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## ABSTRACT

The years 1910 to 1914 were not a period of turmoil which gradually degenerated into war, neither were they merely an extension of the Edwardian era of peace and stability. They were a time of upheaval, development and revitalisation, the changes precipitated by which have been largely overshadowed by the more radical disturbance of the Great War.

The unsettled mood of these four years is reflected in contemporary social, political and artistic life, nowhere more clearly than in the realm of music. This was an enormously rich and prolific period in the history of English music; musical life was flourishing on a hitherto unprecedented scale, and there were more and better composers to be found in England than at any period since the seventeenth century. The enrichment of English music brought about by the late nineteenth century renaissance was revitalised by the appearance of the second generation of renaissance composers, and the machinery of musical life was stimulated into further activity.

This thesis examines the nature of the innovations that characterised early Georgian artistic activity, outlines the early history of the English musical renaissance, makes a detailed examination of the music composed in England during the four pre-War years and describes the flourishing musical life of London and the provinces at the time. From this factual evidence it emerges that there was much that was new about early Georgian English music and musical activity; the abundance itself was new, but there were also innovations and developments which look forward to post-War practice. In artistic and musical terms, the year 1910 marks as important a watershed as the year 1914.

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

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

by

Richard Charles Hall

In two volumes

VOLUME ONE

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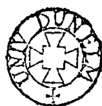
## Chapter 1: Politics, Society and the Arts in early Georgian England

The period of time which elapsed between the death of King Edward VII and the outbreak of the First World War has been curiously misrepresented by English historians. These four years, sandwiched as they are between two periods of markedly individual character, are rarely if ever considered at all independently; they are regarded either as the prelude to and breeding ground of the Great War, or else merely as a continuation of the Edwardian era. It is futile to attempt to isolate one period from what came before and what followed after, especially in the case of so short a span as this; but if one first scrutinises the years in question and then attempts to relate them to and compare them with preceding and succeeding periods, a much clearer, and in this case truer, picture emerges.

Much of the confusion about the period immediately preceding the Great War is attributable to the hugely disruptive influence of the War itself. So radical and far-reaching were the changes which the War brought about that, in comparison, developments in the pre-War years, matters of the utmost importance at the time, appeared increasingly less significant as the War progressed. Furthermore, the misery and hardship of the war years clouded the minds of those who lived through them and cast a false, rosy glow over their memories of the pre-War period. The combination of these two factors did much to blur the distinction between the Edwardian era proper and the immediate pre-War years; looking back in 1919 across the chasm of the four-and-a-half years of hostilities, men saw a period of peace and stability, of ease and prosperity, stretching from the midsummer of 1914 right back into the nineteenth century. And so firmly did this view inbed itself in the national consciousness that it still obtains today.



Until comparatively recently the Great War has been seen as the inevitable outcome of a period of national mismanagement and international misunderstanding, a time during which, in the words of David Lloyd George,"We all muddled into War".[1] This remark is usually taken as referring to the years immediately before the War, but,if it has any application,it is to a rather earlier period, a time when a combination of blinkered national government and clumsy international dealings amongst the European powers had engendered the possibility of a major war. This uneasy climate in Europe was at least as old as the new century, and any of the international crises that shook the continent form 1905 onwards (the two Moroccan crises, the Bosnian crisis of 1908/09, the Italo-Turkish War of 1911 and the two Balkan wars of 1912 and 1913) could have erupted into a European war given the same amount of deliberately provocative manipulation as that which led to the outbreak of war in the summer of 1914. For as more facts emerge concerning the immediate causes of the outbreak of the First World War, it becomes clearer that it was not so much a war of accident as a war of design, deliberately instigated at what seemed a propitious time. The events of July 1914 might well have gone down in history as 'the Serbian crisis' had not Austria, at Germany's instigation, chosen to adopt an intransigent attitude towards Serbia, thus wilfully precipitating a major European war. In the light of this new evidence, there is no case to be made for regarding the Great War as the inevitable outcome of the general trend of events over the preceding years. No-one in England foresaw the War with any accuracy as to the time of its outbreak, its duration or its nature. Thus when examining the early Georgian period, it is blurring the issue to present the War as a dark cloud clearly visible above the horizon; one learns much more by blotting out the War altogether.

[1] quoted by A J P Taylor in "In defence of small nations", an article published in The Listener for 4th August 1977.

If the Great War period was far from being the natural successor to the early Georgian years, in what relationship do the latter stand to their immediate precursor, the Edwardian decade? Is there indeed any need to separate the four pre-War years from the high Edwardian decade 1900 - 1910? Many writers clearly feel that there is not. Percy Young, for instance, in his study of Edward Elgar states that "the Edwardian era, despite the succession of George V to the throne in 1910, effectively ended in 1914 ...";[1] and the historian Donald Read in his survey of the period extends the Edwardian age even further: " ... when did the Edwardian era finally end? The answer is - within about a year of the outbreak of war ... a full five years after the death of Edward VII himself on 6th May 1910".[2] The early summer of 1915 did indeed mark something of a watershed in English history, a watershed defined by the first full appreciation of the destructive power of the War. But hardly less significant, although largely overshadowed by later turns of events, were the changes in outlook and attitude which marked the opening of George V's reign; Virginia Woolf's dictum "in or about December 1910 human nature changed"[3] is far less of an over-statement than it might at first sight appear to be. Striking changes and developments are discernible in political, social and artistic spheres, giving to the four pre-War years a flavour quite unlike that normally associated with Edwardianism, and suggesting that, but for the massive upheaval of the War coming only four years later, 1910 would have come to be regarded as an important milestone in English history marking the completion of the transition from the nineteenth to the twentieth centuries.

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1 Elgar O M (1955) p 150

2 Edwardian England (1972) p 19

3 from her Collected Essays Vol. I (1966) p 320

This survey is an attempt to convey something of the richness and variety of the English musical scene during the four years preceding the Great War, and especially to point the new trends which distinguished 'early Georgian' from 'Edwardian' in the works of the English composers and in musical life in general. As a prelude to this, brief mention should be made of similar new trends apparent in the political, social and artistic life of the early Georgian years.

In the field of politics, the four years preceding the Great War were marked by considerable unrest. The seas of Edwardian political life had been by no means entirely tranquil, but in comparison with the tempests which raged from 1910 onwards, the first decade of the century witnessed only blustery squalls. Its success in both the General Elections of 1910 encouraged the Liberal Party to introduce a number of radically innovatory measures, most of which met with violent opposition. Early in 1911 the Liberals introduced their Parliament Bill, (which sought to curb severely the power of the House of Lords) and instituted the first salaries for Members of Parliament. From this, Asquith's Cabinet went on to present legislation concerned with the setting up of a National Insurance scheme, and, in April 1912, to introduce an Irish Home Rule Bill, a measure which caused the bitterest division in both Ireland and England, and caused the question of Irish Home Rule to become the most serious threat to national peace over the next four years. Irish opposition to the Bill was strongest in the predominantly Protestant North-Eastern corner of Ireland. An anti-Home Rule covenant, signed by a quarter of a million Ulstermen, was issued in September 1912, and Sir Edward Carson's Ulster Volunteers, equipped with arms from Germany, organised themselves into a highly efficient fighting

force some 100,000 strong. Catholic pro-Home Rule forces in the south of Ireland were armed and trained in similar numbers, and civil war in Ireland seemed imminent. Public opinion in England ran almost as high. In March 1914 a British Covenant was published supporting "any action" necessary to prevent the enforcement of Home Rule, and, in the same month, the Government ordered military movements to counter possible violence in the north of Ireland, an action which led to the so-called 'Curragh Mutiny', the resignation of large numbers of British Army officers who felt themselves unable to obey orders which might involve them in armed resistance to the Ulster forces. In short, by July 1914 Ireland stood on the brink of civil war, and a section of the British Army was in mutiny.

If the question of Irish Home Rule was the most serious area of unrest in pre-war Britain, in terms of the disruption of everyday life in England, it was closely rivalled by two other issues: the activities of the suffragettes and the unrest among the trade unions. Both problems had been simmering through the Edwardian decade and both erupted into violent conflict after the start of the new reign.

Since its formation in 1903, Mrs Pankhurst's Women's Social and Political Union had been agitating to secure the vote for women. At first, W.S.P.U. members restricted themselves to verbal protest, but by the beginning of George V's reign they had turned to more physically violent expressions of hostility, such as window smashing and the disruption of political meetings. Matters came to a head late in 1912. The Cabinet allowed clauses concerning the enfranchisement of women to be inserted into a Bill designed to extend the male franchise, but when at the last moment the Bill was blocked on a technical point, the suffragettes' cautious optimism turned to fury, and their actions became very

much more violent; Cabinet ministers were assaulted, bombs were thrown and there was systematic arson of churches and railway stations. This resort to open lawlessness led to the widespread arrest of suffragettes; imprisonment led to hunger strikes, and hunger strikes to forced feeding. The Government introduced highly controversial legislation in an effort to curb the violence; the hated 'Cat and Mouse Act' of 1913 allowed the victims of forced feeding to be released from prison for a few days recuperation, but then rearrested. By 1914 an impasse had been reached. The convictions of the suffragettes had led them to take extreme measures, measures which they felt to be entirely justified by the nature of their cause; but their violence had greatly increased and intensified opposition to the suffragette cause, and had even lost it the support of some of its more moderate sympathisers. This highly unstable stalemate was only relieved by the outbreak of war, when all imprisoned suffragettes were released and Mrs Pankhurst announced a temporary suspension of militant W.S.P.U. activity.

It is ironical that Lloyd George's National Insurance Act of 1912 was partly responsible, in a roundabout way, for much of the trade union unrest which marked the early years of George V's reign. This Act obliged the participants in the scheme to belong to "an approved society", which in many cases meant a trade union; thus union membership over the whole country increased by more than a third between 1911 and 1913. This greatly enlarged membership spurred the unions on to greater agitation on behalf of their members, and had its influence upon the long pent-up industrial discontent which from 1910 onwards had surfaced in the form of widespread strike action. In the November of that year, a large number of coal miners in South Wales began a strike which lasted

ten months and precipitated violent clashes between the strikers and the reinforcements of police and troops despatched from London to quell the rioting. When this strike was nearing its end in August 1911, the country had its first experience of a national railway strike,and,although the stoppage lasted only two days, its effect was devastating in an age when the railways were responsible for almost all movement of both passengers and freight. The seamen and the dockers also stopped work during this black year of 1911, and the temporary settlement of this dispute proved so unsatisfactory that within a year the entire work force of the London docks struck again. Indeed, 1912 marked the nadir of the poor industrial relations of this period; numerous small-scale strikes were overshadowed by the two-month national coal strike, the cause of widespread hardship amongst both the general public and the strikers themselves. It was not only the naturally pessimistic view of an opposition politician which caused Austen Chamberlain to write at this time: "More works are being closed down every day. More trains are being taken off the railways ... The whole machinery of national life is slowly stopping."[1]

As well as direct strike action, the early Georgian period witnessed considerable activity in the field of what might be termed theoretical trade unionism. This activity ranged from the publication of such extremist pamphlets as 'The Miners' Next Step' of 1912, which openly recommended "extremely drastic and militant action" culminating in a general strike, to the evolution of more moderate theories such as the formation of trade guilds and the inception of industrial co-ownership. A practice which had its roots in this period was that of the amalgamation of smaller unions to form larger and more powerful ones on the French and American model; by mid 1914 the railway unions had come near to achieving

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[1] quoted by Donald Read op. cit. p 194

such unity, and a temporary 'triple alliance' had been formed between the miners, the railwaymen and the dock workers for the purpose of initiating another bout of industrial action in the winter of 1914/15. War intervened, and for the moment here too the disputes were forgotten. But, as with the case of Irish Home Rule, the trade union discontent was only temporarily muzzled by the War, to break out again with redoubled violence in the post-War years.

All these areas of political unrest had features in common; in all, the release of long-stifled resentment led to open violence. Compared with the violence of the war years or of the post-War period, it seems slight; but in comparison with the conduct of political life in Edwardian or Victorian England, this violence was a matter for grave concern. An adjective used more than once by the Georgians themselves to describe their own times was 'feverish' (so different from 'golden age' epithet frequently applied to this same period by later generations), and the words 'freedom' and 'emancipation' were heard again and again in the mouths of the various dissenting groups. The seriousness of the unrest is underlined with a striking comparison by the historian D C Watt: "Most of the major powers in Europe stood on the edge of civil strife in the decade before 1914. But not even Austria-Hungary, only Russia in fact, had reached a state of disorder and division similar to that of affairs in Britain." [1] The mood of the country had far more in common with that of the post-War years than that of the England of Edward VII, and the change which coincided with the start of the new reign did not pass unnoticed; writing early in 1911, Winston Churchill remarked wistfully "All the world is changing at once". [2]

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

[2] quoted by Donald Read op cit p 255

Violence and dissension were not the whole story of the pre-War political and social revolution; the upheaval had its positive and constructive aspects. The increase in size and strength of the trade unions did much to better the lot of the working man, and the establishment of National Insurance and of Labour Exchanges (the first of which was opened in February 1910) provided a stabilising influence in the insecure world of industrial employment. The activities of the suffragettes marked one extreme of a general movement to better the position of women in society and remove some of the stifling legal and financial fetters which had previously precluded female independence. Even the activities of the supporters of Irish Home Rule, controversial and ultimately unsuccessful as they were, can be seen as a well-intentioned attempt to find a solution to a highly unsatisfactory situation inherited from a previous age.

Much of the progressive spirit encountered in early Georgian England is attributable to the improvements which were made to the education system at the end of the nineteenth century, the generation which arrived at adulthood just before the Great War being the first to have passed through the system in its improved state. Elementary education, compulsory since 1880, was made free in 1891; eight years later, the school leaving age was raised to twelve, and after the creation of the Board of Education in 1900, local authorities were empowered to raise this further to fourteen. The 1902 Education Act linked primary and secondary education in an organic whole under state jurisdiction and secured an improved system of teacher training. Between 1902 and 1913 central government's expenditure on education rose from £12.5 millions to £19.5 millions, and local authority spending increased from £9.5 millions to over £30.5 millions.

There was a corresponding expansion in the field of higher education. Between 1893 and 1909 seven universities were granted charters and Imperial College, London, was founded, leading to an increase in numbers of university students from around twenty thousand in 1900/01 to thirty-three thousand in 1910/11. Enrolment figures at university extra-mural classes stood at fifty-five thousand in 1910 and the Workers' Education Association celebrated its tenth birthday in 1913 as a vigorous and flourishing concern with more than six thousand members, at this stage of its history all genuine members of the working class.

Statistics on a similar scale chart the continued expansion of all levels of the education system right up to the outbreak of the War, and this increase in both the range and the quality of the educational opportunities now open (in theory at least) to any child in Great Britain was responsible for "a social revolution of the first magnitude" in the words of the French historian E Halévy[1]. Once again post-War attitudes were being anticipated; ideas which had been branded as freakish and dangerous throughout most of the nineteenth century were now winning wide acceptance.

A social revolution was what Virginia Woolf was describing in her aphorism concerning the change in human character which took place at the end of the year 1910 (see above p 7 ). She continued: "All human relationships have shifted - those between masters and servants, husbands and wives, parents and children. And when human relations change there is at the same time a change in religion, conduct, politics and literature". It is curious that Mrs Woolf did not add the other arts to her list for painting, drama and music gave evidence of the new spirit of the new age quite as clearly and forcibly as did literature. Percy Wyndham Lewis summed up the state of the arts in England

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1 Imperialism and the Rise of Labour (2nd edition 1951) p 139

in 1914 as "a big, bloodless brawl"[1], and the energy, innovation and dissent which were the hallmarks of pre-War artistic activity were nowhere more clearly evident than in the field of painting.

At the close of the Edwardian decade, English painting seemed set for upheaval; the necessary ingredients for revolution were to be found in a powerful and intensely reactionary old guard beginning to weaken in the face of assault from an articulate and highly gifted younger generation. Throughout the Edwardian decade England had lacked the cornerstone of a single figure or a school of artists of any stature who summed up and reflected the positive attributes of the age in their work: painters such as Frank Brangwyn, highly respected by the Edwardians themselves, have failed to retain any position in the evaluation of succeeding generations while a number of the major figures active during the first decade of the century fail to merit the application of the adjective 'Edwardian' since much of their best and most characteristic work was done before 1900 or after 1910 (as was the case with John Singer Sargent and Augustus John respectively). In John Russell's words, "'Edwardian' is one of art history's unclaimed adjectives".[2] The decade witnessed a great deal of purposeful artistic activity, but no clear trend had emerged; rather a pregnant and unstable situation prevailed, engendered by the increasingly uneasy balance maintained between the forces of tradition and of progress.

These opposed forces centred upon the activities of the two major English teaching establishments, and much of the dissent was engendered by their difference of opinion over the work of the French Impressionists. The Royal Academy, insular in outlook and

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[1] quoted by William Gaunt in The March of the Moderns (1949) p 153

[2] Edwardian England 1901 - 1914 (1964) p 329

reactionary in temper, viewed recent French work with open hostility, while the Slade School, priding itself upon its liberal and cosmopolitan outlook, did much to spread a knowledge and appreciation of impressionist techniques. Thanks to the Slade and its ally the New English Art Club, a taste for impressionism had become quite widespread among the general public by the end of the first decade of the century; furthermore, a whole generation of young painters had been trained in the light of impressionist principles and the more innovative among them had even started to progress beyond the impressionist norm. These young painters experienced great difficulty in interesting dealers and exhibition-organisers in their work: the Royal Academy used all its considerable influence to block their way and even the N E A C found itself unable to keep abreast of their experiments. A lifeline was extended by the Allied Artists' Association, an independent exhibiting society of progressive inclination founded in 1908.

The winter of 1910/11 was a crucial turning point in the development of English painting. From 8th November to 15th January an exhibition entitled 'Manet and the Post-Impressionists' was held in London, "generally acknowledged as one of the most formative and galvanising art exhibitions ever mounted in Britain".[1] It is no exaggeration to say that it shook the whole of the English art world. The general public, only recently fully come to terms with the subtle and sensitive work of the Impressionists, was outraged by the new style with its raw colours, bold outlines and thickly-layered paint; predictably the Royal Academy faction was hostile to a man, and the majority of Slade staff and N E A C members found themselves antipathetic - the new methods seemed to

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[1] Richard Shone: The Century of Change (1977) p 15

contradict the disciplines on behalf of which they had crusaded so passionately. But the progressive young painters were enormously encouraged in their experiments and others of their generation were inspired to join them in exploring territory which lay beyond the impressionist domain. As a result, when a second Post-Impressionist exhibition was mounted in late 1912, an English section formed part of it.

With revolution in the air and the shortcomings of the N E A C laid bare, a new exhibiting society called the 'Camden Town Group' appeared in 1911, drawing together most of the progressive painters of the day in a movement which displayed a common spirit rather than a common style. The group's nominal leader was Walter Sickert, a painter then in his early fifties, who had been one of the first and arguably the finest of the English Impressionists. Sickert shared little of the younger men's enthusiasm for Post-Impressionism; always fiercely independent, he pursued his own late Impressionist course, depicting in his pictures, the life (dingy by day, garish by night) of the unfashionable and unpicturesque Camden Town area of London. The first four English Post-Impressionists, Harold Gilman, Robert Bevan, Charles Ginner and Spencer Gore, formed the nucleus of the group; they favoured the same novel and unconventional subjects as Sickert did, but treated them very differently, employing the glowing colours, bold outlines and solid masses favoured by Gaugin, Van Gogh and Cézanne. Others who contributed to the Camden Town exhibitions included Henry Lamb, Augustus John and James Dickson Innes, gifted and innovative individuals who were attracted more by the group's iconoclastic principles than by any sense of stylistic affinity.

It had taken some twenty years for Post-Impressionism to reach England, and since the early 1890s European art had wit-

nessed experiment in a number of other directions. The artistic ferment of early Georgian England was caused largely by the impact of these other progressive movements coming so soon after the appearance of Post-Impressionism; "an insular culture was further scorched by European visitors and their activities". [1]

The second Post-Impressionist exhibition,which ran for the last three months of 1912,made a feature of the works of Henri Matisse, the painter at the centre of the group known as 'Les Fauves'. The members of the group took their nickname from a hostile review of their work by a Parisian critic disgusted by the violent colours and distorted shapes which they favoured. 1912 also gave London its first taste of the mature works of Pablo Picasso; a one-man exhibition was mounted at the Stafford Gallery which included a number of paintings in his recently-evolved Cubist style. Abstract art first appeared in England the following year when paintings by Kandinsky and sculptures by Brancusi were exhibited.

The English public was largely hostile to this new art, but its effect upon our younger painters was both profound and immediate. Fauve colour swept into the work of Vanessa Bell and Matthew Smith. The Cubist approach to form liberated a number of young artists, Duncan Grant and Wyndham Lewis amongst them, from the anonymity of a luke-warm Post-Impressionism, and major pioneers of abstract art appeared in David Bomberg and Edward Wadsworth, Kandinsky's principal English apologist. But the European movement which had the most radical impact upon the early Georgian art world was Futurism.

In 1909 a young Italian poet named Filippo Marinetti had published the first Futurist manifesto, and in the following year

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1. ibid p 17

a 'Manifesto of Futurist Painting' appeared,signed by five Italian painters. The movement was born of a violent reaction against the automatic reverence for art, Italian art in particular, of previous ages; it preached a rejection of the values and practices of the past, extolled the new <u>per se</u> and attempted to establish an aesthetic based upon the principles of the machine age. In Italy Futurism was cultivated as much by musicians and poets as by painters, but in England its influence was limited almost exclusively to artists. Practical evidence of the new movement first reached London in 1912 in the form of a travelling exhibition of Futurist paintings,and in the following year Marinetti and Severini visited England proselytizing on behalf of their cause. They made one total convert: C R W Nevinson declared himself an out-and-out Futurist, issued the obligatory manifesto in June 1914 and began to produce works in the accepted Futurist mould. Other young artists were impressed by the brilliance and vigour of Futurist paintings, while at the same time rejecting much of the attendant philosophy. And it was in the wake of Marinetti's visit that Vorticism appeared, an English movement which in its aims, methods and characteristics sums up much of the progressive artistic activity in England immediately before the Great War.

Vorticism was created and managed largely by one man, Percy Wyndham Lewis. As its name implies,it aimed to reflect the turbulent atmosphere of the times rather than to propound any new painterly theory or principle; any homogeneity of style displayed by the Vorticists derived largely from Lewis's dominant personality and his tolerance of like minds only. Post-Impressionism and Fauvism had their effect upon Lewis' early work, but his chief concern was with design and draughtsmanship; and Cubism, with its attempt to explain the structure of an

object rather than merely to reflect its surface, was the strongest single influence upon the formation of his mature style. Futurism infected him with its fierce energy and its delight in the new; and the tone and methods of its protagonists taught him how to transform a personal creed into a general artistic sub-philosophy (Lewis was a poet and novelist as well as a painter). The mouthpiece of Vorticism, the short-lived periodical 'Blast', contained drawings and woodcuts and also poems and stories in addition to a great deal of polemical material by Lewis himself. Its tone was aggressive, intolerant and simplistic: one of its more notorious pages contained two lists headed 'Blast' and 'Bless', each containing the names of people and institutions whom the Vorticists considered worthy of particular castigation or approval. The former list included Elgar, Galsworthy, the Bishop of London and "Beecham (Pills, Opera, Thomas)", the latter Chaliapin, the Pope, the Hairdresser and Lloyd George.

The Vorticists' works showed a stronger family likeness than did those of the Camden Town Group, although the movement was similarly concerned more with spirit than with technique. An interest in abstraction was a Vorticist hallmark, but the form in which this interest expressed itself varied greatly, from the distorted representationalism of William Roberts' work to the totally abstract paintings of Frederick Etchells and Lawrence Atkinson. What united all Vorticist painting was a thrusting energy, a hard geometrical surface and a high degree of tension, characteristics which set it apart from the work of contemporary painters of different persuasions.

For while Vorticism tells us much about the heady, turbulent world of early Georgian painting, it is by no means the whole story. At least two other clearly-defined groups of painters flourished in London alone at this time and there were besides a number of important individual artists who pursued independent careers aloof from the hurly-burly of the coteries.

Against the unstable background of swiftly-changing fashions and ideas, the Camden Town Group did not survive intact for very long. In late 1913 it ceased to exist as a separate entity and, welcoming followers of Cubism and other avant-garde movements to its ranks, transformed itself into the London Group, a more loosely-knit circle of artists of different persuasions exhibiting under a common banner. With Harold Gilman as leader, the group quickly established its biannual exhibitions as providing one of the most important platforms for progressive painting in England.

It was in 1913 also that Roger Fry established the Omega Workshops, an enterprise which sought to explore the application of new painterly theories upon the design of furniture and furnishings and also to provide the means of earning a living for artists unable to subsist on the sales of their paintings alone. At the outset Fry's venture attracted the interest and involvement of a great many of the avant-garde painters working in London at the time - Etchells, Wadsworth, Roberts, Gaudier-Brzeska and the ubiquitous Wyndham Lewis - but after a violent schism whereby Lewis and his followers left to found their Rebel Art Centre, the artists who remained faithful to Fry and who chiefly determined the Omega style were his Bloomsbury friends Vanessa Bell and Duncan Grant. The fabrics, pottery, furniture and furnishings produced at the Workshops exhibited no remarkable innovations in their structural design but rather in their decoration, which was executed under strong Post-Impressionist influence. A distinctive and homogenous style evolved, and artistically the venture was a success, but commercially it never established itself on a firm footing and thus the Omega's impact was somewhat limited.

The four years preceding the Great War saw London exposed to the fruits of at least twenty years of artistic development in Europe. The customary time lag between the appearance of a new

movement on the Continent and its influence being felt in England was greatly reduced, indeed almost disappeared,with the result that "the creative ferment before the coming of war in 1914 produced work of unparalleled modernity in London".[1] The new trends did not meet with the approval of the majority of the general public,but neither were they universally dismissed out of hand, and,what is more important,they had an immediate influence for good upon English painters. The new methods and ideas were assimilated remarkably quickly and were creatively reflected rather than merely imitated. In only four years England had acquired an avant-garde of ability, integrity, distinction and stature.

There is no difficulty in surveying the work of the early Georgian painters; their pictures are easily accessible and their careers amply documented. But to assess the drama of the period is a more difficult task as the vast bulk of the plays produced in the early years of the century proved to be ephemeral and very soon disappeared from the repertory. (They can still be read of course, but one cannot always make an accurate estimate of a play's worth by a reading of it alone). Judging from what works of the period have taken their place in the standard repertory, one would imagine that the only dramatist of any stature working in England in the first quarter of this century was George Bernard Shaw; apart from his works one is hard put to name a play of more than passing interest produced between Wilde's 'The Importance of Being Earnest' of 1895 and Eliot's 'Murder in the Cathedral' of exactly forty years later. But viewed in its own terms early twentieth century English drama was both vital and varied, and if the artistic upheaval of the early Georgian years is but palely

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[1] ibid p 17

reflected in contemporary drama, the pre-War period witnessed some remarkable and influential experiments in matters of production and staging.

The turn of the century had found the English theatre in the midst of a period of transition, the evolution which marked the increase in stature and importance of the dramatist (and to some extent the producer) and the corresponding fall of the actor from his erstwhile position of absolute supremacy in the theatrical hierarchy: where Victorian audiences had gone to the theatre to see the acting of Macready and Henry Irving, Edwardian theatregoers were drawn by the plays of John Galsworthy and Bernard Shaw. There simultaneously arose a new dramatic _genre_, the play of ideas, in which the dramatist explored character and motive and involved the spectator's intellect as well as his emotions in a wide variety of types of play from social comedy and fantasy to tragedy and the so-called 'problem play'. Many of the new plays aimed at a faithful reflection of real life: the remote settings, stock characters and simplistic moral code of much nineteenth century drama were replaced by contemporary, naturalistic settings and fully-drawn, credible figures placed in situations which posed some moral or psychological problem. The first hesitant steps towards the new practice had been taken in the 1860s and the movement had received enormous stimulus and encouragement from the appearance in England of the dramas of Henrik Ibsen in the '80s and '90s; by the turn of the century, the new trend was firmly established, although the old ideals and methods were far from universally abandoned.

The principal dramatists of the transition were Arthur Wing Pinero and Henry Arthur Jones. The former began his writing career as a purveyor of simple farces, graduated to romantic comedies and then evolved his own form of problem play, polished,

soundly-constructed and eminently theatrical. Before the turn of the century, 'The Second Mrs Tanqueray' and 'The Notorious Mrs Ebbsmith' were two of the most advanced plays to appear from the pen of an English author, but 'Letty' (1903), 'His House in Order' (1906) and 'Mid-Channel' (1909), successful though they were, are concerned more with manners than with problems and depend for their dénouement more upon manipulation of the plot than upon development of character. Jones' roots lay in melodrama rather than farce and he too evolved a species of problem play, less polished but more individual than Pinero's, of which the finest, 'Mrs Dane's Defence', appeared in 1900.

From the outset of his career, John Galsworthy proved himself an able exponent of the well-made problem play. In the wake of the success of his novel 'A Man of Property', his first play 'The Silver Box' was produced in 1906, and from then on most years saw the successful production in the West End of a new play from his pen: 'Strife' in 1909, 'Justice' in 1910, 'The Eldest Son' in 1912, 'The Fugitive' in 1913 and 'The Mob' in 1914. The theme of each is broadly the same - the conflict between the solid, conservative middle class ethic and the individual who goes against this code - although the different settings present it in different guises: the family disgraced by the wayward son, the law contravened by the petty criminal, business management opposed by a strike leader. These were matters of concern in Georgian England and Galsworthy did not shrink from facing them boldly: the pervading tone of his work was sombre, even tragic and he rarely allowed himself the luxury of a happy ending, sometimes indeed completely eschewing proper resolution of the problems posed. His plays abound in telling dramatic moments ( in particular several scenes in 'Justice' linger in the mind) and while his themes were burning

issues one can well understand why he should be considered "a dominant force in present-day theatre".[1] But once the social and moral climate had changed and such conflicts as his characters experienced were no longer to be encountered, his work lost much of its bite and effect. To a later generation his characters seem stiff and his concern with the clear presentation of his problems heavy-handed; his plays lack the richness and roundness which have kept his reputation as a novelist alive.

Galsworthy was not the only playwright active at this time who was (or is) better known for his work in another branch of letters. Arnold Bennet's play 'Milestones' had a very successful run at the Royalty Theatre in 1913, and in the same year James Elroy Flecker completed his oriental drama 'Hassan', one of the few fully-fledged verse plays to achieve a prolonged West End run. Somerset Maugham enjoyed a considerable reputation as a dramatist before the Great War, being known chiefly for farcical comedies in the Wilde tradition and more serious but sentimental dramas of social comment, and John Masefield, one of the most popular modern poets of the early Georgian period, had made some stir in the theatre with his grim tragedies written in West Country dialect; the finest of these was 'The Tragedy of Nan', first produced in 1908 and then revived five years later.

Slightly different was the case of Harley Granville Barker, whose four serious plays are immensely rich and closely-observed pictures of upper-middle-class life, the same stratum of society as that favoured by Galsworthy. But Granville Barker's characters are more rounded and his dialogue more lively than Galsworthy's, so that although his plays have dated as quickly, they have more interest as period pieces and would bear revival

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1. 'British Drama' by Allardyce Nicoll (1936) p 368

more readily. After writing 'The Madras House' in 1910, Granville Barker turned his attention more to stage production and it is for his work in this field (and for his dramatic criticism) that he is remembered today. His work as a producer was revolutionary in its time: his seasons at the Court Theatre between April 1904 and June 1907 had "left an indelible mark on our stage" [1] by both establishing Bernard Shaw as the leading dramatist of the day and also by inaugurating the English repertory theatre movement, but his Shakespeare seasons at the Savoy in 1912, 1913 and 1914 were truly epoch-making. Barker sought to return to the principles of Shakespeare's own day, not in any spirit of would-be authenticity but wishing to cast off the shackles of 18th and 19th century tradition. The plays were presented on a bare stage with minimal props and furniture, and, most important of all, swiftly and fluently. A leading critic quoted by W Bridges-Adams [2] dubbed this "post-impressionist Shakespeare" and indeed Barker's activities were quite as shocking to the conservatives as were those of Roger Fry at the Grafton Galleries. But Savoy Shakespeare was also both revelatory and enormously influential; from it "we derive nearly everything that is of worth in our treatment of the plays to this day". [3]

The social issues dealt with in early Georgian discussion plays were not limited to those affecting only the world of the professional classes inhabited by the characters of Galsworthy and Granville Barker. The plays of St John Hankin and Alfred Sutro inhabit a rather lower social stratum, while Elizabeth Baker explored the drab and confined world of lower middle class suburbia

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[1] W Bridges-Adams writing in Edwardian England 1910 - 1914 (1964) p 395

[2] ibid p 406

[3] ibid p 405

in 'Chains' (1909) and 'The Price of Thomas Salt' (1913). Working class life makes its appearance in Stanley Houghton's 'Hindle Wakes', a picture of contemporary Lancashire life which was unexpectedly successful when produced in London in 1912 by Miss Horniman's company from the Manchester Gaiety, and is explored more thoroughly in St John Ervine's two famous pre-War plays 'Mixed Marriage' (1911) and 'Jane Clegg' (1913). The former was the first play produced in England to attempt to deal seriously with the Irish question, anticipating the later work of Sean O'Casey (Shaw's 'John Bull's Other Island' of 1904 was concerned more with English misunderstanding of Irish problems), and other areas of political and social unrest received dramatic treatment too: trade union agitation in Galsworthy's 'Strife' and the activities of the suffragettes in Cicely Hamilton's 'Diana of Dobsons' and Elizabeth Robins' 'Votes for Women'.

