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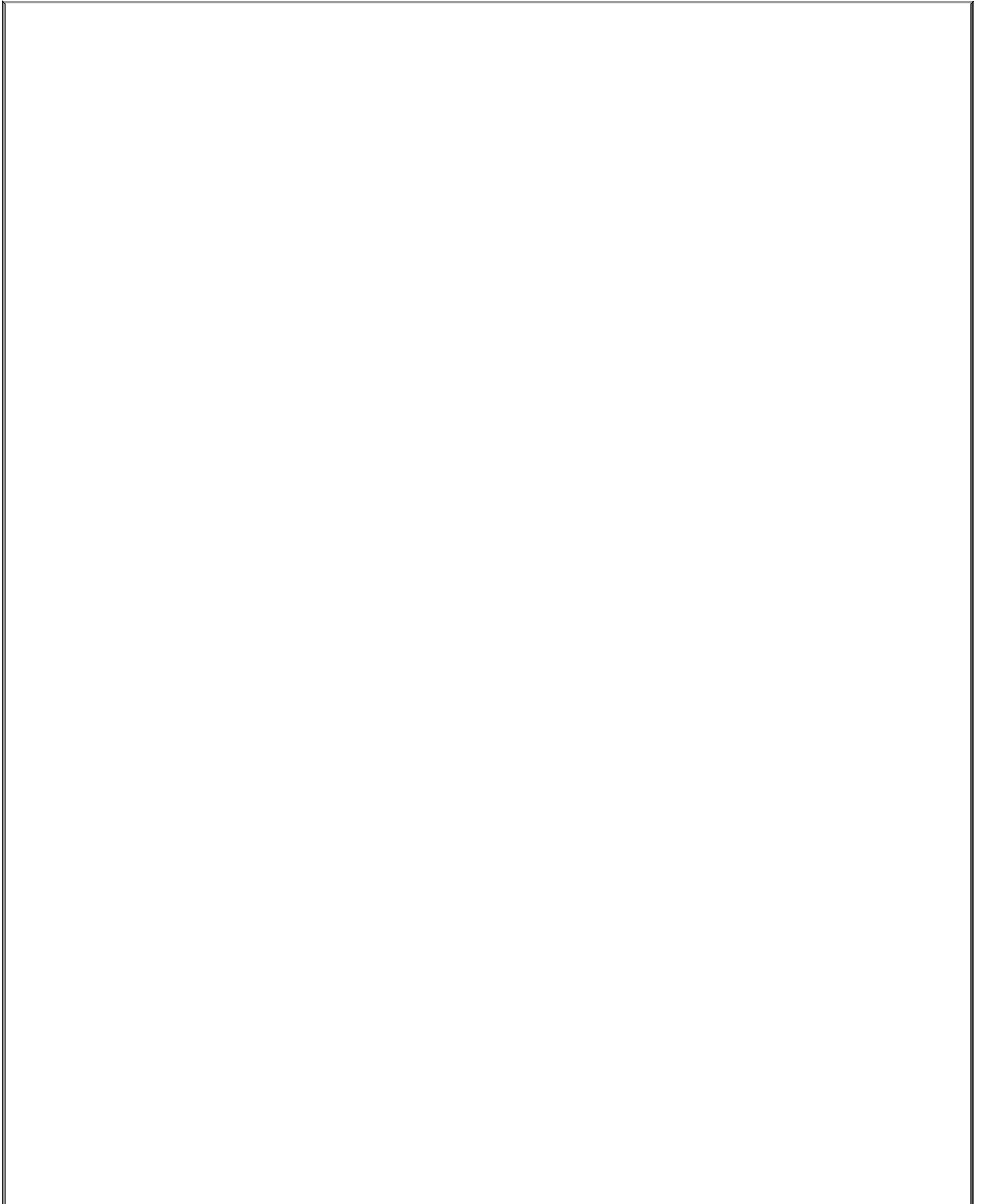
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THE MARY FLEXNER LECTURES ON THE HUMANITIES

II

These lectures were delivered at BRYN MAWR COLLEGE, OCTOBER and NOVEMBER 1932 on a fund established by BERNARD FLEXNER in honour of his sister

NATIONAL MUSIC



NATIONAL MUSIC

By
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PREFACE

These lectures were delivered at Bryn Mawr College, Pennsylvania, under the Mary Flexner Lectureship in October and November 1932.

I have kept the personal form of address to an audience, but have modified many of the sentences. I have omitted a little and added a little. I have also altered the order in some places and have divided the material into nine chapters instead of the original six lectures.

The lectures when originally delivered had the great advantage of being illustrated by Mr. Horace Alwyne, F.R.M.C.M. (Pianoforte) and the Bryn Mawr students choir under the direction of Mr. Ernest Willoughby, A.R.C.M. I wish to express my thanks to Dr. H. C. Colles, Mr. A. H. Fox-Strangways, Mr. Walter Ford and others for advice and help.

R. VAUGHAN WILLIAMS.

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I SHOULD MUSIC BE NATIONAL?

Whistler used to say that it was as ridiculous to talk about national art as national chemistry. In saying this he failed to see the difference between art and science.

Science is the pure pursuit of knowledge and thus knows no boundaries. Art, and especially the art of music, uses knowledge as a means to the evocation of personal experience in terms which will be intelligible to and command the sympathy of others. These others must clearly be primarily those who by race, tradition, and cultural experience are the nearest to him; in fact those of his own nation, or other kind of homogeneous community. In the sister arts of painting and poetry this factor of nationality is more obvious, due in poetry to the Tower of Babel and in painting to the fact that the painter naturally tends to build his visual imagination on what he normally sees around him. But unfortunately for the art of music some misguided thinker, probably first cousin to the man who invented the unfortunate phrase “a good European,” has described music as “the universal language.” It is not even true that music has an universal vocabulary, but even if it were so it is the use of the vocabulary that counts and no one supposes that French and English are the same language because they happen to use twenty-five out of twenty-six of the letters of their alphabet in common. In the same way, in spite of the fact that they have a musical alphabet in common, nobody could mistake Wagner for Verdi or Debussy for Richard Strauss. And, similarly, in spite of wide divergencies of personal style, there is a common factor in the music say of Schumann and Weber.

And this common factor is nationality. As Hubert Parry said in his inaugural address to the Folk Song Society of England, “True Style comes not from the individual but from the products of crowds of fellow-workers who sift and try and try again till they have found the thing that suits their native taste.... Style is ultimately national.”

I am speaking, for the moment, not of the appeal of a work of art, but of its origin. Some music may appeal only in its immediate surroundings; some may be national in its influence and some may transcend these bounds and be world-wide in its acceptance. But we may be quite sure that the composer who tries to be cosmopolitan from the outset will fail, not only with the world at large, but with his own people as well. Was anyone ever more local, or even parochial, than Shakespeare? Even when he follows the fashion and gives his characters Italian names they betray their origin at once by their language and their sentiments.

Possibly you may think this an unfair example, because a poet has not the common vocabulary of the musician, so let me take another example.

One of the three great composers of the world (personally I believe the greatest) was John Sebastian Bach. Here, you may say, is the universal musician if ever there was one; yet no one could be more local, in his origin, his life work, and

his fame for nearly a hundred years after his death, than Bach. He was to outward appearance no more than one of a fraternity of town organists and "town pipers" whose business it was to provide the necessary music for the great occasions in church and city. He never left his native country, seldom even his own city of Leipzig. "World Movements" in art were then unheard of; moreover, it was the tradition of his own country which inspired him. True, he studied eagerly all the music of foreign composers that came his way in order to improve his craft. But is not the work of Bach built up on two great foundations, the organ music of his Teutonic predecessors and the popular hymn tunes of his own people? Who has heard nowadays of the cosmopolitan hero Marchand, except as being the man who ran away from the Court of Dresden to avoid comparison with the local organist Bach?

In what I have up to now said I shall perhaps not have been clear unless I dispose at once of two fallacies. The first of these is that the artist invents for himself alone. No man lives or moves or could do so, even if he wanted to, for himself alone. The actual process of artistic invention, whether it be by voice, verse or brush, presupposes an audience; someone to hear, read or see. Of course the sincere artist cannot deliberately compose what he dislikes. But artistic inspiration is like Dryden's angel which must be brought down from heaven to earth. A work of art is like a theophany which takes different forms to different beholders. In other words, a composer wishes to make himself intelligible. This surely is the prime motive of the act of artistic invention and to be intelligible he must clothe his inspiration in such forms as the circumstances of time, place and subject dictate.

This should come unself-consciously to the artist, but if he consciously tries to express himself in a way which is contrary to his surroundings, and therefore to his own nature, he is evidently being, though perhaps he does not know it, insincere. It is surely as bad to be self-consciously cosmopolitan as self-consciously national.

The other fallacy is that the genius springs from nowhere, defies all rules, acknowledges no musical ancestry and is beholden to no tradition. The first thing we have to realize is that the great men of music close periods; they do not inaugurate them. The pioneer work, the finding of new paths, is left to the smaller men. We can trace the musical genealogy of Beethoven, starting right back from Philipp Emanuel Bach, through Haydn and Mozart, with even such smaller fry as Cimarosa and Cherubini to lay the foundations of the edifice. Is not the mighty river of Wagner but a confluence of the smaller streams, Weber, Marschner and Liszt?

I would define genius as the right man in the right place at the right time. We know, of course, too many instances of the time being ripe and the place being vacant and no man to fill it. But we shall never know of the numbers of "mute and inglorious Miltons" who failed because the place and time were not ready for them. Was not Purcell a genius born before his time? Was not Sullivan a jewel in the wrong setting?

I read the other day in a notice by a responsible music critic that "it only takes one man to write a symphony." Surely this is an entire misconception. A great work of art can only be born under the right surroundings and in the right atmosphere. Bach himself, if I may again quote him as an example, was only able to produce his fugues, his Passions, his cantatas, because there had preceded him generations of smaller composers, specimens of the despised class of "local musicians" who had no other ambition than to provide worthily and with dignity the music required of them: craftsmen perhaps rather than conscious artists. Thus there spread among the quiet and unambitious people of northern Germany a habit, so to speak, of music, the desire to make it part of their daily life, and it was into this atmosphere that John Sebastian Bach was born.

The ideal thing, of course, would be for the whole community to take to music as it takes to language from its youth up, naturally, without conscious thought or specialized training; so that, just as the necessity for expressing our material wants leads us when quite young to perfect our technique of speaking, so our spiritual wants should lead us to perfect our technique of emotional expression and above all that of music. But this is an age of specialization and delegation. We employ specialists to do more and more for us instead of doing it ourselves. We even get other people to play our games for us and look on shivering at a football match, instead of getting out of it for ourselves the healthy exercise and excitement which should surely be its only object.

Specialization may be all very well in purely material things. For example, we cannot make good cigars in England and it is quite right therefore that we should leave the production of that luxury to others and occupy ourselves in making

something which our circumstances and climate permit of. The most rabid Chauvinist has never suggested that Englishmen should be forced to smoke impossible cigars merely because they are made at home. We say quite rightly that those who want that luxury and can afford it must get it from abroad.

Now there are some people who apply this “cigar” theory to the arts and especially to music; to music especially, because music is not one of the “naturally protected” industries like the sister arts of painting and poetry. The “cigar” theory of music is then this—I am speaking of course of my own country England, but I believe it exists equally virulently in yours: that music is not an industry which flourishes naturally in our climate; that, therefore, those who want it and can afford it must hire it from abroad. This idea has been prevalent among us for generations. It began in England, I think, in the early 18th century when the political power got into the hands of the entirely uncultured landed gentry and the practice of art was considered unworthy of a gentleman, from which it followed that you had to hire a “damned foreigner” to do it for you if you wanted it, from which in its turn followed the corollary that the type of music which the foreigner brought with him was the only type worth having and that the very different type of music which was being made at home must necessarily be wrong. These ideas were fostered by the fact that we had a foreign court at St. James’s who apparently did not share the English snobbery about home-made art and so brought the music made in their own homes to England with them. So, the official music, whether it took the form of Mr. Handel to compose an oratorio, or an oboe player in a regimental band, was imported from Germany. This snobbery is equally virulent to this day. The musician indeed is not despised, but it is equally felt that music cannot be something which is native to us and when imported from abroad it must of necessity be better.

Let me take an analogy from architecture. When a stranger arrives in New York he finds imitations of Florentine palaces, replicas of Gothic cathedrals, suggestions of Greek temples, buildings put up before America began to realize that she had an artistic consciousness of her own.

All these things the visitor dismisses without interest and turns to her railway stations, her offices and shops; buildings dictated by the necessity of the case, a truly national style of architecture evolved from national surroundings. Should it not be the same with music?

As long as a country is content to take its music passively there can be no really artistic vitality in the nation. I can only speak from the experience of my own country. In England we are too apt to think of music in terms of the cosmopolitan celebrities of the Queen’s Hall and Covent Garden Opera. These are, so to speak, the crest of the wave, but behind that crest must be the driving force which makes the body of the wave. It is below the surface that we must look for the power which occasionally throws up a Schnabel, a Sibelius, or a Toscanini. What makes me hope for the musical future of any country is not the distinguished names which appear on the front page of the newspapers, but the music that is going on at home, in the schools, and in the local choral societies.

Can we expect garden flowers to grow in soil so barren that the wild flowers cannot exist there? Perhaps one day the supply of international artists will fail us and we shall turn in vain to our own country to supply their places. Will there be any source to supply it from? You remember the story of the *nouveau riche* who bought a plot of land and built a stately home on it, but he found that no amount of money could provide him straightaway with the spreading cedars and immemorial elms and velvet lawns which should be the accompaniment of such a home. Such things can only grow in a soil prepared by years of humble toil.

Hubert Parry in his book, “The Evolution of the Art of Music,” has shown how music like everything else in the world is subject to the laws of evolution, that there is no difference in kind but only in degree between Beethoven and the humblest singer of a folk-song. The principles of artistic beauty, of the relationships of design and expression, are neither trade secrets nor esoteric mysteries revealed to the few; indeed if these principles are to have any meaning to us they must be founded on what is natural to the human being. Perfection of form is equally possible in the most primitive music and in the most elaborate.

The principles which govern the composition of music are, we find, not arbitrary rules, nor as some people apparently think, barriers put up by mediocre practitioners to prevent the young genius from entering the academic grove; they are not the tricks of the trade or even the mysteries of the craft, they are founded on the very nature of human beings. Take,

for example, the principle of repetition as a factor of design: either the cumulative effect of mere reiteration, such as we get in the Trio of the scherzo of Beethoven's Ninth Symphony, or in a cruder form in Ravel's Bolero; or the constant repetition of a ground bass as in Bach's organ Passacaglia or the finale of Brahms's Fourth Symphony. Travellers tell us that the primitive savage as soon as he gets as far as inventing some little rhythmical or melodic pattern will repeat it endlessly. In all these cases we have illustrations of the fundamental principle of emphasis by repetition. 11

After a time the savage will get tired of his little musical phrase and will invent another and often this new phrase will be at a new pitch so as to bring into play as many new notes as possible. Why? Because his throat muscles and his perceptive faculties are wearied by the constant repetition.

Is not this exactly the principle of the second subject of the classical sonata, which is in a key which brings into play as many new sounds as possible? Then we have the principle of symmetry also found in primitive music when the singer, having got tired in turn with his new phrase, harks back to the old one.

And so I could go on showing you how Beethoven is but a later stage in the development of those principles which actuated the primitive Teuton when he desired to make himself artistically intelligible.

