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Beyond England's "Green and Pleasant Land": English Romantics Outside the Musical Renaissance

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BEYOND ENGLAND’S "GREEN AND PLEASANT LAND": ENGLISH ROMANTICS OUTSIDE THE MUSICAL RENAISSANCE

______________________________________________________________

DISSERTATION

______________________________________________________________

A dissertation submitted in partial fulfillment of the requirements for the degree of Doctor of Philosophy in the College of Fine Arts at the University of Kentucky

By
Christopher Little
Lexington, KY

Director: Dr. Ron Pen, Professor of Music
Lexington, KY

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ABSTRACT OF DISSERTATION

BEYOND ENGLAND'S "GREEN AND PLEASANT LAND": ENGLISH ROMANTICS OUTSIDE THE MUSICAL RENAISSANCE

England experienced a resurgence of musical talent in the late nineteenth and early twentieth centuries known as the "English Musical Renaissance." This rebirth spanned the years 1880 – 1945 and is credited to the work of Edward Elgar, Frederick Delius, Gustav Holst, and Ralph Vaughan Williams. Their break with Continental compositional models and the subsequent rediscovery of Tudor music and English folk song eventually created a "pastoral" musical style, heard as the authentically English musical voice.

A strain of English musical Romanticism continued parallel to the Renaissance, however, represented by Granville Bantock, Joseph Holbrooke, Rutland Boughton, Arnold Bax, and Havergal Brian. These composers retained Continental, specifically Wagnerian, Romantic techniques, including chromatic harmony, leitmotifs, virtuosic use of enormous performing forces, and an emphasis on programmatic music. Their inspiration was drawn from exotic sources and Nature's mystical, dangerous, and beguiling qualities instead of any "pastoral" traits. Each wrote emotionally extravagant music at a time when such was considered foreign to the English character.

This dissertation demonstrates the Wagnerian character of these “English Romantics” through examination of stylistic features in representative scores. Further, by presenting scores, criticism, and monographs, it affirms their sustained compositional presence through the twentieth century though English cultural tastes had turned from Germany to France, Russia, and the United States after the First World War. Finally, in challenging the standard narrative of British musical history this study broadens the concept of authentically English music to include a great deal more music “made in England.”

KEYWORDS: Granville Bantock, Arnold Bax, Rutland Boughton, Havergal Brian, Joseph Holbrooke, English Romantics

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June 13, 2016
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BEYOND ENGLAND'S "GREEN AND PLEASANT LAND": ENGLISH ROMANTICS OUTSIDE THE MUSICAL RENAISSANCE

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Chapter One: Introduction, Historical Context, and Literature Review

English music has often been compared to the English countryside, that “green and pleasant land.”¹ Nowhere was this more true than in reference to the “English Musical Renaissance,” the resurgence of native music c. 1880 – 1945.² This flowering of English compositional talent is likened to a flowering plant in each of the three major histories of the period: Frank Howes (1966), Peter J. Pirie (1979), and Michael Trend (1985) all use the image of native flora awaiting the necessary social and cultural conditions before blossoming into authentically English music.³ Recent popular volumes, including Music in the Landscape: How the British Countryside Inspired our Greatest Composers (2011), follow suit.⁴ Even scholarly sources such as the Athlone History of Music in Britain (1981) and the Blackwell History of Music in Britain (1995), as well as the single-volume A History of British Music (1967)⁵ substantiate Howes, Pirie, and Trend in their assertion that an identifiably English school of composition arose

¹ William Blake, “And did those feet, in ancient time,” included in the preface to his epic poem "Milton," published in 1808 and later set by Sir Charles Hubert Hastings Parry as
² The English Musical Renaissance (EMR) is distinct from the earlier Renaissance of Shakespeare, Tallis, and Byrd. In this proposal, the term “English Musical Renaissance” or more simply "Renaissance," will always refer to the period c. 1880-1945. The boundary dates denote the premieres of Hubert Parry's Prometheus Unbound and Benjamin Britten's Peter Grimes, respectively. These dates are accepted by the three main monographs on the topic, named below in the next footnote.
in the late nineteenth and early twentieth centuries due to a combination of three factors: the creation of the Royal College of Music in 1883, the folk-song collecting movement stimulated by Carl Engel (1818-1882) and Cecil Sharp (1859-1924), and the contemporary revival of the modal counterpoint of the Tudor period by the Anglican Reverend E. H. Fellowes (1870-1951).6

**Historical Context of the English Musical Renaissance**

The accepted historical narrative is that these three interconnected events allowed English musicians to throw off the yoke of foreign influence, especially Germanic, that had dominated the British musical world since the death of Henry Purcell in 1695. The first of these German influences was Georg Friedrich Händel, who arrived in 1712 to feed the aristocratic English taste for Italian opera. This naturalized Englishman exercised stylistic influence after his death for generations to come through his immensely popular oratorios. The genre became institutionalized during the nineteenth century and was the vehicle by which another German composer, Felix Mendelssohn, charmed all of England, including Queen Victoria herself. Mendelssohn's oratorio *Elijah* was specially commissioned for the 1846 Birmingham Triennial Music Festival. Sung in English, it was specifically modeled on the oratorios of Handel and gained immediate

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6 Engel, a German émigré, called for the investigation of rural folk songs in his 1866 book *The Study of National Music*. Cecil Sharp became a founding member of the Folk Song Society in 1898. Fellowes’ *The English Madrigal School* began in 1913 and was completed in 1924 at the publication of its thirty-sixth volume.
success. British composers subsequently took up Mendelssohn as another model, if more modern than Handel, to follow.7

By the last quarter of the nineteenth century, however, the low status of music created by native talent was being reappraised. Music, argued George Bernard Shaw (1856-1950), should become more than an imported luxury or mark of social status for pragmatic, business-minded Victorians.8 Members of the royal family, statesmen such as Prime Minister William Ewart Gladstone and Archibald Primrose, the Earl of Rosebery, and the Archbishop of Canterbury were among those who spoke publicly in support of the creation of a new national school for music to complement the Royal Academy of Music (RAM), founded in 1822 and now widely viewed as moribund.9 The duty of this new institution would be to equip future generations of composers and performers in the creation and execution of a newly self-aware national style of "music, made in England"10 without the assistance of foreign conservatories, composers, or styles.

7 Howes describes the situation in this way: “Modern music to them [i.e., English composers] was all one, and it was like Mendelssohn – the full force of Wagner's impact on European music was still a few years ahead. Mendelssohn even provided them with a pattern for oratorios. He was their example in all forms of instrumental music from salon music to orchestral overtures.” Howes, English Musical Renaissance, 68. Pirie calls Mendelssohn’s influence particularly “potent” in the music of William Sterndale Bennett (1816-75), consisting of “limp and inoffensive stuff… shallow and without originality.” Pirie, English Musical Renaissance, 20.
8 “'If we have to borrow tea from China … we can at least plead that our soil will not produce tea. Now music it can produce. It has done it before and can do it again.'” Quoted in Trend, Music Makers, 5. Also, "'Englishmen, after a lapse of two centuries, [ought] once more to express themselves in genuinely British music with a weight and depth possible only in the higher forms of music.'” Quoted in Trend, Music Makers, 6.
9 Ibid., 11.
Sir George Grove (1820-1900), after the publication of the first volume of his *Dictionary of Music and Musicians* in 1879, began working toward the creation of the new teaching institution. The Prince of Wales and the Dukes of Edinburgh and Albany delivered speeches written by Grove at fundraising events across the nation and in 1883 the Royal College of Music (RCM) opened its doors with Sir George Grove as its newly knighted director. Sir Charles Hubert Hastings Parry (1848-1918) and Sir Charles Villiers Stanford (1852-1924) were appointed professors of composition; the stage was set for the growth of native English music.

The first success, however, came from a composer trained at neither the RCM nor the RAM. After the London premiere of his "Enigma" Variations in 1899 conducted by Hans Richter, Edward Elgar (1857-1934) catapulted to sudden national fame. The self-taught son of a Worcester shopkeeper, Elgar had struggled to make his artistic mark in annual provincial music festivals where the choral works of Handel still held sway. Now past the age of forty, he was finally lauded not only in the British Isles but also on the Continent, where he was introduced as "the English Richard Strauss."[^12]

Often referred to as a “cosmopolitan,” rather than an Englishman, Elgar’s contemporary Frederick Delius also achieved recognition late in life thanks to the untiring advocacy of Sir Thomas Beecham. The conductor promoted Delius’ music throughout his career, culminating in a six-day festival sponsored by Beecham in 1929.

[^11]: Grove was an engineer, civil servant, and scholar who exercised a large influence over English music through his organization of the Crystal Palace concerts, his series of program notes from which his *Dictionary of Music and Musicians* grew, and his directorship of the Royal College of Music from 1883 to 1894.

Despite his ambiguous relationship with England’s musical establishment, Frederick Delius added his voice to the first generation of substantial English talent since Purcell with such works as *Brigg Fair*, *In a Summer Garden*, and *On Hearing the First Cuckoo in Spring*.\(^{13}\)

Shortly before the First World War two members of the younger generation, Gustav Holst (1874-1934) and Ralph Vaughan Williams (1872-1958), new graduates of the Royal College of Music, emerged as major figures in the Renaissance movement. During the Edwardian decade both enjoyed successful premieres of works of their early maturity.\(^{14}\) After the war both would be acclaimed by audiences and critics alongside Elgar and Delius, eventually surpassing them as the leading figures in the ongoing English Musical Renaissance.

Holst and Vaughan Williams exemplified the goals of the Renaissance.

Professionally trained at a domestic institution, both composers found inspiration in

\(^{13}\) Howes, Pirie, and Trend each recognize the complicated relationship Delius had with his native country: “Delius was a cosmopolitan, so an historian’s claim to enroll him among English composers may be questionable” (Howes, *English Musical Renaissance*, 204); “Delius… called himself a ‘good European’” (Trend, *Music Makers*, 42); “Delius… scorched the [English] establishment, going his own way,” and was “wholly original” (Pirie, *English Musical Renaissance*, 145 & 82). Yet each also claims him as a founding figure of the English Musical Renaissance: “England reasserted her claim in two Delius festivals organized by Beecham” (Howes, *English Musical Renaissance*, 205); near the end of his life Delius was “symbolically reconciled with the land of his birth” (Trend, *Music Makers*, 41); Pirie gives various technical reasons for the “pervasive Englishness of Delius’ music” (*English Musical Renaissance*, 45) and describes 1934 as the year “all the founding fathers of the English Musical Renaissance died: Elgar, Delius, and Holst” (*English Musical Renaissance*, 143).

\(^{14}\) Holst’s *A Somerset Rhapsody* and *Two Songs Without Words* were first performed in 1906; his chamber opera *Savitri* was premiered in 1908. *The Planets* received a private performance in 1918. Vaughan Williams’ *A Sea Symphony* was first performed in 1909 and in the following year his *Fantasia on a Theme by Thomas Tallis* was given its premiere.
"national" music. They became caught up in the folk-music revival and were similarly energized by the almost simultaneous surge of interest in music of the Tudor period.\textsuperscript{15} Holst and Vaughan Williams combined these two sources of inspiration and channeled them into careers that placed them at the heart of every standard description of English music in the twentieth century.\textsuperscript{16}

**Romantic Composers Outside the English Musical Renaissance**

This narrative of the organic growth of the English Musical Renaissance presented a context at first choked with foreign invaders, then a soil seeded with native talent nurtured in a domestic institution which absorbed the musical fruit of the countryside and the nation's past. Yet this is not the whole tale. If the Renaissance was described as one great floral metaphor then it was not the only plant sending out shoots. Meirion Hughes and Robert Stradling’s landmark study *The English Musical Renaissance: The Creation of a National Music* contended that not only was there a definite and decades-long push for a revival of native English talent but that it became directed along specific "historical-pastoral" lines.\textsuperscript{17} Inspiration and compositional techniques drawing on English folk music and Tudor polyphony became the assumed artistic law of the land, the key to recognition by the musical establishment of academics and critics. This establishment, in its members’ attempt to replace Continental influences

\textsuperscript{15} Particularly the modal polyphony of William Byrd (c. 1540-1623), Thomas Morley (c. 1558-1602), Thomas Weelkes (1576-1623), Orland Gibbons (1583-1625), and Thomas Tallis (c. 1505-1585).

\textsuperscript{16} In contrast to Elgar's Straussian analogy, Ralph Vaughan Williams was introduced to leading European music critics in 1935 with the words “Here is the authentic voice of England.” Howes, 240.

with “national” ones, discredited or ignored much other music “made in England.” Later sources such as Howes, Pirie, Trend, the *Athlone* and *Blackwell* histories, et al., only reinforced this selective view of English music.

**The English Romantics**

Those musicians excluded from the “historical-pastoral” narrative included a variety of compositional talent. One such group, born in the same decade as Holst and Vaughan Williams were destined to outlive both: Havergal Brian (1876-1972), Rutland Boughton (1878-1960), and Joseph Holbrooke (1878-1958). These composers, together with Granville Bantock (1868-1946) and Arnold Bax (1883-1953) are particularly worthy of study as a group in light of their early recognition as “advanced” or “modern” composers, their sharply declining fortunes after the First World War, and their later neglect in both scholarly and popular narratives of the period.

These five composers could be described as “English Romantics,” though they established no formal bonds beyond friendship and journalistic advocacy among them. No established signifier comparable to the Russian Mighty Five or the French Les Six has ever been applied to them. They did not refer to themselves as a group or school in their own correspondence, yet they may be grouped together nevertheless. Their dates of birth span a generation approximately identical with that of the four Renaissance composers named above.\(^{18}\) Each was a native Briton with a view of music, style of composition, and prevailing philosophy of life indebted to the ideals of Romanticism, particularly German Romanticism. Their music was not influenced primarily by English folk song or Tudor

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\(^{18}\) If one uses the standard thirty-year span of a generation, beginning in the 1860s, only Elgar would not fit, and that only by three years.
modes but by those Continental composers who espoused the "Music of the Future": Richard Wagner, Franz Liszt, and Richard Strauss. In the same manner, these Englishmen put a virtuosic use of Germanic Late Romantic musical techniques at the service of a highly emotional and often overtly pictorial self-expression. In private life each was equally passionate, with damaging consequences to the stability of their intimate relationships.

The English Romantics maintained musical careers that spanned the decades known as the English Musical Renaissance and beyond. In the course of these careers, the Romantics composed prolifically, particularly in large-scale genres of music. Each member had a brief period of popular success and positive critical notice. During these moments of achievement each was considered at the forefront of musical modernity in England whether in terms complimentary or notorious.

Modernity in music, however, is notoriously brief and English tastes turned away from German Romanticism after the First World War. Its former cultural model became a defeated and discredited enemy and the English musical establishment looked toward its new French and American allies. During the 1920s American jazz superseded the British musical hall song and French Neo-Classicism inspired the younger generation of British composers.¹⁹ The historical-pastoral style of music reached its peak by the early

1930s; the fact that Elgar, Delius, and Holst, three of the four “founding fathers” of the Renaissance movement, died in 1934 seemed to set the seal on its official recognition.20

By 1945 and the premiere of Benjamin Britten’s opera Peter Grimes, the Renaissance had achieved its primary goals. English composers could build on a native tradition with its own character and without relying on education or advocacy from abroad. Britten’s international reputation was not qualified by reference to his nationality, and his operatic success reclaimed the genre the British had failed to cultivate since Purcell.

The English Romantics thus came to exist in a musical no-man's-land. They were unwilling to cast off the Germanic Late Romantic tradition and were not attracted by the “Pastoral School,” to the rising Neo-Classicism of the 1920s or the serialism that had gained official acceptance by the 1950s. Critical and scholarly assessment passed sharply from contemporary wonder at their chromatic daring and colorful scoring to later censure for their reliance on “outmoded” techniques of expression and lavish performing forces. When the history of English music in the twentieth century came to be written starting in the 1960s, the English Romantics were described as passing figures, “might-have-beens,” and Late Romantic stragglers, imitators of Wagner who, like Richard Strauss, had managed to outlive their time.

This study will help to redress this historical assessment and to challenge its historiographical underpinnings. The personal lives, professional careers, and musical

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20 The phrase “founding fathers” comes from Pirie, English Musical Renaissance, 143. Vaughan Williams would continue to live for two more decades, ensuring the continuation of the style in such works as the Fifth Symphony and the opera The Pilgrim’s Progress and becoming something of a national institution in the process.
oeuvres of Granville Bantock, Joseph Holbrooke, Rutland Boughton, Arnold Bax, and Havergal Brian will be examined through six cultural and musical frameworks: musical education, longevity, German Romantic compositional techniques, inspiration from both a “sublime” view of nature and from “exotic” sources, a preference for program music, and an overt emotional expressiveness.

These frameworks will guide an exploration into the legitimacy of grouping them as “English Romantics,” as well as the reasons for their neglect by audiences, critics and scholars. To flesh out these frameworks, this dissertation will draw on information from published biographies and memoirs, critical notices and reviews, representative musical scores, and selections from the prose writings of the English Romantics.

This study will contribute to the resurgence of interest in the English Romantics among scholars as well as to the problematization of the prevailing narrative for twentieth-century English music. In the effort to rid England of its stigma as “das Land ohne Musik,” one branch of the art was promoted while many others were pruned. This study investigates a previously “pruned” musical branch, equally valid and worthy of performance, appreciation, and further scholarly interest.

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21 The phrase “das Land ohne Musik” (“The land without music”) comes from the title of a book by Oskar Adolf Hermann Schmitz, *Das Land ohne Musik: englische Gesellschaftsprobleme*, first published in 1904. Its last edition was published in Munich as late as 1915. Schmitz claimed that “The English are the only cultured nation without its own music (except street music).” Ironically, Schmitz was inspired by the writings of the German-born musicologist Carl Engel (1818-1882) whose book *An Introduction to the Study of National Music* (London: Longmans, 1866) encouraged British musicians to seek out their own folk music in order to make up for the lack of a contemporary national musical style.
Review of the Literature


Howes' was the first monograph about the English Musical Renaissance and set the pattern for much of the "pastoral" imagery and language used by later authors. Howes gives comprehensive accounts of the folk music and Tudor music revivals and makes clear his belief that it is these rediscoveries that elevated English music from its low state under the Victorians and sparked the Renaissance.26 All five Romantics are mentioned, although Rutland Boughton is referenced only twice while Havergal Brian receives a single sentence. Howes is sympathetic to the remaining composers of the group while also making it clear that they are of secondary importance in the story he is telling. Howes' summation of the Romantic style as a whole is that “a diet of Wagner

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26 The chapter on Holst and Vaughan Williams, for example, is subtitled "Emancipation."
and an infusion of Strauss intended to cure our [English] provincialism was no way to promote a healthier growth of English music.”

The volume by Peter Pirie was intended as a strictly chronological survey of the Renaissance from 1890 until 1978, the year before the publication of his study. His terse prose gives accounts of English composers directly alongside their Continental counterparts and is illuminating for the connections between them that it unveils. His tenuous faith in the value of music "made in England," however, constantly intrudes: "It is doubtful if many, or indeed any, of our composers are of the same stature as the great figures of twentieth-century music, Schoenberg, Berg, Webern, Bartók, Debussy, Stravinsky, Strauss, and the rest." Nevertheless, "if we do not support our composers, no one else will; although that support must be clear-eyed, and free from self-deception." Rutland Boughton is given one sentence, Bantock and Brian two each. Arnold Bax and Joseph Holbrooke are left to more fully represent the Romantics with Bax in particular receiving more attention than might be expected in a history with such a pronounced bias towards Continental musical trends.

Michael Trend returns to substantially the same narrative as Howes in his 1985 *The Music Makers: The English Musical Renaissance from Elgar to Britten*. Trend has more information about the English Romantics than Howes, but he nevertheless argues that such composers, particularly Granville Bantock and Joseph Holbrooke, were so much a product of their Edwardian decade that it would be fruitless to attempt to revive

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their music. The most important aspect of his research is the much greater amount of
information regarding Havergal Brian, five dense pages of scrutiny.

Meirion Hughes and Robert Stradling, whose study *The English Musical Renaissance: The Creation of a National Music* saw its second edition in 2001, provided much of the inspiration for this dissertation topic. Their focus remains, however, on stripping away assumptions about the Renaissance and revealing its self-aware creation by the "team" of composers, professors, and critics associated with the Royal College of Music. The genesis of the "Pastoral School" receives the bulk of their attention and any "outsiders" play secondary roles. Composers such as Rutland Boughton and Arnold Bax are brought into the discussion to provide examples of musical styles or political ideals rejected by the London musical establishment, but they are not thoroughly investigated for their own sakes.

Several general volumes about English music also reinforce the accepted narrative of the English Musical Renaissance. These include *A History of British Music* by Percy M. Young,²⁹ a single-volume study and *The Athlone History of Music in Britain*, which has only a single published volume, "The Romantic Age, 1800-1914,"³⁰ edited by Nicholas Temperley. The *Athlone History* was later completed as *The Blackwell History of Music in Britain*, and its Volume 6, *The Twentieth Century* includes much apposite material.³¹ This work includes a small amount of compensatory history: Peter Evans'

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³⁰ Nicholas Temperley, ed., *The Athlone History of Music in Britain, Volume 5: The Romantic Age 1800-1914* (London: The Athlone Press Ltd, 1981). There were to be six, each covering a different period of history.
essay on symphonic music delves deeply into representative scores by Vaughan Williams, Holst, Bantock, Bax, and Brian. Similarly, the chapter covering "Music and Drama" by Matthew Rye includes both Rutland Boughton and Havergal Brian before continuing on to Benjamin Britten.

Each of the English Romantics has received at least one biography in the "life and works" tradition. Joseph Holbrooke was the subject of only one, Josef Holbrooke and His Work by friend of the composer George Lowe. Published in 1920, over thirty years before Holbrooke's eventual death, it represents an act of advocacy for his music, already falling out of favor. Similarly, the now-defunct Holbrooke Society published a collection of short newspaper articles about Holbrooke titled Joseph Holbrooke: Various Appreciations by Many Authors. While wide-ranging, it is repetitive and again represents advocacy over scholarship. A recent anthology, however, has begun to fill this gap in scholarly explorations of Holbrooke: the 2015 publication of Joseph Holbrooke: Composer, Critic, and Musical Patriot, edited by Paul Watt and Anne-Marie Forbes.

Arnold Bax and Rutland Boughton each have a pair of biographies. The first, eponymously titled Arnold Bax, was written by Colin Scott-Sutherland and published in 1973. This has been superseded by Lewis Foreman's Bax: A Composer and His Times,

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32 George Lowe, Josef Holbrooke and His Work (New York: E.P. Dutton & Co., 1920). Holbrooke's first name vacillated between "Josef" and "Joseph" according to whim during his life.

Granville Bantock's daughter Myrrha wrote an account of her father, *Granville Bantock: A Personal Portrait*, and H. Orsmond Anderton provided another example of an "early" English Romantic biography, published in 1915. 1973 saw the release of Trevor Bray's brief *Bantock: Music in the Midlands before the First World War*. Bantock’s grandson Cuillin Bantock published a memoir entitled *Never Lukewarm: Recollections of Granville and Helena Bantock*, originally intended as a personal volume for the Bantock family. The final monographs are Vincent Budd's *An Introduction to_

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the Life and Work of Sir Granville Bantock\textsuperscript{44} and a collection of correspondence between Bantock and his second mistress Muriel Mann, with a lengthy afterword by Budd.\textsuperscript{45}

Havergal Brian has been the subject of nine monographs. Four focus specifically on his symphonies: Lewis Foreman's \textit{Havergal Brian and the Performance of his Orchestral music: A History and Source Book},\textsuperscript{46} and Malcolm MacDonald's three-volume \textit{The Symphonies of Havergal Brian}.\textsuperscript{47} Kenneth Eastaugh, Reginald Nettel, and Jurgen Schaarwachter all contributed more traditional biographies of Havergal Brian and Malcolm MacDonald also provided \textit{Havergal Brian: A Perspective on the Music}.\textsuperscript{48}

Each of the Romantics themselves also wrote at least one work of prose. While only Arnold Bax wrote short fiction and poetry – including one volume banned by the British censor in 1916 – the others wrote memoirs or monographs of their own besides producing journalistic or critical writings. Bax published a memoir, \textit{Farewell, My Youth}, in 1943. It has been collected with other miscellaneous writings by Lewis Foreman and reprinted in 1992.\textsuperscript{49} Collections of his correspondence with the young British conductor

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\item \textsuperscript{44} Vincent Budd, \textit{An Introduction to the Life and Work of Sir Granville Bantock} (South Uist, Outer Hebrides: Gnosis Press, 2000).
\item \textsuperscript{45} Katherine De Mar Werner, ed., \textit{My Dear Rogue: Sir Granville Bantock’s Secret Romance that Influenced the Music of One of Britain’s Greatest 20\textsuperscript{th} Century Composers} (Waitsfield, VT: Distinction Press, 2013).
\item \textsuperscript{47} Malcolm MacDonald, \textit{The Symphonies of Havergal Brian} (New York: Taplinger Publishing Co., 1978, 1974).
\item \textsuperscript{48} Malcolm MacDonald, \textit{Havergal Brian: Perspective on the Music} (London: Triad Press, 1972).
\item \textsuperscript{49} Lewis Foreman, ed., \textit{Farewell, My Youth, and Other Writings by Arnold Bax} (Brookfield, Vermont: Ashgate Publishing Co., 1992).
\end{itemize}
\end{footnotesize}
Christopher Whelan and Harriet Cohen have been released as, respectively, *Cuchulan among the Guns*\(^5^0\) and *Music & Men: The Life and Loves of Harriet Cohen*.\(^5^1\)

Granville Bantock's single memoir involves the unlikely adventure of a worldwide tour with a variety show he conducted: *Round the World with “A Gaiety Girl.”*\(^5^2\) Havergal Brian describes the no-less unlikely story of the creation of his First Symphony in *How the “Gothic” Symphony Came to be Written*, published in 1978.\(^5^3\) Selections from his journalistic activities filling two volumes were published in 2009, edited by Malcolm MacDonald.\(^5^4\)

Joseph Holbrooke, besides his large amounts of musical criticism, listed in the working bibliography, wrote a book detailing *Contemporary British Composers* in 1925;\(^5^5\) all five of his fellow English Romantics share space with Elgar, Holst, Vaughan Williams, and others. Rutland Boughton's Wagnerian views on opera and its relation to a community's artistic and spiritual health were expounded to the public in *The Reality of Music*\(^5^6\) and *Music-Drama of the Future*.\(^5^7\)

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There are a number of dissertations and scholarly articles about each of these composers. Most, however, are narrowly focused on one particular aspect of a composer's music or life and do not attempt to connect the English Romantics with each other or their contemporaries. As such they are of limited use in this study although occasional use has been made of them where appropriate. Relevant dissertations include Matthew Kickasola’s discussion of Bantock in “Granville Bantock and the English Choral Imagination,”58 Paul Ludden’s connection of Bax and Elgar in “A Song of War and Victory,”59 John Francis Gibbons’ connection of Bax and Sibelius in “The Classical and the Romantic in the Northern Symphony,”60 and Joseph LaRoche Rivers’ discussion of “Formal Determinants in the Symphonies of Arnold Bax.”61

Scholarly articles connecting members of the English Romantics to each other or to fellow musicians include Trevor Bray’s discussion of Bantock and Boughton in relation to Bantock’s opera The Seal Woman,62 Derrick Puffett’s article on Impressionistic influences in The Garden of Fand by Bax,63 Fiona Richards’ exploration

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57 Rutland Boughton and Reginald R. Buckley, Music-Drama of the Future: Uther and Igraine, Choral Drama (London: W. Reeves, 1911).
of Bantock’s early “exotic” compositions,64 and Peter Pirie’s evaluation of three of the
English Romantics in “Bantock and His Generation.”65

The discussion of musical exoticism in Chapter Two draws on Ralph Locke,
*Musical Exoticism: Images and Reflections*66 as well as *The Exotic in Western Music*,
edited by Jonathan Bellman,67 and the chapter on Edgar Allan Poe in Jack Sullivan’s
monograph *New World Symphonies*.68 Analysis of orchestration and its connection with
musical style relies on Gardner Read’s *Style and Orchestration*69 alongside Adam Carse’s
*History of Orchestration*.70 Liner notes to musical recordings provided supplementary
information for specific pieces.71

**Conclusion**

This dissertation brings renewed attention to five composers neglected in previous
narratives of early-twentieth-century British music. Their exclusion from the
historiography of English music prior to recent publications has resulted in an

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64 Fiona Richards, “Granville Bantock and the Orient in the Midlands,” in *Music and
Orientalism in the British Empire, 1780s-1940s: Portrayal of the East*, ed. by Martin
65 Peter J. Pirie, “Bantock and His Generation,” *The Musical Times*, vol. 109, no. 1506
University Press, 2009).
67 Jonathan Bellman, ed., *The Exotic in Western Music* (Boston: Northeastern University
71 The independent Naxos, Chandos, Hyperion, and Dutton record labels provided often
the only recorded performances of pieces by the English Romantics. Care has been taken
to ensure the information quoted from liner notes is accurate due to their often
unscholarly nature.
oversimplified narrative that privileges the "Pastoral School" as the only authentic
English musical voice. The five "outsiders," grouped together as the English Romantics,
represent five similar responses to this turbulent period in British artistic and political
history lasting until after 1945, all of which challenge the exclusivity of the established
Renaissance movement. Knowledge of the life and works of Granville Bantock, Joseph
Holbrooke, Rutland Boughton, Arnold Bax, and Havergal Brian can only contribute to a
more complete picture of music truly "made in England."
Chapter Two: Methodology

This chapter presents the various types of sources consulted for the dissertation, delimitations of the study, and the specific musical and extra-musical links that allow the English Romantics to be considered as a group. Chapters three through seven give biographical sketches that outline these composers’ shared allegiance to Romantic cultural ideals and cite examples from representative scores demonstrating specific instances of stylistic connections.

Sources and Delimitations

This dissertation uses a number of sources to investigate the personal and musical characteristics of the English Romantics. The principal source are musical scores of representative large-scale works providing examples of the stylistic and inspirational choices made by the English Romantics and corroboration for the claim of a Germanic Late Romantic technique. Chamber music will not be included, only large orchestral and choral pieces, or those that call for these forces combined.72

The five English Romantics were writers of large amounts of prose in addition to being prolific composers; their writings form a valuable source of information about their cultural views as well as their financial state. Three became professional journalists out of financial necessity. Two published memoirs and the other three released polemics about the state of music in England. These books and selected newspaper criticisms will become sources for biographical and cultural background.

72 Orchestral and choral music make larger public statements than chamber music genres, aimed at communicating a composer’s aesthetic values and techniques to a broad public. For this reason chamber music compositions are not included in this dissertation.
Other sources include various articles in contemporary music journals – often by contemporary music critics – and the monographs by Howes, Pirie, Trend, Stradling and Hughes, as well as biographies, dissertations and theses, later scholarly articles in various music journals, liner notes to musical recordings, and general histories of music in England. These sources, representing both the immediate reaction of the musical establishment to the music of the Romantics, as well as the later scholarly view of their place in English music history, will be used to provide further context for the Romantics’ times and to trace the declining fortunes of their reputations even before their deaths.

This thesis will not attempt to construct full biographies for each of the composers addressed. A complete survey of compositional output is also outside the scope of this study. The focus will remain on the musical and biographical frameworks outlined below. Each chapter will reinforce the frameworks for viewing the English Romantics in their shifting cultural context, hearing their music as an extension and survival of the Romantic “Music of the Future,” and considering their true place in music “made in England” during the late nineteenth and early twentieth centuries.

**Context**

The English Romantics created no formal association themselves, nor did any sympathetic critic do so for them, as Vladimir Stasov named the Russian Mighty Five or Jean Cocteau publicized the French Les Six. Finally and most importantly, there was no sense of a shared national mission that bound these five composers together.

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73 The Athlone, Blackwell, and Young histories of music in England described earlier.
This lack of association is in marked contrast to the collaboration and sense of collective identity among the recognized English Musical Renaissance establishment figures. Holst and Vaughan Williams’ conscious characterization of themselves as “heirs and rebels” is the most well known example of this. In the words of Gilbert Murray:

Every man who possesses real vitality can be seen as the resultant of two forces. He is first the child of a particular age, society, convention; of what we may call in one word a tradition. He is secondly, in one degree or another, a rebel against that tradition. And the best traditions make the best rebels.74

Frank Howes states explicitly that these two composers were heirs to the Brahmsian academic traditions of Parry and Stanford but used folk music as their “chief instrument of revolt”75 against their mentors. Stradling and Hughes explore this rebellious cooperation extensively in *The English Musical Renaissance 1840-1940: Constructing a National Music*. The authors’ choice of the verb “constructing” in the subtitle illustrates their contention that collaboration among composers, academics, and critics who shared a nationalistic “team spirit” brought the English Musical Renaissance into being: “One of the most striking qualities of the [English Musical] Renaissance was its ‘team spirit’, the collective sense which proclaimed itself both to the skeptics at home and to the observers abroad.”76 This “sharing of a certain ‘character and mind’, as Hubert Foss…once put it”77 is also described by Michael Trend. Speaking for the members of the Renaissance, he writes that

74 Gilbert Murray, quoted in Trend, *Music Makers*, 97. Murray (1866-1957) was an Australian-born British classical scholar and public intellectual, a leading authority on Ancient Greece in the early twentieth century.
Together they felt that they resembled the ‘nest of singing birds’ that had adorned the first Elizabeth’s Court...together they made the first substantial and sustained contribution to English music for centuries, and English music helped, in turn, make them. They were the central part of a thriving musical culture.\textsuperscript{78}

Stradling and Hughes further elaborate on this self-asserted nationalist identity when they write: “Perhaps the greatest of all the weapons forged by the Renaissance…was the power to inscribe itself and to refashion English music history in its own image.”\textsuperscript{79} The members of the Renaissance thereby gained the power to recognize in print and public discourse those musicians who appeared similarly attuned to the goals of the movement, essentially welcoming them into the newly “official” establishment.\textsuperscript{80}

The English Romantics’ lack of interest in this nationalistic “team spirit” led to a natural lack of official recognition. As none of the five Romantics participated in the folk-song or Tudor revivals, so none were celebrated as contributing to the rebirth of English music. Quite the opposite became true: Howes, Pirie, and Trend present the Romantics and other composers outside the movement as adhering to a passing style that had proven to be a dead-end for English music. Howes acknowledges a “short late romantic era of English music that flourished in the reign of Edward VII” but condemns the aforementioned “diet” of Wagner and Strauss as “no way to promote a healthier

\textsuperscript{78} Ibid., 3-4.
\textsuperscript{79} Stradling and Hughes, \textit{English Musical Renaissance}, 51.
\textsuperscript{80} The institution of the BBC in 1922 solidified this ability to officially “recognize” musicians, though the granting of such favor was not always logical or organized. It is beyond the scope of this study to investigate the matter in detail; see further in Stradling and Hughes, \textit{The English Musical Renaissance}, pp. 101-111 and Emily Hoyler, “Masculinity, Musicality, and ‘Englishness’ at the BBC in the Interwar Years” (paper presented at the biannual meeting for the North American British Music Studies Association, Las Vegas, Nevada, July 31-August 2, 2014).
growth of English music.” Trend asserts that Bantock and Brian “were among the many composers who found that their voices were no longer listened to with much interest in the post-war period.” Howes dismissively describes the music of Holbrooke and Bax as “not important for any historical influence on the developing style of modern English music but which is rather a survival of the great romantic movement of the nineteenth century.” He further notes that, “they were not concerned any more than those German-trained Britons to secure emancipation.” Pirie, ever comparing English and Continental trends, notes that, “with Richard Strauss now regarded as a classic, the place of enfant terrible was taken by Igor Stravinsky – for the new music was essentially French and Russian and Stravinsky was adopting French customs. […] The men of the hour in England were a group of young composers who…adopted the Franco-Russian style then fashionable: Arthur Bliss, Eugene Goossens, and William Walton.”

This pattern of considering English musicians outside the Renaissance “historical-pastoral” mainstream as eccentric individuals clinging to a fading style has continued in large part to the present day. There are nevertheless clear connections in matters of musical education, technique, musical style, emotional expression, and Romantic

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82 Trend, Music Makers, 78.
83 Howes, English Musical Renaissance, 203.
84 Pirie, English Musical Renaissance, 105.
85 Stradling and Hughes, English Musical Renaissance, 75. They draw the phrase from Shakespeare’s Hamlet, Act 2, Scene 2. When Polonius announces the arrival of the travelling players to Hamlet, he describes the actors as the best for plays of all types, including history, pastoral, pastoral-comical, and historical-pastoral. When Stradling and Hughes place this term in a musical context “historical” refers to techniques developed from Tudor-era modal polyphony and “pastoral” refers to quotation and imitation of English folk songs.
86 See literature review, Chapter 1.
inspiration that link Bantock, Holbrooke, Boughton, Bax, and Brian into a sustained lineage of Romanticism lasting as long as the English Musical Renaissance itself.

**Connections**

1. Education

The first link in the lineage of English Romanticism is education. This is intimately bound up in the history of national schools of music in England. Acquiring a first-class musical education in nineteenth-century Britain generally meant travelling to the Continent. For those able to do so, Germany was the most common destination. Leipzig drew many students; the reputation of its Conservatory was enhanced in British minds by the Victorian fame and love for its founder, Felix Mendelssohn. Notable English alumni include Sir Arthur Sullivan (1842-1900) and Dame Ethel Smyth (1858-1944). Frederick Delius (1862-1934) spent a short time at the Conservatory, while Sir Charles Villiers Stanford (1852-1924) studied in both Leipzig and Berlin. Frankfurt’s Hochschule für Musik was considered another destination of merit; the close ties among one particular group of English students there led to their being termed “the Frankfurt Group.”

For those who remained in Britain, the sole national conservatory was the Royal Academy of Music, founded in 1822. Yet the recognized inferiority of the Royal Academy to German conservatories had become so severe by 1866 that its new principal, William Sterndale Bennett, had to take immediate action to ensure its existence. He

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87 The best known of these was not British but Australian: Percy Aldridge Grainger (1882-1961). The others were Normal O’Neil (1875-1934), Cyril Scott (1879-1970), Roger Quilter (1877-1953), and Henry Balfour Gardiner (1877-1950).
succeeded in winning back government grants, restored the financial credit of the house, and shouldered, in the words of Charles Villiers Stanford, the “harassing anxiety of complex negotiations with various public bodies of great influence” for seven years.\textsuperscript{88} In the eyes of those who wished to reform English music, however, neither Bennett nor Macfarren who succeeded him in 1876 were able to make Royal Academy more than a copy of Mendelssohn-dominated Leipzig.\textsuperscript{89}

This disappointment helped directly inspire a call for a new institution, one with a “wider outlook, a more comprehensive curriculum and higher standards, to open careers to talents and to meet the needs of a public that was soon to have universal education compulsorily provided for it.”\textsuperscript{90} This new project was championed by the Prince of Wales and ultimately became the Royal College of Music, founded first as the National Training School under Arthur Sullivan in 1876 and then reorganized as the Royal College of Music in 1883.\textsuperscript{91}

Ironically, it was the older school that had the more progressive professor of composition. Sir Frederick Corder (1852-1932) was “a Wagnerian at the time when it was a matter of partisanship” who “was steeped in the Romantic tradition.”\textsuperscript{92} This partisanship extended to his scholarship, his compositions, and his curriculum. Corder and his wife Henrietta were the first to publish English translations of the libretti for

\textsuperscript{89} Howes, English Musical Renaissance, 30.
\textsuperscript{90} Ibid., 29.
\textsuperscript{91} Ibid., 30.
\textsuperscript{92} Ibid., 200, 214.
Wagner’s late operas, including those of the Ring cycle,\textsuperscript{93} a service that “did much to spread an appreciation in England of the composer Corder admired above all others.”\textsuperscript{94} Among his own compositions, Corder’s 1888 concert overture Prospero is a particularly clear example of his orchestral debt to Wagner. Commentator Hugh Priory notes its “Wotanesque tread of trombones” and “ethereal pendant on flute, harp and solo violins.”\textsuperscript{95} This desire to use orchestral sonority to color an unfolding musical narrative proclaimed Corder’s allegiance to “the New German school” of Wagner, Liszt, and Strauss.\textsuperscript{96} As for his teaching, Corder trained Granville Bantock, Joseph Holbrooke, and Arnold Bax, stimulating their interest in the music of his idol Wagner, as well as Liszt and Strauss. This “ardent follower of the Liszt/Wagner school”\textsuperscript{97} encouraged in these pupils the creation of a “late Romantic, German-derived technique”\textsuperscript{98} by their adopting stylistic features from these models, including “endless melody,” expansive forms, rich textures and “full orchestral sonority.”\textsuperscript{99}

In contrast, at the newly founded Royal College of Music, Sir Charles Villiers Stanford’s opposition to all “progressive” music quickly achieved an almost legendary status.\textsuperscript{100} Pirie pithily characterized Stanford as a musician who “would tolerate nothing

\textsuperscript{93} Hugh Priory, liner notes to “Victorian Concert Overtures,” English Northern Philharmonia conducted by David Lloyd Jones, Hyperion CDA66515, 1991, 5.  
\textsuperscript{95} Priory, liner notes to “Victorian Concert Overtures,” 5.  
\textsuperscript{96} Ibid., 5.  
\textsuperscript{97} Ibid., 5.  
\textsuperscript{98} Warrack and Williamson, “Corder, Frederick.”  
\textsuperscript{99} Howes, English Musical Renaissance, 214. Pirie is careful to note, each time he discusses this, that “it cannot be too strongly stressed that it was the influence of the early operas and parts of The Ring, and not of Tristan.” Pirie, English Musical Renaissance, 36-7.  
\textsuperscript{100} Pirie, English Musical Renaissance, 37.
more modern than Brahms” and claimed that, “it is doubtful if he ever really understood Strauss and Debussy.”101 To Stanford, “craftsmanship and polished neatness were everything.”102 He insisted on a “black and white test,” proclaiming that if a composition did not “sound well” at the piano its musical ideas were inherently weak; such paucity of invention could only escape notice when it was camouflaged by dense orchestration.103 He maintained that, “he who cannot write anything beautiful falls back on the bizarre”104; a favorite judgment of his students’ efforts was “That’s damned ugly, me bhoy! [sic]”105 The effect of these judgments, as described by Arnold Bax, was that “the gospel according to Brahms was inculcated at the R.C.M.”106 This dichotomy between the Royal Academy and the Royal College, notes Pirie, “was to be of great importance in the development of music in England in the first half of the century, and influenced, and divided, a whole generation of English composers; the two Royal Schools reflected the division almost too neatly.”107

Of the Romantic group only Rutland Boughton studied at the Royal College of Music, though he left after three years when his funds were exhausted. During his time there Boughton caused Stanford considerable vexation and the older man did not succeed

101 Pirie, *English Musical Renaissance*, 37-8. Stephen Banfield laments: “the Wagner and Strauss blasphemies in his *Ode to Discord* are convincing enough to make one wish he could take their idioms as serious models…” Banfield, *Sensibility and English Song*, 32.


103 Bax, in his memoir *Farewell, My Youth*, criticizes the “moral tone” of both Stanford and Parry as being “so pure… that they regarded sensuous beauty of orchestral sound as something not quite nice (here I am paraphrasing an actual dictum of Parry’s).” Bax, 22.

104 Quoted in Banfield, *Sensibility and English Song*, 40.

105 Quoted in ibid., 39, and described as an “invariable comment” mentioned in “nearly all reminiscences of Stanford by his pupils.”

106 Bax, *Farewell, My Youth*, 115.

in changing Boughton’s Romantic tendencies. Because Boughton was already a largely self-taught composer, with several published songs and piano pieces, he was, in the words of Boughton scholar Michael Hurd,

a difficult pupil because he already knew too much and yet knew it only through the light of his own limited experience. He had plunged into serious composition before he could swim, and found it difficult to understand that simply because he hadn’t drowned there could be anything left to learn.108

Stanford judged Boughton’s student work to be, at best, “curiously like Berlioz – a dubious compliment in those days,”109 and, at worst, “the ugliest thing he had heard, apart from the music of Richard Strauss.”110 Ralph Vaughan Williams, a fellow pupil of Stanford, sympathetically confided to Boughton afterwards that, “some of Strauss’s uglinesses are better than Stanford’s beauties.”111

Havergal Brian attended neither institution but was almost entirely self-taught. Because his working-class background provided neither the means nor the opportunity for university training, his only formal studies came from harmony lessons at age sixteen with a provincial musical examination coach. Yet by twenty Brian had learned to play the organ, violin, piano, and cello, performed in amateur orchestras, and briefly became a church organist. In addition, Brian studied scores, particularly those of Schumann, Grieg, Liszt, and Wagner.112 Wagner and Berlioz became his musical idols, followed by Richard Strauss. Brian also received encouragement from Edward Elgar, who reminded the younger composer that he too was self-taught. Brian took these words to heart during

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108 Hurd, Rutland Boughton, 16.
109 Ibid., 16.
110 Ibid., 17.
111 Ibid., 17.
112 Eastaugh, Havergal Brian, 21.
a musical career that eventually spanned seventy-six years, five operas, and thirty-two symphonies.

2. Longevity

Brian was not the only English Romantic to have a career prolific in both years and compositions. Each member lived a full life. The Romantics were born before the start of the twentieth century, from 1868 to 1883.\textsuperscript{113} The oldest, Granville Bantock, died in 1946 at the age of seventy-eight. Much as the Romantics were born over three successive decades, their deaths spanned four, from 1946 through the 1972.\textsuperscript{114} Their individual periods of greatest critical acclaim likewise came in three waves, though these do not correspond to their birth order. Bantock (b. 1868) and Holbrooke (b. 1878) were musical celebrities during the Edwardian decade. Bax (b. 1883) and Boughton (b. 1878) had their greatest successes in the 1920s and 1930s. Havergal Brian (b. 1876) completed a steady stream of operas, symphonies, and other orchestral works beginning in 1902 and yet missed or failed to capitalize on success until a young BBC music producer named Robert Simpson began to champion his works in the 1950s.\textsuperscript{115}

3. Compositional Techniques

These three “waves” of English Romanticism correspond roughly to the three accepted generations or “waves” of the English Musical Renaissance: Elgar and Delius (pre-World War I), Holst and Vaughan Williams (interwar decades), and Benjamin

\begin{itemize}
  \item \textsuperscript{113} Bantock, b. 1868; Brian, b. 1876; Holbrooke, b. 1878; Boughton, b.1878; Bax, b. 1883.
  \item \textsuperscript{114} Bantock, d. 1946; Bax, d. 1953; Holbrooke, d. 1958; Boughton, d. 1960; Brian, d. 1972.
  \item \textsuperscript{115} This reversal of fortune sparked Brian to an accelerating pace of composition. Twenty of his thirty-two symphonies were written during the last decade of his life.
\end{itemize}
Britten (post-World War II).\textsuperscript{116} Just as the techniques and musical style of these composers are considered to be uniquely “English” while retaining their own individuality, so too can the techniques and style of Bantock \textit{et al.} be considered Romantic while retaining their own individual personalities.\textsuperscript{117}

Frederick Corder taught many specific techniques of German Romanticism in his \textit{Modern Musical Composition: A Manual for Students} of 1909.\textsuperscript{118} Each of these was developed to greater or lesser extent by the English Romantics regardless of whether they studied with Corder or not. Boughton and Brian derived the same methods from their knowledge of the same relevant scores as Corder. The manual’s first sentence contains the seeds of Wagnerian “endless melody”: “Musical Composition is the art of building musical phrases – portions of melody – into periods of greater extent than is natural.”\textsuperscript{119} From this Corder builds throughout the book: the cure for “poverty of resource in Melody” is to “practise [sic] making continuations of melodic fragments.”\textsuperscript{120} To do this, one should

\begin{quote}
[\textit{R}efer to the score of Wagner’s \textit{Meistersinger}. Turn to p. 31 (4\textsuperscript{th} edition), where Walter and Eva are exchanging farewells. Then compare this four-bar phrase
\end{quote}

\textsuperscript{116} This sequence is described by Howes, Pirie, and Trend, and repeated in many general histories of English music. See literature review in Chapter 1.
\textsuperscript{117} The “English” qualities of Elgar and Delius have been called into question many times. Even the New Grove entry for Elgar concludes that, “his Englishness can more easily be felt than defined.” Stradling and Hughes argue that Philip Heseltine, Sir Thomas Beecham, and Sir Balfour Gardiner “disguised Delius with appropriate features in order to forge an entry (as it were) past the doorkeepers [of the English Musical Renaissance]. Delius’s personal and musical images were manipulated to fit the requirements laid down by the ‘English Pastoral.’” Stradling and Hughes, \textit{English Musical Renaissance}, 170.
\textsuperscript{119} Ibid., 4.
\textsuperscript{120} Ibid., 6.
with the expansion of it into a 23-bar melody at p. 320 and this again with the glorified version at p. 445 where it is extended to no less than 32 bars.121

Corder devotes an entire chapter to “Extension of Melody” in order to eradicate what he terms “eight-bar-ishness” from music.122 Besides Wagnerian melodic transformations and sequences – recommended on pages 33-34 – he prescribes the near-total avoidance of perfect cadences through inversion, interruption, or elision. Corder’s example for all three techniques is the Prelude to *Tristan und Isolde*, “in which no real full close occurs (there is not one in the entire drama)” and which “shews [sic] these devices all in constant operation.”123

His further recommendation for extending musical phrases and thus compositions as a whole is avoidance of repetition, particularly in rhythm or harmony. Both are “easy to use to excess”; Corder bluntly quotes examples of “Strong subjects” and “Weak subjects” judged by the amount of repetition in each.124 He stresses the ability to lengthen chord progressions by incorporating intermediary harmonies – “a composer must know how to invent long progressions of chords tending to a given point” – and to avoid the “insufficient variety of rhythmic interest”125 found in both mechanical repetition and the eight-bar phrase. The “art of composition,” he concludes, “is the art of

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122 Ibid., 32. On page 16 he vents his frustration with the phenomenon even in established composers: “As I have said, the song of plain 8-bar periods, however beautiful it may be in the hands of Schumann or Grieg, is scarcely Composition.”
123 Ibid., 86.
124 Ibid., 40. Strong subjects: Liszt, *Faust Symphony*; Wagner, Prelude to Act III of *Lohengrin*; Strauss, *Ein Heldenleben*; Parry, Overture to *Guillaume de Cabestanh*; Mackenzie, *Britannia* Overture; Brahms, Piano Concerto No. 1. Weak subjects: Schumann, Overture to *Genoveva*; Verdi, Overture to *Nabucco*; Spontini, Overture to *Vestale*; Liszt, *Faust Symphony*, second subject; Scriabin, Piano Sonata No. 1; Chopin, Sonata in B minor.
125 Ibid., 6, 38.
making music *as continuous as you require.*”\(^{126}\) Corder’s ultimate aim was to make his pupils’ compositions “more plastic and continuous”\(^{127}\) because “Beauty is our one aim: purely scientific compositions – the Fugue, the Canon, the Motet and the Madrigal – no longer appeal to the modern mind, and the goal is the orchestral tone poem.”\(^{128}\)

As noted above, though not all of the Romantics studied with Corder, his derivation of techniques from the New German School of Wagner, Liszt, and Strauss paralleled the “progressive” tendencies of Rutland Boughton and Havergal Brian.\(^{129}\) To the list of techniques already begun – extension of musical phrases, sentences, and periods by melodic transformation, sequences, rhythmic variety, and avoidance of strong cadences – may be added an increasing amount of chromatic harmony, a restless development of materials that ranges far afield, a reliance on homophonic instead of polyphonic textures, and the use of *leitmotifs* in both stage and concert works.

It is important to remember that each English Romantic not only developed these techniques over the course of his life, but also remained open to other influences. Though they never embraced French or Russian musical styles as wholeheartedly as German, the image of the English Romantics imitating a monolithic Wagnerian musical “gigantism” that merely “copied the more conservative parts of *The Ring*”\(^{130}\) is inaccurate. It is closer

\(^{127}\) Ibid., 33.
\(^{128}\) Ibid., 5.
\(^{129}\) As well as Edward Elgar and Frederick Delius. Corder observes on page 3 that “The student finds the idiom of the past irksome and repellent; it is the vernacular he desires to learn: he does not wish to take as his models the unapproachable gods of antiquity, but his immediate contemporaries.”
\(^{130}\) Pirie, *English Musical Renaissance*, 22.
to the mark to say that the Romantic techniques outlined above were incorporated into a broadly consistent musical style.

4. Musical Style, Genre, and Orchestration

The English Romantics are as remarkable for their prolific output as for their longevity. Each composer wrote dozens of works with a prominent focus on the large-scale genres of symphony, tone poem, and opera. Granville Bantock wrote four symphonies, Joseph Holbrooke nine, Arnold Bax seven, Rutland Boughton three, and Havergal Brian an astonishing thirty-two. Orchestral tone poems were the most popular genre, with Bax writing the most – eighteen – Bantock six, Holbrooke eight, Brian eight, and Boughton four. Despite the relative failure of native operas to hold the stage in England in the early twentieth century, only Arnold Bax failed to complete at least one opera. Holbrooke and Boughton each composed an entire cycle of operas on Welsh and Arthurian myths, respectively, while Brian completed five operas and Bantock three. In addition, though not the focus of this study, the English Romantics composed oratorios, large choral works, ballets, suites of incidental music, and shorter orchestral works.

Their large-scale works are scored for large Romantic orchestras with frequent inclusion of auxiliary instruments. These include piccolo, alto flute, bass clarinet, English horn, and harp; extra percussion such as snare drum, tenor drum, tambourine, triangle, xylophone, and gong; and an augmented brass section of six to eight horns, three

131 Bax did sketch a drama on J.M. Synge’s tragic play “Deirdre of the Sorrows.”
to four trumpets, tenor and bass trombones, and tuba. These additional members are used to create colorful orchestrations, particularly in the scores of Bax and Brian. Each English Romantic also makes use of specific timbres to delineate *leitmotifs* – what Richard Taruskin names “leitmotivic” timbres – in appropriate works. Bax, for example, scores the “song of immortal love” sung by Fand, the daughter of the sea-god, in his tone poem *The Garden of Fand*, for flute and muted trumpet in unison and the song of the human bard from the tone poem *In the Faery Hills*, the “saddest thing [the faeries] have ever heard,” is mournfully conveyed by a solo English horn.

Musical depictions of emotional love or sorrow lead to what most unifies the musical style of these five composers: representations of extra-musical concepts in sound. Program music makes up the bulk of the English Romantic output. Beside tone poems and operas, their symphonies often explore extra-musical ideas or states of being. Each of Bantock’s four symphonies is programmatic, as are two of Boughton’s. Bax’s symphonies are titled abstractly but, like much of his other music, “reflect autobiographical concerns not admitted by the composer at the time.” In a similar fashion, many of Havergal Brian’s abstract symphonies were motivated by programmatic

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132 Havergal Brian in particular favored a large percussion section, frequently calling for three snare drums to be played in unison. Bax calls for heckelphone and contrabass sarrusophone in his First Symphony and organ in his Second; Holbrooke made something of a fetish of scoring for an extraordinary number of players, including saxophones, basset horns, and sarrusophones.


134 Program note by the composer printed in the score.


136 Lewis Foreman, liner notes to *Boult Conducts Bax*, London Philharmonic Orchestra conducted by Sir Adrian Boult, Lyrita Records CD SRCD231, 1992, 1. Examples include the slow movement of Bax’s First Symphony, rewritten after the Easter Rising of 1916 to reflect his sorrow at the deaths of friends in that failed rebellion.
considerations, the inspiration being suppressed before the work became public. In contrast, Holbrooke aggressively publicized the programmatic content of his symphonies, including an early multimedia effort projecting a film on a screen, behind which the orchestra would perform his Second Symphony, “Apollo and the Seaman,” based on a poem by Herbert Trench.

5. Inspirations from the Exotic and Sublime Nature

Beyond mere quantity of program music, a more specific characteristic of the English Romantics is the correspondence of their programmatic inspiration. This was frequently sparked by “exotic” literature, landscapes, and cultures. Jonathan Bellman states that, “On one level, the idea of ‘musical exoticism’ is almost self-explanatory: it may be defined as the borrowing or use of musical materials that evoke distant locales or alien frames of reference.” In a similar fashion, a brief survey of representative titles reveals the fascination each of the English Romantics had for the exotic: Omar Khayyám (Bantock), L’Orient, Piano Concerto No. 2 (Holbrooke), The Tale the Pine-Trees Knew (Bax), Symphony No. 2 “Deirdre of the Sorrows” (Boughton), The Vision of Cleopatra

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137 Several of Brian’s symphonies are, however, quite clearly inspired by extra-musical considerations, including his First “Gothic” Symphony, and his Sixth, Sinfonia tragica, based, as works by other English Romantics, on the Irish legend of Deirdre of the Sorrows. Examples of the latter, suppressed inspirations include his Seventh and Eighth Symphonies, based on Goethe’s autobiography and his poem “Die Braut von Korinth,” respectively.

