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Iain Quinn

PhD Thesis

**Music Department
Durham University**

2012

A Higher Calling

-

***The lofty ideals of
Victorian Organists***

Iain Quinn

Acknowledgments

I am profoundly grateful to all those who have in some way influenced or inspired this thesis. As an organist who grew up as a chorister, much of the subject matter has been familiar to me for many years. However the period of doctoral study has enabled me to re-assess so much of what has long been assumed, or handed-down through the profession. It was an illuminating and inspiring pilgrimage towards the unknown. For much of my life ‘the Victorians’ were veiled in a shroud of suspicion by the musical community. This research has transformed my own view and I hope will allow others to consider this legacy with greater clarity. Far from encountering a disproportionate idealism we discover a genuine sincerity of purpose, high ideals and a passionate desire to excel and be seen as worthy. As the research began to envelop literature and ultimately programming trends I found myself growing to admire these figures all the more. I remain deeply in the debt of all those that supported that development.

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Introduction

*Is it too much to ask that the profession of music should have as honourable a status and recognition on equal terms with those of Law and Medicine?*¹

Stephen Stratton

This thesis charts new territory by examining the figure of the organist within Victorian culture and society. In recent years studies have emerged examining various aspects of Victorian musical life, but to date an enquiry into one of the intrinsic figures of civic life has remained elusive. The reach of the organist, from royal chapel to parish church, and from cathedral to town hall was multi-layered. Throughout this study we find a perception of these musicians tempered by a spirit of idealism that the organists themselves sought to promote. As their reach was great across the cultural landscape, so too was their selective response to conditioning factors of the period. This is exemplified not only by compositional and programming trends but also by their portrayal in literature and the relationship of their work to contemporary aesthetic considerations. As such, a rich canvas is developed that shows the relationship of the public to the organist as well as the organists' sense of place in an ever-developing profession.

The challenges to organists in nineteenth-century England were manifold and varying circumstances brought into play an exhaustive list of prerequisites and conditioning factors. To begin with, the instrument itself had only recently entered into a modern age with consistent pedal compasses from the 1830s onwards. Inspired by Mendelssohn's performances of Bach, English organists continually re-evaluated their own repertoires, and sought out increased education and scholastic qualification. In this respect the 'organ world'

¹ Stephen Stratton, *Monthly Journal* [Incorporated Society of Musicians], December (1888).

began to emerge as an intellectual force in the mainstream of music-making in England and in many communities the organist of a large parish was the senior musical figure in society. However, as Churchill later summarised ‘with opportunity comes responsibility’ and the organists of the Victorian era assumed their positions with the utmost seriousness. Inasmuch as performances on the piano had embraced the more sensational realm of the virtuoso performer in the first quarter of the nineteenth century, the organists sought to pursue a contrasting path in the ensuing quarter century and beyond. With an absence of vain glory they sought honour, respect and esteem.

The establishment of the College of Organists (later RCO, 1893) in 1864 offered not only a public image to the profession on a national scale through a high-profile location in Kensington Gore, but also allowed a forum for many of the professional concerns of earlier generations. Organists were expected to be multi-faceted musicians so that they could easily turn their hand to any number of musical areas. Part of this stemmed from a pragmatic need to increase their income through increased employment opportunities. However, it also created the genesis of an ethic of superior study that demanded organists be well-rounded musicians as able to turn their hand to playing as they could to orchestration, score reading, composition and supporting advanced keyboard skills. To be simply a player of a keyboard instrument was not adequate. Rather, the College of Organists set about establishing demanding standards through examination and applicants quickly took up the challenge. As residential degrees of nine terms were almost thirty years hence (Cambridge, 1893), the CoO diplomas provided a serious professional qualification that could allow experienced musicians to continue in their work with increased standing and those in early careers the opportunity to advance.

Moreover, the ongoing pedagogical leadership from within the profession at a local level afforded many young musicians a valuable education that could not be readily equalled in an era before residential degrees. John Stainer studied with Frederick Gore Ouseley at St. Michael's Tenbury; Arthur Sullivan with George Cooper at St. Paul's; Charles Villiers Stanford with Prescott Stewart at Christ Church, Dublin; and later Ralph Vaughan Williams with Alan Gray at Trinity College, Cambridge whilst sitting for his ARCO and FRCO. As such, the reach of the community of organists was considerable as they were placed at heart of the musical and often national establishment.

The sacred setting of the church post-Oxford Movement - and especially after the work of the Cambridge Ecclesiologists (led by John Mason Neale, Alexander Hope, and Benjamin Webb) - was increasingly looking to past models for inspiration as much as empirical clarity. This point of reflection was allied to the relative upheavals of the Industrial Revolution and Victorian entrepreneurship which themselves caused a certain apprehension about the traditional bases of society.² For several decades the organists followed suit, not least in establishing an organ sonata tradition. In this respect Mendelssohn's early description of his organ sonatas as a *School of Organ-Playing* bore rich fruit as his sonatas (works in title but not in form) could fall into the lineage of the greater lesson-sonata tradition that the English knew from as early as the 1770s. The death of Mendelssohn, a figure much lauded in the higher echelons of the organ world, was hard felt by some musicians and it is easy to see the beginning of the end to a xenophilia that had long gripped Britain. In the words of Henry Chorley, writing in 1854 'The fountain is dry – the familiar book is closed...no more great

² Cyril Ehrlich, *The English Musical Renaissance 1860-1940* (London and New York: Routledge: 1993), 12.

works shall be produced'.³ Undeterred, the organists began a compositional tradition anew and by the late Victorian era the climate had changed sufficiently that home-grown composers were being encouraged by performers and critics alike not least motivated by the emergence of a still more powerful Germany.⁴

However, rather than advancing the musical language towards later romantics such as Liszt, the organists looked backed at Beethoven and Mozart; rather than expand upon traditional musical genres, they instead retained the traditional sonata form, complete with eight-bar phrase structures and a conservative harmonic vocabulary. Whereas the Ecclesiologists had favoured chant and polyphony as their models, the organists mirrored this orthodoxy and rather deftly adopted classical models already admired. Thus it was a period of both reflection and (following a century of meagre compositional growth largely due to the limitation of instruments) a period of historical re-ordering. However, as John Harper has noted with respect to liturgical music, even a piece in an ancient style is still in 'the now' with its inevitable historical points of contact, thus giving it a far richer and more complex cultural and historical meaning.⁵ Music heard in the church is thus, by default, always in 'the now' because its purpose is to serve the greater liturgy. As such the organists were selectively pruning the past repertoire for the finest fruits.

³ Henry F. Chorley, *Modern German Music* (London: Smith, Elder, [1854]) I, 404. Ehrlich, *The English Musical Renaissance*, 14.

⁴ Nicolas Temperley, "Xenophilia in British Musical History" in *Nineteenth-Century British Music Studies*, Vol. 1, (Aldershot: Ashgate, 1999), Bennett Zon. Ed., 8.

⁵ John Harper, "Gothic Revivals," in *Nineteenth Century British Music Studies*, Vol. 2 (Aldershot: Ashgate, 2002), Jeremy Dibble and Bennett Zon. Eds., 16

Central to the desire to achieve hegemony in classical forms on the king of instruments was the Victorian aesthetic quest for ‘worthiness’ and ‘betterment’. In some respects the challenge for improvement was straightforward, for musical standards were perilously low in many English institutions throughout the nineteenth century, with a significant number of foreign musicians still finding ready employment in the larger English cities. But how improvement was to be achieved is another matter and with that comes the central question of how the Victorian organists perceived themselves and wished to be perceived.

To answer the question of perception from within as well as outside the profession, this thesis examines six inter-connected areas that illumine a path of understanding. The six chapters are arranged into three larger parts, with each chapter allowing for conclusions on the specific area of examination. Finer threads of enquiry, not least of conditioning factors, weave in and out of all the chapters thus uniting the whole whilst underscoring specific points in the respective studies.

Part I looks at the sonata tradition from three perspectives. Chapter 1 discusses the early sonatas which are examined in light of the historical lineage that connects them both to the lesson-sonata tradition and the pragmatic pedagogical aspect inherent in Mendelssohn’s sonatas. The sonatas are then viewed in relation to the greater keyboard sonata tradition and specifically to the writings of Mozart and Beethoven. Their output not only represented what they considered worthy models of composition, but arguably, and equally, examples of how they would themselves wished to be judged. As they embarked on a new era, not least with increased opportunities for publishing with the Victorian organ allowing ever-expanding

compositional possibilities, audience response was of far less concern than professional affirmation. As the latter could be fickle in terms of critical reception the organists' assimilation with canonical models is all the more reinforced. Who could challenge a work that drew from the well of the classical masters? In search of worthiness by association, as well professional esteem, we can see how imitation was both subtle, in terms of form, as well as near-pastiche in harmonic and melodic content.

Chapter 2 analyses the place the Leipzig Conservatorium held in the English sonata tradition in the latter part of the century. As musicians flocked to the city of Bach and Mendelssohn, we are prompted to consider what greater conditions could likely have attracted them to the conservatorium for further study, and posit whether their Leipzig schooling was once again a matter of esteemed affiliation, or a deeper desire for self-improvement.

In the second part of chapter 2 an analysis of the 'Leipzig sonatas' demonstrates the compositional trends associated with conservatorium study and how those trends manifested themselves in the English composers who were students there. Through this examination we discover a line of compositional advancement that leads to the culminating sonata of the English tradition, the Elgar *Sonata*, Op. 28 of 1895. Considered Elgar's 'first symphony,' the sonata broke new ground in the literature and has remained at the forefront of the performing repertoire from the English tradition ever since. However, the analysis of the compositional development of English composers (trained in Leipzig) that came before Elgar (who had earlier hoped to study in Leipzig himself) demonstrates not only their desire to be

perceived as part of greater Germanic lineage, but also Elgar's own attachment to this lineage. Far from being an unexpected departure in the literature, Elgar's sonata proves to be the pinnacle of a summit already partially conquered, albeit with a more ambitious landscape under the intendant of a master architect.

The concluding chapter of Part I studies the aesthetic considerations contemporaneous to the writing of the sonatas. The prevalence of first-movement sonata form and fugue in the Victorian organ works demands that the repertory be assessed alongside contemporary conditioning factors, as well as the circumstances that brought about the writing of similar works in the previous century upon which so many of the sonatas are modelled. Placed in the perspective of greater aesthetic thought, the sonatas and their composers come under a new critical evaluation. Beyond the earlier study of the compositional hegemony adopted by the Victorian organist-composers and that greater relationship to the 'work-concept' ideal, the chapter questions the conditioning in place through the sacred setting of the church. Did composers write in a 'conservative' fashion because of their association with ecclesiastical environs, or were they charting a course irrespective of it based on purity of style and an innate leaning towards hegemonic tendencies and absolutism?

Part II examines the perception of the organist as seen through two literary figures that both understood the organ from an amateur musician's perspective; it is a view from outside the profession but from an informed viewpoint. Examining the organist through Robert Browning and Thomas Hardy allows for more than just a literary vision of musicians in the

sacred setting. Rather, this study provides for a multi-layered analysis. To begin, how was the organist seen from a literary perspective, and in the second place was this portrayal an accurate one? In order to delve deep into these areas both chapters probe the greater contexts of the sacred musician. Browning's *Abt Vogler* allows for a study of the organist as an improviser and musician in communion with the Divine. Through *Vogler* and Browning's own musical study we can also draw on natural theology and broader aesthetic dynamics at play in the self-perception of the organist. We can also further consider aspects of the composers' aesthetic conditioning with the perception of the organist as an instrument of the Divine.

Hardy's portrayal of *The Chapel-Organist* provides a contrasting examination that centres on the woman organist and the gendered perception of her as the 'other' within Victorian society. This role is placed in a further historical context by drawing on the study of women organists in medieval and Victorian convents and sisterhoods proving that the perception was not far-reaching on Hardy's part, but rather astutely paralleled. In considering aspects of the 'Other', this study utilises the writings of Michel Foucault and Sigmund Freud, along with Freud's later respondents.

Though Hardy's portrayal of women has often been viewed as challenging at a superficial level, this study finds that (in keeping with Virginia Woolf's eulogising commentary) a more probing analysis provides a realistic historical depiction of the troubled protagonist. As such we see a complex circumstance unfold that has a unique resonance in studying the Victorian woman as an organist.

W. T. Best remains a figure that can baffle the modern musicologist and organist alike, for great though his presence is in English musical history a stigma of condemnable ‘popularism’ has latterly been attached to his art – a charge that in his own time was more swiftly assailed. He was a man of extraordinary professional probity that was committed to the very highest artistic ideals, but in the twenty-first century his reputation has faded much like other virtuosi whose contributions did not find favour in the assemblance of permissible creative prescriptives. But how could a figure esteemed by Hans von Bülow and Franz Liszt seemingly vanish from the musical radar? The greater reason centres on what we can term the ‘canon of performance’, whereby generations of pedagogues have dismissed earlier eras in favour of their own school or others they admire. The fading lights of Best’s once glorious image are little different than the flickers of reputations now remembered of Edwin Lemare, or indeed E. Power Biggs. However, Best’s place in the musical firmament bears an especially close examination for two key reasons: he was England’s greatest (and unquestionably only) contemporary organ virtuoso, and yet he broke nearly all the protocols of professional expectation.

Through a study of Best the organist is extracted from the conditioning domains of the academic and ecclesiastical settings and instead placed in direct comparison with other professional musicians in a concert setting. Here the desire for professionalization takes on an individual, recognisable persona in a musician that, though a freelance concert artist, was engaged by civic leaders to bring his art to the public masses. As such, in considering the larger role of Best’s work, we shall study both the state of the musical profession before and around his appointment to Liverpool as well as the programming styles Best adopted in his appointment and performances elsewhere. By comparing Best’s programming trends with artists in the ‘mainstream’ we can observe two key factors: firstly, that Best was in every

respect the equal of virtuosi of other instruments, and secondly that the role of the organ (not least in a 'town hall' setting) was central not just to civic life and public engagement with the arts but also to progressive musical education. Best drew on the resources of the entire repertoire, whether operatic, symphonic, chamber, vocal or instrumental, and became the most influential musical figure of a great English city.

However, Best's understanding of the nuances of audience taste, the merging of the middle and upper class 'taste publics' (William Weber), coupled with an energetic, and measured pedagogical seam of programming placed his concerts in a unique category. He made a conscious effort to broaden the reportorial base whilst challenging both the audience and himself to a volume of works never previously encountered. Indeed, the combination of life as a successful performer coupled with professional artistic integrity has seen few such ambitious examples in later generations, especially without the want of the artist to appear 'popular'.

That Best did not seek the trappings of fame testifies to the humbler constitution his colleagues readily acknowledged. He was neither an organist of promenade programming tendencies anymore than a closeted ecclesiastical figure shaded by velvet drapery. Rather, he was an uncompromising 'artist' whose own career trajectory was in perfect accord with the society of his age.

Although penned in six chapters that envelop a larger understanding of the Victorian organist there are themes that recur to greater or lesser degrees in each chapter. Key amongst those are the perceptions of worthiness, betterment, self-education and an unwavering self-pride. It

is perhaps the latter which drew the somewhat bruised ego of Edward Elgar to write an organ sonata - little knowing the long-term success and admiration it would command - for he must have known that organists would be able to see quality in his work, even if some other musicians looked with relative disinterest at his earlier efforts. The community of organists founded a scholastic class of their own and their influence was respected.

In the early part of the twenty-first century it is all too easy to perceive the organist as a solitary figure associated solely with ecclesiastical institutions fraught with internal struggles, or a profession set apart and revolving around a self-propelling dynamism. However, this study seeks to open a window towards a path illumined by those who have long striven for perfection in their art at the centre of civic life. Far from a musical sphere oft perceived as looking over its shoulder and all too tenuously engaging the present, this examination shows a profession ever concerned by temporal perceptions yet continually focussed on higher ideals.

When Best could have been ‘popular’ he was in reality ‘educational’; when emerging compositions could have been liturgical miniatures, they were instead sonatas based on esteemed classical models; when the classical well ran dry, the organists looked abroad for inspiration and guidance; when Vogler could have improvised storms and had liturgy rent asunder he was instead observed communing with the Divine. As such the higher road was always the preferred route even if it sometimes became the less travelled course over time.

This quest for excellence has remained undimmed within the organ community and the spirit of intellectual enquiry produces a perpetual bounty of innovative endeavour. We might even suggest that had it not been through a culture of scholasticism engaged in the nineteenth century, the twentieth-century ‘early music’ movement might never have arisen with such impassioned engagement from the academic and performing communities, populated as they are with many learned organists and those once under their tutelage. This study demonstrates the high calling of organists as musicians in Victorian society whilst providing an understanding towards their professional psyche and the lofty idealism they promoted in their work.

Part I

The Organist as Composer

Chapter 1

Classicism in the English organ sonata tradition

I

*An English composer beholds neither glory nor profit in the effects of his labour: who, then,
shall induce him to write?¹*

François Fétis

Historical Lineage

The development of the organ sonata in England came about, as with other developments in musical history, because of a general convergence of contemporary aesthetics. The various components of that convergence will be studied here with the intention of drawing a line of progression that leads from Classical influence to a final emergence of what can be considered an ‘English style’. The focus of this chapter will be a study of how that tradition emerged and will further highlight the coalescing of traditions from across the English Channel. Fundamental to that study will also be the perception of the English organist-composer as a latter-day classicist and musical conservative. Lastly, if that charge is fair and accurate, then what does the history of the sonata in England teach us about their contemporary conditioning and the legacy they inherited and, equally significant, the tradition they began?

It would be easy to surmise that, with the organist-composers’ inherent relationship to the church and an increasingly symbiotic affiliation with academia, a natural conservatism engendered by these associations would prevail throughout the nineteenth century. Neither institution sought to move decisively forward, if at all, without the burden of history on their shoulders, and the weight of individual legacy on those who carried out prescribed change. That said, though the organ is but one part of the musical apparatus of divine service, the

¹ François Fétis, “Letters on the State of Music in London,” *The Harmonicon*, 7 (1829), 276. Nicolas Temperley, “Xenophilia in British Musical History” in *Nineteenth-Century British Music Studies*, Vol. 1, Bennett Zon. Ed., 4.

clerical response to it following the musical developments from the Oxford Movement, and latterly, the dicta of the Cambridge Ecclesiologists, was apathetic at best. The few concerns voiced over organ repertoire or performance style or even a generic liturgical appropriateness, were based on individual negative experiences rather than a universal disquiet. No evidence appears to exist supporting the place of solo organ music in a positive frame of reference. Removed from the *alternatim* tradition of earlier generations, the organist's creative liturgical influence rested with the accompaniment of hymns or other service music, and in the provision (although not canonic requirement) of voluntaries and improvisation. Then, as now, the clerical and congregational response could range from the ambivalent to the enthusiastic. In some respects this is surprising for the organ's physical and tonal presence is unavoidable within its setting. But for many onlookers, whether lay or ordained, it would have been little more than an unintelligible but nonetheless 'wondrous machine' that provided the sense of awe that liturgical traditions so often sought to embrace. Also it was the one area of church ministry – if organists did indeed consider themselves 'ministers' in the modern sense – outside the clerical office that required at least a modicum of specialised training or study. With this, however, comes a further separation as the organist is a solo 'artist' and as such not part of an ensemble. Whereas a daily office could be led by a layperson, the organ needed someone with a modest technical competency and liturgical know-how to assist in the leadership of services. The increasing professionalism of organists (not least through the examinations of the College of Organists) further separated the liturgical musicians from the amateur environs and extraordinary misbehaviour of the west gallery musicians. Thus, organists were in a unique position of creative influence over an 'audience' that, by comparison to the 'secular/virtuoso' world came about in the same half century as Liszt's famous first solo piano recital in Pest (1823).

Although revolutionary in the piano world, the nature of one ‘artist’ commanding a central role was nothing new to the sacred environs of chapel, church and cathedral where organists had performed in a similar ‘solo’ capacity for at least four hundred years. Furthermore the organist was not in any serious sense subject to critical ‘audience’ response. For instance, whereas a pianist might play a second movement of a sonata if the audience response from the first movement appeared sufficiently desirous, the organist was not beholden to such restrictive performance practices. Indeed an examination of concert programmes illustrates that organists did not deviate into the programmatic world as their peers in the piano world had already done. As such, we can determine that organists either knew their audience’s interest in certain repertoire, or they at least knew what music they were used to hearing. In any event it was not performed with an immediate critical response in mind. Naturally there are exceptions to this thesis, not least within the town hall tradition where requests could be made; however, the primary argument that the organist was unleashed from the immediate pressures to entertain due to their ecclesiastical setting nonetheless provides a large part of the foundation for the development of their repertoire. The paradox is that whilst the apathetic response from liturgical reformers provided, by default, a significant licence for potential flight of creative fancy, especially considering the organist’s freedom from ‘audience response’, the creative minds instead sought to align themselves with conservative models first and foremost. On the one hand we can conjecture that this conservatism of style came in the form of an imposed self-regulation (perhaps by teacher to pupil), and that organists, in any event, sought to be relatively pious and removed from the humdrum of musical society. This suggestion may answer many questions not least because the distancing of organists from the mainstream of musical society continues to this day. However, what is of far greater significance in relation to the development of the organ sonata is the comparatively orthodox musical climate that prevailed around the first two quarters of the

nineteenth century, and the fact that its significance was more obviously present in the organ world than any other sphere of public musical endeavour. Bearing in mind this conditioning, whether spoken, written or merely implied by collegial expectation, we must consider whether the organist-composers would have even considered an alternate route for their craft. As such were organist-composers seeking a place in the shadow of great masters of the past, or were they simply writing what they believed to be superior (indeed perhaps morally elevated) music? To this end, what circumstances afforded this musical development in Britain above all other countries in Europe?

Unhindered Extension

Looking at the mid-nineteenth century from a twenty-first century vantage point it is easy to draw lines of progression that offer points of development in the history of Western music. Much of what we take for granted, at least in preliminary studies, comes from an understanding of music that falls into broad categories. This is particularly so when viewing the organ repertoire with the 'baroque' era being defined by countries, regions, and trends.

Allied to this trend for generalisation comes a natural partitioning of composers who do not conveniently fall into one category or another, except when their popularity advances a study of their music; one thinks in this context most obviously of Handel (1685-1759). In many respects, Handel embodied an internationalism – born in Germany, a student in Italy, a cosmopolitan composer of music in multiple styles including North German counterpoint, Italian floridity, the French overture, and all the while the toast of a benevolent monarch and adoring public in England – he was in every sense a true European. Indeed, the high regard for his repertoire in the century following his death is trumped only by the fact that his music has never left the repertoire in England at any point since. The openness of the English public to foreign musicians continued most obviously with the later visits of Haydn (1732-1809) and

Mendelssohn (1809-1847), the long-term residence of Clementi (1752-1832), and the pedagogical influence of Moscheles (1794-1870) and others ultimately connected to Leipzig, not least Sterndale Bennett (1816-1875). This spirit of internationalism is further complemented, in Handel's case, by the serial borrowing of music from other composers. In every sense, music was a language of all people and certainly unhindered by the modes of micro local discourse. As such it can be fairly said that London developed as a trading post in all branches of life, including music.



Felix Mendelssohn²

As Charles Rosen notes, it was also within the sphere of each composer's output to delve into earlier genres. Mozart was perfectly capable of offering works that were in keeping with the High Baroque,³ as much as many nineteenth-century English composers sought, intentionally or simply due to contemporaneous appeal, to develop their own styles on the successes of Mendelssohn. As such, outside the field of the three 'great' composers of the Viennese school (Mozart, Haydn, Beethoven), the modern sense of boundary, or compositional divide,

² William M. Vander Weyde, *Felix Mendelssohn Bartholdy* (ca. 1900), JPG, http://www.notablebiographies.com/images/uewb_07_img0481.jpg (accessed 27 January, 2012)

³ Charles Rosen, *The Classical Style: Haydn, Mozart, Beethoven* (London: Faber, 1976), 20.

was unapparent. If there was a similarity that certain composers showed towards the works of a predecessor, or a special style of composition, it was more likely interdependent on the imperfectly formed aspirations of the age'⁴ than any overt attempt to create a lightly veiled pastiche. Rosen notes that 'what makes the history of music, or of any art, particularly troublesome is that which is most exceptional, not what is most usual, has often the greatest claim on our interest. Even within the work of one artist, it is not his usual procedure that characterizes his personal 'style', but his greatest and most individual success'.

Carl Dahlhaus points to the fact that 'unlike in our own century, the nineteenth century seldom spoke of tradition and that classical music was never considered 'early music' '.⁵ Rather, the works of the previous era were retained in the repertoire, studied, performed and unsurprisingly often emulated. This study seeks not so much to highlight the exceptional – although that in itself can be a supreme example of the 'usual procedure' – but rather the larger realm of composition which forms the era in question. If we are to seek exceptionalism, we should look directly towards Elgar, although as demonstrated in the Leipzig chapter, his circumstances were more influenced than ultimately influential. Rather this chapter considers the very point Rosen notes as 'what is the most usual', and asks why that is the case.

Internationalism

The spirit of internationalism extended across Europe and was already well established long before the nineteenth century. Today it is straightforward enough to analyse the influence of the Italians on the Southern Germans such as Johann Pachelbel (1653-1706), the Germanic-

⁴ Rosen, *The Classical Style*, 20.

⁵ Carl Dahlhaus, *Nineteenth-Century Music*, trans. J. Bradford Robinson (Berkeley: University of California Press, c. 1989), 26.

Italian-Franco influences on Georg Muffat (1653-1704), or J. S. Bach's (1685-1750) adoption of French and German idioms. *Messiah*, written by a German, has an English text and begins with a French overture. As such, the cross-pollination that was commonplace, not least in London, was thoroughly transmutable into the English nineteenth century. As such, the cries of 'Victorian fancy dress' that are sometimes levelled towards this era in fact fall short of realising the far longer tradition that bears their origin, and especially the distinguished lineage it inherited. To charge the English with the adoption of music from other nations is to obviate the central issue that borrowing in all senses was common practice throughout Europe, and had been for at least 150 years beforehand.

'Enlightenment'

Although it cannot be easily argued that the French Enlightenment of the mid-eighteenth-century had a direct impact on the compositional culture of mid-nineteenth century England, it can be unequivocally suggested that when English composers sought to consider which styles of composition most equated with classical ideals, they likewise turned to an earlier era for their inspiration. (The same observation could be made of the Victorian fondness for Greek architectural models.) Indeed the English sonata of the mid-nineteenth century owes less to the structural sonata form of Beethoven, despite his popularity in England, than it does to Mozart, who had similarly already become a seminal figure in Britain. The English composers did not seek to emulate developments in the form, but rather look to earlier models for a template – the earlier the model, the greater the history and the more unimpeachable the source. And, as one commentator (George Macfarren) noted, to some Mozart's model was the superior template in any event; the noted academics (and composers) Crotch (1775-1847) and Ouseley (1825-1889) were both of this belief.

Further, with the advent of the two octave ('German') pedal compass in the 1830s – inspired in large part by Mendelssohn's performances on Bach in England and the natural ambition of English organists to play works of the Leipzig master – came an intentional re-focussing of the repertoire. After all, composers write for the instrument at hand, and seldom for ancient models.

As many of these composers were also practitioners, we can safely assume that their interest in creating new works in the genre was all the more pragmatically sound given the capabilities of the 'new' instruments at their disposal. As with the liturgical reformers, composers chose to look to history, rather than experimentalism (or expressionism) for their inspiration, although admittedly not as far as their clerical colleagues.

It is difficult to say why the sonata concept had managed to bypass the English organist composers, for the organists were not beyond using 'sonata form' (as nineteenth-century musicians would term it) in their works – the concertos of James Hook (1746-1827) being a prime example. It may have been the case that, with keyboard skills born from the fruits of *basso continuo* playing, many organists were accustomed to free improvisation, or at least could provide an agreeable (if not musically adventurous), conclusion to services and did not feel the need to write any volume of new repertoire. Some of the improvisations may have been in at least a binary or ternary form; *basso continuo* playing, of itself, demanded improvisation within set parameters. However, with little musical expectation from the clergy (who were unlikely to be listening to a voluntary in any event) any creative indiscretions would have been of relatively little ultimate consequence. Rather, it appears history had to wait for the sonata tradition to emerge because the contemporary aesthetic conditions were yet to be ripened. However, when the tradition finally evolved, the response was a fully-fledged engagement in both the style and form; as Rosen notes, the sonata was not so much a form as a style, and this they acquired with a ready facility born of sound training.

The historical lineage of the English Sonata

The nature of the sonata as ‘a solo or chamber instrumental cycle of aesthetic or diversional purpose, consisting of several contrasting movements that are based on relatively extended designs in ‘absolute music’ ’⁶ was established at the onset of the Classic era after a century-and-a-half of the Baroque.⁷ Despite this broad definition, and the fact that classical composers had applied the title fairly liberally to works that showed a significant divergence from any true template (even within larger scale sets of works (e.g. Haydn, Mozart, Beethoven), the mid-nineteenth-century continental response was to take the generic classical norm as the acceptable, or preferred, compositional *sine qua non*.

However, in England the term ‘sonata’ had an altogether different meaning in the public conscience, and this has a significant bearing on the genesis of the organ sonata tradition. In English keyboard music of the late-eighteenth century, the term ‘lesson’ was equated with ‘sonata’, thus in each of Samuel Arnold’s (1740-1802) *Eight Lessons*, Op. 7 (c. 1770), each of the works is called a sonata, whereas the opposite was the case in Samuel Webbe’s (1740-1816) *Six Sonatas* which appeared approximately ten years later.⁸ Inasmuch as the English were adopting continental musical forms into the increasingly cosmopolitan metropolis, it is important to establish that this freedom with terminology also extended to France, Italy, Spain, and Portugal. The lesson-sonata equation can be likened to the *esercizi*-sonata of Domenico Scarlatti’s (1685-1757) first publication, around 1739; Johann Joachim Quantz (1697-1773) freely adopted ‘solo’ to mean sonatas; and similarly Felice Giardini’s (1716-1796) usage in his *Six Solos* Op. 16 of 1788. In France, the predominant equation was for *pièce de clavecin-sonate*, whether used for the larger set of works or the individual titles, e.g. Jean-Joseph de Mondonville’s (1711 [baptised]-1772) *Pièces de clavecin en sonates*, Op. 3

⁶ William S. Newman, *The Sonata in the Classic Era* (New York: W. W. Norton, 1993), 19.

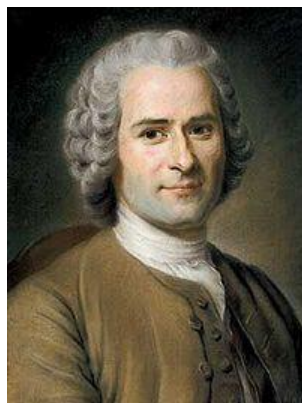
⁷ Ibid, 19.

⁸ Ibid, 20.

(c. 1734). The Portuguese utilised ‘toccata’, as in Carlos Seixas’s (1704-1742) works. The basis of this literal egalitarianism is most pronounced in examples such as Carl Friedrich Abel’s (1723-1787) *Sei Sonate a solo* Op. 6, 1765 where both terms are employed equally.⁹ As such, in defining what a sonata constitutes Jean-Jacques Rousseau defined the structure thus:

an instrumental piece consisting of three or four consecutive movements of different character. The sonata is to instruments about what the cantata is to voices.

The sonata is usually composed for a single instrument that plays [while being] accompanied by a basso continuo; and in such a piece one seizes upon whatever is the most favourable for showing off the chosen instrument, whether the contour of the lines, the selection of the tones that best suit this sort of instrument, or the boldness of the execution. There are also trio Sonatas, which the Italians more commonly call Sinfonie; but when they [the sonatas] exceed three parts or one of these is a solo part, they [the sonatas] are called [by the name] concerto.¹⁰



Jean-Jacques Rousseau¹¹

⁹ Newman, *The Sonata in the Classic Era*, 20.

¹⁰ Jean-Jacques Rousseau, *Dictionnaire de musique* (Amsterdam: Marc Michel Rey, 1772), II, 217. Referred to in Newman, *The Sonata in the Classic Era*, 23.

¹¹ Maurice Quentin de La Tour, *Portrait of Jean Jacques Rousseau*, JPG, <http://www.iep.utm.edu/wp-content/media/rousseau.jpg> (accessed 27 January, 2012)

William Newman comments that Johann Abraham Peter Schulz's (1747-1800) article on the sonata brought together the central views being expressed by the Classic writers and thus has a timeless quality.¹² It addresses not only the question of terminology, but also the pedagogical aspect, the place of 'minor composers' who, nonetheless, seek a place in the eternal line, by connections to C. P. E Bach, and by unavoidable inference, to the legacy of J. S. Bach. As the Victorians also sought a defined lineage as well as a pedagogical emphasis (discussed later) to the past, it is reprinted below in its entirety:

Sonata. A[n] instrumental piece [consisting] of two, three, or four successive movements of different character, which has one or more melody parts, with only one player to a part. Depending of the number of concertante, melody parts that it has, a sonata is described as [being] *à solo*, *à due*, *à tré*, etc.

Clearly in no form of instrumental music is there a better opportunity than in the sonata to depict feelings without [the aid of] words. The symphony [and] the overture have a more fixed character. The form of a concerto seems designed more to give a skilled player a chance to be heard against the background of many instruments than to implement the depiction of violent emotions. Aside from these [forms] and the dances, which also have their special characters, there remains only the form of the sonata, which assumes [any of] all characters and every [kind of] expression. By [means of] the sonata the composer can hope to produce a monologue through tones of melancholy, grief, sorrow, tenderness, or delight and joy; or maintain a sensitive dialogue solely through impassioned tones of similar or different qualities; or simply depict emotions [that are] violent, impetuous, and [sharply] contrasted, or light, gentle, fluent, and pleasing. To be sure, [even] the weakest composers have such goals in the making of sonatas, among the weakest

¹² Newman, *The Sonata in the Classic Era*, 23.

[being] the Italians and those who imitate them. The sonatas of the present-day Italians are characterized by a bustle of sounds succeeding each other arbitrarily without any purpose than to gratify the insensitive ear of the layman, [and] by sudden, fantastic transitions from the joyous to the mournful, from the pathetic to the flirtatious, without our getting what the composer wants [to say]. And if the performance of these [sonatas] engages the fancy of a few hotheads, the heart and imagination of every listener of taste and understanding will still remain completely untouched.



Johann Abraham Peter Schulz¹³

A large number of easy and hard keyboard [i.e., clavichord] sonatas by our Hamburg [C. P. E.] Bach show how character and expression can be brought to the sonata. The majority of these are so communicative that one believes [themselves] to be perceiving not tones but a distinct speech, which sets and keeps in motion our imagination and feelings. Unquestionably, to create such sonatas requires much genius [and] knowledge, and an especially adaptable and alert sensibility. But they also require a highly expressive performance, which no German-Italian is

¹³ Unknown, Johann Abraham Peter Schulz, JPG, http://www.japschulz.de/bilder/startseite_1.jpg (accessed 27 January, 2012)

conditioned to achieve, but which is often achieved by children, who become accustomed early to such sonatas. Likewise, the composer's sonatas for two concertante melody parts with bass accompaniment are truly impassioned tone dialogues. Whoever fails to experience or perceive this [quality] in these [trios] should realise that they are not always played as they should be. ...Embryonic composers who hope to succeed with sonatas must take those of Bach and others like them as models.

For players of instruments, sonatas are the most usual and the best exercises. Moreover, there are lots of easy and hard ones for all instruments. After vocal pieces they hold first place in chamber music. And, since they require only one player to a part, they can be played in the smallest musical society [or association] without ceremony. A single artist can often entertain a whole society with a keyboard sonata better and more effectively than [can] the largest ensemble.¹⁴

Rousseau illuminates several points that have direct bearing on the Victorians adoption of the form. Firstly, he clarifies that the works are not to be treated lightly, in a 'flirtatious manner'. Rather, works bearing the title of the sonata are to fall into the heritage bestowed on the larger genre by J. S. Bach. Secondly, he notes that the works are ideal for instrumentalists to seek out for pedagogical reasons. Thirdly, his comments would offer a challenge to the English composer in a metropolis filled with Italian musicians as he notes their countrymen have yet to succeed in their approach to the genre – one can never rule out innate rivalry. Lastly, and arguably most importantly to the Victorian sensibility, he states that the

¹⁴ Quoted in Newman, *The Sonata in the Classic Era*, 23-24.

composition of the sonata requires a superior intellect and artistic sympathy – values that the Victorian organists knew would hold them in ever-increasing esteem.

Lesson-Sonata

Certainly by 1770 (with Samuel Webbe) the concept of the sonata as a vehicle for pedagogical advancement was well known. This concept quickly takes on a further extension with the introduction of ‘Sonatinos’ by James Hook in 1776 and 1779, alongside the added publishing definitions of works being ‘easy’, ‘short’, ‘kleine,’ ‘leichte,’ ‘piccolo,’ or ‘brevi’. (The custom of defining works according to their level of difficulty continues to this day.)



Samuel Webbe¹⁵

Noting that Schulz observed that the symphony was not ‘a practice piece like the sonata’,¹⁶ once can see how a teacher or student (armed with a primer) could easily establish what works were most suitable to their level of experience. If one couples this circumstance with the rapid development of the music-publishing industry in nineteenth-century Europe, it is easy to see a line of organic advancement. But further it also helps to explain why when the sonata tradition was fully under way in the latter part of the nineteenth century, the music

¹⁵ Unknown, *Samuel Webbe*, JPG, http://www.cyberhymnal.org/img/w/e/webbe_s_sr.gif (accessed 27 January)

¹⁶ Newman, *The Sonata in the Classic Era*, 25.

retained a pedagogical-practical bias, for it was not until the late 1880s that works enter the repertoire which can even churlishly be described as ‘difficult’, especially by comparison with keyboard works written for the sister instrument of the piano.

Style

While analysing the past and plotting a course forward, the influence of the (largely continental) *Sturm und Drang* movement never quite made it to the English organ loft with any lasting impact, save for aspects of the William Russell voluntaries. Certainly this cannot have been because of any lack of awareness for aside from the influence of Franz Joseph Haydn (1732-1809), London also knew the music of Johann Christian Bach (1735-1782), and Johann Baptist Vanhal (1739-1813).



Franz Joseph Haydn¹⁷



Johann Baptist Vanhal¹⁸

¹⁷ Thomas Hardy, *Portrait of Haydn*, (1791), JPG, http://userserve-ak.last.fm/serve/_/10346827/Franz+Joseph+Haydn+haydn.jpg (accessed 27 January, 2012)

¹⁸ Unknown, *Johann Baptist Vanhal*, JPG, <http://www.vukutu.com/blog/wp-content/uploads/2009/08/Vanhal2.jpg> (accessed 27 January, 2012)



Johann Christian Bach¹⁹



Georg Joseph Vogler²⁰

As such, it is more likely that associations with the dramatic, let alone the programmatic, aroused suspicions for organists. One only has to consider the popularity enjoyed by Georg Joseph Vogler (1749-1814), known for his improvisations that included storm effects, to see how sympathetic the English musical *cognoscenti* (especially the learned organists) would have been to his detractors. Also, the expressionistic side of *Sturm und Drang* would have been a matter of equal concern to the self-regulative nature of composers who laboured under the aesthetic conditioning of their clerical colleagues' own conditioning of a generation before. If the organists were to embark on establishing a tradition, they were going to tread carefully and only select from the models they knew could be delivered unimpeachably. However, what we can see, in assessing this repertoire, is not a contemporaneous cognizance of 'conservatism' per se, but rather an overarching concern with appropriateness, worth, and value – virtues that had become central tenets of Victorian society.

General Style and Compositional Protocols

The style that developed - in the temporal sense - was strongly rooted in classical gesture. In first movements, the fluid melody, typically in a major key, utilised four- and eight-bar

¹⁹ Thomas Gainsborough, *Portrait of Johann Christian Bach*, JPG, (1776), <http://attributetoart.com/item.php?id=508> (accessed 27 January, 2012)

²⁰ Unknown, *Georg Joseph Vogler*, JPG, http://www.haydn.dk/mhc_vogler.php (accessed 27 January, 2012)

phrase structure. Second subjects were contrasting and 'bridge' sections were concise and unobtrusive. More dramatic gestures, such as the incorporation of Neapolitan harmonies, were typically avoided in favour of the more conservative harmonic language found in Mendelssohn's sonatas. (Mendelssohn's own use of the 'usual' keys may well have been accustomed due to the inconsistencies which plagued English tuning throughout the century.) The use of 'recitative' that had become well-known through Beethoven does not appear at all, nor is there a trace of the *Empfindsamkeit* style of C. P. E. Bach (1714-1788). Key relationships are conventional and seldom stray beyond a close circle of related tonal centres (see above note on Mendelssohn). When a modulation appears abrupt it is more likely to be through technical misadventure on the part of the composers than through intentional audacity.

Adoption, Reverence and Association

In considering the reception of foreign musicians into the English musical firmament during the eighteenth and nineteenth centuries, it is difficult to find any other European metropolis that could boast such a cosmopolitan outlook. For all the conditions that could befall an island race, few applied in the universal language of music. There is no English musical equivalent to the *querelle des anciens et des modernes* that grasped French society in the late seventeenth century, or a parallel to the Council of Trent in the Italian sixteenth century. Rather, the nineteenth-century English organist-composers followed suit with their countryman Sir William Temple (1628-1699) who argued (in reference to Bernard of Chartres (12th century)) that modern art is able to develop only because we stand on the shoulders of those that have gone before us. English musicians learned that the greatness of the past also commanded public awareness and that similitude could be judged favourably. This state of mind provided a utopian creative aesthetic for the composers at hand. In the absence of a (sonata) tradition (in the pianistic sense) they could call their own, the greater

populus had already sanctioned the emulation of greatness from the past on the sister instrument.



Muzio Clementi²¹

London's Most Industrious Composer of Sonatas

The most celebrated sonata-writer known in England had been Muzio Clementi (1752-1832) – whose prolific output surpassed that of the London Piano School of the Cramers, Dussek, Potter and Griffin - and we can safely conjecture that players of the sister keyboard instrument knew his work either from concert performances of pianists, or in their own study, or that of their students. Clementi would have provided a happy median on which to view individualistic approaches towards the sonata. Although sonata form is clearly in evidence in his first movements, it is a ‘flexible, personal application, with no feeling of formalism or conscious obligation to any particular design that was to become standard in nineteenth-century textbooks’.²² As such, while basking in the serene glow of Clementi’s success, composers could exhibit their creative and intellectual skill by adopting the model of the Viennese school, whilst at the same time investing in an established charter of relative conservative restraint. However, traits of classicism such as chromatic passing notes, marked

²¹ Unknown, *Muzio Clementi*, JPG, <http://www.nndb.com/people/403/000093124/muzio-clementi-1-sized.jpg> (accessed 27 January, 2012)

²² Newman, *The Sonata in the Classic Era*, 750.

dynamic contrasts, metrical distortions (through the use of accented *sf* beats) did not find an obvious expressive parallel in the organ sonatas that followed classical models. Interestingly, however, the later Clementi sonatas show a greater interest in polyphony – a technique to be highly favoured by the Victorian organist-composers – with the incorporation of fugato (Op. 40/3/i) and canon (Op. 40/1/iii and Op. 50/1/ii).²³ Wolfgang Heinrich Riehl sums up this expansive approach to the style in his writing of 1861:

I label Clementi the “master of the sonata” not because he wrote the unqualifiedly best but rather the most sonata-like sonatas; for his entire artist’s career was concentrated and resolved through the sonata, and he alone lived and worked with the modern sonata throughout all of its three main periods [pre-, high-, and late-Classic]. One rightly names Haydn, Mozart, Beethoven, and Clementi in a single breath as the chief exponents of the Classic piano sonata. But the three first-named were much too universal for their mastery of the sonata to become the sole signature of their entire artistic reaches. This [restriction] is the case only in Clementi; he stands and falls with the sonata; it marks, in a word, his greatness as [it does] his limitations.²⁴

Riehl’s commentary provides a valuable absolution to those that come after with their own sonata contributions. His praise of Clementi comes not from any ground-breaking advancement of the form, but rather places value of its antithesis. It is the ‘essence’ (akin to the ‘style’ Rosen alludes to) of the sonata which Clementi maintains, and to Riehl this places his output in a unique vein. A first impression of Riehl’s opinion suggests that value is placed on an immovability of the form and that by this standard, or indeed virtue, none of the later works would have needed to evolve. In fact Riehl’s commentary is an elucidation of the

²³ Newman, *The Sonata in the Classic Era*, 756.

²⁴ *Ibid*, 756.

pivotal concern on which the organist-composers were to seize; it was also a virtue to imitate the *essence* in the first instance, with individualism being a secondary concern.

Further, as Clementi aspired towards a coalescing of Haydn's and Mozart's style – two figures that drew ready enthusiasm in England – his place and influence (not least over pupils) as an adopted foreigner in the land was uniquely affirmed. Indeed, his music was more widely published by western-European publishing houses than in his home country of Italy, which had largely abandoned publishing instrumental music after 1745.²⁵ Whereas four publishers issued his works in Vienna, sixteen published his works in Paris and fifteen in London.²⁶ It is a poignant side-note that Beethoven's library of his latter years included none of Mozart's keyboard music, nothing of Haydn, and yet all of Clementi's sonatas. The poet Friedrich Schiller (1759-1805) noted that 'he had the greatest preference and placed them in the front rank of pieces appropriate to [the development of] fine piano playing, as much for their lovely, pleasing, fresh melodies as for the well-knit, fluent forms of their movements'.²⁷

The Tripartite Form(ula)

The English organ sonata from the late 1850s until the early 1880s remained in three movements. Walter Battison Haynes's (1859-1900) *Sonata in D minor* of 1883 was the first to introduce a fourth movement, which was coincidentally the first time a *scherzo* had appeared in an English sonata (save for the scherzo-esque introduction to a fugue in Henry Hiles's (1826-1904) College of Organists award-winning sonata of 1868).

In the sonatas of this period there is a fairly rigorous adherence to 'sonata form' as the nineteenth century saw it, with a governing sense of purity in execution that was to pervade dozens of works. By parallel the bulk of Clementi's sonatas are in major keys, and none of

²⁵ Ibid, 73.

²⁶ Ibid, 73.

²⁷ Ibid, 758-759.

the sonatas bears a key signature of more than three or four flats. In the English organ sonatas, even those works in minor keys (and nearly always that means D minor) have lighter textures (i.e. fewer notes and centred on the middle to upper part of the keyboard), and a rhythmic buoyancy that fosters a reverence for the eighteenth century whilst applying a contemporaneous temporal worthiness. The use of simpler keys (beyond the issue of tuning) also relates to the pedagogical role the sonatas offered. Further, as with the greater number of Clementi's sonatas, there was no programmatic suggestion with titles – a point that at least moderately distances the composer from the secular world, if not more specifically the expressionistic world of Beethoven (or Liszt).

The Disjunction of Ideas and the Formation of an 'English Style'

However, there are two key aspects that set the English organ sonatas apart from their earlier piano counterparts. Firstly, there is a frequent lack of cohesion between movements as part of the larger sonata structure. It was commonplace for movements to be played separately, as they were customarily in the piano concert. Secondly, and related to the previous point, there is the ever-present fugue as the last movement. Even though fugal writing could occur in the 'traditional' classical sonata, the composers for piano nonetheless conceive the work in a cohesive cyclical fashion regardless of the final performance practice.

This inclusion of strict polyphony into an otherwise *galant* texture creates a portfolio composition. [The reasoning behind the portfolio approach is discussed in the chapter on aesthetics.] Indeed in some respects – not least given the difficulty for players only recently accustomed to utilising the pedals – we might fairly consider that the first movement in sonata form was to exhibit proficiency in the genre (regardless of technical difficulty); the second movement offered a technically less demanding interlude; and the third movement presented the academic fugue. In every sense – briefly putting to one side the question of

overarching compositional cohesion – the work was a ‘sonata scholastic,’ and by design of an ‘ancient’ model (albeit with a contemporary twist), and thus could be considered part of the greater canonical legacy. By contrast, the world of piano music publishing (which had witnessed a continuous development of style) had long dispensed with the ‘usual sonata form’ at the turn of the century, as this invitation of 1803 by the Swiss publisher Nägeli indicated.

Repertoire des clavecinistes

I am interested primarily in piano solos in the grand manner, of large extent, and with manifold departures from the usual sonata form. Wealth of detail and full texture ought to distinguish these products. Contrapuntal movements must be impregnated with artistic figures for the pianist. Whoever possesses no skill in the art of counterpoint and at the same time is no piano virtuoso will hardly be able to achieve much here.²⁸

Of course the similarity between the piano and organ worlds comes in the final line, whereby it is assumed the composer will be a performer. But in all other respects the self-imposed prescription to which organists adhered bears little relation (even after several generations) to that expected of the piano-composer, or at least the piano-composers who want to see their works in print. That noted, Nägeli’s comments do allude to the prevailing understanding of the fundamental ‘sonata form,’ and to this end we can see where the English composers were placing their attentions. Once again it was a matter of essence allied to perceived critical response.

However the flexible ‘formula’, which can be paralleled to the earlier relationship between lessons and suites also bore an historical connection. The German-Dutch organist Jacob

²⁸ Trans. by Newman in *The Sonata in the Classic Era*, 26. From *Allgemeine musikalische Zeitung* V (1802-1803) Intelligenz-Blatt, 97.

Wilhelm Lustig (1706-1796) commented in 1751 that the arrangement of movements in a sonata, or solo, concerto, symphonie, or caprice was entirely at the composer's discretion.²⁹ Whether the composers saw their works as being cohesive is conjecture, but if they intentionally wrote separate 'ideas' into the same work, then they were charting a portfolio course that was at the least self-indulgent, even if on a movement-by-movement basis it was legitimate composition. The dramatist and critic Gotthold Ephraim Lessing (1729-1781) had noted as early as 1768 that 'a symphony that expresses different, contradictory passions in its different themes is a musical atrocity; in a symphony only one passion must prevail.'³⁰ As previously noted, *sturm und drang* did not translate into the English organ repertoire (although it could have) and Johann Friedrich Reichardt's (1752-1814) comment's related to (programmatic) representations bears relation to this disjunct approach:

...instead of contending oneself each time with the expression of the representation of [but] one of these passions [joy or sadness], one mixes the two in a most improper manner in order to show both styles of performance in each instance. Thus originate the most outlandish sonatas, symphonies, concertos, and other pieces in our newer music.³¹

Given the English concern for perception and standing in larger nineteenth-century society can easily see that composers might have shied away from potential critiques of a similar nature. However, despite all the views to the contrary, and some of long-standing, the portfolio sonata appears to have won the day. As such, English composers not only adopted a continental classical style but then Anglicised it to their own ends.

²⁹ Trans. by Newman in *The Sonata in the Classic Era*, 28. From *Dramaturgie*, "27. Stücke".

³⁰ Cited in Newman, *The Sonata in the Classic Era*, 35.

³¹ Trans. by Newman in *The Sonata in the Classic Era*, 35. From J. F. Reichardt, *Musikalisches Kunstmagazin* (Berlin: Im Verlage des Verfassers, 1782-1791) I, 25.

The absence of organ sonatas in the early nineteenth century

Prior to the development of the pedal compass, no solo organ sonatas appear to have been composed by English composers. The relationship between the development of the instrument's capabilities, and the emergence of 'sonata composers', is made apparent by the number of compositions written by church musicians. These were composers who had ready access to an organ in the regular course of their employment, or freely wrote in a sonata form for alternate instrumental forces (e.g. concerto), or other keyboard instruments. Chief among these figures are James Hook (1746-1827) who contributed keyboard concertos for the concerts at Vauxhall Gardens, Samuel Arnold (1740-1802) and Samuel Webbe (1740-1816) who were each known for their church music; Christian Ignatius Latrobe (1758-1836), who dedicated three sonatas to Haydn; and Matthew Camidge (1758-1844) - of the family that provided organists of York Minster for 103 years – and who published numerous accompanied sonatas from about 1796, as well as six concerti for organ or grand Piano Forte.³²



James Hook³³

³² Newman, *The Sonata in the Classic Era*, 764-767.

³³ Unknown, *James Hook*, JPG, <http://userserve-ak.last.fm/serve/500/47125389/James+Hook.jpg> (accessed 27 Januar7, 2012)

As such, although the sonata style was inherent to the contemporary late eighteenth and early nineteenth-century musical cognoscenti, it was only after the development of the instrument that the concept of a solo organ sonata found a place in the repertoire. That said, the burden of legacy would nonetheless be weighted from peers, as well as the older generation of composers and from the older generations who were familiar with the form in its highest Viennese art-form.

This was a modest concern, however, compared with the beleaguered symphonists that would follow the Viennese masters, or the composers of opera that would consider the same libretto. (One considers Gioachino Rossini's (1792-1868) hesitation to set *Il barbiere di Siviglia* in 1816 following the success of Giovanni Paisiello's (1740-1816) opera of the same title from 1782.)³⁴ In relation to the place of repertoire that bore at least the hint of imprimatur of an earlier era Dahlhaus comments:

Tradition stood midway between propagating genres, with individual works merely serving as links in a chain, and singling out works to survive their own time as repertoire pieces, not by representing a genre but by expressing a claim to uniqueness. Earlier tradition might be said to have 'passed through' works, which manifest some but not all of the substance being handed down – the generic norm – whereas more recent tradition 'consists' of works which themselves, rather than generic norms, constitute the substance handed down.³⁵

In relating this commentary specifically to the community of organists, we can see the uniqueness – beyond the fact that most composers generally contributed only one sonata

³⁴ Dahlhaus, *Nineteenth-Century Music*, 28.

³⁵ Ibid

– to the desire for legacy and professional acceptance amongst colleagues, and to the ‘substance handed down,’ a semblance to the past which (due to the paucity of ‘serious’ organ composition in the previous century) can be viewed as the creation of a tradition. This circumstance is an interesting parallel with the ‘meagre residuum’ (Dahlhaus) of string quartets around 1820, and the fact that Johannes Brahms (1833-1897), as a noted composer of chamber music, contributed so little to that genre.³⁶ However the ‘sonata concept’ had already moved forward and, in the organ repertoire, been given an English identity.

Perception

Consideration needs to be given to the perception of the sonata composer. What did it mean to be part of a lineage that was not of your immediate musical ancestry but rather intrinsic to the larger musical world? Why is it that so many (now) lesser-known composers sought to write a sonata? While the chapter on aesthetics will deal with the greater musico-philosophical questions that relate to the composers’ conditioning, this chapter will address the question of perception.

The senior members of the profession that ultimately founded the College of Organists in 1864 were concerned not only with the need to establish standards, but also with the need to be considered part of the larger professions that were ever-present in London society. The concern was not for increased remuneration, for the College of Organists (later Royal College of Organists) did not see itself as a union, or even a society of activists, or for increased recognition or esteem from fellow musicians of other disciplines. Rather it was a want to be allied, at least in perception, with the great professions of law and medicine. (It was for the same reason that Stanford demanded the Cambridge requirements for the B.Mus be extended to nine terms, with residency, so the status of the degree could be paralleled with the other

³⁶ Ibid

professions.) In some respects this happened by default through its membership; if you assemble many of the musicians who hold prominent posts you will, by nature, create an elite institution with which others desire to be affiliated. Indeed, the highly coveted fellowship diploma of the college was initially given to its prominent members in order to encourage junior members of the profession to be examined and join the illustrious ranks. But another part came from worthiness and the noble presentation of earned credentials.

To paraphrase Rosen,³⁷ the mid-nineteenth century also provided for a purification of the style from the ‘irrelevant residues of past traditions’, which was of itself a musical ‘cleansing’. The euphoric buoyancy of so much eighteenth-century repertoire, especially that heard in the church, not least in Handelian imitation, could be left in the past whilst the ‘higher’ plain could be prepared with an idealism – if not to say formalism – that could lay surer foundations for future repertoire. Indeed, looked at subjectively, it is fair to consider that the ‘great’ sonatas of the later part of the century (such as Elgar) may not have emerged were it not for the establishment of the (simpler Mendelssohnian) style of the mid-century works.

There was also the element of self-improvement, and the self-examination and perception that was so prevalent in Victorian society. This culture too could be seen from the example of certain continental musicians. Franz Schubert’s (1797-1828) studies with Simon Sechter (1788-1867) in his final year, and Robert Schumann’s (1810-1856) *recherché* studies of Bach demonstrate not only the want for continued self-improvement and discovery, but also a eulogising for the past masters, who themselves learned from others – one thinks particularly of Bach copying out the organ works of the slightly older Nicolas de Grigny (1672-1703). It was an unembarrassed approach to self-education that in the nineteenth century was then

³⁷ Rosen, *The Classical Style*, 22.

allied to an age of self-improvement and desire for worthiness that was valued throughout society.

Professional recognition

The eighteenth-century notion of a sonata was in part an early step on the professional ladder, and this resonates strongly with the Victorian adoption of classical models. The idea that composers would write a sonata before moving onto more serious works pervaded the professional culture. It was a preferable first step and helped to command an air of respectability as well as providing an initial step towards the greater public. The standard provided by Mozart, Haydn and Beethoven was known to be un-equable, but the sonata as a concept still retained a necessary imprimatur that even the least proficient composer needed to bear in mind. Of three piano sonatas, Op. 6 by Joseph Wölfl (1773-1812) a contemporary commentator noted:

Good piano sonatas are written less often now than formerly, when the tendency of every musician who wanted public recognition as an active composer was to begin his career with piano pieces, especially solo sonatas – solo sonatas that may not have shown our present superior taste but still had to excel in craftsmanship if the composer hoped to come off with some distinction for his work.

...This composition mania is now gone so far that in nearly every town of any size music publishers are or will be established that, in order to supply nothing but novelties, accept and publish everything they can engrave. There are always [those] little men who will buy anything without looking so long as it is new. Such works cost nothing more than about a dozen free samples as an honorarium, [plus] paper

and ink, whereby a publisher is satisfied. The author sees his name printed, nice and big, in an elegantly flourished title, whereby he has achieved his main purpose.³⁸

Further, London had become a centre for sonata composition during the classic period, and not solely because of the extraordinary output of Clementi. Whilst Paris led the field with seventy-five sonata composers, London could boast fifty-three, ahead of Vienna with forty-nine and Berlin with twenty-four.³⁹ As Newman elucidates, these figures are purely quantitative and do not suggest any qualitative basis for assessment although the prevalence of the sonata concept is undeniable, both for later composers and the public psyche.

Publishing had moved on from the Classic era where new works could appear with the note “Printed for the author” (i.e. paid for by the composer), but if that system had been worthy enough for Leopold Mozart’s promotion of his son’s first published sonatas,⁴⁰ there is little to suggest the same need for approbation would not have been considered, if required, of nineteenth-century musicians. Far from (merely) trying to satisfy a singular employer, they were in fact doing all they could to attract larger public approbation. Furthermore, with the exception of the licence to publish issued by Elizabeth I to William Byrd and Thomas Tallis, church musicians in England had not been beholden to any sort of professional publishing crucible. Certainly the works of their predecessors in the eighteenth century had not been restricted to the library of an employer or benefactor, as with court composers. However, there is another aspect to consider, and it is the pragmatic-commercial side.

³⁸ Trans. by Newman in *The Sonata in the Classic Era*, 47 from *Allgemeine musikalische Zeitung* I (1798-99), 236-237.

³⁹ Newman, *The Sonata in the Classic Era*, 61.

⁴⁰ Ludwig Ritter von Köchel, *Chronologisch-thematisches Verzeichnis sämtlicher Tonwerke Wolfgang Amade Mozarts* (Leipzig: Breitkopf & Härtel, 1937), 236-237. Newman, *The Sonata in the Classic Era*, 47.

The Novello Question

The vast majority of organ sonatas were published by Alfred Novello (1810-1896). Novello's publishing house made the larger share of their sheet music sales from sacred works⁴¹ through the advancing choral culture, not least with provincial choral societies providing much of their sales. Further, Novello had a working relationship with Felix Mendelssohn (1809-1847) - whose sonatas served as a stylistic catalyst for many organ-composers - and frequently sought his counsel on future publishing endeavours. As Mendelssohn had already interested Novello in his own music, and Novello's father, Vincent (1781-1861) was producing significant quantities of sacred works and orchestral reductions of classical masses, it is certainly plausible that an interest in further organ music could be generated, especially if it was of a noble origin, such as the 'sonata'.

Secondly, there is an intriguing point that merits consideration, and that is the general relationship of the organists to the publishing house. Given the larger share of Novello's business rested with sales of choral music, whether large-scale oratorios, octavo scores, reductions, arrangements, or alternate versions, and choral organisations were consistently conducted by prominent (or at least competent) organists, a credible case can be made for Novello begetting the good nature of the profession's organists by publishing their (eminently respectable) works to foster a mutually agreeable relationship. Even though organ works provided steady sales, this cannot be overlooked, especially as Novello could also benefit from some form of professional kudos by aligning with the leading lights of the profession.⁴² Furthermore, if we follow this argument, did the cross-dedication of works (discussed later) not further entrench Novello into the very heart of the profession? Not only could a new work

⁴¹ For a detailed discussion of the Novello legacy see Victoria L. Cooper, *The House of Novello* (Aldershot: Ashgate, 2003)

⁴² Parry was asked to contribute chorale preludes long before he published them in the 1890s and Stanford was asked for sonatas in 1920s

appear before the public with all the benefits that provided publisher and composer, but the inscription could further honour another musician, and perhaps bring them into the fold of the publishing house as well.

Admittedly this is conjecture, but once art moves from the creator to the world of business and profit, we must be open to considering potential inducements that favour all parties. Worthy though the works were, the profusion of so great a number must, by any reasonable examination, be subject to the potential underlying forces at play.

The pedagogical aspect and the studious amateur

Central to a consideration of the sonatas place in the larger repertoire is the question of who the sonatas were written for (beyond the dedicatee). Previous discussions have considered the role of the publisher and the professional standing of the composer. However, although a case can be made for the composer seeking a place for his works in the eternal museum of musical works, business considerations alone demand that the works must have had a public with an ability to purchase them.

Technical Demands

A unifying factor running through the sonatas from W. T. Best (1826-1897) and William Spark's (1823-1897) contributions of 1858 to Basil Harwood's (1859-1949) first sonata of 1886 (and to some extent beyond) is the relative limited difficulty of the works. Indeed even if a work had one 'difficult' movement, the larger work would include an easier accompanying movement. (This tradition was maintained until the Elgar (1857-1934) sonata of 1895). Harwood's *First Sonata* is a consummate example in this regard with its commanding outer movements offset by a short, lyrical central movement. But why should this be the case?

Surely as most organists had a command of the piano and would be familiar with classical sonatas and early romantic works, a natural translation of their technique to the organ should not pose any obstacle. But if this were the case, why would there be a lack of a ‘virtuoso’ sonata until the publication of Elgar’s sonata in 1895?

The answer rests with two factors, the first liturgical and the second pedagogical. In the sacred setting the organist is expected to present ‘new’ solo repertoire every week, if not multiple times during a week. Repertoire can be repeated to a certain extent but professionalism suggests the organist continues to learn new repertoire until such time as a broad repertoire is at their quick disposal. This circumstance separates the organist from the mainstream of practical music-making. Whereas a pianist may study a work over several months and then include it in a concert programme which is performed in multiple cities, the organist has, on the whole, a solitary location for their art. Indeed even if the organist travels midweek to give a concert, the Sunday duty soon returns and new repertoire – or at the very least repertoire that is new from the previous week – is required. Thus, large-scale, technically demanding pieces did not offer a pragmatic appeal to the average liturgical organist. This predicament continues to this day where anthologies of shorter works – whose editorship differs little in principle from those of their predecessors in the past one hundred years – continues to provide much of the weekly repertoire for organ voluntaries Sunday-by-Sunday. Thus the creation of shorter, tuneful works that had few technical demands and could potentially be studied between one Sunday and another were of significant interest, especially if found within the structure of a larger (noble) work.

The Pedagogical Usage

The pedagogical aspect stems from the relative paucity of organ primers, beyond those of Rinck (in Wesley's translation c. 1850), George Cooper (c. 1860), W. T. Best (1853, then 1869 and 1883) and John Stainer (1877?). Best's primers include a significant number of his own works, alongside 'editions' of the works of the masters which are heavily edited towards his individualistic style of interpretation; among the pieces included is the last movement of his (first) organ sonata.

It is difficult to establish how many organists learned their trade by studying with a teacher, as opposed to learning the instrument themselves with a primer, or potentially a combination of both. Even if publishing records could be analysed, those figures alone would not give an accurate statistic for comparing how many copies were sold to the optimum number of organists in the profession. Indeed even a comparison with the members associated with the College of Organists would be misleading as membership of itself does not prove a solitary school of pedagogy. However, the lengthy prefaces and the highly detailed contents of primers, not least including diagrams related to posture, do suggest that a certain number of organists acquired their craft through self-instruction. With this in mind, the obvious question becomes what repertoire would they study next after they had completed the primer's contents? And, if simply transferring from the piano to the organ without the use of a primer what repertoire could they swiftly acquire?

The majority of the sonatas follow a surprisingly similar template and as a common factor was Novello's publishing house we have to at least consider that their house editors had a tried and tested formula in place. Beyond the sonatas that owe a strong allegiance to classical idioms (Best, Macfarren and Ouseley), the model for compositional technique seems to be Mendelssohn. Though the Mendelssohn sonatas are not inheritors of the classical sonata

form, but rather works related to the broader use of the term, they nonetheless display a pragmatism that was readily imitated and can be defined by the following characteristics:

- 1 Restricted range for manual writing with hands generally focussed on the central part of the keyboard
- 2 Limited solo pedal lines – where more extensive writing for the pedals is incorporated, the manuals are either unplayed, or in a stationary position, e.g. holding a chord
- 3 Conservative key selection – key signatures do not generally extend beyond four sharps or flats, and if they do it is not for all movements. The majority do not extend beyond three
- 4 Movements are concise with the average sonata lasting no longer than 10-12 minutes, across three movements
- 5 Each movement can be played independently⁴³
- 6 Sonatas are consistently written in a conservative ‘church’ style, but equally ‘tuneful’ enough to find a place in concert performance
- 7 Technically challenging movements are balanced within the same sonata with easier movements

As such, although the pieces satisfied publishing expectations, as well as bringing forward the composer professionally, and served liturgical ends, they could also be studied in the tradition of earlier sonatas (lessons). The pedagogical aspect of organ music that could equally be played liturgically, or in concert, was highlighted with the earlier (1841)

⁴³ Acknowledgement is made of segues in Mendelssohn’s sonatas, equally noting that Mendelssohn’s segues can also be seen structurally as preludatory material to the subsequent movement.

publications of Carl Czerny's (1791-1857) organ works by Robert Cocks & Co. in London. The cover of the *Twenty Short Voluntaries*, Op. 698 notes the works as 'Exercises for the obligato employment of the pedals'. Further, the edition is dedicated to William Crathern (1793-1861), an established London piano teacher and composer, who was also published by Cocks. Crathern's association further highlights the mutually beneficial relationship between performer-teacher-composer-publisher.

That Best included a final sonata movement in his primer illuminates the pedagogical value he saw in the piece. Equally the publishing by Novello of *Four Sonatinas* by Arthur Plant (1853-1914) in 1894 – only a year before the publication of the Elgar – indicates that the pedagogical role of the sonata, founded in the eighteenth century, still held its place. (The *Fourth Sonata* of Plant (based on the Passion Chorale) bears clear hallmarks of Mendelssohn's *Sixth Sonata* (1845), thus showing the reach of the mid-Romantic style.)

As such, the nineteenth-century English organ sonata served the role long established within the English psyche. For the performer the sonata was technically straightforward but nonetheless of practical benefit. Basic pedal technique could be mastered and the liturgical requirements could be accomplished all in one piece. For the composer, there was the validation of their work by a (major) publisher and the strengthening of relationships with colleagues (by dedication). For the public there was the ready assimilation of a structure already established, and in the case of the Mendelssohnian influence on the sonatas with a familiar harmonic and melodic vocabulary, there was the essence and elevation derived from association.

Finally it should be noted that, though these sonatas followed in the trend of the lesson and sonatina, they were not 'dilettantes' sonatas, or simply works for amateurs. Although the

sonata had served this role partially in the Classic era,⁴⁴ it was increasingly gaining a professional aura.



Sir Walter Parratt⁴⁵



Sir John Stainer⁴⁶

However, it is inconceivable that those whose names appeared at the head of publications (most obviously Walter Parratt (1841-1924), Alan Gray (1855-1935), and most especially the institution of the College of Organists) would have considered any association with a work conceived below an acceptable professional standard, or a piece for merely amateur consumption. This is a far cry from the eighteenth century where Giovanni Marco Rutini's (1723-1797) *Sonatas, Op. 7*, (1770) bore the subtitle 'To the Signori dilettanti of the cembalo' further commenting that the sonatas have 'sought to avoid confusion, trying to make them natural and without difficult keys. It seems to me I have achieved what I wanted to, since a little girl ten years old plays them all without finding anything beyond her ability'!⁴⁷

Rather, in the organ sonatas if a compromise beyond the pedagogical is reached it is towards a bourgeois Biedermeier element that would appeal to Levin Schücking's 'taste bearing

⁴⁴ Newman, *The Sonata in the Classic Era*, 43.

⁴⁵ Unknown, *Sir Walter Parratt*, JPG, <http://www.toccataclassics.com/cms/tmp/thumbs/Walter-Parratt-x200-A2F55EB4.jpg> (accessed 27 January, 2012)

⁴⁶ Unknown, *Sir John Stainer*, JPG, <http://www.toccataclassics.com/cms/tmp/thumbs/John-Stainer-240x-A2F55EB4.jpg> (accessed 27 January, 2012)

⁴⁷ Newman, *The Sonata in the Classic Era*, 45.

stratum'.⁴⁸ Further, as Dalhaus notes (in relation to the nineteenth-century reception of Mozart), audiences were 'less governed by listening to his music than by an abstract notion of musical classicism' and were 'less willing to pay attention to what really happened in the music than to cling to ideas that partially concealed the very reality they were meant to illuminate.'⁴⁹ As such the organ community was operating in contrast to at least some continental views when Schumann notes in 1841 that the music of Haydn, though venerated, 'was no longer of profound interest to the present day.'⁵⁰ As previously noted, the classical style could hardly have been 'no longer of interest' on the organ, when it had barely been heard to begin with.

The loss of many of these sonatas in the mainstream of the organist's repertoire in the following centuries owes as much to the sheer volume of works that appeared as it does to the fact that most of the composers were unknown in the broader musical world, just as many composers of church music are today. However, it is not only the English organ sonata that had been lost in concert programmes; the once hugely popular sonatas of Alexandre Guilmant (1837-1911) have also been relegated to a specialist area of the literature for many twentieth- and twenty-first-century performers, with often only single movements appearing in concert. A similar predicament could also be paralleled with the works of Ritter, and perhaps more obviously Rheinberger, despite Harvey Grace's staunch advocacy. *Tempora mutantur, nos et mutamur in illis*.

⁴⁸ Cited in Dahlhaus, *Nineteenth-Century Music*, 41.

⁴⁹ Ibid, 33.

⁵⁰ Ibid, 32.

The Resurrection of the Sonata in Concert

In the history of secular organ concerts in England recitals developed most rapidly with the advent of the Victorian organ. This was in part because the instrument allowed for a greater range of programming through its symphonic capabilities, but also because it was sonically and physically exciting to the greater civic audience.

In comparing the organ recital with the world of the piano recital (blessed as it was with the repertoire of the Viennese masters), the place of the sonata on piano recital programmes was far from prevalent, with Burney commenting that, prior to individual recitals ‘solos’ were ‘wholly laid aside’ in favour of orchestral music. When piano sonatas did appear in concert the typical placement was towards the centre of the programme, as this example of a 1786 programme by Clementi demonstrates:

Act I

Symphony, Haydn
Song, Harrison
Concerto, Salomon
Song, Mara
Sonata, Clementi

Act II

Symphony, Clementi
Concerto, Graff
Song, Harrison
Concerto, Mara
Song, Mara

This was in marked contrast to the organ recital programmes where, though singers could be incorporated, their presence was generally becoming less common as the century moved forward. As such, the promotion of the sonata as a concept within organ recitals by the community of organists provided a distinct educational role to their creative work, as well as being relatively ground-breaking. This is akin to the incorporation of transcriptions of movements from Classical symphonies in the course of concert programmes whereby major works were brought before the public, with many members of the audience hearing the work for the first time. Further, the fact that organists could play sonata movements in the context

of a liturgical setting also meant that the sonata could enter the consciousness of congregants for the first time. (The exception to this rationale may have been the foreign embassy chapels in London who were performing Classical masses, sometimes with orchestral accompaniment. However, though a sonata form may have been heard – non-liturgical works were included on the continent at various points in the service, (eg. Mozart’s ‘Epistle’ Sonatas), and this model may have been adhered to in the London chapels.)

The Sonatas and Influential Models

The Victorian composer of organ music was not having to follow in direct succession to J. S. Bach (or for that matter C. P. E. Bach) or Couperin or Frescobaldi, and so their approach to genre and style of writing was remarkably unhurried, as there was simply no pressing demand. Even the celebrated Henry Purcell offered only a handful of works and there is no current evidence that John Stanley’s voluntaries were in any sense widely known or played by the nineteenth century. Furthermore, given the lack of primers available prior to Samuel Wesley’s (1832) translation of the Rinck *Practical School for the Organ* and Schnieder’s complete *Theoretical and Practical Organ School* (appearing between 1820 and 1840),⁵¹ there is no reason to believe the average English organist would have been equipped with a technique to master more complex works. Peter Williams notes that the first area where Bach’s music had the greatest effect in England was on organ music, and secondly on real counterpoint,⁵² which was to lead English composers of higher ambition towards writing in a more erudite style than their eighteenth-century predecessors. As Williams notes ‘One has only to look at the still miserably Handelian, and even Corellian, counterpoint common in choral and organ music of about 1810 to appreciate how great must have been the effect of

⁵¹ Peter Williams, “Bach and English Organ Music,” *Music & Letters*, Vol. 44, No. 2 (1963): 142.

⁵² Williams, “Bach and English Organ Music,” 140.

Bach's works on the better musicians of [Samuel] Wesley's day'.⁵³ This philosophy of thinking would have been in perfect accord with the Victorian value for self-improvement, and with the public adulation for Bach catapulted to even greater heights by a more tangible contemporary affinity for Mendelssohn, one can witness how the development took hold and where the early influences lay.