J M Barrie stood out resolutely against this trend of realistic drama. Beginning as a writer of sentimental comedies of manners, he soon developed a vein of romantic fantasy all his own, seen at its best in 'The Admirable Crichton' (1903) and 'Peter Pan' (1904). In this dangerous area Barrie was a master; when he stepped beyond its bounds, as in 'Half an Hour' (1913), his attempt at a domestic tragedy produced only ludicrous melodrama. His enormous popularity, his unquestioned originality and his sheer style earn him a place in this survey, and yet he was a totally isolated figure standing quite apart from the unfolding development of twentieth century English drama.

The works of George Bernard Shaw embrace and at the same time transcend all the facets of early Georgian theatre mentioned so far; he was without doubt the outstanding figure in English drama of the first thirty years of the century. His first serious play,

'Widowers' Houses' had been produced in 1892, but for more than a decade Shaw remained "a somewhat precious piece of property belonging to those exclusive circles which an intelligentsia ... always seeks to establish" [1]. His supremacy as a dramatist was not established until the Barker-Verdrenne reign at the Court Theatre from 1904 to 1907 during which nearly one thousand performances were given, seven hundred of them of plays by Shaw; from then on, his works were regularly performed in the West End and taken up by the emerging repertory companies.

Shaw's plays fall into three main categories: problem play, social comedy and farce, and to all three he brought his unique brand of wit and satire and also a dogged didacticism; "I write plays with the deliberate object of converting the nation to my opinions" [2]. Neither satire nor moral purpose was unknown in contemporary drama but Shaw was a true master of both, applying them with great subtlety to a wide range of subjects and dramatic situations. A moralising playwright like Galsworthy denied his characters full development in the interests of tightening the drama and concentrating the theme; Shaw's characters are wonderfully rich and rounded but the presentation of his themes is still very forceful. His major self-indulgence was in the matter of lengthy static discussion scenes, but the nature of his gift for lively and illuminating dialogue made a strength out of a potential weakness. Shaw acquired his knowledge of stagecraft as a dramatic critic so was always keenly aware of the effect of his plays upon an audience.

Shaw produced several good, but no outstanding, plays in the four years before the Great War. 'Fanny's First Play', a keen-edged satirical farce with the feminist movement as its butt, was first produced at the Little Theatre in 1911,

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1 Compton Mackenzie 'Literature in My Time' (1933) p 141

2 quoted by Harold Williams in 'Modern English Writers' (1925) p 261

'Androcles and the Lion', a penetrating study of religious faith and experience, two years later. 1913 also saw the completion of 'Pygmalion', a social comedy which achieved a certain notoriety on account of both its "advanced" language and Mrs Patrick Campbell's performance of the leading female part. Otherwise there were only the slighter plays, 'Over ruled' and 'Great Catherine', and the first part of 'Heartbreak House', an allegory on the state of Europe at the time which was radically altered and completed after the outbreak of the War. None of these plays can be deemed a failure, but neither are they on a level with the earlier 'Candida' or the later 'St Joan'.

The pre-War years were good years for English drama and the English stage. Play-going was an immensely popular pursuit (the infant cinema as yet offered no serious competition) and strong demand fostered ample supply. As in the field of painting, there was both a vigorous avant-garde and also an Establishment which was far from moribund, but there was little open acrimony between the two factions. Beerbohm Tree staged 'Henry VIII' in the grand manner with naturalistic sets and stylised speech at just the same time as Granville Barker was giving sprightly performances of 'A Winter's Tale' on a bare stage; each was well supported and, whatever he thought of the other's work, neither felt the need for public criticism. Nineteenth century traditions were kept alive elsewhere: costume romance flourished at the Shaftesbury Theatre and under George Alexander at the St James', and superior melodrama, complete with elaborate scenic effects, drew large houses at Drury Lane. The new spirit of the age was evident in both the matter and the manner of the younger dramatists; plays were written which dealt with controversial subjects and topical problems more thoroughly and explicitly than had been acceptable

previously. The idea of the stage being a mirror of life as it was, rather than as it had been or should have been, was still something of a novelty; naturalistic dialogue and realistic characterisation were as yet areas of exploration. The most striking innovations were in methods of production and presentation; early Georgian plays merely continued the steady evolution initiated by the dramatists of the early 1890s.

To speak of Georgian drama is to confine oneself to plays written during George V's reign; but to speak of Georgian poetry is to use a technical term referring to the works of a loosely-associated group of poets which flourished during the second decade of the century. It was not stylistic similarity that drew the poets of the group together so much as a sense of experiment and revolt; of all the branches of literature, it was poetry that most clearly demonstrated the influence of the new spirit of the new age. But before examining Georgianism proper, one should learn something of the poetic soil from which it sprang and also consider those poets who wrote and published through the second decade of the century but stand quite apart from those of their contemporaries dubbed 'the Georgians'.

The middle of the Edwardian decade found English poetry in a weak state, what hindsight shows to have been an aimless hiatus between two purposeful eras. Swinburne and Meredith, the last surviving representatives of the high Victorian tradition, both lived until 1909, but the single volume which each published in the new century was (not surprisingly) retrospective in mood and tired in tone. The very last reverberations of this great movement were heard in the works of Stephen Phillips and William Watson, able technicians who attempted with little success to breathe life into a tradition which was by now past reviving.

Decadence, the poetic movement which had flourished during the 1890s, did not survive long into the new century either. With the deaths of Oscar Wilde and Ernest Dowson in 1900 and of Lionel Johnson in 1902, the movement lost three of its most powerful voices; Arthur Symons produced nothing of any significance after 'Images of Good and Evil' (1899); only John Davidson remained to keep alive the ideas of the Rhymers' Club and the Yellow Book until he too died (by his own hand) in 1909. One more poetic vein, too small in stature to merit the title of a tradition, which was still being worked through the Edwardian decade and beyond was that inaugurated by Kipling in his 'Barrack-Room Ballads', narrative or anecdotal verse vigorous in mood and consciously middle-brow in tone, usually on military or patriotic subjects. Some of Kipling's early poems had been genuinely innovative, but his own later works and those of his followers such as W E Henley and Henry Newbolt had nothing new to say and no new way in which to say it.

The lack of any school of poets or strong poetic tradition during the Edwardian era does not mean to say that a great deal of poetry was not being written and published: a host of minor figures maintained the flow of new poetry of various shades of accomplishment and originality, and two important poets, Thomas Hardy and Robert Bridges, pursued their own careers quite independently of changes of taste and fashion occurring around them. Hardy, having abandoned novel-writing in the late 1890s, added year by year to the already considerable body of verse which he had been producing since his teens (in the 1850s) and was to continue to produce until his death in 1928. The three collections of poetry which he published between the start of the century and the outbreak of the Great War all contained both new and old poems lying

happily side by side, verses covering a remarkably wide range of form and content, all deeply felt and strongly personal. Altogether more remarkable, however, was 'The Dynasts', an attempt to encompass the whole Napoleonic era in one massive verse-play (issued in three parts between 1904 and 1908), an intellectual feat spectacular in conception and largely successful in accomplishment. Like much of Hardy's poetry, 'The Dynasts' was admired rather than loved or understood by the majority of his contemporaries; this middle period of his long career was the time when his work was least in sympathy with the temper and taste of the times. Robert Bridges' creative career was equally steady and consistent (and nearly as long), but with nothing but poetry to his name, his fame remained very limited until 1913, his sixty-ninth year, when he was made Poet Laureate. His style of writing as well as his reclusive habits counted against a wide reputation; cool, measured and crystal-clear (though by no means bloodless), Bridge's verse passed largely unnoticed in the highly-charged, richly-perfumed world of late nineteenth century poetry, and his later work was too quiet and dignified to make much stir in the Edwardian decade. His reputation among his fellow poets was always high, however, even among the younger generation; despite the conservative trend of his mind, he retained a keen interest in new developments and was happy to accept the dedication of the first of the 'Georgian Poetry' anthologies.

The spate of conventional minor verse was in no way stemmed by the stirrings of change at the turn of the decade and the advent of the new reign. The best of it showed skill, sensitivity and sensibility but little to give it more than a passing interest. A general anthology of the period containing representative work by Laurence Binyon, Herbert Trench, Maurice Hewlett, Alfred Noyes,

G K Chesterton, Hilaire Belloc, Sturge Moore and Alice Meynell amongst others would make agreeable reading but nothing more.

An anthology of a very different type, however, was that which appeared in December 1912; called 'Georgian Poetry 1911 - 1912', it presented works drawn from the two years' output of seventeen poets, most of them young and little known. As the prefatory note, the work of Edward Marsh, deviser of the anthology, stated, the volume was "issued in the belief that English poetry is now once again putting on a new strength and beauty" and in the hope that "we are at the beginning of ... (a) period which may take rank in due time with the several great poetic ages of the past". If the majority of the contributors were unknown in late 1912, this did not remain so for very long; by January 1914 the book was in its ninth edition and had aroused considerable interest, and Marsh had a second anthology on exactly similar lines in hand.

Marsh's hope for the dawn of a great new period was disappointed, but his belief that something new and important was happening in English poetry was perfectly correct, and his instinct for the best way of publicising it was shrewd. The remarkable popular success of 'The Everlasting Mercy', John Masefield's long narrative poem concerning the exploits and eventual conversion of a drunken village poacher which had first appeared in book form in November 1911, had proved that there was considerable potential public interest in serious modern poetry, and the sustained success of the sales of the first two of Marsh's anthologies proved this to be a genuine interest, not a freak fad caused by one particular work.

The criterion for inclusion in the Georgian anthologies was newness both in a literal sense (all the poems date from after 1910) and in the sense of being new in outlook; Marsh did not look for any common stylistic trait in addition to this. Thus in form, style and subject matter there is a wide diversity to be encountered in the first two volumes of the series. However, many of the

contributing poets were friends and colleagues and a certain amount of cross-influence and common practice is discernible amongst their work; thus inevitably certain common characteristics emerge which make up the Georgian style as it appears to later generations. The most striking general feature was a positive vigour, a "spiritual buoyancy" [1], the poets' passionate confidence in the present and in their own powers. Gone were the richness of the Victorians and the languor of the Decadents; the new style was spare, vital and clear. Simplicity of both diction and metre were favoured; as any poem by Walter de la Mare or W H Davies demonstrates, the subtlest and strongest verse could be made from plain, everyday words arranged in the simplest, most well-tried metrical forms. Image and incident too were drawn from the ordinary, every-day world, a realism which could degenerate into the banal and sometimes strayed into the sordid. Marsh rejected the rawer of Rupert Brooke's poems such 'A Channel Passage' and 'Menelaus and Helen', but was criticised for the "self-conscious brutality" [2] of several of the contributions of Lascelles Abercrombie, Ralph Hodgson and Gordon Bottomley; indeed, this was the aspect of the new verse that gave rise to the most adverse criticism. It is hard to decide at this distance whether the charge of unpleasantness for its own sake was a just one; one can see how passages in Bottomley's 'King Lear's Wife' and Abercrombie's 'The End of the World' must have given considerable offence in some quarters, but it is also clear that experiments in this direction were an important means whereby the young poets could make a clean break with the vapid, rarified atmosphere which had clung about much of the poetry of their predecessors.

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[1] Robert Ross: The Georgian Revolt (1967) p 139

[2] ibid p 146

These characteristics, clearly evident in 'Georgian Poetry 1911 - 1912', were more marked in 'Georgian Poetry 1913 - 1915', a volume which had been planned in detail by August 1914 and which consisted almost entirely of poems written before the outbreak of war. The tone and character of the poetry had become more homogenous as what had been a loosely-formed group of poets began to grow together into a more closely-bound school. The critical reception which greeted the second volume was less favourable than that accorded the first, but its commercial success was considerably greater, 19,000 copies being sold. This figure, calculated in 1939, represents the sales of the book over more than two decades,for the revival of interest in a particular brand of modern poetry which it represented, having started strongly in 1912, continued to grow through and beyond the war years. The Georgian movement itself continued past the end of the War too, the fifth and final volume of the series appearing in the early autumn of 1922; but from 'Georgian Poetry 1916 - 1917' onwards, it lost much of its vigour and bite. Unable to come to terms with the frightful realism of the new war poetry, Marsh turned aside from the subject that was dominating everyone's thoughts and chose poems of retreat and escapism. It was this air of whimsy and unworldliness hanging about the later anthologies which betrayed the early Georgian ideals and clouded critical opinion as to the very real qualities of the work which had brought about the Georgian revolt and changed the nature of poetry.

Georgianism had its roots in a number of books of verse which appeared several years before the movement proper crystalised - one thinks of Masefield's 'Salt Water Ballads' and de la Mare's 'Songs of Childhood' of 1902 and Wilfrid Gibson's 'The Stonefolds' of 1907. So, too, a poetic movement which was to have a considerable

influence upon the poetry of the twenties and thirties first appeared just as Georgianism was becoming properly established at the opening of the new decade. Imagism, the movement which T S Eliot claimed could be "conveniently taken as the starting point of modern poetry" [1], was a technique evolved and practised by a small group of English and American poets, all close friends, living and working in London. As with Georgianism, Imagist practice came first, the name (borrowed by Ezra Pound from contemporary French literature) later; but unlike the Georgians the Imagists were deeply concerned with the formulation and propagation of the theory that lay behind their methods. Overmuch concern with the establishment of a common Imagist aesthetic and fierce debate as to whether one another's poems fell within its bounds led to the disintegration of the group as early as 1917, but the practice lived on as the leading members of the group and their associates went on to become some of the most influential poets of the post-War generation.

Where Georgianism by definition was concerned only with English poetry, Imagism aimed to take a place among the international avant-garde movements of the day. As well as being the outcome of collaboration of like American and English minds, it was heavily influenced by recent French poetry (the work of the Symbolists and the exponents of vers libre) and also acknowledged the influence of Greek and Japanese verse. It preached total concentration upon the 'image' ("that which presents an intellectual and emotional complex in an instant of time" [2]), complete avoidance of rhetoric and superfluous description, and the use of a free rhythm dictated by the demands of the image rather than by any preconceived plan.

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1 'To Criticize the Critic' (1965) p 84

2 Ezra Pound: 'A Few Don'ts By An Imagiste' quoted by Peter Jones in 'Imagist Poetry' (1972) p 18

The movement sprang from the same total dissatisfaction with the poetry of the Victorian era that had thrown up Georgianism, but took the concern with conciseness and clarity very much further as well as drawing upon Futurist and Vorticist theories of non-representational art.

For several years a knowledge of Imagist verse was restricted to the readers of the specialist literary periodicals in which the new poems appeared; it was not until March 1914 that the first anthology, 'Des Imagistes', appeared. This was badly received both in Britain and in America; a critical climate which found Georgian poetry startling would obviously make little sense of the works of Richard Aldington and Hilda Doolittle. Further anthologies appeared annually up until 1917 and gradually the new style made a more favourable impression upon the critics, but it never won anything approaching the wide popular following which the Georgians attracted. Imagism's importance to this survey lies not in its impact upon the early Georgian artistic scene (which was almost negligible) but rather in its being a further dramatic demonstration of the spirit of revolt and innovation encountered in England immediately before the Great War. Imagism was as far ahead of its time as was the contemporary evolution of totally abstract painting.

No such startling innovation is encountered among the novels written during the early Georgian years. Rather was there a steady evolution which slightly accelerated into the war years with the appearance of the earliest works of one of the writers who was to initiate important new trends in the post-War period. Many Georgian novels have a distinctive flavour about them but, as with plays typical of the period, this flavour depends not so much upon the manner in which they are written as upon the matter with which they deal, the themes chosen by the author and the ideas and

feelings with which the characters are endowed.

No single novel presents itself as the obvious starting point for a consideration of the fiction of the first decade-and-a-half of the century. The period did not lack original and influential works: Samuel Butler's 'The Way of All Flesh' (1903), Galsworthy's 'The Man of Property' (1906), H G Wells' 'Tono-Bungay' (1909) and D H Lawrence's 'The White Peacock' (1911) all merit such a description, but none made a strong initial impact, their importance becoming apparent only after several years. One reason for this was the huge volume of new fiction with which these novels were in competition. Writing in 1914, Harold Williams noted that "the impetuous torrent of printed matter, against which Goldsmith protested over one hundred and fifty years ago, has become a wide and unbanked river" [1], and fiction formed a large part of the annual output of new books (12,379 volumes in 1913) [2]. In the face of such profusion not only was it difficult to single out the most significant and outstanding new works but also was there considerable diversity of opinion as to which were the major writers of the younger generation. Early in 1914, the 'Times Literary Supplement' published a survey of the contemporary English novel by Henry James for which James chose eight authors as being representative of the time (four from the older generation, four from the younger) and posterity would endorse his choice in the former category: Galsworthy, Wells, Conrad and Bennett.* But there is no such unanimity of opinion concerning the younger writers he selected as being the most promising: of the four, only D H Lawrence can be said to have fulfilled James'

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1 'Modern English Writers' (1918) p 373

2 quoted by Derek Hudson in Edwardian England 1901 - 1914' (1964) p 309

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* James himself would merit inclusion in this list but it is (and was) widely recognised that after the appearance of 'The Golden Bowl' in 1904 he published nothing which bettered or even equalled his earlier work.

expectations, Hugh Walpole and Compton Mackenzie remaining little more than highly accomplished story-tellers and Gilbert Cannan's reputation having completely evaporated.

Of the senior representative pre-War novelists, Joseph Conrad was the oldest but the last to win a wide following. He published nothing until his thirty-eighth year (1895) and it was not until many years after his death in 1925 that his true stature and the extent of his originality became evident. All his early novels deal with the sea and seafarers, and it was largely for their exotic settings and colourful characters that they were read. But Conrad's interest lay less in strong narrative than in vivid word-painting and the deep study of character and motive; thus lovers of a good yarn were disappointed. The depth of his psychological perception seems to have passed largely unnoticed at first, insight being confused with rounded characterisation, and there was a similar misunderstanding about his highly characteristic recurrent use of a spectator-narrator figure, it being ascribed to his inability to write convincing dialogue (English was his third language of which he knew nothing until he was twenty-three) rather than to the ready means it provided for subtle and complex character study. His best work belonged to the decade 1897 - 1907, his two early Georgian novels 'Under Western Eyes' and 'Chance' representing a new development but hardly an advance. In them the narrative thread becomes hopelessly involved and submerged beneath intricate psychological analysis, and by abandoning maritime settings Conrad robs them of the strength and authority which shine through 'Lord Jim', 'Nostromo' and 'The Nigger of the Narcissus'.

Admired as he was (and revered as he was to become), Conrad

never achieved wide popularity; always a somewhat isolated figure he pursued his steady course regardless of the popular literary tastes of the day. Arnold Bennett, on the other hand, not only identified more strongly with the literary practices of his day but also in a number of his books deliberately courted popular success, writing down to the tastes of the less discerning element among his readership. Such novels as 'Hugo' and 'The City of Pleasure', to which he gave the euphemistic description "fantasias", are no more than cheap, shallow tales in which all the interest is centred upon the sensational nature of the plot.

For the first eight years of the new century, Bennett lived in France, during which time he steeped himself in the works of the late nineteenth century French novelists, Flaubert, Zola and Balzac in particular. Although he eventually outgrew his initial enthusiasm for the so-called Naturalists, he learned a great deal from them and it was the works in which he applied their methods to subjects drawn from his observation of life in the Staffordshire Potteries that earned for him a solid and lasting reputation. Starting with 'Anna of the Five Towns' (1902) and 'Leonora' (1903), the series reached its pinnacle with 'The Old Wives' Tale' (1908), 'Clayhanger' (1910) and 'Hilda Lessways' (1911); 'These Twain' (1916) marked something of a falling-off and after its completion Bennett deliberately turned elsewhere for inspiration.

Two elements in Bennett's mature prose style have their origins in the methods of his French predecessors: his use of detailed description of the most commonplace and trivial incidents and his adoption of a dispassionate and objective stance in relation to his characters. That he was deeply concerned with matters of style is obvious from his critical and theoretical writings, but may also be inferred from the poise and perfection of his own

style of writing, the fineness of which even a hostile critic such as Virginia Woolf freely acknowledged. Adverse criticism of Bennett's work has always centred upon the narrowness of his vision and his apparent lack of soul; but these characteristics were admirably suited to the portrayal of the unglamorous provincial world which he knew best and could render so accurately, and he worked very well within the limits they imposed. His work as a critic and reviewer brought him power and his "fantasias" won him a wide readership, but the eminence of his position in the early Georgian literary world rested squarely upon the strength, truth and originality of his Staffordshire novels.

In the eyes of their contemporaries, Bennett and John Galsworthy were novelists of equal stature. If the latter's prose style was felt to be inferior to the former's, then his obvious humanity and concern for moral issues more than redressed the balance, and the appearance in 1906 of 'The Man of Property', coinciding as it did with the sweeping victory of the Liberal Party in the General Election of that year, had, according to one commentator, an "electric" effect and "indubitably marked the beginning of a new era" [1]. For Galsworthy's concerns were the concerns of the Liberal middle classes - hatred of injustice, the minimisation of social distinction and passionate advocacy of individual liberty - and in book after book from 'The Island Pharisees' of 1904 to 'The Freelands' of 1914 these are the issues on which the fiction is founded.

The considerable vogue which his novels briefly enjoyed rested largely upon the forceful and eloquent presentation of these ideas (Galsworthy had been a barrister before becoming a professional author) for, ideas apart, his fiction has not the stuff of

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[1] Compton Mackenzie: "Literature in My Time" (1933) p 154

greatness in it. Moral issues are rarely successfully integrated into the plot, the characters and their actions failing to fulfil the author's intentions. His observation was acute and his rendering of it precise, but set against Bennett's naturalism, Galsworthy's seems dull and pedestrian. Irony abounds but there is little satire and even less wit, and at the root of much of the characterisation is a fatal flaw: his 'good' figures, the representatives of art and freedom and the rebels against the social code, are often vapid in themselves and sketchily realised by the author, while the plutocrats and reactionaries ranged against them are both far more varied and interesting and also much more clearly drawn, engaging a disproportionate amount of one's sympathy because one understands them so much better.

Galsworthy was by no means the only novelist with a social conscience writing in England before the Great War but his scrupulously impartial presentation of moral conflicts and the reticence of his treatment of potentially sordid scenes and events made his particular brand of social criticism palatable to a wide cross-section of the reading public; his novels perfectly suited the temper of middle class liberal England and he became an extremely popular writer. But his hour passed as quickly as did that of H H Asquith's gentlemanly, well-intentioned, sound but cool liberalism: both flourished during the late Edwardian years, became increasingly insecure during the unsettled early Georgian period and came finally to grief during the crisis of the middle years of the Great War.

Evidence of an active social conscience was one point of contact between John Galsworthy and H G Wells, but otherwise the two men were very different: the former urbane, measured, conformist, patrician, the latter hot-tempered, brilliant, unconventional,

plebian. Intellectually Wells was one of the most gifted writers of his age and his works enjoyed enormous popularity, but his best work belonged to the first two of the five decades of his writing career and his influence upon the development of the serious English novel was very slight.

The early part of Wells' literary career divides itself very neatly into three periods whose boundaries correspond remarkably closely to the beginning and the end of the Edwardian decade. Between 1895 and 1901 he produced a dozen novels and books of stories which come under the general heading of scientific romances, brilliant effusions of a remarkable intellect endowed with outstanding powers of both logical and imaginative thought. It was these books, so much more than mere fantastic yarns as they were, that, as well as bringing him instant fame, won him the respect and friendship of writers of the eminence of Henry James and Edmund Gosse.

In 1900 the first of Wells' great realistic novels, 'Love and Mr Lewisham', appeared, and it was works of this type (some comic, some serious) which largely occupied him through the Edwardian decade. The finest of these works, 'Kipps' (1905), 'Tono-Bungay' (1909) and 'The History of Mr Polly' (1910), were the author's masterpieces. Strong in narrative, rich in characterisation, full of wit, spirit and invention, these books both entertained and edified, for in his exhaustive chronicling of the privations and struggles of his shop assistants and junior teachers, Wells lost no opportunity of exposing and ridiculing the manifestations (both comic and serious) of the class distinction and animosity rife in Edwardian England. His ruthless criticism of society as he saw it was made all the more telling by being

tempered with wit and kept under a tight rein.

While socialism in England was still largely a matter of polemics and theorising, the radical view which Wells expressed in his fiction was more interesting than unsettling. But with the election of thirty Labour Members of Parliament in 1906 and the attendant increased awareness of the enormous potential power of organised labour, such opinions were met with less tolerance; 'In the Days of the Comet', with its blatant socialist preaching, was given a very mixed reception when it appeared in the same year as the momentous General Election took place. Not that politics was the only field in which Wells held advanced views; his attitudes towards sex and marriage were equally revolutionary and these too made their way into his fiction. 'Ann Veronica' caused enormous controversy when it was published in 1909 on account of both its emphasis upon sexual motivation and its apparent endorsement of a relaxed code of sexual practice. Wells and his supporters hotly contested the accusation of immorality on this occasion and again two years later when a similar charge was made against 'The New Machiavelli'.

By this time Wells' attitude to his work had undergone a further change; it was the 'novel of ideas' which was now his chief concern. The balance between the story and the message had been nicely maintained in 'Tono-Bungay' and 'Mr Polly', but in the new works all elements of plot, narrative, characterisation and dialogue were made subservient to the underlining of the author's political and moral point of view. 'The New Machiavelli', 'Marriage', 'The Passionate Friends' and 'The Wife of Sir Isaac Harman' mark a new phase in Wells' career, but hardly an advance; in becoming more of a literary preacher he had become less of a

novelist. His reputation was too great and too secure to be seriously disturbed by this, and he remained one of the most powerful literary figures of the age (Frank Swinnerton quotes a plebiscite published in an unnamed periodical in 1914 which placed Wells second to only Thomas Hardy as "the greatest living novelist"[1]); nevertheless, the falling-off in quality and breadth of appeal of his new novels was instantly recognised.

Conrad, Bennett, Galsworthy and Wells were the giants among the older generation of novelists working in early Georgian England; this is evident to a later generation just as it was clear to their contemporaries, and it needed no great perspicacity on Henry James' part to select them as the subjects for the first of his 'Times Literary Supplement' articles. But neither does it show any lack of perception that the four writers he chose for his second article (the one dealing with the younger generation) seem from this distance a curious choice. Other literary critics than James predicted lasting reputations for writers now totally unread, at the same time failing to recognise the true stature of authors now regarded as the leaders of their generation.

In the former category are to be found such figures as Gilbert Cannan, Maurice Hewlett and May Sinclair. In the spheres of modern comedy, historical romance and the psychological novel respectively it was felt that these authors were producing original work of lasting merit, but in a swiftly changing artistic climate it became apparent that the appeal of their novels was rooted to their own time and that they had little to say to later generations. Conversely, in the eyes of his contemporaries the works of E M Forster seemed not to be of outstanding quality.

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[1] Swinnerton: an autobiography (1937) p 213

His early social comedies were enjoyed for their wit and their perception and 'The Longest Journey' (1907) was recognised as drawing strength from its autobiographical nature. But 'Howard's End' (1910) met with an equivocal reception; criticism was centred upon the implausibility and smallness of the characters while the deeper, more analytical side to the book seems to have passed largely unnoticed. It was not until the publication of 'A Passage to India', his last and arguably his greatest novel, in 1924 that Forster was subjected to the type of close critical scrutiny which revealed the full strength and subtlety of his art.

The early works of D H Lawrence made some stir but less than might be imagined bearing in mind that among the three novels which he published before the Great War was 'Sons and Lovers', acknowledged as a very fine book by his devotees and as his finest work by those who find the later novels unpalatable. Lawrence's was the most original fiction being produced in early Georgian England and his very first published novel, 'The White Peacock' of 1911, contained all the elements of both style and content which were to be found in his fully mature works: the conflict between the intuitive working class and the rational middle class, between the instinctive man and the spiritual woman, the groping towards an understanding of sexual impulse and motivation, and the use of vivid, startling imagery drawn from the raw natural world. Critics acknowledged something of the strength and integrity of Lawrence's intentions but castigated him for his uncouthness, his pessimism and his "dreary preoccupation with animal things in a world of frustrate passions"[1]. In admitting him to show great promise whilst at the same time delivering an

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[1] A C Ward: 'Twentieth Century Literature' (1928) p 53

unfavourable critique, James was reacting with the mixed feelings of many of his contemporaries regarding Lawrence's work.

Compton Mackenzie and Hugh Walpole, the other young writers singled out by Henry James, both enjoyed great popularity at the outset of their careers immediately before the outbreak of the Great War. Both wrote novels which posterity has judged to be their best works at this very early stage of their literary careers; Walpole published 'Mr Perrin and Mr Traill' in 1911 and Mackenzie followed up the resounding popular success of 'Carnival' in 1912 with the two parts of 'Sinister Street', a work of greater substance but no less broad appeal, in 1913 and 1914. These novels dealt with up-to-date matters in a bright, fresh way but were really very traditional in method, not without distinction and a certain novelty but in no way original or innovative. As Mackenzie himself admitted,"in spite of the beginnings of a new point of view about literary expression, and in spite of the obvious resolve of the new novelists to get as near telling the truth about human nature as prudish opinion would allow them, all the novelists who established themselves before the war were still too much imbued with the world of their youth to claim the modernity that has been seized by the post-war successors" [1]. The works of D H Lawrence excepted, the novel was marking time in England in the four years before the Great War, in a perfectly healthy state but not actually growing. It was in France that radical revolt was being initiated in the works of Romain Rolland, Marcel Proust and James Joyce, revolt that was to surface in England during and after the war in the works of the mature Lawrence and of Dorothy Richardson and Virginia Woolf.

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1 Literature in My Time (1933) p 189

Hindsight does not always aid the accuracy of our perception of the past; it can blur as well as clarify and often reveals as much about the vantage point as about the object in view. But the element of hindsight can never be completely excluded from historical study, and it would be neither profitable nor desirable to attempt to deny it entirely; too exclusive a concentration upon a particular period without reference to what followed after gives a distorted, unbalanced view. The fairest assessment of the past rests upon a close scrutiny of the period in question in its own terms filtered through a consideration of later developments and opinions subsequently formed.

The Great War constitutes a particularly dense and distorting filter. Bearing in mind the thorough dislocation of life which it brought about and the stinging blow it dealt the national consciousness, one can quite see how it dwarfed the changes and developments of the preceding years, making the early Georgian period seem calm and unruffled in comparison with itself. It goes without question that the War formed a major watershed in the history of Europe, but in England it was a mountain range rising out of steep and craggy foothills rather than a smooth and level plain. The fabric of life in England had begun a process of radical change before the War came to rock it to its foundations.

The First World War was doubly unsettling for the artist. Not only was the machinery of life, the means whereby a book was printed and published, a painting exhibited, a play staged or a piece of music performed, thrown violently out of gear but there was in addition the most profound spiritual upheaval; the all-pervasive sensations of grief, hatred, despair and impotence had to be countenanced, suffered and somehow transfigured in the

positive act of creation. Thus the post-War artist might well look back with envy to the richness, vitality and sheer profusion of artistic activity of the early Georgian period. Here was no instance of the passage of time distorting the vision - the years after the War were lean indeed by comparison. But if in looking back to the pre-War artistic climate he saw a period of calm and stability, he was suffering a serious delusion. The years 1910 to 1914 witnessed artistic upheaval on a scale unparalleled in any other half-decade of English history.

No sphere of artistic activity was more disrupted by the Great War than was music; the whole machinery of musical life faltered and in some areas broke down altogether, standards of performance and appreciation dropped dramatically and public taste underwent a marked change. This period of ferment began before the War was one year old and continued well into the post-War years as the musical world readjusted to the changed material and spiritual climate of the 1920s. But this should not obscure the fact that music too had experienced its upheavals during the early Georgian period, both composers and performers reacting to the pervading mood of change and experiment. The following chapters will attempt to present five years of the history of the composition and performance of music in England in their historical context and against the unstable but immensely stimulating background of the contemporary social and artistic climate.

2.1

## Chapter 2 The English Musical Renaissance

The most striking characteristic of musical activity in Georgian England was its profusion: music was being written, performed, listened to, published and studied on a hitherto unprecedented scale. Profusion *per se* is no virtue; but when increase in quantity of activity is matched by a similar increase in the quality of the results, this points to a general amelioration which is exactly what English musical life had experienced in the pre-Georgian period, in the shape of a movement which was very soon dubbed 'the English Musical Renaissance'. Renaissance is not a word to be used indiscriminately, but the nature of the changes in musical life which took place in late Victorian and Edwardian England entirely justify the use of such a portentous term.

Various dates have been put forward as marking the inception of this movement: H C Colles placed it in 1875, the year of the first Gilbert and Sullivan opera, 'Trial by Jury'; J A Fuller-Maitland and Ernest Walker chose a date five years later, 7th September 1880, the day on which Parry's "Prometheus Unbound" was first performed; and Edward Elgar, in his inaugural lecture as Peyton Professor of Music in the University of Birmingham in 1905, also suggested the year 1880, but without reference to any particular event. The new spirit must have been in evidence by 1886, for in that year the Viennese critic Eduard Hanslick, not noted previously for his generous criticism of music in England, wrote on paying a visit to London: "In the past few years England's national pride in respect of musical creativeness has experienced a reawakening".[1]

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[1] '*Music Criticism 1846 - 99*' (1963) p 254

It is significant that where precise dates for the beginning of the renaissance are put forward, they are the dates of first performances of works by English composers. The appearance of a gifted and distinctive school of native composers was one of the most dramatic and tangible manifestations of the new spirit in English music; but it was by no means the whole story. The renaissance was also bound up with a marked rise in standards of performance, a stabilisation and rationalisation of the musical profession and the machinery of musical life, a marked proliferation in the numbers of people actually engaged in the performance of music, and the emergence of a generally more serious and committed attitude to music on the part of the general public.

