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**The Amateur Competition Movement: Shaping
Identity through Participation in the Manx Music
Festival 1892-2005**

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**Submitted as part of the requirement for the Degree of
Doctor of Philosophy**

University of Durham – Department of Music

May 2006

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Having read the University regulation, I declare that this work is my own and does not contain any unacknowledged material from other sources.



Abstract

'The Amateur Competition Movement: Shaping Identity through Participation in the Manx Music Festival 1892-2005'

Amanda Jane Griffin - PhD Dissertation, July 2005

The aim of this dissertation is to consider the thesis that the amateur competitive music festival is a contributor to the formation and maintenance of ideas and ideals of identity. The research begins by considering the advent, growth and spread of the amateur competition festival and how these festivals shaped the musical identity of the British Isles and the personal identity of those participating in the festivals. The dissertation then focuses upon the Isle of Man as the locus of the research considering how identity formation is a complex process shaped both by history and the personal need to shape and form identity on a number of levels and suggest examples of how cultural identity can be expressed in differing ways. By considering identity formation found in and through the Manx Music Festival both historically and in the contemporary festival society, the research draws upon both primary and secondary source materials including historical documentation, on-site participant/observation, interviews, questionnaires and case studies. The results found have been formulated to present an ethnographic account of identity formation and maintenance found in, around and through participation in the Manx Music Festival. Finally the research considers the experience of the researcher as an important part of the research process. The dissertation concludes by discussing the outcomes of the research and suggests how the research can be expanded and progressed in the future.

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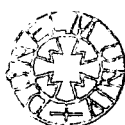
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INTRODUCTION

This dissertation undertakes an ethnomusicological examination of the phenomenon of the amateur competitive music festival as seen in and throughout the British Isles and beyond. By contextualising the place occupied by the amateur festival within British history, this study charts an understanding of the social processes behind the formation of what was to become known throughout the country as the festival movement. Using historical contextualisation to understand how the present has been formed and shaped by that which has gone before, the study shifts its emphasis away from the more generalised concept of the 'festival movement' to consider ideas and ideals of identity formation through participation in the individual festivals upon which the competition movement was built. By performing an in-depth examination of a single festival, the Manx Music Festival, not only does the social and cultural significance of the movement as a whole begin to be explored but the unique importance of each individual festival as a contributor to national, local and individual identity can begin to be considered. The binding framework for this dissertation is provided by the viewing of participation in the competition festival as a contributor to identity formation on a number of different levels. The historical background to the advent of the amateur competitive festival and the festival movement provides an insight into the growth and spread of the



festival. It charts how from the outset the festival movement became a suitable vehicle for the construction and growth of ideas and ideals of identity on a number of different levels. The examination of the Manx Music Festival allows the dissertation to show how these ideas and ideals of identity are shaped around and through the individual participants in the festival. The dissertation considers the musical event as a social and cultural event and shows how participation in the musical event can be used to shape and develop identity in a variety of ways.

The Thesis

The dissertation sets out to consider the thesis that:

Participation in the amateur competitive music festival contributes the formation, development and maintenance of ideas and ideals of identity.

By utilising resources, both historical and contemporary, the dissertation is able to consider the thesis from a number of different angles. The dissertation examines this thesis by considering perspectives of identity through the process of participation. The thesis behind the dissertation considers that idea that the musical event be examined from the viewpoint of its being a cultural contributor and that the aspect of culture under examination, in this

case identity, is shaped through the music, musical practice, and participation. Rice's 1987 ethnomusicological model considers the premise that musical events are 'historically constructed, socially maintained and individually adapted and experienced'¹ and this framework informs the approach that is used to examine the thesis set for the research undertaken here.

Music, Identity and Participation

For the purposes of this dissertation, the thesis is one concerned with aspects of identity formed in and through musically participative practices. It is therefore prudent at this point to consider the concepts of identity and participation how these relate to the musical activity as presented in the dissertation. The advent of the twenty-first century has brought with it an increasing concern with the promotion and maintenance of identity in its varying guises. The current climate of ever increasing global homogenisation, combined with unsettled and uncertain world events has left people feeling out of their depth with regard to controlling this shift, and individual nations are keen to promote themselves as being unique, safe, solid and having something to offer separate to this global climate of uncertainty. Further to this, however, identity moves beyond a national scale when local identity is often keenly promoted within specific geographical areas and within these local areas family and individual identity are formulated, established, promoted and

¹ Rice, Tim, "Toward the Remodelling of Ethnomusicology" in *Ethnomusicology* 31 (3): 469 – 488.

maintained by the social processes that are created by and available to human beings in any particular area.

In its most simplistic form, identity can be defined as who and/or what a thing is. In this dissertation, identity is allied with musical participation in order that a consideration of the role of the amateur competition festival in contributing to the shaping of identity can be considered.

For the purpose of this dissertation the thesis is concerned with the interaction between music, participation and identity. Identity forms an important an intrinsic part of everyday life. Woodward (1997) states that:

Identity gives us an idea of who we are and how we relate to others in the world in which we live. Identity marks the ways in which we are the same as others who share that position, and the ways in which we are different from those who do not. ²

Identity then, is something that is fundamental to the formation and development of the self. It reflects our place in the world and both how we see ourselves and how others see us. Some aspects of identity may be very obvious, gender being the prime example, but others are more subtle. Whatever the aspect of identity being examined one thing remains constant. As Woodward states:

As individuals we have to take up identities actively, those identities are necessarily the product of the society in which we live and our relationship to others.³

What can be drawn from this quotation is that identity is something for which the individual has responsibility over. For something to contribute to identity it has to be pursued and used and shaped as the individual desires. Even the most obvious example of identity, that of gender, is not one that is fixed but rather something that can be shaped, featured, or even changed. Identity is not something that is passive but rather is participative in nature. Factors contributing to the formation and development of identity are as unique and varied as those choosing to use them. For the purpose of this dissertation however, it is those who choose to use music and music-making as an identity who provide the focus.

In its introductory chapter the book *Musical Identities* poses the following theories:

One of the primary social functions of music lies in establishing and developing an individual's sense of identity and that the concept of musical identity enables us to look at the widespread and varied interactions between music and the individual.⁴

² Woodward 1997, "Concepts of Identity and Difference" in Woodward (Ed.) *Identity and Difference*, London: Sage. First Published 1997. Reprinted 1991, 2001, 2002 (twice), p.1.

³ Woodward 2000, "Questions of Identity" in Woodward (Ed.) *Questioning Identity: Gender, Class, Nation*, London: Routledge, p. 7.

⁴ Macdonald, Hargreaves, & Miell (Eds) 2002, *Musical Identities*, Oxford: Oxford University Press, p. 5.

And:

Music is a fundamental channel of communication and we argue that it can act as a medium through which people can construct new identities.⁵

If these theories are to be believed then music would appear to provide an ideal participative practice through ideas and ideals of identity formation can be examined. The use of music as an identifier allows for the development of identity that is seen to be artistic, worthwhile, and valued. Frith writes:

Identity is always an ideal, what we would like to be, not what we are...but if musical identity is, then, always fantastic, idealising not just oneself but also the social world one inhabits, it is, secondly, always also real, enacted in musical activities. Music making and music listening, that is to say, are bodily matters, involve what one might call *social movements*. In this respect musical pleasure is not derived *from* fantasy – it is not *mediated* by day dreams – but is experienced directly: music gives us a real experience of what the ideal could be.⁶

The above quotation highlights the need to often refer to ‘ideas’ and ‘ideals’ of identity rather than using firm realities. Because identity is something which is shaped and developed by individuals is it not something that is cast in stone but something that is used to provide an enhanced perspective of the self from the self viewing the self, how

⁵ Op Cit, pp. 9 – 10

the self projects to others and how others view the self. Identity is a fluid concept and something that is both a part of reality but that can also be, and often is, an idealised perception of reality. Pitts discusses this point further:

The membership of a performing society or a festival audience therefore contributes to the development of participants' identities, providing a particular context where their behaviour and social relations may flourish in ways that are distinctive from other aspects of their lives.⁷

Pitts discusses the aspects of distinction involved in identity formation. By participating in a particular practice, in this case a musical one, individuals identify themselves using a sympathetic situation and context that allows for the chosen identity to develop. In many cases the chosen identity is in addition to identity developed in everyday life and this is certainly the case with the amateur competition festival.

The above is not intended to provide an exhaustive or conclusive review of literature but rather to serve as a theoretical basis from which to approach the study of identity formation in and through the amateur competition movement and, more particularly, the Manx Music Festival. The dissertation examines how individuals shape and form their identity in a variety of ways through participation in the

⁶ Frith, 1996, "Music and Identity" in Hall & Du Gay (Eds), 1996, *Questions of Cultural Identity*, London, California, New Delhi: Sage Publications

⁷ Pitts, 2005, *Valuing Musical Participation*, Aldershot: Ashgate, p. 30.

musical process. It examines the ways in which active participation in the music festival allows for the development of the idealised identity, but also a very real identity. It looks at the ways in which identity is created, promoted and maintained through musical participation and discusses how the amateur competition festival is particularly suitable for the development of ideas and ideal of identity. As Rice contends:

Music lives through the agency of, and is given meaning by, individuals operating in particular social, cultural, economic and historical contexts.⁸

This dissertation considers the meaning given by individuals participating in the amateur competition festival to aspects of identity formation, development and maintenance in a number of ways considering the contexts as set out by Rice above.

Why is a study of the Amateur Competitive Music Festival Movement Important?

There can be no doubt that throughout its long existence the amateur competitive music festival movement has made an enormous contribution to that which can be termed British music and - more significantly for the purposes of this dissertation - that which can be termed British music-making. The amateur competition festival has been a part of amateur music making for over 100 years and has a presence throughout the whole of the British Isles, as can be seen in

⁸ Rice, 1994, *May it Fill Your Soul: Experiencing Bulgarian Music*, Chicago: Chicago University Press, p. 8.

the 300-plus festivals which take place annually.⁹ It is through the participation in and involvement with the competition festival and the competition festival movement that those making music have contributed to the identity of the festivals and have drawn from the festivals that which they need to contribute and shape their own identity. The movement, along with its underlying philanthropic socio-political propaganda which will be discussed in chapter one, spread prolifically throughout the British Isles - and, indeed, beyond - and was embraced enthusiastically by people from varying backgrounds and all social classes.¹⁰ If a full understanding of the nature of music and music-making in Britain throughout the late nineteenth and through into the twenty-first century is to be reached, then a study of the amateur competitive music festival movement is a crucial element. Not only is it significant because of the place it occupies in the broader picture of British social history, including elements of class distinction, nationalism, patriotism, social control, colonialism, feminism, etc., but in addition it is closely connected to the idea of the British musical renaissance involving many of the key figures in this period. There are many parallels to be drawn between the spread of the competitive movement and the major creative period in the re-birth of British music seen in the work of, amongst others, such well known composers as Elgar, Stanford, Parry and Vaughan Williams. All of these composers were keen supporters of the festival movement

⁹ A complete list of festivals can be found in the Year Book of the British Federation of Festivals published annually by the Federation.

¹⁰ This will be discussed further in chapter one.

and wrote works specifically for use at the competition festivals. From the establishment of the first festival in Kendal by Mary Wakefield in 1885 the competitive music festival movement provides an example of an unbroken chain of musical practice, lasting now for over a century, begun at a time when Britain itself was undergoing a period of rapid development and change from the Victorian era, through the Edwardian and to the modern day Elizabethan times; from the promotion of imperialist hegemony that featured in the latter stages of the industrial revolution, to the confident glorification of man's achievement in the early twentieth century, to the destruction levied by two World Wars, to the cultural diversification of the later twentieth century. The competition festival has existed through much social and cultural change but by adapting and changing in response to the needs of its participants it has remained a constant. By studying the competitive music festival movement insight can be gained into the shifting ideologies of British culture viewed through the response of the competition festival to the changes around it and, more importantly for the purposes of the dissertation, how musical processes have aided social processes and assisted in the formation of varying aspects of identity.

The Locus of the Research

The locus of the research is quite easily definable - the British Isles provides the initial broad scale locus for the historical phase of the research and for the wider perspective given upon the 'festival

movement' as a whole. The place which provides the primary focus for this study is the Isle of Man, a British Crown Dependency found part-way between England and Ireland, and the event around which the study is based is the 113-year-old Manx Music Festival.¹¹ The Isle of Man provides an ideal base upon which to undertake the field research for this dissertation. In purely physical terms the Isle of Man provides a natural boundary which means that cultural and social features, although not isolated, are somewhat contained and therefore more easily quantifiable. The Island considers itself very much to be an individual nation so the concept of constructing and maintaining a national identity can be explored in some detail and the role that the music festival occupies within this clearly examined. Although the Isle of Man is geographically small (37 miles by 12 miles at its widest points) there are several towns and villages that promote their own identity within that of the Island as a whole. This localisation can be seen in many aspects of Island life, including the Manx Music Festival where choirs and competitors come from all over the Island and there is a sense of local pride derived from this participation. Individual identity is informed and maintained on any number of different levels by those who take part in the festival drawing from it aspects important to the individual themselves. The establishment of the festival in 1892, means that it has long provided a platform upon which social and cultural meaning can be placed, drawn, developed and/or formed. By using the idea of identity formation and

¹¹ 'Manx' is the word used to describe that which is of or from the Isle of Man.

maintenance the dissertation aims to highlight the ways in which participation leads to social, cultural, and musical meaning in the Manx Music Festival.

The Dissertation as a Contribution to Academic Study

There are perhaps three primary reasons for undertaking this study: the first being that it adds to the small but growing body of work that uses an ethnomusicological approach for the study of a British musical event. Although the academic worth of such studies is acknowledged, they are still very much in the minority as the study of the 'other' remains the prominent focus within ethnomusicological research. What this dissertation aims to show is just one example of the vast wealth of musical and cultural activity taking place in what can be called the 'home' and that this type of activity is worthy of academic attention equal to those studies conducted in the 'home of the other'. The second reason is that the dissertation concentrates on an event that, thus far, has been all but overlooked in British musical scholarship. That event is the amateur competitive music festival which has been a part of music-making in the British Isles for over one hundred years. Viewed as a whole, the competitive music festival movement spread throughout the entirety of Britain and was supported by some of the country's leading social, political and musical figures. This said, currently the only available scholarship appears to be a few passing references in tomes whose overall focus is

much wider¹² and it is time that this aspect of musical life in Britain is given a focus of its own. This dissertation aims to provide a contribution to broaden the available studies on British music making and view the importance of the competitive festival as a contributor to the culture of the British Isles and to identity formation. Finally, the Isle of Man as the place providing the primary focus of the research has much to offer ethnomusicological study with its Celtic/Anglo history and strong sense of cultural distinction. A dissertation examining the role of identity formation found in and around the Manx Music Festival provides a unique, original and significant example of this.

Due to the multi-disciplinary nature of the study, the dissertation draws upon research from a number of fields. Both the theoretical approach used and the methodology employed, which will both be discussed in more detail later in this chapter, draw primarily upon the fields of ethnomusicology and anthropology. However such fields are, by their very nature, broad and it is in the more defined sub-sections found within these main fields where the principal relevance to this dissertation is to be discovered. Within the field of ethnomusicology the research can be classified as contributing to the ever increasing body of work that focuses on musical practices found in the British Isles. This can further be defined by using the Isle of Man as a focal

¹² See Russell's 1987 *Popular Music in England, 1840 – 1914 A Social History*. Manchester: Manchester University Press for an example of this.

point. In this respect the research is relevant to all those who have an interest in these areas, whether the interested party is an amateur with a leisurely interest in cultural practices, or an academic researcher wishing to utilise the results found for comparison and contrast. The end result of the research will be a contribution to a greater understanding of the cultural processes of the British Isles. More specifically, this enquiry into the amateur competitive music festival in the British Isles explores issues of historicism, community, culture, place and tradition and looks how these issues contribute to ideas and ideals of identity formation and maintenance. Shifting away from an ethnomusicological emphasis, the study provides a contribution to the existing body of studies concerned with Celtic culture and in particular those studies concerning the Isle of Man. By undertaking an in-depth analysis of the Manx Music Festival - a 113-year-old event that is part of the social, cultural and musical fabric of the Island - a more in-depth understanding of this unique culture continues to be built and those interested in the popular history of the Isle of Man, again both amateur and specialists alike, should be able to draw upon the information presented. Taken as a whole the dissertation will be of interest to those who have a regard for the development and maintenance of British popular culture, Celtic culture and Manx culture and those who have a concern for identity development and maintenance.

Towards a Research Methodology

Formulating a research methodology appropriate to the thesis is, in many ways, one of the most complex part of the dissertation process. The approach needed is one that first considers existing research, both current and historical, and applies ideas drawn from this research to undertake the formulation of an overall approach that combines the use of data and fact, historical documentation, the field work process and the emic position of the researcher. The dissertation required an approach that would reflect the essentially humanistic nature of the research and keep the focus of the research firmly upon the idea of participation in the competition festival and the festival movement as a contributory factor to the formation of aspects of identity on a number of levels.

Academic work on the competitive music festival movement in the British Isles is scarce. The reason why the movement has been thus far overlooked as a source for in-depth research is something of a mystery. One possibility can be found in the fact that the competitive festival movement is not easily fixed within one academic discipline. It is at once historical, social, cultural, musical, and anthropological and there are undoubtedly many other categories that could be added to this list. A study of the movement could be approached from any of these angles. However, the best approach would seem to be one that allows for a combination of these angles. In this respect the obvious approach to studying the competition movement and the competition

festival is an ethnomusicological one. By studying a phenomenon that is present throughout the Britain, the dissertation aspires to highlight the significance of the movement as something that has contributed to the way in which we both make and think about music in the British Isles. Approaching the study from an ethnomusicological perspective allows for the provision of insight into the historical aspects of the festivals and the festival movement, and enables a view of the cultural processes that exist in, around, and because of the competition festival. It is an approach that allows for the marriage of the anthropological and musical.

In formulating an appropriate research methodology it is important to consider a number of theoretical influences taken both from past and current research. These influences can be defined as being drawn from ethnomusicology and anthropology, although the spectrum can be somewhat narrowed by drawing primarily upon sources that consider the ethnomusicological study of western music, the undertaking of research within the field that can be described as 'home', issues of identity formation and maintenance through music, musical practice and participation in the musical event, and finally a consideration of an appropriate presentation of the research. By drawing upon these sources a research methodology appropriate and particular to the empirical study of the amateur competition festival can be formulated.

Approaching Western Ethnomusicology

The ethnomusicological study of western culture is something of a growing field: a glance at historical ethnomusicology journals show that scholars tended to favour the 'exotic' music of the 'other' over the music happening within their own cultural sphere. Given that the majority of ethnomusicologists were, and for the most part still are, western scholars then the brevity of work undertaken on western themes should come as no surprise. However, the late 1980s saw something of an advent of change and the west as an area for ethnomusicological research became recognised as having potential as a place for study alongside other more established research areas. In 1989 Bruno Nettl wrote *Mozart and the Ethnomusicological Study of Western Culture*¹³ which considered some of the possible problems needing to be addressed in conjunction with the ethnomusicological study of western culture as outlined in his title and suggested solutions. Nettl begins by giving three definitions of ethnomusicology:

The comparative study of musical systems and cultures; the study of music in or as culture; the study of a musical culture from an outsider's perspective. None of these excludes the art music culture of Western society, but few ethnomusicological studies have actually been devoted to it.¹⁴

Nettl's opening tenet highlights a gap in ethnomusicological scholarship both from the perspective of studies of Western Art Music,

¹³ Yearbook for Traditional Music 1989, pp. 1-17.

but also an absence of study by musical culture from an 'insider' perspective.

Nettl approaches the study of Western musical culture by imagining the impression that this culture would give to an alien visitor from Mars. He toys briefly with the idea of 'taste' in Western society:

A woman turns on the radio, there is music, and she says, "aha, it's Mozart [or Brahms maybe]," (but not, for instance, "aha, it's piano music" or "it's Heifetz," or "thank heavens, a rondo!"). The Martian is told that he simply *must* hear the symphony orchestra that evening; or the opera – but he's confused when he's told that he shouldn't bother with the day's soap operas or the evening TV's "Grand Ole Opry."¹⁵

Nettl highlights the seeming lack of consistency with regard to ideas of good musical taste, of what would be considered important for someone outside of the Western Art Music culture to listen to. Immediately interest is created as to the reasons why the outsider, in this case the Alien, should listen to the established classical musical canon as opposed to the more popular, but considered low brow 'Grand Ole Opry'. Music is not merely music, it would also appear to serve a social purpose. Nettl continues by describing how the Alien would see within the music building a distinct hierarchy featuring composers such 'Bach, Beethoven, Haydn',¹⁶ and ideas about what is accepted as talent and what is good performance. Nettl questions the

¹⁴ Nettl 1989, p. 1.

¹⁵ Ibid. p. 2.

¹⁶ Ibid. p. 3.

reasons as to why certain conventions have been established. Nettl's study of the music building and the convention found within lead him to suggest what principles and values underlies the musical system found within this musical culture:

We see intriguing concepts such as genius, discipline, efficiency, the hierarchical pyramid of musics and composers, the musician as stranger and outsider, the wonders of complexity, the stimulus of innovation, music as a great thing with metaphorical extensions. But also we are forced to suggest, we see: dictatorship, conformity, a rigid class structure, over specialization, love of mere bigness, and more of that kind, all explicitly or by implication extolled.¹⁷

Nettl's article highlights how, when viewed through 'alien' eyes, or somewhat from a distance, Western musical culture has many diverse social systems and practices that are just as culturally significant as the study of music from other cultures. All that is needed is to approach the study from the perspective of viewing the ordinary, in this case western musical practice, as extraordinary or, defamiliarising the familiar. By taking a step back from that which is familiar, the process of defamiliarisation, significant scope can be seen for the ethnomusicological study of musical practices which are found within the researcher's own cultural sphere.

The question to be asked here is whether the competitive music festival lends itself to similar evaluation and examination and the

answer would seem to be yes. There are so many conventions and traditions that may seem to be ordinary to those from the Western music tradition and those whose daily lives take place in British culture, but when viewed through 'alien' eyes there is much that can be examined and interpreted and conclusions like the ones drawn by Nettl above are certainly possible. The experience of Nettl's hypothetical alien is equally applicable to the study of the competitive music festival and the festival movement. This musical system also has its own set of established traditions and ideals of good 'taste': the Martian attending a music festival may find that certain composers are featured more than others, in particular in the choral part songs where works by Victorian and Edwardian composers proliferate; it would see that each individual festival contains within it a distinct hierarchical structure consisting of competitors, organisers, adjudicators; it would see that ideas of good talent and performance are present and that this is displayed in the controlled conditions of a competitive class; it would see several people offering performances of the same piece watched by a large audience, with one human in a central position giving an opinion on what is the best performance - the list goes on.

Nettl's article highlights a possible methodological approach and - as with other such studies considering the concept of ethnomusicological research on a western musical practice (see Blacking 1973, 1987 and

¹⁷ Ibid., p. 15.

Nettl 1983) - these were, as Stock (1999) points out, 'generally carried out to illustrate a theoretical or methodological question.'¹⁸ Stock's article is primarily concerned with approaching the study of Western music from an ethnomusicological standpoint, and his conclusion consisting of three key points to enable this has much relevance to the study of the competitive music festival. The first point is nothing particularly new to the study of ethnomusicology, but is worthy of consideration particularly in connection with the concept of western ethnomusicology and the formulation of an approach to the study of the amateur competition festival. Stock writes:

The first of these is in arming musicologists with an expanded view of music as an interrelated cluster of concept, behaviours, and sounds activated in (and activating) specific individual, social and historical contexts...Ethnomusicologists have been addressing questions like these for quite some time already, and their existing literature contains a considerable amount of potential utility to the musicologist interested in formulating questions that say something about (rather than to) fellow members of Western society.¹⁹

In Stock's second point he promotes participation as a valuable method of research:

Ethnomusicology offers the socially orientated musicologist access to a rich bank of experience in the methodologies and theories of research through personal participation...personal participation may

¹⁸ Stock, J, "New Musicologies, Old Musicologies: Ethnomusicology and the study of Western Music." In *Current Musicology* 1999, pp. 40-68.

¹⁹ Stock 1999, p. 64.

be not only the best way but the sole way for the musicologist to gather materials.²⁰

Stock's final point states that:

Music may be studied as a general part of human life...At times, musicologists may wish to employ their in-depth knowledge of the aspects of Western music in order to generate more notions about how music works as part of human life. Or conversely, they may wish to use such general notions as already exist in order to assess what is special and different about the culture specific example they have in mind. Since we have a much richer knowledge of Western art music than any of humanity's other musical styles, musicologists are, in fact, well positioned to lead investigation into the pan-human aspects of music making.²¹

These three points are relevant in formulating an approach to the study of the amateur competition festival in that they provide guidance for the focusing of the empirical side of the research. Point one directs us towards viewing the musical event as something that is essentially 'social' in nature and highlights the importance of contextualising the musical event. In the case of the amateur festival, Stock's first point directs towards formulating a research approach that considers the historical background of the competition festival and the festival movement and how this background influences and reflects the society which surrounds it. Stock's second point emphasises the need to formulate an approach that utilises personal participation in the event being studied. Applied to the study of the

²⁰ Stock 1999, p. 65.

competition festival, this point highlights the need for participation in order that the fullest understanding of the issues raised by point one may be gained. The final point in Stock's article serves to emphasise that a western (ethno)musicologist (or indeed any native researcher) is able draw upon their own background in order to further formulate ideas about the musical practice being studied. In this case an approach that uses local background knowledge combined with a reasonable degree of performing skill able to be used in the field is the most suitable for the study of the amateur competition festival. In all the approach is an holistic one that uses ethnomusicological techniques but also one that acknowledges the specialist background knowledge that a native researcher brings to the research.

Whilst theories and concepts of the ethnomusicological approach to studying western music have been discussed in some small detail, it is only relatively recently that actual studies along these lines have begun to appear. Stock (1999) states that:

Henry Kingsbury's study of the music conservatory is perhaps one of the most stimulating publications within this field to date (Kingsbury 1988). It is probably fair to say that these new ethnomusicological studies have generally concentrated more on aspects of musical conceptualization and behaviour than on the explanation of the sound structure of individual Western pieces or performances.²²

²¹ Stock 1999, p. 65.

This concentration upon the 'aspects of musical conceptualization and behaviour' rather than the sounds that are themselves being produced would certainly seem to be an appropriate approach to take with regard to studying the competitive music festival. In his 1988 study Kingsbury turns the spotlight onto the social practices found within an American music conservatory and uses an ethnomusicological approach to highlight these. Kingsbury approaches his study using the 'alienation' techniques as described in Nettl's article and draws from it a number of interesting conclusions. It is not the music sounds themselves that are to be under analysis, but rather it is the actions and the meanings found thereof performed by the people who participate on this particular musical stage that give the study its emphasis. In this respect there is much to be drawn from Kingsbury's 1988 study of the music conservatory when formulating an approach to the study of amateur competitive music festival: both have as their ideological aim the pursuit of musical excellence; the hierarchical structure of the conservatory could be said in many ways to parallel the hierarchy present in the individual music festivals; the examination of attitudes towards what is good musical practice and what represents talent and who decides this can also be transferred to the music festival. Whilst the amateur competitive festival and the music conservatoire system are distinct, what can be drawn from Kingsbury's study is the successful application of an ethnomusicological approach to the undertaking of research on a

²² Stock 1999, p. 56.

western musical system – that is to say a study that concentrates on the social and cultural perspective of musical practice and behaviours that both informs and reflects the culture under consideration.

A more recent consideration of the ethnomusicological study of Western musical culture and the inherent problems of combining the realm of what is more traditionally that of musicology with that of ethnomusicology is given by Kay Kaufman Shelemay. In her article “Toward an Ethnomusicology of the Early Music Movement: Thoughts on Bridging Disciplines and Musical Worlds”²³ Shelemay offers what she sees to be:

A preliminary ethnography of the early music movement, drawing from it what I hope are useful insights into the collapsing musical boundaries in our changing world and the new agendas that might unite musical scholarship through a shared pedagogy and practice of musical ethnography.²⁴

Like Stock, Shelemay acknowledges that the study of Western musical culture requires the crossing of certain boundaries between ethnomusicology and musicology. Shelemay uses her own experience of crossing these boundaries in the study of the early music movement from an ethnomusicological perspective to give a consideration of what she describes as:

²³ In *Ethnomusicology* 45(1), pp. 1-29.

²⁴ Kay Kaufman Shelemay 2001, p. 1.

Some of the potentials and pitfalls of ethnomusicologies of “Western music” and the role that ethnomusicologists could play in moving musical scholarship further in these directions.²⁵

It is these ‘potentials’ and ‘pitfalls’ that are most helpful when formulating the approach to studying the competitive music festival. One of the first ‘pitfalls’ encountered by Shelemay is the blurring of boundaries that can come through the close association of the researcher with the tradition and those involved with the tradition. She writes:

It should also be noted that, due to the involvement of members of the research team as performers and scholars of early music, and the academic backgrounds and current affiliations of many in the early music movement, the distinction between ethnographer and research associate was more often than not blurred...Interviews sometimes slipped into conversations or even into spirited debates as members of the research team became at once musicians, audience members, or occasionally, critics.²⁶

Similar boundaries could easily be blurred when undertaking the study of the competitive music festival. If, as Stock (1999) suggests, participation is a necessary part of the research process then the researcher is at once audience member, musician and critic. What must be decided in formulating the approach is whether this blurring of boundaries is truly problematic, or whether slipping into conversation may encourage the informant to be more relaxed and

²⁵ Ibid., p. 5.

more open than the formal interview would usually allow for. If the interview is to become more conversational/relaxed and without a more rigid directional process, conversation may be of little use to the researcher as much of the focus may be lost. Shelemay's experience, however, suggests that the researcher needs to be aware of being clear about the establishment and maintenance of boundaries so the research findings do not become affected by the inclusion of personal bias at varying stages of the research process. It would seem that informal interviews have their place alongside more formal interview techniques and using this approach allows for opportunistic and spontaneous research, which is fitting to a live event such as the competitive music festival. Within this aspect of the approach, however, it is important to remember the need to keep informal interviews focused.

The final section in Shelemay's article provides an insight into an approach that uses the historical and places this alongside a consideration of more contemporary social process and also one in which the researcher considers their own place within the research:

Ethnographies of living traditions thus provide a rich opportunity to enhance musical life traditionally viewed only through the lens of written historical sources; as such, they can help guide the music historian, bringing into focus transmission processes and musical meanings as situated among real people in real time. For both music historians and

²⁶ Ibid., p. 8.

ethnomusicologists... ethnographies of "Western music" render the fieldwork process intensely reflexive.²⁷

Shelemay's thought that ethnographies of 'Western Music' mean that the research process is a reflexive one is an important consideration and one which must be factored into formulating an approach to this research on the amateur competition festival.

The final text to be referred to in considering the formulation of an ethnomusicological approach to the study of western music shifts the consideration much closer to the Competitive music festival movement - from the elements that can be drawn from the texts of Nettl, Stock and Shelemay, to something much closer to home. Ruth Finnegan's ethnography entitled *The Hidden Musicians: music-making in an English town*²⁸ is a study considering the amateur musicians of Milton Keynes and in this respect is comparable with the similarly amateur musicians of the competition festival. Finnegan states:

It is easy to underestimate these grass-roots musical activities given the accepted emphasis in academic and political circles on great musical masterpieces, professional music, or famed national achievements. But for the great majority of people it is the local amateur scene that forms the setting for their active musical experience, and it is these 'ordinary' musicians and their activities that form the centre-piece of the study.²⁹

²⁷ Ibid., p. 23.

²⁸ Ruth Finnegan 1989.

²⁹ Ibid., xii.

This forms an almost direct parallel with the people who are at the centre of the amateur competitive music festival. The members of the public that Finnegan describes form an eclectic mix that could well be found at the scene of any competitive music festival:

Among them I include the untrained as well as the highly accomplished, the 'bad' as well as the 'good' performers. This partly comes from my own experience, shared with many others, that even a poor executant can take a genuine part in local music...it is also based on my conviction that amateur practitioners are just as worth investigation as professional performers, and that the cultural practices are as real and interesting as the economic or class facets of their lives to which so much attention is usually devoted...this study is not just about Milton Keynes but also has implications for our understanding of musical – and social – practice in general, and what this means both for its participants and for wider relationships in our society...It also touches on controversial issues about the nature of popular culture, the anthropology and sociology of music, and the quality of people's pathways in modern urban life. I hope it can lead to greater appreciation and study of what are, after all, among the most valued pursuits of our culture: the musical practices and experiences of ordinary people in their own locality, an invisible system which we usually take for granted but one which upholds one very vulnerable but living element of our cultural heritage³⁰

This quotation moves the argument that the Western art music tradition is worthy of ethnomusicological study one stage closer to the amateur competitive music festival movement. Whereas the previously mentioned studies by Nettl, Stock. Kingsbury and

³⁰ Ibid.

Shelemay all discuss the merits of the breaking down of barriers between musicology and ethnomusicology and the importance of studying western music and music making from an ethnomusicological perspective, the music under discussion remains professional and specialist. Where Finnegan differs is by approaching what she calls the 'ordinary musicians' rather than conservatory buildings (Nettl), conservatory systems (Kingsbury) or the early music movement (Shelemay). The question that Finnegan asks, and that is equally applicable to the amateur competitive festival movement, is who are these people making music and what is it that makes them do it in that particular way? Finnegan's approach to the research draws upon the ideas highlighted by Stock and Shelemay in that her approach involves participant observation and transforms the seemingly ordinary into something which is extraordinary in order to gain social and cultural insight into aspects of music making. By applying similar techniques to the amateur competition festival this dissertation aims to highlight the contribution made by festival participation to aspects of identity formation.

Ethnography, Reflexivity and Fieldwork

Contributing to the formulation of an approach to the research is a need to draw upon what Shelemay refers to as the 'intensely

reflexive'³¹ nature of the research. By 'reflexive' Shelemay is referring to the need for the researcher to consider themselves as part of the research process, the place they occupy within the culture being studied, and the effect that the immersion in the culture has on the researcher. This is perhaps especially important when the topic of the study is so close to home as it is in the case of the competition festival here. The links between the researcher and the topic of study are that much stronger in a study that is based within the researcher's own cultural sphere and the research needs to be aware of this both when undertaking field research and when formulating an approach to presenting the work.

Whilst a fieldwork method that utilises the technique of participant observation would seem the most logical approach to take to the empirical side of the research there are still a number of considerations to bear in mind when formulating an overall approach both to how the research will be undertaken and how the forthcoming results, will be presented. What is needed is an approach that will allow for the interpretative fusion of the historical aspect of the research with the results of the field research. In this case an ethnographic approach would seem to be the most suitable.

The ethnography is possibly the single most important tool available to the ethnomusicologist when presenting information collected in the

³¹ Shelemay 2001, p. 8.

field to a wider audience. The modern ethnographic method allows the researcher to spend periods of time in the field collecting information as 'participant/observer' and, in turn, allows for this information to be interpreted in such a way that the resulting ethnographic account contextualises the culture under study whilst allowing for the reflexive nature of the research itself.

Definitions of ethnography and, indeed, ethnographies themselves have evolved a great deal from the emergence of Malinowski's *Argonauts of the Western Pacific* in 1922,³² in which ethnography was considered to be a scientific method enabling anthropology to take its place alongside other scientific genres. Writers such as Geertz (1973)³³ paved the way for allowing a much more interpretative approach to the culture being studied and more recently the role of the ethnographer in the research process has featured in numerous ethnographies (for examples see Seeger 1987; Feld 1982 (revised 1990); Nettl 1989; Rice 1993; Kratz 1994; Goertzen 1997; and so on) thus allowing for a more reflexive presentation of the cultural event being studied. Lareau and Shultz describe the process as follows:

In recent decades, there has been a major transformation in the research process among social scientists in the university. Efforts to emulate the natural sciences and to make social science research 'scientific' have come under attack. Although the basis of the critiques vary, most center on the failure

³² Malinowski, Bronislaw, 1961, *Argonauts of the Western Pacific*. New York: E. P. Dutton.

³³ Geertz, Clifford, 1973. *The Interpretation of Cultures :Selected Essays*. London: Hutchinson

to capture the subjective experiences of individuals and, especially, the meaning of events in individuals' lives. As a result, there has been a renaissance of interest in interpretative methods.³⁴

It is this more interpretative method that is most appropriate for use in the ethnographic account of the amateur competition festival and, in particular, the Manx Music Festival. By employing an interpretative methodology the results of the research place the participants of the festival, including the researcher, at the centre of the research and allows for a consideration of the role of identity formation found in and through participation at the festival without necessitating the presentation of the findings as hard fact and distancing the researcher from the process. The level of reflexivity involved in this research is heightened by the researcher approaching it from the perspective of a native ethnographer. Chou Chiener writes of his own experience as a native researcher:

My earlier knowledge, gained as a musical learner, seemed more difficult to deploy in academic writing than my later observations as a researcher. Nonetheless, I feel that this earlier period of experience was more than a background to subsequent 'proper' fieldwork following ethnomusicological training, and that it led to understandings that were in some cases distinct from, rather than inferior to, those gained through fieldwork. As such...those of us who carry out our research at home, and who have learnt music outside formal fieldwork contexts, need to reflect

³⁴ Lareau and Shultz, 1996, p. 6, *Journeys Through Ethnography: Realistic Accounts of Fieldwork* Colorado and Oxford: Westview Press.

further on the special nature of our position and experience.³⁵

Chiener continues with the following point:

...existing linguistic, musical, and cultural familiarity may advantage the native researcher; nonetheless, this very intimacy brings with it considerations of the role and identity that the native researcher may be unable to avoid...Due to his or her continued proximity, the native scholar is also particularly well placed to study these mutual influences, considering not only his or her impact in the field but also these demands and expectations of others and results of ongoing interaction over a long period.³⁶

Chiener highlights a number of the opportunities and challenges that are presented to the native researcher but if this 'insider' knowledge is to be utilised to its full advantage then the reflexive nature of the research must be fully acknowledged. It is important that the researcher is placed as part of the research and that the influence of the research upon the researcher is regarded as an equally valid and, indeed, essential part of the research process. Coffey writes:

What is central...is the recognition that fieldwork is personal, emotional and identity *work*. The construction and production of self and identity occurs both during and after fieldwork. In writing, remembering and representing our fieldwork experience we are involved in processes of self presentation and identity construction. In considering and exploring the intimate relations between the field, significant others and the private self

³⁵ Cheiner, Chou 2002, "Experience and Fieldwork: A Native Researcher's View" from *Ethnomusicology* 46, No3, Fall 2002, pp. 456 – 486.

³⁶ Ibid, p. 481.

we are able to understand the processes of fieldwork as practical, intellectual and emotional accomplishments.³⁷

What is needed, therefore, is an ethnographic account that focuses upon the Amateur Competition Music Festival - and, in particular, the Manx Music Festival - which acknowledges the reflexive nature of the research that has been undertaken and the role that the researcher has played within the research process. The information gathered for the resulting ethnographic account is assembled from historical research and several periods of fieldwork spent at the Manx Music Festival and time spent living on the Isle of Man employing the technique of participant/observation.

Undertaking the Empirical Work

The empirical work undertaken for the dissertation was perhaps, by its very practical nature, the most straightforward aspect of the research methodology to be considered and the pattern followed was that set out in figure I.i below.

The empirical work followed a number of obvious patterns consulting both primary and secondary sources in order to gain information that could be presented and interpreted in the following chapters.

³⁷ Coffey, Amanda 1999. *The Ethnographic Self – Fieldwork and the Representation of Identity*. Sage Publications London, California and New Dehli, p. 1.

Methods of Data Collection³⁸

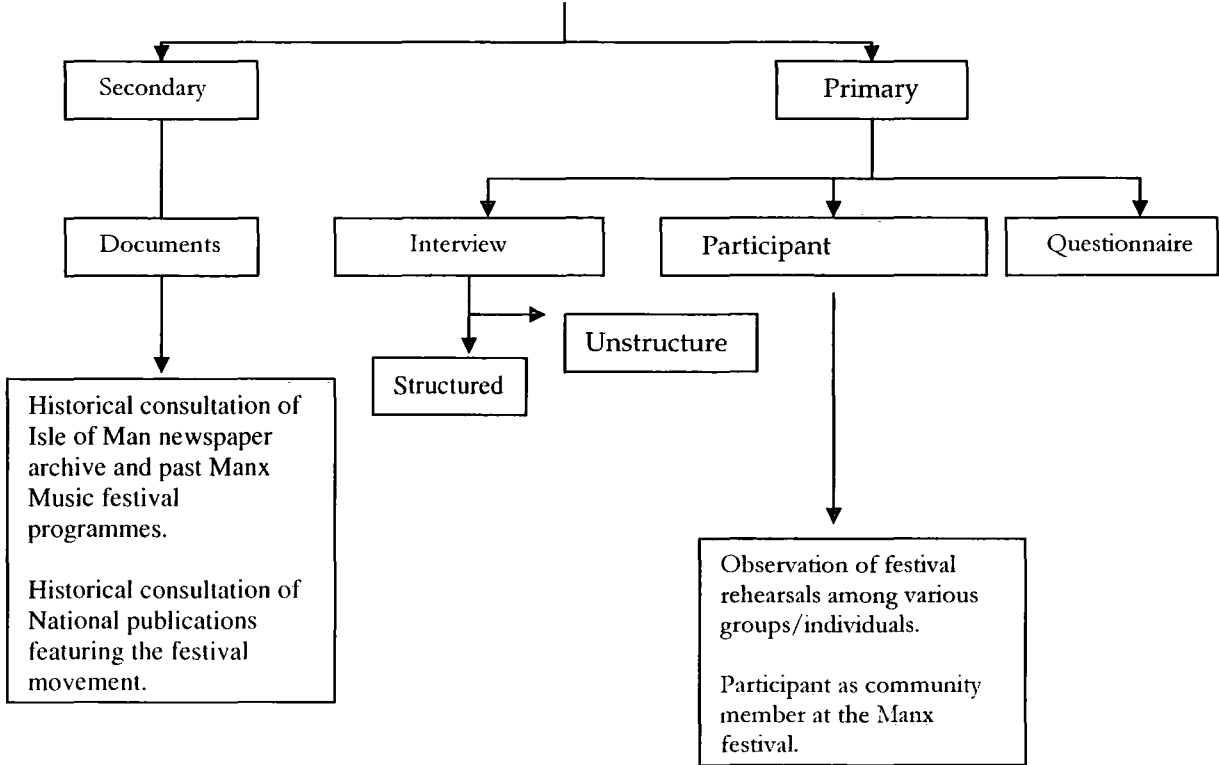


Figure I.i: Empirical Research Methods

By collecting and collating resources that drew upon a variety of sources, a broad spectrum of information from a variety of perspectives concerning the amateur competition festival movement and the Manx festival in particular was obtained. The primary sources consulted for this side of the research involved participation as a member of the Manx Music Festival community over a number of years. Membership of the festival community was used as a basis from which to conduct interviews with other community members; it was used as a place to act and interact with other festival participants and

³⁸ Figure adapted from *Research Methodology: A Step by Step Guide for Beginners*, Chapter 9 'Constructing an instrument for data collection', p. 104, 1999 Sage Publications: London, California and New Delhi.

to observe the social processes that took place within the festival environs. A return to full-time living on the Isle of Man in late 2003 further expanded this community membership by enabling a greater understanding of how the festival lies within the broader sphere of the whole identity of the Isle of Man and the place it occupies in the life of the participants even when it is not the time of the festival itself. By living and working amongst the festival participants in the place where the festival is located, ample opportunity was allowed for an in-depth consideration of the contribution it makes to the formation of ideas and ideals of identity. The practicalities of the primary research used a combination of interviews, less formal conversation, observation and participation in the following ways:

Participation and Observation

Participation and observation forms the main base around which the empirical research for the dissertation was undertaken. Participation involved attendance at and participation in the Manx Music Festival both as a competitor and audience member from the year 2000 to the present day and residency on the Isle of Man during the time of the festival and full time from November 2003. Observation took place alongside and hand in hand with the participation and was assisted by being able to approach the research from the position of a 'native' of the Isle of Man.

Interviews

The interviews were a cumulative process which took place over a number of years and were both structured and unstructured in their composition. The choice of subject for the interviews was, like the interviews themselves, sometimes planned and sometimes less formal and more opportunistic. With both type of interviews it was important to keep in mind the overall objective of the dissertation which was to discover what, if any, contribution the Manx Music Festival made to the identity of the Isle of Man and to the identity of its participants. The more formal of these interviews took place at scheduled times and were recorded with the permission of the interviewee. The less formal interviews involved rough note-taking during the course of the interview, again with the permission of the interviewee, and then an expansion of these notes once the interview was concluded.

