

A NEW DIRECTION IN BRITISH CHORAL COMPOSITION:  
JONATHAN DOVE AND BOB CHILCOTT

A CREATIVE PROJECT SUBMITTED TO THE GRADUATE SCHOOL  
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An oft-repeated maxim declares that Britain did not produce any great composers between Henry Purcell and Benjamin Britten. British music, especially choral music, suffered from an apparent creative atrophy between the time of Purcell (1659-95) and Britten (1913-76), a favorite British son. However, it would be hardly appropriate to say that no great composers worked during the 200-year span. Composers like Charles Villiers Stanford (1852-1924), Edward Elgar (1857-1943), Ralph Vaughn Williams (1872-1958), Herbert Howells (1892-1983), along with Britten, produced high-quality examples of musical creativity in a country that has always had a strong tradition of choral singing. Following in the tradition of choral music of the British Isles, new composers have aimed for prominence in the latter half of the twentieth- and early twenty-first centuries.

Two composers on the current British musical scene have each contributed greatly to the growth and prominence of choral repertoire from Britain. Jonathan Dove and Bob Chilcott, despite their seeming differences in background and focus, compose new choral music in a similar style. The style can perhaps be described as romantic minimalism, in which the voice parts seem sparse, pointed, or even disjunct from one another but are used to create a dramatic texture, color, and sound. Tonally, neither composer limits himself to the confines of conventional tonality and tonal movement. An abundance of modes, overlaid with multi-metric rhythmic patterns dominate the compositions but are used in such a way that the listener finds it neither disturbing nor unpalatable.

Through analysis of Jonathan Dove's *It Sounded as if the Streets Were Running* and Bob Chilcott's *The Making of the Drum*, I aim to explore the new direction that these two men are moving British choral music. Because of their similarity in compositional style, these composers may be members of a new compositional school for choral composers in

Britain. The exploration of this new compositional school is another aim for this project.

The questions that will be asked are:

- Are these men part of a new compositional school or are their compositional styles and techniques the natural progression following the composers who preceded them?
- If they are part of a new school, which other current composers are also participants?
- If they are not, from whom are they deriving their compositional style?
- Are these composers drawing from a strictly British tradition or are they influenced by globalization?

### **Jonathan Dove: *It Sounded as if the Streets Were Running***

Composer Jonathan Dove (b. 1959) began his endeavors in music at a young age learning piano, organ, and viola. While attending university at Cambridge, he studied composition with British composer Robin Holloway, whose style and technique was at first serial and later romantic.<sup>1</sup> Upon graduation, Dove continued his musical pursuits by becoming an arranger, an accompanist, a vocal coach, and a reviewer. His work as an arranger and accompanist for opera companies instilled him with an apt knowledge for working with vocal music.<sup>2</sup> Opera is where the majority of Dove's work lies. *Flight*, Dove's breakthrough onto the international opera scene, is just one of more than twenty operatic works the composer has written. The experience in the theatre also bred theatricality for

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<sup>1</sup> Julian Anderson, "Holloway, Robin," *Grove Music Online*, ed. Deane Root. <<http://www.oxfordmusiconline.com/subscriber/article/grove/music/13232>> (Accessed March 21, 2014).

<sup>2</sup> Jonathan Dove, "Biography," <<http://www.jonathandove.com/biography/>> (Accessed February 16, 2014).

setting text, a salient feature in his choral compositions. His choral output has also been well received. The composer has premiered choral works around the United Kingdom and was commissioned for a new work, *The Song of Joys*, which premiered on the last night of Proms in 2010.<sup>3</sup>

Dove's compositional language could be described as tonal with influences of minimalism. His minimalistic tendencies may derive from the second generation of that idiom, imitating the expressive qualities of American composer John Adams, for example. These qualities are overlaid with a personal melodic style; his music has a theatricality reminiscent of Stephen Sondheim and Benjamin Britten.<sup>4</sup> In a review of "The Passing of the Year" a compact disc of Dove's choral music, critic David Vernier wrote of Dove's compositional style saying,

...[T]he melodic themes are carefully and intelligently woven into the textural fabric, which is always richly colored with all possible variants available from the tonal palette. Dissonances and tonally ambiguous passages are integral, never gratuitous nor inserted merely for "difficulty's" sake...<sup>5</sup>

The last sentence of this quotation makes the two statements. First, Dove's music is not merely difficult for the sake of being difficult; his music's complexity serves a specific purpose, be it for dramatic effect or for textual painting. At a deeper level, the second statement assumes that Dove writes with his audience in mind; his intent being to compose music that is palatable for the ear, even if it stretches the bounds of tonality. Elsewhere in his review, Vernier describes Dove's music as accessible for both singer and listener.

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<sup>3</sup> "Dove, Jonathan," <<http://www.editionpeters.com/modern.php?composer=DOVE&modern=1>> (Accessed March 21, 2014).