The common factor which lay behind this trend of improvement was a new attitude to musical education. Cause and effect are inextricably bound up together; the general renaissance movement fed, and was fed by, the new teaching methods which appeared simultaneously with it, affecting musical education at all levels from the Board Schools and the Public Schools to the Universities and colleges of music. The effects were numerous and far-reaching. In general terms it brought into being a musically literate general public, eager for music and with sufficient discrimination to reject what was not good, it raised the status of the musical profession, and it also greatly enlarged its size; more specifically it improved the quality of musical scholarship and criticism, brought about a marked rise in standards of performance and enabled an aspiring composer to complete his musical studies in this country.

The importance of musical education as a prime concern in the renaissance movement lay in the fact that it bore directly upon native talent. Good music had been played, and played well,

in early and mid 19th century England. But the best of the music and a great many of the musicians who performed it had been imported from the Continent, and in most quarters this had been accepted as a perfectly natural, even a desirable, state of affairs. The newly-discriminating audiences and the rising generation of gifted orchestral players were, however, native to this country, and by the early years of this century, English soloists and conductors could stand comparison with the finest of their European contemporaries. In short, England began to put her own musical affairs to rights, breeding and nurturing her own music and musicians rather than adopting those of other countries. It is this process of rebirth that justifies the use of the word 'renaissance' to describe the new movement.

Frank Howes sums up the renaissance as being a movement concerned with "spirit and standards rather than technical advance or revolution[1]". Of the truth of the first part of his statement there can be no doubt; but the second part needs some qualification. Certainly the renaissance did not thrust any English composers into the van of the more advanced schools of European musical composition, and the only area of musical performance in which England was in any sense ahead of the Continent was that of choral singing. But looking at the developments in terms of this country alone, the technical advances in both performance and musical scholarship were immense, and 'revolutionary' is by no means too strong a word to apply to the change in attitude on behalf of the general public and to the new aims and achievements of the English composers. The validity of a consideration of musical history

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1 Edwardian England 1910 - 1914 ed. S Nowell Smith (1964) p.414

from a national point of view is questioned in some quarters, but such a consideration of English music of the late nineteenth and early twentieth centuries is justified by the following two reasons if by no others. Firstly, the position of this country relative to the rest of Europe, especially to Germany and France, was a matter of great concern to the late Victorian and Edwardian mind; and, secondly, a spirit of conscious nationalism informed a great deal of the musical activity in Europe at this time, and it is hardly to be imagined that such a movement should find no response in England.

As late as 1921 the old jibe at England as being 'das Land ohne Musik' was still being given public expression in Germany. The phrase had been coined in the middle of the nineteenth century, but even then the truth of a literal translation was highly questionable, and its continued use became more and more unjust as the century neared its end. The fact of its persistence into the early twentieth century, even taking into account the unsettled state of Anglo-German relations at the time, would perhaps suggest that what those who perpetrated the remark had in mind was the lack of any English composers who could stand comparison with the contemporary continental giants, although to use the phrase after 1908, the year of Elgar's A flat symphony, shows a considerable degree of prejudice. Given the phenomenal richness of German musical composition in the nineteenth century, perhaps it was inevitable that the Germans should place great importance upon composers as the chief representatives of musical life in general. The lack of any composers of repute points to some deficiency in the musical life of a country and conversely the simultaneous appearance of several such composers is indicative of good musical health. For whereas a single composer of international standing,

a Sibelius or a Grieg, can apparently thrive without the support of a stable and rich musical environment, the appearance in quick succession of a large number of gifted composers able to earn distinction within and beyond their native shores is inconceivable without such a background. So the emergence of a group of such composers in England at the end of the nineteenth century sets a seal upon the renaissance movement.

The thorough permeation of English musical life by the revitalising spirit took a considerable time. It can be recognised as a continuing process past the turn of the century, through the Edwardian period and right up to the Great War, when its course was deflected by a powerful external force which set in action new influences of its own. Since musical education was one of the most important areas in which improvement took place, the full benefit of the new trend was not felt until a generation had grown up and been trained under its influence. Thus the first full crop of renaissance composers belonged to the generation born about the year 1880, and it cannot be merely a coincidence that in a list of the birth dates of English composers of any stature, the decade from 1875 to 1885 produces a rich galaxy of some thirty names; the healthy musical environment gave birth to, nurtured and supported many more gifted musicians than had previously been found in this country. It was from this generation that the youngest of the mature composers working in early Georgian England came.

The spirit of change and experiment which marked the opening of George V's reign had its influence upon music as upon the other arts; important developments took place in the areas of both composition and performance, and the general spirit of renaissance experienced a transfusion of new life. It was the interaction

of these two trends, the spirit of revolt and the emergence of a new generation of able young musicians, which largely explains the richness and profusion of musical life just before the Great War; the soil was fertile, the climate propitious and the seed pure and strong. But to appreciate what was new in early Georgian music one must of course have a knowledge of Edwardian music and musical life, and rather than beginning the survey at the musically arbitrary date of 1901, it will be better to go back to the beginning of the renaissance movement and outline the more important developments of its first two decades.

Of the first generation of the composers of the renaissance, Hubert Parry's name must head the list. As has already been mentioned, several historians take the first performance in 1880 of one of Parry's first major works as a convenient birthdate for the whole renaissance movement, and W.J.Turner spoke for a number of other writers when he said: "He (Parry), more than any other man must be given the credit for the great renaissance of English music which has taken place during the last fifty years."[1] Turner wrote this in 1928, and ten years after a composer's death is not usually a time when such statements are made without ample justification. However, it was not only Parry's activities as a composer which earned him this pre-eminent position but also his work as a teacher, educationalist, scholar and writer on musical matters, coupled with his total involvement with and unflagging enthusiasm for a very wide range of musical activities. The expenditure of his energies in so many different directions, beneficial as it unquestionably was to English musical life in general, caused him to do less than full justice to his natural gifts as a composer: some of the weaknesses in his compositions are attributable to haste and a less than total commitment to

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1 Musical Meanderings (1928) p.145

the work in hand. But despite his plethora of activities, he found a considerable amount of time to devote to composition as is demonstrated by his long list of works; and his achievements as a composer are of considerable importance.

Two points about Parry's training are worthy of particular note. Firstly, he received almost all his musical education in England, a highly unusual course of action to be taken at a time when it was still de rigueur for a young musician to study abroad, especially in Germany. His principal teacher was Edward Dannreuther, a German emigré who was Wagner's chief apologist in the London of the 1870s and 1880s. This leads on to the second point: although not imbibed at the fountain head, the strongest single influence on Parry's music was still the prevailing German style, in particular the works of Richard Wagner. What set Parry apart from his German-trained predecessors and contemporaries, leaving aside the questions of relative strength of character and natural musical talent, was his combination of a mainstream European musical language with a sensitivity to native musical traditions. It is no coincidence that his finest work, which is also the part of his output that has best stood the test of time, is that which lies most conspicuously in the English tradition: his choral music and songs. The five symphonies and the chamber music, works which are Teutonic in manner as well as in matter, never won a firm place in the repertory; they too readily invite comparison with the works in similar mould by the great German nineteenth century composers, and such comparison inevitably works against Parry. His most successful orchestral works are those in freer forms, the 'Overture to an Unwritten Tragedy' of 1893 and the 'Symphonic Variations' of 1897; these made an immediate strong impression and have best survived subsequent changes of taste.

The choral work which had such an impact in 1880 was "Scenes from Shelley's 'Prometheus Unbound'", conducted by Parry at a Gloucester meeting of the Three Choirs Festival. On several counts this work stood out from the general run of festival fare: for one thing, it was most unusual to choose a text from the works of a major poet, but having done so Parry proved himself quite equal to the task of matching first rate poetry with music of a similar intellectual calibre. W H Hadow noted his gift for "entering into the very heart of noble poetry, not by the reflected light of illustration or comment but by a glow of inspiration which has been kindled at the same fire".[1] Similarly innovatory was the work's obvious debt to the music of Wagner, an influence which early reviewers detected in the use of "endless melody" and in the "declamatory style" of the solo voice parts; certainly Parry's long and freely-flowing paragraphs are quite unlike the square, short-winded style to be found in most Victorian choral music.

These are the positive characteristics which mark out the best of Parry's works for chorus and orchestra throughout his career: his sympathetic and felicitous approach to a worth-while text, and his ability to construct large scale, freely-formed musical paragraphs with a spine of strong polyphony running through them. His polyphonic skill is worthy of mention in the same breath as that of his other great idol, Bach; Parry is never happier than when producing massive effects with a finely-woven contrapuntal texture in eight or more parts. His use of counterpoint is no mere intellectual exercise; his polyphony always has life and purpose. But there are other, less happy traits in his style; drab orchestration, a weakness for passages of genial but

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[1] English Music (1931) pp 152/3

aimless musical bustle, and what Fuller-Maitland quaintly but aptly calls "(a neglect) of the amenities of style which make for popularity"[1] - in other words a lack of concern with variety of musical texture and colour.

Once his idiom had ceased to be startlingly novel, Parry's music aroused great enthusiasm among the singers, players and audiences at the provincial music festivals; the resulting commissions led to his writing upwards of twenty large-scale works for chorus and orchestra, works which contain much of his best and (to use his own watchword to his composition pupils) most characteristic music. This distinction of utterance is not nearly so consistently evident in his chamber and piano music; the writing is clean and fluent but not always free of obvious continental influence, particularly that of Brahms and Mendelssohn in the former and Schumann in the latter. Superficially the songs too owe a debt to Brahms, but it is only occasionally in matters of texture and harmonic flavour that the influence is felt. Parry's methods in the key areas of word-setting and melody-writing were entirely his own and the twelve books of English Lyrics which were published between 1886 and 1920 contain some extremely fine numbers.

Parry's importance as a musician is not quite the same as his importance as a composer. In the former capacity he wielded great power, earning for the profession a quite new social and intellectual esteem, and through his influential positions as Director of the Royal College of Music from 1894 until 1918 and Professor of Music at Oxford from 1900 to 1908, he stamped something of his personality upon the leading musicians of several

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1 The Music of Parry and Stanford (1934) p 9

generations. As a composer he is best remembered for setting new standards of integrity and steadfastness of purpose, and for showing how a distinctive style could be evolved from a judicious amalgam of the current Teutonic musical language and characteristics drawn from the English traditions of choral music and song.

The names of Hubert Parry and Charles Villiers Stanford are always coupled. The reasons for this are more personal than musical - they were near contemporaries, colleagues and close friends, although their relationship was not unclouded by disagreement. There were other points of contact: both men were trained, and felt most at home, in a university (or at least academic) situation, for both composition was only one of the many activities that filled a crowded life, and both wielded enormous influence through their tenure of key teaching and administrative posts - Stanford was the principal professor of composition at the Royal College of Music from 1883 and Professor of Music at Cambridge from 1887, both of which positions he held until his death in 1924.

But in other respects the two men were very different. Stanford began his musical career as a Cambridge organ scholar, and the performance of music remained one of his chief activities throughout his life, though he soon relinquished the organ loft for the conductor's rostrum. He was above all an eminently practical musician: as a conductor his style was clear and uncomplicated - he presented rather than interpreted; as a composition teacher he preached economy of means and simplicity of texture; and as a composer he showed himself to be the complete master of his craft. Listed baldly these very real virtues may seem to amount to very little, but they were not universally encountered at the time, and through them Stanford put his

abilities to very good use. Eugene Goossens (another conductor/ composer of conspicuous talent who liked and respected the man but had little sympathy for his works) thought Stanford the finest conductor of Brahms he had ever heard; the list of his pupils (which contains the names of almost all the composers of repute to appear in England between 1890 and 1920) speaks for his teaching abilities; and by his compositions Stanford won acclaim both at home and abroad, and earned himself the respect and friendship of continental musicians of the standing of Brahms and von Bülow. On receipt of a copy of Stanford's First Piano Trio, the latter wrote: "Good Gracious ! What wonderful progress your country is making owing to your genius."[1]

In his music Stanford never achieved anything like as distinctive a voice as Parry, possibly because the technique of composition came to him so easily. This facility led to an enormous output of works: nine operas, seven symphonies, ten concertos, four masses, twenty-two secular cantatas, eight string quartets and large quantities of church music, keyboard music, songs, partsongs and music for the theatre. All types of composition seemed to flow from his pen with equal ease; he never made one particular branch his own. He was a man of a conservative taste which led him to eschew any form of experiment; he filled the accepted moulds by largely orthodox procedures. In his large scale works, all the resources of high romantic harmony and orchestration are employed, but with a tight rein and a characteristic economy. Ultimately these works fail to be totally convincing; they are beautifully written and very attractive, but lack the urgency and total involvement born of a composer's efforts to evolve a personal style. In smaller scale works, this problem is

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[1] quoted by David Cox in Chamber Music (ed. Alec Robertson) (1957) p.337

not nearly so acutely felt; Stanford's particular balance of manner and matter is perfectly suited to a group of songs or a short choral movement, but cannot sustain the broader span of a symphony or a concerto.

Stanford was an Irishman of the Orange tradition, and like many Irish expatriots he had a very ambivalent attitude towards his native country, which in his case extended to her native music as well. Although not a collector, he was a sensitive editor and arranger of folksongs. He never sought to make a reconciliation between Irish folk music and the other elements in his style; the _lingua franca_ of late nineteenth century Teutonic music formed the basis of his style, and 'Irish' remained just a vein he could slip into - which he did frequently with great effect. His most viable orchestral works were the six Irish Rhapsodies, with their imaginative scoring and skilful manipulation of very beautiful melodic material: they are much more successful than the 'Irish' Symphony of 1887, a work which, despite an attractive surface, falls between two stools, being neither properly Irish nor a proper symphony by the accepted Brahmsian standards. His finest songs appear in the Irish song cycles, and his most successful opera was "Shamus O'Brien", which enjoyed an extended run in London and the provinces in the late 1890s.

The works by which Stanford was best known during his own lifetime were his secular cantatas and his songs with choral and orchestral accompaniment. He was particularly successful when setting texts with a nautical flavour - "The Voyage of the Maeldune", "The Revenge" and "The Battle of the Baltic" achieved immediate popularity and possess a vigour quite lacking in his settings of more stately texts by Swinburne and Gray.

Viewed from a distance of nearly a century, Parry and Stanford seem to stand head and shoulders above all the other composers of the first generation of the renaissance. Theirs is the only music of this period of the movement to retain a tiny foothold in the repertory; even this scant representation is denied their colleagues. For most of their lives they were acknowledged as leading musical figures, and, during the last two decades of the nineteenth century, as leading composers too; their works aroused considerable enthusiasm and were frequently performed. There are a number of reasons for their success, apart from the most important fact that they were both very gifted composers: firstly, they both wrote well for chorus and orchestra at a time when choral singing, as well as being one of the most active branches of music-making, was also a field in which there was considerable interest in new music. The provincial festivals were a great encouragement to young composers with their regular commissioning of new works, and both Parry and Stanford soon became the composers most sought after by festival committees needing 'novelties'. Through their work at the Royal College of Music, both were also thoroughly immersed in the musical life of London; it was in the metropolis that most of the performances of their orchestral and instrumental music took place. But the main reason for their popularity was that their music truly reflected the mood of the age; it was serious of purpose, steady of aim, soundly constructed, confident in tone, and novel in a piquant rather than a disturbing way. It was only after Parry's death and after Stanford's conservatism had become embittered by his waning popularity in the face of new trends that the word 'stuffy' came to be applied both to the men and their music. The word is patently quite inappropriate to their

personalities, and to describe their music thus is seriously to misunderstand the situation in which they were working. In the last years of the old century their voices were fresh and vital, and found a ready response from both musicians and the general public alike.

It is mainly because of its strength that their music has retained its small niche in the repertory. Doubtless their fame as teachers and administrators has helped to keep their names alive, although Stanford, and Parry too but to a lesser extent, would deplore the fact of being remembered by anything other than his compositions. For whatever reasons, their names are remembered, and thus their music has never fallen into total neglect. But a number of their contemporaries, men who were highly regarded in their own day, have now been almost totally forgotten because composition was their chief activity, and once public taste had deserted their particular style of music there was nothing else of any permanence by which to remember them. However, no account of the beginnings of the English musical renaissance would be complete without brief mention of them, and two out of the three to be considered lived and composed through the early Georgian period.

Such a one was Frederic Hymen Cowen, born in 1852, the same year as Stanford. He was something of a prodigy pianist, and in later life did a great deal of conducting: he had charge of a total of eleven seasons of the Philharmonic Society's concerts, he was Richter's short-lived predecessor at the Hallé, and was connected with a number of other provincial choirs and orchestras. All this activity he combined with work as a composer in which capacity he had a large and varied output including six symphonies,

two piano concertos, four operas, seven oratorios, nine large-scale cantatas, many slight works for orchestra and for piano, and over three hundred songs. His two periods of study in Germany did little to teutonise his style; the composers he resembles most closely are Sterndale Bennett and Sullivan, though he largely lacked the former's refined taste and the latter's vigour. He achieved a certain distinction of style, but the range of effect over which he had total command was very narrow, being limited to an elegant pastel-shaded pictorialism and a vein of graceful prettiness frequently labelled (by himself and others) 'the olden style'. His workmanship was deft and there was none of the pretentiousness which mars much of the music of the period; at times Cowen can be genuinely atmospheric, as in the 'Ode on the Passions' of 1898 or the 'Scandanavian' Symphony of 1880, which had considerable success on the Continent (under Richter) and in America. Nevertheless, his positive attainments were too slight to secure a permanent place in the repertory, and to set against them there is much that is merely commonplace and trivial.

Arthur Goring Thomas occupied a unique position amongst English musicians at this period in that he studied for two years under Emile Durand in Paris, and his style never lost the grace and polish that it acquired there. He resembled Cowen in possessing a refined technique coupled with a flair for delicately piquant descriptive writing. But despite a composing career of only a dozen years, his modest output shows more variety than does Cowen's; his artistic aims were much steadier, his sentiment more firmly controlled, and his range of dramatic effect much broader. His two operas 'Esmeralda' and 'Nadeshda' were successful both in England and on the Continent; but, true to his time,

it is the lighter sections of the works which are the most successful. (Parry was one of the very few English composers of the nineteenth century who could write serious music which was neither pompous nor stuffy.) It says much for Goring Thomas's abilities that he managed to score an instant success in the difficult field of English opera; but a late start at serious composition together with early suicide leave an impression of considerable talent not fully realised.

Alexander Campbell Mackenzie ought to occupy a position similar to that of Stanford or Parry. Like them, he combined the career of a composer with that of a very active teacher and administrator: he was Principal of the Royal Academy for Music for thirty-six years and was also deeply involved with the activities of the Associated Board, which was his own brainchild. But from his autobiography one infers that after about 1890 composition became something of a part-time occupation for him, fitted in in the few spare moments which his other activities allowed. Both public success and critical acclaim testify to his abilities as a composer; his oratorio "The Rose of Sharon" was rapturously received at its first performance in 1884, and such works as the second Scottish Rhapsody and the Scottish Concerto had considerable success on the Continent and in America. Hans von Bülow championed a number of his works in Germany, and Mackenzie earned the friendship and admiration of Franz Liszt who at his death was engaged upon the composition of a Fantasia on airs from the former's opera 'The Troubadour'. But despite his early successes, Mackenzie's works suffered a swifter and more total eclipse than those of Parry and Stanford.

A number of factors in his training and methods help to explain why. His musical education was very similar to that received by many early 19th century English musicians; at the age of ten he was sent to a small provincial German town where he received a thorough training as an all-round working musician. On his return to England he spent a few years as a student at the Royal Academy of Music, then started upon a career as a free-lance orchestral violinist, accompanist, conductor, instrumental teacher and composer. Starting at a humble level, he swiftly mounted the ladder of the musical profession, assuming direction of the Royal Academy in 1888, and four years later being appointed conductor of the Royal Choral Society and the Philharmonic Society.

Mackenzie's thoroughly professional equipment was both beneficial and ultimately harmful to his reputation as a composer. It led to a thorough understanding of the craft of composition which, allied to his steady artistic aims, placed his work on a firmer footing than that held by much Victorian "professional" music. But it also led to a too-ready acceptance of the musical status quo, and a clinging to such outdated practices as the choice for his operas and oratorios of third-rate libretti turned out by the less perspicacious musical journalists. A good text does not necessarily inspire good music; but a poor text can very easily rob an able setting of much of its effect, especially in a work of any scale, as Elgar's 'Caractacus' and 'King Olaf' clearly demonstrate.

Ernest Walker not unjustly dismissed Mackenzie's musical language as "highly modernised Mendelssohnianism".[1] He was at his most distinctive when writing (to use his own phrase) "in the Doric",

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[1] in A History of Music in England (1907) p 298

i.e. with a conscious infusion of Scottish nationalism. Sometimes he used genuine Scottish folksongs, sometimes he gave his own themes the cut of native melodies: either way, it gave the music a grit and distinctive tang which it otherwise largely lacked. It is not without significance that two of his works to hold a place in the repertory long after the rest of his work had been forgotten were the Scottish Concerto for piano and the Nautical Overture 'Britannia', another work with a consciously nationalist flavour.

The salient characteristics which mark out Mackenzie's prose style are also to be found in his music; good sense, good humour, a simplicity which borders on naivety, and a steady integrity. They were sufficient to win him a considerable following among the musical profession and the general public in the last two Victorian decades, but not to retain any significant hold after the turn of the century when fashions and tastes changed.

These five men represent the first generation of the composers of the English musical renaissance. What united them was a general dissatisfaction with the musical order of things which they inherited; what distinguished them was their different solutions to the problem of how to set matters right. Of the five, Parry and Stanford stand out, if only because they were the most gifted, intellectually and musically. Much has been made of the fact that they were the two who had the benefit of a university education, implying that the lack of this type of training robbed the music of Cowen and Mackenzie of a more permanent position in the repertory. But this is largely irrelevant to their respective positions as composers; the former pair were men of refined taste and natural culture who would have composed in much the same way

regardless of their educational background. The importance of their university connection lay in the way that this lent a new prestige and self-respect to the musical profession and, through their later tenure of university teaching posts, a convenient means was provided whereby they could infiltrate a large section of the nation's musical life with their aims and ideals. As the first generation of their pupils began to emerge as composers in their own right, the good influence of Parry, Stanford and Mackenzie's enlightened teaching methods became evident, although by the same turn of the wheel they lost their positions as leading young English composers.

Arthur Somervell was a typical early product of the renaissance. Born in 1863, he was educated at Uppingham, the first English public school to take the teaching of music totally seriously, and at Cambridge where he took composition lessons from Stanford. After two years work at the Hochschule in Berlin, he returned to England and studied for a further two years under Parry at the Royal College. In 1894 he joined the teaching staff there, and in 1901 was appointed Inspector of Music to the Board of Education. Half a generation younger than Parry and Stanford, Somervell's career closely resembled those of the older men, and like them he combined teaching and administrative work with a steady output of compositions.

He entered the field as a composer in quite the accepted fashion. A Mass with orchestra was given by the Bach choir in 1891, and an orchestral ballad 'Helen of Kirkconnell' was produced by the Philharmonic Society two years later. From then on up until about 1912 almost all his large-scale works were for chorus and orchestra, produced either for the great northern festivals or else for the more modest amateur festivals held at Kendal, Hovingham and elsewhere. Although displaying a very conservative mode of thought, these cantatas have a certain distinction born

of impeccable taste, a fluent style and a considerable melodic gift. Without being derivative, they put one in mind of comparable works by Parry; like him, Somervell was not afraid to set the finest poetry, and movements like the opening chorus of "The Power of Sound' (1895) use a similar massive and rich diatonic style. His lyrical gift was more spontaneous than Parry's, but he had little of his teacher's contrapuntal skill, as the short-winded double fugue at the end of the same work demonstrates. These works served their purpose, but earned for their composer no singular or lasting reputation.

On quite a different level are Somervell's five song cycles. It is not without good reason that Eaglefield-Hull[1] nominated him "one of the most successful of English songwriters". Still using the same deliberately reactionary musical language, he commanded an astonishing variety of mood and style, each song achieving perfect unity of words and music. Something of the breadth of his scope can be seen by comparing the cycle from Tennyson's 'Maud', published in 1898, with his 'Shropshire Lad' set, first performed in public seven years later. (Although concerned with English composers of the last two decades of the nineteenth century, it has been found convenient for this chapter to include discussion of some music written during the Edwardian era.) The former has all the appropriate passion and melodrama, made the more telling by being kept tightly under control, and set off by moments of poise, as when the stillness of the tiny 'O that 'twere possible' succeeds the long and impassioned 'Dead, long dead'. It is a far cry from the self-conscious and artificial world of 'Maud' to the simplicity and gentle melancholy of Housman's 'Shropshire Lad' poems; but Somervell as perfectly catches the mood of the latter as the former.

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[1] in <u>A Dictionary of Modern Music and Musicians</u> (1924) p 467

The ten songs are most skilfully arranged to give a satisfying shape to the whole cycle, and each individual number combines a warmly expressive vocal line with an imaginative and atmospheric accompaniment. By the simplest means Somervell captures to perfection Housman's poignant nostalgia: in the penultimate song the piano plays the innocent melody of the opening song while the voice gently intones on one note "Into my heart an air that kills/ From yon far country blows ..."

As one would expect of a Stanford pupil, Somervell knew how to turn a perfect miniature; his partsongs and teaching pieces for violin and for piano are models of their kind. He had an active interest in folk music and published a great number of discreet, sensitive settings, mainly for voice and piano. But he never allowed this area of his work to influence his original compositions; he was the perfect example of a composer of national, but not nationalist, music. To use Frank Howes' favourite phrase, "he served his generation". Complete integrity shines through every bar that he wrote, and although the anachronistic flavour of his harmony was evident even to his contemporaries, his music won him considerable respect in Edwardian England.

Edward German was an able composer, complete master of his own particular branch of composition. Soon after leaving the Royal Academy in 1887, he took up his first engagement as musical director to a West End theatre. This entailed not only the direction of the theatre orchestra, but also the composition of incidental music for large-scale productions. Theatre music can be a highly ephemeral branch of composition; it says much for German's work that it not only achieved instant success, but also secured a permanent place in the repertoire. His overtures, entr'actes and dances for 'Henry VIII', 'As You Like It' and

'Nell Gwynn' were enormously successful and even survived the demise of the medium for which they were written, in other words the almost total disappearance of the theatre orchestra in the difficult years after the Great War. For the quality of German's indidental music had earned it a position in the repertoire of all the major orchestras at a time when light and serious music rubbed shoulders quite happily in the same programme.

His huge success in the theatre seemed to draw attention away from his more weighty compositions. Critics spoke highly of the two symphonies of 1890 and 1893, and the orchestral Suite in D minor written for the 1895 Leeds Festival; Dunhill, in an obituary appreciation[1], asserts that the Suite "deserves to rank with Elgar's 'Enigma' Variations as one of the unquestioned masterpieces of English music" and Fuller Maitland, in the fifth edition of Grove's Dictionary, also couples German's name with that of Elgar. But despite such high praise from some quarters, none of these works secured any permanent position in the repertoire; even so loyal a supporter as Dan Godfrey gave them each only a single hearing in Bournemouth, and Novello issued only manuscript scores and parts - German had a score of the 'Norwich' Symphony printed at his own expense shortly before he died.

His less ambitious orchestral works fared rather better, most notably the suite 'The Seasons' of 1899 and the 'Welsh Rhapsody' produced at the Cardiff Festival of 1904; these works were published and played with great acclaim. German always issued his works in piano arrangements (for both two hands and four) and it is interesting to compare these versions with the orchestral originals. He was a skilled orchestrator, and in its orchestral dress the 'Welsh Rhapsody' is undoubtedly attractive

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[1] Musical Times Vol LXXVII (1936), p 1075

and vigorous, if a little bombastic. But the success of the work owes much to its brilliant orchestral dress; in the nakedness of a piano arrangement its construction seems weak and contrived and the grandiose treatment of the folk-song themes quite inappropriate. It is as an orchestral work that it should be judged; but piano arrangements need not necessarily lessen one's admiration of musical workmanship, and since Elgar's name has already been invoked, his works may be cited as proving this point.

It is unfortunate that a superficial similarity of style led to German's name being coupled with Elgar's. Having done this in the Grove article mentioned above, Fuller Maitland goes on to say " ... though the difference between genius and talent is glaringly obvious". This is being ruthlessly ungenerous, but it is not untrue; it baldly presents the difference between the two men and thus invalidates any comparison, which is bound to work against German. But in the other major field in which German was active, that of comic opera, another comparison suggests itself which is a much fairer one, since the two figures involved are of a very similar stature. When Sullivan left the light opera 'The Emerald Isle' unfinished at his death in 1901, it was scarcely surprising that German, with his extensive experience of conducting in and writing for the theatre, should be invited to complete the work. The success of this venture, and of 'Merrie England' produced at the Savoy in the following year, suggested that the position of Sullivan as purveyor of hugely popular light operas was to pass to German. But this did not come about. These two operas failed to consolidate their early success with a firm position in the professional repertoire, but were rather taken up by the abler amateur societies; while the later works 'Tom Jones' (1907)

and 'Fallen Fairies' (1909) never made any lasting mark at all. German was not content merely to ape Sullivan's methods, he attempted to produce an individual style, but it was not strong enough or distinctive enough to compete. The wit and pungency of Sullivan is utterly lacking in the works of the younger man, as is the vein of musical parody which runs through many of the Savoy operas; and it is these elements which gave Sullivan's music a lasting appeal. The qualities of tunefulness and sheer charm which German favoured were not enough to secure a permanent reputation. They did not even secure lengthy runs of the first productions of his operas.

But if German could not compete with Sullivan for the favour of the more conservative light opera audiences, neither did he gain the support of the more progressive elements, for he eschewed any leaning towards the sensational and frivolous style of the musical comedies, such as 'The Arcadians' and 'The Merry Widow'. These were the new works which played to packed houses during the Edwardian decade, running for hundreds of performances and appealing to exactly the same type of audience which ten or fifteen years earlier had flocked to the Savoy operas. In the face of such opposition, German's works with their innocent humour and unsophisticated music made no lasting impression in the world of professional light opera. It was with the amateur societies that they were most successful, earning their composer the huge popularity which he enjoyed in the early years of the century and continued to enjoy for many years to come.

Although young enough to be in the very first year's intake of students at the Royal College of Music, and thus an early pupil of Parry, Hamish MacCunn belongs to this chapter rather than the next, for almost all his finest compositions belong to the late Victorian period. Early in the new century composition began to be crowded out by his activities as an operatic conductor and by his work on the staff of the Guildhall School of Music,

and his early death in 1916 precluded any return to creative writing later in life.

His works invite comparison with some of those of Mackenzie, since both show the influence of a Scottish idiom upon a basic Germanic musical style. The problem of the would-be nationalist is well summed up in a 'Musical Times' review of Learmont Drysdale's 'Tam O'Shanter' overture: "... the Scottish patois refuses to blend with the accents of Neo-Romanticism"[1]. In Mackenzie's case, Neo-Romanticism had the upperhand; the national element in his music does not hinder development along the orthodox procedures. But MacCunn's use of "the Scottish patois" is both more frequent and more thorough-going, which makes his music more distinctive but less fluent than Mackenzie's. The tension between the two elements is evident in the work which won MacCunn his early fame, the concert overture 'The Land of the Mountain and the Flood', produced at the Crystal Palace in 1887. In calling the work "one of the finest pieces of musical painting in existence"[2], Dan Godfrey is perhaps tactfully drawing the scent away from the less satisfactory aspects of the work; as a piece of scene painting it is indeed excellent, but as a musical argument it leaves something to be desired. What development there is is short-winded and laboured, and the overall shape of the work is a patchwork of attractive but disparate paragraphs. It is the strong and highly memorable tunes which have kept the work its place in the repertoire.

This uneasy relationship between his material and its treatment mars other of MacCunn's works in classical forms, such as

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[1] quoted in The Mirror of Music (1947) p 478

[2] Dan Godfrey: 'Memoirs and Music' (1924) p 130

the concert overture 'The Ship o' the Fiend' of 1888 and the setting of Psalm VIII produced in 1901. It would seem that he was aware of this dichotomy of style, for as he matured (the two concert overtures belong to his late teens) he turned more to freer forms - choral cantatas such as ...'Lord Ullin's Daughter' and 'The Wreck of the Hesperus', groups of miniatures such as the 'Highland Memories' for orchestra, and dramatic works. He wrote two grand operas, a light opera and a musical comedy, his most successful stage work being the opera 'Jeanie Deans' which was first produced by Carl Rosa in Edinburgh in 1894 and then made its way to London by way of a successful run in the provinces. By this stage in his career MacCunn had had considerable experience as an operatic conductor, and so was well-equipped technically for opera composition. It is not surprising that this technical knowledge, combined with the sympathetic stimulus of a libretto drawn from Scott's 'The Heart of Midlothian', produced a fine work. Frank Howes' description of it as "a straw in the wind of incipient nationalism"[1] is altogether too slighting. Its nationalist character may seem cautious in comparison with later works in the same vein, but at the turn of the century MacCunn's voice sounded novel and arresting. Like his more celebrated contemporaries, he did not merely accept the musical _status quo_ but made a determined effort to evolve a distinctive style of composition, an endeavour in which he achieved considerable, if short-lived, success.