The greatest artist belongs inevitably to his country as much as the humblest singer in a remote village—they and all those who come between them are links in the same chain, manifestations on their different levels of the same desire for artistic expression, and, moreover, the same nature of artistic expression. 11

I am quite prepared for the objection that nationalism limits the scope of art, that what we want is the best, from wherever it comes. My objectors will probably quote Tennyson and tell me that "We needs must love the highest when we see it" and that we should educate the young to appreciate this mysterious "highest" from the beginning. Or perhaps they will tell me with Rossini that they know only two kinds of music, good and bad. So perhaps we had better digress here for a few moments and try to find out what good music is, and whether there is such a thing as absolute good music; or even if there is such an absolute good, whether it must not take different forms for different hearers. Myself, I doubt if there is this absolute standard of goodness. I think it will vary with the occasion on which it is performed, with the period at which it was composed and with the nationality of those that listen to it. Let us take examples of each of these—firstly, with regard to the occasion. The Venusberg music from Tannhäuser is good music when it comes at the right dramatic moment in the opera, but it is bad music when it is played on an organ in church. I am sorry to have to tell you that this is not an imaginary experience. A waltz of Johann Strauss is good music in its proper place as an accompaniment to dancing and festivity, but it would be bad music if it were interpolated in the middle of the St. Matthew Passion. And may we not even say that Bach's B minor Mass would be bad music if it were played in a restaurant as an accompaniment to eating and drinking? 11

Secondly, does not the standard of goodness vary with time? What was good for the 15th Century is not necessarily good for the 20th. Surely each new generation requires something different to satisfy its different ideals. Of course there is some music that seems to defy the ravages of time and to speak a new message to each successive generation. But even the greatest music is not eternal. We can still appreciate Bach and Handel or even Palestrina, but Dufay and Dunstable have little more than an historical interest for us now. But they were great men in their day and perhaps the time will come when Bach, Handel, Beethoven, and Wagner will drop out and have no message left for us. Sometimes of course the clock goes round full circle and the 20th century comprehends what had ceased to have any meaning for the 19th. This is the case with the modern revival of Bach after nearly one hundred and fifty years of neglect, or the modern appreciation of Elizabethan madrigals. There may be many composers who have something genuine to say to us for a short time and for that short time their music may surely be classed as good. We all know that when an idiom is new we cannot detect the difference between the really original mind and the mere imitator. But when the idiom passes into the realm of everyday commonplace then and then only we can tell the true from the false. For example, any student at a music school can now reproduce the tricks of Debussy's style, and therefore it is now, and only now, that we can discover whether Debussy had something genuine to say or whether when the secret of his style becomes common property the message of which that style was the vehicle will disappear. 11

Then there is the question of place. Is music that is good music for one country or one community necessarily good music

for another? It is true that the great monuments of music, the Missa Papae Marcelli, or the St. Matthew Passion, or the Ninth Symphony, or Die Meistersinger, have a world wide appeal, but first they must appeal to the people, and in the circumstances where they were created. It is because Palestrina and Verdi are essentially Italian and because Bach, Beethoven and Wagner are essentially German that their message transcends their frontiers. And even so, the St. Matthew Passion, much as it is loved and admired in other countries, must mean much more to the German, who recognizes in it the consummation of all that he learnt from childhood in the great traditional chorales which are his special inheritance. Beethoven has an universal meaning, but to the German, who finds in it that same spirit exemplified in its more homely form in those Volkslieder which he learnt in his childhood, he must also have a specialized meaning. [1

Every composer cannot expect to have a world-wide message, but he may reasonably expect to have a special message for his own people and many young composers make the mistake of imagining they can be universal without at first having been local. Is it not reasonable to suppose that those who share our life, our history, our customs, our climate, even our food, should have some secret to impart to us which the foreign composer, though he be perhaps more imaginative, more powerful, more technically equipped, is not able to give us? This is the secret of the national composer, the secret to which he only has the key, which no foreigner can share with him and which he alone is able to tell to his fellow countrymen. But is he prepared with his secret? Must he not limit himself to a certain extent so as to give his message its full force? For after all it is the millstream forcing its way through narrow channels which gathers strength to turn the water-wheel. As long as composers persist in serving up at second hand the externals of the music of other nations, they must not be surprised if audiences prefer the real Brahms, the real Wagner, the real Debussy, or the real Stravinsky to their pale reflections.

What a composer has to do is to find out the real message he has to convey to the community and say it directly and without equivocation. I know there is a temptation each time a new star appears on the musical horizon to say, “What a fine fellow this is, let us try and do something like this at home,” quite forgetting that the result will not sound at all the same when transplanted from its natural soil. It is all very well to catch at the prophet’s robe, but the mantle of Elijah is apt, like all second-hand clothing, to prove the worst of misfits. How is the composer to find himself? How is he to stimulate his imagination in a way that will lead him to voicing himself and his fellows? I think that composers are much too fond of going to concerts—I am speaking now, of course, of the technically equipped composer. At the concert we hear the finished product. What the artist should be concerned with is the raw material. Have we not all about us forms of musical expression which we can take and purify and raise to the level of great art? Have we not all around us occasions crying out for music? Do not all our great pageants of human beings require music for their full expression? We must cultivate a sense of musical citizenship. Why should not the musician be the servant of the state and build national monuments like the painter, the writer, or the architect? [1

“Come muse, migrate from Greece and Ionia,
Cross out please those immensely overpaid accounts,
That matter of Troy and Achilles’ wrath, and Æneas’, Odysseus’ wanderings,
Placard ‘removed’ and ‘to let’ on the rocks of your snowy Parnassus,
Repeat at Jerusalem, place the notice high on Jaffa’s gate and on Mount Moriah,
The same on the walls of your German, French and Spanish castles, and Italian collections,
For know a better, fresher, busier sphere,
A wide, untried domain awaits, demands you.” [1

Art for art’s sake has never flourished among the English-speaking nations. We are often called inartistic because our art is unconscious. Our drama and poetry have evolved by accident while we thought we were doing something else, and so it will be with our music. The composer must not shut himself up and think about art; he must live with his fellows and make his art an expression of the whole life of the community. If we seek for art we shall not find it. There are very few great composers, but there can be many sincere composers. There is nothing in the world worse than sham good music. There is no form of insincerity more subtle than that which is coupled with great earnestness of purpose and determination to do only the best and the highest, the unconscious insincerity which leads us to build up great designs which we cannot fill and to simulate emotions which we can only experience vicariously. But, you may say, are we to learn nothing from the great masters? Where are our models to come from? Of course we can learn everything from the great masters and one of the great things we can learn from them is their sureness of purpose. When we are sure of our

purpose we can safely follow the advice of St. Paul “to prove all things and to hold to that which is good.” But it is dangerous to go about “proving all things” until you have made up your mind what is good for you. 11

First, then, see your direction clear and then by all means go to Paris, or Berlin, or Peking if you like and study and learn everything that will help you to carry out that purpose.

We have in England today a certain number of composers who have achieved fame. In the older generation Elgar and Parry, among those of middle age Holst and Bax, and of the quite young Walton and Lambert. All these served their apprenticeship at home. There are several others who thought that their own country was not good enough for them and went off in the early stages to become little Germans or little Frenchmen. Their names I will not give to you because they are unknown even to their fellow countrymen.

I am told that when grape vines were first cultivated in California the vineyard masters used to try the experiment of importing plants from France or Italy and setting them in their own soil. The result was that the grapes acquired a peculiar individual flavour, so strong was the influence of the soil in which they were planted. I think I need hardly draw the moral of this, namely, that if the roots of your art are firmly planted in your own soil and that soil has anything individual to give you, you may still gain the whole world and not lose your own souls.

12

II SOME TENTATIVE IDEAS ON THE ORIGINS OF MUSIC

In considering the national aspects of music we ought to think of what causes our inspiration and also to whom it is to be addressed, that is to say, how far should the origins of music be national, how far should the meaning of music be national?

And perhaps before we go on to this we ought to diverge a little bit and try and find out why it is we want music at all in our lives.

What is the origin of that impulse to self-expression by means of sound? We could possibly trace back painting, poetry and architecture to an utilitarian basis. I am not saying that this is so, but the argument can be put forward. Now the great glory of music to my mind is that it is absolutely useless. The painter is bound by the same medium whether he is painting a great landscape or whether he is touching up the weather-stains on his front gate. Language is the medium both of “Paradise Lost” and of an auctioneer’s catalogue. But music subserves no utilitarian purpose; it is the vehicle of emotional expression and nothing else.

Why then do we want music? Hubert Parry in his “Art of Music” writes, “It is the intensity of the pleasure or interest the artist feels in what is actually present to his imagination that drives him to utterance. The instinct of utterance makes it a necessity to find terms which will be understood by other beings.” 12

Let us try to find out what is the exact process of the invention and making of music.

Music is only made when actual musical sounds are produced, and here I would emphasize very strongly that the black dots which we see printed on a piece of paper are not music; they are simply a rather clumsy device invented by composers; a series of conventional signs to show to those who are not within hearing distance how they may with the necessary means at their command reproduce the sounds imagined by the composer.

A sheet of printed music is like a map where you see a series of conventional signs, by which the skilled map reader will know that the road he is on will go north or south, that at one moment he will go up a steep hill and that at another he will cross a river by a bridge. That this town has a church, and that that village has an inn. Or to use another simile, heard music has the same relation to the printed notes as a railway journey has to a time table. But the printed notes are no more music than the map is the country which it represents or the time table the journey which it indicates.

We may imagine that in primitive times—and indeed it still happens when someone sits down at the pianoforte and improvises—the invention and production of sound may have been simultaneous, that there was no differentiation between the performer and the composer. But gradually specialization must have set in; those who invented music became separated from those who performed it, though of course till the invention of writing the man who invented a tune had to sing it or play it himself in order to communicate it to others. Those others, if they were incapable of inventing anything for themselves, but were desirous, as I believe everyone is, of artistic self-expression, would learn that tune and sing it and thus the differentiation between composer and performer came about. 12

What is the whole process, starting with the initial invention of music and leading on to the final stage when the sounds imagined by the composer are actually heard on those instruments or voices for which he designed them? What should be the object which the performer has in view when he translates these imaginings into actual sound? And what should be the object of the composer when he invents music?

We all, whether we are artists or not, experience moments when we want to get outside the limitations of ordinary life, when we see dimly a vision of something beyond. These moments affect us in different ways. Some people under their influence want to do a great or a kind or an heroic deed; some people want to go and kill something or fight somebody; some people go and play a game or just walk it off; but those whom we call artists find the desire to create beauty irresistible. For painters it takes the form of idealizing nature; for architects the beauty of solid form; for poets the magic of ordered words, and for composers the magic of ordered sound. Now it is not enough to feel these things; the artist wants to communicate them as well, to crystallize these vague imaginings into, as I have already said, ordered sound, clear and intelligible; and to do this he must make a synthesis between the thing to be expressed and the means of expression. Thus there has arisen the technical side of music. Musical instruments have been devised which will translate these ideas in the most sensitive manner possible; artists spend years discovering how to get the best results from these instruments and composers, of course, have to study how to translate their ideas into the terms of the means at their command. And first of all the composer has, as I have said, to devise a series of dots and dashes which will explain, it must be confessed, in a very inadequate manner, the pitch, the duration, the intensity, and to a certain extent the quality of the sounds he wishes the performer to produce. The composer starts with a vision and ends with a series of black dots. The performer's process is exactly the reverse; he starts with the black dots and from these has to work back to the composer's vision. First he must find out the sounds that these black dots represent and the quicker he can get over this process the sooner he will be able to get on to something more important. Therefore though a good sight reader is not necessarily a good musician, it is very useful for a musician to be a good sight reader. Then the performer has to learn how best to make these sounds. Here he is partly dependent, of course, on the instrument maker, but it is here that vocal and instrumental technique have their use. Then he must learn to view any series of these black dots both as a whole and in detail and to discover the relation of the parts to the whole, and it is under this heading that I would place such things as phrasing, sense of form and climax—what we generically call musicianship. When he has mastered these he is ready to start and reproduce the composer's vision. Then, and then only, is he in a position to find out whether there is any vision to reproduce. 12

Thus we come round full circle: the origin of inspiration and its final fruition should be one and the same thing.

How are we to find out whether music as a whole, and especially the music of our own country, has a national basis? Or perhaps we may go further still and ask ourselves whether there is any sanction for the art of music at all, and if so, how we are to discover it. I suppose that most of you to whom I am speaking are studying music—some of you perhaps are teaching it and you find that at present your time is, quite rightly, largely occupied with the technical aspect of music, with the means rather than with the end. Do you not ask yourselves sometimes what is the end? Or perhaps I should put it better by saying, what is the beginning? You can hardly expect a gardener to be able to cultivate beautiful flowers in a soil which is so barren that no wild flowers will grow there. Must we not presuppose that there must be wild flowers of music before we occupy ourselves with our hydrangeas and Gloire de Dijon roses? Before the student undertakes the task of technical training he should satisfy himself that his art is something inborn in man. He should try and imagine whether the absolutely unsophisticated though naturally musical man—one who has no learning and no contact with learning, one who cannot read or write and thus repeat anything stereotyped by others, one who is untravelled and therefore self-dependent for his inspiration, one in fact whose artistic utterance will be entirely 12

spontaneous and unself-conscious—whether such a one would be able to invent any form of music, and if so whether it would be at all like the music which we admire. “Ought not I,” he may say, “to expect it to illustrate in embryonic form those principles which I find in the music of the great masters? Unless I can imagine such a man surely this great art of music can be nothing but a house with no foundation, a sort of fool’s paradise, a mirage which will disappear before the first touch of real life.”

In fact if we did not know from actual experience that there was such a thing as folk-song we should have to imagine it theoretically.

But we do find the answer to this enquiry in real fact. The theoretical folk-singer has been discovered to be an actuality. We really do find these unlettered, unsophisticated and untravelled people who make music which is often beautiful in itself and has in it the germs of great art. 12

Some people express surprise and even polite disbelief in the idea that people who have never seen a pianoforte or had any harmony lessons and do not even know what a dominant or consecutive 5th is should be able to invent beautiful music: they either shut their ears and declare that it is not really beautiful but “only sounds so,” or they declare that these singers must have “heard it somewhere.” Perhaps you know the story of the missionary who, hearing some savages



chanting this rhythm, which after all is a very primitive one and very likely to be found among unsophisticated people, expressed his delight in discovering, as he thought, that Handel’s “Hallelujah Chorus” had penetrated to even these benighted regions. Or to give an example which came under my own notice. A distinguished English musician could not be persuaded to believe that a countryman who could not even read could possibly sing “correctly” in the Dorian mode. He might as well have expressed surprise with M. Jourdain at being able to speak prose.

The truth is, of course, that these scientific expressions are not arbitrary rules, but are explanations of phenomena. The modal system, for example, is simply a tabulation by scientists of the various methods in which it is natural for people to sing. Again, nobody invented sonata form; it is merely a theoretical explanation of the mould into which people’s musical thoughts have naturally flowed. Therefore far from expressing surprise at a folk-song being beautiful we ought to be surprised if it were not so, for otherwise we might doubt the authenticity of our whole canon of musical beauty. 13

Nevertheless the notion that folk-music is a degenerate version of what we call composed music dies hard, so perhaps I had better say a little more about it. If this were really so, if folk-song were only half-remembered relics of the composed music of past centuries, should we not be able to settle the matter by going to our museums and looking through the old printed music? We shall find there nothing remotely resembling the traditional song of our country except, of course, such things as the deliberate transcriptions of the popular melodies in the “Fitzwilliam Virginal Book.”

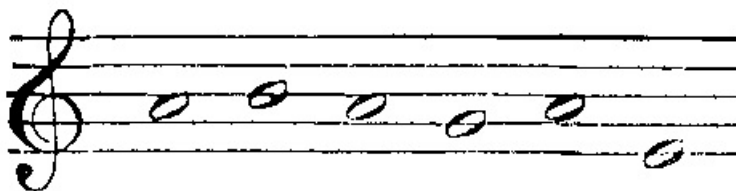
I cannot see why it should not be equally natural to presuppose an aptitude for singing in the natural man as an aptitude for speaking; indeed, singing of a primitive kind may be supposed to come before speaking, just as emotion is something more primitive than thought, and the indeterminate howls which travellers tell us savages make to accompany dances or ceremonies in which they are emotionally excited may be supposed to be the beginnings of music. However, the difference between real music and mere sound depends on the fact of definitely sustained notes with definite relations to each other. Some people hold that this definition of sounds can only have arisen after the invention of the pipe or some other primitive musical instrument; but I shall be able to give you personal evidence to the contrary. I have no doubt myself that song is the beginning of music and that purely instrumental music is a later development. Song, then, I believe, is nothing less than speech charged with emotion. The German words *sagen* and *singen* were in early times interchangeable and to this day a country singer will speak of “telling” you a song, not of singing it. Indeed the folk-singer (of course I am speaking of England only, the only place of which I have personal knowledge), the English folk-singer, seems unable to dissociate words and tune: if he has forgotten the words of a song he is very seldom able to hum you the tune and if you in your turn were to sing the words he knew to a different tune he would be satisfied that you knew the song, and I believe the same is true of dance tunes. A country musician, so Cecil Sharp relates, took it for 13

granted that when his hearers had got the tune of a dance they would be able to perform the dance as well.

The personal evidence I will give you is as follows. I was once listening to an open air preacher. He started his sermon in a speaking voice, but as he grew more excited the sounds gradually became defined, first one definite note, then two, and finally a little group of five notes.

The notes being *a, b, a, g, a*, with an occasional drop down to *e*.