Conversation

When attending the Manx Music Festival, informal conversation took place on a daily basis with a variety of people from all aspects of the festival society. Whilst these conversations were not in any way directed by the researcher they often offered what seemed, at least to the researched, an insight into the more unguarded and less formalised thoughts and feelings of the participants at the festival, which in turn shed light on the 'whys' and 'wherefores' of personal motivation for attendance at the festival. Points arising from these

conversations that were of relevance to the dissertation were noted down but the primary benefit of this aspect of the research was the development of a general feel for what people felt about the Manx Music Festival and the place it occupied in their lives. Conversation taking place outside the Manx Music Festival, at other times of the year, enabled an insight into the place occupied by the Manx Music Festival in the lives of the Isle of Man, the musical community of the Island, and the participants of the Manx Music Festival.

Case Studies

Allowing for a longer insight into the thoughts, feelings and motivations of the participants, case studies are used in chapters three and four. These case studies are drawn from members of the festival society and represent the six social groups found within the festival. The accounts were produced in response to the researcher's request for a reflection upon why the individuals participated in the festival with no elaboration beyond this simple outline. The accounts are purposefully left unedited to enable the thoughts of the participants speak fully rather than in response to particular questions or with parts extracted by the researcher to emphasise certain points. These accounts provide a valuable, firsthand insight into the members of the festival society, why they participate and what personally motivates them to participate.

Documentary Sources

In terms of the Documentary sources consulted, the primary place for extracting the empirical information has been the Isle of Man Government Manx National Heritage Library, situated in Douglas and housing an extensive archive of original documents and other materials relating to all aspects of Manx culture. The process of examining this archive has taken the form of extended periods of research taking place over the past four years. Initially, the time spent in the archive consisted of locating and examining material directly concerning the Manx Music Festival. In this instance a fortunate discovery came in the form of a complete set of programmes for the Festival from 1892 to the present day which contained a large amount of quantifiable information including: entry numbers, classes offered, areas of Island represented, set pieces, own choice pieces, adjudicators and so on. This information gave an insight into the development and growth of the festival, in terms of the classes offered, the music performed and the ever growing number of entries in the festival. Concurrent with the discovery of the full set of festival programmes was a set of syllabuses and booklets containing results from the festival and the remarks of adjudicators. Although these booklets were not available in a complete set as in the case of the programmes – indeed the adjudicator's remark booklets appear to have ceased to exist following 1930 – these documents provided a valuable supplement to the festival programmes. The adjudicator's remark booklets are particularly important in that they give details of

what was said and by whom during a particular festival which reflects the current nature of thought with regard to musical performance and performance standard present on the Isle of Man.

Other important sources to be consulted were the national newspapers of the Isle of Man from 1892 to the present day. Once more, the Manx National Heritage Library proved very useful in providing a full set of all newspapers held on microfiche. Articles appertaining to the Festival, and indeed music as a whole in the Isle of Man, were extracted and the relevant parts noted. AS with the festival programmes this aspect of the research gave good insight into the historical development of the festival, but further to this it also placed the festival within the context of the Isle of Man as a whole. Through the consultation of historical documents the place of the festival throughout its history was able to be charted.

On a broader scale, the library provided a large variety of printed matter concerning the history of the Isle of Man, music-making as an activity on the Isle of Man and the developing nature of Manx culture as a whole from 1892 to the present.

Away from those documents most relevant to the Manx Music Festival, it has also been important to consider the Competitive Festival Movement as a whole. Access to documents has been somewhat difficult as the extensive archive held by the British and

International Federation of Music, Speech and Dance is currently inaccessible. This means that much of the important primary source information in relation to the history and development of the movement as a whole has been unable to be used. However, despite this, a large amount of information has been gained from periodicals such as *The Musical Times* which, in the early Twentieth Century, published a special supplement with its main journal entitled 'The Competition Festival Record'. These documents once more provide the written evidence necessary in formulating a broad perspective considering the place of the Festival movement in Britain during its formative years.

Each of the chapters of the dissertation plays a part in this consideration of the thesis posed that the amateur competitive festival is a contributor to ideas and ideals of identity formation and maintenance.

Chapter One

Chapter one tests the thesis initially by considering the historical circumstances that led towards the formation of the competition festival movement in the British Isles and continues by charting the progress of the movement from its inception to the present day. It considers how the social processes present in Britain meant that conditions were favourable for the formation of a movement like the

amateur competition festival movement and how the individuals involved with this process were reflecting the social identities that were placed upon them either through birth or circumstance. The chapter aims to place the identity of the movement and the individual festivals within British culture and identity as a whole. It begins by considering the early history of the festival movement and the role that the Welsh Eisteddfod played in this history. Here the role of identity is discussed in a number of ways from the out-migration of an expression of Welsh identity into England, to the way in which this aspect of Welsh identity was appropriated by the English upper classes and transformed for their own purposes into a source for good moral education.

The chapter progresses by considering the identity of music itself as a source for moral well-being and how this ideal was shaped and formed by those in the dominant classes as something which could be utilised for good in the small, but significant, leisure time that was beginning to be available to the working classes. Music provided a common area with which all areas of society could identify and, from the outset of the competition movement, provided a suitable basis from which people were able to shape and evolve their own musical identities. The mid- to late- nineteenth century was a time when competition had become a part of the national consciousness and the chapter discusses how this contributed to making an ideal setting for the establishment of the musical competition festival. Having established

the factors present within the identity of British culture as a whole which meant that it was suitable for the establishment and growth of the competition festival movement, the chapter considers how the identity of the individuals involved also had a large part to play. It was the individual identities of Mary Wakefield and her contemporaries, shaped by both the society they lived in and their individual upbringing and circumstances, that allowed for them to be the pioneers to formulate, establish and push for the growth of the competition festival movement. As these festivals grew and spread throughout the British Isles, so the movement began to become part of the national identity, the individual festivals became part of the local identity of the area in which they were established and the individual participants in the festival drew from the festivals strands that contributed to their own identities. The prominence of the musical competition festivals in such journals as the *Musical Times* provides evidence of the increasing status and importance in the national consciousness of the festival movement and provided a source of information for the ever increasing interest in the festival movement. Such was the success of the establishment of individual festivals throughout the country that an 'Association' and later 'Federation' was formed to regulate and shape the festivals to the overall ideals of those behind their initial formation. This formalisation of the festival movement signifies an extra strand to the discussion of identity as the festivals now had an 'umbrella identity' as they followed the guidelines set down by the governing bodies. The identity of the individual

festival was shaped not only by those involved with the festival itself but also by how it chose to subscribe to the many ideals of the Association and the Federation.

The chapter considers how both the festivals and the festival movement responded to the differing challenges posed throughout the twentieth century - from historical events such as the two world wars, to the development of a society where many alternative forms of entertainment/leisure pursuits came to compete with the festivals for the time of the participants. In response to the changes found throughout the society the ideas and ideals of identity found in and shaped through the festival have had to change in response to this and the chapter considers what these changes are.

By considering the festival from its inception to the present day the combination of historicism and identity formation provides a more general background from which to move forward to a more in-depth consideration of the role of identity and identity formation within the individual festival.

Chapter Two

Chapter two moves from a more generalised consideration of the role of identity formation and maintenance within the competition festival movement as a whole to the part that identity formation plays within the individual festival.

The Isle of Man has had a varied and turbulent history and - in part due to its Island situation, and in part due to its status as a nation distinct from mainland Britain - affords an ideal opportunity to discuss aspects of national and local identity. The quantifiable periods of the Isle of Man's history have each contributed something to the culture and identity of the Island as it is now in the early twenty-first century and the chapter discusses the primary features of these periods. In defining a contemporary Manx identity it is easy to see how the influence of the Celts, the Norse and the English is still present in many facets of Manx life. This diverse cultural influence however, has left the Island with a diverse modern identity and one which is not without its share of conflict. The Isle of Man is keen to promote itself as an independent nation with its own cultural identity distinct to that of the rest of the British Isles. The chapter considers how this cultural identity is negotiated and having considered the historical circumstance leading to Manx identity as it is today considers the differing ways in which this identity finds expression through a number of cultural signifiers - acknowledged amongst which is music and music-making. Two comparable musical signifiers are the 113-year-old *Manx Music Festival*, and the more recently revived Celtic festival *Yn Chruinnaght* and the chapter discusses the varying ways in which identity is formed and found in and through these festivals and how, although representing different strands of Manx cultural identity, both form an important part of

what is considered to be Manx identity today. The chapter highlights how both of these festivals have their place within the broader sphere of Manx culture and Manx identity and establishes the place of the musical competition festival within the history, culture and identity of the Isle of Man.

By considering Manx culture and Manx identity throughout history to the present day the chapter firmly establishes a sense of place for the primary object of study for the dissertation and places the Manx Music Festival within that, thus contextualising the study of the festival that is to follow.

Chapter Three

Chapter three considers the Manx Music Festival from the perspective of it being an event that has contained within it its own set of established conventions, practices and idiosyncrasies that lead to the participants forming a distinctive societal group and the chapter begins by defining how the identity of this society presents itself. As with the culture of the Isle of Man as a whole, the identity of the contemporary society of the Manx Music Festival has been shaped and formed by that which has gone before and the chapter considers how the society of the Manx Music Festival was established and how it has evolved and changed in response to the changing social and economic conditions that have been presented to it throughout its history. As with the establishment of the competition festival

movement itself, a detailed social history of the Manx festival allows for a consideration of how events within the festival society reflect events within the broader sphere of Manx cultural identity. As the Manx Music Festival grew in scope, length and popularity, so too was the identity of the society of the Manx Music Festival able to evolve and change and the first part of the chapter highlights the ways in which this took place.

Having considered the establishment and growth of the identity of the society of the Manx Music Festival the chapter moves to a consideration of how the contemporary society of the festival works in practice. Beginning by defining how the society is structured, insight is afforded into how those participating in the festival leave their identity, as found in the broader sphere of Manx society as a whole, behind and assume their festival identities. The social groups found within the festival are broken down into six bands and a definition of the role of these social groups within the society is given. The chapter suggests that by allying themselves with the particular social groups found within the festival the participants in the festival are choosing to identify themselves and define their own role within the festival society. Case studies serve to emphasise how the identity of the individual fits into the identity of the society of the festival. Having considered how the society is structured the chapter moves to a consideration of how the location of the festival has contributed to the

growth and expansion and continued presence of the established identity of the festival society.

By examining the identity of the society of the Manx Music Festival and the social groups found within the society the dissertation is able to move to an examination of how the festival society and the individuals participating in the festival use it as a platform to build and maintain specific ideas and ideals of identity.

Chapter Four

This chapter allows the study to examine the role of the Manx Music Festival in the formation of ideas and ideals of identity from the perspective of national identity, local identity, family identity and individual identity and considers how aspects of identity work in practice. Beginning by looking at how the festival contributes to the formation of a national identity, the chapter discusses the ways in which the festival can be said both to contribute to the national identity of the Isle of Man and the national identity of those participating in it. The chapter looks at ways in which the festival is part of the national identity of the Isle of Man, how it contributes to a sense of national identity in its participants and also how the Isle of Man's recent history is reflected in the status of the festival as a part of the national identity.

Having considered the contribution the festival makes to ideas and ideals of national identity the study moves to a consideration of local, family and individual identity. By explaining how a society is localised the chapter highlights how this process of localisation contributes to the formation of family and individual identity. The chapter proposes that localisation has taken place in and throughout the long history of the Manx Music Festival. Throughout the history of the festival a number of practices have grown which are peculiar to the festival and through which identity has been, and still is, shaped and formed. This chapter concentrates on these peculiar practices and highlights the ways in which the festival participants have forged aspects of family identity and individual identity both within the society of the festival and in the broader sphere of the society of the Isle of Man as a whole.

Chapter Five

This chapter is an in-depth account of the personal experiences of the researcher at the 2003 festival. The researcher is Manx and has come to view the festival as part of both her own cultural identity and musical identity: during the research process it has, at times, been encouraging and inspiring and, at times, caused despair. This involvement has, undoubtedly, influenced the research and given the opportunity to undertake a study from the privileged position of the 'native' ethnographer. It has been attempted, however, to leave

prejudice regarding the festival behind and draw the conclusions presented in the dissertation from the information collected from the sources used during the ethnographic process. However, the purpose of this chapter is to acknowledge the influence of the research upon the researcher and vice versa thus providing an illuminated account of the festival week itself.

Thus, what follows is a dissertation which considers ways in which participation in the amateur competitive music festival contributes to the formation and maintenance of identity on national, local and individual levels.

CHAPTER ONE

The Competition Festival Movement: Establishment, Growth and Spread

Introduction

Making its first appearance over 100 years ago, the competitive festival is now a firmly established part of amateur music-making in the British Isles. Today there are over 300 competitive festivals that subscribe to membership of the umbrella organisation that is now called *The British and International Federation of Music, Speech and Dance*. The vast majority of these festivals are found throughout the British Isles, but even now a number are held in former colonies of the British Empire that still subscribe to membership of the Federation. Whilst the festival may vary in terms of their size and orientation,³⁹ what all of the festivals have in common is their membership of the Federation. By choosing to be a member of the Federation, these amateur festivals are also subscribing to what can be described as the 'competitive festival movement'. It is the establishment and growth of this 'movement' that forms the basis of the discussion in this chapter, as it was the growth and spread of the movement that enabled the music competition festival to become for so many a vehicle through

³⁹ There is great variance to be found amongst the festivals: some may last a day, others over a week; some may feature instrumental music, some vocal, some dance, some drama and some a combination of all of these.

which ideas and ideals of identity became to be constructed, formulated and maintained.

Early History and the Influence of the Eisteddfod

In the twenty-first century music festivals are, for many, an established part of life. From classical to pop, from amateur to professional, almost every part of the British Isles is within reach of a festival of some variety taking place on a regular basis. The first recorded music competitions have been traced back as far as the sixth-century B.C. Pythian Games at Delphi,⁴⁰ so the concept was not something new to those pioneering the festival movement. Indeed, the seed from which the amateur competitive festival grew was not new or original: it was the Welsh Eisteddfod.⁴¹ These Eisteddfodau were, in the late nineteenth century, popular features of life in Wales and included competitions in music, craft, poetry and drama. Although the history of the Eisteddfod was proudly claimed to be a part of Welsh national identity stretching back to events in the Middle Ages, the event taking place in the nineteenth century was something more of a recent reincarnation of the more ancient event. The mid- to late-eighteenth century saw a crisis of culture taking place throughout Wales. Wales was, like most of the Celtic societies existing around mainland England, undergoing a large cultural shift in which everyday life moved away from that which could be termed 'Welsh', to

⁴⁰ The Columbia Encyclopaedia, Sixth Edition, 2000 - under the entry 'Music Festivals'.

that which could be termed 'English'. The music, craft and language of the Welsh faded as the economic need to adapt to an Anglicised way of life became prevalent. Many Welsh people moved to England in search of a better life, and those left behind were influenced by tales of riches and prosperity. The Welsh language became seen as the language of the less socially able and small changes, such as choosing fashionable English names for children, started to erode the Welsh identity. It was upon seeing the erosion and disappearance of what were considered to be many uniquely 'Welsh' cultural characteristics, a number of emigrants, primarily those from the middle classes. The involvement of these emigrants presents something of an ironic juxtaposition in that having left Wales in search of a better life in England the emigrants became concerned with preserving their own uniquely Welsh identity. A chain of events that eventually led to the establishment of the revived Eisteddfod was begun in 1764 when Evan Evans (1731-1788) published *Some Specimens of the Poetry of the Ancient Welsh Bards*. Evans was, himself, a poet of some acclaim and had travelled extensively throughout Wales collecting material for his work. These travels resulted in a collection that charted the history of Welsh poetry until the sixteenth century. Evans' work was the catalyst for many others interested in Welsh culture and identity, resulting in the formation of a number of groups concerned with the preservation and promotion of Welsh identity. One such group, the Gwyneddigion Society formed in 1770, was funded entirely by the

⁴¹ The Welsh word 'eisteddfod' translates into English as 'gathering'.

resources of the emigrant population. The first attempt to revive the Eisteddfod took place in 1789 when a competitive festival was organised in London. However, this festival was not to be a lasting success and this important part of Welsh identity was not successfully revived until the Gwyneddigion came under the inspired, if somewhat dubious, influence of Edward Williams (1747-1826). Williams, a stone mason originally from the Vale of Glamorgan, invented a set of traditions and customs that gave the Eisteddfod the apparent cultural distinction and historical verisimilitude necessary to inspire the Welsh people - not only the emigrant population, but also those in Wales - to enthusiasm about the promotion of their own unique identity. Assisting in this establishment of the importance of cultural identity was the rise of Nationalism sweeping the World at this time, enforcing the need for a distinct Welsh identity. Williams decided that a festival closely connected to an ancient Welsh past would provide the ideal platform for the promotion of Welsh culture and thus, the Eisteddfod was re-born. The first Eisteddfod based upon the 'Williams model' took place in 1819 at Camarthen, and saw the presence of a 'Gorsedd of Bards', a 'prayer to peace', and competitions featuring Welsh music, poetry, drama and dance. This aspect of Welsh life quickly became established as an important contributor to the maintenance and promotion of Welsh identity. The presence of prizes, both monetary and objective, undoubtedly encouraged people to enter, but the overall effect saw something of a cultural renaissance taking place with the first 'National Eisteddfod' taking place in 1860. Through the

reinvention of the Eisteddfod, Wales now had as part of its identity a participative cultural practice that appeared to be linked with an ancient tradition, and the Eisteddfod became an important and easily quantifiable part of the Welsh identity.

The value of maintaining a distinctive Welsh identity was also significant to those who had initiated the revival of interest in Welsh culture within the country, those who had emigrated. Prior to the establishment of the Eisteddfod, Welsh emigrants had little through which they could obviously celebrate their own identity once the move away from the home country had taken place. However, from the nineteenth century onwards, these Welsh migrants, in the form of the Eisteddfod, now had a transportable feature of their own culture, thus allowing them to maintain a distinct sense of their own identity and be able to display this identity to those around them. Eisteddfod competitions began to be held wherever there was a large Welsh emigrant population. With regard to the development of English music competitions, it was the Eisteddfodau organised by those Welsh immigrants who had since established themselves in the upper-middle classes of English Society from whom the greatest influence came. In the form of the Welsh Eisteddfod, the organisers of the English musical competitions had proof that competition and music was a popular combination and although, as will be seen later in the chapter, the English adapted the Eisteddfod to suit their own ideals,

the influence of the Eisteddfod on the development of the amateur competition festival was significant.

The North East of England was a popular destination for Welsh migrants, and Eisteddfodau taking place on Teeside were reported as early as the 1870s. However, perhaps the first festival that could be closely connected with the forthcoming 'English' movement was the Workington festival organised by Ivander Griffiths in 1872. Wiltshire (1997) paints an interesting portrait of this character:

The most significant personality to stamp his Welsh influence in this way in an English society was undoubtedly William Ivander Griffiths. Leaving school in 1842 at the age of twelve, Griffiths worked his way up through the accounts department of a tin-plate works at Pontardawe until in 1865 he was able to form his own company with £26,000 capital. After buying his own tin-plate works at Clydachm this remarkable character, still in his thirties, set up the Derwent tin-plate works at Barepot near Workington. Here, in his Welsh colony of some 350 emigrants from Monmouthshire, he was able to indulge his twin passions – temperance and music. He built houses for 150 families in a self-contained village (“minus drink selling”) and his intention was to raise the standards of “morals, thrift, sanitation and strict sobriety” of the hundreds employed. The (village) institutions included a Sunday School, Day School, Music and Sewing classes, Prize Choirs and a Band of Hope, Prize bands and Flute bands, Bible meetings, etc.⁴²

With this set of moral activities placed upon his work force he stretched his philanthropic zeal further into the wider community.

Organising a New Year's Day Eisteddfod proved to be very popular. Although initially it was undertaken in the medium of the Welsh language, the event soon became English speaking due to popular demand. It was soon so popular that Griffiths funded the building of the 'Good Templars Hall' in Workington to house the event. The Workington festival is still in evidence today and is proud to claim its place as the oldest festival affiliated to the Federation.

The influence of the Welsh was further felt with the organisation of the 'National Music Meetings' held at the Crystal Palace in London in the 1860s and again in 1872 and 1873. Organised by William Beale, a Welshman, with the assistance of the Novello family, these meetings proved to be very popular with English and Welsh choirs travelling to take part.

Social Conditions

The establishment of the Amateur competitive music festival was not solely due to the presence and success of the Eisteddfod however; the social and economic conditions present in England in the mid-nineteenth century were such that the environment was ripe for the formation of such a phenomenon. These conditions were based on a number of factors but the most influential in this case being 'class'

⁴² Wiltshire (1997), *The Festival Movement: A Portrait of its People*, The British Federation of Festivals for Music, Dance and Speech, Macclesfield. Produced by Axxent Ltd., Berkshire, p. 16.

and 'industry'. With regard to the influence of 'class', Royle (1987)

writes:

The actual language of 'class' began to be applied to social structures in the 1790s...These words were, in their earliest contexts, purely descriptive and were often used interchangeably with ranks and orders, but a distinction of meaning gradually emerged. The older term implied hierarchy and a division of society according to legal and social status, to which economic power was of course integral; but with *class* the economic dimension became paramount. Instead of a multiplicity of status groups within the social hierarchy, bonded together by community, deference and paternalism, horizontal classes were observed and distinguished according to their access to and control over economic resources, in conflict with one another about the distribution not only of economic but also of political, social and ideological power.⁴³

It was the political, social and ideological power as described by Royle above that enabled those in the upper classes to establish music as a force for moral good for those in the lower classes. Without the class system and the power that this gave to those in the higher social groups, it is unlikely that music in its western classical form, would have become such a significant part of the lives of the working classes.

Russell (1987) writes:

A wide range of factors coalesced to help create this distinctive popular music culture. Historians of music have, perhaps inevitably, concentrated upon the overtly 'musical' and 'artistic' factors when examining Victorian and Edwardian

⁴³ Edward Royle (1987), *Modern Britain: A Social History 1750-1985*, Edward Arnold, London; Victoria, Australia; Maryland USA, p. 246

music...however it is hard to see such factors exerting influence, or indeed existing at all, without key social and economic changes establishing a climate in which such 'musical' factors could operate.⁴⁴

A consideration of these social and economic changes is important as it enables the advent of the competitive festival to be viewed from a perspective of cultural historicism. Russell continues:

By 1914 a working week of between 50 and 60 hours had become the norm as the brutal work regimes of the early industrial phase were brought under control...Saturday afternoons became the favoured time for the musical competitions and contests which were to become such a central element of musical life...but the basic picture is clear: sections of the working class had an increased economic capacity for musical enjoyment. Both community based organisations and the capitalist leisure industry were to benefit...One major reason why music was so popular in Victorian, and perhaps to a lesser extent, in Edwardian times, was that it was suited to the needs of an overtly religious society. The choral movement probably gained more from this situation than any other element of musical life.⁴⁵

The idea of music as a source of moral enlightenment had become increasingly popular throughout the Victorian period. The philanthropic members of the upper and upper-middle classes were particularly keen to develop the idea that music was a good source of moral education for the working classes. Due to the effects of industrialisation and standardised working hours, members of the

⁴⁴ David Russell (1987), *Popular Music in England 1840-1914: A Social History*, Manchester University Press, Manchester, p. 3.

⁴⁵ Russell (1987), pp. 12-13.

working class had, for the first time, small amounts of leisure. Those who stood in a higher social order were keen that this leisure time not be wasted on idle pursuits and music seemed to present an ideal focus for those with time to spare. The religious overtones in Victorian society and also the prevailing philanthropic zeal meant that there was a desire from those in the dominant classes to educate and 'improve' the working class mind. Russell (1987) describes how music was viewed as 'an object of social utility and balm for society's many evils' and how 'through its supposed capacity to touch emotions music was uniquely suited to the task of shaping men's thoughts and actions'.⁴⁶ Russell summarises the situation thus:

Throughout the period up to 1914, much of the 'music for the people,' as late Victorians eventually christened it, centred on the middle-class wish to destroy the potentially 'dangerous' elements within working-class culture and to create a respectable, self-reliant, collaborationist working class. It is significant that although music for the people was a constant feature of the recreational landscape from the mid-nineteenth century onwards, it was particularly prominent in the mid 1840s and early 50s, and again on the 1880s and 1900s, all periods during which the propertied classes exhibited intensified concern about the political behaviour of the lower orders.⁴⁷

Music provided the perfect form of 'rational recreation' that the philanthropic upper and middle classes wished to bestow upon the working classes. As Royle states:

⁴⁶ Russell (1987), p. 18.

⁴⁷ Ibid., p. 18.

The attraction of rational recreation was that it weaned the lower classes away from vicious habits and at the same time provided a common base of understanding between the classes... Music was acceptable to every social class...these choral societies in the chapel lands of industrial Britain were drawn up in equal proportions from the upper working class, the lower middle class and the 'substantial' middle class of manufacturers and their families. Their audiences (or should one say congregations) were similarly composed.⁴⁸

If music was considered to be a force for good then the importance of musical education was not forgotten, and the formation of the Royal College of Music in 1882 - following on from the establishment of the Royal Academy of Music in 1822 - bears testament to the increasing importance of music in British society. However, for the working classes, musical education proved to be more difficult as lessons were expensive and so those involved in musical pursuits tended to learn through participation rather than through formal training:

Singing and instrumental work required a musical ability rarely taught in the schools of nineteenth-century Britain. Sometimes the talent and skill ran in families. Passed down the generations like any artisan craft; choirmasters trained their choirs to sing by ear; bandsmen started as apprentices with the cornet, and learned by example from their seniors; children learnt oratorios by heart, simply by listening to them.⁴⁹

⁴⁸ Royle (1987), p. 247.

⁴⁹ Royle (1987), p. 255.

It was not, however, purely through the establishment of music as an acceptable form of recreation that it reached such popular heights; industrial innovation also had a part to play:

The biggest advances in music making came in the late 1840s when J. Alfred Novello began to publish cheap editions of oratorios and other works making sheet music widely available for the first time, and when John Curwen popularised the Tonic Sol-Fa notation for sight-singing.⁵⁰

With this industrial advance, groups and individuals were able to expand their repertoire and musical knowledge due to low cost editions. The invention of 'Tonic Sol-Fa' meant that people did not even have to be able to read music to participate in choral groups as the system used its own alternative notation and thus the scope for participation in musical activity became an option for even more people.

Society in the nineteenth century was one where competition permeated almost every aspect of life. Socially, people were trying to better themselves through education, cultural pursuits, and aspiring to membership of a higher social class and this meant competing with other people in order to be able to achieve this. Coupled with this personal aspiration was the competition that was prevalent throughout the country through the development of industry. It was not only Britain as a nation that strived to be a world leader, but

those within the country also drove themselves to be the first to go higher, faster and longer as the industrial age proceeded. It is no surprise in this competitive age, therefore, that competition began to influence leisure pursuits. As Wiltshire (1997) writes:

The nineteenth century was also imbued with the ethos of competition, permeating every aspect of industrial and social life. All of today's major sports organizations and competitions had their inceptions during the period 1863 to 1878 – the Football Association, Rugby Union, County Cricket Championship, Test Matches and Wimbledon.⁵¹

With contest so ubiquitous in everyday life and people competing against one another on a daily basis on so many levels, it should be no surprise that competition began to have its influence on music.

Wiltshire summarises the situation as follows:

In this atmosphere, with the burgeoning of education following the 1870 Act, the explosion of John Curwen's Tonic Sol-Fa sight singing system onto the musical scene, the philanthropy of the new class of non-conformist mill and colliery owners, the building of large chapels to house the congregations and their enthusiastic choirs, the scene was set of the seed-sowing and the immediate flowering of the Musical Competition movement. The growth was so spectacular because the soil was so rich.⁵²

Russell (1987) also considers the importance of the competitive drive in influencing the growth and spread of the competitive movement:

⁵⁰ Ibid., pp. 255-256.

The competitive ethos had a profound effect upon musical life. Apart from the crucial impact of contesting upon both the repertoire and technical standards, it was responsible for much of the expansion and diversification that marked the period to the early 1900s. Competition actually brought societies into existence, a feature which was especially clear in the choral field...New or previously rare types of choir were fostered by competition...The competition also encouraged the 'nationalisation' of popular music, taking musical forms and organisation into previously unreceptive environments. It is doubtful whether, for example, the mixed voice choir part songs of Elgar would have become quite so prominent a feature of the musical landscape of rural Westmoreland, North Yorkshire or even Somerset without the stimulus given by contesting. While there are many who claimed a basic incompatibility between art and competition, nineteenth and twentieth century musical life would have been altogether poorer without the competitive ethos.⁵³

Here Russell also highlights the nationalisation that the musical competition afforded to music in England at the time, something which was to become an important motivational factor behind the music festival movement. The competition festival movement was not the only musical phenomena to spring out of the social and economic conditions in the nineteenth century and many of the theories surrounding the birth of these parallel movements are equally applicable to the competition festival movement. The growth and success of the Eisteddfod has already been discussed but a further such movement is the Brass Band Movement. Newsome (1998) describes the situation as follows:

⁵¹ Wiltshire (1997), p.15.

⁵² Ibid.

⁵³ Russell (1987), p. 219.

Brass bands and choral societies had much in common: an overlap in repertoire and audience, many joint performance opportunities, strong family ties within their member-organizations, and each having some input from the middle classes at organisational level...Choirs turned to competition much later than brass bands, and in general their attitudes towards it were rather different, summed up in the words of Henry Leslie of Oswestry who, in 1880, said that musical competition was 'fundamentally a vehicle for musical education, and not an excuse for prize hunting and self-glorification.'⁵⁴

Herbert (1991) further allies the conditions behind the formation of the competition festival movement with the brass band movement by considering the theory that:

The history of British people and culture has been dominated by capitalism for centuries; and capitalism helped polarize people into classes, not only economically, but culturally too. Music was never *simply* music. Songs were never *simply* songs. Both were produced and used by people in particular historical periods for particular reasons.⁵⁵

In terms of the various musical movements present at this time the 'music' was used as a force for moral good, the 'songs' used to musically educate and the competition as an important spur to strive for higher standards. Herbert (1991) enables further comparisons to be drawn when he writes:

⁵⁴ Roy Newsome (1998), *Brass Roots: A Hundred Years of Brass Bands and their Music (1836-1936)*, Aldershot: Ashgate p.21.

I have several times referred to the brass band *movement*. It is not clear why brass banding is referred to as a movement, but it invariably has been since the nineteenth century. The work carries with it a resonance of progress, conversion, extension and perhaps fainter sounds of a crusade. It is this notion of the brass band 'movement' as clearly defined activity which is symbolized by a coherent orthodoxy and which has a social as well as a musical significance that is the theme of this book.⁵⁶

Like the brass band movement it is possible that the music competition festival movement was thus titled due to the social significance given to it by those promoting its spread.

To conclude, it can be seen that there were many social and economic conditions present in Britain during the mid to late nineteenth century that assisted in the beginnings of the competition festival movement, even before the movement, as a movement, became formally established. These factors included: the formal establishment of the class system and the social control this gave to members of the upper classes, a concern with morality and the philanthropic good works that sprung from this, the use of music as a force for social good and also something that reached across the class boundary, the arrival of the industrial age and the formalisation of working hours, the presence of leisure time for the working classes and the competitive drive to many aspects of life. The prevalent social conditions and the presence of the Eisteddfod in many parts of the

⁵⁵ Trevor Herbert, editor (1991), *Bands: The Brass Band Movement in the 19th and 20th Centuries*, Open

country provided the seed from which the competition festival movement could grow. Even the very concept of 'movement' was not by chance but represents what Herbert (1991) refers to as ideas and ideals of 'progress', 'extension', 'conversion' and 'crusade', all important contributors to the Victorian ethos of success and expansion. The competition festival movement grasped a number of aspects of existing facets of English society and drew all of these together, presenting an event that was a product of its time and one that had its own unique cause (musical nationalism) and identity.

Mary Wakefield and the Early Pioneers

Today, it is widely acknowledged that the person responsible for the founding of the amateur competitive festival movement was Augusta Mary Wakefield.⁵⁷ Miss Wakefield, born in 1853, was the daughter of a rich Quaker business man from Kendal in Lancashire. Mary Wakefield, as she was known, received an excellent musical education and had studied with the likes of Randegger, Henschel, Blumenthal, Grieg and Sir Herbert Oakley.⁵⁸ She was credited with being a fine mezzo-soprano and, but for her father's strict views regarding women earning money, a career in singing would have been an option. However, despite abiding by her families wishes and remaining a gifted amateur performer, Mary Wakefield fashioned an acceptable

University Press, Milton Keynes, editorial preface.

⁵⁶ Herbert (1991), pp. 3-4.

⁵⁷ See Pearsall (1975), *Edwardian Popular Music*. Newton Abbot; London: David & Charles. P. 166.

⁵⁸ See *The Musical Times*, Competition Festival Record, October 1 1910, p. 2.

career in music by dedicating herself to the philanthropic spirit of the time and to the musical education of others.

Although it is Mary Wakefield who can be acknowledged as the founder of the movement, she herself was influenced by the work of others elsewhere. Forming the first link in the chain was Henry Leslie who, upon his retirement from industry, founded a musical competition in the town of Oswestry, near both the Welsh borders and his wife's childhood home of Bryn Tynant. Wiltshire (1997) describes the event as follows:

On retirement, he and his wife settled at her family home when, in his own words, 'it occurred to me that a movement wielding an influence directly opposed to that possessed by the public house, which is too often the resort of persons to whom, in country districts, no other attraction is available. It was thus that I established an annual festival of village choirs in Oswestry in 1880. Each village within a certain radius established a choir of its own, then once a year at Oswestry all these little choirs combined to form a large choir which performed under my direction. Various prizes were offered for competitions amongst the federation choirs and a spirit of healthy emulation was thus fostered with the best results...Elementary musical education in the districts around advanced with rapid strides...Competition for the 'Banner of Honour' was of the most earnest but friendly character.⁵⁹

⁵⁹ Wiltshire (1997), p. 16.

It is unclear how and when Mary Wakefield and Henry Leslie first met, but given the excellent set of social connections held by both it is possible that it was through social engagements that their paths crossed. In terms of the festival movement, the crucial meeting took place in 1870 when Leslie engaged the talented Mary Wakefield as a soloist for a number of Handel and Bach Society concerts. Wiltshire (1997) describes the effect Leslie had on Wakefield:

Leslie was known by everyone of significance on the musical scene (he corresponded with Mendelssohn, Berlioz, Meyerbeer and Gounod) as well as by such literary figures as Dickens. He was a 'trusted counsellor on musical matters' to the Prince of Wales and the Duke of Edinburgh and thus it is not difficult to imagine the influence such a distinguished personality would have had on the young singer. She listened to Henry in the early 1880s enthusing about his 'new' competitions in the Borders and how the Duke of Westminster had asked him to set up similar competitions at his seat in Cheshire (Eaton Hall). Thus it was that Mary was immediately fired with enthusiasm for this concept of village choir festivals and determined to take the idea home to her native Westmoreland.⁶⁰

Indeed, this is exactly what Mary Wakefield did and 1885 saw the organisation of a competition for vocal quartets on the tennis courts at Sedgewick, the Wakefield family home. The chosen test piece was 'Ye Spotted Snakes' by Richard Stevens and there were three entries. The following year the competitions were repeated and within five years the number attending had grown to 140 individual entries. The rise in entry numbers meant that a large combined chorus was able to be

formed and Mendelssohn's *Lauda Sion* was conducted by Wakefield's mentor, Henry Leslie. With the performance of this work, the blueprint on which to model themselves was in place for future festivals – competitions during the day and a combined choirs performance in the evening and the festival had firmly established itself as part of the local community identity.

Establishing a Movement

It was by building upon the Wakefield formula that other festivals began to spread throughout the country. This formula, combined with the philanthropic zeal of Mary Wakefield proved to be an instant success with the musical press:

The report of the musical competitions at Kendal...should be pondered over by all who value the cultivation of music for the people by the people. A dominant and high minded personality has transformed a typically dormant country locality into one of the more active centres of healthy musical study to be found in the Kingdom...If England is to be made musical, the Wakefield educational and stimulative scheme is one of the indispensable factors of the process....All honour to Miss Wakefield and her enthusiastic coadjutors for their persistent belief in the impossible and their energetic services to the cause of musical art.⁶¹

What the above quotation reports is not only the initial success of the competitions organised by Mary Wakefield but also highlights a nationalist impetus that possibly denotes the beginning of the

⁶⁰ Wiltshire (1997), p. 18.

competition festival as a movement through which the desire for 'England to be made musical' could be promoted and executed.

Competitions similar in structure to the one organised by Mary Wakefield began to appear throughout the country. Initially these festivals began in the North West and the districts surrounding the Wakefield competitions at Kendal, but they soon spread outwards. In 1897, over ten years after Mary Wakefield's first competitions had taken place, it was reported that:

It is right to record that all the competitions mentioned above⁶² are the direct outcome of the splendid example of Kendal, where, as everyone knows, Miss Wakefield is an inspiring force. The speciality of nearly all these gatherings is the awakening of local forces. The prizes are small and are not open to distant prize hunters who have no real interest in the district itself...No greater compliment could be paid to that lady than the reproductions of the Kendal scheme that are springing up in various parts of the country. May they increase and multiply!⁶³

The discouragement of the large prizes that were, incidentally, a feature of the Eisteddfod competitions, were central to the philanthropic appeal of the competition festivals. The primary aim of the festival was the advancement of musical art and not winning (although those competing may have felt differently!). The focus of the festivals being the advancement of music and musical skill remained.

⁶¹ *The Musical Times*, May 1 1895, p. 312.

⁶² These competitions being listed as Kendal, Carlisle, Morecambe and Madresfield.

⁶³ *The Musical Times*, June 1 1897, p. 378.

The amateur competitive music festival formula as inspired by Mary Wakefield appeared to be highly successful wherever a festival took place. Factors contributing to this success and the subsequent spread of the competition festivals throughout the country are described by Hyde (1998) as follows:

The principles on which Mary Wakefield based her festivals were that competition was a necessary stimulus, that there should be no money prizes and that all choirs should combine in the performance of a large scale work. The adjudicators were to concentrate on giving valuable critical help as much as on choosing winners: 'test pieces', distinguished by their technicalities rather than by their musical qualities were to be avoided, and overall should be the educative aim of introducing as many people as possible to the study of worthwhile music and participation in its enjoyment. Great attention was paid to the selection of the music and from its early days children were encouraged to participate, eventually having a day of the festival to themselves, sanctioned by the Board of Education, thus allowing music to be learnt at school and attendance at the festival being counted as school attendance. The community aspect of the festival, bringing people of different class and educational background together in the common bond of music making was an important off-shoot of the movement. So self-evident to anyone who visited Kendal during the festival were the numerous benefits of community music-making that similar festivals were instituted throughout the country...to co-ordinate what had become a national movement.⁶⁴

Hyde raises many important points concerning the festival movement in these early years. Firstly, the emphasis on the combined choir's performance – the competition being only a means to an end in the

development of this aspect of festival work. Secondly, the adjudicators were considered to be the people 'in the know' as far as good musical taste and suitable test pieces were concerned. Thirdly, that the involvement of the Government Board of Education meant that the position and importance of the festivals were given official recognition. Fourthly, the important benefits of community music making is acknowledged, alongside the place of the festivals as something of a social leveller in which people from all classes and backgrounds could participate. Finally, the 'national' quality afforded to the movement hints at the increasing part the festival was to play in promoting the idea of an English musical identity and the acknowledgement by the Board of Education signifies the importance of the festival movement. Again, the combination of these factors leads to the suitability of the festival as a place for the growth of ideas and ideals of identity. In this case the identities coming together are those of choral community and those of the adjudicator to shape and guide the identity of the festival participants.

It is difficult to name an exact date when the festivals were first referred to as a 'movement', but the *Musical Times* first started using the term in June 1904 and the seeds for the suitability of the competition festival as something that could grow into a movement were planted from the outset as in the report of the first Wakefield

⁶⁴ Hyde (1998), *New Found Voices: Women in Nineteenth-Century English Music*, 3rd edition. Aldershot Hants: Ashgate. P. 146.

competitions as Kendal. 1904 was particular significant however because this was also the time that the Association of Music Competition Festivals was formed with an objective stated by Mary Wakefield, the convenor of the meeting, that:

All of us connected with and interested in this movement wanted some practical binding link, also something almost of the 'Inquiry Bureau' character to which many of the questions that arise on different topics could be referred, and at which papers would be read, followed by wide discussion...so it often seemed to me, if we could focus all our experience and knowledge in a Congress once a year, we could then, if it is properly organized, get the very best authorities on special subjects, which would be an enormous help to us all.⁶⁵

The Competitions continued to spread throughout the British Isles, with the governing body of the Association now in place to ensure that the festivals were organised and structured in what they saw to be the correct manner. Indeed, perhaps it was this establishment of an Association that provided the necessary formalisation of the individual competition into a movement. By 1906, two years after the founding of the Association, it was estimated that:

This year nearly 40,000 individuals have been, or will be, concerned as competitors in the English festivals alone.⁶⁶

⁶⁵ *The Musical Times*, June 1 1904, p. 392.

The growth over twenty years from three competitors in Mary Wakefield's original competition at her home to 40,000 twenty-one years later is a significant rate of growth and one that shows the success of the movement as a national movement.

The fact that the competition festivals were now organised and structured under the umbrella of an Association meant that the socio-political ideals of what was now referred to as the 'competition festival movement' were much to the fore and festivals wishing to be part of the scheme had to subscribe to these ideals. The ideals were publicly expressed at the annual meeting of the Association and were reported extensively in the press, most prolifically in the champion of the festival movement, the *Musical Times*. In 1905 the periodical preceded its report into the individual competitions by writing:

The musical competition movement continues to expand, and it bids fair to exert considerable influence over the progress of music in England. Probably it serves the requirements of country districts more than it does those of cities and towns. Anyhow, these competitions for their own sake need not be valued very highly. But it is another story when, as a means to an end, they transform unmusical countryside districts into centres of musical life and activity. Everyone familiar with the work of the great majority, if not all of the competition schemes now so common up and down the land will agree that prize-winning is subordinate to the idea of learning something from others, or it may be teaching of others, and of getting properly acquainted with good music and standard of execution, to say nothing of the invaluable social

⁶⁶ *The Musical Times*, June 1 1906, p. 403.

side of the propaganda. In scarcely any other way than through these schemes can the amateur conductor get object-lessons in the alphabet of his task. Then again the hitherto unknown and unsuspected real talent of a choir trainer can rarely find proper recognition except at such gatherings. They are then a school of music for the people. The competitive instinct is strong, and it is a beneficial stimulus to the best work; we have to make full use of it and do what we can to keep it in the right channels.

It is worth while to note that in nearly all the festival gatherings reported in these pages, the prizes are insignificant in value. In some cases (Kendal is typical) no money prizes are at all given.⁶⁷

In the above, the philanthropic ideals of the movement that are stressed and the good that the competition festival movement holds for the everyday person. By participating in the festivals the people was able to distinguish themselves through their musical ability. The festival not only served as a local community identifier, it shaped the identity of its participants in both how they saw themselves and how others saw them and, equally significantly, the movement served as a vehicle to promote an ideas of musical nationalism, whether actual or idealised, as evidenced above.

Blueprint for a Festival and the Question of the Eisteddfod

It is perhaps appropriate at this point in history, the early 1900s and some fifteen years after the first Wakefield festivals, to undertake a brief examination of the format of the competition festival at this time.

⁶⁷ *The Musical Times*, June 1 1905, p. 393.

The festivals had developed considerably in their format from the early days of the Wakefield competitions and by the early 1900s a model was in place from which the blueprint of the festivals was taken. In 1905 at the annual meeting of the Association, Mary Wakefield suggested that:

It was impossible to lay down hard and fast rules for the conduct of Festivals, because the circumstances of districts differed considerably, broadly, the scheme should include (1) a plain sailing choral work, (2) a madrigal, (3) a male-voice part song, (4) a female-voice part song, and 'sight singing for all and above all' and always with the words at first sight. In addition to the above there should be, say, three junior classes – (1) a unison song or a round, (2) a two-part song, and (3) again sight singing.⁶⁸

At the same meeting the possibility of classes for 'boys' clubs, girls' clubs, the inclusion of vocal soloists, church choirs, accompanists' and 'own choice pieces'⁶⁹ was also discussed. These suggestions formed the identity of the modern day festival. At this time, a festival might consist of junior choral competitions, including sight-reading, senior choral competitions, some solo classes and an evening concert consisting of performances by prize winners from the competitions, culminating in a well-known large scale combined choir work.