Bachian influences

The Bachian influence rests with the inclusion of a *stile severo* fugue in the vast majority of sonatas from the mid-nineteenth century to the early-twentieth century. The placing of a fugue without an accompanying prelude (as in Bach) would not have caused any great concern in England (or for that matter Germany). Burney had heard Bach's fugues played in Berlin with extemporized preludes,⁵⁴ and indeed Samuel Wesley – who spearheaded the English Bach revival - composed his own to accompany the (*St. Anne*) Fugue in E flat, BWV 552. Rheinberger's use of fugues within sonatas also bore relation to this separation of the now predictable union of the two genres. As Williams notes, the greatest gift Bach could have given (or simply offered) the English composer was the want to better themselves and their own craft through exposure to a master of the craft. Interestingly though, with the question of mean tone versus well-tempered tuning remaining a source of contention for music performed in the nineteenth century, the fugues written in England remained within traditional harmonic and tonal boundaries. Indeed, even if there were strong overtones of

⁵³ Ibid

⁵⁴ Williams, "Bach and English Organ Music," 148.

Beethoven's chromaticism in other movements, the fugues remained true to the genre composers saw as being "Truth of the *Bach Perfection*"⁵⁵ (Wesley).

Mozartian influences

The Mozartian influence heard in the early sonatas might be considered a transference of the English affinity shown towards Haydn and the predominance of the *galant* style that had concluded the eighteenth century.⁵⁶ For a country so certain of its own identity in an age of empire building, it is perhaps astonishing that flattery by a continental musician in the form of Haydn's composition of 'London Symphonies' should meet with such overt adulation. But part of that of the Victorian success was an inherent culture of musical cosmopolitanism. If celebrated foreigners could be courted then the hosts were by default, and design, even more respected in society. However, it can be easily argued that the flattery the general public bestowed on foreign musicians managed to obfuscate any obvious independent development of British composers for decades to come, with much the same fate curtailing an organic development of the organ builders' historic legacy. However, the prominent musicians of the day knew that affinity by association could equally count for a good deal. That early symphonies of Samuel Wesley and William Crotch further imitated Haydn's symphonic style⁵⁷ accentuate this predicament. The reach of Mozartian influence stretched far beyond the realms of gesture, or harmonic devices, with the model of 4 x 2 or 8 bar phrases lasting until the end of the nineteenth century, despite developments in larger forms and the use of early-Romantic harmonic devices.

The impact of Mozart, though, comes not from his 'organ' music, which is unlikely to have been well-known (if known at all) in Britain, but rather from the orchestral works which were

⁵⁵ Samuel Wesley, *Samuel Wesley's Famous Bach Letters* (London: Hinrichsen Edition, c. 1957), 16. Cited in Williams, "Bach and English Organ Music," 151.

⁵⁶ Nicholas Temperley, "Mozart's influence on English Music," *Music & Letters*, Vol. 42, No. 4 (1961): 307.

⁵⁷ *Ibid*

held in high esteem. George Macfarren's comment that 'Beethoven was sometimes weak, Mozart never' is as compelling as it is mildly amusing for a composer whose own organ sonata parodies the latter, rather than the former. What is unquestionable though is the affection the English had for Mozart, whom Vincent Novello declared 'the Shakespeare of music'⁵⁸. J. B. Cramer sought to promote Mozart at every turn and William Ayrton called the first production of Don Giovanni 'the *chef d'œuvre* of the greatest dramatic composer who ever lived'.⁵⁹ Of course in Crotch's doctrine of the three styles [discussed in the aesthetics chapter], Mozart's more 'ornamental' approach would not have been so easily welcomed. However, if one considers the pinnacle of the ornamental approach being the florid writing of coloratura arias and the intricate filigree of slow movement melodic material, we might consider that Crotch could promote such quality to at least the 'beautiful', as this is easily the quality of Mozartian influence at play in the organ sonatas. Rather it is the earlier classical style of predictable phrase structure and tonic-dominant relationships that prevails.

The larger Teutonic influence

By the middle of the nineteenth century there are two personalities from the Continent whose names would have been immediately recognisable to the British: Beethoven and Mendelssohn. The impact of Beethoven on the use of familiar melodic gesture will be studied in the Macfarren and Ouseley sonatas, but there is a more important aspect to Beethoven's influence which bears discussion. Specifically, it is that Beethoven was not known as a composer of organ music (despite his small number of works in that genre), but rather as a symphonic composer. As such, we must bear in mind that when a great many composers display a tendency towards either Beethovenian form, or for that matter use of gesture, they are not trying to offer a pastiche of another composer's organ (or keyboard) works, as with

⁵⁸ Nerina Medici and Rosemary Hughes, *A Mozart Pilgrimage* (London: Novello, 1955): p. xvii and passim. Cited in Temperley, "Mozart's influence on English Music," 309.

⁵⁹ Temperley, "Mozart's influence on English Music," 309.

the Bachian influence, but rather an imitation of the *orchestral* works. (This is further demonstrated in the wish to play transcriptions of symphony movements on the organ.)

Dedications

Mendelssohn's works must have seemed a near perfect marriage for the Victorian response to the Biedermeier precepts, and to organist-composers these notions, whether conscious or merely coincidental, would have provided a happy union between the doctrines of Crotch and the euphoria over Haydn, Mendelssohn and latterly Bach. If there is one uniting factor of many the nineteenth- and early-twentieth-century British organ sonatas, it is the sense of *Gebrauchsmusik*,⁶⁰ but in terms of nineteenth-century works there is an imbued Biedermeier spirit: i.e. they do not so much challenge the listener but rather provide an aesthetic than can be viewed as legitimate by connoisseur and amateur alike.

In relation to earlier comments, it is important to note the extent to which composers sought to ally themselves with the esteemed members of their profession, as did their publishers. It is especially noteworthy that the conservative figure of Walter Parratt (1841-1924), long-time organist of St. George's Chapel, Windsor, was the most commonly present dedicatee, but he also held multiple senior appointments and was the first of the RCM professors to receive a knighthood. We can note that not one of the sonatas surveyed (or contemporaneous contributions) appears to have been commissioned by the dedicatee, and furthermore, no work was formally commissioned by a specific institution, save for the appearance of the Elgar at the request of (its non-dedicatee) Hugh Blair.

Composer

Dedicatee

A. Alexander

Sir John Stainer

⁶⁰ It is the departure from the functionary to the virtuoso work that sets the home-grown Elgar sonata on 1895 apart for every movement requires an advanced technique.

W. T Best	Jacques Lemmens
J. H. S. Clarke	Frederick Archer
E. Elgar	C. Swinnerton Heap
A. Gray	C. V. Stanford
	C. H. Lloyd
	Walter Parratt
	G. F. Cobb
B. Harwood	Walter Parratt
	C. H. Lloyd
B. Haynes	Herrn Prof. Dr. Robert Papperitz
C. H. Lloyd	Henry Willis
H. W. Nicholl	Herrn Prof. A. W. Gottschalg
F. G. Ouseley	Walter Parratt (Second Sonata)
E. Prout	Edward Deane
A. B. Plant	J. Frederick Bridge
C. V. Stanford	Alan Gray
	Charles Marie Widor
	Walter Parratt
	Harold Darke
J. E. West	President, Council and Members of the Royal College of Organists

Conclusions

The College of Organists had, from their founding, emphasized a broad musical knowledge. Their exams called for significant skills in orchestration and yet even with the huge tonal

resources at their disposal, composers venturing into the new realm of the sonata sought a more restricted, circumscribed musical language. Furthermore, even when the English organ sonata adopted a more developmental demeanour, the style of writing remained modest in overall scope. However, to this predicament some mitigation might be brought by comparison with the French tradition. Whereas the Germanic tradition reached a peak of emotional intensity in the works of Karg-Elert and Reger, the organ music of Franck, Saint-Saëns, Vierne, and Tournemire has a comparatively conservative leaning, despite the notoriously riotous improvisations in French cathedrals that could occur within Divine service.

The presentation of a new work, especially a sonata, must be seen as an important document for the profession to assess. Sir Frederick A. Gore Ouseley (1825-1889) was the second President of the College of Organists (1886) succeeding The Archbishop of Canterbury in that role. Other key figures included Edward J. Hopkins (1818-1901) and later Alan Gray (1855-1935). However unlike the earlier works (Best and Sparks) for the generally less discerning Town Hall audiences, these were works for the Metropolis and for Oxford where the audience would be arguably more discerning.

One can conjecture whether the public fondness for Handel, especially *Messiah*, and for that matter Corelli and Haydn in some way stunted a natural growth of style that was markedly English. However, in terms of the response by the organ-composers it might be more fairly suggested that they saw their responsibilities as being of a far weightier manner. The Victorian organ allowed for the creation of a symphonic texture that players and audiences had not been able to consider previously. The transcription of orchestral scores to the organ allowed opportunities for the organist not only to demonstrate their technical abilities but the chance to introduce new repertoire that a large portion of the population might not otherwise hear; it was also a way of organists associating themselves with the finest works, regardless

of genre, whilst also serving an educational role in communicating those works to the larger public through performance. Indeed Lemare's promotion of Wagner through the specially authorised⁶¹ performance of the first act of *Parsifal* at St. Margaret's, Westminster (2 March, 1898) with a choir of 60 accompanied by Lemare on the organ, not only made him a famous man, but also brought the instrument renewed increased attention as a vehicle for ambitious performance.⁶² In a similar vein, Stainer's transcriptions of orchestral works testifies to the significance of the role organists played in offering the finest music to the public regardless of origin.

The question of whether classicism for English composers in the mid-nineteenth century was capturing the surety of a well-trodden path, or merely an amiable discourse that was beyond reproach is a matter of conjecture, and in any event could be interpreted individualistically. However, if a prominent organist such as W. T. Best were playing works of Beethoven, Mozart and Schubert on the organ, can it be any surprise to see that he would also write a sonata with a slow movement opening set in an early-classically inspired vein? After all, the style remained venerated throughout the land.

⁶¹ Authorised by Cosima Wagner

⁶² Nelson Barden, "Edwin H. Lemare", *The American Organist* (January, 1986): 64.

II

The Sonatas

The Pervading Burnish of Classicism

Macfarren

It is noteworthy that a figure as prominent as Sir George. A. Macfarren (1811-1887) should elect to write in the classical style, thus exhibiting his easy prowess in the genre. Macfarren appears to be the first member of the London musical establishment to contribute a work in the genre.



Sir George A. Macfarren⁶³



Ludwig van Beethoven⁶⁴

Enormously respected among his peers, a contemporary commentator noted of his appointment as President of the College of Organists that ‘all honour to the College [of Organists] that it sought as its president, not necessarily an eminent organist, but the most

⁶³ Unknown, *Sir George A. Macfarren*, JPG, <http://www.clarinet.org/images/festPresentations/Macfarren.gif> (accessed 27 January, 2012)

⁶⁴ Unknown, *Ludwig van Beethoven*, JPG, <http://www.favorite-classical-composers.com/images/beethoven-biography.jpg> (accessed 27 January, 2012)

notable musician of his time'.⁶⁵ At the time of his C major sonata (1869)⁶⁶ he was a Professor at the Royal Academy of Music, later becoming Principal of the RAM, and then Professor of Music at Cambridge University. It is legitimate to consider that the work may have been considered (certainly by Macfarren himself) a 'model' example of the genre. A strong affinity to Beethoven is demonstrated – as is the case with his seven symphonies - beginning with a first theme that is conspicuously reminiscent of the *Allegro* (fourth movement) of Beethoven's *Symphony V* [Ex. 1]. Beyond the adjustment of the third chord from I to viB, and the four chords of bar 3 of Beethoven which can be seen as a parallel to bar 4 of Macfarren, we can also observe the conjunct upward quaver movement in bar 6-7 of Beethoven and bar 6 of Macfarren.

Example 1



L. V. Beethoven, *Symphony V*, *Allegro* (fourth movement): bb 1-8. Transcription for piano, F. Liszt

⁶⁵ G. A. Banister, "The Life and Work of Sir. G. A. MacFarren", *Proceedings of the Musical Association*, 14th Session (1887-1888): 67-88.

⁶⁶ MacFarren, George, *Sonata*, (London: Novello, Ewer & Co., 1869)



G. A. Macfarren, *Sonata*. Allegro: bb 1-8

The bass line is also more idiomatic of string writing than organ pedal technique - which demonstrates the place of the organ as an instrument capable of performing orchestral transcriptions - and it is hard not to imagine this piece presenting some challenge to the average Victorian organist. Although the hands remain in the same general area of the keyboard, the writing is nonetheless challenging. That the range extends to the upper F of the pedalboard [Ex. 2] suggests that the composer was thinking orchestrally in the first instance, and idiomatically for the instrument in the second; this would not have been easy to execute for even a seasoned organist. More crucially, as the instrument had only gained a two-octave pedal compass (C-C) in recent times - and certainly not in every church - one has to question whether a true performance of the piece was even possible, as the pedal line cannot be convincingly transposed down the octave (whilst maintaining the same melodic pattern) to allow for the short compass. As such, we return to the notion of writing a 'portfolio' example of worthiness - pragmatism did not by default act as a necessary ingredient in all the movements. In this movement the pedagogical emphasis rested with overall demonstration of the compositional craft than as an example of an easier piece for the novice to master.

Example 2



MacFarren, *Sonata*. Allegro: bb. 20-29

Example 3



MacFarren, *Sonata*. Allegro: bb 40-44

A typical example of piano writing can be found at bb 40-42, [Ex. 3] where the left-hand is doubled at the octave at a point where the pedals could more easily have been employed. Left hand octaves were also to be round in William Russell's earlier voluntaries, written for English organs without pedals. As such the prevailing tendency – not least with a superfluity of examples of technical awkwardness - appears to have been towards writing in a reduced-

orchestral style, rather than in one more obviously idiomatic to the instrument. If pieces were, by nature, well conceived, then they would outlast ‘lesser’ works in the musical museum.

Assuming the composers could indeed perform their own pieces successfully - and no concrete assumption should be made towards that thesis – it also placed organist-composers in the (arguably) more prestigious lineage of composer-organists rather than (mere) ecclesiastical practitioners.

The treatment of the themes and the overall harmonic landscape in Macfarren owes more to the later sonata concepts of Beethoven than it does to Mozart or Haydn. The presentation of the first theme in E flat demonstrates his willingness to embrace later Classical discourse with a triadic relationship (C-E flat), whereas the use of canon over an extended dominant pedal at bar 157 shows that baroque devices are never far away. The re-harmonisation of the first subject soon thereafter - initially over an A minor (vi) tonality, rather than C major – however, keeps the listener aware of a constant development of material, albeit in a globally conservative vein.

The first movement coda, inclusive of a pedal cadenza, finally ends with three bars of tonic-dominant harmony reasserting the tonality in an unavoidably early-mid classical harmonic style. The second movement, *Andante*, is set (again via a triadic relationship C-E major) in E major, and initially utilises two groups of four bar phrases. The first sixteen bars do not even remotely stray from tonic-dominant relationships. However, through the introduction of semi-quaver movement, Macfarren is more at liberty to indulge in chromatic tones through a series of ascending sequences. Following a brief pedal solo, the central section begins in A flat at bar 49. However, Macfarren’s most ambitious departure comes at 87 [Ex. 4] when the tonal centre begins to move alternately from major to minor with an ultimate enharmonic shift (through A flat-G sharp) back to E major at 105, [Ex. 5] where, save for a brief section in D

flat major (134-142), the pieces remain in the home key of E major for the remainder of the movement.

86

Swell

Choir

92

3

cresc.

95

Example 4: MacFarren, *Sonata*, Andante: bb 86-97

Example 5

The musical score for Example 5 shows measures 104 and 105 of MacFarren's Sonata, Andante. The score is written for piano and choir. The piano part is in the treble and bass staves, and the choir part is in the treble staff. The key signature is B-flat major (two flats). The tempo is Andante. The score shows a melodic line in the piano and a harmonic accompaniment in the choir and bass. The music consists of a melodic line in the piano and a harmonic accompaniment in the choir and bass. The key signature has two flats (B-flat and E-flat). The tempo is Andante.

MacFarren, *Sonata*, Andante: bb 104-105

The final movement, *Allegro deciso*, takes the form of an introduction and fugue, with a brief central section that employs the second movement theme in E flat major. The theme (*Rule Britannia*) is then heard in inversion before an ultimate homophonic treatment leads to a brief two-voiced tonal *stretto* and two final lines of sequences where the predictable assertion of the tonic-dominant relationship is re-stated. Such is Macfarren's desire to include a neo-classical imprimatur on his work, the final chords are a repetition of the tonic chord, heard *six* times, the last three with the addition of the pedals, all of which harks back to the first movement conclusion.

Although there is no ambiguity concerning Macfarren's knowledge of the inherent qualities of classical style, the end result falls somewhat short as a cyclical work, in part due to the profusion of conflicting genres at play. It is particularly unfortunate that Macfarren felt in some way obligated to end with a fugue, which is hardly a classical expectation. Rather it is an exhibition, all in one piece, of all that would govern a meritorious ascent in the profession. Macfarren has, in modern parlance, 'checked all the boxes'.

Best

In a more innocent vein, W. T. Best's (1826-1897) *Sonata in G*, Op. 38 and William Spark's (1823-1897) *Sonata for the Organ*, Op. 21, both of 1858 exemplify composers who, in the early days of sonata writing - theirs were the first by English composers - were not as concerned about academic criticism as Macfarren (and later Ouseley) might well have been. Both were primarily concert organists (in Liverpool and Leeds respectively), and whilst there was the inevitable insecurity of presenting a major new work before the larger profession, they were also indebted to the thousands of audience members who heard their performances in the course of each month. Their burden, it is fair to say, was two-fold: in the first instance to please their audience (and employer); in the second place, to provide tangible proof of their professional standing to colleagues in London, Oxbridge and elsewhere.



W. T. Best⁶⁷



W. A. Mozart⁶⁸

⁶⁷ August Weger, W. T. Best, JPG, <http://images.nypl.org/index.php?id=1105979&t=r> (accessed 27 January, 2012)

⁶⁸ Unknown, Wolfgang Amadeus Mozart, JPG, <http://images.travelpod.com/users/rstout/16.1300339719.mozart.jpg> (accessed 27 January, 2012)

Best was a powerful figure in British musical circles, and indeed the apocryphal story of his meeting with Liszt in Rome, along with this (first) sonata's dedication to the esteemed Belgian organist and pedagogue, Jacques Lemmens⁶⁹ suggests his name – as a performer – was to some extent known on the continent as well. Best was as renowned for his acerbic wit as he was for his formidable technical proficiency. His reputation as a composer bore less renown, and by current critical standards the shortcomings are quite transparent.

However, in this sonata the fundamentals of the form are displayed and the piece is certainly replete with inventive ideas. Knowing of Best's humour though, it is easy to see how a decided effort could have been waged towards lightening the burdens of expectation at every turn, especially as the piece develops – the last movement fugue has a jocular quality, bordering on the comic.

Opening with a slow (*Largo*) introduction in G, the reasoning behind the extended modulations becomes apparent when the first theme appears at the *Allegro con brio* on a dominant seventh. Indeed with a change of metre to 2/2, and with the theme beginning on the second half of the bar, Best is already dispensing with established expectations. The second theme appears in B minor (the relative minor of the dominant of D). There is no development of material, outside of transitional sections employing previously motives, but rather an extended central section in B flat that is self-governing in its form. The only 'related' material that could constitute a 'development' rests with the use of an ascending conjunct melodic figure that bears an initial similarity to the inner voice of the second theme material. Returning to B minor fully at 160, there is a re-transition back to the recapitulation at 183. The movement concludes with a coda, beginning at 230, employing the material from the introduction, although now heard in augmentation, with quavers replaced by minims.

⁶⁹ "Professor of the Organ at the Royal Academy, Brussels. Organist to the King of the Belgians. Chevalier of the Order of Leopold."

Best's approach to the sonata-allegro form is certainly liberal in its application, but with no precursors in the organ repertoire (and indeed the broader generic labelling of Mendelssohn's works as 'sonatas'), Best may well have felt free of constraint. The central *Intermezzo* (*Allegretto con moto*) harks back, at least in spirit, to the Baroque with the inclusion of a chorale over a running bass. As the chorale is played in octaves it can be assumed Best considered both hands to be employed, thus steadying the physical balance and posture whilst executing the rapid pedal passage-work. The final movement demonstrates an inhibition (if not irreverence) with its tongue-in cheek style that remained unparalleled in the genre, and yet shows a deftness of handling of the slightly tonally ambiguous subject material. Best's ending though is far removed from the Baroque model and hints more towards the virtuoso and audience-pleasing environment he was most commonly associated with. Although Best may have considered his fugue [Ex. 6] worthy of the scholastic tradition, his subject material does not lend itself towards the environs of either the *stile antico* or the Mendelssohnian-mid-Romantic overtone of Spark's first movement fugue (referred to later).

Example 6

Moderato

The musical score for Example 6, titled 'Moderato', is written for piano in 6/8 time and the key of D major (one sharp). It consists of two systems of music. The first system contains four measures. The right hand plays a chorale melody, and the left hand plays a running bass line. The first measure of the first system is marked with a forte (ff) dynamic. The second system also contains four measures, beginning with a measure rest indicated by a '4' above the staff. The right hand continues the chorale melody, and the left hand continues the running bass line. The second system also features a forte (ff) dynamic marking.

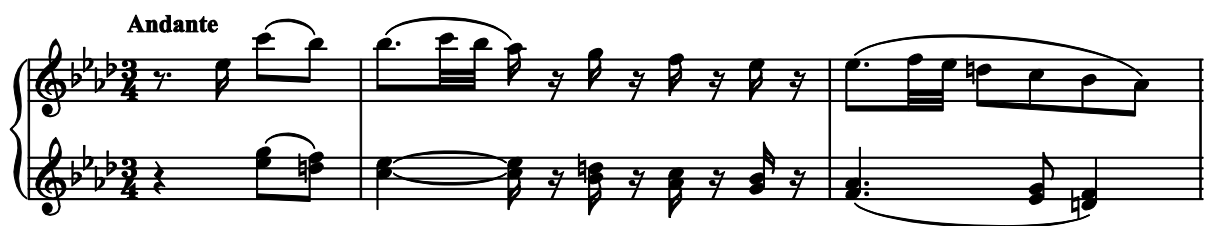
W. T. Best, *Sonata*, Fuga: bb 1-6



Thomas Attwood Walmisley⁷⁰

The Mozartian legacy is most keenly observed in Best's slow movement. Here we see a graceful approach to 3/8 that harks to Mozart's influence earlier on Thomas Attwood (1765-1838), and in turn Thomas Attwood Walmisley (1814-1856) - as demonstrated by Temperley⁷¹ - with the subtle employment of dotted sequential motifs and 'sighing' couplets [Ex. 7].

Example 7:



Mozart, *Fantaisie*, K. 608, Andante: bb 20-22



⁷⁰ Unknown, *Thomas Atwood Walmisley*, JPG, <http://www.brightcecilia.net/gallery2/d/2672-2/Thomas+Attwood+Walmisley.jpg> (accessed 27 January, 2012)

⁷¹ Nicholas Temperley, "Mozart's influence on English Music", *Music & Letters*, Vol. 42, No. 4 (1961).

Best, *Sonata*, Adagio: bb29-30

A - ve, A - ve, ve - rum cor - pus,

This musical score is for the Adagio section of a Sonata by Best, measures 29-30. It is written for piano in G major (one sharp) and 4/4 time. The melody is in the right hand, featuring a series of eighth and quarter notes. The left hand provides a simple harmonic accompaniment with sustained chords and moving bass lines. The lyrics 'A - ve, A - ve, ve - rum cor - pus,' are written below the right-hand staff.

Mozart, *Ave verum corpus*: bb 1-4

This musical score is for the first four measures of Mozart's 'Ave verum corpus'. It is written for piano in D minor (two flats) and 3/4 time. The piece is characterized by its flowing, lyrical melody in the right hand, which often features grace notes and slurs. The left hand has a more active, rhythmic accompaniment. The lyrics 'A - ve, A - ve, ve - rum cor - pus,' are written below the right-hand staff.

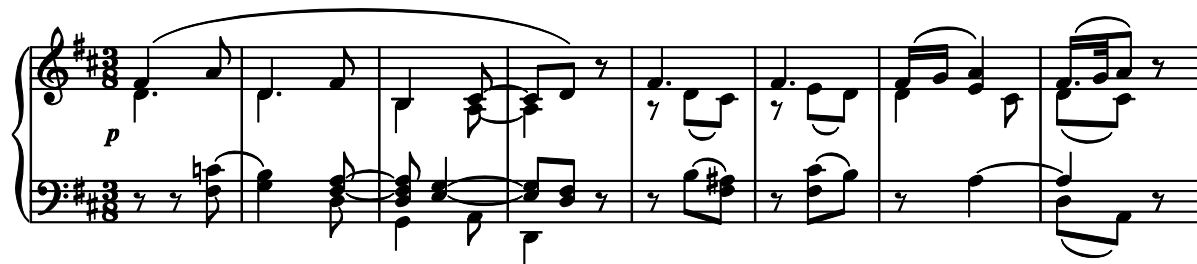
Mozart, *Fantaisie*, K. 608, Andante: bb 4-8

He re - mem - b'ring, re - mem - b'ring His mer - cy hath

5
hol - pen His ser - vant Is - - ra - el,

This musical score is for measures 4-8 of Mozart's 'Fantaisie' in D minor, K. 608, Andante. It is written for piano in D minor (two flats) and 3/4 time. The melody is in the right hand, featuring a series of eighth and quarter notes. The left hand provides a simple harmonic accompaniment with sustained chords and moving bass lines. The lyrics 'He re - mem - b'ring, re - mem - b'ring His mer - cy hath' and '5 hol - pen His ser - vant Is - - ra - el,' are written below the right-hand staff.

T. A. Walmisley, *Magnificat in D minor*. bb 106-113



Best, *Sonata*, Adagio: bb 1-8

Best's registrational notations are relatively minimal. Beyond dynamic marks, he requests the use of a Clarabella, Vox Humana, Oboe, Bassoon and Viol da Gamba. The independence of writing for the hands and the feet suggests, especially in the *Adagio*, a texture idiomatic of a wind ensemble.

Spark

In the same year as Best's sonata, the famed organist of Leeds Town Hall, William Spark (1823-1887) also contributed a sonata, performed 'at the Music festival, September 1858'⁷². Spark had been articled to S. S. Wesley at Exeter Cathedral and when Wesley moved to Leeds Parish Church he moved with him⁷³. Although neither Best nor Spark can be regarded as composers of the first order, the sonata of Spark would have been a substantial addition the repertoire. Rather than exhibiting the free-spirit semi-virtuostic approach of Best, Spark elected to follow a more predictable path in the use of form. Similar to Ouseley's later sonatas of 1877 and 1883, Spark opens with a two-bar theme that is immediately transposed [Ex. 8].

⁷² William Spark, *Sonata for the Organ* (London: Addison, Hollier & Lucas, 1858)

⁷³ Nicholas Temperley, "William Spark" *Oxford Music Online* (accessed 9 July, 2010)

Example 8

Full without Reeds.
Gt. Organ coupled to Sw:
Allegro Moderato

The musical score for Example 8 consists of two systems of organ music. The first system is marked 'f' (forte) and includes a 'Sw.' (Swell) marking. The second system begins at measure 5, marked 'Gt. Org.' (Great Organ), and continues with the same instrumentation. The music is in D minor and 4/4 time.

Spark, *Sonata for the Organ*, Op. 21. Allegro Moderato: bb 1-8

However, the opening material primarily serves (without transition) as an introduction to the first theme (proper) which begins at bar 12 in the tenor and ultimately emerges as a fugue 48 (in D minor) [Ex. 9] which, unusually for the era, includes expressive dynamics, possibly utilising Henry Smart's crescendo and diminuendo pedals at Leeds. Smart had been involved with the design of the Leeds organ along with Spark.

Example 9

48

Diapasons Gt. Organ coupled to swell

53

57

Spark, *Sonata for the Organ*, Op. 21. Allegro Moderato: bb 48-61

The harmonic language however owes much to mid-Romanticism and Mendelssohn, not least with its use of (unprepared) diminished chords. The fugue effectively serves as an interlude-development, with re-transitional material that shows an allegiance to Mendelssohn with the employment of prolonged melodic sequences over pedal tones. An extended coda brings about an atypical quiet conclusion that, though following a plagal cadence, nonetheless presupposes a subsequent movement. In this sense Spark at least hints at the notion of a cyclical composition; a valid suggestion until the final (*serioso*) fugue.

The central *Moderato* (a theme and variations) highlights the need for composers to provide at least one movement that could be played by someone of proficient ability in manual technique (e.g. a pianist assuming the role of the liturgical organist), whilst providing music that could serve a pedagogical role. After an initial treatment of the material in rudimentary sub-divisions and passing notes, the pedals enter with a simple line as part of a texture where the hand positions remain largely stationary through triadic melodic sequences [Ex. 10].

Example 10

$\text{♩} = 96$

8 ft. Stopped Diapason or Flute 4 ft

47

Swell to Principal

16 ft

p

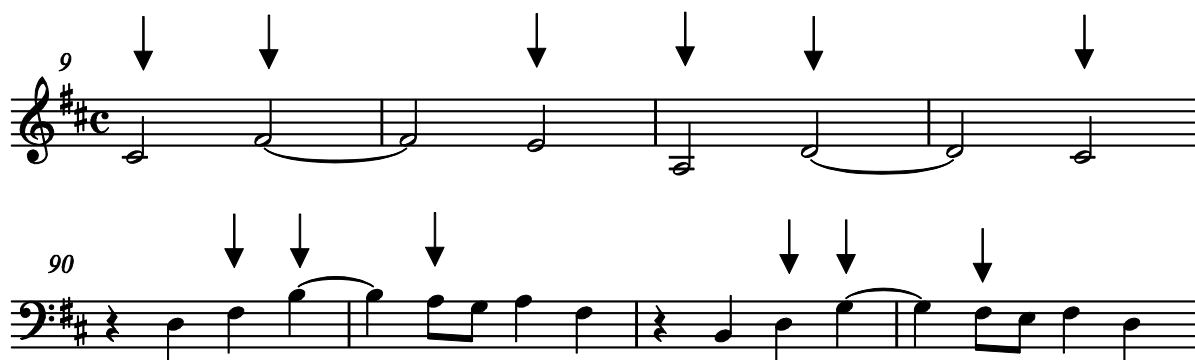
51

Repeat with change of Solo 4 ft Flute Stop

Spark, *Sonata for the Organ*, Op. 21, Moderato: bb 47-54

However, the *fortissimo* end to the middle movement presents this central section as an extended introduction to a double fugue, which (unlike its predecessor in the first movement) is more closely allied with the *stile antico* (or *stile severo*) genre. As with the (progressive) expressive qualities of the first fugue – the phrasing marks could equally be interpreted as bowing – there is a measure of string writing employed with the rapid sequential triadic writing for the pedals. However, the overall approach is fundamentally erudite with an interesting melodic relationship between the first countersubject and the subject of the second fugue [Ex. 11].

Example 11



Spark, *Sonata for the Organ*, Fuga: bb 9-12 and 90-93

After a prolonged dominant seventh chord, the coda begins with a canon at the octave with an ascending chromatic line that demonstrates Spark's ability to create a dramatic musical effect – similar to the mid-nineteenth-century romanticism Mendelssohn personified - whilst adhering to the prescripts of the form. However, the thirty-four bar tonic pedal that sounds throughout the coda maintains a semblance of orthodoxy that would have kept his critics on side; arguably it presents a union of the baroque and classical imprimaturs. Noting of the larger work *Musical Opinion and Musical Trade Review* commented that 'The allegro is a fine specimen of organ music of the highest class; the chorale is bold, broad and effective; and the finale, a fugue on two subjects, is a magnificent piece of contrapuntal harmony'.⁷⁴

⁷⁴ "Dr. Spark's Organ Compositions," *Musical Opinion and Musical Trade Review*, vol. 11, no. 130 (1888): 462



William Spark⁷⁵



Leeds Town Hall⁷⁶

⁷⁵ Unknown, *William Spark*, JPG, <http://cdmnet.org/Julian/echoes/pics/spark.jpg> (accessed 27 January, 2012)

⁷⁶ R. P. Leitch, *Leeds Town Hall*, JPG, <http://cdmnet.org/Julian/echoes/pics/spark.jpg> (accessed 27 January, 2012)



Figure 1: William Spark. *Sonata for the Organ* (London: Addison, Hollier & Lucas, 1858)

Although separate from an assessment of the sonata and its place in the *œuvre*, it should be noted that the front cover of the sonata is dominated by the reproduction of a lithograph of the inside of Leeds Town Hall [Fig. 1]. The presentation of a visual perspective of grandeur on the cover of a substantial musical work is seldom lost on the musical practitioner. Indeed, in an era of impressive and elaborate front covers it is perhaps a shame this move did not provoke other composers and (perhaps more crucially) publishers to follow suit. That said, one argument for this predicament may rest with the larger conservatism in place. Certainly it is believable that organists seeking to be perceived at a higher station than their calling generally commanded would not welcome their music to be presented akin to parlour room songs.

However, Spark may well have taken a far more adroit approach than his popular counterpart in Liverpool. Firstly, the front-cover image immediately summons up a connotation with matters of importance, whether in the form of the civic (town hall-civic-state) connection, or more simply the visual placement and grandeur of the ‘king of instruments’. More crucially (especially for a work appearing at the outset of the sonata tradition in Britain) it provides critical artistic licence to the composer. Association by popularity cannot be ignored, and if the reports of Spark’s huge audiences - 14,000 in his first few concerts – are to be considered, then the publication of a composition which draws attention to the venue of association with the composer can be seen as benefitting from the inheritance of his success.

Along with the statement that it was ‘performed [an interesting designation in preference to the more serious ‘composed for’] for the music festival, the cover also manages to combine the pomposity of the town hall, and the imperial presence of the organ at its far end, with the provincial association of Leeds. As such, although the critical reception was positive, a contradictory reception could easily have been defended for this was a work for a specific purpose, and to consider it more critically would be an injustice, as the cover clearly denotes

those considerations. We can consider that Spark presents himself astutely before the larger profession and general populus, perhaps having learned the ways of the profession's concord and discord from the multifarious public exclamations of his earlier mentor, S. S. Wesley. That he included two fugues further testifies to a professional sagaciousness.

Clarke

The *Six Sonatas* of James Hamilton Smee Clarke (1840-1912) emerge not out of the early Romantic tradition so much as they provide a pastiche of the Classical (if not a nineteenth-century glance at the Baroque). Clarke held appointments in Ireland and at The Queen's College, Oxford, and succeeded Arthur Sullivan at St Peter's, Cranley Gardens, in 1872. He then became conductor at several London theatres and provided incidental music for Henry Irving's Lyceum productions. He also toured with the D'Oyly Carte Opera Company and for a time was principal conductor of the Carl Rosa Opera Company. From 1889 to 1891 he took charge of the Victorian National Orchestra (Melbourne) and was made inspector of Australian army bands. On his return to England he resumed theatrical work until ill-health obliged him to retire prematurely. Clarke was a prolific composer of church music, organ solos, songs, operettas and orchestral works. An expert arranger, he scored some of Sullivan's overtures and published a *Manual of Orchestration* (London: 1888) as well as some fiction and music criticism.⁷⁷

⁷⁷ E. D. Mackerness, "Hamilton Clarke," *Oxford Music Online* (accessed 9 July, 2010)



James Hamilton Smee Clarke⁷⁸

The sonatas (in E flat, F, C minor, D, E and G) are generally in a classical style, although with a couple of baroque dances added (a *Gavotte* in no. 2, and a *Minuet* and *Trio* in no. 3). Extraordinary as the re-emergence of Baroque forms might seem, a contemporary writer noted ‘the form of the Minuet seems to be growing in favour with writers for the organ’.⁷⁹

[Ex. 12]

Example 12

Great to Principal
& full Swell closed

Allegretto

Clarke, *Sonata No. 3*, Minuet: bb 1-4

⁷⁸ Unknown, James Hamilton Smee Clarke, (c. 1800) JPG

<http://math.boisestate.edu/gas/whowaswho/C/ClarkeHamilton.htm> (accessed 27 January)

⁷⁹ *The Musical Times and Singing Class Circular*, vol. 17, no. 405 (1, November, 1876): 668.



Clarke, *Sonata No 3*, Trio: bb 1-4

Great Diapasons & Swell (closed)
Allegretto

Clarke, *Sonata no. 2*, Gavotte: bb 1-4

Sonatas 3, 5 and 6 contain fugues and no. 4 a ‘Theme with Variations’. In the portfolio spirit, the variations are markedly closer to Mendelssohn, and for the larger part demand only a modest technical command of the instrument that would have suited an organ novice with at least a decent piano technique. Quite pronounced similarities can be drawn between Mendelssohn’s *Andante* [with variations] of 1844 and Clarke’s fourth sonata of 1876. Mendelssohn’s own style is an inheritor of earlier Baroque models, resting heavily on the use of contrasting sub-divisions (duplets and triplets) over a repeating harmonic (and melodic) line. In the following examples, Mendelssohn’s work is compared directly, and in sequence, with Clarke’s [Ex. 13].

Example 13

Andante

Musical score for *Andante* (Mendelssohn), measures 1-4. The score is for piano, featuring a treble and bass staff. The key signature is two sharps (F# and C#), and the time signature is common time (C). The melody in the treble staff is a series of eighth and quarter notes, while the bass staff provides a steady accompaniment of eighth notes. The bottom staff is empty.

Andante grazioso
Choir 8 ft. stops

Musical score for *Andante grazioso* (Mendelssohn), measures 1-4. The score is for piano, featuring a treble and bass staff. The key signature is two sharps (F# and C#), and the time signature is common time (C). The melody in the treble staff is a series of eighth and quarter notes, while the bass staff provides a steady accompaniment of eighth notes. The bottom staff is empty.

Mendelssohn, *Andante*: bb 1-4. Clarke, *Sonata no. 4*, Theme with Variations: bb 1-4

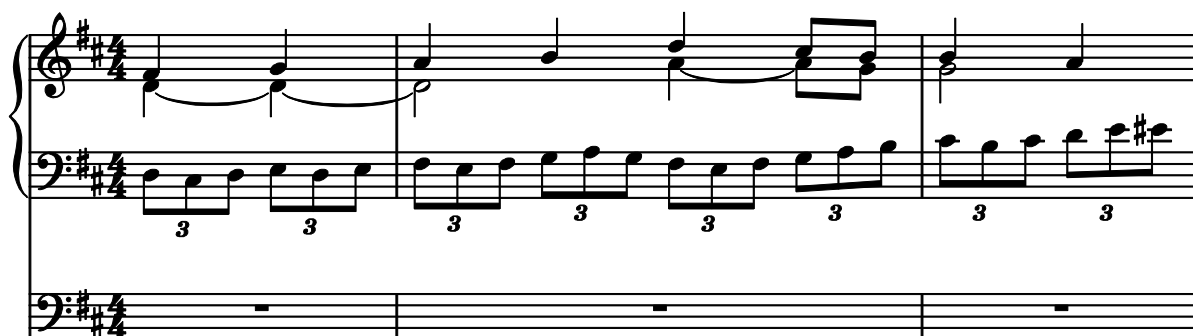


Var. I

Legato



Mendelssohn, *Andante*: bb 17-18. Clarke, *Sonata no. 4*, Variation I: bb 1-2



Var. II
Allegro moderato

Mendelssohn, *Andante*: bb 32-34. Clarke, *Sonata no. 4*, Variation II: bb 1-2

Ouseley

Although the Spark sonata was performed within a music festival, the *Sonata*⁸⁰ of Sir Frederick Gore Ouseley (1825-1889) is believed to be the only sonata of this era written for a premiere related to a specific instrument - the opening of the organ at the Sheldonian Theatre, Oxford in 1877. The piece is governed by an essentially classical vein, with influences that are both Mozartian and Beethovian. However, similar to Macfarren, there is an element of transcription pervading the work that would have required a dexterous technique if the piece was to be successfully executed. Ouseley had been a child prodigy although the prejudices of the time and the inheritance to his father's baronetcy precluded the idea of formal musical instruction.⁸¹ Fellowes notes that he demonstrated a 'romantic feeling' to his early

⁸⁰ Revd Sir Frederick Gore Ouseley, *Sonata* (London: Novello, Ewer & Co. (?) 5592, 1877).

⁸¹ Edmund Horace Fellowes, *English Cathedral Music* (London: Methuen, 1969), 238.

compositions but that much of the passion in his works had dissipated by the time he graduated from Christ Church, Oxford due to the obligatory studies in Latin and Greek, which he disliked. Indeed his interest in music was further discouraged by Thomas Gaisford, the Dean of Christ Church Regius Professor of Greek, who on Ouseley's proposal to take the B.Mus. degree commented that it was unbecoming for a man in his position;⁸² this view also extended to his acceptance of the Professor of Music. As such he received a BA in 1846 and the DMus in 1854.



Sir Frederick Gore Ouseley⁸³



St. Michael's College, Tenbury⁸⁴

Ouseley's single greatest contribution to the profession was the founding of St. Michael's College, Tenbury between 1854 and 1856 (dedication) as a centre for musical excellence and training ground for future church musicians. His appointment as Professor of Music at Oxford in 1855 secured his senior place in academia, as it had for William Crotch (1775-1847), also a child prodigy, before him. Importantly though, Ouseley's sense of the historical place of composition, not least following the conservative Crotch, became paramount. If academia assesses the value of change with a measure of temperance, then it is unsurprising

⁸² Ibid: 238-239

⁸³ Unknown, *Engraving of Sir Frederick Gore Ouseley*, JPG <http://www.npgprints.com/lowres/38/main/8/22491.jpg> (accessed 27 January, 2012)

⁸⁴ Unknown, *St. Michael's College, Tenbury*, JPG http://s0.geograph.org.uk/photos/84/20/842021_f29abab5.jpg (accessed 27 January, 2012)

to find Ouseley remaining close to the traditionalists' view of the banal virtuoso tradition that music critics had similarly deplored. The commentary in the *Harmonicon* of 1829 (p. 146) that Cramer was a 'great musical bulwark' that 'prevent[ed] the inundation of bad taste by which we are threatened from overwhelming us'⁸⁵ could easily have been attributed to Crotch or Ouseley a generation later.

The classical hallmarks of Ouseley's sonata can be considered a generational extension of Crotch's views of sublimity, in part because the potential for floridity is kept to a minimum, but also because of the precepts under which Ouseley operated. As already noted, his world – especially one might argue post-ordination in 1849 – did not revolve around romantic notion, romantic sensibility, or expressionism. There is no 'excess' or 'indulgence' in his writing, but rather a concise approach that is marked by compositional thoroughness and aesthetic elegance.

The sonata is an astute and erudite example for its time. Astute, for it involves a sonata-allegro first movement, followed by a set of variations (doubtless to highlight the tonal resources of the new instrument), and concluding with a fugue (to give the composer an ancestral costume that would hopefully stand the test of comparison with its forebears). Given the popularity of music of the continent, and especially that of Beethoven, the first theme and its immediate (tonal) transposition would have seemed (if not directly reminiscent of the first theme of Beethoven's *Symphony I*, Op. 21, certainly) familiar to the ear of many a musician [Ex. 14].

⁸⁵ As cited in Temperley, *The London Pianoforte School*, vol 15 (New York/London: Garland Publishing, 1985) xviii.

Example 14

Allegro con brio

6

Beethoven, *Symphony I* (Allegro con brio): [trans. based on F. Liszt]

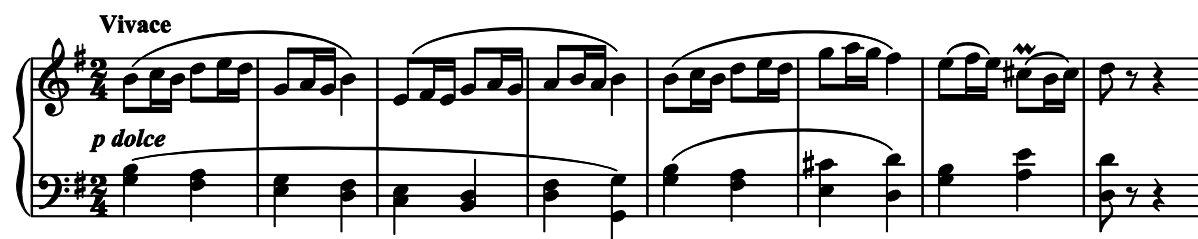
Allegro non troppo

10

Ouseley, *Sonata*, Allegro non troppo: bb 1-16

Similarly the melodic pattern that forms the basis of the variations brings to mind the final movement of Beethoven's G major Sonata, Op. 79 [Ex. 15].

Example 15



Beethoven, *Sonata, Op. 79, Vivace*: bb 1-8

Ouseley, *Sonata (Air with Variations)*: bb 1-8

However, the treatment of material in the subsequent variations owes more to Mozart (if not at times Handel) than to Beethoven. The coda (which incorporates a repeat – a highly unusual device in organ works that are post-Baroque) provides less a conclusion of the variations than it does a grand prelude to the lengthy fugue in the tonic major of C. The fugue takes a somewhat unexpected (if not to say abrupt) turn with an interrupted cadence on vi only to conclude with eight bars that firmly reassert the tonic tonality with a predictable IV-V-I cadential pattern, and the tonic pedal doubled (i.e. using both feet) for the final two bars.

In this sonata the overall style owes less to Mendelssohn than it does to the classical predecessors. However, there is a curious connection to Mendelssohn through the instructions for registration at the foot of the opening page. As with Mendelssohn's sonatas, specific parameters are detailed with regard to the dynamic gradients.

Mendelssohn notes in his 'Prefatory Remarks':

By "Fortissimo", I intend to designate the Full Organ; by "Pianissimo", I generally mean a soft 8 feet Stop alone; by "Forte", the Great Organ, but without some of the most powerful Stops; by "Piano", some of the soft 8 feet Stops combined; and so forth. In the Pedal part, I should prefer throughout, even in the Pianissimo passages, the 8 feet & the 16 feet Stops united; except when the contrary is expressly specified; (see the 6th Sonata).

Ouseley notes:

NB In this piece the following marks indicate as follows: *pp* one soft stop, *p* a soft combination, *mez* diapasons, or an equivalent, *mf* up to principal great, *f* rather loud, *ff* very loud, *fff* full power.⁸⁶

Although a modern scholar or performer might question the relative vagaries of some of these directions, they certainly allowed the player a measure of freedom. Also, noting that the final fugue is to be played *ff*, one wonders quite what *fff* might have entailed on the average English organ for the last line of the piece. Mendelssohn's (or his publisher's) similar directions do not exceed *ff*

⁸⁶ Ibid.

It is intriguing that Ouseley's *Second Sonata for the Organ* of 1883 (the same year as the Battison Haynes sonata) maintains a classical imprimatur. Once again beginning in octaves, and then modulating for the second phrase [Ex. 15], the piece shows a more developed use of the style (as do his two string quartets). Despite the G major key signature, the piece begins ambiguously with the outlining of a diminished chord in first inversion, and after extensive use of a dominant pedal finally reaches a cadence in the tonic key of G major at bar 24 [Ex. 17].

Example 16

Allegro

The musical score for Example 16 consists of two systems of three staves each (Treble, Middle, and Bass). The key signature is G major (one sharp) and the time signature is common time (C). The tempo is marked 'Allegro'. The first system contains measures 1 through 4. In measure 1, the Treble staff has a dotted quarter note G4, an eighth note A4, and a dotted quarter note B4. The Middle and Bass staves have a diminished triad in first inversion (F#4, A4, C5). Dynamics are marked 'ff' in measure 1 and 'mf' in measure 2. The second system contains measures 5 through 8. Measure 5 begins with a fermata over the first measure. Dynamics are marked 'ff' in measure 7. The piece concludes with a cadence in the tonic key of G major at the end of measure 8.

Ouseley, *Second Sonata for the Organ*, Allegro: bb 1-8

Example 17



Ouseley, *Second Sonata for the Organ*, Allegro: bb 21-24

However the classical language is still present, with a repeated exposition and the use of turns at bar 21 and in the second movement (*Andante con espressione, quasi Larghetto*) at bar 5. Most unexpectedly for a piece of the late-nineteenth-century there is the inclusion of a classical rondo as the last movement [Ex. 18]. (However this is a less pronounced ancestral overtone than the finale of his C major quartet in which he displays his handling of a very dense fugal paragraph.) The vaguely pastiche element harks back to Clarke's sonatas, but nonetheless provides a useful reminder that the sonata was to be seen as an example of compositional competence as much as it was a piece for others to (potentially) perform. That it is dedicated to the esteemed pedagogue and conservative Walter Parratt, further supports this argument as well as providing a measure of support for this style of writing so late in the century (1883).

Example 18



Ouseley, *Second Sonata for the Organ*, Rondo: bb 1-8

The Transitional Legacy

From Best and Spark's early contributions to Ouseley's second work in the genre, the English sonata served a role that remained multi-faceted. The prevailing climate for worthiness predominates the legacy these sonatas provide, and in turn the perception we have of their creators. However these characteristics are also inextricably linked with a pragmatism that at once favours the sonata-lesson lineage which of itself relates to the burgeoning publishing world of primers, not least at Novello's. Indeed, as one surveys the larger *œuvre* it is clear that the first concern is for the novice and seldom the virtuoso. That said, as few sonatas appear to have been performed in their entirety, the same work could plausibly appeal to both constituencies, at least insofar as cross-dedication may well have provided further professional advancement.

As much as European composers and practitioners found a home in England, so too had the English adopted (or adapted) the models of their composed works; they fell into line with the popular or esteemed models their continental cousins had injected into the mainstream concert repertoire. In essence Victorian composers paraphrased what they considered the most esteemed European trends of the earlier generation. Their greatest legacy came in the form of perpetuating a musical library of organ compositions in the national consciousness which for more than a century had been spartan at best. As such, English composers were at liberty not so much to re-invent a tradition, but to *establish* one. If the concern for ‘appropriateness’ and ‘worthiness’ somewhat managed to obfuscate a development of musical styles and genres that could be akin to the more ambitious Germanic advancements, then it was because of an orthodoxy which the protagonists believed was well-founded. Like the liturgical reformers they found reassurance in establishing a practice based on historical precedent, and on the shoulders of classical giants any criticism could surely be dexterously assuaged.

Chapter 2

**The late-nineteenth-century influence
of the Leipzig Conservatorium on
English sonata composers -
the path to Elgar**

The Pilgrimage to Leipzig

The genesis for an English organ sonata came to pass with the 1858 contributions of William Spark (1823-1897) and W. T. Best (1826-1897), and continued along classical lines until the 1880s. In a Victorian quest for higher learning, the beauty, elegance, and poise associated with such pure classicism bore a powerful resonance. Through Haydn and Beethoven an inherited affinity towards both classical style and form had borne the image of celebrity figures known and much admired on home soil. That the affection was mutual must surely have been hugely gratifying to English sensibilities. Haydn's relationship with the impresario and musician Johann Philip Salomon (1745-1815), and later Beethoven's commission for the *Ninth Symphony* from the Philharmonic Society of London (together with his Scottish songs) testify to an affection that was, if geographically inequitable, nonetheless in evidence; although the English readily adopted the Germanic model, there is no convincing evidence suggesting the Germans looking to England for lasting musical innovation.

The European influences in the nineteenth century were very much westward driven, much as they had been in the eighteenth century. The operatic influence of the Italians on London - by presence, and (in Handel's case) by training - was fast being replaced with the predominant influence of the Germans. From the Prince Consort to the influential singing teacher Joseph Mainzer (1801-1851), the English were slowly adopting an increasing familiarity with German thinking. When this was allied to their own traditions, such as the use of folksong in Beethoven's Scottish songs, the lines of cultural distinction were easily blurred for creative artists and audiences members alike. The question of German superiority, or even more specifically cultural identity, paled in the presence of a universal language of music. In many respects it was a 'European union' far ahead of its time; a similar point could be made about

the Italian influence on Vienna in the eighteenth century. That German composers were also willing to write vocal works in English can be seen as a considerable tribute to their hosts as well as their own adaptability – a tradition that extended back to Handel. Indeed the relationship the English had with their monarch, and by default her consort, might well be paralleled to that of the English perception of Germany – distant, but nonetheless quietly revered. Thus the Germans could flatter their hosts with works in English, even though the English would never return the compliment in any significant way. For all the English composers that later studied in Germany, the paucity of works written in the host's native tongue bears witness to a decidedly one-sided exchange. Indeed, though the intentions of The Bach Choir in presenting the *St. Matthew Passion* in an English translation were well meaning in terms of the audience response – not to mention the cuts made to the work – and easy to reconcile, could this position not equally have been seen as musically sacrilegious? After all, the same nation would have been aghast to have heard Purcell being sung in French, Italian, or German. Rather, the treatment of continental masterworks as venerable templates handed down not only demonstrates contemporaneous proclivities, but also that the English not only understood the value of past greatness and further wanted to preserve it through their creative practices. The crucible of qualitative assessment of past models had begun in earnest in the early nineteenth century and continued into the twentieth century.

Mendelssohn's presence in England from 1829 onwards managed to bring together many of the successes enjoyed by his continental predecessors. A youthful presence, he had reached a level of artistic maturity decades before any known musician of his own generation, or before, with the composition of the *Octet*, Op. 20 of 1825. Whether the English consistently knew that as a prodigy his talents surpassed even that of the then hallowed Mozart is open to conjecture. However, his ultimate affection for the country and perhaps more obviously

Scotland, placed him in a unique category. More than a celebrated visitor, Mendelssohn was a celebrity who found greatness not only in an increasingly cultured populus, but in the very landscape that defined the country's identity. Through his association with Leipzig, and his evangelising promotion of Bach, he could bring the works of the master to a level only imagined by Samuel Wesley. As a performer he could be assessed alongside the burgeoning field of virtuosos. As a friend of the Royal Household he could exercise quiet influence whilst benefitting from patronage by association. And as a composer of oratorio he could assume the mantle carried by Handel in *Messiah* and Haydn in *The Creation* – a feat not wholly attained in the English conscience by Beethoven. With the rapidly developing choral tradition in England, Mendelssohn's ability to fuse memorable melody with technically manageable vocal and instrumental writing placed him in direct succession to Handel as the master of the form. Indeed, it is surprisingly easy to define the lasting effect of choral works by similar criteria. In the twenty-first century repertoire one can still see regular performances of *Messiah* – a work that has never left the English repertoire – and *Elijah*, whereas the more demanding works such as Haydn's *The Creation* or Bach's *Mass in B minor* are less frequently performed by choral societies, in large part because of their technical challenges. As such, Mendelssohn sagely grasped the formulae most applicable to the English choral situation and provided works accordingly. The same spirit of pragmatism is paralleled in the *Songs without Words*, and ultimately applied to the organ works. All were governed by a combination of utilitarianism, industry and quality. Furthermore, the organ works could fill a void in the repertoire and, as they were first published in England, provide the country's organists with bespoke new works to add to their repertoire. There are no critical commentaries of new works post-Mendelssohn that point to any degree of excitement even remotely paralleled to the reception Mendelssohn's works generated in England. To furnish the public with pieces from an esteemed author who is also perceived as a master practitioner

of the (then developing) instrument is to inject the repertoire with a prescription almost guaranteed to be well received. Further, the English were not used to their musical titans being organists. Although Handel played the organ, he did not offer the great organ works of other composers, and indeed most could not have been faithfully played on English organs. When the English organists had related their style to Beethoven and Mozart, it was first and foremost through their symphonic repertoire. However, with Mendelssohn that dynamic changed. Through his performances of Bach's organ music, not least the organ works with extensive independent pedal lines, he could show English organists the true possibilities of the instrument technically, musically, and emotionally. Once engaged, he could instil his own musical vocabulary, which, conservative by nature, would not stretch the English beyond a quierist's boundaries.

Utilitarianism was perhaps most pronounced in the simple technical demands of Mendelssohn's organ works. Although the musical language remained the same throughout the sonatas (and indeed the preludes and fugues) there was an element of the earlier portfolio style that the English had been accustomed to. Specifically, every work contained an easier movement that could also serve as a stand-alone composition. In this respect his approach to the sonata serves as a transitional point, for they adhere to a consistent musical language but nonetheless offer a variety of performance possibilities to the organist. Whether amateur or professional, the sonatas provided movements for all.

Fundamentally the music Mendelssohn was composing – and certainly the music being heard in England – was part of the larger nineteenth-century culture of 'edification'. In music intended for the church – and we can never fully divorce the organ from that association – this was especially the case, for music needed to "instil devotion", as much as it did serve a practical purpose. As Dahlhaus comments:

...for the purposes of singing God's praises, church music had to meet only one stipulation: the musical offering had to be worthy of the recipient. ...church music of the edifying sort appropriated the aesthetic ideas of classicism (likewise an offshoot of the bourgeois spirit) which Winckelmann had formulated as "noble simplicity and silent grandeur".¹

The Mendelssohn organ works, with their simple, yet elegant approach to melody and somewhat elastic formal structure fit well with Dahlhaus's views, but the evident pragmatism of their undemanding approach to technique also meant that the 'recipient' was not in any sense going to be a limited audience (whether player or listener). Mendelssohn had conceived works that not only almost any organist could play, but every listener could find agreeable – indeed even those tiring of the ubiquitous fugue would find it presented only once in an especially *severo* style, as the penultimate movement of the Sixth Sonata.

The union with Bach extended beyond the mere promotion of his works to the English public. The use of chorales in the Mendelssohn organ works, and indeed the incorporation of pedal cadenzas – just as Bach had – brought a familiar aesthetic into play. Though Rosen is critical of Mendelssohn's rather blatant use of chorales to insert religion into a given work, he nonetheless agrees it was a sentiment allied in the other arts noting Goethe's comment that "I do not care how much harm the Catholic Church has done, provided I can use its symbols in my poetry".² For Mendelssohn though the revival of the German chorale was the larger concern, and the performance practice of improvising on the chorale between lines was still in evidence in nineteenth-century German practice.

¹ Carl Dahlhaus, *Nineteenth-Century Music* (Berkeley: University of California Press, c.1989), 179.

² Charles Rosen, *The Romantic Generation* (London: Fontana Press, 1999), 590-598.

Organ works hold a unique place in the reception that is central to the relationship between religion and the concert hall/concert setting. Whereas a piano work containing a (sacred) chorale is by nature being garnered in an ancestral costume, an organ work heard in a concert setting is by nature entering the consciousness with a sacred overtone. Thus an organ fugue does not need a chorale inserted (as in Mendelssohn's Fugue in E minor, 1837, for piano) in order to have a sacred air. Rather the organ fugue heard in a concert setting unites both the virtuosity of the secular world with the religious overtones of the sacred world. To extend and paraphrase Rosen's argument, whereas the chorale in the virtuoso piano fugue makes the piece seem less trivial, the chorale in the concert setting makes the (sacred) organ appear more virtuostic and unshackled from its traditional setting.

As discussed in the previous chapter, there was a significant leaning in the mid-nineteenth century towards a 'portfolio' style of compositions, whereby, rather than creating a cyclical work, or even simply a work in the same overall musical style, composers adopted what could almost be considered a three-movement suite. Central to the portfolio template was the inclusion of a first-movement 'classical' sonata form, and a fugue (typically as the last movement). When the style departed from early models that evoked Bach, Mozart or Beethoven, it progressed towards Mendelssohn, either in homage, or because of the esteem garnered through affiliation. This sense of homage and lineage could be easily reasoned through contemporary aesthetic conditioning. As Dahlhaus notes:

Where arbiters of the public aesthetic thought they saw a clash of opposites, composers practised a dialectic for which they found a prototype in Bach. The main thing which the nineteenth century owed to Bach's music was the insight that fugues can be characteristic pieces and that character pieces can be fugues – that is, that the

strict style does not have to produce musical fossils, and a wealth of expression does not have to be lawless.³

However, the nature of the portfolio sonata meant that for many composers the older styles were never far away – unmistakeable classically-inspired movements would be placed side by side with mimetic baroque fugues or Mendelssohnian slow movements. With the untimely deaths of Mendelssohn in 1847 and Albert, Prince Consort in 1861, and an artistically benevolent sovereign in mourning, we have to consider whether the seeming inability of English composers to extricate themselves from German models was in some sense countered by a national sense of loss, and a subconscious desire to see time stand still, at least for a generation or two. Victoria's reign continued until 1901 and this may well have protracted this consciousness further, for the more advanced romanticism of the continent found a route to Britain only in the latter years of the century. Whereas one can draw parallels between Brahms and Parry, England did not produce a figure to ally with Liszt, save of course for Liszt's own presence in concert.

There was no heir apparent to Mendelssohn in Britain that commanded both the amateur and connoisseurs taste alike, and so the overarching Teutonic influence that extended from Handel to Haydn, Beethoven and Mendelssohn was in search of a new role model. Although gauging a national psyche is never fool-proof, it can be said that as London had promoted such a cosmopolitan outlook for more than two hundred years, it cannot be surprising that the more astute British musicians would consider educating themselves not only from the many primers that emerged in the nineteenth century (not least from Novello) but also more formally at institutions. As such, in the absence of a new generation of continental composers

³ Dahlhaus, *Nineteenth-Century Music*, 31.

that the English could easily revere at the highest level, a culture developed whereby the musical figures England had most admired from the immediate past could instead be emulated – if Mendelssohn's style was still revered, why depart from it? Furthermore, given the introduction to foreign pedagogy in the metropolis through the numerous continental teachers, the notion of studying abroad would have seemed apposite for those that could garner scholarships, or fund their education through private means. In Mendelssohn the English had come to see the pre-eminence of Bach, and in both figures the English knew that Leipzig, and specifically its famed conservatorium, could offer a chance at being close to the sacred glow, whilst offering the opportunity of returning to England as eminently educated European travellers.

The nineteenth century also saw a broader tendency in England towards holding the predominant figures of the classical era to a higher standard, somewhat to the sidelining of true baroque mastery. However, in the organ world this was not an altogether full shift of perception. Although the sonata had increasingly become the worthy composition, the place of the fugue was far from lost. This said, a far greater effort was made at the scholarly fugue rather than imitations of the Handelian choral fugue. Rosen notes how as a German, Mendelssohn could not afford to ignore the legacy of Beethoven, whereas Chopin and Verdi could not claim such a heritage. Indeed, such was the legacy that Hummel and Schubert could also be observed proudly displaying an allegiance to their forerunners. Later, in Brahms, this was to become a basic principle of composition – to quote from the classical canon just as poets of the eighteenth century added quotations from the classical Latin poets, solely for the pleasure of the connoisseurs.⁴ The notion of separation from the populous would have been well received within the community of organists. That almost every organ

⁴ Rosen, *The Romantic Generation*, 582.

sonata included a scholarly fugue further attests to this, and we can see the pleasure that could be gained for a composer reading a review that spoke highly of his command of the genre. Why write a scherzo, when you could be revered as a contrapuntist? This noted, the fugal writing would never regain the heights of Bach's counterpoint, or ability to combine melody and harmonic ingenuity so elegantly. However, in Mendelssohn, the community of organists found themselves unburdened by such association. Rather, Mendelssohn had (in his organ fugues) more closely aligned himself with Handel's simpler choral fugues than with Bach's upper tier of counterpoint – a curious decision in some respects, for his piano works demonstrate a complete willingness to extend beyond baroque models.

In the mimesis of the classical tradition, composers were undeniably conservative. They looked towards the galant and the unaffected rather than *Sturm und Drang*. For all the dramatic possibilities the developing Victorian organ afforded, composers were keen to pick up where the more illustrious composers had left off and fill the void with their own works. Can we consider that Ouseley would have seen any need to write two classically-inspired sonatas if Beethoven had left thirty-two sonatas for the organ instead of the pianoforte? Arguably, any suggestion at mimesis would have brought harsh criticism, whereas in fact the return (or extension) of classicism was warmly welcomed in the critical press, and, we must assume, by the music publishers. However, how was a tradition set in another era – despite the overt romanticism that engenders – ever going to move composition forward? The sonatas which appeared between 1858 and 1883 did little to advance beyond Mendelssohn in terms of harmonic language. Indeed, the deviation back onto a return path with Ouseley's rondo in his *Second Sonata* illuminates the fact that some composers were quite simply content to promote an orthodoxy of style, regardless of developing continental trends. The organ had become a true bastion for a museum culture, albeit one with an ever expanding

secondary gallery filled with copies. Further, the relationship of the organ to academia did not promote any obvious innovation and, as will be shown later, those composers who did venture slightly outside prescribed compositional protocols were quickly scolded for their indulgences. As already noted, the organ was principally an instrument of the church, and if the church could look back in history for its guide-posts, why not the same for organists? In any creative sphere, electing to employ past templates seldom meets with disapproval if the approach is clearly in homage.

In an assessment of nineteenth-century [continental] church music Dahlhaus comments it was “less an age of church music than one of literature about church music [where the] decline and regeneration of church music was a constant topic of discussion”.⁵ However, to what extent does that view concur with the state of music, liturgical or otherwise, in England?

It is fair to observe that there were significant concerns about the role church musicians were to play. This further relates to how well qualified they were expected to be in order to meet with success in the examinations of the College of Organists, and how the larger professional communities would recognise and respect them. It is also true that perception also played a vital role. After all in seeking greater recognition, organists were not only seeking to promote the place of colleagues but themselves. The question of how to achieve an initial increase in public approbation had been somewhat manufactured through the extension of classical mannerisms beyond the point of their natural life. As commented in the chapter on Classicism, this was nothing new – the Handelians had already approached their musical saviour with the same veneration and could easily argue – although never seem to have been pressed – that their prescribed compositional lineage was in direct succession and obeisance

⁵ Dahlhaus, *Nineteenth-Century Music*, 178.

to that of the masters they emulated. If Bach could be a mimetic for Palestrina, why could not they be one for Handel, Mozart, or Beethoven.

However, after twenty-five years of self-imposed orthodoxy, the want to finally engage in a style that was not only slightly more forward-thinking, but also individual, had reached a culminating point. The conditioning for this breakthrough in England was shrouded with problems for this development occurring in any organic sense. When Ouseley chose to write a classically inspired rondo as the last movement of his *Second Sonata* in 1881, he was not only harkening back to a far earlier genre and compositional style, but also – as a prominent figure in the profession – supplying an imprimatur on a style that was abetting a museum culture. The musical language associated with the organ and known in England at this point had already encountered Mendelssohn's *Three Preludes and Fugue*, Op. 37 in 1839, and the *Six Sonatas*, Op. 65 in 1845 – works that were written in part to move the (English) instrument's repertoire into the nineteenth century. As such, the climate for composers could not be easily advanced either from within the restrictive academic community, nor within the realm of organists. Composers had little choice but to look further afield. If they were seeking to be more than compositional functionaries tied to an antiquated model, their sights would need to look to the continent, and to a culture they had long since revered together with a musician many had come to idolise. As such, they looked back at the musician the world had been robbed of too early and to the city where his name had remained forever enshrined. For those with means or scholarships, Leipzig beckoned.

1883

In assessing the lineage of the English sonata, the year 1883 holds the greatest importance for there is a compositional demarcation of style which broke free from a quarter century of (earlier) classical models. Indeed the musical chasm between London and Leipzig could not

have been more pronounced. 1883 saw the publication in London of the Ouseley *Second Sonata*, and the Leipzig publication of the *Sonata in D minor* of Battison Haynes (1859-1900). Furthermore, supporting this development towards a more progressive style was a positive critical press in England that acknowledged the Haynes as a work by a superior author, without making any reference to the difficulty of the piece (and its comparison to earlier English models), its greater length, or that it was departing from the shackles of past practices. No review was offered of the Ouseley sonata. What separates Haynes, Bertram Luard-Selby (1853-1918) and Basil Harwood (1859-1949) from Ouseley is the fact they studied in Leipzig. Rather than emulating composers through an acknowledged template, they went in search of a style they could call their own. As will later be demonstrated it was arguably because of this infusion of their more symphonic approach to style, form and gesture, that the most significant contribution to the English sonata, the Elgar *Sonata* of 1895, could emerge in the repertoire as a true symphony conceived for the organ – indeed it is Elgar's first purely instrumental work on this scale.

Considering Leipzig

Beyond the appeal of continental travel there were multiple reasons for English musicians to consider Leipzig. They may have been ensorcelled by the glow of Mendelssohn or Bach, or simply have wished to distinguish themselves among their colleagues on return to England; but Leipzig held many additional benefits for those that could afford to travel there, not least the Gewandhaus and one of the finest opera houses in Germany. Since the second quarter of the nineteenth century, Leipzig had been the leading centre for book and music publishing as well as distribution. This development had come in part from the German universities who themselves sought an ever-increasing number of works in print. Most international music publishing houses were represented in Leipzig; the Russian publishers Jurgenson, Belaieff, and Bessel published there in order to secure international copyright, and many European

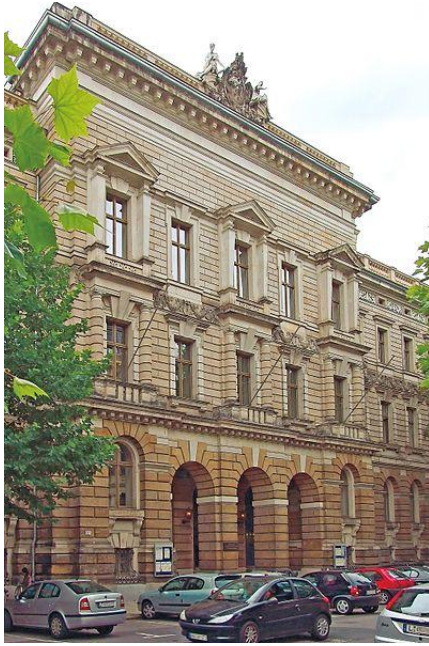
firms had music engraved and printed in the city. As such, publishers in the centres of Berlin, London, Paris, and Vienna typically had distribution arrangements in Leipzig.⁶

Leipzig therefore provided a unique situation for the young composer. The great Classical Editions were issued by Breitkopf, and Peters, and in the days of cheap printing of works in large quantities, publishers also had certain discretion to take on works by the emerging talent of the day. At one point there were as many as 350 music engravers at work in Leipzig.⁷ By 1923 the number had swelled to more than 900 publishers and booksellers with 11,000 firms in other parts of Europe and America represented in Leipzig. Each year hundreds of booksellers would assemble in the city – typically on Monday after *Cantate* (the fourth Sunday after Easter) – to settle their accounts at its famous Buchhandler Börse (Book Exchange).⁸ That Haynes's sonata was published in Leipzig (and dedicated to his teacher Robert Papperitz), as later was Elgar's sonata, is as much testament to the more enlightened approach of the Leipzig publishing houses as it is a telling indictment of the cautious approach to which English publishing firms were still adhering, and the level of pragmatism that governed their publishing decisions in a country still fully acquiring technical competence on the instrument.

⁶ Ralph Hawkes, "From Leipzig to...", *Notes*, Second Series, Vol. 4, No 3 (1947): 323

⁷ Hawkes, "From Leipzig to...", 324.

⁸ P. W. Browne, "The World's Famous Book Mart", *The Catholic Historical Review*, Vol. 8, No. 4 (1923): 515.



Leipzig Conservatorium⁹



Ignaz Moscheles¹⁰

The Leipzig Conservatorium

One might conjecture that the genesis of any institution will always govern its outlook. In this respect a school of music founded by a conservative romanticist like Mendelssohn would always attract certain followers in their faculty, and in turn students, to its work. Many of the early students later became teachers, thus continuing the tradition. This hierarchical nature of pedagogy has many similarities with ecclesiastical settings where young musical apprentices worked under a senior figure only to one day start ascending the ladder of career and ambition. In the case of Leipzig though, the death of Mendelssohn appears to have consciously or unconsciously created a museum culture, alongside a climate of self-promotion among the faculty. In an account of works performed in the years before Mendelssohn's passing it can be observed that more of his works were in the concert repertoire than those of Beethoven, Mozart and Schubert combined:

⁹ Unknown, *Leipzig Conservatorium*, JPG, LE HS Musik Theater-Adj.jpg (accessed 28 January, 2012)

¹⁰ Unknown, *Ignaz Moscheles*, JPG, <http://portrait.kaar.at/Musikgeschichte%2019.Jhd/image24.html> (accessed 28 January, 2012)

Compositions performed at the Leipzig Conservatorium
1843-1847¹¹

Conservatory Teachers		‘Classic’		Contemporary		‘Pre-classic’	
Mendelssohn	14	Beethoven	6	Chopin	4	Bach	5
Moscheles	9	Mozart	3	de Bériot	3	Handel	2
Becker	9	Schubert	3	Henselt	2	others	4
David	7	Spohr	3	Vieuxtemps	2		
E. Richter	3	Weber	3	others	8		
Hauptmann	2	Hummel	2				
		Haydn	1				
		Gluck	1				
		Cherubini	1				
Totals	44		23		19		11

The first prominent English figure to arrive in Leipzig, after William Sterndale Bennett’s introduction via Mendelssohn, was Arthur Sullivan (1842-1900) in 1856. He had been awarded a scholarship at the age of fourteen but continued at the Royal Academy of Music until his voice changed at sixteen, at which point he left for Germany.¹² (Arthur Sullivan was in the same year as Edvard Grieg, Edward Dannreuther, Franklin Taylor and Francis Edward Bache, the latter travelling on the advice of Sterndale Bennett.) He was the recipient of the first Mendelssohn scholarship, for which funds had been raised in London. The Mendelssohn

¹¹ Johannes Forner, “Mendelssohns Mitstreiter am Leipzig Konservatorium,” *Beiträge zur Musikwissenschaft*, XIV (1972): 191.

¹² Leonard Milton Phillips, Jr., *The Leipzig Conservatory*, Unpublished Thesis, Indiana University (1979) 207.

Foundation was established by a group of Mendelssohn's friends and led by Conrad Schleinitz. The purpose was to provide a fund that would enable students to travel to Leipzig for study at the conservatorium through the administration of generous scholarships. Concurrent with the establishment of the German foundation, Mendelssohn's friends and colleagues in London set about a similar venture. Sir George Smart served as the President with Julius Benedict and William Sterndale Bennett also members of the society. On 15 December, 1848 a performance of *Elijah* was staged in order to benefit the fund.¹³

Although it was expected that all teachers at the conservatory would also be composers¹⁴ the constant presence of Mendelssohn's works as late as 1860 demonstrates the anti-radical tendencies the conservatorium espoused. Bearing in mind the English affection for Mendelssohn, this programming may nonetheless have been extremely welcome. However, as musicians with burgeoning careers as composers, the limitations are readily apparent.

