

## Choral Music

Original article

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### British Choral Music at the Turn of the 19th and 20th Centuries: the Phenomenon of the English Musical Renaissance\*

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**Abstract.** The article is devoted to the phenomenon of the English musical renaissance, little studied in Russian musicology — a movement under which presently the formation of the British national compositional school of the turn of the 19th and 20th centuries is comprehended. The author turns to the musical heritage of the leading composers of that period — Alexander MacKenzie, Hubert Parry, Charles Stanford and Sir Edward Elgar — with the aim of demonstrating the sources of the English musical renaissance and determining, what significance was exerted by the choral heritage by its main representatives on the subsequent evolution of choral music in Great Britain. Among the chief factors which influenced the English musical renaissance, the following are highlighted: the development of the choral festival movement, the establishment of the Royal College of Music, the directedness of the British professional education on the formation of the national school of composition, as well as Parry's and Stanford's active work in musical criticism and research. The peculiarities of the choral writing of each of the aforementioned composers are analyzed on the example of the most well-known works in the genres of the cantata and the oratorio. The author brings to light the general tendencies in the organization of the choral texture and timbre and the unique techniques the discovery of which is capable of making adjustments to the existent perceptions about the evolution of the choral music of the early 20th century. In particular, study of Elgar's choral works makes it possible to confirm the composer's interest in the textural and timbral techniques typical for the composers of the first and the second avant-garde in Europe, such as diagonal texture and non-standard unisons. The author's conclusions make it possible to form a perception of the works by the composers of the "first renaissance trio" (Parry, Stanford, MacKenzie) and their younger contemporary Elgar as the greatest impulse of the formation of 20th century British choral music, which in the second half of the century became among the most on demand in world performance.

**Keywords:** English musical renaissance, choral music of Great Britain, Hubert Parry, Charles Stanford, Alexander MacKenzie, Edward Elgar, choral textures, vocal timbral writing

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## Хоровая музыка

Original article

### Британская хоровая музыка на рубеже XIX и XX веков: феномен английского музыкального ренессанса

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**Аннотация.** Статья посвящена малоизученному в российском музыкознании феномену английского музыкального ренессанса — явлению, под которым сегодня понимается становление британской национальной композиторской школы на рубеже XIX и XX веков. Автор обращается к наследию ведущих композиторов этого периода — Александра Маккензи, Хьюберта Пэрри, Чарльза Стэнфорда и Эдварда Элгара — с целью выявления истоков английского музыкального возрождения и определения, какое значение оказало хоровое творчество основных его представителей на последующую эволюцию хоровой музыки Великобритании. Среди основных факторов, повлиявших на английский музыкальный ренессанс, выделены: развитие хорового фестивального движения, открытие Королевского колледжа музыки, нацеленность профессионального образования Великобритании на становление национальной композиторской школы, активная музыкально-критическая и исследовательская деятельность Пэрри и Стэнфорда. Анализируются особенности хорового письма каждого из вышеназванных композиторов на примере наиболее известных сочинений кантатно-ораториального жанра. Выявляются как общие тенденции в организации хоровой фактуры и тембрики, так и уникальные приёмы, обнаружение которых способно скорректировать имеющиеся представления об эволюции хоровой музыки начала XX века. В частности, изучение хоровых сочинений Элгара позволяет установить интерес композитора к фактурным и тембровым приёмам, типичным для композиторов первого и второго авангарда в Европе, — диагональной фактуре, нестандартным унисонам и др. Выводы автора позволяют сформировать представление о творчестве композиторов «первой ренессансной тройки» (Пэрри, Стэнфорд, Маккензи) и их младшего современника Элгара как о важнейшем импульсе становления британской хоровой музыки XX века, ставшей во второй половине столетия одной из наиболее востребованных в мировом исполнительстве.