The early twentieth century was a time of consolidation and development for both the competition festival and competition festival

⁶⁸ *The Musical Times*, August 1 1905, p. 542.

⁶⁹ *Ibid.*, p. 542.

movement and the Association were keen to promote the unique idealism of their own particular scheme. Often this was accomplished via favourable comparison with similar events, in particular the Eisteddfod. Whether the Eisteddfod was the focus for particular attention because it was the germ from which the festival movement had grown and those in the Association wished to make their festivals distinct, or whether it was because of a perceived notion that 'English' equalled 'best' is unclear, but the fact remains that the Eisteddfod was often the target for criticism. An example of this distinction was seen at the 1905 meeting of the Association when the question was raised as to why the Eisteddfodau were not included on the Association's list. It was stated that:

Although the idea of competitions had been adopted from the Welsh, the lines of the Eisteddfodau were generally different from the English Festivals and there had been no disposition shown by the Welsh to join the Association...

Added to this was the fact that:

The proceedings presented all the well-known features of a Welsh Eisteddfod including the callous disregard of the convenience and comport of the competitors and the public in the manner of time-keeping.⁷⁰

The somewhat cynical treatment of the Eisteddfod was placed alongside the ever-growing favourable reports of the festival movement

and continued for some years. In 1907, leading adjudicator Dr William McNaught published an article entitled *The Competition Festival Movement*. This article covered the principle aims and objectives of the movements and having celebrated the success of the movement and the scope for future growth, criticism of the Eisteddfod is made:

Welsh Eisteddfodau are excluded because they are in another category. The problems they present press for the grave consideration of all concerned for the future of music in Wales...⁷¹

The article was published in the *Musical Times*, the champion of the festival movement, and the following month the concerns expressed by Dr McNaught were addressed in an article entitled *Reform of the Welsh Eisteddfod*. Although the article does not give any specific indication of what aspect of the Eisteddfodau were in need of reformation, the general gist was that they 'are not making for a healthy development of the great national musical capacity of the nation' and that they 'have travelled a considerable distance on the downward path'. The article, however, loses no opportunity to compare the Welsh event with the favoured competition festival. In discussing the selection of test pieces, the following thoughts are proffered:

It would be well for the future if for some years it was resolved that no piece that had been previously used should be used again. This course is adopted

⁷⁰ *The Musical Times*, August 1 1905, p. 542.

⁷¹ *The Musical Times*, July 1 1907, p. 450.

at the most important English Festivals, and has resulted in a great widening of outlook.⁷²

The keen distinction drawn between the Eisteddfod and the English festival serves to further underline the significance of the competition festival in relation to the formation of the national identity of music-making in England. The musical nationalism that was promoted through the festival movement was very much one that saw English music-making as superior to its Welsh counterpart.

The Eisteddfodau were the focus of further discussion in 1909 where the annual meeting of the Association had a paper presented by a Mr Harry Evans entitled *The Eisteddfod and Competition Festival Movement: Comparison of Aims, Methods and Results.*' This paper did have some praise for the Eisteddfodau in that they assisted in:

Publishing original works in the Welsh language; and to adopt from time to time, and every means to raise the status of the Welsh people socially, morally, and intellectually.⁷³

However, the main focus of the paper was concerned with the problems of the Eisteddfodau, in particular the problem of scale. The organisers of the Eisteddfodau were criticised in that when small meetings happened 'it was not an uncommon experience to find half-a-dozen competitive meetings being held in the various chapels of one town on the same day'. Further to this, the selection of the test music

⁷² *The Musical Times*, August 1 1907, p. 526.

⁷³ *The Musical Times*, August 1 1909, p. 61.

was not felt to be taken to a satisfactory level. By comparison the Association festivals:

As a rule did much better. The music was selected by capable people, it increased in difficulty, both executive and interpretative, from year to year, with the result that choirs and conductors were systematically developed and improved; the spirit of commercialism did not interfere with the aim of the festival, and so the main object, the cultivation of music in the district, was successfully achieved...the graduation of test pieces from year to year had produced excellent educational results in England, and the inclusion of sight reading was another feature that distinguished English festivals from the Welsh.⁷⁴

Once more the effect of the competition festival movement as a musical educator for the whole of England is noted and the festival continued to promote the ideal of a nation-wide musicality.

In contrast to the success of the competition festival, the Welsh competitions were once again dismissed a year later in a small report on the number of festivals now attached to the Association and the spread of the festival movement. The report states:

About seventy festivals are listed on the Association's circular, but the list incompletely represents the influence and the expansion of the movement. Wales, of course, has always had its Eisteddfodau (which are not noticed in the Association list), but now it is recorded that Scotland and Ireland, as well as England are realising the stimulating and educative force of the

⁷⁴ Ibid

movement. The widespread reports in the Press... has fired emulation, not only at home but abroad, as reports from the colonies and United States testify.⁷⁵

The public 'compare and contrast' parallel between the competition festival movement and the Eisteddfodau began to wane towards the end of 1910, and although scant reference remained through the reports from the meetings of the Association, it ceased to be a source of pre-occupation. One possible reason for this was because the movement and the Association had now become sufficiently established and distanced from its Eisteddfod roots that unfavourable comparison was no longer necessary and, as evidenced above, the scope of the competition festival had spread throughout the British Isles and beyond, far more successful than the Eisteddfod. However, a further explanation is that both the Eisteddfod and the competition festival movement were seen to be representative of the ideas and ideals of their respective countries. As already discussed, the Eisteddfodau had become an important aspect of the promotion and maintenance of Welsh identity and it is unlikely that the Welsh would be keen to submit their own identity to the Anglicised ways of the competition festival movement. By a similar token, the development and spread of the competition festival movement had quickly become celebrated as being a part of English culture and, in particular, the promotion of musical nationalism. Although the festivals had spread beyond England - to other countries throughout the United Kingdom,

⁷⁵ *The Musical Times*, August 1 1910, p. 468.

the British Isles and beyond - these festivals were based upon the English model and were therefore to be encouraged as re-enforcements of the ideas and ideals of the festival movement.

The Great War and After Effects

The decade from 1910 to 1920 was highly significant in terms of the development of the festival movement. By 1910 the festival competitions were firmly entrenched in the consciousness of the public and their contribution to national, local and individual aspects of identity was, by now, significant. Among the organising body, emphasis shifted from concentrating upon the establishment and development of the movement to a concern with more practical 'day-to-day' issues facing the festivals. Marking schemes and the selection of test pieces were often placed under the spotlight at the annual meeting of the Association. However, the prime concern appeared to be the importance of and the correct execution of the combined choir's event held at the end of the festivals:

Too little time had been allowed for combined performances or festival concerts, which, to my thinking, should be the culminating point of all these competitive music festivals... Miss Wakefield says: 'there is a feeling in existence that competitions and festivals do not answer together. I disagree with this, and should never care to be mixed up with merely a competition.'⁷⁶

⁷⁶ Report from the Annual Meeting of the Association of Musical Competitions Festivals 1910, printed in *The Musical Times*, Competition Festival Supplement, July 1 1910, p. 1.

It was participation in the combined performance at the end of the festival that transformed it from being a collection of competitions into the festive event that Mary Wakefield had first envisaged. By coming together the competitors could put aside their individual rivalries and work together for the good of music-making which was, after all, the primary aim with which the movement wished to be associated.

During the first decade of the twentieth century the festival movement continued to grow and by 1910 the number of competitors was thought to total above 60,000. This continued expansion undoubtedly led to the further fostering of identity formation among the increasing numbers of local communities participating in their local festivals. However, the movement as a whole was dealt a blow with the death of Mary Wakefield, the woman about whom it has been said:

There is no other woman in the nineteenth century who by her example brought so many people to an active participation in music-making of such a worthwhile nature. During the years 1885-1900 when she was actively engaged in establishing and organizing the successful competitive festivals at Kendal in Westmoreland, she developed a formula for success wherein competition was seen as but a stimulus to the practice and study of music, leading to the fuller enrichment to be gained through combined singing of a large-scale work. This formula was taken up nationally, involving thousands upon thousands of people hitherto untouched by music.⁷⁷

⁷⁷ Hyde (1998), p. 140.

Not only did Mary Wakefield unite people on a musical level that transcended the common social boundaries of the day, but her musical festival movement also presented opportunity for identity formation on national, local and individual levels. The *Musical Times* acknowledged the scale of her contribution:

Mary Wakefield, to use the form of name by which she was best known, was the greatest force in the musical competition festival movement in this country. She did not invent choral competitions, but by her untiring self-sacrifice and convincing apostleship she made them a national cause, a national asset.⁷⁸

The festivals had been promoted by those organising them as something which held vital importance in the field of musical education and enlightenment. The festivals were asserted as being part of the musical character of the British Nation. Whilst Wakefield's festival formula was not pandemic, it did succeed in becoming part of an idealised musical nationalism and an event which took place throughout the British Isles and into other parts of the British Empire. The success of the competitive festival, its rapid spread and its use by those in other parts of the world is testament to the place occupied by the movement as part of a national identity.

The future of the festival movement did not seem to be adversely affected by the death of its founder. The future of the world, however,

⁷⁸ *The Musical Times* Competition Festival Record, October 1 1910, p. 1.

did not seem quite so secure as the political unease that led to the outbreak of war began to build. The advent of the First World War brought to a halt many of the festival movement's activities as individual festivals lost many of their participants to the fighting. Not all festivals were discontinued however, and some were used as a cause for keeping the community together in hard times. The Competition Festival Record was keen to foster the continuation of as many festivals as possible. An article under the title of *A Review of the Competition Movement Since the War Began* reports:

Under this head last month we have a list of forty Festivals that had been held since last August. We renew this list with some additions. It serves as an example to others to keep going if at all possible, especially in the junior classes and where a festival is in touch with female-voice choirs and girls' choirs.⁷⁹

The festivals were encouraged to continue during the First World War on a number of accounts, but not least because of the power of music to uplift the spirits of those still at home. A report of the 'People's Palace Festival' that took place in East London states:

The position of the Festival in the face of the outbreak of war was necessarily the cause of much anxious thought to the committee. They had first to decide whether it would be right to hold the festival at all, and secondly, even if it were right, whether it would be possible to carry through. They finally decided that they ought to at least try to go on, and they were influenced in this decision by two main

⁷⁹ *The Musical Times* Competition Festival Record, August 1 1915, p. 1.

considerations. They believed that the relief which good music can afford could be specially valued in a time of much anxiety and very exciting work, and also that in many cases the music practices, which the Festival encourages, are of real educational value and ought not to be abandoned.⁸⁰

Whilst the views presented above are just one historical presentation of the role of the festivals during wartime the accounts do serve to highlight that to their supporters the festivals had inherent value for their respective communities at this time and provided a semblance of normality and continuity. The festivals were a part of local community identity and had a role to play in the continuation of this community during an especially difficult time. This is not to say that the competition festival provided the balm for all wounds felt during the war but it does show that, to the participants, the festivals provided a community activity that was able to continue.

The Federation Years 1920-1930

1920 and the end of the 'Great War' saw much social change and an alteration of previously established class boundaries in the United Kingdom, the British Isles and throughout the world. As a part of British culture, the festival movement also had to adapt to the changing social processes taking place. This change was driven primarily by the reformation of the Association of Competition Festivals and the generous grants given by the well-known charitable Carnegie Trust, who donated a sum of £1000 in 1919 towards 'the

⁸⁰ *The Musical Times* Competition Festival Record, October 1 1915, p. 1.

peace-time revival of competitive festival throughout the country.⁸¹ That such a grant was given shows the high regard given to the competition movement and their continued presence throughout the country. This peace time revival brought with it a time for change and Sir Henry Hadow (1819 – 1937) , a leading figure in education and a keen promoter of ideals of English musical natonalism, shared his views at the first meeting of the Association since the end of the War:

The Competition Festival has already done an immense lot to raise the tone and level of music, but it needs absolute and ceaseless vigilance to prevent the weeds from coming back. We have to have Competition Festivals more frequently and more regularly, and they must be instilled and embodied into the very blood of the people before we have really achieved our object... The object which was going to occupy the Executive of this Association for some time was the re-drafting of the constitution and to bring the whole of the movement together throughout the United Kingdom into one scheme and machinery.⁸²

The national importance of the movement as a whole can be seen by the involvement and support of figures of such calibre as Sir Henry Hadow who was engaged with the development and reform of education throughout the whole of the United Kingdom and who certainly felt the festival movement was of prime important in musical education. His desire to have a single scheme was fulfilled in 1921 when a new federation was born:

⁸¹ *The Musical Times* Competition Festival Record, July 1 1920, p. 1.

The British Federation of Musical Competition Festivals is at length an incorporated body. To a large extent it is an expansion of the Association of Competition Festivals, whose officers play a leading part in the new organization...The establishment of the British Federation of Musical Competition Festivals gives the competition movement a long-needed opportunity to become better organized. To a large extent it still remains – as it grew – a dissipated effort with unformed ideals and clashing interests. The new organization offers a means by which musical competitions can become a uniform and co-ordinated influence throughout the country. It is not a self-imposed authority but a committee of all affiliated festivals.

The region covered by the movement has been divided into twelve areas. Seven are in England, and the other five are Scotland, Wales, Ireland, the Isle of Man and the Channel Islands. Each area is to form a council on which every affiliated festival in the district is to be represented.⁸³

The establishment of the Federation meant that the local identity of the individual festivals could be incorporated into the whole with representation on the Federation. The ideals of the movement as a whole were represented by those heading up the Federation and the contribution to a national musical identity made in combination with the aspects of local and individual identity formed in and through the individual festivals.

Sir Henry Hadow was placed at the head of the newly formed Federation possibly, as Wiltshire (1997) suggests, at the hand of the Carnegie Trust who were still to donate money to the Federation and

⁸² *The Musical Times* Competition Festival Record, July 1 1920, p. 2 – Report from the Annual Meeting of the Association of Competition Festivals that took place on the 12th June 1920.

⁸³ *The Musical Times* Competition Festival Record, Feb 1 1922, p. 2.

wished to have a competent and trustworthy leader administering the funds. Those who had led the Association still had their part to play, with Lady Mary Trefusis (the former Lady Lygon who was so instrumental in the formation of the Association) being on the committee. Hadow was extremely well connected musically, socially and educatively and was therefore an ideal person for the job. His experience consisted of:

A First at Worcester College, Oxford, practical study in music in Germany before taking a musical degree, lecturing at his former college (in Classics) and eventually lecturing for the Professor of Music, Sir John Stainer. He became involved in University administration (Proctor at Oxford), and examiner in literature and was general editor of *The Oxford History of Music*. All this before 1896 when he was thirty-seven!⁸⁴

Hadow remained the Chairman of the newly formed Federation for some years until 1928 when he took on the role of President until his retirement from public life in 1930. Other major personalities involved with the Federation kept up the both the excellent musical pedigree established by those involved with the Association and consisted of those with an ongoing interest in the continued promotion of musical nationalism. The figures included the singer Harry Plunket-Greene, Director of the Glasgow Orpheus Choir, Hugh Robertson, T. Tertius Noble, Michael Head and Granville Bantock, to name but a few. All of this list were key figures in British music and

⁸⁴ Wiltshire (1997), p. 29.

music-making and this undoubtedly influenced the status afforded to the competition festival movement. Many of these people were also the adjudicators who travelled to the individual festivals and who were thus able to ensure a standardised programme of merit throughout the festival movement.

The Federation certainly proved to be successful in its aim to revive and unite the competitive festival movement and the individual festivals. The first annual report, produced in 1922, show that 'well over a hundred festivals' were affiliated. The *Musical Times* reported that:

The recent Conference at Carnegie House showed the secret of the Federation's strength. There was a large attendance of officials and adjudicators from all over the country, and discussions were so keen that a very long session was no hardship. Prominent speakers were Dr. Adrian C. Boult, Mr. Julius Harrison, Sir Henry Walford Davies, Mr. Armstrong Gibbs, Mr. Plunket-Greene, Mr. Hugh Robertson, Mr. Granville Humphries, Mr. Thomas Dunhill, and the admirable Chairman Mr. F. H. Bisset. All kept the debate on a plane of practical idealism. Critics who are apparently unable to see more than the weak points and dangers of the Competition Festival would, we are sure, have been converted by this meeting, and, above all, by its clashing of opinions as to matters of detail. Only in one thing was there complete unanimity, and that was in the matter of high aim. Local needs vary so much that the Federation does well to recognise that there can be no hard-and-fast rules and cut-and-dried decisions as to the carrying out of a scheme.⁸⁵

Following the success of the newly formed Federation in uniting the festival cause and giving a central focus for the work of the movement the number of festivals throughout the British Isles continued to grow, although perhaps at a slower rate than the pre-war years. The *Musical Times* remained the champion of the festival movement but other publication began to circulate. Not least of these was Ernest Fowles 1923 book, *Musical Competition Festivals*.⁸⁶ This publication focuses primarily on the practical aspects of taking part in the festivals with particularly advice for competitors in piano classes. Nevertheless it does provide on interesting commentary of the festival movement at this developmental time. Fowles writes:

It is evident that the success of the Musical Competition Festival is due to recognition of the fact that any appeal to men and women in which the question of art is concerned must be based upon the larger issues relative to the best part of human nature...what is the character of that appeal? The answer is given in one word – Music. Men and women are only dimly conscious of how much they owe this wonderful art. They are, for the most part, wholly unaware how greatly they are influenced by the songs and tunes of humankind.⁸⁷

Fowles continues by proffering his thoughts on the educational aspects available to all those participating in a festival - be they audience members or competitors:

⁸⁵ *The Musical Times*, January 1 1923, p. 52.

⁸⁶ Fowles (1923), London:New York.

⁸⁷ Fowles (1923), pp. 2-3.

An audience, keen to follow each competition, takes a long step towards musical discrimination; that is, it learns to distinguish between good, mediocre, and bad performance...it is precisely in this vital matter that an audience at a Musical Competition Festival garners so rich a store of experience. The father, the mother, the friend, compare performance with performance; and always, in the back of the mind, the thought asserts itself that this rendering or that is less – or possibly more – musical than the efforts to which they are accustomed in the case of their own young people at home.⁸⁸

Fowles' book provides an important historical commentary with regard to the competition festival in the 1920s. Fowles recognises the sense of community found within the individual festivals and comments on the familial relationships found within the festival environment. Whilst Fowles does not directly refer to the festivals as being key in the formation of the identity of those involved, by referring the family relationships he shows that this aspect of identity formation was present during festivals at this time.

In 1926 an *Association of Competition Choirs* was formed in Britain and held its first annual conference in Halifax. The main purpose of this conference seems to be the formulation of an agenda of suggestions to be made to the Federation and those involved with the organisation of the individual festivals. These suggestions seemed mostly concerned with ensuring that competitions were judged on a 'fair' basis and that all choirs could stand on the same platform and be adjudicated on their musical merits alone. Topics under

⁸⁸ Fowles (1923), pp. 13-14.

discussion included the merits of singing with or without music, the correct procedure by which the accompanist would give a choir an opening chord, the most helpful layout of the 'mark sheet' and other similar, practically based matters. What is important about the formation of this particular organisation is that those involved with the choirs themselves obviously felt that their needs were not being met by the Federation and decided to take matters into their own hands. Those involved in the choirs now felt so assured of their own role within the festival movement that they felt able to represent themselves. The identity of those competing in the competitions had grown enabling them to develop their own ideas of how the festivals could be shaped and improved and not to merely accept the *status quo* offered to them by the Federation.

The decade of 1920 – 1930 was one of continuing expansion and success for the Festival movement. It established a governing body that encouraged individual festivals to become affiliates. In return for the payment of a small fee the Federation offered advice and support to the individual festivals choosing to subscribe. Interest in individual festivals was re-established following the end of the First World War and new festivals continued to be set up throughout the British Isles. One example of this was the Bournemouth festival first held in 1927. The contests ran from July 2nd to July 9th and it was reported that:

The carefully compiled syllabus, comprising about a hundred classes – music, elocution, folk dancing &c. – attracted nearly twelve hundred entries, reckoning as one each band, choir and so forth. Competitors aggregated approximately seven thousand.⁸⁹

The Bournemouth festival was not alone in this type of entry level and when this figure is added to those participating in the festivals in a more supportive role, either by being an audience member or a member of the organising body, and this figure is multiplied by the number of festivals taking place throughout the British Isles and beyond, the extent of the influence of the festivals on amateur music making is very large. The competition festivals contributed to British identity on a national level with the continued spread of the movement throughout the British Isles so that almost everywhere was in reach of a local music festival. This proximity to a local festival was combined with the continued promotion of the festivals aims by those key figures involved with the Federation. On a local level the festivals contributed to identity by becoming part of the local community involving hundreds, sometimes thousands of people, in the events themselves. On an individual level, participants in the festivals were able to become more confident in their own musical prowess and the formation of organisations such as the Association of Competition Choirs showed that the individual participants felt able to represent themselves on a national level.

⁸⁹ *The Musical Times*, August 1 1927, p. 746.

1930-1960: The Second World War and Beyond

By the 1930s, the competition festival movement had been in existence for almost fifty years and some of the original protagonists had, by now, passed away. However, the list of names associated with the movement was perhaps more impressive than ever before: Sir Henry Hadow, educator and reformer, and leading composers which included Hugh Robertson, Armstrong Gibbs, Gerald Finzi, Roger Quilter, Michael Head, Walford Davies and Herbert Howells. Those at the head of music-making in the British Isles were publicly supporting the movement. This sustained the continuation of the ideas and ideals of the movement and stressed its place as a part of a British musical identity.

By this time the scope of the movement had grown so much that the *Musical Times* considered reporting on the events almost beyond the scope of its abilities:

The spring season of musical competition festivals promises to be more crowded this year than ever before. Hitherto we have endeavoured in this 'record' to chronicle the activities of the competition by giving a rapid summary of the chief events from month to month. But the movement has now grown beyond the scope of such treatment, and an adequate summary would occupy more space than we can afford. We have decided, therefore, to give attention in future only to competition features of special interest, and to leave the main body of events unrecorded.⁹⁰

To maintain the momentum of the movement on a national level a so-called 'National Festival' was held in Liverpool in July of 1930. Whether the establishment of this event was spurred on by the popularity of the National Eisteddfod held annually in Wales, or whether the Federation decided that bringing together groups from throughout the British Isles would ensure the continuation of its own ideals is unclear, but whatever the reason for its establishment the meeting was reported as being a success. The National Festival had only one class and this was for mixed-voice choirs who had taken part in an affiliated festival in the years 1926-1929. The *Musical Times* reported that:

The first National Festival promoted by the Federation of Music Competition Festivals was a success in as much as it brought together some of the finest choirs in the country, drew from them performances that touched the summit of choral art, and led to an exciting tussle for the chief honours of the competition. It failed in part as a gathering representative of the whole choral field. Probably this was due to the inability rather than the unwillingness of choirs to take part...where the festival failed completely was in attracting an audience.⁹¹

Despite the reported success of the first festival, the National Festival never became a feature of the festival landscape. Although such gatherings were held periodically throughout the 1930s and up until the 1950s, the events never succeeded in capturing the imagination of

⁹⁰ *The Musical Times*, February 1 1930, p. 159.

⁹¹ *The Musical Times*, August 1 1930, p. 743.

the public in the same way that the individual festivals had. Possibly choirs found the distances too far and too expensive to travel and, in terms of the audience, perhaps supporters of the choirs and the home festivals were unable to spare the time to travel for a national competition. The success of the individual festivals reflected their status as contributors to local identity. Individual festivals were available on the doorstep, so to speak, for all who wished to participate in whatever capacity. To travel and support a choir at a national festival did not have the same appeal because the community ties were not present.

The end of the 1930s saw the onset of the Second World War. Not only did this lead to a loss of millions of people both at home and abroad, but the bombing raids endured by many cities meant that not only were festivals unable to continue due to the absence of participants, but also that, in many cases, it was simply unsafe to hold the events. Some of the more rural festivals were able to continue throughout the period of the war and many other festivals were re-established after peace had resumed. However, a further threat to the survival of the festival was now felt in the form of other, readily available, leisure pursuits. These pursuits included the cinema, the dance hall and so on and long winter nights spent rehearsing in a cold hall were no real match for warm nights at the cinema. The festivals continued but perhaps without the same dedication and support seen in earlier years. In the past the festivals

had been events for the whole community, now they attracted only the more enthusiastic of participants. The festivals still contributed to identity formation in that the festivals still existed and the same mechanisms remained in force, but the interest and importance was now felt through the individuals participating in the festivals themselves rather than on a wider scale as had previously been the case when the festivals were carried along on the crest of a musically nationalistic wave.

1960 to the Present Day

Despite continuing and ever-increasing demands on the leisure time of the population, the movement has sustained its presence in the British Isles throughout the 1960s to the present day with over 300 festivals still affiliated to the Federation. Whilst per head of population this figure may not appear overly significant the fact that festivals have continued to survive and extra festivals are still beginning in the present day asserts their intrinsic value to their participants. From 1960 onwards, however, there was a shift, however, away from the organisational body and the movement providing the impetus for the success of festivals towards a more localised enterprise where community and the individual participant are more prominent. On a national level, the place of competition with regard to educative development has certainly changed and there are many who consider the competition festivals to be detrimental to the development of musical progress. Heslop (1995), provides one

example of this when she writes of her chief concern being the presence of what she calls 'the uniquely destructive atmosphere the competitive element can create'.⁹² In opposition to this type of statement is the voice of the Federation who has as its claim that:

A festival provides many things: the stimulus of preparing for a public occasion; the opportunity to hear the work of others; and the chance to receive advice from a professional adjudicator...someone whom that performer may never have the opportunity to meet in any other way. Festivals also develop the educated audiences of the future – and they bring forward the specially gifted.⁹³

If there is a concern about the place of festivals with regard to the merits of musical competitions as a means of education, where there is less concern is in the realm of the local community where the festivals take place. Despite a drop in entry levels throughout the 1950s and into the 1960s, these have now stabilised and, for the most part, appear to be consistent. People participating in the festival are part of a community that has been established, in many cases, for over a hundred years. The festivals may have slipped from the national consciousness sometime after the Second World War, however, they remain a strong part of local and individual identity, particularly in the case of those participating in the festivals as will be evidenced in the forthcoming chapters.

⁹² Heslop (1995) *Competitions and Festivals: A Music Teacher Publication*. London: Rhinegold.

⁹³ Quotation taken from the Federation website found at <http://www.festivals.demon.co.uk> 2nd November 2001.



The format of the competition festivals has changed very little since their inception. This may highlight a rather conservative inability to change or it may be that the competition festival format has worked so successfully that there has been little need for change. This is not to say that the festivals have not developed however as competitors now take part in more varied classes that take into account cultural change and social progress – for example some festivals have classes that encompass a multi-cultural element, some have classes for pop bands, etc. What has, for the most part, remained the same is the format: competitors perform, the professional adjudicator gives an official account of their performance, awards prizes for those performances he/she considers to be the best and the next class begins. Measures have been taken to standardise the adjudication process and potential adjudicators, all of whom are, or have been, professional musicians, were recently able take a Post-Graduate Certificate in Adjudication in association with the University of Leeds to assist with this process. Whilst the format of the festivals may remain relatively unchanged, the reasons for competing and the social demographic of the competitors is greatly different. The early competitors were predominantly of the working class with the organisers being from the middle or upper classes. Nowadays, there is a mixture of all social backgrounds across the range of participatory fields available to those involved with the competition festival. The competition festival as a leveller of class remains as people are judged on their musical ability and experience rather than their social or

professional background. The identity of the individual is formed through the festival community rather than through position in the outside world as will be evidenced in the forthcoming chapters concerning the Manx Music Festival.

It is impossible to predict the future of the amateur competition festival, but what can be seen from the history and development of the festivals and the festival movement is the enormous part played in the revitalisation and continuation of amateur music making throughout the British Isles. The 'big names' involved with the movement in the earlier years – names such as Parry, Stanford, Elgar, Stainer, Vaughan-Williams etc. - ensured its importance on a national scale and the festival movement became part of a national musical identity. On a local scale, the festival initially captured the imagination of local communities as choirs and soloists competed against one another in the pursuit of musical excellence and also individual pride. As the festivals became established in the community their contribution of local identity began and the continuing presence of these festivals ensures that this is still the case. Individual identity is formed through the festivals as those who participate do so for their own reasons and thus the festivals contribute towards who people are and why they do what they do.

This history of the competition festival and the competition festival movement has aimed to give an insight into how the festivals were

begun and developed and how the festivals contributed to ideas and ideals of identity. To explore concepts of identity and identity formation further it is necessary to move away from a generalised exploration of the festival movement towards a thorough examination of an individual festival in progress. This will be seen in the forthcoming chapters as the dissertation continues with a consideration of the 113-year-old Manx Music Festival.

CHAPTER TWO

Mann, Music, Tradition and a Tale of Two Festivals

This chapter serves two inter-linked purposes: firstly, to contextualise the background of Manx history from which a modern day Manx identity has evolved. Leading on from this contextualisation the chapter views the position occupied by the Manx Music Festival in the broader context of Manx identity and culture as a whole and provides a comparison of the event with Yn Chruinnaght, an inter-Celtic festival taking place on the Isle of Man. By comparing the two festivals the chapter highlights the fluid and diverse nature of Manx culture in the twenty-first century and the place occupied by the Manx Music Festival within this.

In 1996 the Manx Heritage Foundation⁹⁴ produced an album entitled: *'The Best That's In! A Compilation of the Best and Most Popular Manx Music'*. In the sleeve notes of the album the Chairman of the Manx Heritage Foundation introduces it as follows:

The Manx have always been a musical nation, and as our Victorian novelist Hall Caine put it: "nothing would give you a more vivid sense of the Manx people than some of our old airs". In recent years these 'old airs' have had a new lease of life. New arrangements, new recordings and indeed 'new airs' have all contributed to making Manx music more popular.

⁹⁴ The Manx Heritage Foundation is an organisation dedicated, as the name suggests, to the promotion of Manx Heritage.

This CD brings together the best of the most recent recordings and represents the wide range of Manx Music from Victorian favourites such as Ellan Vannin and the Manx Fisherman's Evening Hymn through the traditional song and dance music to modern day compositions. The Manx Heritage Foundation is pleased to be able to bring together all these in one collection in the hope that it will give a sense of this vibrant part of Manx Culture.⁹⁵

From the description given above it can be seen that music is stressed as a presence forming an important part of the identity of the Manx nation. What is also apparent, however, is that the musical identity of this nation is a somewhat eclectic mix and what is being described as 'Manx music' does not fit easily into one definable genre. From the more 'anglicised' Victorian ballads of nostalgia to the 'celticised' writing of the more modern compositions there is no set national voice, yet music remains an important part of the Manx identity. It is not only in the type of music available in which there is great diversity, but also in the types of music-making available. The Manx Music Festival is just one example of the range of musical activities available on the Isle of Man and is representative of a more Anglicised musical practice while there are others that purport to represent a more Manx traditional music scene. This chapter discusses how the diverse range of musical practices on the Isle of Man came to be and how these musical practices have come to be seen to give an important contribution to the formation of a distinct sense of Manx identity today. The chapter begins by examining the historic events

⁹⁵ Taken from the sleeve notes of *The Best That's In! A Compilation of the Best and Most Popular Manx Music*,

that have shaped both Manx identity and Manx musical identity into the diverse melee present on the Isle of Man today. It will then discuss the range of musical opportunities available on the Isle of Man and how these can be viewed as being a part of the national identity of the Isle of Man. Finally, the chapter will consider whether any of these musical practices qualify as being 'more' Manx than any other and will employ a comparative study of the Manx Music Festival and another festival, Yn Chruinnaght, to illustrate varying ways in which identity can be built, portrayed and represented through musical practice. The chapter aims to come to an understanding of whether the cultural significance constructed through musical practice on the Isle of Man is based in a form of objective reality or whether it is a social construct enforced by individual motivation and participation. It considers the contribution made to identity construction and formation by participative music making and discusses how music contributes to ideas and ideals of identity.

The Isle of Man: Diversity as a Cultural Construct

The Isle of Man has had a turbulent history which is reflected in the disparate and varied culture that is presented today. The historical account presented here is in no way intended to be all-encompassing but focuses on some of the significant events that have been responsible for shaping the diverse culture and identity of the Island and its inhabitants.

The Isle of Man is situated in the centre of the Irish Sea and has an area of approximately 227 square miles. The distance from the northern tip, the Point of Ayre, to the southernmost area - called the Sound - is 33 ¼ miles and from Peel in the West to Douglas in the East is 12 ½ miles.⁹⁶ The Island has four main towns where the majority of the population reside and these are the capital, Douglas (33%), its suburb, Onchan (11.5%) - both of which are in the East, Ramsey (9.6%) in the North, Peel (5.0%) in the West and Castletown (4.1%) in the South. The overall population stands at approximately 76,315 and of this population currently 48% are Manx born.⁹⁷ Situated between these towns are a number of villages and hamlets. The Island is well served by its road network and movement from place to place is frequent and often necessary for social and employment purposes. The physical geography of the landscape is a dramatic one, not dissimilar to that of the Lake District in Cumbria, although as with many things Manx, the features of the landscape are of a smaller scale.

Economically the Isle of Man is currently in a prosperous position, the growth of the offshore financial sector has been dramatic throughout the past ten years and this now accounts for 42% of the Gross

⁹⁶ Figures taken from Young, GVC, *A Brief History of the Isle of Man*, Mansk-Svenska Publishing, Peel. First published 1983, second revision 1999.

⁹⁷ Figures from the 2001 Isle of Man Census Report.

Domestic Product.⁹⁸ Although the older industries of fishing, farming and tourism still remain, they are much diminished and the government offers incentive schemes for financial companies to relocate offshore. The growth and maintenance of the finance sector is high on the list of government policies. The burgeoning film industry is the latest area of growth to be seen on the Island - since 1995 the Government has offered incentive packages to film-makers wishing to use the Island as their main location resulting in the making of several major feature films each year. Although everyday life on the Isle of Man resembles that of much of the British Isles, in no way does the Island consider itself to be part of the United Kingdom and it is here that the most primary distinction between the Isle of Man and its surrounding neighbours can be seen. The Isle of Man is a British Crown dependency with its own democratic parliament called 'Tynwald' and ministerial system of Government. The Queen holds the title 'Lord of Mann' and every five years appoints a Lieutenant Governor as resident Crown representative. The Parliament is split into two divisions with the House of Keys being the lower division, consisting of 24 elected members, and the Legislative Council being the higher, consisting of fourteen members including the President of Tynwald, the Lord Bishop, The Attorney General, 3 ex-officio members and eight members elected by the House of Keys.⁹⁹ Together these two groups are responsible for the internal

⁹⁸ Figures taken from www.iomguide.com/economyfactfile.php, viewed on 3rd January 2004

⁹⁹ Information from www.iomguide.com/government.php, viewed on 3rd January 2004

administration of the Island and have the power to make their own policies and laws separate to those of the United Kingdom. Tynwald is always proud to lay claim to the title of the oldest continuous parliament in the World dating back over 1000 years. However, as will be seen later in this chapter, the independent status of the Island is not the only signifier of a unique cultural identity as the Manx people have instilled a cultural value onto many aspects of life.

History

In his *Brief History of the Isle of Man*, Young suggests that 'the history of the Isle of Man can, for practical purposes, be divided into five periods'.¹⁰⁰ He suggests that these periods be:

- a) The Celtic Period (pre 800)
- b) The Norse Period (800 -1266)
- c) The Scottish/English Period (1266 - 1405)
- d) The Stanley, Derby and Atholls (1405 -1765)
- e) The Post-Revestment period (1765 onwards)

Although it is the final period that has the most influence with regard to the Manx Music Festival, it is worth using Young's time division to take a few moments to see how the cultural situation facing the Island

¹⁰⁰ Young (2nd Rev. 1999), p. 6.

at the start of the twenty-first century has been influenced by that which had previously taken place.

The Celtic Period

Little is known about the Celtic Period other than that which has been found through archaeological investigation. However, it is known that during the time of the Celts those resident on the Island spoke an early derivative of Manx Gaelic that has been found to resemble what is now Scots- and Irish- Gaelic. Christianity was introduced to the Isle of Man, in all probability from monks visiting from Ireland some time around the fifth century.¹⁰¹ Evidence of this conversion is seen in the remains of the *Keeils* (Manx Gaelic for Chapel) and carved crosses that are found throughout the Island. Although little is known of the social conditions prevalent at the time, it is safe to assume that a subsistence way of life operated with small contact with those from outside the Manx boundaries. Who these early Celts were and what their origin is unclear, but myths and legends abound that do suggest some link between the Isle of Man and Ireland, so it is possible that the early Celts were immigrants from the West. The most famous legend linking the Island with Ireland, and perhaps the best known, is that of Mannanan mac Leirr who made the Isle of Man his home residing at the top of the 'South Barrule' hill. Mannanan was (and still is) said to protect the Island from marauding strangers by conjuring a cloak of mist as a protective veil. Indeed it is not only in

the myth of Mannanan that the Celtic influence is found in the Isle of Man today. Many others aspects of the Celtic period remain including the Gaelic language and a number of airs, dances and stories which are said to be from this time. Events such as Yn Chruinnaght which will be discussed in more detail later in this chapter are testament to the importance of this period of history for Manx culture and identity.

The Norse Period

The Norse were thought to have arrived in the Isle of Man during the eighth century. Initially the Vikings raided and pillaged as they had throughout most of the British Islands, but the strategic position of the Isle of Man provided a useful base that led to a longer term occupation. A succession of Norse rulers existed until the thirteenth century and Norse became the official spoken language, although the Gaelic language remained the most common amongst the native Manx people. Inter-marriage was common, as seen from evidence found from early grave carvings displaying both Norse and Celt names and despite the somewhat violent arrival the Celt/Norse existence was generally harmonious. The Norse brought with them their own system of administration and it was they who were responsible for the establishment of the Tynwald, the longest standing and most important reminder of the Scandinavian presence on the Island. The Tynwald was the Parliament of the 'Kingdom of the Sudreys' which consisted of the Isle of Man and the Isle of the Scottish Hebrides and

¹⁰¹ Ibid.

held its annual meeting on the Isle of Man. The Island remained Christian throughout the Viking period - although pagan burial occurred among the early Viking settlers, the evidence for Christianity includes the establishment of a Cathedral and a number of monastic orders. The Norse held their rule for four centuries until the arrival of the Scots and subsequently the English. Their lasting contribution to the culture of the Isle of Man was the establishment of the Tynwald parliament still and everyday feature of the self-governing Island today. Also present throughout the Island are numerous names which are derived from Norse; the Island's only mountain *Snaefell* is one such example of this.

Scottish and English Period

During the reign of Magnus, the final King of Man and the Isles, tension grew between England and Norway as to the claim to ownership of the Islands. Scotland became part of this battle by laying its own claim to the Scottish Isles. Following a turbulent period of struggle involving all three parties and Magnus himself, the Isle of Man was eventually signed over to Scotland by Norway one year after the King's death in 1266. The Manx people did not take kindly to this rule and attempted rebellion led by Godred, the son of King Magnus. This rebellion was soon quashed by the Scots. Whilst the Manx rebellion may have been crushed with ease, a more difficult battle was to ensue as the English now wrestled the Scots for dominion of the Island, primarily for the sake of its position in the Irish Sea. Control

of the Island switched between the two on a regular basis. In the midst of all this unrest, Gaelic once more became the dominant spoken language on the Island. Eventually England took final control in 1346 following the defeat of the Scots by the English during the battle of Neville's Cross in Durham. During this period little thought was given to the internal affairs of the Island itself and the Manx were left without leadership and direction as the battle for ownership continued. The power of the Church in the Island grew and without anyone to stem its control several church leaders and Island bishops grew rich from imposing taxes and tithes upon the Manx.

The Island was granted to a succession of individuals, finally ending in the hands of Sir John Stanley in 1405. The Stanleys remained the Kings and Lords of Man for the next three hundred years. The arrival of the Stanleys brought a new era where the power of the church decreased and the Manx people had, at least in name, a more stabilised leadership.

The Stanley, Derby and Atholl Period

The Stanleys were a highly influential English family from the North West of England who later became the Earls of Derby after assisting Henry Tudor in the Battle of Bosworth, 1485. The succession of Stanleys showed varying degrees of interest in the affairs of Isle of Man until 1627 when Lord Strange, the seventh Earl of Derby, took over the Island. This particular member of the Stanley clan was to

have the most influence on the Island and later became known as 'The Great Stanley'. It was Lord Strange who was to see the Island through the period of Civil War in England which was also to have great repercussions on the Isle of Man as the Earl refused to surrender the Island to the Commonwealth Parliament. He was eventually captured by Cromwell's forces and later executed. Meanwhile on the Isle of Man, the Earl's wife attempted to continue ruling the Island herself. However, a revolt against the Countess by the Manx, led by the now famous William Christian, or *Illiam Dhone* (Brown William) as he is better known, meant that the Commonwealth forces were eventually successful in taking control of the Island. If the leaders of the Manx rebellion thought that this would mean a greater level of self-government they were sadly mistaken as the Commonwealth Parliament retained control. However, the greatest legacy left by the Commonwealth rulers was in the field of education where the Governor required that part of the bishop's income be used to enable the setting up of free schools in the Island's four main towns of Castletown, Peel, Douglas and Ramsey. Following the Restoration the Island was once more granted to the Stanley family and Illiam Dhone paid the price for his part in the rebellion by being executed by a firing squad. Illiam Dhone has since become a legendary figure being hailed as both a hero of the Manx people by some and a traitor by others. Being re-instated, the Stanley family were to continue as the Lords of Man until 1736. Other notable features of this period were the increase in the use of the Island as a port through which goods could

pass without being subject to rates and customs duties that existed in England. Eventually it was this aspect of Manx industry that attracted concern from Westminster and which led the Island into the period that is known as the Revestment. There were, however, a number of cultural features from this period which remained in the culture of the Isle of Man. One was the establishment of education system and the other was the legend of Illiam Dhone – an annual public ceremony still takes place ‘honouring’ his deeds during the rebellion.

The Revestment Period

Following the demise of the last of the Stanleys, the Lordship of Man passed to the Atholl family, related by marriage of the Earls of Derby. It was during the reign of the third Duke of Atholl that the Island was sold in 1764 to the British Crown for £70,000 and the Sovereignty of the Isle of Man was revested to the British Monarch once more. Although the Atholls were now no longer rulers of the Isle of Man in the same sense that their forbearers had been, their association remained as they continued to hold large areas of land and a later Duke of Atholl became the Governor-General. The passing of the Isle of Man into the hands of the British Crown represented a serious blow to the Manx people, both in terms of their economy and with regard to cultural identity since they felt the Island had been sold without their knowledge or consultation. The House of Keys remained but in reality

its power was vastly diminished as any important affairs were handled by the British in Whitehall. Further to this, although primary education of the lower classes was encouraged, there was a strong move to enforce the use of the English language. Not only was this seen to be a more advanced language than the Manx Gaelic spoken by the peasant classes, but the ruling English also gained more control of the people if they could understand what they were saying. With the death of the import/export industry that had provided so much of the income for many Manx families, the established farming and fishing industries had to be rebuilt which proved to be a hard struggle. It was not exclusively bad news, as the British government officials realised that many of the Manx laws were out of date and some of the more oppressive and backward ordinances regarding enforced labour were changed for the benefit of the people. For many, however, the high level of taxation now paid to the British Crown and the poor maintenance of the Island infrastructure meant that this was a difficult time.

One final large-scale change that was to take place in the Isle of Man prior to the start of the nineteenth century was the spread of Methodism. Throughout the eighteenth century the Island was lucky in the appointment of its bishops. Both Bishop Wilson and Bishop Hildesley succeeded in translating the prayer book and the bible into Manx in order that the religious word might become more accessible to the Manx people. Whilst they, in particular Bishop Wilson, were

responsible for stressing the importance of learning to read English, they nonetheless maintained the use of Manx Gaelic as the primary language of the Manx church. Although there had been a number of Methodist preachers visiting the Island in the mid- eighteenth century, it was not until the arrival of John Wesley himself that the impact of this movement was felt. Wesley was very enthusiastic about the response he encountered on the Isle of Man stating:

What a fair proportion is this! What has been seen like this, in any part of Great Britain or Ireland? The local preachers are men of faith and love, knit together in one mind and one judgement...I have never heard better singing either in Bristol or London.¹⁰²

In response to this upsurge of interest in Methodism, a Manx Methodist Hymnbook appeared in 1795 along with original religious compositions in the Manx language called carvels. Wesleyan Methodism was followed by primitive Methodism and both then and now the Methodists and the established church existed alongside one another. The events of most significant lasting cultural importance during this period include: the spread of English as a language equal to the Manx Gaelic, the establishment of Methodism which is still arguably the most popular branch of Christianity on the Isle of Man and the existence of the first Crown appointed Governor.