The Most Frequently Performed Composers at the Leipzig Conservatorium, 1848-1860¹⁵

Mendelssohn	91
Beethoven	25
Moscheles	22
David	20
Mozart	20
Bach	14
Weber	10
Schumann	9
Haydn	8
E. Richter	7

¹³ Ibid

¹⁴ Ibid, 200.

¹⁵ Forner, "Mendelssohns Mitstreiter am Leipzig Konservatorium," 201.

The Most Frequently Performed Composers at the
Leipzig Conservatorium, 1861-1870¹⁶

Mendelssohn	113
Beethoven	49
David	41
Moscheles	37
Bach	34
Chopin	26
Spohr	22
Mozart	17
Schumann	14
Hauptmann	13

The Most Frequently Performed Composers at the
Leipzig Conservatorium, 1868-1891¹⁷

Mendelssohn	293
Beethoven	186
Schumann	100
Bach	86
Mozart	82
Reinecke	77
Chopin	58
Moscheles	57
Spohr	43
Schubert	41
David	37
Weber	33
Hummel	32
Brahms	25
Haydn	24

Of course there is the notable absence not only of Franz Liszt (1811-1886) but also only a modest number of performances of Johannes Brahms's (1833-1897) works. As such, the conservatism that had manifested itself in the early English organ sonatas with their burnish of classicism was but an experiential precursor for the encounters of musicians travelling to Leipzig for their study. Although no longer adopting early classical models in their

¹⁶ Ibid, 203.

¹⁷ Forner, "Mendelssohns Mitstreiter am Leipzig Konservatorium," 204.

compositions, the faculty of the conservatorium were nonetheless promoting a domain of orthodoxy that was in communion with English sensibilities of the same era, a point that was later confirmed by Stanford in 1874 when he studied with Reinecke. Indeed, through regular updates in the English musical press, the activities of the Leipzig establishment were much reported. However, it is interesting to note how a commentator could praise the performance ability of the English students but strongly condemn the ‘new school’ of composition that their peers were seemingly engaged in during student performances. It appears that, at least for some in England, the Conservatory had to preserve its role as a bastion of orthodoxy, and faculty, who erred from conservative protocols by not chastising those in their charge, were not only to be shunned, but dismissed:

The ‘Public Examinations’ of the pupils of the Leipzig Conservatory (writes our correspondent) which have been held during the last few weeks, suggest the question, what has that institution done for the progress of art? I do not propose to enter into a detailed criticism of the performances of the pupils, for it is not a public examination alone, where the pieces are specifically prepared for the occasion, which can test the value of the teaching. Suffice it to say, that two of our countryfolk [from England] were among the best players...The performances included pianoforte, violin, and violoncello solo and ensemble playing; and compositions of orchestra, chamber, and vocal music. The bias of the pupils to the modern school was strongly marked. The piano compositions selected were confined to those of Weber, Moscheles, Mendelssohn and David.¹⁸ Either the masters seem to exert too little influence upon their pupils in directing their choice, or the pupils are too self-willed to obey. Seductive enough is the Romantic School, but its followers require to be strengthened by the more invigorating productions of the classical age. I am not denying the many

¹⁸ It is unclear what piano pieces of Ferdinand David these could have been.

and great merits of the Romanticists, but a too exclusive bias in their direction bring with it enervation and vagueness, just as exclusive classicality tends to dryness and retrogression. To judge from the character of the majority of pupils' compositions, it might be supposed that the masters of the Conservatory belonged to the Zukunft party or as it prefers to be called, the 'New German School'. But the names of Reinecke, Hauptmann, and Richter are a sufficient guarantee that this is not the case. These professors must, however, have felt like a hen which has hatched a brood of ducks. I believe several of the compositions were considerably 'tamed' before they were submitted to the public, but much was still left which ought not to have been stamped with the seal of the Conservatory. Perhaps there is something in the air which seizes upon the present generation, just as our fathers went through a course of Byronism; but the latter settled down into most respectable fathers of families, so there is still hope that our young friends have sown their musical oats, the extravagance and the impatience of law under which they now suffer (and make others suffer) will give way to sounder views, and that the present fermentation will end in wine, new, perhaps in taste, but sound in body. It is unfortunate that the Professor of Aesthetics and Music History [presumably Carl Franz Brendel who taught from 1846-1868] belongs to the new school; so far as I am aware, its only representative in the Conservatory. The chair which of all others has so much influence for good or evil, ought to be otherwise filled, if the Directors had moral courage enough to do justice to themselves and their pupils.¹⁹

The students at the conservatory included a significant number of international students, which in 1873 rose to 55%.²⁰ However, in the years 1866-1881 the majority of students were German with the largest secondary enrolments coming from England and the USA, followed

¹⁹ *The Orchestra*, XXXVII (1864): 587.

²⁰ Phillips, *The Leipzig Conservatory*, 203.

by Russia and Scandinavia. As classes were taught in German this provoked the Conservatory to dismiss some students; the first English speakers, George Babcock and Frederick Tivendell were dismissed and Phillips suggests language may well have been the reason.²¹

The Curriculum

The curriculum at the conservatorium would later form the basis of studies at the Royal College of Music, Paris Conservatoire and the newer conservatories in Boston, Chicago, and New York. As noted, a very significant number of students attended the Conservatorium from the USA. Although a document detailing the exact curriculum at the founding is unavailable, the *Neue Zeitschrift für Musik* published the following regulations for the Conservatorium on 25 December 25, 1843.

- ¶1. The Conservatory of Music of Leipzig is dedicated to higher education in music and offers practical and theoretical instruction in all branches of music and as an art.
- ¶2. The theoretical instruction consists of a complete course in the theory and composition of music, which may be completed in three years and comprises three levels. With the beginning of each new year, at Easter, a new course will be started so that students may enrol.

Those students who are qualified by possessing an already adequate theoretical knowledge may enrol in the upper levels and thus shorten the study of theory to less than three years. They may be obliged to audit the lower levels in order to understand the structure and method of the entire course.

The theoretical instruction consists of the following subjects:

- a) harmony (in three levels)
Level III in the first year harmony and voice-leading;
Level II in the second year; continuation of harmony with the addition of counterpoint;
Level I in the third year; continuation of harmony, study of double counterpoint and fugue;

²¹ Phillips, *The Leipzig Conservatory*, 90.

- b) form and composition are given in lectures which treat the following subjects: songs and instrumental works in the various forms and techniques; analysis of classical musical works; knowledge of instruments and instrumentation;
- c) score-reading and conducting techniques;
- d) The Italian language for those whose study is dedicated to singing.

In addition to the theoretical studies, there will be lectures on other musical subjects, e.g. the history of music (old and new periods), aesthetics, and acoustics (with experiments), etc.

For women there will be special classes in harmony designed to meet their needs. Completion of the study of harmony may be expected in the course of two years for women.

¶3. The practical instruction consists of training in mechanical dexterity on one or more of the following instruments or in singing, which will be offered on several levels and will comprise the following areas:

- a) instruction in singing (solo and choral) in 2 levels;
- b) instruction in instrumental playing:
 - 1) pianoforte (in three levels)
 - 2) organ (in two levels)
 - 3) violin (solo, quartet, and orchestral playing (in three levels)

Also, there will be offered, under the auspices of the Directorium, instruction in the remaining instruments (violoncello, contrabass, and all wind instruments) for payment of a modest fee for those who desire such instruction.

¶4. In addition to the outlined instruction, the student is encouraged to take advantage of the following extra-curricular opportunities:

- a) attendance at rehearsals of the famous Gewandhaus Concerts, which consist of 20 programmes during the winter season;
- b) attendance at the quartet rehearsals and performances which take place every winter;
- c) attendance at the famous choir of the Thomaskirche, which performs each Saturday and Sunday;
- d) attendance at performances at the Stadttheater.

In addition to these opportunities, the University and its various education departments offer the student an opportunity to pursue a broad scientific education in all subjects.

- ¶5. For students interested in orchestral playing, opportunity will be given to perform overtures, symphonies, and accompaniments to large choral compositions in concerts. Those who prepare themselves as concert singers or players will be given the opportunity to appear publicly under the supervision of their individual teachers.
- ¶6. The instruction is entrusted to the thirteen teachers whose names and subjects are found at the end of this publication. The Inspector of the Institute is also named. His duty is to insure that all ordinances of the Directorium and the Faculty are carried out, that the classes are regularly attended, and above all, that the affairs of the Institute are conducted in the best possible manner.
- ¶7. The instruction of men and women is completely separate.
- ¶8. The complete course of music theory lasts, as is indicated in ¶2, for three years and can be shortened only under the specified terms. For instruction in singing or instruments, no specific time period is given, since that depends upon the greater or lesser development and talent of the individual student.

No student may be admitted for less than one year, and those who leave earlier, except when illness is the cause, are obliged to pay the stated tuition for the whole year, which is binding upon the parents or guardian at the time of enrolment.

- ¶9. According to the rules, new students may enter the Conservatory only at Easter of each year, at which time the lower levels of a new course begin. The date for enrolment as well as dates for the required entrance examinations will be announced in local and foreign newspapers and musical journals. Foreign students may enter also at Michaelmas provided they have considerable theoretical knowledge and can conform to the aforementioned rules.
- ¶10. The following are prerequisites for the admittance of foreign students:
 - a) They must possess a general school education and must be acquainted with normal class-room procedures.
 - b) They must be adept enough in the German language to understand lectures. If this is not the case, they must acquire this ability in German through private instruction at their own expense.
 - c) They must possess true talent and, upon enrolment, demonstrable musical knowledge (of notation, rhythm, adequate ability on the keyboard, the violin, or in singing). Moreover, foreign students must have the specific recommendations of former teachers.
 - d) Those who wish to dedicate themselves to the study of singing must possess good and teachable voices. Those of doubtful health or

those entering during the period of change of voice must obtain permission for vocal activity from the school physician.

- e) No student will be admitted without the signed permission of his or her parents or guardian.
- f) Each student must be able to prove his moral upbringing through creditable testimony of his parents and earlier teachers.
- g) Foreign students must have the necessary passport or permit valid for the duration of residency.

¶11. Every prospective student of the Conservatory must take an examination before a special committee prior to enrolment. At that time it will be determined if the student possesses enough talent and musical knowledge to be admitted. In order that practical performance may be judged, each applicant must bring a well-practised piece of music (for pianoforte, organ, violin, or voice), which will be performed by the student before the committee prior to enrolment. Those who have already engaged in the writing of music and have produced their own compositions should send these, postage paid, to the Directorium before enrolment or submit them prior to the time of examination.²²

The curriculum served as a model for others in Europe and beyond, not least the Royal College of Music. For the English musicians familiar with the cathedral system of serving as articulated students the outline above must have been welcome to the eyes. Not only was the organ placed equally alongside the piano and the violin, but theoretical study, including the highly-prized arts of counterpoint and fugue, as well as score reading and instruction in conducting were also included. That they were also encouraged to attend not only the famous symphonic concerts but also chamber and sacred performances further emphasized the broad education the students would receive.

Instruction

Given that the majority of English students remained in England for their study, and those enrolled in Leipzig came from across the country, it is unlikely there was a strong sense of

²² NZfM, XIX (1843), 201-204.

exactly what individuals may have expected on arrival in Leipzig. Edvard Grieg was unflinchingly critical (as was Delius), especially later in life, commenting to a friend in a letter of 30 October, 1884: ‘How I envy your technique which I feel the want of every day. In that, however, I am not alone to blame but mainly that damned Leipzig Conservatory, where I learned nothing at all.’²³ The practical aspects of study were taught in classes of eight to ten students, and often involved the study of a solitary work over an extended period of time. Under Mendelssohn in 1846, Hummel’s *Septet in D minor* provided the principal material for study and practice from the beginning of January to the end of February or March. It was then followed by a Weber’s *Konzertstück*. As the nature of a class was comparable to a modern-day master-class any individual technical concerns were left for more junior faculty to correct.²⁴ As students had ready access to several competent teachers (also performers and composers) it became possible for students to benefit from the received wisdom of one, even if they fell short in the eyes of another. Grieg’s account bears witness to the lighter side of this predicament:

...when we got so far as to write complicated fugues with two or three subjects for both masters, I presume that other pupils did as I did; showed the same piece to both teachers. That as it happened, led to a ‘success’ for me. A fugue on the name GADE which had not found favour in Richter’s eyes aroused so much admiration in Hauptmann, that, after having read it through, and lingering over the details of my work, he exclaimed, contrary to all custom, “That must sound very fine. Let me hear it.” When I had finished, he said to me with this kind, loveable smile, “Very good – very musical!”²⁵

²³ Schjelderup-Ebbe, *Grieg* 24.

²⁴ Phillips, *The Leipzig Conservatory*, 177

²⁵ David Monrad-Johansen, *Edvard Grieg* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1938), 37-38

Two principal teachers encountered by the English organ-composers were Salomon Jadassohn (1831-1902) and Robert Papperitz (1826-1903). As was common, they both taught in multiple areas: Jadassohn teaching harmony, composition, and piano (1871-1902), Papperitz teaching harmony, composition, organ, and piano (1851-1903). Given the account of Grieg's fugue experience, it is plain to see how student composers could easily emulate one musician or another and still achieve 'success'. This is an especially potent issue given the contrasting style of these two seminal figures as will be shown.

Salomon Jadassohn

Jadassohn was born in Breslau [now Wrocław] in 1831 and died in 1902. His initial studies were in Breslau, but he later studied at the (Leipzig) Conservatory. Unusually for a conservatory student, he left Leipzig to study the piano with Liszt in Weimar (1849–52) during which time he heard Wagner's *Lohengrin* which greatly impressed him. After returning, he studied with E. F. Richter (1808-1879) and privately with Moritz Hauptmann (1792-1868), himself a student of Louis Spohr (1784-1859). Jadassohn taught the piano in Leipzig and conducted the synagogue choir (1865), the Psalterion choral society (1866) and the Musikverein Euterpe concerts (1867–9). In 1871 he was appointed to the Conservatory faculty as teacher of harmony, counterpoint, composition and piano and in 1893 named Royal Professor.²⁶

²⁶ Janna Saslaw, "Salomon Jadassohn," *Oxford Music Online* (accessed 21 October, 2011)



Salomon Jadassohn²⁷

As with other members of the faculty he took the greatest honour in his work as a composer, which included pieces for piano, chamber ensemble, orchestra, chorus, and solo voices, with a total of over 140 opus numbers. He also edited and arranged works by Bach, Brahms, Chopin, Mendelssohn, Schubert, Schumann, Wagner and others. His numerous theoretical texts include five volumes of *Musikalische Kompositionslehre* (1883–9), and the *Lehrbuch der Harmonie* (1883) which shows the practical aim of Jadassohn's writings. His reputation as a formidable contrapuntist extended beyond a conservative vein through this exposure to Liszt and Wagner. Jadassohn stated that any musical progression may be sanctioned when one or two tones common to the two chords are held in the same part or parts. Jadassohn's treatise on form asserts that individual musical ideas shape their structure.²⁸ His teaching style, though, adopted less stricture than one might have assumed from such an erudite presence, as Ethel Smyth commented:

Jadassohn's classes, held in the Conservatorium, were at least amusing, but equally farcical as instruction [by comparison with those of Reinecke]; their official length

²⁷ Unknown, *Salomon Jadassohn*, JPG, <http://www.bach-cantatas.com/Pic-Lib-BIG/Jodassohn-Salomon-01.jpg> (accessed 28 January, 2012)

²⁸ Ibid

was forty minutes, and when he arrived, always a quarter of an hour late, it was to stand with his back to the stove for another ten minutes telling us exceedingly funny stories with the Jewish lisp I came to know so well in Germany. He diligently set us canons and other exercises, but there was seldom time even to look at the work we brought, much less correct our mistakes.²⁹



Ethel Smyth³⁰

Smyth ultimately left the Conservatorium before completing her course, and continued with private study. In England, she had been an organ and counterpoint student of Walter Parratt who, though a genial personality to those that knew him well, was generally viewed as an exacting teacher. However, as with any teacher, two students will ultimately draw on different benefits to their own learning; the Organist of the English Royal Church in Leipzig, C. G. Thomas, wrote to the *The Musical Herald* twice in two months after Jadassohn's death, noting of his former master:

As one of the world's great contrapuntists, he saw no need of our English systematic labour at examination counterpoint. To acquire fluency in composition, we were set to write fugues. Professors and students of the Art of Teaching [many of the

²⁹ Ethel Smyth, *The Memoirs of Ethel Smyth*. (New York: Viking Penguin Inc. 1987) 71

³⁰ George Grantham Bain Collection, *Ethel Smyth*, JPG, PD

Conservatory students were training to be teachers] might have found much fault with Dr. Jadassohn's lack of method; but he gave the most artistic examples, criticisms, and guidance. The dull or careless student would make but little progress, and eventually be dismissed: but such instances were rare.³¹

Jadassohn did not trouble much about the nomenclature of chords; he taught harmony as a practical rather than theoretical subject. He said very little in his lessons; but calling his pupils one by one to his side, would rapidly correct the exercises taken from his own book, often leaving the reasons to be searched for. The early stages of counterpoint were also treated very much as a matter of course. It was in double counterpoint, canon and fugue, that the Professor grew glowing and enthusiastic. To be one of his inner circle of pupils in these subjects was an experience to be remembered throughout a lifetime. It never mattered when or where we went to him with our difficulties; whatever he might be doing would be suspended in our favour. No notice would be taken of the flight of time, as he blew dense clouds of cigar smoke over the entanglements while preparing his plans for removing or straightening them with his consummate skill. His books can give no idea of this.³²

This impression on an English student is further testified to in a letter which appeared in *The Musical Times* in 1930: '....it is difficult for me to express the gratitude I owe to Jadassohn and his books. Macfarren and Prout left me bewildered. An old Leipziger introduced me to Jadassohn's 'Harmony and Counterpoint,' and then the matter cleared up amazingly.'³³

The extra-curricular education students received from Jadassohn extended to his position as Director of Music for the Leipzig Synagogue. He customarily invited a small number of his

³¹ C. G. Thomas, "The late Dr. S. Jadassohn", *The Musical Herald* (March 1, 1902) 85.

³² C. G. Thomas, "More about Jadassohn", *The Musical Herald* (April 1, 1902) 118.

³³ H.B.J. "The 'Art of Fugue' and Jadassohn", *The Musical Times* (June 1, 1930) 543.

students to sing at the great festivals with a choir that could include almost every nationality hosted by the Conservatorium. They would typically sing music of Mendelssohn, or one of Jadassohn's own psalm settings, a Bach or Handel chorus, or the traditional music of the synagogue. On occasion the choir would finish their synagogue duties and then walk across to the Thomaskirche and take part in their liturgies.³⁴



Moritz Hauptmann³⁵

As a side note it is interesting to consider what further repertoire Jadassohn's students might have also encountered in the Leipzig Synagogue, which had only been built in 1855. In 1840, Louis Lewandowski (1821-1894) had been appointed to the Berlin Synagogue (in 1886 receiving the title 'royal musical director') and started composing significantly for the Jewish tradition, including publishing organ works towards the end of his life. As his style maintains the mid-Romantic conservative spirit of Mendelssohn, it is curious to consider this possible extension into the psyche of the English organists. However, the perception of a generation of composers assimilating Mendelssohnian templates met with strong concern from another member of the founding faculty, Moritz Hauptmann:

³⁴ Thomas (March) 85

³⁵ August Brasch, *Moritz Hauptmann*, (before 1868), PD

Make Moritz [Franz Hauser's son and a student at the Leipzig Conservatorium] take away a draft of some musical Lethe, in order that he might wash away something of Mendelssohn's influence, and learn to invent a little on his own hook. It is all too Mendelssohnian, so much so that, were we to eliminate the master's thoughts from the pupil's scores, we should be left with a blank sheet of paper.³⁶

He commented further to Otto Jahn in a letter of 1860:

It is amusing to see our youngsters in the Conservatory composing whole pieces, which are Mendelssohn from beginning to end, without so much as a suspicion that they are plagiarising. It is not a casual drop here and there, the whole bucket is drawn from Mendelssohn's well. They are like the caterpillars on the mignonette, just as green as the plant they feed on.³⁷

Above all, Jadassohn provided a pedagogical approach that bore little relation to the "systematic labour" of the English system, and one can easily see the appeal this would have drawn from ambitious young musicians keen to chart their own course. He imbued a culture that encouraged the study of fugue, but not for strictly academic purposes; a spirit of individualism, rather than institutionalised conformity; and an education into an extra-curricular world that was itself in an evolutionary state. That Jadassohn also commanded the respect of the larger musical establishment through his many larger-scale works brought an element of celebrity to his teaching that was equally detached from the English model with its close ecclesiastical-academic ties. Even many of the most celebrated church musicians in England rarely found themselves in the upper reaches of the greater musical profession.

³⁶ Moritz Hauptmann, *The Letters of a Leipzig Cantor* (London: Novello, Ewer and Co., 1982), Vol II 253-254. Referenced in Phillips, *The Leipzig Conservatory*, 181

³⁷ Ibid 242. Phillips, *The Leipzig Conservatory*, 182

Rather, through higher training and expectation they gravitated towards senior administrative posts, through which they could also command increased notoriety.

Jadassohn's compositional style ranges (in orchestral works) from Mendelssohnian-Schumannian overtones to the elegant and pragmatic (especially in the organ works). The *Phantasie*, Op. 95 consists of three movements; *Praeludium (Kanon)* - *Aria* – *Fugue*. [Ex. 1] It is notable that the master contrapuntist should restrict two-thirds of the piece to scholarly examples (much as Taneyev would later do in his *Choral Varié* c. 1913), but through a technically undemanding texture he also offers pieces that can serve in a pedagogical role as well – certainly a function the English organists would have readily recognised from earlier models of lessons-sonatas.

Example 1



Jadassohn, *Praeludium (Kanon)*: 1-4

The last line of the second movement (*Aria*) utilises a modulation from the tonic key of E flat major to D major, with the marking *attacca*, thus retaining the tradition of movements heard ahead of fugue serving as introductions to them but use of the dominant (D) of G. As such, just as some of the composers under him were transitional figures, so too was he. [Ex. 2]

Example 2

Adagio

p

attacca

Jadassohn, *Aria*: 69-74

The subsequent fugue employs an unusually angular subject that is more reminiscent of string writing. Despite the title, the fugue is in fact a double fugue beginning at bar 34 [Ex. 3] – which Thomas commented he was especially fond of producing – which, at bar 52, is then combined with the first subject. In every sense it is a masterly example of the form that requires a significant technical proficiency from the player, unlike the previous two movements. That Jadassohn should elect to compose a three-movement piece without the first movement being in sonata form is less crucial historically than the fact he adopted baroque forms. This connects him with the greater Leipzig lineage and that he elected to write a ‘phantasie’, thus extending the broader pedagogical role Mendelssohn had already set in place for multi-movement works.

Example 3

Allegro

The musical score is written for piano in G major, 3/4 time, marked 'Allegro'. It consists of three systems of staves. The first system (measures 1-5) shows the right hand with a whole note G4 and a half note A4 in the first measure, followed by a half note B4 and a whole note C5 in the second measure, and then a series of eighth notes in the third measure. The left hand plays a series of eighth notes starting from G2. The second system (measures 6-8) continues the right hand melody with a half note D5 and a whole note E5, followed by a half note F5 and a whole note G5. The left hand continues with eighth notes. The third system (measures 9-10) shows the right hand with a half note A5 and a whole note B5, followed by a half note C6 and a whole note D6. The left hand continues with eighth notes. The score is marked with a forte 'f' dynamic in the first measure.

Salomon Jadassohn, *Fugue*: 1-10



Jadassohn, *Fugue*: 34-39

Robert Papperitz

Whereas Jadassohn and Reinecke held external appointments from the Conservatory and were also well-known for their compositions, Papperitz attracted less attention, despite a prominent church post. He had succeeded his former teacher, Carl Ferdinand Becker, at both the Nicolaikirche and Conservatory. However, when Becker had begun the organ department the state of playing in Leipzig was viewed as very poor, as was the state of the instrument's reception in Germany. The following letter of Moritz Hauptmann (who held equal seniority with Becker) portrays a grim picture:

...the organ is a dead-alive instrument; massed with others, it may make an effect, but it makes none musically. The Sixtine Choir, whether voices are good or bad, dispenses with it, and wisely, in my opinion...The temperament of the organ is so artificial, that the tone can never be in vital union with harmony; the intervals,

mechanically defined and methodically put out of tune, are made to suit any combination...

Yet another defect: there is no graduation in the strength of the tone of an organ, there is a want of life, which is not compensated for by any number of mechanical *Crescendos*. Once for all, I do not like them. I would rather the organ were a petrefaction, than a channel for the outflow of morbid sentiment, to be indulged in by every bad player. I prefer the plastic side of the organ...The purely mechanical character of the organ, *plus* the bad character of most organists, accounts, I think, for the dullness of organ recitals...³⁸

Although Hauptmann's comments were clearly not comprehensively shared, the fact that the instrument (and repertoire written for it) had an ardent critic at the centre of the Conservatorium meant that composers (and practitioners) for the organ had to consider a compositional approach that would, fundamentally, be beyond reproach. As such, the use of earlier models, whether in the form of canon and fugue, or the chorale prelude in Papperitz's case, suggests a reasoned conservatism that bore at least a tangential relation to the English predicament. Judging by Hauptmann's account it also seems plausible that, though the German instruments were already more advanced than their English equivalents (not least in the provision of the adequate pedals from the Baroque era onwards), the degree of technical proficiency had likely waned during the classical era. In this respect, and with the success of the 'Victorian' organ, we may consider that in terms of reception (and perception) the English condition was in certain respects more advanced, and that this may well have stemmed from the broad musical cosmopolitanism embedded in the English psyche since Handel.

³⁸ Moritz Hauptmann, *Letters*, Vol. II. 170-171

The relationship between the English and Papperitz was two-edged. Spark had included some of Papperitz's compositions in his *Quarterly Organists Journal* anthology. Support by a figure as prominent as Spark would have been significant and if Spark had included his works in the Leeds Town Hall recitals, Papperitz's fame could potentially have spread quite widely. However, the criticism over the 'modern' aspects of Conservatorium students' work was to be equally found in the English reception of Papperitz's organ works by the critical press:

Dr. Spark is doing much good by continuing the publication of original compositions for the organ. The editor and composer may render his periodical as useful to organists as Muzio Clementi made, in the last century, his selections of harmony music to the pianists. There is a great gulf between the music of Dr. Spark's German friends and that by his countrymen. May the juxtaposition in time tend to equality! Such writing as that by Dr. Papperitz (No. 6, Part XIII,) will be listened to with repugnance, if not amazement, although possibly someday the grouping of such syntax in musical construction may cease to strike, if it afford no gratification. Not that it is purposeless or disjointed, or without intention or feeling, but it is a fair specimen of the mode of thought now indulged in by advanced men, and the new logic which connects the range of musical tones.

....Anglican composers...offer music which, if less recondite and complicated, is more conventional and catching, and therefore is easier to play, and consequently is

calculated to prove more grateful to the church-going amateur and the untutored congregational ear.³⁹

Whereas Jadassohn's style was fundamentally drawn from the lineage of Mendelssohn, Papperitz's compositions were tendered more towards Brahmsian proclivities. His ready use of chromaticism, coupled with a strong awareness of the technical capabilities of the practitioner – arguably more so than Jadassohn with his angular fugue – brought forward a series of choral preludes that are thoughtful precursors to the *Elf Choralvorspiele*, Opus posth 122 (1896), of Brahms's final year. True, their model may well have been the stylistic advancement earlier demonstrated in Brahms's *Choralvorspiel und Fugue 'O Traurigkeit, O Herzeleid'* published in 1882, but Papperitz's Op. 15 choral preludes of c. 1879-1886⁴⁰ nonetheless offer an important stylistic precursor for Brahms's own works. [Ex. 4]

³⁹ "The Organists' Quarterly Journal", *The Atheneum* (February 24, 1872; 2313) 250

⁴⁰ John Henderson, *A Directory of Composers for Organ*, 3rd. ed. (Swindon: John Henderson Publishing, 2005)

Example 4



Papperitz, *Schmücke dich, o liebe Seele*:1-5

As such Papperitz was expanding the harmonic landscape at the Conservatory at a time when several were reticently accepting any departure from established practice. For the students though, the unshackling of historical burden could lead to some poignant self-analysis, as Grieg's commentary notes:

Dr. Robert Papperitz gave me freer rein than E. F. Richer. As a result I got so far off the beaten track that in my harmonisations of chorals I put in chromatic voice leading, wherever I could. One day he exclaimed "Aber diese Chromatik! Sie werden ja der zweite Spohr!" ["But this chromaticism! You are becoming a second Spohr!"] And as Spohr seemed to me an academic, dry pedant of the first order, I was not at all pleased with that judgement. [Grieg later transferred his studies to Moritz Hauptmann.]⁴¹

⁴¹ Schjelderup-Ebbe, *Grieg*. 47

Heap

Charles Heap (1847-1900) was the first English musician with a serious background in organ study to arrive at the Conservatorium. Born in Birmingham, his early education was at Birmingham Grammar School. He sang in public as a child, and was later articled to Edwin Monk at York Minster. In Leipzig he studied with Hauptmann, Moscheles, Richter and Reinecke (1865–7), sometimes deputizing for the latter as organist at the Gewandhaus. He also studied with W. T. Best in Liverpool. In 1871 he graduated MusB from Cambridge and in 1872 took the MusD. His lasting legacy rests with the city of Birmingham where his conductorships included the Birmingham Musical Union (1870–86), the Wolverhampton Festival (1883, 1886), the North Staffordshire Festival, Hanley (1888–99), and the Birmingham Festival Choral Society. He also gave chamber concerts, piano and organ recitals, and was a popular and widely influential teacher. His compositions include a cantata *The Maid of Astolat* (Wolverhampton Festival, 1886), an oratorio, *The Captivity*, a number of other choral works including two further cantatas, several anthems, two concert overtures, chamber and keyboard music and songs.⁴² It is unclear how accomplished an organist and composer Heap was at the point he went to Leipzig, although from Reinecke's employment of him at the Gewandhaus we can assume that he was able to handle some major works. However, his relationship to Elgar and in turn Elgar's publishing association with Leipzig is a key point in question. Elgar had hoped to study in Leipzig but financial circumstances prevented it from happening. However, his *Sonata* was published in Leipzig and dedicated to Heap (and not curiously Hugh Blair who premiered it). As such, he could not only have advised Elgar on the more advanced climate of the organ profession in Germany, but also suggested

⁴² William Barclay Squire/John Warrack/Rosemary Williamson, "Charles Heap," *Oxford Music Online* (accessed 31 October, 2011)

- if necessary – the possibility of the work being well received in the publishing realm. Elgar later remarked that had it not been for Heap he would ‘have remained in outer darkness.’⁴³

Personally Heap composed only a handful of shorter works for the organ along with a more substantial *Postlude in C minor*. However, we can assume that, if his Leipzig Conservatorium impressions were less than favourable, it is unlikely so many others from England would have followed in his footsteps. Rather, by all accounts, his Leipzig training afforded him a hugely successful career on his return to England.

Luard-Selby

The second figure to study in Leipzig (1874) who would later achieve prominence in England, was Bertram Luard-Selby. Selby was born in Ightham, Kent and died in Brigg, Lincolnshire in 1918. In Leipzig he was a student of Jadassohn and Reinecke. His career on return to England included numerous positions including Organist of St. Barnabas, Marylebone, and Highgate School (1876), Salisbury Cathedral (1881–3), St. John’s, Torquay (1884), St. Barnabas, Pimlico (1886), and Rochester Cathedral (1900). His works include two unpublished operas (*The Ring*, 1886; *Adela*, 1888, Nottingham), cantatas, orchestral music (including *Idyll*, 1897), chamber music, piano and organ pieces, 16 anthems and ten services. He was best known for his incidental music to *Helena in Troas*, a drama by John Todhunter and E. W. Godwin (London, Hengler’s Circus, 17 May 1886), and a musical duologue, *Weather or No* (London, Savoy, 10 August 1896). The latter was also popular in Germany and Austria as *Das Wetterhäuschen*.⁴⁴ He was also music editor for the 1904 edition of

⁴³ Gerald Northrop Moore, *Edward Elgar – A Creative Life* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1984), 218. Ehrlich, *The English Musical Renaissance*, 48.

⁴⁴ J. A. Fuller Maitland and John Warrack, “Bertram Luard-Selby,” *Oxford Music Online* (accessed 29 October, 2011)

Hymns Ancient and Modern and some of his tunes can be found in the 1950 *Hymns Ancient and Modern* (Rev.).



Bertram Luard-Selby⁴⁵

Selby was in many respects the first transitional composer in the development of the English sonata tradition. The opening *Prelude (Grave e sostenuto)* of the *First Sonata* is a graceful pastorate in 6/8, although lasting only two pages. With its extensive use of pedal tones it would have been a technically unchallenging work for many to play. The second movement takes the unusual form of a *Larghetto* in 4/8, and with its use of grace notes brings to mind S. S. Wesley's writing in a similar vein, not least through the more advanced writing for the manuals. However, the incorporation of a sonata form is saved for the last movement – an innovation in itself. The F sharp minor *Larghetto* concludes with an F sharp major chord, to be followed by the opening theme of the *Allegro con brio* firmly in D major. [Ex. 5] The writing – unlike that of the central movement – has a pedagogical overtone to it. The pedals do not begin until bar five and the pedal tone of the opening movement is replaced with a repeating figure for the left foot, above which the manual writing is purely chordal. For the novice organist this would have provided writing that was both within the technical reach, as well as musical material that sounded impressive to the listener.

⁴⁵ J. Russell and Sons, *Bertram Luard-Selby*, JPG, *The Musical Times* (March, 1908), 159

Example 5

♩ = 100
Allegro con brio

Gt.

ff

5

Luard-Selby, *First Sonata*, Allegro con brio: bb 1-7

After a second theme is introduced at bar 21, a lengthy development section ensues, minus the tighter structure evidenced in either the earlier classically-inspired sonatas or later Leipzig models. However, the development material – largely based on the first theme – is somewhat awkwardly handled with several cadential points that serve only to offer the material in another key. However, there is a marked departure from expected practice when the first theme is expanded to include a descending chromatic line as the basis of a fugue at bars 123-126. [Ex. 6] The contrapuntal texture is relatively short-lived and in this sense there is a strong resemblance to Mendelssohn's fugues whereby strict counterpoint can be swiftly followed by passage with only occasional interjections of counterpoint at later points.

Example 6

122 *poco rit.*
Sw. *mf*
Ch. *mf*

125 *da questa parte più lento*
Ch. Clar.

Luard-Selby, *First Sonata*, Allegro con brio: 122-127

As such Luard-Selby breaks free of the English model with which he would have been familiar, albeit with a formal structure that was not to be imitated. Dispensing with the first-movement sonata form would perhaps not have been so unexpected had the ‘prelude’ been followed by a larger structure than a larghetto. Similarly, the brief introduction of the fugue – and a startlingly chromatic example at that – could have been an inspired decision had it been more expansively developed. Rather, the piece gives evidence of a student work that, though competently executed, is nonetheless without obvious lineage or foundation. Nevertheless, the merits of the piece as a pedagogical work are significant. Aside from the points mentioned above, registrations are included to aid the performer (including alternate registrations in the *Larghetto*); detailed information concerning which manuals to employ is

indicated; and perhaps more critically, metronome markings are added. Stylistically, and with a still relative paucity of available new works, the piece could have been well received by organists. The first two movements were short enough to be employed liturgically, and the last movement offered something of a technical challenge for the more adventurous player. In comparison with the Handelian-inspired fugues of the earlier English sonatas, Luard-Selby's chromatic fugue owed its relative influence to the romantic generation and Schumann's views of the fugue being an expressive vehicle, rather than an academic exercise.

The lineage via Leipzig to Mendelssohn is most in evidence at the end of the final movement. The coda – initially over a dominant pedal with rapid quaver passagework on the manuals – concludes with a pedal cadenza similar to those in Mendelssohn's sonatas, whereby the manual writing is either homophonic (as in this case) or playable with one hand (presumably to allow for the other to balance their body by holding the organ bench).

Secondly, after a pause on a first inversion dominant seventh chord (on A), there is a bar of rest followed by the playing of a stately chorale (*Andante*). This slowing of the rhythmic motion is reminiscent of the concluding page of Mendelssohn's *First Sonata*, although Luard-Selby chooses to end his first sonata pianissimo.

As such, although Luard-Selby does not adhere to any lineage in his use of form – unless he had intended his work to be received as a 'lesson' – his use of specific compositional devices does bear the imprimatur of Mendelssohn's legacy in England. Significantly, the sonata was published as his *First Sonata* and in this respect Luard-Selby also broke new ground, for when multiple sonatas had been issued by the same composer, they had either been published as a set (in the case of Hamilton Clarke) or issues as 'Sonata' and later 'Second Sonata' (as in Ouseley). Overall though, Luard-Selby had demonstrated that Mendelssohn's approach to the

‘sonata’ was validated in practice by other composers; a coherent (if not entirely cyclical) musical style could wed three (or more) movements together.

Beyond Luard-Selby there are of course several notable contributions to the genre, culminating in the Elgar sonata of 1895. However, the lack of critical enthusiasm for the Elgar as discussed later, is made all the clearer by Luard-Selby’s rather astonishing *Third Sonata* of 1913. Despite Elgar’s significant advancements in form, and melodic development, Luard-Selby’s 1913 sonata returns to the portfolio model. The first movement (*Allegro moderato*) in F major is again reminiscent of Mendelssohn. The central *Intermezzo* in D flat major evokes the nineteenth-century salon style, rather than the more subdued ‘intermezzo’ style Luard-Selby would have known in Brahms. The last movement – a *Finale* – returns to the Mendelssohnian spirit, although it appears abrupt in the context of the larger work. As such he had returned to the portfolio model – a decision that shows any advancement in style was going to be slow in progressing on home soil, if the older model was still perceived as applicable.

The title of ‘intermezzo’ is apposite and would have struck a familiar chord with those who knew Luard-Selby’s larger output for the instrument which included many shorter works and character pieces. This departure from expected sonata practice for a man of Luard-Selby’s education and professional position brings to mind the greater figure of Arthur Sullivan, another Leipzig student (1858-61), who had also elected to pursue a path that was outside the mainstream. Both men had achieved considerable success in Leipzig, and we must at least consider that the return back to England must have been jolting to their Germanically-inspired creativity, for the ‘higher’ fruits of their labours were not mirrored in later works. Both Sullivan and Luard-Selby had enjoyed considerable success with serious works – Sullivan’s incidental music to *The Tempest* and Luard-Selby *Helena in Troas*, and *Weather or No* (*Das Wetterhäuschen*) – yet both elected (or felt obliged) to pursue areas that were less

challenging to the greater English audience. This view has increased resonance when the reception of Papperitz's music in England is similarly borne in mind.

Haynes

1883 until 1886 witnessed the publication of two sonatas that would transform the English organ sonata into a work of symphonic dimensions, ultimately culminating with the symphony for organ of Edward Elgar in 1895. (Walter Battison Haynes (1859-1900), and Basil Harwood (1859-1949) must have later known, and possibly attended the Philharmonic Society's premiere of Camille Saint-Saëns *Third Symphony* in London, in 1886, conducted by the composer.⁴⁶ One wonders whether this boost of attention towards the instrument could have whetted the appetite of the public towards accepting larger structures, and more ambitious musical departures, which could open the door for the Elgar sonata, albeit with a genesis in Leipzig several years earlier.) Haynes's sonata is the first by an English composer to be conceived in four movements, and also the first to include an independent scherzo.



Walter Battison Haynes⁴⁷

Haynes had been a pupil of Prout in London and of Jadassohn in Leipzig. He was subsequently a professor of harmony and counterpoint at the RAM and organist at St.

⁴⁶ Fallon, D, M./Ratner, S. T. *Oxford Music Online* (accessed 9 July, 2010)

⁴⁷ Unknown, *Battison Haynes*, JPG, <http://www.rscm.u-net.com/portraits/HaynesWB.jpg> (accessed 28 January, 2012)

Phillip's, Sydenham, and the Chapel Royal, Savoy, Kensington. The *Sonata in D minor*⁴⁸ was published while he was studying in Leipzig, and is dedicated to Herrn Professor Dr. Robert Papperitz, Organist zu St. Nicolai in Leipzig (a parish formerly in the musical charge of J. S. Bach). The harmonic language of the sonata leans towards the later Romantic period, with a ready use of chromaticism and dramatic gesture. Beginning with a *Largo*, leading to an *Allegro risoluto*, the opening movement is set in the traditional sonata form, although introducing the first theme slowly through the introduction. Both are set in D minor. The subsequent *Andante cantabile* initially owes much to Mendelssohn with its short phrases and simple diatonic relationships, which serve as a relative musical tonic by comparison to the broad harmonic canvas of later material. It is, however, the altered approach to the Sonata as a work not of contrasting movements, but rather as evolving emotions that sets Haynes's work apart from its predecessors, and in direct comparison to Elgar, also sets a template for Elgar to consider.

The inclusion of a *Scherzoso*, [Ex. 7] complete with a slower central section (*poco meno mosso*) third movement however sets this apart from the previous three-movement sonatas of English composers and provoked an interesting commentary in review:

The Organ Sonata, Op. 11, is a work of even greater promise [than the Præludium und Fugue für zwei Pianoforte reviewed in the same article]. It opens with a solemn *largo* based on the principal subject of the succeeding *allegro risoluto*. This movement is worked out at considerable length and with much energy and breadth of style, the form being strictly symphonic. When its stormy course has been run we have an *andante cantabile* in B flat, 6-8 time, in welcome contrast, this portion of the work being written with considerable melodic charm and grace. The next section is a *scherzo*, in G minor, 3-4 time. The term *scherzo* applied to any music for the king of

⁴⁸ Battison Haynes, *Sonata in D minor, for the organ, Op. 11* (Leipzig: Fr. Kistner, 6191, 1883)

instruments may seem inappropriate, but Mr. Haynes's example is vigorous rather than light and playful, and though it shows a good deal of orchestral feeling it cannot be said to be unsuited to the organ. In form it is again strictly orthodox, the *trio* or *intermezzo* being in E flat, *poco meno mosso*. The *finale* is a lengthy fugue based on a simple and well marked subject, and elaborated with as much contrapuntal skill as knowledge of musical effect. The coda is especially striking and worthily closes a work which we may, without hesitation, describe as a very important addition to the repertory of the first-class organist. We say first class advisedly, for Mr. Haynes does not spare his executant, many of the passages, both for manuals and pedal, being of considerable difficulty. Marks of expression are given, but the registering is left to the taste and fancy of the player, as in Mendelssohn's organ works. Mr. Haynes is undoubtedly a composer of great promise, and further essays from his pen will be looked for with interest.⁴⁹

⁴⁹ *The Musical Times and Singing Class Circular*, Vol 25, No. 502, December 1, 1884: 713.

Example 7



Battison Haynes, *Scherzoso, Sonata*: 1-16

Beyond the inclusion of a scherzo, there is also the genesis of the organ scherzo as a composition, as though the genre was already known in the larger concert realm it was new to the ‘sacred’ instrument. Devoid of the nymph-like flights of passagework commonly associated with the piano scherzo, Haynes instead adopts the ‘trio’ as a model, relying on the organ’s ability to sustain harmony and thus utilising largely homophonic textures; the harmonic rhythm is therefore slower. Clearly, it was a well received model for it also forms the basis for Max Reger’s *Scherzo*, Op. 65.10 of 1902, [Ex. 8] which similarly employs a slow harmonic motion, chordal patterns and a 3/4 time signature. A further extension of this can be seen in the *Intermezzo* of Widor’s *Symphonie VI* [Ex. 9] where despite more rapid passagework, the central tenet of re-emphasizing tonic-dominant relationships is nonetheless preserved.

Example 8

Prestissimo

f

sempre *poco*

8

a *poco* *cre - - - - - scen - - - - - do* *ff*

Reger, *Scherzo*: 1-14

Example 9

Allegro (♩ = 126)

The musical score consists of two systems. The first system features a treble staff with a melody of eighth and sixteenth notes, and a bass staff with a simple accompaniment. The second system continues the melody in the treble staff, while the bass staff has a more active accompaniment with eighth notes. The piece concludes with a strong (sf) chord in the bass staff.

Widor, *Symphonie VI*, Intermezzo: 1-8

However, the burnish of Mendelssohn is nonetheless present with an interesting point of figuration that is quite reminiscent in the *Prelude in D minor* of the earlier composer. [Ex. 10] That Mendelssohn's work of 1839 was still forming a template for part of an English sonata movement in 1883 is an illuminating example of the profound influence Mendelssohn's music continued to have more than thirty years after his death. The advancements of the genre as demonstrated by Haynes are discussed later in direct relation to the Elgar sonata.

Mendelssohn, *Prelude in D minor*: 74-80

Haynes, *Allegro risoluto. Sonata*: 167-171

Reception and Conservatism

At this point in the development of the English sonata it is important to consider that Josef Rheinberger (1839-1901) had already contributed nine well-ordered sonatas to the repertoire, explored different forms during the course of these sonatas, and that his works were being

well received in England. Ultimately they were to be championed by Harvey Grace. In a related vein, Gustav Merkel (1827-1885) had contributed nine sonatas, the first of which was an organ duet. Although Rheinberger's works ultimately achieved far greater prominence in England – not least through the advocacy of Grace - the question of their influence on the English tradition needs to be borne in mind. In response, it is fair to gauge the influence of both these figures by their success as writers in the genre, rather than as musical figures composers aimed to emulate. Indeed if there was a degree of emulation inherent in the compositions of the English composers then it was to be perceived as a 'worthy' composer by allying with a broader sonata culture.

The basis of this view stems from the conservatism that had enveloped the English organ loft since the earlier part of the century. When one considers that chronologically speaking Merkel and Rheinberger are the obvious successors to Mendelssohn – albeit due to his untimely early death – then it is straight-forward to observe a line of development that, arguably in the Germanic school, ultimately leads to Max Reger. However, the advancement in structure, chromaticism, scale of composition, employment of secular forms (e.g. scherzo) does not occur in the English repertoire as a direct correlation to the publication of Merkel and Rheinberger's music. Rather the musical language stays predominantly in a Mendelssohnian vein, even until the later sonatas of Alan Gray (1890) and C. V. Stanford (1917-1921). However, the presence of many German sonatas entering the repertoire cannot be overlooked as a possible source of broader inspiration for English composers not least given the perceived superiority of the 'sonata' concept.

A chief critic with regard to advancement was Walter Parratt (1841-1924), Elvey's successor at St. George's, Windsor and later Master of the Queen's Music. Parratt was intermittently

vocal in his criticism of many musicians, not least W. T. Best (whose transcriptions of orchestral repertoire he described as “misapplied skill”), but also Edward Silas, Francis Gladstone, Alexander Mackenzie, C. H. H Parry and C. V. Stanford.⁵⁰ With the gradual introduction of more audacious repertoire from the continent and, meanwhile, a vocal proponent of conservative leanings at home, the role of the composer must have involved walking something of a musical tightrope. In this regard it is notable that poor critical reviews of continental organ music were few and far between, but that equally, in the larger sphere of musical reception, the English press were notoriously fickle – composers could, for instance, be highly celebrated, enjoy the favour of sovereign, and then ultimately be remembered in an obituary that was far from generous; one considers the high praise lauded on Czerny during his lifetime, although his obituary notes his major contribution to the musical establishment being the editorship of the ‘48’.

As such, although Battison Haynes enjoyed a final critical press for his sonata, the relative lack of professional activity that seems to have surrounded his return to England might well have been because of an inconsistent response to his work. Certainly the sonata broke new ground, and there is no question it prepared the way for Elgar, as will be shown later, but whether it met the public (rather than critical) expectation of a new work for the organ is another matter. For a generation accustomed to shorter works of little technical demand, it is conceivable that Haynes’s work was broadly seen as a curiosity.

Harwood

The penultimate composer to emerge from the Leipzig tradition was Basil Harwood. His life was markedly different from Heap, Luard-Selby and Haynes not least due to his limited years of compositional productivity. After taking up a scholarship place at Trinity College, Oxford,

⁵⁰ Andrew McCrea, “British organ music after 1800,” *The Cambridge Companion to the Organ* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1998) 289.

he completed degrees in classics and modern history, in addition to the BMus. However, in 1882 he also travelled to Leipzig for composition study at the Conservatorium with Jadassohn and organ study with Papperitz, later undertaking further organ study at Bristol Cathedral with George Riseley. His church posts included St. Barnabas, Pimlico (1883) followed by an appointment to Ely Cathedral four years later, followed by Christ Church, Oxford. In addition to his duties at Christ Church he was also Precentor at Keble College (1892-1903), Choragus of the University (1900-1909), Conductor of the Oxford Orchestral Association and the first Conductor of the Oxford Bach Choir, which he helped to found in 1896.⁵¹ He wrote a number of large-scale choral works for provincial festivals in addition to a considerable volume of anthems and service settings. He must have received a measure of encouragement from his colleagues for so great were the number and so prodigious must have been his delivery of them. He retired from the music profession in 1909 in order to inherit his father's wealth, and spent the remaining forty years of his life managing the family estate in Gloucestershire.⁵²



Basil Harwood⁵³

⁵¹ Kenneth Shenton, *The Complete Works for organ solo by Basil Harwood* (London: Stainer & Bell Limited, 1991): Introduction

⁵² Jeremy Dibble, "Basil Harwood," *Oxford Music Online* (accessed 9 July, 2010)

⁵³ Private Harwood family photo, *Basil Harwood*, JPG, <http://www.hymntime.com/tch/htm/a/f/l/aflmhigh.htm> (accessed 28 January, 2012)

The *Sonata No. 1 in C sharp minor, Op. 5* (dedicated to Walter Parratt Esq.)⁵⁴ written in 1886, marks a second important addition to the symphonically-inspired repertoire, following Haynes. (By contrast the Ebenezer Prout sonata of the same year remains more classically-conservatively inspired.) Harwood's style would have doubtless sat well with its dedicatee, Parratt, who would have discouraged saccharine indulgences of harmony or overtly secular inflections of style. (That Parratt disapproved of the leanings of Parry and Stanford merits some questioning, and yet it did not halt Stanford from the magnanimous gesture of dedicating his Third Organ Sonata to him. Of course Parratt (the dedicatee of Parry's Fantasia and Fugue in G) was also a composer in his own right and we cannot discount his professional ambition in this equation. Undeniable though is the respect he garnered as a teacher, and he was the first of the RCM professors to be knighted (1892)). Perhaps most importantly though, Harwood prepares the canvas some nine years in advance for Elgar to take the genre to yet another level of creativity altogether. We cannot be sure whether Elgar knew of the Harwood sonata; it is nevertheless highly probable. The piece begins with an opening *Allegro* in sonata form; it is a noticeably concise movement of 158 bars compared with Haynes's first movement of 249. The central movement, *Andante*, harks back to Mendelssohn with its short phrase structure and simpler tonic-dominant relationships within a movement that is rarely far from the D major tonic. Interestingly, Harwood provides a four-bar introduction/segue from the C sharp minor conclusion of the first movement to the theme of the *Andante* in D major. This innovation demonstrates that Harwood conceived the pieces with a larger structure in mind and as such did not adhere to the older portfolio template. However, he does follow Mendelssohn's model of including at least one easier movement, for the *Andante* would have been within the technical grasp of almost any organist, and concludes without an *attacca* marking. Rather, the introduction to the fugue is in the form of

⁵⁴ Basil Harwood, *Sonata No. 1 in C sharp minor* (London: Schott & Co, 1886)

a *Maestoso*, a piece of bold harmonic gesture, layered with chromaticism that in many respects foretells the opening of the Elgar sonata with its bravura dimensions. The concluding fugue (*Con moto*) is set in C sharp minor. Here Harwood loosely adopts a formula taken from the symphonic repertoire by utilising a theme heard in the opening movement. The fugue is on a large-scale and, as with the slow movement of the Haynes sonata, employs enharmonicism, with the sonata ending in D flat major.

Although Harwood opts to return to a three-movement form – the ‘third’ movement serves only as a introduction to the ‘fourth’ – the incorporation of a chorale in the final movement, that he has introduced in the first movement, is nonetheless groundbreaking and brings Harwood into line with the larger symphonic repertoire. Taken from the Constance Psalter (Mainz c. 1500), the words are included in the edition above the music:

Beata nobis gaudia

Anni reduxit orbita.

Cum spiritus Paraclitus

Refulsit in discipulos

The year’s circle bring

blessed joys to us again

when the comforting spirit

shone forth among the disciples (tr. Susan Hellauer)⁵⁵

There does not appear to be an overriding reason why Harwood would have selected this chorale. However, the sonata was first published in Mainz, where the psalter bearing the tune was also printed. That he may have wished for the association or perhaps seen a copy of the Constance Psalter, we cannot be sure. However, there can be no doubt that the publication of

⁵⁵ Hellauer, S. Beata nobis gaudia, www.anonymous4.cpm: 9 (accessed 10 January, 2011)

his works by Germany's oldest musical publisher would have been an enormous professional accomplishment.

The inclusion of the chorale in the first and third movements also brings Harwood closer to the increasingly popular French organ school, "which he admired"⁵⁶ and where chorales and Gregorian chants often appeared in works.⁵⁷ The dramatic impact of the *piano* section near the end of the final movement where the chorale is heard in its purest (homophonic) form after a tumultuous transition to D flat major brings to mind the conclusion of the *Andante moderato e serio* (first movement) of Mendelssohn's *Sonata I*, as well as Rosen's commentaries on the application of chorales to otherwise absolute music.

Of the Sonata, once described as "the finest organ sonata written by an Englishman"⁵⁸ *The Musical Times and Singing Class Circular* noted:

Here we have an ambitious work for the king of instruments, showing that the composer is well versed in modern devices and has no mind to be hampered by tradition in writing for the organ. The Sonata opens with an energetic *Allegro appassionata* in C sharp minor, not so complicated or difficult as it may appear at the first glance, but very solid and spirited. Near the close occurs a chord with G sharp on the fourth ledger line, a note not often found on English organs. The succeeding *Andante* in D, a key not too remote from the original tonic, is brief and simple by comparison, and would make an effective opening or middle voluntary. The *Finale*⁵⁹ opens with a somewhat vague and discursive *Maestoso* leading to a fugue based on an expressive subject and developed with a considerable amount of ingenuity. Near the close an old chorale "Beata nobis gaudia", taken from a psalter printed in Mayence in

⁵⁶ Ley, H. G. Basil Harwood, *The Musical Times*, vol. 100, no. 1402 (December 1959): 683

⁵⁷ Gordon Reynolds, "The Complete Harwood," *The Musical Times*, vol. 132, no. 1785 (November, 1991): 582

⁵⁸ Harvey Grace (quoted with Ley) "Basil Harwood," *The Musical Times*, vol. 100, no. 1402 (December 1959): 682

⁵⁹ Not titled as such in the score.

or about the year 1500, is introduced, and the Sonata is brought to an end with grandiose effect. Organists who give recitals will be glad to make acquaintance with Mr. Harwood's Sonata.⁶⁰

Aside from the issue of compass raised, it must be assumed that the technical demands on the player in this sonata must have seemed quite staggering to many organists, although any player that could master the Harwood sonata would be well prepared for the Elgar. Both composers display an affinity for writing textures that are largely 'piano works with pedals', although this could also be said of Liszt and Saint-Saëns's organ works.

The following article of 1926 about G. D. Cunningham's lunchtime recital programmes at Birmingham Town Hall alludes to the public's reception of musical style and whether the 'sonata' as a genre was ultimately starting to wear thin by the first quarter of the twentieth century:

It has seemed to me to be a bold thing to place a sonata at the end of a recital. In the old days I think eminent recitalists concluded their programmes with a piece of an attractive nature, something that could be "digested". Surely there was wisdom in this. As a rule it must be said that our City Organist is merciful to his audience in this respect, but occasionally we get such heavy fare as Elgar or Basil Harwood.⁶¹

The central movement was published by Schott in 1887 under the title *Andante Pour Orgue*⁶² although the whole work was not in print until 1890, some four years after its completion.

⁶⁰ *The Musical Times and Singing Class Circular*, vol. 32, no. 583 (September, 1891): 553-554

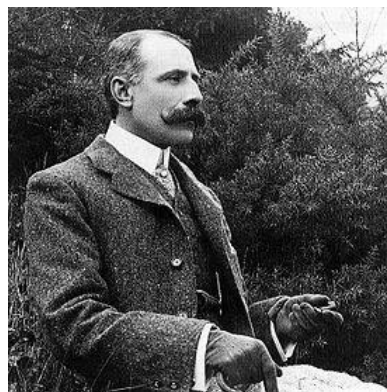
⁶¹ "Birmingham Town Hall Organ Recitals", *The Midland Musician*, Sidney Grew, Editor, vol. 2, no 1 (September, 1926): 24. It is acknowledged that this reference could be to either of the Harwood sonatas, both having been published before the date of the article.

⁶² Peter Hardwick, *Twentieth Century British Organ Music* (Lanham, MD; Oxford: Scarecrow Press, c. 2003), 29

Whether his appointment to Ely Cathedral elevated him in the eyes of Schott who then sought to publish the whole work, or whether Schott simply waited to see the public's response to the middle movement before making a commitment to the whole piece, is conjecture. However, it must be borne in mind that sonata movements were frequently played separately on recital programmes.

Elgar

It is fair to observe that the Elgar (1857-1934) *Sonata* for organ (1895),⁶³ dedicated to C. Heap, Mus. Doc, stands in a class all its own. At the point of its composition, no organ work had been written on English soil of quite the same scale, or with the same measure of technical demands. However, the organ as a vehicle for orchestral colour and symphonic transcription was well known both through the transcriptions of musicians such as W. T. Best in Liverpool and in the repertoire of many a church organist – symphony or chamber movements heard in transcription were often included in sacred settings, not least as part of auditions for church posts.



Edward Elgar⁶⁴

⁶³ Edward Elgar, *Sonata for Organ, G major, Op. 28* (Leipzig: Breitkopf & Haertel, 1896).

⁶⁴ Unknown, *Edward Elgar*, JPG, <http://www.geocities.com/hansenk69/elgar3.jpg> (former link - PD photo) (accessed 28 January, 2012)

However, the writing of a four movement sonata – often dubbed Elgar’s first ‘symphony’ was a bold move, and not universally welcomed into the repertoire. As a commentary written during his lifetime notes, his relationship with the organ began at a young age: ‘As a boy he would sit by his father’s side Sunday by Sunday in the organ loft of St. George’s Church and would frequently extemporise the voluntaries and accompany the services. He worked through Rin[c]k, and Best’s ‘Organ School’ entirely by himself.’⁶⁵ His relationship to the organ world was especially close due to his affiliation with the Three Choirs Festivals, initially as a violinist (including an 1884 performance under Dvořák) and later as a composer. As such he was familiar with the cathedral organists of Hereford, Gloucester and Worcester, as well as organists in Birmingham and London especially.

In 1891 Elgar had moved back to Malvern from London and must have felt somewhat rejected by the musical establishment of the capital city. Arguably he did not approach the metropolis with a significant quantity of larger works and any sense of dejection was somewhat unnecessary. However, feeling somewhat dejected it is not altogether surprising that, in approaching symphonic form, he should choose to write an organ work, rather than embark on a first (orchestral) symphony. As such, on the day of posting the final Bavarian song, he began work on the sonata.⁶⁶ Hugh Blair, then organist of Worcester Cathedral and himself a composer, had asked for a new organ voluntary to play at a cathedral service in July 1895, at which a party of Americans were to be visiting. The first movement to be sketched was in fact the second movement, *Allegretto*. Written as a trio it is Elgar’s most dramatic departure from the established perceptions of the sonata. Moore notes that a ‘whirling figure’ [Ex. 11] of the right hand figuration owes much to Elgar’s writing for two violins in *The*

⁶⁵ The Musical Times and Singing Class Circular, Vol 31, no. 572, October 1, 1890: 642

⁶⁶ Jerrold Northrop Moore, *Edward Elgar – A Creative Life*. (Oxford, New York: Oxford University Press) 188

Snow, although this writing also anticipates *The Wand of Youth* which is itself based on much earlier Elgar sketches.

Example 11

Allegretto

III

pp

I mit II

mf

p 16'

3

Elgar, *Sonata*, Allegretto: 1-5

The first movement, with its broad declamatory gestures is reminiscent of Harwood's brief *Maestoso*, as well as the opening theme of *The Black Knight*.⁶⁷ However, it is the sheer scale of the first movement and the incorporation of multiple themes that demands, more than any sonata before it, a large-scale instrument of symphonic proportions. Elgar's sonata was the first English sonata that required a true (Victorian) English organ. However, Elgar was not beyond a brief glimpse to the past, and although he does not write a fugue – that is saved for the later *Severn Suite*, the so-called 'Second Sonata' – he does incorporate counterpoint

⁶⁷ Ibid, 189.

briefly in the form of a short canon. [Ex. 12] In commenting to an interviewer he once remarked that he played three or four preludes and fugues from the Well-tempered Klavier “every day. No. 33 in E major, is one of my favourites. No. 31 is another, and No. 29, a wonderful masterpiece, is constantly before me.”⁶⁸

Example 12

75 III Clar. 8' p

79 II

mit II

Elgar, *Sonata*, Allegro maestoso: 75-81

As with Haynes, Elgar chose the slow movement for his greatest use of harmonic invention, and (again like Haynes) preceded the movement with a contrasting musical essay that was more harmonically docile. In one of the most significant departures from the conservative English sonata tradition, Elgar employs enharmonicism. Although Harwood had incorporated this phenomenon in his final movement, Elgar’s usage is much closer to Haynes, not least in the key relationship. [Ex. 13]

⁶⁸ Robert J Buckley, *Sir Edward Elgar* (London: J. Lane, 1945), 31.

Example 13

Example 13 shows a musical score for measures 39-42. The score is written for piano (p) and features a complex, flowing melody in the right hand and a supporting bass line in the left hand. The key signature is B-flat major (two flats). The time signature is 4/4. The score includes dynamic markings such as *f* (forte) and *sf* (sforzando), and articulation markings like *legato*. The notation includes slurs, ties, and various rhythmic values including eighth and sixteenth notes.

Haynes, *Sonata*, Andante Cantabile: 39-42

Haynes, *Sonata*, Andante Cantabile: 39-42 shows a musical score for measures 29-34. The score is written for piano (p) and features a complex, flowing melody in the right hand and a supporting bass line in the left hand. The key signature is B-flat major (two flats). The time signature is 4/4. The score includes dynamic markings such as *f* (forte) and *sf* (sforzando), and articulation markings like *legato*. The notation includes slurs, ties, and various rhythmic values including eighth and sixteenth notes.

Elgar, *Sonata*, Andante espressivo: 29-34

However, Elgar also inherits from Harwood in the intra-beat flourishes whereby dotted rhythms are followed by descending arpeggios (by comparison to Harwood's ascending patterns). [Ex. 14]

Example 14

Example 14 shows measures 5 through 8 of a musical piece. The score is written for piano (p) and features a complex rhythmic pattern. The key signature is three sharps (F#, C#, G#) and the time signature is 3/4. The music is characterized by rapid sixteenth-note passages in the right hand and more sustained, often dotted, notes in the left hand. Dynamic markings include *mf* (mezzo-forte) and *più f* (più forte). The notation includes various accidentals and articulation marks such as slurs and staccato marks.

Harwood, *Sonata I*, Allegro: 5-8

This section of the score covers measures 15 through 21 of Harwood's *Sonata I*. The key signature is two sharps (D, E) and the time signature is 3/4. The music features a prominent melodic line in the right hand, often marked with slurs and dynamic markings like *f* (forte). The left hand provides harmonic support with chords and moving lines. Measure numbers 15, 18, and 21 are indicated at the start of their respective staves. The notation includes various accidentals and articulation marks.

Elgar, *Sonata*, Allegro maestoso: 15-21

Finally, the rhythmic and melodic figure Elgar employs as his fourth movement (*Presto*) first theme can also be traced back to Harwood. [Ex. 15]

Example 15

Presto (comodo)

Elgar, *Sonata*, *Presto*: 1-5

Con fuoco

57

ff

Harwood, *Sonata*, *Allegro appassionata*: 57-63

294

f

Voll.

299

Harwood, *Sonata*, Allegro appassionata: 294-302

Had the score of the sonata arrived more promptly, and in turn been more thoroughly practised by Hugh Blair, he might well have garnered an instant triumph, even if a provincial one at first. However, it arrived with only four days left to study it and the reportedly unsuccessful first performance did not solidify its place in the repertoire initially. On Sunday, 8 July, the Elgars, accompanied by Miss Burley, went to the cathedral to hear the sonata as the voluntary at Matins.

Miss Burley wrote:

His performance of the Sonata showed that he had either not learned it or else had celebrated the event unwisely, for he made a terrible mess of poor Elgar's work. I was present at this debacle and commiserated with the Genius. But with a splendid flash of loyalty he refused to blame the murderer who, he said, had not had enough time thoroughly to study the victim.⁶⁹

The sonata is written for an instrument of at least three manuals. Although only a few specific stop registrations are given – for reeds and pitch requirements – the score is replete with dynamic markings and indications for which manual should be employed at a given time. A letter written to a periodical five years after its premiere indicates some of the initial misgivings of its entry into the repertoire:

Elgar was a new name then, and no excessive enthusiasm was shown in certain musical circles. The Sonata was regarded at first with a cold eye. A famous teacher made great sport of a supposed Wagner reminiscence at bar 5 of the first movement; also at the repeated chords for the left hand a little further on, and finally gave it up as hopelessly impracticable when confronted with the stretch (certainly impossible as written) in the second line of p. 7 (I quote from my B. & H. edition. I don't know whether any other has been issued): 'This young man certainly doesn't know how to write for the organ!' It is only just to say that the critic afterwards became a warm admirer of the maturer Elgar. I know nothing in organ literature quite so beautiful

⁶⁹ Edward Elgar: the record of a friendship 86

as this music....Even if one is bold enough to suggest that composers see best through the eyes of the orchestra, that is a small matter.⁷⁰

By 1935 the critical eye still bore a degree of scepticism towards Elgar, although held Harwood in relative esteem:

Sir Edward Elgar, in a fit of youthful folly of which he seems to have repented, wrote an admirable Sonata for the organ. It is an orchestral sketch rather than a true organ work, but we shall always treasure it, as coming from him and for its own sake. Basil Harwood, on the contrary, is a pure organ composer. His work is rhapsodic to an abnormal degree, and in fact the measure of its success is always the measure of its coherence.⁷¹

As with many masterworks, the Elgar sonata was ahead of its time. Even if Hugh Blair had been able to devote sufficient time to a study of the work, it is doubtful the critical reception would have been any different, not least because, with the exception of Miss Burley, later judges were merely surveying the published score. Novello accepted the work for publication but suggested publishing the movements separately. Of itself this was not surprising as sonata movements were often played as pieces separate to the whole, and E. J. Hopkins's sonata had been published in just this manner. However, Elgar instead sent his work to Breikopf & Härtel in Leipzig who accepted it as a complete work. Consequently, it was published with German (rather than English) registrational directions. Dedicated to Heap, the sonata in many respects belonged to the Leipzig tradition, although not for the Heap connection alone. Rather, when considering the lineage of sonatas that were composed in England we can observe that there were no precursors to Elgar's contribution in any respect. Rather, it took an

⁷⁰ Ridgway, J. C, letter to *The Musical Times*, Vol. 72, No. 1058, April 1, 1931: 351-2.

⁷¹ Archibald Farmer, "English Organ Music (Concluded)," *The Musical Times*, Vol. 73, No. 1078, (December 1, 1932): 1110

ambitious stance by Harwood, and most especially by Haynes to transform the English organ sonata from a functional educational model to a work of virtuosity on a symphonic scale. As such, when we consider the harsh criticism directed at Elgar in 1895 and beyond, we must first remember the pioneering spirit of the adopted Leipzigers a decade before. Had the English not encountered Mendelssohn and in turn Leipzig, it is highly unlikely the concept of an organ sonata would have developed sufficiently for Elgar's sonata to have been conceived, un-pragmatic though it may have appeared. Rather the path towards Elgar begins with Mendelssohn and centres on a route through the city that bore the statue of the organ world's eternal divine, J. S. Bach.

Chapter 3

**Aesthetic influences from the eighteenth
and nineteenth centuries towards the
work-
concepts of the sonata and fugue**

Aesthetic considerations

This chapter seeks to examine the role of the Victorian organist-composers when viewed in line with the aesthetic conditioning of their time. In the previous two chapters there has been a discussion on classicism and the lineage from the 'lesson' tradition, together with the importance of the unification of form and pedagogical practice, and, in later Victorian works, the influence and lineage that found its early beginnings at the Leipzig conservatorium. By comparison to the continental composers, English organist-composers elected to continue the sonata tradition far beyond its initial classical domain. However, the compositional decisions made by these composers did not extend classical templates into the romantic period through a clear expansion of the form (or even a continuation of Beethoven's approach to form), but rather sought as a model the classical form of an earlier era.

As such the composers were not so much heteronomists as autonomists. From this standpoint it would be simple to suggest that they were merely following in the tracks laid by the great masters of the past, albeit obviating the course of continental progress by several decades. But with the 'new' Victorian organ at their disposal, with its symphonic capabilities, vastly increased dynamic range, and increased (and consistent) compass, why should they have chosen to look to the past, rather than the future? Further, if their vision of the future was one tempered by a re-evaluation of older models what aesthetical considerations governed this approach?

Central to this consideration will be the two prevailing genres, the sonata and fugue, the latter frequently occurring as the last movement of the sonata. Sonatas absent any fugue or alternate contrapuntal form were very rare. With this creative framework set in place the English had already made a conscious decision to chart a unique course. By comparison a developing French organ sonata tradition was effectively non-existent beyond Guilmant,

whereas the German model departed from the pedagogical style set in place by Mendelssohn and developed instead into a preferred intellectual lineage, from Rheinberger to Reger. To begin this study it is first necessary to consider the broad aesthetic conditioning that applies to the organ, not least by comparison to its sister keyboard instrument, the piano.

The organist-composer functions in a world historically set apart from the mainstream of music-making due to the organ's inextricable association with the extra-ordinary. From the Greek age it was an instrument used in processions, and has long been affiliated with royalty. Indeed instruments have been offered as gifts (not least between tsars and other heads of state). In the liturgical setting the organ has been the traditional instrument of the church, and by default the perception of it as a concert (secular) instrument has always met with apprehension by some.

Unlike the concert hall, the church is a pre-conditioned environment filled with expectations and rules, many of which are unwritten and frequently unspoken until a creative decision is met with critical commentary from clerics, congregants, or fellow musicians. Indeed, the presupposed role of the organist-composer is to seek out a musical world that elevates and enhances more than it does to provide a base phenomenological response of aural gratification for a listener. As such it is not the role of sacred music to appear to be of a given time or necessarily 'popular', but rather to fit within the given liturgical protocols and imperatives of a specific institution or denomination. In this sense the church musician is largely perceived to function at the opposite end of the spectrum to the 'virtuoso' musician. Whereas the virtuoso might seek to engage the audience with showmanship and brilliance of technique, the organist will be seeking a very specific creative aesthetic. The range of this aesthetic can be broad however, ranging from the performance of short meditative works to

imposing grandiose masterworks that summon up the majesty of a particular liturgy or ceremony in a musical voice. However, these variables are always set within the strictures and expectations of a given institution; what may be applicable in one setting is not necessarily welcomed in another. With a rapidly expanding musical press, and the Victorians un-shy when it came to expressing their views – especially when they could do so anonymously in journals – much criticism and advice consequently abounded on what style(s) could be considered ‘worthy’.

The period chosen for examination, 1856-1900, highlights the separation of the organ and the church from the musical mainstream. As the concert world embraced the virtuoso spheres of the piano, with ever more challenging concerti, solo works, transcriptions and paraphrases, the organ world instead turned inward and pondered the ‘ancient’. For protagonists like William Crotch, who in his early-nineteenth-century lectures (1818) had already perceived past models as the summit of creativity, the present model must be a mirror of past styles and the ancient thus admired in the contemporary age. This was preferential to an approach clouded by questionable innovations of ‘new’ styles. Although it would be an audacious leap to suggest that Crotch set a tone of conservatism in his 1818 lectures and writings that continues to this day and thus influenced several generations, it would be equally oblique to deny that his influence was limited to the Oxbridge circles he directly interacted with. In many respects the conservative ideals of Crotch found an easy ear throughout the later nineteenth and twentieth centuries. That these expectations were founded in clerical and congregational courts of opinion further emphasises the reasoning behind the creative decisions that came to the fore.

If we consider that any development – even it be sometimes hastily perceived as a regressive one – is the result of multiple contemporaneous conditions coalescing, then we must first turn to the factor that should have driven this movement of orthodoxy towards an opposing resting place: the instrument itself. The development of the Victorian organ with all its new tonal capabilities allowed for anything but a *status quo* in terms of composition. Indeed, as the development of the organ was arguably far beyond any other instrumental advancement of the nineteenth century one could easily have expected a complete departure in the style of writing across the continent and in England. But this was not to be, notably excepting Franz Liszt whose custom of writing ‘piano music with pedals’ broke new ground.

The development of the English organ, beginning in the late 1830s but gaining rapid ground from the 1840s onwards, allowed for the community of organist-composers (some of whom were prominent academics) to reflect on the position of the instrument along with its role and ultimate repertoire. The previous two centuries had not afforded the English public anything comparable to the developments in Germanic music – England could not boast a J. S. Bach (or indeed a Couperin or Frescobaldi), but instead adopted Handel as its own. Of course the high-points of the baroque period in organ composition had not been followed to any comparable degree in the classical era; as the organ building tradition had largely stagnated in terms of organic development so too had the repertoire. Although Green, G. P. England and Elliott’s building approaches did not bear progressive fruit they nonetheless considered themselves innovators. For the Victorians, though, this provided a ready license to re-assess their own approach and inject into the national heritage works that could be considered worthy of their nation’s expanding superiority in the world, whilst beginning to chart a ‘new’ course filling an unavoidable chasm in the repertoire.

Mendelssohn's influence on the English organ community - beginning in the late 1830s - with his staunch promotion of the works of Bach, led to the development of the 'German system' of design whereby a two-octave C-C pedal compass on organs would eventually become the norm¹, in large part so that English organs were capable of playing the works of Bach. As such, although Mendelssohn's legacy towards sacred music in England was most obviously apparent with the Birmingham commission of *Elijah* (1846) and the earlier Liverpool premiere of *St. Paul* (1836), his greater legacy might well be his re-focussing of the circumscribed view the English had over their instruments. However, in wishing to emulate his heroic role, English composers began to consider German models of composition – specifically the sonata and fugue – and as such moved forward with a Germanic organ, and forms, as their media. Although it is appropriate to consider the influence Crotch's didacticism may have had on the creative decisions of later composers, it is equally pertinent to consider German aesthetical aspects to compositions during the late eighteenth century and throughout the nineteenth century if we are to understand the Victorians' reasoning of this trend in its fuller context.