[3



[play]

It seemed that I had witnessed the change from speech to song in actual process. The increased emotional excitement had produced two results, definition and the desire for a decorative pattern. Perhaps I went too far in calling this song, perhaps I should call it the raw material of song. I will now give you examples of actual folk-songs built on this very group of three notes.

(1) "Down in yon forest" (1st phrase)



[play]

(2) "Bushes and Briars" (1st phrase)



[play]

These are what we call the stock phrases of folk-song which play an important part in folk-music just as the stock verbal phrase plays an important part in ballad poetry. There is a good practical reason for these stock phrases. Any of you who are writers, whether you are writing a magazine article or a symphony, know that the great difficulty is how to start, and the stock phrase solved this difficulty with the ballad maker—so nine out of ten ballads start with some common phrase such as "As I walked out" or "It is of a" or "Come all you" and so on. In the same way we find a common opening to many folk-tunes, and this opening would naturally be a variant of some musical formula which comes naturally to the human voice. Now let us examine this little phrase again. Can not we suppose that our reciter in still greater moments of excitement will feel inclined to add to and embellish his little group of notes? Embellishment, we all know, is a natural consequence of heightened emotion, and it is a good criterion of the more ornamental phrases in a composer's work to make up our minds whether they are the result of an emotional impulse or whether they are meaningless ornament. Take, for example, the cadenza-like passages in the slow movement of Brahms' Clarinet Quintet

[3

and compare them with the flourishes, say, in a Vieuxtemps Concerto, or take the melismata charged with feeling of which Bach was so fond and compare them with the meaningless coloratura of his contemporary Italian opera composers.

Increased emotional excitement leads to increase of ornament so that our original phrase might eventually grow perhaps into this;



[\[play\]](#)

which is as a matter of fact an actual phrase out of a known folk-song. Here we have what we can call a complete musical phrase.

The business of the ballad singer is to fit his music to the pattern of a rhymed verse, usually a four-line stanza with some simple scheme of rhyme; so our melodic phrase has somehow to be developed to cover the whole ground. I assume for the sake of simplicity a single invention and will not discuss here the possibility of communal invention. If the singer is pleased with his initial little bit of melody he will feel inclined to repeat it. Repetition is one of the fundamentals of artistic intelligibility. Hubert Parry in his chapter on primitive music gives examples of savage music which consists of nothing else but a simple melodic phrase repeated over and over again. But supposing our ballad singer finds that the verse he has to recite is like the dream of Bottom the weaver in 8's and 6's. The music which he has adapted to the first line will not suit the second so something new will have to grow out of the old to fit the shortened number of syllables. This gives us a new fundamental of musical structure, that of contrast. When he gets to the third line he finds 8 syllables again and to his great delight he finds he can use his first music that had pleased him so once more. Here we have a very primitive example of the formula *A.B.A.* which in an infinite variety of forms may be said to govern the whole of musical structure, whether we look for it in a simple ballad, in the Ninth Symphony, or in the Prelude to "Tristan." Let us analyse an actual example, "Searching for Lambs," incidentally one of the most beautiful of the English folk-songs.

The words of the first stanza, which after all will largely determine the form of the music, are as follows:

"As I went out one May morning
One May morning betime
I met a maid from home had strayed
Just as the sun did shine."

The tune starts off with the elaborate form of our stock phrase (*A*). Then comes a short line; so a new phrase has to grow out of the old—a repetition in fact a 3rd higher with a major 3rd this time and an indeterminate ending, for we must not have any feeling of finality yet (*B*).

Now for the third line. You might expect a mere repetition of the first. But the third line of the words is not an exact metrical repetition of the first and moreover has a mid-rhyme. So some variety in the music is suggested. We start off with a repetition of line 2 which flows in a free sequence (suggesting by its parallelism the mid-rhyme (*C*)).

Now for the last line. Here we obviously need some allusion to the beginning to clench the whole. So the sequential phrase is merely carried on, and behold, we have our initial phrase once more complete, growing naturally out of the sequential phrase and, to complete all, 3 notes of Coda added to make up the line (*D*).

What a wealth of unconscious art in so simple a tune! All the principles of great art are here exemplified: unity, variety, symmetry, development, continuity.

derived from A

A B

derived from B a repetition of A

C D

[play]

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I will give you one more example of the growth of a tune from the same root idea. This time the 3rd is major and the embellishing notes are consequently differently placed.

I need not analyse this tune in detail, but the same principles apply. The song is "The Water is Wide."

"THE WATER IS WIDE"

[play]

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III

THE FOLK-SONG

We have now traced our course from the excited speech phrase to the complete song stanza. But we took no account of the element of rhythm.

The preacher of whom I told you, when he got excited established a definite relationship between the pitch of the notes he used but not between their duration, and it is this definite relationship between the duration of successive musical sounds which we call rhythm. Melody can exist apart from rhythm just as rhythm can exist apart from melody. But song can only be said to come into being when the two are in combination. Rhythm, I suppose, grows out of the dance, or out of the various bodily actions which we do in our daily life such as walking, or pulling on a rope. And even in speech we find that, unconsciously, if we want to be very emphatic or to impress something strongly on our memory we introduce a rhythmical pattern into what we are saying.

Now in primitive times before there were newspapers to tell us the news, history books to teach us the past, and novels to excite our imagination, all these things had to be done by the ballad singer who naturally had to do it all from memory. To this end he cast what he had to tell into a metrical form and thus the ballad stanza arose. As a further aid to memory and to add to the emotional value of what he had to say he added musical notes to his words, and it is from this that the ordinary folk-tune of four strains arose. Folk music, you must always remember, is an applied art. The idea of art for art's sake has happily no place in the primitive consciousness. I have already told you how the country singer is unable to dissociate the words and tune of a ballad. Song then was to him the obvious means of giving a pattern to his words. But this pattern is influenced by another form of applied music, that of the dance, the dance in which the alternation of strong and weak accents and precision of time are essential. Now let us take the dance tune "Goddesses" as an example of the rhythmical element applied to our initial formula. You will notice that the form is less subtle than in the song tunes. Regularity of pattern is essential to accompany the moving feet of the dancers.

DANCE TUNE "GODDESSES"



[\[play\]](#)

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Next let me give you an example of a tune with very much the same melodic formula in which the rhythmical pattern is entirely governed by the words, a carol tune, "The Holy Well."



[\[play\]](#)

I have now tried to describe to you the folk-song, but before I go any further I had better give you some actual examples of what I mean by folk-song, and try and persuade you that I am telling you not of something clownish and boorish, not even something inchoate, not of the half forgotten reminiscences of fashionable music mouthed by toothless old men and women, not of something archaic, not of mere “museum pieces,” but of an art which grows straight out of the needs of a people and for which a fitting and perfect form, albeit on a small scale, has been found by those people; an art which is indigenous and owes nothing to anything outside itself, and above all an art which to us today has something to say—a true art which has beauty and vitality now in the twentieth century. Let us take a few typical examples of English folk-song: “The Cuckoo,” “My Bonny Boy,” “A Sailor From the Sea,” or “It’s a Rose-bud in June.”

Can we not truly say of these as Gilbert Murray says of that great national literature of the Bible and Homer, “They have behind them not the imagination of one great poet, but the accumulated emotion, one may almost say, of the many successive generations who have read and learned and themselves afresh re-created the old majesty and loveliness. . . There is in them, as it were, the spiritual life-blood of a people.” 14

A folk-song is at its best a supreme work of art, but it does not say all that is to be said in music; it is limited in its scope and this for various reasons.

(1) It is purely intuitive, not calculated. (2) It is purely oral, therefore the eye does not help the ear and, prodigious though the folk-singer’s memory is, owing to the very fact that it has not been atrophied by reading, it must be limited by the span of what both the singer and hearer can keep in their minds at one stretch. (3) It is applied music, applied either to the words of the ballad or the figure of the dance. (4) Folk-music, at all events European folk-music, and I believe it is true of all genuine folk-music, is purely melodic. These limitations are not without corresponding advantages. (a) The folk-singer, being un-selfconscious and unsophisticated and bound by no prejudices or musical etiquette, is absolutely free in his rhythmical figures. If he has only five syllables to which to sing notes and those syllables are of equal stress he makes an unit or what in written music we should call a bar of five beats (to put it into the language of scientific music). If he is singing normally in a metre of 6/8 and he wants to dwell on one particular word he lengthens that particular phrase to a metre of 9 beats. If he is accompanying a dance and the steps of the dance demand it he will lengthen out the notes to just the number of long steps, regardless of the feelings of the poor collector who is afterwards going to come and try and reduce his careless rapture to terms of bars, time signatures, crotchets and quavers. We are apt to imagine that bars of five and seven, irregular bar-lengths and so on are the privilege of the modernist composer: he is probably only working back to the freedom enjoyed by his ancestor. (b) To pack all one has to say into a tune of some sixteen bars is a very different proposition from spreading oneself out into a symphony or grand opera, especially when these sixteen bars have to be repeated over and over again for a ballad of some twenty verses. We have often experienced music which at first seemed attractive but of which we wearied after repetition. The essence of a good folk-tune is that it does not show its full quality till it has been repeated several times, and I think a great deal of the false estimates of folk-melodies which are current are due to the fact that they are read through once, or possibly hummed 14

through without their words, or worse still strummed through once on the piano and not subjected to the only fair test, that of being sung through with their words.

And now as regards what I may call the vertical limitation of the folk-song; the fact that it is purely melodic. Modern music has so accustomed us to harmony that we find it difficult to realize that there can be such a thing as pure melody built up without any reference to harmony. It is true of course that we all whistle and hum tunes without harmony; nevertheless we are all the time unconsciously imagining an harmonic basis. Many of our most popular tunes would be meaningless unless in the back of our minds we supplied their harmonies. 14

Harmonic music, at all events during the 18th and 19th Centuries, presupposed the existence of two modes only, the major and the minor, with all their harmonic implications of the perfect cadence, the half close, the leading note and so on, so as to give points of repose, points of departure and the like. But in purely melodic music an entirely new set of considerations come into being. The major and minor modes hardly ever appear in true melodic music, but it must be referred to other systems, chiefly the Dorian mode, the Mixolydian mode and the Ionian mode, this last having of course the same intervals as the major mode, but otherwise quite distinct.

I do not propose to give you a disquisition on the modes; that would be quite outside the scope of these lectures, but I want to say just two things.

The epithet “ecclesiastical” which has been applied to these modes has led to unfortunate misunderstandings. Because a folk-song can be referred to one of these “ecclesiastical” modes it is often imagined that folk-song derives from church music. I believe that it is just the other way round, namely, that church music derives from folk-music. I shall have more to say about this in a subsequent chapter. 14

The only thing which the plain-song of the church and the folk-song of the people have now in common is that they can sometimes be referred to the same modal system because they are both purely melodic. It is surely hard to imagine that such a melody as “The Cobbler” can be derived from, say, “Jesu Dulcis Memoria” because they are both in the Dorian mode. You might as well say that the “Preislied” derives from the finale of the Fifth Symphony because they are both in C Major.

“JESU DULCIS MEMORIA”



[\[play\]](#)

“THE COBBLER”



[\[play\]](#)

The other point I want to make is this. It is not correct to refer to the modes as “old,” or of pure modal harmony as “archaic.” Real archaic harmony is never modal. When harmony grew out of the Organum, composers found that they could not work in the modes with their new-found harmonic scheme and they began to alter the modal melodies to give them the necessary intervals with which they could work. The harmony of Palestrina and his contemporaries is therefore not purely modal; this was reserved for the 19th century. As I have said, folk-song is pure melody without an harmonic substructure, but when modal melodies began to swim into the ken of composers, the first being probably the nationalists of 19th Century Russia, they began to suggest to them all sorts of harmonic implications. Up to that time harmony was always supposed to be considered as being built up from the bass. The Russian nationalists, perhaps owing to the fact that they were half amateur, evidently preferred to build their harmony from the melody downwards. We find this neo-modal harmony prevalent throughout Moussorgsky’s “Boris.” The lead was taken up by Debussy and the French contemporaries, some of the modern Italians and the modern English. It seems however to have passed by the Germans, possibly because their folk-songs have become tinged with harmonic considerations. Debussy’s “Sarabande” is a good example of pure modal harmony, as are the cadences in the minuet from Ravel’s “Sonatine.” I find it difficult to see what there is “archaic” about these. If you look at real archaic harmony, going back even as far as Josquin and Dunstable, you will find nothing like it. 14

Some people are much worried about what they call the “cult of archaism.” They are upset at all this “borrowing” which is going on among composers and they are filled with indignation, but as far as I can make out on moral rather than on aesthetic grounds.

In an article called “The Cult of Archaism” a recent writer says, “In the writing of synthetic folk-music we have to deal with a form of equivocation which is probably quite as serious, being more insidious than the wholesale acquisition of folk-melody. It is reasoned apparently that though they may be musically unworthy to borrow on an extensive scale, the situation can be redeemed by writing artificial folk-melodies and presenting them as original themes. A student possessing the most elementary inventive ability can effect work of that kind without limit; it requires practically no skill and very little imagination.”

This seems to me to be nothing more or less than a protest by the “trade,” and the “trade” as you know always adopt a high moral attitude when their profits are being interfered with. A brewer will be extremely annoyed if, when he has spent time, money and skill on producing beer, he finds that someone has set up a free water tap just outside his house. So, when the members of the musical trade who have learnt how to construct melodies at great expense with all the 14

latest devices and improvements find a composer writing a tune, not based on all these expensive models but built up on the natural music of his own people, they of course feel vexed: the fellow is not playing the game, in fact he is a blackleg. Which method results in the most beautiful music is not allowed to affect the issue. It is merely a trade question, a matter in going outside the regulations of the guild.

Contrast with this a recent writer on Moussorgsky: "His invented themes recall those of popular art and it is to the phenomenon of 'integration' that he owes his appealing originality." Or as Mr. Kurt Schindler recently said about the same composer, "It all depends on whether it is done with love."

"Integration" and "love." These are the two key words. The composer must love the tunes of his own country and they must become an integral part of himself. There are, of course, hangers-on of the folk-song movement who want to be "in the swim" and think they can do so by occasionally superimposing a modal cadence, or what they imagine to be a country dance rhythm, on to their cosmopolitan style compounded of every composer from Wagner to Stravinsky. These people, of course, have sinned against the light: whether they are also morally reprehensible does not seem to me to matter.

At the risk of wearying you I want to repeat that originality is not mere novelty. In the article I have already quoted Haydn is referred to as occasionally not taking the trouble to say something of his own. And is the same true of Beethoven when he used a theme from Mozart for his Eroica Symphony? A composer at white heat of invention does indeed not "trouble to say something of his own"; he knows instinctively what is the inevitable theme for his purpose. Music does not grow out of nothing, one idea leads to another and the test of each idea is, not whether it is "original" but whether it is inevitable. 14

I should like to quote you the following lately written in the *London Mercury*: "The best composers store up half-fledged ideas in the works of others and make use of them to build up perfect edifices which take on the character of their maker because they are ideas which appeal to that special mind." 15

IV THE EVOLUTION OF THE FOLK-SONG

The fact that folk-music is entirely oral and is independent of writing or print has important and far-reaching results. Scholars are too apt to mistrust memory and to pin their faith on what is written. They little realize how reading and writing have destroyed our memory. Cecil Sharp gives amazing examples from his own experience of the power of memory among those who cannot read or write. The scholars look upon all traditional versions of a poem or song as being necessarily "corrupt"—as a matter of fact corruptions are much more likely to creep in in the written word than in the spoken. Any alteration in a written copy is likely to be due to carelessness or ignorance whereas when we do find variations in versions of traditional words and music these are as often as not deliberate improvements on the part of later reciters or singers.

There is no "original" in traditional art, and there is no particular virtue in the earliest known version. Later versions are as likely as not developments and not corruptions.

There is a well known saying of the folk-lorist Grimm that "a folk-song composes itself." Others replied to this with the common-sense view that in the words of our English critic I have already quoted with regard to the symphony, "It only takes one man to make a folk-song." Böhme, in the Introduction to his "Alt-deutsches Liederbuch," says, "First of all one man sings a song, then others sing it after him, changing what they do not like." In these words we have the clue to the evolution of the folk-song. Let me quote you also from Allingham's "Ballad Book." "The ballads owe no little of their merit to the countless riddlings, siftings, shiftings, omissions and additions of innumerable reciters. The lucky changes hold, the stupid ones fall aside. Thus with some effective fable, story, or incident for its soul and taking form from a maker who knew his business, the ballad glides from generation to generation and fits itself more and more to the brain and ear of its proper audience." 15

According to Gilbert Murray even a written book could be ascribed in primitive times to a communal authorship. Thus, the “Iliad” and the “Odyssey” are both the products of a long process of development.