138 The struggle to coordinate such an ambitious undertaking, including the search for a contrabass sarrusophone player on short notice, is humorously described in the memoir of Sir Thomas Beecham, conductor of the first performance. See Sir Thomas Beecham, A Mingled Chime, New York: G.P. Putnam’s Sons, 1943, pp. 114-116 and 121-125.

(Brian), *Hebridean Symphony* (Bantock), *In the Faery Hills* (Bax), and *The Raven* and *Ulalume* (Holbrooke).

These and other titles evidence a wide range of “exotic” inspirations and evoke not just “distant locales,” but more crucially, “alien frames of reference.” Ireland and Scotland, for example, are not far geographically from England but Bax’s tone poem *In the Faery Hills* and the symphonies of Boughton and Bantock represent what Ralph Locke names “internal ‘Others’” who “have been exoticized (by the society’s dominant population) no less than cultures that lie across an ocean.”¹⁴⁰ Though it is common for what is perceived as “exotic” to be distant, it is more essential that it be “felt to be very different.”¹⁴¹ Locke further argues that what is distant in time may also be considered exotic, particularly when paired with a geographic location: “distance in time often comes combined with a distance in place and culture, giving the listener… a sense of being doubly transported out of the familiar.”¹⁴² Thus Boughton reinforces his “internal exotic” Ireland by focusing on an ancient Irish myth while Bax draws attention to beings ancient in their immortality, the fairies of Ireland. This sense of “way back then”

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¹⁴¹ Ibid., 67.

¹⁴² Ibid., 65. Locke is careful to warn against a “tendency to subsume all operas [or other musical works] set in, say, ancient and medieval Rome and all the characters in them… into the category of the exotic.” Those places which are considered Western in some prototypical way are not made exotic by their distance in time: “[To] the extent that Julius Caesar was not perceived as differing profoundly from current-day Westerners (hence not felt as essentially Other), his Roman world, and most musical evocations of that world were not, in any significant sense, exotic.”
becoming “almost another country”\textsuperscript{143} pertains especially to Havergal Brian’s “Gothic” Symphony. Ralph Locke explicitly names the Middle Ages as an era often accorded “exotic” status because, “though a period closer to us than Roman antiquity, often embodies a search for an exotic alternative, for a world different in feeling or values.”\textsuperscript{144}

A final nuance of exoticism expressed by the English Romantics is the pull towards purely literary locations. Joseph Holbrooke drew repeatedly on poems and stories by Edgar Allan Poe to create musical works in a variety of genres. Poe’s works create their effects by subverting actual or possible locales through fantastical and sinister hints and undertones, leading to places not entirely of this world. This blending of reality and unreality heightens the impression of exoticism in fiction as clearly as it does in other “exotic” sources taken to be objective or documentary.\textsuperscript{145} Locke notes that,

An exotic locale must be ‘not entirely imaginary.’ […] As Gilles de Van has explained, a ‘mixture of realism and hallucination [onirisme]’ is always strikingly present in exotic representations. The exotic arises in the interactive middle field between what he calls ‘knowledge’ of another place (the kind of knowledge that is served by anthropology and related studies) and, at the other extreme, myth or, as he puts it, ‘fairy tale.’\textsuperscript{146}

The draw of the exotic, whether in space or time, set the English Romantics apart from members of the “historical-pastoral” school, who found inspiration in the fields and

\textsuperscript{143} Locke, \textit{Musical Exoticism}, 65.
\textsuperscript{144} Ibid., 65.
\textsuperscript{145} Scholar Jack Sullivan argues that “Poe was perhaps the first major literary artist to reject the notion that art, particularly fiction, had an obligation to teach moral truth…Poe was a genuine radical who believed that art should not inculcate any received truth, whether conservative or progressive. ‘Excitement of the soul’ achieved through hard work and refined technique defined what art is about.” Jack Sullivan, \textit{New World Symphonies} (New Haven: Yale University Press, 1999), 72-73.
\textsuperscript{146} Locke, \textit{Musical Exoticism}, 68-69. Edgar Allan Poe provided a hallucinatory exotic inspiration to a number of European composers, including Debussy, Ravel and Rachmaninov; the idea is explored at length in Sullivan’s \textit{New World Symphonies}. 
villages of England’s “green and pleasant land,” from Neo-Classicists such as Alan Rawsthorne (1905-1971), who followed Stravinsky in elevating abstract musical patterns and ideas, and from serialists such as Elizabeth Lutyens (1906-1983). While Holst and Vaughan Williams did incorporate “historical” elements of Tudor modal polyphony into their compositional styles – the “historical” in the “historical-pastoral” descriptor referenced above – but not as an “alien frame of reference.” On the contrary, the music of Morley and Byrd was seen as a “dizzying eminence”\(^{147}\) for native English music to which they explicitly linked themselves. As quoted above, the Renaissance composers believed they embodied “the ‘nest of singing birds’ that had adorned the first Elizabeth’s Court” in part because “their rediscovery of English music of earlier times” – Tudor music coupled with folk song – helped make them part of this “new renaissance.”\(^{148}\)

It is also true that the “pastoral” descriptor demonstrates a link between the Romantics and the Renaissance in the musical depictions of landscape. The focus of these depictions was different among the Romantics, however, as their interest was drawn to what was mysterious, impersonal, terrifying, erotic, or supernatural in any particular scene. Thus the Romantics took inspiration from “sublime” nature instead of the more welcoming and humanized “pastoral.” This inspiration led to the musical depiction of the Middle Eastern desert in *Omar Khayyám* (Bantock), the sea and “castle-crowned cliff”\(^{149}\) in *Tintagel* (Bax), the spirit-haunted forest in *The Immortal Hour* (Boughton), and the ghoul-haunted landscape of *Ulalume* (Holbrooke).\(^{150}\) Among these Romantic terrains,

\(^{149}\) Program note by Arnold Bax, published in the score.
\(^{150}\) “It was down by the dark tarn of Auber, in the ghoul-haunted woodland of Weir.” From Poe’s poem “Ulalume,” included as a preface to the score.
natural and human events take on a greater, often mythic significance. It is in this context that storms and floods, coronations, funeral marches and war marches, supernatural events like the dancing of faeries and satyrs, the singing of elves, and even the appearance of Bluebeard and a dragon are characterized, using the Romantic musical techniques described above.\footnote{Havergal Brian’s 1912 Comedy Overture \textit{Dr. Merryheart} incorporates adventures in which “Merryheart fights a dragon” and “Merryheart as a chivalrous knight chases Bluebeard.”}

The connection between exotic or natural locales and their musical inspiration was made clear by Arnold Bax in a letter to the young composer Philip Heseltine, later to take the penname Peter Warlock: “Nearly all my longer compositions, the orchestral ones at any rate, are based upon aspects of extreme nature and their relation to human emotion.”\footnote{Quoted in Foreman, liner notes to \textit{Boult Conducts Bax}, 2.}

6. Emotional Expression

Extreme nature often inspired a correspondingly extreme emotional response in the English Romantics, which they expressed in their compositions. This expression cost them in both the early and late twentieth century, though for different reasons. Before the First World War, Bantock and Holbrooke were considered boldly “progressive” composers among a musical establishment still absorbing the music of Wagner. Elgar named Bantock and Holbrooke in his Peyton Lectures of 1905-1906 as two composers who could help provide a “Future for English Music.”\footnote{This was the title of Elgar’s inaugural lecture.} Stradling and Hughes argue that, "Elgar saw the progressive Wagner-Strauss school as the signpost to the future, and
passionately believed that he could give a lead towards a native version."\textsuperscript{154} Similarly, the early music of Arnold Bax was held by Sir Hubert Parry to be “a bevvy of little devils”\textsuperscript{155} and when his tone poem \textit{Tintagel} was first performed in 1921, some critics found it “difficult modern music!”\textsuperscript{156}

After the Second World War, attitudes had reversed. Romantic emotional expression became seen as anachronistic. Even Edward Elgar, whose music was once considered “stirringly heroic” and “ardently expressive” was judged harshly: his brass was now “vulgar” and his characteristic leaps of a seventh and lengthy melodic sequences were “glutinous.”\textsuperscript{157} It took BBC music producer Robert Simpson years to persuade that institution to broadcast the music of Havergal Brian, which they eventually began doing in the 1960s. Even when the BBC helped mount the first professional performance of Brian’s enormous “Gothic” Symphony in 1966, it was largely viewed as the chance to hear a musical dinosaur, a lost work from another age. Scholars such as Stephen Banfield, in his \textit{Sensibility and English Song}, were surprised that Boughton’s opera \textit{The Immortal Hour} had ever been successful in 1920s London, so severely did its unworldly naivety appear to contrast with the image of the fast-paced life of “bright young things” between the wars. Even Ralph Vaughan Williams, the longtime pillar of the musical establishment was thoroughly criticized by Pirie after the premiere of his Fifth Symphony in 1943: “The Fifth is a soft-centered work that borders dangerously on

\textsuperscript{154} Hughes and Stradling, \textit{English Musical Renaissance}, 74.
\textsuperscript{155} Quoted in Arnold Bax, “Farewell, My Youth,” in \textit{Farewell, My Youth}, ed. Lewis Foreman, 21.
\textsuperscript{156} Foreman, liner notes to \textit{Boul\textsuperscript{t} Conducts Bax}, 3.
sentimentality…and the work as a whole is painfully anachronistic for the time in which it was written.”\textsuperscript{158}

**Conclusion**

Pirie’s judgment might stand for the reception of the English Romantics as a group: their music, outside of narrow windows of acceptance, was thought anachronistic. They were deemed too avant-garde before World War I and too outmoded after World War II, when to write tonal music was to be declared “useless” by Pierre Boulez.\textsuperscript{159} Yet their style remained distinct, informed by Romantic techniques learned from the study of Continental masters, inspired by the exotic and the sublime, and expressed passionately in music of programmatic and even autobiographical import. Representative examples of specific compositions will be explored in the following chapters, making explicit and individual what has been generalized here, further establishing the connections among the English Romantics and reexamining their worthiness as contributors to music “made in England.”

\textsuperscript{158} Pirie, *English Musical Renaissance*, 175.
Chapter Three: Sir Granville Bantock (1868 – 1946)

Granville Bantock was the focal point of the English Romantics. His personal connections with Holbrooke, Boughton, and Brian make their study as a group coherent beyond the music itself. He maintained longstanding friendships with each of these composers – only Bax was outside this network, because his personal wealth meant he did not need to find work and could afford to live an isolated life when he chose. For the others, Bantock offered employment and private financial help during some of their most difficult periods. Bantock’s longtime administrative roles at the Midlands Institute and Birmingham University gave him authority in the English Midlands region and he used it, as well as his considerable personal charm, to support younger composers who approached him for help. Nevertheless, Bantock did not see himself as the leader of a faction or school of composition. The only “official” membership he shared with another member of the English Romantics, Havergal Brian, was in an impromptu club called “Step Off The Pavement.” This “revolutionary movement against conventionality” was pithily characterized by Bantock’s daughter Myrrha as an association, “the members of which (all male) met in restaurants, sent one another postcards with witty comments written across them, and drank large quantities of lager beer.”\footnote{Myrrha Bantock, \textit{Granville Bantock: A Personal Portrait} (London: Dent, 1972), 49.} On a darker note, Bantock’s multiple marital infidelities were reflected in the marriages of the other Romantics as well.\footnote{Only Joseph Holbrooke appears to be the exception. These were not done out of conscious emulation of Bantock’s broken relationship but seem to have been an unfortunate consequence of the undisciplined “Romantic” lifestyle of the English Romantics. Driven by their passions, they acted in damaging ways toward their respective spouses.}
Biographical Sketch

Bantock was born in London on August 7th, 1868, the son of a gynecological surgeon. His father intended for Bantock to join the Indian Civil Service or, after having failed the entrance exam, to become an engineer, but Bantock was adamant about pursuing a career in music. Bantock was finally allowed to attend the Royal Academy of Music (RAM) in 1888 after months of familial struggle.

Upon admission to the Royal Academy of Music, Bantock displayed the energy that would characterize his career in music. Bantock’s drive was coupled with two further passions: the “exotic” allure of foreign cultures or the distant past and programmatic music on the largest scale. The results were manifested in the “dramatic cantata” *The Fire Worshippers*, based on Thomas Moore’s “Oriental romance” *Lalla Rookh*, and an orchestral piece after Milton titled *Satan in Hell*. He further envisioned, but did not complete, a cycle of twenty-four tone poems encapsulating British poet Robert Southey's lengthy Orientalist epic *The Curse of Kehama*.\(^{162}\) After he left the Royal Academy in 1895 without completing his degree, Bantock experienced the exotic for himself by joining a one-year round-the-world tour conducting the George Edwardes musical comedy *A Gaiety Girl*.\(^{163}\)

In 1897, Bantock became Musical Director of the New Brighton Tower Pleasure Gardens near Liverpool. New Brighton at that time was a popular resort location with

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\(^{162}\) Only two of these, *Processional* and *Jaga-Naut*, were definitely completed. Both were published together in 1912 as *Two Orchestral Scenes*. Lewis Foreman, liner notes to *Thalaba the Destroyer*, Hyperion CDA67250, 2001, p. 4-5.

several dedicated musical ensembles. Bantock quickly replaced the routine performances of dance music with more challenging modern fare. As his daughter Myrrha described it:

It was not long before the unsuspecting couples dancing during the afternoons in the New Brighton Tower ballroom were waltzing to the strains of Tchaikovsky, Beethoven, Dvorak, Liszt and Brahms, and on one occasion the outdoor band went so far as to play excerpts from Wagner's *Parsifal*, arranged by G.B. for brass instruments... There is a story that he was discovered on one occasion rehearsing the Prelude to *Tristan* in a half-finished building covered by a tarpaulin for a roof, at a time when he should have been preparing for a light concert and had no business to be wasting the orchestra's time on serious music.164

Soon after, Bantock invited British composers to New Brighton to conduct their own music. Among these was Edward Elgar, whose "Enigma" Variations had been premiered only one month before, in June of 1899. Elgar, along with his wife Alice, visited the Bantock family and conducted a concert on 16 July that included the Variations. This experience sparked a lifelong friendship that was soon to bear professional fruit.165

Only one year later Elgar recommended Bantock for first Principal of the new School of Music at the Birmingham and Midland Institute. Bantock was appointed and began teaching classes in Birmingham in the fall of 1900.166 Elgar further promoted his

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165 Bantock also championed the music of Sibelius at a time when his name was unknown in England. Sibelius accepted an invitation from Bantock to conduct his First Symphony at a Liverpool Orchestral Society Concert during this period and stayed with the Bantock family on several subsequent trips to England. Sibelius’ Third Symphony is dedicated to Bantock in gratitude for his friendship and support. For further reading, see especially Byron Adams, “‘Thor’s Hammer’: Sibelius and British music critics, 1905 – 1957” in *Sibelius and His World*, Daniel M. Grimley, ed. (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 2011).
166 Once installed in Birmingham, Bantock taught courses in “modern music” in which, along with Strauss, Debussy, Rimsky-Korsakov, and Sibelius, Elgar was included. Myrrha Bantock, *Granville Bantock*, 54.
friend when he accepted the newly created Richard Peyton Chair of Music at the University of Birmingham in 1904. Its chief responsibility was delivering six public lectures per year. In his first talk, "A Future for English Music," Elgar called for a renewal of English music through its most progressive young composers; in his second lecture he explicitly named Bantock as one of these. In the words of Hughes and Stradling, "Elgar saw the progressive Wagner-Strauss school as the signpost to the future, and passionately believed that he could give a lead towards a native version."

Elgar only held his academic post at Birmingham for four years, relinquishing it in 1908 to Bantock who held both positions until his retirement in 1934. While teaching in Birmingham, Bantock composed further works of a Romantic nature illustrating historical, fantastic, or “exotic” programs, including the tone poems Dante and Beatrice and The Witch of Atlas, and the orchestral song cycles Sappho and Ferishtah’s Fancies. The decade after he added the Peyton professorship to his duties Bantock completed a three-part setting of The Ruba’iyat of Omar Khayyám in Edward Fitzgerald's fifth translation, wrote a Hebridean Symphony based on eponymous folk songs, and composed three "choral symphonies" for unaccompanied voices. After retirement Bantock did not reduce his workload but moved to London to become Chairman of the

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167 Peyton, a wealthy local businessman, had endowed the professorship on the condition Elgar become its first occupant.
168 The other composers named were Joseph Holbrooke (1878-1958) and Henry Walford Davies (1869-1941). Hughes and Stradling, The English Music Renaissance, 70.
169 Ibid., 74.
170 After the eponymous poem by Shelley, published posthumously in 1824.
171 Texts to the song cycles are from Sappho (translated and arranged by Bantock’s wife Helen) and Robert Browning, respectively.
172 The "choral symphonies" are Atalanta in Calydon (Swinburne), Vanity of Vanities (from Ecclesiastes), and A Pageant of Human Life (More).
Corporation for Trinity College, for whom he had already travelled widely around the world as an examiner.\footnote{In a tribute read at his funeral, C. Kennedy Scott, a member of the Trinity College London board, noted that Bantock had served as an examiner “for fifty years exactly.” Quoted in Myrrha Bantock, \textit{Granville Bantock}, 185.} He was knighted in 1930.

Bantock composed additional programmatic music of an “exotic” nature until the end of his long life, including a large-scale setting of \textit{The Song of Songs} for solo voices, choir, and orchestra (1922) making much of the text’s potential for Middle Eastern color, the opera \textit{The Seal Woman} (1924) on a Hebridean legend, and the \textit{Pagan} (1928) and \textit{Celtic} (1940) Symphonies, celebrating ancient Greece and Ireland respectively.

In addition to this wide-ranging music, the Bantock household was full of geographical curiosities, artistic, animal, and human. Bantock’s daughter Myrrha listed the décor of her father’s study as follows:

Eastern hangings framed the bay window, kelims covered the armchairs and high-backed setee, and a large Persian carpet was spread over the floor. There were large Moorish tables inlaid with mother-of-pearl, Japanese screens, and Chinese cabinets with many little doors and alcoves… Chinese pipes, glazed pottery figures from Egyptian tombs, Persian tiles and painted vases, Japanese cloisonné boxes, Indian gods carved in soapstone, little Italian bronzes, brass bows and incense-burners, fossils and ivory figurines rubbed shoulders happily together and spread out over tables and along the ledges of the bookshelves… A lovely plaster term of the old god Pan stood on a pedestal between two of the bookcases… On top of his desk a graceful Japanese Buddha stood on a lotus-flower base, with a decorated panel behind the figure. Beside the fireplace was another Buddha, a very old and simply carved Burmese one, with a face of perfect and absolute calm.\footnote{Myrrha Bantock, \textit{Granville Bantock}, 12-13. This description is confined to her father’s study at Broad Meadow, the Bantock’s fifth home. The remainder of any of the myriad houses occupied by the Bantock family was adorned similarly. For full passage see pages 12-20.}
The Bantock family also hosted his friends among the English Romantics: Joseph Holbrooke lived with them for a time, as did Rutland Boughton. Havergal Brian was a frequent visitor before the First World War and continued to meet with Bantock whenever he could. More unusually, H. Orsmond Anderton, Bantock’s first biographer and private secretary, in his own phrase, “hermitized” in a cottage on the composer’s estate.

Bantock’s career ended shortly after the conclusion of the Second World War. He was hospitalized for a minor operation in 1946 but slipped and fell before it could be carried out, breaking his femur. After his leg became infected pneumonia set in and he died “peacefully” at the age of 78 in hospital.

Bantock had married Helena von Schweitzer in 1898 after courting her upon his return from the *Gaiety Girl* tour. Their marriage lasted forty-eight years, despite some “strains,” specifically two affairs on the part of Bantock. The first, with the English

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175 At Bantock’s invitation they became instructors at the Birmingham Midlands Institute though their tenures did not overlap. Neither stayed in their respective positions long.

176 Michael Trend, *Music Makers*, 82. Anderton became Bantock’s secretary and factotum. These human guests were in addition to the family menagerie: two Great Danes (named Omar and Mesruah), two Aberdeen terriers (named Napoleon and Sappho), and a monkey named Nantze brought back from Bantock’s *Gaiety Girl* tour. See Myrrha Bantock, *Granville Bantock*, pp. 5 & 34.


singer Denne Parker, lasted from 1919 – 1924 and produced an illegitimate son, Micheal John.\textsuperscript{180} The second was with Muriel Angus Mann, an American pianist whom Bantock met while adjudicating for Trinity College in Charleston, South Carolina. This relationship lasting from 1936 – 1940 was conducted mainly via correspondence, although Bantock manipulated his travelling schedule to see her when possible. The couple performed a secret betrothal ceremony and exchanged rings before their passion for each other cooled.\textsuperscript{181}

Both affairs were largely driven by Bantock’s apparent need for “creative, even spiritual renewal through the inspiration of a younger woman” and both directly inspired large musical compositions.\textsuperscript{182} Denne Parker gave Bantock the impetus to complete The Song of Songs in 1922, a work drafted before the First World War while Muriel Mann inspired Bantock’s Third Symphony “The Cyprian Goddess.” This was a “tribute to Aphrodite” sketched days after his second visit to her over Christmas 1937 and completed the following year.\textsuperscript{183}

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\begin{itemize}
  \item \textsuperscript{180} “Micheal” is the Gaelic spelling of “Michael.” Vincent Budd, afterword to My Dear Rogue: Sir Granville Bantock’s Secret Romance that Influenced the Music of One of Britain’s Greatest 20\textsuperscript{th} Century Composers, Katherine De Mar Werner, ed. (Waitsfield, VT: Distinction Press, 2013), 282. The afterword by Vincent Budd gives details of the pregnancy and delivery while Bantock and Parker were on tour in the United States in 1923.
  \item \textsuperscript{181} Budd, afterword, 287. Budd calculates that Bantock and Mann spent “all told, around fifty days” together.
  \item \textsuperscript{182} Ibid., 283. There is also the obvious sexual attraction to be considered. By the time of his relationship with Muriel Mann, his “marital relationship had long since become, if not indifferent, certainly without the physical passion he clearly still craved.” Budd, afterword, 272.
  \item \textsuperscript{183} Budd, afterword, 294. The relevant letters are quoted on pages 59 and 61 of Werner, My Dear Rogue.
\end{itemize}
Musical Examples

These works affirm Bantock as a “romantic soul, a man of formidable passions and immeasurable, almost unfathomable energy.” Like the other English Romantics, his life and music were often inseparable. His compositions are similarly “of a piece,” with a recognizable style across his oeuvre. This is true despite the fact that, in the judgment of his eldest son Raymond, Bantock “suffered from facility and enthusiasms” in his sudden passions for various “exotic” parts of the world including – but not limited to – the Middle East, Scotland, and ancient Greece. Three representative large-scale compositions reflect these varied geographic regions and span three decades of Bantock’s creative life. The first is Part I of Bantock’s magnum opus, Omar Khayyám, written during his first years in Birmingham and premiered there in 1906. The second is the Hebridean Symphony, written in 1913 at the peak of his early career before the First World War, and premiered in 1916 with Bantock himself conducting. The third, the Pagan Symphony, was completed in 1928 after interest in Bantock’s music had faded. Public taste had changed and the work was not premiered until 1936. All three scores demonstrate Bantock’s response to the Romantic inspirations of the exotic, the historical,

184 Ibid., 272.
185 Bantock’s son Raymond, quoted in Cuillin Bantock, Never Lukewarm, 20.
186 The work is set in three parts. Its length precludes a discussion of the complete score in this dissertation. Part II was premiered in 1907 and Part III in 1909.
187 The published score contains the date 23-11-1915 on the last page, yet all secondary sources give the year as 1913.
and the sublimity of the natural world with musical techniques derived from Continental composers such Wagner, Strauss, Liszt, Glinka, and Tchaikovsky.  

**Part I of *Omar Khayyám***

Bantock set the fifth and final translation of the *Ruba’iyat of Omar Khayyám* by English writer Edward Fitzgerald (1809-1883), published posthumously in 1889. The translation comprises 101 quatrains; Bantock grouped these into three self-contained parts scored for mezzo-soprano, tenor, and baritone soloists, mixed choir, and orchestra. Part I includes the first fifty-four quatrains. The solo voices take the parts of three characters, the Poet, the Beloved, and the Philosopher, created by the composer to personify the various philosophical ideas in the *Ruba’iyat*. Lewis Foreman, noted British music scholar, explains:

Bantock viewed Fitzgerald’s verses dramatically, as he did when, later, he came to set the Song of Songs from the Old Testament. He gave Fitzgerald’s words a dramatic context by assigning them to a cast of *dramatis personae*. The Poet and the Beloved sing the quatrains that deal with life and love; in contrast to them, Bantock invented the part of the Philosopher who delivers Omar Khayyám’s

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188 Bantock had met Tchaikovsky during one of the latter’s trips to London. “Enthralled” with his music, Bantock received this advice from the Russian composer: “You must be prepared to work hard.” See Myrrha Bantock, *Granville Bantock*, 30-31.


190 The original Persian poem numbers in the hundreds of quatrains, with scholars disputing the total number and authentic attribution to the original author.

191 All three parts were published in piano-vocal score by Breitkopf & Härtel in 1906, 1907, and 1909, respectively. This dissertation uses these editions.
philosophical speculations; the Chorus sets the scene – what Bantock saw as the stage action – and gives voice to eternal questions and truths.\footnote{Foreman, liner notes to \textit{Omar Khayyám}, 10-11.}

The scoring reflects the contemporary German extravagance of Richard Strauss: besides a large chorus and two antiphonally placed full string orchestras, \textit{Omar Khayyám} calls for piccolo, 3 flutes, 3 oboes, cor anglais, 3 clarinets, bass clarinet, 3 bassoons, contrabassoon, 6 horns, 3 trumpets, 3 trombones, tuba, timpani, bass drum, snare drum, cymbals, triangle, tambourine, gong, glockenspiel, camel bells, harps, and organ \textit{ad lib.}\footnote{Newman, \textit{Omar Khayyám: Book of Words}, 4.}

The following analysis illustrates Bantock’s Oriental “enthusiasms” and Romantic techniques within the Prelude, Interlude, and quatrains 1, 12, 48, and 54.

\textbf{Leitmotifs}

Bantock uses a system of \textit{leitmotifs} throughout \textit{Omar Khayyám} to symbolize the Persian poet’s ideas about life, love, and time, and to portray the striking landscapes in which these musings take place.\footnote{\textit{Leitmotifs} or “leading motifs” are musical themes associated with persons, objects, or ideas in a musical drama, tone poem, or other programmatic work. The mind of the listener should be “lead” to think of the extra-musical association when they hear the appropriate \textit{leitmotif}.} The use of \textit{leitmotifs} and their various transformations are clearly derived from the practices of Wagner, Liszt, and Strauss. The \textit{leitmotifs} in \textit{Omar Khayyám} were labeled by the composer’s friend Ernest Newman, a critic and celebrated writer on Wagner, and published in a \textit{Book of Words with Analytical and Descriptive Notes} alongside the vocal score of Part I.\footnote{Ernest Newman, \textit{Omar Khayyám: Book of Words with Analytical and Descriptive Notes} (London: Breitkopf & Härtel, 1906).}
The first motif is “The Muezzin,” stated in the first bars of the Prelude by a solo horn. The score carries the marking “The Muezzin’s Call to Prayer” and the opening text of the call is written under the notes: “(Al – la – hu Ak – bar!)” (see Figure 3.1). This is the same technique used by Franz Liszt in his “Dante” Symphony (1855-57) to place the inscription above the Gates of Hell into the score, matching the musical rhythm to the natural speech rhythm of the text.

Figure 3.1: Bantock, *Omar Khayyám*, page 2, bar 1. “The Muezzin” leitmotif.

Other leitmotifs relevant for their display of exoticism include those symbolizing the

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196 In Islam, the muezzin is the man appointed at each mosque to give the call to prayer. This call is chanted five times a day from the minaret of the mosque, with the muezzin facing Mecca. The call summons the faithful to prayer and also contains the basic declarations of Islam: “God is great” and “There is no God but Allah and Mohamed is his prophet.” The Shia sect inserts an extra line claiming the Prophet’s son-in-law as Mohamed’s successor.

197 Musical examples in this dissertation are referred to as Figures and given a two-part numbering system separated by a period. The first number refers to the chapter in which the example is placed. The second number refers to the numeration of musical examples within that chapter. Figure 3.1, therefore, is the first musical example in Chapter 3.

198 Liszt sets only the first of three inscriptions, “Per me si va ne la città dolente, per me si va ne l’eterno dolore, per me si va tra la perduta gente,” (“I am the way into the city of woe. I am the way into eternal sorrow.”). He then includes the famous final line of the third inscription “Lasciate ogne speranza, voi ch’entrate” (“Abandon all hope, ye who enter here.”). Later, when Liszt represents the character of Francesca recounting her story of damnation, he includes her words from Canto V underneath the solo cor anglais: “Nessun maggior dolore che ricordarsi del tempo felice nella miseria” (“The double grief of a lost bliss is to recall its happy hour in pain”). Translations from John Ciardi, *The Inferno: A Verse Rendering for the Modern Reader* (New York: The New American Library, Inc., 1954), 42.
“Theme of the World,” “The Desert,” the “Caravan Herald,” “The Caravan,” and a “Turkomani Melody.” These are shown in Figures 3.2 – 3.6

**Figure 3.2:** Bantock, *Omar Khayyám*, page 5, four bars before rehearsal number 6. The “Theme of the World” *leitmotif*.

![Figure 3.2](image)

**Figure 3.3:** Bantock, *Omar Khayyám*, page 196, two bars before rehearsal number 168. “The Desert” *leitmotif*.

![Figure 3.3](image)

**Figure 3.4:** Bantock, *Omar Khayyám*, page 197, six bars before rehearsal number 170. The “Caravan Herald” *leitmotif*.

![Figure 3.4](image)
Figure 3.5: Bantock, *Omar Khayyám*, page 197, two bars before rehearsal number 171. “The Caravan” leitmotif.
Figure 3.6: Bantock, *Omar Khayyám*, page 198 at rehearsal number 172. “Turkoman Melody” *leitmotif* in chorus.
Exoticism

The titles of these leitmotifs foreshadow Bantock’s passion for Middle Eastern color in this piece. The composer uses many of the musical markers of exoticism enumerated by Ralph Locke in his *Musical Exoticism* (see footnotes for this section for specific references). The “Theme of the World,” for example, employs the interval of the augmented second in a repetitive “call” harmonized by an open fifth on A-E. \(^{199}\) The call of the “Caravan Herald” also uses the bare texture of unharmonized perfect fifths; the melodic motion is a static oscillation of minor thirds. \(^{200}\) Static harmonies accompany the approach of “The Caravan” itself, stacked fourths and fifths (A-D-E) across three octaves in a regular half-note iteration. This accompaniment is provided by double-reeds and pitched percussion, including actual camel bells. \(^{201}\) The caravan’s melodic line is an endlessly repetitive Aeolian mode melody sung by the low strings that stretches over ten measures without losing its grip on the perfect fourths and fifths of A, D, and E. \(^{202}\)

During the gradual approach of the caravan, choral tenors and basses hum a “Turkomani melody” “with closed lips” on the syllable “Mm.” \(^{203}\) This, like the

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\(^{199}\) Locke’s first category, non-normative modes and harmonies. Locke, *Musical Exoticism*, 51.

\(^{200}\) Long-held drones, particularly on open fifths, fit Locke’s fifth category. Locke, *Musical Exoticism*, 52.

\(^{201}\) “We would like to thank Cuillin Bantock for making available a camel bell which belonged to Granville Bantock, his grandfather, and was used in the early performances. The camel bells kindly loaned by Jonathan Del Mar were given to him by his father, Norman Del Mar, who used them in the original BBC broadcast performance of *Omar Khayyám* in 1979.” Foreman, liner notes to *Omar Khayyám*, 66.


\(^{203}\) Bantock labels this a “Turkomani melody” in the score without revealing its provenance or where he learned it. It is possible that Banotck heard it himself in the
preceding “Caravan” motif, is characterized by its limited pitch range and content, constantly returning to the same notes.\textsuperscript{204} The apparently authentic Middle Eastern melody is repeated by the entire chorus “with open lips” on the syllable “Ah” growing louder as the caravan approaches closer to the listener. In its final statement, the “Caravan Motif” is repeated climactically in the orchestra to rhythmic bass drum strikes.\textsuperscript{205}

For a final example of musical exoticism, one also employing rhythm, discussion must return to the first Quatrain. Here, six bars after rehearsal number 11, timpani sound a rhythmic and melodic ostinato on the pitches A and E in the rhythm one quarter note followed by two eighth notes. The ostinato continues unchanged for eighteen measures under the chorus’s pronouncement “For the Sun has scattered into flight, the stars before him from the field of night.” This fulfills Locke’s criteria of “repeated rhythmic or melodic patterns…for example in an instrumental accompaniment” that suggest Otherness “by their rigid insistence”\textsuperscript{206} and “emphatically regular (stomping, relentless) performance of repeated rhythms.”\textsuperscript{207}

\hspace{1cm} Middle East on his conducting tour with \textit{A Gaiety Girl} as the ship returned to England via the Suez Canal.\textsuperscript{204} These characteristics conform to items 9 and 11 on Ralph Locke’s chart of exotic style markers. Locke, \textit{Musical Exoticism}, 53.\textsuperscript{205} The most famous musical example of this gradual approach of a procession is Borodin’s \textit{In the Steppes of Central Asia}, which also features a Middle Eastern caravan. Dedicated to Franz Liszt, this “musical tableau” was first performed in 1880. It seems likely that Bantock, who was aware of Russian musical matters and personally met Tchaikovsky during one of the latter’s visits to Britain, knew the score and drew inspiration for his own advancing and retreating caravan from Borodin’s example.\textsuperscript{206} Locke, \textit{Musical Exoticism}, 52.\textsuperscript{207} Ibid., 54.
The next marker of Bantock’s Romantic allegiance is not rigid but fluid. Chromatic alteration of melody and harmony, in the manner of the New German School of Wagner, Liszt, and Strauss, is an immediately apparent feature in *Omar Khayyám*. Its first occurrence in fact takes place in the third phrase of the Prelude. Here the shape of the “Muezzin” leitmotif is contracted as its second and third intervals are lowered by a half-step. This contraction is embedded in a larger gesture characteristic of Bantock’s technique: the use of chromatic scale segments in part-writing to effect a change of key and mood. In this example the shifting harmonies lead from the modal opening gestures to the key of D-flat major at rehearsal number 1 (see Figure 3.7).

**Figure 3.7:** Bantock, *Omar Khayyám*, page 2, bar 1. Chromatic alteration of “The Muezzin” leitmotif amid half-step motion in bars 7-10.

Also present at rehearsal number 1 is another harmonic “fingerprint”: the use of added-note chords. The G-flat major triad is colored by a high C6 in tremolo strings; this composite harmony is the result of the ascending chromatic motion in the violins in bars
7-10 but it continues for four bars as the woodwinds and lower strings present the
diatonic “Night” motif.

A longer example of Bantock’s love for “expressive” chromaticism is found later
in the Prelude, two bars before rehearsal number 3. Marked “Largamente” and “sonore”
violas present the leitmotif of “Love and Regret” (see Figure 3.8). This theme features
prominent chromatically altered seconds, including two lower neighbor-note turn figures.
Its first semitone interval, B natural to C, grows out of the preceding bars’ bass but is
native to neither the B major harmony of those bars nor the E-flat major key signature.
Enhancing the later “con passione” direction, Bantock works the theme to a “powerful
climax” using ascending sequential repetitions over twelve measures.

**Figure 3.8:** Bantock, *Omar Khayyám*, page 3, two bars before rehearsal number 3. “Love
and Regret” leitmotif. Note prominent semitones and Bantock’s avoidance of the written
key signature.

Bantock uses sequences featuring rising semitones in the first Quatrain to increase
tension as the rising sun “drives Night along with them [the stars] from Heaven.” A 4-

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208 Foreman, liner notes to *Omar Khayyám*, 11.
note ascending sequence in semitones is presented by each vocal part in turn (basses, tenors, altos, sopranos), *divisi a 3*, until the chorus splits into two semi-choruses to antiphonally declaim that the sun “strikes the Sultán’s Turret with a Shaft of Light!”\(^{209}\)

One of these sequences is shown in Figure 3.9.

**Figure 3.9:** Bantock, *Omar Khayyám*, page 12, five bars after rehearsal number 13. First phrase of chromatic sequence in the chorus, each part *divisi a 3*. Divided tenor part shown in this example.

At the climax the augmented-second “Theme of the World” twice pierces the texture via a *marcato* trumpet call just before the “Shaft of Light!” arrives on a unison A (see Figure 3.10). The climax is extended by an eight-bar string tremolo on an altissimo tone cluster of A, G-flat, F, and B-flat “depicting the vibration of the morning light.”\(^{210}\)

The energy then gradually slackens as a transition passage introduces the succeedingquatrain.

\(^{209}\) Newman notes that the chorus “must be arranged in two complete semi-choruses (sopranos, altos, tenors, and basses) one on each side of the platform,” following the layout of the two string orchestras. Newman, *Book of Words*, 4.

\(^{210}\) Ibid., 10.
The whole of Quatrain XII makes use of chromatically malleable melody and harmony. One of the climatic moments in the score, this Quatrain is set as a love duet between the Poet and the Beloved. Here, in the words of Lewis Foreman, Bantock’s “technique of multiple melodic repetition and sequence against a constantly changing orchestral texture, already experienced in the choruses, is first heard at its most effective.”

The orchestra surges “Con amore” in its heavily chromatic six-bar introduction at rehearsal number 53 but after the voices enter the Beloved echoes the Poet’s melodic phrases in diatonic D-flat major. There is no foreign note in either solo or orchestral

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211 Foreman, liner notes to *Omar Khayyám*, 12.
parts for fourteen bars. This takes the singers through the first three lines of the quatrain (see Figure 3.11).

**Figure 3.11**: Bantock, *Omar Khayyam*, page 77 at rehearsal number 53.
This soon changes as Bantock places the introductory instrumental bars under the soloists and the texture grows increasingly agitated and chromatic. The Poet and Beloved repeat the entire text in a nominal D minor but with constant foreign chromatic pitches. Their vocal imitation comes closer and closer together as Bantock builds the duet to a climax over eighteen measures. At the music’s peak the tenor reaches a high B-flat above the introductory chromatic gesture in the orchestra. The key changes to G-flat major and the lovers diatonically repeat the quatrain’s final line in satiation after the strenuous climax. A quiet coda follows, repeating the entire quatrain text in a manner identical to the peaceful first section, though still in G-flat major, not the original D-flat.

**Sequential Phrase Extension**

The duet of Quatrain XII lasts 102 measures at a slow tempo, and inflates the original poetic epigram almost beyond recognition. Scholar Stephen Banfield, a specialist in English song, described Bantock’s tendency towards expansive musical settings in this way:

Bantock, like Bax, was primarily a large-scale composer. Fluency and length never bothered him, and at a time when many English composers were looking for verse small enough to fit their tiny lyrical confines (e.g. Housman’s), Bantock’s difficulty was to find texts big enough to carry his broad-gestured style intact.212

Bantock’s tendency to rely on imitation and sequences to create his “broad-gestured style” has already been noted in the above discussion. This seems to have been encouraged by his teacher Frederick Corder. As described by fellow-student Arthur Alexander, “should one get stuck in a composition, the almost inevitable recipe for its

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212 Banfield, *Sensibility and English Song*, 98.
continuation was a long and slowly ascending series of Wagnerian sequences. A similar strategy, though con fuoco, not slow, is used with the text of the final quatrain:

Waste not your hour, nor in the vain pursuit
Of this and that endeavour and dispute;
Better be jocund with the fruitful grape
Than sadden after none, or bitter, fruit.

Its setting lasts 190 measures, almost all at an Allegro molto or Animato tempo.

The exhortation to “Waste not your hour” is repeated fifty-one times in both unison declarations and imitative sequences. Figure 3.12 shows an excerpt from the beginning of this passage.

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Bantock introduces a new theme in F# major at the words “Better be jocund with the fruitful grape,” labeled eponymously by Newman (“Jocund with the fruitful Grape”). At its second appearance, one bar after rehearsal number 203, this *leitmotif* is worked into an extraordinary heightening of tension as the upper orchestral parts begin to rise by half-steps through an entire octave. This slow rise is underpinned by a rising and falling pattern in the bass incorporating tritones in each bar. Figure 3.13 shows the first eight bars of this sequence. The whole process takes fourteen measures, culminating in another “poco largamente” climax on the “Jocund with the fruitful Grape” motif and text.\(^{214}\)

\(^{214}\) At page 231, six bars after rehearsal number 204.
Figure 3.13: Bantock, *Omar Khayyám*, page 229 at rehearsal number 203. First eight bars of sequential chromatic rise. Only orchestral parts shown. Note the tritones in the bass part.
Sublime Nature: The Desert

The exotic landscape in which the “fruitful Grape” grows inspired Bantock to several representations of nature in *Omar Khayyám*. The first of these is the sunrise described in Quatrain I. Bantock achieves a naturalistic “dawn” effect through gradual increases in volume, range of pitch, and number of performers in both the chorus and orchestra over twenty bars and three exhortations of “Wake!” As described above, when the rising sun strikes the Sultan’s turret, Bantock creates a brightly shimmering tone cluster to illustrate its piercing light.

The most extended depiction of nature occurs in an “Interlude” between Quatrains XLVII and XLVIII titled “The Desert.” Here Bantock uses harmonic and melodic stasis to paint a picture of the bleak and unchanging desert landscape. Long-sustained tonic pedals in the upper reaches of the violins represent “the stillness of the desert.”215 Glockenspiel and harp chime a three-note descending pattern on E-B-D that interlocks with a lower octave of the pedal tonic A at each statement. Taken together, these two elements are labeled by Newman the “Desert Motif,”216 shown again in Figure 3.14. The only other musical motion is provided by descending and re-ascending eighth-note perfect fourths on D and A in muted strings.

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215 Foreman, liner notes to *Thalaba the Destroyer*, 9.
216 Foreman, liner notes to *Omar Khayyám*, 12.
Figure 3.14: Bantock, *Omar Khayyám*, page 196, two bars before rehearsal number 168. “The Desert” leitmotif. Sustained pitch A in five octaves and repetitive melodic pattern on A-E-D-B represent the desert’s stillness and permanence.

The music remains in this near-motionless state for sixteen bars. Distant horns in parallel fifths then introduce the motif of the “Caravan Herald”, a quiet fanfare of minor thirds in triplet rhythms shown in Figure 3.15.\(^{217}\) An oboe responds with a long-breathed solo over harmonies that descend chromatically from E to B-flat, the span of a tritone. Newman characterized this as “the mood engendered by the thought that life is short, and that is well to live it while it is given to us.”\(^{218}\)

Figure 3.15: Bantock, *Omar Khayyám*, page 197, six bars before rehearsal number 170. The “Caravan Herald” *leitmotif* with beginning of oboe melody in final two bars.

In contrast to his counterparts Elgar and Vaughan Williams, Bantock drew no positive spiritual experience from such contemplation of nature’s grandeur. Rather than the affirmation of life found in Elgar’s statement that “There is music in the air, music all

\(^{217}\) Foreman, liner notes to *Omar Khayyám*, 12. The “Caravan Herald” leitmotif is shown in Figure 3.4.

\(^{218}\) Newman, *Book of Words*, 47.
around us, the world is full of it and you simply take as much as you require”\textsuperscript{219} or the connection between heavenly and natural beauty that RVW expressed in \textit{The Shepherds of the Delectable Mountains},\textsuperscript{220} Bantock equated the sublimity of nature with the futility of man. “The East regards Man as insignificant before the powers of the Universe,” wrote Myrrha Bantock, and her father displayed this “kinship with the oriental mind” throughout his life.\textsuperscript{221}

The poetry of Omar Khayyám is saturated with this fatalism and Bantock responded vividly: “I am pouring it out at white heat,” he wrote to Ernest Newman during the work’s composition.\textsuperscript{222} One final musical example, Quatrain XLVIII, combines all of its composer’s characteristic features: a fascination with the exotic, inspiration drawn from nature’s vastness, chromatic alterations to a diatonic musical language, and a “sympathy with the philosophy of \textit{Carpe diem} and \textit{Vanitas vanitatum}.”\textsuperscript{223}

The chorus delivers the message of quatrain XLVIII:

\begin{verbatim}
A moment’s halt – a momentary taste
Of BEING from the well amid the waste –
And Lo! The phantom caravan has reached
The NOTHING it set out from – Oh, make haste!
\end{verbatim}

\textsuperscript{219} Quoted in Marshall, \textit{Music in the Landscape}, 51.
\textsuperscript{220} A “pastoral episode” in the form of an operatic scena; written by Vaughan Williams in 1921-22. The text comes from Bunyan’s \textit{Pilgrim’s Progress}, a work that fascinated the composer. He set portions of the story in various forms over five decades before finally completing a full-length opera – or “morality” as he preferred to name it – in 1952.
\textsuperscript{221} Myrrha Bantock, \textit{Granville Bantock}, 33. Stephen Banfield states “Bantock’s true spiritual home was the hedonism of the Near East, of ancient Greece and Persia. In the Epicurean philosophical yearnings of FitzGerald’s \textit{The Rubáiyát of Omar Khayyám} he could allow his opulence full rein…” \textit{Sensibility and English Song}, 98.
\textsuperscript{222} Foreman, liner notes to \textit{Omar Khayyám}, 13.
This is another metaphor for “the transience of existence, and the insignificance of the individual, whether high-born or lowly,” the central message of the work.\textsuperscript{224} The voices proclaim the first two lines in unison rhythm and open-fifth harmony, echoed by the “Caravan Herald” in the horns. The effect is of an implacable decree of fate. The oboe melody from “The Desert” returns, however, as a sudden interruption in the full orchestra, shown in Figure 3.16. This outburst is enriched with chromatically active inner parts and rises to a frustrated climax twelve measures later in the manner of the \textit{Tristan} Prelude. The bass part under this eruption now descends a minor seventh by semitones. Though wordless, this interruption of chromaticism suggests a struggle against the message of purposelessness in the text.

Once this outburst has passed, Bantock returns to the walking rhythms and camel bells to describe the caravan’s journey back to “the NOTHING it set out from.” He creates a fatalistic sense of endless but purposeless motion through melodic imitations between the male and female voices. They urge the listener, “Oh, make haste!” The orchestral brass underscores the climax by playing repetitions of the “Caravan Herald” leitmotif. As the music fades away the low brass picks up the “Caravan” melody, getting softer and softer as the caravan departs from its “momentary taste of BEING.”

Bantock ends the interlude with the “The Desert” motif decorated with descending augmented seconds (E-D#-C). These “exotic” intervals ascend four octaves and reach to the original high pedal A. The camel bells shake a final time. A quiet but richly harmonized statement of “The Muezzin” leitmotif concludes the section. Despite the inclusion of the call to prayer, implying the possibility of intervention by a higher

\textsuperscript{224} Foreman, liner notes to \textit{Omar Khayyám}, 11.
power, the interlude powerfully encapsulates the fatalistic spirit of the *Rubaiyat of Omar Khayyám* as a whole.

**Figure 3.16:** Bantock, *Omar Khayyám*, page 203 at rehearsal number 178. Orchestral interruption in Quatrain XLVIII adapted from earlier oboe melody in the “Desert” interlude. Note the chromaticism in all parts and how the bass descends nearly a full octave by half-steps.
Bantock’s first symphony reflects another of his “sudden, all-consuming enthusiasms,” as British music scholar Michael Hurd describes it, that of “all things Celtic.” The symphony was completed in 1913 five years after Bantock had doubled his administrative workload by accepting Elgar’s endowed Peyton Chair at the University of Birmingham. It is based on themes from Volume 1 of Marjory Kennedy-Fraser’s collection of Hebridean folksongs, *Songs of the Hebrides*, published in 1909. Fellow English Romantic Rutland Boughton introduced Bantock to this collection during his brief tenure at the Midland Institute of Music at Bantock’s invitation. The total effect of the work, however, despite its reliance on the work of one of the key folksong collectors of the time, is completely unlike that of English Renaissance composers. Holst and Vaughan Williams saw folksong as a way to return to the roots of musical England. Their collecting, setting, and developing of folksong materials in their own scores was an attempt to recapture a lost identity and elements of folksong style became absorbed into their personal compositional voices. For Bantock, despite his “own Highland ancestry,”

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225 Michael Hurd, liner notes to *Hebridean Symphony*, Hyperion CD CDA66450, 1991, 3. Hurd continues, “These enthusiasms influenced his personal behaviour and style of living almost to the point of eccentricity.”


227 Marjory Kennedy-Fraser, *Songs of the Hebrides*, Volume 1, Collected and Arranged for Voice and Pianoforte, Gaelic and English Words by Marjory Kennedy-Fraser and Kenneth Macleod (London, Boosey & Co., 1909). Other works to include appropriate melodies are the *Two Hebridean Sea-Poems* (*Caristiona* and *The Sea Reivers*) (1920), the opera *The Seal Woman* (1924), the *Celtic Symphony* (1940), and the *Two Heroic Ballads* (*Cuchullan’s Lament* and *Kishmul’s Galley*) (1944).

the Hebrides were just as intriguingly foreign as any part of the Orient, real or imaginary. He used such “exotic” elements as seemed good to illustrate his musical narratives and put them down afterwards. The folksongs in the Hebridean Symphony are simply the crowning jewels in a work that is more concerned with the legendary past than the real survival or rebirth of an English art form.

The symphony is scored for an orchestra of large dimensions comparable to Strauss in Macbeth (188-91) and Don Juan (1888), though smaller that required for Omar Khayyám. Like all four of Bantock’s symphonies, it is constructed in one continuous movement divided into separate sections each section with its own program. This program will guide the analysis to its most salient musical characteristics: the use of pentatonic folksong as an “exotic” element, the use of chromaticism to heighten tension, transform musical motifs, and inflate climaxes, and the incorporation of various sea-moods in the work’s loose dramatic arc. These features point again to Bantock’s English Romantic identity, now in a different geographical context.

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229 Triple woodwinds with auxiliaries (piccolo, cor anglais, bass clarinet, and contrabassoon), 4 horns, 3 trumpets, 3 trombones, tuba, 3 timpani, bass drum, cymbals, triangle, side drum, celesta, harp, and a large complement of strings, divisi. Bantock specifies 16 first violins, 14 second violins, 12 violas, 10 cellos, and 8 basses. All the parts are divided into two throughout the score. The second basses are instructed to tune their lowest string down to B natural.

230 All of Bantock’s symphonies are programmatic and have “geographic” titles: Hebridean Symphony, Pagan Symphony, The Cyprian Goddess (Symphony No. 3), and Celtic Symphony, respectively.
Pentatonic Folksong Motifs

The three Hebridean folksongs Bantock incorporates are “The Seagull of the Land-Under-Waves,” “Kishmul’s Galley Song,” and “A Harris Love-Lament.” Their melodies are not used in a mosaic or patchwork to create a “folksong rhapsody,” as in Stanford’s *Six Irish Rhapsodies* or Holst’s *Somerset Rhapsody*, but as sources for independent musical motifs. Bantock achieves this by extracting individual phrases for development, manipulation, and recombination.

The opening bars of the symphony demonstrate this: the low strings and bassoons repeat a two-bar phrase taken from “The Seagull of the Land-Under-Waves,” shown in Figure 3.17. Further phrases are introduced in the upper violas, cellos, and basses as the symphony progresses. The first of these is shown Figure 3.18. They remain disconnected from each other and the lower parts continue to play their two-bar phrase as an accompaniment. A similar process introduces “Kishmul’s Galley Song,” as the horns allude imitatively to the second Hebridean folksong over six measures (see Figure 3.19).

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231 The first is an “Old Skye Air from Frances Tolmie, Words from Kenneth Macleod” (Kennedy-Fraser, *Songs of the Hebrides*, 84), the second is a “Barra Ballad,” “Words from Mrs. Maclean, Barra. Air from the singing of Mary Macdonald, Mingulay,” (Ibid., 80) and the third is a “Melody noted from the traditional singing of Frances Tolmie” with the “Traditional version collected and literally translated by Kenneth Macleod” (Ibid., 128).
Figure 3.17: Bantock, *Hebridean Symphony*, page 1, bar 1. Initial motif in cellos and basses taken from first phrase of Hebridean folksong “The Seagull of the Land-Under-Waves.”

Figure 3.18: Bantock, *Hebridean Symphony*, page 3 at rehearsal number 1. Beginning of “Seagull” folksong’s second phrase in marked strings.

Figure 3.19: Bantock, *Hebridean Symphony*, page 79 at rehearsal number 45. Imitative horn calls derived from the first phrase of “Kishmul’s Galley Song.”

The use of these independent musical motifs is similar to that of Sibelius in his Second Symphony; rather than present a theme in full then fragment it via development, Bantock first develops fragments of a source melody before stating it in full at a climactic...
“Kishmul’s Galley” is introduced at just such a point: the peak of the “storm” scherzo, page 79 at rehearsal number 45. Immediately after the above example the folksong is sung out by the four horns. In the words of annotator Michael Hurd, “out of the turmoil loom marauding ships: the opening bars of ‘Kishmul’s Galley Song’ resplendent on unison horns.” Even here Bantock cannot resist a favorite developmental touch: woodwinds imitate the folksong’s phrases as the horns present them. Individual motifs extracted from the “Galley Song” then play a large part in the musical “battle” that follows, discussed further below.

The final folksong, “A Harris Love-Lament,” is reserved for the concluding section, a return to the opening mood of “wistful melancholy.” Its first two phrases are played quietly by the horns (see Figure 3.20), then “gradually expanded into a Bardic Song of Victory.” The expansion uses individual gestures from the melody, played in imitation and with various altered rhythms until a climactic restatement of the folksong by the full orchestra. Further imitations of its final gesture follow immediately in the woodwinds and brass for another eight bars.

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232 Though Bantock was one of the first to promote Sibelius’s music in England, their music does not often use such similar techniques nor did Sibelius turn to exotic sources for inspiration over native subjects save in rare instances like the incidental music for Belshazzar’s Feast. The Finnish composer recognized their differences on one of his many visits to England, saying to Bantock’s son Raymond “Your father’s music is very different from mine.” See Cuillin Bantock, Never Lukewarm, 50.  
233 Hurd, liner notes to Hebridean Symphony, 6.  
234 Ibid., 7.  
235 Ibid., 7.
Bantock subjects these pentatonic materials to frequent chromatic treatment. “The Seagull of the Land-Under-Waves,” for example, the initial gesture of which opens and closes the symphony, is not heard complete until its constituent phrases have been developed via chromatic alteration. These alterations introduce tension into the “dreamy and atmospheric” introductory pages, changing the character of the motif in the manner of Lisztian thematic transformation. These harmonic transformations begin at page 5, rehearsal number 2 as shown in Figure 3.21. The intervals of the opening “Seagull” motif are expanded and contracted by half-steps in the basses and cellos while the upper strings descend chromatically. This harmonizes the changing motif anew in each measure: A minor, B major, B-flat major, F# minor, and F major.

236 Hurd, liner notes to *Hebridean Symphony*, 6.
At rehearsal number 3 the texture thins and a rhythmic variant of the “Seagull” motif is played in sequence by solo woodwinds. Upper strings slowly oscillate between half-steps and horns throb softly with tritones in triplet rhythm. The basses maintain diatonic pedal tones on C and A until the harmonic motion comes to rest on an A dominant seventh chord. Rather than resolve this dominant harmony diatonically, a solo flute, from a high E6, starts a sequence of sextuplets that pass through a new arpeggio every three notes (see Figure 3.22). This is carried lower across three octaves by flute, oboe, clarinet, and bassoon, in sequences of three measures. Every other pattern of sextuplets also descends by half-steps at its “connecting” pitches: C – B, B-flat – A, A-flat – G, etc.

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237 Page 9, four bars after rehearsal number 4.
After this prolonged chromatic manipulation of the tonality, Bantock allows diatonicism to return for 50 bars. A solo violin finally presents the entire “Seagull of the Land-Under-Waves” melody harmonized in fourths by the lower strings.\textsuperscript{238} There remain, however, discreet yet persistent tritones on F-B in the ascending and descending cello line, and in the triple-\textit{piano} tones sustained by the muted third and fourth horns.\textsuperscript{239}

As shown in the sequential woodwind sextuplets, Bantock at times delights in chromatic motion for its own sake, in addition to the chromatic manipulation of diatonic motifs. An even longer example of this display comes four bars before rehearsal number 15, shown in Figure 3.23. Here a solo viola, marked “espressivo” and “a piacere,” spins out a rhapsodic solo line for sixteen measures, consisting almost entirely of chromatic motion in sequential phrases. The solo concludes by alternating chromatic sextuplets with a second solo viola for another four measures. The only accompaniment is provided by three solo cellos and low woodwinds which twice introduce diminished triads on D and C\# (D-F-Ab and C\#-E-G). These are isolated chords and do not lead to resolutions.

\textsuperscript{238} In the words of Trevor Bray, “This was a favourite device that he used in other compositions which include Hebridean material,” particularly the opera \textit{The Seal Woman}. “In these works, the 4\textsuperscript{th} chords are used in such a way as to suggest a misty seascape…” Bray, “Bantock’s ‘Seal Woman,’” 433.