Organists were amongst the few full-time musicians in English musical society, although they did not enjoy the universal respect of civic society. Some cathedral organists were treated poorly by clergy and those associated with the theatre or pleasure garden were labelled with the reputation of such haunts of vice. To this end the founding of the College of Organists in 1864 sought to right many concerns. Key among those was the establishment of standards; securing a physical home for meetings and the founding of a library (this would be their long-time abode at Kensington Gore, thanks to the support of C. H. H. Parry, then

¹ 27-note (C-d1) compass was most common in progressive circles at this point, eventually moving towards a 29-note compass

Director of the Royal College of Music); to secure royal patronage at the earliest possible moment; and to give their branch of the musical world an elevated professional air that would assimilate their endeavours to colleagues in the legal and medical professions. (This aspiration also extended to Ouseley's and Stainer's advocacy towards the Oxford degree being more than simply a gentleman's qualification.) The question of parity in remuneration to other professions appears not to have been a concern, or at least was not seriously entertained. Rather, it was a question of respect and the desire for esteem and acknowledgement of worthy achievement that fostered a climate which ultimately influenced organist-composers' compositional practices.

The question of 'worthiness' through industrious effort was a primary concern. Given the allied concern for (Victorian) appropriateness it cannot be surprising that the English organists would look to successful, if not revered, models. As Crotch had looked to Palestrina and Handel, the figures of Best, Ouseley, and MacFarren would look to Mozart and Beethoven's keyboard and symphonic style, whilst all would look to associate themselves with Bach, through scholarly fugal composition. The age of the Handelian choral fugue had largely passed and the organist-composers sought an (arguably) higher model. In this sense they adopted the mantle of Bach from Mendelssohn's promotion of the Leipzig master, even though Mendelssohn's organ - as opposed to piano - fugues leaned more towards Handelian fugato. In this sense they could be seen breaking new ground on English soil even if the surface had been well marked one hundred years earlier on the continent.

The association with Bach, Mozart and Beethoven (as demonstrated in the chapter on classicism) bore the possibility of a meritorious ascent in the eyes of the profession whilst reaching the larger public who were familiar with the earlier styles. Indeed, that so many composers chose to write relatively 'simple' works by comparison to the models of Bach illuminates a public interest towards the 'style', as well as the composers' astute sense in

providing works that could have a ring of familiarity to them without being an overt technical burden to the player.

However, when technical accomplishment could be in union with high standards of compositions, it is understandable how E. T. A. Hoffmann could write: ‘...recent instrumental music has certainly elevated itself to heights the old masters could not have imagined, just as today’s musicians far surpass those of the past in technique.’² For the most part though, average organists did not possess the technique of the keyboard masters of the day.

The emergence of the sonata as a concept

The sonata became the compositional genre by which English organist-composers could present their credentials to the profession at large, whilst also attaching themselves to an unassailable Teutonic model; through the sonata they could align with the populism of Handel and Mendelssohn, as well as the sacred glow of Bach. Further, through the advancement of the Victorian organ, the sonata need not be a manualiter work, meekly serving as a latter-day English successor to Stanley’s three-movement voluntaries. Rather it could be an artwork that could potentially emulate the orchestral symphonic language, or at least the grandeur of the baroque, or the elegance of the first movement of a classical symphony.

This culture of seeking out a superior form as a template requires a reconsideration of the twentieth-century concept that Victorian transcriptions of orchestral repertoire for the organ were written for the instrument merely because it had the dynamic scope to execute such works, and audiences were (in an age of the music hall) keen for a musical thrill with the solitary organist assuming control of every orchestral part. Rather we must be open to the idea that organists sought to promote the finest musical works through their recitals, whether

² E. T. A. Hoffmann, *Schriften zur Musik*, ed. Friedrich Schnapp (Munich, 1964), 230.

originally written for the instrument or not. To be associated with the ‘great’ and ‘famous’ works was inherent in nineteenth-century musical culture - if operatic scenes could be played on the piano, and symphonies played as piano duets, then why not play orchestral works on the organ? Seeking elevation through association was nothing new, but there is arguably no period that greater demonstrates this concatenation of homage in the organ repertoire than the Victorian era; in an age of grandiose (industrial) personalities, the executants on the king of instruments were well positioned to address a larger audience than most musicians whether they performed in the town hall, or for the weekly (or in some cases daily) church services.

Paul Bekker, writing during the German republican fervour of 1918, explained the composer’s intention of writing symphonically was ‘to speak, through instrumental music, to a multitude’, and as Dahlhaus notes, this is a sentiment that extends back to the late classical period.³ Thus, for the organists, it was a chance to not only chart a noble course in a public setting but also by default break free of the sacred constraint, even if they did so in a vein of self-imposed orthodoxy.

This aspect of independence can be traced to the acceptance of music as an autonomous art-form from the mid-eighteenth-century. Music was no longer perceived simply as a skill, whether composed or performed, but rather to be an instrument of meaning, indeed of transcendence. Further, the relative emancipation of music as an independent art form coincided with the separation of the creative from functional settings. Until the mid-eighteenth century, music had primarily served social, political and religious ends.⁴ Prior to the emergence of ‘fine’ art which developed in the eighteenth century, art production was

³ Paul Bekker, *Die Sinfonie von Beethoven bis Mahler* (Berlin, 1918) 12. Carl Dahlhaus, *The Idea of Absolute Music*. tr. Roger Lustig (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1989), 11.

⁴ Lydia Goehr, *The Imaginary Museum of Musical Works* (Oxford, Clarendon Press, 1992) 149.

valued according to the needs of a specific market rather than by 'higher' principles and functions.⁵ Moreover, the 'purpose' of musical creation was allied directly to an ultimate performance, rather than as a creative process in itself. Bach's sacred works (*pièces d'occasion*) were not intended for secular concert performance but rather for a specific liturgical use, indeed on a prescribed day in the year. As such the Victorian organists were merging two creative aesthetics as their setting was one of circumscription but their art-form was one of independence.

Fine Art

A key aspect of the emergence of 'fine' art (and in turn music specifically), which had peaked around 1800 with a general aestheticization of art, rested with the association of value and aesthetic judgement of particular art works. If works were to be valued, then they needed to be compared with other works. Logically the easiest comparison of works would rest with those written in the same genre, and with the laudatory reception of the '48' (preludes and fugues of Bach) and the '32' (sonatas of Beethoven), the emergence of an English (organ) sonata tradition that typically offered a last-movement fugue seems more than merely coincidental in the same era that placed increased emphasis on the formation of a 'canon'.

That the organ works were most often heard in the context of a sacred environment (whether liturgically or in a concert setting) brings to bear the place of instrumental music occupying a 'transcendent' role within the larger musical *œuvre*. In a romantic creative aesthetic this was stressed with the adulation expressed towards composers of past generations; Samuel Wesley regarded Bach as a 'saint', 'demi-god,' and 'musical high priest', whereas Bizet considered Beethoven not as a human but as a god. These descriptions assigned a superiority to the work of their predecessors that, in turn, represented the authority of those composers who

⁵ Goehr, *The Imaginary Museum of Musical Works*, 150.

themselves aspired to express higher truths.⁶ As such when composers chose to emulate their style they were aligning themselves not only with the quality of creative endeavour, but also the idea of being closer to a superior artist who was (in their mind) closer to the Supreme Creator. In turn the sometimes maligned organist rose in the public's perception.

Music of itself

A further nineteenth-century development occurred with the discussion of musical forms being specific to music itself - chiefly those of the sonata, symphony, and concerto⁷ - and broadly defined as a work-concept. The place of music was no longer attached to extra-musical concerns but rather works were seen firstly in an individuated contextualisation of their own art-form and secondly in comparison to other creations within the same genre. As such this brought a measure of autonomy to the creative aspect hitherto unknown. Adam Smith commented in 1795:

instrumental Music does not imitate, as vocal music, as Painting, or as Dancing would imitate, a gay...or a melancholy person;...it becomes itself a gay....or a melancholy object;...What is called the subject of [instrumental] Music...is altogether different from what is called the subject of a poem or picture, which is always something which is not either in the poem or in the picture.⁸

Organists (and as such organist-composers) of the nineteenth century were in the crosshairs of these concerns. On the one hand they enjoyed the relative luxury of a position that often included an income and housing – a factor which to this day separates them from the mainstream of creative artists – on the other hand they were constrained by expectations and institutional protocols. More crucially, although their work was ‘in service’ to a religious

⁶ Ibid, 208-209.

⁷ Ibid, 164.

⁸ *The Works of Adam Smith* (London: 1811), 287-301. Goehr, *The Imaginary Museum of Musical Works*, 154.

institution, it fell into a further sub-category which set the community of organists apart from the mainstream musical world; their work was primarily governed by the aesthetic concerns of a given institution, and the primary place of organ music was in the extra-liturgical function of preludes and voluntaries (postludes). The style of writing though, considered in organ tutors like Marsh and Done is very clear on what constituted appropriate repertoire before, during and after services. Thus, the composers were liturgically free from constraint, but with a somewhat prescriptive creative license nonetheless. However, despite institutional protocols, their quest ultimately sought to emulate the beautiful in religion, and in this respect the ‘function’ of the art-form correlates well, as found in the subsequent emergence of art religion. In this respect the late-eighteenth-century aesthetic which separated ‘art’ from (mere) ‘craft’, placed these composers in a worthier position. As Karl Philipp Moritz noted in 1795:

Only when considered in conjunction with their function as an entity that includes that function do [objects of utility] afford pleasure; divorced from that function, they are a matter of total indifference...The opposite is the case with the beautiful. This has no extrinsic purpose. It is not there to fulfil anything else, but it exists on account of its own perfection. We do not contemplate it to discover what use we make of it; we use it only to the extent that we can contemplate it.⁹

In a practical sense, English organists had not been beholden to an employer to enable the performance of their music, as (though they needed an employer) the same person would rarely subscribe to any evaluation of the solo organ literature composed or performed. This freeing of the composer from economical restriction was in keeping with Beethoven’s assertion on the ideal working environment of the composer as:

⁹ Letter to Moses Mendelssohn, rpt. Le Huray and Day (eds.), *Music and Aesthetics*, 187. Goehr, *The Imaginary Museum of Musical Works*, 170.

...the aspiration and the aim of every true artist to place himself in a position in which he can occupy himself exclusively with the composition of larger works and will not be prevented from doing so by other duties or by economical considerations.¹⁰

To this day an organist can complete a composition of an afternoon and play it as a voluntary for evensong a few hours later. The music is there to serve a function, but the type of music serving that function is not predetermined, only the expected aesthetic of its creation. (This is in notable contrast to the practice of performing solo ‘repertoire’ in the French liturgical style with the integration of Gregorian chant melodies into improvisation whereby the style of improvisation can be at wild variance to the overall musical tenor of the service.)

The sacred setting

We must also consider the premise that whilst almost any (if not potentially all) organ music can be heard in a concert setting, clerical and professional expectations demand that there are limits to the style of repertoire heard in connection with a liturgical service. The gauge of reason for this essentially discretionary aspect to the musician’s craft varies widely. For some, *Ite missa est* (or an alternate form of ‘dismissal’) declared the end of the service and the music that followed was a mere entertainment for the congregants still in attendance, chattering away. For some clerics, the notion that this was a period for the organist to ‘show off’ was not beyond observance, then as now. Whereas, for a third constituency it was considered integral (albeit extra-liturgical) to the larger tenor of the service, and the spirit of devotion that had manifested itself through the reading of scripture, prayers, music, and preaching was one to be maintained until the final chord of any musical work that concluded a service. That solo organ music found its way into the central part of the service (rather than

¹⁰ *Beethoven: Letters, Journals and Conversations*, ed. M. Hamburger (New York, 1951)

its extremes) through the 'Middle Voluntary' illuminates this position of the organist serving a distinctive role in spiritual devotion.

Coupled to this dilemma is the question of style and suitability which varies as much from musician to musician as it does from one institution to another. A further equation is appended by the place of interventionists within an institution whose view can equally vary as wildly as that of the incumbent musician, but nonetheless bring about influence. Organists are not beyond external influence, anymore than other musicians. In conclusion it should be noted that 'art for art's sake' and 'art for the people' were (and arguably still are), in the context of organist-composer, a relative irrelevance. The composer was largely free to compose what he preferred and deemed worthy.

Lastly, in direct contrast to the ever-vocal audiences of the concert hall, the organist had a congregation that was relatively well-behaved at services, as this was decreed by law. And, even if the congregation (audience) was disaffected by the hearing of a new work it was highly unlikely anyone would leave, or worse still voice their disapproval publicly, as some patrons were known to do in the concert hall and opera house. In short though, organist-composers faced no mean balancing act if they wanted their creative work to meet with universal approval.

Reception

The Victorian sonata (and with it the customary fugue) was both an inheritor of past practice as well as an absolute work, for it generally bore no textual association. In this sense, as Goehr notes:

...the success of aesthetic reception depended upon the work of art's having no referential or external features. Each work had to contain everything of significance within itself."¹¹

As such, unlike a chorale, which could evoke particular associations, the sonata had to stand alone as a complete artwork. Goehr further relates this to the Hegelian theory of an 'embodied Idea'.¹² With this rationale the quality of the 'art' was considered inextricably linked to the form and content of a given 'work', and to this end the selection of a 'form' already venerated proved a key rationale to composers. They were, in essence, working from an approved (if not hallowed) template. Further they could rationalise their decision with the thesis that, since everything was in place for a reason, a validated course of action was the first step toward measuring their own identity, place, and ultimate worth. Though individual egotism suggests a desire for approval there is an aspect to the Victorian's craft that raised their practices above such trivialities.

A sense of place (not so far removed from the military equivalent of rank) was nonetheless a conscious matter within the community of organists, and working in settings themselves imbued with history and social station, the role of the organist-composer had the illusion of inherent seniority to the mainstream of artists. Whereas a concert pianist might enquire about

¹¹ Goehr, *The Imaginary Museum of Musical Works*, 170.

¹² *Ibid*, 171.

the size of the audience attending a colleague's performance, the organist was far more concerned with the valuation of intellectual and professional stature garnered in public circles.

Museum Culture

However, a unifying factor that emerged in both arenas during the nineteenth century was the want for works to hold a place in the eternal museum of masterworks. The culture of museums was founded in the early-nineteenth century, and Liszt's comments on the role of significant additions to the repertoire, and their place in a 'musical museum', bears as much relation to secular world of the virtuoso as it does to the more prescribed world of the liturgical organist:

In the name of all musicians, of art, and of social progress, we require:...the foundation of an assembly to be held every five years for religious, dramatic, and symphonic music, by which all the works that are considered best in these three categories shall be ceremonially performed every day for a whole month in the Louvre, being afterwards purchased by the government, and published at their expense.'¹³

Joseph Horowitz has noted that, whereas in the 1840s 'most Viennese and Parisian concertgoers denigrated the notion that the greatest music might be the music of the past', by 1850 the public's attitude had begun to shift. Indeed, not only was an interest in the past formed from an 'academic' interest in music history – consider Brahms's interest in Josquin and Palestrina – but true masterpieces would also transcend all 'temporal and spatial barriers. One level of history was transcended to reach another.'¹⁴ As such the composers were to pass through a crucible of higher, venerated art in order to discover their own true identity. This

¹³ Alan Walker, *Franz Liszt: The Virtuoso Years* (Ithaca: Cornell University Press, 1987), 159-60

¹⁴ Goehr, *The Imaginary Museum of Musical Works*, 246.

contemporary aesthetic must have been enormously gratifying to organists who sought both the intellectualisation of their profession with the emancipation of the artist from the craftsmen in the same way their instrumental colleagues sought acceptance of their work from the larger world.

Furthermore, not only were organists in a unique position in terms of their relative security of position, but they were also not party to many of the concerns of the secular world. Though some may have resented their working conditions as organists – none perhaps more vocally than the beleaguered S. S. Wesley (1810-1876) – we cannot deny that, in terms of their potential for creative success as composers, their position was far more tenable. Further, rather than need to be accepted by a public society, they were already at its very centre; cathedrals and larger parishes dominated community life and thus the arts associated with them took on a prevalence and overarching (if not sometimes overbearing) significance that the ‘secular’ musicians could only dream of commanding.

Dedication

The sense of ‘place’ and affinity with the great and worthy extended beyond the greater choice of formal structure of the music itself to the now popular trend of dedicatory inscriptions. It was especially common to find dedications of sonatas to colleagues, or organ builders, or the College of Organists. This was a new departure for English organists who had had few opportunities, outside of the royal court, to include dedications in their past work. As such, the question of inscription that had plagued Haydn in what was seen as a temporal ‘power of dedication’¹⁵ had not troubled organists. In the first instance, organists did not need a commission or special concert in order to perform their music (should they wish), when a

¹⁵ Ibid, 227.

colleague could perform it for them, or they could simply perform it themselves. Secondly they were a largely self-sufficient profession with strong allegiances formed in a relatively tight web of personalities. That the much revered arch-conservative Walter Parratt should have been the dedicatee of no fewer than three sonatas attests to the fact that when dedications did occur they were intended to elevate the initial reception of the score by the public – and possibly its critical reception too – to even greater heights. This inadvertent (or extremely direct, depending on your frame of reference) request for approbation from the profession brings to mind a statement of Georg Gottfried Gervinus in 1868 that:

..every instrumental work has every claim on every kind of respect, provided that it is addressed exclusively to the only audience deserving of it, namely the *cognoscenti* – those who know are in a position to judge its formal worth.¹⁶

Form and Legacy

In terms of the style applied to the form, Rosen's comment that the sonata is not a definite form¹⁷ is apposite. He notes that 'sonata form as conceived after 1840 may not work for a great many classical sonatas but it fits an even larger number'.¹⁸ As such there are as many hegemonic aspects as there are heretical concerns to classical purists, and equally there is no single line of orthodoxy or, for that matter, heterodoxy to be found in the sonatas. Rosen's point that the model 'fits an even larger number' of sonatas is certainly true of the organ works. To this point, though, comes the consideration, and question, of imitation, whether intentional or accidental (unlikely though the latter was given the learned standing of many of the composers).

¹⁶ Bujić (ed.), *Music in European Thought 1851-1911* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1988), 91-92.

¹⁷ Charles Rosen, *The Classical Style*. (London: Faber and Faber Ltd, 1971), 30

¹⁸ Ibid

Although there are no apparent direct quotations from the works of the ‘masters’, the use of imitative style is arguably more pronounced in this area of repertoire than in other genres of the greater musical landscape. However, imitation had of course been long sanctioned by church composers. In the Renaissance, composers had freely borrowed from one another, and from their own works. Bach had ‘recycled’ pieces as, of course, had Handel. The Handelian approach, filtered most obviously through William Croft, had been an unabashed attempt to capitalise on the composer of *Messiah*, and arguably Mendelssohn seized upon the easily applicable aspects of the Handelian style in his own oratorios; those choral societies that could sing *Messiah* would face few challenges in staging *Elijah*.

But there is more to this consideration than merely following the trend of pastiche or adoption of larger genre; it is the question of the lifecycle of any given period of composition. Until the nineteenth century the idea that a work (of any genre) would outlast the composer’s lifetime was generally incomprehensible, and whilst the growth of publishing in the nineteenth century allowed for a composer’s score to be more easily available, we can also understand that the flood of new material meant very few works were destined to be seen as masterworks, even if many were latently. (One only has to examine the genre of the piano concerto for a more acuminate comparison where pieces entered and exited the repertoire with staggering frequency, in part due to a fickle audience keen to over-indulge in the newest flights of virtuosity.) As such, although the organist-composers could ‘make their mark’ in the profession by the completion of a worthy example in the genre, we can also see that if they were following a ‘performance practice’ of an earlier era which they could emulate, then they would have had little concern about the work receiving a wide dissemination. Rather, the greater concern was to offer a piece of high quality that could be respected (if possible in review), rather than to offer it for consumption by the greater masses.

However, the impact of industrious publishing houses releasing music of the past century alongside works of contemporary composers meant that, far from being able to chart a new course, composers would immediately be compared with their illustrious predecessors. As such it was a two-edged sword for on the one hand the style was one of homage whereas it was by nature demanding comparison. That said, the contemporary critics did not appear overly burdened with this fact which suggests that the practice was not only common, but accepted, and perhaps even encouraged.

At the same time one only has to look at the slow publishing of J. S. Bach's works, beyond the well-known pieces, to see the challenge contemporary nineteenth-century composers would have encountered in seeing their pieces reach a wide public that could judge them reasonably; they were not only competing with their contemporaries for a place in the publishing catalogue but effectively with the *Kappelmeister* himself!

But to this dilemma came a welcome opportunity, for it meant English composers were not beholden to any one specified tradition and furthermore they were given a new lease of life to re-invigorate the English organ repertoire. Faced with the overwhelming adoration of Handel, Mozart, Haydn, Beethoven and increasingly Bach, it cannot be any surprise that an imitation of their works would find its way into the mainstream repertoire, not least because the output for organ of the classical figures had been minimal and certainly not the seat of their reputation. That this deference to an earlier style could at times take on an almost whimsical familiarity of style (as demonstrated in MacFarren and Ouseley's mimicry of Beethoven) is as much the later composers showing their deft compositional hand as it is aligning with a past master.

Whether the nineteenth-century figures saw themselves as descendants of the greater canon is conjecture, but certainly in trying to raise the organ from a marginal centre and position

towards the mainstream of music-making they could not have made more astute decisions. If they styled themselves on a master and were praised for it in the press (see reviews in the *Classicism* chapter) they had clearly achieved an appealing summit in their larger professional work. However, that they contained their approach to the form found in early-mid-classical sonatas suggests both a timidity of ambition as well as an acknowledgement that the style of sonata they were writing owed its legacy not to an organic creative development but to an affinity for a past model that had largely passed the eighteenth-century organ community without attention.

Portfolio Sonatas

The structural factor that sets these sonatas apart from their classical models is the variety of style they engender within a single multi-movement work. As such, though the generally limited technical demands of the pieces owe more to the legacy of the ‘lesson’ tradition (as discussed in the *Classicism* chapter), the musical style owes more to the ‘suite’. Bearing this in mind and also considering the want for professional approbation, it would be appropriate to consider these sonatas ‘portfolio’ compositions. Indeed such is the profusion of styles a listener hearing a performance of a complete sonata, without a programme, might well consider it the endeavour of not one, but two or three different composers. As an example, a Haydn/Mozartian-influenced first movement followed by a Mendelssohnian ‘song without words’ *andante* as the second movement, and a final fugue that, if not directly imitative of the *stile antico* (or *stile severo*), certainly has the burnish of Bachian models (absent either the jocular nature of the Handel choral fugue, or the angularity and chromaticism of a Handelian keyboard fugue) was very common. Thus the works also had a highly pragmatic aspect for the liturgical organist.

Assigning the sacred

Beyond the question of ‘worthiness’ was the equally pervasive Victorian concern of ‘appropriateness’. With the exception of the *Sonata da Chiesa* (1884) of Edwin Edwards (1830-1907), the pieces were simply titled ‘sonata’. It is reaching to suggest that Edwards’s work was only to be played in the church, even though organists primarily worked in ecclesiastical settings with only a small percentage in the town hall. Rather we must see Edwards as either contributing a work he saw as especially fitting for the church, or publishing a work he saw as more appropriate (than other works) for sacred service. But this nonetheless raises the question of whether a line is drawn between what was considered ‘appropriate’. The point had already drawn the attention of W. T. Best, who in his primer *The Organ Student* laid out clearly which pieces could be considered fitting to the sacred space and which were unsuited. (Fig. 1)

Fig. 1

The Organ Student, W. T. Best

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The pieces having an Asterisk attached are suitable for performance as Church Voluntaries; (Preludes or Postludes) – all the others are intended for Chamber or Concert use.

BACH

- * CHORUS, “Mein Jesu”
- * FUGUE (C Sharp Minor)
- * FUGUE B flat Minor)
- * CHORALE from a Sacred Cantata

BEETHOVEN

ANDANTE from the Serenade for Flute, Violin and Viola
ADAGIO from a Trio for Oboes and Cor Anglais
ADAGIO from an Instrumental Sextet

CHERUBINI

- * CHORUS FROM THE Fourth Mass; - “Amen”

CORELLI

- * ADAGIO and FUGUE

CRAMER

* ADAGIO

GASPARINI

* ADAGIO and FUGUE

* ANDANTE

GRAUN

* CHORUS, "Freut euch alle"

HANDEL

CHORUS, "Crown the Hero"

* CHORUS, "Then shall they know"

* CHORUS, "He is my God"

* CHORUS, "Let all the angels"

* CHORUS, "Eternal Monarch"

* CHORUS, "Immortal pleasures"

LIPAVSKY

* FUGUE (A minor)

MOZART

ANDANTE from a Posthumous Symphony

* MOTET, "Ave verum corpus"

AIR and CHORUS of PRIESTS "O Isis und Osiris"

ANDANTE from the Ninth Symphony

ONSLow

ANDANTE from the Third Quartett

PERGOLESI

* CHORUS from the Stabat Mater; "Amen"

SCHUMANN

ADAGIO

SPOHR

* CHORALE. "Versa, O Ciel;" (Faust)

MARCH from the Opera of "Jessonda"

* INTERMEZZO from the Cathedral Scene (Faust)

LARGHETTO from the Violin Duets

Vol: 2

BACH

* FUGUE (D Major)

* FUGUE (G minor)

BARGIEL

MARCH

BEETHOVEN

ANDANTE from the Pianoforte Bagatelles
* CHORALE FUGUE, “Dona nobis pacem”
* FUGUE (E minor)

BELLINI

PRAYER from the Opera “I Puritani”

FESCA

* CHORAL FUGUE, “Lobet seinem Namen”

GLUCK

LARGHETTO (Flute Solo) from the Opera of “Orfeo”
MARCH from the Opera “Iphigenie en Aulide”
CHORUS, (Orfeo) – “Torna O bella”
CHORUS, (Iphigénie) – “Puissante Déesse”

HANDEL

* CHORUS, “Blest be the man”
AIR, (Rinaldo) – “Lascia ch’io pianga”

HAYDN

ANDANTE from the Third Symphony

MENDELSSOHN

AIR, “Es ist bestimmt in Gottes rath”

MOZART

ANDANTE from the Eleventh Symphony
MARCH of PRIESTS – (Die Zauberflöte)
SESTETT, (Don Giovanni) – “Mille torbidi pensieri”
ANDANTE, from the Tenth Symphony

PERTI

* CHORAL FUGUE from a Motet

SPOHR

ANDANTE from the Violin Duets
ADAGIO from the Third Quartett

The assignment of certain works to the church and others to concert (or private) use is not altogether clean cut, but the trend for contrapuntal works to be seen as wholly appropriate, operatic works as seldom fitting, but orchestral works as discretionary appears to be the general schemata. The prevalence of Bach, Beethoven, Mozart, and Spohr – a composer

whom the Victorians revered – demonstrates the keen desire to embrace what had been evaluated over time as the learned works of the past. The absence of, for instance, C.P.E. Bach, any English composers other than the highly prolific chamber composer Onslow (who in any event was French though of English descent), let alone works of Liszt is of far greater interest. For the Victorian organist-composers, the church offered a sanctuary from the excesses of the outside virtuoso world, divorced as it was from commercial concerns, and unshackled by contemporary trends from the continent, and thus an elevated purity prevailed.

Blurring the line between the sacred and sacred

To twenty-first century sensibilities it may seem perverse to question the line between the appropriateness of one style of repertoire for the church versus another. However, the question of what music to take into the church was already being questioned, and blurred, after Mendelssohn had revived the *St. Matthew Passion* in 1829 in a concert setting. Here was a work soon to be acknowledged as one of greatness, undergoing a revival, and yet not in its original Good Friday liturgical setting. At this point the aesthetical relationship of the sacred artwork to the sacred setting was no longer to be presumed on the continent or in England; further artistic decisions would rest on individual artistic decisions, rather than prescribed protocols. For the English, albeit a unique example, *Messiah* had already chartered this course with Handel seeking to attract his stage audience into another setting, and it is this success of the sacred choral masterwork outside the ecclesiastical confines that Mendelssohn was later to trump with *St. Paul* and *Elijah*, works that were never intended for liturgical usage. It was not until the 1870s that *St. Paul*, the *St. Matthew Passion* and Spohr's *The Last Judgement* were introduced into the liturgical environment during Stainer's tenure at St. Paul's Cathedral.

With these elements of inherent creative conditioning alone, it is easy to observe a labyrinth of competing musical aesthetic interests at play. The organist-composers would consciously have to chart a cautious path, but nonetheless one imbued with a convincing artistic voice of inner dynamism if they sought to make their mark. However, the rapid growth of publishing meant that composers who, in a former century, would never have seen their works copied on anything but manuscript paper, could now see them potentially sold throughout the land and abroad. As such, there was much to gain on all fronts. However, what was their ‘voice’ to be in a post-Oxford Movement Culture that was slowly embracing the suggested reforms of the Cambridge Ecclesiologists? Further, in an age of increasing intellectualisation, what creative decisions would they choose to make? Most importantly, can we consider their conditioning as the reason for their creative response? In this regard, and in a setting (the church) which is dependent on word and publicly declaimed belief, we must next examine the relationship between the composer and text, whether written, prescribed, or imbued.

The Voice of a Multitude

When we consider music of the church, we must acknowledge two basic areas: music with words and music without words. Whereas this study centres on works for organ that do not employ voices, the separation between the two is not quite as marked as it might first appear.

Firstly, we must consider the physical presence of the organ as an emotive force. Whilst we can debate whether the sound and physical presence of the organ in church has a personal metaphorical aspect related to the Divine, what we can say unhesitatingly is that its role is not to equal voices, said or sung; it is either there to support the voices, or to be a voice of its own. By example, if we consider the *alternatim* style of Tudor masses, does the organ fulfil a role of a secondary choir (or soloist) or does it speak as an independent voice? Arguably it is independent; one hears a solo vocal line followed by a contrapuntal line, thus by nature the

organ's response is musically more complex or perhaps considered superior. The same could be said for the extended introduction to a choral work; the tone of the piece is set by the organ and followed by the choir. (Curiously the inverse in composition is seldom, if ever, the case.) Once again, the organ appears in an elevated position. As Heinrich Christoph Koch notes in his *Musical Lexicon* of 1802:

Because [the purpose of] instrumental music is nothing but the imitation of song, the symphony [in this case the 'symphonic' organ work] especially represents the choir, and thus, like the choir, has the purpose of expressing the sentiment of a multitude.¹⁹

E. T. A. Hoffmann moves this idea forward by connecting the spirit of the romantic age via a historical-philosophical lens to Palestrina's vocal polyphony (which we see imitated in Bach's *stile antico*),²⁰ and which by translation we can relate to the desired purity expressed in the contemporary organ-composers' aesthetic. Between Koch and Hoffman we have a fusion of the voice of the people with an endemic spirit cleaving for the superior model. In this sense, the organist-composers not only embraced earlier styles, but also earlier ideals. In representing the 'sentiment of a multitude' the composers held a pivotal role, which by extension of the work of John Hullah could even be considered a distinctly moral role.

'Voicing' the organ

The art of registration is the organist's equivalent to the symphonic orchestrator, with the added challenge that no two instruments are identical, thus requiring a re-visioning of the creative process for each location. This art is part of the organist's artistic treasure and (in the organ composition) uniquely tied to the compositional side, but nonetheless allowing of a particular indeterminacy. Not only is the interpreter approaching the score differently in each performance in terms of the execution of the 'text', but the interpreter is also re-orchestrating

¹⁹ Heinrich Christoph Koch, *Musikalisches Lexikon*. (Frankfurt, 1802; reprint, Hildesheim, 1964), 1386

²⁰ Dahlhaus, *The Idea of Absolute Music*, 41

constantly; it is a romantic aesthetic unique to the instrument. As such it is the hope of the artist to interpret the 'text' in a way that enables the listener to apply an external meaning to the music that is fundamentally the same as that envisioned by the organist and indeed the composer. Though one listener may associate a particular doctrine of beliefs to a specific sound or musical form, another may have a markedly different response but this is not the concern. Rather it is the key aspect of association by circumstance and in turn the conditioning of the creative response. If for instance an organist plays a sonata written in a classical style in a sacred setting, the auditors would assuredly have a clear set of expectations towards the interpretation based on their previous experience of a classical sonata heard on the piano, or indeed in a classical string quartet. As such, though divorced from a text, the composer is not divorced from an unwritten protocol.

The Sacred Instrument

To this artistic canvas we can add the organ's physical presence which, more often than not, is larger than any altar in the building, or crucifix or statue. Its dynamic range far exceeds a choir, sometimes even a congregation, and certainly a preacher. As such, whilst we acknowledge the pragmatic reasons for this predicament, we cannot escape the phenomenological impact of this circumstance. By nature (and often by location) it occupies an elevated place in the minds of those who encounter it, whether congregants, the occasional (un-churched) visitor, or the clergy. For the player it is a seat of considerable power and influence.

Secondly, we must consider how an instrument in a sacred setting is by nature an 'organ of belief'. To hear an instrument in a sacred context - whether it is a liturgical setting or not - is to apply textual associations to its voice, even if they are voices of unbelief. This application, though inward and individual, is nonetheless wholly unavoidable. For those who understood

the intricacies of the instrument this relationship could be all the more powerful as Quantz comments. However, the fact that most of the composers for the instrument were in fact organists themselves makes his views especially potent:

...to judge an instrumental composition properly, we must have an exact knowledge, not only of the characteristics of each species which may occur in it, but also...of the instruments themselves. In itself, a piece may conform both to good taste and to the rules of composition, and hence be well written, but still run counter to the instruments.²¹

The organ, though, is inescapably associated with the church. The visual impact discussed above is further exemplified in iconography through the many stained-glass windows that depict a portative organ being played by St. Cecilia, angels and cherubs, and signifying an instrument fit for heaven. However, beyond that image we should consider the question of the sacred environment with its unique overtones, and also the question of the composer as a believer. To this question the use of form, or rather a *modus operandi* of rules, is fundamental to an evaluation, most especially of the fugue and the first movement sonata form. Both genres require rules that are the musical equivalent of liturgical canons. In the *Moto proprio* (1903) of Pius X (1835-1914), whose life covered all of Victoria's reign, notes that:

Sacred music, being a complementary part of the solemn liturgy, participates in the general scope of the liturgy, which is the glory of God and the sanctification and edification of the faithful. It contributes to the decorum and the splendour of the ecclesiastical ceremonies, and since its principal office is to clothe with suitable melody the liturgical text proposed for the understanding of the faithful, its proper aim

²¹ Johann Joachim Quantz, *On Playing the Flute* (1752), tr. E. R. Reilly (New York: Schirmer, 1985), 28, 310. Goehr, *The Imaginary Museum of Musical Works*, 164.

is to add greater efficacy to the text, in order that through it the faithful may be the more easily moved to devotion and better disposed for the reception of the fruits of grace belonging to the celebration of the most holy mysteries.

Sacred music should consequently possess, in the highest degree, the qualities proper to the liturgy, and in particular sanctity and goodness of form, which will spontaneously produce the final quality of universality.

It must be holy, and must, therefore, exclude all profanity not only in itself, but in the manner in which it is presented by those who execute it.

It must be true art, for otherwise it will be impossible for it to exercise on the minds of those who listen to it that efficacy which the Church aims at obtaining in admitting into her liturgy the art of musical sounds.²²

Challenging Hanslick

For much of the organ's repertoire voices are absent in the sacred setting. Even in sixteenth and seventeenth century *alternatim* works the organ's role is set apart. Indeed the organ verse may be based on the chant melody already utilised, but equally it could simply be a verset in the same mode; as such, it remains independent. In the Genevan chorale tradition its role is to elaborate and expand upon the greater literary material that is already presented (and understood), and then to allow for a period of reflection, or devotion, on the text previously sung or about to be heard, whilst engendering an appropriate aesthetic for the gathered assembly.

²² Pius X, *Moto Proprio* (1903), www.adoremus.org/MotuProprio.html#anchor40146479 (accessed 20 May, 2012)

This thesis helps us consider the Platonic model or *harmonia* (regular, rationally systemized relationships among tones), *rhythmos* (the system of musical time, which in ancient times included dance and organised motion), and *logos* (language as the expression of human reason).²³ Though we are absent strict texts of the platonic thesis, we nonetheless apply our own. Thus the music is never truly removed from ‘text’. However, Eduard Hanslick’s comments that instrumental music is ‘pure and self-subsistent’²⁴ and that the addition of ‘poetry’ does not ‘widen its limits’ merits consideration in relation to instrumental music used in a sacred setting.

Firstly though, the organ’s ‘voice’ is not the predictable one of other instruments. Whereas the piano maybe adjusted in dynamic scale, there is no profound change of timbre that could be a parallel to the organ. As the specific timbre of one organ is different from another, and the selective use of timbre is part of the organist’s art (and therefore inconsistent in application), the very interpretation of works extends beyond the normal musical sphere, and thus, arguably, enters more closely towards a textual realm because it implores definition. As such, in assessing the aesthetical concerns which Victorian composers consciously or subconsciously injected into their works we are left to consider whether their contemporary aesthetical concerns could have sustained a marked impact on their compositional style and interpretation and, related to this, what response they hoped their works might achieve.

For Hanslick, the relation of music to text is a difficult symbiosis. With the absence of text we are no clearer about the emotion or feeling the music is prompting us to experience than we are necessarily guaranteed to experience with it. This equation is further compounded by the historical distancing of composers from particular associations of text and melody and in this regard we see no more elegant an exponent of this comprehensive flexibility than Handel

²³ Dahlhaus, *The Idea of Absolute Music*, 8.

²⁴ Eduard Hanslick, *The Beautiful in Music*. tr. Gustav Cohen. (The Library of Liberal Arts, The Bobbs-Merrill Co. Inc, Indianapolis, 1957), 29-30.

who could treat the same material in both a sacred and a secular context. (Can we conceive in our own age a composer setting the same music to an anthem and madrigal without sharp criticism from peers and the press?)

In considering the relationship between music and text, Hanslick takes matters one stage further. For him the music stands on its own as a creative (and thus potentially spiritual) voice. To add words (as in song or opera) or dance (as in ballet) is to Hanslick simply unnecessary, for it adds nothing further to the listener's understanding of the musical aspects of the piece, and indeed could even confuse the original intentions and emotional overtones. By example, and according to Hanslick's theories, a Liszt transcription for piano of a Mendelssohn song retains almost the same emotional impact on the listener as the same piece sung in the original for voice and piano. One could argue that subtleties of pathos would be removed without the hearing of text, but to Hanslick that is a superimposition of emotion on that which the music already provided. As such, following a performance of the piece the listeners are left much where they started. Hanslick writes:

No instrumental composition can describe the ideas of love, wrath, or fear, since there is no causal nexus between these ideas and certain combinations of sound.²⁵

[Further] ...all will agree about the beauty or beauties of a composition, whereas all will differ regarding its subject. To "represent" something is to exhibit it clearly, to set it before us distinctly. But how can we call that the subject represented by an art which is really its vaguest and most indefinite element, and which must, therefore, forever remain highly debatable ground.²⁶

This is further illuminated by Otto Jahn's comment on playing Beethoven's *Tempest* Sonata, in relation to Beethoven's response to Schindler who on enquiring as to the meaning of the

²⁵ Ibid, 24.

²⁶ Ibid, 29.

sonata was encouraged to read the Shakespeare play of the same name. Jahn notes that the querist will not necessarily see the work in the same light as the composer or another listener, nor will it inspire the same creative process, any more than the tomb scene of *Romeo and Juliet* will be obvious to someone encountering the *Adagio* from the F major quartet, Op. 18, no 1.²⁷

These points lay a foundation that has particular bearing on organ works deemed suitable for sacred use that are without an association of text or chorale. In these works it is left to the listener to interpret their meaning and relevance in an emotive, individual fashion. However, the hearing of the works also has an unpredictable ‘chance’ aspect as no ‘programme’ of works is announced in a sacred setting, unlike a concert hall. (Information concerning the selection of voluntaries was seldom publically advertised.) Rather, the listener experiences the creativity in relation to the larger setting. Further, with this understood, we can also assume those in attendance are seeking a changed emotional state that would generally be a positive outcome. As such, in hearing a work – somewhat regardless of the compositional merits – their state of reception is in some part willed towards a desired emotional outcome. This spiritual quest for the happier state of being, coupled with a culture that emulated past models, is addressed directly by John Jebb when he writes:

...the ancients lead the imagination to the point from which the prospect is obtained, and leave it there in solitude to select for itself the most congenial objects of its contemplation.²⁸

As such, though the Victorian sonatas lack any direct application of text they were nonetheless capable of a reception that would have a positive impact on the listener. The

²⁷ Ibid, 61.

²⁸ John Jebb, *Three lectures on the cathedral service*. (2nd ed., with additions) (Leeds: T. W. Green, and London: F. & J. Rivington, 1845), 138.

‘most congenial objects of contemplation’ could also find parallels in the moral aspects associated with musical performance and the desire for music to provide for a better way of life. Therefore Hanslick’s comments fall short when applied in the sacred setting because the imagination and ‘belief system’ wills the music to fit with the desired emotional outcome. This explanation resolves the frustration expressed by the congregants who, when upset by a particular organ work, exclaim that they have been “unable to worship”.

Considering Busoni

Busoni, himself a transcriber of the ‘sacred’ Bach organ chorale, moves the understanding of the Victorian sonata, whether considered scholastic, or of a portfolio nature, towards a discussion of the relationship between absolutism and form. By his thesis ‘form’ limits the range of the absolutism predetermined by nature.

Absolute Music! What the lawgivers mean by this is perhaps remotest of all from the Absolute in music. “Absolute music” is a form-play without poetic programme, in which the form is intended to have the leading part. But Form, in itself, is the opposite pole of absolute music, on which was bestowed the divine prerogative of buoyancy, of freedom from the limitations of matter. In a picture, the illustration of a sunset ends with a frame; the limitless natural phenomenon is enclosed in quadrilateral bounds; the cloud-form chosen for depiction remains unchanging forever. Music can grow brighter or darker, shift hither or yon, and finally fade away like the sunset glow itself; and instinct leads the creative musician to employ the tones that press the same key within the human breast, and awaken the same response, as the processes in Nature.²⁹

²⁹ Ferruccio Busoni, *Sketch on a New Esthetic of Music*. (Originally published ca. 1911, tr. Dr. Th. Baker. New York: Dover Publications, 1962), 78.

Of course the portfolio nature of the composition remains within the ‘frame’ (by the use of specific compositional genres – first movement sonata form and fugue) whilst being outside the ‘bounds’ of conformity through the employment of contrasting styles within the same work. As such it incorporates an absolutism whilst admonishing its restrictions.

Busoni draws the boldest imaginable line – that of the connection between music and nature. For him the genius of creativity rests with the compositional craft associated with established forms and practices. This opinion would naturally have rested comfortably with Victorian composers, as would Busoni’s later double fugue for organ. Indeed, the landscape of the symphonic arena, equal to that the Victorian organ afforded, alone provides for empirical assessments as Ludwig Tieck notes:

These symphonies can represent a drama so colourful, manifold, convoluted, and beautifully developed as no poet could ever provide us; for they wrap the most mysterious things in mysterious language, they depend on no laws of probability, they need relate to no history and no characters; they remain in their purely poetic world.³⁰

He further comments that instrumental music (alone) is ‘purely poetic’, for the very reason that it is free from literature and makes no attempt to illustrate a character.³¹ Furthermore, he suggests that romantic poets feed on the idea of absolute music because absolute music is already ‘nourished’ by poetry.³² As such, the music provides its own commentary and, whereas Hanslick can dispute the problems of relating text to music, it remains undeniable that certain associations of music and text will manifest themselves.

³⁰ Wackenroder, *Werke und Briefe* (Heidelberg: L. Schneider, 1967), 255.

³¹ Dahlhaus, *The Idea of Absolute Music*, 66.

³² *Ibid*, 67.

‘Romantic’ imagery related to music can be found in abundance in nineteenth-century English literature, but Wackenroder’s paradisaal references have particular bearing on the reception of absolute music in a sacred setting with writing that hints at both the transfiguring power of music, and the redemptive quality. This, of itself, relates to the concept of endless longing:

But what words should I resort to, should I grasp, in order to express the power that heavenly music, with its full tones, its charming reminiscences, has over our heart? With its angelic presence, it enters the soul immediately and breaths heavenly breath. Oh, how all memories of all bliss fall and flow back into that one moment, how all noble feelings, all great emotions welcome the guest!.....lustre shines upon lustre, and all the light, the sparkling, the rain of beams, coaxes a new lustre, and new beams of light.’³³

Such a freeing of the mind could, on the surface, lead to misinterpretation or even ‘false’ attribution of sentiment, which to the Victorian mindset (let alone the ecclesiastical sensibility) could have been potentially provoking. However, Dahlhaus addresses this concern directly:

‘Pure, absolute music’ is never travestied as a ‘programmatic’ or ‘characteristic’ music, but always interpreted ‘poetically’. Although the result is sometimes a regrettable clash of metaphors, the analogies remain in the sphere of an indeterminacy redeemed by intimations, in which romantic aesthetics sought the metaphysical origin of instrumental music.³⁴

Thus, in considering Hanslick, Busoni, and Dahlhaus we can see how in a culture of programmatic music, and not least the continental development of the symphonic poem, the

³³ Wackenroder 236

³⁴ Dahlhaus, *The Idea of Absolute Music*, 84.

Victorian composers elected a style that could be in every sense beyond reproach. Through an adherence to classical form they could align themselves with a compositional aesthetic that was already revered, and through a marked concentration towards the publication of larger works that were absent voices they could also offer works that could not be belittled by fashionable tastes. An example of this rationale can be found in our own time where Victorian sacred works with text are frequently ridiculed and yet the instrumental (including organ) works are held in high esteem. If an identical musical language is applied to a string quartet and to a vocal quartet singing with text the response will by nature be different. In this respect Hanslick's commentary is divorced from the inherent English sensibility of passing judgement on another's work. The advocacy for sublimity in music during the earlier part of the century had a resilient bearing.

The Dichotomy of the Ancient-Modern

The question of a *Querelle des anciens et des modernes* (France, 1690s) looms large for the nineteenth-century composer in general. The Victorian view was towards the traditional/ancient form and creative aesthetic. In this regard the musico-aesthetical consideration may be aligned with those of the Cambridge Ecclesiologists who, likewise, weighed matters amidst debate and came to similarly orthodox conclusions. That this consideration of musical matters came once again (via William Crotch) within a sacred setting is testimony to the governing aesthetics of institutional protocol, and their impact on the creative practice. That the organist-composers also came from a community of musicians that favoured learned (strict) pedagogy, which would, for instance, have favoured Rameau (and leant towards musical styles in favour of harmony over melody), equally set them apart from Jean-Jacques Rousseau's earlier concerns.

The influence of Crotch and the encouragement of orthodoxy

The Cambridge Ecclesiologists did not show an overt concern for the organ in their methodical response to the Oxford Movement of 1833,³⁵ but rather centred their musical focus on the promotion of psalmody sung to Gregorian chants and the choral repertoire of the Renaissance. As the state of the English organ at this time could be considered ‘confused’³⁶ (with its profusion of different building styles), it is fair to assume that a concern for the organ was in every sense a secondary one at best, or at least did not substantiate enough discussion to merit any sort of edict beyond the question of relocating from East to West. Secondly, if Neale, Hope, Webb, or Newman had strong opinions regarding the organ they would have found any early pronouncement unnecessary due to the subsequent revisions of the instruments.

In the nineteenth century the organ world and the academic and clerical world drew ever closer with the establishing of music degrees in British universities, the development of curricula and the prominence of many organists within the academic realm. Since the ‘academics’ at Oxford and Cambridge were largely clergymen this was a time of considerable overlap between the ‘professions’. Chief amongst the musical figures at Oxford was the composer William Crotch (1775-1847) who placed the sacred canon of appropriate music in a doctrine of three styles. Orthodox though these views were, even at their initial presentation, they were nonetheless the views of a prominent musician and as such many followers will have either incorporated them into their own writing, or simply passed them on as the *sine qua non* of professional (and generally acceptable) composition. Ninety years

³⁵ Dale Adelmann, *The contribution of Cambridge ecclesiologists to the revival of Anglican choral worship, 1839-62*. (Aldershot and Burlington: Ashgate, c. 1997)

³⁶ Stephen Bicknell, *The History of the English Organ* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1996), 232

after his first lectures Stainer blamed Crotch for the ruining of at least one promising career, that of Sir Frederick Gore Ouseley, and bitterly pointed to what he considered Crotch's 'blind imitation of the past'.³⁷ However, Crotch's pupils held him in the highest regard. Sir George Elvey, Sir William Sterndale Bennett, Sir John Goss and Dr. Corfe united in an unsuccessful attempt to see posthumous publication of Crotch's final oratorio, the second version of *Captivity of Judah*. Crotch's place as judge of musical competitions and his elevated position at Oxford provided him with arguably the most powerful musical pulpit in the land for some generations. In relation to his thesis on the role of composers, the assigning of music into three styles has particular bearing on the aesthetic that ultimately governed the Victorians until the end of the century, and indeed into the early twentieth century. Adapting Sir Joshua Reynolds's theories of painting he defined music, regardless of national origin, into three³⁸ categories: the sublime; the beautiful; the ornamental. As Rennert notes:

Only the highest, the most lofty and dignified music could be considered sublime. Therefore, just as Michelangelo's works formed a highpoint of sublimity in painting, so Handel's choruses and Bach's organ fugues provided a similar peak in music. The 'pure sublime' had, however reached absolute perfection even earlier, with the 'true church style' of the sixteenth and early seventeenth-century composers in Italy and England, Palestrina, Byrd and Gibbons. Music had been becoming less dignified ever since.³⁹

Crotch's Lecture VII of 1818 noted:

The sublime style comprehends several shades of character, particularly the simple, the terrific and the intricate. It acquires also by combination with the beautiful

³⁷ Jonathan Rennert, *William Crotch 1775-1847* (Lavenham: Terence Dalton Ltd., 1975), 43.

³⁸ Crotch initially chose only two styles

³⁹ Rennert, *William Crotch*, 43.

[pathetic] and the ornamental styles a difference of quality. The beautiful seems to me very nearly allied to the simple, as it does also the pathetic to the terrific and the ornamental, in general, to the intricate species of sublimity though the sublime is not necessarily combined with any of these. For instances of the purest sublimity, which is neither terrific nor intricate, we refer to the most ancient Church music. For terrific sublimity, neither simple, nor magnificent, see the chromatic choruses of Handel's oratorios, especially those in *Israel in Egypt*. For intricate sublimity, neither terrific nor simple, see his full choruses in general. A combination of sublimity and beauty may be found in Gibbons's services and anthems. Pathetic sublimity is Carissimi's *Jeptha* or in his motet *Hodie Simon Petrus*. Grandeur and ornament are heard together in Gluck's overture to *Ifigenie* and in that to *La clemenza di Tito* by Mozart for Modern Music is frequently grand and magnificent but rarely contains simple sublimity.⁴⁰

As the highest of the three styles and wishing to adopt what Reynolds had called the 'Grandeur of effect' or 'grand style' it is easy to observe how such a salutation would have appealed to Crotch's pupils, not least in an alliance to the mainstream of art. Irving notes that 'although Reynolds commonly [associated] the great style with the high Renaissance, his later formulation of the idea [made] it ahistorical, [without the limits of] particular subject matter and [thus applying] it to all genres of art from history painting to landscape.' As such the emphasis was not so much on style as the superior quality of the art which afforded a perfect marriage for the Victorian composers.

⁴⁰ W. Crotch, "Lecture VII 1818" in Howard Irving, *Ancients and Moderns*, (Aldershot and Burlington: Ashgate, 1999), 248.

William Gatens notes that the ‘beautiful’ style was one of ‘grace, smoothness, and lyrical refinement as represented by Italian *bel canto* or many of the arias in Handel oratorios,’⁴¹ while Rennert observes that it could be exemplified in the ‘gentle modulations’ and ‘symmetry’ of Corelli, the minuet in the overture of Handel’s *Berenice* and much eighteenth-century opera.⁴² Whereas the ornamental style ‘is the musical equivalent of what theorists of painting called the picturesque, being a style of abrupt and surprising effects, whimsical turns of melody and harmony, growing primarily from the characteristics of instrumental technique.’⁴³ As such the aim of the third style was to give music a ‘playful’ quality, sometimes ‘rhythmically perverse’ with ‘eccentric harmony and wild, unexpected modulations’.⁴⁴ In essence the ornamental was the consummate antithesis of what the Victorians hoped to be remembered for.

The appeal of Handel (who was ‘able to master every style’ and thus ‘the greatest of all musical composers’⁴⁵) and Mozart (‘the greatest of all modern composers’⁴⁶) – curiously also a child prodigy as Crotch had been, as of course was the soon-to-arrive visitor Felix Mendelssohn – often beclouds Crotch’s broader interests that included J. S. Bach, Clementi, Josquin, Peri, Scarlatti and Tye.⁴⁷ However, at the same time, Crotch, who was not beyond self-contradiction, also recommended students to model their music on ‘no one after Greene [1695-1755] or Boyce [1710-1779]’.⁴⁸

An ardent critic, Crotch answered the proverbial questions his posturing impetrated. Quoting Reynolds’s advice to young composers:

⁴¹ William J. Gatens, *Victorian Cathedral Music in Theory and Practice*. (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1986), 65.

⁴² Rennert, *William Crotch*, 44.

⁴³ Gatens, *Victorian Cathedral Music*, 65.

⁴⁴ Rennert, 44.

⁴⁵ *Ibid*, 46.

⁴⁶ *Ibid*

⁴⁷ Rennert 44: Extracts of these composers works are found in *Specimens of Various Styles of Music*

⁴⁸ Rennert, *William Crotch*, 47.

...the public requires everything to be human; and the true artist ought properly to make everything divine’...Every period of ten years has some forms or turns of melody peculiar to itself; and which, generally, grow out of fashion before it expires. A composer, who thinks to have his works descend to posterity, must take care to avoid them.⁴⁹

Crotch’s own views on criticism from the larger world were somewhat more caustic: ‘were the majority always right, why are the *Battle of Prague* and Pleyel’s *Concertante*, which they so much admired, now passed into oblivion to make way for similar trash?’⁵⁰ and, paraphrasing Burney he noted, ‘the opinions of a man who is not possessed of this requisite [education], can only be compared with those of a blind man on painting’.⁵¹

Although Crotch’s comments on sublimity were based on professorial lectures between 1800 and 1804⁵² the views could easily have been delivered publicly some fifty years later for their impact would have been equally relevant; as Stainer noted, his impact was long-lasting. Although Crotch’s conservatism predates both the Oxford Movement and the work of the Cambridge Ecclesiologists, it demonstrates a more global conservatism in the air of academic circles. Crotch’s liberal invocation of Palestrina demonstrates a desire for musical communion with a musical deity whose reputation was beyond reproach. Indeed he sets in motion a mindset that would suggest any modern composition that did not at least pay homage to the past was in some sense doomed to oblivion; again a view that has a ready applicability to the later Victorians:

‘And must we, then, have no church music?’ Yes; but no new style: nothing which recommends itself to novelty, or reminds us of what we hear at a parade, the concert,

⁴⁹ Ibid

⁵⁰ Crotch “Substance: 20” in Irving, *Ancient and Moderns*, 52 (fn).

⁵¹ Crotch “Lectures,” in Irving, *Ancients and Moderns*, 54.

⁵² Gatens, *Victorian Cathedral Music*, 66.

and the theatre. Much new music may be produced in the sacred style; though to equal what has already been produced will not be found so easy as may perhaps be imagined.⁵³

Whether the musically orthodox response of many an organist-composer to Crotch was as a direct result of his views we cannot be certain, but the profusion of pieces to emanate from the composers' pens that were a celebration of older models cannot be overlooked. Indeed it is marked, for even when considering the sonata form, the composers looked not to the much revered Beethoven, but to the older Mozart, as demonstrated in the chapter on classicism. George Macfarren (sometime Professor of Music at Cambridge and the Royal Academy of Music) noted that 'the greatest musician who has delighted and enriched the world is Wolfgang Amadeus Mozart....Beethoven was sometimes weak, Mozart never.'⁵⁴ Nicholas Temperley points out that the superior opinion of Mozart was also shared by J. W. Davison, the leading supporter of Mendelssohn, and the Leipzig tradition.⁵⁵ (This is an interesting comparison to the later view of Mozart as a lesser Beethoven, and the purists' inverse view that whereas Mozart provided sublimity, Beethoven's departures from strict 'classical form' debased the model.)

Nicholas Temperley further notes that although, in Hogarth's words, Mozart could inspire 'tranquillity and cheerfulness'⁵⁶, his writings did not bring to mind 'gaiety and..mirth'.⁵⁷ However, given Crotch's rather severe disposition, we can see why Mozart's works would have found appeal to him and later composers for their more learned traits. That Temperley is able to trace teacher-student influence through Thomas Attwood (1765-1838) to his godson Thomas Attwood Walmisley (1814-1856) and even John Bacchus Dykes (1823-1876) further

⁵³ William Crotch, *Lectures on music* (London: Longman, Rees, Orme, Brown, and Green, 1831,) 83.

⁵⁴ H. C. Banister: *George Alexander Macfarren* (London: Bell, 1891): Quoted in Temperley "Mozart's influence on English Music," *Music and Letters* (32(4), 1961) 309.

⁵⁵ Temperley, "Mozart's influence on English Music," 310.

⁵⁶ Ibid

⁵⁷ Ibid

elucidates this point which highlights the English organists' fondness for the (sublime) Mozart's compositional style over several generations.

In considering the aspect of a higher calling, and in putting to one side the easy criticism of epigonal composition, the comments in 1884 of William Henry Gladstone reveal that the overriding sentiments of Crotch's views were still present in public discussion:

It will be evident then, I think, that the spirit of one who writes for the Church must not be that of a mere musician. He must be this, but he must be something more. His office has some analogy to that of the preacher. He, too, has to select, expound, and illustrate his text, to dive into its inner meanings, and clothe it in a vesture of song...[His work] must be founded on canons of taste and right feeling that will endure fluctuations of fashion. This, I think, our best musicians feel.

...Dr Wesley confesses the same. "It is an act of worship," says he, "when the musician is in his private chamber, devotes his whole mind to his vocation." Hear also the great Palestrina: "Nothing, most Blessed Father", he says in his Dedication of the Vesper Hymns, "is so congenial to me, as to be able to give myself to that study when I can abide by my purpose of embracing topics which most fully show forth God's praise, and which, pondered in all their weightiness and dignity of word and idea, and embellished with some amount of musical art, may well move the heart of man to devotion".⁵⁸

⁵⁸ William Henry Gladstone, "Music and an aid to worship and work," *Church Congress Reports* (Carlisle, 1884) 308-17 (1961). Gatens, *Victorian Cathedral Music*, 46.

A concluding thought with regard to the style of the sonatas rests with the Biedermeier spirit that pervades so many of the works in this genre. In many instances there is a strong sense of Mendelssohn's shadow in England resting over the creative presence, but there is also an adherence to form and phrase structure that allies more with Mozart than Beethoven. The bursts of creativity remained largely in the orbit of Crotch's compositional code of conduct. However, the appearance of six sonatas by Hamilton Clarke (1840-1912) – complete with a gavotte, minuet and trio – as late as 1876 shows the reach his commentary, or that of his students or sympathisers, had in subsequent generations. Not only did composers seek out the best of the classical era, some had little inhibition in looking to the secular baroque as well. This seemingly 'simple' and 'natural' approach to the repertoire can be considered socio-historically as aesthetically bourgeois, for it is less organic than it is mechanical. However, a composer or interpreter who seeks to breathe his soul into sounds through their own creative impulse relates to an Enlightenment approach, *Empfindsamkeit*, *Sturm und Drang*, popular romanticism, and the larger Biedermeier spirit related to the response of music to bourgeois society and a desire for commonality.⁵⁹ The Victorians were fundamentally writing music that could easily relate to their 'audience' rather than provoking them into considering new directions.

Beauty in Music

The notion of beauty rested heavily in the decisions of Victorian composers, and the somewhat inherent trait of conservatism that then prevailed is perhaps the sharpest criticism to be swiftly levelled. But in seeking beauty and in turn a sense of truth, the composers sought a sincerity to their works that was very much part of a global Victorian ideal of worthiness; absent the need for works to fulfil a societal need, they could instead be seen as serving a greater good.

⁵⁹ Dahlhaus, *The Idea of Absolute Music*, 71.

In considering the place of beauty, Busoni (quoting Tolstoy) drew a parallel with Nature, thus allying his views with Grecian philosophy and underlining the fact that beauty was all around, if only one could see it and admire it. The view was equally applicable to Crotch and his less knowing or unknowing disciples:

Neither on the lake, nor the mountains, nor in the skies, a single straight line, a single unmixed colour, a single point of repose - everywhere movement, irregularity, caprice, variety, and incessant interplay of shaded and lines, and in it all the reposefulness, softness, harmony and inevitableness of Beauty.⁶⁰

Frank Howes argues that we recognise beauty and truth ‘by intuition, the elementary and ultimate act of mind, which is the beginning of all our knowledge’,⁶¹ and that in making moral judgements ‘we intuit, we recognise that such an act is right, such a trait of character is good, such a personality grown old and wise is also beautiful’.⁶² This view allies with the prevailing orthodox mindset of the beautiful often being found, on sage reflection, in the old(er forms). Howes’s commentary has a weightier bearing on music heard in a sacred realm for what is known to be true musically can be considered in alignment with what is to be believed true theologically. By extension, what is known to be valued and thus incorporated into tradition is by nature a source of consolation; in turn it can become a familiar devotion. Indeed it can be fairly debated that the reason the Church wrestles with the contemporary artistic world in any era is due to a received scepticism that artistic endeavour is by nature the antithesis of heritage, tradition, sublimity, and indeed value. Although these points may seem trifling in the twenty-first century, the question of the moral and ethical relationship between music and society was a heavy burden for Victorian thinkers.

⁶⁰ Busoni, *Sketch on a New Esthetic of Music*, 96.

⁶¹ Frank Howes, *Man, Mind and Music*. (London: Secker & Warburg, 1948), 98.

⁶² Ibid

The philosophy behind the form

In considering the use of form and its relation to contemporary aesthetical concerns for composers Dahlhaus notes:

..the historical philosophy of art forms, however, is based in the philosophy of religion, as with Hoffman and Hegel: classical art is influenced by myth, romantic art by Christianity, and modern art – a ‘service of worship of pure beauty’ – by a religious consciousness in which religion is art, and art religion. And the art form in which the ‘modern ideal’ most purely manifests itself is ‘absolute’ instrumental music.⁶³

He continues, referring to Weisse’s comments in 1830:

Therefore instrumental music is the pure and immediate existence of the absolute or modern ideal, free of all specific structure – historically, too, it belongs entirely to this ideal; and even though it is conceptually the first art form, because it is the most abstract, it is the newest in its historical genesis.⁶⁴

Thus, far from being a backward-looking seer of conservatism, Crotch and his successors in the organ and academic circles of the English mid-late nineteenth century were in fact embracing a larger philosophy that was not a mere pastiche but rather related to larger socio-historical-aesthetical concerns. In this sense, the adoption of classical styles aligned these composers with the aesthetics surrounding Haydn and Stamitz who saw their symphonic music as being part of a ‘communal culture of sentiment’, which ‘sought to address the literary and pedagogical efforts of the bourgeoisie to understand itself and its humanitarian

⁶³ Dahlhaus, *The Idea of Absolute Music*, 100.

⁶⁴ Weisse, *System der Aesthetik als wissenschaft von der Idee der schönheit* (Leipzig: C. H. F. Hartmann, 1830), 2:49. Dahlhaus, *The Idea of Absolute Music*, 99-100.

and moral resources.⁶⁵ In the absence of a significant classical repertoire the Victorian composers were, through their compositions, able to ally form with a want for social progress.

The significance of form and the ubiquitous fugue

What modern commentators sometimes cavalierly dismiss as High Victorian sentimentality, the protagonists of the era undoubtedly viewed as a sincere and determined contribution to the art and the greater canon. If some figures are considered on the periphery of the musical court, as twenty-first century commentators look back we must remember that they were at the epicentre of musical life in Britain during their own time. Further, although the Victorians were not beyond idolisation they were also able to recognise the presence and value of a great many contemporary composers, something which recent trends have intentionally or unintentionally avoided.

In relation to the artistic decisions of composers Theodore Adorno notes that ‘the forms of art record the history of mankind more impartially than do the documents’.⁶⁶ This comment gives pause to our considerations, for it is not the individual or corporate activity of composers and the study of the minutiae of their works which bears relevance to a consideration of their creative output, but rather the more consequent decisions they took towards that end. As such, that composers should seek in particular a study of the (scholastically revered) fugue demonstrates not so much an adherence to an older, venerated, model but rather an association with a form that is as true as it is expressive and (perhaps most significantly in respect of the Victorian ethic) is as intellectually challenging. Furthermore, the concept and

⁶⁵ Dahlhaus, *The Idea of Absolute Music*, 103.

⁶⁶ Max Paddison, *Adorno's Aesthetics of Music* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1993), 218.

value of a 'theme' as a device from which 'meditation' or a 'sequence of ideas' could arise was considered the epitome of musical form in the nineteenth century (Schlegel).⁶⁷

As the Victorians sought earlier models, not least those of the Baroque (coupled with an increasing awareness of Bach), de la Fointaine's observation that Adorno saw Bach as 'the first protagonist of material self-reflection'⁶⁸ has particular bearing on this greater aesthetical concern for self-reflection and self-improvement, tenets at the forefront of Victorian thinking. That Adorno also saw Bach as representing a state of 'transcendent Being'⁶⁹ elevates Gladstone's commentary (page 44) beyond that of the music alone serving a higher purpose to that of the composer being someone who would (and could) communicate beyond a merely pragmatic sphere of influence.

However, the omnipresent employment of the fugue in so many of the sonatas presents an interesting philosophical case for a form rooted in another century and aesthetic context. With the application of the fugue, composers demonstrated not only a process of development through their own interpretation of the material but also a lack of deviation from compositional stricture and (musical) canon.

If we consider Adorno's approach to fugue as an example, we can see the 'dissection' of a larger creative thought process, as the fugue gives access to an especially intellectual technique. The Victorian approach though differs from the model of Bach who retains an ongoing creativity to his writing through multiple contributions to the genre. Indeed Bach's fugues are seldom *stile antico* but rather stretch the form to its limits. In the organ fugues especially one might suggest there are extended passages which stray quite far from the

⁶⁷ Dahlhaus, *The Idea of Absolute Music*, 111.

⁶⁸ Paddison, *Adorno*, 227.

⁶⁹ Ibid

contrapuntal model that the Victorians emulated, not least the Fugue in D major, BWV 532, with its lengthy two-voice textures and running treble passages ‘accompanied’ by the sparsest of basso continuo accompaniments. As such it was Schoenberg’s notion of Bach’s ‘developing variation’⁷⁰ approach within fugue that the Victorians strove for with a *stile antico* style that could exemplify ‘true’ fugal composition. The vast majority of Victorian composers contributed only one work to the genre, thus showing sufficient comprehension of the style as well as their own creative ability without feeling obligated to expand upon the genre yet further.

Expanding upon Schoenberg’s view of ‘continuous variation,’ Ernst Bloch’s later observations on the fugue would have allowed the Victorians to consider more broadly that ‘despite its volatile and rich inner character [its form] constitutes repose, solidity [and] stratification. It is, to stretch a point, the medieval idea of society, put into music: and it is not the breathless discovery of a truth but like the careful exposition of a dogma.’⁷¹ A subsequent point of Bloch’s encapsulates the matter:

Composers turn music not only into an expression of themselves but also into an expression of the age and society in which it originates.....No other art is conditioned by social factors as much as the purportedly self-acting, even mechanically self-sufficient arts of music..⁷²

To complement Crotch’s view on remaining with a style [or genre] that is superior to others, Bloch’s comment that the ‘crystal fugues’ were ‘still unconquered in expression’⁷³ would doubtless have warmed the academic’s heart as well as found ready sympathy with the generation between Crotch and Bloch.

⁷⁰ Ibid, 228.

⁷¹ Ernst Bloch, *Essays on the philosophy of music* (Originally published in 1974 as *Zur Philosophie der Musik*) Tr. Peter Palmer (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1985), 107.

⁷² Ibid, 200.

⁷³ Ibid, 204.

The Victorian sense of appropriateness, worthiness and, above all, expectation comes to the fore through the fugue as a ‘voice of humanity’⁷⁴ in a world of unspoken (but understood) expectations and no mild excesses. As Adorno comments, it is the ‘archaism’ that is its very modernity⁷⁵. Thus the composer provides a cleansing of the aural and moral palette and, as the organ literature is not without its own intemperance, the fugue provides a true light of rationalisation and reason. Furthermore, whilst there may well be a superior creative genius at work, the listener is able to recognize the basic structure of the piece. As such there is an air of familiarity that of itself provides a degree of assuredness, as Charles Rosen comments:

All is well as long as the unfamiliar work does not break with what we think is the proper grammatical structure of music, the correct resolution of dissonance, the familiar placing of the cadence, the expected balance of the melodic phrase.’⁷⁶

To break from the prescribed expectation creates a measure of uncertainty, to some an uncertainty in the mind of the composer, to others an uncertainty in the overall meaning. As the church, the commonplace setting for the performance of the sonatas, does not see uncertainty in itself, the infiltration of doubt, disillusionment, or indeed unwanton decadence (in the music form of advancement in creative language) would seem equally out of place. As such, the conditioning of compositional protocol was, if not institutionalised, certainly an endemic constraint.

The freedom of the absolute and pure

The earlier sections of this study draw attention to the questions arising from the prevailing concerns of programme music and the English adherence to conservatism. With these factors

⁷⁴ Paddison, *Adorno*, 229.

⁷⁵ Ibid

⁷⁶ Charles Rosen, *The Frontiers of Nonsense* (New York: Hill and Wang, 1994), 12.

borne in mind this final section considers the question of contemporaneous aesthetical considerations with regard to the 'absolute'. Dahlhaus notes that 'it would hardly be an exaggeration to claim that the concept of absolute music was the leading idea of the classical and romantic era in music aesthetics' whilst also noting that in the nineteenth century the symphony, which this study has drawn parallel to the organ sonata, and chamber music constituted a 'serious' music culture by comparison to the opera, romance, virtuoso display, and salon pieces also available.⁷⁷ As the sonatas unite the two eras and the want to disassociate from the bourgeois world and move towards an aesthetic contemplation of the inner-self and the place of beauty (as derived from Crotch), the earlier writings of Karl Phillip Moritz have particular bearing:

In observing the beautiful, however, I return the purpose from myself to the object; I observe the object as something not within me, but perfect in itself; that is, it constitutes a whole in itself and gives me pleasure for the sake of itself, in that I do not so much impart to the beautiful object a relationship to myself, but rather impart to myself a relationship to it.⁷⁸

As long as the beautiful draws our intention completely to itself, it shifts it away from ourselves for a while, and makes us seem to lose ourselves for a while, and makes us seem to lose ourselves in the beautiful object; just this losing, this forgetting of the self, is the highest degree of the pure and unselfish pleasure that beauty grants us. At that moment we give up our individual, limited existence in favour of a kind of higher existence.⁷⁹

⁷⁷ Dahlhaus, *The Idea of Absolute Music*, 3.

⁷⁸ Karl Philip Moritz, *Schriften zur Ästhetik und Poetik*, ed. Hans-Joachim Schrimpf (Tübingen: M. Niemeyer, 1962), 3.

⁷⁹ *Ibid*, 5.

Thus, if we acknowledge the external conditioning of the organist-composers, then we must also consider the creative-aesthetic-philosophical response to an era when absolutism and a quest for ‘true’ beauty was a source of larger commentary. Paraphrasing Hanslick, we can already note that the disassociation of text from a musical score can allow for a personal and subjective freedom of association, whether with sound, form or other musical considerations. As such, the composer of the sonata/fugue is thus free from constraints otherwise imposed in the sacred setting because the form itself is ‘true’ and has a higher meaning. In this sense, absolutism in the sacred setting brings the composer closer to the Divine.

Although Dahlhaus makes note of Moritz’s evident pietism, his comments are included above to illumine the key aspect of freedom of mind towards music and in turn towards a romantic aesthetic, for the Victorians were embracing both the needs of contemporary culture as well as the genres of the immediate past century and earlier. As such, we can see that whilst a spirit of conservatism pervaded the community of organist-composers, the overarching romantic aesthetic was very much present as the works offered in a sacred context presented an ‘essence’ of contemporaneous thinking whilst remaining ‘pure’ to the compositional ideals.

The Essence and Expansiveness of Form

In the theses of Nietzsche, Schopenhauer, and Wagner, music was considered to be an expression of the ‘essence’ of matters rather than a language of concepts that fostered mere ‘appearances’, a philosophy which speaks to the greater good the Victorians so readily sought.⁸⁰ The essence in adopting a pure form relates to this thesis of ideas quite appositely. With the employment of a sonata structure (which embodied the known symphonic structure), composers allied themselves to the more public forum of a concert, rather than the

⁸⁰ Dahlhaus, *The Idea of Absolute Music*, 10.

private church world, or that of chamber music, or indeed the Biedermeier salon. Despite this ‘public’ application through innate familiarisation with a generally predictable structure, the ecclesiastical world nonetheless presented a sufficient remoteness. This could be likened to the secular purists’ world where ‘real Beethovenians lock the door, imbibing and revel[ing] in every single measure’.⁸¹ The organist-composers were, in a truly romantic sense, locking the door to the greater world for the sake of art. Harkening to words of Carl Maria von Weber, Dahlhaus notes that the ‘innermost essence of art’ reveals itself [only when] one secludes oneself from the world, from the public’.⁸²

However, as Dahlhaus continues, the romantic notions surrounding instrumental works (as opposed to vocal works) owe little to the musico-aesthetical premises that underlay the symphonies of Stamitz or Haydn.⁸³ The moral characters Haydn purportedly spoke of in his symphonies, or the ‘endless longing’ and ‘wonders of the musical art’ noted in Wackenroder and Tieck, were alien to Haydn.⁸⁴ This point can equally be applied to the sonatas for they are not poetic works in the early romantic sense, but rather classical works to be viewed through a classical lens because it was this purity the Victorians sought to recreate, whether in music or indeed architecture, even if burnished with a romantic-poetical nuance. Just as Herbert Howells commented that he felt he was living in the wrong century (preferring the Elizabethan musical dialectic), the mid-nineteenth-century English organist-composers elected an ancestral costume whose aesthetic they willingly brought forward into their own era.