**Ключевые слова:** английский музыкальный ренессанс, хоровая музыка Великобритании, Хьюберт Пэрри, Чарльз Стэнфорд, Александр Маккензи, Эдвард Элгар, хоровая фактура, вокальная тембрика

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In 20th century choral music the composers of the United Kingdom hold a very significant position. After a lengthy period of silence, which manifested itself in a predominant creation of musical works which had not received any substantial dissemination beyond the confines of the country, towards the end of the next-to-last century the British masters have achieved fame of creators of some of the most performed choral compositions not only in Europe, but also throughout the entire world. The explanation of this remarkable success of the choral music of the United Kingdom is enclosed in the nature of the phenomenon which in musicology outside of Russia has received the appellation of the English musical renaissance. The aim of the present article is to disclose of the sources of the present phenomenon, as well as to determine that significance which choral music by the chief representatives of the English musical renaissance on the subsequent development of British choral music.

As Robert Stradling and Marion Hughes assert, for the first time the word combination “English musical renaissance” in regards to the music of Alexander Mackenzie, Hubert Parry and Charles Stanford was used in the lecture presented

by Morton Latham<sup>1</sup> in Cambridge in 1888.<sup>2</sup> The fact that in 1902 the conception of the English musical renaissance also became focal for John Alexander Fuller Maitland’s authoritative monograph *English Music in the 19th Century*<sup>3</sup> vividly testifies to the fact that both the term and the content inserted into it has become common for British musicology.

Why is it that particularly the works of the aforementioned composers — MacKenzie, Parry and Stanford — were associated with the beginning of a new stage in the development not only of choral music, but also, — to interpret it more broadly, — all music in the United Kingdom? Among the possible reasons, let us highlight three most likely ones. First of all, the composers listed above were directly connected with the academic musical education offered by the Royal Academy of Music (MacKenzie) and the Royal College of Music (Parry and Stanford). Second, all of them were active participants of choral festivals in Great Britain for which the greater part of their cantatas and oratorios was written. And, third, quite symbolic is the fact that each of them presented a portion of the British Empire characterized by a bright musical individuality according to the place of his birth: Parry represented England, Stanford

<sup>1</sup> Morton Latham (1843–1931) — British composer, musicologist and secretary of the London Bach Chorus.

<sup>2</sup> Stradling R., Hughes M. *The English Musical Renaissance 1860–1940: Construction and Deconstruction*. London: Routledge, 1993. P. 34.

<sup>3</sup> Fuller Maitland J. A. *English Music in the 19th Century*. London: Grant Richards, 1902. 319 p.

— Ireland and MacKenzie — Scotland, thereby endowing the phenomenon of the English musical renaissance with the meaning of a large-scale and consistent entity. The perception of Parry, Stanford and MacKenzie as those who are more “responsible” for the English musical renaissance remains characteristic for present-day musicology in other countries as well. Let us quote Niall O’Loughlin: “It would not be an exaggeration to say that Stanford, Parry and MacKenzie were to a considerable degree responsible for the revivification of the music of the British Isles.”<sup>4</sup>

There is no one single opinion, starting from what event it becomes necessary to count the history of the musical renaissance in the United Kingdom. Ernest Walker in his monograph *A History of Music in England* suggested to choose as the reference point the date of September 7, 1880, when the premiere of Parry’s *Music to Scenes from Percy Bysshe Shelley’s Lyrical Drama ‘Prometheus Unbound.’*<sup>5</sup> On the other hand, Duncan James Barker, in reference to the words of Sir Edward Elgar<sup>6</sup> about the great significant value of MacKenzie’s cantata *The Bride* suggests counting the history of the musical renaissance from the premiere of this cantata in 1881. But even we do not set for ourselves the goal of finding the date with which most researchers would agree,

analysis of the existent literature makes it possible for us to assert that the 1880s in British musicology are associated with an unprecedented ascendancy of national choral music.