\textsuperscript{239} Page 13, two bars before rehearsal number 6 until page 15, four bars before rehearsal number 9.
An emphatic resolution is found, though much decorated, in the climax that caps the symphony’s first section. Tension begins to mount on page 19, three measures before rehearsal number 11, as the diatonic harmony of the preceding pages is chromatically altered. Bantock begins this alteration in the second violins and spreads it through the woodwinds, “gradually involving the entire orchestra in a Tristan-esque outburst of great splendour.”\textsuperscript{240} The basses take a three-note gesture from the “Seagull” melody’s second phrase\textsuperscript{241} through rising sequences four bars after rehearsal number 12. After rehearsal number 13 the violins ascend to the top of their range via semitones and chromatic scales rise and fall at varying speeds in the woodwinds, violas, harp, and celesta. Basses rise by half-steps: D-D♯-E-F. The harmonic resolution comes at page 28 in a plagal cadence from F to C major capped by \textit{fortissimo} timpani, bass drum and cymbals. The cadence itself is common to pentatonic folksongs; the heavy covering of chromatic part-writing preceding it is not.

The concluding pages of the symphony also contain chromatically colored harmonic progressions that no folksong purist would allow. The coda begins at page 144, two bars before rehearsal number 77 with \textit{Lento molto sostenuto} chords above repetitions

\textsuperscript{240} Hurd, liner notes to \textit{Hebridean Symphony}, 6.
\textsuperscript{241} Given by the violas in their opening bars, page 1.
of the “Seagull” motif that opened the work. These repetitions are adjusted chromatically as the upper parts slowly descend in whole note rhythms, some by whole steps and some by semitones. The process is similar to that described above, found in the symphony’s introduction.

Among the chromatically changing harmonies are two E-flat dominant seventh chords in first inversion that resolve to the tonic G major. These bVI chords appear as a result of the descending chromatic motion in Bantock’s part writing and serve to color the otherwise diatonic progression. The cadence from bVI to I is made more piquant by the seventh being introduced halfway through the measure in bass clarinet, solo cello, and two trumpets in octaves. This pitch is spelled as C#, not D-flat, and resolves upwards to a D, the fifth of the tonic G major chord in the next measure.

Harmonic tension returns immediately in the next measure, however, as the D moves up a half-step to E-flat. This pitch is held in the aforementioned instruments for four bars against a D major triad in the rest of the orchestra, the basses repeating the “Seagull” motif throughout. Finally the E-flat returns to D natural as the dominant chord cadences on G major. Figure 3.24 shows this entire process in an orchestral reduction, beginning two bars before the first bVI intrusion.

242 The strings are muted throughout this section save for the 14 bars of solo cello.
Figure 3.24: Bantock, *Hebridean Symphony*, page 145, three bars after rehearsal number 77. Intrusion of bVI chord in the third bar; after its resolution to G major, Bantock prolongs the tension by sustaining a bVI among a tonic G major triad. Note continuance of “Seagull” motif in the bass.

Bantock introduces three more dissonant interruptions, however, as winds and horns move chromatically away from and return to the tonic triad. This produces the tone clusters C#-E-G#-Bb and C#-Eb-G natural-Bb. The final interruption is a B-flat minor triad that yields to G major without further protest. These interruptions and their resolutions are shown in orchestral reduction in Figure 3.25.
Figure 3.25: Bantock, *Hebridean Symphony*, page 146 at rehearsal number 78. Three further chromatically inflected dissonant intrusions and their resolutions by half-steps.

The last eight measures of the *Hebridean Symphony* present a quietly surprising conclusion (see Figure 3.26). Muted trumpet and horn, *lontano*, give two distant echoes of the “Harris Love-Lament” melody that provides the last great climax of the symphony.

The orchestra, with the strings still muted, moves through a plagal cadence in G major decorated with harmonic color provided by the chromatically moving part-writing.243

During the “Placido” final moments, the three trumpets, *con sordini* and *lontano*, sustain a B minor triad whose F# never resolves to G. This is coupled with a *ppp* E5 in the first clarinet to create an E minor ninth chord as the symphony fades *morendo*, “into the

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243 Describing the “color” chords in functional harmonic terms results in this convoluted explanation: A half-diminished seventh chord in first inversion on A moves to an augmented triad on C with an added B-flat (C-E-G#-Bb), which resolves to a G major triad.
silence from which it emerged.”244 The effect is as far from a rustic pastoral vision as can be imagined.

**Figure 3.26:** Bantock, *Hebridean Symphony*, page 148, last six bars of symphony. Highly colored plagal cadence. Note muted trumpets on unresolved leading tone F# and clarinet pitch E create an E minor ninth chord.

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**Sublime Nature: The Sea**

The *Hebridean Symphony* presents a loose program of sea-moods, a dramatic arch from the *tranquillo* and *molto sostenuto* “sea mist”245 of the opening and closing to the “raging storm”246 and battle against raiders of the central sections. These middle passages in particular draw from Bantock musical description reminiscent of the specificity in Strauss’ *Eine Alpensinfonie*, completed the previous year.

The storm at sea begins at rehearsal number 29 on page 53.247 In this section Bantock paints rising and falling waves, wailing winds, flashes of lightning, and crashes of thunder. During the “heaving”248 string passage with which the storm begins, basses,

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244 Hurd, liner notes to *Hebridean Symphony*, 7.
245 Ibid., 6.
246 Ibid., 6. The second section lasts 61 pages, from page 38, 4 bars before rehearsal number 20 to page 99, double bar six measures before rehearsal number 55. This is a total of 348 measures.
247 The “storm” section lasts 160 measures before the entrance of the second folk-song, “Kishmul’s Galley Song” and the beginning of the battle.
248 Hurd, liner notes to *Hebridean Symphony*, 6.
cellos, and violas swell and recede in wavelike F minor tremolo eighth note arpeggios, shown in Figure 3.27.

**Figure 3.27:** Bantock, *Hebridean Symphony*, page 54, three bars after rehearsal number 29. “Wave” figures in the lower strings.

The violins contribute their own energy in brief rising and falling tremolo arpeggios eight measures later. These, like the sequential woodwind sextuplets from the first section, change tonal centers as their direction changes. This in turn shifts the underlying waves chromatically lower through F, E, E-flat, D and C# minor in turn. Bantock uses the unstable tonality to echo the instability of the stormy seascape. C# minor only remains steady for eight bars until it becomes C minor, then B, B-flat, and finally A minor.

Bantock introduces the wailing winds on page 59 at rehearsal number 33. These are created via chromatically ascending paired eighth notes in strings and woodwinds. After reaching their height in the piccolo, shown in Figure 3.28, the winds descend down interlocking string semiquavers arpeggios.
Bantock produces thunder and lightning in the form of *sforzando* brass chords followed by beats of ascending sixteenth notes in upper woodwinds, first violins, and celesta. These break into the storm texture six times over the course of the storm. Figure 3.29 shows the first instance on page 62 at rehearsal number 35.

Bantock increases the realism of the musical thunder and lightning at rehearsal number 44, page 77 by adding bass drum and cymbal crashes. The cymbals are paired with fortissimo minor chords and running scales in the orchestra but the bass drum strikes are offset by one beat, in the manner of thunder arriving after a lightning flash. Bantock repeats this onomatopoeic effect twice; Figure 3.30 shows the second time.
Figure 3.29: Bantock, *Hebridean Symphony*, page 62 at rehearsal number 35. Thunder (brass) and lightning (woodwinds) break into the storm texture.
Figure 3.30: Bantock, *Hebridean Symphony*, page 78, five bars after rehearsal number 44. More intense thunder and lightning effect obtained by pairing a cymbal crash with an orchestral outburst followed by a stroke on the bass drum.
Program Symphony: Battle at Sea

The loose chain of events Bantock creates in the *Hebridean Symphony* – introductory “misty seascape,” then a “violent” scherzo that swells into a storm – continues after the introduction of “Kishmul’s Galley Song” at the storm’s peak. Here the third portion of the symphony begins: a “graphic description of the [Hebridean] clansmen gathering to ward off…invaders.”

Bantock achieves this via extended conflict between motifs derived from the “Galley Song” in the horns and a three-note fanfare in the trumpets marked “defiant.” This “call to arms” is taken from a Highland pipe tune, the “Pibroch of Donnail Dhu.” The horns and trumpets do battle relentlessly: after twenty bars the three trumpets sound their call in succession and continue uninterrupted for fifty-six measures (see Figure 3.31). The horns also play almost unceasingly. Scholar Michael Hurd writes that this section “exploits the brass with a virtuosity worthy of Janáček.”

Figure 3.31: Bantock, *Hebridean Symphony*, page 111, three bars before rehearsal number 39. Horns and trumpets do virtuosic battle. Note that the three trumpets play this three-note “call to arms” one after another. This call continues for fifty-six measures.

Bantock also calls upon the trombones and tuba to play extended and difficult parts incorporating much chromaticism. Figure 3.32 shows one such passage with tritone.

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249 Hurd, liner notes to *Hebridean Symphony*, 6
250 Page 99, four bars after rehearsal number 54.
251 Hurd, liner notes to *Hebridean Symphony*, 7.
252 Ibid., 7.
253 Ibid., 6.
leaps resolving by rising semitones. Note that the low brass take up the trumpet calls in the last two bars of the example. Once the battle is over, horns and trumpets join together in these fanfares and reach a “Trionfale” climax in C major.

**Figure 3.32:** Bantock, *Hebridean Symphony*, page 124, five bars after rehearsal number 64. Excerpt from one of many virtuosic low brass passages in this section of the *Hebridean Symphony*, incorporating tritones and semitones in a rapid tempo.

The *Hebridean Symphony* fits into a long line of Romantic program symphonies that includes Berlioz’s *Symphonie Fantastique* and Liszt’s *Dante* and *Faust* symphonies. All four works present extra-musical characters, images, and narratives through *leitmotifs*, and eschew abstract musical forms to let the programmatic drama guide the structure of their work. Bantock’s *Hebridean Symphony* incorporates folksongs of the Hebrides Islands but, as demonstrated, uses them to create an exotic legendary past, long ago and far away. Bantock’s second symphony has a similar program and in fact illustrates a pastoral vision - but its fields and forests are populated with nymphs and satyrs. In the words of Michael Hurd, “Here Bantock’s dream is of classical antiquity.”

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254 Vaughan Williams’ First Symphony, “A Sea Symphony” to text by Walt Whitman, does fit into this tradition, as do his second and third symphonies, the “London” and “Pastoral.” See Stradling and Hughes for their discussion of the impossibility of a clean break with German musical traditions by the English Musical Renaissance in *The English Musical Renaissance*, 2nd edition, 117-9.

**Pagan Symphony**

The *Pagan Symphony* was commissioned by the BBC and completed in 1928 – but not performed until 1936 when Sir Adrian Boult conducted the BBC Symphony Orchestra in its premiere performance.\(^{256}\) Bantock had become enchanted with ancient Greece and inscribed his second symphony with the motto “Et ego in Arcadia vixit.” (“I too lived in Arcadia”).\(^{257}\) Like the *Hebridean Symphony* it is in one continuous movement with smaller subdivisions unfolding a loose program. The *Pagan Symphony* has six sections of these subdivisions that provide the contrasts “characteristic of the separate movements of traditional symphonic form.”\(^{258}\) It is scored for a slightly smaller orchestra than its precursor though by only a few instruments.\(^{259}\)

The work’s motto paraphrases a Latin text found in two works of French artist Nicholas Poussin (1594-1665), “the founder of French classicism.”\(^{260}\) Poussin created two paintings with the title *The Arcadian Shepherds*, each showing a group of shepherds discovering a tomb on which the phrase “Et in Arcadia ego” is carved. During the

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\(^{257}\) Other “Greek” works include the orchestral song-cycle *Sappho* (1906), the *Sapphic Poem* for cello and orchestra (1906), and the third symphony, *The Cyprian Goddess* (1938).

\(^{258}\) Hurd, liner notes to *Pagan Symphony*, 3.

\(^{259}\) Double woodwinds plus auxiliaries (piccolo, English horn, contrabassoon), 4 horns, 3 trumpets, 3 trombones, tuba, 3 timpani, percussion (bass drum, cymbals, snare drum, tenor drum, tambourine, and triangle), celesta, harp, and strings. Bantock does not add a bass clarinet and specifies only one oboe, the second oboe player taking the English horn throughout.

nineteenth century this was generally translated “I too lived in Arcadia” and read as a “retrospective vision of unsurpassable happiness, enjoyed in the past, unattainable ever after, yet enduringly alive in the memory.” Erwin Panofsky, however, later argued Poussin’s text ought to be translated “Even in Arcadia, there am I,” with “I” referring to Death. The message would thus be a reminder of the mortality of man: “I shall try to show that this rendering – ‘Death is even in Arcadia’ – represents a grammatically correct, in fact, the only correct, interpretation of the Latin phrase Et in Arcadia ego, and that our modern reading of its message – ‘I, too, was born, or lived, in Arcady’ – is in reality a mistranslation.” 

This reflection on the transience of beauty, both human and inhuman, is deeply Romantic; Bantock had already reacted strongly to such inspiration when setting The Ruba‘iyat of Omar Khayyám. The Arcadian setting is also no less “Other” and therefore exotic than that of Bantock’s Omar Khayyám.

This analysis examines four of the work’s six sections: the first, third, fourth, and sixth. These correspond to a symphonic introduction, scherzo, minuet and trio, and finale. Musical themes presented in the introduction are used to build the entire work, the third and fourth sections are “masterly demonstrations of the Lisztian art of thematic transformation,” while the finale demonstrates Bantock’s admiration for Richard Strauss via multiple stylistic allusions.

**Exotic Musical Motifs**

The Introduction presents the symphony’s initial thematic material. There are five germinal motifs, each of which is transformed by expansion, contraction, re-

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261 Erwin Panofsky, “ET IN ARCADIA EGO: Poussin and the Elegiac Tradition,” in *Meaning in the Visual Arts* (Garden City, NY: Doubleday Anchor Books, 1955), 296. Art critic Erwin Panofsky, however, later argued Poussin’s text ought to be translated “Even in Arcadia, there am I,” with “I” referring to Death. The message would thus be a reminder of the mortality of man: “I shall try to show that this rendering – ‘Death is even in Arcadia’ – represents a grammatically correct, in fact, the only correct, interpretation of the Latin phrase Et in Arcadia ego, and that our modern reading of its message – ‘I, too, was born, or lived, in Arcady’ – is in reality a mistranslation.” *Meaning in the Visual Arts*, 296.

262 The resemblance is approximate. The fourth section is a dance in slow triple meter with clearly defined sections. The “trio” is a dance of very different character and the traditional repeat of the minuet does not really take place. Michael Hurd, in his liner notes to the symphony, refers to it as an “antique dance,” a term continued here.

263 Hurd, liner notes to *Pagan Symphony*, 4.
harmonization, or re-orchestration in the manner of Liszt’s 1848 tone poem *Les préludes*. The first of these opens the work: a descending Aeolian mode scale on A in the muted strings marked “rubato e misterioso,” shown in Figure 3.33. The motif is harmonized in divided violas and cellos with non-functional harmonies: successive minor-minor and dominant seventh chords interspersed with open fifths.\(^{264}\) Bantock’s use of modality throughout the symphony was not to remind English audiences of their rich Tudor heritage like Vaughan Williams, however. Instead, Bantock uses it to evoke the lost atmosphere of ancient Greece. In the words of Michael Hurd:

> The music may be described as a vision of the past, when the Greek god Dionysus (Bacchus) was worshipped as the bestower of happiness and plenty, the lover of truth and beauty, the victor over the powers of evil.\(^{265}\)

**Figure 3.33:** Bantock, *Pagan Symphony*, page 1, bar 1. First motif, a descending scale in the Aeolian mode.

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\(^{264}\) The chords and perfect fifth intervals are as follows: A-E, G mm 7\(^{th}\) chord, D mm 7\(^{th}\) chord, E-B, A Mm 7\(^{th}\) chord, G Mm 7\(^{th}\) chord, and an F Mm 7\(^{th}\) chord.

\(^{265}\) Granville Bantock, program note to the *Pagan Symphony*, quoted in Michael Hurd, liner notes to *Pagan Symphony*, 3.
The second motif, shown in Figure 3.34, is also modal, a four-measure flute solo, “part fanfare, part birdsong.” Bantock makes the most use of this motif, transforming it extensively throughout the symphony. Further, its “interlocking” fourths and fifths are present in almost every other motif.

Figure 3.34: Bantock, *Pagan Symphony*, page 2, two bars before rehearsal number 1. The second motif; much used as the basis for later themes in the symphony.

The third germ theme is a two-note horn call played by two French horns, *con sordini* and *lontano* (see Figure 3.35). The instruments begin a minor third apart (E4-G4), widen the interval to a fifth (B3-F#4) and then return to their starting pitches. The upper horn moves only by a semitone in a motion similar to another “call” in an Arcadian-inspired work, Ravel’s *Daphnis et Chloe*. Ravel sought, like Bantock, to present “the Greece of my dreams” in his 1912 ballet rather than connecting Arcadia with contemporary England or France. The two composers also shared a love for musical

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266 Hurd, liner notes to *Pagan Symphony*, 4.
267 Ibid., 4.
268 Ravel’s “call” motif moves by a major second, not a minor second, and is harmonized in parallel fourths throughout. This is first introduced by muted horns in bar 6 and then the vocalizing choir at bar 8.
269 Ravel stated in his autobiography that, “My intention in writing *Daphnis et Chloe* was to compose a great musical fresco, aiming less at archaism that at remaining faithful to the Greece of my dreams, which was closely related to a Greece such as French artists had imagined and depicted at the end of the eighteenth century.” Alexis Roland-Manuel, “Une esquisse autobiographique de Maurice Ravel [1928],” *La Revue musicale* 19 (no. 187) (December 1938), 21.
exoticism, audible in *Daphnis et Chloe*’s modal harmonies, melodic ornamentation, and percussion-heavy orchestration.\(^{270}\)

**Figure 3.35:** Bantock, *Pagan Symphony*, page 2, two measures after rehearsal number 1. The third motif, an oscillating horn call.

The fourth motif occurs on page 6, at rehearsal number 3, a “sinuous” melody for cellos and bassoons, related to the flute motif (see Figure 3.36). Out of it grows the fifth and final motif: a “yearning melody” for solo violin, shown in Figure 3.37.\(^{271}\) This motif begins on page 9, four bars after rehearsal number 4. Note that the “sinuous” motif prominently features melodic half-steps.

**Figure 3.36:** Bantock, *Pagan Symphony*, page 6 at rehearsal number 3. The fourth motif is a melody for bassoons and cellos with prominent half-step motion.

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\(^{270}\) For further discussions of Ravel’s ballet as a work of musical exoticism, see Lawrence Kramer, “Consuming the Exotic: Ravel’s *Daphnis et Chloe*” in his *Classical Music and Postmodern Knowledge* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1995), 201-225 and Deborah Mawer, *The Ballets of Maurice Ravel: Creation and Interpretation* (Burlington, VT: Ashgate, 2006), 79-124.

\(^{271}\) Hurd, liner notes to *Pagan Symphony*, 4.
Figure 3.37: Bantock, *Pagan Symphony*, page 9, four bars after rehearsal number 4. The final germinal motif, an extended solo for violin.

Chromatic and Thematic Transformation

The remaining pages of the Introduction begin the process of Lisztian thematic transformation present throughout the symphony. For example, Bantock shortens the flute’s “birdsong” motif into a series of rhythmic three-note “chirps.” This shortened motif is used both as a unison statement and in imitation to construct lengthy sequences. Figure 3.38 shows its first prominent use in the musical texture.

Figure 3.38: Bantock, *Pagan Symphony*, page 18 at rehearsal number 7. Bantock transforms the flute motif into a rhythmic “chirping” figure. This is its first unison statement in the woodwinds.

The “sinuous” motif retains its original length but Bantock puts it through a “changing background” procedure in the manner of Glinka, Tchaikovsky, and other
Russian composers. This technique varies orchestration, harmonization, texture, and accompaniment for each successive presentation of a musical theme.

Bantock applies the procedure on page 14, two measures after rehearsal number 6. The two-bar motif is no longer given to the cellos and first bassoon but to the English horn and a solo cello in its upper range. The initial underlying harmony is the same; a fully diminished seventh chord on E, but the accompaniment texture is much thicker. Previously only horns, it now comprises divided violins and violas, harp arpeggios, and a tonic pedal A in the basses and timpani. Bantock shifts the harmonies restlessly every two bars: the E diminished seventh chord becomes an F major-major seventh chord then an F# fully-diminished seventh chord, and finally a chromatically altered A dominant seventh chord (A-C#-Eb-G). The harp arpeggiates each chord in turn while the solo instruments repeat the two-bar “sinuous” motif at various pitch levels. Figure 3.39 shows the first nine bars of this “changing background” variation.

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272 Mikhail Glinka (1804-1857) was long credited with pioneering this compositional technique in his second opera *Ruslan and Lyudmilila* (1842) and his 1848 orchestral work *Kamarinskaya*. “To Russian and Soviet musicologists, [this technique was] simply ‘Glinka variations.’” (See footnote 113, Frolova-Walker, *Russian Music and Nationalism from Glinka to Stalin* (New Haven, CT: Yale University Press, 2007), 113.)

273 The most famous example of this technique is Mikhail Glinka’s 1848 orchestral work *Kamarinskaya*, where Glilnka presents a Russian wedding dance at length, varying the orchestration and harmonization to maintain interest. The above-mentioned In the Steppes of Central Asia by Alexander Borodin uses changing background variations to keep the listener’s attention as the musical procession draws near and then departs. Tchaikovsky’s most famous use of this technique is in the finale to his Second Symphony, where the Ukrainian folksong “The Crane,” used as the principal ostinato theme lends the symphony its nickname of “Little Russian.” For a nuanced description of Glinka, see Marina Frolova-Walker, *Russian Music and Nationalism From Glinka to Stalin*, 104-117. For a similar discussion of Tchaikovsky, see Richard Taruskin, “Chaikovsky as Symphonist,” in his anthology *On Russian Music* (Berkeley, CA: University of California Press, 2009), 129-130.
Further thematic transformation is the focus of the symphony’s third section, “Scherzo: Dance of Satyrs.” This is a “wonderfully grotesque yet good humoured” tour de force of imitative composition and orchestration. It is constructed almost entirely from transformations of the “chirp” motif, itself derived from the longer flute solo in the Introduction. The satyrs arrive in the guise of two bassoons, marked

274 Hurd, liner notes to Pagan Symphony, 4.
275 It is scored for woodwinds and brass alone; the strings enter only just before the percussive climax.
grottesco.” Each takes a transformation of the three-note “chirp” motif through a six-measure phrase characterized by imitative rhythmic and melodic motion (see Figure 3.40 for the first these phrases). Bantock colors the modal theme with heavy use of chromaticism and dissonant tritones.

Figure 3.40: Bantock, Pagan Symphony, page 112 at rehearsal number 39. Beginning of the “Scherzo: Dance of Satyrs.” Bantock transforms the flute’s motif from “chirp” to a heavily chromatic satyr’s dance.

Throughout this section Bantock builds an ever-thicker fugal texture in a “maze of interlocking, imitative phrases.”276 The bassoons introduce a “countersubject” that is rhythmically identical to the “chirp” motif but is melodically only a descending chromatic scale harmonized in minor thirds. Chromatic motion in a variety of rhythmic forms increasingly permeates the texture around presentations of the “dance” motif. Unison trombones and tuba twice give out this “dance” motif fortissimo, an example of the “heavy” brass doing the kind of blatant passage-work that lead to charges of vulgarity against other Romantic composers.277

276 Hurd, liner notes to Pagan Symphony, 4.
277 See Adam Carse, The History of Orchestration (New York: Dover, 1964), 240, 252, and 277. Reflecting contemporary biases, Carse levels such charges against Rossini (“what is more than a trace of vulgarity in his handling of the heavy brass voices”),
When the imitative texture has reached its saturation point, solo timpani create a chromatically altered cadence from A-flat minor (bvi) to C major (I). The other percussion instruments join to present the “thunderous climax.” This features timpani playing the “chirp” motif, rolling snare drum, galloping figures in the tenor drum, and off-beat accents in the tambourine. Bantock’s percussive exuberance reflects the Romantic love of instrumental display already demonstrated by the low brass. Richard Strauss is a clear forerunner, but so is Edward Elgar. Such forceful orchestration is a quality found not only in Strauss’ *Ein Heldenleben* or *Japanische Festmusik* but in in Elgar’s “imperial” music: the *Pomp and Circumstance Military Marches*, the 1897 Hérold and Auber (“a tendency to a too blatant use of the brass instruments gives a rather vulgar tinge” and “their habit of treating the heaviest brass voices in the manner of a commonplace piano accompaniment”) and even early Wagner (“the rather blatant noisiness, the brass-band effects, the more tawdry brilliance and sharp-edged contrasts of *Rienzi*”) and Verdi (“a somewhat too lavish use of full brass harmony gives Verdi’s work an occasional noisiness…a blatant forcefulness not unlike that of Meyerbeer in his spectacular vein”), Elgar was also the well-known target of such criticisms. Edward Dent, in an article for Guido Adler’s 1931 *Hanbuch der Musikgeschichte* commented that Elgar was “too emotional”, “not quite free from vulgarity,” “pompous,” and “too deliberately noble in expression.” (Quoted in Howes, *English Musical Renaissance*, 164.) Howes goes on (pages 165-6) to note Elgar’s love of Meyerbeer, “who is an abomination to academic England,” and his “love of glittering effect, the pomp and shows of things,” which drew Elgar not only to Meyerbeer, but to Liszt, “of whom he had not the horror of the conventionally educated Englishman.”

278 Hurd, liner notes to *Pagan Symphony*, 4. Bantock directs the timpanist to play with wooden sticks, increasing the volume and impact of each stroke.

279 See Stradling and Hughes, *The English Musical Renaissance*, page 63: “Elgar had for long been an enthusiastic Wagnerian and an admirer of the ‘expressive’ and the ‘progressive’ in European music…His contemporary musical hero was Richard Strauss, whom the academics [Parry and Stanford] regarded as an ‘unhealthy’ influence.”

280 Strauss’ opus 84, the *Festmusik zur Feier des 2600 jährigen Bestehens des Kaiserreichs Japan* was written for the 2600th anniversary of the founding of the Japanese imperial dynasty. It is scored for an orchestra that includes 8 horns, 7 trumpets, 8 trombones, 2 tubas, and organ.
Diamond Jubilee *Imperial March*, and the *Crown of India* masque for the 1912 Indian
 coronation of King George V.\textsuperscript{281}

The fourth section of the *Pagan Symphony* also uses thematic transformation to
 create its melodic material. This is an F minor “antique dance” in triple meter, *Allegretto
grazioso*. Bantock increases the “exotic” effect of this section music by a static
 accompanying rhythm accented by shakes of a tambourine on the second beat of each
 bar. Two bassoons provide a drone bass in open fifths (F\textsuperscript{2}-C\textsuperscript{3}). Figure 3.41 gives its first
 eight bars. The flute melody, particularly the distinctive oscillation of a minor second, is
 derived from the horn-calls of the introduction.\textsuperscript{282} Bantock relies heavily on literal
 repetition in this melody, creating a “primitive but hypnotic” effect.\textsuperscript{283} Sudden dissonant
 interruptions of half-diminished seventh chords by woodwinds and horns occur
 periodically before the melody returns. As the dance continues, Bantock employs a
 twenty-four-measure sequence that slowly lowers the melody through two octaves.

\textsuperscript{281} A more innocent public-spirited example is the *Cockaigne Overture*, “In London
 Town.”
\textsuperscript{282} Hurd, liner notes to *Pagan Symphony*, 4.
\textsuperscript{283} Ibid., 4.
Figure 3.41: Bantock, *Pagan Symphony*, page 151, four bars before rehearsal number 53. The theme of this “antique dance” is derived from a transformation of the introduction’s horn calls. Note the markers of exoticism in the drone bass, static string harmonies, and use of tambourine to accentuate the dance rhythm.

Straussian and Wagnerian Stylistic Allusions

As this “exotic” dance ends, Bantock introduces a Romantic waltz, *Lento cantabile* (see Figure 3.42). This seems to be homage to Richard Strauss in his sentimental *Rosenkavalier* mood. The conductor is instructed to “(Beat 1)” in 3/8 time as
the horns, basses, and violas provide accompaniment figures on the weak beats, securing a waltz pulse under the “soave” and “molto espressivo” melody.

**Figure 3.42:** Bantock, *Pagan Symphony*, page 161 at rehearsal number 60. Bantock places this waltz, modeled heavily on the style of Richard Strauss in the middle section of the ternary form “antique dance.” Note the “expressive” chromaticism at both the beginnings and endings of phrases.

There are frequent chromatic pitch alterations in this melody, particularly on strong beats and linking passages at the end of phrases. Bantock creates a twenty-two-measure melody by a symmetrical phrase construction of 4, 4, 3, 3, 4, and 4 bars respectively. A rescored repetition occurs when Bantock merges the waltz melody and accompaniment with a variant of the “exotic” dance motif at page 168, two bars after rehearsal number 64. This is the same contrapuntal ingenuity displayed by Hector
Berlioz in his *Symphonie fantastique* when, at the climax of *Songe d’une nuit du sabbat*, the “witches’ dance” motif and the *Dies irae* combine.\(^{284}\)

In addition to the waltz, there is a passage in the symphony’s second section that alludes to Richard Strauss at his most saccharine.\(^{285}\) At page 62, four measures before rehearsal number 23, the quick triple meter slows to “Lento, molto sostenuto.” In E major, Clarinets in sixths sing out an “espressivo” melody in even quarter notes with prominent descending appoggiaturas resolve upward by half-steps (see Figure 3.43). The gesture is very similar to one in Strauss’ *Alpensinfonie*, during the *Entritt en den Wald* (“Entry into the Wood”) portion, shown in piano reduction in Figure 3.44.\(^{286}\) The effect is of sudden intense sentimentality in both scores.

**Figure 3.43:** Bantock, *Pagan Symphony*, page 62, four bars before rehearsal number 23. “Sentimental” passage reflective of Richard Strauss. Note prominent descending appoggiaturas harmonized in sixths.

\(^{284}\) Bantock presents not just a combination of themes but also a clash of cultures. While Berlioz’s witches fit a macabre death scene symbolized by the plainchant, Viennese waltzes and ancient Greek dances mesh less obviously.

\(^{285}\) Scholar and composer Gardner Read uses this adjective particularly to describe offending passages in *Ein Heldenleben* and *Also sprach Zarathustra*. Read also refers to as Strauss’ “frequent atrocious sentimentality, distressing prolixity, and vulgar mannerisms…” Gardner Read, *Style and Orchestration*, New York: Schirmer Books, 1979), 117 and 114.

Figure 3.44: Richard Strauss, *Ein Alpensinfonie* (Dover edition), page 36, six bars after rehearsal number 35. Compare to Bantock’s “sentimental” passage in Figure 3.43.

In Figure 3.43, Bantock’s shifts attention to a solo violin in the third measure. This introduces a lengthy variant of its earlier “yearning” motif. The soloist’s octave leaps take the violin to the peak of its range, similar to Strauss’s use of the instrument in many of his scores. Music critic David Hurwitz jokes about Strauss’ “obligatory solo violin” because of its frequency in works from *Ein Heldenleben* to the 1922 ballet *Schlagobers.* Figure 3.45 shows a portion of the violin solo from the *Tanzlied* of *Also sprach Zarathustra.*

Figure 3.45: Richard Strauss, *Also sprach Zarathustra* (Dover edition), page 148, one bar before rehearsal number 40. A passage from the *Tanzlied* showing Strauss’s virtuosic and high-lying writing for solo violin.

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288 It is the solo violin passages in particular that Read condemns as “saccharine” in *Also sprach Zarathustra* and *Ein Heldenleben.*
Bantock adds a celesta to the delicate orchestration as the solo violin interacts with the rest of its section in their upper register, a scoring choice particularly reminiscent of the composer of Rosenkavalier’s “Presentation of the Rose” scene. The upper woodwinds and violins in octaves then begin a sequential chromatic ascent intensified by lower chromatic neighbor notes, shown in Figure 3.46. This moves from D#5/6 to G natural 5/6. Notice the bass again descends by semitone in every other measure. The technique is the same Bantock uses in Omar Khayyám’s final Quatrain, shown above in Figure 3.13.

**Figure 3.46:** Bantock, *Pagan Symphony*, page 67, two bars after rehearsal number 24. Ascending chromatic sequence intensified by “swaying” chromatic neighbor tones in the first, third, and fourth bars. Note that the bass descends by a half-step every other measure.

Bantock returns to this “sentimental” passage in the finale of the symphony, where it is lengthened from 32 bars to 56 to provide approximately one-third of the movement’s length. It is followed by a passage that parallels almost exactly the string writing at the conclusion of Wagner’s overture to his opera *Tannhäuser*.

This echo of *Tannhäuser* is a repeated “yearning” figure in the violins made of paired eighth notes that leap upward and then descend by steps with occasional chromatic alterations. The “yearning” leaps are variously by sixths, sevenths, or octaves, and the part is marked “Con moto appassionato” (see Figure 3.47).
Compare this to the string parts at the climax of the Tannhäuser overture, shown in Figure 3.48. Bantock achieves a Wagnerian length as well as increasing the harmonic tension before the work’s final climax: this figure dominates the texture for forty-eight measures as Bantock alternates the upper and lower strings, paired with the upper and lower woodwinds, in repetitions of this phrase. It peaks on page 232 at rehearsal number 88, when the first violins leap from B5 to C#7 before descending; this is the passage shown in Figure 3.47.

**Figure 3.47:** Bantock, *Pagan Symphony*, page 232 at rehearsal number 88. Climax of the Wagnerian “yearning” figure that closely resembles the string writing at the conclusion of the overture to Tannhäuser.
The *Pagan Symphony* ends with final transformations of its principal motives, including the “chirp” and an extended “horn-call” motif now syncopated over the bar lines. The “yearning” paired eighth notes of *Tannhäuser* reappear in the strings, ascending chromatically once again above the “chirp” motif in the cellos, itself shifting chromatically in each bar. A final dissonant tone cluster on D-F#-Ab-C resolving by half-steps clears the way for the diatonic coda. Bantock recalls the satyrs’ dance in a twenty-eight-measure interruption – his natural prolixity asserting itself even here – before he concludes the symphony in ten bars of emphatic C major.

**Bantock in Summary**

Peter Pirie summed up Granville Bantock as a composer who “from his student days favoured subjects that were cosmic in scale, huge in conception, Babylonian in orchestration, and catastrophic in economic effect.”²⁸⁹ Bantock did conceive his music on the largest scale and did not worry about expenses but his musical material itself is not Byzantine in complexity. The examples described above demonstrate Bantock’s debt to

Harmonically, Pirie was more accurate in saying that Bantock’s works often had “diabolical intentions and tonic-and-dominant harmonies; he scored for the Strauss orchestra with common chords.” Diatonic harmonies underpin even Bantock’s most extravagant works, as do those of his models Wagner and Strauss; his “Edwardian excess” comes from the amount of chromatic decoration layered over them. There are three principal forms of this decoration: coloration of harmonic progressions through the addition of chromatic pitches, transformation of musical themes and leitmotifs through chromatic alteration, and the insertion of what might be described as “undigested” chromatic scale segments to change the musical mood. These segments may occur over a short or long term: within musical phrases or through the harmonic rhythm of a whole passage. Bantock also delighted in melodic and harmonic tritones, deliberately daring choices in his Edwardian atmosphere.

290 Pirie, “Bantock and his Generation”, 716.
291 Foreman, liner notes to Omar Khayyám, 10.
292 Bantock’s use of decorative chromaticism was daring enough to make him the equal of both Debussy and Strauss in British author Arthur Potter’s book on chromatic harmony. See Arthur G. Potter, Modern Chords Explained: with musical examples from the works of C. Debussy, Richard Strauss, and Granville Bantock (London: W. Reeves, 1910).
293 An example of the first category is the final cadence of the Hebridean Symphony; examples of the second category include the chromatic alteration of the “Muezzin” motif in Omar Khayyam three bars before rehearsal number 1 and the Pagan Symphony’s transformation of the flute’s diatonic “chirp” into the chromatic “Dance of Satyrs” fugal subject. The third category includes, in the short term, the Hebridean Symphony’s flute sextuplets three bars before rehearsal number 5 and the extended viola solo four measures before rehearsal number 15; also the introduction of the “Night” motif in the Prelude to Omar Khayyám. Long-term examples occur in the Pagan Symphony three bars after rehearsal number 6, where the harmony slowly shifts under the “changing background”
Chromaticism is often paired with sequence, Bantock’s favorite method for building tension, extending musical passages, and evading conclusive cadences. Bantock rivaled Elgar in his obsession with this technique, in both diatonic and chromatically altered forms;295 as described above, sequences were also the favored remedy for his composition teacher when inspiration failed. Perhaps it was for this reason that Bantock’s son Raymond considered his father’s melodies “short-breathed.” 296 More generally, imitation provided polyphonic contrast to an otherwise homophonic texture. Stephen Banfield characterized this primacy of homophony as “Edwardian England… going on a long harmonic holiday.” 297 Banfield quotes William Denis Browne as to the reason behind this primacy:

The training of a musician at this period [the late 19th century] included harmony, taught first, and counterpoint, taught second… A pupil learned naturally to attach more importance to the earlier study than to the second. That is, he learned from the first to think in chords, or vertically, instead of in melodies, or horizontally… Such a training would render a young musician peculiarly susceptible to the influence of a movement that was soon to make itself felt on the Continent. Debussy and others were experimenting with harmony for its own sake, and writing music which depended for its effect solely on the juxtaposition of unresolved discords. Strauss was working on somewhat similar lines in Germany. It was not surprising that young British composers, tired of Brahms and estranged from counterpoint, should fall an

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294 A conspicuous melodic example not already quoted is the “Wail of the Morning” leitmotif in Omar Khayyám, first played six bars before rehearsal number 16. It begins with a descending leap from E#5 to B4 and then climbs chromatically upward to D5. 295 See Quatrains XII and LIV of Omar Khayyám and the “Dance of Satyrs” and “antique dance” in the Pagan Symphony. 296 Cuillin Bantock, Never Lukewarm, 20. 297 Banfield, Sensibility and English Song, 106.
easy prey to music which was both easier (when you had your models) and more exciting to produce than dry fugues and sonatas.298

Juxtaposition of dissonant harmonies was enhanced in Debussy and Strauss by colorful or dramatic changes in orchestration – a trait absent in Brahms. Music critics and scholars have generally credited Bantock’s skill in orchestration. Howes, for example, praises his “mastery of instrumentation,” though at the expense of his melodies:

It is his handling of the media of music, unaccompanied chorus as well as orchestra, rather than the matter, which constitutes the chief excellence of his music. Indeed the poverty of his ideas, concealed so long as they were fashionable, which is to say up to the war of 1914-1918, had even before he died proved noxious, if not fatal to the survival and currency of his music.299

At issue is how often a composer combines timbres from different instrumental families to create a blended sound. This was Wagner’s strategy, constantly mixing two, or even three, different instrumental choirs together.300 In contrast, composers like Tchaikovsky or Sibelius relied on the opposition of unmixed timbres, leaving the strings, brass, and woodwinds generally separated in their scoring.301 Bantock follows Wagner’s blending much more than Tchaikovsky’s opposition, frequently joining woodwinds with either strings or brass. Bantock doubles even solo woodwind lines with a string group. This type of scoring can become monochrome, a danger that Bantock does not always avoid. This is especially true when horns are included as a constant “binding agent” or

300 See Read, Style and Orchestration, 77.
301 Ibid., 83.
“glue” between the woodwinds and strings. Adam Carse, in his *History of Orchestration*, finds this fault in the orchestration of Johannes Brahms.302

Bantock’s boldest instrumental colors come from the percussion and brass sections. “Extra” percussion is always present in his larger works, including bass drum, cymbals, snare drum, and tenor drum. “Middle Eastern” works such as *Omar Khayyám, Thalaba the Destroyer*, and the *Processional* from *The Curse of Kehama* make frequent use of triangle, tambourine, and gong. Bantock’s brass scoring can be more adventurous and taxing than his woodwind or string writing, as Cuillin Bantock describes in his memoir, *Never Lukewarm*: “[there is an] exhilarating over-the-top quality, which, in its un-Englishness, seems to invite musical chaos, like a small boy daring to add yet another card to his growing castle and getting away with it.”303

Bantock was also daring in his neglect of formal archetypes, preferring to create immediate dramatic effects instead of relying on a larger abstract structure. None of Bantock’s symphonic music is in orthodox sonata form; even his tone poems rely on

302 “The horns act as a binding material [between the woodwinds and strings], and are almost continuously employed as such, providing a somewhat monotonous cohesion by means of parts which are not exactly melodic, yet are more than mere harmonic padding… In the matter of grouping and contrasting the main sections of the orchestra, Brahms seems to have adopted one of the least attractive features from Schumann’s orchestration. A sort of semi-tutti, comprised of strings, woodwind and horns, is his favourite and almost constant combination. The groups rarely appear in unmixed form.” Carse, *The History of Orchestration*, 296.
303 Cuillin Bantock, *Never Lukewarm*, 19-20. This is particularly true in the “battle” section of the *Hebridean Symphony* and in the *Pagan Symphony’s* “Dance of Satyrs.” Peter Pirie, however, rates the “defiant” trumpet calls in the *Hebridean Symphony* an “incredible miscalculation” and a “dreadful moment” that caused “every trumpet player in London” to suddenly go “on holiday” after a performance was announced. See Pirie “Bantock and his Generation”, 716-717.
close adherence to a text or scenario. Bantock created an “organic” form relying on Lisztian thematic transformation or Wagnerian recurring *leitmotifs* but it can overextend itself in a wealth of details or unmotivated repetition and imitation. Music critic David Hurwitz noted that Bantock’s main weakness was “a lack of feeling for form,” but that he “conceals this effectively enough in his best works.” Howes mused:

Whether concentration and self-criticism – never characteristic of Corder’s pupils, as seen also in Bax and Holbrooke – would have ensured a more solid achievement and a greater vitality is a matter of some doubt, for Bantock had a diffuse mind, intellectually curious, temperamentally sociable, [and] imaginatively susceptible. He had a chameleon’s skin for local colour, and his wanderings, spiritual no less than physical, were wide – he went round the world twice, once as a youth conducting musical comedies for George Edwardes and once again in age as an examiner for Trinity College of Music.

The critic Neville Cardus dismissed the “local colour” and physical and spiritual wanderings of Bantock’s music as “Brummagem,” claiming that, “if you turned one of Bantock's Oriental works upside-down, like a mug or cup, you would find ‘Made in

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304 Bantock’s wife Helena referred to the *Hebridean Symphony* as, “more a symphonic poem as there is a distinct story.” See Cuillin Bantock, *Never Lukewarm*, 38.


Surprisingly, Frank Howes sympathetically rebutted that “It would be unkind to call these Eastern pictures, poems and evocations Brummagem goods, since they were not for export: they reflect the effects of the East on a sympathetic Western mind.”

Stephen Banfield best sums up Bantock’s imaginative forays into the exoticism of the East: “The Edwardian era was perhaps the last in which such escapism could find geographical embodiment.”

Finally, alongside Bantock’s “impossible oriental obsession,” a Romantic view of nature gave him inspiration. Em Marshall-Luck, director of the English Music Festival, compared Bantock’s landscapes to those painted by J.M.W. Turner: both concerned with immediacy of effect and both drawn to Romantic scenes and moods:

“Mountains in a drifting mist, a seagull calling along a lonely and barbaric coast, a forest full of mystery and strange shadows.” It is a comparison that suits all the English Romantics, as the following chapters illustrate.

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308 Cuillin Bantock, *Never Lukewarm*, 56: “Yet it was the critic Neville Cardus who many years ago wrote that if you turned one of Bantock’s Oriental works upside-down, like a mug or cup, you would find "Made in Birmingham" stamped on the bottom.”


310 Banfield, *Sensibility and English Song*, 97.

311 Pirie, “Bantock and his Generation,” 717.

Chapter Four: Joseph Holbrooke (1878-1958)

Joseph Holbrooke was the most publicly vociferous English Romantic. He took every opportunity to express his strong opinions about the state of music in Britain, particularly what he saw as an overreliance on foreign performers and conductors, in the musical press.\(^{313}\) Ironically, Holbrooke owed his “arrival” as a composer to a German-born conductor, Sir August Manns (1825-1907), who championed Holbrooke’s early tone poem *The Raven*. Manns’ performances opened doors for the young composer, leading to prestigious music festival commissions and lifting Holbrooke out of the worst of the poverty in which he had been living. As a result, Holbrooke experienced a quicker rise to fame and a sharper drop into obscurity than any of the other English Romantics. While in the public eye, Holbrooke worked tirelessly to stay there, even telephoning the press to report a motorcycle accident involving himself; the morning papers dutifully ran accounts of the “dramatic occurrence” in which “composer Joseph Holbrooke” had been involved.\(^{314}\) Bantock and Brian referred to him in their private correspondence as a “cockatoo” for this and other acts of self-preening.\(^{315}\) Yet Holbrooke did, however, write favorably, if idiosyncratically, of the other English Romantics in his *Contemporary British Composers*, a book surveying the English composers active in the early twentieth

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\(^{313}\) Despite this opinion and his self-identification as a “Nationalist in art, as in politics” Holbrooke had little sympathy for the “team-spirit” of the Pastoral School or for its professed nationalist mission in restoring English music to greatness.


\(^{315}\) See Eastaugh, *Havergal Brian*, 71.
century. Holbrooke remained ultimately reliant on patrons and friends, however, and when these passed or faded away, he was left forgotten long before his death.

**Biographical Sketch**

Joseph Holbrooke was born in Croydon, Surrey, Greater London, on July 5th, 1878. His parents were professional musicians; his father was a music-hall pianist and his mother was a professional vocalist from Scotland. Father and son shared a given name, leading the younger Holbrooke to refer to himself as “Josef,” albeit inconsistently. His father taught Joseph piano and violin from age six and Holbrooke later substituted for him in various music halls.

Already writing music by the age of nine, at fifteen he was enrolled in the Royal Academy of Music. He studied piano under Frederick Westlake (1840-1898) and composition under Frederick Corder, who acquainted Holbrooke, like Bantock before him, with Wagner, Liszt, and Berlioz. Holbrooke was an industrious pupil who soon

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316 Joseph Holbrooke, *Contemporary British Composers* (London: C. Palmer, 1925). The fact that Holbrooke felt qualified to pass judgment on composers ranging from Elgar to Frank Bridge is another matter, however.

317 She died from pulmonary tuberculosis when he was two years old.

318 Holbrooke “adopted the German spelling of his name, and a large number of his works was published under that appellation.” Gareth Vaughan, liner notes to *British Composers Premiere Collections, Volume 1*, Cameo Classics CC9037CD, 2009. “Like his father, he was named Joseph, and since the two taught music in the same London city district, the son called himself ‘Josef,’ adopting a modern spelling variant in order to avoid confusion.” Franz Groborz, liner notes to *Holbrooke: Symphonic Poems*, trans. Susan Marie Praeder, CPO 777-442-2, 2009, 17.

319 Holbrooke met the “leading entertainers of his day and wrote countless arrangements from them over the next few years.” Franz Groborz, liner notes to *Holbrooke: Clarinet Chamber Music*, trans. J. Bradford Robinson, CPO CD 777 731-2, 2014, 15-16.

wrote a quantity of chamber music performed at Academy concerts and received numerous prizes.\(^{321}\) He was already composing with a “facility which never left him.”\(^{322}\)

Holbrooke’s facility was tied, however, to an “uncompromising” belief in his own talent that often made him his own worst enemy.\(^{323}\) This revealed itself later in life through polemic articles in the musical press designed to champion his music that instead insulted and alienated those who might otherwise attend to him.\(^{324}\) While still a student he substituted an original piano work, \textit{L’orgie}, for Schumann’s \textit{Toccata} during a chamber music concert.\(^{325}\) This earned Holbrooke a severe reprimand by Principal Alexander

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\(^{322}\) Michael Plant, liner notes to Josef Holbrooke: Historical Recordings, Symposium Records CD 1130, 1992, 1.

\(^{323}\) Ibid., 1.

\(^{324}\) The following is an example of such polemics: “Mr. Josef Holbrooke steps forward somewhat adventurously with his 12\textsuperscript{th} year of endeavour for some Modern English Music to an apathetic public, and hopes to receive as few blows as possible (with the usual financial loss) in return. That our composers rarely hear any of their songs, if they are in any way above the Ballad Concert standard, still holds good, so there is still reason for giving concerts, which may have for their object the encouragement of native art. I do not mean students’ art. It seems that a great deal of encouragement is going on in this direction with plenty of financial backing; with what result the future will reveal. Meanwhile the composer who has passed the stage of the ‘very gifted young man,’ with a fond professor to watch over him, seems to be very little catered for, except by a solitary performance every year.” Quoted by W.G. McNaught, “Josef Holbrooke,” Josef Holbrooke: Various Appreciations by Many Authors (London: Rudall Carte & Co. and Holbrooke Society, 1937), 50.

\(^{325}\) Michael Plant, liner notes to Josef Holbrooke: Historical Recordings, 1.
Mackenzie. His music was judged “morbid,” with “horrible harmonies” “lack of melody,” and “objectionable style.”326 Family and financial troubles, however, not frictions with the administration ultimately forced him to leave the Royal Academy. Holbrooke withdrew in 1896 after three years of study without finishing his degree.

Forced to find work, Holbrooke joined various touring musical troupes and pantomimes as pianist and music director, sometimes for as little return as twenty shillings a week.327 Holbrooke also eked out a living as a music teacher and freelance composer, turning out songs, part songs, anthems, and instrumental works in a salon-music style. At the same time, however, he was engaged with the composition of large-scale orchestral works, modeled on Richard Strauss’ tone poems, with dogged self-confidence. He mailed these works, “quite unsolicited,”328 to conductors such as Dan Godrey329 and Sir August Manns330 in the hopes of attracting a performance and public recognition.

While on a music-hall tour in the north of England during December 1899, Holbrooke learned that Manns had accepted his tone poem The Raven, after Poe, for performance. Holbrooke was so destitute that a sympathetic clergyman had to pay for Holbrooke’s train ticket to London, as he had become stranded in Worksop, near

328 Ibid. 11.
329 Conductor in Bournemouth who championed English composers at this time
330 Conductor at the Crystal Palace, London
Sheffield, after the music-hall tour collapsed. Manns himself paid for the orchestral parts to be copied and for Holbrooke’s trip to the Crystal Palace for rehearsals.

*The Raven* was performed at a Crystal Palace Saturday Afternoon Concert on March 3, 1900. It was an immediate success and Holbrooke began to receive commissions from various provincial music festivals. Soon after Holbrooke met and was befriended by Granville Bantock, who invited him to New Brighton to conduct Holbrooke’s second tone poem, *The Skeleton in Armour*, after Longfellow. Later that year Bantock not only offered Holbrooke a teaching position at the Birmingham and Midlands Institute but also lodgings in Bantock’s own home. Holbrooke accepted and lived with the Bantock family for almost a year. The two friends shared a love for such composers as Tchaikovsky and Richard Strauss. Bantock’s daughter Myrrha recalled in particular how her father and his guest were “wildly enthusiastic” during a concert of Strauss’ music they attended together: “‘Superb! I feel like climbing the pillars,’ exclaimed the excited Josef, white in the face with emotion.” On another occasion the high-strung artist locked himself in Bantock’s study to complete an orchestral scherzo inspired by Shakespeare’s fantastical poem “Queen Mab.” After being

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332 Barnett, “A Life in Outline,” 11. The Crystal Palace was an enormous glass pavilion constructed for the 1851 Great Exhibition in Hyde Park as a display area for demonstrations of technological developments made during the nineteenth century. In 1854 it was rebuilt in South London, where it remained as a concert and assembly hall until it was destroyed by a fire in 1936.

333 These commissions resulted in *Queen Mab* (tone poem after Shakespeare, 1904) and *Byron* (chorus and orchestra, after Keats, 1904) for the Leeds Festival as well as *The Bells* (tone poem after Poe, 1906) for the Birmingham Festival. *The Bells* was premiered alongside Elgar’s *The Kingdom* and Bantock’s *Omar Khayyám* Part I.


335 Myrrha Bantock, *Granville Bantock*, 49. The concert was conducted in London by Strauss himself and included songs sung by his wife.
missed at mealtimes, he was discovered collapsed on the floor, the completed composition on his desk. Eventually, however, pupils proved hard to find and Holbrooke, never patient, decided to return to London and freelance composition.

Holbrooke’s Romantic imagination frequently led him to write enlarged, impractical works. In 1907, Herbert Trench (1865-1923), Irish poet and critic, approached Holbrooke about setting his narrative poem *Apollo and the Seaman* to music. The two created an “illuminated symphony” by using a magic lantern to project the text of the poem, as well as associated images, on a screen that hid the performers from view. Sir Thomas Beecham conducted the premiere at the Queen’s Hall; his description of the difficulties overcome in performing such an unconventional work, reminiscent of Hector Berlioz in its unusual form and large performing forces, makes entertaining reading. *Apollo and the Seaman* received only one performance but at its premiere Holbrooke met Thomas Evelyn Ellis (1880-1946), the Eighth Lord Howard de

340 The symphony is scored for male choir and an enormous orchestra that includes a contrabass sarrusophone, for which Beecham went to enormous lengths to locate both the instrument and an executant. See Thomas Beecham, *A Mingled Chime* (New York: G.P. Putnam’s Sons, 1943), 114-116. He describes the near-disastrous premiere on pages 121-125.
Walden. This was the beginning of “the most important artistic relationship of Holbrooke’s career.”

Ellis became Holbrooke’s patron and catalyst for his largest work, a cycle of three operas closely paralleling Wagner’s Ring cycle. Ellis was an amateur poet and playwright with an interest in the mythology and culture of Wales. He asked Holbrooke to create an opera from his drama Dylan, based on myths from the Welsh Mabinogion. The project eventually became three operas completed between 1908 and 1920. The trilogy, The Children of Don, Dylan, Son of the Wave, and Bronwen, was named The Cauldron of Annwn after its principal plot element, a magical cauldron associated with the underworld of Welsh mythology. The cauldron is similar to Alberich’s ring: both are imbued with power but bear a curse. Each is coveted for their abilities but bring misfortune to their wielders. Holbrooke also used the Wagnerian techniques of leitmotif, chromatic harmony, and an expanded orchestra in composing the Cauldron of Annwn.

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342 Lord Howard de Walden was inspired by Lady Charlotte Guest’s multi-volume translation of the Mabinogion, first published 1838-49, which had popularized the collection of Welsh legends in much the same manner as Fitzgerald’s translation of the Rubaiyat had done for Omar Khayyam. See Forbes, “Out of Old Mythologies.”
343 Dylan was composed first, then The Children of Don, and finally Bronwen. Lord Howard de Walden described how, after finishing Dylan, Holbrooke asked for “returned demanding more contests of the same kind. To furnish these I could only go back before the birth of Dylan to the Children of Don and follow beyond his death to rewrite the tale of Bronwen, endeavouring as I travelled to give some semblance of coherence to the mass.” Thomas Evelyn Ellis, The Cauldron of Annwn (London: Werner Laurie, 1922), xiii-xiv. Quoted in Forbes, “Old Mythologies,” 53.
344 The Children of Don was premiered in 1912 at Oscar Hammersten’s London Opera House, conducted by Arthur Nikisch and Holbrooke himself. Dylan, Son of the Wave was premiered in 1914 at the Drury Lane Theatre by the Beecham Opera Company, Sir Thomas Beecham conducting. Bronwen was not premiered until 1929 in Huddersfield by the Carl Rosa Opera Company.
trilogy. Because of its similarities to the *Ring* cycle, journalist and theatrical critic Hannen Swaffer christened Holbrooke the “Cockney Wagner.”

Ellis supported Holbrooke until his death in 1946. The wealth and personal connections of Ellis made possible generous backing for performances of Holbrooke’s works and those of other British composers Holbrooke championed. Beyond this artistic support, Holbrooke stayed with Ellis regularly, and enjoyed trips to Wales and the French Riviera with his patron. The composer even joined Ellis and his wife on Mediterranean cruises and African safaris.