The Unavoidable Programme

⁸¹ Robert Schumann, *Gesammelte Schriften über Musik und Musiker*, ed. Martin Kreisig (Leipzig: B. & H. 1914), 338

⁸² Dahlhaus, *The Idea of Absolute Music*, 15.

⁸³ Ibid, 65.

⁸⁴ Ibid

However, might we not consider that, putting to one side the poetic and the philosophical, the sacred setting is not by default already full of the programmatic? If belief (or even unbelief) is injected into the sacred setting regardless of the individual response, how can we not consider the hearing of this creative absolutism is devoid of programmatic overtones, be they scriptural, dogmatic, or otherwise? To this question we can consider Friedrich Schlegel's response, by which he elevated the bourgeois Biedermeier elements associated with Haydn and Stamitz's orchestral works and Hoffman's romantic literary interpretations to a point of higher empirical judgement:

All pure music, must be philosophical....

Some find it strange and foolish when musicians speak of the thoughts in their compositions...But whoever has a sense of the affinities among all the arts and sciences will at least not view the matter from the uninspired view of naturalness, according to which music is only supposed to be the language of feelings, and will not find a certain tendency of all pure instrumental music toward philosophy to be impossible of itself. Must not pure instrumental music create a text of its own? And does not its theme get developed, confirmed, varied, and contrasted like the object of meditation in a philosophical sequence of ideas?⁸⁵

As such, although 'absolute' music can be considered as an art-form that is closer to nature by virtue of the fact it is separated from any concept, object or purpose (Dahlhaus),⁸⁶ it nonetheless has inescapable associations in the mind of the listener (and creator). As such, what it 'stands for [is] decisive'⁸⁷ and in some respect conclusive in their minds.

⁸⁵ Friederich Schlegel, "Charakterisiken und Kritiken I", in *Kritische Friedrich-Schlegel-Ausgabe*, ed. Hans Eichner (Munich: Verlag F. Schöningh, 1967), 2:254.

⁸⁶ Dahlhaus, *The Idea of Absolute Music*, 7.

⁸⁷ Ibid

Further, the aesthetic aspect of a ‘loyalty to form’, first alluded to by Hanslick, is considered by August Halm as the ‘spirit of music itself’⁸⁸ as it ‘commands the composer’ towards a ‘spiritual law’ which proclaims itself.⁸⁹ As Ernst Kurth later noted ‘in a technical sense [the absolute] has a double meaning. In a technical sense it means dissolved from song; in a spiritual sense, dissolved from man.’⁹⁰ As such, in adhering to a higher model (sonata/fugue) and placing the work in a sacred setting the composer is fulfilling two aesthetic objectives. Firstly, through the form itself the listener is able to transcend the normal and earthbound and think towards a deeper (spiritual) meaning. Secondly, the listener becomes removed from earthly morals and failings. The work thus provides a measure of eternal hope as individual as it is divinely destined by the form.

Expanding the boundaries of consideration

It is remarkable that, considering the number of people attending church during the Victorian era, the familiarity with hymns and the sincerity of compositional approach found in many a church composer, that chorales do not make a liberal appearance throughout the sonata repertoire. Indeed it is not until the sonatas of Stanford in the 1920s that hymns start to make a pronounced appearance in the sonata form. However, if we apply Hanslick’s rationale, this would only have been a surface addition to the composition at best. Beyond the use of Baroque *affect*, can we say with certainty that the emotions derived from a particular organ work incorporating a chorale manifestly direct the listener to a specific cognitive response? Arguably not. By example, does the congregant hearing the second section of the first movement of Mendelssohn’s *Sonata III*, Opus 65, immediately think of Lenten penitence because the chorale *Aus tiefer Not* appears solemnly in the pedal? Indeed, even if the listeners are informed of its presence in advance, their emotions are unlikely to be any different from

⁸⁸ August Halm, *Die Symphonie Anton Bruckner*, 2d ed. (Munich: 1923), 11.

⁸⁹ Referred to in Dahlhaus, *The Idea of Absolute Music*, 39.

⁹⁰ Ernst Kurth, *Bruckner*. (Berlin: Max Hesses Verlag, 1925), 1:258.

those they would have otherwise experienced. The programmatic element, if we consider it thus, is separate from the music itself. Indeed, as Hanslick would conjecture, the pieces could just as easily bring about a contrary emotion: ‘The initial force of a composition is the invention of some definite theme, and not the desire to describe a given emotion by musical means.’⁹¹

Thus, with the absence of the programmatic we are left with the music itself and thus return to the two prevalent forms of the era, the sonata, and the fugue. In these forms there is an architectonic element of which the listener is, arguably, naturally cognisant through their associations in other venues. In the use of familiar structure, composers allow their music to enter in the sacred portals with an immediate familiarity and as such unite in the mind of the listener an aesthetic impression with the sacred setting.

The aspect of what might best be considered societal pressure and expectation, in the form of Crotch’s comments, has been discussed earlier. However, in relation to the above freeing of the composer and auditor from a prescribed text, the composer also provides for a substitute restrictive framework as Donald Ferguson notes:

Words, the commonly accepted symbols for facts and experience, are admirably capable of evoking images of experience. Yet the essential fixity of association between the verbal symbol and its object deprives the symbol of that elasticity of reference which may evoke the valuation of that object – the way it appears to *you*, at this instant, in this context.⁹²

Novalis’s commentary on romantic poetry being an ‘isolated world for itself’⁹³ also brings music to the point of being restrictive in some respects because it, too, is removed from

⁹¹ Hanslick, *The Beautiful in Music*, 52.

⁹² Donald N. Ferguson, *Music as Metaphor* (Westport: Greenwood Press, 1960), 126.

⁹³ Referred to in Dahlhaus, *The Idea of Absolute Music*, 144.

greater empirical possibilities by the limits of the individual. However this application of the 'isolated' relates to the art-religion world of Wackenroder and Tieck's romantic commentaries for it speaks of the unknown, and the unknown is by nature an individualistic concern and consideration.

Because the auditors are free from the 'fixity' of association they are by nature reliant on their own set of morals. Ferguson's point elucidates Hanslick's assertion that the reception of the words is by nature different from the reception of the music, and in that respect the response is similar to the sister arts. For example, one only has to read a poem to a class of school children and ask them to paint with the text as inspiration to see the same text imbue a sense of visual anarchy to one child and restfulness to another. As such, what does music heard in a sacred setting mean to the listener, whether musically literate or not? Furthermore, could the same listener have a different temporal response based on their contemporary state of emotional temperament, and indeed on his level of simple cognition, general awareness and ability to filter extraneous factors such as other sounds?

To the latter point raised we must conclude that in a sacred setting there exists an inherent expectation in the mind of auditors related to the style (if not temperament) of a work they expect to hear, in order to provoke a phenomenological response that is in keeping with their larger devotional attitude. As Ferguson notes '...if the relation of form is important [and meaningful] to poetry, it must be equally important in music'.⁹⁴ By this conclusion we start to bring together the relationship of Crotch's sublime style (in all its manifestations) to the aesthetic of worship, and ultimately the cognitive aspect related to the creative process. Where, though, does this leave Hanslick's argument of the autonomist versus the heteronomist? Could the Victorian composer in fact represent both?

⁹⁴ Ferguson, *Music as Metaphor*, 124.

The interpretation of this relationship is impossible to determine with any consummate surety for it is inherently individualistic and the arguments are strong on both sides. The fundamental question is again raised: do composers of sacred music ‘will’ themselves toward creativity and hopeful inspiration, or do they act through mechanical necessity? If the latter, are they not governed by a Divine gift of talent in any event? If the former, can we consider any works lesser or more worthy than others? Further, could we equally say that the struggle of dualism is the very struggle presented in all sacred matters, whether of Eden, good or evil, heaven or hell, or musically the *Querelle des anciens et des modernes*?

The questions of musical advancement in the Victorian age frequently relate to a self-conscious will of wanting to mark a place in history and the relationship between the absolute and the realistic desire for musical perfection. If musicians could parody through their works an especially convincing Bachian, Beethovian, Mozartian, or Mendelssohian style then the glow of the great composer would illuminate their own place in the musical firmament; at the very least it would show them to be a worthy. More crucially though, the opposing forces of Hanslick and Wagner are overtaken by the transcendency of absolute music in the sacred setting, as much as the inverse could be the case in a secular setting. By nature the transcendent has no limitation:

“Today you shall be with me in Paradise” – who would not hear this word of the Redeemer if he were to listen to the *Pastorale* Symphony? (Wagner)⁹⁵

⁹⁵ Richard Wagner, *Gesammelte Schriften und Dichtungen*, ed. Wolfgang Golther. (Berlin and Leipzig, n.d.), 9:306. Dahlhaus, *The Idea of Absolute Music*, 136.

The working composer

Gatens asks us to consider ‘the possibility of composers whose temperamental inclinations and creative aspirations correspond[ed] closely with the condition set by the functions and sentiments of the liturgy’.⁹⁶ This is a seminal point that considers the pragmatic element and indeed we should not lose sight of the natural intuition of working church musicians. If we consider that most composers of the time had grown up in and around churches, then we acknowledge that they were already musically indoctrinated in the protocols that pertain to them. As such can the creative aspect truly be considered ‘free’ inspiration, or is it more accurate to consider it a fountain of informed creativity out of which flowed a predictable stream of musical ideas all of a broadly similar consistency? After all, the protagonists were all musicians of considerable training and schooled in music far beyond their own ecclesiastical confines. It is this circumstance that leads us towards a resolution as it is the advanced learning that affords increased gravitas to their creative life as well as professional position.

It is this latter thought which brings this chapter to a close. It would be a courageous assertion to suggest that the most ‘freeing’ music of the church - and as such that which requires the greatest self-enquiry - is actually that which does not associate itself directly with text, but the argument formulated here provides for a consideration of absolutism in sacred music as being, by its very nature, more spiritual, and certainly one of individual artistic communion. However there are several pre-eminent considerations which provide a bulwark against any discomfiture.

⁹⁶ Gatens, *Victorian Cathedral Music*, 45.

We have ascertained that in considering the performance of ‘pure’ music in a sacred setting, the listener cannot be removed from a text entirely and the reader will have noticed that there has been a deliberate avoidance of any prescribed theological thesis to this study for the sole reason that the protagonists were not themselves theologically trained, but rather ecclesiastically conditioned.

Howes writes:

Music certainly has great powers of expressing aspiration, and aspiration in religion’s most unusual characteristic, embodying, as it does, knowledge of, or belief in, God, and emotional response to Him, and good behaviour as an immediate consequence in action of these intellectual and affective states.⁹⁷

He further notes that ‘the creative imagination is a faculty that works by direct and immediate intuition’.⁹⁸ As such, the greater responsibility of composers, both in their own work and in their impact on auditors, was to be self-aware and encourage a sense of individual response through the creation of a worthy work. This relates to our knowledge that the reception of creativity is not only personal but also independent of external influence *i.e.* how we receive music is our own concern. Inasmuch as theories of transcendent and formalist emancipation destined (sacred) musicians for a higher calling, social emancipation required them to remain ‘in the world’ according to their individual consciences.⁹⁹

As such, how we then receive ‘pure’ music in a sacred setting is especially germane to Howes’s view. He makes references to the three goddesses, ‘Virtue, Beauty and Truth’¹⁰⁰ and in defining them as ‘ultimate values’ assimilates with Crotch’s specific classifications. In this vein might we consider that sacred music that aims for a sublime nature transcends all

⁹⁷ Howes, *Man, Mind and Music*, 60.

⁹⁸ Howes, *Man, Mind and Music*, 54.

⁹⁹ Goehr, *The Imaginary Museum of Musical Works*, 211.

¹⁰⁰ Howes, *Man, Mind and Music*, 97.

boundaries as it allows for a communion of sacred idealism *with* the soul absent the intrusion of exceptional instruments of empirical persuasion?

Supporting this thesis, it is incontrovertible that people hearing music in a voluntary state of attendance do so because the sacred setting is fulfilling a specific part of an inner decision. There can be no question that music for a sacred setting aims at being ‘beautiful’ for the purpose of embodying the ideal of perfection sought by the church fathers. However, through that perfection, whether of style or form comes the emotional aspect that we attach to it because of the surroundings and personal belief (or unbelief). The listener receives the music in a ‘beautiful’, ‘emotional’ *and* ‘spiritual’ sense because to the auditor the three are inseparable. Indeed, if one is to view the matter objectively, these classifications are as inseparable to the definition of composers as they are to the performer or listener. The composer becomes the vessel of the intellectual as well as the communicator of the emotional properties associated with the art-form. Thus the creative decisions the Victorians made were not only serving their own ideals and desire for professional approbation, but also consciously or subconsciously served to promote a higher ideal that was to be a model for generations to come. It is this model that aligns with Crotch’s sentiment of the sublime being ‘founded on principles of vastness and incomprehensibility’¹⁰¹ and to which he speaks in a vein that the Victorians would have found easily applicable in their own era:

It is sublime if it inspires veneration....whoever, then, were the greatest composers of the sublime style, they are to be regarded as treading in the highest walks of art..¹⁰²

¹⁰¹ William Crotch, *Substance of Several Courses of Lectures on Music* (1831), introduced by Bernarr Rainbow (Clarendon: Boethius, 1986), 32.

¹⁰² *Ibid*, 43.

Part II

The Organist in Literature

Chapter 4

Robert Browning's 'Abt Vogler'

—

*a study of the role of the sacred
improviser as Divine servant*

Abt Vogler

Robert Browning

(After he has been extemporizing upon the musical instrument of his invention.)

I

Would that the structure brave, the manifold music I build,
Bidding my organ obey, calling its keys to their work,
Claiming each slave of the sound, at a touch, as when Solomon willed
Armies of angels that soar, legions of demons that lurk,
Man, brute, reptile, fly,—alien of end and of aim, 5
Adverse, each from the other heaven-high, hell-deep removed,—
Should rush into sight at once as he named the ineffable Name,
And pile him a palace straight, to pleasure the princess he loved!

II

Would it might tarry like his, the beautiful building of mine,
This which my keys in a crowd pressed and importuned to raise! 10
Ah, one and all, how they helped, would dispart now and now
combine,
Zealous to hasten the work, heighten their master his praise!
And one would bury his brow with a blind plunge down to hell,
Burrow awhile and build, broad on the roots of things,
Then up again swim into sight, having based me my palace well, 15
Founded it, fearless of flame, flat on the nether springs.

III

And another would mount and march, like the excellent minion he was,
Ay, another and yet another, one crowd but with many a crest,
Raising my rampired walls of gold as transparent as glass,
Eager to do and die, yield each his place to the rest: 20
For higher still and higher (as a runner tips with fire,
When a great illumination surprises a festal night—
Outlining round and round Rome's dome from space to spire)
Up, the pinnacled glory reached, and the pride of my soul was in sight.

IV

In sight? Not half! for it seemed, it was certain, to match man's birth, 25
Nature in turn conceived, obeying an impulse as I;
And the emulous heaven yearned down, made effort to reach the earth,
As the earth had done her best, in my passion, to scale the sky:
Novel splendours burst forth, grew familiar and dwelt with mine,
Not a point nor peak but found and fixed its wandering star; 30
Meteor-moons, balls of blaze: and they did not pale nor pine,
For earth had attained to heaven, there was no more near nor far.

V

Presences plain in the place; or, fresh from the Protoplast,
 Furnished for ages to come, when a kindlier wind should blow, 35
 Lured now to begin and live, in a house to their liking at last;
 Or else the wonderful Dead who have passed through the body and
 gone,
 But were back once more to breathe in an old world worth their new:
 What never had been, was now; what was, as it shall be anon;
 And what is,—shall I say, matched both? for I was made perfect too. 40

VI

All through my keys that gave their sounds to a wish of my soul,
 All through my soul that praised as its wish flowed visibly forth,
 All through music and me! For think, had I painted the whole,
 Why, there it had stood, to see, nor the process so wonder-worth:
 Had I written the same, made verse—still, effect proceeds from cause, 45
 Ye know why the forms are fair, ye hear how the tale is told;
 It is all triumphant art, but art in obedience to laws,
 Painter and poet are proud in the artist-list enrolled:—

VII

But here is the finger of God, a flash of the will that can,
Existent behind all laws, that made them and, lo, they are! 50
And I know not if, save in this, such gift be allowed to man,
That out of three sounds he frame, not a fourth sound, but a star.
Consider it well: each tone of our scale in itself is nought;
It is everywhere in the world—loud, soft, and all is said:
Give it to me to use! I mix it with two in my thought: 55
And, there! Ye have heard and seen: consider and bow the head!

VIII

Well, it is gone at last, the palace of music I reared;
Gone! and the good tears start, the praises that come too slow;
For one is assured at first, one scarce can say that he feared,
That he even gave it a thought, the gone thing was to go. 60
Never to be again! But many more of the kind
As good, nay, better perchance: is this your comfort to me?
To me, who must be saved because I cling with my mind
To the same, same self, same love, same God: ay, what was, shall be.

65

IX

Therefore to whom turn I but to Thee, the ineffable Name?
Builder and maker, Thou, of houses not made with hands!
What, have fear of change from Thee who art ever the same?
Doubt that Thy power can fill the heart that Thy power expands?
There shall never be one lost good! What was, shall live as before;
The evil is null, is nought, is silence implying sound; 70
What was good, shall be good, with, for evil, so much good more;
On the earth the broken arcs; in the heaven, a perfect round.

X

All we have willed or hoped or dreamed of good, shall exist;
Not its semblance, but itself; no beauty, nor good, nor power
Whose voice has gone forth, but each survives for the melodist 75
When eternity affirms the conception of an hour.
The high that proved too high, the heroic for earth too hard,
The passion that left the ground to lose itself in the sky,
Are music sent up to God by the lover and the bard;
Enough that He heard it once: we shall hear it by and by. 80

XI

And what is our failure here but a triumph's evidence
For the fullness of the days? Have we withered or agonized?
Why else was the pause prolonged but that singing might issue thence?
Why rushed the discords in, but that harmony should be prized?

Sorrow is hard to bear, and doubt is slow to clear, 85
Each sufferer says his say, his scheme of the weal and woe:
But God has a few of us whom He whispers in the ear;
The rest may reason and welcome: 'tis we musicians know.

XII

Well, it is earth with me; silence resumes her reign:
I will be patient and proud, and soberly acquiesce. 90
Give me the keys. I feel for the common chord again,
Sliding by semitones, till I sink to the minor,—yes,
And I blunt it into a ninth, and I stand on alien ground,
Surveying awhile the heights I rolled from into the deep;
Which, hark, I have dared and done, for my resting-place is found, 95
The C Major of this life: so, now I will try to sleep.¹

¹ Robert Browning 'Abt Vogler' in *The Complete Works of Robert Browning*, Vol. VI. Ed. John. C. Berkey, Allan C. Dooley, Susan E. Dooley (Athens, Ohio: Ohio University Press, 1996), 220-225.

Robert Browning's *Abt Vogler* is unquestionably a defining work in the poetical realm concerned with music and musicians. Through verse, Browning lays bare the very facets of the organist's life, passions, shortcomings, and beliefs while drawing the reader into a world that no other writer had described quite so eloquently, before or since. This study seeks to re-examine *Abt Vogler* through a musical lens that places the poem in the context of nineteenth-century thinking allied to musical practice in terms of its theological overtones, aesthetical relationships and their musicological implications.

The selection of *Vogler* – a figure from the previous century and equally known as a compositional conservative and improvisational radical – bears direct relation on the place of English organ music in the nineteenth century. As the contemporary repertoire looks to the past - and only cautiously to the future - so Browning adopts a known figure of an earlier era, a polymath (as Browning himself was), and, above all, a personality of no lean personality. Crucially, this dramatic monologue opens several windows into the world of nineteenth-century thinking. *Abt Vogler* requires us to consider the pervading presence of German culture in England, the legacy of Germanic pedagogical influence, improvisation, the role of the liturgical organist, natural theology, and nineteenth-century aesthetics and critical thinking. As such, Browning supplies the material for a kaleidoscopic vision of the organist that has a commanding resonance with the English setting more so than any centres of the continental musical axis.

Browning and Music

Browning's unorthodox but nonetheless highly creative upbringing (including lessons in dancing, riding, boxing and fencing)² afforded him the challenging decision of whether to be

² R. W. S. Mendel, 'Robert Browning, the Poet-Musician,' *Music and Letters* 42 (1961): 142.

an artist, poet or musician.³ For many years he effectively combined writing music and text, often penning a few bars as a postscript to a letter or simply missing out a sentence within a letter which was then supplanted with a musical line.⁴

As a child he listened to his partly-German mother playing the piano and would whisper to her to continue playing each time she stopped.⁵ Although none of his own compositions have survived, he was known to have written songs based on Donne's 'Go catch a falling star', Hood's 'I will not have the mad Clytie' and Peacock's 'The mountain sheep are sweeter'.⁶ His writing, though, was to become central and with a gift for several languages it is easy to understand how a natural facility developed. However, despite this early decision, his knowledge of other creative fields offered him material on which to draw.

Richardson has demonstrated how Browning's musical preferences were on the 'reactionary'⁷ side, and that he preferred to look back to forms and techniques of the previous century, rather than embracing those of his own. His tastes, though, bore relation to his own dissenting upbringing, fostering those talents that were on the margins of the musical orbit. His tribute to Charles Avison (1709-1770), the eighteenth-century Newcastle organist, is a good example. One of Browning's teachers, John Relfe⁸ – then an elderly man associated with the court of George III, and a respected teacher with a significant knowledge of musical matters with two published books⁹ – introduced him to Avison's *Essay on Musical Expression* (1752), and it was within this book that he found extraordinary praise for

³ Iain Finlayson, *Browning: A private life* (London: HarperCollins, 2004), 48.

⁴ For a detailed account of this see Nachum Schoffman, *There is No Truer Truth – The Musical Aspect of Browning's Poetry* (New York: Greenwood Press, 1991), 23-44.

⁵ William Hall Griffin and Harry Christopher Minchin, *The Life of Robert Browning* (New York, 1910,) 17.

⁶ Finlayson, *Browning*, 56.

⁷ Malcolm Richardson, 'Robert Browning's taste in music,' *Browning Institute Studies*, Vol 6 (1978): 105

⁸ W. Wright Roberts, 'Music in Browning' *Music & Letters* Vol. 17, No. 3, July (1936) makes the observation that whilst the *Browning Encyclopedia* calls Relfe a celebrated contrapuntist, his name is not to be found in either *Grove* or the *Dictionary of National Biography*. Relfe lived in Church Row, Camberwell, not far from the Brownings and taught at home. W. H. Griffin, *The Life of Robert Browning*, Ed. Harry Christopher Minchin. (London: Methuen, 1938), 16

⁹ *Ibid* 106-107.

Geminiani (1687-1762) and Palestrina at the expense of Handel and Bach.¹⁰ Along with Gänsbacher, Meyerbeer and Weber, Vogler had also taught Relfe, who then based his own teachings on Vogler.¹¹ (It is also noted that composers such as J. S. Bach, Beethoven, Handel, Mozart and Domenico Scarlatti were as well known in some circles as improvisers as they were as composers¹² – the anecdotal story of someone hearing Bach improvise for the first time and claiming that he was either an angel sent from heaven or Johann Sebastian Bach has an obvious relevance here.) As such, Browning developed an affinity and appreciation for the ‘earlier’ schools from an early age, even if sometimes seeing them through a less traditional lens – could anyone but Avison uphold Geminiani and Marcello (1669-1747) against Handel?¹³ (It is an interesting side note that in his essay *Cäcilia*, Johann Gottfried Herder pays homage to the music of Leo, Durante, Palestrina, Marcello, Pergolosi, Handel [and] Bach, whilst considering the present as an ‘impoverished time’ of bygone grandeur.)¹⁴ Naylor notes that in *Parleyings with Certain People of Importance in their Day*, Browning comments on Avison naming ‘twenty-six composers of repute in his time (George II)’..and of ‘twenty-six, he praises twenty-two’, but ‘only half are recognised by us now, and only about four really well known’.¹⁵ It is certainly a selective view of musical history from a twenty-first century perspective, but it cannot be seen either as confused or inaccurate, as the English fondness for musicians of the continent was to continue for generations to come, arguably at the expense of a national tradition beyond that of London being cosmopolitan by nature, and the English being their own worst detractors.

Most of the composers Browning refers to in his writings are those of the past, whether they were Dowland (1562-1626), Palestrina (1525-94), Geminiani (1687-1762), Corelli (1653-

¹⁰ Ibid 113.

¹¹ William Clyde DeVane, *A Browning Handbook* (New York: Appleton-Century-Crofts, Inc., 1935), 290.

¹² Jeremy S. Begbie, *Theology, Music and Time*. (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2000), 181

¹³ Wright Roberts, ‘Music in Browning,’ 244.

¹⁴ Johann Gottfried Herder, *Werke*, ed. Heinrich Düntzer (Berline, n.d.), 15: 337.

¹⁵ Edwin W. Naylor, *The Poets and Music* (Westport: Hyperion Press, Inc., 1928), 21.

1713) or Purcell (1659-1695).¹⁶ As Richardson notes, the name of Geminiani would hardly have been well-known to a nineteenth century English public¹⁷ (although a contemporary such as Corelli's certainly would have been as his solo sonatas enjoyed considerable popularity through a range of contemporary publications). The family music book bore witness to an even greater diversity with Renaissance love lyrics and 'Highland Laddie' appearing alongside works of Handel (1685-1759) and Purcell.¹⁸

A further influence came from his singing master Isaac Nathan, who was a lighter spirit than Relfe.¹⁹ Known as a composer of songs and ballad opera he was a devoted admirer of Byron, sometime tutor to Princess Charlotte and possibly a domestic secret agent for George IV and William II.²⁰ Far from a severe academic he provided a tonic to Relfe whilst opening Browning's eyes to the 'almost dandified world of opera and song'.²¹ Nathan was in the true sense a cosmopolitan and very familiar with European trends. Furthermore not only did he compose and share an interest in musical history, he also took an abiding interest in poetry.²²

He also studied with Abel, a pupil of the pianist and composer Ignaz Moscheles, whose other pupils included Mendelssohn. Browning later befriended Moscheles's son, Felix, and assisted with the preface of an edition of Mendelssohn's letters.²³ However, the Mendelssohn circle (David, Gade, Schumann and Sterndale Bennett), evolved with a similar conservatism, and the relationship to the resurgence of interest in Bach's music would doubtless have rested well with Browning. Of his early education he noted 'I was studying the grammar of music when most children are learning the multiplication table, and I know what I am talking about

¹⁶ Wright Roberts 'Music in Browning,' 111.

¹⁷ Ibid.

¹⁸ John Maynard, *Browning's Youth* (Cambridge, Mass. Harvard University Press, 1977), 146.

¹⁹ Ibid, 142.

²⁰ Ibid

²¹ Ibid

²² Ibid

²³ Wright Roberts, 'Music in Browning,' 106.

when I speak of music'.²⁴ This point, sometimes disputed because of inconsistencies in the employment of musical language, will nonetheless be argued in the positive here. As an educated and cultured man of nineteenth-century England, it is not surprising that, like the pianists of the day, he would extemporise freely at the piano. Of his ability in this sphere we read:

He possessed the gift of improvising on the piano and although there is no commentary on an ability to excel in this genre with a calibre equal to the virtuoso of the age and their 'preluding' and 'interluding' around the (composed) repertoire, his prowess at the art certainly drew attention. To listen was to be entranced as by the rapt strains of Beethoven's compositions, or by Mendelssohn's glorious melodies, as the poet's hands swept the keys, passing from one theme to another; but you could listen only once to the same strains; the inspiration came and went; the poet could never repeat the melodies. Few there were who knew of this divine gift; for only to those who were most intimate with him did he reveal himself in this way.²⁵

He was later noted as playing 'the national airs of various peoples, tracing in the spirit of their melodies the characteristics of the nations to which they belonged'.²⁶

Improvisation by nature adopts a more personal approach to creativity than interpretation alone. Furthermore, in the classical period it was a highly regarded art-form. The ability to be able to create music quickly, whether written down or simply performed was highly prized, and, in addition, in the eighteenth century a skilled improviser was in many respects the charismatic forerunner of the nineteenth-century virtuoso. Indeed of the adage that the best improvisations do not sound like meaningless ramblings but rather full-composed (and

²⁴ Ibid, 107.

²⁵ A. Goodrich-Freer, 'Robert Browning The Musician', *The Nineteenth Century: a monthly review*, Vol. 49, no. 290, April (1901): 650.

²⁶ Ibid, 652.

thought out) works Mizler's report of J. S. Bach speaks volumes: 'Whoever wishes truly to observe what delicacy in thorough bass and very good accompanying mean need only take the trouble to hear our Capellmeister Bach here, who accompanies every thorough bass to a solo so that one thinks it is a piece of concerted music and as if the melody he plays [in the right hand] were written out beforehand.'²⁷ The artist is not only drawing on their past experiences, the weight of tradition, protocol, and expectation, but also acting upon it with an immediacy that, though pre-destined in part through these points, is nonetheless of the moment.

The English heritage of improvisation stemmed not from a prescribed course of study for pieces that were to 'stand alone', but rather from the basso continuo tradition. As such, the average English musician could easily acquit themselves with a short work that was, at the very least, based on functional harmony. A supreme exponent could improvise a fugue – the most learned style of all – but for most organists, improvisation consisted of shorter pieces that were specific to a particular setting, most commonly liturgical. Therefore, Browning's choice of a well-known improviser for a poem to be published in England highlights the creative practice of improvisation to an audience not altogether familiar with the art outside of the extension of Baroque practice. However, in placing Vogler as his protagonist, Browning appeals to the Victorian sense for self-improvement and worthiness. Not only is Vogler well-known, but Vogler is seen to be giving the best of himself, and humbled when he falls short. These sentiments are thoroughly Victorian and the result is an illumination of the organist's condition.

²⁷ Hans T. David and Arthur Mendel, ed., *The Bach Reader*, (New York: W. W. Norton, 1966), 231.

To what extent Browning's early affection for the composer and radical Eliza Flower (1803-1846), who was nine years his senior, played a part in this early musical enthusiasms we cannot say with certainty. It seems probable that Flower may have been asked by Browning's mother to give him lessons.²⁸ However, the fact that a talented musician, such as Flower, could have proved the inspiration for his early work *Pauline* cannot be overlooked. Flower had a similarly unconventional upbringing but had equally been impressive at a young age, including the composition of songs.²⁹ Of their relationship, an intimate friend of both, Mrs. Bridell Fox said that Flower 'profoundly modified his life'.³⁰

Elizabeth Barrett Browning

The period of writing *Abt Vogler* coincides with the time of mourning for his wife, Elizabeth Barrett Browning. Although we know Browning led her out of her more sheltered life into one of 'love, high art [and] political engagement',³¹ coupled with her 'moral domination',³² we know too of Elizabeth's greater appeal to the public at the point of her passing.³³ Thus, we must also consider whether Browning is, through Vogler, retreating to the organ loft and seeking (an ultimate) acceptance from a higher power either to answer his prayers or seek confirmation of his own beliefs. Although we cannot be sure of Browning's faith, wavering as it was, the reader is given solace in the surety and conviction which Vogler appears to possess.

They married on September 12, 1846, at Marylebone Parish Church, London, after which the couple left for Italy with the hope that the warmer Continental climate would ease her

²⁸ Francis Sim, *Robert Browning the Poet and the Man*. (London: T. F. Unwin, Ltd., 1923), 22. No source for the statement is provided.

²⁹ Richard Garnett, *The Life of W. J. Fox* (London: John Lane, 1910), 22.

³⁰ Goodrich-Freer, 'Robert Browning The Musician,' 649.

³¹ John Maynard, *Browning Re-Viewed* (New York: Peter Lang Publishing, 1998), 45.

³² Ibid, 106.

³³ Ibid, 133.

delicate medical condition.³⁴ In 1849, at the age of 43, Elizabeth gave birth to a son, Robert Wiedemann Barrett Browning, known as Pen, and to whom Browning later gave music lessons.³⁵ Pollock has suggested that Browning, an ‘objective’ poet, sought out a ‘subjective’ poet in the hope that ‘dialogue with her would enable him to be more successful’.³⁶ If true, then the loss of Elizabeth, who understood the process of creation of verse, as well as the idiosyncrasies of her husband-poet, would have been all the more poignant for Browning who sought consolation in music following her death.³⁷

Browning’s loss of Elizabeth in 1861 marked his return from Italy to England. John Maynard points out that though the loss of Elizabeth brings Browning to a ‘dark tower’ it also brought about ‘more involvement in human life’.³⁸ DeVane notes of *Abt Vogler* that ‘its profound seriousness and beauty leads one to think that it was written after Mrs. Browning’s death’.³⁹ Though subjective, this opinion accords with his comments to Isa Blagden that ‘now the past & present & future, pleasure & pain & pleasure, for the last taste of all, are mixed up like ingredients of a drink’.⁴⁰ A year later he noted that he had been writing and ‘mean to keep writing, whether I like it or no’, which prompts Hawlin to suggest that ‘his writing life was one way of living through the early years of grief’⁴¹ and Neville-Sington to see as being part of the ‘restorative powers’⁴² of healing.

Although it would be simplistic to describe the poem as being of a ‘later period’ or written in a ‘grief-ridden state’, Browning’s choice of protagonist affords the poet a wealth of

³⁴ William G. Kingsland, *Robert Browning: Chief Poet of the Age* (London: J. W. Jarvis, 1890), 19.

³⁵ Herbert Elveth Greene, ‘Browning’s Knowledge of Music’. *PMLA*, Vol. 62, No. 4, December (1947): 1096.

³⁶ Mary Sanders Pollock, *Elizabeth Barrett and Robert Browning: A Creative Partnership* (Ashford: Ashgate Publishing Company, 2003)

³⁷ DeVane, *A Browning Handbook*, 290.

³⁸ *Ibid*, 45.

³⁹ *Ibid*, 290.

⁴⁰ Edward C. McAleer, *Dearest Isa* (Austin: University of Texas Press, 1951), 87.

⁴¹ Stefan Hawlin, *The Complete Critical Guide to Robert Browning* (London and New York: Routledge, 2001), 33.

⁴² Pamela Neville-Sington, *Robert Browning. A Life after Death* (London: Weidenfeld & Nicholson, 2004), 35.

opportunity for conveying his temporal views on and through music, sacred music, liturgical improvisation, prayer, beauty, artistic talent, and personal and professional devotion.

But also we cannot overlook the fact that at the time of its publication Browning was the lesser known literary figure of his (former) household. Naylor's observations with respect to Browning's poem *Galuppi* that the ancient protagonist allowed Browning to be transported 'back to old times'⁴³ bear equal consideration here as does Kirkconnell's commentary on reactionary views of the *Epilogue* – 'our knowledge of the infinity of the universe is the denial of even this superhuman deity. Man is left alone, a spiritual orphan.'⁴⁴ As such, if man is saved he is not alone and to this end we have to question whether, through Vogler, Browning, seeks a new (or renewed) union with his creator.

Does the timing of *Dramatis Personae*, briefly referenced above in relation to Elizabeth's passing (1861), convey a belief that the writing of *Abt Vogler* was in some sense influenced by her death? Firstly, we know that Browning sought consolation in music upon his return to England⁴⁵. Muir argues that it is 'truth' above all that served as a cornerstone to Browning: 'the uniqueness of personality; the imperfection of human life; the desire of the imperfect being for perfection; and the presence of God'⁴⁶. If we consider the subject of Browning turning from Elizabeth as his focus to God we may consider this a salient reference in this particular study of *Abt Vogler*, for the Divine is already central to the protagonist's role. As such the position of Browning as a religious querist comes to the fore and through music Vogler sees, as a palace before him, a vision of the Eternal. With Elizabeth's passing so close, it would be unfortunate to ignore this relation, if only as a side-consideration, despite

⁴³ Naylor, *The Poets and Music* (Westport: Hyperion Press, Inc., 1928)

⁴⁴ Watson Kirkconnell, 'The Epilogue to *Dramatis Personae*'. *Modern Language Notes* Vol. 41, no 4, April (1926): 218.

⁴⁵ DeVane, *A Browning Handbook*, 290.

⁴⁶ Edwin Muir, 'Robert Browning' in *Robert Browning – A collection of critical essays* (London: Methuen & Co Ltd., 1966,) 66.

the appearance of 'Brownings very sure of God and pessimist Brownings...Brownings for whom God is love and Brownings for whom He refuses to come'.⁴⁷ Relating this to the subsequent generation, Turnbull noted:

In an age like the present, when the faith of many is drifting, anchorless, when dull grey clouds of doubt have settled down on most of our noblest intellects, have we not indeed cause for thankfulness that Browning is among 'the last who believe'? He does not shrink from plunging into the thickest, blackest clouds, his faith being fixed steadfastly on the Sun of Love beyond, which pierces through and suffuses ever the horror of darkness.

How bracing, invigorating, and full of hope is the philosophy of life that he gives us! Surely his scheme of the weal and woe is the best antidote to that dreary fatal pessimism which threatens to sap alike the faith, and virtue, and courage of this century.⁴⁸

West takes this further noting in 1871:

We have not now-and probably the world will never have again-poets who are poets and nothing more. What we have now is truth-seekers and pleasure-seekers gifted with the power of artistic perception and imagination, of rhythmical or melodious expression, and using these gifts to seek what without them they would have sought by other means.⁴⁹

We must, however, see these statements within a culture in the ever-evolving state of religious consciousness of nineteenth-century England and the want to attach a reverential if

⁴⁷ Maynard, *Browning Re-Viewed*, 112.

⁴⁸ Mrs Turnbull 'Abt Vogler' Read at the 17th Meeting of the Browning Society, Friday, June 22, 1883. *Browning Studies*. Ed. E. Berdoe, (London: George Allen & Sons. London, 1909), 148.

⁴⁹ E. Dickinson West, 'Browning as a Preacher,' *Dark Blue*, Vol 2, No. 8, October (1871): 171-172

not homiletic overtone to the writing of a layman. That is not to discount the suggestion that a significant number of readers may well have interpreted writings in a homiletic vein, but equally there are others who could have drawn opposing conclusions, and to this we can note that Browning is improvising with thoughts and interpretation, as his protagonist Vogler does.

But equally Browning comments on the transience of professional life, whether literary or musical, and this has obvious bearing for the contemporary organist in any age. Plamondon reflects on the allusion in Charles Avison that whereas Handel could once inspire the English to great heights, the role is now assumed by Wagner.⁵⁰ As such, even within one's life what is popular is no more.

Through the medium of the organ, and with the image of the organist Vogler quickly placed in the reader's mind, Browning offers his dramatic monologue in the place of the musician in the sacred service to the Church and in ultimate servitude of the Supreme Creator.

Dramatis Personae

At the point of publishing *Dramatis Personae* (1864) Browning was in his fifty-second year and had not written poetry for ten years. Kirkconnell notes that in many respects the *Dramatis Personae* amount to a serious exposition of Browning's 'ultimate philosophy' with the *Epilogue* serving as a recapitulation of that faith.⁵¹

The work fell into a period that coincided with continuing upheaval in the spiritual life of England. Charles Darwin's *Origin of Species* had been published in 1859 and in 1863, Sir Charles Lyell's *The Geological Evidence of the Antiquity of Man* was published. These volumes asserted the place of man with the lower animals and the ultimate battle that ensued

⁵⁰ Marc R. Plamondon, 'What do you mean by your mountainous fugues?. A Musical Reading of Browning's 'A Toccata on Galuppi's' and 'Master Hughes of Saxe-Gotha,' *Victorian Poetry* Vol. 37, No.3 (1999): 310.

⁵¹ Kirkconnell, 'The Epilogue to *Dramatis Personae*,' 213.

with ecclesiastics sought to raise the place of religion to a more inspiring place by the adoption and sublimation of the principle of evolution.⁵²

The church essentially divided into two. The followers of the Oxford Movement moved their followers towards the traditional values of Roman Catholic ritual, with a leading Tractarian, John Henry Newman, ultimately converting to Roman Catholicism. By contrast the Broad Church Party took an interest in German criticism and scientific philosophy of the day, as enshrined in Matthew Arnold's *Literature and Dogma*, where he proselytised a need to reinterpret the Bible for modern times.⁵³ Although the larger *Dramatis Personae* is tinged with the concerns of contemporary querists, the views expressed are nonetheless steadfast and require the reader to consider whether they might be Browning's own, or merely questions for further consideration.

Browning's views through *Dramatis Personae* lean more towards the sacerdotalism and mystery of the Oxford Movement, whereby a knowledge of the Divine is gained through special revelation – and we should not rule Vogler's 'experience' out of this context. God's will is manifested in His church and in the edifices, with ceremonial, which brings us into the realm of the 'Holy of Holies', and in turn the 'glory of the Lord'.⁵⁴ As Browning notes in the *Epilogue* 'Heaven's high does intertwine with earth's low'. Furthermore, is it through the labour of man that the highest forms of worship are achieved as Kirkconnell notes 'thereby comes the progressive realization of potential divinity'.⁵⁵

⁵² Ibid

⁵³ Ibid, 215.

⁵⁴ Ibid, 217.

⁵⁵ Ibid, 219.

Vogler

In selecting Vogler, rather than an imaginary figure, Browning brings to his protagonist a relational perspective. Whereas in the Toccata of Galuppi's it is the 'sound patterning of the words' that are its main force in imitating music, and in Master Hughes the use of sound is secondary to the use of motif,⁵⁶ in Abt Vogler Browning specifically elects a musician in the central rather than submissive role.

Georg Joseph Vogler (1749-1814) was a German theorist, teacher, keyboard player, organ designer, and composer whose theory of harmony influenced nineteenth-century approaches to musical analysis and orchestration. His organ designs – begun as a youth – aroused as much enthusiasm as they did concern. His thirteen-manual, three-console *Triorganon* remained incomplete at the point of his death. As a theorist of organ design, his *Orchestrion* - a movable organ first presented in Rotterdam in 1790 and the 'instrument of his own invention' featured in *Abt Vogler* - marked a return to the world of the portative organ and although deplored by contemporary critics is nonetheless seen in the present century alongside the many curious and short-lived experimental instruments of the nineteenth century.

⁵⁶ Plamondon, 'What do you mean by your mountainous fugues?. A Musical Reading of Browning's 'A Toccata on Galuppi's' and 'Master Hughes of Saxe-Gotha,''319.

Orchestrion⁵⁷

1st Manual

1	Rossignol-Cimbalino	1 ½', 1 3/5', 1 ¾'
2	Campanella	2'
3	Jeu d'acier	2 2/5'
4	Tromba marina	6' . 4 (sic)
5	Tromba trias harmonica	2, 1 1/3, 1 4/5, c'

Pedal

Tromba marina 6, 4

2nd Manual

1	Flute piccolo	1 ½' F-Ombra 4', c	1 Fl. rustico	1 ½'
2	Flute à bec	3'	2 Fl. dolce	3'
3	Flute à chein	6'	3 Sylvana	6'
4	Flautone	12'	4 Basse de fl.	12'

3rd Manual

1	Vox angelica	3' F – Fluttante 3 5/9, d.	1 Cornette	3'
2	Clarinet	6', F – Vox humana 4', c	2 Clairon	6'
3	Fagotto ed Oboe	12'	3 Serpent	12'

4th Manual

1	Violini	3' F – Fl. trav. 1 7/9, d.	1 Viola d.g.	6'
2	Viole d'amour	6', F – Fl. d'amore 1 1/3, g.		

As De Vane notes, 'the organs which Vogler built seemed excellent when he played upon them himself, but other performers found difficulty in using them'.⁵⁸ This also relates to his tampering of instruments which provided disarray to incumbent musicians. He frequently took unskilled laymen into his confidence to note their reactions.⁵⁹ Such was his enthusiasm he was known to provide pamphlets at concerts on the 'restored' organ comparing it with the former one in which he violently defended every alteration or addition.⁶⁰ However, his prominence as a pedagogue attracted students that included the young Carl Maria von Weber,

⁵⁷ Hertha Schweiger, 'Abt Vogler,' *The Musical Quarterly* Volume 25, No. 2 (1939): 162.

⁵⁸ DeVane, *A Browning Handbook*, 292.

⁵⁹ Schweiger, 'Abt Vogler,' 161.

⁶⁰ Ibid

and Vogler's writings on the reform of sacred music foreshadowed the Cecilian movement with his predominant conservative stance for 'old' church music.⁶¹

Grave notes that contemporary accounts cite Vogler's improvisatory skill as being considerable, and perhaps more significant than his compositions which were in a relatively conservative style for the period. As an improviser, Mozart – doubtless unimpressed by Vogler's frequent 'storm' effects - described him as 'a trickster pure and simple', whereas Schubart called him 'one of the foremost organ and harpsichord players in Europe'!⁶² The following programme from the Marienkirche, Berlin on 29, November, 1800 demonstrates the breadth of his style:

- 1 Prelude and Fugue on the full organ
- 2 African terrace-song
- 3 Double concerto for flute and bassoon
- 4 The Mahommedan confession of faith
- 5 A pleasure trip on the Rhine, interrupted by a thunderstorm
- 6 Chorale: O Haupt voll Blut und Wunden.⁶³

With a significant output both as a composer and a teacher, Vogler's reach across the music profession was considerable, even if his concert style included pieces 'you are not at all accustomed to hearing on the organ'.⁶⁴

Vogler felt that his outlook was simply ahead of its time and that his theories were all part of a coherent whole that stemmed from the same canon of principles ordained by nature. To him, truth would win out in the end and the relationship between science and creative inspiration would be proven. However, his teachings were so personalised that many of his

⁶¹ Margaret Grave, 'Georg Joseph Vogler' *Oxford Music Online* (accessed 10 February, 2011)

⁶² Ibid.

⁶³ Schweiger, 'Abt Vogler,' 164.

⁶⁴ Contemporary commentator referred to in Schweiger, 'Abt Vogler,' 164.

detractors found easy ammunition, as Weber was at pains to explain.⁶⁵ As Vogler wrote: ‘You will certainly notice that I made only rough sketches, that I explained much too little and did not exhaust anything, though presenting new material for consideration.’⁶⁶

Despite his critics Vogler’s industrious manner meant that his influence was far reaching with music schools established in Mannheim and Stockholm, lectures at the university in Prague and pupils in Darmstadt during his later years.⁶⁷ However, his criticism of J. S. Bach’s choral (part) writing naturally led to an increased scepticism about his own place in the musical firmament. As such, he is a man of contradiction – misunderstood yet brilliant, conservative yet outrageous.

Quite how well-known Vogler’s name would have been to the English reader of *Abt Vogler* is difficult to say. However, given the Victorians’ fondness for Germanic musicians, especially Beethoven, Handel, Haydn, and Mendelssohn, it is fair to presume that his name would at least have been known to many a reader of Browning’s poems through his influence as a pedagogue. His *112 Petits Préludes pour l’Orgue ou le Clavecin*, Op. 9 were published in 1776, and although references in the musical journals cite him most commonly as the teacher of Weber and Meyerbeer there are consistent references to him in the *Musical World* from 1849 onwards. In the later poem, *Parleying with Charles Avison* (1887) Browning’s speaker somewhat patronisingly comments on the music of ‘to-day’ as that of ‘Brahms, Wagner, Dvořák and Liszt...’, as ‘today’s music-manufacture’. It is hardly a generous compliment on major figures of the musical establishment, but one also notices the absence of any English, French or Italian composers, to name the most industrious musical nations of the era. Richardson notes that Browning ignores French music entirely in his writings, except for two

⁶⁵ Floyd K. Grave, ‘Abbe Vogler and the Bach Legacy,’ *Eighteenth-Century Studies* Vol. 13, No. 2, Winter (1979-90): 120.

⁶⁶ Georg Joseph Vogler, *Über die harmonische Aestik* (Munich, 1806), Translated in Schweiger, ‘Abt Vogler,’ 157.

⁶⁷ Floyd Grave, ‘Abbe Vogler,’ 119.

passing references to Auber and Gounod.⁶⁸ In a paper of 1883, Turnbull took this one stage further, with an observation that has plagued the English composer for generation after generation: ‘England could afford to spare one name from her muster-roll of poets, to place it instead side by side with those of Mendelssohn and Beethoven.’⁶⁹

That Browning selected Vogler, rather than an English, or for that matter a French or Italian organist, could be because during his time on the continent Vogler’s name would have been better known, or simply the connection through his teacher, John Relfe. However, it could equally have been Browning’s appreciation for a continental school of musical pedagogy, or an admiration for the art of improvisation which he may have seen as more prevalent on the continent, even if this was a subjective opinion. In questioning these decisions, Turnbull comments:

The Abbé Vogler, thanks to Miss Marx, is no stranger to us, but it may be interesting to note why Browning chose to depict his feelings instead of those of a more famous musician.

He is seldom heard of now except as being the master of Weber and Meyerbeer, his compositions are neglected and forgotten, and his wonderful improvising on his beloved instrument have faded away for ever into silence.⁷⁰

However, a far weightier argument can be presented for the selection of Vogler: the fact that he was a well-known *improviser*. As such he relies not on the direct inspiration of others in pre-meditated composition, but primarily on the training of his faculties and of, he might

⁶⁸ Malcolm Richardson, ‘Robert Browning’s taste in music,’ *Browning Institute Studies* Vol 6 (1978): 112.

⁶⁹ Turnbull ‘Abt Vogler,’ 142.

⁷⁰ Ibid

claim, *divine* intercession. As Browning writes ‘But God has a few of us whom He whispers in the ear’.⁷¹

Natural Theology

The prevailing tone of the poem leads the reader towards the imagination of an impressive musical structure. The reference, at the end of the poem, to specific harmonies, coupled with references to the Supreme Creator, further leads us towards points of natural theology. That Vogler’s lifetime encompassed all of Mozart’s lifetime, of whom Karl Barth wrote significantly in relation to the theology of creation, cannot be overlooked either, or for that matter Browning’s selection of Vogler’s rather than a ‘secular’ organist. With regard to the discussion of harmony, there are three interconnected aspects to consider: Vogler, Pythagorean theory and their relationship to natural theology.

Aside from being a man of the church, Vogler was also an organ builder of reputation (if not widely held repute). Fundamental to the organ builder’s craft is the question of tuning and in the eighteenth century decisions over the exact relationship of pitch varied from one region to another. The exact ‘quality’, ‘purity’ and ‘proportion’ of these relationships had been a source of discussion from the medieval era. Zarlino (1517-90) wrote of these proportions in 1588, mirroring the ‘form’ of natural creation:

We therefore apply this reasoning to Music, call first of all consonance natural, which is contained in its natural form in one of those forms or proportions, or rational numbers, which are assigned to it by Nature. The forms of artificial things are pure accidents, while those of natural things are kinds of substance, and the Operation of

⁷¹ Browning line 87.

Art is based on the operation of Nature, and this (as St. Thomas teaches us) is based on Creation.⁷²

Zarlino draws us to Vogler's work whose library at the point of his death in 1814 included a copy of Euler's *Tentamen novae theoriae musicae*. Although his Jesuit schooling had emphasised the humanistic side more than the mathematical sciences, he nonetheless retained an ongoing curiosity as evidenced by the long tables of proportions in many of his theoretical writings on harmony,⁷³ and his membership of the leading scientific institutions of England, France and Germany.⁷⁴ Johannes Kepler (1571-1630) had already reached further by claiming equal temperament to the archetype of the very thoughts of God.⁷⁵ (A detailed discussion of the Pythagorean and medieval number symbolism found in the poetical structure of *Abt Vogler* can be found in Bishop and Ferns.)⁷⁶

Through this alignment with perfection we see God manifest in his Son and the relationship of the beautiful Form, 'without separation of division' (Barth)⁷⁷ (i.e. impurity). The relationship between 'form' and 'beauty' and form as inseparable from content Stoltzfus notes are paralleled to the thesis of Hanslick's absolutism.⁷⁸

Beyond the relationship to tuning – a significant point of discussion alone in nineteenth-century England - there is the larger question of the dialogue between creator and Supreme

⁷² Gioseffo Zarlino, *Sopplimenti musicali* (1588) 1.4. Translated in Philip E. Stoltzfus, *Theology as Performance* (New York, London: T & T Clark, 2006), 31.

⁷³ Schweiger, 'Abt Vogler,' 157

⁷⁴ Ibid, 158.

⁷⁵ Stoltzfus, *Theology as Performance*, 32.

⁷⁶ Alan Bishop and John Ferns, 'Art in Obedience to Laws: Form and meaning in Browning's 'Abt Vogler,' 'Victorian Poetry, Vol. 12, No. 1 (1974)

⁷⁷ Stoltzfus, *Theology as Performance*, 144.

⁷⁸ Ibid, 145.

Creator, and in turn contextualisation and freedom within this setting. As Begbie notes, citing Horne:

The propriety of artistic creation is in the doctrine of the incarnation, in which the eternal dialogue between Father and Son is carried into the material of the created order; the Son of the Father through whom all things were created becomes physical, tangible flesh, one with creation. And the necessity and inevitability of artistic creation is lodged in the doctrine of the Spirit, 'who appropriates and expropriates through human persons, materials of creation to bring into being secondary worlds'.⁷⁹

'Secondary worlds' resonate on multiples levels in this context, beginning with the world of Vogler's belief, the creed of his 'audience', and the metaphysical world Browning injects into the monologue with the appearance of Solomon. However, in considering the presence of the Holy Spirit (with the tradition of Basil the Great of being the 'perfector'⁸⁰) we must consider the idea of the (creative) 'gift-exchange' between God and man being one in which man aims for the absolute (perfection). This theory helps explain Vogler's distress near the end of the poem with an imperfect musical progression. However, the nature of the (Divine) exchange (as we assume Vogler understands) demands that Vogler must give of himself freely, for to block the creative gift is tantamount to a refusal to accept God's love. Such a refusal 'robs the improviser of the freedom to do anything for anybody' which alone is a 'condition' of the freedom.⁸¹ Further as the Church is of itself the 'improvising community'⁸², Vogler holds a responsibility to serve as its voice. The nature of music being a language of all peoples

⁷⁹ Brian Horne, 'Art: A Trinitarian Imperative?' in Christoph Schwöbel, Ed., *Trinitarian Theology Today* (Edinburgh: T. & T. Clark, 1995) 8-91. Begbie, *Theology, Music and Time*, 239.

⁸⁰ Ibid, 243.

⁸¹ Ibid, 253.

⁸² Ibid, 265.

resonates with the Spirit's role in Acts 2 whereby, though the crowds spoke different languages, they heard the disciples in their own language.⁸³

The question of language also relates to the intelligibility of Vogler's improvisation. In the first instance we might consider that all his listeners understand the message he himself wishes to communicate. Equally, the experience is individuated as his listener applies his own creed. But arguably, a more plausible universal response will be the overall aesthetical impact of his creation – the rise and the fall of each phrase, dramatic urges, the tension and release, the consequent and antecedent. Indeed, it could be fairly suggested that the emotional response could be paralleled to the 'determined chance' of Boulez – the setting (with its protocols) remains in place whilst the performer chooses one route or another to express his creativity.

The people represent (in Trinitarian theology) the image of God in creation and thus Vogler is a musical representation of their image. Through this medium music can represent the people both in the past (considering older musical models) and into the future (in terms of developing an idea that later becomes an accepted musical departure). In the words of J. B. Metz it allows for a 'productive non-contemporaneity'⁸⁴ This 'reconfiguration of the times' marks salvation,⁸⁵ for in itself it provides freedom and a directionality. Barth interestingly acknowledges a more tempered view that though instinct may lead him towards a sceptical path, the end result of creation-composition-performance (here related to Mozart), nonetheless demonstrate to him parables, if not gospel. This 'story telling' nature also relates

⁸³ Horne, 'Art: A Trinitarian Imperative?', 242.

⁸⁴ J. B. Metz, 'Productive Noncontemporaneity' in J. Haberman, Ed., *Observations on 'The Spiritual Situation of the Age': Contemporary German Perspectives* (Cambridge, Mass. and London: MIT Press, 1984), 169-77. Begbie, *Theology, Music and Time*, 221.

⁸⁵ Begbie, *Theology, Music and Time*, 223.

to the view of *Abt Vogler* as representing a journey into the soul: ‘I am not...inclined to confuse or to identify salvation history with any part of the history of art. But the golden sounds and melodies of Mozart’s music have always spoken to me – not as gospel, but as parables of the kingdom revealed in the gospel of God’s free grace, and they continue to do so with the utmost freshness.’⁸⁶

Bearing in mind these primary considerations we are left with the overarching implication – the homiletic aspect of improvisation. In liturgy (and individual) prayer, sound and silence hold an equal value and in music the same is the case – the musical note is of no greater value than the musical rest or pause, or the longer musical notes versus the shorter one. (Indeed we can further extend this point to the Genevan style of hymn-singing where the tempi are intentionally slow to allow for a meditation on the preceding text before the next text is sung, or the break between movements of a symphony, or the nineteenth- or early twentieth-century pianistic tradition of improvising between movements in order to allow for a segue between works of contrasting key.) Music, like an (unwritten/improvised) homily is derived from a temporal response, by the conditioning of the subject (preacher or musician) to external factors (not least the inner ‘dynamic’ of the setting). Unlike prescribed prayers, or parts of the Ordinary, the length and emotional thrust of both remain in the hands of the subject. To adopt Begbie’s terminology, the liturgy would act as one of the ‘constraints’, whereas the individual setting would be a ‘particularisation’⁸⁷ contingent on both the constraint and the freedom offered. Furthermore, the setting would offer a ‘crystallisation’⁸⁸ of the particularisation. To the improviser the constraints are those of empirical decisions whilst the particularisation is the creative individualisation of the ‘performance’.

⁸⁶ Karl Barth, *How I changed my mind*. (Richmond, VA: John Knox, 1966) 72. Stolzhus, *Theology as Performance*, 157.

⁸⁷ Begbie, *Theology, Music and Time*, 223.

⁸⁸ *Ibid*, 217.

Finally, we must relate the improvisation of Vogler to the role of ‘Vogler the pedagogue’ and consider that his improvisation may well have been based on a traditional (organ-centric) model, such as the fugue. This proposition relates to the human side of the musician, the failings therein, and the pressures thereupon. We know Vogler to be well-trained, respected, and by some, admired. However given that no improvisation can lack *a priori* experience and education, we can consider Stravinsky’s remarks on this creative process and the positive conditioning that education and experience provide to relieve the human side of imperfection. Stravinsky’s approach to imperfection relates to Vogler’s self-admonishment in the final stanza of the poem:

I experience a sort of terror when, at the moment of setting to work and finding myself before the infinitude of possibilities that present themselves, I have the feeling that everything is permissible to me. If everything is permissible to me...everything becomes futile...I shall overcome my terror and shall be reassured by the thought I shall have the seven notes of the scale and its chromatic intervals at my disposal...strong and weak accents are within my reach, and...in all these I possess solid and concrete elements which offer me a field of experience just as vast as the upsetting and dizzy infinitude that had just frightened me...What delivers me from the anguish into which an unrestricted freedom plunges me is the fact that I am always able to turn immediately to the concrete things that are here in question...Whatever constantly gives way to pressure, constantly renders movement impossible...Whatever diminishes constraint, diminishes strength.⁸⁹

⁸⁹ Igor Stravinsky, *Poetics of Music in the Form of Six Lessons*, trans. Arthur Knodel and Ingolf Dahl (Cambridge, Mass.: Harvard University Press, 1947). Begbie, *Theology, Music and Time*, 199

Divine Servant

The choice of an improviser allows Browning a canvas on which to paint his image of the organist with gifts bestowed from above, but for a brief time. Goodrich-Freer and Von Glehn⁹⁰ suggest that the creative Vogler is synonymous with David playing before Saul – a seer as well as a musician. The poem is imbued with a reverential tone from the outset that places the organist in a role set apart from that of the conventional musical world. Here Browning portrays the organist as servant of the Divine where ‘the finger of God’⁹¹ provides consolation to those which have ‘withered or agonized’.⁹² The organist here is one who strives for high ideals where ‘earth had attained to heaven’⁹³ and only falls short in his own abilities, timorously noting ‘And what is our failure here but a triumph’s evidence for the fullness of the days?’.⁹⁴

The poem presents the reader with the observance of a journey that is both musical and spiritual. Vogler is portrayed as the summoner of the ‘armies of angels’⁹⁵ that are ‘zealous to hasten the work, heighten their master his praise’.⁹⁶ The ‘Spirits of Sound’⁹⁷ take the mortal organist from the ‘blind plunge down to hell’⁹⁸ to the palace with its ‘rampired walls of gold’.⁹⁹ In servility to his Master, ‘earth had done her best’¹⁰⁰ to ‘scale the sky’¹⁰¹. Heaven’s response was to rain down ‘splendours [that] dwelt with mine’¹⁰².

⁹⁰ Marian Von Glehn, ‘Browning as a Religious Teacher’, *Jewish Quarterly Review* (1890): 230.
Goodrich-Freer, ‘Abt Vogler,’ 657.

⁹¹ Browning line 49.

⁹² Browning line 82.

⁹³ Browning line 32.

⁹⁴ Browning line 81-82.

⁹⁵ Browning line 4.

⁹⁶ Browning line 12.

⁹⁷ Stopford A. Brooke, *The poetry of Robert Browning* (London: Isbister and Company Ltd., 1903), 149.

⁹⁸ Browning line 13.

⁹⁹ Browning line 19.

¹⁰⁰ Browning line 28.

¹⁰¹ Browning line 28.

¹⁰² Browning line 29.

The relationship between improvisation/creativity and the ‘free’ inspired spirit bears examination as it relates both to the German protagonist in this poem and the enthusiasm of the English towards German culture in the nineteenth century. In considering the aesthetical implications of the poem we turn to the nineteenth-century emergence and development of art-religion. If Vogler’s improvisation is indeed facilitated by gifts bestowed from the Supreme Creator, then it is appropriate to consider his creative spontaneity (which embraces an architectonic scope) in relation to this higher art form.

Art-religion and the Musical Moment

To consider Tieck’s words in his essay *Symphonies* ‘...music is certainly the ultimate mystery of faith, the mystique, the completely revealed religion. I often feel as though it were still in the process of being created, and as though its masters ought not to compare themselves with any others’.¹⁰³ Schleiermacher’s earlier position in his *Lectures on Religion* (1799) forms the basis of art-religion along three paths ‘self absorption, absent-minded contemplation of a piece of the world, and finally the devotional contemplation of works of art’.¹⁰⁴

Tieck’s thesis of the musician removing himself from the ‘real’ world and being absorbed into a religious realm sits well with the notion of the ‘sacred’ organist. Far from an abstract conjunct of disparate thoughts on art-religion as it may relate to absolute music as a whole, it is the organist’s intention, if not ‘will’ to consider his thoughts. The end of the eighteenth century had seen the emancipation of both instrumental music and the romanticization of fine art towards what Lydia Goehr describes as the ‘separability principle’, whereby it became customary to speak of the arts as being completely apart from the ordinary and mundane of

¹⁰³ Wilhelm Heinrich Wackenroder, *Werke und Briefe* [ed. Friedrich von der Leyen] (Berlin, 1938; Heidelberg, 1937), 251.

¹⁰⁴ Carl Dalhaus, *The Idea of Absolute Music* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1989), 89.

everyday life.¹⁰⁵ This principle is central to a consideration of ‘Vogler the improviser’ seen through a romantic lens, for it elevates his position from the outset.

As Sir Joshua Reynolds notes in 1798 of the sister arts ‘Whatever is familiar, or in any way reminds us of what we see and hear every day perhaps does not belong to the higher provinces of art, either in poetry or writing.’ Art ‘cuts itself free from any servitude in order to raise itself to the truth which it fulfils independently and conformable with its own ends alone. In this freedom is fine art truly art.’¹⁰⁶ (In a more contemporary setting this also relates tangentially to the indeterminacy (and separability) of John Cage’s music - ‘[a] composer should strive to eliminate himself from this work and simply let the music happen’¹⁰⁷ or quoting Nadia Boulanger that ‘the greatest objective is when the composer disappears, the performer disappear, and there remains only the work’.¹⁰⁸ As such, Vogler the improviser is similarly free and unbound. Even with the confines of structure he is nonetheless a creator.)

The departure of the ‘musical moment’ weighs heavily on Vogler as the artistic creation reaches its conclusion. The ‘palace of music’¹⁰⁹ that has been ‘reared’¹¹⁰ (almost as if a child, rather than the ‘slave of the sound’¹¹¹ we hear of at the outset) is ‘gone’¹¹² only for Vogler to try and remember it with a humbleness that asks ‘is this your comfort to me’.¹¹³ However, as Ridenour comments, ‘The emphatic amorality of the building is striking. It is based on hell, and built by demons equally with angels....Emphasis falls on the artist’s belief that his

¹⁰⁵ Lydia Goehr, *The Imaginary Museum of Musical Works* (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1992), 157.

¹⁰⁶ Joshua Reynolds, *Discourses on Art*. (New York, Collier Books, 1961). Goehr, *The Imaginary Museum of Musical Works*, 158.

¹⁰⁷ John Cage, *Silence* (London: Boyars, 1978/1986 printing), 204.

¹⁰⁸ A. Kendall, *The Tender Tyrant: Nadia Boulanger* (London: Macdonald & Jane’s, 1976). Goehr, *The Imaginary Museum of Musical Works*, 267.

¹⁰⁹ Browning line 57.

¹¹⁰ Browning line 57.

¹¹¹ Browning line 3.

¹¹² Browning line 58.

¹¹³ Browning line 62.

upward movement, towards 'heaven,' is met by a movement from heaven to him'.¹¹⁴ As much as it was given by God, it cannot be recreated. Browning thus offers us a parallelism of uniqueness; God is unique as improvisation is unique and whatever gifts bestowed from Supreme Creator to mortal creator are in the moment - they are bestowed, but only by grace, and but for a brief time. We are told of the spiritual impact on Vogler and Browning extends this to make us ponder what Vogler is really experiencing. As such, through the unwritten score described in the monologue, Browning allows the reader the freedom to interpret, as Vogler is also allowed. Were reference made to a particular composer, or the duration of the piece or the dynamic level, or numerous other intangibles, we could more easily assess what it is Vogler might be spiritually embracing, but Browning removes that equation. Thus the mind of the reader is as free to interpret both the acts described and their meaning on a subjective level.

The Sacred Improvisation

Vogler, however, seeks an acceptance of his offering when 'eternity affirms the conception of an hour'.¹¹⁵ Furthermore, he acknowledges that mortals will now understand all that he has done with 'the high that proved too high, the heroic for earth too hard'.¹¹⁶ Here we see the organist's eternal *apologia* as Vogler states that art is offered first to God and secondly to man. God will hear the offerings and to Vogler it is enough that 'He heard it once'.¹¹⁷ Browning's comprehension of the organist's predicament is grasping. His appreciation of the historical place of the sacred musician's lot comes not so much as a practitioner but as an observer, and even admirer. Browning's organist is not the wayward meanderer of Hardy's

¹¹⁴ George M. Ridenour, 'Browning's Musical Poems' *PMLA* Vol. 78, No. 4, September (1963): 374.

¹¹⁵ Browning line 76.

¹¹⁶ Browning line 77.

¹¹⁷ Browning line 80.

Chapel-Organist¹¹⁸ who, though passionate about her liturgical role, sees it largely as another pleasure in life. Rather, Browning portrays the musician with a venerable glow, indeed as a craftsman or Divine servant who is touched by ‘the finger of God’¹¹⁹ that ‘whispers in the ear’.¹²⁰ In the relationship of the ‘servant’ to the creative ‘will’ we are cognizant that Vogler is but mortal and so must utilise the skills he has mastered. Barth comments on this nature of craftsmanship in the music of Vogler’s time relating it to Woman Wisdom in Prov 8: 27-31, who existing before creation, works with the Supreme Creator to bring it into being:

Would it not be the revelation of a supreme will for form, a will for form, manifesting itself perhaps only in this sphere its utmost absolutism if the music of the eighteenth century sought to emulate the wisdom of the Creator in its results and in the abandonment and superiority which cause us to forget all the craftsmanship behind it?¹²¹

How Vogler interprets these whisperings is left to the reader to interpret, furthermore proving the argument that improvisatory nature is two-fold – there is Vogler’s improvisation of the music, but also Browning’s of the reader.

The medium of improvisation offers to Vogler a glimpse of the Eternal whilst also granting him the wisdom to see ‘the achievement of earth and the failure of it’¹²². As such, Vogler strives to create moments of transcendental beauty so that he too can witness what heaven will afford him in the next life. This transfiguring aspect of taking an everyday ‘object’ and moving it into the realm of ‘art’ depends ‘on the belief that art has the ability to represent

¹¹⁸ Thomas Hardy, ‘The Chapel-Organist,’ in *The Collected Poems of Thomas Hardy* (London: Macmillan, 1930).

¹¹⁹ Browning line 49.

¹²⁰ Browning line 87.

¹²¹ Karl Barth, *Protestant Thought from Rousseau to Ritschl* (New York: Harper & Row, 1959), 50. Stoltzfus, *Theology as Performance*, 137.

¹²² Brooke, *The Poetry of Robert Browning*, 149.

more or less directly the aesthetic world'.¹²³ Browning's belief that the 'imperfections of this world imply the perfection of the next'¹²⁴ relate well in the field of the improviser as they do to nineteenth-century thought. However, Vogler's congregation of listeners (whether lay or ordained) are never mentioned, except in their supposed lack of understanding. For Vogler, art comes from God and is offered back to Him. Once Vogler has this awakening, seen the palace before him, he rests. The calm 'C major of this life'¹²⁵ - a key without sharps or flats, and analogical in that sense too - has been found, as Vogler knows, in his heart and soul what lays ahead. It is a blissful retreat, for Browning exhibits enough knowledge of the organist's predicament to make clear his understanding, whilst at the same time elevating the organist from the tedium of his customary servility. It also relates to Tieck's thinking as he comments 'Ah, thus I close my eyes to all worldly strife-and withdraw quietly into the land of music, as into the land of faith'.¹²⁶ As Dalhaus comments, Tieck considered the 'experience' of art-religion to be an 'original' experience¹²⁷ and in supplanting Schleiermacher's initial commentary with a musical doctrine demanded of those 'elected' to the 'ordination' of art that they 'kneel down before art with eternal and unbound love'.¹²⁸ Dalhaus notes that 'Tieck's metaphysics of instrumental music, which was originally coined in response to works by Johann Friedrich Reichardt, did not find an adequate object until E. T. A. Hoffmann borrowed Tieck's language in order to do justice to Beethoven'. Although this point in relation to an English poem (albeit with a German protagonist) may seem tangential it needs to be weighed in consideration of both the English affinity for Beethoven in a public sense, but more critically here in a musical sense – the imitation of Beethoven, not least in the mid-nineteenth century English organ sonatas, being of key importance. However, if we are to

¹²³ Goehr, *The Imaginary Museum of Musical Works*, 167

¹²⁴ Roy E. Gridley, *Browning* (London and Boston: Routledge & Kegan, 1972), 121.

¹²⁵ Browning line 96.

¹²⁶ Wackenroder, *Werke und Briefe*, 204.

¹²⁷ Dalhaus, *The Idea of Absolute Music*, 90.

¹²⁸ Ibid tr. 90.

understand that Vogler is indeed the servant of Divine gifts, then his listeners too bear witness to the palace of sound and become equally witnesses to a beneficent Creator. They are a congregation to what Hoffman would consider ‘holy musical art’. Through this Browning intentionally or inadvertently draws us towards the separation of the written word from music, and the personal emotional response which his writing engenders. Indeed, irrespective of whether the piece Vogler plays is improvised or composed, the listener’s impression will differ one to another. By example, one can consider Browning’s other musical references and question whether two readers would respond equally to them – arguably they would not. This further relates to the paradox of how ‘can an artwork be viewed as an embodied expression of an artist as well as an independently existing work that, once created, had meaning to its creator.’¹²⁹ As Goehr notes:

One way to counteract the belief in the *human* creation of a work was to attribute a God-like existence to the creator. Artists effectively superseded their status as mere mortals to reach an ‘aesthetic state’, in Schiller’s terms, so that the content of their works would express not the individual or mundane thoughts of a mere mortal, but universal thoughts of which there can be no personal ownership.¹³⁰

As such, not only is Browning’s imagery metaphysical but the creative act is also not of the mortal world, nor for that matter is the musical ‘work’ of the creator. The previous historical bond of performer-composer is thus split. Christian Gottfried Körner states that ‘he [the artist] must raise us to his level from our lowly, circumscribed state of dependence and represent to us the Infinite, an Infinite that can otherwise come to us only by Intuition’.¹³¹

¹²⁹ Goehr, *The Imaginary Museum of Musical Works*, 162

¹³⁰ Ibid

¹³¹ Peter Le Huray and James Day, Eds., *Music and Aesthetics* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1981), 237.

The Romantic Aesthetic

Browning's employment of a 'man of God' is perhaps not quite so crucial to the theological aspect as the prevailing romantic aesthetic whereby the less worldly the musical content the more worthy the art-form. However, through this portal we can view a multi-layered texture which ultimately leads us back to the theological-philosophical realm. Related to this we must consider that by selecting Vogler, Browning creates an essence of the 'holy' which cannot be untangled from the romantic aesthetic. As Schleiermacher noted: 'The piety which forms the basis of all ecclesiastical communions is, considered purely in itself, neither a Knowing not a Doing, but a modification of *Gefühl*,¹³² or of immediate self-consciousness.'¹³³ In the realm of improvisation this has particular resonance, for the listener cannot previously experience the work and as such associate it with an emotional state. Rather the emotional experiences are placed in a musical suspension of experiences, each of which can be aurally witnessed individualistically. By nature, there is little of the commonplace world about the art-form. Even of the written score Goethe wrote '...music has no material element that has to be taken into account. It consists entirely of form and content...elevates and ennobles everything it expresses.'¹³⁴ Browning's use of imagery deserves further comment as it relates to the romanticism of the improviser's art. The reference to Solomon and by default the temple and palace for Jerusalem, brings a resplendent air to the poem which leads the reader to other-worldly place with its references to 'gold'¹³⁵ and 'great illumination'¹³⁶. Naylor's comments that 'Solomon was, to the Jew of the Middle Ages, what Virgil was to the Christian monk of mediaeval times'¹³⁷ allies this literary metaphor to both the metaphysical

¹³² Tr. feeling/emotion

¹³³ Friedrich Schleiermacher, *Christian Faith*, H. R. Mackintosh and J. S. Stewart, Eds. (Edinburgh: T. & T. Clark, 1948 [1928]) 3.0.2. Stolfus, *Theology as Performance*, 92.