<sup>4</sup> Julian Grant, "Dove, Jonathan," *Grove Music Online*, ed. Deane Root. <<http://www.oxfordmusiconline.com/subscriber/article/grove/music/2061648>> (Accessed January 16, 2014).

<sup>5</sup> David Vernier, "Dove's New--And Knowable--Choral Music," *ClassicsToday.com*, <<http://www.classicstoday.com/review/doves-new-and-knowable-choral-music/>> (Accessed January 12, 2014).

Dove's work in the field of community opera also reinforces his desire to write accessible music for amateur singers and a lay audience, not necessarily trained musicians. His operas *Tobias and the Angel* and *The Palace in the Sky* specifically include roles for community choirs and children's choirs in addition to professional soloists. His goal with projects like these is to introduce serious musical works to people who would not ordinarily be involved with such productions.<sup>6</sup>

Jonathan Dove's set of three part-songs for women's chorus, *It Sounded as if the Streets Were Running*, is an excellent example of his compositional style. The songs are settings of three poems of American poet Emily Dickinson. Dove uses the text of the poems as a springboard to create the mood for each of the songs. Each of the movements exhibits a unique quality of compositional technique but they still function together as a cohesive unit. In the following in-depth analysis of *It Sounded as if the Streets Were Running*,<sup>7</sup> Dove's personal characteristics for choral writing will be explored.

The first movement in the work uses the same title as the whole collection. It divides into two significant sections: the first is rhythmically complex and the second is tonally complex. Section A and section B further divide into clear subsections as demonstrated in Figure 1 below.

A			B			
1	2	3	1	2	3	C

**Figure 1:** Structure of movement one, "It Sounded as if the Streets Were Running."

<sup>6</sup> "Dove, Jonathan" <<http://www.editionpeters.com/modern.php?composer=DOVE&modern=1>>

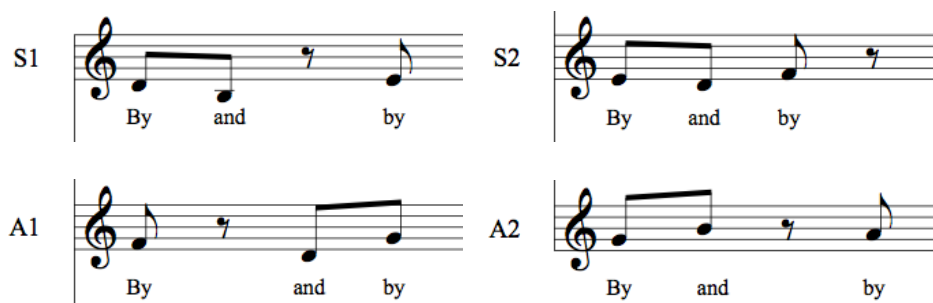
<sup>7</sup> Jonathan Dove, *It Sounded as if the Streets Were Running* (New York: Edition Peters, 2006).

The first large section (A) of movement one takes place exclusively in the mode of E phrygian. Dove uses mixed meter – mainly 4/4 and 3/4 – and a patter of the word “running” between the alto voices to create a swift running sensation. This motive is passed between the sopranos and altos in both the first and third subsections of this movement (A<sub>1</sub> and A<sub>3</sub>). The soprano voices punctuate the patter with interjections of the text “It Sounded as if the Streets Were Running.” These interjections occur diatonically, but make use of half- and whole-step dissonances to cut through the unisons or thirds that the “running” patter produces. The middle/transitional section (A<sub>2</sub>) uses *stretto* entrances to simulate the increasing speed of the runner. Every entrance of the S1,<sup>8</sup> Dove sets the canon at a closer rhythmic interval – first at three beats, then at two, and finally two repetitions at a one-beat interval.

After a moment of silence, Section B opens in a contrasting style. The voices transition homophonically from the E mixolydian of the previous chord to moving on chord tones of a G-sharp-minor chord. The voices move in block chords through a series of non-traditional tonal movement, further highlighting the harmonic complexity in this movement. The transition in section B<sub>2</sub> is made up of repetitive metrical figures. Each voice part is given a three eighth-note figure spanning the length of a half note, as seen below.

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<sup>8</sup> For the purposes of this paper a shorthand will be used describing the voice parts; if a letter is followed by a large number it corresponds to a voice part (example: A2 means alto two); if a letter is followed by a subscript number it denotes a subsection (example: B<sub>3</sub> means section B, subsection 3.)



**Figure 2:** Eighth-note patterns in B<sub>2</sub>.

These figures are repeated at a different rhythmic interval in each voice part. A2 has two beats between repetitions, A1 one-and-a-half beats between, S2 one beat, and S1 half a beat. This creates consistency, but is a difficult structure to perceive aurally without the score. Like the beginning of this movement, the tonal center is E phrygian. This transition is also followed by silence.