After the death of this lavish patron, Holbrooke spent his final decade promoting his music with “tireless vigor.” This promotion was part of a lifelong readiness to spar verbally and in print with any person or institution that the composer saw as impeding the progress of British music in general and his own in particular. His targets included conductors, performers, and, in the words of contemporary critic W.G. McNaught, “the great stupid British public that does not crowd to his concerts.” The BBC was taken

345 Quoted in Groborz, liner notes to *Holbrooke: Clarinet Chamber Music*, 16 and Vaughan, liner notes to *British Composers Premiere Collection, Volume 1*.
348 Ibid. 19.
349 A sample of his rhetoric, quoted in W.G. McNaught, “Josef Holbrooke,” 52: “What is wanted is the death by starvation of three or four English composers. Scarcely anything short of this will awaken the public to recognition of the way they are being treated. You can’t expect men to write music for nothing; nor can you expect publishers to publish it when they know there is little possibility of its being heard more than once – if, indeed, one performance be can be guaranteed. Yet this is what English artists have to contend with. Their work is not wanted at home. They have to waste their money and time in travelling to Germany or France in the heart-breaking endeavour to get their music heard abroad, and then when, by good fortune, they have managed to get a hearing in some second-rate German town, they have at last a chance of acceptation at home.”
350 Ibid., 49.
especially to task for what Holbrooke perceived as deliberate neglect; in his view, “it did not pay proper attention to him.”\textsuperscript{351}

Holbrooke’s brash and combative personality contrasted with his friend Bantock’s more sophisticated charm. Holbrooke was blunt in prose and in person where Bantock was persuasive and charismatic. Both men shared, however, a passion that fixed unwaveringly on its object, however quickly that object might change. They both threw themselves into their work and believed wholeheartedly in their vision of musical Romanticism.

\textit{“Poeana”}

The works of the American poet and author Edgar Allan Poe (1809-1849) had an enormous impact on Holbrooke, inspiring thirty-five compositions in widely varied genres.\textsuperscript{352} Holbrooke referred to these as his “Poeana”\textsuperscript{353} and described Poe as among his favorite authors.\textsuperscript{354}

The English musical press was quick to notice the affinity between the English composer and the American author of the “supernatural, macabre, and uncanny.”\textsuperscript{355} Holbrooke, said Ernest Newman, had “great affection” for Poe’s “fine intellectual

\begin{footnotes}
\footnotetext{351}{Groborz, liner notes to \textit{Holbrooke: Symphonic Poems}, 19.}
\footnotetext{353}{Barnett, “A Life in Outline,” 6 and Allis, “Holbrooke and Poe Revisited,” 119.}
\footnotetext{354}{Lowe, \textit{Josef Holbrooke}, 33 and referenced in Allis, “Holbrooke and Poe Revisited,” 117.}
\footnotetext{355}{Allis, “Holbrooke and Poe Revisited,” 119.}
\end{footnotes}
morbidities.” 356 Gerald Cumberland named them “spiritual kinsman” who “both had the same indefinable quality of mind that found expression in bizarre and grotesque and yet hauntingly beautiful effects.” 357 Finally, Edwin Evans described their “rich, if somewhat erratic imagination, with leanings toward the morbid, the bizarre, and that indefinable neutral territory which separates the two.” 358 Such imaginative territory is clearly Romantic in its exploration of subjective emotion. “The oldest and strongest emotion of mankind is fear,” asserted later Poe devotee and horror author Howard Philips Lovecraft (1890-1937), “and the oldest and strongest kind of fear is fear of the unknown.” 359 Holbrooke, as a follower of Poe into unknown lands of the “supernatural, macabre, and uncanny,” explored imaginative territory inhabited by “Others” or exotic subjects, as much as Bantock with the Middle East or Bax with the “Celtic North.” 360

**Musical Examples**

This chapter presents analyses of two of Holbrooke’s Poe-inspired orchestral works, *The Raven* and *Ulalume*, as well as an excerpt from *Bronwen*, the final opera in the *Cauldron of Annwn* trilogy. Both Poe compositions strive to capture the surreal landscapes of both body and soul that Poe evokes through Wagnerian or Straussian techniques in melody, harmony, and orchestration. The overture to *Bronwen* uses similar Late Romantic techniques to portray the mythical drama’s protagonists as well as to link

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357 Gerald Cumberland, “Queen’s Hall programme,” in *Josef Holbrooke: Various Appreciations*, 7.
its inspiration in the *Mabinogion* with the landscape of “Wild Wales,” a landscape Holbrooke came to know and love much as Arnold Bax did with Ireland later in the century.

*The Raven, Op. 25*

Holbrooke composed *The Raven* at twenty-two as the first of his Poe-inspired works. Holbrooke revised the work after its premiere by August Manns and Novello published this version in 1912. It is scored for approximately the same forces as Wagner’s *Das Rheingold* or Strauss’ *Tod und Verklärung*, though this is modest when compared to Holbrooke’s *Cauldron of Annwn* trilogy.

**Poetic Leitmotifs**

*The Raven*’s construction echoes Liszt’s *Les préludes*, an episodic series of illustrative passages linked by the reappearance and transformation of various *leitmotifs*. Holbrooke’s *leitmotifs* correspond to excerpts from Poe’s text placed in the

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361 For full texts of *The Raven*, see Appendix.
363 Triple woodwind and auxiliaries (piccolo, cor anglais, bass clarinet, & contrabassoon), 4 horns (with the possibility of each part being doubled), 4 trumpets, 3 trombones, tuba, timpani, gong, bass drum, cymbals, harp, and strings.
364 While Holbrooke did write for small theater orchestras, he often called upon exceptional orchestral resources. In addition to the same auxiliaries from *The Raven, The Children of Don* requires oboe d’amour, bassett horn, 5 saxophones (soprano, alto, tenor, baritone, & bass), bass trumpet, and euphonium. *Dylan* adds an alto flute, oboe d’amour, alto clarinet, 3 saxophones (soprano, alto, & tenor), 4 saxhorns (soprano, baritone, bass, & contrabass), bass trumpet, contrabass trombone, tubaphone, and “unlimited” concertinas to an already large Romantic orchestra.
365 Michael Allis, in contrast, describes its structure as a deformed sonata movement in his chapter “Holbrooke and Poe Revisited” in *Joseph Holbrooke: Composer, Critic, and Musical Patriot*. His analysis does agree, however, that Holbrooke “encourages the listener to reformulate a sense of the work’s identity as it progresses, reflecting the
margins of the score.\textsuperscript{366} Each poetic excerpt is labeled with a letter, from “a” to “p”; with the inclusion of one portion marked “bII” and one passage labeled “reminiscence of – never ending remembrance” there are a total of eighteen textual references. Each is provided with a leitmotif to illustrate its imagery or mood. This illustration of action or creation atmosphere was Holbrooke’s primary concern in his tone poems. The frequency and specificity of these devices guide the course of the music along that of the poem. Such extra-musical guidance was necessary because Holbrooke typically shunned abstract musical forms. As Holbrooke scholar Rob Barnett notes:

Holbrooke’s music was, almost without exception, driven by the compulsion to intensify the essence of a poem or the vital energy of the dance… He was not a composer motivated by classical form, despite the sonata and symphony labels he attached to his works.\textsuperscript{367}

To create the “uncanny” atmosphere – a word used by both scholar Michael Allis and Holbrooke’s biographer Lowe in their analyses\textsuperscript{368} – that fills the opening of Edgar Allan Poe’s “The Raven”, a solo double bass, muted, plays an eight-measure “recitative”\textsuperscript{369} (see Figure 4.1).\textsuperscript{370} Holbrooke pairs this with his first quotation from the poem, “(a) Once upon a midnight dreary, while I pondered, weak and weary.” As the narrator’s continual attempts to make sense of the strange events in Poe’s poem – a continual blurring of the familiar and unfamiliar…” “Holbrooke and Poe Revisited,” 145.\textsuperscript{366} For full text of poem see Appendix.\textsuperscript{367} Barnett, “A Life in Outline,” 20.\textsuperscript{368} Lowe, \textit{Josef Holbrooke}, 131 and Michael Allis, “Holbrooke and Poe Revisited,” 117. Allis frames his entire discussion of the work in terms of the uncanny with reference to early twentieth century psychological writings by Ernst Jentsch (1867-1919) and Sigmund Freud (1856-1939). See Allis, “Holbrooke and Poe Revisited,” pages 129-136.\textsuperscript{369} Allis, “Holbrooke and Poe Revisited,” 136.\textsuperscript{370} The choice of timbre is identical to that of Gustav Mahler in the third movement of his First Symphony, though whether Holbrooke was familiar with Mahler’s score is unknown.
melodic line ascends it is joined by a solo cello and then a solo viola, both muted. These instruments drop out gradually as the double bass descends again to end on a held F#.371

**Figure 4.1:** Holbrooke, *The Raven*, page 1, bar 1. “Midnight dreary” leitmotif in muted solo bass. Note sequences in muted solo cello and viola.

Immediately after, cellos and violas, *divisi*, enter *Animato* with four measures of repetitive staccato eighth notes illustrating “(b) While I nodded, nearly napping, suddenly there came a tapping at my chamber door” (see Figure 4.2).

**Figure 4.2:** Holbrooke, *The Raven*, page 2, five bars before letter A. “Tapping” leitmotif in violas and cellos.

The onomatopoeia “tapping” chords in F# major give way to a repetition of the opening eight-bar recitative.

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Allis notes that, “As a single line, it is at once symbolic of the solitary man brooding in his study and, despite its rising contour, its return to where it began as a dominant pedal is suggestive of lassitude. Not only does the internal repetition reflect the compulsive rhythm of Poe’s text, creating an incantatory sense, its initial rhythm matches Poe’s distinctive meter exactly – suggesting that Holbrooke may even have set the text to music before removing the words.” Allis, “Holbrooke and Poe Revisited” 136.
Holbrooke likewise relies on musical onomatopoeia to represent details of atmosphere such as “(c) And the silken sad uncertain, Rustling of each purple curtain, Thrilled me – filled me with fantastic terrors never felt before.” Imitative scalar figures, again in B minor, illustrate the curtains’ “rustling” motion, shown in Figure 4.3. Note the clarinets’ chromatic intrusion in the second bar of the example.

**Figure 4.3:** Holbrooke, *The Raven*, page 5, three bars after letter C. “Rustling curtain” leitmotif in flutes and oboes. Note chromatic lines in the clarinets.

Holbrooke unobtrusively includes the most important *leitmotif* underneath these “rustlings.” It is given to the horns and marked with a square bracket in the score (see Figure 4.4). As it appears when Poe’s narrator recalls, “(bII) Ah, distinctly I remember, it was in the bleak December,” it may appropriately be termed the “remembrance”
leitmotif. This theme appears frequently throughout the piece, providing, in the words of Michael Allis, a “constant reference point amid the structural ambiguity.”

Another point of reference occurs in two leitmotifs that “speak” the words of the poem. Both the motif for Lenore, the narrator’s lost love, and that of the raven’s cry echo the rhythm and syllable count of their texts: “Lenore!” and “Nevermore!” respectively. Both words are also written in the music above the appropriate instrumental parts (see Figures 4.7 and 4.9) as are the Muezzin’s call to prayer in Bantock’s *Omar Khayyám* and the inscription above the gates of Hell in Liszt’s *Dante Symphony* (see Chapter 3).

**Figure 4.4:** Holbrooke, *The Raven*, page 7, six bars after letter C. “Remembrance” leitmotif in horns.

**Chromatic Harmony**

Almost all of the work’s leitmotifs contribute to the use of chromatic harmony in *The Raven*. Holbrooke emphasized an ever-shifting chromaticism in his works even more than Granville Bantock. Thus the opening “recitative” begins on the leading tone of the tonic, A#. The melodic sequence that follows relies on a pattern of falling half-steps. The first note of the “remembrance” leitmotif is similarly modified, beginning one half-step above the tonic, B#. This chromatic misalignment occurs at each appearance or

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372 See also Allis, “Holbrooke and Poe Revisited,” 139.
373 Ibid. 139.
transformation of the theme, no matter the key, and rising half-steps always form its first two intervals. In Figure 4.4, note also that the accompanying long tones form intervals of a tritone.

Holbrooke’s contemporary biographer George Lowe described a later moment of chromatic harmony as “particularly daring and weird in effect.” This is a series of consecutive diminished seventh chords, four bars after rehearsal number 2, in the clarinets, bass clarinet, and bassoon (see Figure 4.5). Chromatic “swirling” in the chalumeau register of the clarinets and bass clarinet precedes each unresolved half-diminished seventh chord. These “particularly daring” harmonies to late-Victorian ears accompany three repetitions of the “remembrance” motif on stopped solo horn. Each statement of the motif is transposed to fit the seventh chord on which it begins and the horn player ascends, piano and decrescendo, to a high written B5 before the oboe takes over the motif.

Following this is another highly chromatic passage (four bars after rehearsal number 3), unmarked by Lowe but just as striking (see Figure 4.6). Here oboe and cor anglais in octaves extend and transform the “remembrance” motif across fourteen measures, accompanied by strings and woodwinds marked misterioso. First violins, cellos, and second bassoon alternate with second violins, violas, and first bassoon in “rustling” sixteenth-note figures. Each group of four notes oscillates by a half-step and each successive beat descends by a half-step. Arpeggiated harp chords quietly emphasize a harmonic rocking between B minor and C augmented triads. The combined timbral and harmonic effects create an evocative effect.

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374 Lowe, Josef Holbrooke, 132.
Figure 4.5: Holbrooke, *The Raven*, page 12, five bars after rehearsal number 2. “Particularly daring” consecutive diminished-seventh chords in the clarinets paired with sequenced “Remembrance” leitmotif in the first horn.

Another series of augmented chords occur when Poe’s narrator opens the door to find “darkness there and nothing more” four bars after rehearsal number 7. As Michael Allis describes it, these harmonies “deflect the comforting D major to its tonic minor.”

The English Romantics’ love of the tritone appears as a key relationship in *The Raven*. When the narrator whispers the name “Lenore!” (two bars before rehearsal number 9) the first violins and cellos in octaves, marked “espressivo sotto voce,” invoke

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375 Allis, “Holbrooke and Poe Revisited,” 140.
the name of the lost beloved four times in a rising sequence (see Figure 4.7). The implied tonality is A-flat major, a tritone away from the earlier D major. Rising semitones also play an important role in its construction.

**Figure 4.6:** Holbrooke, *The Raven*, page 15, six bars after rehearsal number 3. Repetitions of “Remembrance” leitmotif harmonized with descending chromatic lines.
The key relationship then moves down a semitone eight measures later, at the reassurance “(j) ’Tis the wind and nothing more,” where a gust of woodwind and string scales blows in C# minor (see Figure 4.8).

**Figure 4.7:** Holbrooke, *The Raven*, page 23, three bars before rehearsal number 9. “Lenore” leitmotif, fourfold sequence.

The key relationship then moves down a semitone eight measures later, at the reassurance “(j) ’Tis the wind and nothing more,” where a gust of woodwind and string scales blows in C# minor (see Figure 4.8).

**Figure 4.8:** Holbrooke, *The Raven*, page 29, four bars after rehearsal number 9. Naturalistic “wind” in the woodwind and strings created via scalar runs.
When the raven finally speaks (at rehearsal number 16) Holbrooke matches its enigmatic reply to the narrator’s question with enigmatic chromatic harmonies (see Figure 4.9). The leitmotif descends through two unresolved seventh chords to a G major triad. Note also the melodic tritone formed by the top voice: Ab – (F) – D. The woodwinds echo this effect with their own ascending tritone: (Ab) – F – B. Holbrooke mirrors Poe’s hypnotic repetition of the phrase by presenting the motif three times, coupled with a transformation of the “remembrance” motif in the trombones.

Figure 4.9: Holbrooke, *The Raven*, page 40, rehearsal number 16. The raven speaks its “Nevermore!” motif, coupled with the “Remembrance” motif in the trombones.

*Straussian Stylistic Allusions*

Beyond a fondness for “daring” chromatic harmony, Holbrooke’s use of Late Romantic technical resources sometimes approaches his models quite closely. This occurs in *The Raven* when Holbrooke illustrates Poe’s growing resolve: “(d) Presently my soul grew stronger; Hesitating then no longer…” As shown in Figure 4.11, prominent

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376 Specifically, an A-flat major dominant seventh chord in third inversion and an F minor-minor seventh chord in third inversion that descends to a G major triad.
tritone leaps in the first violins’ melody are resolved by “expressive” half-steps, recalling the “sentimental” passages in Bantock’s *Pagan Symphony*. Holbrooke too derived this mannerism from Richard Strauss’s “frequently atrocious sentimentality.” This passage also demonstrates a rhythmic mannerism borrowed from Wagner and Strauss: “intricate divisions of the beat within the bar,” that, in the words of critic David Hurwitz, create a rhythmic “fluidity.” These fluid rhythms carry over bar lines, shifting the beginning and endings of phrases out of alignment with strong metrical beats. Together these techniques help create a Wagner-inspired “endless melody” by their “elaborate inner detail, displaced accents, and lack of literal repetition.” Models of this rhythmic fluidity include the melodies shown in Figure 4.10, from Strauss’ *Also sprach Zarathustra*, found in the *Von der Grossen Sehnsucht* and *Von den Freuden und Leidenschaften* sections, respectively.

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377 Read, *Style and Orchestration*, 114.
379 Ibid., 141.
Such intricate rhythms are frequently encountered in Holbrooke, both in melodic and accompaniment parts. While the effect can be thrillingly “propulsive”\(^{381}\) when applied skillfully, in thick textures or under heavy scoring the effect can become muddied. Such a criticism was also labeled against Strauss’ *Ein Heldenleben* and *Sinfonia Domestica*:

[There] are found moments when the actual musical outlines become completely obscured, and are indistinguishable, simply because there are too many of them going on at the same time. Parts interfere with the clearness of one another till they merge into a din which the ear is unable to disentangle.\(^{382}\)

Holbrooke follows his model into this interference of parts in this extended passage. The effect is exacerbated because it includes both rhythmic fluidity, independent rhythms between parts, and “expressive” chromatic-inflected melodic lines. The total effect unintentionally illustrates a criticism acknowledged even by Holbrooke’s


supporters: “really sublime passages are followed by the most incongruous effects of bathos.” 383

**Figure 4.11:** Holbrooke, *The Raven*, pages 19-20, eight bars after rehearsal number 4. Complex textures in accompaniment interfering with clarity of melodic outline.

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Sublime Nature: Climactic Storm

Fluid rhythms and chromatic harmonic combine again at the climax of *The Raven*, where the effect is not “sentimental” but stormy. It is accompanied by the narrator’s outburst (two bars before rehearsal number 18) “(m) Then methought the air grew denser… ‘Wretch’ I cried, ‘Thy God hath lent thee.’” This cry triggers a musical storm similar to that found in Bantock’s *Hebridean Symphony*. Twenty-six bars later the musical narrative culminates in a *precipitato* climax marked by an *fff* gong stroke at the words “(n) ‘Prophet,’ I said, ‘thing of evil! Prophet still if bird or devil!’” The moment of arrival is shown in Figure 4.12.

Here the harmonic climax disintegrates into chromaticism in all parts. Holbrooke sustains the climactic energy by reiterating the “Remembrance” leitmotif in the horns and low brass several times. Afterwards the storm rebuilds its strength and continues for another sixteen measures. Holbrooke creates a thick texture of chromatic sextuplets in the woodwinds and strings, similar to the earlier “wind” effect, to realistically illustrate the winds of this “tempest” and the “night’s Plutonian shore” to which the narrator commends his avian tormentor at rehearsal number 22: “Get thee back into the tempest!” These rising and falling musical “winds” are underpinned by rising and falling semitones in the horns and tuba above a B-flat pedal in the basses (see Figure 4.13). A last blast of woodwinds ends the storm at page 54, three bars before rehearsal 23, and leads to five repetitions of the “Nevermore!” motif in quiet brass, interspersed with recollections of previous themes.
Figure 4.12: Holbrooke, *The Raven*, page 49, three bars before rehearsal number 21. Harmonic disintegration at climax: “Prophet still if bird or devil!”
Figure 4.13: Holbrooke, *The Raven*, page 53, rehearsal number 22. Reduction of chromatic “wind” effect illustrating the “tempest” to which the raven is commended by the narrator. Note the chromatically falling bassline, starting on an initial tritone (Bb – E) due to Bb pedal.
Romantic Monomania

Holbrooke’s evocation of the torment caused by the raven, however, is not yet over. There is a final major structural division of the work illustrating the mental struggle of Poe’s narrator against the fate articulated by the raven’s words: “(o) Leave my loneliness unbroken! Take thy break from my heart…” It begins six bars before rehearsal number 29. Allis labels this an individual “slow movement” because it broods over one melodic idea with mounting intensity.\(^\text{384}\) The meter returns to the opening 6/4 pattern and the key is now E-flat major. Its contour rises and falls in steady eight-bar phrases and Holbrooke strongly emphasizes the foreign pitches of F# and B natural by placing them on strong beats, returning to the F# in particular obsessively, and resolving both chromatic pitches upwards by a half-step. This “Loneliness” leitmotif is shown in Figure 4.14.

\textbf{Figure 4.14:} Holbrooke, \textit{The Raven}, page 60, six bars before rehearsal number 29. “Loneliness” leitmotif.

\(^{384}\) Allis, “Holbrooke and Poe Revisited,” 143.
Further harmonic color is provided by the descending half-step “sighing” figures in the horns and bassoons at the “loneliness” figure’s second statement, shown in Figure 4.15.

Upper woodwinds add arabesques and then take up these “sighs” as the 8-bar “Loneliness” motif is repeated over and over again. The music’s obsessive focus on a single phrase is “unnerving” and mirrors the “compulsive character” of the poem.\(^{385}\) Holbrooke further increases the intensity by lifting the motif from the fourth to the fifth and then sixth octaves as the “Loneliness” motif is reiterated a total of seven times over sixty measures.

**Figure 4.15:** Holbrooke, *The Raven*, page 61, two bars after rehearsal number 29. “Sighing” figures add further emphasis to the “Loneliness” motif.

\(^{385}\) Allis, “Holbrooke and Poe Revisited,” 143.
Holbrooke creates one final intrusion of dissonant chromatic harmony before the work’s conclusion. Fully diminished seventh chords on D# and A# interrupt the “Loneliness” motif’s concluding B major cadence five measures after rehearsal number 34. These are the same type of harmonies used to such “particularly daring and weird” effect earlier in the score.\(^{386}\) The final eight bars contain pianissimo repetitions of the “Nevermore!” motif in the clarinets and bassoons and the bass clarinet plays the opening “Midnight dreary” motif. The work concludes with a pppp B major triad, the Picardy third lessening the gloom of Holbrooke’s final marginal quotation: “…and my soul from out that shadow that lies floating on the floor, Shall be lifted…nevermore!”

**Ulalume, Op. 35**

Holbrooke’s second orchestral poem after Poe shares many features with its predecessor, including leitmotifs illustrating excerpts from its inspirational poem, unsettled chromatic harmony, and a form guided more by its program than by abstract considerations.\(^{387}\) It is important for Holbrooke’s consideration as an English Romantic because of its eerie landscape imagery – more concerned with an external, “exotic” setting than the often-metaphysical internal landscape of The Raven’s narrator.

*Ulalume*, begun in 1901 and finished in September, 1904, is only half as long as *The Raven*.\(^{388}\) It likewise contains fewer prose quotations from its source, Poe’s

\(^{386}\) Lowe, *Josef Holbrooke*, 132.


\(^{388}\) *Ulalume* lasts 226 measures to *The Raven’s* approximately 400. Henry Wood conducted the premiere of *Ulaume* in 1905 at a Queen’s Hall Promenade Concert.
eponymous 1847 poem – eleven instead of eighteen.\textsuperscript{389} This greater concision leads to a stronger formal organization. The work is in three sections of approximately equal length: an atmospheric introduction, a “wildly animated” middle section, and a concluding segment filled with “painful reminiscences.”\textsuperscript{390} \textit{Ulalume} requires almost the same forces as \textit{The Raven}\textsuperscript{391} but to help create the “peculiar chiaroscuro atmosphere of the poem,”\textsuperscript{392} timpani, triangle, harps, and strings are muted throughout.

\textbf{Sublime Nature: Unearthly Landscape}

The work opens with an evocation of an “exotic,” haunted landscape:

\begin{verbatim}
The skies they were ashen and sober;
The leaves they were crisped and sere –
The leaves they were withering and sere;
It was night in the lonesome October
Of my most immemorial year;
It was hard by the dim lake of Auber,
In the misty mid region of Weir –
It was down by the dark tarn of Auber,
In the ghoul-haunted woodland of Weir.
\end{verbatim}

Holbrooke scores this illustrative passage for \textit{divisi} muted strings, half tremolo, half \textit{sostenuto}, and rippling arpeggiated harp chords (see Figure 4.16). The effect is of a “shimmering web of sound.”\textsuperscript{393}

\begin{footnotes}
\textsuperscript{389} For the text of \textit{Ulalume} see Appendix.
\textsuperscript{390} Groborz, liner notes to \textit{Holbrooke: Symphonic Poems}, 24-25. The respective lengths of each section are 86, 60, and 80 measures.
\textsuperscript{391} Triple woodwind with auxiliaries (piccolo, cor anglais, bass clarinet, and contrabassoon), 4 horns in F, 4 trumpets in F, 3 trombones, contrabass tuba, 3 timpani, triangle, bass drum, cymbals, tamtam, 2 harps, and strings.
\textsuperscript{392} Franz Groborz, liner notes to \textit{Holbrooke: Symphonic Poems}, 24.
\textsuperscript{393} Lowe, \textit{Josef Holbrooke}, 141.
\end{footnotes}
Commentator Franz Groborz, following Holbrooke’s biographer George Lowe, relates the first fully formed melody to the “alley Titanic, of cypress” through which Poe’s narrator roams with “Psyche, my Soul.” Its four bars strain “yearningly” through two leaps of a seventh, one major and one minor. The scoring is for clarinets and horns (see Figure 4.17).

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A final evocation of Poe’s “ghoul-haunted landscape” occurs when Holbrooke illustrates the rising star that exerts such a powerful force on the narrator. The composer uses two overlapping motives, one for the “crystalline light” of the star and the other for the dreamlike trance into which it tempts him. Their first appearance takes place five bars after rehearsal number 5. Here the violins in octaves, with assistance from the violas, unroll a sixteen-bar lyrical melody characterized by Groborz as “broadly ranging and deeply felt.”\textsuperscript{396} This is also Holbrooke’s supreme example of using Straussian rhythmic fluidity to create an “endless melody” (see Figure 4.18).

\textsuperscript{396} Groborz, liner notes to \textit{Holbrooke: Symphonic Poems}, 24.
This “deeply felt” melody represents the narrator’s dreamy faith in the star’s beneficent purpose and his willingness to follow where its light leads. This is made explicit upon its return at the beginning of the work’s concluding section, where it is paired with these lines from Poe: “This is nothing but dreaming: Let us on by this tremulous light!”

As its four-bar phrases unfold, sextuplet arpeggios and bursts of 32nd notes in the woodwinds and harp embellish it. These “impetuous arpeggios,” shown in Figure 4.19, give the star’s light its “tremulous” and “crystalline” quality as it “flickers up the sky through the night!”

397 The tone cluster at the conclusion of the theme could be linked with the star’s eventual betrayal of the narrator’s trust.
398 Lowe, Josef Holbrooke, 143.
Figure 4.19: Holbrooke, *Ulalume*, page 10, four bars before rehearsal number 6. Woodwind arpeggios and horn parts illustrating the “tremulous” and “crystalline” light of the flickering star above Ulalume’s tomb.

[Image of musical notation]

**Chromaticism at Moment of Catastrophe**

The narrator is ultimately betrayed by the star’s “Sibyllic splendour,” however, as it leads him not to the “Lethean peace of the skies,” but to the tomb where his wife is buried; where he, in fact, “on this very night of last year” brought her body as a “dread burden.” Poe’s poetry often builds to a moment of revelation that provides the final stroke of horror or catastrophe. Holbrooke echoes this in *Ulalume* by creating a two-part musical climax at the moment of revelation three bars after rehearsal number 17. Chromatic motion in the orchestra surrounds diatonic C major and B-flat major cadences respectively, as shown in Figures 4.20 and 4.21.
Figure 4.20: Holbrooke, *Ulalume*, page 36, three bars after rehearsal number 17. Chromatic disintegration of texture at the first peak of the double climax. This corresponds to the moment of revelation as the narrator discovers the tomb belongs to his “lost Ulalume.”

This catastrophic chromaticism is foreshadowed earlier in the piece. After introducing the “alley of cyprus” leitmotif Holbrooke builds it to a climax in the brass – but its diatonic resolution is interrupted by a harmonic twist. The tremolo strings move by a tritone from an E half-diminished seventh chord to a B-flat augmented triad. The trumpets and trombones accentuate this unexpected change of direction with fff tritone leaps accented by a tamtam strike (see Figure 4.21). As in *The Raven*, both these climaxes in *Ulalume* precipitate a breakdown of diatonic harmony via destabilizing chromaticism.
Figure 4.21: Holbrooke, *Ulalume*, page 6, three bars after rehearsal number 3. Sudden interruption of augmented harmony precipitating harmonic collapse.
Holbrooke also alludes to later developments in the musical narrative by articulating Ulalume’s name in the same fashion as that of Lenore in *The Raven*. This first occurs three bars after rehearsal number 4, where violins and violas in thirds play an *espressivo* three-note figure that descends by half-steps, shown in Figure 4.22.

**Figure 4.22:** Holbrooke, *Ulalume*, page 8, rehearsal number 4. “Ulalume” leitmotif in violins and violas.

This “Ulalume” leitmotif recurs many times throughout the musical narrative but is not explicitly labeled as such until much later, when the narrator and his Soul are “stopped by the door of a tomb.” Inquiring “What is written sweet sister, on the door of this legended tomb?” she replies “Ulalume – Ulalume – Ulalume – ’Tis the vault of thy lost Ulalume!” Figure 4.23 shows this moment.

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399 The revelation occurs one bar before rehearsal number 14, just before the “concluding section” of the score begins.
Figure 4.23: Holbrooke, *Ulalume*, page 30, two bars before rehearsal number 14. Transformation of “Ulalume” motif in the bassoons and contrabassoon. This is the first time the leitmotif is explicitly named.

By alluding to the name musically, Holbrooke is able to foreshadow the tragedy of the poem’s revelatory final stanzas at earlier moments of unease. Psyche, for instance, twice declares that she mistrusts the “liquecent and nebulous lustre” of the star that the narrator declares will guide them to the “Lethean peace of the skies.” At both moments the three-note “Ulalume” figure appears prominently.400 Even when the motif is first heard, during the opening section illustrating the “misty mid region of Weir,” Holbrooke looks forward to Poe’s repetition of landscape imagery in his concluding lines: “’’Well I know, now, this dim lake of Auber – This misty mid region of Weir – Well I know, now, this dark tarn of Auber – This ghoul-haunted woodland of Weir.’’

**Straussian Rhythmic Complexity**

The “wildly animated” middle section of *Ulalume* also illustrates, perhaps more successfully than *The Raven*, Holbrooke’s fondness for simultaneous lines of rhythmic complexity. To viscerally reflect the narrator’s sentiments that “These were days when my heart was volcanic, as the scoriac rivers that roll – as the lavas that restlessly roll,” Holbrooke shifts meters and rhythmic patterns rapidly and unpredictably. 6/4 and 3/4 organizations alternately emphasize the duple and triple organization of the basic pulse;

400 See passages three bars before rehearsal number 11 and three bars rehearsal number 12.
in each of these meters several rhythmic patterns are layered atop one another. In the 6/4 bars there is a “restlessly pounding”\textsuperscript{401} rhythm in the lower strings and muted horns, quick descending flourishes in the flutes, a fanfare rhythm in the trumpets, syncopated arpeggios in the low brass, and rising scale fragments in the violins. At the 3/4 measures a sudden fortissimo E flat augmented triad is arpeggiated twice in an offset rhythm (see Figure 4.24).

Holbrooke avoids aural confusion in this passage by scoring for clearly differentiated timbres. Each rhythmic pattern is assigned to a different instrument or group of instruments. Further, each instrumental line is clearly independent of the others, forming a network of linear counterpoint articulated by contrasting timbres. This kaleidoscopic effect of musical lines is again clearly modeled on the tone poems of Richard Strauss; a parallel example may be found, for example, in \textit{Till Eulenspiegel} (see Figure 4.25). Scholar Adam Carse notes over the course of Richard Strauss’ compositional development from \textit{Till Eulenspiegel} to the \textit{Symphonia Domestica}, “indeed, the hard and fast distinction between what was, and what was not \textit{tutti} had practically disappeared.”\textsuperscript{402} This allowed such freely intersecting passages all the more license and color. The corresponding passage in \textit{The Raven} described above comes off less successfully in part because the texture is less clearly contrapuntal. Instead, Holbrooke allowed a primary melodic line to be overloaded with complex accompaniment parts. In addition, each line is articulated less clearly because the timbre is restricted to the more homogenized sound of the strings.

\textsuperscript{401} Groborz, liner notes to \textit{Holbrooke: Symphonic Poems}, 24.
\textsuperscript{402} Carse, \textit{History of Orchestration}, 318.
Figure 4.24: Holbrooke, *Ulalume*, page 16, six bars after rehearsal number 8. Independent timbral and rhythmic lines interlocking to reflect the “volcanic” heart of Poe’s narrator.
Figure 4.25: Richard Strauss, *Till Eulenspiegel* (Dover edition), page 49, six bars before rehearsal number 35. Overlapping of independent lines articulated by timbre.
**Chromatic Connections**

Oscillating chromatic motion fills the concluding bars of *Ulalume*. The final cadence is approached via descending chromatic lines in the winds and strings, which then rock slowly back and forth in lengthening rhythms. The whole ensemble grows quieter and quieter until the end, *pppp* and *Grave*. The final dying away is shown in Figure 4.26. Sixteen years later, Holbrooke would conclude the Prelude to his opera *Bronwen* with the same descending chromatic intervals – C-B-Bb – but in a mood of grim defiance, not tragic acceptance.

**Figure 4.26:** Holbrooke, *Ulalume*, page 43, last nine bars. Note final chromatic motion to Picardy third cadence.

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*Bronwen*

*Bronwen* is the final opera in Holbrooke’s *Cauldron of Annwn* trilogy. The cauldron itself is the most powerful object of the *Mabinogion* underworld; in the words of scholar Anne-Marie Forbes, it “enhances the dominant passions of jealousy, vengeance,

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patriotism, religious zeal, and so on.” Like the ring of the Nibelungs, the cauldron’s magic contains the sources of desire “whose breath is madness and whose taste is doom.” The grief caused by desire for the cauldron runs throughout the cycle. Though it shares neither characters nor story with its predecessors in the trilogy, *Bronwen* recapitulates many of the literary themes presented in the first two works. This “replaying of the intersection of personalities and passions” is made possible by metempsychosis, described by Forbes as the “transmigration of the soul after death into another body.” The souls and “distinctive emotional characteristics” of the original protagonists are thus reincarnated in *Bronwen* and the tragic cycle of events is “doomed to be repeated time after time.”

**Sublime Nature: Diatonic and Chromatic Representations**

The Prelude to *Bronwen* displays this cyclic cosmic doom by connecting it with the elemental cycle of nature. Its opening bars are illustrate verses from Taliessin, a bard in the drama:

The mists are melting and the distant day  
Dances with feet of flame on the pale hills.  
The streams run molten to the cold blue bay,  
And the deep forest weeps and fills  
Its path with music of dissolving dew.  

O blessed soil, the brazen clouds are lifting from your sleep!  
Like heavy memories. And soon on high  
Shall they take their radiance, and the deep

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407 Ibid., 54.  
408 Ibid., 54.  
Eternal meadow flame with glories afresh.
So rise, all shadows, from these isles, and build
Full bastioned splendours whence distilled –
Rains of remembrance fall upon all flesh.  

This landscape is epic and its associations tragic, not pastoral. Its location is

“Wild Wales” in ancient times, not an English Eden threatened by encroaching
industrialism and modernity. Holbrooke is here fascinated with this landscape precisely
because it is not familiar or homely to him: “It seems to have been wild, elemental beauty
that spoke most strongly to Holbrooke’s creativity.” It is thus through suitably
“elemental” materials that Holbrooke presents the scene in music. For example, in the
opening bars of the overture a slow sostenuto call in unison horns heralds the “distant
day” rising over the “deep eternal meadows.” Their repeated rising fourths are solemnly
harmonized by fourths and fifths in the low brass and woodwinds (see Figure 4.27).  

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410 Quoted in Lowe, Josef Holbrooke, 274.
412 Bronwen is the most modestly scored of the Cauldron of Anwyn operas (see footnote
56 for the instrumentation of The Children of Don and Dylan, Son of the Wave). It still
requires a substantial orchestra, however, equivalent to those used in Wagner’s Ring
cycle: 3 flutes, 3 oboes, English horn, 2 clarinets, bassett horn, bass clarinet, 3 bassoons,
contrabassoon, 4 (or 8) horns, 3 trumpets, 3 trombones, euphonium, tuba, 3 timpani, bass
drum, side drum, glockenspiel, triangle, tubular bells, cymbals, 2 (or 4) harps, and
strings.
**Figure 4.27**: Holbrooke, *Overture to Bronwen*, page 1, bar 1. Rising horn calls herald the dawning day, harmonized in open fourths and fifths by the low brass and woodwind.

A more raw display of nature comes one bar before rehearsal number 4: a surging of a *molto agitato, allegro e fuoco* “wave” leitmotif, the same as used in Holbrooke’s preceding opera, *Dylan, Son of the Wave*. These waves come as neighbor-note triplets in violas and cellos, full of semitones both diatonic and chromatic. Their first seven bars are shown in Figure 4.28.
**Figure 4.28:** Holbrooke, *Overture to Bronwen*, page 5, five bars before rehearsal number 4. “Wave” leitmotif in the violas and cellos. Note prevalence of both diatonic and chromatic semitones.

This motif slowly climbs in pitch until the first violins and flutes carry it into the sixth octave after eight bars. Thereafter such waves frequently swell from the bass to the upper treble registers, scored alternately for low strings and high woodwinds. The first such wave “crest” is shown in Figure 4.29.

**Figure 4.29:** Holbrooke, *Overture to Bronwen*, page 7, four bars before rehearsal number 5. Cresting “wave” motif rising to the sixth octave.
Thematic Transformation

Atop these waves comes a fanfare-like theme in which three descending chromatic notes are prominent. It is scored for horns and violins (see Figure 4.30, Violins I & II). At rehearsal number 8 Holbrooke transforms this fanfare to create a martellato figure in foreshortened rhythm. This violent new gesture grows to dominate the texture for much of the remainder of the overture. Figure 4.30 shows its rough scoring in the strings’ lower registers, enhancing its brusque character. Though Holbrooke does not specifically connect this gesture with an extra-musical image, the effect might be compared to the earlier “wave” motifs being brought up short as they crash onto a rocky shore. It is this “crashing” or “hammering” figure that Bronwen shares with the earlier Ulalume, though it differs widely in force and effect.

Figure 4.30: Holbrooke, Overture to Bronwen, page 16, two bars after rehearsal number 9. Descending chromatic gesture illustrating the “waves” crashing onto a rocky shore.

Exotic “Wild Wales”

As stated above, Holbrooke was attracted to the Cauldron of Anwyn project for both its “elemental” beauty and its attractive exoticism. Scholar Anne-Marie Forbes makes the case that such specifically Welsh inspiration should be considered part of the “Celtic enthusiasm” or “Celtic renaissance” occurring in music and literature during the
years before World War I. She further argues that, “for some English composers, Celticism was just another manifestation of an exoticism that held public sway for a time.” Just as this is manifest in many compositions of Granville Bantock, Rutland Boughton, and Arnold Bax, it is clear as well in those specifically “Welsh” works of Joseph Holbrooke. He shared with his patron Lord Howard de Walden a “romanticism of ‘Wild Wales’ and its history and mythology.”

In the overture to Bronwen this geographical specificity is further demonstrated by the inclusion of a Welsh folk-song, “The Song of the Bottle.” This melody, characterized by Lowe as “dignified and impressive” appears approximately two-thirds of the way into the score, at five bars before rehearsal number 14 (see Figure 4.31). Its presentation matches its character: massed woodwinds and horns play Maestoso – Andante pesante. Its harmonization is austere and the scoring stark.

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414 Ibid., 42.
415 Beyond the Cauldrof Anwyn cycle these include his Piano Concerto No. 1 “The Song of Gwyn-ap-Nudd,” op. 52 (1908), incidental music to Pontorewyn, a one-act drama by Lord Howard de Walden (1911), the Cello Concerto “Cambrian”, op. 103 (1936), and the Symphony No. 5 “Wild Wales” for brass band, op. 106 (1920).
417 Lowe, Josef Holbrooke, 275.
Figure 4.31: Holbrooke, *Overture to Bronwen*, page 24, six bars after rehearsal number 13. Holbrooke’s initial presentation of the Welsh folk song “The Song of the Bottle,” scored austerely for winds and timpani.
It is immediately restated in the strings and upper woodwinds in octaves at a higher level of intensity, shown in reduction in Figure 4.32. The brass accompanies this repetition with the heavy dotted rhythms of a funeral march; the steady pulse of the timpani supports their measured tread. Note the increased chromaticism present in the harmony of this funereal transformation of the theme.

This may have a programmatic function, representing Taliessin’s “rains of remembrance” that “fall upon all flesh.” Though the verse is not explicitly funereal, the rains are “distilled” from “all shadows” of the passing night; a melancholy or dirge-like mood seems appropriate.
Holbrooke’s use of “The Song of the Bottle” is similar to Bantock’s appropriation of Hebridean folk-songs in his *Hebridean Symphony*. Both make use of indigenous materials precisely to mark such materials as “Other.” In Holbrooke’s case he is more forthright in his intentions than Bantock. Once the “Song” has been sung, first austerely and then grimly, it is abandoned, not developed. The remainder of the overture is taken up with transformations of the chromatic descending three-note “crashing” figure derived from the “wave” *leitmotif*. It is this gesture that brings up the curtain, repeated three final times in octave strings, *fortissimo*.

**Straussian Sentimentality**

Even in this more grim and concentrated score, however, an element of Straussian sentimentality appears. This again takes the form of a lyrical melody heavily inflected by
“expressive” chromatic intrusions and their resolutions. Holbrooke scores this eight-bar theme for flutes and first and second violins in octaves accompanied by tremolo lower strings and arpeggiated harp chords (see Figure 4.33).

**Figure 4.33:** Holbrooke, *Overture to Bronwen*, page 18, three bars after rehearsal number 10. “Sentimental” theme with expressive chromaticism in the manner of Richard Strauss.

After its initial statement Holbrooke uses sequences to extend varied transformations of this melody for another twenty-two measures, much as Bantock might

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Note particularly the melodic tritones formed by the D naturals in the second and fourth bar of the theme.
do. The texture becomes thicker and the mood more agitated as these thematic variants reach higher and higher in their yearning (see Figure 4.34). The Prelude to *Tristan und Isolde* seems the clear model (see Figure 4.35). At its peak on page 24 the first violins reach a high C#7 before returning to their middle register via a rapid scalar passage. Holbrooke then swiftly changes the direction of the music by introducing the “Song of the Bottle” as described above. The effect is the reverse of that in *The Raven*; here, bathos precedes sublimity.
Figure 4.34: Holbrooke, *Overture to Bronwen*, page 21, two bars after rehearsal number 12. Thicker texture and increased chromaticism as string thematic sequences increase in range and agitation.
Figure 4.35: Richard Wagner, *Tristan und Isolde* (Dover edition), 17. Similar sequential “yearning” effects at the height of the Tristan Prelude.
Holbrooke in Summary

To characterize these juxtapositions of extremes in the music and personality of Joseph Holbrooke, critic W.G. McNaught remarked that:

London musical life would be different from what it is without Josef Holbrooke. He is the most amusing serious musician in our midst… He has a characteristic style which includes an opulent and amazing, almost dazzling, variety of imaginativeness, yet bold, bad critics sometimes have had the temerity to hint that his music does not always accurately fit the situation, and that it is applied haphazard. It is also suggested that he does employ those reserves of analytic criticism on his own music which he lavishes freely on that of other composers.420

As with the charges leveled against Granville Bantock, this critique holds truths. Certainly Holbrooke’s reliance on literary programs to shape his compositions instead of abstract formal designs meant their organization can appear haphazard in retrospect. Yet Holbrooke placed a premium on expression, not formal balance, and remained consistent with this Romantic tendency throughout his career.

His melodies rely less on sequences than Bantock’s but share the other’s tendency to use a “changing background” technique of repetition modified by greater volume or varied scoring to achieve greater expression.421 Their phrase-lengths remain in units of two, four, or eight but Holbrooke does display a Wagnerian tendency for starting themes

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420 W.G. McNaught, “Josef Holbrooke,” 44.
421 In *The Raven*, the lengthy dance in 6/8 time from rehearsal number 10 through rehearsal number 18 and the monomaniacal focused “Leave my loneliness unbroken” passage from rehearsal numbers 24 to 35. In *Ulalume*, the “dreaming” theme from rehearsal number 15 through the climax at rehearsal number 19. In the Prelude to *Bronwen*, the treatment of the “Song of the Bottle.”
on weak beats and tying mid-phrase notes over bar-lines. As befits a composer concerned with immediacy of effect, Holbrooke’s shorter thematic fragments are often striking, such as the horn calls in *Ulalume* two bars after rehearsal number 13, shown in Figure 4.36.

**Figure 4.36:** Holbrooke, *Ulalume*, page 28, two bars after rehearsal number 13. Intrusive horn calls of fluid rhythmic complexity.

His more texturally complex statements, however, risk being heard in performance as incoherent, such as that cited as “bathetic” earlier from *The Raven*, though this was not his intent. Similarly, Holbrooke’s tendency to write over-sweet “sentimental” passages seems an unintentional result of his desire for emotional impact becoming cloying. Music critic Ernest Newman, an ardent supporter of Holbrooke, seemed carried beyond himself when he claimed that “Mr. Holbrooke can do quite easily and unconsciously what Strauss has only done half a dozen times in his career – he can a write a big, heartfelt melody that searches us to the very bone.”

A measure of the harmonic daring both Holbrooke and Bantock displayed is their inclusion in A. Eaglefield Hull’s 1915 book, *Modern Harmony*. Hull selected a dozen examples from Bantock’s oeuvre, one example from Holbrooke, and two examples from

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422 See especially the “dreaming” theme in *Ulalume* and the “remembrance” theme in *The Raven*.
the younger English Romantic Rutland Boughton. The author went on to lament not including more Holbrooke, writing later, “I shall always regret that I knew so little of Holbrooke’s music when I wrote a book on modern harmony. I unwittingly did him a great injustice.” Peter Pirie was similarly charitable in his assessment: Holbrooke’s harmony was “more adventurous” than that of Granville Bantock. Dramatic modulations and surprising harmonic interruptions abound in Holbrooke’s music; if he was fond of fully diminished seventh chords borrowed from Berlioz he also displayed a penchant for augmented chords, a rather less common taste in Edwardian Britain. Though Holbrooke was perhaps “too fond of the purple patch,” or colorful chromaticism against a diatonic background, his “pugnacious” musical identity was still “beholden to the musical language of the waning 19th century, with its premium on expression and its constant quest for new timbral effects.”

These “new timbral effects” were a result of Holbrooke’s orchestration. His instrumental requirements, as listed above, were lavish – but his use of these extra instruments did not always follow suit. It sometimes appears that Holbrooke did not know how to make the best use of all he had requisitioned, particularly among the woodwinds. Music critic David Hurwitz claims, “There is an unofficial rule in classical

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425 A piano piece titled “Acrobats,” op. 2 no. 1, illustrating the “modern” assumption that “a Dominant or a Tonic may be added to any combination in the key, and the device of adding to the piquancy, or increasing the colour of chords by altering or adding notes, is now very common.” See Hull, Modern Harmony, 84.
427 Pirie, “Bantock and His Generation,” 716.
430 Groborz, liner notes to Holbrooke: Clarinet Chamber Music, 17.
music: all the greatest masters of orchestration show a special feeling for woodwind instruments, irrespective of time, place, or nationality. Holbrooke did at times demonstrate this sensitivity to the woodwinds’ heterogeneous timbre, particularly at the opening of *Ulalume* and in *Bronwen*’s “Song of the Bottle,” but in many other passages grouped the players into prolonged unison-octave statements. The lengthy dance passage (eighty-two measures, from rehearsal number 10 to rehearsal number 18) and subsequent climatic build-up (“Get thee back into the tempest!”) in *The Raven* are examples of this type of homogenous scoring. Holbrooke’s orchestration was still modeled on the kaleidoscopically changing colors and textures of Richard Strauss but with less discipline and care taken for craft. The effect is thus at times marred. In the words of R.H. Walthew: “There is a certain ‘slap-dash’ way of writing for the instruments nearly akin to Byron’s treatment of blank verse; then there are often too many notes – everything goes into the pot, and the resulting compound is sometimes too thick and slab; more might be left out with advantage.”

Similarly, while Peter Pirie praised Holbrooke for avoiding what he regarded as Bantock’s “habitual blandness of texture,” he also criticized Holbrooke’s lack of formal control: “Holbrooke bumps along with many jerky changes of harmony and rhythm, and a general sense of distracted restlessness (was this a Corder fingerprint? - the same is true of Bax at his worst).”

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432 R.H. Walthew, “The Chamber Music of Josef Holbrooke,” in *Josef Holbrooke: Various Appreciations*, 123. Walthew is describing Holbrooke’s chamber music but the same criticisms hold true for his orchestral music.
433 Pirie, “Bantock and His Generation,” 716.
Yet in spite of this negative view, in the same article Pirie gave perhaps the most accurate assessment of these two English Romantics: “One feels that Holbrooke was more imaginative than Bantock, but technically less secure.”

**Bantock and Holbrooke**

Sir Granville Bantock and Joseph Holbrooke formed the first wave of the English Romantics, having their greatest public success before World War I. At that time both were described as modern English composers who followed the “progressive” school of Wagner and Strauss. “While the scholastic Parry and Stanford turned to Brahms for their direction,” wrote Norman Demuth, successor to Frederick Corder as the composition professor at the Royal Academy of Music, “the wilder spirits such as Granville Bantock and Josef Holbrooke found creative excitement in the Strauss model, scorning an academic approach and arousing complacent English audiences to frenzies of enthusiasm on the one side, among the younger generation, and of indignation and fury on the other.”

Though they continued composing until their deaths, critical opinion passed them by during the inter-war years. Norman Demuth went on to write, “By the 1920’s [Bantock’s] style and idiom had become standardised and he ceased to deliver any message of note to a brave new world that hardly knew what it wanted.” Holbrooke likewise showed his derivation from Strauss “too plainly” for critics who wished

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434 Pirie, “Bantock and His Generation,” 716.
436 Ibid., 110.
musical Britain to assimilate French and Russian post-war trends. It would be the next wave of English Romantics, Sir Arnold Bax and Rutland Boughton, who brought a Romantic style before the public again successfully, a style newly refreshed from a surprising blend of sources.
Chapter Five: Rutland Boughton (1878-1960)

Rutland Boughton was the first of the English Romantics to write his mature music after World War I. The watershed event of the war brought many changes to British culture. Stephen Banfield characterized the pre-war Edwardian decade (1900-1910) as a time when artists did not “distinguish readily between the shallow and the profound: sensation was more often more highly prized than sensibility.”438 During the interwar decades of the 1920s and 1930s, however, sensibility was foregrounded in the New Objectivity (Neue Sachlichkeit) proclaimed by Igor Stravinsky: “I consider that music is, by its very nature, essentially powerless to express anything at all, whether a feeling, an attitude of mind, a psychological mood, a phenomenon of nature, etc.”439 This anti-Romantic aesthetic informed both the serious and the frivolous sides of inter-war Neo-Classicism. The idealism of pre-War Romanticism was a fantasy that needed disproving; a program adhered to by both Stravinsky and Les Six. In British society, the change between the pre- and post-war cultural worlds “was so vast and so abrupt as to make the years after the war seem discontinuous from the years before, and that discontinuity became a part of English imaginations.”440

It was in this world cut off from its earlier values that Boughton composed his major works. He was profoundly un-worldly by interwar standards. Boughton rejected

438 Banfield, Sensibility and English Song, 90.
440 Samuel Hynes, A War Imagined: The First World War and English Culture (London: The Bodley Head, 1990), ix. Hynes continues: “A brief sketch of that collective narrative of significance would go something like this: a generation of innocent young men, their heads full of high abstractions like Honour, Glory, and England, went off to war to make the world safe for democracy. They were slaughtered in stupid battles planned by stupid generals. Those who survived were shocked, disillusioned and embittered by their war experiences, and saw that their real enemies were not the Germans, but the old men at home who had lied to them. They rejected the values of the society that had sent them to war, and in doing so separated their own generation from the past and from their cultural inheritance. Hynes, A War Imagined, x.
not only Stravinsky’s dictum of total abstraction and the light-hearted satire and pastiche of Les Six, but also the growing British obsession with ragtime and American jazz. Neither was he attracted to the fast-paced gaiety of high society or to the solidifying Pastoral School’s attempts to create a self-consciously national style in music. Rather, Boughton remained an idealistic Romantic in both his artistic and personal philosophy, particularly haunted by the transience of earthly beauty.

Boughton was particularly drawn to the ongoing Celtic Revival, most significantly by the poems and plays of Fiona Macleod. Surprisingly, by drawing on this and other Romantic sources Boughton achieved his greatest artistic successes between the wars while in direct conflict with the prevailing \textit{zeitgeist}.

**Biographical Sketch**

Rutland Boughton was born in the village of Aylesbury, Buckinghamshire on 23 January 1878. His family was lower middle-class: his mother a village schoolteacher and his father a grocer. Boughton was brought up in modest provincial comfort but was taught early on that not all others were as lucky as he: “a portion of each Sunday lunch, the week’s best meal, was taken to some poorer home before the Boughton family sat down to enjoy its own slender good fortune. As a lesson in practical Socialism it was not easily forgotten.”\footnote{Michael Hurd, \textit{Rutland Boughton and the Glastonbury Festivals} (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1993), 3.} Such lessons came later to inform both his artistic and political outlook.

Boughton’s passion for music left his family at a loss. Biographer Michael Hurd noted that Boughton’s parents, “like most Victorians of their class…were conservative by
inclination, religious by conviction and puritan by nature… The wider aspects of culture meant nothing to them, and in this they were at one with the majority of their fellow countrymen.”442 His parents apprenticed him at age fourteen to a London-based concert agency. When Boughton was discovered composing during company time, his employer arranged for the office boy to receive lessons in harmony and counterpoint instead being dismissed. The agency manager further arranged for the publication of Boughton’s finished compositions – songs, piano pieces, and works for military band.443 Boughton was later dismissed after working himself to collapse and he returned to Aylesbury in 1898.

Later that year Boughton responded to a *Daily Telegraph* article by music critic Robin Legge asking where was Britain’s “new musical Messiah.”444 Boughton ambitiously presented himself. After seeing a sample of his music, Legge contacted Sir Charles Villiers Stanford at the Royal College of Music:

Stanford decided the boy had talent and began pulling strings to such good effect that the M.P. for Aylesbury found himself agreeing to pay for lessons at the Royal College… Thus, at the age of twenty, Rutland Boughton found himself again bound for London, not this time as a frightened schoolboy, but as a proud member of the Royal College of Music.”445

Boughton did not fit in at the RCM. He felt shy, socially awkward, and provincial next to such older students as Ralph Vaughan Williams, Gustav Holst, and John

442 Ibid., 3.
443 Ibid., 9-10.
445 Ibid., 11.
Ireland.\textsuperscript{446} Stanford introduced him as “a fellow who’s been playing Beethoven in a barn”\textsuperscript{447} and tried to turn the recalcitrant young Straussian into “a virtuous imitator of Brahms.”\textsuperscript{448} Stanford failed. Already as a boy Boughton had precociously mapped out a fourteen-part cycle of music dramas on the life of Christ and his Romantic musical ambitions remained high.\textsuperscript{449} The \textit{Musical Standard} noted that Boughton’s early symphonic suite \textit{The Chilterns} owed much to Wagner and Tchaikovsky and that the student composer “uses his orchestra as if he thought in orchestral colours.”\textsuperscript{450} Stanford’s response to Boughton’s \textit{Imperial Elegy}, composed in memory of Queen Victoria, has already been related in Chapter Two: “Dr Stanford told me that it was the ugliest thing he had heard, apart from the music of Richard Strauss.”\textsuperscript{451} When Boughton left the Royal College of Music in 1901, it was not because of teacher-pupil tension, however, but

\textsuperscript{446} John Ireland (1879-1962) had the potential to become another English Romantic. His tone poems \textit{The Forgotten Rite} (1913) and \textit{Mai-Dun} (1921) illustrate the supernatural and legendary associations of ancient English Druidic sites. Ireland was also strongly influenced throughout his life by Arthur Machen’s (1863-1947) stories of supernatural fantasy and horror.
\textsuperscript{447} Hurd, \textit{Rutland Boughton}, 15.
\textsuperscript{448} Hurd, \textit{Immortal Hour}, 13.
\textsuperscript{449} Hurd relates that “He had for a long time felt that the mere singing of oratorio was inadequate, and it now struck him that if a choir were to be grouped around three sides of a raised platform the soloists might act out the drama as it unfolded in the music. With all the abandon of a Stockhausen he devised a cycle of fourteen music dramas on the life of Christ and began to work through each Sunday with a clear conscience” [having previously been composing music for the witches in \textit{Macbeth}, a dangerously profane subject]. Hurd, \textit{Rutland Boughton}, 6-7. Further, “That such an idea could have occurred to him at all is surprising enough, but when one considers that he had never been inside a theatre and did not know that opera existed it seems little short of the miraculous. He had seen a seaside concert party perform on a raised platform; he had heard a few oratorios and read Shakespeare’s plays. These three unlikely elements combined to give him, though he can scarcely have been aware of it at the time, that peculiarly English form: the Choral Drama.” Hurd, \textit{Immortal Hour}, 5.
\textsuperscript{450} Quoted in Hurd, \textit{Rutland Boughton}, 16.
\textsuperscript{451} Hurd, \textit{Immortal Hour}, 14.
because his funding had run out. The impractical young man did not understand his stipend to be one lump sum and spent it all thinking more would follow.\textsuperscript{452}

Boughton tried to make a living as a freelance musician, including playing harmonium in a theater orchestra much as Joseph Holbrooke had done. Boughton also became music critic for the \textit{Daily Mail} but encountered a difficulty he would face throughout his life: the necessity of aligning his critical opinion with the editorial policy of the paper. Boughton found this journalistic policy “repugnant and quite impossible to accept.”\textsuperscript{453} He was fired shortly after for stating, “Melba won’t do” in a review of the world-famous Australian soprano Dame Nellie Melba (1861-1931).\textsuperscript{454}

The idealistic young composer became married in 1903, though more out of pity than passion: Florence Hobley was the mistreated daughter of a London neighbor who aroused Boughton’s chivalrous feelings. When her mother accused Florence of becoming pregnant by Boughton, he confirmed the false charge rather than see her return to ill treatment. The couple were so poorly matched that Boughton’s attention to other women led him to leave Florence without many qualms – and then to leave her replacement in turn.