It is interesting to note that almost up to the time of the invention of printing more trust was placed in the spoken than the written word. The Greek word Logos means a living thing, the spoken word, not the vague scratchings which in early times served for writing. Even in A.D. 135 it was possible for a historian to say, “I did not think I could get so much profit from the contents of books as from the utterings of the living and abiding voice.” 15

Compare this with what we now realize of the strength and accuracy of oral tradition.

The book, as Professor Murray says, “must needs grow as its people grew. As it became part of the people’s tradition, a thing handed down from antiquity and half sacred, it had a great normal claim on each new generation of hearers. They are ready to accept it with admiration, with reverence, with enjoyment, provided only that it continued to make some sort of tolerable terms with their tastes.... The book became a thing of tradition and grew with the ages.”

Thus you see it is possible to ascribe communal authorship even to a book. To quote Professor Murray once again —“The ‘Iliad’ and ‘Odyssey’ represent not the independent invention of one man, but the ever-moving tradition of many generations of men.” If this be true of the book, how much more so of purely oral music and poetry.

Cecil Sharp, in his book on English folk-song, argues strongly in favour of the communal authorship of traditional music and poetry, but it must be noted that he does not claim a communal *origin*. He writes, “The folk-song must have had a beginning and that beginning must have been the work of an individual. Common sense compels us to assume this much, otherwise we should have to predicate a communal utterance that was at once simultaneous and unanimous. Whether 15 or not the individual in question can be called the author is another matter altogether. Probably not, because the continual habit of ‘changing what they do not like’ must in course of time ultimately amount to the transference of the authorship from the individual to the community.”

However, though the case for communal origin cannot be proved yet I do not see how it can be disproved. No one, so far as I know, insists on the individual invention of the common words of our language and travellers tell us of musical phrases emanating from excited crowds of people spontaneously and simultaneously.

But I will grant for the sake of argument that the separate phrases of any folk-song you may like to name were invented by some individual. I will not go further than that because the “skilled ballad-maker” of Halliwell could put musical phrases together to form a tune just as he could put lines of poetry together to form a ballad, and I have already shown you how certain stock phrases, some of which I have quoted, appear over and over again in folk-tunes, just as the stock phrases “as I walked out,” “lily-white hand” and so on, appear over and over again in ballad poetry. But would it be right to call the ballad-maker who has strung these phrases together so skillfully into a tune the author of that tune? We will take it, however, for granted that a folk-singer has invented a whole tune just as Schubert invented a whole tune. When Schubert invented a tune he made it known to his fellow-men by writing it down; the primitive folk-singer 15 could only make his invention known by singing it over to his hearers.

You will say, if that is all the difference between a composed song and a folk-song there is not much to choose between them. But it is on this apparently small difference that the whole question of individual as against communal authorship depends. If you hear two or three singers sing the same song—say by Schubert—they each will show slight differences in what we call “interpretation” according to their various temperaments, but these differences can never become very wide because we are continually referring back to the printed copy. But supposing there was no printed copy, supposing three of you whom I will call A, B and C learnt this Schubert song, not from the printed copy, but from the individual performances of the three singers I have imagined and whom I will call D, E and F; that is to say, A learnt the song from D, B learnt it from E and C learnt it from F and then you three, A, B and C, sang it to each other, adding of course your own individual predilections—would there not be already a very wide margin of difference?

Let me give you a homely example. There used to be an army exercise called “messages” in which the men were ranged in a row and an officer gave a verbal message to the first man who passed it on to the second, and so on to the end of the

row; and the man at the end of the row had to report to the officer the message as he received it. Now you will understand that the message often came out at the end very different from what it went in at the beginning, and this in spite of the fact that each man was trying to be as accurate as possible. 15

Now this is what happens in the case of the folk-song, with this added factor which makes for divergence—the need for accuracy has disappeared. The second singer who receives the song from the first is at liberty, in the words of Böhme, to “change what he does not like.”

This then is the evolution of the folk-song. One man invents a tune. (I repeat that I grant this much only for the sake of argument.) He sings it to his neighbours and his children. After he is dead the next generation carry it on. Perhaps by this time a new set of words have appeared in a different metre for which no tune is available. What more natural than to adapt some already existing tune to the new words? Now where will that tune be after three or four generations? There will indeed by that time not be one tune but many quite distinct tunes, nevertheless, but all traceable to the parent stem.

Now let us return a minute to our military “messages.” It would often happen, of course, that the message in the course of transmission became hopelessly altered and indeed became nonsense when finally delivered. You may say, is not this the same with the folk-song? Are you not describing a process of corruption and disintegration rather than of growth and evolution? Let us remind ourselves once again that the folk-song only lives by oral transmission, that if it fails to be passed from mouth to mouth it ceases to exist. Now to go back once more to our soldiers. It might happen that by the time it reached the middle of the line the message had already become nonsense, but the soldier’s duty, as you know, is not to reason why, but to pass on what he heard, whatever he might think of its quality. But a folk-singer is a free agent, there is no necessity for him to pass on what he does not care about. Let us suppose an example. John Smith sings a song to two other men, William Brown and Henry Jones. William Brown is a real artist and sees possibilities in the tune and adds little touches to it that give it an added beauty. Henry Jones is a stupid fellow and forgets the best part of the tune and has to make it up the best he can, or he leaves out just that bit that gave the tune its individuality. Now what will happen? William Brown’s version will live from generation to generation while Henry Jones’ will die with him. So you see that the evolution of the folk-song is a real process of natural selection and survival of the fittest. 15

Please forgive me if I return for a fourth time to our row of soldiers. Who is the author of the message in its final form as reported by the last soldier? Not he, obviously, because he was only repeating what he heard with possibly a few unconscious alterations. Neither is the officer who invented the original message, because we are supposing that its final form is only the same in outline and varies much in detail. Each of the soldiers had a hand in it, it is a product of their united minds; in fact it is a crude and rather ridiculous form of communal authorship. The folk-song in its evolution goes through exactly the same process, but as I have already shown, in the folk-song it is a case of growth and not of disintegration, of development, not of corruption. 16

This then is the much discussed and often ridiculed “communal theory” of folk-song. This is what Grimm meant when he said, “A folk-song composes itself.” To sum up, let me quote Cecil Sharp’s definitions of art-music and folk-music. “Art-music,” he writes, “is the work of the individual, it is composed in, comparatively speaking, a short period of time and being committed to paper it is for ever fixed in one unalterable form. Folk-music is the product of a race and reflects feelings and tastes that are communal rather than personal; it is always in solution; its creation is never completed, while at every moment of its history it exists not in one form but in many.”

So you see the individual has his share in the creation of the folk-song and the race has its share. If I may venture to give my own definition of a folk-song I should call it “an individual flowering on a common stem.” We folk-song collectors are often asked “what is the origin” of a particular tune or “how old” it is. There is no answer to either of these questions; there is no original version of any particular tune; any given tune has hundreds of origins. Nor can we say how old it is; in one sense any particular tune is as old as the beginnings of music, in another sense it is born afresh with the singer of today who sang it. Sometimes we are laughed at: the scoffer says, “I expect that is not an old tune at all, the old man who sang it to you invented it himself.” Quite possibly to a certain extent he did. It is not the age but the nature of the tune which makes it a folk-song. 16

Je

Je

[play]

DORIAN MODE



[\[play\]](#)

MIXOLYDIAN MODE



[\[play\]](#)

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I will now show you the reverse side of the question, that is to say, two entirely distinct tunes, but which, I think I can show you, have the same outline and variations of the same phrases. The tunes are, (1) "Bushes and Briars" (2) "This is the Truth."

“BUSHES AND BRIARS” (*Essex*)



[\[play\]](#)

(Printed by permission of Messrs. Novello.)

“THIS IS THE TRUTH” (*Herefordshire*)



[\[play\]](#)

And now I want to give you one or two examples of “individual flowering on a common stem.” Here are two versions of the Morris dance-tune, “Shepherd’s Hey.” The first is the more usual version and the second is the same tune as played by Mr. Billy Wells, a well known folk-dance fiddler from Bampton in Oxfordshire. Notice that delightful little flourish in the second version of the tune. Must we not suppose that Mr. Wells improvised this one day in a moment of especial artistic enthusiasm and that it has since become an integral part of the tune? Thus it is that folk-tunes evolve.





[play]

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Here is another example—two versions of the tune “Banks of Sweet Primroses,” a plain and unornamented version, one from Sussex—the other, much more ornate, from Somerset.

You will notice that in the Somerset version the 1st and 3rd phrase are the same—while in the Sussex variant it is only the 3rd phrase which corresponds with the Somerset tune. We may suppose that this ornamented version so struck the imagination of singers that they sang it in both places instead of only in the 3rd line.



[\[play\]](#)

PRIMROSES (*Somerset*)



[\[play\]](#)

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Thus it is that the folk-song evolves and becomes in reality the voice of the people.

Why am I sure that it is not a process of disintegration or “corruption” as our scholarly friends are so fond of saying? For there are those who would have us believe that the folk-songs which have been sung during the last hundred years are corrupted, imperfect, half-remembered relics of some mysterious “original.” But how with any semblance of accuracy can such tunes as “Searching for Lambs” or “My Bonny Boy” be described as corrupt, or imperfect, or disintegrated—are they not complete rounded, finished works of art? True, they may be different from other versions which have preceded them, but must they therefore be worse—cannot they be better? Is it not possible that the collector caught them at the climax of their evolution—if these are derelict relics, what were the originals?

16

I am far from saying that this is true of all folk-songs, there are dull and stupid folk-tunes just as there is dull and stupid music of all kinds, and it occasionally happens that a collector stumbles across a folk-tune just as it has got into the

hands of an incompetent singer who has spoilt it; but we must remember this, that purely traditional music if it falls into bad hands tends to die a natural death while the written note, however bad it is, remains to cumber our national libraries.

One other point. The communal evolution of a folk-tune is in all points parallel to the evolution of a musical idea in the mind of an individual composer. We can sometimes, as in the case of Beethoven's notebooks, trace this evolution in all its stages in the composer's mind.

Is the final version then of the great tune in the Ninth Symphony a "corruption" of the idea as it originally appears in Beethoven's sketch book? If the worshippers of "originals" are to be logical this is what they will have to say. 16

It may be argued that since the folk-song has now ceased to evolve traditionally, it must be something dead, a mere archaism, interesting to the antiquarian, but with no living message for us in the 20th century.

Our traditional melodies are, I am aware, no longer traditional. They have been noted down by experts and committed to printing, they have been discussed and analysed and harmonized and sung at concerts; they have in fact been stereotyped. They are no longer in a state of flux, they are no longer the exclusive property of the peasant, but have come into line with the composed music of which they are supposed to be the antithesis. From this you might suppose that their growth had stopped and that they are no longer something vital; that however beautiful they may be they belong to an age which is past and have nothing to say to the modern generation. The folk-song is I believe not dead, but the art of the folk-singer is. We cannot, and would not if we could, sing folk-songs in the same way and in the same circumstances in which they used to be sung. If the revival of folk-song meant merely an attempt to galvanize into life a dead past there would be little to be said for it. The folk-song has now taken its place side by side with the classical songs of Schubert, the drawing-room ballad and the music-hall song, and must be judged on its intrinsic merits.

When about twenty-five years ago Cecil Sharp collected and published his new discoveries in English folk-song he had in his mind the ordinary man, the "divine average" of Whitman. And it is the ordinary man for whose musical salvation the folk-song will be responsible. 16

In the English-speaking countries where our artistic impulses are so apt to be inarticulate and even stifled, there are thousands of men and women naturally musically inclined whose only musical nourishment has been the banality of the ballad concert or the vulgarity of the music-hall. Neither of these really satisfied their artistic intuitions, but it never occurred to them to listen to what they called "classical" music, or if they did it was with a prejudiced view determined beforehand that they would not understand it. To such people the folk-song came as a revelation. Here was music absolutely within their grasp, emotionally and structurally much more simple than their accustomed "drawing room" music, and yet it satisfied their spiritual natures and left no unpleasant after taste behind it. Here indeed was music for the home such as we had not seen since the days of Thomas Morley when no supper party was complete without music when the cloth was cleared away.

Is not folk-song the bond of union where all our musical tastes can meet? We are too apt to divide our music into popular and classical, the highbrow and the lowbrow. One day perhaps we shall find an ideal music which will be neither popular nor classical, highbrow or lowbrow, but an art in which all can take part. You remember how the Florentine crowd carried Cimabue's great Madonna in procession to the Cathedral? When will our art achieve such a triumph? Is this popularization of art merely a Whitmanesque fantasy? At present it is only a dream, but it is a realizable dream. We must see to it that our art has true vitality and in it the seeds of even greater vitality. And where can we look for a surer proof that our art is living than in that music which has for generations voiced the spiritual longings of our race? 17

V
THE EVOLUTION OF THE FOLK-SONG
(Continued)
THE FOLK-SONG AND THE COMPOSER

In the last two chapters I described folk-songs. Now, I want to discuss the importance of all this to us, not as antiquarians or mere researchers but as musicians living in the 20th century. Has it anything to say to us as creative artists? Well, I would suggest that to say the least of it, it acts as a touchstone. Artistic self-deception is the easiest thing in the world and we must be continually testing ourselves as to our sincerity, to make sure that our emotions are not all vicarious. Will not the folk-song supply this test? In the folk-song we find music which is unpremeditated and therefore of necessity sincere, music which has stood the test of time, music which must be representative of our race as no other music can.

This, then, or something like this is the foundation, it seems to me, on which all our art must rest, however far from it we spread and however high above it we build. As Hubert Parry says, "All things that mark the folk-music of the race also betoken the quality of the race and as a faithful reflection of ourselves we must needs cherish it. Moreover it is 17 worth remembering that the great composers ... have concentrated upon their folk-music much attention, since style is ultimately national. True style comes not from the individual but from the products of crowds of fellow-workers who sift and try and try again till they have found the thing that suits their native taste and the purest product of such efforts is folk-song which ... outlasts the greatest works of art and becomes a heritage to generations and in that heritage may lie the ultimate solution of characteristic national art."

But what do we mean when we talk of building up a national art on the basis of folk-song? I, for one, assure you that I do not imagine that one can make one's music national merely by introducing a few folk-tunes into it. Beethoven did not become a Russian because he introduced two Russian folk-songs, out of compliment to the Russian Ambassador, into his Rasumowsky Quartets. Nor does Delius become an Englishman because he happens to use an English folk-tune introduced to him by his friend, Percy Grainger, as a canto fermo in one of his purely Nordic inspirations. So I am far from suggesting that anyone can make his music "national" by adding a few touches of local colour. Nevertheless I do hold that any school of national music must be fashioned on the basis of the raw material of its own national song; and this, in spite of the fact that one could name many composers whose music certainly reflects their own country, but 17 who had confessedly little or no knowledge of their own folk-music.

Such a composer was Tschaikowsky, but in his case the national idiom was already, so-to-speak, in the air and he wrote his national music as naturally as he spoke his own language. A stronger case perhaps is our own English composer Edward Elgar. I have some hesitation in discussing in public or venturing to appraise the music of one whom we, in England, all revere as our leader, but the case of Elgar is always quoted by those who oppose the theory of what is known as the "folk-song school of composers." Elgar confessedly knows and cares little about English folk-song. As you know, the case in England is different from Russia. In the days when Elgar formed his style, English folk-song was not "in the air" but was consciously revived and made popular only about thirty years ago. Now what does this revival mean to the composer? It means that several of us found here in its simplest form the musical idiom which we unconsciously were cultivating in ourselves, it gave a point to our imagination; far from fettering us, it freed us from foreign influences which weighed on us, which we could not get rid of, but which we felt were not pointing in the direction in which we really wanted to go. The knowledge of our folk-songs did not so much discover for us something new, but uncovered for us something which had been hidden by foreign matter. Now, in the music of Elgar, in that part of it which seems to me most beautiful and most characteristic, I see that same direction clearly pointed out. When I hear the fifth variation of 17 the "Enigma" series I feel the same sense of familiarity, the same sense of the something peculiarly belonging to me as an Englishman which I also felt when I first heard "Bushes and Briars" or "Lazarus." In other works of Elgar I feel other influences not so germane to me and I cannot help believing that that is the reason why I love, say, the "Be merciful" chorus from "Gerontius" more, and the prelude to the same work less.^[1]

Mr. Bernard Shaw, in what I think is one of his best plays, "The Dark Lady of the Sonnets," imagines Shakespeare waiting on the terrace of Whitehall Palace for his lady and entering into conversation with the sentry he finds there. The sentry's conversation is racy and characteristic; he describes his sergeant as a "fell" sergeant. When he is frightened he calls on "angels and ministers of heaven" to defend him. Here, in truth, is the raw material of poetry and Shakespeare is soon busy with his notebook, preserving these pregnant sayings for future use. Mr. Shaw tells us in his preface to this play that he has been accused of impugning Shakespeare's "originality" when he represents him as "treasuring and using the jewels of unconsciously musical speech which common people utter and throw away every day."