The final subsection, B<sub>3</sub>, is similar to B<sub>1</sub> with a slow pace and sustained pitches; B<sub>3</sub> is similar to B<sub>2</sub> with repetitive rhythmic entrances. The salient feature of this section is the canonical entrances. The voice parts one-by-one unfold out of one another to create full or partial iterations of the melody. When this pattern disintegrates, we are left with a cluster of pitches consisting of whole steps and half steps. With the addition of the C-sharp in this section, the tonality shifts to A mixolydian, although there is never an F-natural or F-sharp sung to complete the mode. The final chord in measure 115 suggests a sonority of [0237],<sup>9</sup> which plays a part in the next movement as well. The final two bars are a short coda in the style and tempo of section A with the sonority profile of section B on the words “Ha ha!” which create an eerie laughter to finish the movement.

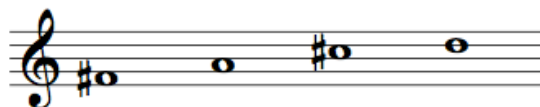
<sup>9</sup> Because of the style of composition it is simpler to use pitch-class set analysis rather than traditional tonal analysis for this movement. All pitch-class sets are expressed in prime form.

The second movement of Dove's work, "I Saw No Way," varies from that of its prior in several distinct ways. These distinctions, however, seem to fit within the overall style the composer has established for this piece. Similar to movement one, the second movement divides into two sections as shown in in figure 3. The first section is divided into three subsections.

<b>A</b>			<b>trans</b>	<b>B</b>
<b>1</b>	<b>2</b>	<b>3</b>		<b>1</b>

**Figure 3:** Structure of movement two, "I Saw No Way."

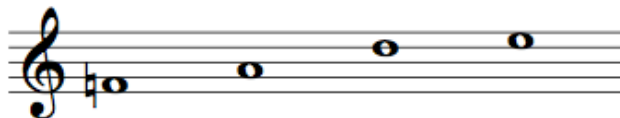
Dove begins this movement ( $A_1$ ) with a specific set of pitches [0158] as shown in figure 4. These are the only pitches used in the first four measures.



**Figure 4:** Four pitches used in opening motive [0158].

Within the confines of this set, Dove uses an alternation between two sonorities (A/D or F-sharp/C-sharp) to create the melodic and harmonic content of the section. The contrapuntally similar motion creates a series of fourths and fifths that resemble a mysterious chant-like sound (the composer's expression marking for this movement is *With mystery*.) The movement of these pitches highlights Dove's use of non-traditional tonalities. In measure six, the pitches change slightly to [0237] (figure 5). These four measures operate in likewise similar motion separated by a pitch, as did the previous measures.





**Figure 5:** Four pitches used in second motive [0237].

For the second subsection ( $A_2$ ) the  $S_2$  and  $A_2$  repeat exactly what the  $S_1$  and  $A_1$  did in the previous section in the same tonal centers. The  $S_1$  and  $A_1$ , however, move with similar motion between themselves but contrary motion to their counterparts. This creates a fascinating effect; because each voice part starts on a different pitch (of the four pitches available) the listener hears the same vertical sonority the entire duration of the section, even though each individual voice part is moving from note to note and never repeating pitches. This all ends with an open fifth on A and E. The text that is for this section is “I Saw No Way; The Heavens were stitched.” Dove uses the voices moving in opposite directions to create a weaving effect painting the “stitching” of the heaven with the movement of the voices. This is an excellent example of the composer’s theatricality and text painting coming to the surface of his writing.

At measure 20, the  $A_2$  part emerges with a new set of pitches as the tonal center, this time as a group of five [01368], shown below.



**Figure 6:** Pitches used in  $A_3$  [01368].

The texture created in  $A_3$  is a layering effect like at the end of movement one, each voice entering a measure after the previous voice. The altos use the same melodic theme

and the sopranos use a contrary idea. Each of these melodies uses only the prescribed set of pitches.

The transition that takes place at measure 28 focuses on two aspects of Dove's writing for this movement. First the different rhythmic ostinatos in the S1 and A2 voices (joined by S2 and A1 at m. 34). Second is the careful use of half- and whole-step movement within each voice part. The movement generates an undulating tonal center. The end of the transition is one of two moments in the whole movement where the voices sing homophonically, here outlining an F-major chord. The F-major chord sounds almost dissonant to the tonal palate that Dove has constructed thus far. He uses the decrescendo and the descent of the pitches (still on F major) to paint the text "back it slid" to a more familiar tonal realm to begin the second half.

The second section (B) of this movement relies on the constant repetition of the altos singing "And I alone" on an osculating tonality between F-sharp minor and D minor. The sopranos sing a through-composed melody utilizing the pitch-class set [0237] with an added F or F-sharp (depending on the alto tonality at the moment). Like the first half, this displays Dove's stylistic use of the motivic ostinato and limited pitch content to create non-traditional sonorities.