Boughton met Granville Bantock after favorably profiling him for the Musical Standard in a series of articles titled “Studies in Modern British Music.” Bantock also

\textsuperscript{452} Hurd, \textit{Rutland Boughton}, 18-19. Boughton’s difficulties with day-to-day living continued to cause friction in nearly every area of his life.
\textsuperscript{453} Ibid., 22.
\textsuperscript{454} Dame Nellie Melba GBE (1861-1931) was an Australian-born operatic soprano who achieved international fame in the late nineteenth and early twentieth centuries and who sang at Covent Garden, the Paris Opera, and the Metropolitan Opera in New York. She was made a Dame Commander of the Order of the British Empire in 1918.
attended the premiere of Boughton’s early tone poem *A Summer Night* in 1902 and later invited Boughton to join the faculty of the Birmingham Midlands Institute in 1905. Boughton was so successful at teaching piano and musical rudiments courses in harmony and sight-singing were created for him. There he also composed his first symphony, intended as a character study of Oliver Cromwell. The style, in the words of Michael Hurd, “leans heavily on Wagner” and features programmatic titles for each movement. To increase the intentionality of the program, in the fourth movement a baritone soloist sings a setting of Cromwell’s final prayer in which Cromwell asks God to lead and guide the English people. This reads in part: “I will come to Thee for Thy People…Thou hast made me, though very unworthy, a mean instrument to do them some good, and Thee service…Give them consistency of judgment, one heart, and mutual love.”

The symphony’s presentation of Cromwell as a heroic figure caring for the common people demonstrated Boughton’s growing interest in socialism, albeit heavily tinged with the Romantic idealism of Thomas Carlyle, creator of the “Great Man”

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456 I. A Character Study (Quick and rough); II. Cromwell’s letter to his wife, after the Battle of Dunbar; III. March of the Puritans; IV. Death Scene.
457 The full prayer is: “Lord, though I am a miserable and wretched creature, I am in Covenant with Thee through grace. And I may, I will come to Thee for Thy People. Thou hast made me, though very unworthy, a mean instrument to do them some good, and Thee service; and many of them have set to high a value upon me, though others wish and would be glad of my death; Lord, however Thou do dispose of me, continue and go on to do some good for them. Give them consistency of judgment, one heart, and mutual love; and go on to deliver them, and with the work of reformation; and make the name of Christ glorious in the world. Teach those who look too much on Thy instruments, to depend more upon Thyself. Pardon such as desire to trample upon the dust of a poor worm, for they are Thy people too. Even for Jesus Christ’s sake. And give us [me] a good night, if it be Thy pleasure.” See Paul Adrian Rooke, liner notes to *Bainton & Boughton: Symphonies*, BBC Concert Orchestra, conducted by Vernon Handley, Dutton CD CDLX7185, 2007, 7.
Boughton embraced Cromwell and later Wagner as “Great Men” whose biographies were the focus of history. Boughton’s reading of William Morris, Walt Whitman, John Ruskin, and Edward Carpenter fostered this idealistic combination of Romanticism and socialism, as did a long friendship with George Bernard Shaw. Each of these men emphasized art and music’s ability to form and shape communities that would lead to an international contemporary utopia. The communism Boughton eventually embraced was thus, in the words of Michael Hurd, “more the child of English nineteenth-century liberal-socialism than any Marxist doctrine.”

Boughton’s utopian socialism found a partner in the poet Reginald Buckley (1883-1919). The two met in 1907 when Buckley contacted Boughton to ask for his collaboration on an operatic setting of the Arthurian legend. Both Elgar and Bantock had previously turned down Buckley before Bantock recommended Boughton for the project. Buckley provided libretti for a cycle of four music-dramas outlining King

458 Thomas Carlyle (1795-1881) was a Scottish writer and historian who lectured widely in Victorian England. He was considered an important social commentator whose On Heroes, Hero-Worship, and The Heroic in History (1841) promoted the idea that “history is nothing but the biography of the Great Man.”

459 William Morris (1834-1896) was an artist, poet, and early advocate of socialism in England. His textile and architectural designs were cornerstones of the British Arts and Crafts Movement and he was a close friend of the Pre-Raphaelites. Walt Whitman (1819-1892) was the preeminent poet of 19th century America whose free verse in praise of nature and democracy were celebrated on both sides of the Atlantic. Many English composers set his poems to music, including Delius, Britten and Vaughan Williams; the latter’s A Sea Symphony set Whitman’s poetry in each of its four movements. John Ruskin (1819-1900) was a leading Victorian art critic and social thinker. His writings emphasized the connection between art, society, and nature. Edward Carpenter (1844-1929) was a poet, philosopher, and founding member of both the Fabian Society and Labour Party. George Bernard Shaw (1856-1950) and Boughton corresponded at length for decades, with hilarious results. Selections from Shaw’s teasing letters to Boughton denouncing his art and idealistic personality in the most outrageous terms are reproduced in both of Michael Hurd’s biographies. See Hurd, Rutland Boughton, 38-40, 51, 80, 208-10, 213-4, and 224-5.

460 Hurd, Immortal Hour, 19.
Arthur’s efforts to build a just society; Boughton, already interested in opera, began enthusiastically setting Buckley’s libretti. The two published their explicitly Wagnerian aims in *Music Drama of the Future*, a manifesto stating their intent to found a self-sufficient artistic community emphasizing the numinous aspects of art:

> Our dramas necessitate the building of a place which Buckley has fitly forenamed the Temple Theatre. That theatre we are intent on making the centre of a commune. There have been many communes and they have failed – for lack of a religious centre. Our theatre supplies that. It shall grow out of the municipal life of some civically conscious place if we can get such a place to co-operate with us. Failing that, a new city shall grow around the theatre.

The idea of a community unified by a quasi-sacred theater is clearly modeled on Wagner’s Festival Hall theater at Bayreuth, though the emphasis on communal living and artistic production is unique to Boughton and Buckley. The “civically conscious place” that cooperated with their scheme was the town of Glastonbury, already strongly associated with the legendary British king. Rather than building a Temple Theatre as a religious center, however, the first Glastonbury Festival was held in the town’s Assembly Hall.

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461 Buckley’s poems were titled *Uther and Igraine* or *The Birth of Arthur*, *The Round Table*, *The Holy Grail*, and *The Death of Arthur*. Boughton and Buckley fell out, however, over the dramatic viability of the texts; Boughton felt they needed to be rewritten extensively, while Buckley would not suffer them to be touched. Boughton set *The Birth of Arthur* (1908-9) and *The Round Table* (1915), then, decades later, rewrote Buckley’s final two libretti and set them as *Galahad* (1943) and *Avalon* (1944). Boughton also inserted an original music-drama of his own creation, *The Lily Maid* (1933-4) between the second and third dramas. *The Lily Maid* received one performance but *Galahad* and *Avalon* have never been performed.


463 Boughton later visited Bayreuth in 1911 while traveling on the Continent to avoid scandal in Glastonbury with his new common-law wife Christina Walshe. See below for further discussion.

464 Glastonbury Tor, a hill outside the town topped with a tower, has at times been claimed to be the location of Avalon, the magical island where Arthur was taken after his death and where he sleeps awaiting reawakening.
Rooms on August 5th, 1914.\textsuperscript{465} In place of \textit{The Birth of Arthur}, too impractical in its requirements, Boughton premiered a new work of his based on Fiona Macleod’s “psychic drama” \textit{The Immortal Hour}.\textsuperscript{466} This “strange Celtic play”\textsuperscript{467} drew on Irish legends and the author’s own mythic creations to create a “parable of man’s endless quest for beauty and perfection, brought to an inevitable destruction by the very nature of his mortality.”\textsuperscript{468} This opera would become the backbone of the Glastonbury Festivals, run by Boughton continuously from 1914 until 1926, and which grew in scope and ambition each year.\textsuperscript{469}

The Glastonbury Festivals gave regular performances of Boughton’s music-dramas \textit{The Immortal Hour}, \textit{Alkestis}, and \textit{The Queen of Cornwall} as well as scenes from Wagner’s \textit{Tristan} and \textit{Parsifal}.\textsuperscript{470} No theater was ever built and the Glastonbury Assembly Rooms remained the Festival’s venue, with a grand piano instead of an orchestra due to lack of space. Reflecting the communal aspects of music making emphasized by William Morris and Edward Carpenter, Boughton had originally hoped to train the townspeople well enough to sing all the necessary vocal parts. This proved impossible, but the operatic chorus was made up of local citizens while professional singers, often Boughton’s old pupils from Birmingham, filled the principal roles. A Festival School ran year-round to prepare its students, mostly drawn from Glastonbury’s students.

\textsuperscript{465} Britain had entered the Great War the previous day, August 4th, 1914.
\textsuperscript{466} Hurd, \textit{Rutland Boughton}, 269.
\textsuperscript{467} Hurd, \textit{Immortal Hour}, 42.
\textsuperscript{468} Ibid., 140. Fiona Macleod was the pen name of Irish author William Sharp (1856-1905), though he maintained that she was a real person. For more information see the analysis of the \textit{The Immortal Hour} below.
\textsuperscript{469} Their only interruption resulted from Boughton being drafted from 1916-1918. Christina Walshe organized makeshift theatrical festivals during these years.
\textsuperscript{470} Boughton also produced performances of Purcell, Gluck, and For a list of Festival programs, see Michael Hurd, \textit{Rutland Boughton}, Appendix C, 365-402.
population, for operatic performance in festivals at Christmas, Easter, and Whitsuntide. An August festival was the largest and longest of all, running for multiple weeks.

The premiere festival in August 1914 almost did not take place because of marital scandal. In 1910 Boughton met a young art student in Birmingham, Christina Walshe, who soon became not only Boughton’s lover, but also artistic partner: Walshe designed the costumes and scenery for each new Glastonbury production. Under Christina’s direction in dance the amateur chorus not only sang but also created “living” scenery with their costume and motion on stage.471 This alternative to the lack of professional scenery and stage machinery became a notable feature of early Glastonbury Festival performances.

Boughton did little to hide this liaison from his wife, and the two separated in 1911 but never divorced. Christina became his common-law wife while the community of Glastonbury was divided over the affair.472

In 1927 Boughton caused a second scandal by leaving Christina Walshe for another woman, Kathleen Davies. She had joined the Glastonbury Festivals as a singer in 1920 and attracted Boughton’s eye. Having already left one “impossible marriage”473 he now found himself tempted to leave another. With his characteristic personal openness a complex love triangle ensued, leading directly to his music drama The Queen of

471 Blue-robed chorus members swaying rhythmically, for example, supplied the waves of the sea, while those dressed in greens or browns provided forests and hills.
472 Birmingham was divided as well. Boughton resigned his teaching appointments in 1911 and left for a three-month visit to Berlin – with an excursion to Bayreuth – with his lover to allow things to cool down. He never returned to Birmingham but scraped by in London until the first Glastonbury Festival took place in 1914.
473 Hurd, Immortal Hour, 72.
Cornwall, a retelling of the Tristan story. By 1923 Christina had conceded her failure to hold his affections. She continued, however, to collaborate with Boughton on all artistic matters relating to the Glastonbury Festivals and she and Kathleen apparently remained amicable.474

In semi-retirement in Gloucestershire Boughton continued to compose, including two more symphonies, a music-drama called The Ever Young again involving the Celtic faery world, and concertos for oboe, trumpet, and flute.475 He attempted two more festivals on the Glastonbury model at Stroud in 1934 and Bath in 1935, but neither took root.476 He was able to “[keep] his colleagues nervously aware of his existence,” however, through the articles he regularly contributed to the Musical Times, the Musical Standard, and the Sackbut: “His lances were everywhere, attacking stupidity and injustice wherever he saw them.”477 Like Holbrooke, a favorite subject of attack was the BBC, which both composers charged with deliberately neglecting their music. Boughton died on January 25th, 1960, in his sleep.

Musical Examples

Important as the Arthurian cycle is as an artifact of Boughton’s utopian Socialism and his Wagnerian use of English legend, it has never been published and only partially

474 Hurd, Rutland Boughton, 158. It can only be hoped that the situation was fully as amicable as Boughton’s biographer describes.
475 Boughton’s daughter Joy (1913-1963) became a leading oboist in Britain. Her father wrote her two concertos and Benjamin Britten’s 1951 solo oboe piece Six Metamorphoses After Ovid was written for, premiered by, and dedicated to her.
476 Michael Hurd, liner notes to The Immortal Hour, Hyperion Records CDA66101/2, 1984, 4.
477 Hurd, Immortal Hour, 103.
478 Ibid., 103.
performed. This analysis is therefore devoted to *The Immortal Hour*, his first completed, most popular, and most characteristic music-drama. Boughton’s Romantic connection of natural beauty to pantheistic spirituality is particularly clear in this work, alongside Wagnerian appropriation of myth adapted from an “exotic” Celtic Other. A brief examination of Boughton’s fourth music-drama, *The Queen of Cornwall*, follows because its reworking of the Tristan story had personal relevance to Boughton: he lived the central love triangle with Christina Walshe and Kathleen Davies.

*The Immortal Hour*

*The Immortal Hour* was composed during 1912-13 just before the Glastonbury Festival scheme was finalized. Owning to its simpler musical and stage requirements, it was chosen to inaugurate the first Festival instead of the planned *Birth of Arthur*. *The Immortal Hour* has four principal vocal roles, a large chorus, and is scored for a modest orchestra reflecting the practical limitations of space and budget found in Glastonbury.

**Fusion of Wagner and British Choral Tradition**

Musically, Boughton’s emphasis on the chorus in *The Immortal Hour* as equal to the solo voices differs from Wagner’s practices. This emphasis was modeled equally on ancient Greek theater and the English choral tradition. Boughton was sure it was the prevalence of choral singing, combined with subjects drawing on Celtic mythos that would ensure his success in England. In *Music Drama of the Future* he related how “the

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479 *Sir Galahad* and *Avalon* were never produced.
481 *The Immortal Hour* is scored for flute (doubling piccolo), oboe (doubling English horn), 2 clarinets, bass clarinet, bassoon, 2 horns, trumpet, 2 trombones, timpani, snare drum, bass drum, cymbals, triangle, glockenspiel, harp, and strings.
greatest artists acquire their superhuman power by acting as the expression of the oversoul of a people. Then I understood why Wagner had chosen folk subjects which had been produced by that oversoul.”

The subject for each of Boughton’s stage works, save Alkestis, finds a place in his conception of a British “oversoul.” At the same time, the English love of choral singing provided “just that channel of musical expression which is absolutely essential to the English people” which “the Wagnerian drama lack[ed].” The composer thus fused three components:

the purely choral utterance, inherited from oratorio and therefore an important part of the British musical heritage; the system of representative themes derived from Wagner… and the self-contained song, stemming from the traditional British tendency towards ballad-opera models.

**Celtic Exoticism**

Boughton’s source for The Immortal Hour’s libretto, however, was the product of a strange division. Scottish writer William Sharp (1856-1905) was already an accomplished author when he became “seized by the conviction that there was another side to his personality that could only be expressed as Fiona Macleod: a mystic champion of Celtic art living, it was said, in inviolable isolation on some remote Hebridean island.” Among the works written under her name was The Immortal Hour, first

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483 Boughton prefigures his own work *The Immortal Hour* when notes that Wagner’s music dramas “will also appeal to the Norse element in our nation. A Celtic legend would probably have even stronger force.” *Music-Drama of the Future*, 6.
486 Ibid., 54. Sharp publically maintained Macleod’s independent existence throughout his life, even being “driven to correspond with Fiona, receiving letters in return.” Sharp’s early death may have been caused in part by the “sheer exhaustion of having to be, quite literally, two people.” See Hurd, *Rutland Boughton*, 54.
published in *The Fortnightly Review* in 1900 and then in book form in 1908. Boughton modified it only slightly when he turned it into a libretto.\(^487\)

Before composing Boughton studied select Hebridean folksongs Marjorie Kennedy Fraser had recently published in *Songs of the Hebrides*, the same source that Boughton had introduced to Bantock for the *Hebridean Symphony*. These folksongs became models for the many pentatonic melodies in *The Immortal Hour*. As in Bantock’s *Hebridean Symphony* and Holbrooke’s *Bronwen*, however, Boughton was not identifying with a British pastoral tradition but saw the melodies as a route to an exotic Celtic Other. The overall style of *The Immortal Hour* is much closer to Wagner’s use of Norse myths, as the libretto demonstrates:

Act One, Scene 1: Dalua, Lord of Shadow, the agent of all dark and unknown powers, whose touch brings madness and death, wanders alone in the forest. He is observed by invisible spirits who mock him as the outcast of gods and men. At first he does not know why he has come to so remote a spot, but when he senses the approach of others he understands the workings of a destiny beyond his control.\(^488\)

Etain enters, wandering as in a dream. She no longer remembers that she is a Princess of the faery Land of Youth. She knows only her name. Dalua tells her that a king draws near, searching for the Immortal Hour, the Fountain of all Beauty, and that he will believe that in her he has found what he desires, not knowing that death is the one true end to his quest. Etain goes on her way while Daula waits for Eocahidh, the King.

When at least he arrives, Dalua reveals the Fountain of Beauty and despite his apprehension Eochaidh allows himself to be led further into the forest by Dalua’s mocking voice.

Act One, Scene 2: A storm has arisen and Etain has taken shelter in the hut of two peasants, Manus and Maive. Led by Dalua, Eochaidh comes to the same place and at first glance knows that his search is at an end. As night draws on he sinks

\(^{487}\) A mimed scene in the second act was cut and Boughton added eight Macleod poems. Half appear as self-contained arias and half provide texts for the choral processions that introduce Act Two.

\(^{488}\) Hurd, *Immortal Hour*, 140.
into a deep sleep, his head in Etain’s lap, while she, half in dream, hears in the far distance the echoing faery songs of her own people.

Act Two: At a great feast Eochaidh celebrates his ‘year of joy’ with Etain. But both are troubled by strange dreams and forebodings. Etain leaves the gathering, but no sooner than she has gone than a stranger enters and makes a simple request of the King: that he may ‘touch the white hand of the Queen’ and sing to her ‘a little echoing song.’ Sadly, compelled by a fate he cannot alter, the king sends for Etain. While he and the stranger wait an Old Bard sings of the transience of mortal life. Etain comes in, dressed in the strange garments she wore when Eochaidh first saw her. At the touch of the stranger’s lips and the first notes of his song she recognizes that he is Midir, Prince of the Land of Youth, her rightful lord. Joyfully she goes with him. Eochaidh falls stricken, his dreams shattered. Dalua’s shadow, the shadow of death, covers him completely.489

**Wagnerian Leitmotifs and Their Transformations**

Each major character in *The Immortal Hour* is characterized by a musical *leitmotif*: Dalua, Etain, Eochaidh, (and their love), the faery people, and their prince, Midir. While these *leitmotifs* are predominantly pentatonic, they do not remain so as the drama unfolds. As Eochaidh’s “year of joy” comes to its tragic end in Act Two Boughton deforms many of them chromatically, dramatizing the tenuous nature of mortal happiness. Dalua, the Lord of Shadow, is himself characterized by a *leitmotif* full of accidentals – described by Boughton’s performance direction as “weary and painful” – that reveals both his “tortured relationship to the other gods”490 and Boughton’s harmonic debt to Wagner (see Figure 5.1).

**Wagnerian Chromatic Harmony**

The harmonies of Dalua’s *leitmotif* are placed in the depths of the orchestra; only brief ascents of a minor third characterize the upper parts. Individual chord members often move by semitones, in the first measure between G minor and B minor triads and in

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the second measure between B minor and B-flat augmented triads. The timbre of low woodwinds and brass portray Dalua’s status as a “strange creature of faery.”

**Figure 5.1:** Boughton, *The Immortal Hour*, Act One, page 1, four bars after rehearsal number 1. Dalua’s *leitmotif*

Midir, Prince of the Land of Youth, is given “solemn, *Parsifal*-like chords” that underline each mention of his name. The harmonies move by thirds around a central chord: A major, C# major, A major, F# major. Motion between chords is again accomplished by half-steps in the part-writing, producing a close, glowing sound scored for the strings (see Figure 5.2).

**Figure 5.2:** Boughton, *The Immortal Hour*, Act Two, page 179, two bars before rehearsal number 18. Midir’s *leitmotif*.

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491 Stage directions, page 1, 4 bars after rehearsal number 1.  
Michael Hurd’s comparison of Midir’s *leitmotif* to that of Parsifal can perhaps best be heard in moments from Wagner’s final music-drama like that shown in Figure 5.3. Here Parsifal experiences the pain of Amfortas’ wound and repulses Kundry’s seduction attempt in Act Two. As he cries “My dull gaze is fixed on the sacred vessel; the holy blood flows: – the bliss of redemption, divinely mild,” the string tremolo chords above the “Eucharist” or “Last Supper” *leitmotif* create a similar bright and “glowing” sound. Individual parts also move by half-steps, just as in Midir’s motif. When Midir speaks, his *leitmotif* expands to a playful 6/8 lilt (see Figure 5.4).

494 “Es start der Blick dumpf aus das Heilsgefäβ – Das heil’ge Blut erglüht: – Erlösungswonne, göttlich mild.”
495 The fact that both Midir and Parsifal are characters connected with the supernatural may also be relevant to the comparison.
Figure 5.3: Wagner, *Parsifal*, Act Two, page 378 (Dover edition). Inspiration for Midir’s leitmotif in string tremolos.
Midir’s revelation of his identity as the Faery Prince at the climax of Act Two seals Eochaidh’s fate and the “love” motif between Eochaidh and Etain is twisted by chromatic intrusions (see Figures 5.5 and 5.6). Boughton’s stage directions in Figure 5.6 clarify the negating function of these harmonic fluctuations. Between minor key presentations of the love leitmotif in bars one and three of Figure 5.6, Eochaidh is startled.
“as if by some unseen phantom.” The brief bursts of chromaticism in the second and fourth bars are later used by Boughton to indicate unseen laughter and hint at the tragic end of Eochaidh’s quest for eternal beauty. Further chromatic deformations occur in Figures 5.7 and 5.8.

**Figure 5.5:** Boughton, *The Immortal Hour*, Act One, Scene 2, page 94, two bars before rehearsal 120. “Love” *leitmotif* between Eochaidh and Etain.

![Figure 5.5](image1)

**Figure 5.6:** Boughton, *The Immortal Hour*, Act Two, page 146, two bars before rehearsal number 36. Minor mode transformation of “love” *leitmotif*.

![Figure 5.6](image2)

**Figure 5.7:** Boughton, *The Immortal Hour*, Act Two, page 179, two bars before rehearsal number 82. Chromatic deformation of “love” *leitmotif*.

![Figure 5.7](image3)
Etain, who along with Eochaidh experienced strange forebodings before Midir’s appearance, likewise has her previously pure pentatonic theme disfigured by foreign pitches in Act Two. Her Act One leitmotif is shown in Figure 5.9. Originally scored for oboe above pizzicato strings, Boughton emphasizes the harmonic transformation, including prominent tritones between E and B-flat, by rescoring the melody for the more plangent tone of an English horn in Figure 5.10.

Figure 5.8: Boughton, *The Immortal Hour*, Act Two, page 195, four bars after rehearsal number 107. Chromatic deformation of “love” leitmotif.

**Figure 5.9:** Boughton, *The Immortal Hour*, Act One, page 39, rehearsal number 42. Etain’s leitmotif: Solo oboe above strings.
The only leitmotif that remains pentatonic – besides Midir’s – is that of the faery folk, first heard sung by the offstage choir at the end of Act One (see Figure 5.11.) Only Etain hears it, an echo of the eternal life and superhuman joy she once shared. This same melody forms Midir’s “little echoing song” to woo Etain back and caps the end of the opera, sung again by the unseen choir, as Etain returns to the “Land of Heart’s Desire” with her rightful lord.\footnote{This “Faery Song” went on to lead a popular independent existence, much to Boughton’s chagrin, obscuring his later work. It remains his most well-known musical composition.}
Figure 5.11: Boughton, *The Immortal Hour*, Act Two, page 182, five bars before rehearsal number 86. The faery people’s *leitmotif* as sung by Midir in Act Two. Also known as the “Faery Song.”
Boughton here musically demonstrates the transience of beauty inherent in human life; only the opera’s supernatural characters – at least those who remain uninvolved with humans – are spared sorrows and thus chromatic deformation. Their lives, and thus their leitmotifs, retain their joy indefinitely. Etain’s love for Eochaidh provides the conduit for pain to enter her otherwise super-human existence. Once called by Midir, Boughton presents her return to her people, “the lordly ones who dwell in the hollow hills,” as occurring “in a trancèd ecstasy.” Thus the faery world created by Boughton and Macleod does not involve creatures with gossamer wings sitting on toadstools and prancing in magic circles. Rather, it offers a mirror-image of the mortal world: a proud, fierce race to whom the comings and goings of mortals are of no more importance than the peregrinations of ants. The words of the song that lures Etain back to faery reality set the tone: ‘They laugh and are glad and are terrible.’

**Sublime Nature and the Supernatural**

Boughton was inspired to compose *The Immortal Hour* in part because he was immersed in nature at the time. He had become the temporary amanuensis for Frederick Jackson, a retired solicitor with musical interests but no technical training. Jackson lived in the Surrey countryside on a private income while Boughton and his family were housed in a small cottage in the woods on Jackson’s estate. As Boughton wandered the house and grounds, singing madrigals and partsongs with friends, “the whole atmosphere of the Surrey woods reawakened an idea that had lain dormant since his Birmingham

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497 Stage directions on page 204, two bars before rehearsal number 116.
days: to make a setting of Fiona Macleod’s Celtic drama *The Immortal Hour.* During the process of composition, the music “seemed to come to him out of the trees…So intense was his mood that he half expected the creatures of his fancy to appear before him: it was as if he was a trespasser in the woods that were theirs by right.”

The link Boughton formed between the sublimity of nature and the supernatural world carries over into the music drama. Musical presentations of natural phenomena shade into presentations of the supernatural. An example is the storm in Act One, Scene 2 that causes Eochaidh and Etain to meet. This passage contains naturalistic “storm” music, with chromatic scales in a solo violin depicting the wailing winds accompanying swelling and receding half-step motion in the orchestra (see Figure 5.12.)

499 Ibid., 53.
501 Boughton’s original plan was to premiere *The Immortal Hour* in the Surrey woods with an amateur cast to be trained by himself and Christina after a prototype Festival School. The plan was rejected as too ambitious. See Hurd, *Rutland Boughton*, 52-53.
502 The solo violin continues under the voices, providing a realistic expression of rain and wind during Etain and Manus’ conversation on pages 81-84 and at Eochaidh’s entry on page 88.
Figure 5.12: Boughton, *The Immortal Hour*, Act One, Scene 2, page 80, one bar after rehearsal number 100. The storm. Solo violin over orchestra.
Yet because the storm arose from clear skies – conjured by Dalua to bring Eochaidh and Etain together – it also prompts eerie chromatic pronouncements of dread by the peasant Maive, shown in Figure 5.13.

**Figure 5.13:** Boughton, *The Immortal Hour*, Act One, Scene 2, page 84, five bars before rehearsal number 106. Maive’s chromatic fears.

Her husband Manus explains that “Grey Feathers” and “Blind Eyes” are supernatural representations of the wind and rain: “Blind Eyes, the dreadful one whom none has seen, whose voice we hear. Grey Feathers, his pale love who flies before or follows.” When Etain mentions the Shee, another name for the faery folk, in connection with nature, Manus silences her abruptly: “We do not speak of them.” When Eochaidh appears, the peasants cannot conceal their fear of the storm’s supernatural connections;
Maive pleads, “Sir, if you are one of the nameless ones, the noble nameless ones, do us no ill.”

The concept of the Immortal Hour itself, the “joy that is more great than joy,” beyond what “the beauty of the old green earth can give,” receives a leitmotif, scored for clarinet above pulsing strings in open fifths. This opens the drama and introduces its exotic “otherworldly” atmosphere. In Christina Walshe’s original staging, Boughton called for a “continuous ballet of tree-spirits” to enliven the evocation of “a forest” with “a pool in the background.” Figure 5.14 demonstrates:

Figure 5.14: Boughton, The Immortal Hour, Act One, page 1, bar 1. The “Immortal Hour” leitmotif. Solo clarinet over strings.

503 See the above discussion of Christina Walshe’s use of “living scenery.”
Even this *leitmotif* of immortal bliss, however, contains prominent tritone dissonances in measures nine and ten. Boughton thus creates a harmonic reminder that such an unattainable goal is dangerous for mortals to seek.

**Sublime Nature and Supernatural Chromaticism**

That danger – and its attendant foolhardiness – is also represented by the sound of laughter, which throughout the opera symbolizes immortal mockery of mortal pretensions.\(^{504}\) Boughton creates musical laughter through rhythmic descending chromatic figures, repeated briefly or at length. The first, and longest, example is given by the chorus in Act One, Scene 1 (see footnote 71 and Figure 5.15.) Thereafter, its intrusions are purely instrumental. Each occurs at key moments in the drama. For example, just before Dalua tempts Eochaidh deeper into the forest towards his fateful meeting with Etain, the Lord of Shadow’s laughter is heard from offstage in flute, clarinet, and pizzicato strings, shown in Figure 5.16. Here the laughter has a scalar “tail” of descending semiquavers.

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\(^{504}\) It also characterizes mockery of immortal ignorance. In Act One, Scene 1 the chorus of unseen “Voices in the Woods” explicitly mocks Dalua for his lack of foreknowledge about his own actions and purposes. See pages 25 through 38 of the vocal score.
Figure 5.15: Boughton, *The Immortal Hour*, Act One, page 31, four bars before rehearsal number 35. Choral laughter.

Figure 5.16: Boughton, *The Immortal Hour*, Act One, page 74, four bars before rehearsal number 89. Dalua’s instrumental laughter offstage, including descending diatonic “tail.”
The same laughter also mars the otherwise joyful first meeting of Eochaidh and Etain. Immediately after they profess their newfound love, the characteristic figure returns with identical scoring (see last two bars of Figure 5.17). Eochaidh asks sharply, “Who laughed?” Manus replies “sullenly”\textsuperscript{505}: “No one laughed.” Maive only repeats “Grey Feathers and Blind Eyes!” in descending semitones as before.\textsuperscript{506}

**Figure 5.17:** Boughton, *The Immortal Hour*, Act One, Scene 2, page 108, seven bars before rehearsal number 133. Unseen faery laughter follows the climax of the love scene.

In Act Two, Midir’s shakes with silent laughter as the departing chorus of druids, warriors, and ladies refer to him in supplication among the other gods, ignorant of

\textsuperscript{505} Stage direction, page 104, one bar after rehearsal number 133.

\textsuperscript{506} Significantly, Etain hears no laughter, only the hooting of an owl. She remains unaffected by the forebodings experienced by Eochaidh; she either does not experience them or interprets them as welcome – a guess confirmed by her acceptance of the faery prince once her memory is restored.
his presence and purpose among them. Boughton here creates a different pattern of laughter, though it is still rhythmic and depends on chromatic motion. It is scored more bitingly than the previous mirth, for muted trumpet.

**Chromatic Harmony as Romantic Passion**

Boughton uses chromaticism for a different purpose in the later portion of Act One, Scene 2. Here, as Eochaidh and Etain converse in the peasants’ hut during the storm. As their love blossoms, Boughton uses fluid shifts of harmony to present their rising passion (see Figure 5.19.) The technique and effect are similar to Quatrain XII in Bantock’s *Omar Khayyám*; both are characteristically Late Romantic in effect.

Midir expresses a similar chromatically-inflected passion in Act Two when he recounts the supernatural creative joy of Dana, “mother of gods, sea-crowned, mood-shod,” and Aed, “of the Sunlight and Shadow” (see Figure 5.20). These two “Great Fires,” the sun and moon, came together to produce Aengus Og, “Sun-Lord and Death-Lord,” the Celtic god of love named by the druids in their earlier chorus.
Figure 5.18: Boughton, *The Immortal Hour*, Act Two, page 158, two bars before rehearsal number 51. Midir’s “silent laughter” in muted trumpet.
Figure 5.19: Boughton, *The Immortal Hour*, Act One, Scene 2, page 102, three bars before rehearsal 131. Etain’s rising passion is reflected in the increasingly chromatic texture.
Figure 5.20: Boughton, *The Immortal Hour*, Act Two, pages 164-5, one bar before rehearsal number 59. Midir’s chromatically inflected passion as he retells the conception of Aengus Og.
heav'd as the sea heaves in the great

calms and the wind of her sighs were as the

winds of sunrise soaring the peaks of the

ea-gles

Da-na, Mo- ther of gods,
Wagnerian Stylistic Allusion

Eochaidh likewise calls upon Aengus in desperation to preserve his union with Etain against the intervention of a fate he still does not recognize. Before Midir’s arrival he confesses his fears of the faery people’s interference in a dramatic arioso.

This passage is perhaps Boughton’s closest approach to his Wagnerian model. As Eochaidh’s attention shifts from one recent uncanny experience to another the music follows him closely, reflecting his anxiously changing focus in changes of key, shifting harmonies, and sudden musical evocations of textual references. Beginning to in D-flat major, Eochaidh moves to E and then B-flat major, a tritone away. Within these keys chromatic alterations shift the harmonies expressively at key moments, such as when Eochaidh asserts Dalua’s magical touch can “make the chords of life a bitter jangling tune” (see Figure 5.21).

Likewise, when Eochaidh claims to see “a host of shadows marching” on the grass at night, Boughton introduces a regular marching rhythm in pizzicato strings supporting a military call figure in dotted rhythms (Figure 5.22). At the king’s claim that “Dalua then must sure have blown a magic air, or with the mystic dew have sealed my eyes from seeing fair,” a muted trumpet call breaks into the marching rhythms (Figure 5.23).
Figure 5.21: Boughton, *The Immortal Hour*, Act Two, page 143, three bars before rehearsal number 31. Eochaidh’s aria.

Figure 5.22: Boughton, *The Immortal Hour*, Act Two, page 129, two bars before rehearsal number 28. Eochaidh’s aria.

Figure 5.23: Boughton, *The Immortal Hour*, Act Two, page 141, three bars before rehearsal number 30. Eochaidh’s aria.
Finally, Eochaidh refers multiple times to the ubiquitous laughter from unseen sources discussed earlier. For this Boughton uses not only his previous motif, but creates a new one that emphasizes its sinister nature. It is scored for a solo clarinet that emerges abruptly out of the texture and then returns to a persistent low trill. Persistent faery laughter of the sort found in Act One pursues Eochaidh after he finishes this passage (see Figure 5.24).

Etain responds to Eochaidh’s anxieties by admitting that she too has heard “strange delicate music.” But to her this manifests as “a little lovely noise of myriad leaves” as if “the greenness of the wind o’ the South came travelling to bare woods on one still night.” Boughton expresses the contrasting gentleness of her experience in G-flat major and lilting 6/4 rhythms using a variant of her Act One introductory phrase: “I am Etain, White o’ the Wave.” Boughton scores this for pianissimo strings and harp; even the chromatic rise and fall of the upper parts create an ethereal sound of “subtle murmurings” far removed from Eochaidh’s night terrors (see Figure 5.25). Boughton’s close musical reflection of both the king’s restless fears and Etain’s attractive hints of the faery world echoes Wagner’s own goal of achieving a symphonic web of infinite plasticity, moving freely in response to whatever was being done and said on the stage – which alone determined whether a new theme was introduced or an old one repeated, the guises they appeared in and the way they were developed; whether the music modulated or stayed in the same key, threw up a single melody or ramified into contrapuntal lines.507

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Figure 5.24: Boughton, *The Immortal Hour*, Act Two, page 144, two bars after rehearsal number 32. Eochaidh’s aria.
The Land of Youth as Exoticism

Despite Boughton’s claim to express aspects of a British “oversoul” in each of his dramatic works, his connection to Fiona Macleod’s work was based in large part on its exoticism. The composer was not Irish by birth or ancestry – but his second wife was. “Half Irish herself,” Christina Walshe became “an ardent champion of Celtic revivalism and her enthusiasm kindled [Boughton’s].” As described earlier, the faery world of Macleod is not a Victorian kitchen garden but a large and ancient world peopled by beings who “are proud and terrible, marching in the moonlight with fierce blue eyes.” Just as Boughton’s Arthurian cycle draws on old stories to create a distance in time, so The Immortal Hour combines distant myths and a distant location. Both are invitations to

508 Hurd, Rutland Boughton, 53.
509 Boughton, Immortal Hour, 208.
a sense of exoticism. Though the “lordly ones” dwell “in the hollow hills” of nearby nature their realm is closed to mortals. One can receive glimpses of the Land of Heart’s Desire – but one cannot remain there in the Immortal Hour.

**Favorable Reception**

*The Immortal Hour* won audiences wherever it was performed. It was a favorite of Glastonbury Festival audiences and was produced in London, over Boughton’s objections, at the Regent Theatre by Barry Jackson in 1922. *The Immortal Hour* ran for 216 consecutive performances, still the record for a serious opera. Jackson revived it the next year for 160 more performances. Two more revivals followed, in 1926 and 1932, bringing the total number of London performances to over 500. Boughton stopped tracking the total performances of *The Immortal Hour* after the number reached 1,000.

Michael Hurd explains its unprecedented and unexpected success as a response to the widespread loss and bereavement following World War I and a reaction against the prevailing 1920s climate of escapist hedonism:

> [Boughton’s] material and method were the very antithesis of post-war attitudes to life. *The Immortal Hour* was not the music of disillusioned ‘bright young things’ intent on a hedonistic escape from a new and harsher world; nor was it an expressionist scream of anguish, an atonal retreat from emotion, or a Stravinskian exploration of the primitive. It was the voice of an authentic dreamer from an earlier, saner age, and as such it had a powerful appeal. A war-weary generation

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510 See discussion in Chapter Two referencing Ralph Locke’s *Musical Exoticism*.

511 Boughton protested because he believed a commercial production of the opera would destroy the pure communal spirit in which the work was created. Yet London audiences attended it as faithfully as those in Glastonbury, returning to see the work again and again.

512 Hurd, *Immortal Hour*, 82.
was eager to escape into this dream world… In the early 1920s *The Immortal Hour* was the perfect mirror of society’s needs.513

Yet underlying the story of Etain won back to the Land of Youth, there is the Romantic paradox that the beauty sought is transient and cannot last. This same paradox deeply affected fellow English Romantic Sir Arnold Bax, who was to draw from similarly Celtic sources for both his life and music – though his wider travels brought influences from as far abroad as Russia and Finland.

**The Queen of Cornwall**

Boughton’s fourth music-drama was based on Thomas Hardy’s 1923 “Mummer’s Play” *The Famous Tragedy of the Queen of Cornwall at Tintagel in Lyonesse*.514 It was composed in the same year, Boughton visiting Hardy during the work’s creation and gaining his approval of Boughton’s operatic adaptation. The composer’s inspiration was strikingly similar to that of his model, Wagner’s *Tristan und Isolde*: just as Wagner pursued an extra-marital affair, so did Boughton. He was Tristram, torn between his marriage to Iseult of the White Hands (his common-law wife Christina Walshe) and Iseult the Queen of Cornwall (her new rival Kathleen Davies.)

**Chromatic Harmonies**

Boughton presents destabilizing chromaticism immediately in *The Queen of Cornwall* reflecting its prevailing mood of tension and unease. As shown in Figure 5.26, in the first bar of Act One Boughton writes D-flat minor and G-flat fully diminished seventh chords against the implied C minor in the orchestra. In the second bar the chorus

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initiates a series of descending chromatic wails sung by each voice part in turn. After this dramatic *a cappella* gestures Boughton returns to the C/D flat dissonance in the orchestra.

The C/D flat combination is sung later by the chorus to punctuate the wordless grief of Iseult the Queen of Cornwall after she has been informed of Tristram’s apparent death in Brittany, shown in Figure 5.27. Boughton instructs the Queen to mime her sorrow and uncertainty “as though the chorus and orchestra were expressing her feelings and thoughts.”

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**Figure 5.26**: Boughton, *The Queen of Cornwall*, Act One, page 1, bar 1. First choral entrances.

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515 Four bars after rehearsal number 34.
The chorus members in *The Queen of Cornwall* represent “ghosts of long-dead Cornish men and women” who rise “out of the sea and wind and the very stones of the castle.” During the Queen’s lament at Tristram’s supposed death, the chorus echoes her thoughts at a distance, singing in alternation with her (see Figure 5.28). Their music is again highly chromatic, full of half-step motion and in conflict with the written key signature.

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516 Hurd, *Immortal Hour*, 151.
517 From two bars before rehearsal number 22 to two bars before rehearsal number 29.
Boughton also writes chromatically for the orchestra in this scene, though this is not always shown in the vocal score. A solo violin, for example, spins out sequential chromatic semiquavers at cadence points between rehearsal numbers 22-24, similar to the depiction of the “wailing wind” in Act One, Scene 2 of *The Immortal Hour*.\(^{518}\)

\(^{518}\) The first instance occurs two bars before rehearsal number 23. The violin continues for three bars before ceasing at the next entry of the chorus. At the next phrase ending, one bar before rehearsal number 24, the solo violin reappears for another three bars. The pattern repeats throughout this section, though the part does not appear in the vocal score.
At the peak of her anguish Queen Iseult becomes distraught, her wish to escape “this nightmare too appalling” driving her to a high A5 via many chromatic sidesteps (see Figure 5.29). In bars two, three, and six of Figure 5.29 Boughton underscores her tension with tritones in the bass. One bar before rehearsal number 39, the orchestra gives voice to the Queen’s cries in minor second “sighing” gestures scored for high woodwinds as Brainwain appears, fearing for the Queen.

**Wagnerian Leitmotifs**

As in all of Boughton’s music dramas, there is a Wagnerian network of *leitmotifs* in *The Queen of Cornwall*. Fitting the work’s anxious atmosphere, several *leitmotifs* already contain chromatic dissonances in their initial statements. These include the choral “wails” representing the winds and waves surrounding the Queen’s Cornwall castle and the motif for Queen Iseult herself. The Queen’s *leitmotif* contains a prominent tritone dissonance created by the non-chord tone D# (see Figure 5.30). This tension is not resolved by the D# moving to E; instead the D# sinks to D natural, producing a quality of resignation and frustrated yearning.
Figure 5.29: Boughton, *The Queen of Cornwall*, Act One, page 48, eight bars before rehearsal number 39. The Queen’s cries draw Brangwain.

Quicker.

Yet stays this night-mare too appalling

P cresc.

moito accel.

And like a web shakes me, And

P cres, molto

piteously I keep on calling And no one

Cresc. molto

39

Brangwain hastens in alarmed by her cries,

Quick.

and
Figure 5.30: Boughton, *The Queen of Cornwall*, Act One, page 33, three bars before rehearsal number 22. Queen iseult’s *leitmotif*, scored for strings in octaves.

![Score Example](image)

The Queen’s *leitmotif* is given further chromatic inflections during her “lament” scene. Boughton frequently shrinks the initial leap of a fifth into a tritone as shown in Figure 5.32. The composer couples this with half-step motion in the orchestral part writing, portraying Iseult’s uneasy position between her husband King Mark and her lover Tristram. King Marks’ leitmotif, in contrast, is a diatonic phrase for low brass and strings in dotted marching rhythms. Its implacable nature reflects the threat the King poses both to Tristram and the Queen should he prove the infidelity he suspects (see Figure 5.31)

**Romantic Orchestration**

The whole music-drama is “more astringent, raw, and exciting,” than *The Immortal Hour*, with “noticeably harsher” orchestration involving the brass, especially muted horns and trumpets and prominent low brass phrases.\(^{519}\) The Queen of Cornwall is scored for a larger orchestra than *The Immortal Hour*, though it is still modest compared

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\(^{519}\) Hurd, *Rutland Boughton*, 290.
to Boughton’s model Wagner. The opera ends as it began, dissolving into a chromatic “storm chorus” as the ghosts of the chorus return to the sea and winds (see Figure 5.33). The voices of Tristram and Iseult are heard in peaceful diatonic harmonies in the final bars (see Figure 5.34).

Figure 5.31: Boughton, *The Queen of Cornwall*, Act One, page 20, rehearsal number 4. King Mark’s leitmotif, scored for low brass and strings.

The *Queen of Cornwall* is scored for a larger orchestra than *The Immortal Hour*, though still reasonable in size: piccolo, 2 flutes, oboe, cor anglais, 2 clarinets, bass clarinet, 2 bassoons, 2 horns, trumpet, 3 trombones, tuba, harp, celeste, timpani, percussion, and strings.

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520 *The Queen of Cornwall* is scored for a larger orchestra than *The Immortal Hour*, though still reasonable in size: piccolo, 2 flutes, oboe, cor anglais, 2 clarinets, bass clarinet, 2 bassoons, 2 horns, trumpet, 3 trombones, tuba, harp, celeste, timpani, percussion, and strings.
Figure 5.32: Boughton, *The Queen of Cornwall*, Act One, page 40, two bars before rehearsal number 29. The Queen’s leitmotif woven into the orchestral texture with further chromatic inflections.
Figure 5.33: Boughton, *The Queen of Cornwall*, Act Two, pages 187-8, five bars before rehearsal number 95. Concluding “storm” chorus interacts with Iseult of the White Hands (Tristram’s wife).
**Figure 5.34:** Boughton, *The Queen of Cornwall*, Act Two, page 197, last nine bars. The spirits of Tristram and Queen Iseult appear in the final measures.

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**Boughton in Summary**

Rutland Boughton was the least worldly wise of the English Romantics, but he achieved greater public success than any of the others. “We will do anything for Boughton,” proclaimed a performer at the premiere of *The Ever Young*, “he is so
unpractical, always making something out of nothing."\textsuperscript{521} The Glastonbury Festivals, the record-setting run of \textit{The Immortal Hour}, and the formation of a travelling company, The Glastonbury Festival Players, were all created “out of nothing.” Boughton’s idealism, no less than his Romantic aesthetic, conflicted with the British inter-war \textit{zeitgeist}, yet seemed to succeed because of this.

Boughton’s musical material also shared more traits with Bantock and Holbrooke than contemporaries like Stravinsky or Schoenberg. Boughton’s operas and “Cromwell” Symphony are constructed using the Wagnerian principle of \textit{leitmotifs}, as are Bantock and Holbrooke’s large-scale works. Melodically, Boughton set his libretti in flowing Wagnerian recitative that often crossed into arioso. He set off this stream of “unending melody” by inserting brief self-contained songs or longer arias at various points.\textsuperscript{522} Bantock followed a similar strategy in \textit{Omar Khayyám}, though Bantock turned to polyphonic or imitative choral numbers more than solo sections to break up the presentation of text.

Boughton followed his operatic model, Richard Wagner, most closely in the harmonic choices underlying the characters’ \textit{leitmotifs}, melodic recitatives, and more dramatic arias and scenes. There harmonies chromatically fluctuate to follow the emotions of the text as Wagner wished. Boughton was less adventurous in his harmonic

\textsuperscript{521} From W.G. McNaught’s review of \textit{The Ever Young}, quoted in Hurd, \textit{Rutland Boughton}, 213.

\textsuperscript{522} The pentatonic melodies and ballad-like strophic structure of Etain’s aria in \textit{The Immortal Hour} (“Fair is the Moonlight”) and Tristram’s medieval minstrel song in \textit{The Queen of Cornwall} (“When I set out for Lyonesse”) are Boughton’s closest approach to the folk-song style of the English Musical Renaissance. Again, however, Boughton approached these through the lens of exoticism, drawn by the foreignness of an Other in culture or time.
choices than the frequent augmented chords of Holbrooke, but he was consistent in his application of chromaticism for expressive purposes even when setting authentic folk song.

Boughton arranged two English folk songs for unaccompanied four-part choir in 1905, *The Barkshire Tragedy* and *King Arthur Had Three Sons*, published by Novello as one set titled *Choral Variations upon English Folk Songs*.\(^{523}\) Boughton’s variations incorporated “expressive” chromaticism in a manner “calculated to freeze the blood of any devotee of pure folksong.”\(^{524}\) Figures 5.35 and 5.36 show one example of chromatic modification from each folk song setting, respectively.

**Figures 5.35:** Boughton, *Two Choral Variations*, page 37, last three bars. Final cadence of first folk song setting using extensive “expressive” chromaticism.

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\(^{523}\) Rutland Boughton, *Two Choral Variations upon English Folk Songs* (London: Novello, ca. 1907-08).

\(^{524}\) Hurd, *Immortal Hour*, 136.
Figure 5.36: Boughton, *Two Choral Variations*, page 44. Variation on King Arthur Had Three Sons using continuous chromaticism in the inner voices.
Despite the active inner parts in Figure 5.36, Boughton was a composer who thought harmonically, not contrapuntally. Like Bantock and Holbrooke, Boughton’s musical textures were largely homophonic save for special imitative effects. There are no vocal ensembles in either *The Immortal Hour* or *The Queen of Cornwall*, so complete was Boughton’s choice of texture. Even the operatic chorus, such a crucial part of Boughton’s plan for Wagnerian-inspired English music drama, remains homophonic, with only occasional imitative polyphony. This absence of rigorous or “true” counterpoint is also found in his instrumental works and choral part-songs; Michael Hurd commented wryly that, “Boughton himself evidently misunderstood the nature of his animated part-writing, for he dedicated the second set of Choral Variations to ‘Walford Davies, who taught me the spiritual value of counterpoint.”

Unlike both his models Wagner and Strauss and his fellow English Romantics, Boughton rarely used an enlarged Late Romantic orchestra. This was largely the result of practical necessity: at the Glastonbury Festivals, a grand piano generally had to suffice for reasons of space. Boughton nevertheless used blended timbres characteristic of post-Wagnerian German orchestration, most prominently during *The Immortal Hour*’s opening pages. Here Boughton set the mysterious forest scene by low strings pulsing across octaves 1-3. A clarinet in its chalumeau register plays a lyrical melody above them, the whole making up the “Immortal Hour” *leitmotif*. Similarly, Dalua is characterized by a blend of low strings, bass clarinet, bassoon, and horns.

525 The passages of musical laughter in *The Immortal Hour* are imitative, as are the chromatic “wails” of the chorus of ghosts in *The Queen of Cornwall*. Boughton also layers the individual choral songs from the beginning of *The Immortal Hour* Act Two on top of each other at the scene’s climax, but this is not polyphony in the strict sense.

Boughton scored for a more Straussian shifting between instrumental families in Eochaidh and Dalua’s respective arias in *The Immortal Hour* Act Two. When Eochaidh describes the foreboding anxiety he has lately experienced, blaming Dalua and the “Hidden People” of the Faery, his mood veers from confusion to fear, then bitterness, anger, and resignation in turn. Boughton not only followed this progression harmonically but also with shifting orchestration. Woodwinds, strings, brass, timpani, and cymbals combine in sudden surges of dynamic intensity and also split apart in brief solos.\(^{527}\) Similarly, when Midir sings of the birth of the gods, prominent glockenspiel, cymbals, and bass drum combine with the strings, woodwinds, and brass in fluid patterns and dramatic climaxes, closely following the mood of the creation myth Midir retells.

Though English music scholar Stephen Banfield dismisses Boughton as among those mislead by Edwardian license to “indulge in their private dreams,”\(^ {528}\) he does affirm that Boughton’s “Celtic dream world” was “part of the wide Celtic renaissance which, as we shall see, fired creative imaginations as much after the First World War as before.”\(^ {529}\) Boughton’s approach to the Celtic myths of *The Immortal Hour* was through this lens of exoticism. In the same way Bantock and Holbrooke approached their subjects in the *Hebdridean Symphony* and *The Cauldron of Anwyn*, respectively.\(^ {530}\)

The next English Romantic, Arnold Bax, identified himself even more closely not only with the Celtic revival, but also with his “private dreams.” For Bax, his ultimate

\(^{527}\) In strong contrast, when Etain shares that she also has had strange visions, they are scored for an idyllic mixture of harp, high strings, and flute.  
\(^{528}\) Stephen Banfield, *Sensibility and English Song*, 104.  
\(^{529}\) Ibid., 104.  
\(^{530}\) Boughton also saw in his symphonic portrait of Oliver Cromwell and the medieval setting of *The Queen of Cornwall* a Romantic vision of the past, another exotic subject.
Romantic musical style was a result of these “dark, necromantic desires” and it was to express these that Bax fashioned his musical techniques.\textsuperscript{531}

\textsuperscript{531} Stephen Banfield, \textit{Sensibility and English Song}, 104.
Arnold Bax was the most socially isolated of the English Romantics because he could afford to be. His family’s private income meant his youth was a self-described “ivory tower” devoted to music, literature, and the pursuit of various young ladies. Even after the combined blows of the First World War and the Irish Easter Rising in 1916 forced him to a more realistic appraisal of the world Bax was able to construct a life centered on his own aesthetic and amorous interests. Thus while Bax was professionally connected to Bantock, Holbrooke, and Boughton as fellow composers he did not need to seek out their financial or journalistic help. Bax ultimately rose higher than the other English Romantics in official favor by being named the Master of the King’s Musick in 1942 but the position was viewed as a sinecure by the London musical establishment and Bax wrote nothing of importance while in the office.

Bax was throughout his life an idealist; in this he and Boughton especially were of a pair. Unlike Boughton’s socialist sympathies, however, Bax pursued purely otherworldly utopias, connecting him more closely with Holbrooke’s musical visions. Bax also gave his allegiance to the Celtic Revival and never repudiated his love of myths and legends during the New Objectivity of the interwar years. Even after the Second World War Bax continued to look to a world beyond the material for inspiration and spiritual succor. In recognition of his yearning for supernatural beauty in myth, nature,

and the feminine, Bax noted that, despite being born in a London suburb and not “on an island in the middle of a bog-lake in County Mayo...I am never certain that I ought not to have been born on that island in the Connaught bog-lake.”

**Biographical Sketch**

Arnold Bax was born in Streatham, south London, on 8 November 1883. His upper middle class family derived their wealth from a share in the patent of Mackintosh raincoats. Bax remained financially independent throughout his life; unlike the other English Romantics he never had to find work. Bax grew up in large homes with domestic servants and private tutors. The most formative home for Bax was Ivy Bank, Hampstead, to which the family moved in 1896. Its enormous garden helped give Bax a love of natural beauty. This love became focused on the “sublime” quite early; Bax described in his autobiography a visit to Arundel Park in 1889:

> It was the hour of sunset, and as we stood there an unimaginable glory of flame developed in the west so that all the wooded heights seemed on fire. Even the east was stained with pale coral. It might have been Ragnarök, the burning of the Gods in Norse mythology. I watched speechlessly. To my childish perception this visitation was sheer all-conquering splendour and majesty, untroubled by the sense of the transitoriness of all lovely things. The hour was immortal.

Such splendor was soon the source of as much pain as pleasure:

> That all-too-early sorrow for the mutability of all things was revealed to me, I think, in the following year. We had been to Ockley all a long golden day of summer, and whilst we were returning to Victoria in the train, the sunset, at first a magnificence of tranquil bands of crimson and gold, gradually smouldered dimmer and duller behind Leith Hill with its tower and pine-trees. And suddenly

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535 Bax, “Farewell, My Youth,” 5. The allusion to Rutland Boughton’s opera The Immortal Hour is surely conscious.
an ache of regret that this particular day of beauty should come to an end and nevermore return wrung my heart so cruelly that, unseen, I wept bitterly in my shadowy corner of the carriage…This tenderness of pain, half cruel, half sweet, is surely an essential quality of the never clearly defined ‘Romantic mood.’