We shall make the attempt at delving into the sources of the English musical renaissance. One of them was the founding and the effusive development in the 1880s of the Royal College of Music. Despite the fact that specialized academic musical education existed in Great Britain since 1822, i.e., since the year of the founding of the Royal Academy of Music, it was particularly the Royal College of Music which became the crucial place of gathering for outstanding pedagogues and scholars. These include the founder of the College, Sir George Grove (1820–1900) — the author and compiler of the famous encyclopedia, *The Grove Dictionary of Music and Musicians*, his successor, composer and musicologist Sir Hubert Parry (1848–1918), who is also the author of a considerable number of articles in the Grove Dictionary, as well as Sir Charles Villiers Stanford (1852–1924), the most authoritative among the composition pedagogues at the turn of the 19th and the 20th centuries, whose students include many well-known British composers — Ralph Vaughan Williams, Gustav Holst, George Dyson, Arthur Bliss, Herbert Howells and others. The predominating

<sup>4</sup> O’Loughlin N. In the Shadow of Parry, Stanford and Mackenzie: Musical Composition Studies in the Principal London Conservatories from 1918 to 1945. *Konservatoriji: profesionalizacija in specializacija glasbenega dela [The Conservatories: Professionalisation and Specialisation of Musical Activity]*. Založba Univerze Na Primorskem, Festival Ljubljana, 2020. P. 93. DOI: 10.26493/978-961-7055-86-3.87-104

<sup>5</sup> Walker E. *A History of Music in England*. Oxford: At the Clarendon Press, 1907. P. 286.

<sup>6</sup> “Elgar’s cantata *The Bride* became a wonderful example of choral and orchestral writing, received an enthusiastic welcome and became the first composition in a lengthy set of large-scale works” (Barker D. J. *The Music of Sir Alexander Campbell Mackenzie (1847–1935): A Critical Study*. A Thesis Submitted for the Degree of Doctor of Philosophy (Ph.D.). Durham: University of Durham, 1999. P. 108).

interest in the British musical tradition, also expressed in the study of compositions pertaining to early music — from Thomas Tallis to Henry Purcell, as well as the attention towards the national British folk music, unlike the predominating studies of continental European music at the Royal Academy of Music, led to the creation of an entire set of compositions in which English, Scottish and Irish melodicism became organically conjoined with the principles of compositions typical of such European romanticist composers as Wagner, Mendelssohn and Brahms.

The combination of the tonal-harmonic symphonic principles typical for German romanticism with the modal-intonational and textural peculiarities of British music is also characteristic of other works by Parry and his contemporaries. It suffices to remember the final fugue *Put off, o Jerusalem* from the oratorio *Judith* (1888), in which the diatonic theme with a constantly varying intonational profile combines in concordance with the rich romantic harmony and the diversity of orchestral textures. Our attention is also drawn by the “pockets” of chordal texture characteristic of the musical compositions of Purcell and Handel, designed not as much to bring in the textural contrast as much as to demonstrate a culmination of the preceding contrapuntal section. Also interesting is the manifestation of the technique so typical for Handel’s fugues — the structure of the texture of the middle sections on the basis of expounding the separate choral parts with their subsequent unification into an overall imitative polyphonic texture (Example No. 1).

The successive inclusion of the choral parts with the gradual formation of a chord, one of the most actively used techniques in choral music of the first half of the 20th century (let us remember the final chorus of

Schoenberg’s *Gurre-Lieder*), is also typical for other works by Parry, for example, his *Prometheus Unbound* (Example No. 2).

Here we also encounter another peculiarity of choral writing characteristic of Parry — the inclusion of fragments of the *a cappella* choral sound, creating timbral contrast, into the vocal-orchestral texture. This technique is also characteristic for Parry’s ode *The Glories of Our Blood and State* (1885).

In comparison with Parry’s oratorios, most of the compositions by Alexander Campbell Mackenzie (1847–1935) in the genres of the cantata and the oratorio are distinguished by a simplicity of textural and tonal-harmonic solutions. In the cantatas *The Bride*, *The Story of Sayid* and *The Witch’s Daughter* there is a predominance

Example No. 1

Hubert Parry. *Judith*.  
Finale, mm. 248–253

Musical score for Example No. 1, showing vocal lines and piano accompaniment. The vocal lines include the lyrics: "Re-joic-ing in the re-bring-eth Thy peo-ple ex-alt-ed with glo-ry." The piano part features a complex, rhythmic accompaniment with many beamed notes.