The third movement, "How Happy Is the Little Stone," ends the set of pieces included in this work. Tonally, this is the most traditional movement in the set; rhythmically, it is the most complex and difficult to perform. The main melody, which is stated by all voices at the very beginning, is in 5/4 meter (grouped 3+2). What makes the melody difficult to conquer is the quick tempo and entrances that occur either on beats 4 or

5 with no reoccurring pattern. Adding to the difficulty, the syllabic and metric stresses do not always line up creating false poetic stresses in the text.

This movement can be divided into three large sections plus an introduction and coda. The introduction is simply the statement of the main melodic and rhythmic content in unison by all voices as described above. The first section is a full restatement of the theme in each voice with paired imitation separated by a measure as shown in figure 7.

The image shows a musical score for four voices: Soprano 1 (S1), Soprano 2 (S2), Alto 1 (A1), and Alto 2 (A2). The key signature is B major (two sharps). The lyrics are "How hap - py is the lit - tle Stone". The score illustrates paired imitation entrances. S1 and S2 enter first with the melody. A1 and A2 enter later, with A1 starting on a whole note and A2 on a half note, creating a staggered entrance. The lyrics are written below each staff, with hyphens indicating syllables across notes.

**Figure 7:** Paired imitation entrances of voices in A<sub>1</sub>.

The second section begins at measure 34 where Dove pivots on the flat-seventh scale degree (A natural) of the previous key (B major) to become the fifth scale degree of the new key (D major). In the new key, the melody continues with the same rhythmic patterns that occurred in the first section. The altos are given new melodic material characterized by longer note values and mainly intervals of fifths or thirds. This generates cohesiveness for the larger work. The soprano part with a quick moving melodic line is reminiscent of the first movement; the alto part with open harmonies at a slower pace is similar to the second.

The third section is like that of the second, but with the altos singing the melodic ostinato and the sopranos singing the longer note values. Dove then modulates to C major

using the flat-major seven in the old key of D major to become the new tonic. The coda for this movement also uses a shortened version of the ostinato back in the soprano voices. The altos sing the text “Happy is the little Stone” in repetitive melodic cells that decrease in duration every third time. The ending statement of the melody is the only time in the movement when all voices sing the theme homophonically. It ends in C major on a first-inversion tonic chord with an added sixth. The main features of this movement are Dove’s rhythmic complexity and the abundant use of the flat major-seventh scale degree to modulate tonal areas.

Several stylistic components of Dove’s music can be garnered from the analysis of this work:

- Rhythmic complexity: mixed meter (1)<sup>10</sup>, unnatural text stress (1, 3)
- Motivic ostinatos: using the same motive continuously while changing the texture around it (1, 2, 3)
- Use of canon: using motives and rhythmic figures repetitively on top of one another (1, 3)
- Coherent non-traditional tonalities: the use of church modes (1) and specific sonorities (2) to create a compositional palate that is different from traditional tonality but is not unpleasant to hear
- Semitone emphasis: especially in slower sections (2) an emphasis is placed on the dissonance of the semitone
- Unusual tonal movement: Using tonal shifts through sevenths and mediant relationships (2, 3)

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<sup>10</sup> The numbers in parenthesis correspond to movements where the quality is featured prominently.

These six points are properties that can be found as component not only in this piece but in many of Dove's other choral works as well, including: *The Passing of the Year*, "In Beauty May I Walk," "Who Killed Cock Robin," and "I am the Day."

### **Bob Chilcott: *The Making of the Drum***

Bob Chilcott (b. 1955) gained much of his musical experience while a chorister and choral scholar at King's College in Cambridge. While in university, Chilcott studied with composer Ian Kemp (who later became a professor at Manchester University and was a nephew of Sir Michael Tippett.)<sup>11</sup> From King's College he joined the renowned King's Singers as a tenor. Chilcott sang with the ensemble for 12 years; he also arranged and composed new works for the ensemble. In 1997 he left the ensemble to pursue a career as a full-time composer and conductor.<sup>12</sup> The composer describes himself as a melodist who draws unashamedly from the musical influences that have touched his life.<sup>13</sup> In addition to those mentioned above he has been influenced by his time serving as an arranger/orchestrator for BBC Radio 2 and the great amount of conducting that he does around the world.

Chilcott has achieved critical acclaim. Reviewers from *The Observer* anointed him "a contemporary hero of British choral music."<sup>14</sup> Part of his appeal is that he has been a champion for children's music, producing more than thirty pieces for treble voices.<sup>15</sup> It

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<sup>11</sup> John Quinn, "A contemporary hero of British Choral Music': Bob Chilcott in conversation with John Quinn," *MusicWeb International*, <[http://www.musicweb-international.com/classrev/2013/Nov13/Chilcott\\_interview.htm](http://www.musicweb-international.com/classrev/2013/Nov13/Chilcott_interview.htm)> (Accessed March 24, 2014).