Bax found this “Romantic mood” in his own garden as well. There he combined sublime nature with erotic love, as in this 1908 letter to a girlfriend:

I longed that you should be here, that we might steal down when the house was quiet, and out into the dark. It would have been magical to be naked in the long grass under the apple trees, and to feel the soft night breezes moving over our bodies… A summer night can be the loveliest time possible, and last night was just such a night, full of those star-reaching moods and fancies that are so beautiful and that hurt so horribly…

All of these moods permeate Bax’s music. His earliest formal training was at the Hampstead Conservatory run by Cecil Sharp, folk-song collector and scholar, with whom Bax was often at odds. In 1900 Bax moved on to the Royal Academy of Music, where he studied composition with Frederick Corder and piano with Tobias Matthay. Here his natural piano technique achieved such renown that he was regarded as “the best sight-reader from orchestral score in the country.” This technique meant his later being deputized, at short notice, to play for The Music Club, which brought Continental

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536 Ibid., 5.
537 Quoted in Foreman, Bax, 23.
538 Bax’s opinion about Sharp is characteristic of all the English Romantics: “This pundit was soon to build up a great national reputation for himself amongst those numerous nationalist musicians who then believed that a true English atmosphere could only be achieved by ‘solemn wassailing round the village pump’ (as Ernest Newman put it). The truth is that Sharp often talked a great deal of nonsense.” Bax, “Farewell, My Youth,” 11.
539 Foreman, Bax, 18.
composers to London for recitals of their music. Here Bax met both Debussy and Sibelius by 1910, both of which later became musical influences.  

His first love, however, was the Romanticism of Wagner and Strauss: “My senses were drunk with Wagner, my nerves a-twitching to the titillating perversities that Richard Strauss was obtruding for the first time into a fundamentally diatonic style, whilst my brain staggered at that man’s complex audacities of counterpoint and infernal orchestral cleverness.” Again, “for a dozen years of my youth I wallowed in his [Wagner’s] music to the almost total exclusion – until I became aware of Richard Strauss – of any other.”

Another powerful influence came from reading Yeats’ poem “The Wandering of Usheen” in 1902. Bax stated melodramatically that, “in a moment the Celt within me stood revealed.” He travelled to Ireland in “great spiritual excitement,” exploring the remote west of the country. Bax returned to Ireland annually until 1910 often staying in the small County Donegal village of Glencolumcille. Here he learned Gaelic and began to write poetry, short stories, and plays heavily influenced by Yeats, J.M. Synge, 

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540 Ibid., 72. Sibelius proved the more lasting influence and Bax was never a thoroughgoing Impressionist. He also met Schoenberg, to whom he was not drawn at all.  
541 Bax, “Farewell, My Youth,” 16.  
543 Bax, “Farewell, My Youth,” 36.  
544 Ibid., 39.
and “Æ” (George Russell). These were created under the name “Dermot O’Byrne,” Bax’s literary alter ego.

Bax, like the other English Romantics, had no ancestral or cultural connection to Ireland. He was drawn there by the exoticism of its legends and landscape, particularly as articulated by Yeats and “Æ.” Bax later lived in the Dublin suburb of Rathgar after his marriage in 1911, where he spent literary evenings with “Æ” and his circle, and published poetry and prose under his “Irish” name beginning in 1909. Bax returned to London in early 1914, apparently untroubled by the inconsistency of his dual identity. Even his children received Irish names: Dermot and Maeve, respectively.

Irish music had a subtle but lasting effect on Bax’s compositional style. He never incorporated Irish folk music directly – finding Stanford’s *Six Irish Rhapsodies*, for

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545 William Butler Yeats (1865-1939) was an Irish poet and core figure in the Irish literary revival or Celtic Renaissance. He helped found the Abbey Theatre, Dublin, in 1904 and was awarded a Nobel Prize in Literature in 1923, the first Irishman so honored. John Millington Synge (1871-1909) was an Irish poet, playwright and participator in the Irish literary revival. He co-founded the Abbey Theatre; his most famous play is *The Playboy of the Western World*. George Russell (1867-1935) was an Irish poet, painter, mystic and Theosophist.

546 His family’s roots went back to Holland, even though “I have been informed (in print) that I was born on an island in the middle of a bog-lake in County Mayo.” Bax, “Farewell, My Youth,” 3.

547 His prose publications consists of two volumes of poetry: *Seafoam and Firelight* (London: Orpheus Press, 1909) and *A Dublin Ballad and other Poems* (Dublin: The Candle Press, 1916); three volumes of stories: *The Sisters and Green Magic* (London: Orpheus Press, 1912); *Children of the Hills* (Dublin: Maunsel & Co., 1913) and *Wrack and other stories* (Dublin, The Talbot Press; London, T. Fisher Unwin, 1918); two published plays: *Red Owen: a drama* (Dublin, The Talbot Press, 1919) and the earlier ‘Tinker sketch’ *On the Hill* which appeared in the *Irish Review* for February 1913. There are two unpublished plays, several short stories and many poems, some of which were included in the anonymous *Love Poems of a Musician*, published in 1923. Various poems and stories also appeared in Clifford Bax’s journal *Orpheus* and in the *Irish Review*. 

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example, “horrific”\textsuperscript{548} – but adopted “figures and melodies of a definitely Celtic curve”\textsuperscript{549} to leaven the mixture of Wagner and Strauss in his music.\textsuperscript{550} This idiom became so personal to Bax that he could reflect that, “many works of mine have been called Irish or Celtic when I supposed them to be purely personal to the British composer, Arnold Bax.”\textsuperscript{551}

Bax left the Royal Academy in 1905 restlessly feeling he had nothing left to learn there.\textsuperscript{552} He visited Dresden twice during the next two years, where he heard a performance of \textit{Salome} in its initial run alongside \textit{Tannhäuser}, \textit{Siegfried}, \textit{Tristan und Isolde}, Mahler’s Sixth Symphony and Bruckner’s Fifth Symphony. Bax was inspired by these to sketch his own Symphony in F in 1907, a “colossal”\textsuperscript{553} work designed to last over an hour in performance.\textsuperscript{554} Bax scholar Colin Scott-Sutherland characterized the

\textsuperscript{548} Foreman, \textit{Bax}, 30.  
\textsuperscript{549} Bax, “Farewell, My Youth,” 41.  
\textsuperscript{550} Bax quoted only once from Irish folk-song once, using the tune “An cailín donn deas na ciócha bána” (O Pretty Brown-Haired Girl of the White Breasts) in the slow movement of his 1920 \textit{Phantasy for Viola and Orchestra}. Even here the melody is decorated with original arabesques, however. See Scott-Sutherland, \textit{Arnold Bax} (London: J.M. Dent & Sons Limited, 1973), 80.  
\textsuperscript{551} Bax, “Farewell, My Youth,” 41.  
\textsuperscript{552} He had accumulated a Macfarren Scholarship in 1904 and the Charles Lucas Medal for composition in 1905 as well as the Macfarren Prize for piano playing. Foreman, \textit{Bax}, 37. His notable student compositions included \textit{A Celtic Song Cycle} to poems by Fiona Macleod (1904) and the tone poems \textit{Cathaleen-ni-Hoolihan} (1903-1905) and \textit{A Song of War and Victory} (1905). A reviewer warned that Bax be kept away from any more Debussy after writing \textit{A Celtic Song Cycle} though he had never heard any of Debussy’s music at the time.  
\textsuperscript{553} Bax, “Farewell, My Youth,” 31.  
\textsuperscript{554} See Lewis Foreman, \textit{Bax}, 55-56 for a discussion of the symphony with musical examples. The work remained in manuscript piano score until Martin Yates orchestrated it and recorded on the Dutton label (CDLX 7308) in 2013.
unfinished score as “heavily Straussian” though he found an “unmistakably Celtic lilt” in the secondary themes.\footnote{Scott-Sutherland, \textit{Arnold Bax}, 15.}

Bax also made a formative trip to Russia in 1910 in pursuit of a beautiful Ukrainian girl.\footnote{Natalia Skarginska, whom he had met in London. This name is changed in his autobiography.} There, Bax saw the Russian Imperial Ballet and Borodin’s opera \textit{Prince Igor}, both of which had an “almost physical impact”\footnote{Foreman, \textit{Bax}, 77.} on him. When the Ballets Russes reached London in 1911 Bax saw every performance. He became so enchanted with prima ballerina Tamara Karsavina he wrote a ballet for her, \textit{Tamara} (later renamed \textit{King Kojata}), a mixture of Balakirev, Rimsky-Korsakov, Glazunov and his own emerging style. Because the work was not commissioned, Bax did not present it to either Diaghilev or Karsavina herself.\footnote{It remained un-orchestrated and un-performed during Bax’s life. Graham Parlett scored a suite from the work and it was recorded on the Chandos label in 2001. See Lewis Foreman, liner notes to \textit{Arnold Bax: Premiere Recordings}, BBC Philharmonic conducted by Martyn Brabbins, Chandos CD 9879, 2001.} In 1919, however, Bax was commissioned by Diaghilev to write “symphonic interludes” for performance between the ballets proper.\footnote{Eugene Goossens, Herbert Howells, and Lord Berners were also commissioned. Bax orchestrated two piano pieces, \textit{Gopak} and \textit{In a Vodka Shop}, reflecting his time spent in Russia. A third piano piece, \textit{Nocturne: May Night in the Ukraine} was later orchestrated by Graham Parlett.}

This combination of Germany, Ireland, Russia, and the mingled pain and pleasure of sublime nature and erotic love created Bax’s distinctive compositional voice: “I am a brazen romantic, and could never have been and never shall be anything else. By this I
mean that my music is the expression of emotional states. I have no interest whatever for sound for its own sake or any modernist ‘isms’ and factions.”

Bax remained relatively unaffected by the First World War but was profoundly troubled by the failed Irish Easter Rising in 1916. Many of his Irish friends were killed or fled the country. Writing as Dermot O’Byrne he produced the poem *A Dublin Ballad* commemorating the tragedy; the Irish office of the British censor immediately banned it. Bax’s music was more successful: his mature tone poems date from the war years and seven symphonies followed in the 1920s and ’30s. In his symphonies Bax slowly shifted away from explicitly Irish associations towards the sound-world of Sibelius and the landscapes of Scandinavia and northwestern Scotland. “I have gone Northern,” Bax related. For a brief time in the late twenties Bax achieved fame but soon after he was eclipsed both by the continuing success of Ralph Vaughan Williams and the rising stars of William Walton and Benjamin Britten. By the end of his life

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561 The Easter Rising was an attempt to establish an Irish republic by force and drive the British authorities from Ireland while England was heavily engaged in WWI. Several hundred armed volunteers seized key locations in Dublin on Easter Monday 1916 but little action was taken in the rest of the country. British troops put down the Rising after six days of fighting and most of the leaders were executed. As for Bax during the First World War, he avoided conscription due to a poor physique: his medical report indicated he had a “flat chest, with only two inches expansion…an irregularity of the heart…and he complains of palpitations. He is highly nervous and occasionally suffers from claustrophobia.” Quoted in Foreman, *Bax*, 140.
563 Vaughan Williams’ Fourth Symphony was premiered in 1935. Walton’s *Belshazzar’s Feast* was premiered in 1931 and his First Symphony was completed in 1935. Britten’s documentary film scores for the BBC date from the 1930s and his *Variations on a Theme*
Bax also protested, like Joseph Holbrooke and Rutland Boughton, that the BBC
deliberately neglected his music.

Bax did not neglect his own passion, which led him into two protracted affairs
that directly impacted his music. The first was with concert pianist Harriet Cohen (1895-
1967), whom Bax first met briefly in 1912. She was 17 and he 30. Both her piano
playing and “elfin beauty”\(^{564}\) immediately captivated Bax. He described her as a
“wonderful stray creature from the faery hills.”\(^{565}\) During the winter of 1914 the two
began a passionate affair that inspired two major tone poems, *November Woods* (1917)
and *Tintagel* (1917-1919), and ultimately destroyed his marriage. Bax and his wife Elsita
separated in 1918 but never legally divorced. Even after Elsita’s death Bax never
remarried, valuing his romantic freedom too highly. Harriet Cohen nevertheless became
the public champion of Bax’s piano works.\(^{566}\) After 1924 their relationship became
strained; Harriet was frequently on the Continent for medical treatment, became
increasingly jealous of all other women, and was possessive of Bax’s music. Bax
responded by secretly initiating a second affair with a girl named Mary Gleaves in 1926.
Both relationships continued simultaneously with Harriet unaware of Mary’s existence
until 1948. In the end he married neither woman. None of his romantic relationships
seemed based in reality but on a search for a creature only half of this world, an “elusive,

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\(^{564}\) Scott-Sutherland, *Arnold Bax*, 50.
\(^{566}\) Including the concerted *Symphonic Variations* (1918), *Winter Legends* (1930) and the late *Concertante for Piano Left Hand and Orchestra* (1949).
fleetingly imagined nymph; an intriguing mixture of child-like, wide-eyed innocence and wanton sexuality.”

Bax was knighted in 1938 and made Master of the King’s Musick in 1942. He accepted both honors reluctantly and was uncomfortable with his official duties. Contemporary critic Wilfred Mellers stressed that Vaughan Williams was the clearer choice for the position: “One cannot help thinking it odd that the creator of this dark universe of primeval gods and satyrs should become the honoured guardian of British musical respectability.” Bax wrote few works in this royal capacity, the most notable being a *Coronation March* and a madrigal for Queen Elizabeth’s coronation in 1953. Bax died in Cork, Ireland during a 1953 trip as outside examiner for University College. He was buried locally in St. Finbarr’s Cemetery, Cork.

**Musical Examples**

Bax confided in a letter to Philip Heseltine (1894-1930, better known by his pen-name, Peter Warlock), “Nearly all my longer compositions, the orchestral works at any rate, are based upon aspects and moods of extreme nature and their relation to human emotion.” As mentioned above, the varied localities of this “extreme nature” reflected the composer’s travels and changing interests, from Wagnerian *sehnsucht* (longing) to

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568 The former Master, Walford Davies, had died in 1941. His predecessor was Edward Elgar.
570 The madrigal was one of several collected in a “Garland for the Queen” by various composers. Bax’s brother Clifford wrote its poignant text: “What is it like to be young and fair?”
571 Quoted in Foreman, *Bax*, 139.
Ireland, Russia, and finally the “pine forests and dark legends”\textsuperscript{572} of Scandinavia. In this Bax was similar to Granville Bantock, though his “enthusiasms” were fewer in number. All the English Romantics were drawn to the geographically and culturally exotic because they could not find satisfaction at home. As Clifford Bax said of his brother, they dreamed of “more than life can give.”\textsuperscript{573} Dalua, the Lord of Shadow expressed the same sentiment about King Eochaidh in Boughton’s \textit{The Immortal Hour}: “He has known dreams, and because bitter dreams have sweeter been than honey, he has sought the open road that lies mid shadowy things.”\textsuperscript{574} The “shadowy things” in the English Romantics were the human emotion Bax connected with sublime or extreme nature. What drew these threads together for Bax was the pursuit of beauty – almost always manifested in the erotic pursuit of a particular female beauty.

The works discussed in this chapter reflect Bax’s pursuit of beauty and its attendant pains. These are \textit{The Garden of Fand} (1913-1916), \textit{Tintagel} (1917-1919), and \textit{November Woods} (1917), his three mature tone poems, the First Symphony (1921-1922), a score reflecting the upheavals in his life after the First World War, and the Fifth Symphony (1932), the largest of Bax’s works indebted to Sibelius. All four show, in varying proportions, Bax’s incorporation of his Romantic influences into his own musical style.

\textsuperscript{572} Ibid., 290.
\textsuperscript{573} Ibid., 147.
\textsuperscript{574} Rutland Boughton, \textit{The Immortal Hour}, vocal score, 50.
The Garden of Fand

Bax sketched *The Garden of Fand* while living in Dublin in 1913 and completed it after moving back to London.\(^{575}\) It was his eighth tone poem and the first of three he would complete during World War I.\(^{576}\) *The Garden of Fand* was inspired by Irish legends and landscape while containing elements derived from Richard Strauss.\(^ {577}\) Bax’s combination of influences is connected with the work’s program, expressed by Bax in a lengthy preface to the score. It reads in part:

The Garden of Fand is the sea. The ancient Saga called ‘The sick-bed of Cuchulain’ tells how that hero (the Achilles of the Gael) was lured away from the world of deeds and battles by the Lady Fand, daughter of Manannan, lord of the ocean; and how in the time of his country’s direst need he forgot all but the enchantments of an immortal woman…

In the earlier portion of the work the composer seeks to create the atmosphere of an enchanted Atlantic completely calm beneath the spell of the Other World. Upon its surface floats a small ship adventuring towards the sunset from the shores of Eirinn, as St Brendan and the sons of O’Corra are said to have sailed in later times. The little craft is borne on beneath a sky of pearl and amethyst until on the crest of an immense slowly surging wave it is tossed on to the shore of Fand’s miraculous island. Here is unhuman revelry unceasing between the ends of time, and the voyagers are caught away, unresisting, into the maze of the dance. A pause comes, and Fand sings her song of immortal love[,] enchaining the hearts of her hearers for ever. The dancing and feasting begin again, and, finally, the sea rising suddenly overwhelms the whole island, the immortals riding in rapture on the green and golden waves, and laughing carelessly amidst the

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\(^{575}\) *The Garden of Fand* was published by Murdoch & Murdoch in 1922.


\(^{577}\) And, to a lesser extent, Claude Debussy. Though scholar Derrick Puffett names this work as Bax’s “most explicit homage” to Debussy, Bax was by no means a thoroughgoing Impressionist. See Derrick Puffett, “In the Garden of Fand: Arnold Bax and the ‘Celtic Twilight’” in *Art Nouveau, Jugendstil und Musik*, ed. Jürg Stenzl (Zurich: Atlantis, 1980), 193
foam at the fate of the over-rash mortals lost in the depths. Twilight falls, the sea subsides, and Fand’s garden fades out of sight.\textsuperscript{578}

Bax works this program into an arch form, ABCBA. Sea-music opens and closes the score (A) enfolding dances of “unhuman revelry” (B). These dances in turn flank Fand’s “song of immortal love” (C). The B sections show the influence of Strauss while Fand’s central song has the “Celtic curves” described above.\textsuperscript{579}

\textbf{Sublime Nature: Orchestration and Chromatic Harmony}

Bax creates the sea-music of \textit{Fand} through linear elaboration of underlying chromatic harmonies. This elaboration is found in Bax’s part writing, where multiple lines of music move roughly together but do not precisely align. These musical lines are differentiated by timbre. In the opening pages, for example, Bax creates two different rising and falling “wave” figures in the woodwinds and harps, respectively. These are surrounded by quiet tremolos in heavily divided strings (see Figure 6.1). The woodwind “waves” undercut the tonic key of G major by their whole-tone motion and Bax also includes augmented triads in the harp on the fourth beat of each bar.

\textsuperscript{578} Arnold Bax, \textit{The Garden of Fand} (London: Murdoch & Murdoch, 1922).
\textsuperscript{579} Bax, “Farewell, My Youth,” 41.
Figure 6.1: Bax, *The Garden of Fand*, page 1, bar 1. Heavily divided strings support "wave" motions in the woodwinds; whole tone patterns (woodwinds) and augmented triads (harps) point away from the G major tonic.
When the cellos and basses enter in bar three their own slower “wave” pattern is centered on the interval of a tritone, further obscuring the sense of functional harmony. The “splashing” wave figure in the woodwinds continues at cross-rhythms with the bass (see Figure 6.2). The whole forms an increasingly complex texture. This pattern of a “surging” bass pattern below ostinato-like figures is typical of all Bax’s sea-music in this and later works. 

580 Puffett, “Garden of Fand,” 201.
581 Ibid., 196.
582 Examples include Tintagel, the Fourth Symphony, and the Sonata for Two Pianos.
Figure 6.2: Bax, *The Garden of Fand*, page 2. Bass parts enter with slower “wave” figure centered on the interval of a tritone. This proceeds at cross-rhythms with the upper ostinato-like woodwind and harp figures.
Like Bantock, Holbrooke, and Boughton, Bax remained a harmonically-oriented composer. Unlike the earlier English Romantics, however, Bax elaborated these harmonies across bands of linear counterpoint, though not in a rigorous or academic fashion (see Figure 6.3). *Fand*’s sea-music is an early demonstration of this technique. Lewis Foreman notes that this contrapuntal elaboration of what is nevertheless conceived harmonically represents Bax’s characteristic style:

The layout of a typically Baxian full score is finally crystallized in *Fand*… The music is presented in three or four separate bands of ideas and orchestral colour, which move against each other, and the way each band reflects the others is the basis of the technique for evoking the sea. Within each of these broad bands there is further detailed contrapuntal movement, the overall impression being kaleidoscopic in effect.583

Bax uses these techniques still further during the transition to *The Garden of Fand*’s central section. This is a fifty-two-bar passage creating a mood of supernatural enchantment as the goddess Fand appears. Bax again divides the strings: first violins, second violins, and violas are each *divisi a 3*. These sustain *pianississimo* augmented triads stretched over three octaves; below these are cellos sustaining open fifths that create both a minor second and a tritone when combined with the upper strings. Two clarinets play arpeggio figures incorporating both the augmented triads and an initial tritone. These are to be played “rippling gently, expressionless,” for forty bars. Both they and the string harmonies shift slowly downwards by semitones (see Figure 6.4).

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Figure 6.3: Bax, *The Garden of Fand*, page 12, three bars after letter C. Multiple bands of linear counterpoint, differentiated by timbre, elaborating the harmonic basis of the “sea music” in *Fand*. 
Figure 6.4: Bax, *The Garden of Fand*, page 42, ten bars after letter K. Transition to middle section. Augmented triads in the upper strings, tritones and minor seconds between the upper and lower strings. The clarinet arpeggios incorporate both tritones and the augmented triads.

At the end of the passage the celesta enters for twelve bars, each of its own figures ascending a half-step. It is underpinned by chromatically descending string lines that form consecutive ninth chords (see Figure 6.5).
To illustrate the “unhuman revelry” on Fand’s island in the B sections Bax adapted techniques from the “infernal orchestral cleverness”\textsuperscript{584} of Strauss. The primary theme is a dance with unexpected twists and turns of melody and harmony. It is strongly rhythmic but avoids metrical strong beats. For example, it avoids the downbeat by beginning in the middle of the bar. Bax’s placement of ties further emphasizes weak beats until the melody cadences on a down beat – lasting seven bars instead of eight. Harmonically, it begins on a “wrong” note, a tritone away from the tonic, and a series of semitones in its penultimate bar diverts attention from the cadential goal it achieves only one measure later (see Figure 6.6).

\textsuperscript{584} Bax, “Farewell, My Youth,” 16.
**Figure 6.6:** Bax, *The Garden of Fand*, page 20, four bars after letter E. Dance of “unhuman revelry”

Bax’s dotted rhythms, ties over the barline, large melodic leaps, and unpredictable points of cadence owe a debt to Strauss’ *Ein Heldenleben* (1899). While Bax’s dance does not have the same forceful volume or scoring, similar elements are clearly present in Strauss’ opening bars, the horn melody of which is shown in Figure 6.7.585

**Figure 6.7:** Richard Strauss, *Ein Heldenleben* (Dover edition), opening 13 bars. Leitmotif for “The Hero” with rhythmic and melodic similarities to the Bax’s dance of “unhuman revelry” in *The Garden of Fand*.

Bax veers harmonically further away from F major in the dance’s second phrase.

The prominent A-flat/G sharps swing the melody suddenly between F major and D-flat major (see Figure 6.8). Bax develops these melodies at length in growing harmonic and rhythmic complexity (see Figures 6.9 and 6.10). Bax’s own words about the effect of Strauss’ music on unaccustomed ears describe the overall effect of the B sections:

Ancient and pedantic ears were assaulted by novelties of all kinds. Seemingly perverse progressions – the swaying in and out of keys and back again – titillating wrong notes – melodies in enormous sweeps hitherto undreamed (e.g. the opening of *Ein Heldenleben*), and beside all these the lusciousness and languor of those delayed cadences creating the effect of long-drawn-out summer sunset.\(^{586}\)

*Figure 6.8:* Bax, *The Garden of Fand*, page 22, sixteen bars after letter E. Further chromatic inflections away from the tonic key

Figure 6.9: Bax, The Garden of Fand, page 27, thirteen bars before letter G. Further chromatic and rhythmic play with the second “dance” melody.
Figure 6.10: Bax, *The Garden of Fand*, page 28, one bar before letter J. Climax of B section with “exotic” percussion.
“Exotic” Orchestration

Also like Strauss, Bax was a virtuosic orchestrator whose “kaleidoscopic” instrumental colors have already been mentioned. *The Garden of Fand* is scored for a large orchestra notably rich in “color” instruments: piccolo, cor anglais, bass clarinet, two harps, celesta, glockenspiel, and tambourine.\(^{587}\) Bax further increases his range of string color through extensive *divisi* scoring in the manner of both Strauss and Wagner. In the opening bars, for example, first violins are divided into eight parts while the woodwinds and harps begin their delicate “wave” motions. In the B sections Bax introduces the “exotic” percussion of glockenspiel and tambourine as the dance increases in energy (see above, Figure 6.10). The celesta, used prominently in the central section, is also an “exotic” instrument often associated with magic or the supernatural: Tchaikovsky’s sugar-plum fairies in *The Nutcracker*, for example, the fairy tale atmosphere of Stravinsky’s *Firebird*, or the “distant sound” symbolizing otherworldly beauty in Franz Schreker’s (1878-1934) opera *Der Ferne Klang*.\(^{588}\)

**Celtic Exoticism**

Just as with Bantock, Holbrooke, and Boughton, Bax’s Celtic inspiration represents an exotic Other. The peak of otherworldly Celtic beauty in *The Garden of Fand* comes in the central section. Here Fand, daughter of the sea god sings her song of immortal love. Fand’s song is a pentatonic melody in F# major, scored for two flutes and

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\(^{587}\) The full instrumentation is piccolo, 3 flutes, 2 oboes, cor anglais, 3 clarinets, bass clarinet, 2 bassoons, contrabassoon, 4 horns, 3 trumpets, 3 trombones, tuba, timpani, bass drum, cymbals, glockenspiel, tambourine, 2 harps, celesta, and strings.  
\(^{588}\) First produced in 1912.
cor anglais in unison, an “unusual and beguiling sonority.”\(^{589}\) (See Figure 6.11) Besides the aforementioned Celtic curves, it features another distinctive “Irish” trait: beginning and ending with repeated notes. Lewis Foreman asserts:

> Also very characteristic of Bax’s melodic idiom is its tendency to cling to or revolve around a central note – which may be the 3\(^{\text{rd}}\) or 5\(^{\text{th}}\) or, less usually, the tonic – whose repetitions he varies with shifting chromatic harmonies. It is a characteristic derived from the necessity for tonal polarity within the web of chromatic colour, and of Bax’s reluctance to complete the cadential progression. It has also a dark corollary in the chant-like repetitions of the liturgical themes which are related to plainsong.\(^{590}\)

The liturgical themes to which Foreman refers will be discussed below in connection with Bax’s symphonies. As for Fand’s song, Bax related in a letter how he “wept in his Dublin room” as he composed this melody, and claimed that the entire piece was “all literally given to me by Ireland – I can’t remember any work connected with it at all except for the orchestration…I remember feeling how uncanny it was; I did it partly in Dublin and partly in London but there was no break in the continuity.”\(^{591}\)

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\(^{589}\) Andrew Keener, liner notes to *Bax: Orchestral Works, Volume 3*, Ulster Orchestra conducted by Bryden Thomson, Chandos Records CHAN X10156, 2003, 7.

\(^{590}\) Scott-Sutherland, *Arnold Bax*, 82.

\(^{591}\) Quoted in Foreman, *Bax*, 118.
**Climactic Chromatic Collapse**

After several repetitions of Fand’s melody in the upper strings, Bax reaches the climax of the work. Here harmonic chromaticism, already present in the accompaniment to the repeated pentatonic melody, is increased to such an extent that it destabilizes the diatonic climax. This occurs at letter N in the score, set up by the horns leaping to a written A#5 and descending by accented semitones. The rest of the orchestra follow suit at the cadence two bars later as the melody disintegrates into chromaticism in an emotionally charged *Largamente molto* tempo reduction (see Figure 6.12). Such harmonic destabilization at climatic points is a fingerprint of Bax’s Romantic style, as are earlier “ornamental” decorations of the melodic line, discussed further below. Both the destabilizing chromaticism and melodic arabesques are expressive of heightened emotion and what Colin Scott-Sutherland calls an “excess of passion,” coupled with a reluctance to
complete the melodies or harmonic progressions “without dwelling on [their] beauties.”592 Once a climactic cadence is achieved Bax cannot seem to bear the emotional weight of it and the forward drive of the music breaks down into chromatic chaos.

This chromatic dissolution echoes Holbrooke’s practice in both The Raven and Ulalume and forms a recurring pattern in both composers’ oeuvres. It speaks to the highly personal nature of their music that drew its emotional charge from their own experiences. For Bax, this personalized emotion is particularly true of his tone poems Tintagel and November Woods.

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592 Scott-Sutherland, Arnold Bax, 81-2.
Figure 6.12: Bax, *The Garden of Fand*, page 54, two bars before letter N. Chromatic dissolution at the climax of Fand’s song.
**Tintagel**

*Tintagel*, the last of Bax’s three war-era tone poem was actually begun second, in the fall of 1917.\(^{593}\) By this time, his feelings for Harriet Cohen had become overwhelming and she took “precedence over everybody and everything.”\(^{594}\) In late August of that year Harriet visited the village of Tintagel in North Cornwall, famous for its ruined castle associated with King Arthur, King Mark, and Tristan and Isolde. There she wrote to Bax, “goading” him to join her.\(^{595}\) He arrived with his family on September 6\(^{th}\), staying for almost six weeks. He was unsettled and wretched with unfulfilled desire: rather than spend time alone with his lover, Bax had to tour the site with his wife, family and friends. That Bax and Harriet were “fully aware of the legendary associations”\(^{596}\) of the place is made clear in a poem he wrote there for her, called “Tintagel Castle.”\(^{597}\) Its first and third verses run:

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While these old walls were crumbling
Fair countless maids and men
Have cried and kissed and whispered,
And never come again.
We two know all their story,
Though all heroic glory
Fall from this old sea-warden,
Slain by a pedant pen.

They stared out even as we do
Across the silken tide,
And sought in sundown splendours
The dream their world denied;
And Dick and Meg have parted
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\(^{593}\) It was not orchestrated until 1919, however, by which time *November Woods* had already been completed and scored. Murdoch & Murdoch published *Tintagel* in 1923.

\(^{594}\) Foreman, *Bax*, 150. More particularly for Bax, relief from the tragedy of the 1916 Easter Rising that destroyed Dublin’s literary scene.

\(^{595}\) Ibid., 159.

\(^{596}\) Ibid., 159.

\(^{597}\) This was published in his 1923 anonymous collection *Love Poems of a Musician.*
In Cornwall broken-hearted
Ten thousand times, though Tristram
Had never sinned and died.

*Tintagel* celebrates Bax’s link with the legendary lovers of that place.\(^{598}\) Rather than dwell upon Tristan’s fate or the pains of leading a double life, as he would in *November Woods*, this tone poem instead expresses the “ecstasy of happiness”\(^{599}\) he experienced in his passion for Harriet. Its personal connection with the Tristan myth places it in the company of Boughton’s *The Queen of Cornwall* and Bax in fact quotes Wagner’s “sick Tristan” *leitmotif* in *Tintagel*, where it plays a large role in the work’s development section.\(^{600}\)

**Wagnerian Quotation**

Bax introduces the “sick Tristan” motif just before *Tintagel*’s central development section begins (see Figure 6.13). It is marked “plaintive and wistful” and Bax referred to it in print as “a wailing chromatic figure.”\(^{601}\) Its rhythm has been diminished from Wagner’s original and the scoring changed from flutes, clarinets, and first violins to solo oboe and solo violin (see Figure 6.14).

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\(^{598}\) *Tintagel* was premiered in Bournemouth by Dan Godfrey in 1921 and was published by Murdoch & Murdoch in 1923.\(^{599}\) Foreman, *Bax*, 158.

\(^{600}\) In Wagner this *leitmotif* is found originally in Act One, Scene Three of *Tristan*. In the Dover edition this occurs on page 59, bar one. Richard Wagner, *Tristan und Isolde* (New York: Dover Publications, Ltd., 1973).

\(^{601}\) Arnold Bax, program note for a performance at the 1922 Leeds Festival, quoted in Foreman, *Bax*, 161.
Figure 6.13: Bax, *Tintagel*, page 18, two bars before letter H. The “sick Tristan” motif in solo oboe and violin.

\[
\begin{align*}
\text{\textit{plaintive and wistful}} & \\
\text{\(\frac{\text{\textit{d = 72)}}\} & \\
\text{\(p \quad mf \quad p \}} & \\
\end{align*}
\]

Figure 6.14: Wagner, *Tristan und Isolde* Act One, Scene Three (Dover edition), page 59. Original “sick Tristan” motif.

Bax based the development almost entirely on metamorphoses of this Wagnerian motif. Among its many transformations, Bax places it whole in the high strings as well as using its dotted rhythms and chromatic motion as the basis for imitative passages in the lower instruments (see Figure 6.15).
Kaleidoscopic Romantic Orchestration

Bax accompanies transformations of the “sick Tristan” leitmotif with chromatic motion in the rest of the orchestra. At the development approaches its peak Bax layers chromatically ascending and descending lines differentiated by orchestration (see Figure 6.16). Flashes of glockenspiel, harp glissandos, stopped horns, and muted trombones strikingly color the shifting harmonies in this section. *Tintagel* is scored for an orchestra nearly identical to that in *The Garden of Fand*, lacking only the celesta and substituting a euphonium for the heavier bass tuba.602

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602 The instrumentation is 3 flutes (with the third doubling piccolo), 2 oboes, cor anglais, 2 clarinets, bass clarinet, 2 bassoons, contrabassoon, 4 horns, 3 trumpets, 3 trombones, euphonium, timpani (4 drums), bass drum, cymbals, triangle, glockenspiel, harp, and strings.
Figure 6.16: Bax, *Tintagel*, page 34, two bars after letter O. Divergent chromatic lines differentiated by orchestration color the music near the development’s peak. Note the inclusion of “exotic” instruments such as glockenspiel and harp.


Sublime Nature: The Sea, the Castle, and Further Wagnerian Allusion

Bax provided a lengthy program note for Tintagel similar to that for The Garden of Fand. In it he characterizes the development section described above as “restless…as though the sea were rising, bringing with a new sense of stress thoughts of many passionate and tragic incidents in the tales of King Arthur and King Mark and others among the men and women of their time.”\textsuperscript{603} The outer sections of the work’s ternary form in contrast illustrate Bax’s Romantic vision of “the wide distances of the Atlantic as seen from the cliffs of Cornwall on a sunny but not windless summer day.”\textsuperscript{604} A heroic second theme represents the “castle-crowned cliff”\textsuperscript{605} of Tintagel itself. Bax achieves the effect of a choppy swell through sea-music in the vein of Fand and that of Tintagel castle by another reference to Wagner.

Bax’s Tintagel seascape again uses asynchronous overlapping lines of arpeggios and other “wave” figures in different timbres. These are largely diatonic, anchored to a pedal B (see Figure 6.17). Where the whole-tone inflections in The Garden of Fand leaned toward Debussy, Bax’s diatonicism in Tintagel creates a more straightforwardly heroic mood. This heroic mood is paired with Bax’s Wagnerian leitmotif for Tintagel castle. It is in two parts: a fortissimo rising fanfare in the low brass and a more lyrical phrase played by the horns (see Figure 6.18). The leitmotif shares a similar texture and

\textsuperscript{603} Arnold Bax, program note for a performance at the 1922 Leeds Festival, quoted in Foreman, Bax, 161.
\textsuperscript{604} Arnold Bax, Tintagel (London: Murdoch & Murdoch, 1923), program note.
\textsuperscript{605} Ibid.
heroic atmosphere with the “Entry of the Gods into Valhalla” at the conclusion of *Das Rheingold* (see Figure 6.19).\textsuperscript{606}

Figure 6.17: Bax, *Tintagel*, page 1, opening 4 bars. Multilayered sea-music over tonic pedal.
Figure 6.18: Bax, *Tintagel*, pages 6-7, three bars after letter A. Tintagel castle leitmotif in the brass amidst the opening sea-music.
Figure 6.19: Wagner, *Das Rheingold* (Dover edition), page 316. Excerpt from the “Entry of the Gods into Valhalla” demonstrating similarities of texture, fanfare-like melody, and scoring to Bax’s Tintagel castle *leitmotif.*
Chromatically Decorated Climax

When the A section returns after the heavily chromatic development, the opening sea-music reappears – but Bax adds chromatically dissonant modifications en route to the work’s climax. Tritones fill the previously diatonic cello ostinato even under repeated statements of the “castle” leitmotif in the brass (see Figure 6.20). When Bax reaches the high point of the work, a powerfully scored restatement of an earlier lyrical melody, he delays the moment of arrival by increasing the harmonic tension. As in The Garden of Fand, this is provided primarily by the horns, which play a final transformation of the “sick Tristan” motif, shown in Figure 6.21. Unlike in Fand, however, this climax is not dissolved by chromaticism but continues on to end the piece with, in Bax’s words, “a picture of the castle still proudly fronting the sun and wind of centuries.”

607 Arnold Bax, program note for a performance at the 1922 Leeds Festival, quoted in Foreman, Bax, 161.
Figure 6.20: Bax, *Tintagel*, page 38, two bars after letter Q. At the return of the A sections’s sea-music, Bax adds tritones into the bass parts.
Figure 6.21: Bax, *Tintagel*, page 46, four bars after letter T. Bax inserts a final transformation of the “sick Tristan” motif in the horns to delay the moment of arrival at the work’s diatonic climax.
Bax biographer Lewis Foreman writes that *Tintagel* has a sense of “sheer physical elation, underlined by the difficult and often exultant horn parts.”\(^{608}\) Bax’s elation was inverted in his next tone poem, *November Woods*, though it also includes a strong Wagnerian allusion.\(^{609}\) The work was inspired by Bax sheltering in a beech stand during an autumn storm while clandestinely meeting Harriet Cohen outside London.

Appropriate to its title, the opening and closing pages of *November Woods* echo Wagner’s *Waldweben*, or “forest murmurs,” from *Siegfried*.\(^{610}\) Bax weaves this pattern of alternating thirds in the flutes (see Figure 6.22). Rather than Wagner’s peaceful E major, however, shown in Figure 6.23, Bax chooses the darker key of G minor. Bax also introduces melodic chromaticism early in a descending three-note phrase for bassoon, second violins, and viola. This theme is supported by falling semitones in the divided strings, muted horns, and *Waldweben*, creating dissonances such as the augmented triad underpinned by a tritone in the second bar of Figure 6.22.

*November Woods* contrasts strongly with its predecessor, encapsulating the positive and negative poles of Bax’s personal life at the time – in *Tintagel* the “ecstasy of happiness” found in his pursuit of Harriet Cohen and in *November Woods* the “anguish

\(^{608}\) Lewis Foreman, liner notes to *Arnold Bax: Orchestral Works, Volume 3*, Ulster Orchestra conducted by Bryden Thomson (Chandos Records CHAN X10156, 2003), p. 8-9.


and indecision between domestic responsibility and romantic passion...sublimated in music that evoked the conflict in terms of stormy nature."611

Figure 6.22: Bax, *November Woods*, page 2, bar three. Wagnerian “Waldweben” in the flutes and chromatically inflected melodic motif in the bassoons and second violins. The horns are muted throughout. Note the harmony in each bar descends by a half-step.

611 Foreman, *Bax*, 158.
Bax’s First Symphony also expresses intense conflict. The work was originally conceived as a “heaven-storming”\textsuperscript{612} piano sonata until Harriet Cohen told Bax he had in fact written a symphony. When Bax orchestrated the work he replaced the middle movement, whose gentleness Bax felt was ill suited to a world in which his “beloved

\textsuperscript{612} Lewis Foreman, liner notes to \textit{Bax: Symphony No. 1, Christmas Eve}, London Philharmonic Orchestra conducted by Bryden Thomson, Chandos Records CHAN 8480, 1986, 3.
Ireland” had been divided by civil war, with a “funeral oration [of] compelling orchestral terms.”613 This expressed the preceding years’ upheavals – the failed Easter Rising in 1916 and the subsequent Irish Civil War, the First World War and his own break with his spouse and children.614 Thus, while Bax claimed publicly that the work was purely abstract, the symphony seethes with dark energy, surprising its first audiences who thought Bax a dreamer “be calmed in a Celtic, romantic backwater.”615 After the Celtic exoticism of The Garden of Fand and the Wagnerian heroism of Tintagel the symphony’s “harshness…fell with brutal violence” at its Queen’s Hall premiere on 2 December 1922.616 Its overt violence formed a sharp contrast with Vaughan Williams’ Pastoral Symphony, premiered the previous January.617 This energy sustained Bax through six more symphonies between 1924 and 1939; Bax later claimed that he did not “possess a gift” but “was possessed by it – as by a demon.”618

Russian and German Influences

Not least among Bax’s gifts was his ability to absorb musical influences from locations as disparate as Ireland, Germany, and Russia. His First Symphony fuses

613 Foreman, liner notes to Bax: Symphony No. 1, 3-4.
614 Lewis Foreman explains “Bax would never admit such specific influences, although earlier in his life he had been quite open about his sources of inspiration and the programmatic nature of his music. But as he grew older he increasingly insisted that what he wrote was ‘pure’ music, though he betrayed his real musical concerns in occasional asides in letters to his friends.” Bax, 208.
615 Scott-Sutherland, Arnold Bax, 75.
616 Ibid., 118. The symphony was published in 1923 by Murdoch & Murdoch.
617 Foreman, Bax, 216. While Vaughan Williams’ Pastoral Symphony has many more somber layers of meaning than is obvious at first hearing, Bax’s First Symphony is much more direct in its emotional moods. For a further discussion of the hidden aspects of the Pastoral, see Eric Saylor, “‘It’s not lambs frisking at all’: English Pastoral Music and the Great War,” The Musical Quarterly, XCI/1–2 (spring–summer 2008): 39-59.
Russian influences – particularly in thematic profile and colorful orchestration – with German Late Romantic harmonic and developmental techniques. The work itself was largely inspired by the failed 1916 Irish Eastern Rising. It is in three movements, as are all Bax’s seven symphonies. Bax carried the three-in-one principle further in the First Symphony by writing the second and third movements in ternary form. While the first movement is in sonata form, Bax, as a rule, could not resist developing his thematic material immediately. The effect is almost improvisatory, metamorphosing themes through a Lisztian process of transformation of material and character. Bax’s near-continuous transformation of themes results in sprawling expositions and shortened development sections as the force of Bax’s inspiration takes precedence over abstract formal considerations.619

“Exotic” Orchestration

Another Russian influence here is on timbre. Bax’s First Symphony is more heavily scored than Fand, Tintagel, or November Woods, outdoing them in its colorful instrumentation. Besides piccolo, cor anglais, and bass clarinet, there is also alto flute, E-flat clarinet, heckelphone, and contrabass sarrusophone.620 Bax’s brass section remained

619 For example, the exposition and development sections of the first movement of the First Symphony are equal lengths. See the dissertation by Joseph Rivers, Jr. on Bax’s formal procedures for a fuller discussion of this characteristic: Joseph LaRoche Rivers, Jr., Formal Determinants in the Symphonies of Arnold Bax, Ph.D. Music Theory dissertation, University of Arizona, 1982.

620 The heckelphone is also known as a bass oboe. This was developed by German instrument maker Wilhelm Heckel at Wagner’s request in order to create an instrument that bridged the gap between oboes and bassoons. It sounds an octave lower than an oboe, enabling it to reach lower than an English horn but retains the oboe’s penetrating tone. Strauss scored for it in Salome (1905), Elektra (1909), Ein Alpensinfonie (1915), and Josephslegend (1914). Holst calls for a heckelphone in The Planets and Delius in his Dance Rhapsody No. 1 and A Mass of Life. The sarrusophone family of instruments was
four horns, three trumpets, three trombones, and tuba, but the percussion section is especially enlarged with “exotic” instruments: timpani, bass, tenor, and snare drums, cymbals, gong, tambourine, triangle, bells (tubular chimes), glockenspiel, xylophone, celesta, and two harps.

Bax uses these instruments in changing combinations to articulate the many strands of his melodic and harmonic material. Linear counterpoint plays an even greater role in his symphonies than in his earlier tone poems; many parts often move alongside one another until they come together for unison statements at climaxes. Thereafter they often disintegrate, as observed in *The Garden of Fand*, dissipating their energy into disparate chromatically inflected lines. Harmonic tension is raised and lowered via what Bax’s friend Christopher Whelen called his “key-switchboard” to achieve these climaxes, often shifting by semitones or tritones “like the changing colours of a mosaic.”

**Thematic and Timbral Transformation**

In the First Symphony’s opening bars Bax introduces his first theme in one of these unison statements (see Figure 6.24). It is a terse motif with a distinctive dotted

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created by French instrument maker Pierre-Louis Gautrot and named after French bandmaster Pierre-Auguste Sarrus (1813-1876) who conceived it. It is a keyed metal instrument played with a double reed, intended to replace oboes and bassoons in military bands for outdoor performances. Sarrusophones were made in all sizes, though only the contrabass model made inroads into the orchestra as a substitute for the contrabassoon. It is called for in Ravel’s *Shéhérazade Overture* (1898), *Rapsodie espagnole* (1907) and *L’heure espagnole* (1907-9). Delius required one in his *Requiem* (1913-16) and *Songs of Sunset* (1906-07). Even Dukas’ *L’apprenti Sorcier* (1897) calls for a contrabass sarrusophone, though this is almost always replaced by a contrabassoon. As late as 1958 Stravinsky asked for a contrabass sarrusophone in *Threni*.

rhythm and rise of a semitone, found in the second measure. This raised mediant scale
degree reflects the tonal ambiguity of the symphony’s title, specifying neither E-flat
minor nor major. Bax’s developmental urge begins in the next measure and does not
abate even in the recapitulation. Thematic development is paired with his love of unusual
instrumentation. In measures 3-5, for example, not only does Bax rhythmically expand
the initially compact motif from one bar to three, but colors it with tenor drum,
contrabass sarrusophone, muted trombones, and sul ponticello tremolos in first violins
and violas.

Bax transforms this motif further during the exposition by continuing its melodic
line in various ways. Figures 6.25 and 6.26 show two of these extensions. Figure 6.27
gives another, scored for one of Bax’s brightest orchestrations. Each orchestral strand is
differentiated by timbre and articulations: upper woodwinds paired with muted trumpet
and glockenspiel, stopped horns (each pair forming a different tritone), slurred bassoons,
pizzicato low strings, trilling middle strings, and harp glissandos. This combination might
be compared with the sound, though not the musical material, of the “Magic Carillon” in
Stravinsky’s 1910 ballet The Firebird.622 Each of these thematic transformations
precedes Bax’s introduction of the second theme.

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622 The “Magic Carillon” section in The Firebird is scored for bells (tubular chimes),
celesta, three harps, piano, tam-tam, muted trumpets, high woodwinds and low strings.
Figure 6.24: Bax, First Symphony, first movement, page 1, bar 1. First theme (in bar two) and its immediate transformation. Colorful scoring choices include the tenor drum, contrabass sarrusophone, muted trombones, and sul ponticello tremolos.
Figure 6.25: Bax, *First Symphony*, first movement, page 5, letter A. Development of first theme in woodwinds, horns, and strings.

Figure 6.26: Bax, *First Symphony*, first movement, page 7, nine bars after letter A. Further transformation of first theme in unison horns.
Figure 6.27: Bax, *First Symphony*, first movement, page 11, three bars before letter C. Colorful scoring reminiscent of Stravinsky’s “Magic Carillon” from *The Firebird.*
Russian Romanticism Allusion

When Bax finally introduces the second subject he raises his “key-switchboard” by a semitone to E major. The theme, scored for the first violins, has a “considerable winding curve,”\textsuperscript{623} one “worthy of Glazunov in its strongly lyrical character.”\textsuperscript{624} In fact the Russian composer’s symphonies were favorite works for Bax and friend Arthur Alexander to play in two-piano arrangements.\textsuperscript{625} Figure 6.28 shows Bax’s melody while Figure 6.29 shows the lyrical theme from the slow movement of Glazunov’s Second Symphony; a specialty of the piano duo.\textsuperscript{626}

Even in its initial presentation Bax destabilizes the second theme by the numerous chromatic segments in the accompanying voices and he immediately begins to modify this theme as well. In the development section proper Bax transforms this melody’s “lyrical cantilena”\textsuperscript{627} into a staccato dance scored for low woodwinds and strings (see Figure 6.30).

\textsuperscript{624} Keith Anderson, liner notes to \textit{Bax: Symphony No. 1, Tone Poems}, Royal Scottish National Orchestra conducted by David Lloyd-Jones, Naxos CD 8.553525, 1997, 5.
\textsuperscript{625} Glazunov’s works were well-known in London musical life during the Edwardian decade thanks to the advocacy of critic Edwin Evans and conductor Sir Henry Wood. See Lewis Foreman, \textit{Bax}, pages 13 and 61-63 and Colin Scott-Sutherland, \textit{Arnold Bax}, 132.
\textsuperscript{626} Alexander Glazunov, \textit{Symphony No. 2 in F# minor} (Leipzig: Belaieff, 1889).
\textsuperscript{627} Whelen, “Bax’s Symphonic Architecture,” 90.
Figure 6.28: Bax, *First Symphony*, first movement, page 17, sixteen bars after letter D. Second subject in the first violins, supported by highly chromatic lines in the horns, flutes, and lower strings.

Figure 6.29: Glazunov, *Second Symphony*, second movement, letter A. Principal theme (first eight bars).
Climactic Collapse and Recapitulation

Bax uses a gong stroke to mark the arrival of the first movement’s high point at the peak of the development section. As in The Garden of Fand, this climactic diatonic cadence is immediately dissolved by half-step motion (see Figure 6.31). The triple-forte sequence of semitones in the winds and brass make this more violent than the earlier example.

Bax builds energy for the arrival of the recapitulation by repeating a rhythmic ostinato derived from the opening theme – presented in each part at the interval of a tritone. The “exotic” raw-sounding combination of heckelphone, bass clarinet, sarrusophone, low brass, and basses play melodic tritones below this pattern. Bax also includes tenor drum in this passage to sharpen the ostinato’s syncopated rhythm (see Figure 6.32). The tension is released after twelve bars with the return of the first theme.
in E-flat minor, *Molto largamente*. Even during the recapitulation, however, as noted earlier, Bax continues to transform and re-score both principal themes.
Figure 6.31: Bax, *First Symphony*, first movement, page 39, one bar before letter L. Chromatic disintegration after diatonic cadence at the climax of the development section.
Figure 6.32: Bax, *First Symphony*, first movement, page 45, one bar before letter N. Ostinato derived from the first theme, presented at the interval of a tritone and aided by the tenor drum. Melodic tritones are also prominent in the low woodwinds and low brass.
Second Movement: Irish Inspiration, Wagnerian Allusion

The second movement is a tripartite *Lento solenne* that juxtaposes Wagnerian and Russian elements in its A and B sections respectively. Lewis Foreman compares this movement with *November Woods*, claiming, “In the tone poem we found that personal emotional experiences were sublimated in an evocation of stormy nature, while in the symphony a personal reaction to contemporary events is sublimated in terms of a universal or archetypal tragedy.”628 A clue to the contemporary events – the still-raging Irish Civil War – is given in Bax’s direction for the snare drum to be played with snares slack, “as at a military funeral.”629 During the A section the drummer provides a triple-piano drumroll amid a hushed texture of *sul ponticello* string tremolos, harp semiquavers, and *pianissimo* brass chords. The key is A-flat minor (see Figure 6.33). The effect is again Wagnerian *Waldweben*, though the mood is made darker than *November Woods* by the timbre of muted horns and low-lying string tremolos.

Straussian Melodic Dissonance and Rhythmic Flexibility

The first melodic idea, scored for muted cellos and basses, is made almost entirely of rising tritones in a slow syncopated rhythm: D2-A-flat 2-D3-F3-C-flat 4. This interval is also prominent in the main theme that follows on in bars 11 – 16. The melody has a funereal marching rhythm incorporating slow dotted notes and triplets; these compact rhythms are extended with a Straussian flexibility into five and seven note groups in its third and fifth bars (see Figure 6.34). Bax scores this theme for muted trombones and

628 Foreman, *Bax*, 211.
tuba, which gives a pungent, rasping quality to their already dark timbres. This sonority is a characteristic feature of Bax’s orchestration and is found in many of his orchestral scores.\textsuperscript{630}

**Figure 6.33:** Bax, *First Symphony*, second movement, page 57, bars 1-4. Allusion to Wagner’s *Waldweben* in tremolo strings and scalar harp passages. The horns are muted in this passage.

\textsuperscript{630} In all seven symphonies, for example, as well as in *Tintagel* and *November Woods*. 

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Figure 6.34: Bax, *First Symphony*, second movement, bars 9-16. Muted trombones and tuba present the main theme of the A section; this melody includes prominent tritones. Its slow dotted and triplet rhythms echo those of a funeral march.
Russian “Liturgical” Allusion

In the B section of the movement a new theme is given out by bassoons and muted trombones. It strongly evokes plainchant, having a melodic shape with many repeated notes, stepwise motion, and small leaps. These are presented in steady quarter note and half note rhythms and harmonized in perfect fourths and fifths (see Figure 6.35).

**Figure 6.35:** Bax, *First Symphony*, second movement, page 66, letter D. “Liturgical” theme at the beginning of the movement’s middle section.

Since Bax was not responsive to Anglican or Catholic musical traditions, this “liturgical” influence seems also to have come from Russia. During Bax’s trip there he arrived in St. Petersburg on the evening of Easter Sunday and crowds filled the city’s churches. Bax attended a service in Kazan Cathedral, describing its powerful impact on his senses in his autobiography: “The blaze of a thousand sacred candles, the gorgeous vestments of metropolitan and priests, the awed ecstasy on the faces of that superstitious
Slavonic mob as those mysterious, complex and colourful rites were enacted. A dim phantasmagoria of sound and light… Bax’s knowledge of Russian composers would also have exposed him to this style; models include Rimsky-Korsakov’s *Russian Easter Festival Overture*, the coronation scene in Mussorgsky’s *Boris Godunov*, and the “bleak Russian-liturgical opening” of Glazunov’s aforementioned Second Symphony, shown in Figure 6.36.

**Figure 6.36:** Glazunov, *Second Symphony*, first movement, first 9 bars. The liturgical-style opening of Glazunov’s Second Symphony, a work Bax knew well in two-piano score.

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631 Bax, “Farewell, My Youth,” 59.
632 Scott-Sutherland, *Arnold Bax*, 132.
633 Though less likely because less pervasive, Bax would also have known the Communion scene in Wagner’s *Parsifal* and the “Hinterland” section of Strauss’ *Also sprach Zarathustra*. The Strauss tone poem quotes a fragment of plainchant from the Credo of the Mass. The text is written in the score above the horns that play it. In the Dover edition of Strauss tone poems, volume 1, this is on page 66, bar 6. Richard Strauss, *Tone Poems Series 1*, New York: Dover, 1979.
Climactic Chromatic Collapse

Bax gradually involves the full woodwind and brass sections in this “liturgical” passage. The harmony is modal, not chromatic, and there is no chromatic disintegration afterwards. Instead, a unison figure leads on to another, even larger climactic statement. It is here that catastrophe happens (see Figure 6.37). After preparing a fortissimo C major cadence with a 4/3 suspension on G, the bass voices move not to a C major resolution but to an open fifth on D-flat and A-flat. The effect of this interval, a semitone away from both the tonic and dominant pitches in the rest of the orchestra, is, as C.M. Francis says, one of “overwhelming disaster.”634

Bax extends this “disaster” by returning to the dotted rhythm of the funereal first theme. He scores its rising tritones for trombones and tuba marked molto pesante. As the chromatically dissonant passage continues, Bax reintroduces the A section Waldweben in woodwind and strings. It is now high-pitched and shrill, accompanying further rising tritones in the brass (see Figure 6.38). At the end of the movement Bax returns to the pianissimo string and harp patterns of the opening bars, and the music sinks into a near-silent A-flat minor cadence.

Figure 6.37: Bax, *First Symphony*, second movement, page 71, three bars before letter G. Chromatic dissonance undercuts the affirmative modal climax of the “liturgical” theme. The C major cadence is destabilized by the open fifth of D-flat to A-flat in the bass, a semitone away from the tonic and dominant of the key.
Figure 6.38: Bax, *First Symphony*, second movement, page 74, six bars before letter H. Return of the opening Waldweben, now scored for upper strings and woodwinds; the low brass continue to play rising tritones.
**Third Movement: Further Russian Allusion**

The third movement opens with another Russian nationalist allusion, that of bells pealing. Bax creates this effect by transforming again the first theme of the opening movement. Its short dotted rhythm is augmented into steady quarter notes and eighth notes played by the brass. Bax harmonizes this melodic variation with perfect fifths plus major seconds. These repetitive clashing harmonies and their steady rhythm invoke Russian bells ringing in much the same way as Modest Mussorgsky in the coronation scene of his opera *Boris Godunov*. (See Figures 6.39 and 6.40, respectively).