Example No. 2

Hubert Parry. *Prometheus Unbound*.  
Introduction, mm. 263–265

Musical score for Example No. 2, showing vocal lines and piano accompaniment. The vocal lines include the lyrics: "come, come! Oh, come, come! Oh, come, come! Oh, come, come!" The piano part features a complex, rhythmic accompaniment with many beamed notes and dynamic markings like *f cresc.* and *ff*.

of presentation of melodies in octaves, as well as chordal texture, while canonic constructions are almost entirely absent. These compositions are greatly contrasted by the thickset saturating contrapuntal texture of the composer's two oratorios — *The Rose of Sharon* and *Bethlehem*. We shall pay special attention to the first of them, which is set to a text by Jim Bennett inspired by the Biblical “Song of Songs.” In his libretto, Bennett unified eight chapters of the original text into four main movements (*Separation, Temptation, Victory and Reunion*), which, according to Barker, is connected with an adherence to the fashion of that time (one of the most popular genres of that time was the operetta, which usually consisted of four acts).<sup>7</sup> Each of these movements contains polyphonic culminations: the fugato *Fifty Mighty Men* (the first movement), the fugue *For the Lord is Good* and the canon *God Save the King* (the second movement), the canon *Art Thou so Simple* (the third movement), and a mirror canon *Which is in the Midst of the Paradise* (the fourth movement).

Such a striking distinction of *The Rose of Sharon* and *Bethlehem* from the composer's other vocal-orchestral works may be explained by the genre-related solution of the compositions. In his dissertation devoted to MacKenzie's musical heritage, Barker classifies the composers' works written in the genres of the cantata and the oratorio into four main groups<sup>8</sup>:

1) oratorios: *The Rose of Sharon* (1884), *Bethlehem* (1894);

2) dramatic cantatas: *Jason* (1882), *The Story of Sayid* (1886) and *The Sun-God's Return* (1910);

3) non-dramatic cantatas with soloists: *The Bride* (1881), *The Witch's Daughter* (1904);

4) the “choral” cantatas: *Veni Creator Spiritus* (1891).

A comparison of the works within the respective genre-related groups makes it possible to see the unity of their textural solutions. Thus, in the dramatic and non-dramatic cantatas the foundational types of textural statement of the choruses are monophony (statements in unison and in octaves) and chordal texture, which is connected, first of all, with a maximal closeness of these genres to works pertaining to the musical theater, for the dramaturgy of which the definitive meaning is held by the unfolding of the plotline, which also presumes an ultimate clarity and laconicism of the vocal stanzas. At the same time, the oratorio as a genre connected with definite historical parallels (similar to Handel's oratorios) in MacKenzie's works are associated with the significant role of the imitational contrapuntal forms — the extensive embellished and canonic fragments. An important role is played by counterpoint in the choral (plotless) cantatas, as well: one of the vivid examples is the polyphonic *Veni Creator Spiritus*, created for the Birmingham festival, which took place in 1891.

A distinctive place among the works by the “first renaissance trio” is held by Sir Charles Stanford's compositions written in the genres of cantata and oratorio. The fact that these works had been disseminated much less than those by Parry and MacKenzie is probably due to the composer's fascination for large-scale

<sup>7</sup> Barker D. J. Op. cit. P. 122.

<sup>8</sup> Ibid. P. 105.



contemporary, Vaughn-Williams, seeming to answer this question, states in one of his interviews: “The national English style must be formed on the basis of the individual style of English musicians. Until our composers will not write music which they really like most of all, without any hind thoughts, until then we shall not have a true English musical school.”<sup>10</sup>

Besides basing themselves on the classical and contemporary examples of British literature, the composers of the English musical renaissance found the connection with the great past of British music to be equally significant. To a considerable degree, the musical works of Parry, MacKenzie and Stanford have established the tradition of the correspondence in terms of ideas and musical techniques with the works of the British classics, which likewise became characteristic to the subsequent generations of English composers. It can even be found in the works of composers whose musical languages are quite radical. One striking example of this is the case of Elisabeth Lutyens, who actively utilized the resources of serial dodecaphony. As Yulia Agisheva writes: “One of the most exciting moments associated with the name Lutyens in the history of music is that the composer claimed to have invented a new method herself (!) owing to her interest in music of the 16th–17th centuries. This happened before she became acquainted with the music of the Second Viennese School representatives. The composer stated that Henry Purcell’s instrumental fantasies played a key role in this.” [2, p. 158] The accentuation of the close connections between the past and