Or take the case of Burns—there can be no more original genius than Burns and yet it is well known that he founded 17
much of his most beautiful poetry on traditional songs which his wife used to sing to him and which he gradually
modified until the derivative material became his own. It all comes back to Emerson's well known saying that the most
original genius is the most indebted man. And if we all, whether geniuses or not, are in debt, why not be in debt among
other things to that which is the fountain head from which all music must originally have sprung?

What is originality? Perhaps you know Gilbert Murray's aphorism that "the genius may be a rebel against tradition, but
at the same time he is a child of it." Nobody has ever created or ever will create something out of nothing. We have a
common stock of words and notes from which to select. The artist selects rather than creates. Originality is something
much more subtle than being what advertisements call "different." A great artist can infuse a common thought with a
special radiance. Schumann used to say that Beethoven's chromatic scales sounded unlike anybody else's. Hundreds of
people might have heard Mr. Shaw's sentry make his pithy remarks, but it required a Shakespeare to see their beauty, to
realize their implications, to cut the diamond and give it its true setting.

I remember being told a story of how the artist Burne-Jones pointed out to a young friend that the blackened stone of the
Oxford College buildings was beautiful. The young friend had, up to then, taken it for granted with everybody else that
the colour was ugly. Now any fool can see that the Oxford Colleges are black, but it required an artist to see that this 17
black colour was beautiful.

Probably one of the most original phrases in the world is the opening to the prelude of Wagner's *Tristan*, yet it is almost
identical with one out of Mozart's C major Quartet. Its originality lies in the fact that with Wagner it had a definite
emotional purpose, while with Mozart it was probably an harmonic experiment. We can be pretty sure that the Mozart
phrase had not the same emotional effect on its contemporary hearers as the Prelude to "*Tristan*" has on us, because the
world was not then ready for such an emotional experience. When Mozart wanted to write amorous music, the mode of
expression that suggested itself to him was "*La ci darem*." To take another example, it was not Debussy who was the
inventor of the whole-tone scale; anyone can sit down to the piano and play that and probably composers have often
experimented with it in private. I have it on the authority of Sir Hugh Allen that an English 18th Century composer, John
Stanley, wrote a fugue on a subject in the whole-tone scale, but this of course was in the nature of an experiment; it was
reserved for Debussy to see the significance of this method of expression and to explore its harmonic possibilities. And
just as John Stanley before Debussy used the whole-tone scale without producing anything vital because it struck no
corresponding sympathetic chord in his imagination, so the younger generation of composers since Debussy fail to 17
make their whole-tone music vital because, to them, it is no longer a truth but only a truism. A composer is original,
not because he tries to be so, but because he cannot help it. Monteverde and his contemporaries introduced an entirely
new form of art, the Opera, under the impression that they were reviving the declamation of the ancient Greeks. Mozart's
"musical clock" *Fantasia* was a deliberate attempt to imitate the style of Handel, but Mozart sings to you in every note of
it. I suppose there is nothing in the world more characteristic of its author than Coleridge's "*Ancient Mariner*," but this
was deliberately modelled on the ballads in Percy's "*Reliques*." A really original work remains original always. What
is merely novel becomes stale when the novelty has worn off. The diminished 7th as a means of dramatic excitement is
now considered an outworn device, but the "*Barabbas*" from Bach's St. Matthew Passion remains as exciting and as
unexpected for us today as it was when Bach wrote it two hundred years ago. When Brahms and Liszt were both new
composers the music of Liszt was considered new and exciting, while that of Brahms was thought to be old-fashioned
and obscurantist. Nowadays Brahms sounds as fresh as ever, while Liszt has become intolerably old-fashioned.

Do we not perhaps lay too much stress on originality and personality in music? The object of the composer is to 18
produce a beautiful work of art and as long as the result is beautiful it seems to me it matters very little how that
result is brought about. This idea of originality, especially in subject matter, is a very recent growth.

The great masters of music have never hesitated to build on folk-song material when they wished to. Certain musical
critics cannot get out of their heads that it is a source of weakness in a composer to use what they call "borrowed"
material. I remember one writer saying unctuously that Bach never needed to borrow from folk-song. He could have
known very little about Bach. I think he was an organist, which may account for it. As you probably know, about three-
quarters of Bach's work is built up on the popular hymn-tunes which he loved so well, in fact, "borrowed" material. Not
all of these hymn-tunes are, of course, folk-songs in the technical sense of the word, though many of them are adaptations

from traditional melodies.

But let us start a little further back.

Through all the ecclesiastical music of the 15th and early 16th Centuries runs the mysterious figure of "*l'homme armé*," a secular tune which it became the fashion to introduce as a canto fermo into masses and motets.

Now why did these early choral composers introduce this and other secular airs into their Masses? As I daresay you know, the thing became a scandal and was prohibited because the congregations, when they heard the sound of the tunes they knew proceeding from the choir, would join in singing, not the words of the Mass but the words proper to the tune, which were often, I believe, not for edification. 18

I think these old composers felt that they must keep in touch with real life, that they believed, unconsciously, that music which is vital must preserve the popular element. If we look down the ages this is true of all great music. Could anything be more "popular" than a fugue subject of the "Cum Sancto" in Bach's B minor Mass, or the opening of the Finale of Beethoven's C minor? When hearers complained to Beethoven that his later quartets did not please, he did not reply that he was the high priest of an esoteric cult or that art was for the few, but he said, "They will please one day."

To return to "*l'homme armé*." The practice was discontinued by papal edict in the 16th Century, but I think we can trace the influence in the "tune" bits which Palestrina occasionally introduces into his motets and masses, when the metre of the words allows it, as at the "Osanna." A little later than Palestrina we find the Elizabethan Virginal composers doing much the same thing and we owe our knowledge of such tunes as "Sellenger's Round," "Carman's Whistle," "John, Come Kiss Me Now" and dozens of others, in fact our whole knowledge of what was being sung in the streets of London in the reign of Elizabeth, to the fact that these Virginal composers introduced these songs into their compositions. Little they cared about "originality"—perhaps they felt as we felt in modern England about twenty-five years ago, that these tunes must not remain unrecorded, that the fashionable English ladies who played on their virginals and were then, as now, apt to look with an exaggerated reverence on anything that came from overseas, would be all the better for a good honest English tune. 18

May I interpolate here our personal experiences in England in modern times?

In the early days of the "Folk-song Movement" when we were all students, we felt there was something to be expressed by us Englishmen, that we had not got to the bottom of it; we saw signs of it in the works of our older composers; but we could not help feeling that foreign influences occasionally cramped them. Then Cecil Sharp brought to the notice of his countrymen the extraordinary wealth of beautiful English folk-songs, of which we had previously hardly had an inkling. Here was something entirely new to us and yet not new. We felt that this was what we expected our national melody to be, we knew somehow that when we first heard "Dives and Lazarus" or "Bushes and Briars" that this was just what we were looking for. Well, we were dazzled, we wanted to preach a new gospel, we wanted to rhapsodize on these tunes just as Liszt and Grieg had done on theirs: we did not suppose that by so doing we were inventing a national music ready-made—we simply were fascinated by the tunes and wanted other people to be fascinated too, and our mentors in the public press have lost no opportunity of telling us so. Some clever journalist has invented the phrase "synthetic folk-song" and has told us "that any student with moderate inventive ability can write synthetic folk-songs literally by the yard." What is meant by the word "literally" I fear I do not know. Personally, I think it is just as good for the student to write synthetic folk-song as synthetic Strauss, Debussy or Elgar "by the yard" if his music paper is large enough. All student work is synthetic; he absorbs what appeals to him and I cannot help thinking that what appeals to him most naturally will be the music of his immediate surrounding unless his mind is forcibly turned in another direction by his training, by his environment or, more subtle than these, by that dreadful artistic snobbery which poisons the minds of young artists in England and, as far as I can judge, in America as well. It is by synthesis that the student learns. Early Beethoven is "synthetic" Haydn. Early Wagner is "synthetic" Weber and I believe that for a student to do a little "synthetic" folk-song writing is a better way of arriving at self-knowledge than imitation of the latest importations from Russia or Spain which after all only cause him to write "synthetic" Russian and Spanish folk-song, and that at second-hand. 18

Possibly we of the older generation were self-conscious and “synthetic” in our devotion to folk-song. But it is the younger generation which matters: they are no longer self-conscious, they speak the language without thinking. Largely owing to the labours of Cecil Sharp our folk-tunes are now known to English people from their earliest youth. These tunes have become part of the national basis of musical language to every child in England. Cecil Sharp was never under the delusion that a national music could be “made out” of folk-song; but he did believe the more these tunes became the property of the young, true composers would arise among them. His prophecy came true. 18

We have been told that the folk-song movement in England is dead. The arguments used prove that it is not dead but that it has just begun to live, that we are now taking folk-song for granted, whether we like it or not, as part of our natural surroundings; that its influence is no longer self-conscious but organic.

We are told that many of our younger composers are as yet untouched by the influence of folk-song, but those of us who can see rather deeper into things and with more imagination, know that they can no more help being influenced by their own folk-songs than they can help being nourished by their mothers’ milk. Of course they are touched unconsciously and so the superficial journalist cannot see the influence; probably they do not recognize it themselves and would be most indignant if it was suggested to them; for them the folk-song is no longer synthetic, it is spontaneous.

I have had the privilege of looking at the early work of our younger English composers, written while they were still *in statu pupillari*, while they were still in the imitative stage, and it was largely what we have been taught to call “synthetic folk-song.” Later on of course, as some of them took the trouble to explain to me, they put away childish things, saw the errors of their ways and so on. This is just what we should wish. They are in fact, once again to quote Gilbert Murray, “rebels against tradition but at the same time children of it.” 18

I know in my own mind that if it had not been for the folk-song movement of twenty-five years ago this young and vital school represented by such names as Walton, Bliss, Lambert and Patrick Hadley would not have come into being. They may deny their birthright; but having once drunk deep of the living water no amount of Negroid emetics or “Baroque” purgatives will enable them to expel it from their system.

But this is a digression from historical order.

Do we find the folk-song influence in the classical period, Mozart, Beethoven, Schubert?

One would at first be inclined to say no. I hope I shall not be accused of inventing a paradox if I say that it is not noticeable because it is so very plain. If we look at a collection of German Volkslieder we are apt to be disappointed because the tunes look exactly like the simpler Mozart, Beethoven and Schubert tunes. The truth of course is the other way out. The tunes of Mozart, Beethoven and Schubert are so very much like Volkslieder.

We talk of the “classical tradition” and the “grand manner.” This really means the German manner because it so happened that the great classical period of music corresponded with the great line of German composers. 18

What we call the classical idiom is the Teutonic idiom and it is absolutely as narrowly national as that of Grieg or Moussorgsky. But there is one composer of the classical period whose case is different—Joseph Haydn. Haydn’s themes, indeed the whole layout of his work, has really nothing in common, except purely superficially, with that of Mozart, though they have the same technical background and show some of the conventions of the polite music of the period. Sir Henry Hadow in his interesting essay on Haydn’s nationality, called “A Croatian Composer,” proves definitely, I think, that he was not a Teuton, but a Slav of Croatian nationality. It is a curious comment on the strength of the German influence on all music that up till quite lately, we habitually spoke not only of Haydn, but even of the Hungarian Liszt and of the Polish Chopin, as “German” composers.

That Haydn’s musical ancestry is different from that of his German so-called compatriots is obvious in all his characteristic work. Of course before he attained maturity he followed the lead of his teachers and even in latter life, in the enormous amount of his output, there is a certain proportion of mere journeyman work, and it is noticeable that in these the national characteristics are not so apparent. It is when he is most himself that he owes most to the music of 18

his own country. It has been suggested that Joseph Haydn owes nothing to a national bias because we do not find the same bent in the compositions of his brother Michael. But Michael of course was not a genius, but just an honest practitioner who never got beyond the commonplaces of the “polite” music which he absorbed in Vienna, just as Joseph does not show his national characteristics except in his inspired moments.

Some explanation surely is required of all the irregular metres and characteristic phrases which distinguish Haydn’s music. They derive from nothing in the music of Emanuel Bach or any other of his Teutonic forerunners. What is their ancestry? These themes and many others are found to be nearly identical with certain Croatian folk-tunes.

It goes without saying that Hadow has been accused of charging Haydn with plagiarism. This is what he writes on the subject:

“No accusation could be more unfounded or more unreasonable. He poached upon no man’s preserve, he robbed no brother artist, he simply ennobled these peasant tunes with the thought and expression of which he was most nearly in accord.... No doubt he was not only the child of his nation, he had his own personality, his own imaginative force, his own message to deliver in the ears of the world, but through all these the national element runs as the determining thread.... No doubt there are other factors; [besides nationality] the personal idiosyncrasy that separates a man from his fellows and again the general principles, fewer perhaps than is commonly supposed, that underlie all sense of rhythm and all appreciation of style. But to say this is only to say that the artist is himself and that he belongs to our common humanity. In everything, from the conception of a poem to the structure of a sentence the national element bears its part with the other two; it colours the personal temperament, it gives a standpoint from which principles of style are approached and wherever its influence is faint or inconsiderable the work of the artist will be found to suffer in proportion.... It is wholly false to infer that music is independent of nationality. The composer bears the mark of his race not less surely than the poet or the painter and there is no music with true blood in its veins and true passion in its heart that has not drawn inspiration from the breast of the mother country.” [88]

The debt of the Russian nationalist school of composers to their own folk-song I need hardly dwell on, it meets us at every turn.

Chopin wrote national dances, the Mazurka and the Polonaise; Moussorgsky and Borodin frankly made use of folk-songs. Grieg and Dvořák avowedly and Smetana less frankly imitated them. In each case they have made the so-called “borrowed” tunes their own.

In the 18th century an enterprising Scottish publisher commissioned Beethoven to harmonize some Scottish melodies. The result was curious and not satisfactory, but the strange thing is that the accompaniments added by the great master gave a decidedly German tinge to the tunes.

In the 19th century Brahms harmonized a collection of his own German Volkslieder—they sound exactly like Brahms, but here there is no misfit because the composer felt at home with his material. One of the tunes, “Du mein einzig Licht,” has been harmonized in another collection without sympathy or understanding by Max Friedländer (though I admit he was also a German). A comparison between the two settings is instructive. [8]

I will not give you any more detailed examples but I will try and tell you what I mean by the connection between the composer and the folk-song of his country. Supreme art is not a solitary phenomenon, its great achievements are the crest of the wave; it is the crest which we delight to look on, but it is the driving force of the wave below that makes it possible. For every great composer there must be a background of dozens of smaller ones. Professor Dent has given us examples of a crowd of small practitioners in Vienna, who, so to speak, went to make up one Schubert.

There never has been and never will be a great artist who appeared as a “sport”; a supreme composer can only come out of a musical nation and at the root of the musical quality of a nation lies the natural music whose simplest and clearest manifestation is the folk-song.

Historians of early English music are continually being puzzled and slightly annoyed by the occasional outcrop in medieval times of a magnificent piece of music like “Sumer is icumen in” or the “Agincourt Song” without apparent reason. There is no written record of a musical soil which could have produced such wonderful flowerings as when the wonderful Tudor school suddenly appeared, as they pathetically complain, “from nowhere.” Of course, these things do not spring from nowhere, of course, the English were “carolling” as Gerald the Welshman puts it, all through the middle ages, disregarded by the Frenchified court and the Italianized church, but coming to their full fruition in the age of Elizabeth. True, there is no written record of these happenings—therefore the historians are at a loss to account for their [9]

results; but there are more things in heaven and earth than are dreamt of in the bookman's philosophy.

The scholar's pathetic trust in the written word often leads him into difficulties. The only medieval music of which we have written record is that of the church and that of the Troubadours. Therefore, according to the scholars, this was the only medieval music worth notice. Popular music was made not according to rule but according to instinct—therefore it was negligible. This attitude of mind is well illustrated in Mr. Gerald Cooper's article on the Troubadours in the "Oxford History of Music."