The Modern Period

This section is entitled the Modern Period because of the vast change to the existing way of life that began in the early nineteenth century and which has had the greatest influence in shaping Manx culture and identity to the present day. The primary catalyst for these changes was the establishment of a weekly steamship service between the Isle of Man and Liverpool in 1819 which brought the Manx into greater contact with those from England. With regard to the Manx language, the opening up of routes between the Island and elsewhere consolidated the need to be understood and to be fluent in English. A number of immigrants from around the United Kingdom moved to the Island to take advantage of the lower cost of living offered alongside the clean air and open spaces. Many of these immigrants moved to Douglas which was considered to be the most English of the Island ports. It was also the location where most imported goods landed, thus enabling the newcomers to have greatest access to goods that would otherwise not have been available on the Island. If life for these newcomers was easy and cheap, it continued to be a struggle for the native Manx - and the early part of the nineteenth century saw people taking advantage of the emigration opportunities and promise of a better life.¹⁰³

¹⁰² Kinvig (1975), p. 129.

¹⁰³ Many of these emigrants chose to move to Cleveland, Ohio but they still found ways of contributing to the cultural identity of their native Island, as will be seen later.

Greater economic opportunity became available closer to home as the arrival of more and more immigrants increased the demand for products and services, although once more the impact of providing services for English speakers took its toll on the Manx Gaelic language. The Duke of Atholl, who had been Governor-General, finally departed in 1830 having sold all his remaining interests in the Island to the British Crown for £417,144. Rather than the consequence of this being the further loss of Manx independence, the work of subsequent Lieutenant Governors saw a period of political reform that led to the Island regaining control over its financial affairs. In particular it was the work of Governor Loch (1863-1882) that saw the House of Keys once again becoming a publicly elected body and moving from Castletown to the now thriving economic and commercial centre of Douglas. Financially the Island was once again to be governed from within, although it continued to be watched closely by the Government at Westminster.

During this period of the mid-nineteenth century, tourism began to have a large impact upon the indigenous way of life. The earliest visitors were from the more 'genteel' classes of society but improvement in conditions and the introduction of leisure time for the working classes meant that the Isle of Man provided a cheap, pleasant and convenient destination for workers from the North West of England. By 1850 fifty to sixty thousand visitors were visiting in the summer season thus providing a great input into the economy of the

Island, but an erosion of the insular way of life that had existed for centuries. Tourism as an industry continued to build throughout the nineteenth century and in 1899 saw the arrival of 418,142 visitors in the summer season.¹⁰⁴ The impact of these tourists on the Island cannot be under-estimated as what could be called the Manx culture that had existed for centuries was all but swallowed up in the need to cater for the English speaking tourists. The Victorian novelist, Hall Caine, who was a resident of the Isle of Man, wrote in 1891:

It has become too English of late. The change has been sudden... God forbid that I should begrudge the factory hand his breath of the sea and glimpse of gorse-bushes; but I know what price we are paying that we may entertain him.¹⁰⁵

If the growth of the tourist industry was to the detriment of the Manx culture it had obvious economic benefit to the industries of fishing and farming as the summer arrivals had to be catered for as well as the Manx residents. This relative prosperity amongst the industries of agriculture and fisheries was to last until the advent of the First World War.

The First World War brought many changes to the Isle of Man which had, by that time, firmly established itself as Britain's top tourist destination. Dance halls and entertainments supplied suitable pursuits for visitors in the evening whilst the beautiful scenery

¹⁰⁴ Young (2nd Rev. 1999), p. 27.

provided a backdrop for passing time during the day. 1913 had seen a record number of arrivals with 634,512 ¹⁰⁶ visitors being recorded and the 1914 season looked set to equal this. However, the outbreak of War was to see the arrival of a different type of visitor in the form of Prisoner of War internees. With regard to how much control the Manx Government had over the use of the Island during the War, Winterbottom writes:

The limitations of 'Home Rule' status were made quite clear during the years of war: decisions that concerned the Island were frequently taken by the British Government with scant reference to Tynwald. The first example of this was to use the Island as a location for the internment of enemy aliens resident in Britain at the outbreak of War.¹⁰⁷

Camps were established on the site of 'Cunningham's Holiday Camp for Young Men', which provided an existing set up for the internees to use and at Knockaloe Farm on the west coast of the Island near Peel where over 20,000 men were held. Conditions in the camps were said to be good and the internees were provided with a range of educational, artistic and sporting pursuits. Although the number of internees was nothing like the visitors arriving during the tourist period, they did at least provide the Manx economy with sustainable income as the needs of the internees with regard to food and other necessities were generally met by local suppliers. It was a different

¹⁰⁵ Sir Thomas Henry Hall Caine, *The Little Manx Nation* (London 1891), pp155-156 as quoted in *A New History of the Isle of Man, Volume V 1830-1999*, p. 81.

¹⁰⁶ Winterbottom, Derek, "Economic History: 1830-1996" in *New History of Isle of Man*, p. 235.

¹⁰⁷ *Ibid.*, p. 236.

story for those renting boarding houses as lack of visitors meant that bankruptcy loomed for many. A loan scheme was set up to help those suffering financial difficulties because of the loss of the tourist trade, but this was by no means ideal and times were difficult.

The end of the First World War saw a return of some of the tourist trade with numbers reaching over 500,000 in 1920 and thus the hoteliers, boarding house owners and tenants were able to recoup some of the losses made during the war. Douglas once again became an attractive destination for the working classes of the North West and arrival figures remained stable with one record being the arrival of 68,000 passengers in a single day in 1937.¹⁰⁸ Whilst 'home rule' once more returned to the Island, the British Government was quick to demand a contribution towards the cost of the war and Tynwald, although protesting strongly, could do nothing but comply with the 'powers that be' at Westminster. Also providing additional revenue during the inter-war years was the re-establishment of the TT, or Tourist Trophy motor-cycle races that had originally begun in 1907 but were halted for the war period. These motor sport pursuits had the knock-on effect of leading to an improvement of the road transport system around the whole of the Island.

The arrival of the Second World War saw the Island once more plunged into uncertainty as yet again the tourist trade came to an

abrupt halt. However, the British Government saw the strategic advantage of the Island and used it as a base for a number of RAF squadrons and also established various army and navy training camps and bases. Internees were also to arrive once more, but instead of being held in specifically formed camps, the plethora of hotels and boarding houses around the Island provided the 'aliens', as they were known, with suitable homes.¹⁰⁹

Following the war the immediate outlook was positive. The Island had been left with greatly improved resources with regard to transportation of all varieties. The airfield at Ronaldsway became the national airport and a service was established between the Island and several United Kingdom destinations. The sea services between the Island and elsewhere were restarted and passenger figures remained high. The fishing industry that had prospered from the War due to lack of competition from elsewhere continued to thrive. The farming industry had expanded into an export market due to the wartime destruction of agriculture in the North West of England and continued to grow with the return of the tourist trade. However, this was not to last and the 1950s saw a reduction in the tourist trade and fishing and farming went into a decline due to competition from elsewhere now that these industries had become re-established. Tourism reduced, but remained the Island's primary industry and efforts were

¹⁰⁸ Ibid., p. 245.

¹⁰⁹ For a full account of the story of the internees on the Isle of Man during WWII, see *Island of Barbed Wire* by Connery Chappell, London, Corgi 1984.

made to publicise the Island as a destination on a wider scale. However, as it became easier for tourists to travel further afield and enjoy foreign holidays in sunnier climes for similar prices to holidays on the Island, a decline in the tourist industry began which continues to this day. The Government was forced to look for an alternative to boost the ailing economy.

The necessary boost to the economy was provided in 1960 when Tynwald passed the 'Income Tax Act' that ensured that no surtax would be levied on personal income. With the increase of taxes in the United Kingdom and the introduction of Capital Gains taxation, the Isle of Man became an attractive prospect to the wealthier United Kingdom resident. This period saw the beginnings of the financial industry that was to prove so successful throughout the remainder of the twentieth century and into the twenty-first. The growth of the Island's finance industry has been so rapid that the influx of workers required to keep the industry afloat has forced up the cost of living on the Isle of Man - in particular, the cost of housing which has moved beyond the realms that many can reasonably afford. However, without the finance sector the Island would have been plunged into economic gloom as the tourist, farming and fishing industries continue to decline.

Cultural Consequences of the Modern Period

Even as the arrival of the tourist trade was driving the final nail in the coffin of the native Manx Gaelic language, there were individuals and groups campaigning for the preservation and continuance of the language and other facets of Manx culture, such as song, that were dependent upon it. In 1899 *Yn Cheshaght Ghailckagh*, or The Manx Language Society, was formed and although, as Thomson writes:

It would be too much to say that it succeeded in its declared primary aim of preserving Manx as the national language, or indeed in its attempt at the cultivation of a modern literature in Manx, but it has been successful in promoting the study and publication of existing Gaelic literature.¹¹⁰

In recent years *Yn Cheshaght Ghailckagh* has gone from strength to strength as renewed interest in what is seen to be traditional Manx culture has arisen and greater resources, both financial and technological, have become available. A strong interest has also arisen in the use of 'Manx-English' or 'Anglo-Manx', which was something of a crossover between Manx Gaelic and the Standard English that is spoken today.¹¹¹ Other progress in terms of the language has been made in recent years and includes the appointment of a Manx Language Officer and the introduction of widespread Manx teaching, including the option of taking a qualification equivalent to a GCSE in Manx. A purely Manx-speaking

¹¹⁰ Thomson, RL, "The Manx Language" from *A New History*, p. 314.

¹¹¹ See the chapter by Kewley-Draskau in *A New History*, pp. 316-322.

primary school has been formed and programmes in Manx can be heard on the local radio station, Manx Radio. Although the last native speaker of Manx died in 1974, the future of the language in the twenty-first century looks strong as the revival of interest continues to grow.

The strong amateur theatrical and performance scene on the Island came formally into existence in 1892 with the formation of the Douglas Choral Union which, although formed to serve the lofty purpose of performing oratorios, soon turned its attention to more light-hearted staged operettas and, more recently, musicals. Other societies were formed throughout the twentieth century and most amateur productions were staged in the winter months before the summer tourist season started. Proving a great advantage for local groups was the provision of many large scale performing spaces, in particular the Gaiety Theatre and Opera House that was opened in 1900, that were largely unused outside the tourist season.

With specific regard to music-making Bazin writes:

There has always been a strong musical tradition in the Isle of Man, with a particular love for singing and dance music. The violin appears to have been extremely popular but harps and pipes had died out long before the 1800s if, indeed, they had been employed at all. The repertoire was affected by constant contact with musicians from other parts of the British Isles and further afield. Within the

Island there are strong indications that music crossed language, social and religious divides.¹¹²

Initially this dancing and singing would have taken place on an informal basis in the home or at community gatherings and be passed down by both the oral tradition and - on a more formal basis - in church or religious gatherings. However, in the nineteenth century interest in Manx music became more formalised and, as with the language, efforts were made to preserve the music for future generations. Although there were earlier publications such as *Mona Melodies*, a compendium of Manx airs arranged for the piano and voice that appeared in 1820, the most significant years were those leading up to 1896 and the publication of W. H. Gill's *Manx National Songs* and A. W. Moore's *Manx Ballads and Music*. The appearance of these volumes was in response to, on the one hand, Moore's desire to preserve the Manx ballads as they had appeared over the centuries and, on the other, Gill's popularisation of the airs which made them more accessible but often bore only a small resemblance to the original. The relevant merits of both publications are often discussed and Moore's adherence to the original Manx means it is regarded as the most worthy. However, for much of the twentieth century it was Gill's work that provided most Manx people with their only available contact with Manx music. In the early twentieth century, events such as the *Chruinnaght Ashoonagh Vanninagh* were organised by those involved with the Manx Language Society as festivals of traditional

¹¹² Fenella Bazin "Music" from *New History*, p. 383.

Manx culture. These were not to last, however, and the last one took place in 1926. From the mid 1920s to the 1970s interest in specific Manx music and culture waned and it was primarily the efforts of one woman, Mona Douglas, which gave the opportunity for a revival to take place. Mona Douglas herself was born in 1898 and had, from an early age, taken an interest in the folk life around her thus coming into contact with many aspects of traditional Manx culture in their unadulterated form. The revival of Manx music parallels the interest that grew in folk music throughout the British Isles in the late 1960s and 70s and through her long standing interest in the promotion of traditional Manx culture, Mona Douglas was in an ideal position to spearhead the Manx revival. She drew together a band of interested people and once more an awareness of all things Manx traditional began to grow. The Chruinnaght was re-established in 1976 as a summer festival that drew together all aspects of traditional Manx culture such as music, drama, dance and speech and this quickly grew in popularity. The Manx Language Society became more active in the promotion of the Gaelic and gave greater opportunity for those wishing to learn. A renewed Nationalistic concern was felt throughout the Island in response to the growth of the finance sector and the resulting influx of immigrants led to the increasing desire to strengthen that which was obviously 'Manx' culture. The revival of this aspect of Manx life proved to be successful and at the start of the twenty-first century the more traditional aspects of Manx culture are stronger than they have been for over a hundred years. Of course

Manx culture consists of more than the 'traditional' practices and pursuits and the desire to maintain a Manx identity and define a nation have led to the installation of cultural values on almost any aspect of life. As Harrison writes:

Manx national music, already developed to high levels in the Manx Music Festival, became the spearhead of rampant cultural assertion in competition with the wider world. Such chauvinism echoed in the records of many Manx associations, from 'fur and feather' shows to Manx athletics. The first exuberant intention of the Douglas Harriers, on their foundation in 1890, was to build a national team for competition in Britain. The growth of expatriate Manx societies throughout the British Empire and beyond – and the foundation of the World Manx Association of 1911, which led them into federation – had a similar triumphal flavour. In associational and cultural representation (as the writings of T. E. Brown and Hall Caine attested), the little Manx nation reached its apogee in the Edwardian years.¹¹³

Nationalistic hubris was common in the Edwardian era throughout much of the Western world and the colonies, but the tendency to regard anything with 'Manx' in the title as being culturally significant has continued even when, at first glance, the object of national intention has little about it that is identifiably Manx. There are endless examples of these types of cultural signifiers from social organisations to sporting events, and all are considered to be part of the Manx identity and what makes the Isle of Man unique. One such signifier is, of course, the Manx Music Festival and it would seem

¹¹³ Harrison, A, "Cultural History: Associational Culture" from *A New History*, p. 405.

appropriate at this point to move to an examination of the place occupied by music in the present day culture of the Isle of Man and consider the Festival's place within this.

A Musical Nation: Negotiating Identity through Music

In 2003 the bi-annual Isle of Man Department of Education directory entitled *Music in the Isle of Man* was prefaced with the following words:

Once again it is hoped this booklet will prove to be a useful source of reference for all those interested and involved in music-making in the Isle of Man. For such a small community, it is encouraging to note the wealth of opportunities that exist for everyone.¹¹⁴

This booklet gives a good overview of the types of music available on the Island and breaks down as follows:

1. The music service offers 8 full-time instrumental staff and 4 part-time who are responsible for the free peripatetic music service offered in the Isle of Man schools.
2. The Department of Education organises the 3 Manx Youth Orchestras, the Manx Youth Wind Orchestra, Manx Youth Wind Ensembles, Manx Youth Guitar Ensembles, 4 Saturday morning music centres for 8-13 year olds, and the Manx Youth Choir.

¹¹⁴ Isle of Man Government, Department of Education directory: Music Making in the Isle of Man, Tenth Edition, 2003, p. 1.

3. Under the heading of “Bands” are offered: Ellan Vannin Pipes and Drums, Castletown Metropolitan Silver Band, Crosby and District Silver Band, Douglas Town Band, Douglas Town Junior Band, Manx National Youth Band, Onchan Silver Band, Ramsey Town Band, Rushen Silver Band, the Garden Avenue Four, and the Manx Jazz Aces.
4. Under “Instrumental Ensembles” and “Orchestras” are: the Manx Camerata, Isle of Man Wind Orchestra, the Manx Philharmonic Orchestra, Manx Sinfonia, and the Manx Dance Orchestra.
5. There are 18 Choirs: Glenfaba Ladies Choirs, Harmony, Isle of Man Barbershop Harmony Chorus, the Isle of Man Teachers’ Choir, Lon Dhoo Male Voice Choir, Lon Vane Ladies Choir, the Manx Festival Chorus, the Manx Girls Choir, Meadowside Choral Society, Musicale, Ramsey Choral Society, Ramsey Ladies Cushag Choir, Ramsey Male Choir, the Regal Singers, the Lezayre Chimers, the Northern Lights Vocal Ensemble, and the Wanderers Male Voice Choir.
6. There are three principal operatic and musical societies: The Douglas Choral Union, The Manx Operatic Society, and the Manx Gilbert and Sullivan Society.
7. Included under “Organisation, Association and Clubs” are: Hartes Ease – early music group, Isle of Man Church Music Association, the Isle of Man Organists Association, the Isle of Man Performers Club, the Isle of Man Electronic Organ Society,

the Manx Jazz Club, the Manx Rock and Pop Club, and the Ramsey Music Society.

8. Traditional music is covered in a section entitled “Manx Folk Groups” and lists: Arthur Caley Giant Band, Bock Yuan Fannee (a Manx dance group), Bwoie Doal (an informal association of musicians playing Manx traditional music), Caarjyn Coidjagh (a group devoted to Manx singing, music and dramatics), the Calor Gas Ceilidh Band, Cliogaree Twoaie (a Manx Gaelic singing group), the Manx Folk Dance Society, Perree Bane (Manx dance, singing and music), and the White Boys of Man (rapper and long sword dancing). Also included are details of pub sessions, “Manx and Irish music is played at the Mitre Hotel in Kirk Michael every Wednesday night, the Bridge Inn in Laxey every Thursday night, at the Hawthorn on Douglas Road every Friday night, and at the Whitehouse Hotel, Peel every Saturday night.”
9. Also included are a list of festivals taking place on the Island: The Isle of Man International Festival of Music and Dancing (All-island triennial event featuring foreign choirs, bands, ensembles and international folklore group), Manannan International Festival of Music and the Arts (a professional festival featuring high quality artists from outside the Isle of Man), the Manx Music Festival (billed as a competitive music festival founded in 1892), and Yn Chruinnaght Inter-Celtic Festival (billed as the

Manx National Assembly celebrating Celtic music, arts, crafts, literature and language).

10. Finally are the list of private music teachers which number 54 in total and include a mix of both instrumental and singing.¹¹⁵

This list is by no means exhaustive, but it gives a clear view of the range and scope of music-making that is available and the important place that music and music making occupy within the Isle of Man as a whole and thus forming a part of Manx identity. What is interesting is the fact that each of these ten categories can be allied with a particular period in the recent, that is to say from approximately 1850-2000, social history of Manx music. The interest in musical education, highlighted here by categories 1, 2, and 10 was sparked towards the end of the nineteenth century when education for all became a way of life and music as a popular form of entertainment became accessible to the members of the middle and working classes. On the Isle of Man events like the Manx Music Festival were devoted to the advancement of musical education, not just in schools but also for adult members of the local population, seen through the existence of the many choral societies and choirs. Many of these groups have either reached or are reaching their centenary years, confirmation of the idea that the Manx Music Festival was an incentive in the formation of these groups. The interest in the expansion of musical education was not something merely confined to the Victorian era

however, and throughout the twentieth-century and into the twenty-first the resources and money given to this activity have been consistently high. The presence of the bands, orchestra and operatic societies can be linked with the presence of more popular entertainments during the tourist heyday throughout the first part of the twentieth century and again with aspects of musical education, and the influence these had on the local population. In the months outside of the summer season, the Manx were left with a large number of concert venues, which were filled by amateur concerts in the absence of professionals. This led to the fostering of local talent and the growth of groups such as the 'town bands'. As with the choirs a certain amount of friendly rivalry may have been felt between the various towns and villages and this may have assisted in developing the prolific island-wide musical activity. Further evidence of 'outside' influence can be seen in the presence of the groups in category seven which seem to cater more for the specialist audience than the wide appeal that town bands, operatic societies or choirs may offer. Finally, the twentieth century has seen two major revival periods of what is seen to be the more 'traditional' Manx music. The first of these periods can be dated approximately from 1890-1930 and the second period from 1970 to the present day. The first period saw concerned individuals striving to save the local culture from extinction. This preservation took a number of forms, including the popularisation of the local airs with four part harmony

¹¹⁵ Ibid.

accompaniment and anglicised words making the music more accessible to the general public, the best known example of this being Manx National Songs, published in 1896 and still widely available throughout the Island. The latter of the revival periods saw much more concentration of the development of 'authentic' Manx tradition, which included the language, music and dance. Here Manx Gaelic was seen to be the key to Manx culture and all aspects of the revival encouraged the use of the Manx language. The Folk tunes were restored with their original words and the revival of the Inter-Celtic festival Yn Chruinnaght strengthened links between the Isle of Man and other Celtic nations.

The culturally diverse situation present on the Isle of Man gives rise to a large number of broader issues including ideas of tradition, both real and invented, revival and authenticity, historicism versus modernity, nationalism, tourism and cultural representation and how music and music-making is both organised through and around these issues. The Isle of Man has a somewhat enigmatic cultural situation, partly derived through its unsettled history, but also partly through the modern day tensions between what is and what is not considered to be Manx. The history of the past 150 years which has seen the erosion of what could be described as the traditional way of life has also been responsible for seeing the Isle of Man move closer and closer to England in terms of the everyday practices of the population. Yet, the Manx still maintain a separate identity and grasp for cultural

evidence to support this. Some claim that 'Manx' is evident through the lives and cultural ways of the people who live there, whilst others embellish a more 'traditional' way of life as being truly 'Manx'. Music is, of course, an important part of the cultural whole of any country and can often be a binding factor uniting people above their other differences.

Manx Traditional and Traditionally Manx: A Tale of Two Festivals

This second section of the chapter considers the possibility of two similar, yet ideologically distinct events existing within one cultural sphere. The place of study is the Islè of Man and the focus is provided by the two annual week-long festivals, Yn Chruinnaght and the Manx Music Festival. At an initial glance Yn Chruinnaght and the Manx Music Festival have much in common: both feature music, dance and drama, both are competitive in orientation, and both claim their place as being representative of the culture of the Isle of Man. However, despite these obvious similarities, the festivals are actually quite different with regard to their ideological origin and alignment. The brief examination presented here compares and contrasts the two festivals and touches on aspects of cultural definition, realism, authenticity and tradition whilst aiming to come to an understanding of the different ways in which ideas and ideals of identity can be shaped and formed to be quite different yet a part of the same whole.

The key to understanding the divergent paths taken by the two festivals lies in the complex route undertaken by what can be termed 'Manx culture' throughout the eighteenth, nineteenth and twentieth centuries. Central to this route is the demise of the Manx Gaelic language as the everyday vernacular of the Manx people. In the first half of the nineteenth century although Manx was 'under threat from the pressure of English'¹¹⁶ it was still widely used in official settings such as the courts and churches and was also used widely in advertising. However, as outlined earlier in the chapter, with a steady income of English immigrants and a local position that saw English as the language of advancement, use of Manx soon became marginalised. The choice to use English as a first language was something of an ideological one as people in positions of power and those of a higher social class had used English for some time. To survive economically and to further themselves in terms of social advancement many of the Manx population saw the adoption of the English language and English ways as the only sensible choice. Coupled with this was the Britain-wide philanthropic movement that saw as its goal the education and development of the working classes. On the Isle of Man these pursuits were organised by English speakers and tended to concentrate on English activities.

It was in this late nineteenth century time of cultural upheaval and philanthropic zeal that the Manx Music Festival finds its origins.

¹¹⁶ See the chapter by Thomson in *A New History*, p.312

Founded in 1892 by Miss M. L. Wood, who later became known as the 'mother of Manx Music', it began as a modest half-day affair consisting of junior and adult choral competitions attached to the annual exhibition of the Isle of Man Fine Art and Industrial Guild and was organised as a worthy working-class leisure pursuit. The music competitions later developed into the main attraction of the Guild and whilst the parent event ceased to continue following the first world war, the music competitions grew both in popularity and size until they were soon a full week in length. Attracting a large number of the Manx population from all classes and walks of life, the competitions took their inspiration from the Westmorland Music Festival begun in Kendal in 1880 by Mary Wakefield. The aims of the competitions were to impart upon working people good musical taste and to improve the performance standards of all who participated. Soon all parts of the Isle of Man were represented and by utilising the existing large concert venues present for tourist entertainments, the competitions facilitated the gathering together of a large cross section of the Manx population. It is fair to say that the music festival provided the stage for the largest annual assembly of Manx people under one roof. Today the festival is still one of the highlights of the Manx music calendar, particularly for the singers who still remain the central focus of the festival, and it also continues to provide a forum for the social gathering together of Manx people. Whilst it still aims to raise musical standards, it also has an important part to play in the sustaining of

ideas and ideals of identity and, certainly for those involved if not for others, part of what it means to be Manx.

Although in its present form Yn Chruinnaght began as a revivalist festival in 1976, its origins lie much earlier. In fact, to call Miss M. L. Wood the 'mother of Manx music' is something of a misnomer as music had, of course, existed on the Isle of Man for centuries. Although throughout the eighteenth and nineteenth century there was a strong tradition of liturgical music-making, particularly with the weighty presence of Wesleyan Methodism seen throughout the Island, the Chruinnaght (this being the Manx Gaelic word for festival) existed as a secular practice alongside this. Many villages would hold their own Chruinnaght, which consisted of singing and dancing and spelling competitions. This practice is still seen in a number of villages, although interestingly these now use the 'eisteddfod' title rather than Chruinnaght which is now singularly associated with the modern day festival. The present day revivalist Yn Chruinnaght is derived from the Chruinnaght Vanninagh Ashoonagh, which existed in the earlier part of the twentieth century, a product of what is known as the first Manx revival. This early event was held 'under the auspices of the World Manx Association'¹¹⁷ and Yn Cheshaght Ghailckagh (The Manx language association formed in 1899), and took place around Hollantide. The competitions were open to 'residents

¹¹⁷ Advertisement for 1926 Yn Chruinnaght Vanninagh Ashoonagh.

and Manx people throughout the world'¹¹⁸ and featured Manx music and dance. It was successful and popular until the outbreak of the Second World War led to its abandonment. The 1970s revival was the brainchild of Mona Douglas (1898 –1987) a folk-song collector who, throughout her life was a keen enthusiast in the preservation, continuation and promotion of a traditional Manx culture. Mona Douglas was the honorary secretary of Yn Cheshaght Ghailckagh from 1917 and was heavily involved with Yn Chruinnaght Vanninagh Ashoonagh. She was, in many ways, the ideal person to be responsible for single-handedly reviving the event as she provided a link between the earlier event and the revival event. In an extract taken from the 1979 Chruinnaght festival programme, Mona Douglas describes the process that led to the establishment of the revival as follows:

Here in the Island, largely due to the missionary work by members of Yn Cheshaght Ghailckagh and Ellynyn ny Gael [the art of the Gaels], general interest in Manx music, dancing and drama, visual art and traditional crafts, and especially in the Manx Gaelic language, was growing both rapidly and steadily, and Manx people were taking part in inter-Celtic festivals and being well placed in their competitions, so it was felt by many workers for the national revival that Yn Chruinnaght should also be revived...a one day non-competitive festival was held in August, 1977, in co-operation with Ellynyn ny Gael, in St Paul's Hall and the Ramsey Grammar school, and in spite of bad weather conditions it proved such a success that it was decided to organise for the following summer a full scale revival of Yn Chruinnaght to cover five days, the competitions to be predominantly Manx but also

¹¹⁸ Ibid.

Inter-Celtic and open to competitors both within and from anywhere outside the Island. ¹¹⁹

This has remained the format of the Chruinnaght to the present day and the festival now markets itself as a festival that 'celebrates and preserves all the traditional Manx arts including music, dance, crafts, literature and language.'¹²⁰ The festival also attracts visiting groups from other Celtic countries to the Island and most evenings end with a Celidh involving participation of both the groups and the audience members.

With the briefest of background information having been given on the festivals it is possible to draw a number of parallel points between them to illustrate their differing cultural alignments. The names of the festivals themselves give a clear point for initial demarcation: Yn Chruinnaght establishes itself as something that belongs to the Isle of Man through the use of its Manx Gaelic title whilst the Manx Music Festival highlights its own position through the use of the word 'Manx'. Both festivals are competitive but with a very different emphasis, the Manx Music Festival employs adjudicators from outside the Isle of Man to give the awards to the best musical performance standard. Yn Chruinnaght, due to the nature of its promotion of Manx culture, and the relatively small amount of expertise in this area, uses adjudicators from within the Island and awards the best

¹¹⁹ Bazin, *The Manx and their Music before 1918*, p. 119.

¹²⁰ www.ynchruinnaght.org, viewed 26th August 2000

presentation of the traditional Manx culture. Further to this the range of competitions offered are similar in that both feature music, dance and speech and drama. The Manx Music Festival, however, offers classes that feature test pieces taken from standard classical repertoire, whilst Yn Chruinnaght uses those pieces which can be termed as Manx traditional. Although the Manx Music Festival does offer a number of token Manx classes, these are four or five in a syllabus of over 100 competitive classes. Both festivals are culturally symbolic, the difference lies in the conscious use of Yn Chruinnaght as a cultural symbol through the arts on display. The Manx Music Festival has developed as a cultural symbol through its continued, stable presence on the Island and the cultural symbolism lies at a more unspoken level. The Manx Music Festival has established itself as being part of Manx culture through a lengthy, continuous existence, thus it could be termed to be 'traditionally Manx', whilst Yn Chruinnaght is part of a conscious folk revival, lending itself more easily to the term 'Manx traditional'. Yn Chruinnaght presents the culture of the Isle of Man, not in an everyday format, but as what could be said to be a somewhat idealised version of traditional Manx culture from some past epoch. The Manx Music festival does not consciously try to be 'Manx'; it provides more of an example of 'actual' culture rather than the 'presented', or possibly even the 're-presented' culture of Yn Chruinnaght.

Both festivals have forged links with other similar events. In the case of Yn Chruinnaght this is seen through the Inter-Celtic nature of the festival which sees groups from other Celtic countries participating in the festival and thus affirms the status of the Isle of Man as a member of these Celtic Nations. The Manx Music Festival has links with other music festivals through its membership of the British Federation of Music Festivals. Although this link does less to highlight the distinct status of the Manx Festival as being part of Manx culture, it does confirm the commitment to promoting standards of excellence and, in a similar way to the Chruinnaght affirming the Celtic status of the Isle of Man, this affirms the status of the Isle of Man as a nation devoted to music making. It is often commented upon that 'the Manx are a musical people' or 'Mann is a musical nation', so the music festival serves to reinforce this perceived aspect of Manx identity. In a broader sense both festivals are claimed by the Isle of Man Government and are marketed as part of the tourist package set to attract visitors to the Isle of Man. However, although both festivals are in receipt of marketing in this manner, there is a distinction when it comes to the financing of the festivals. Yn Chruinnaght is in receipt of support from organisations such as the Isle of Man Arts Council and Government-funded Manx National Heritage who see it as being worthy of financial endowment. In contrast, the Manx Music Festival relies upon the support of a group of annual subscribers, entrance fees and door money to finance it. In this respect it must be considered that, as far as the official, money-giving organisations are

concerned, Yn Chruinnaght is considered to be a worthier part of the Manx culture than the Manx Music Festival. Perhaps one of the reasons for this is that it is true that Yn Chruinnaght has more of an obvious attraction to the outsider as here is presented a clean, idealised version what is Manx music and dance and in terms of the 'insider', Yn Chruinnaght offers a sense that one is making an effort to promote, preserve and belong to the 'real' culture of the Isle of Man, that which differentiates it from the mainstream British culture. The Manx Music Festival is less of a draw for those who are from the outside as people can observe other people performing western classical music in any location in the British Isles and beyond, it is not something that is exclusive to the Isle of Man. The complex nature of social relationships and tradition that give this festival its cultural significance are only known to those from 'inside' the event. In terms of tourists, people are interested in seeing and experiencing cultural difference and it is Yn Chruinnaght that provides this even if it is the Manx Music Festival that is more readily allayed with everyday Island life hence it has more potential for increasing incoming revenue. In the Manx Music Festival people are being cultural by participating in the event be this conscious or unconscious, whereas in Yn Chruinnaght people are going to the event to be cultural therefore the former is implicitly and the latter explicitly cultural. The musical traditions seen at the Manx Music Festival are very much a part of everyday life, those at Yn Chruinnaght are, for the most part, not. This is not to say that either of these festivals has a more valid claim

on being representative of Manx culture but that the orientation, perception and presentation of the culture is noticeably different.

It is at this point the chapter turns to the concepts of tradition and authenticity to see if this can assist in developing an understanding of the respective cultural positions of these two festivals. Yn Chruinnaght and the Manx Music Festival would both claim their right to call themselves traditional and both would claim their authenticity, however, the meanings implied by these terms are far from straightforward. Ethnomusicology has extensive literature concerning the concepts of tradition, authenticity and revival¹²¹ and several aspects of these studies can be usefully applied to the study of the two Manx festivals. At a first glance these theories would seem most overtly applicable to Yn Chruinnaght. Yn Chruinnaght is, after all, a revivalist festival promoting what it sees to be authentic: Manx, traditional culture. The festival fits the revivalist model proposed by Livingstone (1999)¹²² in that it offers the thought that 'revivalists position themselves in *opposition* to aspects of the contemporary cultural mainstream, align themselves with a particular historical lineage, and offer a cultural alternative in which legitimacy is grounded in reference to authenticity and historical fidelity.'¹²³ The historical lineage that Yn Chruinnaght is aligned with is the former Yn Chruinnaght Vanninagh Ashoonagh and it is in opposition to the

¹²¹ Coplan 1991, Hobsbawn 1983, Posen 1993, Feintuch 1993, Bruner 1994, Rees 1998 are just a few examples.

¹²² Livingstone "Music Revivals: Towards a General Theory" in *Ethnomusicology* 1999, 43, p. 1.

more 'English' mainstream cultural alternative. This is best illustrated by a comparison between Yn Chruinnaght and the anglicised Manx Music Festival. Livingstone's model cites the 'basic ingredients' of musical revivals as including:

1. an individual or small group of core revivalists
2. revival informants and/or original sources
3. a revivalist ideology and discourse
4. a group of followers which form the basis of a revivalist community
5. revivalist activities (organizations, festivals, competitions)¹²⁴

All of the above can be applied to Yn Chruinnaght as follows using the appropriate corresponding number:

1. The festival was the brainchild of Mona Douglas and a few key supporters. (Manx alignment)
2. The revival informant was Mona Douglas herself, having been present in the organisation of Yn Chruinnaght Vanninagh Ashoonagh. (Manx alignment)
3. The revivalist ideology and discourse was set out by Mona Douglas in the introduction to the 1979 programme, already quoted. (Manx alignment)

¹²³ Ibid., p. 66.

¹²⁴ Ibid., p. 69.

4. The group of followers, which formed the basis of the revivalist community, were present and were sprung from a general resurgence of interest in Celtic Folk Music. The number of followers totals several hundred and is drawn from a cross-Celtic community. (Celtic alignment)
5. Yn Chruinnaght is itself a revivalist activity and is both a festival and a competition heavily marketed as being part of Manx culture and supported by the Arts Council and Manx National Heritage. (Cultural status officially recognised)

Applying the model to the Manx Music Festival, one can see the different cultural origins of the two events.

1. The festival was formed by Miss M. L. Wood and her group of middle-class ladies. (English alignment)
2. Miss Wood drew on her own informant, in this case Mary Wakefield, the acknowledged founder of the Competitive Festival Movement in the British Isles. (English alignment)
3. The ideology and discourse was formed through the philanthropic movement spreading throughout the Island at that time – the key ideology being the need to educate the working classes in good musical taste and practice. (English alignment)
4. The group of followers, which formed the basis of the festival community, were from all walks of society and soon expanded to several thousand, all from within the Isle of Man. (Manx alignment)

5. The activity is once more both a festival and a competition supported by non-official avenues but is financially independent. (cultural status unrecognised)

In terms of tradition then, it is difficult to say what is invented tradition and what is real tradition. Hobsbawm argues that 'tradition is something that by its very nature is invented in an ideological 'process of formalization and ritualization, characterized by reference to the past, if only by imposing repetition.' (Hobsbawm 1983, p4.) He further states that the 'strength and adaptability of genuine tradition is not to be confused with the 'invention of tradition'. Where the old ways are alive, traditions need neither be revived nor invented.' (Hobsbawm 1983, p8.) In the case of Yn Chruinnaght it would appear that here is a revived tradition that fulfils the criteria of a revival. The Manx Music Festival, although formed along a very similar basis to Yn Chruinnaght, is certainly not revived - but at some point it must have been invented and this, equal to Yn Chruinnaght was, through the ideological process of 'formalization' and 'ritualization' that Hobsbawm refers to. The two festivals have their own individual set of musical and social canons constructed within and around them which leads to the labelling of one of them as being 'Manx traditional' and the other as being 'traditionally Manx'. If, as Feintuch writes, what revivalists have actually done is 'create their own historically conditioned and socially maintained 'artistic paradigm'" (Feintuch 1993, p192), then the Manx Music Festival is equally paralleled to the example of a

revival that Yn Chruinnaght presents. If the festivals can both argue their case for being a part of the traditional culture of the Isle of Man then the question to be asked at this point is whether either, both or neither festival is an authentic part of Manx culture.

Edward Bruner (1994) suggests four main criteria for authenticity to be present:

1. Historical verisimilitude, which is to say mimetic credibility.
2. A complete and immaculate situation, based on genuineness.
3. Original, as opposed to a copy.
4. Duly authorised, certified or legally valid.

If these four criteria are applied to the two festivals under discussion the four points look like this:

1. The Manx Music Festival is in possession of the appearance of being true or real – it is a festival in existence to promote the search for musical excellence and certainly appears to fulfil this. Yn Chruinnaght is an expression of Manx traditional culture in conjunction with other Celtic countries. It is afforded historical verisimilitude due to its links with the past and the blending with other similar traditions.
2. Both festivals present a complete and immaculate situation based on genuineness in that there is nothing false about what they

present or promote. Yn Chruinnaght is a genuine representation of a Celtic Festival, whilst the Manx Music Festival is genuine in its devotion to music-making and performing.

3. To a certain extent, both festivals are copies of something else, Yn Chruinnaght with the Chruinnaght Vanninagh Ashoonagh and the Manx Music Festival with its basis on the Mary Wakefield Westmorland Festival, but this does not make them unoriginal. Yn Chruinnaght is original for the 1970's onward and whatever the ties with the earlier event it is not a carbon copy, nor does it try to be. The Manx Music Festival may have taken its inspiration from the England festival but again the focus and emphasis of the festival is very much its own.
4. Both festivals are duly authorised both by the Manx people, the Manx Government and others associated with them. This is seen through media reports, tourist brochures and participation in the events.

From the application of the above theory it would appear that there are no problems with classifying either festival as authentically Manx in its own right.

To conclude, what is presented in this section of the chapter is an example of two very distinct culturally significant festivals taking place within one cultural situation. Figure 2.i at the end of this chapter provides a summarisation of the information presented in this section

of the Chapter. It presents a comparison of the culturally identifiable features found through the two festivals and the position they occupy within Manx Culture. Whilst some of these aspects are seemingly polemic to one another both festivals occupy an important and valid place within the culture of the Isle of Man and both take their place in forming part of a Manx National identity and both shape the identity of those individuals who participate and are interested in them. Figure 2.1 aims to highlight how differing notions of culture and identity can be even within one small cultural sphere, in this case the Isle of Man.

This chapter has considered how modern day identity is shaped and formed by that which has taken place before it. Identity is not something which is, however, easily definable to being tied to just one single strand of culture. In the case of Manx culture the contemporary culture is diverse. The Manx Nation and the Manx people are able to define their own identities through a number of different ways of life, such as music-making, participating in festivals and so on. Two such examples of ways in which Manx identity is formed can be seen through participation in Yn Chruinnaght and the Manx Music Festival. The next chapter will consider further the role of the Manx Music Festival, as a traditionally Manx event, in forming, shaping and maintaining identity but this chapter has aimed to acknowledge that there are many ways in which Manx identity is shaped, formed and presented and place the Manx Music Festival as part of this process.

Figure 2.i
Cultural Comparison between Yn Chruinnaght and the Manx Music Festival

Yn Chruinnaght

Title automatically cultural through use of Gaelic

Competitive, although emphasis considered to be on the performative

Festival used as cultural symbol

Folk revival

Manx traditional

Invented tradition

Presented culture

Links with Manx language, music and dance

Links with other Celtic nations reinforcing Manx identity.

Bringing together like minded people – interested in traditional culture/music/dance

Marketed by the Isle of Man government/tourism

Represented as being Manx

Folk/Celtic tradition represented

Idealised/clean version of Manx culture.

People consciously performing culture

Not part of everyday life
 Attempt at re-establishing traditional culture

Manx Music Festival

Use of 'Manx' in title culturally implicit

Competitive, emphasis on musical excellence

Festival developed as cultural symbol

Traditionally Manx

Naturally evolving tradition

Actual culture

Links with English language, music and dance – token Manx

Brings together like minded people from throughout Island

Links musical groups/individual musicians in one space.

Marketed by Isle of Man government

Evolved into being Manx through long history

Predominantly western classical tradition.

Realistic version of Manx culture

People being unconsciously cultural through participation Part of everyday life

Continuation of system that erased traditional culture in first place

CHAPTER THREE

The Manx Music Festival: A Society in Practice

Introduction

The aim of this chapter is to provide an insight into the primary focus of the dissertation, The Manx Music Festival, and discusses how it is a suitable vehicle for the formation and development of ideas and ideals of identity. The chapter takes the form of two sections beginning with a social history of the Manx Music Festival to show how this particular society has been shaped and formed through its 113-year-old history. The second half of the chapter then examines this society as it exists and operates in the present day - thus giving a picture of how the present society reflects the processes that have gone before it.

The society of the Manx Music Festival is a collection of like-minded individuals who come together for one week of the year for an annual competition featuring music, dance and drama. Although this society is something of a temporal one in that it only exists as a complete entity for one week in the year, it nevertheless still possesses many characteristics found within what could be viewed as more permanent societies. The society of the Manx Music Festival has been in existence for as long as the festival. This chapter explores how the society of the Manx Music Festival as presented today has been shaped through its past.

Forming a Society: The History of the Manx Music Festival

The Early Years: 1892 - 1900

In December 1892 the bud that was to blossom into the Manx Music Festival made its first appearance. Attached to the annual exhibition of the Isle of Man Fine Arts and Industrial Guild was a day-long round of music competitions - the brainchild of Miss M. L. Wood, who later became known as the Mother of Manx Music.¹²⁵ Originally from London, Miss Wood moved to the Isle of Man at the age of 16 in 1857. Already a competent musician, she made it her business to form several choirs and music groups, she wrote a column in the *Isle of Man Times* offering her thoughts on all aspects of music-making on the Isle of Man, and was keen to bring about the formation of a musical competition as a means to raising the overall standard of musical practice within the Island. Such music competitions were already becoming popular in England with many following the example set by Mary Wakefield with her Westmorland competitions. Miss Wood visited Miss Wakefield in 1891 and observed these competitions in practice. She returned to the Isle of Man filled with enthusiasm and vigour and organised a team of philanthropic ladies who were keen to impress the positive moral benefits of music upon

¹²⁵ This title is commemorated in a plaque in the Douglas Town Library. Fargher makes reference to this in his 1992 book *With Heart Soul and Voice, 100 Years of the Manx Music Festival*. Birtersett:Leading Edge Press

the people of the Isle of Man. The Fine Arts and Industrial Guild had first taken place in December 1888 in a setting that:

Sought to stimulate the arts and crafts both in the workplace and as a leisure activity. Its annual exhibition introduced the public to the ongoing work of local designers and architects, including two who were to rise to international eminence: Archibald Knox and H. M. Ballie-Scott.¹²⁶

Miss Wood decided that the Guild would make the perfect host for her musical competitions. The first day of competitions consisted of adult and junior sight singing classes, something Miss Wood thought to be of utmost importance in musical education, and adult and junior choral classes culminating in an evening concert involving all of the competitors. The entrants came from around the Island and the competitions were an instant success. A local newspaper noted that 'it was hoped they would become a permanent addition to the Fine Arts and Industrial Guild'.¹²⁷ In actual fact the 'Fine Arts and Industrial' section of the Guild did not survive beyond the First World War, but the music competitions went from strength to strength.¹²⁸

The years following the establishment of the competitions in 1892 saw the original classes expanded to accommodate both village and town choirs, church and chapel choirs and, in 1894, four vocal solo classes

¹²⁶ M Fargher, 'Architecture, Photography and Sculpture' from *A New History of the Isle Of Man, Volume V*, pp.364-375.