**Musical Humor and Musical Exoticism**

The finale is in ternary-form with elements of a scherzo, though Bax’s musical humor is “bitter and ironic.” Bax’s cutting humor emerges in a passage marked “grotesquely.” Here he gives a syncopated four-bar phrase to cor anglais, two muted trumpets, and violas. This melodic line passes through numerous augmented seconds, giving a sudden “exotic” feel to the music. The musical exoticism is enhanced by a rhythmic accompaniment of strong downbeats in stopped horns, muted low brass, tambourine, and col legno strings. These musical materials correspond to Ralph Locke’s first and seventh categories of musical exoticism, respectively. In the subsequent six

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637 The first category is non-normative modes and scales; the augmented second of the harmonic minor scale has long represented the Middle East in Western art music. Locke’s seventh category is repeated rhythmic or melodic patterns, into which the heavy downbeats of the brass and percussion fit.
bars Bax inflates this “exotic” passage for the full orchestra and draws in glockenspiel, xylophone, snare drum, and cymbals. The bass parts meanwhile maintain a steady tonic and dominant pattern. The effect is markedly similar to the “Middle Eastern” Orientalism of Bantock’s *Omar Khayyám*. Figure 6.41 shows the whole passage.

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638 The cor anglais, muted trumpets, and many percussion instruments represent Western imitations of “exotic” musical instruments, Ralph Locke’s thirteenth category of musical exoticism.
Figure 6.39: Bax, *First Symphony*, third movement, page 82, first six bars. The introductory three-bar motif is a further transformation of the symphony’s opening theme; its steady accented quarter note rhythm and open fifth harmonies colored with major seconds evoke the pealing of bells, another allusion to Bax’s Russian influence.
Figure 6.40: Modest Mussorgsky, *Boris Godunov*, Prologue, Coronation Scene, page 67 (Rimsky-Korsakov edition, published by Dover). Imitation of bells through dissonant harmonies in steady rhythm. Major and augmented seconds added to major triads. Literal bells included on bottom line of score example.
Figure 6.41: Bax, *First Symphony*, third movement, pages 93-94, two bars before letter D. “Exotic” passage with marked Orientalisms: melodic augmented seconds, rhythmic ostinato alternating tonic and dominant harmonies, and scoring for cor anglais, tambourine, glockenspiel, xylophone, and cymbals.
Final Thematic Transformation

As quickly as these Orientalisms appear, they are gone, and Bax moves on to end the symphony with a final transformation of the main theme. This melody is expanded to a stately processional theme in the lengthy coda, marked *Tempo di Marcia Trionfale* (see Figure 6.42, in orchestral reduction).

**Figure 6.42:** Bax, *First Symphony*, third movement, page 114, seven bars after letter L. Transformation of the symphony’s main theme into a triumphal march melody in the parallel major. Piano reduction.

![Figure 6.42](image)

After the Second Symphony Bax would extend codas into an explicit Epilogue, his largest formal innovation, and an important part of each symphony’s emotional trajectory. This is not yet made explicit in the First Symphony. Its coda does, however, contain a *Trionfale* conclusion with tubular bells, Bax’s earlier Russian allusion now made explicit (see Figure 6.43). For all its force, however, the conclusion does not lay to rest the “inimical forces”639 Bax had called forth at the beginning of the symphony.

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639 Scott-Sutherland, *Arnold Bax*, 118.
Destabilizing chromatic half-step motion is still present in nearly every part, particularly in the bass parts and horns, until the final E-flat major cadence. In the words of Bax biographer Colin Scott-Sutherland, “It is quite apparent from the final passages of the first [symphony] that resolution of the conflict was beyond the scope of one work… The violent energy of this work was to power not only the first Symphony but the whole seven.”

640 Ibid., 119. Bax did not conceive his symphonies as a unified cycle but there are connections between certain members of the seven. Bax’s first three symphonies, for example, form an emotional arc from violence and struggle to an otherworldly peace. The Fifth and Sixth Symphonies are austere in tone, both influenced by Sibelius. The Fourth Symphony is somewhat removed from the others by its sustained mood of optimism and the Seventh Symphony is a valedictory farewell to the genre.
Figure 6.43: Bax, *First Symphony*, third movement, page 122, final six bars. Conclusion of the First Symphony; real bells replace the earlier Russian bell allusions but the major-key cadence is still approached via intensely chromatically inflected harmonies.
By the time of his Fifth Symphony Bax had responded to a new inspiration: the music of Jean Sibelius. Bax had met Sibelius as early as 1909, noted above, and the two met again in 1932 when Bax visited Finland with Harriet Cohen. Bax had also attended the first English performance of *Tapiola* in 1928. Harriet recalled that “tears were pouring down his face” during the concert and that Bax later declared to her “if Sibelius had written nothing else, this would place him among the immortals for all time.”

Colin Scott-Sutherland noted that during the 1930s Sibelius was the “strongest single influence upon British symphonic thinking.” Yet Bax appears to have been most taken with *Tapiola*’s evocation of the wild Northern landscape and its gods rather than the abstract formal concerns in Sibelius’s symphonies. It was the sense of elemental power in *En Saga, Tapiola*, and the Fourth Symphony – with its prominent tritones – that “turned Bax’s gaze northward.”

It was in this context that Bax’s Fifth Symphony was written in 1932. As had become his habit since 1930, he took annual winter trips to Morar, in northwest Scotland’s Invernesshire accompanied by Mary Gleaves. There he spent the winter filling in and orchestrating works he had earlier sketched in London. The Fifth

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641 Scott-Sutherland reports that Sibelius and Harriet Cohen had been friends for “many years” and the Finn referred to her as “my daughter.” See Scott-Sutherland, *Arnold Bax*, 160.
643 Scott-Sutherland, *Arnold Bax*, 131.
644 Ibid., 148.
Symphony was completed at Morar in the winter of 1931-32; Sir Thomas Beecham conducted the premiere on January 15th, 1934 in the Queen’s Hall, London.

Despite Bax’s Fifth Symphony being his closest approach to Sibelius, even being dedicated to him, it nevertheless remains rooted in Bax’s English Romantic style. Formally, Colin Scott-Sutherland notes that, “there is no real relationship in their symphonic procedures.” Bax’s thematic material is unlike that of Sibelius, being largely melodic rather than motivic. Bax’s Fifth Symphony “grows like a living entity from the pregnant opening figure by a process of thematic expansion – a romantic procedure – while Sibelius creates a physical architectonic structure which is closer to classical procedures.” The “organic proliferation” of thematic transformations, already noted in the First Symphony, again drives Bax’s Fifth Symphony although by now Bax has curbed some of his prolixity. Bax seems most influenced by Sibelius in this work’s mood, orchestration, and formal concision.

**Thematic Transformation**

Like Bax’s First Symphony, an example of thematic transformation occurs on the Fifth Symphony’s first page. Here the clarinets state the above-mentioned “pregnant opening figure.” The stepwise shape and equal rhythms of this five-note gesture make it briefly similar to the opening of Sibelius’ Fifth Symphony, second movement (see

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646 Scott-Sutherland, *Arnold Bax*, 160.
647 Ibid., 160-1.
648 Ibid., 160.
Figures 6.44 and 6.45). This is quickly lost, however, as Bax’s focus on the “metamorphosis” of themes takes hold. The initial gesture is expanded in phrase length and intervalllic size as more woodwinds enter. Its initial statement in bars 2-5 is also more chromatic than the Sibelius passage, moving entirely by semitones. Further, it forms tritones with its accompanying pedal point at the end of the first and third phrases (B-flat against E.)

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651 Nina Large, liner notes to *Bax: Symphony No. 5 & The Tale the Pine-Trees Knew*, David Lloyd-Jones, Royal Scottish National Orchestra, Naxos CD 8.554509, 2000, p. 2.
652 Compare this with the opening of the Bax Third Symphony, similar in texture (a solo bassoon) and melody (an ever-lengthening phrase constructed almost entirely out of semitones).
Figure 6.44: Bax, *Fifth Symphony*, page 1, bars 1-14. Initial thematic motif in the clarinets (bars 2-4) reminiscent of the second movement of Sibelius’ Fifth Symphony, but much more chromatic in pitch content. This forms tritones against the bass accompaniment in its first and third phrases. Bax immediately begins the process of extension and modification.
Figure 6.45: Sibelius, *Fifth Symphony*, second movement, bars 1-8. The five note gesture to which Bax’s initial motif alludes, though relatively briefly.

Bax subjects his chromatic initial gesture to varied modifications of pitch and rhythm until it emerges as the first full-fledged theme, a four-bar melody in syncopated cake-walk rhythm. It keeps the original chromatic motion by “swaying” between C and C#, connected by a chromatic grace notes and triplet gestures (see Figure 6.46).

Figure 6.46: Bax, *Fifth Symphony*, first movement, page 10, five bars after rehearsal number 7. The first full-fledged theme of the symphony, created by a metamorphosis of the initial Sibelian gesture. Piano reduction.

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653 Bax stressed in a letter to Christopher Whelen that this theme must be played with “confident ferocity.” Quoted in *Cuchulan Among the Guns*, ed. Dennis Andrews, 53-4.
The same process of thematic transformation produces the main theme of the finale. There symphony’s initial motif becomes another of Bax’s “liturgical” themes, shown in Figure 6.47.

**Figure 6.47:** Bax, *Fifth Symphony*, third movement, page 97, bars 1-8. The main theme of the finale, “liturgical” in character, created through a metamorphosis of the symphony’s introductory motif.

**Chromatic Harmony**

Bax’s Fifth Symphony also contains much characteristically chromatic harmony. In the first movement’s introduction, for example, before the cake-walk theme, rising musical tension leads to almost pure chromatic motion (see Figure 6.48). Here the ensemble seems to sway unsteadily back and forth between chord members while the cellos and basses underneath move by tritones with harmonic tritones in their pizzicato chords. The harmonic and rhythmic tension continues to accumulate over the next seven bars, but rather than lead to a climax, Bax cuts off the orchestra with a grand pause, shown in Figure 6.49. He then introduces the principal melodic theme described above, itself containing prominent chromaticism.
Figure 6.48: Bax, *Fifth Symphony*, first movement, page 8, two bars after rehearsal number 6. “Swaying” chromatic motion in all parts between strong beats of the bar.
Figure 6.49: Bax, *Fifth Symphony*, first movement, page 10, rehearsal number 7. Continued chromatic harmonies lead not to a cadential resolution but to a grand pause. Afterwards, Bax introduces the main theme of the movement, derived from the initial chromatic gesture.
Climactic Chromatic Collapse

In the first movement’s development section Bax employs the same strategy found in his earlier scores, a chromatic disintegration of a diatonic climax. Here clarinets, second violins, and violas sustain chromatic motion in running groups of five eighth notes while muted horns provide a diatonic fanfare. At the moment of harmonic resolution, the horns, now unmuted, lead the orchestra with *fortissimo* chromatic sequences (see Figure 6.50). The low brass and woodwinds also descend by semitones. Rather than proceed to a recapitulation, however, Bax creates a second, successful climax by rebuilding the harmonic tension. This new high point is announced by the return of the cake-walk theme. It remains largely diatonic as the music’s energy subsides. There is no formal recapitulation, as Lewis Foreman observes, but “the ideas from the introduction reappear as the movement gradually dissolves in a short coda.”

Bax plays a final harmonic twist in the Fifth symphony: at the beginning of the Epilogue to the third movement Bax moves from C# minor, the principal key of both the finale and the symphony as a whole, to D flat major in a simple but striking change of mode. This enharmonic respelling of the tonic is preparation for the “liturgical” theme shown above in Figure 6.47 to “blaze forth in glory” in the concluding pages of the Epilogue, one of only three triumphant endings to a Bax symphony.

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656 The others are the First and Fourth Symphonies; as noted above, however, the finale of the First Symphony does not fully resolve the work’s musical violence.
Figure 6.50: Bax, *Fifth Symphony*, first movement, page 55, one bar before rehearsal number 36. Climax of development section showing chromatic disintegration of the diatonic cadence from the second bar.
Orchestration: Sibelius vs. Bax

Perhaps the most immediate influence Sibelius had on Bax in this symphony was a reduction of the exotically “bright and jeweled”\textsuperscript{657} colors in his orchestration. The opening \textit{con malincolia} timbre of clarinets in thirds in their chalumeau register supported only by timpani, bass drum, and double basses is an instance of this. Bax’s Fifth Symphony requires, in his own words, “very little kitchen [i.e. percussion] of any kind,”\textsuperscript{658} with no celesta or xylophone. There is glockenspiel, tambourine, and gong, though these members of the “kitchen” do not play a prominent role until the third movement.\textsuperscript{659}

Bax’s restrained “Sibelian” scoring is relieved in the finale of the Fifth Symphony, however, not only by these percussion instruments but also by two piccolos, E-flat clarinet, and snare drum. These brighter instruments make their presence felt in the whirlwind-like scherzo between the introduction of the “liturgical” theme and the slower Epilogue.

Bright timbres also help provide the strikingly “otherworldly” atmosphere of the second movement (see Figure 6.51). Bax opens the movement with high string tremolos on B-flat, E-flat, and F and harp sextuplets. Trumpets enter in the second bar with

\textsuperscript{658} British Library, Harriet Cohen Papers, Deposit 1999/10, 4.1X. Quoted in Foreman, \textit{Bax}, 316.
\textsuperscript{659} The complete orchestration consists of three flutes (with second and third flute alternating with piccolos), two oboes, English horn, three clarinets (with the third clarinet alternating with E-flat clarinet in the last movement), bass clarinet, two bassoons, contrabassoon, four horns, three trumpets, three trombones, tuba, timpani, bass drum, tenor drum, snare drum, tambourine, cymbals, gong, glockenspiel, harp and strings.
declamato fanfares; there is also an opening strike on the tambourine. Lewis Foreman referred to these introductory sixteen measures as “a brilliant pictorial opening…” that evokes “some long-cherished grand sweep of landscape.”\textsuperscript{660} That this is connected with such a “feeling of otherworldliness”\textsuperscript{661} is not surprising. As noted above in \textit{The Garden of Fand} and \textit{Tintagel}, Bax strongly linked nature with numinous or legendary associations.\textsuperscript{662}

Bax accomplishes harmonic magic here as well: in bar six of Figure 6.49, for example, the trumpets’ B-flat minor fanfares cadence in B major (spelled enharmonically as C-flat major) as the whole texture shifts around the common tone E-flat/D#.\textsuperscript{663} In bar thirteen, the second fanfare moves from C-flat major to E-flat major, again using the common tone of E-flat. A similar effect is used in the recurring trumpet fanfares in Nikolai Rimsky-Korsakov’s opera \textit{The Tale of the Tsar Saltan}, further evidence that Bax’s “northern” works still included elements of his earlier inspirations (see Figure 6.52).\textsuperscript{664}

\textbf{“Northern” Exoticism}

Timbre likewise plays a role in the creation of musical exoticism even in this most “northern” of Bax’s scores. Within the first movement’s development section Bax inserts two overtly “exotic” passages using rhythmic and melodic ostinati that emphasize strong

\textsuperscript{660} Foreman, liner notes to \textit{Bax: Symphony No. 5}, 4.

\textsuperscript{661} Large, liner notes to \textit{Bax: Symphony No. 5}, 3.

\textsuperscript{662} Further examples of this practice include pieces such as \textit{In the Faery Hills} (1909), \textit{Christmas Eve on the Mountains} (1912, revised 1921), \textit{Spring Fire} (1913), and \textit{The Happy Forest} (1922).

\textsuperscript{663} In the language of Neo-Riemannian analysis, this is known as a “slide.”

beats, drone basses, and unusual instrumental color.\textsuperscript{665} In the first “exotic” evocation basses create a drone bass – though one that oscillates by a half-step between D-flat and D natural – while low woodwind emphasize strong beats with slower oscillations of these pitches. Violas and cellos reiterate the initial bar of the cake-walk theme in an ostinato, supported rhythmically by tenor drum. The horns repeat a second ostinato in a dotted fanfare rhythm created from the tone cluster B-F-G. Above all this, the first and second violins sing a transformation of the second theme in unison, \textit{molto cantabile}, decorated with triplet arabesques. The whole section lasts twelve bars and in shown in Figure 6.53.

\textsuperscript{665} Ralph Locke’s seventh and thirteenth categories of musical exoticism, respectively.
Figure 6.51: Bax, *Fifth Symphony*, second movement, page 69, bars 1-6. Striking orchestration at the beginning of the second movement; high string tremolos, “flowing” harp sextuplets, and declamatory trumpet fanfares.
Figure 6.52: Rimsky-Korsakov, *Suite from The Tsar Saltan*, pages 1 and 42, respectively. Trumpet fanfares using common tones between chords to execute harmonic shifts.

The second passage of musical exoticism follows closely after. Here the low strings and winds provide a stamping rhythmic ostinato that again oscillates by half-steps. Piccolo, flutes and oboes take up the cake-walk ostinato while underneath them the violins and violas repeat a different ostinato emphasizing a semitone alternation between B and A#. The harp provides running eighth notes incorporating two different tritones (B-F and D – A-flat. The horns – muted – take the violin theme in marcato accents, reaching a unison high B-flat (see Figure 6.54). After a further twelve bars this passage transforms into the chromatic build-up to the first climax of the development described above.
Figure 6.53: Bax, *Fifth Symphony*, first movement, pages 46–7, five bars after rehearsal number 30. First “exotic” passage in the Fifth Symphony; Bax employs a drone bass, strong rhythmic downbeats, both rhythmic and melodic ostinato, and a melody largely limited to the range of a tritone.
Figure 6.54: Bax, *Fifth Symphony*, first movement, page 49, two bars after rehearsal number 32. Second “exotic” passage in the Fifth Symphony; Bax again employs rhythmic and melodic ostinato, rhythms emphasizing strong beats, and melody that remains anchored around the pitch G4.
Bax in Summary

Arnold Bax was in many ways the archetypal English Romantic. Features shared by all these composers are especially clear in his life and works. Like Granville Bantock, Bax was enchanted with a succession of geographically remote landscapes and cultures “exotic” to a suburban-born Englishman. Like Joseph Holbrooke, Bax’s imagination was triggered by the legendary, supernatural, or even macabre. Bax and Rutland Boughton both seemed as much conscious of an idealized, pantheistic other world as of the world in which they lived and worked. Both also found their greatest public success in ways and at times they did not intend. Finally, like Havergal Brian after him, Bax expanded the horizons of English Romanticism beyond the two pillars of Richard Wagner and Richard Strauss.

Bax was also subject to the same limitations in the minds of his critics. Frank Howes directed attention to this:

In view of Bax’s early diffuseness and life-long addiction to saturated colour it was once said with much truth that Bax was the one composer of his generation who was not a pupil of Stanford and who would most have benefitted from Stanford’s inculcation of economy, air-holes in the texture in the shape of rests, and disciple: he could not curb prolixity, nor concentration his invention in the memorable or distinctive theme.

This complaint focuses on the lack of balance in Bax’s scores and by extension in the works of all the English Romantics. “Besides the luxuriance and the romance,” Howes continued, “there is to be discerned in Bax’s music…an element of severe

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666 This last is particularly clear in prose short stories like “The Sisters,” a “tale of ancient Ireland,” where, as Bax noted in his autobiography, “the vanity of women met with a nemesis of peculiar savagery.” See Bax, “Farewell, My Youth,” 60.
667 Howes, English Musical Renaissance, 214.
struggle. […] Almost all his music composed up to the age of fifty gives the impression of being the product of a mind at war with itself.”

Such is clear from Bax’s biography as well as the tone poems Tintagel and November Woods and the First Symphony. Yet while Bax’s powers may have been just enough to control his divided mind and powerful emotional impulses, they were nevertheless considerable. In the realm of melody, Bax was able repeatedly to create long, flowing tunes that fulfill his teacher Frederick Corder’s wish for seamless melodic phrases not dragged down by “eight-bar-ish-ness.” Shorter rhythmic motives also abound in his symphonies, as discussed above in his First Symphony. All his melodic material, pithy or expansive, was transformed extensively and organically by Bax as his powers of invention took control of his themes.

Rhythmically, Bax alternated between periods of rhythmic stasis created by rhapsodic melodies and decorative arabesques and rhythmically direct, forward-driving passages powered by ostinati. A “pronounced processional spirit“ is notable in his more moderate tempi and Bax shares these march-rhythms with both Elgar and Gustav Mahler. They can be heroic and stately, as in the finale of the First and Fourth Symphonies or in the 1910 tone poem Roscatha – sketched originally as a “barbaric

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669 Corder, Modern Musical Composition, 32. See particularly Fand’s song in The Garden of Fand, the “sea-vista” theme in Tintagel, the harper’s theme from In the Faery Hills, and the slow movement of the Second Symphony.
670 The first is present in the opening sections of Fand and Tintagel, as well as in the slow movement of the Fifth Symphony. The second drives the finales of the Third and Fifth Symphonies and the first movement of the Sixth Symphony. Christopher Whelen characterizes these contrasting styles as “two moods, the one rhythmically adventurous and exciting, the other a mood of supernal calm.” See Whelen, “An Approach to Bax,” 83.
march” for the Gathering of the Chiefs in Bax’s abortive Deirdre opera – or they can be funereal and bitter, as in the slow movement of the First Symphony and the dark opening of the Fifth Symphony.

Bax’s harmonic language is a bridge between the earlier English Romantics and the later Havergal Brian. It remained a vertically-conceived progression of diatonic harmony heavily decorated and swayed from its path by chromatic inflections and intrusions. Bax, however, characteristically displayed it more horizontally than Bantock, Holbrooke, or Boughton by weaving multiple layers of musical lines into complex textures in the manner of Richard Strauss. Bax was much less dependent on pure homophony in his musical textures; he was also at times less dependent on functional tonality in his harmonic progressions. Decorative chromatic chords fill some measures of his music not to increase harmonic tension – although this happens as well – but as a result of his love of beauty and intoxication with pure musical sound. This is an area where the aforementioned hint of Debussy is particularly noticeable.

Another musical focus Bax drew from Impressionism, as well as from the Russian music he knew, was a love of musical timbres. While this was shared with the other English Romantics, Bax made instrumental color more audibly an end in itself. In particular, Bax was second only to Havergal Brian in his love of the orchestral “kitchen,” or percussion section. Such a fondness seems to come directly from Rimsky-Korsakov and Maurice Ravel. In the words of conductor and personal friend of Bax Christopher Whelen:

672 Joseph Holbrooke shared this immediate auditory focus, though Bax’s are more colorful and his instrumental effects generally more successful.
There are one or two notable influences at work in Bax, among them, I think, a distinct Byzantine strain. When Byzantium became the capital of the Roman Empire, a richness of material and decoration was the sole aim of the artist, and Bax’s music has always seemed to me to possess this splendid and large influence; a luxurious influence possibly, and which depends much on colour and surface ornament for its effect. Instead of an equal proportion of parts, the stiff outline and the severe lines of the modern Classicists, Bax gives us extravagant splendour, ornamentation, and superbly chiseled detail.  

Such “extravagant splendour” also carries over to the formal architecture of Bax’s compositions. In genre, Bax fulfilled his teacher Frederick Corder’s exhortation towards the then-modern form of the symphonic poem with a dozen scores. In each of them Bax is content with simple formal schemes, ternary or arch forms, but overfills these containers with his material. His symphonies especially burst the formal bonds of sonata form with imbalanced internal sections. This is perhaps what drove Bax to create Epilogues in his later symphonies as a method of balancing at the conclusion their earlier weight of invention.

Bax’s obsession with musical invention and thematic transformation rather than strict argumentation seem to reflect his complex, divided personality. Bax’s childhood tutor, Francis Colmer, wrote an unpublished sketch of Arnold and his brother Clifford, describing them in this way:

These diverse contrasts [between a strong ‘feminine’ element derived from their mother and the ‘more violent emotions of the masculine mind’ which produced a ‘sharp conflict’ within them] are strongly exhibited in both the music and stories of Arnold; and the poems, plays and stories of his brother. In both are found the mystic and haunting glamour of unearthly things, and the barbaric violence of the

ancient world. Both brothers were under an obsession which was part of their beings and which it was not of their power to control.674

Bax, like all the English Romantics, sought the “mystic and haunting glamour of unearthly things” and often found it in the “ancient world.” His “exotic” geographical obsessions were also spiritual ones, in pursuit of something located far away from pastoral England. The Romantics’ pursuit of this Other, at times an Other World, stood apart not only from the artistic fashions but also the materialistic concerns of the middle twentieth century. This further alienated them from the British musical establishment and its sources of official recognition and approbation. As for Bax’s “obsession…not of [his] power to control,” and its often self-destructive consequences, British music scholar Lewis Foreman argues that far from alienating Bax from his countrymen it ties him – and, I argue, the English Romantics more broadly – to a peculiar trait of the English character. In his words:

“I would argue that Bax’s duplicity anchors him firmly to the English character. We English take a pride in our historically induced powers of compromise (‘It hath been the wisdom of the Church of England to keep the mean between the two extremes,’ as the 1662 Preface to the Book of Common Prayer puts it) without realizing that this often requires us to hold two opposing beliefs simultaneously: hence the frequent clear-sighted foreign perception of ‘perfidious Albion.”’675

Thus, the English Romantics as a whole fit into this broader view of “Englishness.” Yet for perfidiousness, as well as stubbornness, among them, Havergal Brian was the most extreme example. Brian’s duplicity and stubborn character is the

674 Francis Colmer, ‘A Few Remarks on Certain Traits of Character Belonging to Arnold and Clifford Bax’ (notes sent to Colin Scott-Sutherland, May 1963.) Scott-Sutherland has subsequently published Colmer’s ‘Memoir: The Two Brothers’ in SSOB, pp. 251-81. Quoted in Foreman, Bax, 4-5.
subject of the final analysis chapter, alongside his further extension and personal adaptation of the Late Romantic musical style well into the post-WWII years.
Chapter Seven: Havergal Brian (1878-1972)

It is appropriate that the last English Romantic in this study, Havergal Brian, should have had so close a friendship with the first, Granville Bantock. The two corresponded constantly, sometimes several times a day, and Brian would often travel to Birmingham to visit Bantock or accompany him to London on professional business. Even before the two became friends Brian was an early champion of Elgar and helped recruit support for performances of *The Dream of Gerontius* from choral societies in the English Midlands town of Hanley after the work’s disastrous premiere at Birmingham in 1900. Elgar later requested these same choirs sing in its first London performance.676

Brian was more reticent but still friendly towards Joseph Holbrooke who much later in life briefly became Brian’s neighbor. Brian, ambitious in the extreme, was suspicious of Holbrooke’s similar drive but Brian’s family found him charming and personable.677

Brian was to need these friends because his rise and fall from prominence to obscurity was the sharpest of all the English Romantics. Brian’s critical tongue and irresponsibility towards others destroyed his reputation after early public successes and prevented him from capitalizing on many other musical and social opportunities later in life. Despite being well connected in his youth – Brian also knew Hallé Orchestra conductor Hans Richter (1843-1916) and critic Gerald Cumberland (1879-1926) and received a generous stipend from a secretive patron – Brian caused all but Bantock to

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677 Kenneth Eastaugh quotes a letter from Brian to Bantock in which Brian complains that “your friend Holbrooke” has rented the flat above Brian’s own. See Kenneth Eastaugh, *Havergal Brian: The Making of a Composer* (London: Harrap, 1976), 245.
desert him and he returned to the impoverished conditions of his own working-class upbringing. Brian’s eventful life and restless, passionate music are a microcosm of the English Romantics as a group, of their yearning after natural and exotic beauty, their stubborn unwillingness to court musical fashion, and of their ultimate disappointment in the British musical establishment.

**Biographical Sketch**

Havergal Brian was born on January 29\(^{\text{th}}\) 1878 in Dresden, a village in the English Midlands region known as the Potteries.\(^{678}\) Havergal Brian was christened William Brian but changed his name in his late teenage years. Encountering the name “Havergal” from a family of hymn writers and church musicians in nearby Worcestershire Brian found it more artistic than “William” even though it was originally a surname.

Brian’s family was from the working class; his father was a potter’s turner in one of the area’s many factories.\(^{679}\) Brian’s father also strongly influenced his son’s view of personal and professional relationships. Benjamin Brian was intensely suspicious of “interference” in one’s private affairs and passed on to Havergal paranoia of professional intrigue and personal jealousy. Havergal Brian grew direct to the point of rudeness, rejecting social graces and refusing to charm those whom he did not respect.\(^{680}\) This outspoken persona crippled Brian’s search for public success in music, which he desired passionately, but for which he would not stoop to “intrigue.” Brian also had difficulty

\(^{678}\) The Potteries derived its name from the area’s major industry, the production of pottery in large factories whose smoke covered towns in black soot.

\(^{679}\) A man who received the partially dried clay pieces from a drying-room then shaved them to the desired shape and burnished them with a steel tool.

expressing his feelings and states of mind save by letter or music.\footnote{Brian wrote hundreds of letters to his few close friends, sometimes several per day. In the words of Brian biographer Kenneth Eastaugh, letter writing and composition were safety valves for the emotions he felt but could not express in “talk and living.” See Eastaugh, \textit{Havergal Brian}, 91, 106, and 309.} His difficult exterior masked a man who was “stuffed with emotion”\footnote{Eastaugh, \textit{Havergal Brian}, 91.} but who did not always know how to express them in his personal or professional relationships.

Composition remained Brian’s obsession despite lack of public or critical recognition.\footnote{Kenneth Eastaugh, Brian’s second biographer, characterized this urge to compose music as being “like a tiger.” When it was awake and hungry, “it devoured everything and everybody who got in its way.” See Eastaugh, \textit{Havergal Brian}, 2.} He was largely self-taught in music. As a working class child his formal education stopped after completion of grammar school at age twelve. Brian’s only professional musical training derived from a local music examination coach named Theophilus Hemmings\footnote{Such coaches trained their students in elementary harmony and part writing so as to pass a university entrance examination in music.} who provided a thorough training in theory and keyboard skills but could not understand his pupil’s obsession with then-radical Romantic composers. Brian argued that a university degree was unnecessary; in his words, “Berlioz, Wagner and Liszt were neither Doctors of Music nor Fellows of the College of Organists.” His teacher disapproved: “When I [Brian] mentioned Berlioz, he regarded me as gone and lost forever.”\footnote{Nettel, \textit{Havergal Brian and His Music}, 12.} In defiance Brian hung portraits of Berlioz and Wagner in his room and swore that he would become their musical disciple.\footnote{Ibid., 12.}
Edward Elgar encouraged Brian in this Romantic dream. Brian first heard Elgar’s music by chance in 1896 and swiftly became an enthusiastic admirer. Brian sent Elgar an early part song to critique and learned that the older composer likewise distrusted academic musical instruction, believing it smothered originality. Inspired by Elgar’s example, Brian began composing large-scale orchestral works on programmatic subjects and attained a growing reputation in the Potteries district. His early success peaked in 1907 with two London orchestral performances conducted by Sir Henry Wood (1869-1944). These did not lead to national recognition, however, because Brian was too uncomfortable with the politics of the London musical world to use such opportunities to his advantage. He returned to the Potteries and was bitterly disappointed when no further invitations to London came.

Brian’s most loyal friend and promoter was Granville Bantock, whom Brian met in 1906 at a joint performance of Bantock’s *Omar Khayyám* Part I and Brian’s similarly “exotic” setting of Psalm 137, *By the Waters of Babylon* for baritone solo, chorus and orchestra. The two men shared a love for large-scale German Romantic musical expression and “Eastern” literature and philosophy. Brian sought Bantock’s advice in both compositional and personal matters and often visited Bantock’s family in Birmingham.

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687 Brian observed a rehearsal of Elgar’s oratorio *King Olaf* for the North Staffordshire Triennial Festival.
688 Elgar was also largely self-taught as a composer.
689 These early compositions include the symphonic poems *Pantalon & Columbine* (1899), *Tragic Prelude* (1900), a set of *Burlesque Variations on an Original Theme* (1903), and the overture *For Valour* (1904).
690 Wood conducted Brian’s *First English Suite* and the concert overture *For Valour*.
691 Bantock regularly promoted Brian’s music though this usually only resulted in local performances in Birmingham, where Bantock’s influence was strongest.
Bantock’s similar love of “exotic” inspiration influenced Brian a year later to create another choral-orchestral work, *The Vision of Cleopatra.* Its violent “martial and barbarous” quality, combined with the text’s portrait of Marc Anthony as a soldier “fresh from the bloody field of battle, hungry for the appeasement of an insatiable lust,” caused fellow literary friend Arnold Bennett to exclaim, “If the good people of Southport only knew what they are listening to, they would lift up their hands in horror!” Elgar had a similar reaction, admonishing Brian in a letter, “Let us, my dear Brian, have no more of these hatreds.”

Brian moved away from overt exoticism after 1907, turning instead towards the orchestral virtuosity and textural complexity of Richard Strauss. Strauss’ satirical humor is found in Brian’s Comedy Overture *Doctor Merryheart* (1911) and in *Fantastic Variations on an Old Rhyme,* a send-up of “Three Blind Mice.” (1912).

Brian was able to compose these works at his leisure thanks to the generosity of Herbert Minton Robinson (1858-1923), secretary for the Minton china firm in the Potteries. Robinson became Brian’s patron in 1909, allowing Brian to leave various menial jobs and devote himself full time to composition. Robinson claimed to support Brian because, “I’m very certain that you are the only composer of any account in this country who is not financially well off – and, it is a crime to be poor!” Brian soon began spending Robinson’s wealth on luxuries such as whisky, cigars, and fine clothes,

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692 Text by Gerald Cumberland after Shakespeare’s *Antony and Cleopatra.*
694 Nettel, *Havergal Brian and His Music,* 64.
695 Ibid., 71.
however, and reading or gardening for pleasure instead of composing. Matters between Brian and his disappointed patron reached a crisis in 1913 with the breakdown of Brian’s marriage.

Brian had married Isabelle Priestly, a local schoolteacher, in 1899, with whom he had five children. Brian was serially unfaithful with the most serious affair occurring with Hilda Hayward, the family’s maid in 1911. Isabelle believed this affair would pass and Brian would return to the domestic stability she represented but Brian became convinced that Isabelle had become unfaithful to him in turn. In late 1913 he confronted her, revealed that Hilda had become pregnant, and claimed that Robinson’s patronage must be expanded to include Hilda’s child. Isabelle severed their relationship, Robinson cut off his financial support, and Bantock and Elgar were scandalized by the public nature of the marriage failure. In December 1913 Brian fled the Potteries for London with Hilda.  

This move initiated a thirty-five year period of struggle for Brian, Hilda, and their subsequent five children. He and his second family were financially insecure, moved frequently, and relied heavily on their few remaining friends, Bantock chief amongst them. Brian changed addresses over twenty times and worked as a soldier, clerk,

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697 Robinson was later persuaded to reinstate a monthly allowance of six pounds, which he maintained until his death in 1923. It was often Brian’s only steady source of income during those years.

698 Full details can be found in Kenneth Eastaugh’s biography *Havergal Brian: The Making of a Composer* (London: Harrap, 1976).

699 In the Honorable Artillery Company from August 1914 to spring 1915. Brian’s decision to join the British Army was ill considered and he soon found a way to be discharged. His unit never left London and Brian saw no combat.
manual laborer, fruit picker, music critic,\textsuperscript{700} and statistician for the British Inland
Revenue Service. Joseph Holbrooke also found Brian work as a music copyist writing
out the string parts for his opera \textit{Dylan, Son of the Wave}.\textsuperscript{701} Brian nevertheless
completed many large works, including what is considered the world’s largest symphonic
work, the “Gothic” Symphony.\textsuperscript{702} Long forgotten by the London musical establishment,
Brian finally found a second friend and supporter in the 1950s, Robert Simpson (1921-
1997)\textsuperscript{703} a BBC music producer who began arranging for radio broadcasts of Brian’s
works.\textsuperscript{704} This led to a burst of creativity in the elderly composer, who had finally settled
in the town of Shoreham-by-Sea, Sussex, near Brighton. Brian, already seventy-eight,
composed twenty-two more symphonies, eight of these after the age of ninety. His total
output of large works was thirty-two symphonies, five operas, two concerti, and various

\textsuperscript{700} For \textit{Musical Opinion} from 1927-1939, contributing to the column “Le Main Gauche”
and writing articles about Elgar, Bantock, Holbrooke, Bax and other composers. See
Malcolm MacDonald, ed., \textit{Havergal Brian on Music: selections from his journalism}, 2

\textsuperscript{701} Brian complained bitterly to Bantock about being paid less than the standard wage for
this work, however, and often distrusted Holbrooke, knowing that composer’s
commitment to promoting himself and his own music sometimes at the expense of others.

\textsuperscript{702} Brian also composed a satirical opera expressing his bitterness when his Romantic
outlook lead to disappointment with society (\textit{The Tigers}, 1917-1920), and a massive
cantata based on Percy Bysshe Shelley’s \textit{Prometheus Unbound} (1939-1944).

\textsuperscript{703} Bantock, who died in 1946, was most influential in Birmingham before his retirement
from there in the 1930s. Bantock produced a number of Brian’s works, especially early
in the century, but his influence waned with the years as his own music became
neglected.

\textsuperscript{704} Including two performances of the “Gothic” Symphony, the first a largely amateur
effort in 1961 and the second supported by the BBC in the Royal Albert Hall in 1966,
conducted Sir Adrian Boult. Simpson was also a composer in his own right, writing a
cycle of nine symphonies.
tone poems, overtures, and choral-orchestral pieces. Havergal Brian died in 1972 at the age of ninety-six.\textsuperscript{705}

Brian’s Romantic interests were wide-ranging. His early enthusiasm for Berlioz and Wagner led to admiration for Edward Elgar.\textsuperscript{706} Brian shared with Bantock an interest in the exoticism of the Middle East and later contemplated an opera on J.M. Synge’s Celtic drama \textit{Deirdre of the Sorrows}. Like Bax, Brian never completed this work but he did convert its orchestral prelude into his sixth symphony titled \textit{Sinfonia tragica}. Finally, Brian’s sustained interest in German Romanticism was expressed in his letters, personal habits, and music. Brian learned to read and write in German, subscribed to an academic Goethe journal, and corresponded with Richard Strauss, the exiled Kaiser Wilhelm II, and the Kaiser’s son.\textsuperscript{707} This mixture of exotic and German Romantic influences informed Brian’s music throughout his long life.

\textbf{Musical Examples}

Due to the large number of Havergal Brian’s compositions, this chapter focuses on Brian’s largest and most personal surviving work, the \textit{Gothic Symphony} in D minor.\textsuperscript{708} Analysis of the \textit{Gothic} is supplemented by briefer examinations of \textit{The Vision of}

\textsuperscript{705} The children in Brian’s second family never learned of the existence of his first family until the day of Brian’s funeral, when his two surviving first-family children arrived to pay their respects. See the first chapter of Eastaugh, \textit{Havergal Brian}.

\textsuperscript{706} Elgar, however, no longer supported Brian after the affair of 1913 and almost never responded to Brian’s subsequent pleas for financial support, work, or performance opportunities.

\textsuperscript{707} Brian received portraits of the Kaiser and the Crown Prince which he displayed prominently, greatly embarrassing his second family.

\textsuperscript{708} Brian wrote an even larger piece, a cantata for vocal soloists, chorus, and orchestra setting Acts 1 and 2 of Percy Bysshe Shelley’s \textit{Prometheus Unbound} during 1938-1944. The full score of this work was lost in 1961, however, and has not yet been located. It is reputed to last four hours and eleven minutes.
*Cleopatra, Doctor Merryheart,* and the Sixth, Seventh, and Tenth Symphonies, works that show the wide range of Brian’s inspirations, his skill in applying Romantic musical techniques, and his interest in programmatic considerations even in seemingly abstract pieces.

**The Vision of Cleopatra**

*The Vision of Cleopatra* is Brian’s largest example of musical exoticism, written for a competition held by the Norwich Music Festival in 1908. Each festival submission had to set the text provided by poet and music critic Gerald Cumberland. Cumberland’s libretto followed the passionate and fatal relationship between Antony and Cleopatra, making much of its Egyptian setting.\(^{709}\) Brian’s setting uses many markers of musical exoticism, as well as heavily chromatic melodic and harmonic techniques to represent the passion of its protagonists.

**Musical Exoticism**

The clearest examples of musical exoticism come in the work’s opening section. This is an orchestral introduction Brian labeled a “Slave Dance.” A steady rhythmic ostinato on C# underpins nearly the entire section, broken only occasionally into arpeggios or scalar chromatic motion. The ostinato is paired with trilled open-fifth pedal tones on C#-G#, decorated with rising and falling arpeggios and scalar patterns, and set off by accented whole tone alternations between C# and B minor triads in empathic rhythms. All these “exotic” characterizations are shown in Figure 7.1.

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\(^{709}\) Cumberland had himself won the Norwich Festival’s competition for a suitable libretto the year before.
Figure 7.1: Brian, *The Vision of Cleopatra*, page 1, bars 1-12. Opening bars of “Slave Dance” characterized by musical exoticism.

*Allegro con fuoco.*
The dance itself, shown in Figure 7.2, sways rhythmically by half steps between chord members. In its second phrase, Figure 7.2 bars 8-12 Brian incorporates decorative arpeggios in melody and ostinato bass and gives weight to the three long chords by adding grace notes to each. Both phrases stretch the ostinato’s steady eighth-note framework with melodic groupings of five quarter notes in bars 3, 10, and 11.

Brian marks the dance’s second phrase “Stately – gradually grow wild and riotous.” After numerous stringendo directions over the following pages Brian indicates the dance should become “Wild and uneven.” It gradually returns to its initial Lento tempo but Brian returns to the idea of passion growing uncontrollable in various ways throughout the remainder of The Vision of Cleopatra.
Figure 7.2: Brian, *The Vision of Cleopatra*, page 2. First two phrases of “Slave Dance” showing further characteristics of musical exoticism.

The Dance.

\[
\text{\textit{a tempo}}
\]

\[
\text{\textit{ppp}}
\]

\[
\text{(Stately - gradually grow wild and riotous)}
\]

\[
\text{\textit{stringendo}}
\]

\[
\text{\textit{ppp a tempo}}
\]
Chromaticism Representing Sexual Passion

One of the most striking examples of musical passion occurs on pages 54-55 of the Bosworth vocal score. (See Figure 7.3.) Here Cumberland’s text displays the sensuousness that led Arnold Bennett to predict an audience protest:

The day just dawning is accursed
For we are feverish with the thirst
That Venus has aroused
Within the veins of us
Who may not win deep satisfaction
Of our pain until cold winter come again.

Brian prefaces the first line with a restless passage of tremolos and 5-note groupings that gradually fill the orchestral texture. Above them a glockenspiel plays arpeggios in the tonic of A-flat and a trumpet adds fanfares. When the chorus enters Brian asks they “ejaculate” the opening words on a unison E-flat. The dramatic change of harmony at the word “accursed” allows Brian to move from A-flat major to E major, a tritone’s distance, in one beat. In Figure 7.3 bar three the voices leap to a diminished seventh chord on A natural that Brian resolves to E major in the next bar. Its arrival is anticipated in the soprano and bass E’s on beat two. He adds further tension to these dissonant and unexpected changes of harmony by scoring for seven-part divided chorus

710 Havergal Brian, The Vision of Cleopatra: Tragic Poem for Orchestra, Soli, & Chorus (Leipzig: Bosworth & Co., 1909). The full score was destroyed in the London Blitz during WWII and has been reconstructed in the spring of 2016 by John Pickard, composition professor at Bristol University and archivist of the Havergal Brian Society. This chapter uses the vocal score published in 1909.
moving at different rates of speed and marking the passage “molto passion and abandon.”

Another example of chromaticism connected with sexuality occurs on page 51. Brian this time demonstrates a mood of sexual satiation in setting the text “Venus and Bacchus clasp and kiss, and melt with rapture at their bliss” (see Figure 7.4). To prepare this moment of satisfaction, the brief first line of text is imitated by each voice part in turn, energized by rapid scalar runs in the orchestra. When Antony and Cleopatra, represented by the mythical figures of Venus and Bacchus, kiss on page 52, Brian again splits the chorus, this time into eight parts. He also directs the orchestra to pause at the moment of its greatest energy. This is followed by a climactic arrival on C# minor, the key in which the work began. Both chorus and orchestra immediately begin sliding down the chromatic scale by semitones, almost graphically depicting the melting bliss of Gerald Cumberland’s verses. Brian’s performance directions indicate the music should “dissolve to nothing.”

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711 Brian also immediately undercuts the E major tonic by introducing a prominent B-flat in the next bar. Additional dissonant tritones appear as the passage continues to shift keys unsteadily.

712 *The Vision of Cleopatra* also shares this key with Richard Strauss’ *Salome*, another work concerned with both Middle Eastern exoticism and erotic tension.
Figure 7.3: Brian, *The Vision of Cleopatra*, page 55, four bars after rehearsal number 50. Chromaticism expressive of sexual longing.
Figure 7.4: Brian, *The Vision of Cleopatra*, page 52, six bars after rehearsal number 48. Chromaticism expressive of sexual satisfaction (descending chromatic lines after climax on C# minor).
The Vision of Cleopatra is similar in many respects to Bantock’s Omar Khayyám. The two works share a Middle Eastern focus and are characterized by musical exoticism and sensuality articulated by melodic and harmonic chromaticism. The two were also composed in the same decade, 1900-1910.\footnote{Bantock’s Part I of Omar Khayyám was complete by 1906, Part II had its premiere in 1907, and Part III followed in 1909. Brian’s The Vision of Cleopatra was composed in 1908 and premiered in 1909 at the Southport Triennial Music Festival.} Reginald Nettel’s Brian biography notes that this was the high point of the “pagan” fascination in Edwardian music and a “counterblast” to “academic” composers like Sir Charles Villiers Stanford.\footnote{Nettel, Havergal Brian and His Music, 64.}

**Doctor Merryheart**

Brian’s next major piece was also directed against what Brian perceived as musical academicism and pedantry. In Doctor Merryheart: A Comedy Overture for large orchestra, Brian turned from Orientalism to satire.\footnote{Doctor Merryheart was written in 1911 while Brian enjoyed Herbert Robinson’s patronage. It was first performed in Birmingham in 1913 under the conductor Julius Harrison and published by Breitkopf and Härtel in the same year.} In both of these guises he was indebted to Richard Strauss as his model, first to Salome and then to Till Eulenspiegel. Doctor Merryheart shows the influence of Strauss’ “roguish” humor\footnote{From Till Eulenspiegel’s subtitle, “nach alter Schelmenweise”: after an old rogue’s tale.} most clearly of all Brian’s early scores.

**Straussian Humor Surpassed**

Doctor Merryheart operates on two levels of musical humor. It is a tone poem describing the exploits of a fictitious astronomer of “original views.”\footnote{From the program note written by Brian. Havergal Brian, Doctor Merryheart: A Comedy Overture for Orchestra (London: Breitkopf & Härtel, 1913).} Here Brian
turned to Strauss’ *Till Eulenspiegel* and *Don Quixote* for models. It is also a series of private jokes at the audience’s expense. These two levels of humor operate simultaneously. Brian wrote a lengthy program note outlining Doctor Merryheart’s character. Its fantastical, or even farcical elements, however, go beyond Strauss’ *Till Eulenspiegel, Don Quixote, or Symphonia Domestica*. Brian outdid his model in whimsicality presented in a serious context.\(^{718}\) Likewise, the score is divided into programmatic episodes in the manner of Strauss’ tone poems but the straight-faced absurdity of Brian’s descriptive titles were another exercise in “intellectual leg-pulling.”\(^{719}\) The sections are:

1. --- (Theme)
2. Whimsies and Sun-shadows
3. Smiles and Storms
4. Dreams: Asleep in the arms of Venus
5. Merryheart as chivalrous knight chases Bluebeard
6. Merryheart fights a dragon
7. Merryheart leads a procession of heroes
8. Merryheart awake
9. The Dance of Merryheart

\(^{718}\) An excerpt of the program note reads: “Doctor Merryheart was well-known as an astronomer of original views. His geniality and perpetual smiles earned for him the name of Merryheart. He advanced the strange theory, in a happy persuasive manner, that the sun, mood, earth and ‘all that therein is’ are part of a vast diatonic scale, having its tonic in the centre of the Milky Way. He would not admit the value of the spectroscope and he held the view that there are no chromatics… He was a great dreamer. In his dreams he was prone to loud mutterings, and was known to exclaim, ‘I must shoot that lion.’”

\(^{719}\) Nettel, *Havergal Brian and His Music*, 76-8.
Straussian Scoring

Brian presented this only half-serious sequence of events with all the technical resources of his model, Strauss. *Merryheart* is scored for a large Romantic orchestra used in full almost throughout. Brian biographer Reginald Nettel described the score as “packed” with instrumentation and incident.

Thematic Transformation

Brian wove *Merryheart*’s main theme (see Figure 7.5), a combination of two converging musical lines, into each programmatic section. He further develops and transforms it at each appearance. This “continuous symphonic variation,” in the words of Reginald Nettel, reflects Strauss’ practice in both *Till Eulenspiegel* and *Don Quixote*. Both composers use thematic transformation to articulate various aspects of their musical characters and to illustrate programmatic situations.

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720 Brian calls for 3 flutes (3rd flute doubling piccolo), 2 oboes, English horn, 2 clarinets, bass clarinet, 2 bassoons, contrabassoon, 4 horns, 3 trumpets in F, 3 trombones, tuba, timpani, glockenspiel (*ad lib*), snare drum, tambourine, triangle, bass drum, cymbals, harp, and strings.
722 Its prominent trills, particularly when scored for the trumpets, may be illustrative of Merryheart’s geniality and good humor. The fact that *Doctor Merryheart*’s main theme is not directly tied to the character of its protagonist was pointed out by Brian himself in later life as another subtle modification of the traditional Romantic tone poem. This disrupts the pattern linking musical style to the personality of a musical protagonist followed by Strauss in his tone poems and set even earlier by Hector Berlioz in his *Symphonie Fantastique*.
Figure 7.5: Brian, *Doctor Merryheart*, bars 2-6. *Merryheart*’s main theme, shown in reduction. The upper line is scored for violins in octaves; the lower line is scored for cellos, basses, bassoons, and contrabassoon in octaves.

Even within the introductory section Brian added additional contrapuntal lines to *Merryheart*’s theme for further decoration and instrumental display (see Figure 7.6)

Section five, “Merryheart as chivalrous knight chases Bluebeard,” contains a dramatic example of Brian’s practice of thematic transformation. In this section Brian added a chromatically dissonant fanfare to the second half of the “Merryheart” theme, shown in Figure 7.7. The fanfare’s melodic motion includes tritone leaps (E to B-flat) accented by *sforzando* markings and lengthened rhythmic values. Larger and more decorated presentations of this transformed motif make up the bulk of this musical confrontation between Merryheart and Bluebeard.

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724 Brian almost certainly did not know Bela Bartok’s opera Bluebeard’s Castle, as its first performance was not until 1918. Brian is here referring to Bluebeard the folk villain.
Figure 7.6: Brian, *Doctor Merryheart*, page 12, ten bars after rehearsal number 3. Contrapuntal decoration of main theme within introductory section.
Humorous Wagnerian Allusion

In section six, “Merryheart fights a dragon,” Brian turns his humor on Wagner, one of Brian’s own early influences. Brian’s “dragon theme,” scored for bassoons, contrabassoon, and tuba, points clearly to the leitmotif for Fafner, the dragon who guards the Nibelungen gold in Wagner’s *Siegfried* (see Figures 7.8 and 7.9, respectively).725 Brian places above the “dragon theme” fragments of Merryheart’s main theme in pizzicato strings and harp as if the hero Merryheart was not fighting the dragon but creeping past while it slept. The prominent trills in the dragon theme, suggesting snores, heighten the effect of stealthy effort.726

726 Malcolm MacDonald suggested that even the tempo marking was meant as a joke, the term “comodo” sounding similar to Komodo dragon; the name of a species of large lizards native to Indonesia. Malcolm MacDonald, liner notes to *Brian: Symphonies Nos.*
Figure 7.8: Brian, *Doctor Merryheart*, page 53, rehearsal number 13. The “dragon” theme is played by low winds and brass in bars 1-5. Brian presents a transformed version of the main theme in harp and pizzicato strings in bars 6-11 to illustrate the hero creeping past.

11 & 15, RTÉ National Symphony Orchestra conducted by Adrian Leaper, Naxos CD 8.572014, 2010, 5.
Tragedy Foreshadowed by Humor

Both modes of Brian’s humor, the “roguish” fun of Till Eulenspiegel and his satirical laughs at audience credulity, return in Brian’s later music. Brian’s late symphonies are full of moments that frustrate musical expectations by using traditional Romantic musical devices in nontraditional ways or juxtaposed with unexpected material. Even in an early score like Doctor Merryheart Brian often built expectations for large harmonic climaxes, for example, only to turn away to apparently trivial material (see Figure 7.10).

Harold Truscott saw Brian’s second mode of humor as evidence of his growing skepticism and bitterness towards Brian’s own Romantic ideals. Brian’s increasing use of familiar Romantic techniques in unexpected ways allowed him to comment musically on the difficult course of his own life, an idea that will return to frame the conclusion of both Chapter 7 and the thesis.
Figure 7.10: Brian, *Doctor Merryheart*, pages 13-14, four bars before rehearsal 4. Transition from introductory section to “Whimsies and Sunshadows.” Brian builds anticipation toward large harmonic climaxes only to introduce instead light-scored, seemingly trivial material.

**Symphony No. 1 “Gothic”**

Though Brian poked fun at his musical idols Strauss and Wagner in *Doctor Merryheart*, he would return to their example in earnest for his *Gothic Symphony*. 
composed during 1919-1927. Brian described the *Gothic Symphony* to Bantock as a “big Teutonic work” and dedicated the score to “Meinem geliebten Freund und Meister Dr. RICHARD STRAUSS.” Brian corresponded with Strauss during the symphony’s composition and afterward asked Strauss to secure a performance through his considerable influence. Strauss claimed he would be unable to accomplish this but he praised the *Gothic* as “magnificent” (großartig). Brian’s dedication to German Romanticism in the work is also displayed in the quotation from Goethe’s *Faust* he used as a motto: “Wer immer strebend sicht bemücht, den können wir erlösen.”

**Romantic Inspiration and Organization**

Brian drew on all his Romantic inspirations for this score. The *Gothic Symphony* is organized into three orchestral movements and a choral finale after Beethoven’s Ninth Symphony. Brian’s choice of *Te Deum* as the finale text reflected Hector Berlioz’s large 1849 setting of the same Medieval Latin prayer. The *Te Deum* also had a personal connection to Brian’s childhood; he heard a setting of the same prayer during Queen Victoria’s Golden Jubilee celebrations in 1887. Brian’s school choir took part in a Jubilee ceremony in the fourteenth-century Lichfield Gothic cathedral; this experience of an art combining enormous size and intricate detail fused with his memory of the *Te

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728 Quoted in Eastaugh, *Havergal Brian*, 256.
729 Ibid., 277.
731 Brian’s setting is in the original Latin.
732 This setting was composed in 1845 by Prince Albert and included in an 1882 publication, *The Collected Compositions of HRH Prince Albert*, ed. W.G. Cusins (London: n.d. [1882]).
Deum performed in such a space. Brian even alluded to Gustav Mahler (1860-1911) by employing progressive tonality (the Gothic Symphony moves from D minor to E major), as well as prominent marching rhythms in nearly each movement, an obsession of both composers.733

Enlarged Performing Forces

Brian echoed Berlioz, Wagner, Strauss, Mahler, and other Romantic composers of “monumental” works in his personnel demands for the Gothic Symphony. Brian divided the score into two unequal halves: the first three orchestral movements as Part I, and the choral and orchestral finale as Part II.734 Part I calls for an orchestra of quintuple woodwinds, sixteen brass, two timpanists, eight other percussion instruments, two harps, organ, and strings.735 Brian included historical instrumental rarities like the oboe

733 Mahler’s Second, Fourth, Fifth, Seventh, and Ninth Symphonies all use progressive tonality; the Second, for example, begins in C minor and ends in E-flat major while the Seventh begins in E minor and ends in C major. It is uncertain if Brian knew Mahler’s music. None of Brian’s biographers mention Mahler and Mahler’s symphonies were not widely known or respected in England until Brian’s last decades, certainly not in the inter-war years. The above-mentioned similarities between the two composers are, however, quite marked, as was their preference for subdividing a large orchestra into many smaller “chamber groups” to provide contrasts of timbre and texture, only bringing the whole group together at the largest climaxes of a piece. Harold Truscott’s repeated denials in his chapter on the Gothic Symphony in Havergal Brian’s Gothic Symphony: Two Studies that Brian had any musical connections to Mahler only appear confirm their manifest commonalities, Truscott’s vehemence also serving to reaffirm Brian’s links to the earlier English Romantics – whom Truscott names only to protest that such connections are not in fact there. This part of the essay seems a product of its time as the British musical establishment in the 1970s had little respect for musical Romanticism of any kind.