<sup>12</sup> Dennis Schrock, *Choral Repertoire* (New York: Oxford University Press, 2009), 708.

<sup>13</sup> Bob Chilcott, liner notes to *Making Waves*, The Sirens, Signum Records Ltd SIGCD142, CD, 2008.

<sup>14</sup> Anthony Holden and Stephen Pritchard, *The Observer*, "Classical CD Releases," Last modified Oct 26, 2008. <<http://www.theguardian.com/music/2008/oct/26/classical-cd-review>> (Accessed March 24, 2014).

<sup>15</sup> Schrock, 708.

should be noted that just because Chilcott writes for children’s voices, it does not mean that his compositions are simple or pedantic. His compositions are varied in style; some are complex and can be difficult for even an adult choir to perform.

The compositional technique used by Bob Chilcott in his mixed-voice choral cantata *The Making of the Drum*<sup>16</sup> is a good representation of his choral writing. The five-movement work is set to the poetry of Edward Kamau Brathwaite, whose poetry describes the literal process of making a drum in certain African cultures. Contained within the text is the reverence with which the drum maker views the instrument. The drum serves as a tool to speak with and for the gods of the tribal peoples. Chilcott wrote the work originally to be performed by mixed choir *a cappella* with percussion. In the mid-2000s Chilcott prepared an optional marimba part was composed to accompany the work.

The text of the first movement “The Skin” centers on how the skin is taken from the killed goat and stretched to make the drumhead. The first movement is written in ternary form (figure 8), the beginning material coming back at the end with a few alterations.

<b>A</b>	<b>B</b>		<b>A'</b>
	<b>1</b>	<b>2</b>	

**Figure 8:** Structure of movement one, “The Skin.”

Chilcott begins by having the choir create a sandblock-like sound by rubbing their hands together. Over the top of this rhythmic rubbing, a punctuated ostinato begins between the basses and altos that continues through the entirety of the A and A’ sections. The pitch content is somewhat unusual in the bass because the focus lies mainly on B-flat

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<sup>16</sup> Bob Chilcott, *The Making of the Drum*, New York: Oxford University Press, 1999.

(V in the home key of E-flat) while the altos provide tonic on a much less rhythmically stressed line. The effect is that B-flat becomes a false tonic because of its emphasis, even though it is clearly written as the dominant. The melodic line for the A section does not help in the strengthening of actual tonic. The soprano line also ends on a B-flat reinforcing the false tonic idea. But when the tenors and second sopranos enter at measure 11, the three voices end on a second inversion G-minor triad. All of this serves to confuse the sense of tonic.

The opening to the B section contrasts the preceding material. Though still very punctuated like the melodic content of the previous section, all voices here sing in homophony. While the voices do not vary greatly in rhythmic content through B, the harmonic content is the driving force of this section. The voices alternate between two like-quality chords (both either major or minor, shown in figure 9) that are only separated by a whole step.



**Figure 9:** Alternation of like-quality chords, mm. 28-29.

This creates the feeling of anticipation that the tonal areas are building up momentum to move to a different place. This series of moving chords happens four times in different tonal areas, modulating by a minor third, tritone, and minor third, respectively.

The second half of the B section uses text painting as a device for composition. The text reads, “cut the rope of its throat/skilled destroyer of goats/its sin spilled on the washed gravel.” Chilcott uses a *fortissimo* two-octave F to announce the killing of the goat for its skin. From this F, voices begin to bleed inward to create non-functional harmonies. This occurs three more times either centering on B-flat or F. The section ends on a repetitive text, “devour us all,” diminishing until the voices fade into nothing and the rubbing of hands begins again to signal the return to the A section.

The A' section is a truncated version of A with the same ostinato continuing the B-flat emphasis running underneath the pointillistic vocal parts. The movement ends in the same way as it began with the ostinato fading out (ending on B-flat) into the sound of the hand rubbing.

The transition into the slower-paced second movement, “The Barrel of the Drum,” uses the previous false tonic (B-flat) to become the new tonic. Structurally, the movement divides into two large sections with a codetta (labeled c in figure 10). The sections mimic each other, each with three subsections, as shown in figure 10.

<b>A</b>			<b>A'</b>			<b>c</b>
<b>1</b>	<b>2</b>	<b>3</b>	<b>1</b>	<b>2</b>	<b>3</b>	

**Figure 10:** Structure of movement two, “The Barrel of the Drum.”

The first of these subsections is an introduction without words. The bass line proclaims a new tonic with a strong V-I motion while maintaining the V. The tenors and altos move in dotted-quarter/eighth rhythms that disorient the metric pulse. The harmony is an F-major chord that includes the B-flat tonic of the key. This introduces the concept of traditional chords with added tones that informs this movement.