He writes that "the music of the Troubadours in spite of certain points in contact with popular music was an aristocratic and intricate art with none of the haphazard characteristics of folk-music." I take this to mean that the Troubadours were amateurish, *i.e.*, "aristocratic," that they wrote by rule, *i.e.*, "intricate," and not by instinct, *i.e.*, "haphazard." The Troubadours, judging from results, had no instincts to guide them and therefore invented elaborate rules. But elaborate rules cannot produce live music: instinct is the sure guide. These rules reached their limit of absurdity in the music of the Meistersingers, the bourgeois descendants of the Troubadours. 19

Beckmesser thoroughly distrusted instinct and says to Walther, "*Oho! von Finken und Meisen lerntet ihr Meisterweisen? dasz wird dann wohl auch darnach sein.*" Again, Professor Dent writing also on the Troubadours says that "from a social point of view the Troubadours are important because their art gradually led to the acceptance of music as an independent art, to its cultivation among the leisured classes, and so to a wider sphere of influence than could ever be permeated by an art of music which remains subservient to an ecclesiastical ritual." But this is surely to put the cart before the horse. Music has always spread from below upwards, the spontaneous song of the people comes first. Quantz did not play the flute because Frederick the Great played it, but the other way out. Quantz learnt the flute presumably because it was indigenous to the country where he lived. The people have always sung and danced. Historians are too apt to take it for granted that, because there is no written record of this, it did not exist, or that at all events it is quite unimportant.

I cannot make out that Troubadour music flourished in England, at all events as an indigenous art. There is a simple explanation of this. The fashionable language was French and English was the despised speech of the peasants, so that fashionable England was probably in those days as it has so often been since, an importer of foreign goods. Perhaps it was just as well, for it allowed our native music to pursue its quiet way undisturbed so that "Sumer is icumen in," almost certainly a popular melody, is still the despair and wonder of historians, and other popular tunes that have come down to us such as the "Salutation Carol" and the "Agincourt Song" are still vital, while the songs of the Troubadours are mere museum pieces. When the great School of Tudor music arose, it could go straight to the fountain head for its inspiration, fructified of course by the skill of the great Belgian contrapuntists, but inheriting its energy and vitality from the unwritten and unrecorded art of its own countryside. 19

[1] This was written in 1932.

VI THE HISTORY OF NATIONALISM IN MUSIC

In primitive times, when each small community was self-sufficing and every outsider an enemy, nationalism, or rather, parochialism was not so much an ideal as a necessity. But with the growth of mobility and its consequences of foreign trade, foreign wars, and the breaking down of natural boundaries by the purely artificial action of international treaties, people began to feel that their sheet anchor was dragging, that something that they loved and which peculiarly belonged to them was slipping away from them. It was not until they were threatened that they realized for the first time how much their customs, their language, their art meant to them.

Thus arose on the one hand the self-conscious cosmopolitans and on the other the self-conscious nationalists with their evil counterparts, the truculent chauvinists and the lovers of every country but their own. I am afraid it is true that nationalism first appears as hatred and fear of enemies, or at all events the fear of losing one's livelihood. English

nationalism really came into being, strangely enough, as the result of the Norman Conquest. In the early Plantagenet days French, the language of the Conquerors, became the speech of the Court and of the educated classes and English was driven down to be the language of the peasants. 19

Then came the French wars and it became fashionable to regard French as an enemy language; the fashionable classes turned to the hitherto despised speech of the peasants in the same way, I suppose, as it becomes fashionable occasionally among our bright young things to talk cockney. By the year 1362 English again became the official language and it is interesting to note that it was then for the first time called the mother tongue. In 1385 certain schoolmasters had the courage to teach English and not French to their pupils in the grammar schools. "Thus," writes Professor Trevelyan, "did these humble schoolmasters prepare the road for Chaucer and Wycliffe in their own century, for Shakespeare and Milton in time to come, for the English Reformation and Renaissance and the whole development of English life and letters as something other than a northern offshoot of French culture."

In early days the music of the people was of necessity national. They had to make their own music because there was no one else to make it for them. The music of Courts and Princes had always been and probably always will be cosmopolitan. The Kings, Emperors and Bishops attracted to their courts the best that they could get regardless of country. The skilled musician seems to have had no national conscience, but went where he could get most recognition and best pay. Thus, Dunstable, Dowland and Lassus, to mention only a few, gained their fame and their livelihood at foreign courts. 19

It was this same indiscriminate Court patronage which first produced a wave of nationalism in music, at first no more than a "keep out the foreigner" movement, a desire for protection by those who had to make their living by music. Thus we find Locke and Bannister and other English musicians complaining bitterly of the preference given to foreign musicians at the Court of Charles II; entirely, I fear, on the grounds that their bread and butter was being taken away from them. Nationalism as a spiritual force in art was yet to come.

The nationalism of John Sebastian Bach was on the other hand unself-conscious and consisted not in a fear of the foreigner, but of a deep love for the spiritual values of Teutonism, as exemplified in the Lutheran religion and the great choral melodies which were one of the outward and visible signs of that spirit. In Bach's case there was no question of fighting the foreigner, except perhaps in the one instance of his famous victory over Marchand at the Court of Frederick the Great, because there was no foreigner to fight. Music, in Bach's time and in Bach's community, was looked on not as an international art but as a local craft. The citizens of the small German towns where Bach practised his art would no more have thought of importing a foreign Cantor than of importing a foreign Town Clerk. 19

An interesting but short-lived "keep out the foreigner" movement arose during Mozart's lifetime at the instigation, curiously enough, of the Emperor himself who established Opera as a national institution, abolished the old Italian Opera and Ballet, and started what was called the "National Singspiel," and it was for this that Mozart wrote "Die Entführung." The experiment did not last long. In 1783 the German company came to an end, but isolated performances of German operas continued to be given, among them of course "Die Zauberflöte." So we must be thankful for this short-lived outburst of nationalism. The ultimate effects did not stop there because it prepared an audience to be enthusiastic later about "Der Freischütz," and if we had not had "Der Freischütz" there would certainly have been no "Ring des Nibelungen."

I am no historian and I speak under correction, or perhaps I am telling you the obvious, but the outburst of artistic nationalism in the early 19th Century appears to me to have been the natural reaction to the artificial carving up of Europe to suit the needs of Emperors and politicians after 1815.

Chopin is generally considered the first of the nationalist composers and he certainly was strongly influenced by the patriotic aspirations of his oppressed country. We must, however, distinguish between the Parisian Chopin of the Waltzes and Nocturnes and the national Chopin of the mazurkas, polonaises and Polish songs. But in reality he was no more national than Schumann or Beethoven or Mozart; his inspiration simply came from a new source. His period was the heyday of the romantic movement when everything had to be exotic. One's own time and one's own place were not enough and one sought an escape from reality in the glamour of remote times and remote places, the forests of Poland 19

or the mountains of Scotland. So when Chopin appeared on the scene with his Polish rhythms and cadences he was hailed as the first nationalist, though he was only building on his own foundations just as Beethoven and Mozart had built on theirs.

The most striking example of a national renaissance comes from Czechoslovakia, or Bohemia, as it was then called, and it is a clear proof that a self-conscious movement among a few patriots can spread so as to be a living force in the country. The Czech national movement started little more than a hundred years ago with a coterie of Bohemian *littérateurs*; yet now Czech language, Czech culture and Czech music is a natural and spontaneous expression of its people. This would not have been so if the roots had not always been there. The plant had shrivelled under the chill blasts of foreign suppression. Perhaps these March winds were required before the April showers could bring forth the flowers of spring. Those who bring about revivals are often scoffed at by the ignorant as foisting on the people something “unnatural”—if it is “real” we are sure it will come about “naturally.” But does not life itself start for us in nine cases out of ten “artificially”? Ask any doctor. And when life is nearly extinct can it not be revived by artificial breathing, artificial feeding, artificial blood pressure? If a healthy life ensues why quarrel with the means employed? [10]

Smetana, the recognized pioneer of Czech musical nationalism, received his first impulse from 1848, the year of revolution, when he wrote his choruses for the revolutionary “National Guards.” It is curious, however, that Smetana denied that he owed anything to folk-song and would indignantly protest that he never committed what he called “forgery.” When we think of the polka out of his string quartet, of the dance movement in “*Ultava*” or the opening chorus of “*The Bartered Bride*,” this seems difficult to swallow. The truth probably is that Smetana’s debt to his own national music was of the best kind, unconscious. He did not indeed “borrow,” he carried on an age-long tradition, not of set purpose, but because he could no more avoid speaking his own musical language than he could help breathing his native air.

The national movement in Russia is too well-known for me to have to dwell long on it, but I will call your attention to two points. The Russian movement had small and humble beginnings as all great artistic movements do and I believe should do. And the Russian nationalist composers drew frankly and unashamedly on their own folk-songs. These are really two aspects of the same factor. The Russian movement started in the late 18th Century with a revolt against the boredom of the heavy Italian operas which led people to look out for something lighter, some entertainment in which their own popular tunes might have a place. [10]

This led to a series of “people’s” operas in which folk-tunes were introduced rather after the manner of the “*Beggar’s Opera*.” Then came 1812 and the resultant outburst of Russian patriotism. Thus the way was prepared for Glinka who deliberately, as he said, wanted to write music which would make his own people “feel at home,” music which was sneered at by the Frenchified Russian aristocrats as “coachman’s music.” Mrs. Newmarch rightly says that whereas Glinka’s predecessors had been content to play with local colour he “re-cast the primitive speech of the folk-song into a new and polished idiom.” From Glinka we pass on to the splendours of Moussorgsky, Borodin and Rimsky-Korsakov surpassing their musical ancestor far in power of imagination, but like him, having their roots firmly planted in their native soil. It is a question how far the modern Russian school has not uprooted itself; possibly Stravinsky is too intent on shocking the bourgeois to have time to think about making his own people “feel at home.” Cosmopolitanism has to a certain extent ousted nationalism. He seems deliberately to have torn up his roots and sold his birthright, cutting himself off from the refreshing well-spring of tradition. At one time he will toy with jazz, at another time with Bach and Beethoven seen through a distorted mirror. Or he will amuse himself by adding piquant “wrong notes” to the complacent beauty of Pergolesi. This seems to be not the work of a serious composer, but rather that of the too clever craftsman, one might almost say, the feats of the precocious child. But in one branch of our art it is hardly possible for an artist to be untrue to himself, namely when he writes for the human voice, for then language takes command and the natural rise and fall of the words must suggest the melodic and rhythmic outline. And the human voice is the oldest musical instrument and through the ages it remains what it was, unchanged; the most primitive and at the same time the most modern, because it is the most intimate form of human expression. Instruments are continually being improved and altered, new inventions are continually increasing their capabilities both for good and evil. The pianoforte of today is not the instrument for which Beethoven wrote, the modern chromatic trumpet has nothing to do with the noble tonic and dominant instrument of the classics. Violinists can perform feats on their instruments undreamt of by our forefathers; we can add mutes hard, soft or medium to our brass instruments which change their features so that their own mothers would [10]

not know them. But through all this the human voice remains what it was with its unsurpassed powers and its definite limitations and in the face of these limitations the composer is forced to think of the essentials and not of the external trappings of music; thus he often finds his salvation. More important than all, the human voice is connected with our earliest associations and inevitably turns our thoughts back to our real selves, to that sincerity of purpose which it is so difficult to follow and so perilous to leave. And I believe this is especially the case in choral music where the limitations are most severe and the human element is the strongest. When Stravinsky writes for the chorus his mind must surely turn homeward to his native Russia with its choral songs and dances and the great liturgies of its church. And so I believe that it is in “Les Noces” and the “Sinfonie des Psaumes” that we find the real and the great Stravinsky which will remain fresh and alive when all the clevernesses of his instrumental works have become stale from familiarity.

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VII TRADITION

Closely connected with nationalism is the question of tradition. I have already quoted to you Gilbert Murray’s great saying that a genius is the child of tradition and at the same time a rebel against that tradition. He develops this further by pointing out that in art tradition is essential. Art has to give a message from one man to another. As you can speak to a man only in a language which you both know, so you can appeal to his artistic side only by means of some common tradition. Consequently tradition cannot be disregarded. This is really the same thing as Emerson’s epigram, “The most original genius is the most indebted man.” Many of the most revolutionary artistic thinkers are in externals most obedient to traditional forms. In contrast to the iconoclasts of today there stand out one or two truly original figures, such as Sibelius, who have something to say that no one has said before, but who are nevertheless satisfied with the technical content which has been handed down to them by their ancestors.

Cecil Sharp wisely says, “The creative musician cannot produce music out of nothing and if he were to make the attempt he would only put himself back into the position of the primitive savage. All that he can do and as a matter of fact does, is to make use of the material bequeathed to him by his predecessors, fashion it anew and in such manner that he can through it and by means of it express himself.”

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It is true that tradition may harden into convention and I am entirely in sympathy with all artistic experimenters who break through mere convention. Let the young adventurer branch out into all known and unknown directions. Let the tree develop flowers and leaves undreamt of before, but if you pull it up by its roots it will die. Truly we cannot ignore the present and we must build for the future, but the present and future must stand firmly on the foundations of the past.

Walt Whitman says:

“Have the past struggles succeeded?
Now understand me well. It is provided in the essence of things
That in any fruition of success, no matter what,
Shall come forth something to make a greater struggle necessary.”

But there may be bad traditions. Every generation, I suppose, thinks that the tradition of its immediate predecessors is bad, but the tradition is there and however much we want to we cannot help being the inheritors of those who have gone before us. We are inevitably the children of our fathers. We may curse our parents, but it is they that have made us, and not we ourselves. Effect proceeds from cause and always has done so; the sins of the fathers are visited on the children and it is up to us to see that the sins of one generation turn into the virtues of the next. Dr. Colles writes:

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“Most of the best things in modern music come from composers who have kept close to their several native traditions and whose individual genius has enabled them to extend it in directions undreamt of by their predecessors.”

We cannot help building on the past. What is America building on? Have we possibly on both sides of the water a common tradition? Well, we have one thing in common and that is perhaps the strongest traditional force, namely, our common language—though even in that America and England in their divergent practical and emotional needs have to a

certain extent drifted apart. And whether in fifty years' time we shall be mutually intelligible seems to me doubtful.

Now the musical style of a nation grows out of its language. To quote Dr. Colles again: "A people's music grows in contact with the people's mother tongue, from the emergence of the vernacular in poetry and prose literature speech stamps its character with increasing decisiveness in the music of that people."

The roots of our language and therefore of our musical culture are the same, but the tree that has grown from those roots is not the same. We cannot, if we wish to, jump back three hundred years and join up again where we parted. We have seen in the case of Bohemia and Russia how a tradition can be brought to fruition in a hundred years if the roots are well planted. America and England have had three hundred years of separate existence with different ideals and a separate culture. This must count for something. How are we each to find and preserve our own souls? [11]

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VIII SOME CONCLUSIONS

I will venture to say a little more about the future of music in America. I admit that I have not really got sufficient data to say much that is positive and you may think it very impertinent of me to attempt the task, but I feel that the future of music in America has something in common with that in England and that what is true of one may be true of the other. Here in America you have the finest orchestras in the world, you are determined to have nothing but the best, to engage the finest players, the finest conductors and to play the finest music. You have organized colleges and conservatories, you see to it that the study of musical appreciation and musical history are given a prominent place in your educational scheme; but I want you to ask yourselves whether because of these things, or might I say, in spite of these things, you are musical—or are going the way to become musical? Have you in the midst of all these activities the one thing needful? I am not going to answer the question because I do not know enough, but you may well ask me what do you mean by the "one thing needful"? You may think, judging from previous lectures, that I think folk-song the one thing needful, and that conditions in America do not admit of folk-songs, because there is no peasant class to make and sing them. [11]

Folk-song is not a cause of national music, it is a manifestation of it. The cultivation of folk-songs is only one aspect of the desire to found an art on the fundamental principles which are essential to its well-being. National music is not necessarily folk-song; on the other hand folk-song is, by nature, necessarily national. You may truly have got past that stage of development that makes folk-song possible. Nevertheless the spirit may be there all the same, the spirit of nationality. Or perhaps you may say that you have too many folk-songs. You have the folk-songs of the Negro, those of the Indian, those of the English settlers, and perhaps you will tell me that if I went to Oregon I should find the national music of the Swede, or that in New York I should be able to take my choice among the songs of every nation from Greece to China, and you might well ask me how a national music can grow out of that, since you cannot have a national art without a national language, a national tradition and so on.