734 Part II is generally agreed to be divisible into three large sections, though there is no break between them in performance. Thus Brian scholar Harold Truscott breaks the Gothic Symphony into six movements in his analytical article. See Truscott, “The Music of the Symphony,” 12.

735 Piccolo, 4 flutes (3rd doubles piccolo, 4th doubles alto flute), 2 oboes, obe d’amore, cor anglais, heckelphone (bass oboe), E-flat clarinet, 2 clarinets, basset horn, bass clarinet, 3
d’amore, heckelphone, and basset horn, inspired by a chance remark made by the conductor Sir Henry Wood (1869-1944) in 1907, while Wood and Brian traveled to one of Brian’s first London performances: “Think what it would be – a suite written for all the modern instruments and all the ancient ones – each with a distinctive part. Some composer ought to try it.”

Part II, almost twice as long as the three movements of Part I combined, calls for even larger forces. Brian included two double choirs, a children’s choir, and four vocal soloists (soprano, alto, tenor, and bass). He also added four brass bands inspired by Berlioz’s Requiem, one to be placed behind each of the choirs. Each band consists of two trumpets, two horns, two trombones, two tubas, and one timpanist with three drums. The orchestra itself is enlarged again for a total of 82 strings, 32 woodwind, 29 brass, and 17 percussionists. Particularly unusual or colorful instruments in Part II include contrabass clarinet, bass trumpet, two contrabass trombones, two euphoniums, long drum, thunder machine, small chains, and a “bird scare” or ratchet. This amount

bassoons, contrabassoon, 6 horns, E-flat cornet, 4 trumpets in F, 3 trombones, 2 tubas, 8 timpani (2 players), 2 bass drums, 3 snare drums, tambourine, triangle, cymbals, tam-tam, glockenspiel, xylophone, celesta, 2 harps, organ, and strings.

Quoted in Nettel, Havergal Brian, 45.

Each of the first three movements lasts about twelve minutes while the finale lasts approximately one hour.

Brian estimated 500 chorus members total, not counting the children’s chorus.

Each double choir is split into two individual choirs: IA, IB, IIA, and IIB.

The minimum number of performers would thus be 750.

The complete instrumentation list is: 2 piccolos, 5 flutes, alto flute, 4 oboes, cor anglais, oboe d’amore, heckelphone (bass oboe), 2 E-flat clarinets, 4 clarinets, 2 basset horns, 2 bass clarinets, contrabass clarinet, 3 bassoons, 2 contrabassoons, 8 horns, 2 E-flat cornets, 4 trumpets (4 extra ad lib.), bass trumpet, 3 tenor trombones, bass trombone, 2 contrabass trombones, 2 euphoniums, 2 bass tubas, 8 timpani (2 players), 2 bass drums, 3 side drums, 2 tambourines, 2 triangles, 6 large pairs of cymbals, tam-tam, long drum, tubular bells, low-tuned bells in C, D, and E, thunder machine (not thunder sheet), small
of personnel, as well as a performance time of approximately one hour forty minutes, enabled the *Gothic Symphony* to be listed in the Guinness Book of World Records as the “World’s Largest Symphony.”

**Part I, First Movement: Chromatic Harmony**

To facilitate discussion of such a large work, this analysis considers Romantic elements in Part I and Part II separately. Brian in fact sanctioned performances of Part I alone if the required performing forces and related logistics of Part II proved insurmountable.

The first movement provides three examples of Brian’s harmonic chromaticism characteristic of both this and later symphonies. The first is Brian’s insertion of chromaticism into accompanying lines to destabilize a diatonic theme. The *Gothic Symphony*’s first theme outlines a D minor triad using steady marching rhythms but the rest of the orchestra immediately begins to contradict this (see Figures 7.11 and 7.12, respectively). The divided mood such tonal conflict creates becomes so much a part of this movement and of portions of Part II that it ceases to be a clash between diatonicism and chromaticism but instead one mood of simultaneously contradictory parts – what Harold Truscott described as “schizophrenic.”

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742 A place it still holds, though the title of the record has been changed to “World’s Longest Symphony.”

Figure 7.11: Brian, *Gothic Symphony*, first movement, bars 5-6. Theme 1 of the *Gothic Symphony*’s first movement outlines a D minor triad. Scored for first violins and oboes.

**Allegro assai** (Quick free and bright)

![Musical notation]

Figure 7.12: Brian, *Gothic Symphony*, first movement, bars 5-8. Diatonic theme (Violin 1) in highly chromatic context.
Secondly, even in such a large work as the *Gothic Symphony* Brian did not write long transitional passages between musical ideas but moved from one theme or section to another by quick changes of harmony. The *Gothic Symphony*’s first movement is in a nominal sonata form: to reach the second tonal area Brian moves from D minor to D-flat major by one pivot chord of B-flat minor. The effect is similar to the analogous passage in the first movement of Bax’s First Symphony, creating a sudden, even disconcerting, change of mood through chromatic changes of harmony at a “key switchboard.” Brian’s transitions are even terser than Bax’s, however, as he moves the key again by a half-step slide to D major after twelve bars.\(^{744}\)

Finally, Brian uses chromatic harmony to increase the effect of diatonic cadences at climactic points. This is the same Romantic device of Bantock, Holbrooke, and Bax magnified in Brian’s case by the size of the orchestra. The closing bars of the first movement provide an example, made more dramatic by the initial use of the organ. Brian ends the movement with a Picardy third cadence in D major interrupted by a dissonant chord of A-flat, C, E-flat, and E natural, an A-flat major triad with both a diminished and perfect fifth. The semitone clash between E and E-flat is combined with implied tritones between each member of the A-flat chord and the tonic D major chord. The dissonance is emphasized by Brian’s heavy scoring, calling for an organ with 16’, 32’, and 64’ pedal stops paired with the full orchestra.\(^{745}\) The harmonic tension is

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\(^{744}\) This further change of key is also made in one bar.

\(^{745}\) Brian calls explicitly for a 64’ stop in the score (see Figure 7.13), rare even in large organs.
released one measure later as each voice slides by a semitone to the final D major triad (see Figure 7.13).\footnote{Save for those voices with E natural, which move by a whole step up to F# or down to D. Brian spells the dissonant chord in second inversion with the E-flat in the bass, emphasizing the effect of “sliding” as the bass descends to the tonic D.}

**Figure 7.13:** Brian, *Gothic Symphony*, first movement, last seven bars. D major Picardy third cadence interrupted by dissonant A-flat chord (in bracket). Only organ, percussion, and strings shown, winds and brass follow organ and strings.

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**Part I, Second Movement: Rhythmically Flexible Funeral March**

Brian used rhythmic flexibility to give the *Gothic Symphony*’s second-movement funeral march a distinctly Romantic character. The underlying meter is 5/4, broken occasionally by single bars of common (4/4), simple triple (3/4), and compound triple (6/4) time. The lyrical melody Brian placed above this uneven pulse is also rhythmically flexible: twice sustaining over bar lines and never emphasizing down beats but instead beats two or three of five. The melody is itself five bars long. All of these details link
Brian with his models Wagner and Strauss, as well as with fellow English Romantics Holbrooke and Bax in their avoidance of rhythmically square four-bar phrases.

Brian established the quintuple meter in the movement’s first bars by dotted rhythmic figures rising a perfect fifth. These “fanfare” figures are memorably scored for timpani and two solo tubas in alternation (see Figure 7.14). The lyrical melody follows in bar four scored for violas and cellos in octaves (see Figure 7.15).

**Figure 7.14:** Brian, *Gothic Symphony*, second movement, page 40, bars 1-4. Dotted rhythm funeral-march figure scored for timpani and two tubas.

![Figure 7.14](image1)

**Figure 7.15:** Brian, *Gothic Symphony*, second movement, page 40, bars 4-8. Lyrical “lament” melody that alludes to both F# major and F# minor; scored for violas and cellos in octaves.

![Figure 7.15](image2)

**Mahlerian Allusion**

Though the tuba and timpani figures imply F# minor as the funeral march’s main key, the lyrical “lamenting” melody hovers between F# minor and F# major because Brian uses both A# and A natural, notated enharmonically as G double-sharp, in this melody. His inclusion of the major and minor third of the tonic chord is similar to
Mahler’s, such as in the slow movement of Mahler’s Sixth Symphony. There the tonic harmony wavers between E-flat major and E-flat minor expressive of Mahler’s emotional ambiguity in one of his most personal symphonies (see Figure 7.16).\textsuperscript{747}

Figure 7.16: Mahler, Sixth Symphony, Andante moderato, bars 1-7. The main melody of Mahler’s Sixth Symphony, slow movement, also moves between major and minor.

Romantic Monomania

Like Holbrooke’s “slow movement” in The Raven that reiterates the same melody obsessively Brian focuses this movement on the tuba fanfare and the lyrical “lamenting” theme. The entirety of the funeral march is built around “increasingly climactic”\textsuperscript{748} statements of the lament supported by the rising-fifth fanfare. Malcolm Macdonald characterizes this monothematic focus as producing a quality of “monumentality.”\textsuperscript{749}

Part I, Third Movement: Thematic Transformation

In contrast, Brian relies heavily on thematic transformation in the third movement of the Gothic Symphony. This movement is a scherzo with mercurial changes of style and character. Even its main theme is an adaptation of the first theme of the first movement, again outlining a D minor triad (see Figure 7.17).

\textsuperscript{747} Gustav Mahler, Symphony No. 6 (Leipzig: C.F. Kahnt Nachfolger, 1906).
\textsuperscript{749} Macdonald, Symphonies of Havergal Brian, Volume One, 32.
Figure 7.17: Brian, *Gothic Symphony*, third movement, bars 16-20. The main theme of the scherzo, itself a transformation of the first theme of the first movement.

After its first appearance in solo oboe Brian repeats it at various pitch levels to create a “polytonal fabric”\(^{750}\) of overlapping entries; Brian later introduces two variants of this theme. The first wavers between F major/minor scored for four horns, shown in Figure 7.18.

Figure 7.18: Brian, *Gothic Symphony*, third movement, page 66, six bars before rehearsal number 47. First variant of the scherzo’s first theme.

Brian scores the second variant of this theme for cellos, basses, and two tubas on (see Figure 7.19). The key is again D minor and the theme is decorated with woodwind and string lines featuring prominent movement by half-steps.

\(^{750}\) MacDonald, *Symphonies of Havergal Brian, Volume One*, 34.
Figure 7.19: Brian, *Gothic Symphony*, third movement, page 67, three bars before rehearsal number 52. Second variant of the main theme in low strings and tubas.

Homage to Berlioz

Brian created a double homage to Berlioz in the *Gothic Symphony*’s scherzo by scoring repeatedly for trombone pedal tones. The lowest pitches available to trombones are so-called “pedal tones” in the first octave on B-flat, A, G#, and G natural. Brian introduces these pitches in the tubas during the “polytonal” passage at the beginning of the movement but began to score them for trombones starting at page 70, four bars after rehearsal number 54 (see Figure 7.20). These pitches appear in Berlioz’s *Treatise on Instrumentation* as illustrations of the instrument’s pedal range and Brian knew this treatise in the German revision prepared and updated by Richard Strauss. Berlioz himself also used these notes in the “Hostias” movement of his *Requiem*, paired with flutes to create common chords spanning four octaves (see Figure 7.21). Brian also


paired the trombone pedal tones with flutes at their first appearance and repeated these pedal tones at climactic points in the *Gothic* scherzo. Their most dramatic return is at the height of a musical storm.

**Figure 7.20:** Hector Berlioz, *Requiem*, “Hostias,” page 93. Berlioz’ use of trombone pedal tones in his Requiem, paired with flutes four octaves higher.

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**Sublime Nature: Storm**

Part I of the *Gothic Symphony* does not have an explicit program but Brian nevertheless clearly composed a musical representation of a storm in the third movement. It begins on page 83 at rehearsal number 67 and lasts until page 100 at rehearsal number 76, almost one hundred measures at an *Allegro assai e con fuoco* tempo. Brian makes use of the standard Romantic techniques for depicting a storm, including trills and quick scalar runs in the woodwinds and strings – c.f. Bantock’s “wailing winds” in his *Hebridean Symphony* storm – and loud chords in the brass and percussion for thunder effects. Both techniques are shown in Figure 7.22.
Figure 7.21: Brian, *Gothic Symphony*, third movement, page 70, five bars before rehearsal number 55. Brian’s use of pedal tones paired with flutes in an homage to Berlioz’ *Requiem*. 
Figure 7.22: Brian, *Gothic Symphony*, third movement, page 83, two bars after rehearsal number 67. Musical storm with “wind” effects in the woodwinds and strings and “thunder” effects in the percussion.

Brian also introduced unusual personal touches of instrumentation to this musical storm. He gave quick sixteenth-note passages to the heavier instruments of tubas, bassoons, and low strings, for example, (see above, Figure 7.22 bars 3 and 5) and wrote a lengthy passage for solo xylophone. The xylophone is accompanied only by snare drum rhythms, repeated C# minor triads in the cellos, and high harmonics in the violins and violas. These harmonics form a tone cluster of G#, D#, E, and F# while the solo xylophone reinforces C# minor in dotted rhythms and triplet arpeggio figures (see Figure
7.23). The xylophone figures continue for thirty-two bars, joined by further “wind” and “thunder” effects in the woodwind, strings, and percussion (see Figure 7.24).

**Figure 7.23**: Brian, *Gothic Symphony*, third movement, page 92, four bars before rehearsal number 73. First entrance of solo xylophone.
Figure 7.24: Brian, *Gothic Symphony*, third movement, page 95, one bar after rehearsal number 74. Increased chromatic scalar “wind” effects in woodwinds and xylophone and “thunder” effects in the percussion. Note two bass drums and rapid moving parts for tubas.

At the storm’s height Brian pairs the xylophone triplets with flutes, all repeating triplet figures in C# minor while the upper strings sustain their harmonic tone clusters. The lower woodwinds and strings play increasingly dissonant tone clusters supported by a low C# in the organ pedals. In the storm’s final bars Brian is combining ten of the twelve chromatic notes; only G and C are missing. Here Brian brings back the trombone pedal tones; the low brass “blast” these notes through the swirling texture with “awesome
effect”\textsuperscript{753} (see Figure 7.25). Their last note – G natural – is used by Brian as the dominant of C and he resolves the dissonant passage into a “Grandioso” march in C minor on page 100.

\textsuperscript{753} MacDonald, \textit{Symphonies of Havergal Brian, Volume One}, 39.
Figure 7.25: Brian, *Gothic Symphony*, third movement, page 99, four bars before rehearsal number 76. Height of “storm” section. The trombones’ final pedal tone, G natural, becomes dominant of following bars’ C minor march.
To return to the symphony’s tonic D minor, Brian again pivots abruptly using only three chords. The first is C major, followed by F# major and then D minor (see Figure 7.26). Each triad is consecutive, played by the full orchestra plus the organ; Malcolm Macdonald described this cadence as evidence of Brian’s confident ability to “stride from one end of the tonal universe to the other in a split second.” Brian ends Part I of the Gothic Symphony on another Picardy third cadence in D major, “sweetened” in the Late Romantic manner of Mahler with an added sixth.

Figure 7.26: Brian, Gothic Symphony, third movement, pages 103-4, one bar before rehearsal number 78. Brian reaches the tonic key of D minor by another swift harmonic twist: C major, F# major, D minor. Reduced view of score, winds and brass follow organ and string parts.

754 MacDonald, Symphonies of Havergal Brian, Volume One, 40.
755 This added sixth, the note B, is only present in one voice, the fifth horn. Malcolm Macdonald notes that at the 1966 premiere performance Brian asked the pitch be replaced by an A; this both “chaster” and “more logical,” if less Romantic. See Macdonald, Symphonies of Havergal Brian, Volume One, 41.
Part II: Complex Textures

Brian uses two double choirs, a children’s choir, and four vocal soloists to set the Te Deum in Part II of the Gothic Symphony. The height of Brian’s choral complexity is found in the second section of Part II at the words “Judex crederis esse venturus” (“We believe that Thou shalt come to be our judge.”) Brian splits each chorus into two halves and writes overlapping entries for each female half-choir in turn that superimpose triads of D minor, E minor, G major, and A minor (see Figure 7.27). The male voices immediately repeat the same effect. Brian next initiates an imitative choral texture in sixteen parts then expands the number to twenty by dividing the soprano, alto, and bass voices. The a cappella voices reach a state of “near-atonality”756 before Brian ends this highly dissonant chromatic passage on an open fifth of A-E after sixty bars. Figure 7.28 shows the first twenty bars of this passage.

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Figure 7.27: Brian, *Gothic Symphony*, Part II, section 2, bars 1-13. Opening of “Judex” section with overlapping triads of D minor, E minor, G major, and A minor in heavily divided women’s voices. The men repeat this passage immediately after.
Figure 7.28: Brian, *Gothic Symphony*, Part II, section 2, page 150, rehearsal number 151. A cappella passage in sixteen imitative parts, later expanding to twenty; extreme chromatic dissonance in vocal writing.
Part II: Spatial Effects

Brian’s use of spatial effects in the *Gothic Symphony* mirrored that of Berlioz in his *Requiem* and Mahler in his Eighth Symphony; both of these pieces use extra brass groups placed “offstage” in the performing space itself. Brian used the four brass bands for several antiphonal effects in the *Gothic Symphony*; their first entrance occurs immediately after the “Judex” *a cappella* passage. Brian moves from the thick texture and “vibrant” cluster chords to a wordless soprano solo marked “afar.” Once the solo voice becomes “almost inaudible”\(^{757}\) the eight trumpets of the brass bands enter in pairs with a series of complex rhythmic fanfares (see Figure 7.29). After an interlude for the orchestra alone, Brian directs each half-choir to enter in turn, accompanied by the brass band seated directly behind it. If placed as Brian directed across the front of the performing space, the effect would be of the music “wheeling round in a great half-circle.”\(^{758}\) The first two of these entrances are shown in Figure 7.30.

\(^{757}\) Performance direction on page 153.
\(^{758}\) MacDonald, *Symphonies of Havergal Brian, Volume One*, 49.
Figure 7.29: Brian, *Gothic Symphony*, Part II, section 2, page 153, fifteen bars before rehearsal number 177. Antiphonal fanfares from the trumpets of the four extra brass bands. This is Brian’s first use of the extra brass in the score.
Figure 7.30: Brian, *Gothic Symphony*, Part II, section 2, page 161, rehearsal number 203. Initial antiphonal entries of the four extra brass bands each paired with a semichorus.
**Gothic as Exoticism**

Brian named the *Gothic Symphony* for the predominant architectural style of the late medieval period (1150-1550). This was the historical period that inspired many Romantic artists in different media, from Goethe’s *Faust* in literature to the English Pre-Raphaelite painters. Brian was fascinated with this historical Other, particularly with Gothic cathedral architecture. This was fused in his mind, as noted above, with the text of the *Te Deum* prayer. Though the *Te Deum* has traditionally thought to be written before the medieval period it too represented to Brian the same “exotic” age of faith.

Brian could consider historic Christianity “exotic” because he had rejected orthodox Christian doctrine, crediting the verses of the Romantic poet Percy Bysshe Shelley (1792-1822) with “weaning” him away from the Church of England. As a Romantic Brian valued the beauty of Gothic cathedral architecture and the remoteness of its vanished culture but had no sympathy for their continued use as places of worship. Brian wrote to Bantock: “Victor Hugo long ago taught me to worship the beauty of Rheims Cathedral – and as far as I am concerned I have no use for them religiously. I think they ought to be preserved as museums, evidence of an age and faith which produced them.”

**Romantic Purpose**

Brian viewed the *Te Deum* through a Romantic lens. His setting is not an expression of personal Christian faith, but of faith in a Romantic brotherhood of humanity. Brian believed in humanity united by Romantic heroes to achieve great

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cultural and social objectives. He wrote the *Gothic Symphony* to prove that his worldview was not destroyed after World War I and during his lowest period of forgotten artistic status and financial stress. He would do the same during World War II when he composed a setting of *Prometheus Unbound*. This affirmation of his poetic idol Shelley was even larger than the *Gothic Symphony*, lasting four hours eleven minutes. The full score was lost in 1961, however, and only the vocal score has survived.\(^{761}\)

**Later Symphonies: Varied Romantic Programs**

None of Brian’s later symphonies were as large as the *Gothic*. They remain, however, though widely varied in mood and inspiration, united by Brian’s Romantic temperament. The Second Symphony in E minor (1930) was inspired by Goethe’s 1773 drama *Götz von Berlichingen*, though Brian later reduced its program to the overriding idea of “man in his cosmic loneliness.”\(^{762}\) Brian’s Fourth Symphony was another choral-orchestral work, subtitled *Das Siegeslied* (“Song of Victory”). This was a setting of Psalm 68, “Let God arise, let his enemies be scattered,” in German translation written during Hitler’s rise to power in 1933. Some commentators have seen this symphony as a warning against resurgent German militarism, something Brian abhorred despite his often exaggerated pro-German sentiments.\(^{763}\) In his next symphony Brian turned to the poetry of Lord Alfred Douglas, Oscar Wilde’s alleged lover during the 1890s. *Symphony No. 5: The Wine of Summer* (1937) sets the eponymous poem by Douglas for baritone soloist and large orchestra. Brian’s *Sinfonia tragica* of 1948 was inspired by J.M. Synge’s play *Deirdre of the Sorrows*, the same subject that Bax developed into an opera libretto. Brian

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\(^{761}\) The estimated time in performance is written on the vocal score.


\(^{763}\) MacDonald, *Symphonies of Havergal Brian, Volume One*, 89-90.
likewise planned an opera on this Irish mythological subject but could not obtain
copyright permission and only completed a lengthy symphonic prelude. Brian later
numbered this as his Sixth Symphony.

**Symphony No. 7**

Brian’s Seventh Symphony, also written in 1948, was inspired by Goethe’s
autobiography. Brian connected Goethe’s love of the Alsatian city of Strasbourg,
particularly its cathedral, with Brian’s own medieval interests. Though this
programmatic inspiration, as with other Brian symphonies, was not expressed explicitly
in most of the score, the final movement is subtitled “Once upon a time” and its final
note, a bell-stroke on E, Brian described as the “actual sound of the great bell of
Strassburg [sic] Cathedral.”764

**Pentatonic Exoticism**

The second movement of Brian’s Seventh Symphony also contains a striking
example of musical exoticism, though apparently unmotivated by the Germanic subject
matter.765 Brian made this movement a moderately paced scherzo built on an ostinato
bass line; this much-repeated phrase is the first suggestion of musical “exoticism” (see
Figure 7.31). The ostinato uses only three pitches and is unevenly rhythmic in a 5/2
meter. Its unvarying tread and limited pitch content suggest Ralph Locke’s fifth and
seventh categories of musical exoticism, static harmonies and distinctive repeated
rhythmic or melodic patterns, respectively. Brian transposes the pitches of the ostinato to

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764 Quoted in MacDonald, *Symphonies of Havergal Brian, Volume One*, 131.
various pitch levels but retains their narrow focus on two intervals, the minor third and the major second. These intervals suggest a pentatonic harmonic context.

**Figure 7.31:** Brian, *Symphony No. 7*, second movement, bars 1-3. “Exotic” ostinato scored for bassoons, contrabassoon, tuba, basses, and bass drum.

Brian confirms this choice of scale later in the movement with a melodic figure almost identical to a stereotypical pentatonic phrase (see Figures 7.32 and 7.33, respectively). Brian scores this distinctive phrase for a solo trumpet then draws further attention to it by imitating it successively in horns, muted trumpet, and muted trombones. This pentatonic phrase returns throughout the movement always accompanied by the five-beat ostinato. Brian scores these later appearances of the ostinato for strings, muted trumpets and horns, and xylophone, with bass drum, cymbal crashes, and tubular bells strikes to provide increased rhythmic emphasis. Brian’s combination of “exotic” ostinato and allusion to a stereotypically “Oriental” musical trope provide a striking later example of Brian’s musical exoticism in an unlikely place, particularly in its context of a piece with autobiographical significance for its composer.

![Exotic pentatonic melodic phrase](image)

Figure 7.33: Stereotypical “Oriental” music figure.

![Stereotypical “Oriental” music figure](image)

**Symphony No. 10**

Brian’s Tenth Symphony, written in 1954, also provides a striking later example of a Romantic trait: musical depictions of sublime nature. Brian inserted into this otherwise abstract work a musical storm representing “interior, psychological upheaval, expressed in the imagery of nature.”

Reading the storm as “psychological” connects it

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with Holbrooke’s *The Raven* and Bax’s *November Woods*; all three works symbolically link internal and external tempests.\textsuperscript{767}

**Sublime Nature: Musical Storm**

The Tenth Symphony is a single-movement work lasting approximately fifteen minutes in performance.\textsuperscript{768} Despite this symphony’s compressed length and reduced orchestra, Brian included a large percussion section, including wind machine and thunder machine.\textsuperscript{769} These onomatopoeic instruments are used throughout the musical storm, which begins on page 14 at rehearsal number 22. Figure 7.34 shows their first entrance.

Malcolm MacDonald noted that it was “almost impossible” to describe Brian’s this passage “except in naturalistic terms” due to the music’s atematic character and reliance on instrumental effects.\textsuperscript{770} Figures 7.35 and 7.36 show two further “storm” passages demonstrating naturalistic “wind” and “thunder” effects created in the same manner as earlier musical storms by Bantock, Holbrooke, and Boughton. Its “interior, psychological” character comes from its abstract surroundings suggestive of an inner landscape rather than a specific geographical location. Its disjuncture from these abstract

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\textsuperscript{767} The storm in Act 1, Scene One of Boughton’s *The Immortal Hour* also fits this reading. The storm was conjured by Dalua and its unusual appearance disturb[s] the peasants Manus and Maeve. Even Eochaidh and Etain are troubled in mind until they begin to fall in love.

\textsuperscript{768} Havergal Brian, *Symphony No. 10* (Chelmsford, Essex: Musica Viva, 1973).

\textsuperscript{769} The full percussion consists of 3 timpani, cymbals, 1-2 bass drums, 1-3 snare drums, triangle, glockenspiel, xylophone, wind machine and thunder machine. The rest of the orchestra includes 3 flutes (3rd doubles on piccolo), 2 oboes, cor anglais, 2 clarinets, bass clarinet, 3 bassoons (3rd doubles on contrabassoon), 4 horns, 4 trumpets, 2 tenor trombones, bass trombone, euphonium, tuba, 2 harps, and strings.

\textsuperscript{770} MacDonald, *Symphonies of Havergal Brian, Volume One*, 178-9.
surroundings provides a disconcerting element of stylistic and emotional juxtaposition of unrelated materials.

**Figure 7.34:** Brian, *Symphony No. 10*, page 15, one bar before rehearsal number 23. First entrance of wind machine (marked W.M.) and thunder machine (marked T.M.) during the musical storm.
Figure 7.35: Brian, Symphony No. 10, page 18, one bar before rehearsal number 25. Musical storm incorporating scalar “wind” effects in the winds and brass and “thunder” effects in the percussion; includes wind machine and thunder machine.
Figure 7.36: Brian, *Symphony No. 10*, page 20, one bar after rehearsal number 27. Further example of musical storm in the Tenth Symphony with virtuosic “wind” effects in woodwind, strings, and pitched percussion.
Disconcerting Juxtapositions

Perhaps the most disconcerting thing about this musical storm is its sudden appearance and brief duration. The storm lasts only thirty-two bars of the total 250 but its intensity suggests a much longer passage. Such juxtaposition of short but striking passages became a hallmark of Brian’s later symphonic style. The fact that Brian used well-known Romantic musical techniques in increasingly episodic ways, placed side by side with no smooth transition or explanation for their arrangement, gave his late music a restless, questioning quality. In the Tenth Symphony this is displayed in the passage immediately preceding the storm, as well as in the final bars.

Before the storm, at rehearsal number 19 on page 13, Brian placed what his champion Robert Simpson described as a “passage of total stillness, riveting the attention as nothing else could, however violent.” It lasts fifteen bars, half as long as the storm that follows. Brian nevertheless created an illusion of “limitless space” via sustained chords for muted horns and muted strings, and fragmentary lines for glockenspiel and pizzicato harps (see Figure 7.37). The musical storm follows without a break and disappears just as quickly as this “point of stillness.”

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772 MacDonald, Symphonies of Havergal Brian, Volume One, 178.
773 Ibid., 178.
Figure 7.37: Brian, *Symphony No. 10*, page 13, two bars before rehearsal number 19. “Point of stillness” using sustained harmonies in muted horns and strings plus harp and glockenspiel interjections.
The last page of the symphony compresses these juxtapositions of unlike material into an even smaller space. After the brief but powerful storm the music moves through a self-contained “slow movement,” in the words of Robert Simpson, to a “grimly triumphant finale” in C minor.\textsuperscript{774} Once this martial music reaches its peak, however, Brian writes a coda of quiet but dissonant chords sustained in the strings and brass in turn. These “Sphinx-like and inscrutable”\textsuperscript{775} harmonies are followed by a phrase in solo violin above \textit{sul ponticello} string tremolos and two final chords. Figure 7.38 shows these three contrasting elements: the brass discord, a dominant ninth chord on G-flat, the solo violin phrase, and the final chords of the symphony. Both the ninth chord and string tremolos suggest C-flat major, a half-step away from the previous climax in C minor but Brian instead ends the symphony by implying C major through an open fifth of C-G.

\textsuperscript{774} Simpson, preface.
\textsuperscript{775} MacDonald, \textit{The Symphonies of Havergal Brian, Volume One}, 182.
Figure 7.38: Brian, *Symphony No. 10*, last 11 bars. Juxtaposition of dissonant chord in brass, violin solo, and final chords
Musical Skepticism: Brian and Mahler

To Malcolm MacDonald, Brian’s restless treatment of unlike musical material suggested an increased skepticism about his Romantic worldview. The C major ending to the Tenth Symphony seemed to reflect Brian’s reconciliation with unresolved tensions in life: “peace of mind lies only in a stoic, unafraid acceptance of the fact that there will be no answers.” Robert Simpson described the final chords of the Tenth Symphony as “hard immovable quiet, mysteriously out-facing all questions.”

This musical expression of skepticism further connects Brian with Gustav Mahler; both composers were at once Romantics yet they challenged Romantic assumptions about the world in their compositions through irony or unresolved musical difficulties. Though Brian fought to maintain faith in a heroic German Romanticism – through composing the Gothic Symphony and his even larger setting of Shelley’s Prometheus Unbound – by the end of his life Brian claimed he had never sought public success but wrote music privately with no thought of performance. This was a myth to justify the hardships and neglect he had experienced during his long and difficult life.

Brian in Summary

Brian’s earlier Romantic compositions were sincere, though his ironic attitude began to be developed in Doctor Merryheart. Like his contemporaries Bantock, Holbrooke, Boughton, and Bax, Brian expressed heightened emotion through harmonic

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776 MacDonald, The Symphonies of Havergal Brian, Volume One, 182.
777 Simpson, preface.
778 Brian did not admit the fact that his sufferings were largely of his own making.
chromaticism, portrayed “exotic” inspirations in music evoking Otherness, and called for
enlarged performing forces to execute his works.

Brian most closely resembled Bax of all the Romantics, sharing use of linear
counterpoint to articulate harmonic progressions. Brian’s super-enlarged orchestras,
however, and heavily divided forces meant his musical textures were even denser than
Bax’s. Brian coupled complex texture with colorful scoring focused on the brass and
percussion sections – his trumpet, tuba, glockenspiel, and xylophone parts outdo Richard
Strauss in their virtuosic demands. Brian’s difficult writing for voices in both *The Vision
of Cleopatra* and the *Gothic Symphony* reflected his experience of English competition
festival choirs. Brian knew from performances of Elgar’s *Dream of Gerontius* as well as
Bantock’s *Omar Khayyám* that such groups could perform complex and dissonant *a
cappella* passages accurately.

In Brian’s late symphonies his musical prolixity was replaced by concision.779
Brian’s most compact work was his “Sinfonia brevis,” Symphony No. 22, lasting
approximately ten minutes in performance.780 This change of musical values from
expansion to compression reflected Brian’s grappling with the changing aesthetic
worldviews around him; he was born under Queen Victoria and lived through the
Edwardian, interwar, and postwar years as British cultural life underwent enormous
changes. His increasing skepticism about Romanticism was demonstrated by his
increasing juxtaposition of contradictory material in his compositions.

779 Brian claimed to Harold Truscott that even the inspiration for the *Gothic Symphony*
came to him so intensely that he wanted to compress the work into twenty bars of music.
See Calum MacDonald, liner notes to *Brian: The Gothic Symphony*, 5.
780 The score is 196 bars long.
Harold Truscott took the idea of musical skepticism farther, describing Brian’s later symphonies as intentionally self-destructive acts of musical suicide; they “begin in agreement and, by intent, gradually fall apart.” Truscott believed this explained why Brian’s late works “disintegrate” and “die out” only to resort to a “sudden, false, triumphal ending.”

Truscott questioned Brian about this tendency before his death and took his refusal to answer as confirmation. Brian was known to argue against anyone with whom he disagreed on any subject, but in this case he said nothing and looked “rather like a child caught out in something he wished to keep hidden. After a moment he changed the subject.”

Brian’s struggle with changing values was not only characteristic of the English Romantics but the twentieth century as a whole. Truscott argued that the “suicidal despair” he detected in Brian’s late symphonies informs all late twentieth century music: “it is perhaps the truest reflection of this century, for it has the tendency to self-destruction within it, and so has the 20th century.” The fact that Brian did not commit suicide was due to the emotional outlets of musical composition and letters to close friends.

Bantock and Brian became close friends because they shared a Romantic worldview and an unusual sense of humor. Though Brian became embittered late in life he continued to compose symphonies until his death, fighting against self-destruction and

782 Ibid., 11.
783 Ibid., 11.
suicidal despair. His largest and most characteristic works affirm his belief in musical Romanticism, as do those of Bantock, Holbrooke, Boughton, and Bax. Malcolm MacDonald wrote that Brian’s music “seems to measure the human spirit against the forces of Nature and, behind these, the still immensity of the Universe… Brian’s symphonies always voyage onwards into new realms of experience and a deeper view of life. His is some of the least complacent music ever written.” The same might be said of all the English Romantics.

\[784\] MacDonald, *Symphonies of Havergal Brian, Volume One*, 175.
Chapter Eight: Conclusions

The English Romantics complicate the accepted narrative of British music in the late nineteenth and early twentieth centuries. Their German Romantic worldview and musical style were inspired by the late-nineteenth-century music of Wagner, Liszt, and Strauss yet survived both World Wars fought against Germany. While they experienced changing musical tastes – Romanticism, Impressionism, Neo-Classicism, the Pastoral School, and serialism – each English Romantic composer maintained his Romantic ideals of musical beauty and emotional expression throughout his career. Even when open to other influences such as Debussy or Sibelius this core of German Romantic musical affect and technique remained in their compositions.

Persistent musical Romanticism connects the successive members of the group as well. Each English Romantic in turn grew farther and farther from the spirit of his time. Bantock and Holbrooke suffered least in this regard, their public successes coming early in their careers during the Edwardian decade (1900-1910). Historian Samuel Hynes described Edwardian society as “rich, punctilious, and unoccupied” and noted that later writers called the era “a golden afternoon,” a “golden security,” or a ‘long garden party.’ Bantock and Holbrooke capitalized on an aesthetic interest in the “exotic” or “uncanny” in their compositions. Scholars such as Stephen Banfield have since criticized Edwardian “artistic senses” for being unable to “distinguish readily between the shallow and the profound: sensation was more often more highly prized than

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786 See Allis, “Holbrooke and Poe Revisited,” 129-136. Allis described Holbrooke’s tone poem *The Raven* as an “effective exploration of the uncanny” (117). *Ulalume* can be viewed in the same way.
sensibility.” Yet both Bantock and Holbrooke continued to seek “exotic” and emotional musical sensation during the interwar years (1918-1939) and beyond, after this Romantic aesthetic fell out of fashion.

Boughton and Bax came of age in the 1920s as the New Objectivity (Neue Sachlichkeit) of Neo-Classicism gained ascendance in Europe. Proponents of this aesthetic believed the idealism of pre-war Romanticism a fantasy to be disproved, a program adhered to by both Stravinsky and Les Six. The former declared that music was, “by its very nature, essentially powerless to express anything at all, whether a feeling, an attitude of mind, a psychological mood, a phenomenon of nature, etc.” The seemingly frivolous French Neo-Classicism of Les Six projected a “terrible irony” as the most appropriate anti-Romantic method. The imaginations of Boughton and Bax, however, remained fixed on idealistic expressions of beauty; their pain at its transience was sincere, not ironic. Their most powerful works deal with this loss and each was written during the interwar years: Boughton’s operas The Immortal Hour and The Queen of Cornwall and Bax’s First Symphony.

Only Havergal Brian showed signs of skepticism towards Romanticism. After living through the pre-war, interwar, and post-WWII decades, Brian had accumulated

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787 Banfield, Sensibility and English Song, 90.
788 Bantock’s Pagan Symphony dates from 1927; his third symphony, The Cyprian Goddess, inspired by his second love affair, was written on the eve of World War II (1938-39). Holbrooke’s final opera in the Cauldron of Anwn trilogy was completed in 1924 and his second piano concerto, L’Orient, finished four years later. Its movements are titled Javanese Dance, Burmese Dance, and Singhalese Dance, respectively.
790 Paul Fussell, The Great War and Modern Memory (New York: 1975), 3. Though Fussell is discussing Thomas Hardy’s poetry, the sardonic or ironic tone used to dispel idealism in his work is very similar to the methods of Poulenc, Milhaud, et al.
many personal and musical frustrations and disappointments. After his death advocates like Harold Truscott separated him from Mahler in order to avoid charges of imitation but it is clear that the two composers came to share a similar blend of Romanticism and ironic skepticism. It is a fitting tribute to the English Romantics that only Brian, the longest lived, should entertain doubts about Romanticism, and that only after having experienced the bulk of the turbulent twentieth century.

**Implications for the Field**

Each English Romantic composer has been discussed in scholarship on English music but their achievements and status have been diminished until recently. In general histories of British music individual Romantics were named in passing or acknowledged only for their pre-World War I work. In the case of a largely interwar composer like Boughton, scholar Stephen Banfield expressed his bewilderment at the success of Boughton’s masterpiece *The Immortal Hour* in the 1920s. Howes, Pirie, and Trend gave a similar treatment in their respective monographs. Though they presented more detailed discussions of the various English Romantics, focus remained on the Romantics’ status as pre-war composers alongside their evaluation as anachronisms irrelevant to a consideration of the twentieth century. Banfield summed up the attitude of these authors in two statements: that in Romantics such as Holbrooke and Boughton “we reach the lunatic fringe” and that such composers who “indulge[d] in their private dreams” did not

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791 See Banfield, *Sensibility and English Song*, 104.
understand what the “unique interplay of tradition and innovation at this juncture of England’s musical history demanded of them.”

The fact that Romanticism persisted between successive members of the English Romantics as a whole as well as within each composer’s life strengthens their need for reassessment as a group. Despite the fact that these composers did not consider themselves members of a movement or formal group, strong personal and musical connections exist among them. Contemporary scholarship is beginning to explore these connections, as reflected in the 2015 Rowman & Littlefield volume on Joseph Holbrooke: David Craik contributed a chapter on Holbrooke’s friendship with Granville Bantock and Anne-Marie Forbes explored Holbrooke’s close relationship with his patron Thomas Evelyn Ellis. Similarly, the English Romantics had artistic relationships with well-known literary figures in the United Kingdom. These connections have also begun to receive scholarly attention. Bax knew both W.B. Yeats and George Russell (Æ) personally, and these Irish authors heavily influenced his poems, prose stories, and two short plays. Colin Scott-Sutherland edited a collection of Bax’s published and unpublished poetry, titled Ideala: Love Letters and Poems of Arnold Bax. More recently, British scholar Michael Allis has explored the connections between Granville

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792 Ibid., 104. What Banfield argues was demanded of them was becoming “heirs and rebels” like Holst and Vaughan Williams to assist in the creation of the English Musical Renaissance.


Bantock and many of his literary inspirations.\footnote{See Michael Allis, \textit{British Music and Literary Context: Artistic Connections in the Long Nineteenth Century} (Woodbridge, Suffolk, UK: Boydell Press, 2012), particularly the chapter on Bantock and Robert Browning’s \textit{Fifine at the Fair}. See also "Bantock and Southey: Musical Otherness and Fatalism in Thalaba the Destroyer," \textit{Music and Letters} 95, no. 1 (2014): 39-69. \url{https://muse.jhu.edu/} (accessed April 6, 2016).} These are encouraging signs that scholars are already investigating this previously neglected aspect of British musical history.\footnote{Lewis Foreman explored epistolary connections between many British composers in his collection of correspondence between British composers and others in the musical establishment from 1900 to 1945. It includes letters from each of the English Romantics; importantly, nowhere do any of them describe themselves as part of a Romantic movement the way members of the English Musical Renaissance espoused a “team spirit” in promoting national music. See Lewis Foreman, ed., \textit{From Parry to Britten: British Music in Letters 1900-1945} (Wilshire, OR: Amadeus Press, 1987).}

**Further Scholarship**

The English Romantics were a group of composers who deserve to be studied no longer in isolation. Their internal friendships, alliances, mutual advocacy, and occasional rivalry demonstrate the interconnected nature of their lives and musical careers. This study that considered them as a distinct group for the first time is only a preliminary work. There are many areas both inside and outside this group of English Romantics that merit scholarly attention.

Future scholarship might investigate the connections between the English Romantics and their Renaissance contemporaries. Both groups of composers were inspired by identical sources at times – Vaughan Williams and Bantock each made settings of John Bunyan’s \textit{The Pilgrim’s Progress} and Vaughan Williams’ \textit{Flos Campi} (1925) uses similar techniques of musical exoticism as Bantock’s \textit{Omar Khayyám} or Brian’s \textit{The Vision of Cleopatra}. Though Gustav Holst is treated as a “historical-
pastoral” composer much of his output was devoted to “Eastern” musical topics on a large scale in works such as *The Cloud Messenger* (1910-1912) or the three-act opera *Sita* (1899-1906) after a story from the Hindu epic poem the *Ramayana*. Each of these “Eastern” or “exotic” works share a common source with the exoticism of the English Romantics.

Elgar and Delius may especially be explored in connection with the Romantics; scholarship on both composers has long acknowledged the influence of Wagner and Strauss on their music though each created a highly personal style. Bantock based his “Helena” *Variations* on Elgar’s “Enigma” *Variations* and Havergal Brian’s Romantic rejection of Christianity echoes Delius’ espousal of Friedrich Nietzsche in his large-scale works *A Mass of Life* (1904-05) and *Requiem* (1913-1916). Bax became friends with Delius during later life, visiting him in France several times. Ironically, Delius also criticized Bax’s tendency to improvisatory development in his music: “If only that boy

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would concentrate, he’d do something fine. His form is too loose. He should concentrate!”

Scholarly attention could also turn to trends within the English Romantic cadre. Boughton, Bax, and Brian each wrote a score based on the Irish legend of Deirdre articulated in J.M. Synge’s tragedy *Deirdre of the Sorrows*. Each score was an adaptation of an earlier, larger project, either ballet or opera; each ended as something else, a symphony or brief tone poem. These compositions articulate their composers’ attraction to the Otherness of Celtic myth, particularly to that of a tragic heroine like Deirdre.

Tracing this strain of Germanic Romanticism in composers not included in this study may prove to be most useful to the field of British music studies. Cyril Scott (1879-1970) would be the strongest candidate for inclusion. An English Late Romantic composer, Scott was influenced by Debussy but his debt to Germany was nevertheless strong; he studied music in Frankfurt with Iwan Knorr (1853-1916) and became part of the “Frankfurt Group” of composers whose most well-known member was Percy Grainger (1882-1961). Scott befriended the German mystical poet Stefan George (1868-1933) and later became a devotee of Theosophy, writing many books on both the occult and natural medicine.

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798 Quoted in Foreman, *Bax: A Composer and His Times*, 308. Delius was similarly criticized for writing “formless” music reliant on small-scale connections or points of interest lacking an overarching plan or stable architecture.

John Foulds (1880-1939) was another English Late Romantic composer interested in Eastern spirituality. Largely self-taught, he incorporated Indian modes and quarter tones into his works. Foulds’ World Requiem (1919-1921) blended texts from the Bible and John Bunyan’s Pilgrim Progress with a poem by fifteenth-century Indian mystic Kabir. Foulds moved to India in 1935 but died of cholera four years later.800

Other English composers sympathetic to the Romantic worldview included John Ireland (1879-1962), George Lloyd (1913-1998), and Malcolm Arnold (1921-2006). Each used Romantic technical devices in their compositions though diluted by other influences. Lloyd and Arnold in particular were criticized for the unrestrained emotionalism of their music, an un-English but characteristically Romantic trait; Ireland was more tightly self-controlled but under the spell of Arthur Machen (1863-1947), author of supernatural horror stories, Ireland wrote works illustrating ancient British histories and pagan legends.801 Tracing Romantic sympathies and techniques in these and other composers would demonstrate the wide but subtle spread of Romanticism in England beyond its common association with composers most active before World War I.802

800 Other “exotic” works by Foulds include Three Mantras for Orchestra, Essays in the Modes, Deva-Music (fragments), and Symphony of East and West (lost). Foulds wrote many works while in India, most of which became lost after his death.
801 These include The Forgotten Rite (1913) and Mai-Dun (1921) for orchestra and the piano suite Decorations (1912-13) consisting of The Island Spell, Moonglade, and The Scarlet Ceremonies.
802 The persistence of musical Romanticism in the twentieth century was not limited to England. It remained central in the United States through the works of Howard Hanson (1896-1981), Aaron Copland (1900-1990), and Samuel Barber (1910-1981), though these composers were more influenced by Neo-Classical techniques than their English counterparts. In France Florent Schmitt (1870-1958) and Vincent d’Indy (1851-1931) combined a similar debt to Wagner with an interest in musical exoticism. None of these composers, however, had close ties with the English Romantics; Jean Sibelius remained
Last Words on Romanticism

Historian Paul Fussell linked the aggressive focus on “present pleasures” in 1920s Britain with the loss of connection to the pre-war past: the Great War was “perhaps the last [event] to be conceived as taking place within a seamless, purposeful “history” involving a coherent stream of time running from the past through present to future.”

The English Romantics provide a bridge across this chasm, through the interwar years, and even into the last quarter of the twentieth century, continuity with a past that had not been cut off but whose stream still flows today.
Appendix

*The Raven* by Edgar Allan Poe

Once upon a midnight dreary, while I pondered, weak and weary,
Over many a quaint and curious volume of forgotten lore—
   While I nodded, nearly napping, suddenly there came a tapping,
As of some one gently rapping, rapping at my chamber door.
   "'Tis some visitor," I muttered, "tapping at my chamber door—
Only this and nothing more."

Ah, distinctly I remember it was in the bleak December;
And each separate dying ember wrought its ghost upon the floor.
   Eagerly I wished the morrow;—vainly I had sought to borrow
From my books surcease of sorrow—sorrow for the lost Lenore—
For the rare and radiant maiden whom the angels name Lenore—
   Nameless *here* for evermore.

And the silken, sad, uncertain rustling of each purple curtain
Thrilled me—filled me with fantastic terrors never felt before;
   So that now, to still the beating of my heart, I stood repeating
   "'Tis some visitor entreating entrance at my chamber door—
Some late visitor entreating entrance at my chamber door;—
   This it is and nothing more."

Presently my soul grew stronger; hesitating then no longer,
   "Sir," said I, "or Madam, truly your forgiveness I implore;
But the fact is I was napping, and so gently you came rapping,
   And so faintly you came tapping, tapping at my chamber door,
That I scarce was sure I heard you"—here I opened wide the door;—
   Darkness there and nothing more.

Deep into that darkness peering, long I stood there wondering, fearing,
Doubting, dreaming dreams no mortal ever dared to dream before;
   But the silence was unbroken, and the stillness gave no token,
   And the only word there spoken was the whispered word, "Lenore?"
This I whispered, and an echo murmured back the word, "Lenore!"—
   Merely this and nothing more.

Back into the chamber turning, all my soul within me burning,
Soon again I heard a tapping somewhat louder than before.
   "Surely," said I, "surely that is something at my window lattice;

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804 First published in *The American Review*, under the pseudonym “Quarles,” in February 1845.
Let me see, then, what thereat is, and this mystery explore—
Let my heart be still a moment and this mystery explore;—
'Tis the wind and nothing more!"

Open here I flung the shutter, when, with many a flirt and flutter,
In there stepped a stately Raven of the saintly days of yore;
Not the least obeisance made he; not a minute stopped or stayed he;
But, with mien of lord or lady, perched above my chamber door—
Perched upon a bust of Pallas just above my chamber door—
Perched, and sat, and nothing more.

Then this ebony bird beguiling my sad fancy into smiling,
By the grave and stern decorum of the countenance it wore,
"Though thy crest be shorn and shaven, thou," I said, "art sure no craven,
Ghastly grim and ancient Raven wandering from the Nightly shore—
Tell me what thy lordly name is on the Night’s Plutonian shore!"
Quoth the Raven "Nevermore."

Much I marvelled this ungainly fowl to hear discourse so plainly,
Though its answer little meaning—little relevancy bore;
For we cannot help agreeing that no living human being
Ever yet was blessed with seeing bird above his chamber door—
Bird or beast upon the sculptured bust above his chamber door,
With such name as "Nevermore."

But the Raven, sitting lonely on the placid bust, spoke only
That one word, as if his soul in that one word he did outpour.
Nothing farther then he uttered—not a feather then he fluttered—
Till I scarcely more than muttered “Other friends have flown before—
On the morrow he will leave me, as my Hopes have flown before.”
Then the bird said “Nevermore.”

Startled at the stillness broken by reply so aptly spoken,
“Doubtless,” said I, “what it utters is its only stock and store
Caught from some unhappy master whom unmerciful Disaster
Followed fast and followed faster till his songs one burden bore—
Till the dirges of his Hope that melancholy burden bore
Of ‘Never—nevermore’.

But the Raven still beguiling all my fancy into smiling,
Straight I wheeled a cushioned seat in front of bird, and bust and door;
Then, upon the velvet sinking, I betook myself to linking
Fancy unto fancy, thinking what this ominous bird of yore—
What this grim, ungainly, ghastly, gaunt, and ominous bird of yore
Meant in croaking “Nevermore.”
This I sat engaged in guessing, but no syllable expressing
To the fowl whose fiery eyes now burned into my bosom’s core;
This and more I sat divining, with my head at ease reclining
On the cushion’s velvet lining that the lamp-light gloated o’er,
But whose velvet-violet lining with the lamp-light gloating o’er,
She shall press, ah, nevermore!

Then, methought, the air grew denser, perfumed from an unseen censer
Swung by Seraphim whose foot-falls tinkled on the tufted floor.
  “Wretch,” I cried, “thy God hath lent thee—by these angels he hath sent thee
  Respite—respite and nepenthe from thy memories of Lenore;
  Quaff, oh quaff this kind nepenthe and forget this lost Lenore!”
  Quoth the Raven “Nevermore.”

  “Prophet!” said I, “thing of evil!—prophet still, if bird or devil!—Whether Tempter sent, or whether tempest tossed thee here ashore,
  Desolate yet all undaunted, on this desert land enchanted—
  On this home by Horror haunted—tell me truly, I implore—
  Is there—is there balm in Gilead?—tell me—tell me, I implore!”
  Quoth the Raven “Nevermore.”

  “Prophet!” said I, “thing of evil!—prophet still, if bird or devil!
  By that Heaven that bends above us—by that God we both adore—
  Tell this soul with sorrow laden if, within the distant Aidenn,
  It shall clasp a sainted maiden whom the angels name Lenore—
  Clasp a rare and radiant maiden whom the angels name Lenore.”
  Quoth the Raven “Nevermore.”

  “Be that word our sign of parting, bird or fiend!” I shrieked, upstarting—
  “Get thee back into the tempest and the Night’s Plutonian shore!
  Leave no black plume as a token of that lie thy soul hath spoken!
  Leave my loneliness unbroken!—quit the bust above my door!
  Take thy beak from out my heart, and take thy form from off my door!”
  Quoth the Raven “Nevermore.”

And the Raven, never flitting, still is sitting, still is sitting
On the pallid bust of Pallas just above my chamber door;
  And his eyes have all the seeming of a demon’s that is dreaming,
  And the lamp-light o’er him streaming throws his shadow on the floor;
  And my soul from out that shadow that lies floating on the floor
  Shall be lifted—nevermore!
Ulalume by Edgar Allan Poe

The skies they were ashen and sober;
The leaves they were crisped and sere—
The leaves they were withering and sere;
It was night in the lonesome October
Of my most immemorial year;
It was hard by the dim lake of Auber,
In the misty mid region of Weir—
It was down by the dank tarn of Auber,
In the ghoul-haunted woodland of Weir.

Here once, through an alley Titanic,
Of cypress, I roamed with my Soul—
Of cypress, with Psyche, my Soul.
These were days when my heart was volcanic
As the scoriac rivers that roll—
As the lavas that restlessly roll
Their sulphurous currents down Yaanek
In the ultimate climes of the pole—
That groan as they roll down Mount Yaanek
In the realms of the boreal pole.

Our talk had been serious and sober,
But our thoughts they were palsied and sere—
Our memories were treacherous and sere—
For we knew not the month was October,
And we marked not the night of the year—
(Ah, night of all nights in the year!)
We noted not the dim lake of Auber—
(Though once we had journeyed down here)—
We remembered not the dank tarn of Auber,
Nor the ghoul-haunted woodland of Weir.

And now, as the night was senescent
And star-dials pointed to morn—
As the star-dials hinted of morn—
At the end of our path a liquecent
And nebulous lustre was born,
Out of which a miraculous crescent
Arose with a duplicate horn—
Astarte's bediamonded crescent
Distinct with its duplicate horn.

805 First published anonymously in The American Review in December 1847.
And I said—"She is warmer than Dian:
    She rolls through an ether of sighs—
    She revels in a region of sighs:
She has seen that the tears are not dry on
    These cheeks, where the worm never dies,
And has come past the stars of the Lion
    To point us the path to the skies—
    To the Lethean peace of the skies—
Come up, in despite of the Lion,
    To shine on us with her bright eyes—
Come up through the lair of the Lion,
    With love in her luminous eyes."

But Psyche, uplifting her finger,
    Said—"Sadly this star I mistrust—
    Her pallor I strangely mistrust:—
Oh, hasten! oh, let us not linger!
    Oh, fly!—let us fly!—for we must."
In terror she spoke, letting sink her
    Wings till they trailed in the dust—
In agony sobbed, letting sink her
    Plumes till they trailed in the dust—
Till they sorrowfully trailed in the dust.

I replied—"This is nothing but dreaming:
    Let us on by this tremulous light!
    Let us bathe in this crystalline light!
Its Sybilic splendor is beaming
    With Hope and in Beauty to-night:—
    See!—it flickers up the sky through the night!
Ah, we safely may trust to its gleaming,
    And be sure it will lead us aright—
We safely may trust to a gleaming
    That cannot but guide us aright,
    Since it flickers up to Heaven through the night."

Thus I pacified Psyche and kissed her,
    And tempted her out of her gloom—
    And conquered her scruples and gloom:
And we passed to the end of the vista,
    But were stopped by the door of a tomb—
    By the door of a legended tomb;
And I said—"What is written, sweet sister,
    On the door of this legended tomb?"
She replied—"Ulalume—Ulalume—
'Tis the vault of thy lost Ulalume!"
Then my heart it grew ashen and sober
   As the leaves that were crispèd and sere—
   As the leaves that were withering and sere,
And I cried—"It was surely October
   On this very night of last year
   That I journeyed—I journeyed down here—
   That I brought a dread burden down here—
   On this night of all nights in the year,
   Oh, what demon has tempted me here?
Well I know, now, this dim lake of Auber—
   This misty mid region of Weir—
Well I know, now, this dank tarn of Auber—
   In the ghoul-haunted woodland of Weir."

[Said we, then—the two, then—"Ah, can it
   Have been that the woodlandish ghouls—
   The pitiful, the merciful ghouls—
To bar up our way and to ban it
   From the secret that lies in these wolds—
   From the thing that lies hidden in these wolds—
Had drawn up the spectre of a planet
   From the limbo of lunar souls—
This sinfully scintillant planet
   From the Hell of the planetary souls?"]}

806 This stanza was not printed with the others on the flyleaf of Holbrooke’s published score to Ulalume. The preceding stanza thus became the final lines.
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Vita

Christopher Little was born in Princeton, New Jersey; his family subsequently moved to Sarasota, Florida and Springfield, Missouri. Christopher thus spent his childhood in the former and his teenage years in the latter. He earned a Bachelors of Music degree in Clarinet Performance from Missouri State University in Springfield; when admitted Christopher was awarded a four-year Board of Governors Scholarship. Moving to the Bluegrass region of Kentucky, Christopher earned a Masters of Music in Clarinet Performance at the University of Kentucky, where he was awarded a one-semester non-service fellowship. Christopher has also served as a teaching assistant and worked as a part-time instructor while at the University of Kentucky.

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