¹²⁷ *Isle of Man Times*, December 1892

¹²⁸ For a full description of the first competitions see Appendix A.

for soprano, contralto, tenor and bass. Deemster¹²⁹ Gill said of the music competitions in 1893:

The adding of the music branch has been a great, a vast success...it is gratifying, ladies and gentlemen, to see these competitions and to find church and chapel choirs and musical societies from all parts of the Island coming to Douglas and some of them beating Douglas on her own ground.¹³⁰

In 1895, it was acknowledged that the music competitions had grown beyond the scope of a single day and would have to be divided into adult and junior competitions. The adults expressed the need for a change of timing, the current date of the competitions being in December and not giving enough time after the end of the tourist season for sufficient practice, in addition to causing possible disruption to preparations for Christmas festivities. Thus the decision was made that the junior competitions would remain in December while the adult competitions would move to a new date in March - where they remained until 1899 when the juniors also moved to the spring date. The evening concert remained the highlight of the competitions and utilised both the talents of the competition adjudicator to musically direct and one of the Isle of Man's professional orchestras.¹³¹

¹²⁹ 'Deemster' is the Manx title given to a High Court Judge.

¹³⁰ *Isle of Man Times*, December 9th, 1893

¹³¹ At this time the Isle of Man had a number of professional orchestras supporting the summer tourist season.

December 1899 saw an interesting development when, taking the place of the now transferred junior competitions, an evening concert consisting of 'Manx Competitions and Melodies' was staged. This coincided with a revival of interest in what was seen to be traditional Manx music and song, and the publication in 1896 of W. H. Gill's *Manx National Songs* and A. W. Moore's *Manx Ballads and Music*. The *Isle of Man Times* reported that:

The management of the Guild are doing a great deal to help forward the movement for the revival of Manx Language by their promotions of annual Manx reading and singing competitions.¹³²

Aside from the addition of Manx competitions in December, the main music competitions had now grown to two full days in length and were a well- established event in the calendar of the Isle of Man.

Development and Expansion: 1900 – 1925

The period between 1900 and 1925 was one of development for the festival. The competitions were expanding: more and more classes were being introduced, including instrumental classes, and competitor numbers were increasing.¹³³ The programme of the 1900 festival stated that:

The object of the competitions are to offer inducements to the diligent study or practice of

¹³² *Isle of Man Times*, 9th December 1899.

¹³³ Appendix B provides a statistical breakdown re: entry numbers and classes available.

music; to bring talented and young musicians to the front; to enable competitors to trace their weaknesses or observe their strong points by comparing each others performances; to interest the public in good music and local resources and to bind together all who love music whether as teachers, conductors, singers or players, for the common purpose of advancing musical art.¹³⁴

1902 saw the introduction of the 'special' classes that were to become such an important feature of the festival. These 'special' classes were open to the respective winners of each of the vocal solo classes and individuals who achieved success here were highly regarded by all those involved with the festival. Also offered in 1902 was an extra train service from the Isle of Man Railway Company, who stated that:

The Isle of Man Railway Company is running special trains on Thursday for the convenience of competitors.¹³⁵

This 'special' train service became a regular feature of the Thursday night of the competitions. The final night concert was infamous for running beyond its scheduled finishing time and without the reassurance of the special train service those attending the festival would leave at their appointed train time, often before the end of the evening, causing much disruption. A plea in the programme asking people to remain in their seats until the end of the concert, combined with the promise of a later train, seemed to combat the problem.

¹³⁴ Manx Music Festival programme, 1900, MANX NATIONAL HERITAGE LIBRARY J48.

The local press continued to report the growing success of what was now termed 'the annual music festival', and stressed the importance it held for the musical life of the Isle of Man. In 1904, the status of the festival was enhanced when a letter from Charlotte Knollys, Lady in Waiting to Her Majesty the Queen, was received:

I am commanded by the Queen to thank you very much for the programme you sent, and at the same time assure you of the great interest her Majesty feels in the musical progress of the inhabitants of the beautiful island she visited last autumn.

The queen wishes once more to assure you of the great interest her Majesty takes in the musical progress and studies of the young artists of the Isle of Man.¹³⁶

The growing importance of the festival in the life of the Isle of Man led the committee to make a plea to those involved with the employment of potential competitors and stressed:

The absolute necessity of making the Thursday in festival week a whole holiday to enable the competitors in all senior choral classes to take part in the competitions...will all the employers of labour help us in this.¹³⁷

It is not clear whether the 'employers of labour' obliged, but it is known that participants often took their annual leave to coincide with the competitions thus enabling them to participate freely.

¹³⁵ Manx Music Festival programme, 1902, MANX NATIONAL HERITAGE LIBRARY J48.

¹³⁶ Manx Music Festival programme, 1904, MANX NATIONAL HERITAGE LIBRARY J48.

¹³⁷ Manx Music Festival programme, 1905, MANX NATIONAL HERITAGE LIBRARY J48.

The establishment of the 'Baume' scholarship in 1905 added an extra incentive for the more serious musical scholar to enter the festival. This scholarship, donated by a wealthy family, was a three-year tenure for study at the Royal Academy of Music for the chosen candidate. For those musicians whose families would not have been able to afford to pay the fees for such tuition, this must have offered a great incentive for musical study. Initially, candidates who showed suitable merit were sent to London for further examination, but later the scholarship was awarded at the festival itself – testament to the musical standards achieved at the festival.

By 1906 the entries for the competitive classes had grown to more than 2000, and almost every district of the Isle of Man was represented, although to the dismay of Lord Raglan, the Governor at that time and festival patron:

There were still parts of the Island that did not compete...he would not be satisfied until every single village and parish were represented at these competitions.¹³⁸

This comment by the incumbent Governor stressed the importance of the competitions as an event for the whole of the Isle of Man and, as

¹³⁸ Isle of Man Times, 31st March 1906.

such, gives an early indication of the contribution it was making to national identity.

The conclusion of the 1906 festival led, indirectly, to one of the most important developments with regard to a modern Manx identity. At the close of the Thursday evening concert a 'Pan Celtic National Anthem' was performed in both English and Manx and used as its tune the Welsh anthem 'Land of My Fathers'. The chorus was as follows:

Mann! Mann! O but my heart is with you!
As long as the sea
Your Bulwark shall be
To Mannin my heart shall be true.¹³⁹

This rather obvious adaptation inspired W. H. Gill, author of the aforementioned Manx National Songs and passionate enthusiast of all things Manx, to write the words and music for a more appropriate anthem to be sung at the close of the Manx Music Festival. This anthem 'O Land of Our Birth' was first performed in 1907 and was enthusiastically received by the attending audience, the words providing a sense of unity and pride in the Isle of Man:

Oh Land of our birth
O gem of God's earth
O Island so strong and so fair
Built firm as Barrule¹⁴⁰

¹³⁹ Manx Music Festival programme, 1906, MANX NATIONAL HERITAGE LIBRARY J48.

¹⁴⁰ Barrule is the name given to two hills of the Isle of Man, North Barrule and South Barrule.

Thy throne of home rule
Makes us free as thy sweet mountain air.¹⁴¹

This anthem was used from 1907 onwards at the end of every festival session and, more significantly, was soon adopted as the official Manx National Anthem to be sung on important national occasions.

Lord Raglan finally saw his wish fulfilled in 1911 when he expressed his pleasure at finally seeing 'every part of the Island being represented...the prizes have gone to all parts of the Island.'¹⁴² A similar sentiment was expressed by the adjudicator who, in his remarks about the 'village choirs' class, stated:

I was going to say there is a term I like better than festival, and I have only heard it here – the Guild. I like the term Guild; it is warmer than festival and more homely, and this Guild really is a homely meeting from all parts of the Island (hear, hear), the encouragement it gives to music is enormous I can see.¹⁴³

The titling of the festival as 'The Guild' is still in use today and is, in fact, far more widely used than the more formal title of 'Manx Music Festival'.

The 'Coming of Age' festival in 1912 saw the appearance of a certain R. Vaughan Williams as the chief adjudicator. Vaughan Williams was

¹⁴¹ See Appendix C for Gill's reasoning behind the composition of the anthem.

¹⁴² Isle of Man Times, 1st April 1911..

¹⁴³ Annual Report and Adjudicators' Remarks, 1911, MANX NATIONAL HERITAGE LIBRARY J48.

one of many 'famous' adjudicators to visit the Island festival.¹⁴⁴ That the 1912 festival was the 21st also allowed for some reflection upon the progress of the event thus far:

The coming of age of the Manx Music Festival was an unqualified success. The festival started in 1892 at the suggestion of Miss M. L. Wood...and it rapidly grew in popular favour, so much that a separate day had soon to be set apart for it and now it has grown to a three day festival with 55 classes in most branches of music, while entries this year fell just short of three thousand.¹⁴⁵

The popularity of the festival was also proven through attendance at the evening concert, which numbered over 4000. The success of the festival was attributed to:

The hearty manner in which the insular public has supported the movement...a striking testimony to the musical taste and music loving character of the Manx people as well as their immense loyalty to this movement.¹⁴⁶

The festival was not an event to rest on its laurels, however, succeeding festivals were considered to be even more of a success with the 23rd festival in 1914 being hailed as:

The most successful since the competitions started, there being more entries and larger attendance of the general public than ever before...Every part of the Island was well represented, the competitions

¹⁴⁴ The well-known adjudicators included amongst their number: Elgar, Vaughan Williams, Noble, Ireland and Howells.

¹⁴⁵ Isle of Man Times, 23rd March 1912.

¹⁴⁶ Ibid.

and the prizes were well distributed...Indeed, year by year, the festival is becoming more national in character.¹⁴⁷

If the 1914 festival saw increasing significance with regard to the place of the festival within the national culture of the Isle of Man, it also marked the appearance of the most illustrious of adjudicators, Sir Edward Elgar. Sir Edward was not, however, overly impressed with either Manx singers or their native songs. Faragher reports that:

After hearing a solo test piece he [Elgar] enquired, "where are the Romeos of the Isle of Man? Evidently not amongst its tenors!"

And in response to the Manx folk music class:

You possess, and have given us, specimens of Manx music...it does not amount to very much...these simple melodies appeal to your hearts as they could not do to a foreigner...this old music, touching as it is, finds its real expressions in its homes...it is not always suited to the concert room. As specimens of competition they bear the same relationship to modern music as astrology does to astronomy – interesting but too antiquated to be of practical use.¹⁴⁸

The extent to which Elgar's comments were taken to heart is unclear, but it is interesting to note that the Manx Language Folk Song class was withdrawn within two years of his remarks.

¹⁴⁷ Isle of Man Times, 23rd March 1912.

¹⁴⁸ Faragher 1992, *With Heart Soul and Voice: 100 Years of the Manx Music Festival*. Leading Edge Press, Birtersett.

The advent of the First World War saw the demise of the original Fine Arts and Industrial Guild that had provided the basis from which the music festival came into existence. The music festival continued without the Fine Arts and Industrial Guild however, although during the war years it was under somewhat depleted circumstances. The festival committee were keen to stress that there were 'no male competitors taking part unless they were unfit for military service or exempt.' Nevertheless, the festival did provide a constant in a time of uncertainty, the 1917 evening concert being hailed as 'the largest gathering of local people since the commencement of the war.'¹⁴⁹ At the close of the concert the Governor, Lord Raglan, made the following remarks in his speech:

I think it is good to hold a festival like this and those who are fighting for our hearths and homes all over the world, I am sure are glad that the Manx Music Festival is being held tonight. Whether it is in the adjacent Islands, in France, in the Balkans, the Mediterranean, Mesopotamia, or even Africa. Wherever they are, Manxmen in Khaki, shouldering the rifle, their thoughts are with us tonight and they are wishing well to the Manx Music Festival.¹⁵⁰

Here the festival is used not only as the basis for bringing together a large group of Manx people, but is also employed as a symbol of patriotism and hope for those at home whilst others were fighting the War.

¹⁴⁹ Isle of Man Times, 31st March 1917.

1919 saw a change in Governor for the Isle of Man and the festival mourned the loss of Lord and Lady Raglan as its patrons and the support and encouragement they had given the festival which had certainly contributed to its success, growth and increasing importance as a national event. The incoming Governor, General Fry, was immediately involved in presenting prizes at the festival and it was reported:

It was a real pleasure for him to be present. He remarked that the first invitation he had received since his appointment to be Governor of the Isle of Man was a letter from Mrs Laughton asking him to preside that night, but he had no conception that he was going to meet such an enormous multitude. Mrs Laughton had said, 'you will see the Manx Nation', and he (the Governor) honestly thought she was not exaggerating. The presence of such a large gathering proved the Manx are a musical people.¹⁵¹

In these comments Governor Fry makes two important statements with regard to the festival. Firstly that the people present at the festival were representative of the Manx nation as a whole, thus reinforcing the idea that the festival had an important part to play in the culture of the Isle of Man and secondly that the Manx were a musical people, this musicality being re-enforced through the work found at the festival.

¹⁵⁰ Isle of Man Times, 31st March 1917.

¹⁵¹ Isle of Man Times, 12th April 1919.

The worthy place of the festival in the calendar of the Isle of Man was reiterated in the introduction to the brochure containing the results and adjudicators remarks of the 1921 festival:

There are two occasions in the year on which any Manx person can count upon seeing any other Manx person – first Tynwald Fair¹⁵² and second the final day of the music guild competitions.¹⁵³

1922 saw the advent of two very significant events that were to become features of the festival. The first was the formation of a children's concert, running along similar lines to the evening concert held on the final night of the festival and featuring prize-winners in the junior classes. This concert proved to be an immediate success with over 1000 children being involved and remained a feature of the festival until the late 1980s. The second event was the beginning of an association with the expatriate Manx of Cleveland, Ohio. It was reported that:

The committee are also proud to have received £11 from the Manx Societies of Cleveland, which was added to the prizes in the special solo classes and welcome Mr J. J. Kelly, the President of the Mona Relief Society, Cleveland, to the Festival. He understood from Mr Kelly, that they intended doing something of a permanent character which would identify them with the festival for all time.¹⁵⁴

¹⁵² Tynwald Fair is the annual celebration that takes place on the fields behind Tynwald Hill on the 5th July, following the Tynwald day ceremonies.

¹⁵³ Annual Report and Adjudicators Remarks for 1921, MANX NATIONAL HERITAGE LIBRARY J48.

¹⁵⁴ Isle of Man Times, 22nd April 1922.

The 'something' was to become the Cleveland Medal, initially contested the following year in 1923 by the winners of the 'special' classes. Alongside the creation of the Manx National Anthem, the introduction of the Cleveland medal has to rank as being one of the most important in the festival's history. If there is one factor synonymous with the Manx Music Festival both inside the festival environs and outside in the broader sphere of Manx culture as a whole, it is the Cleveland Medal. Still the ultimate accolade for any Manx singer, Mr Kelly certainly achieved his wish for the Cleveland Manx to be identified with the festival for all time.

The festival of 1924 continued to be a mainstay of life on the Isle of Man, the press hailing it as:

The great musical and social event of the year as far as the Manx people are concerned.¹⁵⁵

As it moved towards its fortieth year the festival had not only achieved its aim in raising the standard of music-making on the Island, but it had also become an established event possessing cultural meaning for many thousands of people on the Isle of Man.

1926 – 1960: Consolidation and Continuation

In 1926 the festival was praised for the contribution it had made to the musical advancement of the Isle of Man:

When one looked back at the small beginnings of the Festival and realised all the troubles and difficulties which were experienced and overcome and then looked at the huge machine the Guild has become...the Island was steeped in music from one end to the other and if music was of any value it must be of incalculable worth to the Manx people.¹⁵⁶

At this stage in its history the festival was still growing in terms of the classes offered, number of entry levels and, indeed, the length of the festival itself. It was decided in 1927 that the festival would have to be four whole days in length instead of the previous three-and-a-half as:

Interest in the Guild is becoming even more manifest, and the musical fraternity of our little Island is growing apace, and so the committee, profiting by the experience of past years when there was scarcely 'time to breathe', decided this year to commence the Guild on Monday morning.¹⁵⁷

The new Lieutenant Governor, Lord Hill, apologised at the close of the 1927 festival for not being present the previous year:

He said that he must confess that last year, when he sent his telegram from Paris, he did not realise the importance of the festival. They would be tired of hearing him say that it was a great pleasure to his wife and himself to be present, but it happened to be the truth, and he so seldom got opportunities of speaking the unvarnished truth that he was going to repeat it. His Excellency continued that had he experienced any doubt to the importance of the

¹⁵⁵ Isle of Man Times, 22nd April 1922.

¹⁵⁶ Isle of Man Times, 24th June 1926.

¹⁵⁷ Annual Report and Adjudicators Remarks for 1927, MANX NATIONAL HERITAGE LIBRARY J48.

festival, he would have realised it because that afternoon he had had rather a fiasco. He went down to present the prizes in the cup final,¹⁵⁸ and they did not win. They had not won when he had to leave the enclosure, the score was one all, and so he felt rather jealous that his wife had presented all of these prizes while he had not presented any! To resume, however, the fact that there were only half the people at the football match was attributed to the fact that the Manx Music Festival was on. He did not think that there was any other part of the United Kingdom in which the currency of a music festival would have prevented millions from charging into the football enclosure.¹⁵⁹

The festival also continued to receive glowing reports in the local press with it being hailed as 'the greatest social gathering of the year', and that:

It is an undoubted fact that our Manx people are naturally musical, and it is doubtful if any other population of under fifty thousand could carry on, year after year, a festival lasting nearly a week...The Guild is a social event of some importance, and it is attended by most of the principal personalities from the four corners of the Isle of Man. To Manxmen in different parts of the world it holds tender memories, and what is known as the Cleveland test furnishes one of the principal events...As a musical and social event the Guild will probably have as successful a future as it has had a past and it may even develop into something even more of an insular event.¹⁶⁰

The reports both from within the festival and the reportage in the press are clear in their affirmation of the festival both as a worthy event and as one that contributes significantly to Manx society and

¹⁵⁸ The cup final is an annual event taking place under the auspices of the Isle of Man Football Association and is the local equivalent to the United Kingdom F.A. Cup.

¹⁵⁹ Annual Report and Adjudicators Remarks for 1927, MANX NATIONAL HERITAGE LIBRARY J48.

culture. By 1927 the festival had reached new peaks of popularity, however the event was soon to face competition of its own.

The end of the 1920s saw the festival competing for its participants against other, ever-increasingly popular forms of entertainment such as dancing and the cinema. The prediction made in the 1927 press report was correct and the festival did become something more of an insular event: instead of being the great social and musical event of the Isle of Man, it began to shift towards becoming the great social and musical event of the Manx musical community. Whilst the number of participants did not drop significantly - levels of entries remained at around 3000 - a change was noticed:

His Excellency said from what he had read in the newspapers there was a suspicion that the standard of the Guild competition had not risen during the past year, and he was perfectly certain that this was a matter of great concern to everyone in the Island who took an interest in music, and he was concerned with it from this point of view...Unless he had misread the newspapers, it was more particularly in the school singing that there had been a suspended progress this year. That meant unless they did something about it there would be a deterioration even. That was a thing they could not tolerate.¹⁶¹

In an attempt to combat this shift of enthusiasm away from the festival, the committee implemented a number of changes in the 1930s. A number of dance and drama classes were introduced and

¹⁶⁰ Isle of Man Times, 30th April 1927.

the length of the festival increased to accommodate these extra competitions. These classes proved to be very popular as entrants could emulate their 'big screen' heroes by performing acts and dances of their own. In addition to these dance and drama classes, a number of choral and solo classes were opened to entrants from outside the Isle of Man. This would have served the twofold purpose of attracting competitors from outside the Island and thus raising entry levels and also ensuring that the competition within the Island did not stagnate. Whilst this measure did attract a small number of competitors from outside the Island, the vast majority of the competitors remained Manx and thus the festival retained its status as being something by Manx people for Manx people.

In 1934, praise was heaped upon the festival's longevity. Governor Butler stated in his closing speech that:

I believe it is in its forty-third year, which anywhere but the Isle of Man would be considered of great antiquity, but I understand that this Festival has had a longer continuous existence than any similar festival in any other part of the British Empire...What appealed to me in this Festival is that it is our own show, and our home show...and so when I have been watching the festival I have enjoyed it from this point of view, as a manifestation of Manx spirit, a show run by Manx men and women, and I have felt that in watching these I have come more into contact with your real feeling than I do on sitting in on the legislature of Tynwald.¹⁶²

¹⁶¹ Annual Report and Adjudicators Remarks for 1929, MANX NATIONAL HERITAGE LIBRARY J48.

From these comments it is apparent that the festival had, at least for those taking part, lost none of its significance and was able to convey many aspects of Manx identity to the Lieutenant Governor.

The 1930s saw a return to global uncertainty as the world began moving once more towards war. When the Second World War did begin, the festival continued, although under somewhat depleted circumstances, and it continued to receive support from the Manx audience and, once more, provide a sense of stability and continuity for those attending. The sense of community and identity provided by the festival during this difficult time once more established its place within Manx culture.

The end of the War saw much rejoicing with the 1946 festival billed as 'The 2nd Victory Festival', whilst the 1947 festival saw a return to praise for the good works of the festival:

This annual gathering, most important to the Manx character, is looked forward to eagerly. There is no doubt to its popularity. It is one of the few things to have survived the war, and today, one would imagine, is stronger in public imagination than ever...One of the great attractions of the Manx Music Festival is its social side. One meets people there that one hasn't seen for such a long time and the exchange of greetings and good wishes with one's friends is always a happy one...the oldest friend we met was Mrs Freddie Johns of 91 years of age and goodness knows how many Guilds she has seen and enjoyed... Nearly 3000 people enjoyed

¹⁶² Isle of Man Times, 29th April 1934.

some of the finest festival singing in the Island for years...It was in the real old pre-war festival spirit, with a crowded concert hall, bright lights and a stream of waiting cars and charabancs stretching along the promenade.¹⁶³

The festival provided the ideal setting for members of the Manx public to meet together, to socialise and to enjoy the music making presented through the week. The contribution the festival was making to Manx identity and culture was a subconscious one, but through the attendance of many thousand of participants – both audience and competitors - this contribution remained significant.

The celebration of the 'Diamond Jubilee' festival in 1952 was somewhat hampered by the Cleveland Medal being held and investigated by customs officers in Liverpool, during its now traditional journey from Ohio to the Isle of Man:

With 43 special soloists competing this year for the medal which is to be presented by the Bishop of Sodor and Mann, and only four more days before the Cleveland contest takes place on Wednesday, the festival committee are anxiously awaiting the customs officials' decision.¹⁶⁴

Thankfully the medal arrived in time and was duly awarded, for the second time, to the Bass soloist Mr A. W. Quirk.

¹⁶³ Isle of Man Times, 10th May 1947.

¹⁶⁴ Isle of Man Times, 3rd May 1952.

During the 1950s the festival managed to maintain its grip on the imagination of the Manx public and its influence spread further than the festival week itself as a number of 'pre' and 'post' Guild concerts began to take place around the Island. These concerts proved very popular and enabled the wider reach of the Guild throughout the Island as those not able to attend the festival itself could still participate, albeit indirectly, by attending one of these concerts. Concerts of this nature have remained popular throughout the Island to the present day.

In 1957 the unthinkable happened, one of the few visiting soloists from outside the Island, Mr Robert Kenderick, succeeded in taking the Cleveland Medal at his third attempt. Mr Kenderick did not have any familial connection with the Island but was attracted by the high standard of competition found at the festival. This was the only time in the twentieth century that the medal was to be won by someone from outside the Isle of Man, every other medallist either living on the Island, or having a Manx connection. It is difficult to imagine the reaction to an outsider taking the ultimate prize at the festival but it is safe to assume that it provided a shock element to those who saw the festival as being organised by the Manx for the Manx.

Overall the period of 1926-1960 saw the festival consolidate its place within Manx culture and a continuation of its contribution to Manx and individual identities. The festival had faced a number of

challenges including the advent of a number of leisure pursuits tempting its participants away and the Second World War which saw the end of many festivals elsewhere. The Manx Music Festival responded well to these challenges and was able to adapt itself to ensure that interest was maintained in the face of increasing leisure activities and that its continuance during the War was necessary to the community of the Isle of Man.

1960 – 2004: A Modern Manx Festival

1960 saw the arrival of the modern-day festival which has changed little to the present day. The dance and drama classes that had been a large feature of the festivals during the 30s and 40s had become more and more difficult to organise whilst competition numbers were dropping. These classes were scaled down to a smaller number of folk-dance and Manx dance classes and drama classes featuring the spoken word and character studies, with the musical aspect of festival again becoming its dominant feature. Continuity between the 1960s and the present day has been assured by the competitors of the 60s still participating in the festival today, be it as organisers, competitors or audience members. In the early 1960s however, whilst the press remained positive with its claims that 'the festival still had a special place in the hearts of the Manx people',¹⁶⁵ the festival was losing some of its popularity in terms of the numbers of participants. With home entertainment such as television now widespread throughout the

Island's homes, the appeal of gathering round the piano to practise during the cold winter months was considerably lessened. 'Radio and television' columns featured highly in the local press and the festival was keen to use these popular means of communication. In 1963 the festival was to be the featured subject in a weekly 'radio and television' column:

The Manx musicians who will be using the Royal Hall of the Villa Marina as their meeting point this week will have had little interest for Radio and Television programmes, their major focal point being the Cleveland test last night. What a pity such an outstanding item has to pass by without a more permanent record of the climactic event either by means of tape or film...what a wonderful idea if someone could film, with accompanying sound, the full proceedings of the Cleveland test for circulation to Manx societies throughout the world. Not only would it provide a wonderful evening of music, but it would strengthen the considerable ties that bind our exiles to their home country. And in typical Manx fashion we could decide if the judges are right.¹⁶⁶

This hopeful columnist got their wish in 1965 when local radio station, Manx Radio, began to broadcast the event, although at this stage the coverage was not Island-wide. Copies of the audio cassettes were dispatched to the Cleveland and other Manx societies around the World. The festival was utilised as a means of conveying a sense of Manx identity and culture to those far removed from the Island itself.

¹⁶⁵ Isle of Man Times, 26th April 1963.

¹⁶⁶ Isle of Man Times, 3rd May 1963.

Throughout the 1970s and into the 1980s, life on the Isle of Man was undergoing rapid change with many new residents arriving to support the burgeoning finance industry. For the Manx music festival this meant an influx of residents who had not grown up with the festival and its future began to look less stable as entry numbers continued to fall throughout this period. Cleveland night was no longer the sell-out occasion it once was and audience numbers, although still reasonable, were smaller than before. Manx Radio and the local press continued to feature the festival, but it was no longer front-page news. For those involved with the festival its significance continued but in the broader sphere of Manx society it no longer held the same prominence as in earlier years. However, the approach of the festival centenary in 1992 meant that publicity levels were raised and that numbers both in terms of competitors and audience members at first stabilised and then began to rise. The festival was still used as an indication of Manx culture and identity and this aspect of the festival was often best expressed by the dignitaries speaking on the closing night. In 1991 His Honour Deemster J. W. Corrin presented the awards and said:

It was a privilege for my wife and I to be the official guests of the Manx Music Festival. This is a Manx institution through and through. It has been part of our Manx Heritage and something to keep secure.¹⁶⁷

¹⁶⁷ Isle of Man Examiner, 30th April 1991.

In the following year, 1992 and the centenary of the festival, Chairman Noel Cringle stated that:

The support of the Manx public during the week has been quite magnificent...there can be no doubt that the standard of music on the Island is superb and we have had a wonderful evening. This is a particularly proud moment for the Villa Marina, I am sure it is a proud moment for all the committee of the Manx Music Festival and, I would dare to suggest, a proud moment for all Manx people.¹⁶⁸

No less notable in the allaying of the festival with the identity of the Isle of Man was the recollection of the President of Tynwald, Sir Charles Kerruish that:

Over a century ago Manx National Poet, T. E. Brown had urged his countryman to 'maintain the characteristics of their Celtic Heritage.' Would that he were here tonight to see how well he has wrought because this festival demonstrates the strength of Manx culture as it is today. Frankly it makes me proud to be Manx and happy in the knowledge that our cultural heritage is in such safe-keeping. It is one part of our lives free from international obligations, alien commentators. Our culture, at least, is free.¹⁶⁹

In the most recent decade of its history, the festival has seen a continued upswing in popularity with entry levels continuing to rise with over 2000 competitors at the 2004 festival and an audience in excess of 1200 on at least two occasions throughout the festival week.

¹⁶⁸ Isle of Man Examiner, 5th May 1992, MANX NATIONAL HERITAGE LIBRARY Newspaper Archive.

¹⁶⁹ Isle of Man Examiner, 4th May 1993, MANX NATIONAL HERITAGE LIBRARY Newspaper Archive.

The festival committee have worked hard to ensure that Cleveland night has remained a highlight in the Manx musical calendar and since 2000 have employed the services of a 'celebrity' adjudicator for the Cleveland medal test. The adjudication of the test is twinned with this adjudicator giving a mini-recital of his/her own. Since 2000 these adjudicators have been the 1999 Cardiff Singer of the World, Guang Yang, Bass-Baritone James Rutherford, Bass-Baritone Willard White, Soprano Ailish Tynan, in 2004 the tenor Dennis O'Neill and in 2005 baritone Jason Howard. Not only does the presence of these adjudicators enhance the importance of the Cleveland Medal Test, but they also ensure a high audience as people are encouraged to attend by the prospect of the top-class singers performing. Those organising the festival are very positive about its future with the festival Secretary, Mrs Joan Hinnigan, stating:

It is very encouraging, it is a lot of people and it shows the Guild continues to be a very important part of the cultural life of the Island.¹⁷⁰

Lately, the festival has also began to regain its place in the wider sphere of the Island with Manx Radio increasing their coverage of the festival to include a nightly, one-hour edited highlights programme, broadcast throughout the festival week and the local newspaper featuring pictures and reports from the festival throughout the week. This exposure by the media allows those not able to attend the festival

¹⁷⁰ Manx Independent, 23rd April 1999.

itself to be a part of the festival community and ensure its continued high profile throughout the whole of Manx society.

The future for the Manx Music Festival would appear to be a strong one and the contribution it has made to Manx identity and culture throughout its 113-year history is a substantial. The festival has contributed to Manx culture on a number of levels, perhaps the most obvious being the production of the Manx National Anthem. It has shaped the identity of those involved and has, through its long history, evolved its own self-contained society through which these aspects of identity can be explored and is firmly entrenched as part of the culture of the Isle of Man.

Structuring the Society of the Manx Music Festival

The society of the Manx Music Festival is something that has been evolved by and shaped through the history presented above. The people who form the society are drawn from a variety of backgrounds: they may be school children, teachers, politicians, members of the judiciary, doctors, lawyers, retired, employed, unemployed and so on. Whatever the role these people play in the wider society of the Isle of Man is relatively unimportant. What matters in the society of the Manx Music Festival is the role they play within its confines. For example, His Honour the Deputy Deemster Andrew Williamson is known within the festival more for the two Cleveland medals he has won and his fine Bass voice than his senior role within the Isle of Man

Judiciary. A further example is found with Noel Cringle, current President of Tynwald, who - within the festival world - has become the festival Chairman. It is not that participants in the festival are uninterested in the role people occupy in the 'outside world', more that when the festival is taking place what happens within its confines becomes more important. The Manx Music Festival becomes something of an egalitarian set upon which the actors are responsible for shaping their own roles, distinct from the roles they play in the outside world. As with every example of egalitarianism, however, some are more equal than others and the festival possesses a unique internal dynamic and hierarchical structure that has been shaped throughout its existence. The society and identities found within the festival are formed by those people choosing to participate and thus belong to one of the six interpersonal groups found within the festival. These groups are represented in the diagram below:

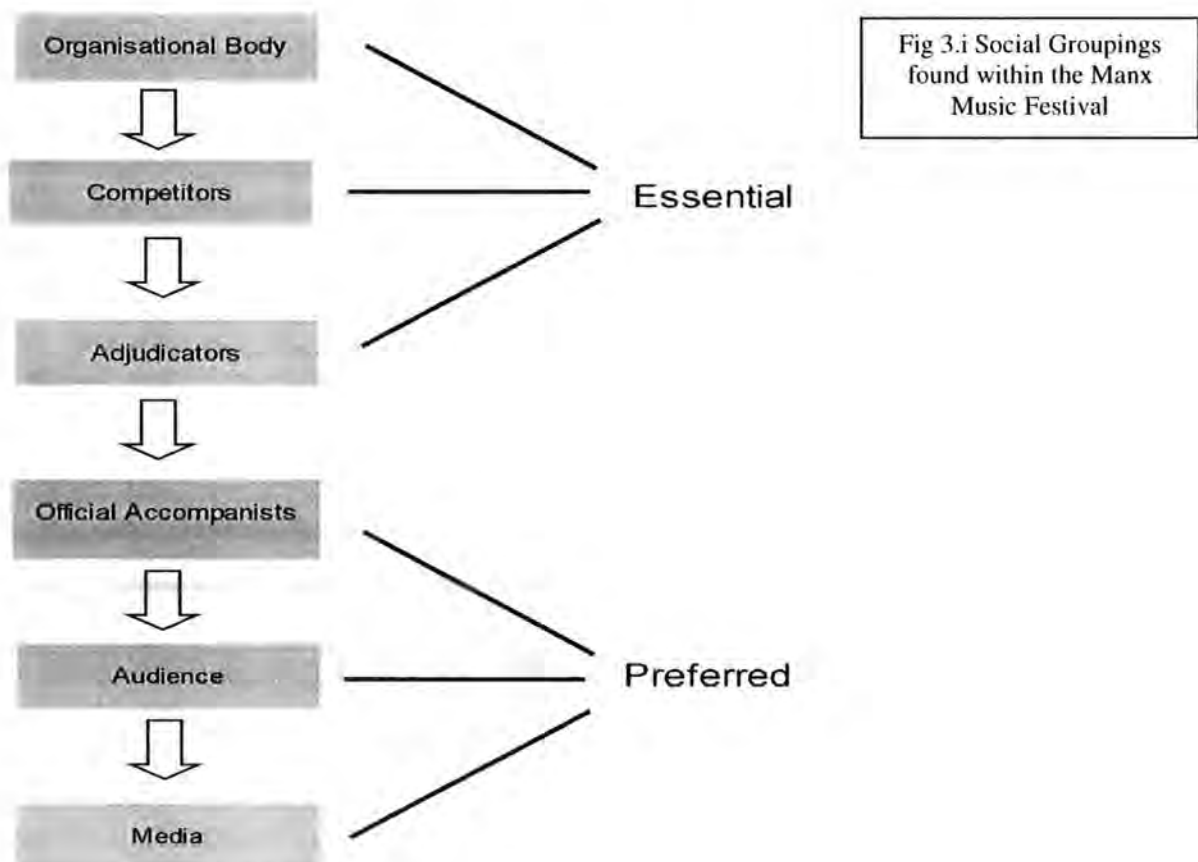


Figure 3.i is representative of the social groups found within the festival and their relative necessity to the existence and function of the event. Without the organisational body, the competitors and the adjudicators, the festival would not be able to take place, hence their demarcation as being 'essential'. The official accompanists, audience and the media are non-essential in that the festival would be able to take place without them, but their presence is very much preferred and it would be difficult to imagine a festival without their presence since they contribute much to move the event away from being merely a 'competition' to being a 'festival'. With regard to the society of the Manx Music Festival, membership of multiple groups is common whether by choice or by default. For example, in the first instance of multiple membership by choice, a participant may begin by being an audience member, decide to compete at a later date and maybe follow this by becoming a member of the organising body. In the second instance of multiple membership by default one example could be found in the person working for the Media who is automatically also an audience member and thus has membership of both of these groups. The number of possible combinations is infinite, but nonetheless, each of the groups maintains a separate identity and it is necessary to examine the six categories individually in order to greater understand the contribution made to the overall society of the Manx Music Festival.

The Organisational Body

Central to the group who make up the organisational body are the members of the festival committee, lead by the Chairman, Secretary and Treasurer. It is these people who are responsible for the day to day running of the festival during the week itself, ensuring that classes are running on time, that competitors are ready to take their place in the classes, that the adjudicators and accompanists have everything they require to undertake their roles and so on. However, there are a large number of behind-the-scenes tasks that are undertaken by the committee throughout the year. These tasks include: booking venues, producing the festival syllabus, selecting the test music, processing entries, producing the programme, selecting adjudicators, and organising the festival timetable. The committee members comprise Manx musicians and teachers and a number of people who have had a long association with the festival in any number of capacities.

In addition to the festival committee, the members of the organisational body include a number of prestigious figureheads, including: the current Lieutenant Governor as the festival president, whilst the vice-presidents include amongst their alumni, members of Tynwald, town mayors and other local dignitaries. The duties of these figureheads are primarily passive ones, but they do include presenting awards on Cleveland night. Less passive in their organisational role is a team of hardworking festival stewards who voluntarily give their

time to ensure the smooth running of the festival during the week by aiding the committee in any number of capacities from assisting the adjudicators, to announcing the competitors, to organising the competitors own choice music.

In many ways the organisational body have something of a thankless task as much of their work is behind the scenes, for little or no reward other than the opportunity to be closely involved with the festival. However, without this group of people the festival would not be able to take place.

Linda Harding describes her involvement as a member of the organisational body as follows:

For as long as I can remember, my family has been strongly involved with the Guild, though on my mother's side it was more intensely so, as she and both her sisters were involved in all forms of vocal competition, one also in committee work, whereas apart from him and a second cousin, my father's side inclined to the children's competitions and support via attendance and subscriptions. (Subsequent checking of old Guild programmes reveals another cousin on the committee for at least a few years, just overlapping with me, which I had forgotten.)

In spite of a very limited, unsuccessful, and one might have thought, off-putting junior performance career (including a first-ever vocal-solo in the Royal Hall at the age of 13 years of age singing an apparently idiotic song!), I attended enthusiastically throughout my teens – indulging, it has to be said, in a lot of competitive spirit as well as artistic appreciation. The group culture was also part of it – a bunch of cousins crouching on the stairs between the seats in the balcony, or huddled on the window sill, because there wasn't an empty seat on Cleveland night!

After missing the Guild for almost 10 years, for university and postgraduate study and a few years of living in England, I returned to the Island in 1977, immediately slotting back into regarding it as

the cultural highlight of the year. Though other important and memorable musical events occurred, the sheer scale and duration of the Guild, together with its notable setting gave it an unassailable position on the calendar. In addition to attending whenever practicable with two young children and a third arriving just after my first resumed Guild, I also soon joined the Glenfaba Ladies Choir and was taking part with them. Additional attendance time came with the start of participation by two of my children.

In 1983, with the general idea of looking for a way of contributing to the running of the festival, if any extra hands were needed, mainly envisaging offering to join the ranks of the Festival Stewards, (who were for a decade listed in the programme as a separate category from the committee – now they still exist in large numbers but are not listed) , I took the rash step of attending the Annual General Meeting. This does require a marked effort from a non-committee member, as it is half a year away from the Guild and the notice in the programme is the only reminder. I did not know then a basic law of the AGM, one which was demonstrated again just this year, viz, that unless they obviously have a major bee in their bonnet about some special issue, anyone turning up is practically making an announcement that they want to join!

When I had been about five years on the committee, doing the stewarding duties expected of all the members, but inexperienced, listening more than talking, Mr R. H. "Biffy" Johnson, a former Treasurer and then Assistant Treasurer handling the subscriptions and Cleveland tickets announced his intention of retiring from the Committee, and my name was proposed for this task. I took it quite happily, as I certainly did not have the musical knowledge and qualifications needed for some of the sub-committee work, not did I wish to find myself scrambling round for trophies not returned by lackadaisical competitors, or worse, trying to drum up advertisers for the program!

Another small bit of work I took upon myself to do following much grumbling, and disappearing audiences for the set piece Lieder classes, was the provision of short translations.¹⁷¹

The above account highlights Linda Harding's experience of the festival and how she came to be involved as a member of the organisational body. The account is in no way intended to be representative of the experience of all members of the organisational

¹⁷¹ Extract submitted to author – 24th January 2005.

body, but shows as an example the experience of individual participant. Linda Harding show strong family links with the festival and the account illustrates how the festival has become a part of her, and her family's, identity.

The Competitors

The competitors are the very essence of a competitive music festival and without them the festival would not be able to exist, hence their categorisation as being 'essential'. The Manx Music Festival has always had a large number of competitors numbering in their hundreds in the early years of the choral competitions and growing to thousands in later years. These competitors have differing interests and specialisms be they singers, pianists, instrumentalists, dramatists or dancers. This simple classification can be further subdivided as to whether the competitor is participating as an individual or as part of a group, which class they are choosing to compete in, and whether they are competing as a junior or an adult. Of course, many competitors choose to take part in a number of classes across the available genres on offer. The largest body of competitors at the festival are those competing in the vocal classes and it is the singers who provide the primary focal point for a large part of the festival, including the Cleveland Medal test on the final night of the festival. Experience and expertise amongst the competitors varies greatly and standard of the performances reflect this. There are many

competitors who are highly skilled musicians, teachers and who perform widely throughout the Isle of Man and beyond throughout the festival year, whilst there are those who may only make a solo appearance at the Manx Music Festival, it giving an opportunity for everyone who wishes to perform to do just that. Amongst the competitors there is a general feeling that it is the taking part and receiving a positive adjudication that is the most important aspect, however people do take the competitions very seriously and many begin preparations almost a year in advance. All competitors have to be prepared to receive a mark from the adjudicator which is read publicly at the end of the class. In the following case study, competitor Helen Prescott describes her own reasons for being a member of the festival society:

My name is Helen Prescott (nee Sweetman), a Mezzo Soprano, and I have been competing in The Guild since I was 6 years old, having been introduced to music by my parents Florence Frances (nee Cubbon) and William Frank (long-standing members of the Douglas Choral Union who later became founder members of The Manx Operatic Society). My parents also competed in The Guild, my mother, a Special Contralto and my father, a Tenor. My parents were also members of the Lon Vane Ladies Choir and the Lon Dhoo Male Voice Choir, respectively. Of course, in the early years of my parents competing in The Guild, the venue was The Palace Ballroom on Central Promenade, Douglas. My mother died in 1988, but my father was still competing in The Guild, as a member of the choir Musicale, until 2002, aged 82. I am delighted that my two daughters, Kelsey, 15 and Hayley, 13, have followed in my family's footsteps and both compete in the piano classes, therefore, during the years 1996-2002, there were three generations of my family competing in The Guild. I was recently reading through some old Guild Programmes, held at the Music Centre, Douglas, when I came upon my mother's name when she competed in 1948.

I have vivid memories, as a young child, of trembling with fear walking up to the stage in the original garden room, which was an L-shaped room, to compete in the girl's solo classes. I remember my mother making me a new dress every year, for this very occasion! The numbers competing in classes were much greater in those days (I have a certificate for 3rd place in the under 10 girl's solo in 1963, which, if my memory serves me right, was a class of 73 competitors). I continued to compete into my teenage years, but gave up singing until my early 20s. I was encouraged to return to solo singing by the late Will Cowley (a past conductor with the D'Oyly Carte Opera Company). My teachers from then on were Gladys Skillicorn and Dougie Buxton (who was later made a Freeman of the Borough of Douglas), both now deceased. After a short period of ill-health, when I feared I would not be able to sing again, Allan Wilcocks (four times Cleveland Medal Winner) took me under his wing and gave me back the joy of singing and the ability to compete once again; I have also been extremely fortunate in having the additional assistance and encouragement of Mrs. Wendy McDowell. As with all the competitors in The Guild, I have had my ups and down, successes and failures (although one of the Island's best tenors, Michael Corkhill, boasts that "he has come bottom in more classes in The Guild than anyone else" – an exaggeration, I'm sure). Possibly my worst experience was when I took stage fright whilst competing in the British Composers class, which resulted in me walking off stage. Somehow, I found the courage to walk back out on stage the following night to compete in the Songs from the Musicals (a winner was not decided on the night, but the top three positions performed on Cleveland Night for a final judgement). To my absolute delight, I was chosen to be one of the three to compete. If I hadn't had the courage to walk back on stage that night, I don't think I would have ever competed again. On reflection, that year was probably my most successful ever – on Cleveland Night I competed in the final of Songs from the Musicals, Mixed Duet, Ladies Duet and sang for the first time in the Cleveland Medal Final.