Changes and improvements in standards of performance were also set in train by the renaissance, but these developments differed in several ways from the appearance of the new school of composers. Firstly, the changes in musical life were not so much a rebirth of something which had not previously existed for many

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1 _The English Musical Renaissance_ (1966) p 64

years but rather a process of evolution whereby a living tradition was modified and stimulated; and secondly,they lacked the spirit of a single movement transmitting itself from teacher to pupil but made up instead a confluence of similar but separate developments which together amounted to a general trend of amelioration. Furthermore they appeared slightly later; it was to the Edwardian decade that the dramatic proliferation and improvement of English musical life belonged. Thus consideration of the musical environment in which the renaissance composers found themselves will best be left over to the next chapter.

The English musical renaissance does not fall neatly into Victorian, Edwardian and early Georgian periods. Once it established itself it remained the mainspring behind the greater part of the musical activity in this country through the last years of the old century, through the Edwardian decade right up until after the outbreak of the Great War when external forces blocked its path and set in train different trends of development. This is not to imply,however,that the ameliorative trend progressed at a perfectly steady speed or that it did not reflect something of the changing ethos of the years between 1880 and 1914. The major change occurred about the year 1910 when there were sudden dramatic developments in the fields of both composition and performance. By contrast the change from Victorian to Edwardian was made smoothly and almost imperceptibly; the music of each era had its distinctive flavour but the transition between them was marked by a gradual merging rather than by a sudden change of direction. In human terms the span of a generation is defined as being about thirty years, and this would appear to hold good for this particular period of musical evolution too. The music of the first decade of this century has far stronger links with what came

before than with what came after, the years 1880 to 1910 forming the first generation of activity of the English musical renaissance.

## Chapter 3 Music and Musicians in Edwardian England

It is always tempting to regard the turn of a century as a dividing line rounding off one era and simultaneously inaugurating another. Horology and artistic evolution do occasionally coincide in their major periods (the most striking example of this in musical history occurring in Italy at the beginning of the seventeenth century), but in England the opening of the twentieth century marked no such watershed; Edwardian music and music-making were to acquire a distinctive quality, but musically speaking the old century merged into the new with scarcely a jolt or a creak. That this survey should open a new chapter in dealing with the first decade of the new century is largely a matter of convenience only; in several instances a glance back into the 1890s will be necessary just as the previous chapter frequently looked ahead into the new decade.

The musical renaissance surged forward into the new century, each year witnessing an increase in both the quantity and the quality of musical activity: the ranks of the profession were swelled by the young musicians being turned out by the colleges and universities, the repertoire of modern English music of merit grew year by year, the season became ever more densely packed with concerts of all types, and standards of performance continued to rise. The developments in the sphere of musical performance were noteworthy but it was the appearance of more and more gifted native composers that continued to be the most dramatic manifestation of the renaissance spirit, the factor that convinced the musical public both at home and abroad that something new and important was happening. The composer who dominated English music throughout the first decade of the century, and with a consideration of whom any

survey of Edwardian music must begin, was, however, not 'of' the renaissance in the same way that the composers mentioned in the previous chapter were. Edward Elgar and the English musical renaissance happened to coincide. Each would have existed without the other, although each was sufficiently powerful for considerable mutual influence to be exerted: without Elgar's music the renaissance would have been an altogether more cautious and parochial affair, but without the renaissance and all it stood for Elgar's struggle to maturity and fame would have been very much more difficult and prolonged.

Born in 1857, Edward Elgar composed steadily from his childhood onwards, being convinced of his potential powers from an early age. Unlike the composers already mentioned, he did not choose to divert some of his energies into teaching and performing but was forced to do so by material circumstances, although he hated teaching and was largely frustrated by playing in provincial orchestras; it was not until after the composition of 'The Dream of Gerontius', when Elgar was approaching his forty-fifth year, that he was finally able to relinquish his violin-teaching and live by composition and conducting alone.

It is commonly assumed that Elgar's reputation as a composer was made overnight with the first performance of the 'Enigma' Variations in June, 1899. But in reality his fame had been gradually radiating outwards from the immediate area of his home town of Worcester since the late 1880s. The south-west Midlands knew him as a choral and orchestral composer during the early 1890s; Mackenzie tells how "the publication of 'King Olaf' (in 1896) brought Edward Elgar's name into sudden prominence"[1], and the first performance of 'Caractacus' at the Leeds Festival two years later secured

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[1] A. C Mackenzie: A Musician's Narrative p 205

for him a nationwide reputation as a highly gifted writer of choral cantatas such as might be commissioned by the more enterprising of the provincial festival committees. Thus the appearance of the Variations did not initiate his career as a composer but rather marked a very important milestone in it for two reasons: firstly, with them he scored a resounding success at the very heart of English musical life, a concert in St James' Hall (then a more important centre for orchestral music than either the Royal Albert Hall or the new Queen's Hall) conducted by Hans Richter, the most respected conductor working in England at the time; and secondly, he proved himself a master of orchestral composition, a field in which his immediate predecessors had made little lasting impression.

His succeeding works consolidated his position as England's leading composer. The first performance of 'The Dream of Gerontius' in October 1900 was a miserable failure on account of the standard of both the solo and choral singing; it left a very baffled Birmingham Festival audience, but the musicians present unanimously recognised the worth of the work, and their confidence was rewarded when it began its triumphal career in England with the Hanley performance of March, 1903. As for the general public, the setback of 'Gerontius' was more than effaced by the huge success of the first of the 'Pomp and Circumstance' Marches and the overture 'Cockaigne' in 1901. From that time on for the rest of the Edwardian decade Elgar was the undisputed leader of English music, recognised both at home and abroad as our greatest composer since Purcell.

Elgar has been described as the musical laureate of the Edwardian age, and the epithet is fitting in both a literal and a figurative sense. Certainly he was 'crowned with the laurel wreath' of success again and again during the Edwardian era; and it is an

uncanny coincidence that the first première of a major work of his to take place after the death of King Edward, that of the Second Symphony in May 1911, met with a distinctly lukewarm reception. The lack of enthusiasm on that occasion was made all the more marked by the memory of the huge success of the first performance of the Violin Concerto in the previous year and the scenes of ecstatic enthusiasm which had greeted the early performances of the First Symphony in 1908. These were the pinnacles, but it is clear that, with the exception of 'Gerontius', every major work of Elgar's to appear between 1899 and 1910 met with a favourable initial reception.

But first performances are not all. What really mattered was that during this decade Elgar's works were played again and again, taking their place in the repertory alongside the best contemporary continental works and the standard classical diet. They needed no allowances made, no special pleading. There was no conductor who was the Elgar specialist; although the composer himself frequently conducted his own works, all other reputable conductors were keen to add them to their lists. Previous English music had made some headway abroad, particularly in Germany and America; Elgar's works travelled the globe, greeted enthusiastically by audiences, performers and critics alike, and at home the measure of his success was complete. Civil and academic honours were showered upon him; there was keen rivalry among concert-giving organisations to be allowed to give the first performances of his works; a three day festival of his music was given at Covent Garden in 1904; a university professorship was created specifically for him (the venture proved a conspicuous failure, but its inception was a rare compliment) and at least eight books about him appeared during his lifetime alone.

He was the musical laureate of the Edwardian age in the broader sense

as well. In a memorial tribute, Arnold Bax referred to him as "one of the greatest of the Edwardians"[1], and truly Elgar's music sang the glories and celebrated the successes of the period. But as one might expect in such a complete Edwardian, he also shared the weaknesses and reflected the uncertainties of his time. On the surface he and his music were exuberant, opulent and self-confident, but not far below the surface lay uncertainty, neurosis and confusion. Like all the best Edwardians, Elgar knew how to erect a strong facade; ultimately this hindered his continued popularity in the post-war period, for then many of the younger critics were unable to penetrate the self-assured, bombastic aspect which his music presented to their generation (just as they took at face value his pose in the persona of a country squire) and failed to recognise the existence of a passionate and sensitive spirit beneath. There is a double irony in Cecil Gray's comment, written in 1924: "He might have been a great composer if he had not been such a perfect gentleman"[2].

Despite his supreme importance to English music at the time, Elgar occupied a peripheral position in the renaissance movement as a whole. He enjoyed none of the benefits of the improvements in musical education, being entirely self-taught as a composer. The enrichment of the musical life of even a small provincial centre like Worcester must have helped to broaden his experience (for instance we know from letters that Dvořák's visit to the Worcester meeting of the Three Choirs in 1884 made a great impression upon him); but he still found life there intolerably narrow and cramping, and longed to escape to London. The rapid rise in performing standards in the two decades from 1890 meant that orchestras were well able to keep abreast of the complex technical demands made on them by Elgar's

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[1] from the Daily Telegraph; quoted in The Musical Times, Vol LXXV (1934), p 321

[2] Contemporary Music: (1924) p 93

mature scores. It was no idle boast when he claimed that players always enjoyed performing his music; his consummate mastery of the orchestra was so patent that he won the ungrudging respect of the members of a profession not always noted for its enthusiasm for the new. Singers were more guarded in their approach; Elgar's vocal writing was quite as novel as his orchestral writing, and at first choirs found his mature vocal style finicking and ungrateful. But once the true stature of 'Gerontius' had been revealed, and the rumour of its being unsingable had been dispelled, choirs came to regard the ability to tackle the Elgar oratorios and cantatas as a vital part of the equipment of any able group of singers and they responded to the challenge of the new style as enthusiastically as the orchestral players were doing.

Elgar cannot be identified with any of the groups of composers at work in Edwardian England; neither did he choose to identify himself with any of them. In age he was nearest to the first renaissance generation; but he was not on good terms with Stanford or Mackenzie, and he resented the early success and the frequent performances of what he saw as the 'academic clique'. Understandably, the composers of this group did not neglect opportunities of using their considerable influence to promote performances of one another's music, but to a struggling and ambitious outsider this must have been galling. By the time that due recognition began to be accorded him, a younger generation of composers was similarly beginning to make a name for itself. Bantock, Walford Davies, Coleridge-Taylor, Hurlstone and Holbrooke were between ten and twenty years younger than he, and their apparently easy success, helped on by their respective places of learning, was a cause for further resentment. On a purely personal level he was on good terms with Bantock and Walford Davies, but his

limited esteem for their works is to be inferred from his letters to them and to others.

As well as having no close friends amongst the other Edwardian composers, Elgar had no disciples in their ranks either. All had some degree of admiration for his work, even those who had little sympathy with the tone of his musical language, and all had reason to be thankful for the national and international prestige which he earned for the profession and for English music in general. But hardly anyone actually absorbed anything from Elgar's style in the formation of his own musical language; one can only call to mind Vaughan Williams' claim that 'The Dream of Gerontius' had direct influence upon the last movement of 'A Sea Symphony', or else such facile cribbing as Josef Holbrooke's Opus 60, a set of orchestral variations on 'Auld Lang Syne', each variation complete with the initials of the personality it purports to represent. (Incidentally "E.E." himself appears as Variation Nine, but cuts a poor figure in comparison with his _alter ego_ "E.D.U." in the 'Enigma' Variations.) So partly through force of circumstances and partly from his own natural inclination, Elgar was an isolated figure even at the height of his fame, his very stature as a musician setting him apart from all but a handful of men in Edwardian England.

Frederick Delius occupied an even more peripheral position in the renaissance movement. Six years Elgar's junior, he was truly cosmopolitan in both background and temperament, his physical links with England being very tenuous. Both his parents were German,and although he was born in Bradford, after reaching adolescence he never spent any great length of time in this country; by the time of his marriage in 1903 he had been settled for some years in the northern French village which was to become his permanent base for

the rest of his life. It was in Germany that Delius received his official musical training, and it was there that his orchestral and operatic works first began to appear, greeted initially with interest but soon with enthusiasm. It was this first taste of success rather than his parents' nationality or his years as a student in Leipzig that gave him an enthusiasm for Germany and her methods and attitudes. At a time when to be pro-German was to be anti-British, Delius in no way stood out against the trend: he was forever comparing the two countries and drawing conclusions in Germany's favour. At a rehearsal in Hanley in 1908, he is reported to have burst out with "My God, if this country goes to war with Germany, what a hiding you'll get !"[1], and, extending his Anglophobia to the field of music, three years later, he wrote as follows in a letter to Granville Bantock: "I am afraid artistic undertakings are impossible in England - the country is not yet artistically civilised. There is something hopeless about English people in a musical and artistic way".[2]

If Delius had little respect for musical conditions in England, English musicians were slow to take to his music. After the artistically successful but materially disastrous concert of his own works which he gave at St James' Hall in 1899, not a note of his music appears to have been heard in this country until September 1907 when Henry Wood included the Piano Concerto in the season of Promenade Concerts at Queen's Hall. Later the same year the first English performance of 'Appalachia' took place, with the New Symphony Orchestra playing under Fritz Cassirer, an important event for two reasons: firstly, the work was very well received, and secondly, it was the first occasion on which Thomas Beecham encountered Delius' music, and thus marks the inception of the conductor's unflagging

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[1] quoted by Charles Reid in 'Thomas Beecham, an Independent Biography' (1961) p 59

[2] quoted by Christopher Palmer in 'Delius, Portrait of a Cosmopolitan' (1976) pp 143/4

championship of the latter's works.

The success of the two 1907 concerts led to a whole spate of performances the following year. Orchestral works were given in London, Manchester, Birmingham and Liverpool (largely but not exclusively under Beecham's direction) and 'Sea Drift' was taken up by a number of leading provincial choirs. In 1909 Delius can be said to have penetrated to the very heart of respectable English musical life when he was invited to direct the first performance of 'A Dance Rhapsody No 1' at the Hereford Three Choirs Festival. With the production of 'A Village Romeo and Juliet' at Covent Garden in 1910, works from all branches of the composer's output had been played with success in this country.

The awakening of interest in his music led Delius to make more frequent and extended visits to this country and he began to build up a circle of friends among English musicians, at first largely through Percy Grainger, and later through Beecham and Henry Wood. He was even drawn into semi-officialdom by accepting, somewhat against his better judgement, the position of Vice President of the Musical League, a short-lived concern active between 1908 and 1913 which sought to promote performances of the works of the younger composers. On the surface his music too began to show closer affinities with this country: he turned more to the English poets for the texts of his vocal and choral works, he gave his works specifically English titles, and he took an English folk-song, 'Brigg Fair', as the basis for an extended set of orchestral variations to which he gave the subtitle 'An English Rhapsody'. This is not to say, however, that his works became more English-sounding. His music in no way resembles that of Elgar or Parry, the two composers whose works were most often described as sounding peculiarly English at this time; indeed to Edwardian ears it must have sounded

particularly un-English, especially since the two works most frequently played between 1908 and 1911 were 'Sea Drift' and 'Appalachia', both of which have strong non-European associations.

Delius almost always drew inspiration from the surroundings in which he found himself, and his early works reflect his travels through Northern Europe and America - the Florida works being 'Appalachia' and 'Koanga', the early Scandinavian works 'Paa Vidderne' and 'Over the Hills and Far Away', and the Parisian works 'Margot la Rouge', 'Lebenstanz' and, of course, 'Paris'. As he became more and more settled in the village of Grez-sur-Loing near Fontainbleau, so a number of his works, beginning with 'Brigg Fair' and 'In a Summer Garden' written in 1907 and 1908, began to reflect the quietly pastoral character of that particular area of North Eastern France. It was as this vein in his music became more pronounced and his works in this style became increasingly popular in England that people began to find a specifically English quality in his music, the landscapes of Northern France and of Southern England being sufficiently similar for a single piece of music to be strongly evocative of either to a sympathetic listener. (An interesting parallel of this is to be found in Vaughan Williams' 'Pastoral' Symphony; Tovey is not alone in believing it to have been "born and bred in the English countryside as thoroughly as the paintings of Constable" [1], whereas in fact it was born and partially bred in the fields of Flanders where Vaughan Williams was on active service during the Great War.) But this is to anticipate a later reaction to Delius' music; there was no reason why the Edwardians should have labelled him or his music 'English'.

However tenuous his links with this country before the Great War, he must be considered as making a distinctive contribution

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[1] Tovey: Essays in Musical Analysis' Vol 2 (1935) p 129

to English musical life of the period. In the last few years of the Edwardian decade he was regarded as one of the most acceptable of the ultra-moderns,although then as now the profession held very mixed views about him. Critics were worried by not being able to place him in any school of composers or tradition of composition; choral singers were initially drawn to his works not so much by their direct appeal as by the challenge of the novelty and difficulty of his vocal writing,and orchestral players and conductors were baffled by, amongst other things, the almost total lack of any marks of expression to be found in his scores. But the originality and strength of the music could hardly fail to be recognised and initial doubts were largely overcome. The more immediately appealing works such as 'Appalachia', 'Sea Drift' and 'Brigg Fair' established themselves in the regular repertory remarkably quickly, and even problematical works such as 'A Mass of Life' received a number of performances and were by no means universally condemned. Before the advent of the Russian Ballet in 1911, Delius' music was some of the most exotic and sensual to be heard in this country, and as such it offended and repelled a few but interested and attracted many.

Although by birth and regular domicile Ethel Smyth unquestionably belonged to this country, she too stands very much to one side of the renaissance movement. Her musical studies were undertaken in German (largely in Leipzig) during the 1880s, and through her composition teacher, von Herzogenberg, she was admitted to the Brahms circle. Close contact at an impressionable age with such a musical giant left its mark; her earliest works are saturated with Brahmsian techniques and flavours, and it was a considerable time before her own musical personality began to emerge from under the weight of the Germanic influence. Its presence can still be felt in

the more severely contrapuntal sections of the Mass in D, composed in 1891; but this is generally acknowledged to be her first fully mature work, and alongside echoes of her student days are to be found all the elements which make up her highly individual mature style - great vigour and rhythmic drive, an unconventional but resourceful handling of large-scale forms, rich orchestration and a feeling for the dramatic possibilities of a text. If the style of the work looks forward to her later works, then the circumstances surrounding its first performance by the Royal Choral Society under Barnby in 1893 were also premonitory of many later occasions. She had to bluster and bully and make use of influence in high places to get the work accepted in the first place; it went very well in performance and was a considerable success with the audience and many of the critics, but was then completely dropped and had to wait thirty-one years for its second performance.

Strangely it was the Mass which launched **Ethel Smyth** into her career as an opera composer. One of the conductors she tried to interest in performing it was Hermann Levi who, greatly impressed by the dramatic gift it revealed, suggested to her that she should try her hand at writing for the stage. And so it was that for the next twenty years the bulk of her energy was taken up with her first three operas; with their composition (the words as well as the music in the case of the first two), with the endless task of hawking them round the opera houses of Europe, and with acting as midwife whenever they were being prepared for production. 'Fantasio' was completed in 1894, but during the four years which elapsed between its composition and its first production, the composer's views about opera underwent a considerable change, so that by the time of the Weimar première she was already at work on 'Der Wald', a one-act opera "emphatically of

the German school" as a New York critic put it [1]. This work, first given in Dresden in 1901, subsequently produced in Berlin and given twice at Covent Garden in 1902 and 1903, marked a notable advance over its predecessor, the strong musical characterisation and powerful climaxes receiving especial commendation. But both these works are overshadowed by her next opera, the work by which she is chiefly remembered and which is acknowledged her crowning achievement. It has never been given in its original French, but as 'Strandrecht' was produced in Leipzig in 1906, two years after its completion, and as 'The Wreckers' it was given its English première at His Majesty's under Beecham in June 1909, repeated in the following year, and revived twice again in 1931 and 1939. It is a fine, strong work; Beecham, writing in 1944, called it "one of the three or four English operas of real musical merit and vitality written during the past forty years." [2], and it found keen supporters in Artur Nikisch and Bruno Walter amongst others. As well as more than matching the tragic passion of the libretto, Ethel Smyth's score is conspicuously successful in its technical aspects; the musical characterisation is strong, especially in the case of the heroine Thirza, the scoring is magnificent, often highly atmospheric, and the writing for the chorus original and very accomplished. It is a difficult opera to stage successfully, and none of the early performances did the work full justice; but in spite of this it always made a considerable impression, even under the unnatural circumstances of a concert performance under Nikisch at Queen's Hall in 1908.

Apart from 'Der Wald' and 'The Wreckers', Ethel Smyth wrote very little during the first decade of the century. There were the first two movements of a string quartet written in 1902 and given an

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[1] quoted by Christopher St John in 'Ethel Smyth (1959) p 104

[2] Thomas Beecham: A Mingled Chime (1944) p 86

independent performance in Venice in 1908 (for a discussion of the whole work, see Vol. II, p 127) and the four songs to French texts for medium voice and chamber ensemble, written in 1907/08. If the influence of Brahms is still be felt in the string quartet, then the songs are in a free and utterly personal style. Their composition was partly inspired by an interest in the harp, the use of which, coupled with chromatic harmonies and a sinuously inflected vocal line, gives the work something of a French flavour. These songs came nearer than anything else she wrote to achieving real popularity; for once there was no need for agitation on her part to secure their performance.

As for the rest of her output, however, as much time and energy went into its promotion as went into its composition. Had she not crusaded on their behalf, it is probable that her works would have received even fewer performances than they did; but whether the methods she adopted were the best she could have chosen to bring about the desired effect is open to question. Many conductors, while professing admiration for her works, fought shy of actually inserting them into their programmes, for having done so they knew that the composer herself was sure to appear and start interfering, even to the extent of forcing them to allow her to conduct the works herself. Opinions differ widely as to her abilities as a conductor; her highly idiosyncratic style was suited only to her own music, but players and singers enjoyed her wit and pungency and were prepared to overlook her technical shortcomings. Some concert promoters and managers gave in before her bull-dozing methods and her slightly underhand but frequently resorted-to practice of invoking the influence of her various friends on the fringes of the Royal Family, but others dug in their heels and refused to be bullied into compliance. So the likelihood of performance came to depend more on strength of will and tactical

skill on the composer's part than on the intrinsic worth of the works themselves.

That Ethel Smyth's work did suffer unjust neglect is undeniable: after the success of the Mass it seems inconceivable that she should not have received any festival commissions or performances. She put this neglect down to prejudice against her sex and her German training; but the latter is no reason at all, for Cowen and Stanford were only six years her senior, and training in Germany never hindered their popularity. The former reason however contains some truth: there was demonstrable prejudice against women throughout the musical profession at this time, although it did not have so powerful an influence in her own case as she imagined it to have. It largely took the form of refusal to take her quite seriously or to judge her work by the same critical standards as were applied to the music of her male contemporaries; nothing angered her more than the type of criticism she received after the concert performance of 'The Wreckers' which spoke of its being "a wonderful achievement for a woman"[1].

The reasons for the neglect of her works are more numerous and more complex. She was an outsider with little or no contact with official musical circles in England; her chief English ally was Beecham who proved a true but not always a very constant friend; her chosen field of operation, opera, was one in which it was extremely difficult to make much headway in England at the time; she was performed and published in Germany; she wrote none of the small-scale works, part-songs or piano pieces, which had a wide circulation and helped to ease a composer into a position of popularity; and, although a "true composer" (the words are Bruno Walter's), she was not a full-time composer, but dissipated her energies in a number of non-musical directions. Finally, her iron will and her fierce independence were

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[1] quoted by Christopher St John op cit p 114

at once the making and the undoing of her. They gave her music its strength and glowing sincerity, but earned her a general reputation as a stubborn eccentric. Most of those who knew her work admired it greatly; but for those who were new to it, the music was often obscured by her overbearing personality. She was famous in Edwardian England, but not for musical reasons alone, and part of her fame was more like notoriety.

The chief point of contact between these last three composers, Elgar, Delius and Ethel Smyth, is that they all stand somewhat to one side of the mainstream of English musical development, set apart by the nature of their gifts, their temperament and their musical upbringing. They cannot be entirely severed from the renaissance movement; the music of all three made a distinctive contribution to the rehabilitation of musical composition in England which was so marked a feature of it. But the movement also generated its own composers, men who were nurtured under its direct influence, whose lives became totally bound up with the musical life of this country, and whose work forms the central backbone of the continuing trend for improvement.

Typical of these was Henry Walford Davies, who made his way to the Royal College of Music in 1890 via a choristership and assistant-organistship at St George's Chapel, Windsor. After four years study, during which time he had composition lessons with both Parry and Stanford, he began a career as an organist, a teacher of counter-point at the Royal College, a choral conductor and a composer. Many of his early works remained unpublished and largely unplayed, and never reached the official list of his compositions; amongst them is much chamber music and a number of large-scale orchestral works including a symphony which was given its only performance under Manns at the Crystal Palace in the autumn of 1895. From contemporary

evidence it appears that this early music was a curious and unsatisfactory mixture of orthodoxy and experiment; a cantata which was submitted as the Exercise for a Cambridge Doctorate in 1896 was dismissed as "unmitigated cacophony ... tedious and dreadful" [1]. A meeting with Brahms resulted in his expressing cautious enthusiasm and advising the young man to refrain from publication "until the public want it" [2]. It seems that what the public wanted of Walford Davies' early music was his part-songs, solo songs and two violin sonatas - these were his first publications and the works by which he was first known.

It was to Elgar that Walford Davies owed the major advancement of his career as a composer. On the former's recommendation he was invited to write a large-scale work for the Worcester Festival of 1902, and although the oratorio 'The Temple' met with a very mixed reception (its undue length and clumsy orchestration receiving particular castigation) it put its composer's name to the fore as a festival composer. For the next ten years most major provincial festivals featured one of his compositions, often amongst the new works. The most frequently performed was the cantata 'Everyman', written for Leeds in 1904. A marked improvement upon 'The Temple', in the opinion of many 'Everyman' is Walford Davies' finest major work. In composing it he paid particular attention to those aspects which had been most criticised in 'The Temple', and thus his libretto was much more compact and well-planned and his handling of the orchestra far more assured. It is in every way a more interesting work, nowhere more so than in its harmonic characterisations: the earthly aspects of the morality employ a richly chromatic idiom, the voice of Death is associated with strange harmonic juxtapositions, the voice of God is represented by the unaccompanied chorus singing

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[1] quoted by H C Colles in Walford Davies" (1942) p 30

[2] ibid p 43

in a simple chordal style and the music assumes a radiant diatonic harmony at the moment when Everyman overcomes Death and puts on immortality. This apparent diversity of idiom does not prevent the overall cohesion of the work, which seems to be largely due to the composer's total absorption in his subject. The work sounded a new note in Edwardian choral music, and after a highly successful first performance, was taken up by every choral society with an interest in modern music in the land.

Walford Davies' next two large-scale choral works made much less of an impression. 'Lift up your Hearts', described as a 'sacred symphony' is an interesting idea not entirely successfully realised; the unsuitability of drawing the thematic material for a work on this scale from Marbecke's Communion setting is more evident in the first two largely instrumental sonata-form movements than in the rest of the work where the voices predominate. 'Noble Numbers', written for the 1909 Hereford Festival, contains much attractive music, but the overall plan which governed the selection of eighteen short poems by Herrick and his contemporaries is not at all clear, and with no apparent connecting thread the diversity of style and treatment in their musical setting is bewildering.

Walford Davies never found a more successful solution to the problem of structuring a large-scale work than the one he produced in 'Everyman'. He was essentially a miniaturist and although on the scale of 'Noble Numbers' the device was a complete failure, on a smaller scale his practice of assembling a collection of short, heterogeneous movements was often highly successful. The 'Holiday Tunes' for orchestra, the 'Pastorals' for vocal quartet and piano quintet, and the 'Peter Pan' suite for string quartet all achieved some measure of popularity, suiting his talents much better than did

the amply-proportioned festival works. He could also produce a single miniature of distinction, as is borne out by a number of his songs and part-songs and much of his church music. His works on this scale display all the most admired qualities of his teachers' own works: good workmanship, sensitive word-setting, economy and directness, and it is by these works if any that later generations remember him as a composer. But he had a brief spell as a figure of some importance in Edwardian England. A composer who wrote for chorus so naturally and so well was sure of a sympathetic hearing in an age when choral singing was one of the most actively-pursued branches of music-making, and Walford Davies' characteristic of overlaying a style unshakably grounded in traditional practice with a certain surface novelty endeared his music to the Edwardian musical mind.

Two more composers trained at the Royal College (and this under the direct influence of Stanford and Parry) died young and thus had their composing careers cut short. This was a more serious loss to English music in the case of the one than the other. Apparently there was little new talent left undeveloped in Samuel Coleridge-Taylor when he died in 1912 at the age of thirty-seven. Some of his early chamber music had attained performance in Berlin by the Joachim Quartet, and an interesting Ballade for orchestra was given at the Gloucester Festival of 1898; then in the same year the young composer scored a huge and instant success with the cantata 'Hiawatha's Wedding Feast', a success which was repeated in each of the following years as two Hiawatha sequels appeared. But even these have not the spontaneity and melodic richness of their precursor and the remainder of Coleridge-Taylor's large output is similarly disappointing. His dance music has a pleasing lilt about it and his orchestration is always bright and telling. But of the large-scale cantatas and oratorios with which he fulfilled the festival commissions which came flooding in, only

'A Tale of Old Japan' made any lasting impression. This and the Hiawatha cantatas retained considerable popularity long after the composer's death, temporarily joining the ranks of compositions which could be relied upon unfailingly to draw an audience, and for this reason they held a place in the repertoires of a great many choral societies.

As well as never equalling the success of 'Hiawatha', Coleridge-Taylor never wrote anything as good. His early works sounded distinctly novel to late Victorian ears, but his style did not grow at all, and general taste quickly caught up with and overtook his particular brand of modernity. His mixed parentage attracted him to exotic subjects, but it was the manner rather than the matter of his music that was unusual. His work released a blast of fresh air into the still musty world of festival choral music, but made little lasting contribution to the revitalisation of English music.

William Hurlstone first came before the public in 1898 when, at the age of 21, he played his own Piano Concerto at St James' Hall. Apart from this work and the 'Fantastic Variations on a Swedish Melody' for orchestra, all his other notable works were in the field of chamber music: he won the first of the Cobbett Chamber Music Competitions with a Phantasy String Quartet, and his Piano Quartet was one of the works chosen for inclusion in an early Patron's Fund concert. Chamber music was one of the last areas of English musical life to bear witness to the spirit of renaissance, and Hurlstone's brief life spans one of the bleakest patches as regards the performance of native chamber music, after the demise of the old St James' Hall 'Pops' but before the advent of the several first-rate English ensembles and the numerous chamber music series which were such a feature of musical life before the Great War. This new wave of interest brought his music

the renown which was largely denied it during his lifetime. When he died at the age of thirty-one, he had still to evolve a fully consistent style, but the works he left show considerable achievement and even greater promise, combining an attractive surface with strong workmanship and a particularly distinctive harmonic flavour.

It will already have become apparent that Charles Villiers Stanford was the major composition teacher active in England between 1890 and 1920, an impression that will be greatly strengthened in the following pages as it becomes evident that the vast majority of the composers of repute to appear in England during these thirty years passed through his hands at some stage in their careers. He was, of course, fortunate in the quality of the raw material which presented itself; but it was largely because of the success of his own and Parry's compositions in the 1880s, as well as their gifts as teachers, that the newly-opened Royal College of Music gained the reputation of being the home of the best composition teaching to be had in England at the time. Nevertheless, it should not be imagined that these two men were the only composition teachers active at the turn of the century and that the Royal College was the only school worthy of the consideration of aspiring composition students. The Royal Academy of Music brought forward a number of composers of renown at this time and boasted as its principal composition teacher a man, if not as gifted, at least as energetic and outspoken as Stanford.

Frederick Corder, Stanford's exact contemporary, received his own training at the Royal Academy and at the Cologne Conservatoire under Ferdinand Hiller. His musical sympathies lay with the works of Liszt and, especially, Wagner; he waged protracted campaigns in the press on the latter's behalf, translated his librettos into English and generally did all he could to promote the cause of Wagner's music in this country. As a composer he was fairly prolific but had no

great success, the majority of his large-scale works remaining unpublished. His opera 'Nordisa' was given by the Carl Rosa Company in 1887 and at least three of his cantatas were produced at the major provincial choral festivals. Otherwise his published output consists largely of songs, part-songs and teaching music.

Apart from a ruthlessly forthright manner, Corder and Stanford had little in common and in their teaching methods they were diametrically opposed: where the latter was conservative and repressive, preaching economy and simplicity above all, the former was easy-going and progressive, encouraging his pupils to follow their own impulses and experiment on the largest scale. The more talented pupils of the two men soon began to assert their own individual musical personalities; but, despite an enormous diversity of style, all retained something of their teachers' musical personalities. Where Stanford's pupils tended towards economy of means and clarity of texture, Corder's favoured the broad brush and the brilliant palette.

The earliest of Corder's pupils to make a name for himself as a composer was Granville Bantock. Born in 1868, Bantock spent his entire studenthood (from 1889 to 1893) in London, almost all of it at the Royal Academy of Music where, as well as composition, he studied the piano, the organ and a variety of orchestral instruments, and also gained some experience of conducting. It was in this last field that he began his professional career, touring England as a conductor of opera and musical comedy; then, after a year's world tour with George Edwardes' 'A Gaiety Girl', he took up an appointment as musical director of the Tower at New Brighton. His contract defined his duties there as being to conduct an open-air military band and an indoor ballroom orchestra in appropriate music, but in

the three years that he remained at New Brighton he formed a modest symphony orchestra from the diverse forces under his direction and initiated regular concert series at which not only were the standard classics played but also many programmes of works by living composers, both British and foreign.