the present of English music manifests itself not only in Parry’s and Stanford’s musical works, but also in their writings in the sphere of music criticism. Both of them wrote articles, monographs and tutorial works in which the English musical tradition demonstrates itself as a part of the overall European academic music. In this connection, it is possible to mention Parry’s works: *Studies of Great Composers* (1886), *The Evolution of the Art of Music* (1896), the third volume of the large-scale edition *The Oxford History of Music* devoted to 18th century music, Stanford’s critical articles, frequently published in the journals *National Review*, *Cambridge Review*, *Musical Quarterly*, and *Music and Letters*, as well as the monograph *Music in Beginning School* (1890), in which the composer draws our attention to the significance of inclusion of some of the best examples of music from Great Britain in programs of the school teaching curriculum. Such a commitment to the principles of championing the national aims in development of the arts of composition and performance, as well as the musical-aesthetic upbringing of children was stipulated by that attitude towards professional music which prevailed in British society during the second half of the 19th century. Thus, Hughes and Stradling note that “Victorian England was generally of a modest attitude towards the art of music <...> music was perceived by them as an alien phenomenon: the opinion was established that music was created by foreigners, and they were the ones who possessed the monopoly over their performance.”<sup>11</sup>

<sup>10</sup> Saylor E. *Vaughan Williams*. Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2022. P. 28.

<sup>11</sup> Stradling R., Hughes M. Op. cit., pp. 3–4.



Moreover, the wish to encourage the revival of the national academic art of music did not hamper the active mastery, on the part of Parry, Stanford and MacKenzie, of the artistic experience of composers outside of Great Britain, particularly that of German composers. In many ways this was also influenced by the understanding of the necessity to learn from the best examples of music of their own time period, as well as the perception on the part of German composers as the most qualified bearers of systemic knowledge in the sphere of music theory and compositional technique. It is not by chance that both MacKenzie and Stanford studied composition in Germany — MacKenzie studied with August Bartel and Eduard Stein in Sondershausen, Stanford studied in Leipzig with Carl (Heinrich Carsten) Reinecke,<sup>12</sup> — while Parry, as Rachel Alessio<sup>13</sup> affirms, wished to study with Brahms, however, subsequently, was compelled to limit himself with a brief period of study in Stuttgart with Henry Hugo Pierson, a German composer of British descent.

Of course, the study of the finest examples of music by Schumann, Mendelssohn, Brahms, Wagner and Liszt could not do otherwise but influence the choral works by the British composers who were stylistically close to them. However, the latter demonstrate, along with the peculiarities of the textural and tonal-harmonic language, typical for German Romanticism, a tendency

to utilize intonations of folk songs, to implement modal-harmonic particularities typical for historical English odes, carols and anthems, which can be explained by the orientation on the part of most of the compositions towards a concrete auditorium — the performers and audiences of British choral festivals, the most famous of which were:

a) The Three Choirs Festival, which had been organized starting from 1715 successively in three cities Hereford, Cloucester and Worcester; here the premieres of MacKenzie's cantata *The Bride* and Parry's oratorio *Job* were held;

b) The Birmingham Triennial Music Festival, established in 1784; at this festival the premieres of Stanford's oratorios *The Three Holy Children* and *Eden*, and Parry's oratorio *King Saul* were held;

c) The Leeds Festival, which was organized for almost 130 years (from 1858 to 1985) with the periodicity of once every three years in Leeds; at the Leeds Festival the public was introduced for the first time to MacKenzie's cantatas *The Story of Sayid* and *The Witch's Daughter* and Stanford's cantata *Songs of the Fleet*.

Such peculiar features of the choral scores of the aforementioned compositions in the genres of the cantata and the oratorio as the prevalence of chordal textures, a large amount of examples of melodic statements in unisons and octaves, as well as the

<sup>12</sup> The stylistic connection of Stanford's compositions with the German choral works of the Romantic Era also served as the reason of the labelling of Stanford, as frequently encountered in literature, "as the British Brahms" (see: Alwes Ch. L. *A History of Western Choral Music*. Vol. 2. NY: Oxford University Press, 2016. P. 321).