I will never forget taking part in the Cleveland Medal final – it was one of the most wonderful and proudest moments of my life (which, possibly, only another singer can understand) – I only wish my mother had lived to see it. I remember waiting at the side of The Royal Hall for my opportunity to compete, I was extremely calm, as I knew I didn't really have any chance in winning the Medal; I was competing that night against five past Medal winners. I viewed the final, not as a competition on my part, but a night to enjoy and revel in – which I succeeded in achieving one hundred percent. I can only imagine what it must be like to hear the adjudicator announce your name as the Cleveland Medal winner! The Cleveland Medal is something that is almost inborn in every

Manx singer – no other competition prize comes anywhere near the prestige of this accolade.

I would sum up that music, predominantly singing, has been “the love of my life”, apart from my children, of course. I thank my parents, with all my heart, for introducing me to, and giving me the gift, of music. Music spans all walks of life, languages and emotions. Music has filled my life, along with all the friends I have made who are similarly involved.

I owe so much to The Guild – it instils a discipline to strive for as high a standard as possible. I have made so many friends, learned such a diverse range of songs and gained experience and confidence that I would not otherwise have attained.

Thank you to all the competitors, organisers, accompanists, adjudicators and, most importantly, the teachers who have shared this love over the last 40 years.¹⁷²

The above account serves, once more, to highlight the extent to which competing in the Manx Music Festival has become a part of Helen Prescott's identity. Her memories of competition from an early age to the present day provide an illuminated account in the first person of one person's experience.

The Adjudicators

At a first glance the role of the adjudicator is deceptively straightforward, they have to simply select the best performance from each class and award marks to each of the competitors. The reality of the situation, however, is far more complex and the job of the adjudicator is demanding and tiring, often with days lasting from 9.00am until 11.00pm with only a half-hour break for lunch and tea. The

adjudicators have to be masters of tact and diplomacy creating extensive remark sheets for each and every competitor. Not only does the role of adjudicators include the provision of constructive criticism for the competitors but they are also expected to be informative entertainers with regard to the audience at the festival. The adjudicator has to stand up at the end of every class to detail the reasoning behind their decision in every class, explaining what they were looking for with regards to a good performance and read out the marks awarded to every competitor. At the Manx Music Festival the music and drama adjudicators are experienced professionals who often combine adjudicating with teaching and performing in their own profession. There are two local adjudicators, experts in the field of Manx language and Manx dance who judge the small number of classes in these areas. Aside from the two Manx adjudicators, the committee arrange for adjudicators to come from outside the Isle of Man and so they are able to view the festival without local knowledge and thus can provide a considered decision without prior knowledge of any of the competitors taking part. One of the adjudicators at the 2004 festival was Marilyn Hill Smith who provides the following comments on her experience at the festival:

I started participating in Federation festivals at about six/seven years of age, doing solo singing, poetry and piano classes. In fact, it was really through Gwen Catley (a lovely soprano who sadly died a few years ago – in her eighties) who adjudicated me when I was about 14 years of age, that my parents became aware of my (then) coloratura soprano voice, and a professional career in music became a possibility. I was also adjudicated by Arthur Reckless at Worthing

¹⁷² Extract submitted to author – 4th March 2005.

festival when I was seventeen, and he then became my Professor at Guildhall School of Music when I left school to study there full time.

Impressions of the Manx Festival

I had last visited the Isle of Man some years ago, as soloist with BBC Radio 2's Friday Night is Music Night at the Gaiety Theatre. So the look of the newly refurbished Villa Marina complex was a pleasant surprise. The facilities within the building were excellent, and the splendid Sefton Hotel (almost next door) in which I was accommodated was very convenient. This is not always the case, and adjudicators can occasionally find themselves obliged to accept accommodation from committee members, when the festival is small and lacking in funds. Alternatively, the only suitable hotel may be some distance from the venue. The actual adjudicating room may also not be as satisfactory as those available at the Villa Marina, so again I was delighted.

The actual organisation of the festival was excellent, it is usual to find a committee very closely involved in all the arrangements for a visit, and, although there was clearly a good "back-up team", Mrs Joan Hinnigan, the Honorary Secretary, seemed reluctant to delegate. I dealt only with her regarding my engagement to attend Manx, and she sent my airline ticket in good time, having ensured that I was able to fulfil my previous engagements and still travel at a convenient time. A charming taxi driver met me from the airport (and delivered me back there safely at the end of the week!) and my schedule was clear and detailed. The programme was fairly exhausting, with some very large classes, but everything was done to make the task comfortable and most enjoyable. There was adequate time off between sessions to relax and refresh.

The popularity of a festival can provide its own problems: particularly with class sizes. Concentration of an adjudicator, participants and audience is stretched to the limit at times when large classes last for an hour or more. This, again, was splendidly managed by Mrs Hinnigan.

It is essential to have the help of a table steward for all classes. There is little enough time to assess a performance, write and adjudication sheet, and organize placings, without having to worry about the correct piece of music being available for reference, or keeping check on absentees. Again, all of this was splendidly organised at Manx.

The great public interest in the Manx Festival was most encouraging. At the majority of festivals I attend these days, the audience comprises a handful of parents and teachers and immediately a

class is over the participants leave with their supporters. In the case of the Marx Festival, this was certainly not the case and even the smaller daytime classes were well patronized. The audiences attending the evening session were quite extraordinary and clearly boost the festival's public profile and assist financially.¹⁷³

What Marilyn Hill Smith's account highlights is how the festival appears to an outsider, albeit an informed outsider, viewing it for the first time. The account gives an example of how this particular adjudicator became involved with festivals, initially as a competitor and later as an adjudicator and provides some comparison with how the adjudicator experiences other festivals.

The Official Accompanists

These are the official festival accompanists engaged by the committee to accompany those participating in the vocal classes. The accompanists are expected to play for a variety of different classes throughout the festival week ranging from junior solo classes to accompanying the Cleveland finalists. The adult vocal classes have provision for each competitor to have one rehearsal with the accompanist, usually in the accompanists homes or other convenient location. Many of the adult classes have a requirement that the competitors must take the official accompanist which imparts an element of fairness throughout the class but this often places great demands upon the accompanist who may have to play, for example, oratorio or opera accompaniments for over 30 competitors. However,

¹⁷³ Extract submitted to author – 14th August 2004.

not only does the presence of an official accompanist ensure that every competitor is singing from the same position - it also ensures that a high standard of accompaniment is maintained for the whole competition. Currently there are five official accompanists at the Manx Music Festival and these people are well-known local musicians and/or teachers, often with professional qualifications and experience. The festival committee engages their services on a small stipend and informs them a few months in advance of the festival which classes they are to play for. The duties of the official accompanist include the allowed rehearsal with the adult competitor (junior competitors do not have a rehearsal), and the accompaniment of the test performance. The accompanists are not only expected to be note perfect but they also provide a good source of moral support for nervous competitors, and in cases where competitors may lose their place in the music or forget their words, the accompanist is the first to assist. The festival would be able to exist without the official accompanists; however, they are an essential part in the maintenance of the high standard seen throughout the competitions and the festival considers itself very lucky to be able to engage their services year after year. Madeline Kelly was herself a successful competitor in the festival and has been an official accompanist for three years now. Here she describes the experience of being a member of the festival society as an official accompanist:

I first got involved in the Manx Music Festival when I was a child, taking part in the junior piano and singing classes. One of the things I most enjoyed about the Guild then was the fact that I got to

know a lot of the other young singers and piano players from other schools on the Island. For one week each year we were like friends, and it was really good fun. It was also, of course, a prime motivating factor in getting me to learn my piano pieces to performance standard – and I was desperate to win every class I was in.

When I moved back to the Isle of Man in June 1999, I planned on taking part in the Guild competitions again – as a way of keeping my performance standard up. A local singer contacted me and we arranged to compete in the Accompanied Lieder class. In February 2000 Mrs Hinnigan asked me if I would consider being one of the festival accompanists, but I had to refuse because I felt like it would conflict with the fact that I was also a competitor that year. She initially contacted me because Miss Mavis Kelly had told her that I was a good accompanist – word of mouth is the main source of information on the Island!

In 2001, however, I was able to join the other Guild accompanists, taking my turn on the platform during the week. We're on a rotation system for the Special Solo and Lieder classes, so that we don't accompany the same voice two years in a row. We also share out the junior vocal classes fairly evenly, but it seems to be pot luck who has to accompany the duet classes each year. My regular classes are Songs From The Shows 14-u19, and Popular Standard Song.

As an official accompanist I am obliged to offer singers the opportunity to have one rehearsal before the competition, and the rehearsal time is charged to the Guild. If a performer wishes to have more than one rehearsal (and a very small number do) then I have to make sure that they're aware they'll be paying me for my time.

For some of the adult classes in the Guild it's compulsory to use the official accompanists, but this isn't the case in my regular classes. This means that, in a class of more than thirty competitors, I might accompany less than ten. Last year the committee decided to allow the 14 – u19 competitors the same right to a rehearsal, although this fact has not yet become generally known.

Another task I have to do is the re-arrangement of singers' copies of music – sometimes stapled together, sometimes submitted as several loose sheets, sometimes with pages missing, etc.!

Guild week is a frustrating experience for me, because I have to reschedule many of my piano lessons; and of course a lot of my pupils are taking part in various classes and this can have a knock-on effect on their lesson/practice times. It's also physically and

mentally exhausting; physically because some of the accompaniments I have to play are extremely challenging, and the classes can go on for hours; mentally exhausting because I need to stay jolly and encouraging for the whole time that I'm backstage, trying to calm the nerves of the competitors.

Because I grew up with the Manx Music Festival being a large part of my musical life, I feel a certain amount of pride in being a part of the team now. I relish the chance to get up on stage and accompany people (something I don't have enough time to do usually because of my teaching schedule). I appreciate the fact that my reputation has grown as a result of being an official accompanist, and that I am now generally known in musical circles on the Island. Also, it's a good chance to catch up with performers that I don't often see.

Really, being an accompanist for the Guild makes me feel like I'm a part of the Manx community – and that's my main reason for doing it.¹⁷⁴

The above account details the experience of the official accompanist from Madeline Kelly's perspective. Like many festival participants she has a long term involvement and the festival allows her to feel a part of the 'Manx Community'. Her involvement is something which is both a part of her personal identity as an accompanist and outside the festival as a teacher and also something which forms a part of her national identity.

The Audience

One of the features that make the music competitions into a festival is the presence of an enthusiastic audience. For the larger of the adult vocal classes and the brass band competitions the audiences number over 1000 and whilst the smaller of the drama competitions sees a

much smaller audience each class is fortunate to have some audience support. The audience can be deconstructed to have three distinct levels. The first level consists of those who can be said to be 'involved' and include the competitors, the adjudicators and the stewards, the people essential to the existence of the competition and those who are default audience members having their primary function in another of the societal groups found throughout the festival. The second category consists of people who can be described as being 'connected', encompassing friends and relatives of the competitors, accompanists and organisers. The final category comprises the 'unconnected' members of the audience and these are people whose involvement with the festival stems from their own interest without any direct involvement to the competition or the competitors. From an impression gained by attendance at the festival, Audiences at an average competition would consist of a cross-section of these categorisations. Classes such as *Songs from the Musicals* do, however, attract larger members of the general public and would, therefore, have a larger proportion of category three members. Whatever the reasons for membership, the audience provides warm support for the competitors whatever the standard of performance. The audience also serves the further purpose of being something of a critical sounding board for the adjudicators. Many members of the audience have been involved with the festival for a number of years and as such perform their own unofficial adjudication amongst themselves. If the audience

¹⁷⁴ Extract submitted to author – 15th March 2005.

disagrees with an adjudicator's decision regarding the winner of a class or a mark given to a particular competitor then disapproving murmuring is often heard. Over the 113 years of the festival the audience has become accustomed to the festival being run in a particular way and are, again, not afraid to voice their disapproval should something not be following the expected course. One example of this type of behaviour is seen at the beginning of the festival week when adjudicators often seem reluctant to give out the marks for all of the competitors preferring to concentrate on talking about the leading performances. Should such an oversight be made the audience have been known to vocally start shouting 'Marks!' until the adjudicator has to give in. The audience are the largest body attending the festival and, as such, have a large amount of unspoken influence and control on the proceedings taking place. In the following account audience member Lillian Robertson reflects upon her involvement with the festival over a number of years:

I have been interested in music and singing for many years and then having been asked to join a choir I discovered I really enjoyed singing myself and the company of the members themselves.

Some of the choir members took part in the Marx Music Festival, affectionately known as 'The Guild' and so I decided to go along and listen.

The Guild is a week long festival so to begin with I chose the classes I wished to attend. I enjoyed the classes so much, particularly the singing classes, that the number of classes I went to increased over the years and now I find myself attending at least one class a day and usually more but going along every evening anyway.

The more you attend, of course, the more people you meet and the enthusiasm of these people is very infectious. You soon realise that it is a wonderful meeting place and that everyone is there for the same reason, this being for the enjoyment of the Guild and to support its participants. The Guild caters for all ages at all levels of ability in whichever class they enter and you cannot help but admire and feel proud that there is so much interest taken and enjoyment given through the people who give their time and talent.

The Guild is a very good thing for the Island but people from areas outside the Island take part too, which means the interest knows no bounds. It brings people together from every walk of life and by tradition is a wonderful festival for the Isle of Man.¹⁷⁵

Lillian Robertson's account highlights the 'infectious' nature of involvement with the festival and gives one example of this. As well as being something that she enjoys participating in, Lillian acknowledges, in her final paragraph, the significance of the festival for the Island as a whole.

The Media

Although the presence of the media is not essential to the day-to-day proceedings of the festival, they do provide an important function in relaying the festival to the wider culture of the Isle of Man. The primary media presence at the festival is Manx Radio who record the full proceedings of the festival and so have a team of workers present throughout the festival. Their daily hour-long programme, *Today at the Guild*, broadcast throughout the festival week has proved to be very popular and affords access to the festival for those who are unable to attend. The secondary presence is that of the local press

who are periodically on hand to take photographs and print these, along with the festival results in the local papers published throughout the festival week. The media presence is an unobtrusive one and belies, in the case of Manx Radio, the hard work that takes place in co-ordinating the recording and editing of the festival coverage. The main protagonist in this coverage has been Judith Ley and she describes her work in the following account:

There is a curious, unwritten, rule of radio that each station must be possessed of a staff member who is prepared to unquestioningly undertake coverage of events and activities which defy categorisation. Church services and the Manx Music Festival are two good examples, and as I have been responsible – over the years – for bringing many hours of religious broadcasting to the Manx listening public, it was no great surprise when our Programme Controller asked me to take over radio coverage of the Manx Music Festival – or the Guild, as it is more popularly known.

Initially I was enthusiastic - but apprehensive! Rather like a Church service, the Guild is revered and respected, and so great offence and disappointment follows if the reportage does not meet the listeners' expectations. But I had a model. For many years, a member of the Guild Committee, in addition to competing and stewarding, had been going up to the radio station twice daily to read out the latest results "live" into the morning and early evening news bulletins. The reason I was asked to become involved was because he felt he could no longer balance all three tasks simultaneously.

In the first year, I delivered the results service in much the same way that my predecessor had done, but, because I was a staff member and "knew the ropes" at the station, I was able to ask for – and get – an extra pre-recorded results spot. As the week progressed, I learned two things – firstly, the switchboard was jammed with complaints from Guild devotees, because I had carelessly used incorrect terminology – for example, the word "marks" may never, ever be replaced by the word "points", and no result may ever be given out if not first preceded by the relevant programme page number. Secondly, my colleagues at the station considered the daily results service to be the most excruciatingly boring piece of broadcasting ever devised. At the end of the first week, I too had made a discovery – it is a complete nonsense to have

¹⁷⁵ Extract submitted to author – 11th December 2004.

one of the most successful Music Festivals literally on the door step and yet not broadcast a single spoken word or note of music. Of course, this was not always so. For a long period, classes would be broadcast "live" on the radio. Some of the – now retired – staff can remember when there was a permanent audio link to the old Villa Marina and almost everything made it to air. I am told this was discontinued due to the deteriorating quality of the competitors. I am in no position to make any comment on this, as it pre-dates my time with Manx Radio.

But what I did experience in that first year of working at the Guild was an absolute riot of music, drama, dance and spoken word - people of all ages and abilities competing for all kinds of reasons, but mostly for the sheer joy of it - living their dreams - taking their five minutes of fame that would sustain them through the next year - and all of this in an atmosphere of admirable professionalism. Here we have serious - yet often most entertaining - adjudication, with exhaustive attention to detail to ensure classes run smoothly and no rule is transgressed. And looking at the impressive array of silverware on display at the commencement of the week, there is an almost tangible feeling that here is a vital and lasting part of our Island heritage.

So it was that, in the months that followed my first "working" encounter with the Guild, I began campaigning for the restoration of a daily programme devoted to the Festival. Eventually, I succeeded. Clearly, the best way to do this was to record all the classes, every day, and then pick out highlights for broadcast each night of the Festival, in an hour-long programme with the highly original title "Today At The Guild"

The programme features, as far as possible, the winning performance in each of that day's classes, plus a full results service for that day, with a little time reserved to cover anything unusual/original/particularly amusing which may not necessarily have won a prize. During the course of the week, I also try to invite a few "specialists" to talk about the standard of competition in their particular area eg brass bands, opera, Manx language. This might cover anything from comment on individual performances, to insights on the complexities of the test pieces, plus the inevitable nostalgic memories, too!

However, as this new programme - Today At The Guild - is broadcast each evening at 9pm, it cannot include any results from the evening classes, so I have introduced another 3-minute report which is broadcast during the early morning extended news programme (Mandate) which summarises the results of the previous evening and points the listener to the fuller report to be broadcast that night. This report, and the one-hour evening programme, plus a

two-hour programme of the Finals Night (broadcast on the night after the Cleveland Medal test) replace the old results service.

I had expected a storm of protest – but there was none. Maybe, like me, the listener realises that it is better to compromise a little on transmission times, in favour of capturing some of the magic of this huge, wonderful Festival, which draws the entire Island community together, either as competitors or loyal, enthusiastic and knowledgeable supporters. Its broadcasting significance is reflected in the fact that I no longer have to negotiate for the air time – the Programme Director automatically factors it into his schedule for the coming year, alongside TT coverage and Tynwald Day etc.

Last year, we put a very basic results service on the Manx Radio website. This year, we are currently working on a website for the Guild itself, which will not only build into a results archive over the coming years, but will have the facility to include still photographs alongside video and audio clips, too. The quality of this Festival, and its importance in the community, deserve no less than the best that today's technology can offer.

And should you be wondering – yes, I am still very careful always to give out the programme page numbers with each set of results, and never, ever, say “points” instead of “marks” !!¹⁷⁶

Judith Ley's account not only captures her own enthusiasm for the event but highlights a number of the idiosyncratic practices to be found at the festival. It also shows the national significance of the festival in the support shown to it by the national radio station and the need for it to be promoted to an Island-wide audience.

Once the festival begins the members of the six social groups cast off their roles from the outside world and assume their festival identities and the meanings, behaviours and idiosyncrasies that these imply. High ranking in the unspoken hierarchy of the festival society is

¹⁷⁶ Extract submitted to author – 25th January 2005.

gained in a number of ways: long association with the festival, membership of more than one festival group, success at the festival, and a Cleveland Medal or two, or three, or four can only serve to enhance an individual's status in the proceedings. It is not merely the presence of these six social groups that supports the society of the festival however, the location is also significant and has its own role to play.

Location of a Society

The society of the Manx Music Festival is maintained and developed through the participation and interaction of the members of the six interdependent groups as described above and is assisted by the venue used to host the festival. Since its inception the festival has been based around two primary locations: the Palace Ballroom, which, until its demolition in the 1990s, boasted the largest ballroom in Europe, was the setting for the earlier competitions, and, beginning in 1948, the Villa Marina - which is now firmly established as the home of the festival. The place and space used for hosting the festival is particularly important to the development of a festival society as the continued use of a single venue allows the society to build upon a stable base. The majority of the participants in the Manx Music Festival have, for the past fifty years, been coming to the Villa Marina complex and immersing themselves in all the Manx Music Festival has to offer. The Villa Marina facilities included a small concert venue seating approximately 300 known as the 'Garden Room', which hosted

many of the junior classes and the more intimate of the adult classes such as the 'folk song' and the 'lieder' and a magnificent octagonal two tiered hall seating 1500 called 'The Royal Hall' where the larger adult solo classes and group classes took place. The complex also had a small café on site which allowed for participants to remain immersed inside the festival setting morning, afternoon and evening if they so desired. The café formed a focal meeting point for talking, socialising and discussing the events taking place at the festival and participants had no need to leave the festival setting and so the society remained self contained. Just how important the stability of space and place is to the festival was highlighted in its recent history when the Villa Marina was closed for an extensive refurbishment programme in late 2001. After almost fifty years in the same spatial setting the festival was forced to locate elsewhere and this caused much disruption as the festival was split over two sites with a ten-minute walk between each. The chosen alternative venues of the Loch Promenade Church and the Gaiety Theatre were adequate although there was no obvious social area for the participants in the festival and the smaller seating capacity of the theatre of 830 meant that many festival participants were unable to obtain tickets for Cleveland Medal Final. Unpredictable weather also meant that moving between the two locations could mean a drenching and so participants tended to settle at one venue for the whole of the evening, whereas the Villa (as it is colloquially titled) had allowed for the fluid movement between a number of the different classes on offer. In 2004 the festival made a

welcome return to the refurbished Villa Marina and enjoyed the new facilities on offer. Although the Royal Hall had remained structurally unaltered there were a number of new facilities such as a 'Promenade Suite' to replace the Garden Room and a 'Colonnade Suite' where outside caterers provided the food and drink so necessary to the social aspect of the festival society. Festival participant Helen Godfrey describes the change of venue as follows:

The Villa Marina has been associated with the Guild for all my life. When I think of attending the Guild and imagine the classes I might watch or the people I might see, it is always with the mental picture of the dramas unfolding in the rooms of the Villa.

My strongest memories of the Guild are dashing (silently) from the Garden Room to the Royal Hall and back again to see (or compete) in different classes as the day wore on. The fact that all the action was in one self-contained complex meant that it was easy to immerse oneself entirely in the world of the festival and not see anyone from the 'outside world' at all. Even meal times could be spent in the little café – thus it was possible to arrive early morning and not step outside the Villa until it was time to go home to bed at the close of the Festival at night. This in turn meant that for the duration of the Guild one could live in an alternative (and very enjoyable!) universe and not think about or interact with the real world at all. Having all the classes under the same roof (albeit different rooms) also meant that one bumped into everyone else attending at least once a day (or ten times a day between regulars) and thus, over years, faces and names were memorised and friendships/enmities formed. One last but very important aspect of the Villa's Guild experience is the shape of the Royal Hall itself. If one positions oneself at the sides of the raked seating on the highest row in the auditorium, one can not only watch the performances but also nearly all of the audience. Thus people's reactions become part of the spectacle. People-watching and Guild-gossip have always been a large aspect of festival attendance.

The move to the Gaiety and Loch Promenade Church has been an interesting one. I definitely prefer the arrangement at the Villa because moving between the two venues waters down the feeling I like of the self-contained microcosm of the Guild. I much preferred the Garden Room to the spaces in the Church. In addition, when

one is competing in one class but trying to support a friend in a parallel class, it is very easy to run between the rooms when the Guild is at the Villa. However, running between separate venues 10 minutes apart makes this much more difficult, and since this is part of the camaraderie between regular Guild-goers (trying to watch it all and compete simultaneously!) it affects the atmosphere slightly if it becomes harder to do. Having said all that, the Gaiety is a lovely space and I have very much enjoyed the past two years' Cleveland finals at the Theatre. The importance of the occasion and the performers' glamorous attire seemed to fit with the beautiful grand décor of the interior very well.¹⁷⁷

The above opinion was expressed by Helen Godfrey before the festival returned to the Villa Marina, but the general feeling amongst festival participants upon the return in 2004 is one of pleasure at the facilities of the newly refurbished Villa and a sense, as expressed by the festival Chairman at the close of the 2004 festival, that the Manx Music Festival had now returned to its 'rightful home'.¹⁷⁸

The Society of the Manx Music Festival is, like all societies, a fluid one. It is one that has been formed throughout the long history of the festival and shaped through the participants who choose to belong to the social groupings found within the festival. The self-contained festival setting found within the Villa Marina complex assists in fostering the festival society and it is through this society that aspects of identity are forged on a number of levels. The next chapter takes this examination further by looking in more detail specifically at the ways in which the participants who form the society of the Manx Music Festival use it to shape and form aspects of their own identity.

¹⁷⁷ Extract submitted to author – 18th July 2003.

¹⁷⁸ Quotation from speech made by Noel Cringle at the close of the 2004 Festival.

CHAPTER FOUR

The Manx Music Festival: Shaping Identity through Participation

As seen from the previous chapters there are several elements that contribute to the suitability of the Manx Music Festival as a vehicle for the growth of social and cultural meaning with particular regard to ideas and ideals of identity and society. This chapter extends this theme further by concentrating on the people who are involved with the festival itself and considers how the festival has contributed to the formation and maintenance of identity from the perspective of national, local and individual. The chapter will examine these levels in the context of the Manx Music Festival.

The Manx Music Festival and National Identity

There are four primary elements that contribute to the formation and maintenance of national identity found in and through participation in the Manx Music Festival. These are:

1. The festival takes place on a small island that claims its status as an independent nation. Because of the insular nature of Island life and the use of the word Manx in the title the festival automatically has an implied cultural status.

2. The vast majority of the festival society, with a few notable exceptions, has been and still is of Manx origin. Given that Manx-born residents are in the minority on the Isle of Man this feature allows the significance of the festival to swell.
3. The Manx Music Festival has developed over a lengthy time period thus allowing it to remain part of the fabric of life of the Isle of Man. It has remained a constant whilst other aspects of the culture have changed considerably.
4. The Manx Music Festival has become associated with places and spaces that are part of the fabric of the Manx Nation. Places of historic importance such as the Palace Ballroom, the Villa Marina, the Gaiety Theatre.

The Isle of Man is an independent nation and looks for cultural features to substantiate its 'difference' from the United Kingdom. Whilst many features have been erased over the past one hundred years, the Manx Music Festival has remained largely unchanged both in format and practice, so has become an important link between the present and the past. The Manx Music Festival is most obviously something belonging to the Nation of the Isle of Man due to the use of the culturally implicit 'Manx' in the title. For the participants in the Manx Music Festival, however, the contribution made to their own ideas of Manx National Identity goes beyond simply the implicit use of Manx in the title.

Geoffrey Christian, nephew of the late Miss Emily Christian,¹⁷⁹ who was a well-known choral conductor and official accompanist at the festival, is a keen member of the festival community and active both as a competitor and audience member. His wife Elaine is also active within the festival community and can be found stewarding throughout the week of the competitions. Mr Christian considers the festival to be:

Our own Manx festival. I know that there are other groups on the Island...but I see the Guild as being our Manx National Festival and we need to support it.¹⁸⁰

The need to 'support' the festival stems from an ideological motivation; it provides a common tradition and the place of the festival as a 'national' festival needs to be maintained. Double Cleveland Medallist Andrew Williamson agrees with the idea that there is a national value to the festival:

It has been going since 1892. Everyone born on the Island since then has grown up with it and always known it. The Celtic Nations have always enjoyed their music-making.¹⁸¹

Mr Williamson draws upon the longevity of the festival as a signifier in its contribution towards Manx identity but takes the analogy of

¹⁷⁹ Miss Christian was one of the stalwarts of the Guild in earlier years. The close family connections between people who participate in the festival will be discussed later in the chapter.

¹⁸⁰ Extract from interview with Geoffrey and Elaine Christian – 17th April 2000.

¹⁸¹ Quotation from response to written questionnaire sent to participant by author in April 2000.

national identity one stage further by allying the Isle of Man to the 'Celtic Nations', something which reinforces the cultural difference of the Isle of Man, i.e. as a nation that enjoys music-making, and also as a place that is part of a Celtic culture.

Barbara Gale, who has won the Cleveland medal four times, states that:

The Guild is one of 'the' weeks to Manx people. Our new residents attend it if their children are involved but many Manx people attend because it is the thing you do! They'd never not attend... this is a truly Manx occasion, the Guild is the biggest musical event of the year.¹⁸²

Here again the status of the festival as a 'Manx' event that is of importance to 'Manx' people is stressed. What is of interest here is the fact that the festival has become a part of the Manx culture even when at a first glance it would seem to have very little worth as a signifier of national identity. Since its establishment by Mrs M. L. Wood in 1892, the festival has become enculturated into ideas of what it is to be Manx, particularly by those who participate in the event, and one which embodies 'Manx' traits such as the thought that the Manx are a musical nation.¹⁸³ Danielle Duncan, who has now left the Isle of Man to study musical theatre at university, first moved to Isle

¹⁸² Quotation from response to written questionnaire sent to participant by author in April 2000

¹⁸³ This feature of Manx character will be discussed more extensively in the next chapter. For now it will suffice to say that the musicality of the Manx has been written and spoken of on many occasions.

of Man in 1996 at the age of eleven and quickly became involved in the musical life of the Island. She states:

On the whole I would say music and dance is a main way of life on the Isle of Man. The festival becomes more popular each year. So many different people enjoy coming and competing. Plus it caters for all musical tastes and age groups.¹⁸⁴

The festival becomes part of the fabric of the culture of the Island because it has something to do with making music, and making music is seen to be something that the Manx do. Former Head of Drama for the Manx Academy of the Performing Arts, Alison Farina,¹⁸⁵ compounds this aspect of the Manx identity by stating:

It's definitely a huge part of the Manx identity. Because I think from what I know - I've only been here for a year - from what I do know about the Island, the history of the Island and people of the Island, is that music is extremely important. Music seems to really bind people together here. I think it's a really powerful thing. And...it seems that the music at this Manx Guild thing is like the epitome of this Manx ideal of music, which is nice and I think it's beautiful and I really can't wait to see. I think it reminds me in a way of the Sound of Music, of the festivals that they have in the Sound of Music that the Von Trapp family seem to go in...I mean, that's really spectacular and to have something that people prepare for months in advance and everyone looks forward to and it's like the high point of the year. I think that is a real, real, community building thing.¹⁸⁶

¹⁸⁴ Quotation from response to written questionnaire sent to participant by author in April 2000

¹⁸⁵ Alison herself is a native of New York, USA, and moved to the Island in the year 1999 to marry her Manx husband.

¹⁸⁶ Extract from Interview with Alison Farina - 19th April 2000.

Festival participant, Helen Godfrey, has the view that:

The Guild is one of those particular local events that is inextricably linked with my feeling of Manx identity. Although there are local music festivals elsewhere in the UK, I cannot imagine any having such a particular flavour as the Guild, probably because of the nature of my home as an island. It is an important local event with the regulars – and even those Manx citizens who are not involved know all about it and hear the daily reports on the radio, and see the attendees in their hundreds descend upon the temporary car park. The only other time of the year that Douglas promenade (the location of the venues) sees so much vehicular and pedestrian traffic is during the other love-it-or-hate-it Manx Festival, the TT motorbike races.¹⁸⁷

For Helen Godfrey the festival is part of her own Manx identity because it is something linked with where she is from, what she has grown up with and the nature of life on the Isle of Man. It is interesting that Helen links the Manx Music Festival to the TT Motorbike Races as something that is also an example of a 'Manx' festival. The TT, or Tourist Trophy, races began in 1907 and have remained a firm fixture in the calendar of the Isle of Man. Although these races are widely known on an international level and the music festival is not, from an insider perspective this is somewhat insignificant as both are part of the Manx nation and both contribute to Manx identity.

¹⁸⁷ Quotation from response to written questionnaire sent to participant by author in April 2000

Perhaps the biggest boost to the status of the festival as a contributor to the Manx national identity is the use by the Manx Government and its representatives as a symbol of Manx culture. In the official tourist brochure the festival is advertised as being part of the 'Celtic Celebrations' which make the Island unique.¹⁸⁸ Further to this the then-President of Tynwald, the late Sir Charles Kerruish (1917-2003) stated at the close of the 1993 Manx Music Festival:

This festival demonstrates the strength of Manx culture as it is today. Frankly it makes me feel proud to be Manx and happy in the knowledge that our cultural heritage is in such safe keeping.¹⁸⁹

Endorsement by the Isle of Man Government and the President of the Island's Parliament stating the position of the festival as a contributor to national identity means that the festival is used not only a symbol of identity to those inside the festival and the Island itself, but also to those who will only encounter the festival via the medium of a parliamentary official's speech or a tourist brochure.

The status of the festival as a symbol of national identity is not, however, a certainty that people accept without reservation. From the outset the adoption of a festival that did not evolve from the Isle of Man, but rather one that was 'imported' from England, as a national identifier was not something with which everyone was comfortable

¹⁸⁸ Taken from Isle of Man Department of Tourism and Leisure brochure, 2004

¹⁸⁹ The Manx Independent, 4th May 1993.

with. There are also those who are concerned that time is somewhat 'running out' for the festival and that its history and tradition are all very well, but if it is to remain part of Manx identity then it will have to adapt with the times. In response to a question as to whether the festival was part of the Manx identity, Judith Ley, a Manx Radio presenter and producer had the following to say:

I want it to be so. I personally perceive it to be part of the culture. Hugely important to the culture of the Isle of Man. That being said, I think we need to be careful to keep its Manxness. I was saddened to see some of the traditional classes weren't there this year, simply because there was nobody to teach the skills, like the Manx sword-dancing. It's only a little thing, but I felt a bit sad that those things can be so easily eroded and a comparatively low entry in the Manx-speaking classes. And the same people doing the Manx-speaking – doing it very beautifully, but the same people and not as high in entrants. I mean, the young people doing their singing, again huge entries – seventy odd, which is lovely – but then single figures when it comes to Manx-speaking and I think that's a shame. Maybe, and I know it's improving, the Manx Language in schools is improving in leaps and bounds, and maybe that's going to be reflected in the Guild in a few years time. I do hope so, because I personally see it as a fabric of our Island and I wouldn't want to see it undermined by losing the Manx classes and the very traditional Manx things for want of people to teach and for the want of people to try it.¹⁹⁰

Barbara Gale takes this point one step further by expressing her concerns that it is not just the 'Manx traditional' classes that are under threat but the very festival as a whole due to high immigration in the past few decades. She says:

I don't think we're educating the Island well enough about the Guild. Before, it's been known. What happens when my Gran's generation, my Mum's generation have gone? Who's going to keep telling them about the Guild? You know? It's worrying me because an awful lot of parents are not Manx and they've come over here to live because of jobs, or tax, or whatever, and they don't know what the Guild is. You say, 'The Guild' to them and they ain't got a clue. They know what the Manx Music Festival is because their child is in it, but they've no idea about the history... I wonder if perhaps it's time that there was some sort of education programme, or whatever, because we've got to get this through to people about the history and what the Guild is all about....I suppose in a way we don't want it changed. We just need to find a way of educating non-Manx people who don't know what the Guild is. We've got so many new residents now. You see all these houses being built – I mean look at Peel, all these new people.¹⁹¹ If we want the Guild to survive, I don't think it's going to survive by Manx society because we're in a minority and if we don't get the new people in, and it's so good and the standard is so high, I mean surely their kids are just as talented? We need to get them educated in it.¹⁹²

Mrs Gale raises the question of the need for new residents to be educated in those practices which are long standing, part of the island way of life and therefore part of the national identity of the Island. Another point raised by Mrs Gale is indicative of the status of the festival as a part of the national identity. She discusses the use of the term 'Guild' as a title for the festival rather than the more generic 'Manx Music Festival'. This term has developed through the history of

¹⁹⁰ Extract from interview with Judith Ley – 8th August 2002.

¹⁹¹ Peel, like many parts of the Island, currently has a large number of new houses recently completed or under construction to accommodate the new residents.

¹⁹² Extract from interview with Barbara Gale – 10th August 2002.

the festival to become part of the everyday vernacular of the Island, at least to those with a history on the Island or an involvement with the festival. Those involved with the festival would never refer to it as the 'Manx Music Festival' but always by the more colloquial, yet more culturally implicit, term of 'Guild'. The festival is also generally referred to in the Press and on the Radio by the term of 'Guild'. For example, Manx Radio's hour-long daily programme that takes place during the week of the festival is entitled, *'Today at the Guild'*. There is no need for explanation as to the history and development of this term as it is assumed that those on the Island will understand that the term 'Guild' is referring, in fact, to the Manx Music Festival. Similar to the cultural implicitness of 'Guild' is the meanings applied to the 'Cleveland Medal'. For those within the festival society, the Cleveland Medal is the climax to the competition week. For those outside the festival the term, usually expanded to refer to the actual medallist, signifies an implied standard or quality of the person holding the title. Triple Medallist Graham Crowe states that whilst the week of the festival may now pass many residents on the Island by, 'a large percentage are aware of and have heard of the Cleveland Medal.'

¹⁹³ The position of the Cleveland Medal will be considered further later in the chapter.

The status afforded throughout the Island to those who have won the 'Cleveland Medal' and the understanding of what is meant by the term

¹⁹³ Quotation from response to written questionnaire sent to participant by author in April 2000

'Guild' support the status of the festival as one that contributes to national identity outside its own sphere of involvement. It is unlikely that outside the Isle of Man anyone would either have heard of or have an understanding of these two terms without having a direct involvement with either the festival or the Isle of Man.

Having discussed the position of the 'Cleveland Medal' as a part of the culture of the Isle of Man, it is worth considering briefly the origin of the medal. The Cleveland Medal is sent each year as a gift from the Cleveland Manx Society in Ohio, USA. Mona Haldemen, the current President of the society has this to say:

I don't know why the decision was made to present the medal. All I know is that it started in 1923, and was meant to show the interest of the Cleveland Manx in the Isle of Man. Perhaps because the medallist was allowed to keep the medal it became the main prize at the festival. The first medals were gold, but now are merely gold plated. Some time after it was begun, it was taken over by the Ladies Auxiliary. A mold was made, and until a few years ago all medals were made using that mold, even though it had been cracked somewhere along the line. It was finally decided that it could no longer be used, so a new mold, a rubber mold, was made, and enough medals were cast to last until 2023. After that time, who knows. While the Cleveland Manx Society is the oldest in North America, we are dwindling fast, and when the present members have expired, there may not be enough younger ones to carry on. We are proud of our contribution, and love to have the medallists come to see us and sing for us. My husband and I have personally welcomed Christine Bregazzi¹⁹⁴ to

¹⁹⁴ Christine Bregazzi is a twice Cleveland Medallist – the first time under her maiden name of Christine Kinvig in the Centenary year of 1992 and secondly in 1995 under her married name of Bregazzi.

our home, and have in fact “adopted” she and Mark as part of our family.¹⁹⁵

For the Cleveland Manx, the association with the festival was initially a strong connection with their homeland and assisted in maintaining ties with the Isle of Man and their Manx identity. Although the association between the Isle of Man and the Cleveland Manx is undoubtedly less strong as the generations have gone on, it still provides a connection with the Island and contributes towards the maintenance of the Manx identity of these American Manx.

The Manx Music Festival contributes to national identity of those involved with the festival; it contributes to the national identity of the Island as a whole in that it is promoted by the Government as being a ‘Manx’ event; and it contributes on an international level to the Manx identities of those now removed from the immediate sphere of the Isle of Man, such as the Cleveland Manx. Tynwald President, Noel Cringle, describes the place occupied by the festival as follows:

The Manx Music Festival has been a major event in the every calendar year I have lived! Both my parents were competitors and as a family we attended “for the week”! The effect was that we have all been inspired to have and accept music as part of the culture of the Island. The acceptance of music as part of the Manx way of life is replicated throughout many families across the Island and is deeply ingrained. From the time that many adults first attend as part of their school groups until attending with Grandchildren, they remember both

¹⁹⁵ Quotation from Email sent to author dated Sunday 13th August 2000.

the music and the competition. As an Island we will always face the need to look outwards to “earn a living”. The acceptance of a major competitive festival deeply ingrained in the Manx culture makes it easier for the natural ability to recognise that need to compete and seek excellence on a wider field.¹⁹⁶

Perhaps the most obvious way in which the Manx Music Festival has made a lasting contribution to the national culture and identity of the Isle of Man is seen in the existence of the Manx National Anthem. As mentioned in Chapter Three, W. H. Gill composed an anthem to be performed at the festival alongside the British national anthem. This anthem soon became adopted as the ‘official’ national anthem of the Isle of Man and is now used at State occasions, such as Tynwald day, as well as local events in the Manx community. The existence of a national anthem assists in no small way in defining the Isle of Man as something distinct from the rest of the British Isles and the existence of the national anthem is something that is owed entirely to the existence of the Manx Music Festival.

Localised, Family and Individual Identity

It is not only aspects of national identity that are shaped and formed within and through the festival - far more widespread are those constructs that are concerned with the formation and maintenance of family and individual identity. The nature and operation of the festival society was discussed in detail in the previous chapter. What follows here is a discussion of how the localised nature of this society

¹⁹⁶ Quotation from letter sent to author dated 18th March 2005

works towards the formation and maintenance of family and individual identity. There are a number of factors contributing towards the formation of the family and individual identity, these include:

- 1 A localised society in which members have an established set of conventions and practices.
- 2 Members who accept the rules and ideals of the society, be these spoken or unspoken.
- 3 A localised society in which members remain for many years.
- 4 Societal members who know and are familiar with each other and the respective roles within that society.
- 5 Members who are part of a long line of family members who participate at the festival.

Localising a Society

Due to the long established nature of the Manx Music Festival there have arisen a number of practices and traditions that are part of the modern-day fabric of the festival. It is these idiosyncratic practices that enable the society of the Manx Music Festival to have its own localised identity. These include small rituals such as the band of people who subscribe to the festival stapling their subscriber's ticket to the front or inside cover of their programme. Everyone who is anyone must purchase a programme and come equipped with this

programme and a pen to each class at the festival. At the end of every class the members of the audience require the adjudicator to read out the marks given to each and every competitor so they can record these marks into the programme. If an adjudicator tries to omit the ritual of the reading of the marks, the festival society display their collective displeasure by barracking the adjudicator with shouts of 'marks!' until the adjudicator is forced to submit to their will. The adjudicators and their decisions are respected but they never become part of the inner fabric of the festival and are always viewed as outsiders. The programme also provides bountiful information to assist with the discussion and gossip that is rife throughout the festival period. It provides lists of who is singing, playing or speaking, what they will be singing, playing or speaking and where the competitor is from. Gossip and chat comprises a large part of the festival societies localised quality as people discuss who is participating in the festival, who is doing well, what they think of particular adjudicators, what they think of the adjudicators' decisions, what they have been doing in the year since the last festival took place. People watching also plays a part in the proceedings as festival participants are often able to see a large percentage of other participants and like to comment on who is doing what at any particular time. There are also certain procedures which are present throughout the festival which provide the participants with a certain amount of comfort in the knowledge that everything is happening as it should. One of these practices already referred to is the reading of the marks at the end of every class. Others include the

appearance of the stewards who announce each class and each competitor and ensure that the correct number card is in place; the presence of the official accompanists; the scheduled breaks for 'lunch' and 'tea'; comments on 'Guild weather'; the singing of the national anthem at the end of the evening; the mark sheets that are given out to each competitor at the end of the class; the presentation on the stage to the prize-winners; the long speeches at the end of the final night. All of the above are just part of the make-up of the Manx Music Festival and are able to be witnessed by any attendee attending any class at the festival. It is through the actions of the individual people participating in the festival that these practices and idiosyncrasies begin to take on meaning.

Many of the practices encountered at the Manx Music Festival have socio-cultural meaning and contribute to ideas and ideals of identity because they have existed in a continuous form for a long period of time. By consciously or unconsciously subscribing to the ideas and ideals and practices found within the festival those individuals taking part allow their own identities to be shaped and formed. When considering the formation of individual identities, however, it is important to begin with an understanding of why people participate in the festival to begin with, what it is that motivates them to become a member of the festival society and then remain a member of the society. What happens to people when they become a member of the festival society and how identities are created, maintained and

changed both from the participants own perspective and from the perspective of others also provides a point for discussion.