In the autumn of 1900 Bantock assumed the principalship of the Midland Institute School of Music in Birmingham (at the same time turning down an offer from Mackenzie of a position on the staff of the Royal Academy) and in this new post once again he showed great initiative, transforming a small, haphazardly-run musical establishment into the most important school of music outside London. He also took over the conductorship of several amateur orchestras and festival choral societies in the Midlands, was instrumental in the foundation of the Birmingham and Midland Competitive Festival, and in 1908 was appointed to the other important academic musical position which the Midlands had to offer, the Peyton Professorship at Birmingham University. The midland counties remained the area in which almost all his musical activity took place until the 1930s, and his was the dominant personality behind the flowering of music which was to be observed in that part of England in the first three decades of the century. Frank Howes makes a half-hearted attempt to identify a school of composers centred upon Birmingham before and after the Great War [1], but this is to overestimate the corporate spirit of the group of musicians who either worked or trained in the city at the time - Elgar, Holbrooke, Brian, Broughton and Julius Harrison. However, despite not constituting an independent school of composers, these men, together with a number of gifted players, teachers and critics,

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[1] The English Musical Renaissance (1966) pp 197/8

formed the nucleus of the strong and independent branch of musical development found in the Midlands during the first quarter of the century; and the figure at the centre of a great deal of this activity was Granville Bantock.

The urge to compose was already strong in Bantock before he entered the Royal Academy of Music, and while he was still a student a number of his works were produced there, works which clearly showed the young composer's response to his teacher's musical enthusiasms; when the one-act opera 'Caedmar' was later given a professional production, one critic went so far as to say that "the music at every step reminds one of Wagner"[1]. They also show technical fluency (Bantock was the first holder of the Macfarren Scholarship and was a sub-professor of harmony during his final year of study at the Academy) and a marked predilection for the stimulus of exotic subject-matter. All his life he was fascinated by the East, an obsession which was given musical expression on many occasions; another one-act opera dating from this period was entitled 'The Pearl of Iran' and the first of Bantock's works to be given an independent professional performance (under Manns at the Crystal Palace in November 1893) was a "Dramatic Overture: 'The Fire Worshippers'".

In 1896 he gave an orchestral concert at Queen's Hall when works by himself and five young contemporaries were performed. In reviewing this concert, the 'Musical Times' critic congratulated Bantock on having "learnt a lesson in modesty"; undue length and over-ambitious dramatic programmes had weakened the effect of many of his earlier works. But the comparatively modest scale of the pieces played at the Queen's Hall Concert did not presage any radical change of policy on the composer's part; indeed, the late

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[1] quoted in The Musical Times Vol L (1909), p 12[illegible]

1890s saw the inception of some of his most ambitious projects. All ten sections, each an amply-proportioned cantata in itself, of the massive 'Christus' were completed, although only two ('Christ in the Wilderness' and 'Gethsemane') were published and performed; but of the projected sequence of twenty-four symphonic poems based on Southey's 'The Curse of Kehama', only two were written. Bantock was fortunate in that his most productive years as a composer spanned the only period in English musical history when both the funds and the forces needed to perform his huge works were readily available; in the opulent years before the Great War the large scale of his compositions was indeed in some cases a positive inducement to their performance.

Of Bantock's nineteenth century works, many were published and performed once or twice, but none found a secure position in the repertoire. It was after he had settled in Birmingham in 1900 that he entered his first period of real maturity as a composer, evolving a more personal style and writing works which combined an attractive surface with a satisfying depth. The Edwardian decade also marked an increase in the quantity as well as the quality of his work; in an age liberally endowed with phenomenally productive musicians, Bantock must take the first place for accomplishing the largest amount of work as a composer in addition to pursuing active secondary careers as a conductor, a teacher and an administrator.

The first of his orchestral works to arouse more than a passing interest were the tone poem after Shelley 'The Witch of Atlas', produced at the Worcester Festival of 1902, and the first version of 'Fifine at the Fair' belonging to the same year. The latter was a great favourite with Thomas Beecham, largely on account of its brilliant orchestration; it does little more than reflect the variegated surface of Browning's poem, but does so in a particularly

deft and winning way. 'The Pierrot of the Minute', a comedy overture after Ernest Dowson, first played at Worcester in 1908, marks a considerable advance; here poem and music stand on a more equal footing, Pierrot's whimsical courting of the Moon Maiden making a perfect subject for Bantock's vivid pictorialism and episodic methods. It was of this work that Henry Wood wrote "Had Ravel or Debussy written it ... it would have been played the world over" [1], a very misleading comment on two counts. Firstly, despite the work's rather French-sounding surface, it is quite inconceivable that it might have been written by either Ravel or Debussy; and secondly, it was played the world over in the years preceding the Great War. After Elgar's, Bantock's proved to be our most readily-exportable music at this time, and 'The Pierrot of the Minute' was the latter's most widely-performed work.

If it was by his orchestral music that Bantock was best known abroad, it was on his choral works that his fame in Edwardian England chiefly rested. 'The Time Spirit', a rhapsody for chorus and orchestra, made some impression at the 1904 Gloucester Festival, and then two years later the first part of his setting of 'Omar Khayyám' appeared at the Birmingham Festival and was justly greeted as something of a landmark in the composer's career. As all agreed, this was a subject well suited to Bantock's particular gifts; the scale, subject matter, imagery and episodic construction of the poem were all utterly congenial and called forth some of his best and most characteristic music. The initial favourable impression created in 1906 was confirmed the following year in Cardiff and in 1909 in Birmingham again as the succeeding parts of the huge work were produced. It elicited some highly extravagant praise; Ernest Newman went so far as to claim that "in the way it deals with

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1 <u>My Life of Music</u> (1938) p 237

issues of life and death (it) could be mentioned in the same breath as the B minor Mass"[1]. To present day ears this seems a most unsuitable comparison, but Newman was by no means alone in considering 'Omar Khayyám' as his finest work to date. Its enormous difficulty was undeniable, but the composer was praised for not striving after unnatural and ungrateful effects. The novelty of the work lay in the nature and scale of the undertaking and in the manner of its execution; there was nothing particularly adventurous about the actual substance of the music. Nevertheless, 'Omar Khayyám' threw down a considerable challenge to the leading English choral societies, a challenge which a number of them were both eager and able to meet.

With all this activity on the grandest scale, Bantock did not despise work on what might be termed a domestic scale. He produced very little instrumental music other than teaching pieces, and no chamber music of any importance, but a great number of solo songs, some of the best of which - the nine 'Sappho Fragments' of 1906 and 'Ferishtah's Fancies' of the preceding year - were provided with orchestrations of their piano accompaniments. An increasing interest in the competition festival movement led to the composition of a great many part-songs, many written as test pieces to show off the abilities of the virtuoso choirs. The dashing 'Awake, awake' is a good example of the composer's complex, highly chromatic style, but equally effective and taxing in a quite different way is the serene and timelessly beautiful 'On Himalay' of 1908. The nature of his work as a conductor (often of amateur singers and players) kept Bantock's feet firmly on the ground even if occasionally his head was lost in the clouds; for all his grandiose schemes and high-flown extravagance, he remained at heart an intensely practical musician.

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[1] quoted in '<u>Conversations with Cardus</u>' by Robert Daniels (1976) p 40

With 'Omar Khayyám' and 'The Pierrot of the Minute', Bantock can be said to have fully 'arrived' as a composer. Earlier works, although pleasing to audiences, critics and performers, had often been spoken of as heralding greater things to come; but there was no such hesitancy in the response to these two works. They were the first fruits of the composer's full maturity, and placed him at the end of the Edwardian decade in the very front rank of English composers, second only to Elgar in the esteem of the musical public.

Although eight years older than Bantock, William Wallace entered the Royal Academy of Music in the same year, 1889, abandoning a promising career as an eye-surgeon in order to devote himself to music full time. After a short period of study he quickly began to make a name for himself as a composer; in 1892 his 'The Passing of Beatrice' was hailed as the first British symphonic poem and over the next seventeen years he produced five more works in this form, the best and most characteristic being the last, 'Villon', produced under his own baton by the New Symphony Orchestra in 1909 and before long taken up by all the leading British, continental and American orchestras. He wrote several other large scale orchestral works including two inspired by his feelings for his native land, 'A Scots Fantasy' and an overture 'In Praise of Scottish Poesie' first given by Manns at the Crystal Palace. A nationalist vein runs through many of his songs, most notably the two groups which became his most popular works, the 'Freebooter Songs' of 1899 and the 'Jacobite Songs' of the following year, ballads which are bluff in manner and straightforward in style, with strong melodies and vigorous rhythms.

Beecham refers to Wallace as "one of the most versatile characters of the day"[1]. As well as composing, he wrote on music

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[1] Thomas Beecham: 'A Mingled Chime' (1944) p 75

and translated a number of operas including Strauss' 'Feuersnot'; he achieved considerable success as a poet and a painter; and he never lost sight of his first love, medicine (he was to return to it as a full-time occupation during the Great War). He was also active in a number of fields of musical administration: he was for several years honorary secretary to the Philharmonic Society, and he occupied a similar position with the Society of British Composers, an organisation formed in 1905 under Frederick Corder's leadership of which the aim was to secure publication and performance of members' works. Lastly he was active on behalf of his fellow composers in their legal concerns, amongst other things giving evidence before the Royal Commission on Copyright. Talented in so many different ways, it was inevitable that Wallace could not pursue all his interests concurrently with equal vigour. Nevertheless,it is curious that he should have abandoned composition immediately after the production of 'Villon' which was hailed on all sides as his best work to date. For there is no evidence to suggest that he produced any major works after this and certainly nothing that he wrote later made any mark. Several of his contemporaries testify to his ruthless honesty; perhaps he, like a number of other composers, felt increasingly at odds with the new artistic climate which appeared in the years immediately before the Great War, and, rather than compromise his art in any way, abandoned composition in favour of his other activities. (That he held very decided views about the position and duty of a composer is borne out by his action during the Great War when, having given up writing himself, he made no secret of the fact that he thought that all other composers should do likewise.)

The next of Corder's pupils to make a name for himself as a composer was Josef Holbrooke who, during his three years at the Royal Academy of Music, studied the piano as well as composition,

gaining several prizes, medals and scholarships in both fields of activity. He wrote a great deal of music during his student days, of which almost all that survives is for various chamber ensembles: two sextets, a clarinet quintet, a piano quartet, a piano trio and a number of pieces for violin and for piano. The quintet and the quartet may be taken as representative of his early style: they are attractive and imaginative works, fluently written but sufficiently unorthodox to have given considerable offence to the authorities at the Academy. All in all they were remarkable achievements for one so young, and display few of the stylistic weaknesses and inconsistencies which mar many of his later works.

On leaving the Academy in 1896 at the age of eighteen, Holbrooke began his professional career at a very humble level, acting as accompanist to touring pantomimes and variety artists. He never ceased to compose, however, even in the least congenial circumstances, and in March 1900 he had his first success as a composer when Manns gave his orchestral poem 'The Raven' at the Crystal Palace. The work was well received (although the critics reckoned it to show more promise than accomplishment) and on the strength of this modest success the young musician decided to abandon his itinerant life, to settle in London earning a basic living by private teaching, and to attempt to establish himself as a composer by selling to publishers as many as possible of his small-scale works:- songs, part-songs, anthems and instrumental music. Holbrooke had ready command of a light-music style and his 'Danse Rustique' and 'Pensée Divine', together with many similar models of fluent anonymity, took their places in the catalogues of publishers of instrumental music for amateurs.

These unashamed pot-boilers served to earn the young composer a meagre income while he devoted most of his energy to the composition of more serious works on a larger scale. His first popular success came with a set of variations on 'Three Blind Mice', first given at a Queen's Hall Prom in 1901 and repeated in many subsequent seasons, being, in Wood's words, "always a popular item"[1]. Another particularly well-received work was 'Queen Mab', the fifth of the orchestral poems, which first appeared at the Leeds Festival of 1904 and was soon taken up by the other English orchestras; by 1912 it had travelled as far as Berlin where the Philharmonic Society performed it with some success under Nikisch. Several substantial works were written "after Edgar Allen Poe": 'The Bells' of 1903, 'Ulalume' produced at a Queen's Hall Symphony Concert in 1905, and the 'Dramatic Choral Symphony "Homage to E A Poe"' written between 1902 and 1908. Another contemporary work designated a "Dramatic Symphony" was the setting of Herbert Trench's poem 'Apollo and the Seaman' for soloists, chorus and large orchestra, given the first of its two known performances under Beecham in 1908, the year that saw the completion of another major work with strong literary associations, 'The Song of Gwyn ap Nudd', a concerto for piano and orchestra after T E Ellis' poem of the same name.

From the outset of his career, Holbrooke and his music provoked a very mixed response from the critics and the public. There was a great deal of critical fence-sitting to be encountered in reviews of performances of his works (" ... on the whole one feels one may do the composer the justice of assuming that the music ... is a genuine expression of the impressions which Poe's words ... have made upon his own vivid imagination"[2]), but the general tone of much of the

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1 '<u>My Life of Music</u>' (1936) p 120

2 from a review of 'The Bells' quoted in '<u>The Mirror of Music</u>' (1947) p 141

criticism was laudatory and in some quarters his music elicited very high praise indeed: in about 1910 Ernest Newman recorded the opinion that the composer's symphonic works were "probably the most important in the whole of Europe" [1] at the time. It was generally felt that a composer who wrote so purposefully and confidently deserved to be taken seriously and that the strength and vividness of his music made up for its occasional crudity and illogicality.

A critic of the first performance of 'Apollo and the Seaman' aptly sums up the characteristics of Holbrooke's style as being "independence, remarkable fluency, occasional striking power and dubious congruity" [2]. His music was certainly quite his own, notwithstanding the strongly-felt influence of Corder's enthusiasms, and of his fluency there can be no doubt, even if the critic is using the word partly as an ironic euphemism for prolixity. Mention of "occasional striking power" implies that there are also passages of undistinguished music and once again this is an accurate criticism, as is the final charge of dubious congruity. The composer was often very explicit in his use of a programme, printing extracts from it at various points in the score; but the connection between the literary image and its musical representation frequently seems very tenuous. 'The Song of Gwyn ap Nudd' illustrates all these stylistic traits, none more clearly than the last-mentioned; the superscriptions which appear in the score, especially those in the second and third movements, raise dramatic expectations which are totally unfulfilled by the conventional, even bathetic, music to which they are affixed.

Apart from a short and unsatisfactory association with the Midland Institute, Holbrooke was never attached to the staff of any academic institution; he wielded influence in other ways. Early in

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1 quoted in 'Conversations with Cardus' (1976) pp 40/1

2 'Musical Times' Vol XLIX (1908) p 111

his career he was active as a pianist and a conductor, from 1900 he gave annual series of chamber concerts devoted to his own and his contemporaries' works and he fought ceaselessly with his pen on behalf of the younger British composers. By the outspoken pugnacity of his attacks upon critics, publishers, performers, concert promoters and, especially, the general public, he did great damage to his reputation, even more than Ethel Smyth did to hers by a similar course of action. For whereas the latter had command of a magnificent vein of brilliant and witty invective, Holbrooke's diatribes are too often laboured and spiteful (and on occasion scarcely coherent), petulantly snapping at all the hands that were in a position to feed him.

Holbrooke had less need than Ethel Smyth to bludgeon conductors and impresarios into performing his music; left to speak for themselves, his works would have received as much attention as they merited. But he seems to have been afflicted with considerable egocentricity (the episode of his refusing to play at Bournemouth because of the small size of the lettering used for his name on the posters is too well documented to be totally without foundation) and by working far too hard on behalf of his works he raised expectations which most of them were quite unable to satisfy. Holbrooke was another composer famous in Edwardian England for reasons not wholly concerned with the quality of his compositions.

The most talented of all Corder's pupils was Arnold Bax who spent the first five years of the new century as a student at the Royal Academy of Music where, in addition to composition, his principal study was the piano. Despite his considerable gifts as a keyboard player, Bax never took his playing completely seriously and his public appearances as a performer were limited to occasions

when, exploiting his unique sight-reading abilities, he acted as a last-minute substitute for another player. He speaks fondly of Matthay (his piano teacher) in his autobiography 'Farewell, My Youth' but says next to nothing about Corder. It is more than possible that he recognised that Corder's easy-going and indulgent methods were not what he had needed in the early stages of his career; the opinion has certainly often been expressed that of all the second generation of composers of the English musical renaissance, Bax more than almost any other stood in need of the rigorous discipline of a course of lessons with Stanford. But would master and pupil have been able to establish any sort of working relationship? The clash of personalities might well have proved too violent for there to have been fruitful results from the attempt; try as he surely would have done, it is not very likely that Stanford would have been able to rid Bax of the tendency to over-complexity and prolixity to which his early works were prone.

The first of Bax's compositions to make an impression were some that he completed towards the end of his spell at the Royal Academy: a 'Concert Piece' for viola and piano given at the second of the Patron's Fund concerts in December 1904 (on which occasion a critic praised an "expressive theme of Irish idiom" but found the whole work marred by "vagueness of form" [1]) and a set of orchestral 'Symphonic Variations' selected by the same body for rehearsal at the Royal College of Music the following year. 'A Celtic Song Cycle' and the trio for piano, violin and viola also date from the same period and were published under the auspices of the Society of British Composers in 1906 and 1907 respectively; the latter the composer later dismissed as a "derivative and formless farrago" [2] but

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[1] Musical Times, Vol XLVI (1905), p 40

[2] 'Farewell, My Youth' (1943) p 89

the former was for many years his best-known work. The 'Concert Waltz in E flat', dating from 1904, is a *jeu d'esprit* with a strong vein of affectionate parody.

Bax's fascination with Ireland and the Irish dates from 1902 and remained with him right up until his death in 1955. As a result of it he spent long periods of time in Ireland and went so far as to create an Irish *alter ego*, Dermot O'Byrne, through whom he became friendly with the leaders of the nationalist literary movement based in Dublin, and produced poems and tales in a self-consciously Celtic idiom. This love of Ireland also had its effect upon his work as a composer, but its primary influence on his music was restricted to the decade 1903/1913. The form which this influence took had more to do with the expression of his own reaction to Irish scenery amd legend than with the creation of a deliberately nationalist idiom based on indigenous folk music. Bax was always scornful of composers who used folk-songs in their works (although he excepted Vaughan Williams from this blanket stricture) and the fact that some of his melodies have a distinctly Irish flavour about them has its roots far deeper in the musical subconscious than a desire merely to impart a little local colour.

The first of the Irish works, a tone poem entitled 'Cathleen ni Houlihan', remained unperformed during the composer's lifetime. 'A Connemara Revel' was given by the Royal Academy orchestra at Queen's Hall in April 1905 and 'Into the Twilight' by Beecham in April 1909, but neither made a strong impression and Bax subsequently withdrew both from circulation. Interest aroused by other of his works combined with a recommendation from Elgar prompted Henry Wood to invite Bax to write a piece for the 1910 Queen's Hall Proms, and 'In the Faery Hills' was duly introduced on 30th August that year.

It was recognised as being of greater significance than its predecessors, an accomplished treatment of strong and original material, and could be claimed to be the composer's first fully mature orchestral work, the first in this genre to be deemed worthy of publication. These substantial compositions were interspersed by smaller-scale works with Irish associations: a number of songs, including one setting of his own verse 'When we are lost' written in January 1905, and the first version of 'Moy Mell' ('The Happy Plain'), one of the best of his two-piano works, produced in 1908.

Just as Arnold Bax and Dermot O'Byrne pursued largely independent but contemporary careers, so the English and Irish strains in his music flourished simultaneously and works quite free of Irish associations were produced at the same time as those mentioned above. Two orchestral works, 'A Song of Life and Love' and 'A Song of War and Victory', have not remained extant; two two-movement symphonies dating from 1906/07 escaped destruction at the hands of the composer, but never reached performance. A setting of Runeberg's 'Fatherland' for tenor, chorus and orchestra was given at the Musical League Festival in 1909 and justly criticised for its remarkable conventionality. A 'Festival Overture', written in 1909 but not performed until March 1912 when it opened the second of Balfour Gardiner's orchestral concerts, two unpublished string quintets and more songs complete the catalogue of Bax's Edwardian works. The style and spirit of his early music were such as to attract attention and his gifts as a pianist won him a certain notoriety in London musical circles. One may be surprised to read that as early as 1909 Edwin Evans felt justified in introducing him to Vincent d'Indy as "one of our prominent composers" [1] but it is safe

[1] quoted in '<u>Farewell, My Youth</u>' p 60

to say that by the end of the Edwardian decade he was one of the young composers whose careers were being watched most closely.

Ralph Vaughan Williams would have merited this description at this time just as much as Arnold Bax did. Less obviously gifted than the latter, Vaughan Williams developed into a composer of stature more slowly and apparently with greater difficulty; but by 1910 several works had proclaimed him to be a composer with something to say and, at last, the means with which to say it.

Vaughan Williams was born in 1872 into an upper-middle-class family of enlightened outlook and intellectual prowess but no particular artistic accomplishment. His official musical education was undertaken at the Royal College of Music during two periods of study (1980 - 92 and 1895 - 96) and at Cambridge in the intervening three years, where the impression he made on his teachers and contemporaries was of being conscientious and determined but in no way specially gifted. He was possessed of a small private income which precluded the necessity of his settling into a full-time occupation on leaving the Royal College and allowed him both the time and the energy to pursue the composition which soon supplanted organ-playing as the chief of a number of musical activities. With the benefit of hindsight we can see how the other musical pursuits which he was following just after the turn of the century, which at the time must have appeared both diverse and diverting, were unconsciously preparing him for the role he was soon to fill. A large number of the articles he wrote for the musical press and the extension lectures that he gave turned upon the position of the composer, especially the modern English composer, in society and the musical world at large; and the conductorship of choral societies and the management of a competitive festival gave him considerable insight into choral singing and the ways of amateur music-making, two spheres of activity

in which he was to accomplish much in later years. His deep involvement in the revival of interest in English folk-song and his editorship of old English music should be mentioned here although each is sufficiently important to warrant further discussion later. Thus the general trend of his activity was aiming him towards a career as a composer although it was not until about 1907 that his works began to earn him anything like a wide reputation. Nevertheless, as early as 1903 two remarkably perceptive articles (one by Edwin Evans and the other by W Barclay Squire) were published, both surveying the contemporary musical scene in England and each singling out Vaughan Williams' name for special mention and prophesying great things from him. The composer subsequently withdrew or disowned all the large-scale works on which these two estimates of his stature were based; all that has come down to us from this stage in his career are a handful of songs including 'Linden Lea', 'Silent Noon' and 'Whither must I wander?'.

In the course of his official training Vaughan Williams came under many influences. In his student days he had composition lessons from Parry, Stanford and Charles Wood; Elgar and Delius refused to give him formal tuition but could not prevent him from learning something of their methods directly from their scores. He also studied with Max Bruch in Berlin in 1897/8 and ten years later spent two months in Paris working (mainly at orchestration) with Maurice Ravel, a man three years younger than himself. From all these men he learnt something, but all, even Stanford who at first seems to have had little faith in his abilities, respected his independent spirit and recognised that he would have to discover himself musically in his own good time. Works can be found which give evidence of these influences having been only partly digested;

one thinks of the Quintet produced soon after the period of study with Bruch on which the Teutonic hand lies heavy, and of the first version of the String Quartet in G minor, produced shortly after his return from Paris, which caused one of his friends to remark that he "must have been having tea with Debussy"[1]. But as the composer became more sure of himself he began to evolve a style which was quite his own, a style in which these (and other) widely differing outside influences were reconciled and resolved and took their place alongside much that was quite new and utterly personal.

More important catalysts in the development were the two influences already mentioned which he imbibed directly from the fountain-head rather than from precepts suggested to him by other men. The first and more radical influence was that of English folk-song. Even as a child Vaughan Williams had responded strongly to the few folk-carols which were then current, and his interest had grown considerably during the 1890s, a decade which saw the publication of several important pioneering collections of "country songs". But despite the founding of the Folk Song Society in 1898, a knowledge of folk-song was still restricted to a comparatively small academically-inclined circle whose interest was aroused by antiquarian rather than purely musical considerations. Folk-music was an absorbing specialist interest for the few but not seen as having any connection with the main stream of musical development. Two men changed all this. Cecil Sharp set about enlarging the treasury of known songs by embarking upon a vigorous career as a collector working in the field, and was also responsible for a very much wider dissemination of folk-songs by his proselytizing work both in print and as a lecturer. Vaughan Williams pursued an equally important and active career as a folk-song collector - between 1903 and 1913

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[1] Ralph Vaughan Williams: <u>National Music and other Essays</u> (1963) p 191

he gathered over eight hundred songs - but also filled a unique position in being the first English composer of stature to involve himself fully in the movement and to see in folk-song an element which could and should be absorbed into the current national musical language. Speaking on behalf of a number of musicians of his generation, Vaughan Williams wrote: "We were dazzled, we wanted to preach a new gospel, we wanted to rhapsodize on these tunes just as Liszt and Grieg had done on theirs... we simply were fascinated by the tunes."[1] The composer had long been troubled by the wholesale automatic acceptance in this country of artistic canons and practices prevalent in other countries which had no rightful application to the musical situation in England. He preached the apparent paradox that English music should turn in upon itself and acquire a distinctive idiom in order to gain a new self-respect and also to win greater respect abroad. In English folk-song, he and a number of his contemporaries recognised a means towards this end, a wholly native musical strain of irreproachable artistic integrity which could be enormously helpful in giving English music a distinctive voice.

The other major influence which contributed to the formation of his mature musical style was his increasing awareness of English music of the past. Like many of his generation his eyes were opened to the greatness of Purcell by the musical celebrations which marked the bicentenary of the latter's death in 1695. (Vaughan Williams actually sang in the chorus of the revival of 'Dido and Aeneas' staged by students of the Royal College at the Lyceum Theatre in November 1895.) At the same time there was a similar revival of interest, or more accurately an awakening of interest, in English

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[1] ibid p 46

music of an even earlier period. The first modern performing editions of the Byrd Masses were issued between 1890 and 1901; Barclay Squire and Fuller Maitland published their edition of the Fitzwilliam Virginal Book in 1899; R R Terry began to exhume some of the forgotten treasures of Tudor Church Music at Downside Abbey, work which he continued when he moved to Westminster Cathedral in 1901; and interest in the secular music of the same period was stimulated by the activities of such groups as the Magpie Madrigal Society and the Oriana Madrigal Society. This rediscovery of the riches of England's musical past made its strongest initial impact in academic circles, one result of which was that composition students began to be taught modal counterpoint rather than the strict academic counterpoint beloved of the pedagogues of the early nineteenth century. Stanford was in the forefront of this movement in England and made his pupils write modal masses and motets as exercises; but Vaughan Williams he found to be so taken with the modes already that he needed restraint rather than encouragement in their use.

As with his other enthusiasms, Vaughan Williams found practical outlets for this interest; in his lectures and articles he urged his fellow countrymen to acquaint themselves with the best English music of the past, and all the choirs he conducted before long found themselves singing the works of the Tudor and Stuart composers. The scholarly yet enthusiastic tone of his articles caught the attention of the committee of the Purcell Society, and he was invited to make a new edition of the 'Welcome Odes' to be published under its auspices; this work seems to have been undertaken at about the turn of the century although the two volumes were not issued until 1905 and 1910. A more time-consuming and substantial piece of musical

scholarship was his editing of the music for the 'English Hymnal', a task which occupied the best part of the two years before the new book appeared in 1906. This work did not, of course, restrict itself to English music or even to music of the past, but it was for its enlightened treatment of English tunes of the sixteenth, seventeenth and eighteenth centuries that it is most remarkable. Once again the composer's 'Musical Autobiography' best sums up the influence that this work had on him. "I wondered then if I were wasting my time ... But I know now that two years of close association with some of the best (as well as some of the worst) tunes in the world was a better musical education than any amount of sonatas and fugues."[1] Typical of the composer that he should turn an apparently mundane musical task to dual advantage; for as well as having a beneficial effect upon his own music, the 'English Hymnal' was an epoch-making work in the field of church music, setting new standards of musical scholarship and integrity.

Once again there are works which show that Vaughan Williams found it no easy matter to absorb these musical influences straight away. Although from the first his settings of folk-songs for voice and piano were highly felicitous, being more interesting than Sharp's but less idiosyncratic than Grainger's, his solutions to the problem of how to employ folk-songs in more substantial compositions were at first only partially successful. Of the three 'Norfolk Rhapsodies' written in 1906 (which were originally intended to form a three-movement 'Norfolk Symphony'), only the first was allowed to remain in circulation and eventually to reach publication in 1925. It is partly the quality of the melodies it uses that places it on a higher level than its companion pieces, but the way in which the tunes are handled is pleasantly spontaneous and easy; there is little attempt at their development or contrapuntal combination, devices

[1] ibid p 190

which seem to have marred the other two rhapsodies. However, it is only fair to point out that the work was quite radically revised in the early 1920s; verbal descriptions of the first version show it to have been a more contrived affair, using many more tunes and subjecting them to more elaborate treatment. A different technique was used in the 'Fantasia on English Folk Song' first given by Henry Wood at a Prom in 1910 but subsequently withdrawn and destroyed. There is a divergence of opinion as to whether this work was based on true folk-songs or on material written in a folk style; the confusion seems partly due to the fact that it never presented the tunes complete or in unaltered form. The critic of the 'Musical Times' found it "one of the most interesting and convincing of compositions in this form",[1] but clearly the composer was dissatisfied; no second performance of the work can be traced.

The characteristics which Vaughan Williams' musical style acquired in the wake of his studies of the music of the past are less tangible than those traceable to his enthusiasm for English folk-song. In matters of effective sonority, contrapuntal skill and just verbal accentuation, qualities in which his mature choral music excels, he clearly learned much from his understanding of the methods of the Tudor composers; but a number of early part-songs which describe themselves as balletts or madrigals, attractive as they are, quite miss the sprightliness and subtlety of the models on which they are loosely founded. The clearest proof of his deep sympathy with the Tudor polyphonists came much later in his career with the Mass in G minor and 'O Vos Omnes', just as his understanding of the spirit as well as the form of the dances of the seventeenth century was not revealed fully until 1930 and 'Job'. In the early years of this century the chief importance to him of the

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[1] Musical Times' Vol LI (1910), p 658

music of Byrd, Purcell and their contemporaries was its liberating influence; it made a welcome and stimulating change from the opaque and elaborate style of much of the new music current at the time, and provided living proof that there was such a thing as a first-rate native musical tradition in England.

Vaughan Williams once defined a genius as the right man in the right place at the right time. He obviously did not intend that this definition should be applied to himself, but it is interesting to see how these three requisites were fulfilled in his own case. He was the right man in being highly intelligent, fiercely individual, enormously hardworking and someone whom circumstances had placed above the necessity of writing music in order to make a living. He found himself in the right place; in a country with a glorious musical past and a strong tradition of music-making, and with which he felt a deep spiritual affinity. And above all he appeared at the right time to benefit from the high standards of musical education, the enormously thriving musical environment and the growing concern with the evolution of a national school of composition.

During his first period of maturity as a composer (the years from 1907 to 1914), Vaughan Williams produced works in a great variety of genres; orchestral, chamber, instrumental, choral, vocal and operatic. His first published compositions had been songs with piano, and it was on these works that his early fame rested. The most widely performed and appreciated of his late Edwardian works was in a similar medium, the song-cycle 'On Wenlock Edge', written soon after his period of study with Ravel. It is interesting that the first works that posterity regards as being entirely worthy of the composer's gifts should have appeared immediately after this final period of official composition study, as though the mature style had waited for the end of the last lesson then gladly revealed itself. But there is one work pre-dating Vaughan Williams' stay in

Paris which, by its novelty of outlook and sureness of technique, deserves to be classed as a mature work. This is 'Toward the Unknown Region', lines from Whitman's 'Whispers of Heavenly Death' set for chorus and orchestra. It dates from 1906 and was first performed at the Leeds Festival in the autumn of the following year, the composer conducting. The work is a fruitful hunting-ground for the student of stylistic influences and person characteristics. Utterly distinctive are the juxtapositions of simple triads, the frequent use of triplet rhythms and several germs of melody; less so are the pages of modal harmony, the moments of rich chromaticism and the lengthy paragraphs of warmly diatonic counterpoint, although even these devices are used in a highly personal way. The 'Musical Times' critic of a performance of the work given by the Bach Choir in March 1909 found the music to be "permeated by the Brahms idiom", but this is misleading because what Brahms there is in the work has come as part of the much stronger influeuce of Parry. This mingling of the personal with the general, the new and the old, is partly what makes the work so interesting. To a later generation it is the retrospective elements which are immediately striking, but early audiences found the work excitingly forward-looking. "New in its outlook and new in its working out" [1] was how Harry Plunket Greene described it, and "enthralling in its beautiful interpretation of the words". All this talk of influences and stylistic traits should not obscure the fact that it is a highly successful piece of music, greeted with enormous enthusiasm at its first performance, and that, in the words of the critic of 'The Times', it was "easily ahead of anything the young composer has yet given us".

The work which occasioned the wry remark about Vaughan Williams "having tea with Debussy" was a String Quartet in G minor, begun in

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[1] H Plunket Green: Charles Villiers Stanford (1935) p 138

1908 immediately after his return from France, completed the following year and first performed by the Schwiller Quartet in November 1909. It was one of a number of works written before the Great War then revised for publication in the early 1920s. It is not known exactly what form this revision took, but from the tone of some of the reviews of the first performance it would seem that in its original version it was a highly advanced and experimental work. Michael Kennedy quotes one critic as labelling it "an extreme development of modernism" and another who speaks of "harmonic progressions that frequently torture the ear".[1] The harmonies certainly range very widely and the harmonic rhythm is frequently very swift, especially in the outer movements. But chords which look puzzling on paper sound perfectly natural in performance, and the principal melodies are concise, clear and easy to grasp. The Finale, a boisterous rondo, is full of the colouristic string effects which must have given rise to the jibe about French influence. One is reminded that Vaugham Williams' lessons with Ravel were largely concerned with instrumentation; it is the manner not the matter of this music that betrays a French influence.