But is it not perhaps the other way out? That some common art will be a bond of union and be one of the means out of which a national spirit will grow? Music is indeed in one sense the universal language, by which I do not mean that it is a cosmopolitan language but that it is, I believe, the only means of artistic expression which is natural to everybody. [11] Music is above all things the art of the common man. The other arts have their practical counterparts; when we use our pen to order a ton of coal or our paintbrush to repair the damages made by our neighbour's motor car on our front gate, we are not necessarily expressing ourselves artistically; but the wildest howl of the savage, or the most careless whistling of the errand boy is nothing else than an attempt to reach into the infinite, which attempt we call art. And it seems to me that for this reason music is able to grow out of our ordinary life in a way that no other art can. We hear a great deal of the ugliness of modern life and we are making frantic attempts to preserve some visual beauty in the world. But we need no preservation societies, no national parks to preserve the amenities of music. The more sordid our surroundings, the more raucous the mechanical noises that assail our ears, the more I believe shall we turn to that art which comes entirely from within, as a means of self-expression. Music is above all others the art of the humble. We are laughed at in England for our bourgeoisie—personally I am proud to be described as a bourgeois. I remember a young

exquisite saying to me that he didn't like Bach "because he was so bourgeois." I am not at all sure that it is not a true criticism and that that is why Bach appeals especially to me and my fellow bourgeois. I feel sure that it is not necessary for great composers to imitate Margaret Kennedy's Sanger and to banish themselves onto Austrian mountainsides. I believe that every community and every mental state should have its artistic equivalent. [11]

I was told the other day that some of the English music which appeals to us at home was considered "smug" by foreign critics. I was delighted to hear it because it suggested to me that our English composers had some secret which is at present for our ears only. That it is not also for others does not distress me. One day perhaps our "native wood-notes wild" may cross the frontier hand in hand with Shakespeare, but they will not do so unless they are true to the land of their birth.

I expect the American composer has some secret to tell his own people if he will only trouble to find out what it is, if he will search for lights hidden under bushels or for nuggets of gold in heaps of dross. Why not look below the surface occasionally and find out what it is in the direct appeal of the popular tune which makes the audience go home whistling; to see if there is not some genuine artistic impulse hidden in unlikely corners? I don't suggest for a moment that a composer should ever write down to a supposed public; he must of course be true to himself in order not to be false to any man; the universal popular art is, alas, still a dream. But music is the youngest of the arts. We have perhaps not yet started to explore the promised land and before we can do so we may have to experience a change of heart.

I have been told that my talks turn into sermons. I hope that up to the present I have managed to keep off sermons, but now I fear that nature is becoming too strong for me and I propose to finish not by preaching you one sermon but three, each with its appropriate text. [11]

My first text is "Unless ye become as little children ye shall not enter the Kingdom of Heaven." Education is said to be what a man has learnt and forgotten. I believe that in music we are still learning and do not yet know how to forget. Until our music becomes a really spontaneous expression, first of ourselves, next of our community, then and then only of the world, in fact until it is as unpremeditated as that of the folk-singer, it will not be vital. How should the childlike mind show itself in us? For one thing we must learn to walk before we can run. It is so easy now to be clever and to join in the race halfway without going the full course. But that is not the way to write true music. We cannot see perhaps why with all the wealth of the world at our disposal we cannot enter into the inheritance of a German or a Russian tradition straightaway without all these tiresome preliminaries. Any student can nowadays pick up all the tricks of the trade which go to make a Wagner or a Debussy or a Sibelius, but I assure you if we do this there will be something lacking in our music. We must in spirit though not in form start again from the beginning, even at the risk of appearing parochial, and do something, however small, which only we can do and our own people can appreciate.

Of course in recommending the childlike mind I am not speaking to the extremely young. I do not expect boys and girls under twenty-five to be childlike. Of course you have got to try your 'prentice hands on your symphonic poems, on your modernistic ballets or your atonal fugues according to the period of musical history when the disease attacks you. But when you have got through your measles and tried your hand at everything and discovered how futile is the letter without the spirit, it is then that you will begin to examine yourselves and find out which is the straight way up the hill of difficulty. [11]

After this necessary digression I can pick up the main thread again.

All artistic movements which have produced great men had small and humble beginnings. It was the humble *Singspiel* of Adam Hiller and other local German composers which led the way to Mozart's "Magic Flute," and then on by way of Weber and Marschner to Richard Wagner. If Germany had not started with "Der Dorf Barbier" she would never have finished up with "Die Meistersinger."

Perhaps the history of the Russian school is more striking still. We are apt to think of the Russians in terms of the complexities of Stravinsky or the gorgeous colouring of Rimsky-Korsakov or the epic grandeur of Moussorgsky. But we must trace the history of Russian nationalism back to an almost unknown composer who wrote operas with the definite object of catching the humbler part of the Russian public by "rendering native song in a national manner." Close on [11]

his heels followed Glinka whose “Life for the Czar” was a definite bid for popularity through patriotism. Glinka’s avowed object in his music was to make his fellow countrymen “feel at home.” Is it not a good criterion of the sincerity of our music whether it will succeed in making our own people “feel at home”? The trouble of course is that we have so divorced art from life that people have got into the habit of thinking of music as necessarily something exotic. They do not want to be made to “feel at home” and so the snobbery of the composer who wants to be sure that he is doing the latest thing and the snobbery of the hearer who wants to imagine that he is anything but his real self follow each other round in a vicious circle.

But you may say to me that our younger composers are doing just what you tell them to—they are raking out folk-songs from every conceivable quarter of the world and incorporating snatches of them into their compositions. Yes, but what are they doing with them when they have got them? It is of no use disguising them so that their fragrance is entirely lost or making them vehicles for mere cleverness as did the medieval composers with their *l’homme armé*. It is not enough for music to come from the people, it must also be for the people. The people must not be written down to, they must be written up to. The triviality which is so fashionable among the intelligentsia of our modern musical polity is the worst of precious affectations. But the ordinary man expects from a serious composer serious music and will not be at all frightened even at a little “uplift.” [12]

What the ordinary man will expect from the composer is not cleverness, or persiflage or an assumed vulgarity. He can get real vulgarity enough if he wants it in his daily life, but he will want something that will open to him the “magic casements.”

Life is very exciting for the young composer nowadays; he is free of all rules, the means at his disposal for making new effects are almost unlimited; he is taking part in a breathless race to produce what is more and more unheard of. The temptations to beat all competitors in that race are great. Perhaps he is like the young novelist who is tempted to show off all that he knows about “Life” and to cram his pages with night clubs and the amours of financial magnates about which he only knows at second-hand. This is all very alluring, but it is only first-hand experience which counts: simulated sentiment can only result in failure.

I receive from time to time a publication, issued from America, called “New Music,” consisting chiefly of compositions by young Americans. I do not pretend that I can make head or tail of what these young composers are saying, or what they are aiming at, but I am an old fogey and I realize that I am not justified in praising or blaming it. But I am justified in asking at whom it *is* addressed. Is it merely the music of a clique, or has it a genuine message to young America? All great music has the element of popular appeal, it must penetrate beyond the walls of the studio into the world outside. [12]

“They may prove well in the lecture rooms yet not prove at all under the spacious clouds and along the landscape and flowing currents.” Can these composers of the new music say, do they even want to say with Beethoven, “It will please one day”?

The three watch words of great music are sincerity, simplicity and serenity. Once more, and I believe for the last time, I will speak to you about folk-song. Let our composers and performers, when they can spare time from solving some new problem in atonality or exploiting the top register of the double-bassoon, refresh themselves occasionally with a draught of that pure water.

My next sermon is addressed not to the professional musician but to the amateur, and especially the listener, and my text is “Be ye doers of the word, not hearers only.” A musical nation is not a nation which is content to listen. The best form of musical appreciation is to try and do it for yourself; to get really inside the meaning of music. If I were to visit a strange country and wanted to find out if it had a real musical life I should not go to the great cities with their expert orchestras, their opera houses and their much advertised celebrity concerts, but I should go to the small towns and villages and find out there whether enthusiastic quartet parties met once a week, whether there was a madrigal club, whether music was a normal form of recreation in their homes, whether the people met to sing together or play together under their local leader, whether they encouraged that leader to create music for the pageants and ceremonies of their town, whether they saw to it that the music in their churches was worthy of the liturgies performed [12]

there. Music is not only a form of enjoyment, it is also a spiritual exercise in which all have their part, from the leading hierophant down to the humblest worshipper.

Continuity is a necessary element of a living organism. In the hierarchy all have their place, the greatest expert and the lowliest amateur; they all share in building up the edifice. In the ideal commonwealth of music the leaders will be, not those who have come in from outside, but those who have started in the ranks with the Field Marshal's baton in their corporal's knapsack. And these leaders will have their duty—to speak to the people in the language which they understand.

The temptation to become a mere listener is nowadays very great. Gramophones and wireless have brought the world's riches to the doors of the humblest, but if we all become listeners there will soon be no one left to listen to. Modern invention is tending to make us content only with the cream of music, but where will the cream come from if there is no milk to skim it off?

This brings me to my third sermon and my third text, "What shall it profit a man if he gain the whole world and lost his own soul?" [12]

We are apt to look on art and on music especially as a commodity and a luxury commodity at that; but music is something more—it is a spiritual necessity. The art of music above all the other arts is the expression of the soul of a nation, and by a nation I mean not necessarily aggregations of people, artificially divided from each other by political frontiers or economic barriers. What I mean is any community of people who are spiritually bound together by language, environment, history and common ideals and, above all, a continuity with the past.

The music of other nations is the expression of *their* soul—can it also be the expression of ours? If we possess our own soul surely and firmly, as indeed we do from the accident of language in our literature, then, indeed, we can afford to be broad-minded and to enlarge and enrich our own possessions by contact with all that is best in the world around us. But have we English-speaking people yet found our own soul in music? Gardeners tell us that it is dangerous to substitute artificial watering for natural rainfall because it tends to make the plants turn their roots up to meet the surface water instead of striking down to find the moisture deep in their native earth. Nations, like individuals, need periods of contact followed by periods of isolation. We must be careful that too much dependence on outside influences does not stifle rather than foster our native art. If we have no musical soul of our own, how can we appreciate the manifestations of the musical souls of others? In that case our love of music can be little more than a pose or at the best a superficial interest, not a deep-rooted intuition. If we have music in us it must show itself actively and creatively, not passively and receptively. An art which is not creative is no art. [12]

I have told you how the national spirit in music has occasionally shown itself in a "keep out the foreigner" movement. We have had it lately in England and doubtless it makes its appearance occasionally in America. It happens of course only in those countries and in those times when an influx of foreign influence tends to stifle native talent. The protest usually comes from professional musicians and is purely economic in its origin. They demand protection as members of other professions do so as to secure their means of livelihood. But there is this distinction in the case of the musical profession, that the case is often prejudged against them, and especially in English-speaking countries. That extraordinary mixture of self-depreciation and snobbery with which we view artistic questions makes us apt to take it for granted that the exotic art must be the best, and to refuse to believe the evidence of our eyes and ears. But it is not the economic side of the question that I want to discuss.

Music cannot be treated like cigars or wine, as a mere commodity. It has its spiritual value as well. It shares in preserving the identity of soul of the individual and of the nation. Some people will not believe this and tell us that music is a "manufactured article" just like bacon and cheese, and they will have the music they like just as they will have the cheese they like regardless of where it comes from. And this view is not held only by the Lucullans of music, but by philanthropists and educationists as well, who tell us that we are not doing our duty by the young or the struggling masses by giving them anything except the best. They disregard the personal and national element in art and roundly declare we have no right to limit the outlook of those whose destinies are in our hands. [12]

Does the same apply to us? I believe that in the long run it does apply; that, even at some immediate sacrifice of good we must develop our own culture to suit our own needs. Only in that way will art cease to be an excrescence on our life (an “extra” as they used to call it in the school bills) and will become an indispensable element in our being. But I have to admit that those who hold with the spiritual value of the best art, regardless of its origin, have a strong case. Is not a compromise possible?

The Lucullan, of course, one who holds what I may call the “commodity” theory of art, will say, “When our composers and performers at home give us something better than I can get elsewhere I will willingly pay to hear it.” What are we to say to this? I have already suggested in an earlier lecture that there is no absolute good in art. We want to know for what end it is good. The Lucullan seems to take it for an axiom that, because the music he gets from elsewhere is different from the music he finds at home, it is necessarily better. It is of course better for those who made it, but is it necessarily better for us? Here I am afraid I am again compelled to point my finger at the creative artists and ask them whether they are content to let their music be something of itself, or whether they are trying to make it as much like that which comes from outside as possible? I find that young composers both in America and in England are inclined to say that they must go to Paris or Vienna in order to learn their technique. I am not going to argue this point for a moment, but will content myself with saying that technique is not a thing that can be added to a composer’s outfit like the buttons on a suit of clothes. The technique must grow out of the desire for expression and ultimately is the discovery of the perfect balance between inspiration and realization. Gustav Holst once told me that a pupil once came to him and asked him to “give him an idiom.” He might as well have asked him to give him a new set of bones. We are too apt to forget that the style is the man.

I now see that I can no longer avoid mentioning jazz. You will tell me you are tired of jazz and that it only represents a very small part of your psychology. I think you are wrong in despising jazz, but I do not go so far as to say as some thinkers do that it has in it the seeds of great further development. But it does show this: that there is musical vitality in America which at any moment may manifest itself in some other form which has in it the elements of greatness. At all events jazz, whether you like it or not, is a purely indigenous art. No one but an American can write it or play it. Anyone who has listened to the helpless attempts of German or French bands to play jazz, or the pitiful efforts of some modern French or German composers to add a little sting to their failing inventiveness by adopting a few jazz rhythms, will realize this.

And the obverse is true. Certain attempts by American composers to make jazz “polite” by dressing it out in the symphonic style of European tradition have also proved in my opinion to be failures.

I hope you do not think that I am preaching artistic chauvinism. That purely negative attitude of mind is, I trust, a thing of the past. If the civilized world is not to come to an end we must become more and more “members one of another.” But as our body politic becomes more unified so do the duties of the individual members of that body become more, not less, defined and differentiated. Our best way of serving the common cause will be to be most ourselves. When the United States of the World becomes, as I hope it will, an established fact, those will serve that universal State best who bring into the common fund something that they and they only can bring. In 1926 Stresemann said, “The man who serves humanity best is he who rooted in his own nation develops his spiritual and moral endowments to their highest capacity, so that growing beyond the limits of his own nation he is able to give something to the whole of humanity.”

It has been suggested that in order to save its own soul every nation should institute a kind of artistic “five year plan” in accordance with which only indigenous music would be allowed for five years. In this way the people of each nation, being prevented from employing others to make music for them, would be obliged, if they wanted it, to make it for themselves. Then one of two things would happen. If there was no indigenous music to be had the art in that country would die out altogether, which in that case would be very right and proper because it would have been proved that music was not necessary to the lives of the people of that country and that it would sink to the level of a C3 nation in one of its most important means to a full life.

Or, on the other hand, being forced to make music for themselves, composers and performers would be encouraged to express themselves in terms which would voice the ideals of their fellow men. A new music would grow up which would be for that nation truly the best music and we should perhaps at last approach that consummation when art would be at the same time the treasure of the humble and the highest expression of the greatest minds.

If after the five years the foreign influence was again brought to bear, it would be acting on a strong and sturdy plant [12] and would act wholesomely as an incentive and a corrective. It would no longer stifle, it would encourage. Personally I would like to see the experiment tried, but the objections are obvious. It could be said with some show of justice, "Why condemn the present generation to a course of mediocre music in order that their descendants may find their souls?" This I think begs the question by taking it for granted that the music would be mediocre. I believe there would be some surprises in store for us. But there are other more subtle, but perhaps stronger objections. Would the nation rise to its opportunities? In those countries where the legend of foreign superiority is already strong the legend might gather strength rather than disappear when there were no means but traveller's tales of testing its authenticity. And would the composer seize the moment? He might be inclined to write what was expected of him by some clique, rather than what he genuinely felt and, when there was no real foreign music to dispute his sway, he might think it necessary to make a faithful imitation of it.

I offer no solution to the problem, but we must not imagine there is any short cut or easy road. The business of finding a nation's soul is a long and slow one at the best and a great many prophets must be slain in the course of it. Perhaps when we have slain enough prophets future generations will begin to build their tombs.

One more stray thought before I finish. I think there is no work of art which represents the spirit of a nation more [13] surely than "Die Meistersinger" of Richard Wagner. Here is no playing with local colour, but the raising to its highest power all that is best in the national consciousness of his own country. This is universal art in truth, universal because it is so intensely national. At the end of that opera Hans Sachs does not preach about art having no boundaries or loving the highest when he sees it, but says what I may slightly paraphrase thus:

"Honour your own masters;
Then even when Empires fall
Our sacred nation's art will still remain."