<sup>13</sup> Let us cite Alessio's work: "He [Parry. — A. R.] even applied to study with Brahms himself, however the opportunity did not present itself successful." (Alessio R. *A Choral Conductor's Guide: Anton Bruckner 'Trösterin Musik,' Charles Hubert Hastings Parry 'Six Modern Lyrics,' Dan Forrest 'You Are the Music,' Pärt Uusberg 'Muusika,' Ron Nelson 'Proclaim This Day for Music.'* San Diego: Point Loma Nazarene University, 2017. P. 12.)

frequently encountered aspiration to begin and end compositions by means of unisons and octaves in the choral voices reflect the socially inclusive atmosphere of the British choral festivals, which primarily brought together lovers of choral singing. However, it may be said with certitude that the evolution of the amateur and professional choral performance, which is closely connected with the festival events in Great Britain, presented another important source for the English musical renaissance. When studying in chronological order the scores of the cantatas and oratorios composed at the turn of the 19th and 20th centuries, we can also notice the complex textures created by increasing the number of embellished sections, the saturations of harmony by means of complex chromatic sonorities, as well as the active incorporation of the extreme ranges of choral voices. All of this bears witness to the fact that the development of choral festivals led not only to an increase of the amount of ensembles of performers, but also to the growth of their professional levels, which allowed composers to create more and more perfect examples of compositions in the genres of cantata and oratorio.

Let us summarize all the observations presented earlier by listing the main sources of the English musical renaissance:

- the development of British choral festivals, along with their reorientation on performance of compositions in the genre of cantatas and oratorios on the part of contemporary national composers;

- the activities of the Royal College of Music, focused on study of the musical heritage of Great Britain in educational courses, as well as scholarly and artistic projects;

- the directedness of professional education in Great Britain on the formation of a national school of music composition;

- the activities in the sphere of music criticism on the part of the late 19th and early 20th century composers with the statement in articles, monographs and tutorial editions of the question about the place and the role of British composers in the development of European music as the most important issue of discussion.

The fluorescence of the choral festival movement in conjunction with the stress of professional performance and education on performance and study of British music created the conditions for the appearance of the musical compositions of Sir Edward Elgar (1857–1934) — the first significant British composer of the turn of the 19th and the 20th centuries whose musical legacy has been accepted far away beyond the confines of his country and virtually became the culmination of the English musical renaissance. Most of the premieres of Elgar's vocal-orchestral compositions, as well as those by his contemporaries, took place within the framework of the most significant English choral festivals:

- the symphony for chorus and orchestra *The Black Knight* — at the Three Choirs Festival (Worcester, 1893);

- the oratorio *The Light of Life* — at the Three Choirs Festival (Worcester, 1896);

- the cantata *Caractacus* — at The Leeds Festival (1898);

- the oratorio *The Dream of Gerontius* — at The Birmingham Triennial Musical Festival (1900);

- the oratorio *The Apostles* — at the Birmingham Triennial Music Festival (1903);

- the oratorio *The Kingdom* — at the Birmingham Triennial Music Festival (1906);

- the ode *The Music Makers* — at the Birmingham Triennial Music Festival (1912);

– the ode *The Spirit of England* — at the Birmingham Triennial Music Festival (1917).

Already in Elgar's first choral oeuvres it is possible to observe such a characteristic trait of the composer's writing as "counterpoint of articulation" — the simultaneous combination of diverse traits in the choral parts. In the middle section of the piece *My Love Dwelt in a Northern Land* (1889–1890) from the cycle *Three Part-Songs* (opus 18) the composer delineates in the choral fabric two independent strata diverse in their execution of strokes: the soprano and first tenor parts sing a melodic line *legato* against the background of recitation carried out *staccato* in performance by the alto, second tenor and first bass parts. A more complex variant of differentiation of strokes are found by us in the second scene of the choral symphony *The Black Knight*. Elgar combines here sounds performed *staccato* (in the basses and altos), tenuto (in the tenors) and *legato* (in the soprano) (Example No. 4).