The same is true, but to a lesser extent, of the song cycle 'On Wenlock Edge', composed at much the same time as the quartet and similarly first heard in public in November 1909. The songs were accorded a much more favourable reception than the quartet had received; what adverse criticism they provoked centred not so much upon the composer's musical style *per se* but rather upon his wedding of music and words. But it was this very quality of sensitivity both to the general mood and the details of the text which was commended by the majority of contemporary critics, a judgement which posterity has endorsed. Of the six poems set, the only one which

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[1] Michael Kennedy: *The Works of Ralph Vaughan Williams* (1964) p 115

runs contrary to the poet's intentions is the final one, 'Clun', where the serene beauty of the music makes a convincing but unexpected reading of the poem,one which ignores the pessimism which Housman surely intended. Elsewhere the music underlines and points the text with outstanding sympathy. The representational music of the first and fifth songs (depicting the gale in the former and the church bells in the latter) is no less effective for being an obvious treatment of the poems; equally felicitous but more subtle is the irony of the fourth song 'Oh when I was in love with you' and the timeless poise of the second. The third song, 'Is my team ploughing?', is at once the most affecting and the least effective in the cycle. In style it looks back to the composer's earlier pre-Raphaelite phase, with its pounding triplets and rich chromatic harmony, devices which lead it dangerously near the brink of melodrama, especially in the last verse. A dense and overstrained texture at climactic moments was an impediment which even the fully mature Vaighan Williams could not always shake off; the other great emotional peak of the cycle, "Oh noisy bells be dumb" in 'Bredon Hill', makes a greater effect with many fewer notes. It is the sense of strain in 'Is my team ploughing?' which places it on a lower level than the rest of the cycle; the other songs have an effortless inevitability which is the mark of great music.

Spontaneity characterises also the incidental music to Aristophanes' 'The Wasps' which Vaughan Williams wrote for a Cambridge production in 1909. This quality, combined with its wit and high spirits, made the work immensely effective and engaging, but blinded, and continues to blind, listeners to its high level of inspiration and its expert workmanship. The cut and flavour of many of the melodies show that the spirit of folk-song had been thoroughly absorbed, and their treatment is admirably unforced.

The work was written for a theatre band of twenty-four players, but three years after its first performance five movements were extracted and rescored for full orchestra to form a concert suite. It would be interesting to hear the original version as this was the first orchestral score that the composer completed after his lessons with Ravel; certainly the orchestration of the 1912 version is endlessly resourceful and beautifully apt.

The three premières which took place in November 1909 did little to increase Vaughan Williams' reputation. 'On Wenlock Edge' attracted surprisingly little attention at first and what impression the string quartet made was by no means wholly favourable. The music to 'The Wasps' had the potential of considerable popularity but until the concert suite was first played (in July 1912) it was known only to Cambridge audiences. It was the continuing success of 'Toward the Unknown Region', together with the growing popularity of some of the early songs, for which the composer was best known at the end of the Edwardian decade, a state of affairs which did not alter until the first performance of 'A Sea Symphony' in the autumn of 1910 and the start of the vogue for 'On Wenlock Edge' which occurred at about the same time.

The names of Parry and Stanford are linked largely as a result of historical accident; those of Vaughan Williams and Holst are coupled for the good reason that one cannot fully understand the one without knowing something of the other. They first met as students at the Royal College of Music in 1895, and from the earliest days of their friendship shared the gestation, birth pangs and early life of each new work that either produced. Their system of mutual criticsm worked well because they were close friends but very different musicians; their talk of "writing one another's music" was a facetious joke. They shared a dissatisfaction with the musical status quo as they found it at the turn of the century

and a common basic approach to the problem of how to set matters right; in some of their solutions they coincided but in others each went his own way. Both were striving for the same musical ends, but the means that each adopted were congruent rather than conjunct.

Holst was born in 1874 and was thus Vaughan Williams' junior by two years. He came of a family of professional musicians of Swedish origin and was sent to the Royal College largely as a result of the successful production of a youthful operetta in his native Cheltenham. His principal studies at the College were composition (in which he was awarded a scholarship in 1894) and, after neuritis had forced him to give up serious study of the piano, the trombone; his composition teacher was Stanford who found him a hard-working and not unreceptive pupil. While still a student he augmented his scholarship allowance by playing the trombone in theatre orchestras and seaside bands, and on leaving the College he found employment as first trombone and _répétiteur_ with the Carl Rosa Opera Company; but after a spell in the Scottish Orchestra, he gave up professional playing to devote himself more fully to composing and teaching. His activities in the latter field were two-fold; he taught at a number of girls' public schools in London and in addition became interested in adult education, an involvement which culminated in his appointment as Musical Director at Morley College for Working Men and Women in 1907. Like Vaughan Williams, he found working with amateurs both rewarding and stimulating; with his Morley College students he gave first English performances of several Bach cantatas and, in 1911, the first performance since the seventeenth century of Purcell's 'Fairy Queen'. He was to continue this dual career of composer and teacher for the rest of his life.

Holst's musical adolescence, like that of many of his generation, was entirely dominated by the music of Wagner, an overbearing influence which for many years permeated all his serious works on any but the smallest scale. The composer's daughter claims that the one-act opera 'The Youth's Choice', completed in 1902, was so derivative as to sound like a skilful Wagner parody, and empty Wagnerian formulae filled out much of the early orchestral music such as the 'Winter Idyll' and the 'Walt Whitman Overture'. The 'Cotswolds Symphony' of 1900 showed a recognition of the desirability of writing music taking its inspiration from a native source, but confirmed that the composer had not yet found a musical idiom with a more English quality than the 'olde worlde' style of Edward German. Holst's professional background coupled with the legacy of his years under Stanford gave him fluent command over an utterly conventional musical idiom, a style he adopted when writing works aimed at swift publication and popular appeal. His early published works, mainly songs and part-songs, are in this undistinctive style; they are soundly constructed and fluently written, but only momentarily does a characteristic turn of melody or harmony presage the composer's mature, highly original musical language. The orchestral 'Suite de Ballet', which also belongs to 1900, takes conventionality to the point of banality, but the choral ballad 'King Estmere', composed three years later, has an appealing colour and vigour; a critic of the 1908 <u>première</u> detected "dramatic intuition" as well as "imagination and cleverness ... in the choral and instrumental writing"[1].

Imogen Holst claims that "the sudden impact of English folk-tunes changed the whole course of (Holst's) life"[2]. Vaughan

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[1] <u>Musical Times</u> Vol XLIX (1908), p 326

[2] <u>The Music of Gustav Holst</u> (Second edition 1968) p 15

Williams collected his first folk-songs in December 1903, and was doubtless quick to share his finds with his friends; up until that time Holst seems to have been largely unaware of the existence of English folk-song. His first attempts at fitting piano accompaniments to the tunes were apparently "not always a success as it was difficult to grow out of the chromatic habits of the past twelve years"[1], and his first extended composition employing folk-song material, the orchestral 'Songs of the West', was something of a failure for much the same reasons. The 'Two Songs Without Words' for small orchestra of 1906 were very much more successful, neither quoting an actual folk-song although each containing melodies written in the folk style. The first piece, 'Country Song', presents two fine tunes but obscures them with a laboured and over-elaborate setting. The 'Marching Song' is much more homogenous in style; there are no awkward joins and the occasional chromatic harmonies do not jar with the basic dorian modality. 'A Somerset Rhapsody', written at the request of Cecil Sharp and based on four folk-songs from Sharp's collection, is another work which combines passages of great beauty and sensitivity with some staggering harmonic and stylistic inconsistencies. Passages of pure modal writing suddenly lurch into reeling Wagnerian chromatics (as at the 'poco affretando' at figure 12) and the end of the work is marred by a clumsy piece of workmanship where 'Sheep Shearing' and 'High Germany' are forced into uneasy counterpoint.

Holst never fully absorbed folk-song into his musical language. Although he continued to use folk-tunes in his compositions over the succeeding years, he only rarely achieved the ease and spontaneity which characterises Vaughan Williams' mature arrangements

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[1] Imogen Holst: '<u>Gustav Holst:</u> A Biography (1969) p 28

and rhapsodies. The importance of folk-song to him was in the invaluable lessons it taught in matters of the setting of English words and the achievement of emotional strength by the simplest of means, and in the liberating effect it had upon his rhythm and his key sense. To quote his daughter once again,"The language of folk-tunes was a guide to him, but it was not his own language ..." [1]

It was just before the turn of the century that Holst first became interested in the study of Hindu philosophy and religious writings; he began to learn Sanskrit in 1899 and was soon making translations into English of hymns and philosophical poems. At first these studies had little more effect upon his music than the suggestions of novel subject matter; the symphonic poem 'Indra' belongs safely in the post-Wagnerian tradition, and the three act opera 'Sita', written between 1899 and 1906, was later irreverently dismissed by the composer as "good old Wagnerian bawling", though Edmund Rubbra makes the interesting point that "Sita in Hindu mythology is the god both of destruction and creation, and in the opera Holst has destroyed by confession the remnants of his earlier Wagnerian enthusiasms as well as created a viewpoint which in later works led to such remarkable results." [2] The first of these remarkable results are to be found in the 'Vedic Hymns' for voice and piano written in 1907 and 1908 and first performed in their entirety in 1911 by Leila Duart. The cycle as a whole is very uneven; in some of the songs the composer falls back upon utterly conventional harmonic progressions and textural figurations, but the best numbers (the first, second, fifth, sixth and ninth songs) are strikingly original. The natural rhythms and inflections of the words are scrupulously observed and the harmonies in the piano part have a spare, uncompromising strength. Holst had begun to realise the limitations of his earlier style and had struck out upon the lonely

1 The Music of Gustav Holst (2nd edition 1968) p 20

2 Gustav Holst (1974 edition) p 25

journey towards an original musical language capable of expressing exactly what he wanted to say.

More of the composer's translations from Sanskrit were set in the four groups of 'Choral Hymns from the Rig Veda', the first two of which were composed in 1908 and 1909. In style they occupy much the same territory as do the solo Hymns, but their idiom is more consistently personal; there is less resorting to well-worn patterns and sequences. The flavour of each hymn depends upon its function or the deity it addresses, and Holst provided an appropriate musical reflection of each, even in the mysterious and elusive 'Hymn to the Unknown God'. The mood which he found hardest to match convincingly with music was that which touched on human passion, and it is this difficulty which mars the most interesting of the early Sanskrit works, the chamber opera 'Sāvitri'. This was written in 1908/09 but not performed until 1916 when it was given by students at the London School of Opera; the first professional production was in 1921. This small work was truly revolutionary in both its manner and its matter. Its physical dimensions alone mark it out from all opera current in England at the time, for it lasts barely half an hour, presents only three characters and employs an orchestra of no more than twelve players, to which is added a small wordless female chorus. Its musical idiom is very nearly as original. The vocal lines are for the most part in an expressive recitative style only rarely breaking into arioso, and the accompaniment is very spare; for long stretches the orchestra is totally silent and only very occasionally do the instruments carry the main substance of the music. Everything is geared to a clear and sensitive presentation of the text, so much so that when the words (which Holst wrote himself)

are trite and conventional, the music too momentarily falls back upon the platitudes of grand opera. Such moments of stylistic inconsistency are fatal flaws in the 'Somerset Rhapsody' because that work as a whole has little urgency about it; but there is a sense of total involvement in 'Sāvitri', an intensity which carries the listener through the passages where the composer's technique is unsure. It is not known whether Holst attempted to have 'Sāvitri' performed before the Great War; if he did, it is scarcely surprising that his attempt was unsuccessful. The work's economy and directness of utterance would have had little appeal in the opulent world of pre-War English opera; its mood was much better suited to the taste of post-War audiences, and in the early 1920s it had a notable success and stimulated a number of other English composers to experiment with dramatic works on a similarly modest scale.

The Edwardian years in Holst's career were chiefly characterised by a growing awareness of the inadequacy of his early musical language and consequent experimentation with a number of different alternative styles. The years immediately preceding the Great War were to be marked by a gradual drawing together of these different strands, the folk-song vein, the style of the Sanskrit works and the straightforward idiom of his works written for pupils and amateurs, into the rich, homogenous and original idiom of 'The Planets' and 'The Hymn of Jesus'.

There are interesting similarities between the early careers of Holst and Rutland Boughton: both came under the tutelage of Stanford at the Royal College, for both Wagner was an immensely strong early influence, both used folk-song as a means of acquiring a distinctive musical language and both shared their time and energy between composing and teaching. Boughton was four years younger

than Holst and, apart from his one year at the College under Stanford and Walford Davies, was largely musically self-taught. After leaving the College in 1901, he spent four years earning a meagre living as a musical odd job man in London before moving to Birmingham to take up a position which Bantock had offered on the staff of the Midland Institute. He was to remain in Birmingham until 1911 teaching singing, lecturing, conducting amateur choirs, reviewing concerts for the musical press and composing.

The earliest of his compositions to achieve professional performance were for orchestra; a symphonic suite 'The Chilterns', an 'Imperial Elegy' on the death of Queen Victoria and the symphonic poem 'A Summer Night' given in Birmingham in November 1902, works which the critics judged to be competently written but too overtly reminiscent of Wagner and Tchaikovsky. More distinctive were the songs he produced at about this time; David Ffrangcon Davis (to whom Boughton acted as accompanist for a short time) took a number of them into his repertoire, and on the evidence of the early song-cycle 'The Passing Year', Ernest Newman felt justified in telling the composer that he knew of "no other of the younger school in whom there are such clear indications of a quite personal style to come"[1]. But apart from this cycle, few of his works achieved publication, a state of affairs which persisted throughout the Edwardian decade despite an unceasing flow of compositions: a symphony entitled 'Oliver Cromwell', two more symphonic poems in 1902 and 1906, a short dramatic work to a text by William Morris, and a great many songs and part-songs. Of these it was only works belonging to the final two categories which made any mark, most notably the 'Choral Variations on English Folk-songs', of which four sets appeared between 1905 and 1909, fine

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[1] quoted by Michael Hurd in <u>Immortal Hour</u> (1962) p 8

works in which the considerable liberties taken with the tunes are justified by the contrapuntal vigour and dramatic effect of the settings as a whole.

Boughton's fame as a composer remained very limited until almost the end of the Edwardian decade when widespread interest was aroused by the appearance of a number of his choral works. Novello issued three in vocal score in 1909, all of which had been performed by the end of the year. 'The Skeleton in Armour' and 'The Invincible Armada' were eleven and eight years old respectively; both were competently-written, run-of-the-mill festival cantatas, simplistic narrative tests provided with vivid settings, in no way out of the ordinary and certainly not representative of the composer's mature style. Very different was 'Midnight', a setting of part of Edward Carpenter's poem 'Towards Democracy', composed in 1907. By this time Boughton had become a fervid socialist, and Carpenter's vision of slumbering humanity waking to a glorious future fired his imagination in a way that costume dramas about skeletons and sailing ships never could. The resulting work shows a total command over a variety of musical effects, a thorough understanding of choral writing, a vivid musical imagination and a sure contrapuntal technique. 'Midnight' made a deep impression upon those who heard it performed at the 1909 Birmingham Festival and in Sydney Grew's words, "first brought fame to the composer"[1].

Boughton's first completed opera 'Eolf', a very Wagnerian affair complete with rival minstrels and a prize song, was written between 1901 and 1903. Total acceptance of Wagner's theories of music-drama led to a wish to employ them in a specifically English situation, and in 1906 he began work on a cycle of dramas using Arthurian legends as a basis. In the following year he became aware

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1 Our Favourite Musicians from Stanford to Holbrooke (1922) p 210

of Reginald Buckley, a journalist and poet who was working along exactly similar lines; the two men decided to pool their resources and together wrote the libretti of the first two dramas of the projected cycle. Boughton's setting of the first, 'The Birth of Arthur', was completed in short score in 1909; the orchestration was never finished (the performances of the work that took place from 1920 onwards were given with piano accompaniment) and the work has remained unpublished. Both the matter of the music and its treatment were unashamedly Wagnerian, although Michael Hurd detects "touches of Debussy in the supernatural scenes"[1]. The work's one completely novel feature was the use of the chorus to set the mood of each scene and comment upon the characters and their actions without taking any part in the drama itself. This was a device which Boughton was to use on many other occasions and one which he hoped would give his works special appeal in England where the tradition of choral singing was so strong.

The Edwardian decade saw Boughton develop from an unremarkable composition student at the Royal College to an accomplished writer for voices with an original approach and a fluent technique. His reputation as a composer had grown steadily, no single work suddenly thrusting his name into prominence, and had been complemented by a growing fame in areas other than composition: his activities as a conductor and as a teacher had earned him a wide following in the Midlands and his vigorous and outspoken reviews and articles had made his name familiar to readers of the musical press. In addition, his unconventional outlook on moral and political matters was sufficiently out of tune with the temperament of the times to earn him a certain degree of notoriety and even censure. The more liberal and relaxed atmosphere of the early

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[1] Michael Hurd op cit p 162

Georgian years was to prove more sympathetic and, in conjunction with a very much happier social life, was to stimulate some of his finest creative work.

Another Midlands musician who rose to fame during the Edwardian decade was William Havergal Brian. Born in Staffordshire in 1876, Brian had no formal training in composition beyond some lessons in basic harmony and counterpoint, his early musical activities being centred around parish churches and amateur orchestras in the Potteries. Before the turn of the century he had written a number of conventional apprentice pieces - songs and anthems - one of which he had submitted to Elgar for criticism and received in reply a letter of guarded encouragement. In addition he had composed a number of orchestral works including a Romance entitled 'Pantalon and Columbine' and a Requiem Mass, works which from the first displayed a novel and distinctive style.

Brian's admiration for Elgar's music led to his using every scrap of his influence to promote performances of the latter's works in the Potteries. (It was largely Brian's agitation which led to 'The Dream of Gerontius' being performed at Hanley in March 1903, the first English performance to do the work anything approaching full justice.) Elgar reciprocated by recommending a part-song of Brian's, a setting of 'Shall I compare thee to a Summer's Day?', to the committee of the Morecambe Competitive Festival who used it as one of the main choral test-pieces at their 1906 meeting. Morecambe was one of the leading choral festivals at the time,and its adoption of the part-song brought the composer's name briefly into the limelight and ensured the work's publication and dissemination. Further successes in the same field followed as other leading competitive festivals chose part-songs from his pen as test-pieces, his works in this genre being imaginative and attractive and sufficiently complex and uncoventional

to test the abilities of the fine choirs who sang them. Brian also scored some success with his solo songs; the 'Faery Song' and the 'Soliloquy upon a Dead Child' were taken up at about this time by singers of the stature of John Coates and, at a slightly later time, John Goss and John McCormack.

But, like many composers, Brian did not set great store by these modestly-proportioned works. Most of his creative activity was channelled into the composition of large-scale choral and orchestral works, compositions which, although they showed him at his most distinctive and original, at first stood very little chance of being performed; they were too difficult for the amateur orchestras with which he came into contact, and even Elgar's somewhat fitful interest was not enough to bring them to the notice of the conductors of the orchestras of national repute. There was the 'Tragic Prelude' of 1900 and the 'Legende' of 1903, both scored for large orchestra and both lost or discarded before reaching performance, and a symphonic poem 'Hero and Leander' which also disappeared, but not before it had been performed once under Beecham in Hanley in 1908, after Brian's sudden leap to fame in the previous year. A happier fate befell a Concert Overture 'For Valour', also written in 1904. Both critics and audience greeted the work warmly at its first performance at a Queen's Hall Prom in 1908, Josef Holbrooke expressing his enthusiasm in a characteristically unconventional manner when he wrote "I came away from hearing 'For Valour' feeling as if I had been scalped."[1] This comment gives some clue to the prevailing mood of the piece, but whatever its more extreme effects it proved to be one of the composer's more successful works; both score and parts were published by Breitkopf and Härtel and it was taken up by a number of leading conductors.

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[1] quoted by Reginald Nettel in <u>Ordeal by Music</u> (1945) p 58

Another work which was noted for its violence was the setting of Psalm 137, 'By the Waters of Babylon', for baritone, chorus and orchestra composed in 1905 and first performed in Hanley two years later with the composer conducting. On this occasion and at subsequent performances, the audience was roused to great enthusiasm, moved by the work's drama and pathos; but fellow musicians and critics were more guarded, recognising it as a striking and original piece but more notable for its promise than its accomplishment. At a time when there was such a huge amount of choral activity in England, the work helped greatly to consolidate the reputation as a composer of national standing which Brian suddenly gained in 1907.

It was a single work which brought him this fame, the 'First English Suite' written between 1903 and 1906 and first performed by the Leeds Municipal Orchestra on 12th January 1907. Even under the far from ideal conditions which prevailed at this première (the orchestra was quite clearly out of its depth and Brian had not realised that he was to conduct until he arrived in Leeds on the day of the performance), the work was received with great enthusiasm and two months later when three of the six movements were given on the composer's home ground (at the Victoria Hall, Hanley) by the North Staffordshire Orchestra, the audience was so enthusiastic that the final section, 'Carnival' had to be repeated twice. These two highly successful performances, coupled with a warm recommendation from Granville Bantock, aroused Henry Wood's interest in the work, and it duly appeared at a Queen's Hall Prom on 12th September 1907. Probably on account of the high quality of the performance, the London audience was even more enthusiastic than the Leeds and Hanley audiences had been. The Queen's Hall Orchestra players also responded warmly and Wood was delighted; he was reported as having said in the

heat of the moment "Here have I been conducting novelties in London for thirteen years and this is the first real success I've had".[1] The critics too were full of praise, commending the piece for its fluency, originality, humour and effective scoring. It was a work which showed the composer's gifts to their best advantage, six contrasting scenes each with its own vivid flavour and all ideally suited to musical description, and Brian's pride in it was entirely justified.

This successful Prom début had a number of important repercussions: firstly 'For Valour' was inserted into a Prom programme a few weeks later (when the 'Musical Times' found it to be a "convincing and brilliant production"[2]); secondly, other conductors and concert promoters began to show interest in his music; and thirdly, Breitkopf and Härtel accepted a number of his works (including 'For Valour', 'By the Waters of Babylon' and the 'First English Suite') for publication. And it was as a result of this increasing fame that Brian acquired a patron. Late in 1907 Herbert Minton Robinson, a director of the Minton china and pottery manufactory, began his practice of allowing the composer sums of money to enable him to attend concerts and buy music, and generally to ease his financial worries. With a family of six to support on the £130 he earned each year as traveller for a timber firm, Brian was finding it increasingly difficult to find the money which was vital to the furtherance of his career as a composer. Robinson had little interest in or knowledge of music;- Brian was merely one of the numerous beneficiaries of his generosity to be found in and around Stoke.

1st December 1907 marked the closing date for a competition organised by the Norwich Festival for which composers were invited

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[1] ibid p 57

[2] Musical Times Vol XLVIII (1907), p 740

to submit settings of Gerald Cumberland's specially-written poem 'The Vision of Cleopatra". Of the thirty-three entrants. Julius Harrison was the overall winner, but Havergal Brian was runner up, and at Henry Wood's suggestion was awarded an additional money prize. Although he missed a performance at the 1908 Norwich Festival, Brian did not have to wait long for his work to be published and performed; the firm of Bosworth paid him £40 for right of publication and the cantata was given its première at the 1909 Southport Festival under Landon Ronald. What struck the audience most on that occasion was the work's complexity and modernity; Ronald had been obliged to call several extra rehearsals to familiarise the performers (himself included) with the music. The more conservative critics found the cantata lacking in melody and suffering from heavy-handed scoring, but all admitted that it matched Cumberland's passionate, even barbaric, text to perfection. It appears that the work was never performed again, one reason for which was purely practical: it was published in vocal score only, and the one manuscript full score got lost. In his indolence Brian had shirked the chore of copying out a duplicate.

The remarkable year of 1907 saw a start made on the 'Fantastic Symphony' for large orchestra, a work which was completed the following year but of which two movements were lost or destroyed before reaching performance, and the others separated, revised and retitled before their respective premières. The original work was based wholly on the nursery rhyme 'Three Blind Mice', the tune being taken as the theme for the set of variations which formed the first movement, and the story providing the programme for the whole work. As 'Fantastic Variations on an Old Rhyme', the first movement had a modest success after the Great War when it was given in Brighton, Bournemouth and by Tovey in Edinburgh. The

final 'Dance of the Farmer's Wife' (which has no connection with the nursery rhyme tune) was first given by Bantock in Birmingham in December 1914 and was played again the following year under Beecham at the Royal Albert Hall. Renamed 'Festal Dance', it stood well on its own, displaying all Brian's skill in its virile theme and exciting orchestration.

Indolence was a strong trait in Brian's character, and it counted against the progress of his career on many occasions as for instance when, just after the turn of the century, Dan Godfrey had offered to perform one of his orchestral works in Bournemouth, an offer which was never taken up because Brian fought shy of the labour of copying a set of parts. This unfortunate characteristic became very much more marked after the end of 1909 when Brian's material circumstances changed enormously in the wake of his acceptance of an offer from Herbert Robinson of an annual allowance of £500, money which was to enable him not only to devote all his energies to composition but also to raise his standard of living to something nearer that of his more celebrated colleagues. It was a magnificently generous offer but was characteristic of an artistically ignorant business man in that it assumed that material ease would stimulate creative work. This simply did not happen in Brian's case; in the four years that elapsed between his acceptance of Robinson's offer and his quitting Stoke in December 1913, he completed only two new works of any size. Robinson offered Brian the allowance on the understanding that it was only a temporary means of helping him to establish himself as a self-supporting composer, and that it should be withdrawn should Robinson feel unsatisfied with his output. As it turned out, however, it was for very different reasons that Brian ceased to derive the full benefit from it after only four years.

Of the twelve composers mentioned in this chapter so far, at least two-thirds acquired their early reputations through the performance and publication of their choral music. Even before the first stirrings of the English musical renaissance, the quantity and quality of our choral singing had been one of the few areas of English musical life to receive unanimous praise from visiting foreign musicians, and choral music had been the field most frequently and most successfully cultivated by English composers. After 1880 choral singing continued to be a favoured branch of musical activity and the demand for new choral music in no way abated. But orchestral, chamber and instrumental music began to be cultivated with greatly increased vigour, making musical life very much more balanced and rounded and providing many more opportunities for the young composer of other than choral music to gain a hearing. Composers who first came to the fore on account of their orchestral and chamber music have already been mentioned; now it is the turn of a group of young musicians who first attracted notice with their keyboard works.

York Bowen was born in London in 1884 and displayed remarkable gifts as a pianist at an early age; but the urge to compose was hardly less strong than the urge to play, and, having studied under both Corder and Matthay at the Royal Academy, he embarked upon a double career, pursuing each branch of activity with equal vigour. One of the earliest of his major public appearances was in a dual role when he took the solo part of his own First Piano Concerto at Queen's Hall under Henry Wood in 1904; a second concerto was given under similar circumstances by the Philharmonic Society two years later. Bowen did not write exclusively for the keyboard: a symphony was given at the Royal Academy in 1902, Hans Richter expressed great enthusiasm for a Symphonic Fantasia in which he conducted the London Symphony Orchestra in February 1906, and

Lionel Tertis gave first performances of the Viola Concerto and the two Viola Sonatas between 1905 and 1908. Nevertheless, of the first thirty opus numbers (the major part of his output up to about 1910), eighteen are assigned to piano music and these are the works which earned the enduring part of his reputation. The major orchestral pieces caused considerable excitement when they first appeared, but subsequent performances were very scarce and no work entered the repertoire even for a short time; in an interview given to the 'Musical Times' in 1906, he expressed the wish that "conductors and others would give new works a second hearing, so as to give them a better chance of life"[1].

Bowen's style of writing was distinctive but not original. The forms and textures he employed were entirely conventional and his harmonic vocabulary, though rich, showed no spirit of innovation, indeed was positively reactionary. The writing is clean and very fluent, but the darker and deeper emotions are rarely touched and never explored. If as a pianist he was brilliant (and reports suggest that his playing was quite outstanding), as a composer he was no more than very able.

Bowen was the dedicatee of a work which made a considerable stir when it first appeared in 1905 and raised keen expectations of more and greater things to come from its composer. This work was the Piano Sonata in D Minor by Benjamin Dale, another Corder pupil who before his twentieth year had produced a quantity of orchestral and instrumental music. His sonata attracted attention by its very size and by the originality of its overall design as well as by its vigour, its easy flow and its endless inventiveness; it was altogether a remarkable work for a youth of seventeen and

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[1] <u>Musical Times</u> Vol XLVII (1906), p 175

stands head and shoulders above any other English piano music of the Edwardian decade. But, as Josef Holbrooke bluntly put it, "where are the works we were justified in expecting after it?" [1] Stringent self-criticism caused Dale to allow only a handful of pieces to remain in circulation and by the end of the decade only two more opus numbers had been filled; such works as the overture to 'The Tempest', the Fantasia for organ and orchestra and the Concert Overture in G minor had been performed but subsequently withdrawn from his list of compositions.

The nearest rival to the piano sonata in originality and accomplishment was the suite in three movements for viola and piano, first performed in October 1906 by Lionel Tertis and York Bowen, a warm and attractive work with a particularly striking slow movement; this and the finale were later rearranged for viola and orchestra and played in this form at the Philharmonic Society and elsewhere. Dale's Opus 3, an impromptu for piano entitled 'Night Fancies', composed in 1907 and published by Ricordi in 1909, is a slight work, pleasing in style but not entirely free of sentimentality. Without the reputation of the piano sonata such a work would have passed largely unnoticed.

A composer different in almost every way was Cyril Scott. Six years older than Dale, Scott spent most of his student days in Germany at the Hoch Conservatorium in Frankfurt, at first concentrating mainly on the piano but later, during the period 1896 to 1898, turning to composition. His teacher, Ivan Knorr, was a man of enlightened outlook and progressive methods; under him Scott received a course of instruction which instilled a thorough knowledge of the craft of composition without discouraging experimentation and the following of personal inclinations. The desire to

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[1] Contemporary British Composers (1925) p 239

explore new territory arose early in Scott; a number of works belonging to his student days and the period immediately following (including the symphony given at Darmstadt and the early piano quartet) were criticised for their audacity. But his progress along the path of experiment was rapid, and before long he had withdrawn both these works on account of their being "unrepresentative and old-fashioned" [1].

Scott was one of the first to respond positively to his friend and contemporary Percy Grainger's experiments with irregular rhythms and unconventional discords, and these became points of departure for his own stylistic innovations. It was his 'advanced' harmony that caused most stir in his day and which is of most interest to later generations. He developed a very personal use of the higher chromatic discords, freeing them from the necessity of resolution and using them for their sensual effect rather than for their function in the diatonic system. Scott was by no means the only composer to pursue this line of development at the turn of the century, but the solution he found to the problems raised by the need to explore beyond the frontiers of diatonic harmony was both highly personal and quite workable as far as his own needs were concerned. The fact that he proved to be travelling down a _cul de sac_ as far as the continuing development of twentieth century music was concerned, and that the continued use of his idiom after about 1930 gave his works a dated, even anachronistic, air is no reflection on Scott's abilities as a composer; nor does it belie the novelty of his style in the early years of the century. There is no question but that he was one of the leaders of the _avant garde_ in English music of the Edwardian period.

Scott's output of works was very large. By the age of thirty-five (i e by 1914) he had produced a second symphony, two orchestral rhapsodies, four overtures, two orchestral suites and two piano

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[1] Cyril Scott: _Bone of Contention_ (1969) p 84

concertos. There were also two string quartets, a piano trio, a quartet and a quintet and a pair of violin sonatas, besides an enormous number of short piano pieces and songs. This music won the support of a number of eminent musicians: Richter gave the 'Heroic Suite' at Liverpool and Manchester, Wood gave Scott five major premières at the Queen's Hall Proms between 1903 and 1914, Kreisler took part in the first performance of the piano quartet given at a Broadwood Concert in St James' Hall, and August Jaeger, having failed to interest the readers at Novellos in any of Scott's piano music, undertook to publish the 'English Waltz' at his own expense. Both Debussy and Ravel had expressed their enthusiasm for Scott's work, the former having written a short eulogy for inclusion in a publisher's catalogue, a paragraph from which the phrase "Cyril Scott is one of the rarest artists of the present generation" was extracted and used to great effect for the purposes of advertisement. It was perhaps this which led to Scott's being referred to by some as "the English Debussy", a foolish misnomer which did no service to either composer and showed a facile appreciation of the music of each.