Individuals are introduced to the Manx Music Festival in a variety of ways: they could be continuing a long family tradition, they could be taking part with their school, they might be members of an adult choir, they may be coming along to support friends or family members, or they may be new residents to the Island and come across the festival quite by chance. The small population of the Isle of Man and, until recently, the relatively small incidence of immigration means that many people are in some way related, either by blood or by marriage. In the year 2003 there were many members of the society of the Manx Music Festival who are the fifth or sixth generation of their family to participate. Often several generations of families are in attendance at the same festival with grandparents, uncles, aunts, parents, children and so on. Through this type of family participation the festival has created a certain number of 'Guild' families, the members of which carry certain expectations of being successful at the festival and thus to continue the family tradition. Marilyn Cannell, one of the current official accompanists, provides one such illustration of this:

We used to go out as a family group. I think we had a name... Yes, we were the 'Country Singers', the various branches of the family. My mother was a contralto, my Aunty Ena Gelling was a mezzo-soprano, she's won the Cleveland medal three

times, her son Philip has won it once and the other sister is Mrs Ruby Crowe and her son Graham has won the medal three times.¹⁹⁷

Marilyn's own family also have successful connections with the festival. Two of her daughters, Ruth and Eleanor, have both won the festival scholarship offered annually to the best all round performer of music aged 18 and under. The Curphey family provide a further example of a festival 'dynasty' with father and daughter both winning the medal – William Curphey in 1975 and 1978 and his daughter Margaret in 1960. Mrs Susie Curphey, William's wife, was the conductor of the successful Glenfaba Ladies Choir, a role that her daughter Muriel, herself an excellent soloist, has emulated. Muriel defines her role within the Manx Music Festival as follows:

My parents were Wally and Susie Curphey. My father was born in Peel the eldest of four boys who all sang in Peel Parish Church choir as it was then, but it was not a musical family. My mother on the other hand did come from a musical family (father sang tenor and mother mezzo). Mum and her twin brother Tom and Jack Gelling were all sent to piano lessons as children and were all competent pianists and solo singers. It was only when my parents married that Dad started solo singing as a Tenor and joined his new extended family sings in the 'Jolly Millers' under Mrs Corris. Dad was a very conscientious amateur singer and one he retired from the Police force and lived life with more regular hours he had to practice every day. Even when he was decorating he would have a tape recorder going and would be singing at the top of his voice. This dedication culminated in his winning 2 Cleveland Medals, the premier award at the Manx Music Festival. I think he sang about 13/14 times in the final. He also sang for the Blackpool Rose Bowl about the same number of times. My mother's solo singing was curtailed because she ended up accompanying others or sitting with us while we practiced the piano.

¹⁹⁷ Extract from interview with Marilyn Cannell - 17th April 2000.

I am the youngest of four daughters. Margaret and Mary were the eldest and after a ten year gap twins, Christine and myself. We were all sent to piano lessons and Sunday school where we all sang our first solos at the Sunday School Anniversary. We all progressed to the music festival piano and solo singing and school choirs. Margaret went on to win the Cleveland Medal and the Blackpool Rose Bowl within a few months and shortly after that went to study at the Birmingham School of Music under John Carol Case and the principal then was Gordon Clinton. Margaret sang all over the world (opera, oratorio and concert work) and English National Opera, Glybourne and Covent Garden. Mary joined the Lancashire County Police and Christine trained as a nurse at Nobles Hospital. At 18 I was accepted at the Royal College of Music and studied singing with Gordon Clinton and piano with John Russell. I always enjoyed singing in the College Choir and did so all the time I was there even though it was only compulsory in your first year. I didn't continue my musical career as a professional and came back to the Island to live and started work in a Chartered Accountants but I soon got involved in the Marx Operatic Society and the Marie Belles and Beaux. It was only after I had my family that I started to teach piano and singing.

I have been a member of the St Johns WI Choir and then the Glenfaba Ladies Choir and the Choral since 1969. Mum was the conductor and we went together every Monday. She had great success over the years at our own music festival and at Blackpool. I thin her crowning glory was the Millennium Concert at the Cathedral on 27-07-79 when we joined forces with the Country Singers (the nucleus of which was the Gellings, Farghers and Curpneys) Margaret and her husband Philip Summerscales and Stephen Barlow as accompanist and organist. I sang at that concert and our son was born the day after!!!

Mum retired as conductor of the choir in November 1986 and I took over and been there ever since. I had no formal training as a conductor and have learned from my mistakes and being able to pass on my knowledge as a trained singer has helped. This has been a challenge and sometimes very difficult but I love it and even after only a couple of week's holiday I am ready to get back. A concert or festival is over and I am starting to plan the next. I can not imagine not being involved with the choir and music in one form or another. Music is around me throughout my working day. In fact while I am writing this I am listening to Mozart Concerto No 27. ¹⁹⁸

¹⁹⁸ Extract written for author by Muriel Corkish on 11th December 2004

The familial connections do not end here, however, as the Curphey family are themselves related by marriage to the Crowe/Gelling family of which Marilyn Cannell is a member. Family connections are present throughout the festival as Dr Fenella Bazin comments:

It's very interesting, it's just like a big family party. That's what is so much fun and people are either related by marriage, or blood relatives, or third cousins twice removed or whatever, but it's a great family atmosphere.¹⁹⁹

Barbara Gale describes the event as being 'something that has been passed down through the family'²⁰⁰ and indeed this is the case for many taking part. The aspect of family identity that is maintained through participation in the festival means that many members of the festival society have known each other since childhood, their parents have known each other and their children know each other and all are interested in music and the arts. This leads to the further fostering of the festival society that is something that is Manx in orientation and that the society is one in which people have many connections both familial and those that they have formed for themselves. Marilyn Cannell defines the experience as follows:

The Guild is a social thing, you meet people and you sit and chat. You meet up with people you haven't seen all year and you go and have coffee and it's nice.²⁰¹

¹⁹⁹ Extract from interview with Fenella Bazin - 20th April 2000.

The contribution made by the festival towards the maintenance of family identity is an important one and this importance is heightened due to the long history of the festival. It must be remembered, however, that the festival is not a closed society and that anyone who wishes to can participate in any manner they desire. Karen Elliott summarises the overall situation by stating:

I do think the festival is part of the Manx way of life. So many families on the Island are connected to and with the festival. It's a superb week of music making. It forges friendships and everyone helps everyone.²⁰²

The identity of those involved with the festival is reinforced by the shared common bonds of music and music making and members of the festival society have these common bonds. There is no boundary as to who can become a member of the festival society; simply by attending an event in any capacity an individual becomes a member of one of the social groups present and, therefore, a member of the festival society. In this respect, all those becoming members of the festival society can use the festival as a means to promote, expand and maintain their own individual identity should they so desire. Indeed, further to this, by choosing to become a participant in the festival society individuals can not only choose to use the festival to define themselves, they are also allowing themselves and their identity to be defined by other participants.

²⁰⁰ Quotation from response to written questionnaire sent to participant by author in April 2000

The Manx Music Festival and the Construction of Individual Identity

In many ways, defining how the festival contributes to the construction and maintenance of individual identity is more complex than describing national, localised and family identity. With these it is through membership of a 'group' that the identity is being forged, shaped and developed be it from within the festival or outside in the broader society of the Isle of Man. However, because the nature of the individual is just that - 'individual' - it is something personal to each and every member of the festival society and therefore one cannot easily alight on something definite as to what makes the festival a contributor to individual identity. What can be examined are aspects of the ways in which the festival is a contributor to individual identity by looking at the individuals who participate. The festival contributes to individual identity formation in many ways, including:

1. The participant makes their first contact with the festival and the festival's contribution to identity formation is begun. (Method of first contact makes a difference as does place of residence)
2. The participant defines themselves by obtaining membership of a respective section of the festival society.

²⁰¹ Extract from interview – 17th April 2000.

²⁰² Quotation from response to written questionnaire sent to participant by author in April 2000.

3. By belonging to a particular section, or sections, the participants also define how others see them.
4. Participants become known for the role they play within the festival rather than in the 'outside world'.
5. Participants are able to take the role played within the festival into the 'outside world'.

By examining these points in order, the initial aspect of identity that is shaped through the festival is through the section or 'group' of the festival that the participant chooses to belong and the reason for this belonging and whether the process at this stage effects the level of identity contribution.

The primary reason for choosing to become a participant at the Manx Music Festival is an important one and one to which there are as many answers as there are participants. For people being born on the Island it may be something they are encouraged to do by their parents in order to continue with the family tradition, as discussed previously. For some, it may be something they come into contact with through their school or private music teacher. Many of the schools around the Island, particularly the primary schools, enter the junior choirs section of the festival and although these numbers have diminished in the past ten to twenty years there were still 11 different groups entered in the junior choral classes in 2003 and, with choir membership ranging from ten up to fifty, this is a large number of

children being introduced to the festival. The number of entries from the Island's secondary schools remains small with only two out of six choosing to take part, however this number remains constant with former years and is dependant more on the teacher than the pupils. Indeed this is true of the primary school groups as well as the secondary school groups. However, whilst the individual in these groups may not be themselves responsible for choosing to participate in the festival, it nevertheless provides an introduction that remains with many for years. In fact, so vibrant is this memory that people now in adulthood can remember the words of the first song they ever sang on the Guild stage. Helen Godfrey describes the situation as follows:

My first memory of the Guild was at the age of 9, when I competed in a choir class with my primary school. I still remember the song, it was called 'New Shoes'. I remember being overwhelmed by the hustle and bustle and sheer volume of people coming and going between classes, but it all seemed very exciting to me. Throughout secondary school I was a regular attendee, both as a competitor in the choral classes and as an observer of the solo classes. I remember spending every waking hour outside of school-time with my friend, watching all the classes we could fit in, while engaging ourselves in observations about who had improved or worsened, who was new and who was missing, and catching up with people one may not have seen at all since last year.²⁰³

Miss Godfrey's experience is not an unusual one and many have vivid memories of their first time at the festival. Margaret Curphey,

member of the well known Curphey family spring-boarded from the Guild into a professional singing career. She recalls her first solo singing experience:

I think I was about ten, about ten... with very little success. I didn't really cotton on what I was doing really. I think my mother knocked me into shape for the year after... And I think that was the first year I really cottoned on what I was doing. I was up there and I could sing and I really could sing. Before that I was not aware of being able to sing better than anyone else and suddenly it came to me, I really can sing... I'm going to do this... And I took it incredibly seriously, I don't know why, I think it was just something I felt good at. I used to enter all the classes I could actually. I did right up through when I was 22 and won the medal and all the classes and that was the last time I competed. And then I went to Blackpool and did much the same and behind my back, my father knew about it, there was a lady over here who was not short of a bob or two and she'd been to the Guildhall and knew one of the adjudicators... So anyway, she said to him, 'what do you think of this girl? Do you think she's worth spending any money on?' because she had spoken to my father and he said, 'well, we can't afford to do it, we've got four daughters and we've got to treat them all equally and I can't afford to do that four times!' So she said, 'Well I'll do it! I never really had my big moment, I was at College and left and that was that.' So she said, 'Keep it a secret until after the Blackpool Festival.' And my father told me after the Rosebowl win in October that this was happening in January and not, 'Would you like to do it?'... 'You ARE doing it and that's the end of that. It would be silly not to go on from where you've got to now really.' I think the Guild, for the years I'd been competing in it, I learnt a very good basic repertoire, songs I wouldn't have learned otherwise and when I did go to College, I could say, 'well this...' because I'd done them all quite intently.²⁰⁴

²⁰³ Extract from written account prepared for the author – 24th September 2003 .

²⁰⁴ Extract from interview with Margaret Curphey - 26th April 2000.

Margaret Curphey's story is not unique and there are a number of competitors in the festival, both past and present whom have gone on to have formal training at one of the established music colleges in the British Isles.

For a large number of people, in particular children, their first introduction to the festival as a soloist is through their personal music teacher and for most the experience is a positive one. However, there are those who find the experience something of a negative thing and one where they themselves have no control. Charles Guard, a Manx resident, professional musician, composer, broadcaster and director of the Manx Heritage Foundation recalls his first experience:

Like many young children, I didn't choose to be involved, but I was forced to compete by my piano teacher (Mrs Corris), and spent a number of months learning the required piece to play, which I didn't get through without stopping during the competition.

Mrs Corris used to have all her competitors round to play their pieces in a sort of mini concert, which was almost as terrifying as the competition itself.

As an adult I competed in various classes voluntarily, which I enjoyed much more, and the exultation of winning a class, even if there were only three people in it, was usually way out of all proportion to the actual achievement.²⁰⁵

In the case of Charles Guard the experience of competing as a child when under more 'forced' conditions is different to that felt when an

adult when competing under voluntary circumstances and the aspects of identity being formed through the festival are affected by this. Nigel Taylor describes his own experience as follows:

My one and only moment of competitive participation in the Guild was in the junior violin class where around forty ten year olds played a dismal little piece called 'The Ruined Castle'. I found the whole experience and the subsequently awarded mediocre mark thoroughly unpleasant. It was possibly a defining moment for many of my neuroses. I have more recently joined the comfortable and demanding ranks as an enthusiastic audience member and am now of the opinion that competitive participation in the Guild is a thoroughly good thing for other people. I look forward to the occasion avidly each year convinced that I could do better myself but safe in the knowledge that I don't have to.²⁰⁶

Although Nigel Taylor's response may be somewhat tongue-in-cheek, what remains constant is that participation in the festival does play a large part in identity formation, particularly at an early age when the Guild 'experience' remains vivid in the mind of those who participated, be it as a group or individual and the experience good or bad. That it remains in the mind means that it can be classified as part of the individual's identity.

All of the above accounts concern people who have come to the festival through the more usual routes of family/school/teacher introduction. There are, of course, many people who become involved with the

²⁰⁵ Quotation from response to written questionnaire sent to participant by author in April 2000.

festival through their own choice at a more adult age. An example of this is Alison Farina who having moved to the Isle of Man describes her first contact with the festival as follows:

Well, I heard about the Guild the first year I was here from word of mouth and I didn't quite know what it was and everyone kept saying, 'Oh the Guild...he's in the Guild...the Guild...the Guild...the Guild'. I wasn't quite sure what it was... but I know it was very important because of the reverence that everyone seemed to have for it and then finally I started to realise that it had more to do with singing and music and some bits of drama and then I started to get more interested.²⁰⁷

Alison Farina's introduction was initially by word of mouth, followed by an involvement as a teacher who entered her drama pupils and now she chooses to participate as a member of the audience and a sometime competitor in the drama classes. To Alison, the festival had not been a part of her identity before arriving on the Isle of Man - it was not something she grew up with - but it has become a part of the identity she has formed for herself on the Isle of Man by being something she chooses to be involved in each year. The 'Guild' is an event with which she has chosen to associate herself and it presents an opportunity for her to develop her identity on the Isle of Man.

In adulthood participants choose to belong to one or more of the particular sections of the festival society and by doing this they are

²⁰⁶ Quotation from response to written questionnaire sent to participant by author in April 2000.

²⁰⁷ Extract from interview - 19th April 2000.

defining their own status within the festival environment. If a participant chooses to belong as a competitor they obviously have a desire to perform in front of an audience and to receive critical feedback from the adjudicator. If a participant chooses to be a member of the audience they are defining themselves as being a lover of music and the performing arts, and may also be expressing a close held family connection. By being an accompanist at the festival, participants are showing their own highly skilled performing ability and expressing a desire to be involved with the festival on a more formal basis as professionals.²⁰⁸ The adjudicator has the crucial task of ranking people, awarding marks and, most importantly, providing constructive criticism for each and every competitor. In this manner they are defining themselves as the 'expert'. The organising body at the festival are defining themselves by being part of the underlying structure that makes the festival happen. The members of this group give freely of their time and energy and as a result their commitment to the importance of the festival cannot be doubted. Finally, the media define themselves as being the people who take the festival from beyond its immediate confines into the broader sphere of the Isle of Man as a whole.

By choosing to belong to these particular sections, members of the audience are not only involved in the process of self-definition, but

²⁰⁸ The official accompanists and the adjudicators are the only members of the festival society who are paid to be there.

also how they are defined by others. As already mentioned, the 'skeet' passed around at the festival is almost as important as the competitions themselves and discussion between members of the festival society about other members of the festival society features strongly. This process of definition and discussion is something of a reflective one in that the members of the festival society are not only considering their own status within the proceedings, but also the status of the other. Status here is not meant necessarily in a hierarchical sense, but more in the sense of defining a particular position within the festival society. The way members of the festival society are defined by other members of the festival society may be very close to how these members define themselves in that the adjudicator is still seen as the expert, the competitors are still the performers, the audience provide support, both overtly in terms of the applause they give to the competitors and less obviously be providing support to the festival as a whole, the accompanists are the unflappable professionals, the organisers ensure that the festival runs in a smooth and orderly manner and the media take the festival to a broader audience. Ideas of identity come in to play at the point where the individuals of the festival society assign significance to other individuals. For example, an audience member may comment on a particular competitor that he/she is or is not singing/playing particularly well and speculate on reasons for this. An adjudicator may be seen to have a particular 'favourite' amongst competitors to whom he/she consistently awards high marks. People are identified

by others through the role by which they have chosen to identify themselves.

The two-way process involved with role assumption is taken one step further when those involved with the festival society cast off the roles they have in the outside world and become known primarily by the role they play within the confines of the festival. Deemster Andrew Williamson becomes better known for his double-Cleveland-medal-winning singing-voice than the role he plays in the Isle of Man's judicial system and in a similar fashion, Noel Cringle - the Chairman of the Manx Music Festival - is known for that, rather than for his role as President of Tynwald. The two examples are obviously of people who play a large role in the public life of the Isle of Man. For people with less obvious roles in the life of the Island the assumption of their festival persona is even more total. With the exception of the adjudicator, the outsider, members of the festival society are aware of the public roles of both Deemster Williamson and Mr Cringle but these fade in importance to the roles they play within the festival. For other participants, members of the festival society will, in all likelihood, have little or no idea what roles other members of the festival society fulfil in the 'outside' world, so people can only discuss people by what they know of them from their festival identity. For example, Barbara Gale is known primarily for having won the Cleveland Medal on four occasions, as are Allan Willcocks, Peter Cringle and Karen Elliott. A small section of the society who

personally know these members outside of the festival may know and have an understanding of their role away from it, but for the majority it is the identity created within and through the festival that is the only one available for consumption and so is the one that is taken. As with many things to do with the festival it is through the massed group of the audience that these identities are negotiated and maintained. The identity of the adjudicator is solely that of music professional. Members of the festival society know nothing about the adjudicator beyond what is printed in the short biography at the start of the festival programme. As the festival week progresses they may learn something of the adjudicator's personality but it is solely through the events of the festival that the adjudicators are identified. The accompanists are known for their piano playing skills rather than their roles outside the festival. Many of the accompanists will be known to members of the festival society in their capacity as private music teachers, but again, to the majority, they are known only through their role as 'official accompanist'. It is the competitors who provide themselves with the most obvious platform from which to be identified by placing themselves as individuals in the competition. A performer may become known for his/her 'beautiful voice', the manner in which they present themselves on the platform, the number of Cleveland Medals they have won, whether they have participated before, whether they are a singer, instrumentalist, dramatist and so on, whether they have won or done well in a class either in a previous year or earlier in the week. The Media bring their

outside roles into the festival with them, in the sense that their representatives are still doing their job within the festival, so they are perhaps the only section of the festival society who bring their role from the outer world into the festival. However, they do have a festival identity due to the fact that when they are in the festival environment the talk they are performing is solely concerned with the festival and therefore, at least for one week, their primary role becomes that they perform within the festival rather than outside. This is particularly the case with the staff from Manx Radio who now record all of the competitions - the highlights of which are played in the 'Today at the Guild' programme each evening. The members of the audience are most difficult to define with regard to identity as the group is such a mix of all members of the festival society. Audience members are, however, defined by whom they are with, for example audience members may be friends or family of a well known competitor and as such they are defined as 'friend of X', whether or not they have played another role within the festival such as 'he/she was stewarding last night', 'he/she is also the official accompanist', 'he/she got such and such a mark in the class this afternoon' and so on. Although the members of the audience are something of an anonymous group, they still have a collective festival identity defined through and by other members of the audience group. The organisational body are firmly known by their festival identity. The Festival Secretary, Joan Hinnigan, is firmly placed in her role as the chief co-ordinator and organiser of the festival. Her role throughout the week is such a busy

and full one that there is little opportunity for her to be defined by anything other than her festival identity. Other festival organisers may play a more 'behind-the-scenes' role than Joan Hinnigan, but will be defined as, for example, 'the treasurer', often without any reference to how this person exists and functions outside of the festival. Many of the stewards have other roles within the festival by which they may be defined rather than for their stewarding; for example, quadruple Cleveland Medallist Allan Wilcocks is vice-chairman of the festival committee and also assists in stewarding at the festival, but this is secondary to his achievements on the competitive platform. In this respect there is something of a hierarchical ordering to the roles which people play within the festival, particularly with regard to those who have a multi-functional role. At the top level of this hierarchical structure are those who have had a long involvement with the festival, possibly family connections, and have a multi-functional role such as Allan Wilcocks. Mr Wilcocks is a competitor, audience member, he won his first Cleveland Medal in 1961, he officiates both as a committee member and as a steward and, as such, is a prominent audience member. At the bottom end of this hierarchical structure would be the audience member attending the festival for the first time with no other connection to the festival other than their own interest. This is not to say this person is in anyway made to feel unwelcome, more that other members of the festival society would not have a sense of the identity and the role that this person plays within the festival and therefore, although such a person would be a member of

the festival society, their lack of known identity would place them on the fringe of the festival society. It is not always the case that first time participants are on the fringe of the society, however, as seen in 2003 when Glynn Morris, visiting the festival for the first time from Sale near Manchester in the UK, chose to compete in variety of classes. His week was very successful with first and second places in many classes and his ultimate win of the Cleveland Medal. Glynn quickly became 'known' for his excellent bass-singing, his status as a competitor from outside the Island and his success throughout the week. By choosing to be a competitor and being so successful, Glynn placed himself in the spotlight and so was able to become recognisable to the festival society and thus rapidly defined himself and his identity within the festival.

The final way in which the festival contributes to the formation of individual identity is seen when the role played within the festival extends outside the festival society and into the Isle of Man as a whole. This type of identity negotiation can happen in many ways - beginning with the member of the festival society encountering friends, family and colleagues not connected with the festival and describing the events of the festival to them. In this respect the participant is known primarily through their identity in the 'outside world' but by making others aware of their involvement in the festival they are informing others that the festival is a part of their identity as a whole. This aspect of informing others about the festival and the

part played by the individual within it is perhaps the most common situation involving festival identities being taken to the outside world. Less common, but no less significant, would be the case of the Cleveland Medal winner who becomes known throughout the Isle of Man as 'the Cleveland Medallist'. Members of Manx society coming into contact with the medallist may, or may not, be aware of other aspects of the individuals' identity but, at least in the year of winning the competition, it is primarily for winning the medal that the person becomes known. Several Cleveland medallists describe the experience as follows:

Quadruple Medallist Barbara Gale writes:

Everyone who is organising a fund raising event wants the medallist to bring in the musical audience but also because they know their entertainment will be of a very high standard.²⁰⁹

Quadruple Cleveland Medallist Karen Elliott writes:

I have won medals and I found that I was asked to perform at certain functions purely because of the medal whether they knew I could sing or not and, of course, it did give me a chance to be heard and from that – my own performance – I have been fortunate to be given more work on the Island.²¹⁰

Double Medallist Andrew Williamson adds to this by stating:

²⁰⁹ Quotation from response to written questionnaire sent to participant by author in April 2000.

I have won the medal. Yes, it does change the musical profile of the winner, particularly among non singers and non musicians. Singers and musicians are more likely to say 'X is good therefore he will win the Cleveland medal' or 'it is no surprise that he has won the medal.' Non singers, non musicians often see it the other way around – 'x must be good because he has won the medal.'²¹¹

Triple Medallist Eleanor Shimmin consolidates this by adding:

There is a certainly a degree of celebrity attached to a Cleveland Medal winner and rightly so. It changed my musical profile on the Island in as much that I was asked to sing all over the Island and beyond! I won my last medal in 1969 and I'm still singing nearly as much!²¹²

The Cleveland Medal becomes something by which members of the festival society are defined by outside the festival. The winner of the medal usually has their photograph printed in the Manx press, they may be interviewed on Manx Radio, certainly the name of the winner is announced on the Manx Radio local news and so the medallist becomes identified through their Cleveland Medal success. As the quotations above show, the medal is often an indicator of quality for a singer and many singers, away from the festival will, if singing a solo role in a concert performance or a show, write in their biography of their Cleveland Medal success. There is no mention of what the Cleveland Medal is in such biographies, it is assumed that members

²¹⁰ Quotation from response to written questionnaire sent to participant by author in April 2000.

²¹¹ Quotation from response to written questionnaire sent to participant by author in April 2000.

²¹² Quotation from response to written questionnaire sent to participant by author in April 2000.

of Manx society will have an understanding what this is and what it stands for.

In conclusion, this chapter has shown some of the ways in which identity is constructed, negotiated and maintained in the Manx Music Festival by using members of the festival society as practical examples. The Festival is used as a platform for the building of ideas of identity in many ways - from National identity, to localised, family and individual identity. The festival is not the sole contributor to the identity of those who are members of the festival society, but it does, at least for one week of year, become of prime importance and identities negotiated through the festival are of great significance. Identities that are formed within the festival do, in some cases, spill out into the larger scale society of the Isle of Man as a whole and the identity of the festival itself has contributed to and continues to occupy an important place in the identity of the Isle of Man.

CHAPTER FIVE

Experiencing The Manx Music Festival: From Objective Participation to Personal Identification

Introduction

The purpose of this chapter is to highlight some of the inherent concerns facing this research most particularly the issue of the etic/emic enquiry where fieldwork is concerned. The chapter discusses the identity of the researcher within the research process and the difficulties faced when becoming more deeply involved with the focus of the research. As the research for this dissertation has progressed, the boundaries between the identity of the researcher as an objective analyser and the identity of the researcher as a participant in the annual festival have become ever more blurred. Indeed, with the dissertation being complete, the identity of the researcher within the Manx Music Festival will shift once more with the emphasis moving towards being that of purely a festival participant. This is in contrast with the beginning of the research project when the researcher's aim was to approach the festival from the perspective of objective observer. This chapter utilises this changing experience also to explore the idea that the identity and experience of the researcher is equally valid to that of the, for want of a better term, informant, and should be utilised in an appropriate manner. The majority of ethnomusicological writing presents with the experience of the researcher and there is no way in which this can be

separated from the research. The identity of the researcher and his/her place within the research process provides an insight into the presented research as it places the researcher at the centre of the process. What this chapter aims to present is an in-depth experiential account of the researcher's participation at the 2003 Manx Music Festival without masquerading behind the visor of objectivity and presenting the findings as if they are somehow separate from the researcher, but rather exploring the Manx Music Festival as an important part of the researcher's own identity. The chapter thus not only reflects the effects of the research, in particular the field research, on researcher's identity but the effects of the researcher's identity on the research itself. With the personal nature of this chapter being borne in mind, it makes best sense for the chapter to progress in the first person.

Experiencing the 2003 Manx Music Festival: A Participant Observer's Perspective

The first period of field research for this dissertation was undertaken during the year 2000 Manx Music Festival. Prior to the festival I had undertaken research which utilised resources available at the Manx National Heritage Library. This enabled me to have some understanding of the historical background to the festival, and of the form the day-to-day running of the festival would take. I was also armed with my own involvement with the festival as a competitor with

my school choir when younger, the recollection of which gave the initial impetus for deciding that the Manx Music Festival might be a good focus for a research project. Other than this I did not undertake much actual preparation for the festival itself. It was my aim to attend the festival, observe and record the people and processes I found taking place within its confines and then review the research with a view to developing the approach if necessary for the next festival in 2001. My attendance at the 2000 festival was, in many ways, frustrating as I found that although the festival was not a closed society; those I approached to interview were not overly keen to speak to me and seemed somewhat suspicious as to who I was and what I was doing. Coupled with this was the fact that the festival programme itself is reasonably intense and participants were mostly observing the competitions or getting ready to attend the next lot of competitions. I felt like an outsider even though, prior to undertaking the research, I had thought my own position as a Manx person would allow me to bypass this obstacle. It seemed that everybody knew everybody, or at least had somebody to talk to and that these groups were somewhat difficult to approach. Although immersion at the 2000 festival allowed me to observe and record much that was of use – the social groups present, the dynamic between the audience, competitors and the adjudicator, the communal singing of national anthem, the standard of the competitions, the entry levels across the individual classes – I felt, in terms of the field research, distanced from the event itself and felt that to obtain an understanding of what the festival was really

about I needed somehow to create my own identity within the festival community. Whilst I had entered as a competitor in the 2000 festival I had withdrawn from the competitions due to thoughts that I should concentrate on the research itself rather than my own participation. When revising my fieldwork plans for the 2001 festival I decided that I must definitely participate as a competitor if only so those people I was approaching for interview would have some knowledge of who I was. This technique certainly achieved the desired outcome as competing in the classes at the festival from 2001 to the present day meant that my own identity within the festival was significantly raised. The account given below describes my own experience at the 2003 festival as something where the festival had gone from being an object of research to something where participation had firmly become an important part of my own identity.

Background to the 2003 Festival

Preparation for the 2003 festival began when the entries for the festival were submitted in February. I have decided to enter seven classes in total some of which are own choice pieces and some of which have set pieces. My own choice pieces are as follows:

1. Operatic solo – ‘*Adieu Forets*’ from Jeanne D’arc by Tchaikovsky
2. Oratorio solo – ‘*Buss und Reu*’ from the Matthew Passion by Bach
3. British Composers – ‘*Music for a While*’ from Oedipus by Purcell
4. Folk Song – ‘*Scarborough Fair*’ – arranged by Pratley

5. Songs from the Musicals – ‘*I Have Confidence*’ from The Sound of Music by Hammerstein

The set pieces for Special Mezzo Soprano class are ‘*Sweet Venevil*’ by Delius and ‘*If Music be the Food of Love*’ by Purcell and the set piece for the Lieder class is ‘*Waldseligkeit*’ by Strauss. I arrive on the Isle of Man a week before the festival begins and have made arrangements to stay with my friend Nigel and to meet up with another friend Helen throughout the festival period. I rehearse with the pianists assigned to each class in the week leading up to the festival and make last-minute preparations both to my performances and my approach to the field research period before the festival week starts.

Saturday 26th April: and so it begins...

Saturday morning and the classes begin at 9.00am with the Under 12 Brass Solo taking place at the Loch Promenade Church and the Junior Choir classes taking place at the Gaiety Theatre. The two split venues are the temporary home of the Guild while the Villa Marina, its permanent home since 1948 undergoes refurbishment. I decide to focus my attention on the choir classes as singing forms such a large part of the festival as a whole and I have spent time observing the brass classes in previous years. I arrive at the theatre with my Guild programme clutched in hand with my ‘Subscribers Ticket’ stapled to the front. Being equipped with your programme is an important part of Guild protocol as it is necessary when it comes to the taking down of the marks awarded to the competitors. As I arrive at the theatre

doors I am overcome with a sense of 'coming home' and feel it is significant that whilst three years previously I had arrived as an unknown observer I now feel very much part and parcel of the proceedings. I also think that my childhood participation at the festival and the excitement I used to feel in those early days enhances this sense of belonging although it is only since my participation as an adult that I feel the my own identity within the festival society is truly established. The Gaiety Theatre is a spectacular location for the festival as the auditorium has been painstakingly restored to its original Frank Matcham designs and is the height of Victorian splendour. As I arrive the auditorium is buzzing with the chatter of the under 12 competitors. I am surprised to see how full the stalls area is and quickly head to the dress circle. I take myself up to the dress circle and find this is almost as crowded. It pleases me that the Gaiety is almost full to its capacity of about 800 and that the excitement of the Junior choral classes remains the same as when I was a child. As I go to my seat I see several people I know across the dress circle. For now, however, prior to the beginning of my participation as a competitor, I think it is important to observe the proceedings in as detached a manner as possible without being drawn into Guild gossip at this early stage. I sit myself quietly at the back and take some basic notes about the scene – attendance numbers, general impression of the atmosphere and so on. Waiting for the classes to begin I find it difficult to equate my position and interest in the festival now with the fact that I was once one of the over-excited

children below. Making the reminiscence all the more real is the sight of my old primary school teacher, Miss Clague, waiting with my old junior school choir. This scene lends the Guild a certain timeless quality that I find that reassuring. The festival Chairman and Tynwald President, Mr Noel Cringle, walks onto the stage to open the proceedings. Without further ado, a hush falls on all present as the adjudicator walks through to take her place at the adjudicator's table in the middle of the stalls. The steward walks onto the stage and announces the name of the class and the first competitors and the 'Action Songs' for under 12s begins. As the morning session progresses the classes move from action songs, to the gaelic choirs, vocal ensembles to an assortment of under 12 school choir classes for 'girls', 'boys' and 'mixed'. I am pleased to see that Peel Clothworkers, my old school, have the largest choir present, but I am convinced that in my day the choir was much smaller and possibly the better for it – although possibly my memory of our sound is somewhat selective. At 12.20pm (all of the start times for the classes are written in the programme and I note that, as ever, the festival runs remarkably close to it) the junior choirs finish and there is something of a mass exit from the auditorium. This leaves the final class of the session, the 'Choir Concert Class (12 and under 19)' with an almost empty space to fill with only about 30 people remaining when a few minutes earlier there had been several hundred people with the theatre packed to capacity. However, the two choirs in this section sing their ten-minute programmes with great skill, not daunted by the change in

atmosphere. Following the adjudicator's comments, the session draws to a close at approximately 1.00pm. This first session not only gives a chance for the juniors to show what they can do but gives the audience a first glimpse of one of the festival adjudicators. In this sense the adjudicator is judged almost to the extent that he/she is judging – how high the marks are, whether they remember to give the marks out in full and, most importantly, whether the audience is in agreement with the adjudicators decision. Dr Eileen Bentley has seemed to satisfy all of these criteria and has been well received by the morning's audience.

My selected afternoon session began at 2.30pm and focused upon Manx and 'Country' dance. These classes are well supported, both in terms of the entry numbers and the numbers of people attending as audience members. The classes see the dancers wearing what can be termed 'traditional' costume and they are often accompanied by live musicians. The class with the highest entry is the 'Manx Folk Dancing (under 12)' with eight competitors primarily from primary schools but also from a well known folk-dance group called 'Perree Bane'. The other two classes only have one and two entries respectively and the afternoon soon draws to a close. I notice that there has definitely been a downturn in entries in the folk-dance classes from last year's festival and I wonder if this is due to the change of venue. The Upper Church Hall at the Loch Promenade Church is rather small and the stage area quite cramped. With about

ten dancers and the accompanying musicians there is not much room for the dancers to manoeuvre. I hope that when the festival returns to the larger stage of the Villa Marina the dance-class entries will begin to rise once more. I make a note to myself to watch for this decline in entries as being a possible trend to watch for in the future.

Saturday evening sees the Brass solos continuing at the Loch Promenade Church, whilst the Gaiety is staging the 'Songs from the Musicals (14 under 19) and the Popular Standard Song (Own choice of song from 1940 go the present day). This session begins promptly at 6.15pm and I arrive at 6.00pm to take my place at the rear left of the stalls. The auditorium is already filling up and there is a real buzz in the air as people greet and speak to each other that they haven't seen since the year before. Across the stalls I see my former secondary school music teacher, Mr Elliott, who is here to accompany some of his private pupils and I go over to say hello. I see that his wife, three times Cleveland Medallist, Karen is not with him and enquire how she is. He tells me she is staying home to avoid catching any sort of illness that might be in the air. Illness, at least for me, has become a feature of Guild week and I am never able to work out whether this is psychosomatic or as a result of practising too fiercely. Mr Elliott is joined by some other friends and, again, 'hello, how are you?' is exchanged all round. It is almost time for the class to begin and I make my way back to my chosen seat noticing that the theatre is filling up and there must be about 500 or so in the audience. As well

as the junior shows class which is always very popular this evening gives the first opportunity to hear the adult singers and see who is singing well, who isn't, who sounds nervous, who sounds confident and so on. I always feel that although there is one official adjudicator for each class, in reality each competitor is being judged by every other person in the room, all of whom have their own opinions as to what constitutes a good performance. The official accompanist for the evening is Madeline Kelly. Madeline is the first to walk on the stage for the evening and ensures that the piano and the stool are correctly positioned. My friend Helen arrives 'good, I knew you'd be here in our spot' she says, referring to the fact that I have chosen to sit in the same place as we did the previous year. 'Well people have to know where to find us,' I respond only half in jest as all around the stall I can see members of the festival community sitting in almost exactly the same seats as they had the previous year. The objective side of me supposes that this is all about ritual and people feeling comfortable with events and happenings taking place as they should without any surprises or disruptions. Everyone is looking around the theatre to see 'who is here' and Helen and I find ourselves waving to several Guild acquaintances which is, again, a nice part of the festival proceedings. The steward walks onto the stage and announces:

'Songs from the Musicals, 14 and under 19. Our adjudicator this evening is Dr Eileen Bentley and the official accompanist for this class

is Madeline Kelly. The test piece is own choice and the first prize is *The Crowe Family Challenge Cup*. Competitor number one...'

With that she switches off the stage microphone and walks off as the audience applaud the first competitor in the class who walks onto the stage. The standard in this class, and indeed most of the classes, is varied. Most people are reasonable, some people are excellent and some fall a bit short of the mark. However, what strikes me this evening is that the audience are there primarily to be entertained and whilst they are all making their own mental notes about who should get what mark, they are very generous in showing their support for all the performers. There are 23 competitors in this class but there is only really one obvious winner and that Danielle Duncan with her interpretation of 'All That Jazz' from *Chicago*. Danielle also won this class the previous year and is extremely talented at acting, singing and dancing. Dr Bentley walks onto the stage accompanied by applause from the audience and gives her remarks on the class. She praises the standard of performing as well as offering a few insightful tips as to what constitutes a good performance, in her own words, 'a complete performance'. Dr Bentley is obviously aware that she has to give a full run down of the marks, something which has escaped adjudicators in previous years and, having performed this task, offers first prize to Danielle with 90 marks with second place and 88 marks going to Emma Doolan for her interpretation of 'If I Loved You' from *Carousel*. Emma walks onto the stage to collect her second place

certificate from Dr Bentley to be followed by Danielle who collects both her trophy and her certificate. With only a few minutes break whilst Dr Bentley returns to her seat the audience are quick to seize the opportunity to chat and a loud hub-bub breaks out. Graham Watterson arrives to where Helen and I are sitting to say 'hello'. I vaguely knew Graham from my days as a member of one of the Isle of Man Young Farmers clubs but have only really got to know him properly in the past few years through chatting at the Guild. Graham works on his family's farm but has become a keen singer and is a great supporter of the Guild and the opportunity for solo performance it affords. Graham wants to compare notes on the 'shows' class and we eagerly cross-examine our programmes comparing the adjudicators remarks with the marks we would have awarded. The steward walks onto the stage:

Class Number S16, Popular Standard Song. Our Adjudicator is again Dr Eileen Bentley, and our official accompanist is, again, Madeline Kelly. Test: Own choice of Songs from 1940s to the present day excluding songs from the shows or songs eligible for other classes. Only one accompanying instrument permitted. Amplification not allowed.

With the boundaries for this class clearly established she announces the first competitor and the class is underway. This class is a relatively recent addition to the festival programme but is a success

with audience and competitors alike. In many ways it is quite strange to hear people who have, for the most part, more 'classical' sounding voices belting out popular hits and the song choices are wide and varied both in style and the manner in which they are presented. Selected pieces range from '*Love is a Many Splendoured Thing*' by Fain, to '*Diamonds are Forever*' by Barrie, to '*Cry me a River*' by Hamilton. In this class the best performances are those who make the most of having to sing without amplification whilst still being true to the style the individual song demands. Many people manage this well and when Dr Bentley steps onto the platform she awards a large number of high marks. In third place is Danielle Duncan having been awarded 90 marks for her interpretation of Newley's '*Feeling Good*'; in second place with 91 marks is Michael Corkhill for his rendition of '*Be My Love*' by Brodsky and in first place with a high 92 marks is David Holland who accompanied himself singing '*God Give Me Strength*' by Bacharach. The winners are warmly received when they go onto the stage to receive their prizes and the night is almost over. There is, however, one important ritual left. Madeline walks back onto the stage, seats herself at the piano and plays a chord of F Major. With this chord the audience rise and sing together the first verse of the Manx National Anthem. With the verse at an end it is 10.45pm and we are pleased to note that it is a relatively early end to the evening. The members of the festival society spill out onto the pavement adjoining the theatre and continue in conversation.

This first day at the festival has afforded me the opportunity to view proceedings whilst remaining firmly in my role as a participant observer. I have been able to observe proceedings, speak to other members of the festival society and make notes without worrying about my own performance as a competitor.

Sunday 27th April

As far as the festival is concerned, Sunday morning is a rest period. I, however, rise early and begin practice for the Oratorio class later that afternoon. Helen is also staying with Nigel for the duration of the festival and wanders past me to make herself breakfast. Luckily both Helen and Nigel appreciate the nervous state I am in ahead of the Guild classes and she knows not to disturb me at this time. I sing through 'Buß und Reu' a number of times and start to panic that I don't actually know it at all. Luckily the Oratorio is the one class where competitors can choose to use their music if they so desire and I know that I will be taking full advantage of this opportunity. 'It sounds awful', I say to Helen for what will be the first of about one hundred times this week. 'It sounds fine' she reassures me as she butters her toast. I am not convinced. The first class is always the worst with regard to nerves and there is always worry that no sound is going to come out at all. After practising for about an hour I stop – after all, I tell myself, if I don't know the piece by now then I'm not

going to know it. I'm also very aware that I've been doing a lot of singing and that there is a lot of singing still to come in the next week and with my current Guild-induced sore throat I don't want to waste what little voice I have left in practising for the first class. At this stage any thoughts of pertinent field observations have completely left my brain. All I can think about is the impending performance and trying to stay relaxed and focused. We arrive at the Loch Promenade Church in time for the class to begin at 1.45pm. I hand in my music to the adjudicator's steward and sit down near the front of the church. This is not my preferred place, but the 'Worship Centre' where the class is being held is very small and already all of the seats near the back are taken. I discuss with Helen what a bad place the Worship Centre is to be holding the Oratorio class as the floor is carpeted, the roof low and the space so full of people that the acoustic will not be remotely forgiving. I feel a tap on my shoulder, it is Jane Mayne, who has chosen to sing the same aria as myself in this class. Jane is an excellent contralto who sings with great expression and sincerity. I am quite anxious that she is singing the same piece as me as I know that she will sing it far better! The steward walks to the front of the room:

Class S8, the Oratorio Solo. Our adjudicator for this class is Dr Eileen Bentley and the Official Accompanist is Frank Woolley. The test piece is own choice from any oratorio. Competitor number one...

I am singing at number seven and am following two of the festival's most experienced and successful competitors, Karen Elliott and Harry Galbraith. Karen sings Vivaldi's '*Sum In Medeo Tempestatum*' and gives, as usual, a breathtaking performance. Helen turns to me and whispers, 'Karen's won again then.' I nod in agreement. Harry Galbraith also gives an excellent performance of 'Now Heaven Shone in Fullest Glory' from Haydn's *Creation* and all too soon it's my turn. 'Competitor Number Seven' announces the steward. I rise from my seat and suddenly I'm very glad that I'm sat near the front as my legs seem to have stopped working properly. As I walk to the front I can feel my heart pounding, my head spinning and my breath shortening. I turn round to face the audience and smile what I hope is a smile of confidence. I open my copy of the music (the oratorio being the only class where it is acceptable to use a copy) and smile at Frank to indicate that I am ready to begin. 'Thank you', says Dr Bentley. Frank begins the introduction at what seems a far quicker speed than the one we had set at our rehearsal. The introduction is quite long and I use the time to glance around the room and am terrified to see all eyes on me. In one of the larger venues this would have been less apparent, but in this small space there is no avoiding the audience in such close proximity. I start singing at what feels like a newly quickened pace and almost as soon as we have begun we reach the end. I am not pleased with how I have sung but am pleased that the first performance is now out of the way. Also, singing early in the class means that I can relax and enjoy the rest of the performances

without worrying about my own. Jane's performance of the Bach is very good and notably slower than my own. Helen whispers, 'is she doing it slower than you?' I confirm that this is the case, but I feel slightly relieved that we might escape direct comparison as Jane is singing in English whereas my own performance was in German. Overall there are thirty two competitors in the class and the oratorio pieces are often over five minutes in length. As the seats in the Worship Centre are not built for comfort there is some relief when the class draws to a close and we are able to stretch our legs. I use this time to attempt to jot down some observations about the class and the audience present but am distracted by the impending adjudication, so after a few basic points I give up and just wait. Dr Bentley takes about five minutes to arrange her papers and inform the stewards of the result. She then walks to the front of the room as the audience welcomes her with applause. She opens her remarks with:

Well, what a marvellous afternoon's music making we've had ladies and gentlemen

This particular adjudicator is being well received and has a pleasing way of involving the audience with her comments which is appreciated and I note this in my book. She continues by giving an explanation of what she looks for in an oratorio performance and again comments that she is looking for a performance – not just beautiful singing but a stylish presentation also. Some of the pieces chosen, she feels, were a

little beyond the capabilities of those singing them – I immediately feel that I'm one of these people – but on the whole people had chosen wisely and she was pleased about this. She closes her remarks by saying:

I can honestly say that this is one of the best oratorio classes I have ever adjudicated.