¹³⁴ Goethe, 'Wilhelm Meisters Wanderjahre' (1829), tr. Le Huray and Day, Eds., in *Music and Aesthetics*, 420.

¹³⁵ Browning line 19.

¹³⁶ Browning line 22. Browning had witnessed the illumination of St. Peter's Basilica, Rome at Easter 1854.

¹³⁷ Naylor, *The Poets and Music*, 11.

realm and the earthly world. Further, the introduction of the metaphysical world allies with a freeing of the text - and in turn Vogler - from the earthly world in a 'true' romantic aesthetic of music received through the metaphysics of instrumental music.¹³⁸ Indeed it is a form of 'romantic illusion'.¹³⁹ 'Pure, absolute music' is never travestied as a 'programmatic' or 'characteristic' music, but always interpreted 'poetically'.¹⁴⁰

The 'palace of music',¹⁴¹ is, to Vogler, fit for kings. However, Browning allows his speaker to suggest his music is (solely) fit for the worldly monarch, rather than it be heaven-fit. Equally he states that his craft is in the hands of the 'builder and maker, Thou, of houses not made with hands'.¹⁴² However, the inclusion of Solomon, with his command of supernatural forces, lifts the poem, and arguably the reader's imagination from the humdrum of everyday existence, to a more fantastical place. Indeed the Aristotelian overtone of representing the 'possible' as opposed to the 'real' also injects the very nature of faith and belief into the poem whilst conjugating it to a flight of fancy for both protagonist and reader.

This unleashed position also relates to Hoffmann's 'pure romantic',¹⁴³ which 'removed from the conditions and limitations of characters and affections'¹⁴⁴ 'leads us forth out of life into the realm of the infinite'.¹⁴⁵ With this inclusion of Solomon, and the fabled stories of magic and spells, Browning transports the reader – perhaps especially the un-churched reader – before proceeding with greater preponderance towards matters of creation and creativity. It is this very freeing that makes it absolute and therefore divine. The use of the metaphysical also brings to mind Novalis's comment: 'Inasmuch as I give the lowly a higher meaning, the

¹³⁸ Dahlhaus, *The Idea of Absolute Music*, 65.

¹³⁹ Goehr, *The Imaginary Museum of Musical Works*, 158.

¹⁴⁰ Dahlhaus, *The Idea of Absolute Music*, 84.

¹⁴¹ Browning line 57.

¹⁴² Browning line 66.

¹⁴³ E. T. A Hoffman, *Schriften zur Musik*, Ed. Friedrich Schnapp (Munich, 1963), 34.

¹⁴⁴ Dahlhaus, *The Idea of Absolute Music*, 6.

¹⁴⁵ Hoffmann, *Schriften zur Musik*, 34.

common a hidden aspect, the known the dignity of the unknown, the finite an infinite appearance, thus I romanticize them.’¹⁴⁶

The Sister Arts

Browning also makes a brief reference to his passion for the complementary arts, whilst drawing us to the sanctity and unparagoned moments of the improvisation, the deafening silence that follows being as humbling as the great moments of the playing itself. It is the nature of the ‘moment’ and then the inevitable silence (indeed a consequent and antecedent affect) that Kierkegaard surmises:

Music exists only in the moment of its performance, for if one were ever so skilful in reading notes and had ever so lively an imagination, it cannot be denied that it is only in an unreal sense that music exists when it is read. It really exists only in being produced. This might seem to be an imperfection in this art as compared with the others whose productions remain...Yet this is not so. It is rather proof of the fact that music is higher, a more spiritual art.¹⁴⁷

However, beyond music works being ‘of the moment’ they are equally ‘of their time.’ The creative relationship of performer-composer meant that unless pieces were brought into print they were unlikely to outlast the composer’s own performances, save for the potential efforts of their students. The Earl of Egmont’s comment in 1741 of going to ‘Lincolns Inn playhouse to hear Handel’s music for the last time as Handel was intending to go to a spa in Germany’¹⁴⁸ either bore witness to the fact that he did not believe anyone but Handel was going to perform Handel’s music, or (perhaps an equally valid concern) that no one would

¹⁴⁶ Referred to in Goehr, *The Imaginary Museum of Musical Works*, 158.

¹⁴⁷ Søren Kierkegaard, *Either/Or*, tr. David F. Swenson and Lillian Marvin Swenson (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1944), 55.

¹⁴⁸ Goehr, *The Imaginary Museum of Musical Instruments*, 191.

perform it quite as Handel did himself. Nowhere is this temporality more acute than in the improvisation.

As painter Browning writes, ‘had I painted the whole, why, there it had stood, to see, nor the process so wonder-worth’¹⁴⁹. Then as the writer, ‘still, effect proceeds from cause, ye know why the forms are fair, ye hear how the tale is told’¹⁵⁰, concluding that both have ‘obedience to laws’¹⁵¹, inferring that the sister arts are beholden to earthly laws, whereas music is subject to a Divine instruction. This is an interesting point as Vogler is both a great pedagogue – a communicator of canon – whilst also being an innovative experimenter. As such, far from being ruled by commandment or analysis, Vogler is ruled by the ‘flash of the will’¹⁵² that only ‘such gift be allowed to man’¹⁵³ and as such with Divine intervention ‘recognizes his vision as Absolute reality’.¹⁵⁴ Further, Browning places Vogler as a protagonist with only brief doubts, which illumine the human perspective, whilst conveying an eternal message to Vogler. He may question his own abilities – although arguably only in a deferential tone – but he does not question his faith.

A Musical Misunderstanding?

Although, in the words of Augustine Birrell, Browning ‘sought to fathom in verse the deep mysteries of sound’¹⁵⁵, he was, like Coleridge, Hugo, Milton, and Thackeray¹⁵⁶ not beyond an occasional amateurish blemish. Though anecdotal, Stanford’s well-known castigation bears repetition, at least to put Browning’s detractors in context:

¹⁴⁹ Browning line 43-44.

¹⁵⁰ Browning line 45-46.

¹⁵¹ Browning line 47.

¹⁵² Browning line 49.

¹⁵³ Browning line 51.

¹⁵⁴ Robert Langbaum, ‘The Dramatic Element: Truth as Perspective,’ in *Robert Browning – A collection of critical essays* (London: Methuen & Co Ltd., 1966,) 136.

¹⁵⁵ Referred to in Wright Roberts, W. ‘Music in Browning,’ 237.

¹⁵⁶ Discussed in Arthur Elson ‘Literary Errors in Music’, *The Musical Quarterly*, Vol. 3, No. 2 (1917): 272-281.

There was a most interesting gathering in Coutts Trotter's rooms at Trinity, when Joachim, Grove, Robert Browning, and Hueffer (destined to be Davison's successor as critic of *The Times*) had a warm controversy on the subject of Beethoven's last Quartets. The member of the party who talked most and knew least about the subject was, curiously enough, Browning. I remember remarking *sotto voce* to my neighbour that his arguments explained to me that the true reason of the obscurity of many references to music in his poems was the superficiality of exiguity of his technical knowledge. When Jebb was writing his masterly Greek translation of 'Abt Vogler,' he too became well aware of this weakness, and was able with infinite skill to gloss over the solecism of the original. 'Sliding by semitones till I sink to the minor' is indeed the refuge of the destitute amateur improviser.¹⁵⁷

We might consider Stanford's criticisms severe, for many is the slip of the tongue in the common room of eras past and present. Greene further comments that 'The 'plaintive' minor thirds. The suspension with their resolutions, the 'commiserating' sevenths, all show musical understanding. The diminished sixths, however, make one stare!'¹⁵⁸ These points are raised here in first part to show that Browning sees the technical (if sometimes misunderstood) aspect in a literary vein, but they also demonstrate that he is not altogether out of step in his understanding. But more crucially it is essential that we not solely analyse the musical terminology from a limited musical perspective but rather see it too from a reader's perspective. If Browning's intention was to write solely to musicians would he have erred and strayed from predictable musical parlance?

But there are also possible misunderstandings. Many writers have anguished over Abt Vogler's lines 'Sliding by semitones, till I sink to the minor,-yes, And I blunt it into a ninth,

¹⁵⁷ Charles Villiers Stanford, *Pages from an Unwritten Diary* (London: Edward Arnold, 1914): 176 – quoted in Herbert Elveth Greene, 'Browning's Knowledge of Music'. *PMLA*, Vol. 62, No. 4, December (1947), 1096.

¹⁵⁸ Greene, 'Browning's Knowledge of Music,' 1097.

and I stand on alien ground...’,¹⁵⁹ but is this not easily explainable, albeit via musical translation from the poet’s pen? Furthermore, can we not easily explain that this is the speaker and not Browning himself.

Firstly, one plays a C major (‘common’) chord on the piano, octave Cs in the left hand, and a first inversion of the chord in the right hand. The upper voice is then lowered from E to E flat (‘sliding by semitone..sink[ing] to the minor). Indeed, this is no subtle modulation, but surely the use of ‘sinking’ alludes to no positive connotation either! From there our organist ‘blunts it into a ninth’ (‘sliding’ from E flat to D). The ‘blunting’ becomes a musical effect exactly as a musical juror would see it – a rough handling of the material, and out of place in a piece already given to higher calling. It is not ‘finessed’ or ‘refined’ or even ‘resolved’, but rather ‘blunt[ed]’. Far from being an error – albeit curiously described - this portrayal of the fallible organist aligns well with Ruskin: ‘to banish imperfection is to destroy expression’¹⁶⁰ i.e. the organist errs because he is a creature of Divine creation, and not the Supreme Creator.

But further we should consider the question of Vogler’s imitation. By providing a commentary on the harmony – and it is conjecture whether he considers the harmony wrong, audacious, or simply ill-judged – attention is drawn to a comparison with previous models, whether contemporaneous or of an ancient style. To this though Hoffman offers some tonic:

It would probably be quite impossible today for a composer to write as Palestrina, Leo and later Handel, among others, did – as exquisitely as Christendom still shone in its full glory then, that age seems to have disappeared forever from the earth and with it that consecration of its artists. No musician of today composes a Miserere the way

¹⁵⁹ Browning line 92.

¹⁶⁰ John Ruskin, *The Stones of Venice*, Vol. II. (Sunnyside, Orpington: George Allen, 1886)

Allegri or Leo did, just as no painter paints a Madonna like Raphael's, Dürer's, or Holbein's',¹⁶¹

A Sublime Soul and the Higher Art

Hoffman argues that 'spirit' in art is directly allied to technical detail, further noting that technical progress was impossible without spiritual development.¹⁶² The claims (though empirically improvable) that Vogler was a devout man would naturally endorse this argument - through a life of prayer and meditation Vogler's gifts would be continually blessed. Tieck's comment 'to produce something great one needs a great and sublime soul. I would go even further and claim that comprehending the great and sublime requires something of a great spirit',¹⁶³ could also be applied. By relation it is also difficult to imagine an instrument more apposite than the organ when considering Hoffman's related commentary:

Now, it is certain that music will hardly well up within a composer of today except in the adornments given it by the abundance of riches now available to him. The splendour of the manifold instruments, some of which sound so wonderful in high vaulting, shines forth everywhere; and why should one close one's eyes to it, as it is the onward driving world spirit itself that has cast this splendour into the mysterious art of the newest age, an age working its way towards inner spiritualization?'',¹⁶⁴

Whilst speaking of ancient music, Hoffmann goes still further:

Love, the consonance of all that is spiritual in nature, as it was endowed to the Christian, expresses itself in the chord, which therefore first awakened to life in

¹⁶¹ Referred to in Dalhaus, *The Idea of Absolute Music*, 92.

¹⁶² Dalhaus, *The Idea of Absolute Music*, 93.

¹⁶³ Wackenroder, *Werke und Briefe*, 292.

¹⁶⁴ Hoffman, *Schriften zur Musik*, 36.

Christendom; and thus the chord, harmony, becomes the image and expression of the communion of souls, of union with the eternal, of the ideal that rules over us and yet includes us.’¹⁶⁵

Further ‘modern’ (i.e. contemporary) music was to be heard with ‘devotion’. As Wackenroder had already demanded, the very harmony was part of the science that Rameau had written of and in turn drawn to the ‘miraculous’ rather than merely functional.¹⁶⁶ Thus it was imbued with a sense of inner divine quest. To Herder ‘devotion’ was ‘the highest result of music’.¹⁶⁷ ‘It is devotion that elevates humans and a gathering of humans above words and gestures, for then there is nothing left for their feelings except tones’.¹⁶⁸

The question of ‘inwardness’ rests heavily when considering the sacred improviser, as he is both the creator/re-creator of musical ideas as well as the creator of performance. Hegel comments that ‘What it claims as its own is the depth of a person’s inner life’¹⁶⁹, further noting that ‘object-free inwardness in respect of music’s content and mode of expression constitutes its formal aspect’.¹⁷⁰ This relates to Sailer’s comments that:

...aside from the life that goes outward, religion also has a life that returns inward, and enters deep into the affected soul, then the one hold art has a new dignity; it is not merely a tool of outward religion, but also a tool of onward religion.¹⁷¹

Hegel also leads us to the question of music and text, not with Hanslickian considerations but rather the fact that poetry is being employed to describe music: ‘...music has the greatest

¹⁶⁵ Hoffman, *Schriften zur Musik*, 215.

¹⁶⁶ Dahlhaus, *The Idea of Absolute Music*, 46.

¹⁶⁷ Johann Gottfried Herder, *Werke*, Ed. Heinrich Düntzer (Berline, n.d.), 18:604.

¹⁶⁸ Ibid

¹⁶⁹ Georg Wilhelm Friedrich Hegel, *Aesthetics, Lectures on Fine Art*, tr. T. M. Knox (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1975), vol. II, 888-910. *Contemplating Music* (Stuyvesant: Pendragon Press, 1987), 340.

¹⁷⁰ Hegel, *Aesthetics, Lectures on Fine Art*, 341.

¹⁷¹ Johann Michael Sailer, *Sämmtliche Werke*, ed. Joseph Widmer (Sulzbach: J. E. v. Seidel, 1839), 170.

affinity with poetry because they both make use of the same perceptible material, i.e. sound. And yet there is the greatest difference between the two arts both in their way of treating sounds.¹⁷² By contrast, Hegel places the written word on a lower plane than the musical phrase by commenting:

For the proper objectivity of the inner life as inner does not consist in the voices and words but in fact that I am made aware of a thought, feeling, etc., that I objectify them and so have them before me in my ideas or that I develop the implications of a thought or an idea, distinguish the inner and outer relations of my thought's content or its different features in their bearing on one another. Of course we always think in words but without needing actual speech for that reason.¹⁷³

As such, although Hegel notes the close relationship with the sister art of poetry he also points to the fact that it demands an outward projection to be heard and experienced. Despite this superiority he observes that music, instead of being governed by a specific 'meaning' rather creates an 'atmosphere', especially through instrumental music, towards a greater inwardness, unshackled as it were by words.

It is this notion of aesthetic personal will that also brings us to the humility of emotion expressed by Vogler – as Vogler expresses his own failings, so too does Browning extricate himself from the larger concert of association with the sister art-forms.

For Christian Hermann Weisse, who anticipated Hanslick's formalism, the question of fallibility of Vogler would have nonetheless been removed because of the Divine supervision that music was subject to:

¹⁷² Hegel, *Aesthetics, Lectures on Fine Art*, 347.

¹⁷³ Ibid

Tones, which through rhythm and harmony are combined into melody and into the musical work of art, are not immediately natural sounds but are produced through mechanical art [one might suggest especially on an organ]; not merely in order to subordinate them externally to the will of the striving spirit that rules them, but also to purify them of all special finite meaning that, as an alien content, would disturb and could the absolutely spiritual content with which they are to be imbued.¹⁷⁴

Dahlhaus notes that to Weisse the ‘pure concept of art’¹⁷⁵ which instrumental music realises is a manifestation of religious consciousness¹⁷⁶ and this relation to the Divine also correlates with Ernst Kurth’s commentary on absolute music being ‘dissolved from man’.¹⁷⁷

However, it is Weisse’s larger thesis that bears special consideration as it relates to the sacred organist and in turn the reception of art-religion. Weisse’s ‘modern ideal’ was ‘absolute’ or instrumental music, freed from the association of text and therefore ‘absolute’ and thus pure. The following commentary takes on a renewed focus as it applies to the sacred improviser and his own creative processes:

The meaning that sound also possesses outside of music in nature or in the world of the human mind – the latter excluded in this art, or, if it is incorporated, this can only happen by transmitting the idea that reveals itself as pure essentially, free of all finite appearances, in tones inasmuch as they are tones and not merely sounds.¹⁷⁸

¹⁷⁴ Christian Hermann Weisse, *System der Aesthetik als Wissenschaft von der Idee der Schönheit System der Ästhetik* (Leipzig: C.H.F. Hartmann, 1830). 2: 49.

¹⁷⁵ Weisse, *System der Aesthetik als Wissenschaft von der Idee der Schönheit System der Ästhetik*, 55.

¹⁷⁶ Dahlhaus, *The Idea of Absolute Music*, 101.

¹⁷⁷ Ernst Kurth, *Bruckner*, (Berlin: Max Hesses Verlag, 1925.), 1: 258.

¹⁷⁸ Weisse, *System der Ästhetik*, 2:49.

In *Parleying with Charles Avison*, written only two years before his death Browning notes:

I state it thus:

There is no truer truth obtainable

By man than comes of music.

Browning does not seek to promote music as the higher art, but rather reasons that music is a gift from above. This idea resonates across multiple complementary thoughts. His ready promotion of the music of earlier genres sits well with the domain of English organists in particular and their close association with academia in the nineteenth century. Although their perceived place in larger society was often troubled, they sought to promote higher ideals, through superior musical endeavours. To this end the founding of the College of Organists in 1864 marked a public statement setting forth the organist not merely as a learned musician, but rather a professional equal to the doctor or lawyer.

Browning's views ally well with those of the Oxford Professor of Music, William Crotch whose Lectures of 1818 speak of the supremacy of 'sublimity' in music – a style most closely associated with Palestrina and the Renaissance in general. But Browning's views on music also align with Hanslick and Schopenhauer, and we shall investigate the latter of these first, whilst viewing both through the musician's lens. Phelps¹⁷⁹ has argued that Browning may well have read Schopenhauer's *Die Welt als Wille und Vorstellung* (The World as Will and Idea) before embarking on *Abt Vogler*. As he writes: 'Schopenhauer attempted to account for the superiority of music over all the arts, and for its profounder significance to humanity, by

¹⁷⁹ William Lyon Phelps, 'Browning, Schopenhauer, and Music', *The North American Review*, Vol. 206, No. 743, Oct. 1917. 623.

insisting that poetry, painting, sculpture and architecture belonged to the world of 'idea', but that music was the direct expression of the Will.¹⁸⁰

This of course finds a parallel in 'But here is the finger of God, a flash of the will that can' and brings us to the realisation that unhindered by a score – for *Abt Vogler* is the 'creator' and not the 'interpreter' [except arguably of Divine intentions] – our organist is touched directly by the hand of God. Richardson adds that this would have been an obvious deliberation for Browning who felt that 'while improvising, the 'soul' can be released through music in the most spontaneous way available, and the music can soar as high as the player's individual 'soul' can make it fly.'¹⁸¹ 'The romantic aesthetic of music sprang from the poetic conceit of unspeakability: music expresses what words are not even capable of stammering.'¹⁸² Here too we see a symbiosis between poet and musician. The improviser is by nature both free from rules and beholden to them – phenomenologically and hermeneutically the improviser is always in a condition of response, perhaps never more so than to themselves. But more directly, Vogler is free through his improvisation (on an instrument of 'his own invention') as Avison and Browning are – Avison with his more expansive musical tastes and Browning with his unorthodox education. No one subject is restricted by circumstance, but rather all are unconstrained. Although admittedly Browning is merely presenting these views, a legitimate consideration of Browning, a musician, requires us to consider whether a linear progression of ideas is possible.

¹⁸⁰ Ibid

¹⁸¹ Richardson, 'Robert Browning's Taste in Music,' 114.

¹⁸² Norbert Miller, 'Musik als Sprache', *Beiträge zur musikalischen Hermeneutik*, ed. Carl Dahlhaus (Regensburg: Studien zue Musik geschichte des 19. Jahrhunderts, 43 1975), 271.

The Improviser

There is a complementary note, which Wright Roberts¹⁸³ questions, of whether improvisation might have been considered (by Browning or others in general) as an art-form superior to composition. Improvisation was the mainstay of European organists for successive decades and we must consider whether composers whose organ works lean towards the conservative by comparison to their orchestral works – one thinks obviously of Mendelssohn and Franck, but also of Bruckner – might have been fiendishly skilled at organ improvisation and simply not have seen the practical need to write down much of what they easily engineered on the organ unhesitatingly. An account of Chopin relates to this very issue:

The other day I heard Chopin improvise at George Sand's house. It is marvellous to hear Chopin compose in this way [note the use of 'compose' indicating no perceived separation in the quality of one art over the other]: his inspiration is so immediate and complete that he plays without hesitation as if it could not be otherwise. But when it comes to writing it down, and capturing the original thought in all its details, he spends days of nervous strain and almost terrible despair.¹⁸⁴

However, Browning places Vogler as an improviser in an extra-liturgical context, thus he removes the automatic application of text and symbolism to the improvisation that a liturgical environment would perhaps imply. As such, although Vogler is engaging in a personal act his playing nonetheless becomes part of a corporate act. In turn, his creative spirit can be firmly centred on music as its primary concern rather than text and by extension text-music-symbolism.

¹⁸³ Wright Roberts, 'Music in Browning,' 247.

¹⁸⁴ Referred to in Begbie, *Theology, Music and Time*, 232.

From a Hanslickian¹⁸⁵ perspective we are able further to consider music which is free from the addition of text. If we consider Hanslick's basic premise that music cannot be subordinate to the sister arts because the emotion derived from it is unalterable by external factors, then we must consider three implications as they relate to *Abt Vogler*. The first concerns Vogler's own response. He does not appear to improvise on a chant or chorale, nor is he bound to a liturgical season, a specific reference in the Ordinary, or even a sacred service. As such, he can develop his musical ideas without extra-musical considerations and his mind can freely perambulate, guided solely by his own emotions. Secondly, there is the response of Vogler's listeners. If we follow Schleiermacher's thinking that holiness is capable of manifesting itself through music,¹⁸⁶ we should also consider that by Schleiermacher's rationale Vogler 'preached' to 'the educated among its detractors' a 'religion of feelings'.¹⁸⁷ As such, Schleiermacher speaks of the ineffable - the objective correlative to the 'inner state' in which religion constitutes itself and this can be enciphered through music as a language above language.¹⁸⁸ Of the listeners and the question of artistic freedom we can consider Forkel's latter remarks:

[A] rock upon which a genius often comes to grief, is the public's indiscriminating applause. To be sure many artists have been thrown off their balance by exaggerated and often unmerited plaudits... The public merely asks for what it can understand, whereas the true artist ought to aim at an achievement which cannot be measured by popular standards. How, then, can popular applause be reconciled with the true artist's aspirations towards the ideal?¹⁸⁹

¹⁸⁵ Eduard Hanslick, *The Beautiful in Music* tr. Gustav Cohen. (Indianapolis: The Library of Liberal Arts, The Bobbs-Merrill Co. Inc., 1957).

¹⁸⁶ Dahlhaus, *The Idea of Absolute Music*, 86.

¹⁸⁷ Ibid

¹⁸⁸ Ibid

¹⁸⁹ Johann Nikolaus Forkel, *Johann Sebastian Bach*, (London: Constable, 1920), 149-50. Referred to in Goehr, 210

Although we have established that Vogler's personal concern is to provide a sacred offering and not a mere mortal entertainment, that does not discount the empirical response of his 'audience' reference above. The previous points are further extended because Vogler knows, as a craftsman, at least partial thoughts drive his musical creations, whereas his listeners and crucially the reader are left to determine their own initial perceptions and conclusions. However, Schleiermacher's point raises the issue that the educated will hear Vogler's creations in a different state than the uneducated.

As such, we cannot say there is a specific programmatic nature to Vogler's playing other than that which the listeners (and in turn readers) themselves apply, although Vogler does act as the 'creator' of this circumstance. Dahlhaus remarks that Schleiermacher represented Protestant theology of the nineteenth century noting that 'propositions are truly theological propositions to the extent that they cause the religious feeling to become more sure of itself, one may without false generalization conclude that the art-religion of the nineteenth century was truly a religion and not just a travesty of one.'¹⁹⁰ However, he further expounds:

..the fact that music expresses the feeling of infinity that is the substance of religion ...sufficient to allow aesthetic contemplation and religious devotion to flow into one another without having Schleiermacher's theological premises...be suspected of being superstition. The theologian of feeling – feeling that was 'immediate self awareness' on the one hand with the perception of 'simple dependency' on the other – was simultaneously, if implicitly, the theologian of the art-religion.¹⁹¹

By metaphorically opening so many doors before the reader he too engages into a spirit of freedom and individual interpretation. By example, the reader that is fully cognizant with various styles of improvisation, or knows of Vogler through anecdotal reference will come to

¹⁹⁰ Dahlhaus, *The Idea of Absolute Music*, 86.

¹⁹¹ Ibid

one conclusion on reading the poem. By contrast, a reader that has never heard of Vogler, knows nothing of improvisation and to whom ‘manifold music’ could suggest a cacophony of sound rather than a ‘palace’ of aural delights will infer a very different sense. To extend the question of the latter circumstance would require a measure of conjecture. However, we can freely reflect on the case of the informed listener and consider that the faith which Browning imparts to his protagonist he also imparts to his reader. By this reasoning we can also consider that the poem would bring one (broad) response from the believer and another from the un-churched.

If we then coalesce these thoughts to the earlier question of the impact of Elizabeth’s passing on Browning, then the following statements of Schopenhauer and Johann Michael Sailer seem all the more poignant in considering *Abt Vogler* as a work that deals with grief by looking towards eternal rest:

The unutterable depth of all music, but virtue of which it floats through our consciousness as the vision of a paradise firmly believed in yet ever distant from us, and by which also it is so fully understood and yet so inexplicable, rests on the fact that it restores to us all the emotions of our inmost nature, but entirely without reality and far removed from their pain. So also the seriousness which is essential to it, which excludes the absurd from its direct and peculiar province, is to be explained by the fact that its object is not the idea, with reference to which alone deception and absurdity are possible; but its object is directly the will, and this is essentially the most serious of all things, for it is that on which all depends.¹⁹²

¹⁹² Phelps, ‘Browning, Schopenhauer, and Music,’ 40.

Musical Form

The nature of art-religion demands that religion and art exist in an alliance that is not coincidental or arranged, but substantial, necessary, and possessed of an eternal message unhindered by temporality.¹⁹³ Within this realm we must consider aesthetic concerns which relate to the question of form and the choice of genre in the culture of nineteenth-century England.

Cook¹⁹⁴ has analysed specific lines of *Abt Vogler* in detail, drawing Leibnitzian parallels with the over-arching doctrine that ‘imperfection of the part may be necessary to the perfection of the whole’¹⁹⁵ and finding similitude with Aquinas, Shakespeare, Wordsworth, and Tennyson. His observations do much to place Browning in the extra-musical-literal-philosophical realm. Bishop and Ferns have discussed a fascinating application of number symbolism and the presence of a Pythagorean influence, also noting that in ‘submitting his art to a system of laws, did not sacrifice his poetic freedom.’¹⁹⁶ (This relationship of ‘constraint’ versus ‘freedom’ in art is discussed by Begbie at length in relationship to improvisation.)

However, for the purposes of this study, we shall examine the poem through an aesthetical-philosophical-musical lens. Smith notes that ‘music transcends the laws of art to become one with the laws of God’¹⁹⁷ and observing of the formal structure of the poem that its ‘logical divisions merge with an imagistic pattern equally important to the turn of the argument, and, while the poem rises with the cumulative insistence of the formal fugue, the impression of the freedom of improvisation remains.’¹⁹⁸

¹⁹³ Sailer, *Sämmtliche Werke*, 14: 161f

¹⁹⁴ Albert S. Cook, ‘Abt Vogler,’ *The Journal of English and Germanic Philology*, Vol. 5, No. 4, (1905): 485-491.

¹⁹⁵ Cook, ‘Abt Vogler,’ *The Journal of English and Germanic Philology*, 486.

¹⁹⁶ Alan Bishop and John Ferns, ‘Art in Obedience to Laws: Form and meaning in Browning’s ‘Abt Vogler’’. *Victorian Poetry*, Vol. 12, No. 1 (1974): 32

¹⁹⁷ C. Willard Smith referred to in Bishop and Ferns, ‘Art in Obedience to Laws,’ 26.

¹⁹⁸ Referred to in Bishop and Ferns, ‘Art in Obedience to Laws,’ 27.

Does Browning thereby create an empirical response that correlates to that of a fugue, even to the un-tutored ear/eye? Further does the ‘prerequisite’ of fugal harmony serve towards a ‘truth and determinacy’¹⁹⁹? Could the relation of subject to countersubject be likened to Herder’s ‘musical logic’ of tones where perception is brought to a sense of the ‘true’ by relation to one another? Is Browning in fact the master-architect of a ‘formal’ ‘palace’ which the reader enters into much like the congregant who arrives mid-way through a musical performance? And, more specifically, is Browning transporting his reader through a narrow byway into the very formal structure we are lead to believe Vogler engages in? Or are we to imagine for ourselves the thoughts that Vogler considered beyond those Browning alludes to?

It cannot be too audacious to consider that Vogler most likely improvises a fugue, not least because of his known prowess as an improviser, but also because it is the form most alluded to in other writings of Browning. It is also the archetypical ‘church’ form. ‘Structure brave’, ‘manifold music’, ‘obedience to laws’, ‘existent behind all laws’ are not the descriptors a musician associates with the relative frivolity of the gavotte or the scherzo, as two examples. Rather, if we consider the influence of Avison the pedagogue on Browning as a promoter of the ancient schools, Browning the lover of Palestrina, and also Vogler the pedagogue, we are able to draw a reasonable estimation that it was a fugue at play under Vogler’s hands and feet.

The much discussed ‘blunt[ing]’ of a ninth at the end of the monologue further testifies to this. The harmonic vocabulary of the nineteenth-century had already run far beyond that of simple diatonic harmony, but still a ‘wrong’ note affixed to a venerable musical structure like the fugue would indeed be veritable heresy amongst musicians. With numerology also a factor in the poem, as it was in the sacred works of Bach [also an improviser], and which

¹⁹⁹ Johann Nikolaus Forkel, *Allgemeine Geschichte der Musik* (Graz: Akademische Druck- u. Verlagsanstalt, 1967), 24.

were in turn also laden with symbolism, the fusion of all these factors brings us at the very least to a musical structure of supreme proportions. To this end the reader's response would naturally consider the rendering of a fugue most apposite.

Ancestral Costumes

The English organist-composer of the mid- nineteenth-century - and we should fairly consider this as Browning's primary point of reference - was wrestling for an identity that did not simply adopt an ancestral costume borrowed from the continent. In a culture enamoured of Germanic traditions - not least the interest Bach's music, driven by Mendelssohn's performances - the English composer had the choice to imitate or to venture bravely into his own sphere. For many the imitation was a reverential one, looking back rather than forward. This view was enabled - if not directly encouraged - by the writings of William Crotch, for whom the best in music lay with the past masters. The close relationship between the organ and academic worlds further propounded this view and for the larger part of the nineteenth-century a spirit of conservatism pervaded the contemporary English organ repertoire.

As already discussed, Browning too had conservative leanings, and indeed an affinity (although not a strong adherence) for matters Germanic. After all, he did not choose one of the Wesleys as his focus, but rather a continental musician. Further, the descriptors mentioned above do not bring to mind the pastiche Handelian choral fugues that provided such easy pleasure in England. Rather, Browning seeks an elevated protagonist, a servant of the Supreme Creator, who can imbue his musical discourse with all the (appropriate) emotions and place him centrally in the dominion of a servant of higher calling. We do not read of 'gaiety', 'folly' or anything frivolous, but instead we learn of the 'palace' which Vogler creates, a remembrance of the 'wonderful Dead' and, most significantly, the mortal that receives Divine 'whispers' in the ear. In many respects, Browning's Vogler might be at

one with the underlying sentiments of Crotch's uninterrupted 'sublimity' and the thinking of an earlier age. As Dahlhaus notes:

...literature about music is no mere reflection of what happens in the musical practice of composition, interpretation, and reception, but rather belongs, in a certain sense, to the constituent forces of the music itself. For insofar as music does not exhaust itself in the acoustical substrate that underlies it, but only takes shape through categorical ordering of what has been perceived, a change in the system of categories or reception immediately affects the substance of the thing itself. And the change in the conception of instrumental music that took place in the 1790s, the interpretation of 'indeterminacy', as 'sublime' rather than 'vacuous,' may be called a fundamental one.

...the pathos used to praise instrumental music was inspired by literature: were it not for the poetic conceit on unspeakability, there would have been no works available for reinterpreting the musically confusing or empty into the sublime or wonderful.²⁰⁰

By Dahlhaus's rationale we can see that Browning assimilated himself with the spirit of the age. Through his own writing he injected his presence into the musical community. Further, through Vogler, he took minimal risk; Vogler could be viewed as not only a man of God and a man of erudition, but equally a man of the people with his flamboyant concert improvisations. As such, Browning saw that in the nineteenth-century aesthetic both shades of the organist's personality held validity.

²⁰⁰ Dahlhaus, *The Idea of Absolute Music*, 63.

Postludium

It is the theological awareness that captures much of the spirit of this poem. After all, Vogler is not only an improviser but an abbé. The comments of William Hayes in 1753 that a composer's (Handel) true character could be seen in his music²⁰¹ and Adorno's comments on the relationship of music to theology have particular bearing in this context:

As opposed to language that means something, music is a language of a completely different type. In the type lies its theological aspect. What it says is an appearance simultaneously determined and hidden. Its idea is the form of the name of God. It is...the human attempt, though futile as always, to speak the name itself, not to impart meanings. [Music] refers to the true language as to one in which the content itself becomes manifest, but at the price of unequivocalness, which passed to the 'meaningful' languages.²⁰²

Goodrich-Freer comments that if Shelley is called the 'poet of poets', Browning is surely the 'poet of musicians',²⁰³ and as an antagonist defending the state of art in the mid-nineteenth century Browning is without doubt one of its most eloquent advocates from the musician's perspective. His description of a musical-theological protagonist allows for a consideration of a writer seeking a deeper faith through a transformation in their own life. As Mahler notes:

My need to express myself musically, symphonically, only begins where the dark sensations rule, at the door that leads into the 'other world'; the world in which things are not longer separated by time and place.²⁰⁴

²⁰¹ Christopher Hogwood, *Handel* (London: Thames and Hudson, c. 1984), 276. Goehr, *The Imaginary Museum*, 238.

²⁰² Theodor W. Adorno, 'Fragment über Musik und Sprache', *Quasi una Fantasia* (Frankfurt am Main: Suhrkamp, 1963; Frankfurt am Main, 1963), 11. Referred to in Dahlhaus, 115.

²⁰³ Goodrich-Freer, 'Robert Browning the Musician,' 649.

²⁰⁴ Gustav Mahler, *Briefe*, ed. Alma Mahler (Berlin: Zsolnay, 1924), 185.

Through Browning we also witness Vogler's free spirit. In a 'language above language', especially one of improvisatory means, we are squarely placed in a state of 'transcendence of musical specificity' coupled with 'intermittent intentions'. If we consider that 'every musical phenomenon points to itself' then Dahlhaus's thesis that transcendence for Adorno refers both to an internal as well as external state,²⁰⁵ places Browning's protagonist in a state of musical-homiletics. It is, to borrow from Wagner, 'a consultation with God on faith in the eternal good'.²⁰⁶

Of the commentaries on the organist through a nineteenth-century lens, we can note that Browning does not belittle his church musician or make a comedy of his circumstances. No mention is made of the 'station' of the organist which was far from satisfactory for many a nineteenth-century English musician. Further his 'preaching', through the organist, is the ultimate subtlety for it is in admiration of the devoutness of Vogler's craft. If Browning does 'preach' at all then it is solely in the reader's perspective. Indeed, is not all preaching subject to reception? A 'sermon' to one is a 'speech' to another, but through music Wackenroder is surely correct in suggesting 'no other art form has a basic material that is of itself already as pregnant with a heavenly spirit as music [is]'.²⁰⁷ The poet is in the fortuitous position of being able to expound not only on the power of music, but also the influence of music on a sacred musician, and further allude to the beliefs of a musician. Indeed he unhesitatingly suggests that music in the service of the Divine can most assuredly move the soul to a better place.

Dahlhaus notes that 'the ancient concept of God was realised in the statue, the Christian one symbolized in music, which allows one to experience the 'infinite both in vocal polyphony

²⁰⁵ Adorno, referred to in Dahlhaus, 116.

²⁰⁶ Richard Wagner, *Gesammelte Schriften und Dichtungen*, ed. Wolfgang Golther. (Berlin: Goldene Klassiker-Bibliothek, n.d.), 9: 306.

²⁰⁷ Wackenroder, *Werke und Briefe*, 221.

and in instrumental music'.²⁰⁸ Browning's commentaries on sacred art in a post-Oxford Movement world demonstrate that there remained, at least among the cognoscenti, an appreciation for the place of the organist in society and indeed in devout service. Chesterton remarked that Browning 'could not merely talk arts with artists - he could talk shop with them'.²⁰⁹ Whether Browning's musical view relates to music of the continent, music of England, or music of England through the rose-coloured spectacles of an Englishman travelled abroad is conjecture, but we cannot subtract the aesthetic implications that contextualise this work. What we can say is that *Abt Vogler* raises provoking observations about the organists' art, then and now, for not only does Browning impart on the nuances of the liturgical organist's place as musician, muse, and preacher, but through the injection of the individualised art of improvisation he expands this limited view into the realm of Divine interpreter and homiletic orator. In this respect viewing *Abt Vogler* through a musical lens provides us with a mirror of the nineteenth-century organist for not only does Browning select a protagonist of an earlier generation, much as contemporary composers did in their endeavours, but he imbues his monologue with the aesthetic questioning and romantic idealising of his own time.

²⁰⁸ Dahlhaus, *The Idea of Absolute Music*, 43.

²⁰⁹ Referred to in Wright Roberts, 'Music in Browning,' 237.

Chapter 5

Saint, Siren, or Martyr? - Thomas Hardy, gendered perception and the sacred setting

The Chapel-Organist, Thomas Hardy
(A.D. 185-)

I've been thinking it through, as I play here to-night, to play never again,
By the light of that lowering sun peering in at the window-pane,
And over the back-street roofs, throwing shades from the boys of the chore
In the gallery, right upon me, sitting up to these keys once more . . .

How I used to hear tongues ask, as I sat here when I was new:
"Who is she playing the organ? She touches it mightily true!"
"She travels from Havenpool Town," the deacon would softly speak,
"The stipend can hardly cover her fare hither twice in the week."
(It fell far short of doing, indeed; but I never told,
For I have craved minstrelsy more than lovers, or beauty, or gold.)

'Twas so he answered at first, but the story grew different later:
"It cannot go on much longer, from what we hear of her now!"
At the meaning wheeze in the words the inquirer would shift his place
Till he could see round the curtain that screened me from people below.
"A handsome girl," he would murmur, upstaring, (and so I am).
"But--too much sex in her build; fine eyes, but eyelids too heavy;
A bosom too full for her age; in her lips too voluptuous a look."
(It may be. But who put it there? Assuredly it was not I.)

I went on playing and singing when this I had heard, and more,
Though tears half-blinded me; yes, I remained going on and on,
Just as I used me to chord and to sing at the selfsame time! . . .
For it's a contralto--my voice is; they'll hear it again here to-night
In the psalmody notes that I love more than world or than flesh or than life.

Well, the deacon, in fact, that day had learnt new tidings about me;
They troubled his mind not a little, for he was a worthy man.
(He trades as a chemist in High Street, and during the week he had sought
His fellow-deacon, who throve as a book-binder over the way.)
"These are strange rumours," he said. "We must guard the good name of the chapel.
If, sooth, she's of evil report, what else can we do but dismiss her?"
"--But get such another to play here we cannot for double the price!"
It settled the point for the time, and I triumphed awhile in their strait,
And my much-beloved grand semibreves went living on under my fingers.

At length in the congregation more head-shakes and murmurs were rife,
And my dismissal was ruled, though I was not warned of it then.
But a day came when they declared it. The news entered me as a sword;
I was broken; so pallid of face that they thought I should faint, they said.
I rallied. "O, rather than go, I will play you for nothing!" said I.
'Twas in much desperation I spoke it, for bring me to forfeit I could not

Those melodies chorded so richly for which I had laboured and lived.
They paused. And for nothing I played at the chapel through Sundays anon,
Upheld by that art which I loved more than blandishments lavished of men.

But it fell that murmurs again from the flock broke the pastor's peace.
Some member had seen me at Havenpool, comrading close a sea-captain.
(Yes; I was thereto constrained, lacking means for the fare to and fro.)
Yet God knows, if aught He knows ever, I loved the Old-Hundredth, Saint Stephen's,
Mount Zion, New Sabbath, Miles-Lane, Holy Rest, and Arabia, and Eaton,
Above all embraces of body by wooers who sought me and won! . . .
Next week 'twas declared I was seen coming home with a lover at dawn.
The deacons insisted then, strong; and forgiveness I did not implore.
I saw all was lost for me, quite, but I made a last bid in my throbs.
High love had been beaten by lust; and the senses had conquered the soul,
But the soul should die game, if I knew it! I turned to my masters and said:
"I yield, Gentlemen, without par lance. But--let me just hymn you ONCE more!
It's a little thing, Sirs, that I ask; and a passion is music with me!"
They saw that consent would cost nothing, and show as good grace, as knew I,
Though tremble I did, and feel sick, as I paused thereat, dumb for their words.
They gloomily nodded assent, saying, "Yes, if you care to. Once more,
And only once more, understand." To that with a bend I agreed.
- "You've a fixed and a far-reaching look," spoke one who had eyed me awhile.
"I've a fixed and a far-reaching plan, and my look only showed it," said I.

This evening of Sunday is come--the last of my functioning here.
"She plays as if she were possessed!" they exclaim, glancing upward and round.
"Such harmonies I never dreamt the old instrument capable of!"
Meantime the sun lowers and goes; shades deepen; the lights are turned up,
And the people voice out the last singing: tune Tallis: the Evening Hymn.
(I wonder Dissenters sing Ken: it shows them more liberal in spirit
At this little chapel down here than at certain new others I know.)
I sing as I play. Murmurs some one: "No woman's throat richer than hers!"
"True: in these parts, at least," ponder I. "But, my man, you will hear it no more."
And I sing with them onward: "The grave dread as little do I as my bed."

I lift up my feet from the pedals; and then, while my eyes are still wet
From the symphonies born of my fingers, I do that whereon I am set,
And draw from my "full round bosom," (their words; how can _I_ help its heave?)
A bottle blue-coloured and fluted--a vinaigrette, they may conceive -
And before the choir measures my meaning, reads aught in my moves to and fro,
I drink from the phial at a draught, and they think it a pick-me-up; so.
Then I gather my books as to leave, bend over the keys as to pray.
When they come to me motionless, stooping, quick death will have whisked me away.

"Sure, nobody meant her to poison herself in her haste, after all!"
The deacons will say as they carry me down and the night shadows fall,
"Though the charges were true," they will add. "It's a case red as scarlet withal!"
I have never once minced it. Lived chaste I have not. Heaven knows it above! . . .
But past all the heavings of passion--it's music has been my life-love! . . .
That tune did go well--this last playing! . . . I reckon they'll bury me here . . .
Not a soul from the seaport my birthplace--will come, or bestow me .
. . a tear.

-THE END-¹

¹ Thomas Hardy, "The Chapel-Organist" (A.D. 185-)," *The Collected Poems of Thomas Hardy* [1898] (New York: Macmillan, 1926), 601-2.

When Trollope wrote that ‘We have become a novel-reading people, from the Prime Minister to the last-appointed scullery maid’² he directs attention to the fact that through reading many were not only now educated sufficiently to embrace literature but that the literary world could also encompass a wide social demographic. Even briefly putting aside escapism and sensationalism, the Victorian novel or poem could transport the reader from their own world to another and away from the ordinary. However, this can only be undertaken by the writer if a strain of believability pervades the whole. Scandal, for instance, is regarded as such because we can see the makings of it in society and even in our contemporary world, without the social mores that governed the Victorians. Thus to inject titillation, objectification, and misogyny into the literary sphere is to draw on the sinews of the soul that exist within the reader, whether male or female, and allow them to engage in the intrigue and respond to the narrative. To what extent that engagement is of itself decadence or flirtation with the subject matter is open to conjecture. However, a story of illicit activities within the ecclesiastical surrounds of a chapel is by nature provocative. In the puritanical sense even to read of such goings-on is a sinful consideration for it imagines the scenario and makes one consider the circumstances.

However, Hardy’s poem has a larger message, for he unravels the complexities of the congregational machinations and takes the reader to a bitter conclusion. Judgement is rendered not only on the wayward organist, but ultimately on the immoral onlookers who, lacking a consistent moral compass of their own, are themselves tainted by guilt; a guilt akin to scriptural betrayal - reporting on whereabouts and perpetrating defamatory slander which results in a life removed is nothing new to the sacred setting. As such Hardy offers a moral tale – a lesson to be observed and pondered. It is, for the reader, an account of a young

² Anthony Trollope, *Four Lectures*, ed. M. L. Parrish (London: Constable, 1938), 108.

woman's life cut short by the society in which she lives. True, her actions run foul of expectations and protocols, but her detractors fall short of ethical exemplars too. Unlike her, their actions are invisible to the greater populus, as the political intrigues of the church typically are; what the learned discuss is seldom what the mass experience.

Trollope's comment brings Hardy's presence in Victorian society to an important place of received commentary, in both directions. After all, Hardy was not, outside of his early fiction a career sensationalist, even if he was obliged to omit parts of *Tess* in its early serialisation for the offence its narrative might bring about to certain readers. Hardy did not see himself as a historicist either; that we can trace elements of his writing to factual statements, or see facets of life beautifully illuminated, cannot necessarily serve to provide an empirical canvas on which to draw a realistic picture. However, Hardy's *Chapel-Organist* touches on such a large number of salient points that are central to an understanding of the woman as an organist in Victorian culture and society that viewing the role of the woman through this lens proves especially rewarding. As such, this chapter does not solely seek to examine the role of the woman in the Victorian church from Hardy's perspective (although that will be considered in order to evaluate his own role as a commentator), but rather this poem allows Hardy to open the doors that lead to a central locus whereby the factors inherent to the woman as a sacred musician in the Victorian era can be expanded upon and better understood. In order to determine a critical evaluation of these circumstances, and in adopting Hardy's poem as a source of departure, it is necessary to first consider Hardy's own relationship to the musical community.

Hardy and Music

Eva Mary Grew comments that Hardy was sensitive to rhythm and melody, even to the point of tears when he was as young as three or four years old.³ He learned on an accordion which his father gave him when he was four who also instructed him in musical notation. The repertoire would consist of dance airs and melodies that were in his father and grandfather's scrapbooks.⁴ The family environment of *Tess* appears modelled on Hardy's own upbringing, with the author possessing a command of the fiddle in his teens and having the experience of both playing for dancers and being a dancer himself. As Grew notes:

Born into a family where the simple music of the church and of country merrymaking was practised to a quite unusual extent, he grew up in its bright, consistent atmosphere, and the local jigs and songs, hymns, chants and anthems became as familiar to him, and as much a part of his being, as the local legends and turns of speech.⁵

He was taught by this father who had himself inherited two carol and ballad books written in the hand of 'young' Thomas's grandfather, who also owned an old dance-tune book.⁶ Florence Hardy related how when he was a boy of thirteen or so he 'played the popular 'New-Rigged Ship' for twelve vigorous couples for three-quarters of an hour on end, his hostess finally stopping the boy's frenzied playing "for fear he would burst a blood-vessel."⁷

³ Eva Mary Grew, "Thomas Hardy as Musician", *Music & Letters*, Vol. 21, no. 2 (April, 1940): 120.

⁴ Ibid, 128.

⁵ Ibid, 120.

⁶ Elna Sherman, 'Music in Thomas Hardy's Life and Work', *The Musical Quarterly*, vol. 26, no. 4 (October, 1940): 422.

⁷ Ibid

However, as J. A. La Trobe notes:

The common class of country singers [knew] nothing of theoretical, and little of practical music...and yet...they [saw] no defect in their taste....throwing in, according to their notions of beauty, shakes, turns, cadences, and other frivolous ornaments...the mind is uncertain how to draw the line between an attempted ornament, and an undesigned defect.⁸

His mother also owned a table-piano which the young Thomas attempted to tune, though he became perplexed at the problems inherent in ‘true’ tuning. Being of a humble disposition he considered the fault his own due to a lack of musical ability.⁹ His great passion though was to study and become an organist, and it is this highly specialised musical interest that sets him apart from other writers of the era. Carl J. Weber writes of this entrancement when he sat listening to an instrument later in life:

On Tuesday, June 22nd, 1875, the organist of Wimborne Minster was practising late at night. He was reading his music by the light of a single candle which threw its feeble rays out into the minster’s gloom. Ten o’clock struck. While the practising was still going on, the door of the minster quietly opened, admitting a bearded man of thirty-five who tip-toed in to a nearby stall and sat down. He listened with rapt attention to the organ music, towards which he had been drawn by the dimly-lighted minster windows. The listener was Thomas Hardy, who had come that very day to reside at Wimborne.¹⁰

⁸ John Antes La Trobe, *The Music of the Church* (London: Seeley & Burnside, 1831), 138-9. Also, R. G. Woods “Church Bands and Thomas Hardy,” *Early Music*, vol. 10, no. 1, (January, 1982), 68.

⁹ Sherman, “Music in Thomas Hardy’s Life and Work,” 422.

¹⁰ Carl J. Weber, “Thomas Hardy Music: with a bibliography,” *Music & Letters*, vol. 21, no. 2 (1940): 172.

Both his father and grandfather played bowed instruments in Stinsford parish church, and thus serve as the model for the west gallery musicians in the Mellstock parish church of his writings. Hardy's mother also sang songs and ballads of the time such as 'Gaily the Troubadour' and 'Jeannette and Jeanot'.¹¹ It is from this early familial-ecclesiastical upbringing that Hardy undoubtedly developed his views on money and its relationship to the church. The Hardys were known as especially generous people that were always willing to give of themselves musically to others, whether a nearby church or farmhouse,¹² and would refuse to accept payment for their services. Indeed the future novelist's mother was deeply distressed when he took payment of 5s in order to purchase a book he desired.¹³ An inverse scenario is played out in full in *Under the Greenwood Tree* where the family of musicians that have given such long service without pay are somewhat unceremoniously relieved of their duties. (This is perhaps the most obvious departure from Hardy's own setting where the vicar was also an accomplished fiddler and had formed a string quartet with Hardy's grandfather and his two sons, thus allowing for a healthy 'working' relationship.) Having achieved no income from their position in the church, the Mellstock Dewys' had played for honour. Thus their removal from their position is all the more difficult for them to comprehend. It is an interesting merging of disparate dynamics; they respect the parson's wish (thus acknowledging his religious authority), but yet are not troubled by the absence of their own liturgical ministry. As such they 'believe' but in a broader sense, for they choose to live their faith through their life and not merely through weekly attendance. (Hardy thus portrays his musicians as being capable of a strong moral compass and consequently it is all the more provoking when he elects to move away from this generic character when he turns to the chapel-organist.) That noted, the desire to perform well and at least emulate the

¹¹ Sherman, "Music in Thomas Hardy's Life and Work," 421.

¹² La Trobe, *The Music of the Church*, 126.

¹³ Ibid, 226.

metaphysical world is found in William Dewy's comments to his band of Christmas carollers:

Now mind, naibours. You two counter-boys [the altos] keep your ears open to Michael's fingering, and don't ye go straying into the treble part along o' Dick and his set, as ye did last year; and mind this especially when we be in 'Arise and hail'. Billy Chislem don't you sing so raving mad as you fain would; and, all o' ye, whatever ye do, keep from makin' a great scuffle on the ground when ye go in at people's gates; but go quietly, so as to strike up all of a sudden, like spirits.

Under the Greenwood Tree

Hardy's sense of the honourable place of the sacred musician (even if not perhaps always of the organist specifically) is found in *Jude the Obscure* where the protagonist departs from his desire to be an organist and instead becomes a wine-seller. Seeing the church not as an institution to profit from but rather a sacred edifice where gifts are offered back to the Creator resonates strongly in Hardy's portrayal of his chapel-organist. She is not enamoured of her position for the pecuniary emoluments - indeed they do not even cover her travel expenses - but for the passion of playing, and especially of playing the well-known hymns. One might think her great passion would be whatever she could play in a solo capacity, be it a voluntary or interlude, but rather she seeks to be part of the worshipping mass and to lead them in song.

Stinsford had a good reputation for music and for around a hundred years sang the Service in F of William Jackson of Exeter, as well as his setting of Pope's 'Vital spark of heavenly flame'. Every Sunday throughout the year they would sing Ken's morning and evening hymns and Tate and Brady's *New Version* was used for psalmody.¹⁴ Much of the music

¹⁴ Ibid, 130.

would have included repertoire inspired by the Handelian school – works in major keys, filled with fugal (fuguing) writing (though seldom strict fugues) and with an easy energy that is akin to the slightly raucous dancing Hardy knew from country life. The west gallery musicians were of course unvested, and to a large extent unseen. Their contribution, at the opposite end of the building from the cleric who led the service could – if akin to other west gallery musicians – also be strenuously divergent in terms of conduct, one of the major complaints of the Oxford Movement post-1830. It was not unheard of for the musicians to offer comments in the services, although discursive outbursts from congregants could be encountered even in royal chapels as the biography of Lady Elvey notes in her biography of George Elvey.¹⁵ As such, their ‘belief’ was, as noted, of an extra-liturgical nature focussed not so much on the sacrament but the service. Hardy notes in *The Dynasts* how faith could nonetheless give reign to an emotional response:

What is the creed that these rich rites disclose?

A local thing called Christianity,

Which the wild drama of the wheeling spheres

Included, with divers others such, in dim

Pathetical and brief parentheses,

Beyond whose span, uninfluenced, unconcerned,

The systems of the suns go sweeping on,

¹⁵ Lady Mary Elvey, *Life and Reminiscences of George J. Elvey* (London: Sampson Low & Co., 1894).

With all their many-mortalled planet train

In mathematic roll unceasingly.

The Dynasts

As such, Hardy portrays the sacred musician from the perspective of a practitioner with ‘feeling’ – yet one removed from the niceties of ecclesiastical sentiment. This view resonates strongly across the history of Anglican music-making, beginning with the professionalization of this sphere of music, and on occasion filtering to other branches; to achieve standards one seeks professionals, and with professionals come the unexpected quirks of behaviour of those individuals. Does one sacrifice the liturgy for perfect decorum, or does one achieve musical majesty through a compromise of conduct? It is an age-old problem, but it resonates here in Hardy, somewhat unexpectedly in this chapel-organist’s demeanour as she does not seek conformity.

In time the gallery musicians of Stinsford (and elsewhere) were replaced by an organist. However, the reputation set by the older Thomas Hardy had left its mark and it was noted that long before young Thomas knew who Handel was in the musical realm he had noticed a similarity of style between ‘See the conquering hero comes’ and ‘The Dead March’ from *Saul*,¹⁶ a work that appears frequently in Victorian services. In later life he wrote to his sister to enquire ‘Tell me about the organ and how the Sundays go off. I am uncommonly interested.’¹⁷

¹⁶ Sherman, “Music in Thomas Hardy’s Life and Work,” 423.

¹⁷ Ibid, 425.

Hardy's diaries note that after moving to London when he was twenty-one to continue his studies in an architect's office, he attended the theatre hearing English and Italian opera whilst singing the bass line in part-songs and playing the violin with a friend in arrangements of operatic airs.¹⁸ The opera performances included the Italians Bellini, Donizetti, Meyerbeer, Rossini, Verdi, and the Englishmen Balfe and Wallace.¹⁹ His employer was a keen glee-singer and the staff would often burst into song when they were either tired from work or needed some distraction. Always short of an alto he would comment "If ever you find an alto in the Strand, bring him in."²⁰ As at home, Hardy would go to sing in the houses of friends, and also served as a vocal soloist in the opening of the new organ at St. Matthias, Richmond.²¹

He maintained a lifelong interest in music that was not beyond a romanticised overtone either in his writing or in his own actions. The story of his continual quest for an anonymous folksong bears inclusion here for it demonstrates his own tenacity for music that finds a parallel in that of the chapel-organist who 'craved minstrelsy more than lovers, or beauty, or gold.' As Weber accounts:

Throughout his life Hardy was on a search for an elusive dance-tune which he had heard as a sixteen-year-old boy. When Hardy entered the office of John Hicks of Dorchester, he found there a fellow pupil named Fippard. Hardy began his term of study under Hicks just as Fippard was about to leave, but the two were together long enough for the older pupil to make at least one indelible impression upon the mind of the future novelist. Fippard, five years older than Hardy, had made several trips to

¹⁸ La Trobe, *The Music of the Church*, 120.

¹⁹ *Ibid*, 135.

²⁰ *Ibid*

²¹ *Ibid*

London and brought back from the big city a quadrille tune which he liked to whistle. Hardy remembered not only the faultless whistling but also the way Fippard would caper about the architect's office while whistling the fascinating tune. Hardy remembered the tune, too, even though the senior pupil had been able to give no name for it and supply no information about it other than the fact that it was a quadrille. Afterwards, when Hardy himself reached London, he went to various second-hand music shops and hunted over a lot of quadrille music, but without finding Fippard's tune. Later he went to the British Museum to continue his search, but again to no avail. One day during the summer of 1878, three years after his solitary listening to the organ of Wimborne Minster, he was sitting in his writing-room near Wandsworth Common when he heard a street barrel-organ begin to play. It was now twenty-two years since he had watched Fippard capering and whistling at Dorchester; but when the barrel-organ began to play that same quadrille tune, Hardy's recognition of the music was instantaneous. He threw down his pen, dashed out of doors without a hat, down the street, around the corner, until he caught up with the organ-grinder.

"What's the name of that tune?" asked the panting novelist.

The frightened grinder could only point to the index on the front of the organ, Hardy looked, but 'Quadrille' was the only word there. He never learned the name of the tune and according to Mrs. Hardy never heard it played again.²²

²² Weber, "Thomas Hardy Music: with a bibliography," 173-4.

Hardy's portrayal of the musician as a figure within his writing remains with the countryfolk, as of course does his larger writing. However, it is always injected with a cause of passion as much as it is a vital necessity to the life of his characters. Music for Hardy was not something removed and Divinely partitioned for a section of society, but rather an art-form that all could, and did, engage in. In the *Chapel-Organist* Hardy takes us away from the cathedral, collegiate and indeed civic environment that provides so much of the commentary on the Victorian setting for organists and instead places the organist in a local church setting. Whether in the *Chapel-Organist* or *Under the Greenwood Tree*, Hardy considers the organist as a person, rather than just a post-holder. That in these instances he should place a woman in this role expands the dimension of the character, their response, and our overall understanding of the greater situation due to the difference in social circumstances and conditioning. Whether as an organist or listener, Hardy's narrative of the response of a woman to the organ is always tinged with an emotional temperament:

He now played more powerfully. Cytherea had never heard music in the completeness of full orchestral power, and the tones of the organ, which reverberated with considerable effect in the comparatively small space of the room, heightened by the elemental strife of light and sound outside, moved her to a degree out of proportion to the actual power of the mere notes, practised as was the hand that produced them. The varying strains – now loud, now soft; simple, complicated, weird, touching, grand, boisterous, subdued; each phrase distinct, yet modulating into the next with a graceful and easy flow – shook and bent her to themselves, as a gushing brook shakes and bends a shadow across its surface. The power of the music did not show itself so much by attracting her attention to the subject of the piece, as by taking up and

developing as its libretto the poem of her own life and soul, shifting her deed and intentions from the hands of her judgement and holding them in its own.

Desperate Remedies

Of his later liturgical experiences his diary entry of October 27, 1865 records attendance at Westminster Abbey for the funeral of Lord Palmerston, the music for which was ‘Purcell’s service,’ [sentences] and the ‘Dead March in Saul’. In a letter to his sister Mary he describes the music:

The opening sentences, ‘I am the Resurrection,’ etc., were sung to Croft’s music. Beethoven’s Funeral March was played as they went from the choir to the vault...I think I was never so much impressed with a ceremony in my life before....²³

In 1892 he attended Tennyson’s funeral, also at Westminster Abbey noting ‘Music....sweet and impressive’.²⁴

A few years earlier (1886) he heard a concert of Wagner’s music observing what was to become typical imagery:

It was weather and ghost music – whistling of wind and storm the strumming of a gale on iron railings, the creaking of doors; low screams of entreaty and agony through key-holes, amid which trumpet-voices are heard. Such music, like any other, may be made to express emotion of various kinds: but it cannot express the reason of that emotion.²⁵

²³ “Sherman, “Music in Thomas Hardy’s Life and Work,” 425.

²⁴ Ibid

²⁵ Sherman, “Music in Thomas Hardy’s Life and Work,” 426. Also Joan Grundy, *Hardy and the Sister Arts*, (London: Macmillan, 1979), 136.

In a later (1906) meeting with Grieg he relayed how such a scene in nature could remind him of Wagner's music to which the great Norwegian retorted of Wagner's music "I would sooner have the wind and rain!"²⁶ Hardy offered an interesting appreciation of Wagner when he expressed:

I prefer late Wagner, as I prefer late Turner, to early (which I suppose is all wrong in taste), the idiosyncrasies of each master being more strongly shown in these strains. When a man not contented with the grounds of his success goes on and on, and tries to achieve the impossible, then he gets profoundly interesting to me. Today [writing of a particular concert] it was early Wagner for the most part: fine music, but not so particularly his – no spectacle of the inside of a brain at work like the inside of a hive.²⁷

Such relative perception of Wagner's music suggests that when Hardy references "Such harmonies I never dreamt the old instrument capable of!" he knows the topic at hand. Indeed given the prevailing culture for 'storm effects' in organ recitals we might even consider that he suggests a musical event for the chapel-organist of some great moment.

Elna Sherman comments that the musical passages of Hardy's writing demonstrate four different facets of his musicality:

¶ His keen perception of sounds in nature and of human voices and instruments

²⁶ Ibid

²⁷ Ibid, 431.

¶ His pre-occupation with music, its signs, and symbols, and its effect on the daily lives of men and women

¶ His thorough familiarity with, and appreciation of, the remarkable folk-song music that was his

¶ His fine sense of the underlying rhythm and music of life, as expressed in the animate and inanimate worlds, in time and circumstance²⁸

As such Hardy's background incorporates not only that of the musical practitioner, but also that of the music lover, and so his commentary offers a dual perception of significant bearing. Although he was born of a musical family and performed publicly as a child, he remained captivated by the other-worldly quality of the musical art throughout his life.

Education

In the second half of the nineteenth century music featured heavily in discussions of female education, especially in advice books and journals for women that had a 'how to' approach to life. As Delia da Sousa Correa notes, music was seen as both the most spiritual and most sensual of the arts and this engendered a degree of ambivalence, if not sometimes confusion, as to the role music was to serve in (middle and upper class) women's lives.²⁹ She writes:

Music formed part of serious intellectual education but was also a frivolous or seductive accomplishment. It was an agent of social progress and a cause of sexual havoc.³⁰

The relationship between music and 'sexual havoc' is further alluded to by Susan McClary when surveying music's orientation toward mind and body:

²⁸ Ibid, 434.

²⁹ Delia da Sousa Correa, *George Eliot, Music and Victorian Culture*, (London: Palmgrave Macmillan, 2003), 60.

³⁰ Ibid

Music is an extremely powerful medium, all the more so because most listeners [including performers] have little rational control over the way it influences them. The mind/body split that has plagued Western culture for centuries shows up most paradoxically in attitudes toward music: the most cerebral, nonmaterial of media is at the same time the medium most capable of engaging the body.³¹

Despite the ‘power’ of music and the possibility its emotive force could be overwhelming for women it was rarely left out of curricula. Part of this relative encouragement stems from the possibility for music to be studied privately, with a primer, at flexible hours that wouldn’t interfere with the familial duties (prior to marriage). But also it was a subject that could be considered among the unthreatening areas for self-improvement alongside drawing, basic French, and geography.³² One of the criticisms voiced against this limited educational background was that it led to a cultivation of the emotional side of the character but not the ability to reason.

Novels, music poetry, and gallantry, all tend to make women the creatures of sensation, and their character is thus formed in the mould of folly during the time they are acquiring accomplishments, the only improvement they are excited, by their station in society, to acquire. This overstretched sensibility naturally relaxes the other powers of the mind, and prevents intellect from attaining that sovereignty which it ought to attain to render a rational creature useful to others, and content with its own station; for the exercise of the understanding, as life advances, is the only method pointed out by nature to calm the passions.³³

³¹ Susan McClary, *Feminine Endings: Music, Gender and Sexuality* (Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press, 1991), 151. Phyllis Weliver, *Women Musicians in Victorian Fiction*, (Aldershot/Burlington: Ashgate, 2002), 6.

³² Sousa Correa, *George Eliot, Music and Victorian Culture*, 61.

³³ Mary Wollstonecraft, *Vindication of the Right of Woman* [1792] ed. Miriam Brody (Harmondsworth: Penguin, 1975), 152. Sousa Correa, *Sousa Correa, George Eliot, Music and Victorian Culture*, 61-62.

Although no mention is made of the education of Hardy's chapel-organist, the comments above of Mary Wollstonecraft betray an easy application, for the chapel-organist appears to live more for personal sensation, than for her sometimes 'possessed' playing. As such, Hardy's protagonist could be viewed as using music, and herself, in a sirenic fashion. That she sings as well only adds fuel to the fire of criticism as singers were held in low esteem for their reliance on feminine attributes - a point Hardy emphasises with his chapel-organist (although not with Fancy Day). Singing was by nature a public display, unlike domestic piano playing. As a woman's natural role was as a wife and mother and as such tied to the home, how could this be achieved by public displays in larger society? Rather the nature of music was a fulfiller of a spiritual dimension within society as a mother responds to her daughter in the *British Mothers' Magazine*:

We must distinguish, my love, between what is always an injurious amusement, and what may possibly become so. In my opinion, dancing and cards, as practised in society are always evil; and we therefore keep our children at the greatest distance from both. Music on the contrary, whether vocal or instrumental, is a source of innocent and exquisite pleasure to the performers and the auditors, softens the feelings, refines the taste, and, in devotional services, is allied to the highest and holiest emotions of our nature. It is essentially good, though, like every other talent possessed by man, capable of being perverted. It is abused, when it is made so important as to engross much time and money; when words are sung which we should 'blush to hear spoken,' or which are otherwise immoral; and when the gratification is sought in public assemblies, in which the company, the display, and the expense, are all objectionable.³⁴

³⁴ 'P.', 'Amusements', *BMM*, 2. (1846), 204-5. Sousa Correa, *George Eliot, Music and Victorian Culture*, 67.

The reference to the financial side of musical study bears some commentary. We have to consider whether in training young women to be musically adept in order to appear more obviously appealing to a suitor (who would then expect her to drop musical ambitions after marriage) by nature assisted in restraining the profession from developing more rapidly. Put differently, if women were only encouraged to study in order to achieve marital success – a feat not universally accomplished – then how could the women who did seek professional recognition advance their own careers with any measure of professional integrity? As most liturgical music required only limited technical skills the ‘profession’ was overrun with potential applicants.

However, though the church excluded women, and in turn many women musicians, from its liturgical activities, society had adopted music for its ‘spiritual feeling’. Through the growth of the singing movement music had acquired a received moral dimension. A commentary in the *British Mothers’ Journal* of 1857 notes how an evening of rational entertainment for young people culminates in a discussion of scientific investigation of nature illustrated religious faith in God’s design. As Sousa Correa observes, ‘Music, like natural science, could be seen as conducive to piety.’³⁵

Women musicians and the Church

The historical role of musical women in the church has typically been one of unease, and though a superficial glance at Hardy’s poem suggests he is merely leaning towards a scandalising narrative, the historical and contemporary overtones of his free-spirited protagonist are strongly provoking in chronicling both the ancient role of the sacred keyboard musician as well as the Victorian reality. Hardy’s protagonist draws us both to the women

³⁵ Sousa Correa, *George Eliot, Music and Victorian Culture*, 70.

organists of the period as well as those of an earlier era from whom fundamental parallels can be drawn.

As organists, women were to be found most consistently in the only environment where they held universal prominence; the convent or nunnery. In the post-Oxford Movement culture of relocating musicians from the West to the East of the church there were endemic concerns over what would be seen of them, not least with women (if allowed to sing or play), a parallel that can be found in the post-Tridentine reforms. Hardy's very brassy description of the chapel-organist with her voluptuous physique creates an unmitigated affront to both Victorian mores and a church orthodoxy that the English reformers were trying to recapture. Craig Monson's description of the convent world's response to the Council of Trent could just as easily be applied not only to the conditioning of women in nineteenth-century England, but also the harshness of response levied on them (without any enduring success) by their male 'colleagues'.

As cloister walls rose higher, as any and all openings were bricked up, shuttered, grated, and veiled, the nun, who before the Council of Trent had been a not so uncommon sight, now became visible only to the very few...

As Gabriella Zarli commented:

The nuns become an invisible presence, they are transformed into a voice.³⁶

³⁶ Craig. A. Monson, *The Crannied Wall* (Ann Arbor: The University of Michigan Press, 1992), 191. Gabriella Zarri, "Le monache divengono una presenza non vista, si trasformano in una voce," *Monasteri femminili a città (secolo xv – xviii)*, in *Storia d'Italia, Annali 9: La Chiesa e il potere politico dal Medioevo all'età contemporanea*, ed. G. Chittolini and G. Miccolo (Turin: Giulio Einaudi, 1986), 412.

Of course this has a double overtone for the women in Victorian England in the struggle for independence against stricture through a musical medium. Firstly, the walls rose between East and West as the presence of the women in the chancel became an unwelcome consideration. But secondly, the ‘voice’ of the woman, by default rather than design, could become the organ. Whereas the woman could be silenced in society, she remained a powerful voice within the church.

In the conventual setting the purity of the voice (and its relationship to natural intervals and the harmony of the spheres) allowed for women to be both idealised in an angelic aura whilst restrained from the relative power and command associated with instruments; the instrument was of itself both a creation of man as well as being a supreme (dynamic) voice. However, the combination of nineteenth-century reforms coupled with contemporaneous orthodoxy caused a shift in this dynamic by the social conditioning of women in tandem with the eccesiological reforms. As such, the latter day silencing of women in the sacred musical setting removed critical agencies that were both musical and spiritual, a circumstance earlier paralleled in the conventual setting.



The organ had, in the post-Tridentine convent reforms, become a source of discussion with the want to see the instruments removed (and with them the organists) from the outer church to a more discreet location. However, in a somewhat mischievous move some creative Bolognese musical nuns chose to enlarge the instrument they were obliged to remove thus making its ‘voice’ still louder. It was a not so quiet rebellion against the strictures of their

archbishop. At the same time is marked a point at which edict and reality and conformity are seen to separate for women in the sacred setting:

...in the month of June, [1585] Suor Giulia Montecalvi our organist, happily spending some fifty scudi, had the convent organ enlarged, and provided it with a larger windchest and registers, which had not appeared in the one already removed from it place. And then the convent had it reinstalled in the inner church...where, resounding excellently well it still creates delightful harmony with those outside.³⁷

As with Hardy's chapel-organist, whose playing is never criticised and yet despite her wayward activities is not initially removed from her position, it is the quality of musical work that kept the naysayers at bay for the musical nuns. Their creative interpretations of the rules handed down – when followed, and that was far from a universal consequence - were coupled with a want to expand the musical remit given to them. Curiously, by being hidden, the invisible musician became all the more adventurous – if unseen one could only judge by hearing. (Likewise the chapel-organist, though berated by society, becomes all the more adventuresome in her playing as time moves on.) Thus, as Monson suggests, the dedication of the publisher Giacomo Vincenti to the nuns of Santa Christina of Giovanni Battista Cesena's *Compieta con Letanie* of 1606 may have been more than mere hyperbole:

Amongst the marvellous things which in months past I saw and observed in the magnificent and regal city of Bologna, none gave me greater delight, nor provoked

³⁷ Referred to in Monson, *The Crannied Wall*, 194.

greater astonishment than the divine musical concerts of various nuns, [which I] witnessed and heard there.³⁸

Monson's essay *Disembodied Voices* highlights the ability of the nuns to both obfuscate and circumvent the authorities above them, whilst in their mind offering praises to the Creator. But he also draws attention to the inability of the church authorities to make any lasting conformity truly regulated. Central to this is an incapacitation to manage a prevailing climate of advancement. Indeed the fact that the nuns of Sant'Orsola were to draw up their own list of stipulations, noting their intended infractions for the feast of a woman saint strongly suggests that they felt a greater power was on their side. This circumstance likewise bears relation to the chapel-organist who becomes increasingly persuasive and manages to delay the ultimate end of the employment:

On the feast of Saint Catherine, where the curate sings the mass....and the nuns respond in plainchant, which is against the Decrees of both the Congregation of the Council as well as the Congregation of Bishops and Regulars, in any event, to please the nuns, who wish it, with the consent of the Ordinary he shall permit it, as much with the approval of the Ordinary as appropriate...And although the curate should not sing the solemnities with the nuns, in any event since abuses were introduced long ago without objections from the confessor pro tempore to the curate's singing with the nuns, who would go up to the organ to sing the Magnificat in plainchant, in order to please the nuns, who wish it, the confessor shall permit it.³⁹

³⁸ Ibid, 199.

³⁹ Ibid, 203.

As the restrictions were largely administered from afar and meanwhile daily liturgical practice was overseen at a local level, it is easy to witness how persuasive the nuns could have been with these petitions. By parallel, in terms of relating the feminine deference, Hardy's chapel-organist freely acknowledges her larger faults, but also makes reference to the fact the chapel service is not altogether free of possible indiscretion:

(I wonder Dissenters sing Ken: it shows them more liberal in spirit
at this little chapel down here than at certain new others I know.)