[13]

IX

THE INFLUENCE OF FOLK-SONG ON THE MUSIC OF THE CHURCH AND OF THE TROUBADOURS

This chapter is really rather outside my main subject which intends to deal with folk-song, only as one element of nationalism, but I have been specially asked to say a little about the influence of folk-song on the music of the church. "Surely," you may say, "you have got the order wrong, you mean the influence of the church on the folk-song. Church music which has been committed to writing and reduced to rule and measure must be the firm rock and that which is merely spoken or sung as the shifting sand."

Here is another instance of the unfortunate tendency among scholars to believe that the written words must be authoritative and oral tradition unreliable. The opposite is more often than not the case. Writing is a much more frequent cause of corruption than tradition. We can all read and write now and it is difficult for us to imagine the tenacity of memory which those possess who absolutely depend on it.

Cecil Sharp writes as follows: "To those unacquainted with the mental qualities of the folk, the process of oral [13] transmission would be accounted a very inaccurate one, the Schoolman for example, accustomed to handle and put his trust in manuscript and printed documents would look with the deepest suspicion upon evidence that rested upon evidence of unlettered persons. In this, however, he would be mistaken as all collectors of folk-products know well enough."

You may be surprised at my suggesting that the elaborate, unmetrical, aloof plain-song of the church could have ever grown out of the joyful rhythmical song of the people. Nowadays we think of the church with its music and its ritual as something at the latter end of a long tradition, but each church had to begin somewhere and had to start with a popular appeal. In the 18th century John Wesley declared that he did not want the devil to have all the pretty tunes, and in the 19th century General Booth adapted all the popular melodies of the day to the service of what Huxley called corybantic Christianity. Is it not possible that the plain-song of the church originated in the same way? Frere in the "Oxford History of Music" admits the possibility.

There can be no doubt that popular music of some kind existed long before the Christian church organized the music of its ritual. The question is, how much did the church owe to popular song? At first it was naturally bitterly opposed to popular art which the churchmen labelled as "infamous, nefarious, immodest and obscene," and Christians were forbidden to attend pagan ceremonies. But we must remember that the parish church probably stood in what would now be the public square which would be the great meeting place for the people. These pagan ceremonies with their accompanying music would be going on at the very church door making the struggle for existence between the two visible and audible to all. Now, as we know, the churchmen found it impossible to oust the pagan ceremonies. But they did the next best thing; they adapted them to their own use: if you can't defeat your enemy the only course is to take him to your bosom and hope to tame him by kindness. Thus the pagan ceremony of Yule became Christmas, the old Spring Festival became Easter, the worship of ancestors became the commemoration of saints, and so on. Surely it is impossible to believe that with these ceremonies some of the popular music connected with them did not creep in also. [13]

We have direct evidence of the effect of folk-song on the plain-song or music of the church in the history of French song. The evidence comes from a most interesting account of Charlemagne's visit to Rome in 785. About two centuries before that date Pope Gregory had made an attempt to regularize the music of the church and had made a collection of what he considered to be pure and proper church music, in what is now known as the Gregorian chant, and this was the music in use at Rome at the time of Charlemagne's visit. But in other places local tradition was too strong and there were extant several local "uses" besides the Roman or Gregorian, the chief being the Milanese or Ambrosian, the Spanish or Mozarabic, and most important for our present purpose the French or Gallican "use," each with its peculiar music. [13]

Now when Charlemagne went to Rome he took with him his French singers who performed the church services according to the Gallican use with their own melodies. Charlemagne was a great nationalist, convinced of the superiority of French art and was very sarcastic at the expense of the Roman singers. To his surprise the Romans in their turn despised the French singers and called them "ignorant fools and *rustics*." Note the word "rustic." The French music was to the Romans not harsh or unmelodious or too severe, but "rustic." In other words the Roman experts saw traces of that influence which is the bugbear to the academic mind—the folk-song.

As regards the poor French singers the story ends there. They were sent home by Charlemagne with their tails between their legs and two Roman teachers to show them the supposed pure style. But for us the romance unfolds itself like a detective story. According to Frere in the "Oxford History of Music" there appeared later in the Roman use "a good many items which must have originated elsewhere than in the Roman rite and have come into the Roman collection from outside." We may suppose that the Romans adapted something even from the despised Gallican use; it is not unknown for superior-minded people to make secret use of that which they affect to despise. [13]

Of this again we have evidence. Among the melodies to which, in the Roman rite, the psalms are chanted is one very different in character from the rest, more "tuney" if I can so describe it, more popular in character. Moreover it came to be known as the "Foreign Tune," "Tonus Peregrinus," and it is almost certain that this melody was taken by the Romans from the Gallican use. Now was this not one of the "rustic" melodies, one of those adaptations from folk-song which the Romans in Charlemagne's time so strongly disapproved of? If such a folk-song exists where should we look for it? Should we not expect to find it connected with some primitive ceremony which might be among those which the French church had adapted for their own use? Tiersot gives us the proof we need in the "Chant des Livrées," a song connected with the marriage ceremony, the melody of which suggests in its outline this very "Tonus Peregrinus."

Let me recapitulate the steps of the argument. First, here is a French folk-song. Secondly, it is connected with an ancient

custom. Thirdly, French ecclesiastical music is accused of being rustic. Fourthly, it is likely, therefore, that this music should be based on folk-song, especially on ceremonial folk-song, and lastly, the family likeness between “Le Chant des Livrées” and the “Tonus Peregrinus.”

You may think that there seems to be very little connection between the slow, solemn, long drawn out, unmetrical music of the church and the brisk, strongly accented songs of the French people, but we must remember that in plain-song as we have it now, we see the muse of the people, not as she was when she first stepped blithely out of the sunlight into the dim incense-laden atmosphere of the church, but as she is now after she has for years exchanged her parti-coloured *jupe* for the sad robe of the *religieuse*, her gay garland of flowers for the nun’s coif and the quick country dance for the slow-moving processional. We shall then realize that the same features might be scarcely recognizable in such different circumstances. [13]

Such transformations are not unknown in later times. Thomas Oliver reshaped the sprightly tune, “Where’s the mortal can resist me,” so as to make the solemn melody “Helmsley” for Wesley’s Advent hymn, “Lo, he comes.” And the English dance-tune, “Sellenger’s Round,” lost its lilt in crossing the Channel and reappears in Germany as a stately Chorale, “Valet will Ich dir Geben,” which we know so well in Bach’s great setting from the “Passion According to St. John.”

Some of the French folk-songs were proof against the church influence even though they were used in the church services. The famous “Prose de l’Ane” is a good example, though this was a definite invasion of the church from the secular world outside on a special occasion. Secular melodies naturally tended to keep their definite outline when they were set to metrical words. One of the most famous French ecclesiastical metrical melodies is the Easter Sequence [14] “O Filii et Filiae.” Now Easter suggests at once the Spring Festival. Is there any folk-song connected with that Festival to which this tune can be referred? Again Tiersot gives us the proof in two French May-day folk-songs which have a distinct likeness to the melody “O Filii.” (“Trimouset” and “Voici venir le joli mois.”)

These two songs are both called “Chansons de Quête” and were sung, at all events till quite lately, by young men and women going out to get their “étrennes” for the 1st of May. The very word “Trimouset” is of obscure Celtic origin and points to some very primitive ceremony.

You will notice that it is in the beginnings and endings of the tunes that we find most likeness to the church melody. This is just what we should expect. The church was trying to attract people to its new religion. If you want to give people something new, start with what they are accustomed to, then having startled them with your new notions let them down gently at the end with the idea that what you had said is not so very new after all.

Having now established the possibility of folk-song affecting church music let us see how other churches were influenced.

Luther and his followers borrowed largely; partly from the melodies of the Roman church, but chiefly from secular tunes. It became the fashion to make what was known as a “spiritual parody” of the words of a secular song and to sing [14] these words to the same tune as the original. Böhme in his “Altdeutsches Liederbuch” gives a list of over 250 of these word transpositions; thus “Susanna will’st du mit” became “Du Sündrin willst du mit.” “Wach auf mein Herzens Schöne, zart allerliebste mein” became “Wach auf mein Herz und Schöne, du christenliebe Schaar.”

The two most famous of these spiritual parodies have come down to us in the form of the well known hymn tunes, “The Passion Choral” and “Innsbruck.” The “Passion Choral” was a secular love song “Mein G’müth ist mir verwirret.” Böhme is of the opinion that this was not a folk-song, but was composed by Hans Leo Hasler in 1601. But to my mind Hasler’s version has all the appearance of a folk-song and it is quite possible that Hasler only arranged it. Such things were quite usual in those days before the modern craze for personality set in. This tune had, by Bach’s time, been adapted to Gerhardt’s Passion hymn, “O Haupt voll Blut und Wunden,” or as Robert Bridges has it, “O Sacred Head sore wounded.” Bach uses this tune over and over again, but you will have noticed he uses a simplified form of the melody. The original was a solo song. The version Bach uses was for massed, or as we should now say, for community singing; hence the simplifications. Thus a Choral can evolve like a folk-song, adapting itself to new uses and new circumstances, surviving in that version which is the fittest for its purpose. [14]

The tune which we know as “Innsbruck” is now, I believe, sung in Germany to the words “Nun ruhen alle Wälder”; in the Bridges version “The duteous day now closeth.” This tune is undoubtedly adapted from a secular folk-song, “Innsbruck Ich muss dich lassen,” one of the numerous class of “farewell” songs popular in medieval Germany when the apprentice or workman might be leaving his native city for ever. We first know of it, with its secular words, in a version harmonized by Heinrich Izaak. The words were later paraphrased for church use as “Ach Welt Ich muss dich lassen” and later still adapted to yet other words. In the later version of the tune we find the simplifying process again at work. For “community” purposes the long melisma at the end of the tune which is such a common feature in German folk-song had to disappear and give place to a plain ending. This was the version that Bach knew, and he in his turn ornamented this plain cadence.

Both Bach and Mozart are reported to have said that they would have rather invented this tune than any of their own compositions.

If we turn to the Genevan Psalter of Calvin, we find the same story. When Clément Marot translated some of the psalms into French verse his versions caught the fancy of the young exquisites at the court of François I and they sang them to well-known ballad-tunes. Each had his favourite, The Dauphin had his, Catharine de’ Medici had hers and even Diane de Poitiers is said to have sung the “De Profundis” to the melody of “Baisez moi donc beau Sire.” [14]

The Genevan Psalter as you doubtless know originated in these metrical versions of Marot. The origin of the tunes is unknown. We still find many of them attributed to Goudimel but all he did was to harmonize them. Another supposed author is Greiter, but he, it has been proved, was no more than a collector and adapter. We can find the solution I think in a sentence from Sir Richard Terry’s pamphlet on the Strasburg Psalter of 1539. He writes, “The bulk of the tunes in this Psalter have not been traced to any known source. [This] is not surprising if we remember that in the 16th Century the sharp line of demarcation between sacred and secular music did not exist.... Just as the courtiers of François I sang Marot’s psalms to any popular air that took their fancy, so the Huguenots adapted to their vernacular psalms and canticles tunes that were already familiar.... In the task of collecting tunes for the early metrical psalters all was fish that came to the compiler’s net.... Just as the Lutheran Choral has preserved for us secular tunes of the moment which have long since died out at their original source, so has this book preserved for us a number of noble tunes which must have been popular in their day, but which now survive only as settings to Calvin’s psalms.”

The Genevan Psalter contains many beautiful tunes; the best known to us probably are the following two; that which is known in England and America as “The Old Hundredth” still, I am sorry to say, occasionally attributed to Goudimel, and a psalm-tune which is known to us as “The Old 113th.” The “Old Hundredth” comes from the Genevan Psalter of 1551 and was there set, not to the 100th but to the 134th psalm. This tune is undoubtedly derived from a folk-tune, or rather is likely to be a synthesis of more than one. The opening phrase occurs in other Lutheran Chorals and at least one other English psalm-tune. There are several secular folk-tunes in which phrases very like the “Old Hundredth” occur. Douen, I think, quotes a French love-song in this connection and Böhme has a Netherlandish Volkslied (“Altdeutsches Liederbuch” (103)) which is extraordinarily similar. This tune was printed in the “Souterliedekens” in 1540. As we saw in the case of “Innsbruck” the melismatic cadences especially at the ends of the first and last lines have been simplified in the psalm-tune for the purposes of massed singing. [14]

The “Old 113th” appears as a psalm-tune in the Strasburg Psalter of 1539. We have no external proof that it is derived from a folk-song, but the internal evidence is very strong, the nature of the tune itself and the fact that several of its phrases appear in other tunes. The well-known Easter hymn, “Lasst uns erfreuen,” which we first know of in the Cologne Hymn Book of 1623 can hardly be anything else than an adaptation to different words of some source common to the two tunes. [14]

Whether this tune was popular in origin or not, it has all the history of a folk-song, adapting itself to different words and different moods, showing slight variants in detail, and, finally, receiving illumination at the hands of J. S. Bach. In the Strasburg Psalter it was set to Psalm 36, “My heart sheweth me the wickedness of the ungodly,” but later it was used to Psalm 68, “Let God arise,” or in the French metrical version, “Que Dieu se montre seulement.”

In this guise it became known as the “Battle-hymn of the Huguenots” and was to them what “Ein’ feste Burg” was to the

Lutherans. The tune also became known in Germany, but changed its character from the martial to the penitential, being set to the words of Sebaldus Heyden's hymn, "O Mensch beweine," and in this version forms a basis of the great chorus at the end of the first part of Bach's "St. Matthew Passion" and also of one of his most beautiful choral Preludes. The tune also came to England where it was set in rather a distorted form to fit a new metre to the 113th psalm. It is said to have been John Wesley's favourite tune.

It will be seen from these examples that even written music can, within limitations, evolve like the folk-song. Those who pin their faith on the written word call these changes deteriorations. There are some people who are always after the *earliest* version of a tune and call every later change "corruption." But the earliest version is by no means always the best; the voice of the people is often on the side of the angels and we can often trace a steady evolution until the tune reaches its climax illumined by the genius of a Bach. The best example I know is the "Ein feste Burg" which, if the earliest version is really what Martin Luther played on his flute to his friend Walther, is not much to be proud of. It is not until it has passed through generations of German congregations and has been glorified by Bach's harmony, that we realize its magnificence. [14]

I sometimes wonder if we could trace this process of evolution through all music; if there is for composers a fixed stock of root ideas which each can make his own and use for his own purposes, good, bad and indifferent. We could, for instance, perhaps imagine a melodic germ originating in the *Sing-spielen* of J. A. Hiller or one of his contemporaries, passing on through the early 19th century ballad writers, lit up by the genius of Weber, finding its climax in Wagner, gradually deteriorating in the minds of Richard Strauss and his followers, until it finally finds an unhonoured grave in the compositions of some 20th century conservatoire student.

In England and Scotland in Elizabethan times we find "Ghostly parodies," as they were called, of such popular ballads as "Go from my window" and "John, come kiss me now." So we may suppose that the church in England was not averse to adapting secular music for her use. In the English psalters the names of composers of the tunes are not given, but only of those who harmonized them; but several of the tunes have local names, the "Winchester" tune, the "Windsor" tune, the "Glastonbury" tune and so on. Why were these names given? May they not have been adaptations of folk-songs sung in those districts? This is, of course, merely a suggestion, but as far as I know, no other explanation has yet been given of these names. [14]

I need not trace the secular influence any further; but in the 19th Century it seems to have died out in the face of clerical disapproval. The tune "Helmsley" was divorced from "Lo, He comes" in the early editions of "Hymns Ancient and Modern," and in one quite modern hymnal, the Editor tells us with conscious pride that there are no folk-songs in his collection. Perhaps we can find an explanation of this attitude from the following from Dyson's "Progress of Music." Commenting on the modern relation of church and people he writes, "Our churches are lovingly cared for, they are far cleaner and quieter and more decorous than our ancestors would have deemed possible, or even desirable.... We preserve with meticulous care everything of historic or local significance, everything that is, except the supreme historic fact, that the church was once the unchallenged centre and meeting place of the whole local community.... Our consecrated gardens may now be trim because the present world passes them by.... A church can be very peaceful when it is empty."

Transcriber's Notes to the Electronic Edition

- The HTML version is considered definitive.
- In the text version, musical examples are omitted (although any titles and copyright notices remain.)
- In the text version, short footnotes, originally at the foot of the page, are included inline in square brackets: *e.g.*, [footnote: See page 12.]
- In the text version, short musical snippets are replaced by textual descriptions in curly brackets: *e.g.*, {quarter note}.
- Duplicate chapter headings were omitted from the e-text.
- The HTML version contains links to MIDI files for musical examples. To play these files from a browser, click on

the “[play]” link underneath the score.

[The end of *National Music* by Ralph Vaughan Williams]