The second subsection is in mixed meter. Chilcott seems to intentionally confuse the listener as to where the strong and weak beats fall through the homophonic lines. The chords in this subsection do not follow traditional functional movement. Many of the added tone chords are based around triadic harmonies of VII, IV, and III. This movement contains the only instance in this work of tonal clusters, which unfold out of the stillness after the text “Here in this silence” while a lone soprano sighs in a wailing descant.

The final subsection asserts itself through an added-tone chord in a high tessitura. All of these harmonies are added-tone chords with clashing half steps or whole steps. The basic harmonic movement underneath these chords behaves non-traditionally as well (as seen in figure 11), a hallmark of Chilcott’s writing.

The figure shows a musical score for two staves, treble and bass clef, with a key signature of two flats. The chords are labeled below the staff as i, bVI, ii°, iv, and I. The notation includes various chord symbols and accidentals, illustrating non-traditional harmonic movement.

**Figure 11:** Non-traditional harmonic movement, end of A<sub>3</sub>.

The second half of the movement (A') nearly mirrors the first with an exact replication of the first subsection, followed by a mixed-meter section that is only a third as long as A<sub>2</sub> (mm. 112-114). The third subsection mimics the same kinds of added-tone harmonies found in the first half but ends with a different resolution. The codetta develops with non-traditional harmony as well, finishing the movement on a major-III chord.

Of the five movements in this work, the third movement, “The Two Curved Sticks of the Drummer,” may have the most traditional harmonies throughout. Like the first

movement, the peppy third movement is in ternary form with a brief codetta at the end. The notable elements in this movement are the continuous soprano ostinato, which reinforces tonic and the rhythmic bass line of the repetitive spoken word “hé”. The A sections of this piece are split into two like halves. The first half is the presentation of the alto melody during the soprano and bass ostinato. The second half includes chordal parallel harmonies for the melody the altos presented previously: IV, V, and vi chords in second inversion that eventually cadence IV-V-I. With the parallel harmonies, Chilcott draws upon the late-19<sup>th</sup> century technique called harmonic planing. The rhythmic component of the melodic line has the feel of a tribal dance, each two-measure phrase forming a rhythmic ostinato couplet. The pulse that is felt in the first measure of the couplet is syncopated, while the contrasting measure is made of straight eighths, as shown in figure 12 below.



**Figure 12:** Differing rhythmic pulse in “3. The Two Curved Sticks of the Drummer.”

The B section contrasts starkly the sections surrounding it. Melodically the women’s and men’s voices are moving mostly in contrary motion. In each pairing (SA and TB) the voices are always a perfect fifth away from each other creating a very hollow-sounding harmony. Rhythmically, section B is written in a combination of 5/4 and 6/4, where the men’s voices are always a beat or two beats behind the women’s voices. This ensures that a voice pairing is always moving on every beat. The result is a hollow call-

and-response or echo-like chant. It serves to highlight the text, which speaks of mysticism of the trees that will never die.

The A' section is an exact reiteration of the first A with different text. It is split into two parts with the altos leading in the first and the tenors joining for fill out the harmonies in the second. The movement ends with a coda of all voices shouting "hé" in at an accelerating pace to lead into movement four.

"Gourds and Rattles," the fourth movement, is just as spirited and joyous as the previous movement. A rondo in structure (figure 13), the A sections are multi-metric (4/4 + 2/4) and have a Caribbean-like ostinato figure that is passed between the tenors and altos outlining the tonic triad in G major. These sections are also fairly standard in terms of harmonic functionality, during which the sopranos and basses alternate between outlining I and IV chords.



**Figure 13:** Structure of movement four, "Gourds and Rattles."

Section B is characterized by the menacing planing of inverted triads (second inversion for the men, first inversion for the women). The upper and lower voices pass these chords between one another before joining together at the end of the B section and finally settling on a tonic chord. The alto voice overlaps this final chord with the return of its ostinato for a truncated A section.

Section C enters with a strong statement in C major shifting through various inversions of tonic triads in the men's voices. The women enter two bars after and almost

immediately the men switch tonal areas to F major, creating a moment where the choir is singing in two tonal areas simultaneously as seen in figure 14.

**Figure 14:** Inverted melodic triads and simultaneous tonal areas, piano reduction.

On the words “music” (m. 317) the chords change to inversions of F (flat-VII) and resolve on G for the second syllable. This call-and-response builds until it becomes full choir chant before giving way to the final A section.

The final statement of A continues with the ostinato in the center two voices while the soprano and bass voices create a warm cushion of sound by humming. All voices decrescendo as if the celebration is fading into the distance.