Hardy incorporates an extra dimension of femininity by sexualising his protagonist (as discussed later), and consequently brings to his narrative an inherent response of conservatism from the reader's contemporary sensibilities. Through the organ the nuns had a powerful voice; indeed, if it were merely an accompanimental device, it is hard to imagine how such impassioned commentary would have been entertained. However, it was not only an instrument the nuns could feel expressed their thoughtful inner voice – that much of their written music is set in the intellectual vein of counterpoint attests to this – but it was also an 'instrument' which was then the summit of 'man's' engineering prowess. That they should make the organ their own invention through enlargements, modifications and tonal adjustments demonstrates as much a curiosity for the technical side as it does a desire to magnify their own role. These accomplishments however were not undertaken without some measure of adventure as the account (1607) of the nuns of Santi Naborre e Felici by Archbishop Paleotti to the Sacred Congregation asserts:

it happened that in the Monastery of the Abbazia di San Felice, a nunnery under my control, two nuns who practice the calling of music, in order to disturb the regular organist in her office and to cause her strife and contention, secretly, and without my knowledge, had a very large organ built, and had it brought secretly to the monastery and installed on one side of the choir; and began to play it, with dishonour and annoyance for the entire monastery.⁴⁰

Putting aside the mischievous nature of the nuns that Monson refers to, there was an overarching concern that they only be educated so far as was useful for the execution of the liturgy, i.e. to be a support to the clergy. We can observe a strong parallel in the Victorian notion of the wife being educated only insofar as it was beneficial for the husband and the family. Anything beyond those limits was deemed unnecessary, and, in the Victorian case, the stress considered potentially harming to body or mind. This rationale when coupled with a dogmatic approach from clerical authorities placed the woman musicians in an almost untenable (employment) situation and explains quite blatantly the distress Hardy's chapel-organist must have endured. 'Free' from marriage and potentially unencumbered by societal expectations she nonetheless trades one bastille for another. However, even if she had remained excluded from the 'secular' aspects of the larger world, the following account provides little consolation to her temporal equivalent in a Victorian sisterhood.

Contemporary 'Voices'

When the poet laureate Robert Southey resurrected the idea of sisterhoods in the early nineteenth century, he imagined they would function primarily as a place of refuge for

⁴⁰ Ibid, 198.

unmarried women and as sources of charitable relief and places for trained nurses to ameliorate the suffering of the poor. It was as a tribute to Southey that the first sisterhood, the committee-established Park Village community, was founded in 1845.⁴¹ Positive though their role undeniably was it nonetheless caused consternation to the Victorians who saw the developing sisterhoods as an implicit criticism of the state of marriage and the family condition.⁴² The lifestyle was both similar (in routine) and different from the domestic setting, but as with the historical model the rules were broadly defined by the (male) clericus. With most sisterhoods modelled on Roman Catholic communities and driven by an Anglo-Catholic ethic, the sisters were busy throughout the day (as were the Victorian wives) but performing their additional (charity) work not for the benefit of their own families, but rather the good of larger world. With the establishment of the sisterhoods came a sense of independence and as women's groups began to form in society to aid the advancement of issues, the sisters themselves became more active and more questioning in their own role. By definition they were free from the immediate 'ownership' of men, even if they gave their larger life to one determined by another in authority. For some it was seen as a potentially explosive paradox to have the High Church movement so closely allied with more radical points of view⁴³. The life of service to the poorer communities continued unabated though and by 1900 it was estimated there were between 3,000 and 4,000 sisters in Britain.⁴⁴

In the twenty-first century it is hard to imagine that a woman who was more engaged in the church would have met with a severer critical eye than one who was not, but the setting, whether post-Tridentine, Victorian or twenty-first century nonetheless energises strong emotions that are as capable of compassion as they are of envy. Though it is unlikely Hardy

⁴¹ Susan Mumm, *Stolen Daughters, Virgin Mothers* (London/New York: Leicester University Press, 1999), 3.

⁴² *Ibid*, 4.

⁴³ *Ibid*, 6.

⁴⁴ *Ibid*, 3.

saw his wavering chapel-organist as robbing society of a moral presence - although this chapter argues that she indirectly did - it is interesting to note that had she led a 'religious life' she could have been equally criticised for her role in the larger world. Penelope Holland warned of the negative impact of convents 'sifting society':

convents....have a tendency to absorb.....those who have any earnestness or solidity of character, leaving social life wholly to those who wish for nothing beyond amusement. It is worthy of observation, that the last ten years, during which it is said that such a marked change for the worse has been seen in English society, have coincided with the period at which the effects of the multiplying of Roman Catholic and Church of England convents began to be felt.⁴⁵

As with the earlier Roman Catholic convents the liturgical life was built around daily services, and with that the responsibility for one of the sisters to play the organ. However, as with their earlier 'sisters', episodes of poor conduct were reported and discussed. The reports (within the Chapter of Faults) though are more detailed than those earlier in terms of (arguably) unrelated aspects of concern such as general behaviour. In this sense the sacred environment for the Victorian woman as an organist, had become one that was even more judgemental for though the convent at least had rules, society and the (free) chapel had increasing unwritten mores. In the convent life it is easy to reconcile how, new to the tradition, Anglican sisters were keen to emulate the noblest reaches of an older tradition. But in society, as fairly typified by Hardy's chapel-organist, we can see the same measure of intrigue if not to say gossip when it comes to a critical response. As much as the testimony

⁴⁵ Referred to in Monson *The Crannied Wall*, 202. "A few more words on convents and on English girls," *Macmillans Magazine*, 19 (1869): 534-9.

against Hardy's chapel organist comes to the chapel authorities through second-hand sources, so too does the following detailed account of a Victorian sister's tantrum followed by activities in the subsequent days. Ultimately it comes to a similar conclusion on the part of the authorities; as she breaks the rules she must be removed.

Sep 14th 1888.

Chapter of Faults.

After which The Rev the Chaplain said.

I am very sorry to have to speak to you as I am now doing but the matter does not allow of delay. It refers to S. Louisa [secular name unknown]. It is not a trouble of yesterday, as many of you are aware, it has been a long trouble in various places, this self-will of hers. I dare say many of you have known it is was at Eastbourne, when she left the organ silent, & gave way to her temper; now matters have culminated, & while at Liverpool her conduct has been such, that S. Emily had often in Chapel to take up both sides in Choir, because S. Louisa was simply dogged and sullen.

When she first went there S. Emily told her to be cantrix and she went on much in the same way she did at Wolverhampton, until one day at the Nunc Dimittis she was simply making such a noise with the instrument that it was an act of irreverence to go on, & she was told to stop altogether. After that S. Louisa asked S. Emily's leave to go home to her family who live in Liverpool, & said she would write to the Mother. S. E. allowed her to go. An hour after her return to her family S. Louisa wrote to her Mother, saying that she had thought the matter over very seriously, & could not wear the habit any longer. She said S. Emily had no right to give her leave to go to her sister's house – she having herself asked her for leave. The Mother telegraphed to her to come home at once, & getting no answer telegraphed a second time 'By what train shall we expect you'. Then came a letter from S. Louisa saying she was not coming at all, & would send her things home – she must persist in leaving the Community. Now it seems after this that we scarcely ought to allow her to go of her own self-will. No doubt it is better – not for her – but for the Community that she should go, because those who are in a state of perpetual ferment, can be no real help to the Community, but it seems both to the Mother & me that she ought not to go off just because she chooses, but that the Society ought to dismiss her.

The matter must be under consideration, & you can vote upon it at your next Chapter.

I ask you to vote as to whether we accept her resignation, or whether we consider that the Society has expelled her. We must feel however sorry we may be to lose this or that Sister, that such a state of insubordination ought not to be tolerated for ever. It is not the case of a Sister feeling herself unworthy to be a Sister, & unable to live up to a Sister's life, & therefore requiring the encouragement of the Society. Those who feel unable to live up to their ideal of a Sister's life, are just those one wants to encourage & cheer, but one feels that a Sister who goes on as S. Louisa has done, in dogged self-will ought to be dealt with by the exercise of some discipline. The exercise of discipline is always a very sad thing, but at the

same time while sad to individual hearts, it is a matter of strength in the Community to have the society purged of those who are simply setting it at defiance. One of the great leaders of the Religious Life said that what gave him the greatest pleasure, next to admitting a Novice for Profession, was expelling one who had proved himself utterly unworthy, not that his going was a pleasure, but that it was such a relief to the Community that unworthy members should be sent off. We may hope that such an act of discipline may be a blessing to S. Louisa, & that she may be made to see that putting off the habit, is not putting aside a plaything she is tired of, but that the habit is the symbol of Religion & of an abiding covenant with GOD. I hope you will all feel this more & more & realize that the Habit is the symbol of tremendous responsibilities, & of a Covenant of wondrous grace.

Those that seek GOD's grave and His Covenants shall surely find it. We must not be surprised at temptations. Any of us may be liable to some terrible temptation at any time, & it is then that the grace of the Covenant is so Great, one member of the Community – we feel ourselves sustained by the whole Community. Oh the marvellous power of our mutual devotions, our mutual intercessions, of our Rule – of our life – of our work given to GOD under the three vows. We ought to realize this when we feel our weakness, we ought to feel the strength of the Community holding us up.⁴⁶

Central to this complaint is a value placed on penance and of the reputation of the community. Hardy's character comments "These are strange rumours....we must guard the good name of the chapel. If, sooth, she's of evil report, what else can we do but dismiss her?" In both cases the women are deemed as dispensable both to the liturgy (where we assume they will be replaced) but also to the larger society. We know that the chapel-organist ultimately takes her own life, but equally we can observe that the (real life) sister is unhappy, and perhaps even depressed. That it is acknowledged to 'be better [though] – not for her' is a startling admission that protocol and reputation was to overshadow Christian decency. Beyond that it is not enough to let her rest with her decision but rather that she should be made aware that she has been censured. The hierarchical nature of the sisterhood (akin to the deacon(s) of Hardy's chapel) is all the more transparent by the vagueness of permissible response delivered a week later (Sept. 21, 1888):

.....

⁴⁶ September 14, 1888, Chapter of Faults, *All Saints Sisters of the Poor – An Anglican Sisterhood in the 19th Century*. Ed. Susan Mumm. (Woodbridge/Rochester, NY: The Boydell Press/Church of England Record Society, 2001), 143.

All the Sisters who have sent in votes (except 3 who did not understand the matter) about 45 have said that they do censure her conduct, & consider it worth of dismissal. Among all the votes there is scarcely one dissentient one. We all feel alike that as far as we are concerned we are better without one who would do such a thing as she has done.⁴⁷

The question of purity of voice also extended to the ecclesiological reforms in mid-nineteenth-century England where the move of musicians from West to East came in tandem with the encouragement of boy (trebles) on the upper line of a four-part texture.⁴⁸ This was met with expected controversy and topics as seemingly trivial as what would be the correct attire for the ladies, and even the difficulties of formulating a seating plan came to the fore.⁴⁹ The importance of dress, decorum and deportment for women in a 'new' setting extended to the introduction of women into Oxbridge colleges.⁵⁰

From the domestic to the liturgical

Music was seen as the great harmoniser within the Victorian domestic setting, and the mother was expected to lead the family in this respect. As such, at least a moderate technique would need to be retained in order to sooth away the troubles of the father or of family disputes. If this maternal responsibility could then be inherited by the daughter, then domestic life would be all the more blissful:

never does a daughter appear to more advantage, than when she cheerfully lays aside a fashionable air, and strums over, for more than the hundredth time, some old ditty which her father loves...The old man listens until tears are glistening in his eyes, for

⁴⁷ Ibid (September 21, 1888): Mumm, *All Saints Sisters of the Poor*, 144.

⁴⁸ One should also bear in mind Stainer's removal of the mixed evening choir at St. Paul's when he arrived in 1872

⁴⁹ Judith Barger, *Elizabeth Stirling and the Musical Life of Female Organists in Nineteenth-Century England*. (Aldershot/Burlington: Ashgate, 2007), 33.

⁵⁰ Ibid, 13.

he sees again the home of his childhood....The brother too – the prodigal....In other lands, that fire-side music haunts his memory....He says, ‘I will arise and go to my father’s home’ [a pious interjection].....so wide has been my separation, that a feeling of estrangement still remains...The sister feels this. She knows the power of music...she plays a low soft air. Her brother knows it well. It is the evening hymn [rather than a secular piece] they used to sing together...His manly voice is raised [asserting his future role]. Once more it mingles with the strain. Once more the parents and the children, the sister and the brother, are united as in days gone by.⁵¹

Such music had acted - through the initial mediation of the daughter - as both the pacifier and the absolver of the family discord. The ‘angel of the house’ (as defined by the mid-nineteenth-century poem of Coventry Patmore) would lead family, friends, and visitors in music that was of modest technical demand but nonetheless morally sound. Religious songs as well as pieces that reinforced the domestic setting and an upright society were the typical fare. As such, music had found its spiritual dimension in the home but only through the woman. It is the converse of larger society; in the home she is the musical voice, but in public performance she is silenced among men.

The transference of this spiritualism into a liturgical setting came more through issues of pragmatism and expectation than through any necessarily pious or devout intentions on the part of the mother/daughter. Providing they had a modicum of keyboard skills, it was not beyond the local cleric to seize upon their services. This situation continues to this day, especially in smaller parishes, as suggested by Janette Cooper, long the twentieth-century champion of the ‘reluctant organist’.

⁵¹ Mrs [Sarah Stickney] Ellis, *The Daughters of England: their Positions in Society, Character and Responsibilities*, (London: Fisher, 1842), 104-5. Sousa Correa, *George Eliot*, 71.

The regular organist disappears, the vicar looks round the congregation and sees Mrs A who he has heard play the piano at a children's party. Told that the organ is very similar to the piano and that anyone can play a few hymns, she feels it would be ungracious to refuse to help next Sunday. She and the choir make valiant efforts and the following Sunday she has been prevailed on to repeat the performance. A year later she is still there.⁵²

Of course there are vast differences between the two instruments, not least the need for a player to acquire an adequate pedal technique. However, if they were replacing an 'organist' of similar ability it is easily conceivable that they had only witnessed a modest command of the instrument in the past and thus felt relatively confident in approaching the responsibility. In more prestigious posts women competed openly with men, although often meeting with unfair bias, as later noted. Richard Leppert observes that the idea of men considering music in the lives of women as an "appropriate and important"⁵³ factor in the overarching patriarchal hierarchy of society with regard to the previous century, was nonetheless still in evidence, albeit with occasional modifications in interpretation.

The organ too was an immovable instrument and by Trinitarian and episcopal construction was also an instrument of authority. Once someone secured a post they were in a sense quite immovable too. Dispensing with an organist - a musician that generally presided over the most expensive piece of church property after the building itself – typically meant having to find another person of similar ability. This is the great departure from the engagement of the west gallery musicians. Whilst in *Under the Greenwood Tree* Hardy could inject a

⁵² Janette Cooper, *The Reluctant Organist*. RSCM Handbook no. 1 (Croydon: Royal School of Church Music, 1976) 3. Barger, *Elizabeth Stirling*, 178.

⁵³ Richard Leppert, *Music and Image: Domesticity, Ideology and Socio-Cultural Formation in Eighteenth-Century England* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1988), 31.

favouritism for strings in preference to, say, clarinets⁵⁴ the organ offered discussion of a completely different order. Removing the instrument, and thus the player, not least in an era when it had potentially not long been purchased brought into play a dynamic that pre-dates greater employment protection. Thus, for the women that secured a post, this was a major step forward in the advancement of women in music by comparison to other fields. This is not to allay the considerable challenges women faced but the movement does ally with the broadening appeal of a wider range of instruments for women to play as Weliver notes:

Making instruments newly acceptable for women to play demonstrates how highly influential women performers [such as the violinist Norman-Neruda and of course Clara Schumann] were and how pervasive the women's movement was in middle - and upper-class Victorian life.⁵⁵

When they did enter the ecclesiastical surround their mere presence helped to chart a course forward for women in the church. However, the societal expectations for raising a family remained in place and, as Barger notes, the long tenure held by many women in several posts illustrates that the nineteenth century afforded greater opportunities than the previous century.⁵⁶ For those more serious about a compositional career, and with the means to support their study, Continental travel afforded an opportunity far beyond the strictures of Victorian life; Ethel Smyth's earlier study with Walter Parratt, followed by travel to Leipzig illustrates a marked independence from the societal norm. However, the seeds of feminism in Britain had begun in the 1830s⁵⁷ as middle-class women began to band together and work towards better educational standards, legal and employment rights, and ultimately the right to vote, with Smyth being one of the most vocal suffragettes.

⁵⁴ Thomas Hardy, *Under the Greenwood Tree*. (London: Chatto & Windus, 1906), 39.

⁵⁵ Phyllis Weliver, *Women Musicians in Victorian Fiction* (Aldershot/Burlington: Ashgate, 2000), 48.

⁵⁶ Barger, *Elizabeth Stirling*, 181.

⁵⁷ *Ibid*, 10.

If women were seen as exceptional performers - and in this regard they could see Clara Schumann and in England to a lesser extent Fanny Mendelssohn as heroines - then they could pursue concert careers. However, the moral application to this came in the expectation that a percentage of their earnings would go to a charitable organisation. For Victorian men, money was a matter of their material world whereas the purer, moral world was found in the feminine soul. In this sense, music as a profession was still not taken seriously for women as even the most successful performers saw their income capped, not least because society had been structured on only one half of the household working. If women ignored this protocol they were seen as flaunting their wares in public. This happened with the paradox of encouraging women and educating them, whilst at the same time suggesting too much of it was a bad thing. In *Maternal Counsels* Mrs Pullan writes 'for who would wish a wife or daughter, moving in private society, to have attained such excellence in music as involves a life's devotion to it' adding that women should not 'attempt in a drawing room to perform some impossibility of Liszt'.⁵⁸ As Correa Sousa notes, such commentaries were obviously wilfully ignored in practice.⁵⁹ In a concert setting though the stigma of being associated with immoral aspects of 'performing' before a public was a potentially fraught situation. In the Victorian way of looking at things the public arena – which is to say almost anywhere outside the home - was the place of actresses and prostitutes, women who could be hired for a price. This presupposition of character was not in fact one of home-grown development but rather based on the behaviours of foreign actresses in England at the time. When women had first

⁵⁸ Mrs [Matilda Marian] Pullan, *Maternal Counsels*, (London: Darton, 1855), 81. Sousa Correa, *George Eliot*, 77.

⁵⁹ Sousa Correa, *George Eliot*, 77.

taken to the stage in the seventeenth century their role was considered tantamount to the potential prostitute;⁶⁰ the performing woman is a sexualised presence within society.

With these social strictures in place, how are we to perceive Hardy's chapel-organist? Does her music-making place her as a 'minister of congregational concord' (to paraphrase the domestic role)? Or is she to be perceived as using the much feared emotive influence of music to the detriment of society? Valid though these points are, Hardy demands we consider the larger implications, for the chapel-organist does not see herself as a mere pacifier of the faithful but rather as an independent musical communicant.

Considering work as an organist

In England, by comparison with the Continent, the 'out of sight-out of mind' placement of the west gallery musicians had allowed a generation to obviate prescriptions concerning women and engage them to participate in the liturgy. Set apart (at the other end of the building) from all that was holiest (the sacrament and the consecration) their role did not bring sustained consternation amongst clergy or the layperson. When they could secure a position as an organist their role was either lightly praised or dismissively maligned:

On visiting Cologne Charles Burney observed:

...in the church of St. Cecilia, I heard a nun play the organ, to the coarse singing of her sisters; her interludes would have been thought too light for the Church of England; I soon discovered that they were not extemporary; however, they were pleasing and well executed.⁶¹

⁶⁰ Barger, *Elizabeth Stirling*, 8.

⁶¹ Charles Burney, *The Present State of Music in Germany, The Netherlands, and United Provinces*, 2nd ed. (London, 1775; reprint, New York: Broude, 1969), 1:71.

His views of the Italian organists, however, were not nearly so generous:

...some of the girls of the Venetian Conservatoires, as well as the nuns in different parts of Italy, play with rapidity and neatness in their several churches; but there is almost always a want of force, of learning, and courage in female performances, occasioned, perhaps, by that feminine softness, with which, in other situations, we are so enchanted.⁶²

The perception of the organ as a more masculine instrument presented a difficulty for Victorian women because, as Phyllis Weliver notes, ‘the organ was the only instrument which became less acceptable for women to play during the nineteenth century’.⁶³ This was a continuation of eighteenth-century sensibilities whereby parents discouraged organ study for their daughters. By example, a gentlewoman writing under the pseudonym Portia writes to her daughter Sophy who was away at a boarding school:

As most young ladies are taught to play on the harpsichord and guitar, I expect you will learn to perform on both these instruments, especially the first. But still I would have you apply your chief attention to vocal music, because, it is perfection, it is of a far more excellent nature than that which is merely instrumental; the merit of the latter being always determined by its approach to the former. A fine singer is much more esteemed than a skilful organist.⁶⁴

Of course we must see this commentary in the context of Victorian society. The concern of the mother is not that her daughter may find herself immersed in the music profession when she reaches adulthood, or even that she should acquire skills on an ostensibly superior instrument. Rather it is to see her daughter develop skills that could enamour her to a

⁶² Ibid, 300.

⁶³ Weliver, *Women Musicians*, 113. Barger, *Elizabeth Stirling*, 33.

⁶⁴ Portia, *The Polite Lady or a course of Female Education in a Series of Letters, From a Mother to her Daughter*, 2nd ed. (London: Newbery and Carnon, 1796), Barger, *Elizabeth Stirling*, 21.

prospective suitor, while they could watch her ‘graceful movements’ and ‘read the signs of her class suitability’,⁶⁵ as was expected of many a young pianist. As the primary locus for courtship was to be the house, then a domestic instrument would obviously be more appealing. Further, study of the harpsichord, guitar, or voice opened up the possibility of collaborative performance, if not with a suitor, then perhaps with a less experienced relative who would allow the courted to appear all the more attractive. But in turn the young woman then loses the relative privilege she had commanded in her initial private studies; what was once a potential joy is now a relative curse.

However, despite often blunt discouragement in the press a number of women did venture forth into the organ world, and Donovan Dawe notes over forty positions held by women in the City of London alone, many in prominent posts, among them Emily Dowding at The Temple Church.⁶⁶ Such a prestigious appointment though was far from common with the sidelining of applications becoming notorious. This solicited a running commentary in the press. A cleric asked in 1857:

Why should a really competent female be set aside (as is often the case, to my knowledge) for the sake of a less competent male, simply because she is female?⁶⁷

By contemporary conditions such decisions were cases of blatant sexism, even if the nation’s finances were arranged on the assumption that only the man worked in a couple. However, a further consideration should also be evaluated. Samuel Wesley’s commentary that the appointment of John Immyns for London’s Foundling Hospital Chapel in 1798 was a

⁶⁵ Weliver, *Women Musicians*, 33.

⁶⁶ Donovan Dawe, *Organists of the City of London 1666-1850* (Padstow: by the author, 1983), 3-5, 73 passim.

⁶⁷ A Clergyman, ‘No Lady Need Apply’, *Musical World* 35 (1857), 553.

‘Bamboozle’⁶⁸ suggests that in fact fairness, let alone transparency, was frequently lacking in appointments. Friends and issues of professional nepotism were often at play. As such, we might consider that, grossly unfair though it was, the men were clearing the field as far as they could; knowing of general injustice, they perpetrated themselves by instantly removing half of the population from the equation.

Physical issues

Hardy’s narrative ‘I will lift my feet from the pedals’⁶⁹ brings the subject of feet, ankles, deportment, and general health to bear. In a commentary in the *Musical Standard* related to the nonsensical inequality between the genders suggested in other letters, correspondent ‘Manuals’ notes ‘As to pedalling, a lady *cannot* look at her feet – a gentlemen *ought not* look at his. This related to the oft-purported idea that the physical strength required of organists was outside the ability of the ladies. Correspondent ‘Pedals’ notes:

I deny that I object to the ladies on account of their sex... . My objections arise solely from their natural inabilities – inabilities over which they have no control, since they are inherent in their nature; and if it has not pleased the great Maker of All to endow them similarly to men, it is not their fault. But still they must not endeavour to fill appointments to which the endowments of men alone are equal.⁷⁰

Interestingly although arguments surround the physical stress placed on the woman, and the detriment that would have on her role as a mother, there is no acknowledgement of the intellectual strain that might endure from playing the most complex of instruments. Rather, an article by Thomas Laycock, MD in 1840 focussed solely on the strain music could provide to the woman’s psychological and reproductive well-being. Bearing in mind that the organ

⁶⁸ James T. Lightwood, *Samuel Wesley, Musician: The Story of His Life* (London: Epworth, 1935), 92.

⁶⁹ Perhaps a satirical reference to Psalm 121

⁷⁰ Pedals, ‘Pedal’s Reply’, *Musical Standard*, o.s., 1 (1863) 287.

was considered to demand greater physical strain than the piano one can only presuppose how detrimental this article could have been to the advancement of the women organists.

The slow but powerful influences of music, dancing, vivid colours, and odours, on the nervous system, but especially on the reproductive system....is quite overlooked; three or four hours of severe application are occupied in the acquisition of a brilliant mechanical performance of some difficulty and elaborate pieces of music on the piano-forte, which are forgotten as soon as possible after marriage when it would be least hurtful, or rather most useful.⁷¹

A much later concern, also related to the piano, is voiced in *The British Medical Journal* in 1899:

The maelstroms of crashing sounds which many performers think it necessary to produce as proof of their skill jar the delicate apparatus of the nervous system to a degree, that, in irritable persons, might have serious consequences if they were compelled to undergo the torture frequently.⁷²

The supposed technical demands put to one side, the woman organist found, perhaps accidentally, an interesting supporter in John Stainer, Organist of St. Paul's Cathedral and a professor at the National Training School for Music. Stainer's organ method broke new ground by suggesting that rather than looking at their feet to ensure correct execution of notes (and leaps between notes), organists should instead feel their way between the pedals. While this is undeniably a more laborious method of pedagogical advancement, it may have been a deft handling of the problems faced by the women organists with regard to the 'crinolines' that could impede their progress. If all students were encouraged in this way, especially by a

⁷¹ Thomas Laycock, *A Treatise on the Nervous Diseases of Women: Comprising an enquiry into the Nature, Causes and Treatment of Spinal and Hysterical Disorders*, (London: Longman, 1840), 140-1. Sousa Correa, *George Eliot*, 86-87.

⁷² Anon., 'The Piano as a Cause of Neuroses,' *The British Medical Journal* (22 April, 1899), 988. Weliver, *Women Musicians*, 5.

senior figure, then there is nothing to suggest women could be (at least initially) disadvantaged. His later words in *The Girl's Own Paper* further promote this encouragement:

There is something very fascinating in listening to the rich tones of a fine church organ, and probably there are but very few girls who have not, at some time or other, longed to know how to perform on this "king of instruments."⁷³

He continued with more direct encouragement:

The answer to the question, "How am I to play the organ?" might be answered in two words, namely, "Do it." This is, in fact, the only answer that can be given.⁷⁴

Stainer's comments are illuminating on a few levels. Firstly though he adopts Mozart's famous remark of the organ being 'the *king* of instruments', he uses the demonstrative 'this', rather than the definite article 'the'. As such, he does not discount other instruments, but rather presents the organ in a regal domain; an instrument fit for kings, rather than the king's instrument. As will be noted later this has particular relevance considering the masculinity attached to the organ as a musical force.

The 'Court of Appeal'

On May 7, 1883, Stephen S. Stratton presented a paper to the members of the Musical Association (later Royal Musical Association) titled 'Women in Relation to Musical Art'.⁷⁵

He began by stating that the subject material has not received sufficient attention (in musical circles) and, in a deferential tone, clarifies that though he does not come forward to 'advocate

⁷³ John Stainer, 'How to Play the Organ', *The Girl's Own Paper* 1 (1880), 328.

⁷⁴ Ibid

⁷⁵ Stephen S. Stratton, "Women in Relation to Musical Art", *Proceedings of the Musical Association*, Ninth Session, 1882-1883 (London: Stanley Lucas, Weber & Co, 1883).

the cause of woman in musical art'⁷⁶ (although so obviously he does) he hopes to 'clear away misconception and prejudice'.⁷⁷ Whilst his greater concern is whether womankind can produce a great composer, his examination of the history of women in the humanities provides a broad canvas on which to draw his conclusions. Fundamental to his paper is the following statement:

It is generally believed that woman is only fit for such and such work, and that other kinds belong exclusively to man; but this law has been laid down by man, and from such decision woman should have a court of appeal.⁷⁸

Stratton then proceeds to lay out his 'case', with of course no mean supply of evidence at his disposal. He begins by highlighting, from the fifteenth century onwards, the women of learning. He then moves to the women of poetry from the sixteenth century onwards, followed by the novelists, and, missing no opportunity to name the prominent figures of the age, includes Jane Austen, Charlotte Brontë, and George Eliot. He then departs to survey women who have given great heroism, beginning with Joan of Arc and including the perhaps lesser-known story of Catherine Douglas 'who attempted to stay the murderers of King James by thrusting her arm as a bolt through the staples of the door, and enduring the agony until the limb was snapped asunder'.⁷⁹ In referencing Countess Hahn-Hahn he quotes:

⁷⁶ Ibid, 115.

⁷⁷ Ibid

⁷⁸ Ibid, 116-117.

⁷⁹ Ibid, 120.

When a woman's heart is touched, when it is moved by love, then the electric spark is communicated and the fire of inspiration kindles; but even then she desires no more than to suffer or die for what she loves.⁸⁰

(This statement alone has significant bearing on the perception of Hardy's chapel-organist who, unwilling to pursue what she loves, takes her own life.)

He continues with observations of the devotion and self-sacrifice of women before moving onto painters and finally women of the stage. Although he notes little prejudice against the actresses, he is surely reflecting their employability rather than the social stigma attached to them in contemporary society, as discussed later.

In finally moving to music he notes that despite the patronising tone of Von Bülow's 'petticoat pianists', if the men can boast a Rubinstein or Liszt, the women can offer Sophie Menter, Clara Schumann, Marie Pleyel, Lucy Anderson and Arabella Goddard.⁸¹ He further points out that 'organists will have to look to their laurels, for besides those veterans the sisters Mounsey, we have a vigorous school of players coming into notice'.⁸² He then makes special mention of the Paris recital of Mdlle. Marie Deschamps at which she performed a programme exclusively of her own compositions. He later remarks how women are also contributing compositions to the literature of the 'king of instruments'.⁸³ He observes the interesting comparison with the large number of female singers, none of whom appear to have composed at all.

⁸⁰ Ibid

⁸¹ Ibid, 123.

⁸² Ibid

⁸³ Ibid, 126.

Despite the advancements for women and commenting that when afforded the same education as the men, the women perform just as well (and sometimes better), he observes the fact that earlier continental commentary still, unfortunately, has some relevance. He cites a notice of the clarinettist Karoline Schleicher's (Madame Krähmer) concerto performance in Munich (1823):

Our modern belles are determined not to be excluded from exercising any department of art; all we now want is a female virtuoso on the bassoon and trombone, we believe the list will then be complete.⁸⁴

As Stratton observes, the tone was 'doubtless [meant] to be sarcastic'. He continues by drawing attention to critics that though voluminous in their laudatory remarks might still add that the life of a professional musician is 'not suited to a female'. It is here of course that evidence departs from the oblique musical and intellectual arguments (questionable though they are) into direct exclusion and indeed isolation of the woman in music. He concludes his paper by quoting Sheridan, in a reference that would surely have rankled the more regressive members of the establishment, especially so close to his final remarks. His comments though touch on the greater issue that even if women were to be bettered by music, the great benefit would still be the improvement of man's condition:

Women govern us; therefore, let us render them perfect; the more they are enlightened, so much the more shall we be.⁸⁵

⁸⁴ Ibid, 124.

⁸⁵ Ibid, 132.

Stratton presents a strong ‘case’, replete with detailed analysis of the current and immediate past circumstances, as well as a degree of historical commentary. For the points he omits – neither Hildegard nor Cleopatra are mentioned, to name two symbolic figures – he highlights numerous people that, in our own century, have been largely forgotten, certainly by the greater populus. And, if the forum were one of debate akin to the mock literary trial of Edwin Drood (organised by the Dickens Fellowship in 1914 with G. K. Chesterton as the judge and G. B. Shaw as foreman of the jury), it would be difficult to imagine that the ‘appeal’ did not result in a measure of repentance for past wrongs and a resolve to move forward with greater equanimity in the future.

However, in an astonishing departure from the empowering tone engendered in Stratton’s commentary, the Chairman, G. A. Osborne, immediately seized upon Stratton’s brief observation of the role of women to manage both the expected domestic role with that of the professional musician. Although he offers brief praise for the recent compositions of ‘Mrs. Bartholomew, Miss Prescott and Mrs. Meadows-White,’⁸⁶ Osborne nonetheless reconciles the role of the women firmly in the home and subservient to her husband:

Providence has given woman to man; for what reason? to be the consolation of his life.

I remember when I was quite a lad, my idea of woman was that she was to smile always on her husband when he returned home, and play with the babies. Now look and see what advance they have made, I hope they are always going to smile on their

⁸⁶ Ibid, 133.

husbands, and that they will also continue to play with their babies, but see what they have done, and what they are doing.⁸⁷

Admitting fault he adds:

I am reminded by my friend Mr. Higgs of an omission, that I have not invited the ladies to speak on the subject, but I hope those present will stand up and say something for their sisterhood.⁸⁸

His later comments towards the end of the session do little to suggest that, even after debate, the central points of Stratton's examination have been absorbed:

I must say I intend when I go home to examine an old fiddle that I have there, because the form of woman has been described as resembling a fiddle. I think it must be a fiddle that has been wearing hoops or something of that sort, because I cannot assimilate the beautiful form of woman, at least, with my own fiddle.⁸⁹

The voice of opposition to Stratton's encouragement of 'the ladies' is met with a more virulent response by Mr. Ferdinand Praeger (who had offered a paper on classical form the previous year):

There is no one who has a greater devotion to the female sex, or a greater appreciation of their wonderful power, than I have; but their gift is not in *invention*. Woman is gifted beyond man with a genius – I say genius advisedly – that we cannot understand – her marvellous power of instinct, and in this we are inferior to her. She

⁸⁷ Ibid.

⁸⁸ Ibid. This further relates to de Beauvoir's woman as a 'being' in relation to a man

⁸⁹ Stratton, "Women in Relation to Musical Art", 139.

knows; but why does she know? She cannot tell, but she *does know*. In every-day life you will find a clever man with a wife who is not by any means clever, yet she will tell him “If you do this, such and such will be the upshot!” “But why, my darling?” “I cannot tell you *why*; but I am sure of it.” Can any one deny that is not the common case? It is genius of which men are totally incapable. Men can give reason, they give details, they go step by step to prove that such and such a thing must occur, but woman has *direct genius*, she has instinct, and does a thing because she *feels*.

Given that Stratton had gone to pains to explain that the emotional side of woman was a strong indicator for why they should be encouraged in musical pursuits, it is all the more aberrant that Praeger should seize on this as a focal point in his disparagement of Stratton’s paper. This question of the emotional side to women has direct bearing on chapel-organist and her shunning from the church community. As she is not herself but rather possessed, then to her accusers she is fairly judged wanting.

The final lengthy response comes from Mr. Meadows-White whose ‘very clever’ (Osborne) wife is praised in the paper. He returns to a cogent point raised by Stratton that is, even today, too often overlooked. In naming five or six great composers, such as ‘Bach, Mozart, Beethoven, and two or three other great names to whom we all turn at once,’⁹⁰ there are of course thousands that we omit. Are they merely copyists of the great ‘masters’, or is our view so limited to a type of ‘hero-worship’ and promotion of an orthodox canon, that we cannot absorb the nuances of individual artists? And, if this is the case can it be any surprise that a just appreciation, let alone encouragement of women in music has been so lacking when society has, as Stratton observes, been determined by rules made of man? Further, given the

⁹⁰ Ibid, 137.

weighty discussions the Musical Association generally engaged in we have to assume that (divorced from our twenty-first century reading of these texts) the commentators of this topic considered their views measured and sincere. Far from anecdotal accounts, or letters to a journal, the members knew these proceedings were to be published and their views held over. As such, it is fair to conclude that although the women organists (and composers) were well praised during the course of Stratton's paper, the challenges facing them in terms of professional recognition were very considerable, whereas men were judged (largely) on the merits of their work; the quality of the 'ladies' work was still deemed by some as irrelevant given their 'unsuitability'.

Securing a post

Hardy's chapel-organist plays for her love of the music, even when she has to travel to the chapel at her own expense. This passion for music, more than paid employment was commonplace in Victorian England, and not merely so that organists had a location in which they could practise their art, teach, or perform concerts. Churches that did not have means to sufficiently compensate an organist would instead advertise for a Volunteer Organist. When in 1888, St. Peter's, Hoxton Square, advertised for a voluntary organist to play on its recently installed organ, they asked for someone 'who would conscientiously take up the work out of love to Christ and His Church'. Staggeringly, forty organists applied for the job.⁹¹ Although many of the applicants could have been amateurs, and not necessarily competent, the level of application suggests a climate whereby any professionalization of the organ world was some way off. Indeed, Thomas Attwood's earlier appointment at St. Paul's had provided a secondary income to his work in the theatre.

⁹¹ 'Voluntary Organist Wanted', *Musical Times* 29 (1888): 582; 'An advertisement recently appeared', *Musical Times* 30 (1889): 212. Barger, *Elizabeth Stirling*, 46.

Furthermore, *The Girl's Own Paper*⁹² actively encouraged amateur organ-playing amongst its readers with a running commentary and replies to letters. However, we must consider that the organ also offered a release from domesticity if young women were prepared for a more independent life with positions that could offer housing and a small amount of remuneration in return for services, especially in rural parishes. Hardy's narrative refers to the financial position of organists when the deacon notes it would cost twice to replace their organist, by which we can assume they infer with a man.

For the organist that was possessed of a competent technique, rather than a 'concert' technique, this could have been especially appealing and the advice in *The Girl's Own Paper* on transferring piano skills to the organ, how to select an organ primer, choosing repertoire, and finding a teacher attest to this.⁹³ The illustrations found within the paper offer a marked contrast to 'The Awakening Conscience' (1854) of William Holman Hunt (Fig. 1). Whereas Hunt's portrays the woman as restrained, pensive, submissive, and a mistress to her lover, *The Girl's Own Paper* illustrations of 1880 show a woman of learning, independence, and poise (Fig. 2). Indeed, in the illustration 'How to Play the Harmonium' the man is seen in the submissive role as page-turner, yet within what we presume to be a domestic setting.

⁹² A publication Parry wrote articles for which ultimately resulted in *Studies of Great Composers* (1887)

⁹³ Barger, *Elizabeth Stirling*, 49.

Fig. 1: William Holman Hunt, *The Awakening Conscience*

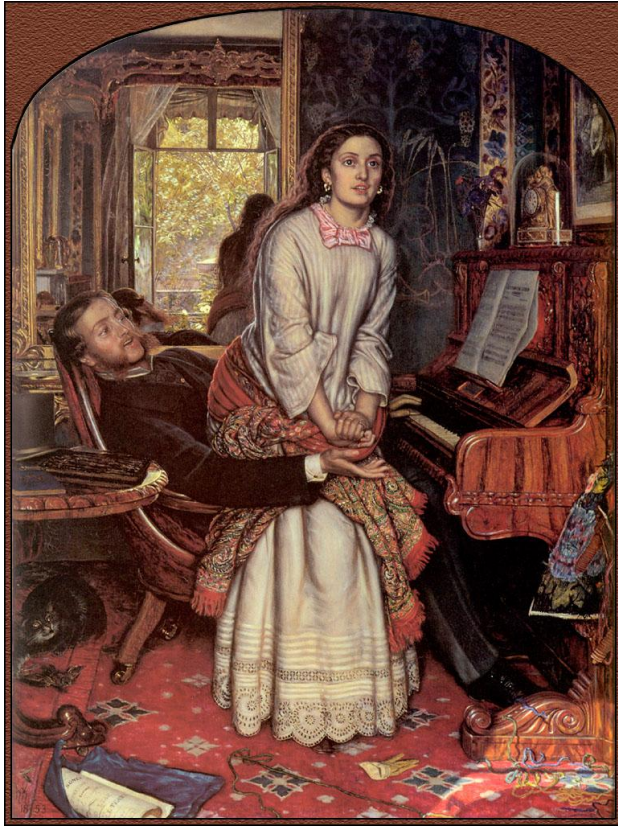


Fig. 2: Illustration 'How to Play the Harmonium', King Hall, *The Girl's Own Paper*, 1880



As such, the church offered a route of relative liberation for the woman that other musical fields did not, and this accords with the increasing number of Victorian publications that offered information on 'independent living', many of which included advice on managing personal finances and living alone, not least in London.

Barbara Owen has noted the anomaly that the Victorian period was 'an age when a woman could rule an empire but not grace the organ-bench of a cathedral'⁹⁴. Whereas Florence Nightingale encouraged women to 'qualify [themselves]...as a man does for his work'⁹⁵, the organ world provided a range of obstacles to employment that other areas of the music

⁹⁴ Barbara Owen, 'Elizabeth Stirling and the English Pedal Organ', *De Mixtuur*, 65 (1900), 267.

⁹⁵ Florence Nightingale, 'Letter from Miss Nightingale', *Englishwoman's Review* 3 (1869): 150-151. Barger, *Elizabeth Stirling*, 35.

profession did not seriously parallel. The argument that women were weaker, mentally or physically, entered into new territory in the Victorian era. With the rapid expansion of organ design due to the building of new churches, so too came increased opportunities for the employment of organists, providing the applicants met the expected requirements. That women were held back from applying, without any consistent explanation or reason, came in the form of advertisements for new positions that excluded their candidacy outright:

To ORGANISTS – The Vestry of the Parish of SAINT JOHN, SOUTHWARK, will meet on TUESDAY, the 11th day of APRIL, 1865, for the purposes of receiving applications from Gentlemen desirous of becoming Candidates for the office of ORGANIST. Ladies, and persons afflicted with blindness, will not be eligible. ⁹⁶

Musical Standard, 1865

Barger notes that whereas some positions did not have such a stipulation for application, the conditions of the auditions were frequently absent any fairness. The advertisements however did promote a spirited commentary within the journals with the same questions of women in music applied directly to organists, specifically, ‘is it a proper or decent profession for a lady to follow?’⁹⁷

That the route to a post as organist had an unreasonable amount of impasses cannot have been a little frustrating to the women organists. As such, that forty women were successful in their applications to London parishes suggests a spirit of no mean determination as well as an appeal in the work entailed. Above all it shows a consistent level of ‘professional’

⁹⁶ Referred to in Barger, *Elizabeth Stirling*, 39.

⁹⁷ Barger, *Elizabeth Stirling*, 40.

competency Hardy also alludes to. His organist is never specifically criticised for her playing, indeed she is praised. Although, she has erred and strayed in her personal life, the church authorities cannot fault her musicianship. Her references to hymns show knowledge of her craft, and in an age of musical embellishment by the organist on the unison lines of the congregational hymns, Hardy suggests she has an easy command.

A Cecilian allusion and the masculinity of the instrument

The fatalism Hardy injects to his poem has a strong reference to St. Cecilia, patroness of music. Although Cecilia was married, she is consistently portrayed in art as a commanding presence rather than a martyred soul, and surrounded by adoring faces. However, Cecilia's martyrdom after she insisted on receiving the Sacrament a last time finds a parallel in Hardy's protagonist taking a phial to end her life. Both seek a release from earthly tribulation and both see their life as representative of a larger cause. Indeed Hardy's protagonist corrects her accuser saying:

"I've a fixed and a far-reaching plan, and my look only showed it," said I.

The harmonies they 'never dreamt the old instrument capable of' and the fact that Hardy's protagonist also sings, brings forward consideration of the historical legacy of the woman in sacred music. With the closeness of women to nature, the music they produced had, since (at least) the medieval period, been considered as deriving a degree of emotion that men could not equate⁹⁸; hence the restrictions imposed with the post-Tridentine reforms. As such, Hardy's protagonist, with her singing *and* playing represents a musical entity that is potentially overwhelming to historical sensibilities. Indeed she is the literary equivalent to

⁹⁸ See chapter 4 on *Abt Vogler* and the relationship of improvisation to natural theology

Vermeer's woman with a lute – a gentle siren. The depiction of Cecilia, so often playing an organ, sets her image apart from the majority of saintly icons, whilst at the same time placing her in a position of strength over the most powerful instrument otherwise depicted in masculine terms (not least in literature).

However, this image is thrust into a far more powerful realm with the control over man's most elaborate creation, the organ, and especially as it had developed in the Victorian era. Far from being an instrument simply to accompany liturgical singing, the instrument was now a fully-fledged concert instrument. Further, the rapid growth of organ building firms had resulted in considerable competition akin to the industrial spirit that gripped the nation. But more crucially it became an instrument associated with power and control. The organ did not accompany a choir so much as lead a congregation. As such the organist wielded considerable influence over the governing tone of the liturgy and the worshipping congregation, and it is this circumstance that Hardy's protagonist illuminates.

Furthermore, the Victorian musical world did not allow for woman to play in orchestras, let alone conduct them (except rarely). As a result, a number of orchestras and chamber ensembles formed that were solely made up of women. With the organ now being designed with a symphonic tonal palette and considerable dynamic resources at the player's disposal, the organist was in every sense an orchestrator and conductor in one. However, more than merely directing and needing to will an orchestra's morale, the organist had complete command over their 'orchestral' force. As such, a woman in the position of an organist managed to obfuscate no end of societal dicta. She presided over the most powerful instrument, and in a liturgical sense over an entire congregation of men and women. Far from being relegated to the role of a domestic pacifier she was instead a musical doyen. Thus the

role of the woman as a sacred musician was as much hindered by the past as the present, as it was pioneering by the (inadvertent) technical advancement of man's handiwork. As much as society determined the advantages of playing the piano for an inner 'harmony' at home, the skills women acquired had also enabled women to transfer their abilities to the organ and escape the vestiges of their otherwise prescribed habitation.

The sirenic chapel-organist and the unethical dimension of her accusers

Although we never encounter the protagonist's lovers we are all too well aware from the narrative that the organist strays, and often. Though she never admits to being 'in love' she is nonetheless fulfilling a lover's need in some respect. The notion of the organist as a romantic figure is more obviously pronounced in *Under the Greenwood Tree* and whilst one could argue that the school teacher Fancy Day is of greater moral countenance, Victorian mores suggest that she is equally wayward in her desires. However what they both share is an inherent desirability; Fancy with:

'her little mouth; her neck and shoulders; all of her...' If she'd been a waxwork she couldn't have been comelier"

and the chapel-organist as:

'A handsome girl' albeit with 'too much sex in her build' and 'fine eyes, but eyelids too heavy'

Both, in their own ways, have the ability to use music in a sirenic (Ruskin) capacity. Fancy is introduced as the (new) organist, and is initially described in affectionate terms. The chapel-organist is equally identified by her appeal to men. This portrayal of the woman in a role

beyond that of the ecclesiastical duties they perform stems from the overarching musical expectations associated with women in the domestic setting.

Central to Hardy's narrative of the chapel-organist is the sexualising of his protagonist. This is achieved not only through the physical descriptions of the chapel-organist – which she herself questions the relevance of – but also the intimation of physical relations with the men she liaises with in her private life. Though it would be simple to suggest that Hardy frequently offers descriptions of his characters' physique, regardless of gender, it is the chapel-organist's questioning of this relevance that bears consideration. Further, inasmuch as it can be argued that the restrictive social mores of Victorian society created an increased sexualisation of the individual in private – one only needs to consider the disparity between the public and private life of the sovereign – it can also be argued that coupled to the expectations of the church, Hardy's protagonist is placed in a role of overbearing anxiety. She knows her actions are wrong, and yet she continues, but is she by definition the one at greater fault? Further does Hardy's narrative portray a scandalous mini-sensationalistic episode, or is he in fact drawing on believable attitudes and responses of the era? Indeed, if we consider Dickens's portrayal of John Jasper, the opium-addicted choirmaster of *The Mystery of Edwin Drood*, to be within the realm of possibility should we not, by default, consider Hardy's organist likewise, or vice versa?

Of the Victorians, Michel Foucault notes:

Sexuality was carefully confined; it moved into the home. The conjugal family took custody of it and absorbed it into the serious function of reproduction. On the subject of sex, silence became the rule. The legitimate and procreative couple laid down the law. The couple imposed itself as model, enforced the norm, safeguarded the truth,

and reserved the right to speak while retaining the principle of secrecy. A single locus of sexuality was acknowledged in social space as well as at the heart of every household, but it was a utilitarian and fertile one: the parents' bedroom. The rest had only to remain vague; proper demeanour, avoided contact with other bodies, and verbal decency sanitized one's speech. And sterile behaviour carried the taint of abnormality; if it insisted on making itself too visible, it would be designated accordingly and would have to pay the penalty.⁹⁹

Hardy's protagonist falls afoul of several of these points whilst Foucault's analysis further illumines both the condition of the chapel-organist and the Victorian sister and her conventual ancestor. Not only was her behaviour outside the domestic setting but it was certainly all 'too visible' as was her style of dress. The lack of secrecy endemic in her public liaisons is then the subject of private (if not altogether secret) discussions within the congregation. Whereas one's own life must have a blanket of privacy, the lives of others, especially those unprotected by the 'model' of marriage, were subject to gossip and innuendo.

More critically, Victorian mores set in place a repressive culture that could lead to complete exclusion. That Hardy's character, a woman, had achieved a position as an organist we can already see was not without obstacle. However, that she could then be excluded from a society acting beyond civil laws – but rather imaginary dogmatic and selectively applied mores – fully suggests reasons for her fatal demise. If you are no longer a part of society you are by definition closer to feeling further removed from the world altogether. Hardy's portrayal of her as a sexualised girl - enshrouded with the veil of illicitness- removes the reader not only to a point of separation from the sacred setting but to the underworld of the brothel. In this sense he illuminates the deep-rooted attitudes of women and stage, using their

⁹⁹ Michel Foucault, *The History of Sexuality*, Vol. 1, tr. Robert Hurley (London: Penguin Books, 1979), 3-4.

attributes (musical or otherwise) to lure men. Addressing these points with regard to larger society Foucault continues:

Nothing that was not ordered in terms of generation or transfigured by it could expect sanction or protection. Nor did it merit a hearing. It would be driven out, denied, and reduced to silence. Not only did it not exist, it had no right to exist and would be made to disappear upon its least manifestation – whether in acts or in words. Everyone knew, for example, that children had no sex, which was why they were forbidden to talk about it, why one closed one's eyes and stopped one's ears whenever they came to show evidence of the contrary, and why a general and studied silence was imposed. These are the characteristic features attributed to repression, which serve to distinguish it from the prohibitions maintained in penal law: repression operated as a sentence to disappear, but also as an injunction to silence, an affirmation of nonexistence, and, by implication, an admission that there was nothing to say about such things, nothing to see, and nothing to know. Such was the hypocrisy of our bourgeois societies with its logic.¹⁰⁰

He continues by asserting that outside the brothel a form of 'modern Puritanism imposed its triple edict of taboo, nonexistence and silence'. However, the inquisitors in Hardy's narrative break with the mores of the day. In discussing the topic of the girl's¹⁰¹ indiscretions they have themselves transgressed, and that they appear to discuss the topic in a sacred place affirms this all the more. As such, they defy the natural state, all the more grievous in a house of worship, whereas the girl defies society in the secular world. That she is a girl, not a woman, further ignites this situation in Foucault's terms. In essence, Hardy authors a double revolt. However, whereas the girl freely admits of her failings (sins) and accepts her discipline

¹⁰⁰ Ibid.

¹⁰¹ Her age is never disclosed, only that her appearance belies her real age

(penance), the inquisitors feel fully justified in their actions. Though they do not gloat or boast of their actions, they nonetheless feel they have purified the temple. As such, their act (sin) is greater than the girl's wrongdoing. Thus Hardy portrays the girl not so much as a wayward misfit, but rather as the victim of a congregation with a questionable moral compass.

This paradox also extends to the ethical questions surrounding the question of the girl's pay. The chapel authorities do not discuss any poverty of their own and yet freely acknowledge that she can barely cover her expenses to fulfil the duties expected of her. More critically though, when she errs they do not hesitate to reduce her pay, though not out of a financial penance, but rather noting that to replace her would require them to pay someone else a greater amount. This allusion of Hardy, whether to the moneychangers in the temple, or Judas's betrayal, gives the narrative a powerful moral invective; the girl is found wanting in morals by those who are themselves again found corrupt to a far greater degree.

The sense of penance in relation to a 'confession of the faith' had steadily increased through history after the Counter Reformation.¹⁰² As Foucault observes:

...the Counter Reformation busied itself with stepping up the rhythm of the yearly confession in catholic countries, and because it tried to impose meticulous rules of self-examination; but above all, because it attributed more and more importance in penance – and perhaps at the expense of some other since – to all the insinuations of the flesh: thoughts, desires, voluptuous imaginings, delectations, combined

¹⁰² Foucault, *The History of Sexuality*, 19.

movements of the body and the soul; henceforth all this had to enter, in detail, into the process of confession and guidance.¹⁰³

The prescriptions of the teaching found in the Christian pastoral (after the Council of Trent) can be found in a parallel with the chapel setting Hardy defines. Not only was it necessary to confess your sins but you should do so verbally.¹⁰⁴ However, in the chapel setting, absent the confessional, the rules are subjugated to the free interpretation of the self-appointed ‘ministers’, for, as we can see, it is not the deacon alone who serves as the voice of concern but rather the gossiping hoard of congregants mumbudgeting (Hardy) around him.

Central to the Inquisitors’ accusation is the assumption of a greater unspoken guilt on the part of the chapel-organist fuelled by the Victorian segregation of women into ‘angels or prostitutes’. It is a rapid descent for her. That she is seen with men is enough for the inquisitors to disassociate themselves with her at the earliest opportunity, or at least the earliest opportunity that coincides with financial benefit. It is this latter point where Hardy effectively questions the success of the Victorian model, driven as it was with free enterprise, at the expense of the lower class within a culture that could find it conceivable to rationalise the workhouse.

Therefore bearing in mind the girl’s free admittance (confession) of fault (sin) and her awareness of the short-comings of the inquisitors ethical compass, does she in fact resolve to correct the situation herself by taking her own life? Can we consider that absent an absolution the girl determines her own penance and thus her own salvation? Arguably this is a legitimate analysis and as a result Hardy has presented a weighty challenge to the Victorian mind. He has shown a church riddled with inequality, sexism, unethical behaviour, malicious gossip, and above all an absence of morality, even from the deacon. Whereas he portrays the woman

¹⁰³ Ibid

¹⁰⁴ Ibid, 21.

initially in the light of an easy sinner, he obliges us to recognise her as the bearer of a greater soul. Thus, she confesses, receives her fatal sacrament, and then sacrifices her life for the greater good. In the author's final gesture, the congregants are left with not only the 'blood on their hands' of her death, but also the loss of reputation to the chapel that is forever possessed of the girl's fateful tale. She had martyred herself for the greater good as well as for her own absolution and salvation.

Related to the interaction, such as it is, between the congregants and the chapel-organist is a prevailing indifference to her personally. It is the same indifference exhibited by the Musical Association when, as a passing thought, the chairman acknowledges that a discussion of women and music might have included a woman speaker, or even respondent. Of the chapel-organist, the congregants know very little and yet she is not far off in an organ loft but rather visible, for they comment on her physique. Yet, though busy with their gossip they do not enquire of her family, or other circumstances. This rather acerbic setting brings to mind Hardy's poem 'The Caged Goldfinch', also set around a church:

Within a churchyard, on a recent grave,
I saw a little cage
That jailed a goldfinch. All was silence save
It hops from stage to stage.
There was inquiry in its wistful eye,
And once it tried to sing;
Of him or her who placed it there, and why,
No one knew anything.¹⁰⁵

¹⁰⁵ Thomas Hardy, 'The Caged Goldfinch', *The Complete Poems*, ed. J. Gibson (London: Macmillan, 1976), 436.

John Hughes's commentary on this poem bears repetition here for it illuminates a background to Hardy's approach to a (presumed) death. The commentary is equally applicable to Hardy's portrayal of the chapel-organist's condition:

....the poem, through the types of mystery and ignorance which are implicit in the situation, starts to proliferate lines of reading and response which do not cancel each other out, but which spread out into a more generalised and inclusive sense of the disharmonies of existence. These resonating possibilities ramify and connect within the overall affective dimension of hopelessness which the poem sets up.

We imagine individuals lingering for a moment, out of an obscure necessity to exchange some remarks corresponding to their sense of all that is disquieting and somehow implicating about the scene. Contrary feelings of shame and indignation whirl around for the onlookers that their remarks, like their actions, are in themselves desultory, inadequate and inconsequential. There is so much to say, and nothing to be said. Those who stand by the scene, like those who read about it, are caught between staying and turning their back on something that cannot be helped.

Hardy opens a window into the world that many women must easily have been able to recognise, not just for the wrongdoing, but the careless judgement rendered. In a societal environment where women made few consequential decisions outside the domestic setting and had virtually no influence in an ecclesiastical one, the chapel-organist seizes control, and overwhelmingly so. Quite what impact his poem may have had on its readership is difficult to gauge, especially if the male constituency was as emotionally divorced from collective sympathy as he indirectly suggests. However, as a narrative put alongside the working conditions and social mores of the Victorian period it remains a valuable document.

Examining Oneself

In *The Chapel-Organist* the scene is set inside the church proper, and Hardy presents a weighty transference of guilt. Indeed whereas the church could provide consolation for a young woman (as it does for Fancy, also an organist) it instead becomes (or is, in this case) a place of dissension and unease. Through this though comes the response to the querist; why do the congregants respond so harshly, and what are we to understand by the shortfall in their own ethical well?

As an organist (as well as a singer) part of her duty is to act on behalf of the congregation, not as an intercessor, but as a ‘voice’; she is part of the larger offering of praise and therefore a part of the worshipping community. Therefore she must seem an equal, and if she is not a disjunct occurs that, by Victorian sensibilities, is irreparable. This comes, of course with the rather select use of ethics that the Victorians applied as a people of contradiction. In Jerome Hamilton Buckley’s book *The Victorian Temper* (1951) he speaks of the paradoxes endemic to Victorian society:

We are told....[the Victorians] were a poor, blind, complacent people; yet were torn by doubt, spiritually bewildered, lost in a troubled universe. They were crass materialists, wholly absorbed in the present, quite unconcerned with abstract verities and eternal values; but they were also excessively religious, lamentably idealistic, nostalgic for the past, and ready to forgo present delights for the vision of a world beyond.¹⁰⁶

A slight re-phrasing of Buckley to consider the Victorians as ‘lamentably nostalgic for the past’ would illumine a fundamental problem for the woman organist. The Victorian ecclesiastical setting could be as much one of grandeur as it was one of unknowing. The Tractarian and Ecclesiological reforms did not so much develop liturgical traditions as revisit

¹⁰⁶ Jerome Hamilton Buckley, *The Victorian Temper*, (New York: Random House, 1951), 2.

past models, and within a culture of enforced nostalgia and idealism comes a measure of interpretation and discretion, from both the clergy and the laity. Were this not the case there would have been no need for a constant supply of pamphlets and questions in the press to answer the well-meaning, but generally ill-informed, querists. This setting though creates binary opposition to an almost perpetual degree as all areas can be subject to a dual meaning and purpose. Further, how does the perception of the woman in larger society intersect with the role of women in the church? These arguments can be made fluidly both for and against as there is no golden solution to the self-created dilemma. By nature, when you depart from an organic process – as the Tractarians and Ecclesiologists ultimately did – you enter a world of dualism. The writings of the Reverend Hugh Reginald Haweis speak to the dualism that faced the chapel-organist; the balance between *intensity* and *restraint*. Music provides the first of these so easily, whether in the passion of the musical gesture, or the inherent emotion derived therein. The second, though, is the greater challenge as he felt all music embodied a disciplining of emotion. Thus, music embodied ethics,¹⁰⁷ and as women were also expected to embody morals, the sacred women musicians were placed in a role of almost saintly duty.

This expectation in itself creates an innate binary culture. Although Hardy's narrative does not mention the women of the congregation – and it seems odd to imagine there were none – the chapel-organist's role was by nature a threatening one to them. Firstly, a woman organist would not be seated with a husband, unless by some quirk he were a singer located in close proximity. Secondly, she would be assuming a leadership role, an unusual predicament for her gender. But latterly, and most crucially, she would be using her talents that (to them) emanated from the domestic setting in a sanctioned (liturgical) performance. Thus to an

¹⁰⁷ Edward Green, "Music and the Victorian Mind: The Musical Aesthetics of the Rev. H. R. Haweis," *International Review of the Aesthetics and Sociology of Music*, vol. 39, no. 2 (December, 2008), 243-4.

easily insecure woman congregant, the angelic duty of the woman organist (portrayed even by Cecilia), could be easily reduced to the role of a siren. It is not to suggest that the playing of hymns or other music could have a bewitching effect, but rather than the coupling of an immoral individual with the very public sacred setting was a circumstance of explosive proportions; nonetheless she becomes the ultimate powerbroker. We might further extend this argument, albeit cautiously, to suggest that the men in the poem are happy to feast their eyes on the organist and retain her in service beyond a reasonable time (especially if they can save money), whereas it is likely the women who wish to see her dismissed forthwith. This circumstance has a parallel in *Under the Greenwood Tree* where old William Dewy passes comment on the advancement of the new organist, Fancy Day, in place of his family of gallery musicians:

‘Then the music is second to the woman, the other churchwarden is second to Shinar, the pa’son is second to the churchwardens, and God A’mighty is nowhere at all.’¹⁰⁸

The idea of the woman musician being a corrupting influence - indeed a siren luring men in through her musical talents, but yet throwing them onto unethical shores - is found in the same story as Dick Dewy questions the choice of Fancy’s dress, much as the congregation of the chapel-organist discuss hers. Equally though, they question the motive and the reasons. Here, Fancy offers an unequivocal response - a response indeed that at this juncture in the novel comes across as startling, for we only know Fancy in the purest light thus far:

‘I fear for that dress,’ he said, as they wiped their hands together.

‘What?’ said Miss Day, looking into the box at the dress alluded to. ‘O, I know what you mean - that the vicar will never let me wear muslin?’

‘Yes.’

¹⁰⁸ Hardy, *Under the Greenwood Tree*, 150.

‘Well, I know it is condemned by all parties in the church as flaunting, and unfit for common wear for girls below clerical condition; but we’ll see.’

‘In the interest of the church, I hope you don’t speak seriously.’

‘Yes, I do; but we’ll see.’ There was a comely determination on her lip, very pleasant to a beholder who was neither bishop, priest, or deacon. ‘I think I can manage any vicar’s views about me if he’s under forty.’

Dick rather wished she had never thought of managing vicars.¹⁰⁹

It is possible to exact a Lacanian mirroring that befalls the chapel-organist. For instance the women in the congregation sing the hymns the organist accompanies, and the sentiment, the feeling, the ‘tone’ should be of one between the singer and the organist. If it is not, then a disconnection has occurred. Further, when the chapel-organist, in her final service, is transported in harmonies previously unheard, she again departs from the mirror image. In this sentence she becomes the opposite of contemporaneous art; far from an ‘angel’ she becomes a debased version of self. In considering this disfigured realisation the commentator enters into the conceptualised world of the ‘other’.

The concept of The Other

Aside from the fact that Sigmund Freud’s (1856-1939) life shadowed much of that of Hardy (1840-1928), his writings, though mostly prominent in the latter part of his life, centre on a Victorian understanding. Freud’s three ‘conditions for loving’ focus on a neurotic individual - although in Freud’s words are also applicable to ‘people of average health [and] even those with outstanding qualities’ - can be easily applied to the characters Hardy portrays. That the

¹⁰⁹ Hardy, *Under the Greenwood Tree*, 178-9.

congregants make public statements of the chapel-organist's physique suggests a degree of attraction, even if unspoken. Hardy labours this point by not only describing her buxom appearance but adding 'too much sex in her build; fine eyes, but eyelids too heavy;/ A bosom too full for her age; in her lips too voluptuous a look'.

Freud's first prerequisite is that there be an 'injured third party', observing that men are only interested in those that are already engaged with another – this we see in the girl's exploits away from the chapel. His second stipulation acknowledges that 'chaste and irreproachable women never become love objects' – we know the girl is far from either condition and she is certainly desired. Finally, he notes that 'passionate attachments of this sort are repeated with the same peculiarities – each an exact replica of the others – again and again' to form a 'long series'¹¹⁰ – this we readily observe in the serial behaviour of the girl who, despite warning and whilst forthcoming in her love for music, admits she cannot help but admit her infraction will not be the last; she cannot readily command her own moral fortitude. This lack of self-control brings the chapel-organist into Freud's definition of 'psychical impotence' as defined by T. R. Wright whereby:

victims....remain unable to fuse the affectionate and the sensual: 'Where they love they do not desire and where they desire they cannot love.' They can overcome impotence only by 'a psychical *debasement* of the sexual object' which destroys all resemblance to the maternal image. Women are accordingly split into two main types, the overvalued, idealised angel of the house and the debased prostitute. Freud recognises how severely his own generation is stamped with this pattern, institutionalised in its high ideal of marriage and constant resort to prostitution. He also sees that women, through 'their long holding back from sexuality and the lingering of their sensuality in phantasy', suffer from a similar association of sexuality

¹¹⁰ References from T. R. Wright, *Hardy and the Erotic* (Basingstoke: Macmillan, 1989), 10.

with secrecy, ‘the condition of forbiddenness’ in their erotic life performing a similar function to that of debasement in men.’¹¹¹

However forward thinking (or not) Freud may have been, one cannot divorce his views from that of a man who lived in a certain era, and in this sense the ready alignment of his opinion has an added tangibility to the perception of the chapel-organist. In this sense his displacement of the woman into a secondary role is not unexpected. For Simone de Beauvoir, Freud saw the norm as the boy and the girl a deviation from the norm.¹¹² With this sense of the ‘other’ – the social outcast, the siren being – develops an inner strength, a sense of conviction that instead determines her life choices. De Beauvoir comments:

I believe that she has the power to choose between the assertion of her transcendence and her alienation as object; she is not the plaything of contradictory drives; she devises solutions of diverse values in the ethical scale.¹¹³

Of course, referring to Dostoevsky, this is a ‘knife that cuts both ways’; the woman can make a decision but she is nonetheless governed (somewhat or wholly) by her own ethical compass. However, returning to Freud, and recalling the account of the professional situation for woman musicians (even to the point of their exclusion from work along with those who were afflicted with blindness), we can readily reconcile Freud’s views to Osborne’s not so much as being in stark contrast to contemporary thought, but rather being a more thorough author of markedly similar views. As much as Victorian society was repressed from expressing views, Freud was a prominent voice to the contrary. The distance between his commentary on the female populus is in tandem with society’s response to the same. Betty Friedan summed this up accordingly:

¹¹¹ Ibid.

¹¹² Juliet Mitchell, *Psychoanalysis and Feminism* (New York: Pantheon Books, 1975), 308.

¹¹³ Simone de Beauvoir, *The Second Sex* (London: Jonathan Cape, 1960), 76. Referred to in Mitchell, *Psychoanalysis and Feminism*, 309.

The fact is that to Freud, even more than to the magazine editor on Madison Avenue today, women were a strange, inferior, less-than-human species. He saw them as childlike dolls, who existed in terms only of man's love, to love man and serve his needs. It was the same kind of unconscious solipsism that made man for many centuries see the sun only as a bright object that revolved around the earth. Freud grew up with this attitude built in by his culture – not only the culture of Victorian Europe, but that Jewish culture in which men said the daily prayer: 'I thank Thee, Lord, that Thou has [sic] not created me a woman,' and women prayed in submission 'I thank Thee, Lord, that Thou has [sic] created me according to Thy will.'¹¹⁴

In offering an analysis of Friedan's writing, Juliet Mitchell comments that Freud's notions of a woman's inferiority were applied in order to suppress the emancipation of women.¹¹⁵ Though there is an aspect of emancipation through music the larger societal conditioning inevitably takes precedence, not least because the chapel-organist is (unlike the sisters) of the secular rather than sacred world.

In this sense, we can draw a clear parallel with the numerous nonsensical reasons given for avoiding the woman organist as an employee. If the employers were discontent for any reason they could readily seek her downfall through an application of inferiority. Exacting justice through the use of scripture or even the inference of religious worthiness is of course nothing new.

By today's thinking Freud was no more a convincing moralist than many of the characters Hardy portrays, especially those responding to the chapel-organist. That he allowed the interpretation of his views to be massaged over time, according to local circumstances,

¹¹⁴ Betty Friedan, *The Feminine Mystique* (New York: Penguin Books, 1965) 96. Referred to in Mitchell, *Psychoanalysis and Feminism*, 326-7.

¹¹⁵ Mitchell, *Psychoanalysis and Feminism*, 326-7.

betrays an overriding conviction, arrogance, or merely egotism, even if he was the father of a new model. In this sense, he was somewhat taken out with the tide of current discourse as Eva Figs suggests:

The middle-class morality of the nineteenth century was highly hypocritical, but Freud, like so many intellectuals before and since, made life difficult for himself by taking the ideals seriously and actually living up to them.¹¹⁶

Of the challenge to Freud's views in relation to the musical orbit of Victorian England is the rise of the educated woman, the formation of women's societies, and the continued development of feminism. Although Freud provides a contemporary commentary, it is by nature – and some of this is due to the infancy of the field – limited in scope. As such his writing, though a crucial source, is one of divided perception, not least because of its hegemonic invective. However, the question of 'experience' and of divided/dual perception is key to an understanding of the role of the woman, so much of which is undocumented.¹¹⁷ What Freud, or for that matter Hardy, suggests is but one person's view, based on one person's experience, but whether we can consider it as legitimate 'evidence' is another matter. However, that their views are very largely in the same vein, and that the evidence correlates to a global narrative does affirm the fundamental tenets of their commentary, albeit emanating from a male perspective.

Further evidence (if we return to Stratton's defence) supporting this argument is found in the letters Hardy received from female readers; a girl from The Hague wrote after reading *Tess* 'you *understand* a woman,' while a girl from New York City who confessed 'some of my

¹¹⁶ Eva Figs, *Patriarchal Attitudes* (London: Faber & Faber, 1970) 137. Referred to in Mitchell, *Psychoanalysis and Feminism*, 332.

¹¹⁷ A detailed commentary of the subject of 'experience' can be seen in the following article: Joan W. Scott, "The Evidence of Experience," *Critical Inquiry*, vol. 17, no. 4, (1991): 773-797.

experiences of life have been not unlike hers'.¹¹⁸ Hardy's ability to capture the very essence of life's troublesome episodes (through his vast presentation of characters) not only offers the factual anecdotal type of retelling inherent to the narrative, but equally the rejoicing of the spirit as well as the despair of the soul. As such his portrayal of the chapel-organist affords a glimpse into the deeper concerns of the woman organist whilst offering a word of caution to those who would venture towards the profession. In Virginia Woolf's obituary of Hardy she notes:

We have been freed from the cramp and pettiness imposed by life. Our imaginations have been stretched and heightened; our humour has been made to laugh out; we have drunk deep of the beauty of the earth. Also we have been made to enter the shade of a sorrowful and brooding spirit which, even in its saddest mood, bore itself with a grave uprightness and never, even when most moved to anger, lost its deep compassion for the sufferings of men and women. Thus it is no mere transcript of life at a certain time and place that Hardy has given us. It is a vision of the world and of man's lot as they revealed themselves to a powerful imagination, a profound and poetic genius, a gentle and humane soul.¹¹⁹

The poem of Walter de la Mare, offered as poetical homage to Hardy posthumously, is included in the appendix to this chapter.

Postludium

There is, in modern parlance, a 'brutal honesty' to Hardy's summing up of the human condition and with it a thorough directness to the heart of the reader who can so easily relate to the circumstances he describes. Indeed the conditioning of many of his characters would

¹¹⁸ T. R. Wright, *Hardy and his Readers* (Basingstoke: Palmgrave Macmillan, 2003) 10.

¹¹⁹ <http://ebooks.adelaide.edu.au/w/woolf/virginia/w91c2/chapter21.html> (accessed 14 January, 2012)

be little different for many in our own time. Of his treatment of the culturally contingent binary relationship of men and women, Lionel Johnson notes:

He runs two risks: the risk of unpopularity among the un-philosophical and inartistic: and the risk of dislike from lovers of another philosophy and of another art. For he does nothing to conciliate possible enemies: there are no concessions to a vulgar or to a fastidious taste: when once a character, or an event, or an issue of events, is conceived by him as true to the nature of things, he will present it with all the power of his art; but he will not soften its asperity, not herald it with deprecation, nor dismiss it with a palinode.¹²⁰

In Hardy's perception of the woman organist in Victorian England, we are presented with a model that lives within a stern set of rules and expectations. The woman (or girl in this case) is respected above all in her domestic setting, whether for her wifely support of the master of the house, her child rearing, or her range of supporting attributes, be they musical, literary, or culinary. However, if she can transcend the inherent vicissitudes of the ecclesiastical setting and retain her angelic demeanour, her reputation may be enhanced within larger society. If however she falls short of these expectations through perceived debasement of not only her own character but of other women and the institution she serves, then she is left to suffer the wrath of all those who bear witness. In this respect the woman in the sacred setting is charged with a higher code of conduct, and therefore is effectively paralleled to the non-laity of the church. As the sisters of the church (convent) follow a strict life of prayer, worship, and servitude, so too we find that the organist must exercise her own self-control in the sacred setting. Absent discipline she becomes a disfigured effigy of the angelic form society sought to behold. The angel of the house was expected to be the archangel of the temple.

¹²⁰ Lionel Johnson, *The Art of Thomas Hardy* (London: John Lane The Bodley Head Ltd., 1923), 172.

Appendix

Thomas Hardy

Mingled the moonlight with daylight – the last in the narrowing west:
Silence of nightfall lay over the shallowing valleys at rest
In the Earth's green breast:
Yet a small multitudinous singing, a lully of voices of birds,
Unseen in the vague shelving hollows, welled up with my questioning words:
All Dorsetshire's larks for connivance of sweetness seemed trysting to greet
Him in whose song the bodings of raven and nightingale meet.
Stooping and smiling, he questions, 'No birdnotes myself do I hear?
Perhaps 'twas the talk of chance farers, abroad in the hush with us here –
In the dusk-light clear?'
And there peered from his eyes, as I listened, a concourse of women and
men,
Whom his words had made living, long-suffering – they flocked to
remembrance again;
'O Master,' I cried in my heart, 'lorn thy tidings, grievous thy song;
Yet thing, too, this solacing music, as we earthfolk stumble along.'¹²¹

¹²¹ Walter de la Mare, 'Thomas Hardy', *Victorian Poetry*, Vol. 17, No. ½, The Poetry of Thomas Hardy: A Commemorative Issue (Spring –Summer, 1979): 30.