Another no less characteristic technique of Elgar's choral writing is the succession of vocal-orchestral sounds with chorus without orchestral accompanying (*The Black Knight*, *Scenes from the Saga of King*

*Olaf*, *The Apostles*, *The Music Makers*). As a rule, the a cappella choral fragments are short in their duration: the composer uses such a succession as the brilliant technique of contrast, at the same time, without complicating the goals of preserving the clarity of the choral harmony.

Let us also turn our attention to the special type of exposition, which cannot be found in the scores of Elgar's predecessors or elder contemporaries. In the fifth number of *Scenes from the Saga of King Olaf* we see for the first time an example of diagonal texture connected with a sequential transfer of the pitches of the melody from the lower choral parts to the higher. At the same time, we are referring not only to the allotment of the pitches of a single horizontal line between the various choral parts, but also a supple timbral recoloring of the melody by means of operating with unisons of the adjoining parts. Such a form of tone organization would later become widespread as the result of Arnold Schoenberg's and Anton Webern's *Klangfarbenmelodie* technique in the works written by composers of the first avant-garde and, even to a greater degree, of the second avant-garde movement (Examples No. 5a, 5b). It must be noticed here that the conclusion regarding Elgar's indirect

Example No. 4

Edward Elgar. *The Black Knight*.  
Scene 2, mm. 64–66

Musical score for Example No. 4, showing vocal parts and piano accompaniment. The score is in G major and 4/4 time. It features a soprano line with a melodic line and a recitative line, and a piano accompaniment. The lyrics are: "When he rode in - to the lists, The arch of heav'n grew black, grew black, arch of heav'n, the... arch of heav'n grew black, grew black, rode in - to the lists, The arch of heav'n grew black, grew black." The tempo is marked *cres. molto* and the dynamics range from *f* to *fz*.

Example No. 5a

Edward Elgar. *Scenes from the Saga of King Olaf*. No. 5, mm. 269–271

Musical score for Example No. 5a, showing vocal parts and piano accompaniment. The score is in G major and 4/4 time. It features a soprano line with a melodic line and a recitative line, and a piano accompaniment. The lyrics are: "A - thwart the north - ern sky, A - As leap the lights of win - ter, A - loop the lights of win - ter, win - ter." The tempo is marked *cres.* and the dynamics range from *f* to *fz*.

Example No. 5b

Luigi Nono. *Liebeslied*. Mm. 11–15



the polyphonic lines moving in a contrapuntal manner may be presented both by separate choral parts, as well as their unisons. Of special interest is the unification into unison of unconventional voices with the contrasting data of tessitura-related

connection with musical modernism is also arrived at by Oliver Chandler, who analyzed the composer's works for violin and piano. [3, pp. 28–29]

All the particular features of Elgar's choral writing are adjacent with more traditional varieties of textures familiar from the works of the composer's elder contemporaries — monophony, chordal exposition by means of fragments of imitational-contrapuntal organization. To a certain degree, it could be said that Elgar was able not only to synthesize the artistic experiences of Parry, MacKenzie and Stanford, but also to bring out the development of English choral music onto a new stage. This is testified by the oratorio *The Dream of Gerontius* (1900). Having conjoined Parry's and MacKenzie's experience at creating large-scale contrapuntal choral episodes with an interest in monochordal structures, typical for Stanford, Elgar composed an oratorio which, as Michael Kennedy writes, became "as popular among British choral societies as *Messiah* and *Elijah*."<sup>14</sup> In the canonic and embellished sections, the composer utilizes the choral resources rather freely:

intensities. Such an example can be discovered by us in the second movement of the oratorio, in the canon *O Loving Wisdom of Our God*, where the polyphonic line is performed in unison by the tenor and alto parts (Example No. 6).

Our attention is also drawn by the composer's freedom in the formation of various choral combinations. For example, the finale of the second movement makes use of a triple combination formed by a female monophonic vocal texture (sopranos

Example No. 6

Edward Elgar. *The Dream of Gerontius*. 2nd Movement, f. 77



<sup>14</sup> Kennedy M. Elgar, Sir Edward William, baronet. *Oxford Dictionary of National Biography*. DOI: 10.1093/ref:odnb/32988

+ altos), a small chorus (semi-chorus), the soprano part (sopranos 1 + sopranos 2) and an incomplete mixed ensemble (altos + tenors + basses).