The through-composed final movement, “The Gong-Gong,” is reverent, in the manner of a slow procession. The opening E-flat dyad leads the listener to believe that, for this final movement, E-flat will truly be tonic, but it ultimately leads to several false tonic B-flats, just like the first movement. The harmonic progressions in this movement, like the second movement, are non-traditional. Following their opening statement, the women begin an overlapping melodic ostinato while the men reiterate the women’s opening statement. This restatement is composed of triads instead of dyads, and being in the middle of the men’s vocal register, it enables a rich, almost triumphant sound to be produced for the finished drum.

The image shows a musical score for three voices: Soprano (S), Alto (A), and Tenor/Bass (TB). The key signature has two flats (B-flat and E-flat). The Soprano and Alto parts have a repeating melodic pattern: a quarter note followed by a quarter rest, then a quarter note, eighth notes, and a quarter note. The Tenor/Bass part provides a harmonic accompaniment with chords, including triads and dyads, some with a dotted quarter note.

**Figure 15:** Ostinato and triadic harmony in “5. The Gong-Gong”, piano reduction.

After the men’s statement of the melody under the ostinato the movement begins building to the climax of the piece. A lone B-flat in the tenor voice is the starting point and for the next five measures the other voices unfold from that B-flat into non-functional chords. The final push toward the climax comes at measure 367 where the voices cry out in increasing volume “the dumb blind drum” with ascending added-tone chords calling out to the god whose voice inhabits the drum sound. At the climax (m. 372) the women hold a high F-minor chord as the men play second inversion IV and V chords underneath them on the name “Odomankoma” (the supreme creator in certain African religions).

After the powerful chord the women revert back to their ostinato when, for the first time in the entire cantata, a drum is finally struck. The sensation of a loud percussive instrument being struck after such a striking chord in the voices is startling. The drum begins *fortissimo* and each measure, with a slightly different rhythm, decreases in dynamic level as if the drum has passed into the distance. The women’s voices also fade away leaving the men to finish the cantata quietly and calmly on a “shh” that is reminiscent of wind passing through the trees or over a field.

Chilcott's cantata exhibits many hallmarks of his style of choral writing. Many of the qualities listed below can be found in his numerous other choral works:

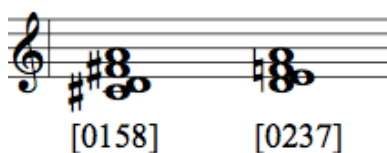
- Rhythmic complexity: the use of mixed meter (2, 4) and unusual textual stress (3)
- Motivic ostinatos: repetitive melodic material that may be passed between voices or carried out through long sections (1, 3, 4, 5)
- Coherent non-traditional tonalities: chords that have a traditional basic triad but have tones that are added to create unique sonorities (2, 5)
- Planing and intervallic chord movement: the movement of a specific inversion of a chord up or down by the same interval in each voice (1, 3, 4) or the movement by all voices up or down together to the next nearest chord tone (4, 5)
- Non-tradition tonal shifts: moving from one tonal center to another that is not considered "close" in traditional functional harmony (1, 2, 4, 5)
- Pointalistic melodic content: melodies created by short, separated pitches (1, 3, 4)

The previous six points describe Chilcott's compositional style. These techniques can be found in many other choral compositions by Chilcott as well. Some examples include: *The Modern Man I Sing*, "So Fair and Bright," "This Day," and *Fragments from His Dish*.

### **Comparison of Analyses and Conclusion**

From the analyses of these two pieces, several connections between the composers' styles can be found. Similarities exist in both the tonal and rhythmic realms of their music. Both Chilcott and Dove frequently include coherent non-traditional tonalities: simultaneous sonorities that reference the tradition of conventional tonality but do not fit within its parameters.

Chilcott's main form of tonal expansion is using traditional triads with added tones, creating four-pitch chords that have a semblance of traditional structure but do not behave according to traditional functions or sound expressly tonal. Dove's use of non-traditional chords resembles the practice of composers who use pitch-class set sonorities by creating certain combinations of intervals that appear frequently. These pleasing sonorities function for Dove as chords but not within the framework of functional tonality. In the works examined, two sonorities occur frequently: [0158] and [0237] as shown in figure 15. Though individual, the harmonic and aural results provide a recognizable sound that can be identified in listening to their music.



**Figure 16:** Sonorities used in Dove's and Chilcott's music, prime form.

A unique feature of Chilcott's music is the use of chordal planing. In several movements from his work, the composer uses chords in a specific inversion and moves them up or down in either a diatonic or strictly parallel motion. Many of the planing examples in *The Making of the Drum* are in second inversion (for the males) or first inversion (for the females). This may be because, if a different inversion were used for each, the tessitura would be too high or too low to sing with any power or without vocal strain. The planing gives passages a sense of unification between the voice parts.

Both composers use mediant relationships between chords. They also use a chord (or major triad) built on the lowered-seventh scale degree to shift tonally. Many of the shifts occur between movements of pieces but they also occur within the movements

themselves, the best examples of this are evident in the fourth movement of *The Making of the Drum* and the third movement of *It Sounded as if the Streets Were Running*.