Part III

The Organist as Civic Music Director

Chapter 6

W. T. Best – Magic Music Man

“Had he been a long-haired Pole, or a lean and lanky Paganini, reams of paper would have been spoilt, and pints of good printers’ ink spread, in the public setting forth of his virtues and vices both moral, social and professional.”¹

In the earlier chapters considerable attention has been drawn to the relevant pertinence of professional protocols: compositions were written within a broader aesthetic climate and a quest for worthiness; styles of earlier eras were adopted; foreign travel was undertaken to pursue ‘higher’ learning; behavioural norms, spoken and un-spoken, were contrived; spiritual devotion was conjoined with artistic creativity; gender politics was engaged and, in some instances, obviated. Once these conditioning factors are amassed and intertwined with ecclesiastical expectations a prototypical English organist begins to emerge. Charles Rosen’s observation that, in historical study we look for exceptionalism rather than normalcy has a particular application to the organ world, for the inverse became the status quo. When assessing the organ profession we can observe careers that typify an expected trajectory more often than examples where musicians break free of the mould. Some aspect of this comparative normalism comes from the rigidity of examinations set forth from the College of Organists, the need for conformity of study, and in turn a predictability and reliability associated with those gilded with honours. But in entering the scholastic fray the organists also initiated a culture of self-examination that continues to this day, both of themselves and of their profession. It was not enough to play well, but what you played and the style of your performance took precedence over a passing faddism derived from temporal circumstance. One’s role in the musical firmament of the ‘organ world’ would relate quite directly to the forces at play, both musically and politically. With these considerations borne in mind, it can be no surprise that a musical giant such as W. T. Best, whose sometimes fractious behaviour

¹ Orlando A. Mansfield, “W. T. Best: His Life, Character, and Works”, *The Musical Quarterly*, vol. 4, no. 2 (1918), 209.

could cause disquiet to those he countered, should emerge not only as a musical Titan of the people, but also as a source of consternation to those convinced of the righteousness of their professional agendas. What provokes an examination of Best is the very fact he was a musical non-conformist. In an age of canonical prescription he chartered a course entirely of his own making, and though offering some of his own compositions for broader critique (not least the sonatas) his primary focus lay outside the ramparts of ecclesiastical subjugation. Further, Best's extraordinary technical facility and the comparison of his work to the great virtuosi on other instruments set him apart from the organ profession at large. Because Best appeared to have no technical limitations and played in a concert, rather than liturgical, setting for the larger part of his career, his creative decisions bear particular examination. Furthermore, his innate professionalism saved him from the criticism being volleyed at 'virtuosi' with whom the public had become disillusioned with through their self-serving tactics which some regarded as crudely commercial.² The focus of this study will be to assess Best's role in the greater musical profession during his lifetime, as well as consider his style of programming by comparing his concerts with contemporary performances of the Philharmonic Society, the pianist and conductor Hans von Bülow and Louis Jullien. Through this methodology we can consider whether Best was a visionary, merely a copyist, or simply in a class of his own. There is no doubt that he was a figure equal to the masters of the era. To begin we shall consider the state of the profession at the point of his birth, 1826.

W. T. Best

Born in Carlisle, William Thomas Best (1826-1897) left a career as a civil engineer in order to devote his time fully to music. He was organist for the Liverpool Philharmonic Society from 1848 until 1852, and then from 1852-1855 resided in London. Whilst in the civic and

² William Weber, *The Great Transformation of Music Taste* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2008), 141, 159.

cultural capital he was organist at the Royal Panopticon of Science and Art in Leicester Square, Lincoln's Inn Chapel and at St. Martin in the Fields. In 1855 he was appointed to St. George's Hall, Liverpool, where he served until 1894. He was frequently engaged for the opening of new instruments, which included the Royal Albert Hall in 1871 and the Albert Hall in Sheffield in 1873. During 1872, he resumed his connection with the Liverpool Philharmonic Society although continued to perform throughout the country, including at the Handel Festivals in London between 1871 and 1891. Outside of Britain, Best opened the famous William Hill organ of Sydney Town Hall in 1890. Ill health forced him to resign his posts in 1894, although he was already the recipient of a civil list pension, granted in 1890.³



W. T. Best⁴

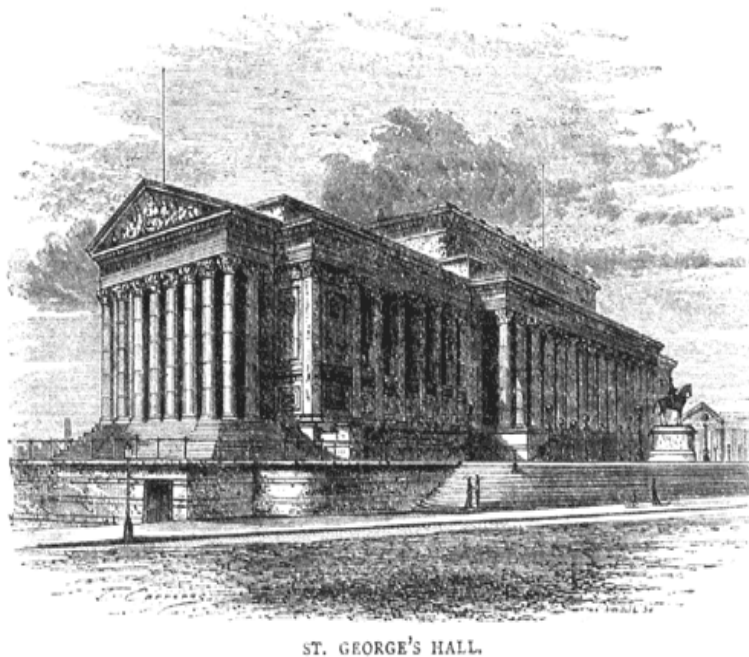
Best had a technique and a performance charisma without equal. He did much to continue sustained interest in Bach's music in England, whilst also introducing large audiences to a

³ E. D. Mackerness, "W. T. Best," *Oxford Music Online* (accessed 9 July, 2010)

⁴ August Weger, *W. T. Best*, JPG, <http://images.nypl.org/index.php?id=1105979&t=r> (accessed 27 January, 2012)

considerable repertoire beyond original compositions for the organ. His career was not absent criticism though it was largely unfounded. Heathcote Statham pointed to his appointment in a central provincial town as allowing some critics to conveniently label him a ‘provincial organist’, just as they had refused to come and hear Hallé’s orchestra when he brought it to London for concerts.⁵

One of Best’s considerable gifts lay in the art of transcription and in the realisation of the transcriptions upon the relatively new symphonic organs of the era. The combination of an excellent technique, coupled with strong musicianship, rendered him a unique spot in the musical firmament as he sought to evangelise and educate the masses who attended his concerts, especially at St. George’s Hall, Liverpool.



St. George’s Hall⁶

⁵ H. Heathcote Statham, *The Organ and its Position in Musical Arts* (London: Chapman and Hall, 1909), 216.

⁶ JPG http://www.acwrt.org.uk/uk-heritage_The-Confederate-Bazaar-at-Liverpool.asp

Professional Considerations

What ultimately set Best apart from the larger musical profession that enjoyed outstanding success in the mid-nineteenth-century was, curiously, his nationality; the most successful artists of the time had consistently been imported talent. Though much could be discussed of the royal court's support of foreign musicians during Victoria's reign, this was far from an innovation. In 1590 nineteen out of twenty-nine members of the Queen's Musick were foreign, and during the seventeenth century sons and grandsons continued to predominate.⁷ Although these numbers diminished in subsequent generations, the presence of Handel, the Italian opera and ultimately the rise of the European virtuoso tradition kept the metropolis a thoroughly cosmopolitan environment. The reasoning stemmed as much from a passion for concert-life as it did from a severe lack of home-grown talent. Although formal conservatories did not come into being until the early nineteenth century, Daniel Defoe's 1728 'Proposal to prevent the expensive Importation of Foreign Musicians, etc., by forming an Academy of our own' pointed to the need for reform in musical education. Cyril Ehrlich suggests the proposal to attach the school to Christ's Hospital was likely its resemblance to the *conservatori* or *ospedali* of Naples and Venice.⁸ Despite its obvious logicity, the idea did not take flight. Not even the validity in arguing that the cost of maintaining sixty students would only be £300 compared with the £1,500 cost per annum of hiring an Italian singer held sway.⁹ Later proposals by John Potter (1762) and Charles Burney and Felice de Giardini (1774) also ran aground despite initial support. As Fanny Burney noted:

where more splendid rewards await the favourite votaries of musical excellence than in any other spot on the globe, there was no establishment of any sort for forming

⁷ Cyril Ehrlich, *The Music Profession in Britain since the Eighteenth Century* (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1985), 16.

⁸ Ibid, 9.

⁹ Ibid, 10.

such artists as might satisfy the real connoisseur in music; and save English talent from the mortification, and the British purse from the depredations, of seeking a constant annual supply of genius and merit from foreign shores. An institution, therefore, of this character seemed wanting to the state, for national economy; and to the people, for national encouragement.¹⁰

The monetary side was two-edged though; high fees were paid to a select few singers, and ultimately to instrumentalists once Paganini achieved the status and emoluments of a major figure,¹¹ but many of the orchestral players scraped by on meagre concert earnings. The situation with the poorer musicians did little to raise the perception of the profession in the eyes of society, especially for the upper classes; most musicians remained in a servant class. The issue of class also had bearing in social circles. As late as 1868 Michael Costa's candidacy for membership of the Atheneum club was declined noting that the more assured George Smart has been elected not as a musician,¹² but as a knight – a curious twist as Costa became a knight the following year. Thomas Attwood, organist of St. Paul's Cathedral, a favourite at Court was similarly noted in 1800 as one who 'in addition to musical science.....possesses the well cultivated understanding of a *gentleman*'.¹³

In the latter parts of the century the situation had not much altered, as Paula Gillett observes:

Unlike the painting profession, many of whose leading practitioners were British....most music celebrities were foreign: Joachim, Hallé, Neruda [Lady Hallé],

¹⁰ Fanny Burney *Memoirs of Dr. Burney, by his Daughter Madame D'Arblay* (1832) 234. Ehrlich, *The Music Profession*, 10-11.

¹¹ Ehrlich, *The Music Profession*, 18.

¹² *Musical Times*, May 1868. Ehrlich, *The Music Profession*, 42.

¹³ *Monthly Mirror*, quoted in P. H. Highfill, K. A. Burnim, and E. A. Langhans, *A Biographical Dictionary of Actors, Actresses, Musicians...in London, 1660-1800* vol. 1 (Carbondale, 1973-82) 173. Ehrlich, *The Music Profession*, 41.

Manns, Richter, Clara Schumann, Rubinstein, Sarate, Piatti, not to mention the great prima donnas who only came from the Continent.¹⁴

The financial concerns for organists resulted in many working in numerous fields in order to make ends meet. Even those in cathedral posts were found supplementing their income, despite the fact their housing was already taken care of. In fact a figure as prominent as Walter MacFarren, a composer and prolific editor of standard classics, professor of piano at the Royal Academy of Music, also served as organist at Harrow and spent two days each week at a ‘seminary for young ladies’ teaching piano and singing to four pupils an hour from 9 a.m. to 7 p.m., his account never fully paid.¹⁵ It cannot have been an easy existence for anyone less than fully committed to their art.

Best though was able to surpass much of the disaffection encountered by his fellow musicians with his sheer musical ability, and in turn attracted concert work outside his salaried post in Liverpool. The man described as the Paganini, Liszt, and Berlioz of the organ – the last being like Best a master of tone-colour¹⁶ - enjoyed accolades others could only dream of. On hearing Best play the opening recital at St. Andrew’s Hall, Glasgow, Hans von Bülow commented in the *Glasgow Herald*:

If I would longer listen to an organ like this and a player like Mr. Best, I would, were I not grown too old, jeopardise my pianistical career, and begin to study the organ, where certainly I would be able to display with much more eloquence as Beethoven’s

¹⁴ Paula Gillett, “Ambivalent Friendships: Music-Lovers, Amateurs, and Professional Musicians in the Late Nineteenth Century” in *Music and British Culture, 1785-1914*, ed. C. Bashford and L. Langley (Oxford: OUP, 2000) 326.

¹⁵ Walter MacFarren, *Memories: An Autobiography* (London: Walter Scott Publishing Company, 1905), 73. Ehrlich, *The Music Profession*, 35.

¹⁶ John Mewburn Leven, *Impressions of W. T. Best* (London: Novello and Company, [1943]). Preface [i]

and Chopin's speaker. ...I listened with the most eager attention from the first to the last note of Mr. Best's recital.¹⁷



Hans von Bülow¹⁸

That Liszt was instrumental in arranging a visit of Best to play in Rome, and Lemmens (the dedicatee of the Sonata in G) became a firm friend dedicating a volume of fantasias to him further amplifies the reach of a musician far outside the 'normal' boundaries of the profession. However his surly temperament caused him to be relatively isolated from colleagues, which when coupled with his protectionist stance regarding other performances on the St. George's Hall organ, amounted to a somewhat exclusionary distance from supporters. Only those who could hold their own professionally offered him praise and even then it was often tempered with a sour observation. Walter Parratt, initially an ardent critic (as discussed later), was seen to modify his opinions over time. One of his American pupils, Everett E. Truette, summed up Best:

¹⁷ Levien, *Best*, 31-32.

¹⁸ Unknown, "Hans von Bulow", Carte de Visite Woodbury type – Print. JPG

(He was) greatly maligned by many of his countrymen as being cross, testy, disagreeable and the like. His disposition was peculiar, and made him many enemies. He was a man of strong ideas, and never hesitated to give vent to his opinions, oft-times exaggerating to increase their forcefulness. At one time I was chatting with him in his study. We had been talking about organ-builders, and I casually mentioned the name of an English organ-builder with whom he had recently held a wordy disagreement. Best burst forth: 'That man does not know how to build an organ. Look at the organ in ---Hall: he put the solo stops on such a high pressure of wind that it was necessary to chain them to the wind chest to keep them from being blown out through the roof!'¹⁹

Despite this awkward disposition his place at the summit of the profession remained unchallenged, and the ready alliance of major figures outside the organ world suggests that Best was indeed viewed as a virtuoso equal to those of other spheres as well as his adoring public. Furthermore, his professionalism could act as a source of inspiration to other musicians, as the many budding organists who attended his concerts would testify, scores in hand. Diligence and hard work were central tenets of the Victorian ethos and observing excellence could encourage and inspire those who might follow in subsequent years. As George Bernard Shaw noted:

When I was a child I heard certain operas rehearsed by a company of amateurs who, having everything to learn, could not have achieved a performance at all if they had not coached and trained and rehearsed with a thoroughness impossible to professional music. It would cost too much. These amateurs rehearsed an opera for six months. There were all sorts of weaknesses about their performances: and yet I have never

¹⁹ Levien, *Best*, 34.

since, even in the course of several years' experience as a professional critic in London, with occasional excursions to Paris, Italy, and the German capitals, heard any performances as perfect, except some of the most thoroughly prepared productions at Bayreuth and Munich.²⁰

A repertoire of 5,000 pieces

When Best was appointed to St. George's Hall, in 1855 the state of music in the provinces was far from settled. As organist to the corporation, rather than a congregation, Best did not have the luxury of a comparatively unhindered artistic domain; whereas a church musician could play almost anything as a voluntary regardless of response, Best had to select his repertoire with a watchful eye on the audience response. It is perhaps in relation to this remit that he would sit in his armchair between pieces and look at the audience, so they did not feel distanced from a musician whose back was always turned to them during performances. The visual display, and to some aspect the programming, held a certain parallel with the promenade tradition, hailed as much for its visual spectacle as its musical delights. Although the venue of the town hall was far from being a 'show place,' it was nonetheless imbued with a certain eye-catching décor. As Roy Johnston notes:

In any age enthusiastic for technology, the organ had proved an ideal instrument for development and improvement. Installed, with impressively decorated casing, it could be an object of splendour dominating its environment.²¹

The installation of large instruments in town halls had been initially fuelled by the development of choral festivals and the need to construct a location to present performances.

²⁰ George Bernard Shaw, "The Amateur Orchestra", *Shaw's Music*, ii, 864-7. Gillett, "Ambivalent Friendships," 328.

²¹ Roy Johnston, " 'Here will we sit': The Creation of the Ulster Hall," in Bashford and Langley, *Music and British Culture*, 222.

The development of the instrument into one of symphonic capabilities further allowed for an expansion of the repertoire into the realm of orchestral transcription. At the time of its installation, the organ at St. George's Hall was the largest in the country, but that mantle was soon passed to the Royal Albert Hall. (Liverpool's pride was not ultimately dimmed for Henry Willis & Sons, Ltd. (based in Liverpool) installed an even larger instrument in the Anglican cathedral in 1926, which remains the largest organ in the country.)

Of course transcription for the organ was nothing new and in the general musical world more generally accepted. For the organists, even in Best's era, it was a two-edged sword as they sought to resurrect the instrument's reputation from a century of largely uninspired composition. However, as much as Bach had transcribed Vivaldi concertos and Liszt had transcribed Beethoven symphonies, Best set to work on any and all music he thought could be successfully communicated on the king of instruments. Furthermore, Best's decision to incorporate works originally conceived for other instruments lay in a fundamental understanding of programming found in related concert fields; if pianists did not see a need to trawl their repertoire for original works, even though their published resources at the time far outweighed those of the sister instrument, why should the organists follow a different path? Arthur Lister Peace, Best's successor in Liverpool summed up the matter:

the use of the organ as a concert instrument has worked a revolution, and in this connection the name of W. T. Best is to be forever honoured. He was under the necessity of giving recitals week after week, and found the original organ music sadly deficient. In order to form his varied programmes he began arranging: he laid all styles under contribution: he chose good music: he had the ability to transcribe and to

perform it, and so he has done more than any other man to extend the resources of the instrument.²²

Peace's observation that Best was playing week after week (typically in three performances) also underlines the reasoning behind the need for Best's reputed 5,000-piece repertory. Whereas a pianist may be on tour and alter their programme from time to time, city to city, the inveterate challenge for the town hall organist is to present a different programme to the same audience, on the same instrument multiple times in the same year – there is no parallel to this in any other branch of the profession. Through his programming he managed to survey music of England, Denmark, France, Germany, Italy, and Sweden as well as resurrecting (or possibly giving first English performances of) the music of Couperin and Morandi.²³ Even if the citizens of Liverpool felt short-changed by the relative paucity of orchestral concerts, they could nonetheless feel a certain pride in the sophisticated expansion of their city's concert programming. As Simon McVeigh notes:

...the arts became closely identified with the concept of national improvement. In music, this could take many forms; and Britain could claim that its cosmopolitan support for European art music showed both discernment and a self-confident universality - indeed composers such as Haydn, Beethoven, or Mendelssohn were successively colonized as part of British culture.²⁴

Indeed as Linda Colley observes, in the 1780s, when George III was concerned about a threat to the monarchy, he began to cultivate British art and architecture engaging Handel for the

²² Mansfield, "W. T. Best," 240.

²³ Ibid, 239-240.

²⁴ Simon McVeigh, "The Society of British Musicians (1834-1865) and the Campaign for Native Talent" in Bashford and Langley, *Music and British Culture*, 152.

musical equivalent.²⁵ It is interesting to note that Handel's popularity with the public surpassed any concern over his foreign heritage. But, as McVeigh notes, by 1815 this was no longer enough. His study²⁶ demonstrates how the opposition to foreigners at the Philharmonic Society (which in 1834 included the hissing of the pianist Henri Herz foreshadowing the heckling of Thalberg eight years later) was breeding contempt both with performers and composers. Even in 1840 William Sterndale Bennett took issue with the uncharitable response now accorded Continental musicians in a note to his Leipzig publisher:

You know what a dreadful place England is for music and in London, I have nobody who I can talk to about such things, all the people are mad with Thalberg and Strauss, and I have not heard a single Symphony or Overture in one concert since last June.²⁷

George Macfarren further referred to the Hanoverian Succession by criticising the ruling classes for 'ignoring everything Anglican in connection with music'.²⁸

On the positive side, by the middle of the 1850s there was ample room for scope, but how this would manifest itself in real terms varied from one institution to another. However, in this instance, Best had an upper hand. Whereas much discussion of concert programming had centred on the formulaic aspects of generating a consistent audience base through the inclusion of singers, varied instrumental ensembles and the select choice of symphony movements, all within the limitations of budget and available personnel, Best could offer a solution through a solitary performer, himself. Furthermore, with three programmes a week

²⁵ Linda Colley *Britons* (London: Pimlico, 2003), 227, 198-200. Also McVeigh, "Society of British Musicians," 151-152.

²⁶ McVeigh, "Society of British Musicians," 152.

²⁷ J. R. Sterndale Bennett, *The Life of William Sterndale Bennett* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1907), 100. McVeigh, "Society of British Musicians," 163.

²⁸ George Macfarren, "'The English Are Not a Musical People,'" *Cornhill Magazine* 18 (1868), 356. Weber, *The Great Transformation*, 59.

he had enormous latitude to incorporate an especially wide repertory and to gauge audience response accordingly. Saved the squabbles that later attended Edmund Chipp's tenure in Belfast²⁹ or almost all of Edwin Lemare's career,³⁰ he could ride the crest of the wave with aplomb. In Best, Liverpool had not only an exemplary executant of the standard repertoire, they also had a researcher of older scores, a music director, a chamber musician, and an opera enthusiast all rolled into one, for a singular salary. As much as chamber music concerts were less expensive than orchestral concerts and achieved a higher standard because of increased rehearsal time,³¹ organ recitals with the right person at the console could elevate the city's musical life to the heavens. As Gottfried Weber declared in 1807:

[the director of a concert series] can be seen, like the regent of state, as the representative of the general will³²

But where, with all this responsibility, and no mean societal expectation, did Best's programming fit within the larger history of the concert programme in England? Also, can a virtuoso be a populist *and* an educator? To consider this, and bearing in mind Best's unofficial nominative position as a musical director, we must first assess the question of audience response and programming style that had developed ahead of Best's tenure in the greater concert world. As he knew London from his earlier positions and travelled widely giving recitals, including on the Continent, we have to consider that his knowledge of programming traditions was fairly broad.

²⁹ Johnston "Here will we sit," 215-232.

³⁰ See Nelson Barden articles "Edwin H. Lemare" in *The American Organist*, January, March, June, August, 1986.

³¹ McVeigh, "Society of British Musicians," 165.

³² John Spitzer and Neal Zaslaw, *The Birth of the Orchestra: History of an Institution, 1650-1815* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2004), 514. Weber, *The Great Transformation*, 20.

Liverpool

Although Liverpool's Philharmonic Hall opened in 1849 and was later described as the finest concert hall in Europe,³³ the musicians were largely hired from Charles Hallé's orchestra in Manchester, the local musicians being insufficiently trained. As late as 1881, sixty-six per cent of the Liverpool players were still being drawn from the Hallé. As such, although Liverpool had many reasons to be a proud centre of commercial maritime life in the northern part of the country, they did not 'own' their orchestra *per se*, even though the Liverpool Philharmonic was some eighteen years older than its Manchester counterpart.



Charles Hallé³⁴

By 1861, six years after Best's appointment, the number of professional musicians in Liverpool had drawn much closer to Manchester, although even when the two cities musicians were counted together they still did not equal a third of those in London.

³³ Ehrlich, *The Music Profession*, 62.

³⁴ Unknown "Charles Hallé" JPG <http://www.nndb.com/people/938/000101635/charles-halle-1.jpg>

Numbers of full-time musicians, 1861³⁵

Town	1861
London	3,102
Manchester	451
Liverpool	425
Birmingham	294
Leeds	135



Philharmonic Hall, Liverpool³⁶

The professional market was growing though, particularly in the provinces, where there was less competition and star performers could rise to greater prominence. Ultimately this benefitted London too as it was only the return of provincial touring that allowed the capital

³⁵ Dave Russell, "Musicians in the English Provincial City: Manchester, c. 1860-191," in Bashford and Langley, *Music and British Culture*, 235.

³⁶ Unknown, "Liverpool Philharmonic Hall", http://www.entertainmentinspain.com/philharmonic_hall%20original%20building.jpg

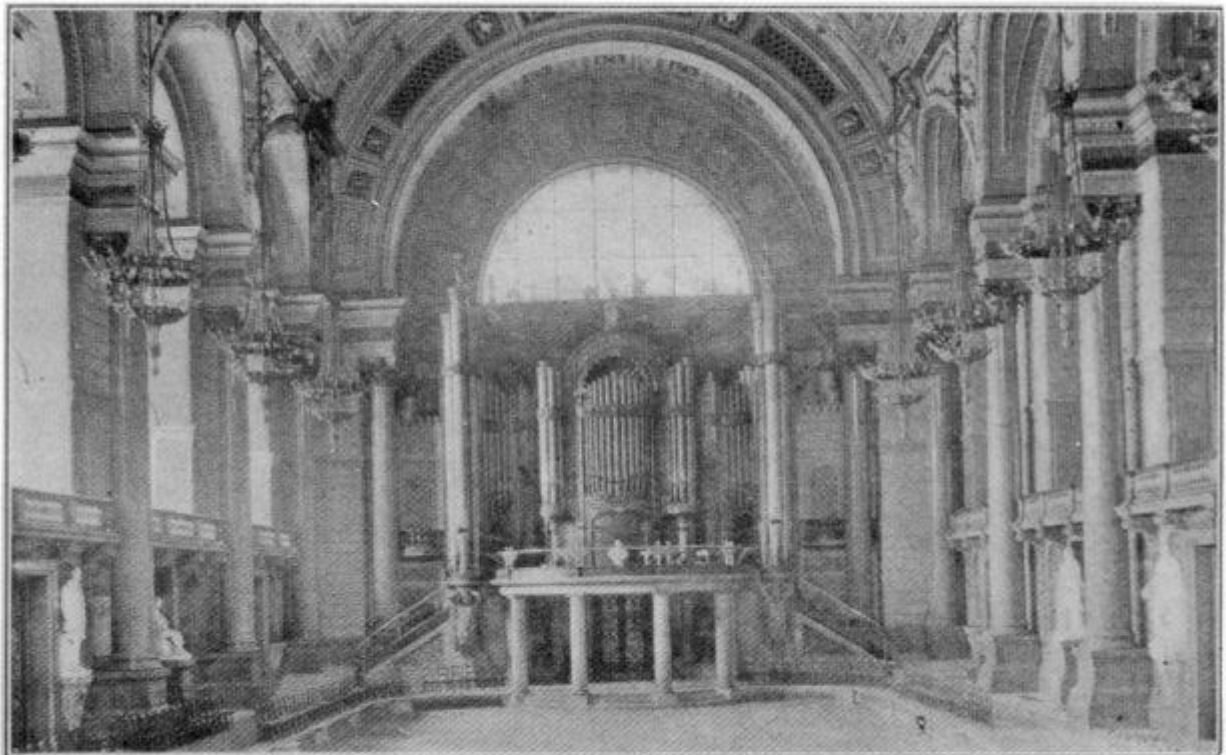
to become a stable base for performers.³⁷ This did mean, however, that a figure as prominent as Best in Liverpool was not only the leading organ virtuoso but the leading virtuoso of them all (to paraphrase Beethoven) in a resident capacity. To have musical excellence in one person that could harness the powers of a mighty instrument that alone could summon the symphonies of Haydn or Mozart, in addition to the choral accompaniments, must have been enormously gratifying. Certainly this is evidenced in the long-term gratitude shown to Best through an extra-contractual pension on retirement due to ill health. Although the ‘low-status’ concerts of the capital had always offered both ‘classical’ and ‘popular’ music in their programmes, by comparison to the more homogenous programming of the ‘high-status’ concerts (e.g. The Academy of Ancient Music or the Philharmonic Society), Best’s formula of incorporating works *primarily* across ‘classical’ lines broke new ground in the low-ticket environs.

As professional orchestral concerts were by nature more expensive to present they did not occur with great frequency in the northern cities. Dave Russell notes that in October 1891 Leeds only had nine concerts and four of those were presented by the Town Hall organist, William Spark. Although Manchester led the way, Birmingham and Liverpool were still some way behind.³⁸

³⁷ William Weber, *Music and the Middle Class* (New York: Holmes & Meier Publishers, Inc., 1975), 38.

³⁸ Russell, “English Provincial City,” 237.

Considering that since 1854 licences for music-halls had been issued quite liberally, and that beyond drinking, fornication and sport, these remained the most popular arenas for entertainment in the second half of the century,³⁹ it is easy to observe how a desire to inject more ‘respectable’ spheres of entertainment governed the senior townsmans’ hire of Best and his ability to furnish the city with potentially elevating programmes.



*The Organ in St. George's Hall, Liverpool, Eng. Built by Henry Willis in 1855. Rebuilt 1867 and 1898
The White Marble Bust Seen in Front is That of W. T. Best.*

St. George's Hall, Liverpool⁴⁰

Furthermore the ‘town hall’ (and this nomenclature is used to define the large spaces housing an organ, whether owned by the city or by a corporation) could provide an intersection for society as a whole. Whilst low ticket prices could open the concerts to a burgeoning middle-class, keen for self-improvement, it also bore the air of respectability. The buildings alone,

³⁹ Ehrlich, *The Music Profession*, 57.

⁴⁰ <http://www.gutenberg.org/files/21204/21204-h/images/img-front.jpg>

designed upon classical lines, gave the city an air of esteem and civic pride. As Roy Johnston notes, it was a temple to Mammon and a status symbol that, whilst impressive as a physical presence, also proclaimed the town's membership of the urban league.⁴¹ Fundamentally it was a place of meeting, but as a mature symbol of the Industrial Revolution it also combined commerce with art. In bringing at least a part of greater society together under one roof the city fathers not only removed the stigma many could associate with 'elite' concerts of the past, and select membership of societies, but also placed art and its reception before the larger public as a moral agent. The *Musical World's* commentary of Hallé's concert could equally have applied to Liverpool's situation:

Mr Charles Hallé's Manchester concerts are becoming the vogue with all classes, from the rich merchant and manufacturer to the middle-class tradesmen and bourgeois ...to the respectable and thrifty, albeit humbler, artisans.⁴²

As such, in the engagement of a professional organist, the Corporation elevated not only the performance standards that came to be known in large cities, but also professionalised the world of the musician by example, even if in a singular instance. Although Liverpool was not the first to engage a professional organist – Birmingham Town Hall led the way with the appointment of Thomas Munden in 1834 – Best elevated the position through the high quality of his programmes and performances. In addition, the organist, as a professional musician, although not wealthy by salary, was nonetheless a respected figure amongst his musical peers. W. H. Monk, musical editor of *Hymns, Ancient and Modern*, the *Parish Choir* and *Organist* at King's College London, observed of cathedral organists that the career was the

⁴¹ Johnston, "Here we will sit," 216.

⁴² *Musical World*, 14 January, 1860. Ehrlich, *The Music Profession*, 63.

‘beau ideal of a musical professor’s existence...relieved from pecuniary anxiety by an assured stipend; a gentleman respected and admired, in and out of his profession; visiting on equal terms his most worthy neighbours’ as part of ‘the most solid and satisfactory branch of the profession’.⁴³ Indeed, such was the respect given to them that the church, doubtless knowing of this benefit, never sought to pay organists according to their education or experience. However there was a flood into the market in the mid-nineteenth century; one who was well educated and armed with exemplary testimonials applied for 222 appointments and received acknowledgements from only 4.⁴⁴ Market forces could be cruel even to the most able. That said, the view of the organist as an elevated figure helped the perception of Best from the outset, even if successive generations would look upon the town hall organists with a certain incredulity, or envy.

Once audiences had witnessed Best’s supreme command of a classical symphony movement (indeed on an instrument that was also tuned unlike the oft times *ad hoc* orchestral situation) how could they not demand the same of the profession? Furthermore, by the 1840s a climate had emerged in favour of the ‘artist’ over the pure ‘virtuoso’.⁴⁵ As the organ had developed into a full symphonic instrument only from the 1830s onwards, the concept of an ‘organ virtuoso’ had not in any sense begun to emerge. So by the time of Best’s appointment he could define himself in almost any terms he wished. That he had an extraordinary technique (not least of the pedals which many struggled with for some years) and an exceptional ability to control rapid changes of registration allayed him to the virtuoso world; he was no meagre performer. That he played music from the great classical canon brought him into line with

⁴³ Ehrlich, *The Music Profession*, 123-124.

⁴⁴ Ibid, 125.

⁴⁵ Weber, *The Great Transformation*, 104.

Clara Schumann's classical tradition, and in performing transcriptions of classical repertoire his interpretation was essentially two-fold: transcriber and interpreter. Moreover, divorced from the flamboyant mannerisms of the virtuoso piano world, he could easily be seen as a 'serious' musician. That Best was based in London when William Sterndale Bennett was described in 1851 as 'the first to influence the public mind in favour of the pianoforte works of the great masters'⁴⁶ cannot have been lost on him, even perhaps engendering a spirit of musical evangelism to take into his own domain. For all his snarly comments, he remained true to his art, even if for a time, he was its only disciple. Saved from the ready criticism of a pestering board – perhaps the distinct advantage of being the progenitor of the tradition – Best did not have to define what 'school' of practice he was going to adhere to. However his fondness for the 'classics', whether the major works of Bach (of which he offered to play any work providing he had two days notice), or symphonic movements or overtures, brought him to an elevated place away from greater public critique. As a writer in Edinburgh had noted just over a decade earlier:

The musical quackery of the French school can do us no good: we wish to hear Beethoven, Mozart, Haydn, and Handel simply and elegantly treated.⁴⁷

Liverpool's role as a major trading port brought another similarity to Manchester in the form of a significant German population. While statistics on the demographic constituency of the town hall concerts did not extend to national origins, Russell argues that the German immigrants in Manchester brought an increased awareness of a greater cultural life:

⁴⁶ *The Times*, 3 June 1851, pg. 6. Weber, *The Great Transformation*, 165.

⁴⁷ "The World of London, Part XI: Music," *Blackwood's Edinburgh Magazine* 51 (1842), 429. Weber, *The Great Transformation*, 114.

..it is undeniable that the German merchant community brought to the city an enhanced sensibility for both serious orchestral and chamber music.⁴⁸

In Manchester, programming for Hallé was not without its difficulties and in the 1870-1 season concern was raised that performing all nine of the Beethoven symphonies might result in a loss of public support.⁴⁹ With Clara Schumann and Charles Hallé's style of classical programming came a recalibration of the role of the musician from that of performer to interpreter, a calling they clearly deemed undeniably higher. These decisions manifested themselves on the Continent in the programming of the Viennese Concerts Spirituel, and later Vienna Philharmonic who not only took the leap of offering (only) three (large-scale) works on a programme, but also a concert entirely of orchestral music,⁵⁰ a revolutionary move in the mid-1840s when programmes consistently involved a sung item in order to attract crowds. More crucially, as William Weber notes:

...musical idealism was born from a utopian vision of artistic truth [and though] the people who took up idealistic musical values were relatively small in number [they] knew how to make their opinions known.⁵¹

In relation to Best's transcriptions of the classical repertoire we must also consider that the symphony (as a musical genre) became an agent for understanding music in a methodological fashion, thus becoming part of the 'quest for truth' and the 'infinite sublime'.⁵²

⁴⁸ Russell, "English Provincial City," 239.

⁴⁹ Michael Kennedy, *The Hallé Tradition* (Manchester: University of Manchester, 1960) 44. Russell, "English Provincial City," 247.

⁵⁰ Weber, *The Great Transformation*, 7-8.

⁵¹ *Ibid*, 87.

⁵² Mark Evan Bonds, *Music as Thought: Listening to the Symphony in the Age of Beethoven* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 2006) xv, 45. Weber, *The Great Transformation*, 93.

Crossing Social Divides in Choral and Orchestral Concerts

Admission to the St. George's Hall series was set at six pence so that the larger share of society could afford to attend. Low-priced professional concerts had emerged in London in the context of ongoing social tension. The founding of the St. George's Hall series in the mid 1850s occurred at a respective mid-point between the reform acts of 1832 and 1867. Because of the relationship of the halls to the choral festivals, the organ series in the town halls managed to coalesce the spirit of the former social protests that resulted in the development of the choral tradition as much as they promoted a relationship with the previously distant high-status musical world. While learning an orchestral instrument was by nature a highly individual activity, being part of a choir was, by default, an intensive group experience, thus the choir members had an arguably keener interest in contemporary social movements than instrumental players did.⁵³ This further explains the relatively easy transition Best was able to effect in bringing forth concert programmes of a 'higher' nature, as the choral constituency in Liverpool would have been key to his audience and could enthuse on the removal of social barriers. As one reviewer had noted in 1834 'the time will come when professors [musicians] will find it their interest to appeal to the public rather than the few'.⁵⁴

The very nature of reform had started in 1834 when the Crown staged a festival of oratorios by Handel in Westminster Abbey. Although the public aim was to commemorate the seventy-fifth anniversary of the composer's death, it also bore a political focus in asserting royal leadership after a bitter dispute over electoral reform. However, the administrators not only restricted admission to a carefully chosen list but also excluded local church choirs from the chorus, instead focussing on singers from Anglican churches and predominately upper-middle class provincial choruses. This caused considerable upset with the city choirs and in

⁵³ Weber, *Music and the Middle Class*, 101.

⁵⁴ *Spectator*, January 4 (1934): 13. Weber, *Music and the Middle Class*, 98.

the Autumn of that year several of the choirs banded together to present an Amateur Music festival of Handel oratorios. Ultimately they constituted themselves as the Sacred Harmonic Society, and (predictably filled with dissenters) continued to be a body of reckoning against social discrimination.⁵⁵ Ultimately, though, ‘cultural experience served as an entry-point into a new class’.⁵⁶ As much as some resented the former snobbery of the higher-class musical world, their campaign brought them into an increasingly equal position. A little over a decade later Ruskin’s comments towards taste in relation to social health bore particular resonance:

Of all the arts [music] is most directly ethical in origin, [and] also the most direct in power of discipline: the first, the simplest, the most effective of all instruments of moral instruction; while in failure and betrayal of its functions, it becomes the subtlest aid of moral degradation. Music is thus in her health the teacher of perfect order, and is the voice of the obedience of angels...In her depravity, she is also the teacher of perfect disobedience, and the *Gloria in excelsis* becomes the *Marseillaise*.⁵⁷

In the orchestral realm, by comparison, The Concert of Ancient (formerly Antient) Music, founded in 1776, faltered and eventually died in 1848 in part because of their exclusiveness and conservative repertory, but also their amateurish standards.⁵⁸ By contrast to the later town hall model their audiences were described as ‘most pertinaciously exclusive of any other persons than of such as had the privilege of belonging to the ‘upper ten thousand’. Even for those attending it was only to ‘be wearied to death with the unceasing round of dull

⁵⁵ Weber, *Music and the Middle Class*, 102-103.

⁵⁶ Ibid, 124.

⁵⁷ John Ruskin, *Queen of the Air: Being a Study of the Greek Myths of Cloud and Storm* (London: Smith, Elder, 1869), 59. Quoted in Robert Stradling and Meiron Hughes, *The English Musical Renaissance 1860-1940* (London and New York: Routledge, 1993), 11-12.

⁵⁸ Ehrlich, *The Music Profession*, 59.

conformity'.⁵⁹ The Philharmonic Society, established in 1813 with the intention of appealing to the middle-class audience, initially restricted its tickets to subscribers, but in 1841 began to make tickets available to the general public.⁶⁰ By 1848 a commercial concert world had emerged in London, over which the middle-class exerted considerable control.⁶¹ Indeed the growth of concerts since the 1830s allowed for a social scene that had a high degree of malleability between the classes.⁶² However, it too was stuck with a traditionalist repertoire and limped along for a time.

By the 1860s, London's musical scene had become largely professional and the once predominately amateur orchestras and conductors no longer held the stage as they once did.⁶³ Extricating the music profession from amateurism was not easy because, by default, it meant finding sponsorship for concerts or presenting programmes that would have sufficient appeal to generate a ticket buying public. It was in this climate that 'pops' concerts came into being. At the centre of these endeavours were George Grove and the conductor Arthur Manns whose Crystal Palace concerts on Saturdays 'formed the backbone of orchestral musical culture in England' between 1855 and 1901'.⁶⁴

During the 1850s a dichotomy had arisen whereby music deemed serious and less serious was becoming more keenly defined, even though the nomenclature 'popular' was not used outside of Britain.⁶⁵ This distinction between the styles allied to 'taste publics',⁶⁶ whereby artistic

⁵⁹ J. E. Cox *Musical Recollections of the Last Half Century* ([S.I]: Lensley, 1872), 43-44. Ehrlich, *The Music Profession*, 59.

⁶⁰ Ehrlich, *The Music Profession*, 59.

⁶¹ Weber, *Music and the Middle Class*, 7.

⁶² *Ibid*, 9.

⁶³ Ehrlich, *The Music Profession*, 60.

⁶⁴ *Ibid*, 61.

⁶⁵ Weber, *The Great Transformation*, 2.

⁶⁶ Weber, *Music and the Middle Class*, 10.

tastes sprung from social attitudes has a particular relevance concerning the town hall setting.

William Weber notes:

Each of the two kinds of culture has usually had wide class bases, and in some instances popular culture has had more prestigious support than high culture. ...Popular culture is always assumed to be contemporaneous and non-esoteric; people take for granted that they do not have to know anything special to appreciate it. High culture is the opposite: focused upon classical forms, it is assumed to require some kind of knowledge for its comprehension, and thereby receives an elevated culture standing.⁶⁷

Thus to bring classical music such as orchestral transcriptions into the town hall is to merge these two publics, for if the performance is to be for the people it must not seem unapproachable but at the same time music of the higher culture historically engenders a certain distance.

Whether the corporation saw how far reaching their vision could be in hiring Best we can only conjecture, but what remains undeniable is that their town organist broke not only musical boundaries but quite pronounced class distinctions as well. Indeed by 1840, whereas the practice of having reserved seating at concerts at a higher price had become common in London⁶⁸ – the policy did not extend to the more forward-thinking town halls. Further, as much as the middle class sought new kinds of leisure elsewhere, the town hall could now provide for intellectual stimulation as well.

This separation of musical culture from a single mooring has continued to the present day, and indeed fractionalised still further. As much as there was a culture of advancement

⁶⁷ Ibid

⁶⁸ Ibid, 25.

through industrial endeavours - and the organ as an instrument benefitted from both technological advancements as well as the beneficial climate and the establishment of new churches – the musical world became concerned with how to harness the best of the past and what to consider (if anything) in the future. As Carl Dahlhaus noted:

What was fundamentally new about nineteenth-century musical culture was the overpowering presence of earlier music, a presence that has apparently become irrevocable in our century.⁶⁹

Programming for the masses

When surveying the repertoire performed during Best's first season as reproduced in the *Musical World* (Fig. 1), it is difficult to imagine the vast array of works was not either a repertoire list for an entire career, or at the very least a summation of several years' employment. The volume of pieces performed is simply staggering by the conditions of any age.

The opera overture, considered *approachable*, even if different examples would appeal to different tastes,⁷⁰ had been a staple of the orchestral programme for a century. However, as Weber observes, from 1750 to around 1830 it had been seen at the opposite end of the spectrum from the scholastic fugue. By 1850 this trend had already started to shift in piano recitals and the works of Bach occurred frequently.⁷¹ More interesting though is Best's inclusion of Haydn whose music had gone from great popularity around 1800 to being performed only at 'learned classical music concerts' by 1840,⁷² whereas the performance of

⁶⁹ Carl Dahlhaus, *Nineteenth-Century Music*, tr. J. Bradford Robinson (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1989), 22. Weber, *The Great Transformation*, 3.

⁷⁰ Weber, *The Great Transformation*, 36-37.

⁷¹ Ibid

⁷² Ibid

the more well-known operas and oratorios could be perceived to transcend the distinction between popular and esoteric music'.⁷³

Opera overtures had taken on a popular life of their own and certainly beyond the 'serious' classical music orchestral series. In the mid-nineteenth century, arrangements could be heard in band concerts, street ensembles and eventually music halls,⁷⁴ and in some respects Best was able to capitalise on this familiarity whilst injecting a broader repertoire of overtures into the mix. Even in one season Best offered excerpts from more operas to his audience in Liverpool than a London audience was likely to encounter, however passionate they may have been for the art-form.

It is interesting to note the differentiation the *Musical World* gave to 'Fantasias' and 'Dramatic Music' as both have an improvisatory nature about them. The fantasias played directly to the socio-political climate with a focus almost entirely on national airs. Had Best simply followed the path of writing yet another set of variations on *God save the Queen* (which he later included), his contribution would simply have been part of a seemingly illimitable lineage. To focus on the patriotism of the people, through airs or folk melodies, was as innovative in the organ literature as it was judicious. In a similar vein Heathcote Statham noted that the only movement he ever heard of George Onslow's – a French musician of English ancestry – 'now forgotten' quartets was the one heard at St. George's Hall.⁷⁵

⁷³ Dahlhaus, *Nineteenth-Century Music*, 35.

⁷⁴ Weber, *The Great Transformation*, 144.

⁷⁵ H. Heathcote Statham, *The Organ and its Position in Musical Art* (London: Chapman and Hall, 1909), 222.

Reminiscences

Best's description of what the *Reminiscences* would involve musically stresses that the genre – mastered in piano form by Liszt – would likely have been unknown to Liverpool audiences. Of course the title is a little curious to the English, for to 'reminisce' one must have already encountered an experience and Liverpool audiences were not hearing these melodies in a salon environment having already attended the opera. In the French psyche though the idea of a dream-like musical sequence was completely legitimate. However in a socio-musical setting Best was transporting the classes *en masse* to a theatrical world of which most had little true concept. In this sense we might suggest Best was providing an 'aural promenade' replete with special effects and unique touches. Certainly the *Reminiscences* bore no direct relation to anything experienced in previous organ recitals, not least due to the more typical ecclesiastical setting of the church, but he may well have felt it necessary. As Heathcote Statham observed:

In the earlier days of his Liverpool recitals Best seemed certainly to be afraid of making too severe a demand on the musical perceptions of his popular audiences. He thought it necessary to amuse them to some extent with what they could be supposed to understand, and a regular feature at first in the programmes was a *pot-pourri* under the title "Reminiscences of Popular Opera" – selections from the air and concerted pieces from "Don Giovanni," "Figaro," "Guillaume Tell," or from some of the still more popular operas of Verdi, Donizetti, and Bellini, bound together with short improvised connecting-links. From the point of view of the young purist [Statham]....this seemed a wretched beginning; I fairly hated those *pot-pourris*. But it must be remembered that the organist had before him the task of interesting a popular audience, at sixpence a head, in three recitals a week the whole year round, except

during the Assizes....But it was not very long before the concessions to popular taste were abandoned, and the programmes consisted entirely of classical music.⁷⁶

Reminiscing in Belfast

Indeed the ‘reminiscences’ did not last beyond the first season in Liverpool. It was a novel ploy to attract an audience, especially as so few would have had first-hand experience of the actual opera. Interestingly in a concert by Best at the Ulster Hall, Belfast on 30 November 1868, he included a ‘Fantasia on themes from the Opera *Dinorah*’ by Meyerbeer.⁷⁷ This bears elaboration because of the respective Belfast tenures of Edmund Chipp and his successor, Alfred Cellier, who arrived in 1866. When Belfast was first looking for an organist it was clear Best could not be enticed from Liverpool⁷⁸ and the post was filled by Chipp, who had been organist at the Royal Panopticon, Leicester Square after Best.

Chipp’s first programme (1862) had consisted of ‘Bach’s ‘St. Anne’ fugue, the ‘Hallelujah’ chorus, a portion of the ‘Harmonious Blacksmith,’ a Pleyel Andante and a Mendelssohn organ sonata’.⁷⁹ Within a year the concerts were breaking even but little more. The following season he no longer played Bach fugues or Mendelssohn sonatas in any profusion and instead began to introduce vocal and instrumental soloists.⁸⁰ When his successor Alfred Cellier arrived in 1866 he broadened the programme still further with the introduction of military bands,⁸¹ but the series never achieved the popularity of Liverpool. Thus Best’s decision to include a ‘reminiscence’ in 1868, when he had stopped including them in Liverpool, attests to their ability to at least (in theory) to draw an audience that is less sophisticated. Cellier’s use of militaristic music also helps explain Best’s reasoning behind the utilisation of eight

⁷⁶ Statham, *The Organ*, 219-220.

⁷⁷ *Musical Standard*, Vol. ix, No. 230 (1868): 251

⁷⁸ Johnston, “Here we will sit,” 223.

⁷⁹ *Ibid*, 225.

⁸⁰ *Ibid*, 226.

⁸¹ *Ibid*, 229.

marches in his first season as they likely met with ready audience approval as well as playing to the patriotic gallery.

The infusion of music of Sir Henry Bishop from the ballad opera tradition, listed beside Haydn, Mozart and Spohr, indicates not only how fast Best was able to break down the barriers that had so long kept the lower classes from hearing the greater works, but also that he was able to incorporate a popular figure from the English opera world alongside the celebrated continental masters. Best's desire simply to present fine works, regardless of their provenance, was in no short measure remarkably far-sighted as well as supremely egalitarian. By today's sensibilities Best had adopted a popular concert aesthetic, but by comparison with the larger contemporary musical world, he was not so much a flamboyant Paganini as part Hallé, part Liszt. In every sense he laid the path for Edwin Lemare to continue further with his expansion into Wagner transcriptions in later generations.

Figure 1

A resumé of the programmes given during W. T. Best's first year as Organist of the Hall

Music by composers for the organ

Concertos	Handel
Sonatas	Mendelssohn
Offertoires	Lefébure-Wely
Concerto	Rinck
Preludes and Fugues	J. S. Bach
Miscellaneous Organ Pieces by:	Hesse
	Freyer
	Kullak
	W. T. Best
	Bach
	Handel
	Rinck

Oratorio and other sacred music

Songs: Handel

*What though I trace
Angels ever bright and fair
Let me wander not unseen
Honour and arms
He was despised
From mighty kings
Verdi prati
O lovely peace
He layeth the beams
Let the bright seraphim
O had I Jubal's lyre
Hush ye pretty warbling choir
Love sounds the alarm
O ruddier than the cherry*

Choruses: Handel

*From the censer
Let their celestial concerts
May no rash intruder
Oh, the pleasure of the plains
Hallelujah
For unto us
The king shall rejoice
Be as for his people
He gave them hailstones
How excellent
Sing unto God
The Coronation Anthem
You hearts and cymbals sound*

Sacred Music: Mozart

Motet: *Splendente te Deus*
Quartet: *Recordare*
Air: *Agnus Dei*, and
Chorus: *Dona nobis*
Chorus: *Gloria in excelsis*
Quartet: *Benedictus*, and
Chorus: *Hosanna* [Requiem]

Sacred Music: Haydn

Air: *On mighty wings*
Chorus: *The Heavens are telling*
Quartet: *Et incarnates*
Air: *With verdure clad*

Sacred Music: Rossini

Trio: *Tantum ergo*
 Chorus: *La carita*
 Prayer: *Dal tuo stellato*
 Air: *Cujus animam*
 Chorus: *Ex Inflammatus*
 Air: *Pro peccatis*
 Quartet: *Quando corpus*
 Air: *Fac ut portem*
 Quartet: *Sancta mater [Stabat Mater]*

Chorus: <i>Hallelujah [Mount of Olives]</i>	Beethoven
Chorus: <i>Hosanna, Son of David</i>	Lindpainter
Air: <i>If with all your hearts</i>	Mendelssohn
Chorus: <i>Be not afraid</i>	
Air: <i>Oh, rest in the Lord</i>	
Air: <i>Hear ye, Israel [Elijah]</i>	
Trio: <i>O Jesu, O pastor bonus</i>	Winter

Instrumental Music

Andante [1 st Symphony]	Beethoven
Andante [2 nd Symphony]	
Andante [7 th Symphony]	
Adagio [Sonata, Op. 2]	
Andante with variations [Septuor]	
Adagio [3 rd Symphony]	Mendelssohn
Andante [Trio in C minor]	
Andante [Symphony No. 9]	Mozart
Adagio [Symphony 5]	
Andante [Quintett in C minor]	
Gavotta [from an Overture]	J. S. Bach
Air with variations [Suites des pieces]	Handel
<i>The Harmonious Blacksmith</i>	
Romanza [Op. 56]	Fesca
Allegretto [<i>Military Symphony</i>]	Haydn
Romanza [Symphony <i>La Reine de France</i>] [No. 85]	
Andante [1 st Symphony]	
Andante [3 rd Symphony]	
Adagio and Allegro [Symphony in D]	
Adagio [Op. 60]	Weber
Air with variations	Rode
Air with variations	Hatton

Marches

The Wedding March	Mendelssohn

Marche du Sacre [<i>Le Prophète</i>]	Meyerbeer
War March	Mendelssohn
Marche Triomphale	W. T. Best
Marcia Caractéristique	Kalliwoda
Grand March [<i>Egmont</i>]	Beethoven
Marche des Bardes	Herz
Grand March [<i>Jessonda</i>]	Spohr

Fantasias

Fantasia on old English airs	W. T. Best
Military Fantasia	
Fantasia on Scotch airs	
Fantasia upon English national melodies	

Dramatic Music

'*Reminiscences*' of the following operas: (-the most striking and popular subjects of each opera are brought together, forming a *fantasia* of more than ordinary length)

[W. T. Best]

<i>L'Etoile du nord</i>	Meyerbeer
<i>Les Huguenots</i>	
<i>Robert de Diable</i>	
<i>Die Zauberflöte</i>	Mozart
<i>Le Nozze di Figaro</i>	
<i>Don Giovanni</i>	
<i>La Sonnambula</i>	Bellini
<i>I Puritani</i>	
<i>Norma</i>	
<i>Lucrezia Borgia</i>	Donizetti
<i>Lucia di Lammermoor</i>	
<i>Ernani</i>	Verdi
<i>Il Trovatore</i>	
<i>Masaniello</i>	Auber
<i>Der Freyschutz</i>	Weber
<i>Oberon</i>	
<i>Euryanthe</i>	
<i>Maritana</i>	
<i>The Bohemian Girl</i>	Balfe
<i>Guglielmo Tell</i>	Rossini

Miscellaneous Concerted Music

Quintett: <i>Now by day's retiring lamp</i>	Sir Henry Bishop
Chorus: <i>The tiger crouches</i>	
Trio and Chorus: <i>The Chough and Crow</i>	
Serenade: <i>Sleep, gentle lady</i>	
Quartett: <i>Breathe my harp</i>	

Chorus: <i>The halt of the caravan</i>	
Chorus: <i>Allegiance we swear</i>	
Quintett: <i>Blow, gentle gales</i>	
Trio: <i>This magic wove scarf</i>	Barnett
Quartett: <i>A te o cara</i>	Bellini
Quartett: <i>Lo, the early beam of morning</i>	Balfe
<i>Chant of Vivadières</i>	Meyerbeer
<i>Dolce conforto</i>	Mercadante
<i>Dans ce séjour</i>	Rossini
Duet: <i>Mira la bianca luna</i>	
Duet: <i>Come, be gay</i>	Weber
Duet: <i>Ah perdona</i>	Mozart
Chorus: <i>Come gentle spring</i>	Haydn
Duet: <i>Dearest, let thy footsteps glide</i>	Spohr

Miscellaneous Songs

<i>Could I thor' aether fly</i>	Molique
<i>When the moon is brightly shining</i>	
<i>Angiol d'amour</i>	Donizetti
<i>Cupa fatal mestizia</i>	
<i>Voi che sapete</i>	Mozart
<i>Qui adegno</i>	
<i>Di piacer</i>	Rossini
<i>The Mermaid's Song</i>	Weber
<i>A wealthy Lord [The Seasons]</i>	Haydn

Overtures

<i>Jubilee</i>	Weber
<i>Preciosa</i>	
<i>Oberon</i>	
<i>Euryanthe</i>	
<i>Der Freyschütz</i>	
<i>Peter Schmoll</i>	
<i>Don Giovanni</i>	Mozart
<i>Der Zauberflöte</i>	
<i>Cenerentola</i>	Rossini
<i>Siege of Corinth</i>	
<i>Il Barbiero di Siviglia</i>	
<i>La Gazza Ladra</i>	
<i>Tancredi</i>	
<i>L'Inganno Felice</i>	
<i>Guglielmo Tell</i>	
<i>L'Italiana in Algeri</i>	
<i>Masaniello</i>	Auber
<i>Le Duc d'Orlonne</i>	
<i>Zanetta</i>	
<i>Fra Diavolo</i>	

<i>Le Cheval de Bronze</i>	
<i>Le Domino Noi</i>	
<i>Coriolanus</i>	Beethoven
<i>Fidelio</i>	
<i>Jessonda</i>	Spohr
<i>Die Setzen Diogo</i>	
<i>L'Etiole du Nord</i>	Meyerbeer
<i>Belisario</i>	Donizetti
<i>Macbeth</i>	Dr. E. J. Loder
<i>Athalia</i>	Handel
<i>Saul</i>	
<i>Esther</i>	
<i>Samson</i>	
<i>Stratonice</i>	Méhul
<i>Die Hochzeit des Comacho</i>	Mendelssohn
<i>A Midsummer Night's Dream</i>	
<i>Son and Stranger</i>	
<i>Military Overture, Op. 24</i>	
<i>Yelva</i>	Reissiger
<i>Zampa</i>	Hérold
<i>Luisa Miller</i>	Verdi
<i>Gutenberg</i>	C. Löwe
<i>Henry the Eighth</i>	J. L. Hatton
<i>Maritana</i>	W. V. Wallace
<i>Le Caid</i>	Ambroise Thomas

Best gave 77 concerts during this first season, with an aggregate total of 211 different compositions.

‘.....we think great praise is due to Mr. Best, not only for his well-known talent on the organ, but for the taste and skill he has displayed in catering for the varied musical tastes and pleasures of the “masses”. The universal appreciation he has met with reflects credit both upon his own talents and the judgement of the corporation, in selecting him to preside over the magnificent instrument in St. George’s Hall.....’

Musical World, Vol. xxxiv, No 36, 6 September, 1856: 570-571

Best’s programming style remained much the same for his entire career at St. George’s Hall, with a final performance in September 1894. Beyond an examination of the genres represented in Best’s programmes, diverse as they are, a related enquiry must be his style of programming. Because the organ could play all the repertoire, Best became the singer, the chorus, the string quartet, and the orchestra all in one. Indeed he could wear all these musical hats in a solitary programme. Thus the opinions of singers, or of the balance between

chamber and orchestra works, let alone the issues of foreign performers were mute, or at least largely inconsequential. It is interesting to note that though Best could have engaged soloists for a 'concerto' to be played on his concert - and thus broadened his professional reach into the mainstream of music-making – he only rarely worked with other instrumentalists in that capacity beyond the early years when their presence was perhaps thought essential. Best was only an accompanist when the situation compelled him to be so. Indeed the anecdotes of him instructing a choir to follow him instead of a less able conductor attest to a certain impatience with other professional musicians.

By January of his first year Best had found his stride in a programming formula that would serve him well for the rest of his career. With little deviation, programmes started with an opera overture or a Handel concerto. The inclusion of a Handel concerto would have satisfied many a listener immediately, and in turn placed the audience 'at ease' with the otherwise fairly remote concept of an organ concert. It also bore association with the chronological nature of recitals that pianists were readily acquiring. To be seen to be 'learned' as well as 'popular' is something that could well have appealed to Best, despite his gruff exterior. However, the employment of an opera overture brought him into a lineage inherited from the promenade concerts which he would certainly have known from London.

A programme from 1856 (Fig. 2) demonstrates many of these factors together, by comparing a programme of Best to the first half of a promenade concert of Louis Juillien at the Covent Garden Theatre some twelve years earlier. In essence Best borrows from the, by then, well-tested popular promenade formula. It proved to serve both the town hall and promenade audience equally well until the latter part of the century.

Figure 2

London, Covent Garden Theatre
12 February, 1844⁸²

Overture: <i>Anacréon</i> (1803)	Cherubini
<i>Highland Quadrille</i>	Jullien
Cornet Solo, <i>Adieu Romance</i>	Roch-Albert [Jullien]
<i>Valse à deux Temps</i>	Jullien
Descriptive Fantasia, <i>The Destruction of Pompeii</i>	Roch-Albert

W. T. Best
Liverpool, St. George's Hall
[?] 15 March, 1856⁸³

Overture: <i>Guttenberg</i>	C. Löwe
Air: <i>When the moon is brightly shining</i>	Molique
Reminiscences of <i>Les Huguenots</i>	Meyerbeer [Best]
Quinett: <i>Blow, gentle gales</i>	Bishop
Air: <i>Let the bright seraphim</i>	Handel

⁸² Adam Carse, *Life of Jullien* (Cambridge: Heffer, 1951), 48-49. Weber, *The Great Transformation*, 217.

⁸³ *Musical World*, Vol. xxxiv, No 12, (1856): 183.



Louis Jullien⁸⁴

An interesting comparison of Best's own style as well as his awareness of professional position can be found in contrasting his programme for the opening of the Willis organ at the Royal Albert Hall with a recital at the same venue a week later. (Fig. 3) The first programme demonstrates a certain conservatism on Best's part with the complete absence of any transcriptions or reminiscences. However he does include a Handel concerto, a Mendelssohn sonata (much favoured by the metropolitan organist cognoscenti), two major preludes and fugues of Bach, and the works of two composers with whom he had crossed swords: Wesley and ('old Neddy') Hopkins. He had commented to Hopkins:

My programme is to consist of live Englishmen and dead Germans, and I want you to write a piece for me.⁸⁵

Again, despite the terse commentary he could unleash, he remained a consummate politician as aside from ingratiating himself with colleagues, he also promoted the cause of the British composer – a point that was to become a central factor in subsequent generations.

⁸⁴ Unknown, "Louis Jullien", PD, JPG. <http://musicb3.files.wordpress.com/2011/04/louis-jullien1.jpg>

⁸⁵ Levien, *Best*, 29.

Figure 3

W. T. Best
London, Royal Albert Hall
18 July, 1871

Part 1

Organ Concerto [no. 2]	Handel
Choral Song and Fugue	S. S. Wesley
Andante grazioso [MS]	E. J. Hopkins
March in A minor	W. T. Best
Grand Prelude and Fugue [E flat – <i>St. Anne</i>]	J. S. Bach

Part 2

Organ Sonata No. 1	Mendelssohn
Andante Pastorale and Fugue [E major]	W. T. Best
Air with variations in A minor [MS]	H. Smart
Prelude and Fugue in D major	J. S. Bach

By comparison, the programme for 23 July reverts to his customary town hall formula, beginning with an overture (albeit from an oratorio) and once again including Mendelssohn in addition to the increasing popular Alexandre Guilmant.

London, Royal Albert Hall
23 July, 1871⁸⁶

Sacred Music

Overture to the Oratorio <i>Samson</i>	Handel
<i>Ave Maria</i> [Air and Chorus composed in the 17 th century]	Arcadelt
Allegretto Cantabile [from the Symphony to the <i>Hymn of Praise</i>]	Mendelssohn
March for a Church Festival	W. T. Best
Chorale: <i>Blessed Jesus, we are here</i> and Fugue on the Chorale: <i>We all believe in one God</i>	J. S. Bach
Adagio Religioso [with <i>Vox Humana</i>]	Alex. Guilmant
Chorus: <i>Hallelujah</i> [<i>Mount of Olives</i>]	Beethoven

⁸⁶ Archives of the Royal Albert Hall



The Grand Opening of the Royal Albert Hall by Queen Victoria, 1871⁸⁷

The publication of Kenneth Birkin's book on Hans von Bülow (Cambridge, 2011) has allowed for an interesting comparison of Best with a contemporary musician who, though more widely travelled, nonetheless functioned as a performer and conductor/interpreter, much as Best did in Liverpool. Whilst Best would assuredly have seen himself as an 'interpreter' rather than as a 'performer' (with all the virtuoso mannerisms that would imply) he did not move completely towards the conservative programming favoured by Clara Schumann or indeed von Bülow. However, it is quite conceivable that, once his audience became used to a diet that could cherry pick from the finest works of all genres, an austerity regime of purely canonical works might have seemed severe at best. Whilst von Bülow's touring programmes did not vary significantly from country to country – there is no example of an 'English concert' – the 'noble scheme' to educate the 'less aesthetically minded audience' sat well

⁸⁷ The grand opening of the Royal Albert Hall in London by Queen Victoria on 29 March 1871 as illustrated in *The Graphic*. JPG. PD.

with von Bülow's pedagogical philosophy.⁸⁸ Contrasting programmes on 24 November 1877 in Glasgow and 26 November in Edinburgh with Best's Royal Albert Hall recital not only highlight that Best was party to a larger trend, but also that the most esteemed musicians were intent on bringing not only a wider audience to the concert hall, but also at ease in styles of repertoire beyond the classical canon. (Figure 4)

Figure 4

Glasgow

24 November, 1877

Popular Concert 2 (English Night)

Hans von Bülow⁸⁹

Overture: <i>Chevy Chase</i>	Macfarren
Intermezzo and Scherzo	H. R. Gadsby
<i>Anacréon's Ode</i> (Chorus)	B. Cooke
Overture: <i>The Wood Nymph</i>	Sterndale Bennett
<i>The Merchant of Venice</i> (incidental music)	Sullivan
Overture: <i>Maritana</i>	W. V. Wallace
Harp solo	Parish-Alvers
'My Lady Sleeps' (Chorus)	J. L. Hatton
Adagio & Andante (<i>Prometheus</i>)	Beethoven
<i>Neu Wien</i> Op. 342 (Waltz)	J. Strauss
'The winds whistle cold' (Chorus)	H. Bishop
Overture: <i>Tannhäuser</i>	Wagner

Edinburgh

26 November, 1877

Hans von Bülow

Overture: <i>Les deux journées</i>	Cherubini
Piano Concerto No. 3 in G major Op. 45	Beethoven
[Bülow c. Zavertal]	
Aria: 'Awake Saturnia' (<i>Semele</i>)	Handel
[Helen Arnim]	
Symphony in G minor	Sterndale Bennett
Overture: <i>Meeresstille u. Glückliche Fahrt</i>	Mendelssohn
Op. 27	
Air: 'O del mio dolce ardour'	Stradella
[Helen Arnim]	
<i>In our Boat</i>	A. Mackenzie

⁸⁸ Kenneth Birkin, *Hans von Bülow* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2011), 262.

⁸⁹ *Ibid.*, 541.

[Helen Arnim/Carrodus/Bülow]	Massenet
<i>Sarabande espagnole du XVI siècle</i>	Meyerbeer
'The Revolt' Polonaise (<i>Struensee</i>)	
Overture: <i>Struensee</i>	Meyerbeer

In comparing Best's programmes with those of the Philharmonic Society (London) an interesting summary may be drawn. Whereas their early programmes (beginning in 1817) start with a classical symphony and generally include some solo or small vocal ensemble singing and a chamber work, by 1876 the overture has taken the place of the symphony as the first work on the programme.⁹⁰ However, the variety of styles (save for a whole concerto) and content would have been just as welcomed by Best's Liverpool audiences. (Figure 5)

Figure 5

Philharmonic Society
13 July, 1874⁹¹

Part I

Overture: 'The Isles of Fingal'	Mendelssohn
Cantata: 'Il Nerone'	Stradella
Mr. Santley	
(For whom St. M Costa arranged and scored it)	
Concerto for Pianoforte in G	Beethoven
Mons. Camille Saint-Saëns	
Recit.: 'Crudele' Aria: 'Non mi dir'	Mozart
(<i>Don Giovanni</i>)	
Mlle Titiens	
Overture: 'William Tell'	Rossini

Part II

Symphony in A (No. 7)	Beethoven
Duet: 'La dove prende' (<i>Il Flauto Magico</i>)	Mozart
Overture: 'Jubilee'	Weber

(In relation to this concert Saint-Saëns wrote 'if my own Concerto alarms you, I will play Beethoven'. Evidently it did alarm the directors as he played Beethoven instead!⁹²)

⁹⁰ Myles Birket Foster, *History of the Philharmonic Society of London: 1813-1912* (London: John Lane, The Bodley Head, 1912), 354.

⁹¹ Ibid, 346.

⁹² Ibid, 343.

Finally, we can observe a legacy inherited within academia in Stanford's programming at Trinity College, Cambridge in 1872 (Figure 6). Once again the programme begins with an overture. In place of a Handel organ concerto we see the popular Rinck Flute Concerto as well as further works from the well-known canon.

Figure 6

Charles Villiers Stanford
Trinity College, Cambridge
24 May, 1872⁹³

Overture in C Minor, Op. 95	Mendelssohn
Adagio from Sonata in C, Op. 24	Weber
Flute Concerto	Rinck
a. Allegro	
b. Adagio	
c. Allegro con brio	
Notturmo in F minor, Op. 55. No. 1	Chopin
Larghetto in A	Beethoven
(from Symphony no. 2 in D)	
Lieder	Schumann
a. Widmung (in A flat)	
b. Mailed (in E)	
Organ Fantasia	Sir R. P. Stewart, Mus. D
a. Maestoso	
b. Andante	
c. Allegro	

The Best Defence

Walter Parratt famously criticised Best's 'arrangements' as 'misapplied skill', but this may not simply have been a musical rivalry so much as perceived superiority of status. Parratt, professor at the Royal College of Music, Organist of St. George's Windsor, and knight of the realm must have seethed at the ignobility of Best's choice to turn down a knighthood in preference to a pension for life – Best had done so primarily for pragmatic reasons. At the

⁹³ Jeremy Dibble, 'Stanford and the Organ Recitals at Trinity College, Cambridge 1872-1893', *Journal of the British Institute of Organ Studies*, 18 (1995): 158-170.

very least it was an affront to the establishment, and the London establishment had already contended with Best giving the opening recital at the Royal Albert Hall. However, Parratt's disparaging view - not unlike many who have since misunderstood Best - flounders when countered with the essential argument that the Liverpool master aimed to obfuscate by his programming. Far from being a charlatan, eager to capitalise on the novelty of symphonic transcriptions played on the new organs of the day, Best was in fact arguing that as the very finest music of all genres could be played on the instrument, why not seize the opportunity? Were audiences outside the metropolis to be denied access to the works of the masters? But secondly, (and this is the tetchy issue for the profession, especially as it sought to shore up its base in greater society,) the organ repertoire as it was known, was severely lacking from a concert perspective. The connection to the church had, by default, deprived the contemporary performer of an adequate concert repertoire. Best writes in response to Parratt:

Bach was the father of all arrangers, as he accommodates Vivaldi's violin concertos to the expressionless German organ of his day with its intractable pedal bass.

Mr. Parratt urges 'that the erection of large concert hall organs and the necessity for pleasing Saturday-night audiences, has had a disastrous influence over organ music, as in the majority of such programmes two-third at least are arrangements of orchestral and choral works.'

It must be remembered, however, that in endeavouring to raise the musical taste of the humbler classes, the municipal authorities of our large towns did not intend their concert organs to be restricted to the performance of preludes and fugues, and somewhat dry sonatas. As is the case with orchestra; concerts of a popular character, the higher forms of composition have to be introduced both warily and gradually....It is gratifying to note that a better state of things exists now, and if we could obtain

anything approaching Mozart's great Fantasia in F minor, all would be well. Modern German composers are now timidly adding *crescendo* and *diminuendo* to their organ pieces, the builders being compelled to advance with the times and provide their lifeless stacks of pipes with the means of musical expression common to all English and French organs....The works of Mr. Parratt's favourite composers - Herren Merkel and Rheinberger - though in undeniable organ form, are apt to pall upon cultivated ears. Their numerous sonatas, in particular, bear a strong family likeness, the chief themes being encumbered with a wearisome technical development, too often proclaiming the manufactured article rather than the presence of the creative impulse, while the enormous length of many of the movements effectually prevents a frequent performance!⁹⁴

Conclusion

Whether Best perceived himself as a virtuoso or great educator is conjecture, although many esteemed musicians of his era would rush to support the case for either accolade. What we can be certain of, however, is that he saw a unique role for the organ, and to some extent himself, as a musical force from which great artistic achievement could serve for the betterment of a growing society. That the larger portion of his career was devoted to one city testifies to this commitment to a broad, yet subtle pedagogical reach, not unlike von Bülow's educational desires. That Best also published several organ primers also supports this suggestion.

The uniqueness of Best's programming style, and thus the value of its study, was his innate skill in adapting to the audience at hand, and there were many. The initial formula for

⁹⁴ Levien, *Best*, 23.

Liverpool was applied when opening the organ at the Royal Albert Hall, and even programming at the RAH was altered within a week. Similarly the return of the 'reminiscence' in Belfast showed Best to be a master of selecting the very best from the work of others. Was Best a promenade organist? I would suggest not even remotely for if he sought a populist role he could have continued further along his initial trajectory and even become a 'ballad organist'. Rather Best chartered a course all his own.

The legacy of Best is two-fold and we shall address the chronological aspect first. Although Best's approach had been supremely received, it once again set the organ world apart, or rather divided it. Parratt's later positive comments of Best did not remove the stigma attached to the town hall organist, although arguably those opinions have never extended beyond the community of organists - audiences were never so consistently judgemental. Barely two generations later, Edwin Lemare experienced difficulties in employment practice in numerous American institutions - the civic organist's lot is never an easy one. Today, of all the 'town halls' that still present a weekly series, Liverpool no longer features in the listings, a fate that would have been unimaginable in the late nineteenth century, or would it?

If we conjecture that Best knew his audiences well and sought to educate them beyond that of any other single musician we must assume that the advancement of the musical art would have pleased him greatly. That Liverpool now boasts a professional orchestra that does not rely on the good graces of Manchester professionals, has a university music department, and two cathedral choirs attests to the groundwork Best helped to set in place. As Manchester can, and does, celebrate Hallé, Liverpool can laud their prince who, as his name suggests, knew no equal. However his extraordinary ability to conjure concerts filled with such a broad array of canonical as well as popular works shows the work of a master craftsman intent on

pursuing a higher artistic calling. He was, in the words of a small girl who attended his concerts, 'the magic music man'.⁹⁵

⁹⁵ Levien, *Best*, preface [ii]

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