In an essay on Grainger, Scott deplored the fact that " ... a man nearly always becomes celebrated by his lightest, most frivolous, and most easily understandable works"[1]. Scott had good reason to feel this keenly for it applied to himself just as much as to his friend, with the added irony that it was true more of his reputation at home than of the esteem in which he was held on the continent. In this country, it was for his songs and short piano pieces (of which he was bound to produce a certain number each year by the terms of his contract with Messrs Elkin, his principal publishers) that he was famous, whereas in Germany, this side of his output was practically unknown; there his quite considerable reputation rested upon performances of his orchestral works and chamber music. In the early years of the century he seems to have

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1 Cyril Scott: The Philosophy of Modernism (undated) p 129

been not above adopting a deliberately popular, even cheap, style when writing these 'pot-boilers'; there is a mawkish sentimentality about such works as 'Vesperale' and the 'Two Pierrot Pieces' (both published in 1904) that is totally at variance with the bold experimentation to be found in his contemporary works on a larger scale. Like Elgar, he seems to have had an ambivalent attitude towards these trifling pieces; while deploring their excessive popularity, he nevertheless continued to produce them and launched many of them himself at the concerts he gave of his own compositions. Also he never sought to free himself from the contract with his publishers; he professed great admiration for William Elkin and remained on the friendliest terms with him. Such was the huge number of these small-scale pieces that the comparatively few substantial works, infrequently performed and not all of them published, were submerged and Scott became known to the Edwardian musical public as a purveyor of elegant, sensuous miniatures, novel and piquant but exhibiting a very limited emotional and stylistic range, a reputation which did less than justice to his talent.

Scott was not the only student from the Frankfurt Hoch Conservatorium to be active in England during the early part of this century. While in Germany he had fallen in with three young English musicians and a like-minded Australian, all of whom were receiving instruction in composition from Iwan Knorr; ties of racial origin and similarity of musical outlook drew the five students together in Frankfurt, and after all had settled in England at the turn of the century they remained on friendly terms, dubbing themselves 'the Frankfurt Gang' and working together to help one another's music to performance. Stylistic resemblances between the works of the five composers were never very strong, and became even less evident as each matured. But certain shared musical sympathies

marked them off from their contemporaries, almost all of whom had completed their studies in England. Posterity has judged Percy Grainger the most considerable and original member of the group, although contemporary opinion would have accorded Scott this position. Two others, Roger Quilter and Norman O'Neill, achieved only small reputations, each becoming identified with a single branch of composition, while the fifth member of the group, Henry Balfour Gardiner, achieved only a passing reputation as a composer chiefly through the great popularity of a single work, and is nowadays remembered by his accomplishments in other areas of musical activity. Quilter and Grainger made little impression by their compositions until the opening of the second decade of the century, the former by reason of a small output and a reclusive disposition, the latter because of his deep involvement in other musical pursuits; but the works of O'Neill and Balfour Gardiner made their mark in the ever more crowded world of Edwardian musical England.

If the name of Balfour Gardiner is remembered at all today it is as the patron and benefactor of many early twentieth century English composers and as the organiser and principal conductor of two remarkable series of choral and orchestral concerts given in London in 1912 and 1913, concerts which presented first rate performances of a wide cross-section of the most progressive English music of the time. These concerts are now recognised as being of great interest and importance, but in the hectic world of Georgian music they did not receive the attention or support that they deserved: they were just one more attempt to give new English music a fair hearing. Before 1912 Gardiner's reputation rested very largely upon his activities as a composer.

Like Scott, Gardiner spent two periods of time studying in Frankfurt, finding in Iwan Knorr a highly sympathetic teacher. Feelings of esteem were reciprocal: Knorr considered Gardiner the most understanding of all his pupils. After a few months spent studying conducting at Sonderhausen, Gardiner returned to England and took a post on the music staff at Winchester College; but his ample private means precluded the necessity of wage-earning, and after a short time he relinquished this post and devoted himself more fully to composition. Between 1903 and about 1925 a steady stream of works appeared, all of which elicited a favourable response and a few of which achieved considerable popularity. Of his technical skill as a composer there can be no doubt; Holst, himself an expert orchestrator, expressed admiration for Gardiner's handling of instruments, and a number of younger men (Robin Milford and Patrick Hadley among them) came to him for advice and criticism of their work. But at the same time as offering constructive criticism of the works of others, he was bitterly critical of his own; although well able to finance performances and publication of his works, he very rarely did so. By no means all of his completed compositions did he allow to be performed, and fewer still were given more than once or committed to the permanence of print.

Of the five major orchestral works composed before 1910, only the 'Overture to a Comedy', first performed at Queen's Hall in 1906, was allowed to be published. The others (including a symphony in D major) were all performed - some more than once - with varying measures of success, but none was permitted to remain in circulation for long. A string quintet in C minor (a work particularly admired by Percy Grainger) was given a very successful first performance at a Broadwood Concert in November 1903, but was soon afterwards hidden away by the composer and did not reappear until 1932. A one-movement quartet in B flat fared rather better; after

a première at the Suffolk Street Gallery in 1906, Gardiner allowed it to be published under the auspices of the Society of British Composers, a body of which he was an enthusiastic founder member. Even the early songs and piano pieces usually remained unpublished for several years after their completion until the composer was sure that they stood the test of time.

Reviewers of these early works of Balfour Gardiner often used the same epithets to describe their reactions: good humour, fine craftsmanship, terseness and vigour seem to have been the characteristics most in evidence. If these are not the qualities of which resounding fame is made, at least they ensured that his works were accorded a friendly reception and had a wide appeal.

The oldest member of the Frankfurt group, Norman O'Neill, was born in 1875. His earliest lessons in composition were given him by Arthur Somervell, but in his eighteenth year, on the advice of Joseph Joachim, he was sent to Frankfurt. His principal study during his four years in Germany was composition and he too had a great respect for Iwan Knorr, later referring to his "positive genius for imparting the technique of composition" [1]. Although friendly with Grainger and Scott, O'Neill seems to have been largely unaffected by their experimental tendencies; a typical review of a performance of some of the student works of his which were played in Frankfurt speaks of them as being " ... tuneful, fully and beautifully worked out in all parts and finished in polished style" [2].

On settling in London in 1897, he gathered enough teaching work to ensure a basic income but determined that composition should be his principal activity. Singers of the stature of Gregory Hast and Plunket Greene began to include his songs in their

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[1] quoted by Derek Hudson in 'Norman O'Neill: A Life of Music' (1945) p 20

[2] ibid p 24

programmes; his fiancée Adine Ruckert, a very able pianist, introduced many of his keyboard pieces at her recitals both on the continent and in England; and both Henry Wood and Hans Richter began to show interest in his orchestral works. In 1901 each conducted the overture 'In Autumn', a work which a critic from 'The Times' found much more to his liking than Sibelius' 'King Christian II' Suite which Wood introduced to England at the same concert. This same year marked O'Neill's first involvement with the sphere of activity which he was later to make especially his own, music for the theatre. Thus the pattern was set for the course he pursued throughout the Edwardian decade: a steady stream of compositions in a variety of forms appeared from his pen, none of which he found difficulty in having performed at least once, their charm and sound workmanship invariably eliciting favourable reviews. Publication too came comparatively easily; at first it was solo songs and short piano pieces which were issued, but a little later chamber music and more substantial keyboard works appeared. O'Neill also became very active in professional circles; he was a keen member of the Society of British Composers and the Musical Conductors' Association, and he played a large part in the formation and brief career of the Musical League.

Up until 1909 his activities in the theatre were limited to his association with the actor-manager John Martin-Hervey. But in that year O'Neill took the post of musical director at the Haymarket Theatre, the management of which had recently come into the hands of the poet Herbert Trench. This position involved him in the composition of incidental music to a wide variety of plays - eight, ranging from Shakespearean tragedy to light comedy, in the five years preceding the Great War - and also gave him responsibility for rehearsing and conducting the Haymarket's band of some two dozen players. In both branches of activity offered by the

post O'Neill was conspicuously successful: his original work raised musical scene painting to the very highest level, and his Haymarket orchestra became recognised as the best of its kind in London. By far the most celebrated of his pre-War works for the theatre was his music for the first English production of Maeterlinck's 'The Blue Bird' which ran from December 1909 to June 1910 and was revived the two following Christmases. The success of this work was not limited to its performance at the Haymarket; the suite of four dances which the composer extracted for concert use was played no fewer than three times at the Queen's Hall Proms in the autumn of 1910 and, as with Edward German's works in the same genre of a generation earlier, was quickly taken into the repertoire by both professional and amateur orchestras. In Derek Hudson's words, "'The Blue Bird' established Norman in the public mind as a composer of great charm and delicacy, and from this time until his death he ranked as facile princeps among composers for the theatre"[1]

A composer who at the outset of his career commanded a style quite as fluently conventional as O'Neill's was Frank Bridge. No true comparison can be drawn between the two men for in background, temperament, outlook and musical stature they were very different. But in view of Bridge's later development it is worth underlining the utterly unremarkable nature of his early style. The 'Three Sketches' for piano and songs such as 'E'en as a Lovely Flower' or 'Come to me in my dreams' accept unquestioningly the artistic canons of Edwardian salon music; their charming, elegant surface is quite unruffled by presages of very different, greater things to come.

Bridge was born in Brighton in 1879. Armed with a considerable amount of practical experience gained in his father's theatre

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[1] quoted by Derek Hudson in 'Norman O'Neill: A Life of Music' (1945) pp 48/9

orchestra, he entered the Royal College of Music as a violin student at the age of seventeen; but in 1899 he was awarded a composition scholarship and for the next four years he studied with Stanford. This change of direction did not cause him to neglect his playing,however, and on leaving the College he entered the ranks of the profession as a violinist specialising in chamber music. He soon changed to the viola and by 1906 was sufficiently recognised in this capacity to be asked to deputise when the viola player in the Joachim Quartet was indisposed. His most important regular playing position was with the English String Quartet which was formed in 1909 by Tom Morris. He was also active as a conductor, being associated with the New Symphony Orchestra from its foundation in 1905; he early acquired the reputation of being able to step into the breach when real or feigned illness prevented a well-known conductor from directing a difficult new work.

For a busy practical musician,Bridge produced a remarkable quantity of original work in the Edwardian decade. That he was already master of a fully-formed style in his student days can be seen from the published works dating from that period: the song 'Go not Happy Day', the 'Andantino' for organ and the 'Minuet' for piano, all are fluent, cleanly-written, unpretentious and perfectly assured. (How their fine craftsmanship must have gladdened Stanford's heart,even if the harmonies were at times a little too lush for him.) Songs and piano pieces continued to appear after college days, becoming a little more extrovert in spirit as the young composer began to feel his way towards a personal idiom but breaking no new ground and remaining faithful to the conventions of their day. The works which suggested that his gifts as a composer were in any way out of the ordinary were those on a larger scale.

Three orchestral works from the first decade of the century merit brief consideration. A symphonic poem 'Isabella' was given at Queen's Hall in October 1907 when the 'Musical Times' found it a "clever and significant composition". The 'Dance Rhapsody', completed in May of the following year and first given by the Royal College of Music orchestra two months later, is a single movement containing four contrasting dance sections and lasting a quarter of an hour, confidently extrovert in tone if rather naive in its invention. The 'Suite for String Orchestra', belonging to the same year, is another well-mannered, fluent piece of writing, lacking the rhythmic drive of the rhapsody but surpassing it in subtlety and depth.

Just as Bridge's reputation as a player rested largely on his chamber music activities, so it was his chamber works which won him the most recognition as a composer. His earliest surviving work in this genre was the Phantasie String Quartet of 1901, a large-scale single movement in three sections, serious of intent and with a Brahmsian flavour about the cut and treatment of its themes. By complete contrast, three years later the 'Noveletten', also for string quartet, appeared, three charming miniatures in a highly-polished salon style, and two years after that the 'Three Idylls', similarly slight in their material but more original in their treatment of it. In the same year, 1906, Bridge wrote his first standard string quartet, nicknamed 'the Bologna' after its success in an international competition organised there. It is a fine work and one which earned a prominent place in the repertoire after its publication in 1916, but is more remarkable for the adroitness of its fine workmanship than for the individuality of its diction. In 1905, Bridge had won second prize in the first of the Cobbett Chamber Music Competitions with his 1901 quartet and in 1908 his Phantasie Piano Trio took first prize in the second of Cobbett's competitions. The rules on this occasion

required composers to submit a single movement lasting no longer than twelve minutes but containing sections of contrasted mood and tempo. The arch-shaped form which Bridge adopted was an ingenious solution to the problem of overall design and the material he presents is strong and varied, but the transitions from one section to the next have a contrived air about them and structurally the work seems short-winded.

Another composer who had a practical knowledge of chamber music from the vantage point of the viola player's chair was Charles Wood, although Wood's playing was at an infinitely humbler level than Frank Bridge's. Wood entered the Royal College of Music in 1883 as a member of its very first batch of students, and had much in common with his teacher Stanford (who was only fourteen years older than himself) in terms of background and musical outlook. In some branches of composition it is virtually impossible to tell the works of the two men apart, although in temperament they were very dissimilar. For a number of reasons Wood's output was small: poor health, deep involvement in the musical life of Cambridge, a rigorously self-critical nature, perhaps also the inescapable fact of Stanford's enormous popular success, all contrived to prevent "him from taking the place in later life which his abilities as a composer deserved" [1]. Of the half-dozen choral odes and cantatas he produced, only the setting of Whitman's 'Dirge for Two Veterans', first performed at the 1901 Leeds Festival, found a place in the regular repertoire. The single large-scale orchestral work brought to public performance, the 'Symphonic Variations on an Irish Air' produced by Beecham and the New Symphony Orchestra in November 1907, was greeted with respect rather than enthusiasm. Church music and part-songs formed the major part of his output, strong, beautifully-worked miniatures which stood out from the feeble works of this type

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[1] from E J Dent's introduction to the posthumous edition of <u>Wood's string quartets</u> (1929)

produced by many of his contemporaries but which, although a number are still performed today, are not the stuff of which a lasting reputation is made.

Ironically,the works for which Wood is chiefly remembered and for which he evolved a style quite his own, his string quartets, were performed only very rarely during his lifetime, were not published until three years after his death, and even after publication were played only occasionally. There are six complete quartets and two single movements,of which the mature examples, i e those produced from 1912 (the date of the third quartet) onwards are a fine body of work. In matters of felicitous workmanship and unfaltering technique,Wood was quite Stanford's match,and the total and happy absorption of the idiom of Irish folk-song gave the former's chamber music a distinctive element of great appeal. Whether it was a haunting Irish melody used as the theme for a set of variations or a batch of snippets from imaginary reels and jigs worked into a spirited *finale*, this infusion greatly enriched Wood's classically-based contrapuntal style and demonstrated another way in which folk music was able to liberate composers from the anonymous sub-Brahmsian *lingua franca* which was the style in which a great deal of chamber music was written at the turn of the century.

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The emergence and growth of the renaissance movement is not difficult to trace in its effect upon composers and their works. The first stirrings are easy to identify because the contrast with what had gone before was so marked,and the unfolding development is clear to follow as pupil learnt from teacher and one composer influenced another. But to chart the contemporary changes in musical life which amount to a complementary branch of the renaissance is a far less straightforward task. There are

three main reasons for this: firstly the field covered by the phrase 'musical life' is very large, secondly the aims and ideals of those involved in the performance of music are usually far less clear and well-documented than those of composers, and thirdly there is not the sharp contrast between the situation as it was before the inception of the movement and the new musical environment which appeared in its wake. Mid-nineteenth century England had not lacked a healthy concert life in the way that it had lacked a flourishing school of composers; thus the machinery of musical life was sufficiently extensive and efficient to answer the needs of the native composer during the earliest phase of the renaissance movement.

By the turn of the century, however, this would no longer have been the case had not the musical life of this country begun to enlarge and develop. It is not possible to say with certainty which of the strands of renaissance had the greater influence upon the other, whether composers were encouraged to write to the limits of capacity for performance or performing practice changed in order to satisfy the demands of composers. All that can be said is that roughly complementary with the renaissance of composition there was a similar enlargement and enrichment of musical life, less dramatic perhaps but equally far-reaching.

A convenient span against which to measure these developments is the Edwardian decade. In 1900 musical life in this country was running on much the same lines as it had been for the previous thirty or forty years, but by 1910 new forces had come into play and the situation had changed considerably. The enormous richness and variety of early Georgian musical life was largely stimulated by the expansion and improvement which had taken place over the previous decade, and nowhere were these changes more clearly demonstrated than in the field of orchestral music.

At the beginning of the decade, orchestral music in London was dominated by the activities of the Philharmonic Society under Mackenzie and Cowen and the Crystal Palace Saturday Concerts under August Manns, with Henry Wood and his Queen's Hall Orchestra as able and very promising new-comers. By 1910 Manns was dead and the Crystal Palace concerts had ceased, the Philharmonic Society had enjoyed an infusion of new life and spirit, Wood and his orchestra were firmly established as a focal point of London music, a new permanent orchestra of outstanding quality, the London Symphony Orchestra, had appeared, closely followed by the New Symphony Orchestra, another first-class body of players, and the Beecham Symphony Orchestra had just commenced operations. Thus both the quantity and the quality of orchestral playing in England had increased dramatically, a trend which had sprung largely from the activities of one man, Henry Wood.

Queen's Hall, a concert hall with excellent acoustics and a seating capacity of two-thousand-five-hundred, had been opened in 1893 under the managership of Robert Newman. Having established a Queen's Hall Choral Society under Cowen's conductorship and a temporary orchestra under Alberto Randegger, Newman, who displayed a rare combination of keen business acumen and the highest artistic ideals, invited Henry Wood to form a permanent orchestra initially for the purpose of giving a ten-week series of promenade concerts in the summer of 1895, but then to set about making the new hall a centre for orchestral music in London. This Wood did, selecting most of his players from among his contemporaries at the Royal Academy of Music and from among the younger members of the other English and continental orchestras. The recent expansion of the London schools of music had led to a large number of highly trained instrumentalists being released into the profession, few of whom were able to find good positions straight away; thus competition for places in the new orchestra was keen, and the

standard of the players Wood chose very high. The rapid rise to excellence of the Queen's Hall Orchestra was partly explained by the fact that so many of its players grew up and learned their trade together, and Wood's strong personality was stamped upon it from the outset. His meticulous methods and iron discipline did not suit many of the older players who were used to slacker, more easy-going ways, but within a few years the composition of the orchestra had become largely stabilized and it had come to be without peer in this country in matters of ensemble and finish.

The series of concerts for which the orchestra had originally been founded set the pattern for the activity for which it was chiefly known, the summer season of Queen's Hall Promenade Concerts. Taking the framework of the nineteenth century promenade concerts, where popular programmes of dance and theatre music had been given in informal surroundings at a modest charge, Wood and Newman created a new type of concert and, by the adoption of a deliberately educative policy, succeeded in attracting to it a new type of audience. Wood remembered his manager as saying at the outset of the venture "I am going to run nightly concerts ... popular at first, gradually raising the standard until I have _created_ a public for classical and modern music."[1] A time of year when there was hardly any competition from other musical events was chosen, prices were kept low (a promenade ticket cost one shilling), and regular attendance was encouraged by the generous concessions offered on season tickets and varied programmes were presented in a pleasantly informal atmosphere, factors which in combination ensured the success of the first season. The same formula was used in succeeding years with similarly favourable results and a regular series was established.

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[1] Henry Wood: '_My Life of Music_' (1938) p 68

At first programmes were kept very popular in order to attract a large and regular audience, the raw material which Wood and Newman were to use in their educative experiment. The concerts lasted for three hours, and contained on average twenty short items - overtures, dance music, operatic selections, songs and ballads with piano, and instrumental solos, often given by members of the orchestra. As the first season progressed, a shape to the week's music-making began to emerge: Monday was Wagner night, Tuesday Sullivan night and Thursday Schubert night; Wednesday and Friday were so-called 'Classical Nights' when the audience might expect to hear a complete symphony as well as short works by the older established composers. This was how the first half of each concert was arranged; the second half and the whole of Saturday's programme was planned along traditionally popular lines. From the outset Wood made it a deliberate policy to introduce large numbers of new works, or 'novelties' as he called them, especially those by native composers. On average at least three soloists appeared at every concert, and in this matter too Wood exercised a policy of mingling talented but largely unknown young artists with older, well-established figures who often drew a larger-than-usual audience.

Before long the policy of educating the public was put into operation. Gradually there was a change of emphasis in the constitution of the programmes; the preponderance of light music over serious lessened, the cornet solos and ballads began to disappear, and the Classical Nights began to assume the appearance of standard symphony concerts. The change of emphasis was imperceptibly gradual, and everything possible was done to ease the transition. The whole policy was one of establishing an ever-expanding repertoire; carefully timed repetitions of new and unfamiliar works led to their being accepted as modern classics,

to be added to the list of well-known and well-loved works which provided the staple diet of Wood's programmes. The aim of educating the audience was accomplished with complete success; attendance figures remained as high as ever and many of the earliest subscribers continued to return season after season. Although he changed the musical content of the concerts, Wood wisely kept a constant format: the informal atmosphere, the varied programmes with a large number of short items, the cheap tickets, these did not change, a factor which must have helped to attract the same subscribers back year after year. By the turn of the century, the Queen's Hall Proms had become something of an institution and by the middle of the Edwardian decade they had settled into the mixed programmes of classical and modern music played before a large and varied audience which Wood and Newman had originally envisaged.

The ten week Prom season apart, the Queen's Hall Orchestra was employed in giving single concerts or occasional short series on home ground, elsewhere in London and in the provinces as Wood's reputation grew. But in 1897 Newman established two more regular series for the orchestra in its own hall, the Saturday Afternoon Symphony Concerts and the Sunday Afternoon Concerts. The former presented fortnightly concerts in what was already a standard pattern used by every other major orchestra (a symphony, a work involving a soloist and miscellaneous shorter orchestral pieces), but the latter series was more distinctive. Established in the teeth of fierce opposition on legal and moral grounds, Sunday concerts were at first organised on educational and philanthropic lines, providing good music for the working classes at a minimal charge (and, in the case of seventy members of each week's audience, at no charge at all). Thus Wood was on familiar territory, providing popular programmes within a broadly educational

framework, and, as with the Proms, he gradually raised the standard of the programmes once regular subscription to the series had been established. Because the concerts were given without rehearsal,all the works performed were drawn from the regular repertoire, but without losing sight of the original philanthropic aims of the venture,Wood was able to present enterprising and varied programmes which appealed to a wide cross-section of casual concert-goers.

Henry Wood was unique in being the first Englishman to acquire an international reputation as a conductor. Before him, the leading conductors in this country had been either immigrants such as Costa, Manns, Hallé and Richter, or else, like Stanford, Cowen and Bantock, better known as composers. But Wood, despite his activities as an arranger and editor and his secondary career as a singing teacher, was primarily a conductor, and by his impeccable baton technique, his outstandingly acute ear, his versatility and his enormous capacity for hard work,made himself "the first great conductor of modern times in England" [1]. Elsewhere Landon Ronald admitted that in the early years of the century he had found it impossible to procure worthwhile conducting engagements in London for "there was only one (English) conductor in those days whom Londoners would have, and he was Henry J Wood" [2], and up until the immediate pre-War period no-one offered a serious challenge to his pre-eminent position; when in 1910,the 'New York Times' published an article ascribing to Elgar the chief responsibility for the recent improvement in the musical state of affairs in England, the 'Pall Mall Gazette' was quick to

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1 Landon Ronald: 'Variations on a Personal Theme' (1922) pp 174/5

2 Landon Ronald: 'Myself and Others' (undated) p 46

reply that "if any single person has waved that magic wand it is the conductor who has been inviting London for years past to hear good music well rendered at Queen's Hall"[1].

Late in 1904 a crisis occurred, the outcome of which proved a number of things, not the least being that Wood was secure in being the most influential figure in London orchestral circles. At a stroke he and Newman forbade the deputy system within the Queen's Hall Orchestra, thus ending the practice of players sending substitutes to any rehearsals or performances which they chose not to attend, and as a result nearly half of the orchestra immediately resigned. New players were instantly engaged on Wood's terms and there was no break in the orchestra's activities, but the corporate feeling was temporarily shattered and, in Landon Ronald's words, the new Queen's Hall Orchestra "was at first a very scrappy affair"[2]. However, now that he was assured of a really permanent orchestra, Wood set to work with renewed zeal to remould his players into a unified body, as polished and sensitive as ever. This he accomplished remarkably quickly: during the 1905 Prom series Richard Strauss conducted a performance of his 'Sinfonia Domestica' and shortly afterwards wrote to a fellow German living in London " ... I cannot leave London without an expression of admiration for the splendid orchestra which Henry Wood's master hand has created in so incredibly a short time"[3].

Wood's termination of the deputy system in the Queen's Hall Orchestra was directly responsible for the formation of the London Symphony Orchestra, for of the forty-six players who immediately tendered their resignation to Wood, the names of all but one appeared in the list of founder members of the new orchestra.

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

2 Landon Ronald: 'Myself and Others' (undated) p 23

3 quoted by Reginald Pound op cit pp 95/6

But this suddenly-precipitated birth of London's second permanent professional orchestra had been preceded by a gestation period of indeterminable length, for the idea of secession had been in the minds of a number of the Queen's Hall players for some time. The reasons for this suppressed discontent were numerous and complex. Many years after the event, several of the leading secessionists were careful to point out that they had no personal quarrel with Wood; it was rather the system on which the Queen's Hall Orchestra had been run that was the cause of the trouble.

The particular reason which the malcontents gave for their actions had to do with finance; they felt that they would be unable to maintain a decent standard of living if denied the right to pick and choose engagements, accepting only the most lucrative. But Wood had hardly made an unreasonable demand on his players by asking them to relinquish the bulk of their outside engagements. By 1904 the Queen's Hall Orchestra was a well-established, healthy concern with a minimum of one hundred safe engagements per year, as well as an increasing number of opportunities for extra work in London and the provinces. The players who remained faithful to Wood apparently suffered no material hardship, although it was perhaps no coincidence that it was largely the younger players, those less troubled with financial responsibilities, who stayed on. One must suspect other than purely financial reasons for the actions of the deserters, for were they not taking a very considerable financial risk in their new venture? It was by no means a foregone conclusion that London could support another permanent orchestra; Hubert Foss rightly pointed out that "the immediate success the London Symphony Orchestra gained came as a suprise to all the participants" [1].

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[1] in 'London Symphony' (1954) p 18

Wood doubtless had excellent reasons for his autocratic rule of the Queen's Hall Orchestra; he felt that by no other means could the highest standards be maintained. But in two ways this policy was unsatisfactory from the players' point of view: firstly, had Wood at any time chosen (or else been forced) to sever his connection with the orchestra, it might well have foundered, and secondly, in an age which gave a great deal of thought to the co-operative principle, there were bound to be some members of the orchestra who disliked the very notion of autocracy, regardless of its incidental advantages, and wished to have some say in the determination of the policies which directly affected their livelihood. The life of an orchestral player in Edwardian England was fraught with uncertainty; there was no shortage of work, but neither was there any shortage of able players, and as standards of orchestral playing continued to rise, rank and file players had to work hard to keep abreast of the demands made upon them by modern orchestral works. As well as a sound technique, a player needed business acumen and a clear head to be able to maintain a decent standard of living, and a large proportion of the original Queen's Hall Orchestra clearly considered that they stood a better chance of being able to do this if the management of their affairs lay in their own hands.

The programme book of the new orchestra's first concert contained an interesting passage in which the orchestra describes itself as "something akin to a Musical Republic"[1], for from the very first it was run on co-operative lines. The financial risk was shouldered by the players themselves, who were named as the shareholders when the orchestra was registered as a limited

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1 'London Symphony' (1954) p 7

liability company in February 1905 and who elected a board of nine directors from amongst their number. The independence which this method of self-government permitted was highly prized; even in the very early days, when one might assume that the orchestra would have accepted any engagement offered, it exercised its right of choosing carefully where, when and under whom it played. Only the best conductors were invited to direct concerts, and it was discreetly but firmly implied that it was something of an honour to be associated with a London Symphony Orchestra concert in any capacity. This pride was well justified, for the new orchestra contained the cream of London's mature orchestral players. Sir Adrian Boult, speaking of the list of names of the founder members, says: "Its brilliance staggered all those who knew the London orchestral world at the time." [1]

Hans Richter conducted the very first London Symphony Orchestra concert on 9th June 1904, a fitting choice since not only was he the most celebrated conductor working in England at the time but also it is very probable that he had had a clandestine influence on the decision to form a new orchestra. In the wake of this highly successful inaugural concert, a monthly winter series was planned to start in the following October, and the orchestra advertised itself as available for hire on other occasions "in its full strength or in smaller numbers ranging from forty-five to one hundred" [2]. Forty-two outside engagements were fulfilled in the first full season in addition to the eight monthly symphony concerts, and at the close of its first year the orchestra was left with £520 in hand. From the outset of its career, the general policies to which it adhered up until the

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[1] in London Symphony (1954) p 2

[2] ibid p 7

the Great War were established, and the tone of its later activities was set in that first season. For its monthly series the orchestra engaged different conductors for each concert, and they, like the soloists, were chosen from amongst the best to be found in England or on the Continent at the time. Modern music was not ignored - two short works were given their first performances - but the backbone of the programmes was music from the German classical tradition, the works of Beethoven, Brahms and Wagner. English music was played at three of the eight concerts, and on March 8th 1905 a happy and fruitful relationship was established when Elgar conducted a programme of his own works which included the first performance of the third 'Pomp and Circumstance' march.

The second half of the Edwardian decade saw the London Symphony Orchestra take its place as one of the great orchestras. Its increasingly busy programme took it all over England and it was soon recognised as being at least the equal of any other of the native orchestras - in fact both Richter and Arthur Nikisch considered it to be the finest body of players in England. The large number of foreign conductors who appeared with it helped to spread the news of its excellence and it earned an international reputation unlike that enjoyed by any other English orchestra. This reputation was further enhanced by a number of visits to other countries; the orchestra played in Paris in 1906 and in Antwerp two years later. On home ground it continued its regular winter series and in October 1905 began two simultaneous fortnightly series of Sunday concerts given at the London Palladium and the Royal Albert Hall week and week about. Its first appearance at a provincial festival was in 1905, and by the end of the decade it was responsible for the orchestral playing at all the major festivals barring Sheffield and Norwich, which were Henry Wood's particular domain. Percy Harrison, the Birmingham impresario,

arranged frequent provincial tours, often with Elgar as conductor. In January 1907 it made a highly successful *début* in the opera house when it played under its own name at a month-long season of German opera at Covent Garden, and in April 1908 refused an offer from Robert Newman to replace the Queen's Hall Orchestra at the following season of Promenade Concerts. The flood of engagements which continued to pour in amply confirmed the original premise that there were sufficient opportunities to warrant the formation of another permanent orchestra in London and, although from 1907 onwards it had another rival in the New Symphony Orchestra, by then the London Symphony Orchestra was sufficiently well-established to be hardly troubled by the appearance of this unlooked-for new arrival.

Up until his departure from England in 1911, Hans Richter directed many more of the London Symphony Orchestra's concerts than any other conductor. His identification with the orchestra at the outset of its career had been enormously helpful to its growing reputation, and the frequency of his subsequent appearances ensured that the German classical tradition was well represented in the programmes and also helped to cement the orchestra's link with Elgar. Arthur Nikisch was the next most frequent choice of the orchestra's directors and, as one of the first international 'star' conductors, his name added further lustre to the orchestra's activities. His musical sympathies were broader than Richter's and he was more universally admired and respected by players, audiences and fellow conductors alike. Other European conductors engaged by the orchestra during its first half-dozen seasons included Wassily Safonoff, Emil Mlynarski, Max Fiedler, Fritz Steinbach and Edouard Colonne, while among the native conductors were Stanford, Cowen and Landon Ronald. However, the Englishman who was most closely associated with the

L S O in its early days was Elgar. In November 1904 he took the orchestra on its first provincial tour, and from then on appeared with it frequently in London and elsewhere, conducting his own and other men's music. On Richter's retirement in 1911, it was to be Elgar who was to be appointed Principal Conductor in his place.

The ease and rapidity with which the London Symphony Orchestra had established itself was influential in the formation of yet another self-governing orchestra in Edwardian London. In October 1905 a group of about forty players calling itself the Sunday Orchestral Society initiated a series of Sunday afternoon concerts at the Coronet Theatre, Notting Hill Gate under the baton of Evelyn Howard Jones, then as later known chiefly as a pianist. Despite varied programmes and the participation of some of the very best orchestral players to be found in London, the concerts were poorly attended and the series was terminated early. The players oontinued their freelance careers, but the idea of a new orchestra was kept alive; a committee was formed and occasional concerts under different conductors were given during 1906.

This was exactly the time when Thomas Beecham was searching for an orchestra with which to put into practice the views he had formulated concerning orchestral balance and ensemble. His first attempt at orchestral conducting in London, in December 1905 with forty members of the Queen's Hall Orchestra, had not been a success, partly due to lack of co-operation on the part of the players, but having attended a rehearsal of the Sunday Orchestral Society and been struck by "a superior refinement of tone ... not found elsewhere"[1], he was delighted when approached by a member of its committee placing himself and his colleagues at Beecham's disposal for a series of four concerts in the winter of 1906/07. Once again

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[1] Thomas Beecham: 'A Mingled Chime' (1944) p 57

the series did not run its full course - programmes built largely of obscure works from the 18th and early 19th centuries failed to attract sufficiently large audiences even to the modestly-proportioned Bechstein Hall - but the playing and the conducting won universal praise and both Beecham and the New Symphony Orchestra (the name had been chosen in the autumn of 1906) recognised the advantages to each of continued association with the other.

During the spring and summer of 1907 the orchestra, on Beecham's advice, expanded itself to true symphony orchestra proportions, the new body of eighty players appearing for the first time at Queen's Hall in October of that year. This and the two other concerts given before Christmas put the new orchestra on the map. Before that time even one with so full a knowledge of London music as Robin Legge (a critic on 'The Times' and then the 'Daily Telegraph') had had no knowledge of its existence: when Delius had questioned him about the professional orchestras to be found in the capital, Legge had told him of only the Queen's Hall Orchestra and the London Symphony Orchestra. Delius attended the first New Symphony Orchestra concert out of curiosity and was so impressed with what he heard that he immediately decided that this was the orchestra to introduce his mature works to England. Others besides Delius were enthusiastic - the critics were unanimous in their praise of the high standard of the playing and the Queen's Hall was tolerably full on each occasion that the orchestra appeared. Doubtless Beecham's presence on the rostrum was responsible for some of the interest shown in the new orchestra, but all the press reviews singled out the polish and precision of the playing for special reference.