The flat-major seven is a possible tie in to the lineage of Ralph Vaughan Williams. Vaughan Williams, who died the year before Dove was born, composed in a number of modalities, many of which he encountered in English folk music. He favored mixolydian modality, with its major seven chord and used the progression frequently in his works<sup>17</sup> and examples can be found in many including: *Five Mystical Songs*, *House of Life*, and *The Wasps*.

These non-traditional tonal shifts also appear in music by other composers of the post-romantic era. In using these chords and tonal shifts in a similar way both composers are able to create a new and complex sound without alienating their audiences. For the listeners, the music is just tonal enough to feel “normal” and just atypical enough to be interesting.

In addition to the tonal components, the composers both use rhythm as a salient element in their pieces. The most noticeable rhythmic element in these works is the use of motivic ostinatos. These repetitive musical fragments are the moments in each of the works that seem to be the hook for performers who may leave their rehearsals humming and whistling. These earworms have effectively hooked the performers and audience members into remembering the composers’ music. In most cases, these ostinatos do more than just create a base for the other voices to sing over; they are actual melodic content that provides color and especially drive to the movement. “How Happy Is the Little Stone”

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<sup>17</sup> Ian Frederick Edward Bates, "Generalized Diatonic Modality and Ralph Vaughan Williams' Compositional Practice." Order No. 3342727, Yale University, 2008. <<http://search.proquest.com/docview/304392237?accountid=8483>> 5. (Accessed March 28, 2014).



from *It Sounded as if the Streets Were Running* is a prime example of a situation in which the lengthy melody fulfills the function of the melody that occurs through the rest of the piece.

A technique prominent to Dove's writing is the use of canon. In a similar way to ostinato, this repetitive layering helps move the piece forward. Dove's canons are always at pitch, sometimes separated by a time lag as small as half a beat from the first iteration of the melody ("How Happy Is the Little Stone"). This creates a series of sonorities that cannot be analyzed vertically and must therefore be heard as a layered melody. The complexity of some of Dove's canons can be a source of frustration in the rehearsal process, but also become a badge of honor when the lines are performed accurately.

Both Dove and Chilcott rely on rhythmic complexity consisting of the abundance of mixed meter and many instances of unnatural text stress. The latter refers to the setting of poetry in such a way that normally unstressed syllables in speech become stressed or accented according to their position with the musical meter. The former quality, mixed meter, is present in almost every movement of the compositions in this study. Mixed meter is used to create another point of departure from traditional tonal music. The constant shifting of stressed beats give a very distinct sound and feel to the works.

Each of these similarities individually would not constitute a new compositional style, but the combination of the four (coherent non-traditional tonalities, non-traditional tonal shifts, motivic ostinatos, and rhythmic complexity), especially shared between two composers of such a close age and geographic area, give credence to the notion of a new style of choral composition being formed in Great Britain. Each composer has absorbed many influences into his music, so it may overstate the case to assert that a new school has been formed. However, I believe the evidence presented here establishes the claim that a

new British style is emerging. These two composers share some tonal similarities with their American contemporaries Eric Whitacre and Morten Lauridsen. Each of these American composers uses an identifiable chordal structure. Whitacre is characterized by his abundant use of tonal clusters; Lauridsen by his chords with an added second. Both British composers also use these effects in their music, but not to the extent or frequency as the Americans. Chilcott and Dove share some of the same mixed-meter similarities as the original compositions by British composer John Rutter. Rutter's compositions are much more traditionally tonal than either Chilcott or Dove and do not use the overlapping ostinatos as prominently. Examples of Rutter's prominent mixed-meter uses can be found in compositions including his *Gloria, Te Deum*, and "The Lord is my Shepherd."

If these mature composers are the beginning of a new choral style, it would follow that a younger generation of composers should show evidence of influence from Dove and Chilcott. One of these students may be British composer Tarik O'Regan (b. 1978) who uses many of the same compositional devices as Dove and Chilcott. A composer of more than forty choral works,<sup>18</sup> O'Regan employs the use of the canonic ostinatos and expanded traditional harmonies that have been established as pillars of this proposed new compositional school. Some of O'Regan's works that exemplify this similarity in style are: *The Ecstasies Above*, "Had I Not Seen the Sun," and *2 Upper-Voice Settings*.

The success and popularity of Dove and Chilcott may drive others to write in a style similar to theirs. Both have worked in the public arena and have a clear grasp of what the public consumes. The new school that has been started by these two composers offers new and exciting possibilities for not only British music, but, because of fast globalization due to

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<sup>18</sup> Schrock, 710.

technology, choral composers worldwide as well. The music of these two pioneers, in the opinion of the author, merits greater attention in choral performance and academic study.

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