Such a textural mobility corresponds to a certain degree with the tendencies of development of choral music on the Continent. In particular, during that same period Arnold Schoenberg works with unisons of altos and tenors, with various monochordal verticals different in the combinations of parts (it suffices to remember *Darthulas Grabgesang*, 1903). It is curious that the composers concurred in many ways, even in the questions of organization of unisons complex in their timbral combinations. In the 1900s Schoenberg actively experimented with merging into unisons not only the alto and tenor parts, but also the soprano and tenor, as well as the alto and bass parts. Such nonstandard unifications can also be seen by us in the composition written after *The Dream of Gerontius*, — the oratorio *The Apostles* (1902–1903) (Example No. 7).

The generalization of the best traditions of British traditions in combination with a sharp feel for the newest tendencies of development of choral texture typical not as much for the English as for the Continental tradition, on the one hand, and the remarkable combination of the idyllic and the imperial spirit of Great Britain,<sup>15</sup> on the other hand, made it possible for Elgar to become the most performed composer of that period, not only in his own country, but in other countries, as

Example No. 7

Edward Elgar. *The Apostles*.  
Part 1, f. 40

The image shows a page of musical notation for Example No. 7. It features five staves. The top two staves are vocal parts with lyrics: "mighty: He will di-rect their work in" and "cho - sen the weak to con - found the mighty;". The third staff is another vocal part with lyrics: "He will di-rect their work in" and "- sen the weak to con - found the mighty.". The bottom two staves are piano accompaniment. The tempo marking "animato" appears above the first staff and below the fourth staff. The key signature is B-flat major (two flats).

well. In fact, it was particularly Elgar who became the transmitter of the contextual and textural ideas, not only those innate in the works of their elder contemporaries — Parry, Stanford and Mackenzie, but also, as Grigoriy Konson indicates, directly continuing the line of the oratorio works of Handel in their aspiration “to create an art based on high ethical and aesthetic ideals.” [4, p. 80] Moreover, Elgar’s music written in the genre of cantatas and oratorios set up the vectors of development, which found its continuation in the works of the subsequent representatives of British music, among which are:

1) highlighting choral music into one of the most top-priority spheres of music composition for most British composers;

<sup>15</sup> According to the words of British researcher Jenny Doctor, during the period between the two world wars, Elgar with his music “represented nationalism, imperialism, the era of English glory, which preceded the legacy of the Great War, filled with horrors” (Doctor J. Broadcasting’s Ally: Elgar and the BBC. *The Cambridge Companion to Elgar*. Ed. Daniel M. Grimley and Julian Rushton. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2005. P. 199. DOI: 10.1017/CCOL9780521826235.015).

2) accentuation on the connection of present-day compositions with the best examples of music by British masters of the preceding eras constantly present in the British composers' musical compositions, educational work, and activities related to music criticism; this tendency would become the leading one for such brilliant composers of the subsequent generations as Ralph Vaughn-Williams, whose *Fantasy on a Theme of Thomas Tallis* is acknowledged in Grove's Dictionary to be "the first implicit masterpiece" [5, p. 990];

3) the priority of religious and religious-philosophical subject matter in choral music, the possibility to combine in one musical composition secular and canonic texts unified by one idea;

4) elite qualities and social inclusivity in choral composition and their mutually complementing tendencies: on the one

hand, the directedness of the amateur choral movement towards appreciation by a wide audience, on the other hand — the creation of musical compositions presuming a very high professional level of performers.

While the composers of the "first renaissance trio" were in many ways conducive to the revival of British national choral music and drawing special attention to it in the United Kingdom, Elgar was able to provide contemporary music in the country with an international status, and also give that impulse towards the subsequent development of choral music which led to the creation of outstanding masterpieces by Vaughan Williams, Tippett, Britten, Walton, Tavener, Finnis, Ferneyhough, Birtwistle and many other British composers without which it is impossible to imagine the art of choral music in the 20th century.

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