The new orchestra continued its close association with Beecham for one more year. The concerts it gave during 1908 reflected its conductor's refined and inquisitive tastes, the

programmes being largely made up of unfamiliar pieces by well-known composers, totally unknown music by the lesser figures of 18th and 19th century Europe, and new English works. Music of this last type was particularly strongly in evidence; each concert contained two or three English works, many of which were being given for the first time.* The style of the orchestra's playing also reflected Beecham's particular concerns, notably scrupulous attention to matters of balance and ensemble. But once the New Symphony Orchestra had established for itself a permanent and widely-recognised niche in the musical life of London and Beecham had earned himself the reputation of being one of the most talented of the young English conductors, no longer was it vital that differences of opinion between players and conductor should be patched up and minimised. Beecham expressed his dissatisfaction with the orchestra's adherence to the deputy system, while the players complained of his autocratic attitude to what was intended to be a co-operative venture. Since neither's well-being now depended upon the other, conductor and orchestra allowed the breach between them to widen beyond the reparable limit, and Beecham finally severed his connection with the orchestra in December 1908.

Just as Beecham's first encounter with the New Symphony Orchestra had been a piece of timely good fortune for both parties, so the orchestra's search for a new conductor to replace him coincided happily with Landon Ronald's casting around for just such a position as the orchestra was able to offer. Ronald had begun his conducting career in the opera house, but, after changing to

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* This policy towards native music was not wholly altruistic: Josef Holbrooke was not the only composer with a patron willing to subsidise concerts which included his works.

orchestral work, found himself in the curious position of having an enviable reputation in Europe (as a result of highly successful appearances with the Berlin Philharmonic, the Leipzig Gewandhaus and other leading continental orchestras) but able to secure only occasional engagements in London. His appearances with the London Symphony Orchestra at their Sunday concerts were regular but infrequent due to the Directors' rigid adherence to the policy of engaging a large number of different conductors each season. Like any other ambitious young conductor, he felt the need of close association with a permanent body of players, and a single rehearsal with the New Symphony Orchestra was enough to convince both parties of the desirability of Ronald's succeeding Beecham. Accordingly, early in 1909 the former severed his connection with the London Symphony Orchestra and became Principal Conductor of the new orchestra, a position which he held for more than a decade.

Ronald considerably altered the character of the New Symphony Orchestra, his appointment initiating a new phase in its history; therefore discussion of the orchestra's development under his leadership will be held over until the next chapter. Similarly, the orchestra which Beecham immediately founded, and which was to play an important role in English musical life just before the Great War, will best be dealt with in the chapter concerned with musical activity during the early Georgian years, even though it gave its first concert as early as February 1909. But before turning aside from this sketch of Edwardian orchestral activity, mention should be made of the oldest English orchestra, an institution which exerted considerable influence by virtue of its seniority and illustrious history as much as by its pursuance of a steady, ordered policy. "The history of the Philharmonic

Society of London ... is practically, at any rate during the first sixty years of its existence, (ie until the mid 1870s) the history of English orchestral music" wrote the Society's official historian in a centenary retrospect published in 1912 [1], and if the appearance of the new London orchestras had robbed the Philharmonic Society of its pre-eminent position, its activities were still an important part of the London musical season.

The Society had been founded in 1813 as a non-profit-making professional club whose raison d'être was the presentation of orchestral concerts (the inclusion of chamber music in the programmes seems to have been confined to the first few seasons only) and one hundred years later its constitution and aims were largely unaltered. It had grown in size and its orchestra was no longer assembled purely from the ranks of the subscribers, but the Society was still made up of members and associates paying an annual subscription and electing from their number seven directors to manage its affairs with the help of a number of permanent honorary officers. The early association of the Philharmonic with such figures as Mendelssohn and Beethoven had immediately established it as a concern of international standing, and through the nineteenth century it continued to identify itself with the latest developments in European music; musicians of the repute of Spohr, Weber, Berlioz and Wagner conducted for it, all the leading continental soloists who could be persuaded to visit England appeared at its concerts, and it kept relatively well abreast of the latest trends in composition. From 1856 onwards, all the conducting was undertaken by Englishmen, but, despite the performance of a considerable amount of native music (a feature of the Society's programmes from the very beginning), it was able

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1 Myles Birkett Foster: History of Philharmonic Society of London (1912) p 7

to maintain its cosmopolitan ethos. A great many storms had to be weathered in the course of its history: periods of inept management and confused ideals, times of financial crisis and failing support, and the appearance of organisations bent on deliberate competitive rivalry. All these difficulties were overcome, but the most serious threat of all was the enormous proliferation of orchestral activity in London in the two decades before the outbreak of the Great War.

For the first eight seasons of the new century the Philharmonic Society had Frederic Cowen as its conductor, he having direction of all works except those which the composers elected to conduct. As a considerable number of new works were given, not a few composers appeared on the rostrum, among them Glazounov, Elgar, Stanford, Weingartner, Sinding and Sibelius. Modern English music was well represented in the programmes at this time; every concert presented at least one work of this type, and it was by no means only the older, established English composers who were favoured with performances. Modern European music fared less well; the names of Strauss and Debussy appeared in the programmes only very infrequently, as did those of Rimsky-Korsakoff, Glazounov and Sibelius. Brahms and Tchaikovsky were the most popular of the moderns, and the standard German repertoire of the 18th and 19th centuries was well represented, especially by the works of Beethoven, Mendelssohn, Wagner and other composers who had had direct dealings with the Society. Seven concerts were given each season on Thursday evenings at Queen's Hall. The number of subscribers was not as large as it had been formerly, and the Directors relied heavily upon casual ticket sales prompted by attractive programmes and eminent soloists. The activities of the Society took their tone from the personality of its principal conductor - technically able

and well-intentioned but far from progressive and slightly dull.

A major change of policy was initiated in 1908. The Philharmonic had drifted into the doldrums during the previous seasons; subscription had fallen off, expenses were continually rising and competition from the other London orchestras was growing fiercer every year. In an attempt to remedy this situation Cowen's services as conductor were retained for only two of the season's concerts, the remainder being allotted to Nikisch, Richter and Wood. The programme of music offered was more enterprising than of late, a factor which, coupled with the engagement of three of the most eminent conductors of the day, increased both the number of the subscribers to the series and also the sales of single tickets. The artistic success of the season was resounding and, had Richter not withdrawn from his contract at the last minute, the financial outcome would have been equally favourable.

Similar policies were pursued the following seasons: the concerts were directed by leading English and continental conductors, the programmes offered were varied and enterprising, mingling works from the standard repertoire with representative modern music and a sprinkling of brand new compositions. English music continued to be well represented, no concert passing without the performance of at least one English work. Financially the Society was in a healthier state than it had been for many years; a subscription list of over four hundred names helped to swell the income for the 1909/10 season to close on £2,500. "With such resources, something may be done by the Society even in expensive London!"[1]

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1 Musical Times Vol LI (1910), p 514

Orchestral developments in the Edwardian decade were to some extent mirrored in the choral field with the founding of several important new choirs and the revitalisation of a number of older organisations. Choral singing in England had experienced something of a revolution in the mid-nineteenth century which precipitated a considerable amount of choral activity right to the end of the Victorian period; but the new renaissance movement stimulated further developments through the Edwardian decade and into the early Georgian years.

Vaughan Williams summed up the situation in London in the late 1890s as follows: "I wish there were a good choral society in London. We have only three - the Albert Hall and the Queen's Hall - which can sing but do not and the Bach Choir which does good things but can't sing ... "[1]. By the Albert Hall choir Vaughan Williams meant the Royal Choral Society, formed in 1872 by the amalgamation of Barnby's oratorio choir with the Royal Albert Hall Choral Society which had been established under Gounod in the previous year. The large size of this choir (some nine hundred voices),coupled with the unique acoustic of the building in which it performed,restricted the choice of works which could be given effectively, and although Frederick Bridge (who succeeded Barnby as conductor in 1896) breathed new life into the repertoire by giving works by Parry, Stanford, Elgar and Vaughan Williams, solid performances of the standard eighteenth and nineteenth century oratorios accounted for much of the choir's activity.

The Queen's Hall Choral Society was never a very flourishing concern, its chequered history being chronicled by occasional references in the musical press between 1894 and 1903. The Bach

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[1] a letter to René Gatty written in about 1898 quoted by Ursula Vaughan Williams in 'R.V.W.' (1964) p 56

Choir however was something of an institution. It belonged to the same generation as the Royal Choral Society, having been founded for the particular purpose of giving the first English performance of the B minor Mass, an event which took place in 1876. The choral works of Bach remained the choir's chief concern, but under successive conductors (Otto Goldschmidt, Stanford and Walford Davies) other more modern works were given as well. The membership "consisted largely of Kensington amateurs who had more musical culture than voice"[1], which explains the staid and exclusive reputation the choir enjoyed and also Vaughan Williams' disparagement. Walford Davies did something to raise the musical standards during his short tenure of the conductorship (from 1902 to 1907), but it took the zeal and forthrightness of his successor Hugh Allen to galvanise it into action and enthusiasm.

Another choir to change its character during the Edwardian decade under the influence of a new conductor was the Alexandra Palace Choral Society. The sporadic choral activity at the Palace during the last quarter of the old century had been regularised under George Risely in 1898, but on the appointment of Allen Gill to the conductorship in 1901, the choir was transformed in its size, its ambition and its accomplishment. It soon came to rival the Royal Choral Society in numbers but, because of the nature of the building in which it performed and also the methods of its conductor, a more enterprising policy was pursued, with wide-ranging programmes of classical and modern works being given (with the Elgar oratorios as something of a speciality) to an extremely high standard.

The first important London choir to be founded during the Edwardian decade was the London Choral Society, established by Arthur Fagge in 1903. A sensible size was decided upon (about

[1] H C Colles: '<u>Walford Davies: a biography</u>' (1942) p 58

three hundred voices), a high level of vocal technique and sight-reading ability was required of applicants and a deliberate policy of "presenting unfamiliar and unjustly neglected works"[1] was adopted, although occasional performances were given of standard favourites. The Society won its spurs with a performance of 'The Dream of Gerontius' at Queen's Hall in February 1904, something of a feat for a choir still in its first season, and then went on to introduce many other new English works to London: 'Everyman' later the same year, Parry's 'Pied Piper' and Holbrooke's 'The Bells' in 1906, the first part of 'Omar Khayyám' in 1908, and many more. Fagge held firmly to his original resolution; only very rarely were the choral warhorses given. The standard of the Society's performances, creditable from the outset of its career, soon became uniformly high as was proved towards the end of the decade when it was invited to share concerts with the London Symphony Orchestra, a body obsessively aware of its reputation and standing in the musical world.

Slightly younger than the London Choral Society was the Oriana Madrigal Society, founded by Charles Kennedy Scott in 1904 as a choir of thirty-six voices intending "to devote itself solely to the singing of Elizabethan madrigals"[2]. The Society did not have this field entirely to itself; there were other bodies in London and the provinces which specialised in the performance of secular Tudor choral music, but these were merely large choirs whose conductors had an interest in old English music. Scott's approach was revolutionary in that he understood the true spirit of madrigal singing and recognised the necessity

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1 an early programme of the Society quoted by Robert Elkin in 'Queen's Hall 1893 - 1941' (undated c 1944) p 64

2 an "introductory announcement" quoted ibid p 65

for a light, flexible and sprightly style of performance. His concerts were revelatory, as was his 'Manual of Madrigal Singing' issued in 1907. He was not narrow in his approach, however, and, having enlarged his choir to about sixty voices, he set about exploring the seventeenth century choral repertoire and also began giving works for unaccompanied chorus by modern English composers. This was a side to the Society's activities which became very much more pronounced in the pre-War period; during the Edwardian decade it was for its distinctive and accomplished madrigal singing that it was known.

In 1907 another London choir was formed. Edward Mason, a professional cellist and a member of the music staff at Eton College, gathered together a group of about one hundred voices with the intention of performing concerts of modern English music. The choir's first public performance was in April 1908 when works by Dunhill, Holst, Stanford, McCunn, Parry and Elgar were given; a certain imbalance between the parts and lack of maturity in the singing were noticed on this occasion, blemishes which seem to have disappeared by the following March when another concert at Queen's Hall was given at which Boughton's 'The Skeleton in Armour' was performed for the first time and Edgar Bainton's 'The Blessed Damozel' was introduced to London. Even the vocal and orchestral items given at these concerts were all English - it was at a concert given by the Edward Mason Choir in April 1910 that Holst's 'Somerset Rhapsody' was first performed. Thus with financial support from the Patron's Fund and fine orchestral playing from its conductor's colleagues, the choir was able to serve greatly the cause of the native composer.

For much of the Edwardian decade it was an acknowledged fact that the finest choral societies in England were to be found not in London but in the Midlands and the North. The activities

of Henry Coward in Yorkshire and James Whewall in Staffordshire had set new standards in choral singing, standards which choirs from no other parts of the country seemed able to match: a common practice at this time was for festival choruses in the south and west of England to import a contingent of singers from Leeds or Sheffield to add brilliance and tone to their own efforts. It was Whewall's North Staffordshire District Choral Society which, having given a performance of 'The Dream of Gerontius' in Hanley which the composer described as being "almost flawless"[1], was invited to give the first London performance of the work in Westminster Cathedral in June 1903, and the same choir was chosen by Beecham to introduce Delius' 'Sea Drift' to London in February 1909 and to give the first English performance of 'A Mass of Life' at Queen's Hall only four months later. Coward's Sheffield choir performed to great acclaim in London too, but also gave concerts further afield; it toured Germany in 1906 and 1910 and visited Canada in 1908, being received with enthusiasm wherever it went. Although by the close of the decade there had been a steady rise in the standard of choral activity in London, the provincial choruses still had the edge, especially where large and medium-sized choirs were concerned; it was only the two new small choirs in London which led the field in their particular branch of musical activity.

The changes observed in English orchestral life at and after the turn of the century were mirrored remarkably closely by contemporary developments in the chamber music field. A period of major expansion was initiated in the mid 1890s, a very influential and long-standing series of concerts died with the old century, new premises designed with chamber concerts in mind were opened and were soon in great demand, several important concert series

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[1] a letter from Elgar to the choir secretary quoted by Reginald Nettel in Music in the Five Towns 1840 - 1914 (1944) p 91

were established and among the new performing ensembles were several which made it a fixed policy to bring forward works by native composers. In terms of number of active ensembles and concerts given, the chamber music field was immeasurably richer than the orchestral field, so much so that "to attempt to summarize the principal concerts of chamber music which came into existence during the latter years of the nineteenth century, and especially after the Popular Concerts ceased their regular ministrations (i e after 1898), is an almost hopeless task"[1]. One can only hope to chart outlines and distil a mass of detail into a pattern of trends.

The important chamber concert series which came to an end at the turn of the century was the 'Popular Concerts', better known as the Monday and Saturday 'Pops', presented twice weekly at St James' Hall by Chappell and Co. Between 1859 and 1898 these concerts exerted enormous influence both upon standards of performance and upon public taste, but ultimately lost favour because of the severely conservative tone of the programmes, the resolute refusal to acknowledge the existence of the growing number of able native chamber music composers, and, most importantly, because of growing competition; where once the 'Pops' had had the field largely to themselves, from the 1890s they had to compete with an ever-increasing number of rival organisations.

The 'South Place Sunday Concerts' were established in 1887 largely as a philanthropic concern, providing first class concerts that were financially within the reach of the working man. As with Henry Wood's Sunday concerts, gradually the philanthropic aspect was played down (although the charge for admission was kept low) and the South Place concerts came to be known as a

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[1] Thomas Dunhill: 'Historical Survey (of) British Performing Organisations' in 'Cobbett's Cyclopedic Survey of Chamber Music' (1929) Vol 1 p 201

series which for seven months of each year presented catholic programmes of classical and modern chamber music expertly played in informal surroundings. Another series with a very definite purpose was that established in 1894 by Ernest Fowles, the 'Concerts of British Chamber Music'. This venture ran for five years only, but during that time Fowles proved that varied and attractive programmes could be built of chamber works by British composers old and new.

Despite these and other attractions such as the regular concerts presented by the newly-formed John Saunders Quartet and Johann Kruse Quartet, the demise of the 'Pops' at first left something of a vacuum in British chamber music. There was a deliberate but unsuccessful attempt to revive them in 1903/04, but in 1905 St James' Hall was demolished and London chamber music lovers had to look elsewhere for their concerts among the new series that were mushrooming in the other small halls in London.

One of the first of these new series was the 'Broadwood Concerts', inaugurated in 1902. This venture enabled subscribers to hear the finest native and foreign ensembles in programmes fully representative of all periods of chamber music composition. Its first seasons were given at St James' Hall but in 1905 it moved to the Aeolian Hall and was continued with great success throughout the Edwardian decade. 1902 also marked the inception of Josef Holbrooke's chamber concerts, an annual series which was to enjoy an uninterrupted career for fifteen years. These concerts, given at various halls in London, were largely concerned with the presentation of modern British works,and considerable numbers of the concert-givers' own compositions appeared in the programmes. Holbrooke was an able pianist and engaged the finest instrumentalists to share the platform with him, but the

tone of the concerts was marred by the narrow range of music played and the abrasive manner of their advertisement.

Of a very different character were the 'Chelsea Chamber Concerts' established by Donald Tovey in March 1906. Tovey's tastes, wide-ranging but conservatively inclined, were reflected in the Chelsea programmes which were primarily concerned with the works of Bach, Beethoven and Brahms; but his friendship with some of the most eminent continental players of the day combined with his own remarkable gifts as a pianist ensured the highest standards of performance at his concerts. One of the most celebrated of Tovey's friends was Joseph Joachim, the violinist respected more than any other in late nineteenth century England, whose string quartet had appeared regularly at the 'Pops' and, after the demise of that series, continued to visit this country every year until their leader's death in 1907. The tradition of Joachim's concerts was carried on by a new concern, the 'Classical Concerts Society', run by Tovey, Leonard Borwick and F S Kelly, which presented first-rate performances of conservatively-toned programmes. The first concert organised by the new society took place in October 1908 and from then on until the outbreak of the Great War a series of some eight to ten concerts was given every winter.

Another composer/pianist who organised regular series of chamber concerts during the Edwardian period was Thomas Dunhill whose first programmes were given at the Small Queen's Hall in June 1907. Like Holbrooke, Dunhill intended that modern British music should be well to the fore in his scheme, but his programmes were very much more balanced and widely representative than the former's; no fewer than eleven English composers had their work played and sung* at Dunhill's first series of three

* Like almost all contemporary chamber concerts, Dunhill's always presented both instrumental and vocal music; concerts of chamber works in only one medium were very rare at this time.

concerts and in succeeding years a policy of giving second performances as well as premières of native works was adopted.

In addition to these named chamber music series (of which the above list does not claim to be complete), there were the myriad concerts presented by the ensembles themselves. A number of the more illustrious continental chamber music parties, among them the Bohemian, Rosé and Flonzaley Quartets, were regular visitors to London, and, in addition to their activities, there were the appearances of the established native ensembles, usually grouped into concert series: the Johann Kruse Quartet played frequently at Leighton House and the Bechstein Hall, the John Saunders Quartet, the senior English ensemble, was best known for its appearances at South Place, and the Wessley Quartet, the first quartet to be founded in the new century, gave an annual series also at the Bechstein Hall. Following Hans Wessley's lead, a great many other English string players formed ensembles during the Edwardian decade; 'Cobbet's Cyclopedic Survey of Chamber Music' lists thirteen professional string quartets established between 1900 and 1910 [1].

Several factors combined to make the Edwardian decade a particularly rich period for chamber music activity. In addition to those concerned with ensembles and the presentation of concerts outlined above, there were also the increasingly large amounts of chamber music of worth being composed in England, the opening of two more good halls (the Bechstein Hall and the Aeolian Hall) especially suited to the presentation of chamber concerts, thus bringing the number of such concert rooms in central London to four, and the activities of Walter Cobbett whose acts of patronage were helpful to the cause of chamber music at many levels.

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[1] Vol 1 pp 203 - 209

Whether there was at this time any decline in private and amateur activity it is impossible to say with any confidence, but the growth of the public cultivation of chamber music is unquestionable.

Compared with the flourishing of orchestral, choral and chamber music during the early years of the century, contemporary operatic activity was both limited and lacking any sense of innovation. But opera has never occupied a very prominent position in English musical life,and there has always been a body of opinion both within the musical profession and among the general public which has remained untouched by the attractions of opera and thus indifferent to its scant representation in English musical life. The state of English opera during the Edwardian decade was no worse than might have been expected bearing in mind the nature of operatic activity at the end of the nineteenth century. The shortcomings were only thrown into greater relief by the revitalisation which had occurred in almost every other branch of the musical life of this country.

The most prestigious operatic concern in England at this time was the Grand Opera Syndicate which organised regular seasons at the Royal Opera House, Covent Garden. This body, formed in 1896, pursued a safe rather than an adventurous policy, mounting seasons of Italian, German and French operas sung in their original languages by companies largely made up of foreign artists. Almost all the works given were from the standard repertoire; only occasionally was a new work (or an unfamiliar old one) brought forward. Between 1900 and 1910 only two new English works were given: Ethel Smyth's 'Der Wald' in 1903 and E W Naylor's 'The Angelus' in 1909. Standards of performance and staging were high and the venture was well supported.

If not actually responsible for it, Covent Garden seasons did nothing to counter the notion that opera was an expensive and exclusive pastime. Prices were high, the patronage of the aristocracy was encouraged and the principal series each year was carefully timed to coincide with the height of the social season, the late spring and early summer. The image of opera as being an imported commodity was fostered by the engagement of leading continental and American singers; British performers were as scarce at Syndicate seasons as British operas. In January 1909, however, an important innovation was made in the shape of a short season of opera in English under Richter and Percy Pitt, performances which necessitated the engagement of English singers for the main parts, and the success of this venture led to several German and Italian operas in the principal summer season the following year being given in the vernacular.

The Covent Garden Syndicate apart, the only companies operating with any regularity in Edwardian England were the Royal Carl Rosa Opera Company and the Moody-Manners Opera Company. The former, established in 1875, was dedicated to the presentation of opera in English, much of its work being undertaken in the suburbs and the provinces which it toured with a large repertoire of mainly standard works; but occasional seasons were given in central London at Drury Lane Theatre and elsewhere. Methods of production were of necessity far less elaborate than those of the Syndicate at Covent Garden, but the musical tradition was strong and the whole management policy a fine balance of enterprise and practicality. The Moody-Manners Company, younger by some twenty years, pursued similar aims of presenting grand opera in English. At its most prosperous period (the early part of the Edwardian

decade) three independent companies were maintained, employed largely in provincial tours but, like Carl Rosa's company, giving occasional seasons at Covent Garden (1902 and 1903) and Drury Lane (1904).

The educative work achieved by these two companies was of great benefit in cultivating an appreciation of opera among those who were geographically, financially or socially beyond the reach of the influence of the Grand Opera Syndicate. They also provided an excellent training ground for young singers, almost all the English operatic singers of note who later came to the fore under Beecham having served their apprenticeship and undertaken their first major roles in one or other company. In addition they served the native composer well, the Moody-Manners Company being credited with first performances of seven British operas between 1897 and 1909, the other company, with its longer career, with bringing forward ten new works by native composers. Thus the peripatetic companies provided excellent foil for the policies of the Grand Opera Syndicate and between them the two branches of English opera covered a wide spectrum of activity.

For other than this there was very little. Operatic selections (some of them quite extensive) were performed with great success on the slenderest of resources at the 'Old Vic', but for legal reasons it was impossible to stage complete operas there. There were attempts to establish other touring companies, most of them shortlived and none at all successful, too many being of the type of the 'Imperial Grand Opera Company' described by Beecham in 'A Mingled Chime'[1]. Much ink was spilled in the drawing up of schemes whereby some sort of National Opera House might be established (with or without financial aid from public funds)

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[1] Chapter 9, pp 46 - 51

to provide a proper focus for English operatic endeavour; Stanford, for example, put up what seems an eminently workable scheme which is described in his 'Studies and Memories' of 1908[1]. But nothing actually happened until February 1910 when Thomas Beecham's first Covent Garden season opened and the process was initiated whereby the face of English opera was to be transformed.

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This chapter has a twofold purpose: firstly, to chart the course of the continuing renaissance in English music past the turn of the century, and secondly, by sketching the composers and the musical life of the Edwardian decade, to prepare the way for the next two chapters, exhaustive examinations of the musical activity and the compositions of the period 1910 - 1914. Any consideration of the musical life of these four years is bound to be concerned very largely with London music-making in all its richness and variety; provincial activity cannot be ignored, however, and so the conclusion of these opening chapters will provide a little background information about each of the provincial institutions to be examined towards the end of the next chapter.

There were two permanent symphony orchestras to be found outside London at the beginning of this century, the Hallé Orchestra in Manchester and the Bournemouth Municipal Orchestra on the south coast. The former was entirely the creation of one man, Charles Hallé, who, invited to form an orchestra for a specific series of concerts in Manchester in 1857, seized the opportunity to place the enterprise on a permanent footing and then managed its affairs and conducted its concerts until his death in 1895. This event precipitated the formation of the

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[1] pp 3 - 23

Hallé Concerts Society, a limited company which put up a guarantee fund of £20,000 as financial bedrock upon which the continued running of the orchestral concerts could be founded. The musical direction was placed in Frederic Cowen's hands until 1899 when Hans Richter was appointed resident conductor, a position he was to hold until 1911. Under Richter the orchestra gained in discipline, in standard and in prestige. His performance of the German classical repertoire was supreme and this formed the central backbone of his programmes; however,he was not entirely averse to the exploration of the music of other traditions and other countries, and a small amount of English music found a place in the orchestra's repertoire. The very large German contingent to be found in Manchester lent solid support to the Hallé concerts,and the orchestra won a further following on its visits to the principal cities of the North and the Midlands. In 1904 it played at the Elgar Festival in London when its standard of playing was found to compare favourably with that of the London orchestras.

The Bournemouth Municipal Orchestra grew out of the band engaged to provide light musical entertainment for the visitors to the town. In 1893 Dan Godfrey, a band master of great ability and ambition, was appointed and within two years had so enlarged and moulded his forces that he was able to start giving regular symphony concerts while still continuing to provide entertainment of the type which he had originally been engaged to produce. In 1896 ,the municipality assumed ultimate responsibility for the orchestra but Godfrey, as Bournemouth's official Director of Music, retained control over its policy and its day-to-day management. Other concert series were initiated (besides the symphony concerts),

of all of which the most striking feature was the inclusion of a very large amount of English music; in this respect Godfrey out-did even Henry Wood, a huge amount of native music being performed in Bournemouth, much of it under the direction of its composers. Godfrey's orchestra was small (in 1910 it numbered fewer than fifty players and was thus considerably smaller than the string section alone of the London Symphony Orchestra) but its repertoire was remarkably extensive, keeping well abreast of contemporary developments up until the end of the Edwardian decade.

Both of these orchestras exerted considerable influence upon the quantity and quality of the musical life of the areas in which they were to be found, vastly different though these were. The presence of each was a stimulus to amateur and semi-professional playing and was also the cause of much chamber music activity and recital work. To each was attached a choral society, the Hallé Choir earning a considerable reputation in its own right as being for a short time one of the ablest bodies of singers in the country. The Bournemouth orchestra travelled little and thus its influence upon musical life in general was largely limited to the immediate area of its base, but the Hallé Orchestra, with its regular concerts in towns other than Manchester and the wide reputation and diverse activities of its resident conductor, made an impact upon the musical life of a large part of northern England.

Birmingham could boast no permanent orchestra until 1920. Regular orchestral concerts were given in the city from 1876, some drawing upon the best local players available, others importing professional players from elsewhere; but the individuals and societies responsible for the promotion of these concerts could never rely on steady public support and thus the situation remained very unstable. One of the longest-surviving ventures

was the Birmingham Concerts Society, itself an amalgamation of two previous concerns; but after a little more than a decade of changing fortunes, it too was forced to cease operations in 1909. Even the Promenade concerts given by an ad hoc London orchestra under Landon Ronald could not command sufficient response to be financially self-supporting.

In contrast to the languishing orchestral activity, the choral life of Birmingham was both plentiful and well-established, an important factor in making the Birmingham Festival such a flourishing concern. Second only to the Three Choirs in seniority, festivals had been held in the town since the latter part of the eighteenth century; until 1885 there was no regular pattern to the frequency of their occurrence, but in that year they were established on a triennial basis. The conductor from 1885 to 1909 was Hans Richter who did much to raise the standard of the orchestral playing and also to achieve a more equal balance between the choral and orchestral activities, the former having previously been very much the more important. The failure of the first performance of 'The Dream of Gerontius' at the Birmingham Festival of 1900 had been as much a matter of shame to the festival authorities as it was a disappointment to the composer, but the successful production of 'The Apostles' and 'The Kingdom' at the next two meetings was regarded as something of an atonement.

The Norwich Festival was another long-standing institution to the early history of which a certain lustre had been added by the visit of Louis Spohr in 1839. The conductor from 1881 to 1905 was Alberto Randegger, who maintained it on very traditional lines as a predominantly choral festival presenting standard repertoire works with one or two recent English compositions as leaven. For the 1908 meeting Henry Wood was appointed conductor, and infused new life into the programmes and the standards of performance.

The festival in Leeds dated from the opening of the Town Hall in 1858. From the early days it was the excellence of the choral singing which marked this festival out, and as the programmes became more and more wide-ranging under Sullivan (1880 - 98) and then Stanford (1901 - 1910), the handicap of there being no permanent body of professional players to form the festival orchestra became increasingly apparent. A blow to the reputation of the Leeds Festival in the late 1890s was the dramatic rise in the standard of the singing in neighbouring Sheffield and the establishment of an enterprising festival there; one senses keen rivalry between the two concerns throughout the Edwardian decade.

The Sheffield Festival was a foundation dating from as recently as 1895, but the lack of a long tradition was in many ways advantageous, allowing progressive methods and policies to be established from the outset. With Henry Coward as chorus master, the excellence of the choral singing was assured, and the engagement of August Manns as principal conductor meant that a body of players from the Crystal Palace could be employed as the nucleus of the festival orchestra. In 1902 Henry Wood was appointed in succession to Manns, whereupon the standard of the orchestra rose even higher and also the programmes became very much more enterprising. The emergence of Sheffield as one of the major festivals at the turn of the century had a profound influence upon the whole festival movement, showing just what was possible in the way of high standards of performance and resourceful programme planning: and it was in emulation of Sheffield that many other festivals initiated changes of method and policy and infused more vigour into their activities.

Moving further south and west one encounters the oldest of the provincial festivals, the Three Choirs Festival held in Worcester, Hereford and Gloucester in turn. Dating from 1724, this festival passed through several stages of development but always retained a distinctive character of its own, being only partially influenced by the emergence of other similar institutions in the nineteenth century. Two factors were important in establishing this character: firstly, all the principal concerts had to be held in the respective cathedrals, there being no alternatives in the way of sufficiently large concert halls, and secondly, the organist of each cathedral was, ex officio, the principal conductor of the festivals held in his city. Able conductors though many of these men were, this practice placed the Three Choirs meetings on a different footing from similar events directed by such figures as Henry Wood or Hans Richter. The somewhat parochial air which hung about the Three Choirs Festival towards the end of the nineteenth century was largely dispelled by the involvement of two of the leading English musicians of the day: Hubert Parry and Edward Elgar had strong family ties with Gloucester and Worcester respectively, and the organisers of the festivals there lost no opportunity of capitalising on these connections. Thus during the Edwardian decade the Three Choirs Festival had strong links with the most eminent English musician of the day and through him access to the heart of professional musical activity, earning thereby a prestige which would otherwise largely have been denied it.

Bristol and Cardiff boasted festivals of some importance too, the former dating from 1873, the latter from 1892. Bristol, unlike most other festivals, had little interest in securing first performances of new works; steady standard programmes had been given under Charles Hallé, but when George Risely succeeded

him in 1895, a policy was initiated of favouring large-scale continental works. The Cardiff Festival had Cowen for its principal conductor from 1902 and presented representative programmes of English and continental music with a special place allotted at each meeting to the production of a new work by a Welsh composer.

The festival system which played so prominent a part in provincial musical life in the late nineteenth and early twentieth centuries was open to criticism on several counts: intense activity was concentrated in three or four hectic days with nothing tangible to show for the rest of what was usually a three year period, and the charitable purpose which lay behind many of the meetings led to their acquiring something of the character of social functions and caused frequent clashes between artistic aims and financial considerations. But the festival as cultivated in Edwardian England had its advantages too: being largely financially dependent upon subscription, festivals allowed for a certain degree of adventurous planning otherwise impossible outside the main musical centres, they provided a valuable stimulus to native composers and, most obviously, they gave provincial audiences the opportunity to hear a wide variety of music expertly rendered.

The festivals were forced to expand and raise their standards during the early years of the century because of the increase in both the quality and the quantity of musical activity in the provinces; the calibre of the programmes and the performances at festivals in the '80s and '90s was now to be encountered in an ordinary season's concerts. Thus the renaissance touched even the festival movement and was the cause of amelioration in yet another branch of English musical life.