This comment is particularly well received and applause breaks out on the floor. With these opening remarks complete it is time for the marks to be given. She goes through the competitors in order of performance and I am pleased to discover that I have been awarded 88 marks and that Jane has received the same mark. Overall Karen Elliott is in first place with 92 marks, Terry Qualtrough (bass) is in second place with 91 marks and Graham Crowe (baritone) is in third place. Between these three are a grand total of seven Cleveland medals and so it can be assumed that these marks are deserved. The class, having lasted for more than four hours, ends just after 6.00pm and having collected my results sheet Helen and I return back to Nigel's house. We decide to give the brass band competitions a miss - me because my throat is still not getting any better and I feel I should have a quiet night at home and Nigel and Helen because they are not interested in the band competition. I retire to bed early having and think about the next day. In previous years I would have attended the brass competitions as a matter of course in that I would feel it was my

duty as an ethnomusicologist to attend absolutely everything that was physically possible to attend. I have continued to attempt to wear the double hat of researcher and competitor in the noting down of the adjudicator's remarks, attendance numbers and general impressions gained at the festival. I am, however, finding it difficult to keep focused upon both aspects of my participation and feel that my performing role is, at least this year, personally more important.

Monday 28th April

I wake up feeling particularly unwell and decide that it is probably wise to stay away from the festival until the evening classes begin. As well as needing to rest myself, I have no wish to give my 'throat' to anyone else at the festival. The classes taking place at the church during the day are junior classes and I worry that this will have an added risk of extra infection. I have an element of guilt at not attending these classes as I feel I should surely be making comparative notes that will assist the fieldwork process. In opposition to this guilt is the knowledge that I have this evening's opera class requiring me to deliver a demanding aria which I do not think I will be able to do if I spend the day at the junior classes. The evening sessions begin at 7.00pm with the 'French Song' in the Gaiety Theatre and the 'Lieder – Voice and Piano' in the church hall. I delay warming-up to the last possible minute in order to conserve energy for the classes ahead. The opera class is scheduled to begin at 7.45 pm and I am not feeling at all confident. My throat has got worse, I feel

drained of all energy and my most demanding song of the week is due to take place in a few hours. However, by the time of arriving at the theatre adrenaline has started to kick in and I feel much better. I take my music to the steward and then return to where we are sitting at the back left of the stalls. It is my friend Nigel's first evening at the Guild and he seems more interested in looking about to see where is here than watching the remaining performances in the French Song class which is just drawing to a close. There is a different adjudicator for this evening's classes, a Stuart Smith, who give a very witty and insightful adjudication and he shows his obvious skills when it comes to entertaining an audience. There is a ten-minute break between the classes, during which time Helen arrives with Alison, a mutual friend. We exchange news and then it is time for the Operatic Class to begin. The steward performs the, by now, familiar duty of announcing the class, the adjudicator and the accompanist. Judith Christian walks onto the stage to take her place at the piano and the class is underway. In this class not only is a prize awarded for first place, but there are also trophies for each of the individual voice categories – soprano, mezzo, contralto, tenor, baritone and bass. In this class, as in the oratorio, there is someone else singing the same song as myself. In this case the 1996 Cleveland Medallist, Angela Stewart. Again I am slightly concerned that the person singing the same piece as me is such an accomplished performer but, as Nigel tells me, it will be ages before I have to sing and so I may as well just relax and enjoy the other performances. Karen Elliott is singing early in this class and

once again her performance is superb. I am left speechless at her control, technical ability and the pure beauty of her tone. 'Karen's won again then', says Helen. The competitor following Karen, Glynn Morris also attracts extra interest as he is one of the few competitors from outside the Isle of Man. His performance of 'O Tu Palermo' from *I Vespri Siciliani* by Verdi is very impressive and I decide that Glynn will be a voice to watch throughout the festival. Following Glynn is Angela's performance of the Tchaikovsky. I feel a rush of adrenaline as she walks onto the stage and am pleased that I have this extra opportunity to run through the words and notes quietly in my head. Angela's performance is excellent and I can feel my nerves starting to take over. It is soon time to make my way backstage and, during a break between performances, I proceed along the back of the stalls and down to the front of the right hand side aisle where the entrance from the auditorium to the stage is placed. Once backstage I tell the steward that I am present and begin quietly humming to myself. Nerves are beginning to come into play again and I can feel my chest tightening and my breath quickening. I am now quite excited by the impending performance and any trace of ill-health from earlier has now passed as adrenaline completely takes over. The aria I have chosen takes place in Act one of Tchaikovsky's opera when Joan of Arc is about to leave her beloved fields and mountains and head into battle. I have assumed a costume of sorts – a country-esque skirt and a floating top and an accessory of a large wooden cross to grip at appropriate times during the aria. Harry Galbraith, who is once more

singing before me, finishes his performance, comes off stages and wishes me luck. I take my place in the wings and make 'scared' faces at Judith sitting over by the piano. I take several deep breaths in the hope I can get my nerves under control. 'Competitor number 14...'. It is horrible walking onto the stage at the Gaiety because you see the audience before they see you. There is a split second of silence and I think that no one is going to clap as I come on. Of course, this is not the case and as I take my place on the front of the stage in the curve of the piano I hear, to some relief, that people are applauding. Silence falls and I try to arrange my features into something approximating those of a peasant girl about to go into battle. As Judith begins, I internally congratulate myself on my choice of piece as the character requires that I be nervous and uncertain and that's certainly how I'm feeling. In a whirl I somehow sing through the piece and I cannot believe that we have made it to the end. I do, however, have some reservations about my performance – I think that I have gone flat in a few places and my inability to control my nerves mean that my breathing has been all over the place. As I walk off the stage I think I'm shaking even more than before the performance. Waiting in the wings to come on and sing is Ann Fletcher, who sang the same aria the year before. 'Stunning', she says. I smile politely, not really taking too much notice as people are always very encouraging to their fellow competitors and I, in return, wish her luck. I walk back from the stage to the auditorium and people congratulate me as I go by. This encouragement is very nice but my head is spinning, my legs are

wobbling and I need to sit down. I eventually get back to where Helen, Alison and Nigel are. 'That was ace,' says Helen. Of course, these people are my friends and I expect them to be complimentary no matter how I have sounded. However, all three of them seem particularly excited and Helen says that I almost made her cry 'with the emotion of it all'. I push aside these compliments lest my ego get completely out of control and await the recommencement of the competition as we are taking a ten-minute break in the proceedings. People are standing up around the theatre and stretching. By now it is approaching 10.00pm and there are still another ten operatic arias left to sit through. For me, however, the time goes quickly as I'm still somewhat on an adrenaline fuelled high after my performance and I'm looking forward to the adjudication. As Stuart Smith walks onto the stage to give his adjudication it is clear that he has got the measure of the Manx audience and knows how to build suspense with regard to who has won the class and the respective voice categories. He begins by reading out the general marks for the class and then gives the names of the six people winning the voice categories. He does not give the marks for these people however, so the audience still does not know who has won. I am pleased to discover that I am the winner of the Mezzo-Soprano trophy, but the main surprise for the audience is that the soprano trophy for the first time in over ten years has not gone to Karen Elliott but to Ruth Tickle for her rendition of 'Deh Vieni non Tardar!' from *The Marriage of Figaro* by Mozart. The Contralto trophy goes to Denise Groenewald, the tenor to Simon Bampton, the

baritone to John Qualtrough and the Bass to Glynn Morris. Then... it's time for the final adjudication. Three competitors, John, Denise and Simon are all given 86 marks, Ruth is awarded 88 (by this point I'm feeling sick as my highest place in the operatic previously had been fourth overall. It is amazing how much this placing suddenly seems to matter). Glynn is awarded 89 and I am given 90! I cannot believe it – I have come first overall. Stuart Smith invites me back onstage to collect the trophy and offers warm words of congratulations. I have just left the stage when I have to go back on again to collect my certificate. By now I am quite convinced that people are sick of the sight of me, but I am enjoying the moment and I feel like I'm walking on air. I can't ever recall feeling so happy and excited. I sign for the trophies that I have received in the back stage area and I see Judith. I thank her as I'm sure that my success has definitely had something to do with the quality of her accompanying. 'I just knew when we were doing it' she says, 'everything just felt right'. Everyone is congratulating me, which is nice, by now I feel so stunned that I can't really speak. I just sort of nod and smile in everyone's general direction. Eventually I make my way over to Helen, Nigel and Alison who are waiting patiently and who are looking just as excited as I am. We gather together all our belongings. I keep hold of my trophies and the others kindly carry my other things and we head for home. Back at Nigel's house I have my garlic on toast and head straight to bed as the Lieder class is due to begin at 9.15am the next day. It is about midnight as I switch off the light and I know I must

get to sleep straight away as my alarm is set for six the next day in order that I may both wake up and warm up in time for the class. I still cannot believe that I have come first in the operatic class at the Manx Music Festival, more than that I cannot feel how much a part of the whole festival that this success has made me feel. I know it will take some time for all of this to sink in and I eventually end up getting to sleep sometime after three. Concentration on my performance and subsequent success in the opera class have meant that all thoughts of observing the festival from a field researcher's perspective have, on this occasion, completely flown my mind.

Tuesday 29th April

Feeling extremely groggy after only three hours sleep I drag myself out of bed and downstairs to have my garlic breakfast. Right now the excitement of the night before has faded and all I want to do is crawl back to bed. I'm not generally a morning person anyway but added to this the fact that I have to begin warming up by 7.00am, it all seems somewhat crazed. I imagine in my head that all around the Island there are tired singers trying to motivate themselves to get going before the early start of the Lieder. In my half awake state I tell myself that it must say something about the status of the Manx Music Festival and the role it plays in the lives of its participants if they are prepared to subject themselves to such early morning extremes. The Lieder is the class that I am currently least looking forward to as the set piece by Strauss is extremely difficult. There are still several

places where I am not sure of what note follows which and how it all fits together with the accompaniment. After an hour or so of scales it is 8.15am and time to set off. Although I am only staying a ten minute drive from Douglas, the rush hour traffic means that it will take at least 40 minutes to get to town. I arrive at the church at 9.00am. Helen has not come with me as she was still in the process of getting up when I left, she has decided to cycle in later and Nigel has gone to work, so I am attending on my own. The soprano and contralto classes are taking place first and I see Jane Mayne sitting in the hall so I go and join her. I am very jealous of the contralto's as they have as their set piece '*Zuignung*' by Strauss, which is one of my all-time favourite songs. There are six lieder classes for the separate voice types, each with their own prize. However, an overall winner is selected in an evening competition where the six prize winners sing against one another. The winner of the soprano class is Ruth Tickle and Jane wins the contralto class. The morning's classes see a new adjudicator, Mary Powney, and I feel slightly anxious about this as one never knows how each new adjudicator will react to the performances. So far she appears to be looking for good German pronunciation and 'a sense of really understanding what the song is about.' Her adjudications are well received by the audience although she is noticeably less flamboyant in her manner than Stuart Smith. Before the Mezzo class begins I take myself outside to do a bit of humming up and down a few scales. I see Linda Corkish, who tells me that her throat is very sore and that she was really disappointed

that she had to withdraw from the operatic class. I give her my tip about raw garlic, but she doesn't look too convinced! Soon it is time for the mezzo class to begin. Angela Stewart sings first and I sing second. The Lieder is in the very small space of the worship centre of the church but it seems more appropriate for this more intimate class than the Oratorio. I take my place at the front and suddenly feel even more nervous than usual when I hear a lady sitting near the front say, 'this is the girl who won the opera'. The introduction begins. I am aiming for a somewhat introspective, intense performance with a quiet dynamic throughout. Although this performance style had vaguely worked in practice my voice does not stand up to the sustained breath control needed once nerves have taken over. I can feel my voice wobbling all over the place and I run out of breath before reaching the end of a number of phrases. The worst moment is the very final note where I sound like I'm trilling because the wobble has become so bad and I can see an audience member slowly shaking her head at the back of the hall. I am relieved when it is all over and I am glad to return to my seat. 'Was that awful?', I ask Helen. 'Well... I could see that you were nervous,' she responds. Next to sing is Linda Corkish who has a far louder dynamic and who takes the whole pieces at a much quicker tempo than my own. This approach seems to suit the song far better and Linda has no problems either with breath or voice control. All too soon the class is over and I am dreading the adjudication but keep telling myself that even if I get the worst mark of my life at least I know why and I will always have the opera class to

remember... Mary Powney comments upon how this particularly piece is by far and away the most difficult of all of the set lieder pieces. I am pleased that she has, at least, made those not singing the song aware of this fact as I don't like to think that the mezzo-sopranos have come across as being any less able than the other voice categories. The adjudicator gives comments on each of the individual performances and I feel no surprise when she mentions my 'lack of control at the end'. She does, however, comment generously on my expressive use of tone colour and I don't feel too ashamed. Linda is awarded first place with 86 marks, to my surprise I am awarded second place with 85 which I don't feel I deserve at all. With my most dreaded performance out of the way I settle down to watch the men's lieder classes. Glynn Morris is the only competitor in the Bass class and is awarded 87 marks, quadruple Cleveland Medallist, Peter Cringle, takes the Tenor class with 86 marks, and John Qualtrough the Baritone also with 86.

The final class of the morning is the 16 and under 27 vocal solo class. There are four entries, one of whom is Ruth Tickle and who would, on paper, seem a clear favourite to win. The Competitors in this class have to sing two contrasting songs of their own choice that are not already in the syllabus and which exclude Oratorio, Opera, Lieder and Folk Song. The singers in the class range from Ruth's developed and trained voice to the much smaller and less trained voices of those still at school. What is nice about the class, I think, is that each of the

competitors, even though their voices are so different, have something unique to offer with regard to interpretation, style and vocal quality and this is something that Mary Powney comments on. Ruth actually comes second in the class overall with the winner being 18 year old Olivia Black. The adjudicator explains her choice by saying that Olivia's songs were particularly suited to her voice. With the end of this class the morning's competitions are over. I am relieved that I have no more singing to do on Tuesday and feel that, possibly for the first time in the week, concentrate my thoughts onto observing and interpreting the remainder of the days events.

The Special Solos are the most eagerly awaited of all the competitions as it is these who decide the line up for the Cleveland Medal Test. The first of these competitions takes place on Tuesday afternoon and is the Special Baritone Solo. Whilst some of the evening classes offer more of a light-hearted opportunity for enjoyment, this afternoon the atmosphere is deadly serious. Stuart Smith is the adjudicator and I am keen to hear his adjudication as he will also be adjudicating my class and it may give an insight into what he is looking for. The marks in the baritone class are close but the overall winner is three times Cleveland Medallist Graham Crowe, with John Qualtrough in second place. The other Special Solo class of the afternoon is the Contralto. This class offers three competitors but, again, they are closely matched and there is no obvious clear winner. I am struck by the beauty of one of the test pieces, Tchaikovsky's *'Nur Wer Die Sehn*

Sucht Kennt' and resolve to obtain a copy as soon as the festival is over. I cannot separate the singers myself as all of the performances seem to have something special to offer and I don't envy the adjudicator his task. Denise Groenewald is awarded first place with 86, Ann Fletcher second with 85 and Jane Mayne third with 84. I am surprised with Jane's mark as I had thought her rendition of the Tchaikovsky particularly beautiful and I wonder if her decision to sing the song in English may have been reflected in her marks. The Special Tenor Solo is the final class of the afternoon. Again, the voice are well matched but it clear that the competition is between the final two singers- - Michael Corkhill and Peter Cringle. In my opinion, Michael's performance bursts with energy and enthusiasm, whilst Peter's is more controlled and reflects his wealth of experience. It is this control that gets the nod in the end with 87 marks going to Peter and 86 to Michael. And, so, the first three in the Cleveland line up have been decided. Overall, I have noted that Stuart Smith appear to be looking for variety within the songs, colour, contrast and not over emphasising the words at the expense of the vocal line. I rush home in the tea break to put the adjudicator's advice into my own 'special' pieces.

The evening class is the popular 'Victorian and Edwardian Ballads' with an option for the performers to wear costume if they so desire. The class begins at 7.00pm and there are 43 competitors to get through. This class is one of the 'lighter' classes of the week and the

competitors enjoy the opportunity to inject some fun into their performances. The audience also love this class as it affords them the opportunity to become further involved with the proceedings and they often join in the more well known refrains. What Stuart Smith, who is again adjudicating, makes of all this is difficult to see, but the theatre is full and the atmosphere is charged with enthusiasm. There are many old favourites on offer from '*Keep the Home Fires Burning*' to '*Macushla*' to '*Rose of Picardy*'. I am amazed by how many of the songs the audience seems to know that I have never heard of but it seems easy it is to pick up these songs by the time fifth or sixth rendition of the chorus is reached and we join in with great gusto. Perhaps this is part of the appeal of this class and these songs in that they are accessible to everyone and allow everyone to feel involved. When Stuart Smith comes to give his adjudication at 11.45pm, he earns himself a few murmurs of disapproval when he announces 'these songs are not great music', but he goes on to say how enjoyable they are. He is disappointed that so many of the singers encouraged the audience to join in as he feels that this has detracted from the performances. However, he rescues himself from further audience disapproval by saying that he realises that such a class at this is not about serious music-making, but about enjoyment and participation and so he goes on to give the marks. In first place is Karen Elliott with 90 marks for her rendition of '*Ah, Moon of My Delight*' by Lehmann and in second place is James Mitchell with his performance of '*At Santa Barbara*' by Russell. The prize-winners collect their

collect their certificates and trophies, we sing the Manx National Anthem and it is time to go home and prepare for the challenges of the next day. With only three hours sleep last night and no adrenaline to fuel me this evening, I am looking forward to getting to bed.

Wednesday 30th April

I allow myself the luxury of mini-lie in this morning and don't get out of bed until 10.00am. I'm on my own today as Nigel has gone to work and Helen has left the house early and so I enjoy the chance to be quiet for a few moments. I cannot believe that we are more than half way through the Guild already and I look through my programme and my field notebook mulling over the events of the past few days. With a few hours to spare I take the time to write up the field notes I have made so far. At this festival the notes are impressionistic and based upon observations made in between my own performances. I am not concerned with the time I am devoting to my own performances at the festival. In previous years I have concentrated far more in the research aspect of my participation and, also, the level of participation and the significance the festival now has for me allows me to appreciate personally how all consuming being a competitor in the festival can be. Given that it is the special classes this afternoon I am feeling remarkably calm and my warm-up goes quite well. Although neither of the two pieces for the special class are what could be called easy, the Purcell, in particular, is challenging and so I spend the

majority of my time concentrating on this. I am conscious that I have two classes in the evening to prepare for but I push thoughts of these to the back of my mind as all my current focus needs to be on the Special pieces.

The Mezzo class is the first of the afternoon's solo classes and I am quite pleased as it means I can warm up to the point of arriving at the theatre without having to worry about how long I will need to wait before I sing. I am also pleased that, in this instance, I am singing last in the class as it affords me the opportunity of hearing how the others in the class are singing. Everybody before me is singing very well. My own performance is, I feel, adequate. As I walk back over to our place in the stalls I see Helen, Nigel and Alison have arrived and they seem enthusiastic – but, again, they are my friends and I am sure that however I have sang they would find something encouraging to say. As Stuart Smith walks onto stage to applause from those sitting around the theatre, I can feel my nerves rising. It is strange, but I often find the adjudication even more stressful than the performance. It is only at this stage the fact of being judged presents itself as a harsh reality and it is not a pleasant sensation. He begins his adjudication by giving general comments on the class and his comments are similar to those of yesterday. He then move to the individual adjudication and offers some thoughts about each of the performances. About my performance he comments that he thought my performance of the Purcell was 'shrewd' because I chose to use

rubato at the end of phrases allowing myself some time to breathe thus allowing me to sustain the long phrases. However, he states that he doesn't feel I used enough contrast in the first verse, but that the second was much better with 'some quite lovely touches'. He continues to say that he felt the Delius captured the light, dance like element of the pieces although he would have liked to see even more dynamic variety and use of tone colours. 'And so the marks... Linda Corkish 85, Helen Prescott 86, Angela Stewart 83, Anna Goldsmith 84, Jean Kennish 85, and Mandy Griffin 88.' I feel a rush of excitement - I will be singing on Cleveland Night for a second time and I cannot believe my luck (and part of me acknowledges that luck plays an important part in the result - a different adjudicator would have produced a different result). I have to go onto the stage to collect my trophy and Stuart Smith congratulates me for 'some very lovely singing' and adds, 'not just today, but I loved your Jeanne D'Arc the other night particularly'. I begin to feel a bit self-conscious as he continues talking to me as I am aware that the audience are looking on and probably wondering what he has to say to me that is taking so long. So, I'm keen to take myself off the stage as soon as possible and return to my seat. On the way back the other competitors in the class congratulate me. I find it difficult to know what to say to them as I know that each of them would have liked to have won the class and be singing on Cleveland Night. In response to their congratulations I mutter 'thanks' and head back to where the others are sitting. As we wait for the next class Marilyn comes over and asks when I would like

to practice for the Cleveland. We arrange to meet the next day and she asks if I can bring a recording of my 'own choice' piece for Saturday night. The remaining solo classes that afternoon pass in something of a blur and other than the fact that Glynn Morris wins the Bass solo with 89, and Karen Elliott the Soprano also with 89 marks, I do not really absorb much of the proceedings as I am too busy thinking forward to Cleveland Night. We leave the theatre at 5.30pm and have approximately one hour before returning for the evening session and I try to focus my thoughts on the evening's classes. I am very worried about the possibility that I will go wrong in both of these songs as they are somewhat under-rehearsed and I am particularly worried about a tuning problem in the unaccompanied first verse of '*Scarborough Fair*'. I practice a few times and every time I go sharp. There is not really any time to panic though as, almost immediately, we have to head back to the theatre. I grab myself an apple to sustain me through the night as I have had no lunch due to singing in the afternoon and no dinner due to singing second in the British Composers. This is a common problem during the festival week and food intake has to become a carefully planned operation. We arrive in time for the Lieder final where the six winners of the individual Lieder classes sing once more in order to decide the overall winner. Glynn Morris is awarded the overall prize and people are beginning to talk about what a successful week he is having and whether the Cleveland is his for the taking. A few other friends, including Graham Watterson, come over and sit with us. Graham is

laughing because he has written the words for the folk song class all over his hands. Often the smaller classes, such as the folk song, have less practice time devoted to them and, as in Graham's case, extraordinary measures are taken in order to get through the performance. As I go to make my way backstage in order to prepare for the British Composers I discover that Glynn, due to sing first, has decided to withdraw from this class which means I am first to sing. This completely throws my composure and I rush down to the entrance to the stage in time to hear the steward making the customary announcements at the start of the class and informing the audience that I will be first to sing. I walk onto stage and as I am halfway on the steward assisting Stuart Smith shouts 'we're not ready, hold on.' The audience have not yet begun to clap and with the steward's cry, they hold off. I feel mortified and am unsure whether to go back off and come on again or whether to just wait. I decide to move nearer the comfort of the piano and just wait there. After what seems an age, although is probably actually only a matter of minutes, Stuart Smith shouts 'ok', and I look at the pianist, Mary Frankwick, to signal that I am ready to begin. My choice for this class is Purcell's '*Music for a While*' and, again, I feel that my performance is adequate but nothing beyond this. I am very glad that the experience of singing first in the class is over and that I have made it from beginning to end without any obvious mistakes. There is, however, no opportunity of sitting back and enjoying the rest of the class as I am already panicking about my lack of tuning in the folk song class. I've brought

along a tuning fork that I might continually strike it and get the pitch of *Scarborough Fair* firmly established in my brain. A few of the audience members sitting around us give me the odd strange look as I slap my wrist with the fork and hold it to my ear every time a performance comes to an end. There are officially twenty-eight competitors in the British Composers class, but a number have withdrawn and so it soon draws to a close. Stuart Smith in his, by now, familiar way announces the marks for the competitors who are not in the highest places first. He has held back six performances upon which to give an individual adjudication and, to my surprise, I am one of them. I am awarded 87 marks which turns out to be enough for joint third place. In first place is John Qualtrough, awarded 90 marks for singing 'Spring Sorrow' by Ireland and in joint second are Graham Crowe and Hilda Harrison. Hilda is one of the few competitors who come from outside the Isle of Man and, due to her regular attendance at and enthusiasm for the festival, she is a popular figure during the festival week. Along with the prizes for first and second place it is announced that there will be an extra prize, the *Margaret Lane Award* to be given to the most promising performance in the class. I have a combined mixture of pleased and mortification when I hear my name being called out as the recipient of the award. The mortification is primarily due to the fact that I don't feel I did the Purcell song the remotest justice and that there is, surely, a more deserving cause than myself. This angst disappears, however, when I discover the award comes with a prize of £50 – the supper will be on

me later in the evening! Before any thoughts of celebration take over there is the nightmare of the folksong to be undertaken. Usually the folksong is one of my favourite classes as it takes place in a smaller venue and has a friendly and intimate atmosphere. Tonight, for some reason, it is taking place in the theatre which not only formalises it by utilising the proscenium stage, but also means that there are far greater audience numbers in attendance than is usual in this class. With my concerns over tuning, particularly in the light of the award received for the British Composers, the familiar feeling of nerves are beginning to build. Making my nerves worse is the fact that I am singing after double Cleveland Medallist Christine Bregazzi. Christine is not only another fellow mezzo but is also one of the handful of singers at the festival who has trained at music college and her voice is outstanding. She sings the most beautiful unaccompanied song entitled '*The Boatman*' and is rewarded with tremendous applause. I plod on to take my turn and I go over to Judith Christian at the piano and whisper that if I do go out of tune she is just to keep playing and that I'll right myself as soon as possible. I take my starting note from the piano and begin the first verse. As Judith begins to play I feel tremendous relief that, although I am not absolutely in tune, I am close enough to adjust as soon as the piano starts playing and hope that none of the audience or, indeed, the adjudicator will have noticed. The relief is so great that my concentration slips and I stumble over some words. I make it to the end without any major incident though and allow myself to relax for the first time since

arriving at the theatre earlier in the day. The Folk Song class has 26 competitors but it is soon time for the results. Stuart Smith commences his adjudication by saying that folk song is not necessarily about 'having the most beautiful voice but about giving a convincing and true performance.' In this case, however, he awards first prize to a performance that had both. I don't think anyone in the theatre is surprised that the first place is awarded to Christine Bregazzi with 88 marks. I am awarded second place with 87 marks. As I come off stage after collected my certificate I bump into Angela Stewart who informs me that she has her money on me in 'the sweep' for Cleveland Night. She had told me the same thing last year and I tell her not to expect any return on her investment! We leave the theatre close to 11.00pm and treat ourselves to chips on the way home. It has been a successful day and I am so very excited that I'm going to be able to sing in the Cleveland final once more.

Thursday 1st May

I have a further a lie-in on Thursday morning. My focus is now on preserving what is left of my voice until Saturday evening. I am beginning to feel quite tired now, which I think is a combination of my on-going throat condition, nervous exhaustion and bad diet during the festival period. Following breakfast I warm up and have a run through of the own-choice song I have chosen for the Cleveland final. I have selected 'The Swimmer' from Elgar's *Sea Pictures*. This is a long piece running to around six minutes in total and requiring dramatic

characterisation. So far I have been singing along with my recording of Janet Baker performing the work but it is soon going to be time for my rehearsal with Marilyn and I won't have Dame Janet to rely on. In the copy of the music Elgar has been very specific in his use of dynamic markings so the singer has a clear sense of what the composer requires. My only worry with this piece is that it ends of held top 'A' and that I will not have enough voice left to sustain it. However, for now, I am focused on remembering the words and notes in the right order at the right time.

I arrive at Marilyn's house for our rehearsal at 2.00pm. I have skipped lunch and decide that I will eat after our rehearsal and this should sustain me until after the 'Shows' class tonight. Marilyn and I talk through the Elgar and I am pleased when she says how much she likes the piece. I had worried that the accompaniment, which is an orchestral reduction, was rather dense. This worry, however, was unfounded as Marilyn has no problems with it and our first sing through goes well. Marilyn is very complimentary, which is encouraging for me at this stage, and all of the notes come out. It is quite difficult to gage how the thing sounds as a while as generating sufficient sound to fill Marilyn's front room is quite different to filling a large theatre. We have a break and discuss which of the test pieces that will best compliment the Elgar. I have decided that the Purcell probably provides the best contrast both in terms of the vocal line and the accompaniment. Although it is the more difficult of the two pieces

I was pleased with how this went in the Special class itself and I feel I can use the adjudicator's comments to assist in shaping this piece further. We sing through the Purcell, which is really just a matter of keeping it ticking over and we decide that one run through is sufficient for the day. Before I leave we practice the Elgar one more time and by the time I leave I feel confident that I will not be embarrassing myself on Cleveland night. I also love singing the Elgar piece which is a definite help to the rehearsal process. Marilyn and I arrange to meet again the next day and with that I am on my way.

I take myself into Douglas town centre for lunch and go to the food court of a local shopping mall. Since the Guild has moved from its self-contained home in the Villa Marina complete with the eating and drinking facilities that this provided, the festival participants have been forced to move further afield when it comes to lunch and tea-breaks. In an attempt to compensate for this there is a small café set up in the Loch Promenade Church but this fills up very quickly and members of the festival community have found places elsewhere. I am pleased that the clientele of the food court I have chosen is patronised almost entirely by festival personnel as it confirms to me that the socialising aspect of the festival is still very much in force even with the venue change. I order my sandwich and choose a quiet spot behind a plant from which I can eat in peace whilst still observing the goings on. After all, in spite of the dominance which my own participation in the festival as a competitor has taken this week I am

still aware of the need to observe the interaction of the festival participants. After lunch I go home for a quick practice for the Songs from the Shows class. Ideally I would like to withdraw from this class and save my voice as I am worried about the effect a 'belt' song will have on my already tired voice before the big event on Saturday. However, I know that it is not looked kindly upon when Cleveland finalists withdraw from classes both from an organisational perspective and from the audience point of view. Also, I really enjoy this class as it is the largest of the week in terms of the number of competitors and the size of the audience. I sing through '*I Have Confidence*' just once and then spend the rest of my time miming along with a CD recording so I can practice the movement I have planned. I have borrowed a guitar case for the event to add an authentic 'Julie Andrews' touch and have also purchased an outfit from a local charity shop similar to that which Ms Andrews wears in the film. I am beginning to regret the guitar case as it is much heavier than it looks even without the guitar inside and I am having visions of dropping it mid-song. As I leave for the theatre I am still undecided as to whether to use my 'prop' or not.

The class begins at 6.15pm but I am not singing until number 42 out of a class of 60 competitors. The songs in the class are usually the well-known standards of musical theatre together with a few light opera numbers. Not all of the performances are 'staged', but some people do use costume and props and there is an award for the best-

costumed performance as well as the overall award. If there were an award for the most comic performance then it would surely go to Graham Watterson who has fashioned a pantomime horse type costume where his legs operate the thing as a whole with fake legs astride the horse to give the effect he's riding it. The song which accompanies this horse play is 'Oh What a Beautiful Morning' from *Oklahoma*. The laughter from the audience is so great that I would be surprised if anyone can hear Graham's singing at all. I'm even more amazed that he is able to sing the song with a straight face. I understand from his friends that he has had several pints of 'dutch courage' to help him through! My performance arrives at about 10.30pm. I still haven't quite decided what to do about the guitar but once the song begins it seems appropriate to place it down on the stage and not worry about it. However, this plan goes slightly awry as by the end of the piece I have moved away from the case and have to awkwardly shuffle sideways in order to pick it up at the end. The remainder of the 'Shows' class passes fairly quickly which is always a nice feature of singing later in the running order of this class. Mary Powney is again adjudicating this evening and she is welcomed onto the stage with the usual applause. She briefly outlined what she was looking for in the class and states that it is too late and too large a class for her to give individual adjudication on every competitor - this comment is again met with applause as the audience have been present since 6.15pm and it is now past 11.30pm. She reads the marks from beginning to end and I am pleased to find I have been

given 87 marks. The winner is a lady called Sarah Nicholls who, for her rendition of 'Maybe This Time' from *Cabaret* is awarded 92 marks and who is following something of a family trait as her mother won this class some years earlier. We stand to sing the Manx National Anthem, I collect my music and mark sheet and it is finally time to head home.

Friday 2nd May 2003

I have designated this day officially a rest day, although there is no time for a lie-in as I am seeing Marilyn at 10.30am for our next Cleveland practice. I warm-up and have a quick run through with my CDs of Dame Janet Baker and Dawn Upshaw respectively. Marilyn and I have a gentle practice as I am never vocally at my best in the mornings. We arrange to have a final practice at the same time the next day and I take advantage of having no classes of my own on Friday to attend some of the junior classes at the festival. At the end of the afternoon session I head home for a quick run through of the Cleveland pieces before heading back for the evening's session.

The evening begins with the Ladies Voice Duet at 6.45pm, a popular class with 13 entries. The choice of piece in the duet classes is own-choice and there is a wide range from Victorian and Edwardian repertoire to more modern arrangements. The outstanding competitors in the Ladies Class, however, are Marlene Hendy and Dilys Sowry singing an arrangement of a folk tune that was written

especially for them by former Guild accompanist and music scholar Dr Fenella Bazin. Their rendition of '*Padjer Column Killey*' suits their very distinctive and unusual voices perfectly and they are deserving winners with 90 marks. Following the ladies duet is the Sheffield Plate final. This class is like a Cleveland Medal final for the junior soloists. I am always amazed how these young singers, ranging from 6 to 15 are able to stand up in such a large space and give poised performances of their test pieces with seemingly no obvious nerves. Tonight's competition is no exception and the overall prize is given to the winner of the Girls' Solo (14 and under 16) but all of the competitors are invited onto the stage to receive the applause of the audience. The next class is the Vocal Ensemble (14 and over) in which there are three entries who each sing a piece of their own choice. The first to sing are The '*Manx Savoyards*' who are a group made up from members of the Manx Gilbert and Sullivan Society. They are directed by John Elliott and their choice of piece is Stanford's '*The Blue Bird*' featuring Karen Elliott as the soprano soloist. The second group provide quite a contrast. The *Lhon Dhoo Ensemble*, made up of members of the Lhon Dhoo Male Voice Choir, present a lively performance of a piece entitled '*Give Me That Old Time Religion*' by Simmons. Finally the *Northern Lights* give a nice performance of an arrangement of '*Faith in Spring*' by Schubert. The *Northern Lights* are duly awarded first prize and this win, the first by the group, receives warm applause from the audience. The next class of the evening, the Operatic Duet, has had a number of withdrawals and only two are left

remaining to sing. Doreen Smith and Hilda Harrison sing 'The Letter Duet' from *The Marriage of Figaro* by Mozart, whilst Jane Corkill and Ruth Tickle sing the popular 'Flower Duet' from *Lakme* by Delibes. Jane and Ruth are awarded first place with 90 marks. The Mixed Voice Duet, which follows, is won by Helen Prescott and Allan Wilcocks with their interpretation of 'The Singing Lesson' by Squire. The highlight of the evening, however, comes with the Male Voice Duet. This class always has a large number of entries and the friendly rivalry between the competitors coupled with some excellent singing makes for a good competition to end the evening. Andrew Williamson and Peter Cringle, who between them have a grand total of six Cleveland medals, are awarded first place with 89 marks and the evening draws to a close. Whilst I have enjoyed the evening, I am glad to be going home as I have felt rather restless with the excitement for Cleveland Night building. It feels rather like Christmas Eve with the sense of the anticipation and I can't wait to wake up and the big day will have arrived.

Saturday 3rd May – Cleveland Night

I awake with a mixture of complete excitement coupled with sadness that the festival is now, once more, drawing to a close. I have arranged to meet Nigel at the choral classes in the afternoon and I spend the morning doing a gentle warm-up before heading to Marilyn's for our final practice. This practice goes well and I am feeling confident that this evening will be okay. I say goodbye to

Marilyn and make my way to the Gaiety for the classes beginning at 1.00pm. I meet Nigel on the way in and we ruefully discuss how another year is over. We decide that instead of sitting in our usual positions at the back of the stalls we will sit at the front of the dress-circle and once there we meet Graham Watterson who is singing with one of the choirs. The choir classes are enjoyable but there are number of observations that can be made with regard to the average age of the choir members, the size of the choirs and the choice of repertoire. The vast majority of choir members are older rather than younger and one wonders what will happen to the choirs when these members are unable to sing. Also, the chosen pieces are not especially challenging and the standard of the choral singing is not high. However, the afternoon is enjoyable and provides a welcome distraction to my Cleveland Night butterflies and has provided some final relaxation. Once home I have about two hours to get ready for Cleveland Night and much of this is spent doing hair and make-up. Looking the part feels as important as the singing and the syllabus expressly requires that 'those taking part observe the special nature of the occasion and dress appropriately.'²¹³ I allow an hour for warming up as I want to make sure that I am as ready as possible. The warm up takes the form of gentle exercises throughout the whole of my range and a sing through of both pieces. By the time we leave for the theatre I am feeling quite good. My voice is sounding fine and my nerves are, at least for now, under control. The night begins at

²¹³ Festival Syllabus 2003

7.00pm with the final of the duets class. As I make my way backstage I see the finalists waiting to go on. Wishing people luck I make my way to a dressing room so I can keep exercising my voice while the duets are taking place. I find that I am sharing a dressing room with Denise Groenewald, the contralto finalist, and I am glad of the company. Neither of us speaks much however as we continue to prepare for the performance. I swallow about three packets of various throat sweets and keep humming gently. The performances from on stage play through the tannoy system into the dressing rooms and it is nice to hear what is taking place. As Marlene Hendy and Dilys Sowry are announced as the overall winners I decide to go and wait backstage. By now my nerves are building and I try to keep taking deep breaths to keep them under control. I am not singing until number five in the running order, so I find a chair to sit down on until it is my turn. Denise is the first to sing and is waiting in the wings whilst the steward introduces her. Denise has chosen to sing the Tchaikovsky test piece and Madeline Dring's '*Song of a Nightclub Proprietress*' as her own choice piece. Second to sing is the Baritone, Graham Crowe who sings his chosen pieces beautifully. Following Graham is the 2002 Medalist, Karen Elliott who, as ever, gives a flawless performance. Bass, Glynn Morris follows Karen and I move from my chair to the side of the stage. Glynn's performance seems to go on until eternity and I start to feel sick as my nerves begin to get the better of me. I try and think of my own pieces but I cannot seem to recall them in my head. As Glynn finishes, panic sets in and as he

walks past me off the stage my voice squeaks a congratulations to him. The steward introduces me by saying:

The winner of the Special Mezzo – Soprano class was Mandy Griffin. She is going to begin with her test piece '*If Music be the Food of Love*' by Purcell and then sing '*The Swimmer*' by Elgar as her own choice. Ladies and Gentlemen, Mandy Griffin.

I walk out to the applause of the audience and thankfully my nerves seem to calm. It is a relief to see Marilyn sitting at the piano and as I head towards her I feel really excited about the two songs to be performed. I take my place by the piano and Marilyn plays the opening chord of the Purcell. I am aware that I am not singing it the best I possibly can but we make it to the end without any major mistakes. I am anxious that I haven't provided enough expression or contrast and determine to make up for this in the Elgar. The Elgar goes well and the final top 'a' lasts for its full length at its fortissimo volume. I bow to acknowledge the applause of the audience and head offstage. I see Peter Cringle, the tenor finalist, waiting in the wings and as I walk past him he says, 'that's the song to win it with'. With my own performance over I stay in the wings to watch Peter. Peter has been having memory slips all week and tonight is no different. His accompanist, Marilyn Cannell, realises what is happening and cleverly disguises a small slip with her playing. Peter finishes his performance and the Cleveland contest is, with the exception of the

adjudication, over for another year. The steward announces that there will a twenty minute interval before the performance by Ailish Tynan, this year's Cleveland Final adjudicator, and her accompanist, Simon Lepper, will take place. I go back into the auditorium and attempt to find Helen and Nigel. As I make my way towards them several people congratulate me and tell me that they think I will be the winner of the competition. I have a feeling that people say this to all of the finalists and so I don't take the prediction too seriously. Eventually I get to my seat and settle back to watch the second half of the evening's entertainment knowing that my part is now done.

Ailish Tynan is astoundingly good and I worry that she makes those of us who have taken part in the Cleveland Final look sub-standard. The feeling does not last long, however, as the pure exuberance and skill displayed throughout this mini-recital are such that one can only sit back and marvel.²¹⁴ Ailish and Simon's recital comes to a close with a double encore and it is then time for the serious business of the announcing of the winner of the 2003 Cleveland Medal. The festival always ends with the committee, accompanists and adjudicators sitting on the stage and there are various speeches that always take place. Tonight is no different and as the curtains on the Gaiety Stage open for the final time of the festival I can feel stomach churning nerves building once more. The Chairman of the Festival is

²¹⁴ Since adjudicating at the festival Ailish Tynan represented Ireland in the 2003 BBC Singer of the World Competition where she was awarded the Song Prize.

known for his lengthy final night speeches and as he is in full flow I am just willing his to get on with it so we can know the result of the Cleveland. Everybody is thanked, presentations are made to committee members, accompanists, adjudicators and to Ailish Tynan and Simon Lepper and everybody is thanked once more. Finally, the Chairman hands over to Ailish Tynan to make her announcement. Ailish does not prolong the agony any longer. She says:

All of these singers are accomplished technically and all of them sang the right notes in the right way, so I've decided to go for the performance that entertained me the most and that was the Bass singer, Glynn Morris.

There is a communal intake of breath around the auditorium before loud applause breaks out throughout the theatre. I don't feel disappointed that Glynn has won the medal, indeed I think he is a worthy winner. I do, however, feel a little deflated and suddenly very tired. Glynn is only the second non-Manx resident in the history of the festival to have won the Cleveland Medal and I wonder how the festival community feel about this. However, if there are any misgivings that the medal has gone away from the Island there are no signs of this as Glynn is warmly applauded as he goes onto the stage to receive his medal. As Glynn leaves the stage, the Chairman enthuses that tonight we will sing the first, second, third and last verses of the Manx National Anthem and the festival community rise

for the final time of the 2003 festival and lustily sings their way through the verses. With the final verse of the anthem over the 2003 festival is over and the festival community begins to make its way out of the theatre.

Outside the theatre a group of us decide to go for a post-festival drink in one of the local hotels. When the festival is held in its usual Villa Marina home there is usually a post-festival buffet supper where everyone can gather and mull over the events of the week. This opportunity was unable to take place in the surrounds of the Gaiety but it is good to wind down with a few drinks and festival talk for a few hours. We eventually head home at about 2.00am and, following a few rounds of toast, it is time for bed. I find it very difficult to sleep however as I am too busy playing over the memories of the past week. Twelve months until the next Guild seems an awful long time away and as I go to sleep I am already beginning to plan what I will sing in 2004.

Thoughts on Participative Process

The above account has aimed to show how all those who participate in the festival has their identity in some way shaped and formed by their participation and that each individual who participates draws their own motivation and response from the festival process. What the account has also shown is some of the inherent problems that can be

found from approaching the research from the perspective of a participant observer. It is, for example, difficult to get an equal balance between the time devoted to the field research – for example, observing, taking notes, speaking to other participants in the festival – and also be able to give the necessary time and attention to the demands of being a competitor. Both place different demands upon the researcher and both require a somewhat different mindset in that the focus is on others when it comes to field research but firmly and absolutely on the self when performing. Switching between the two roles during the course of an evening is a challenge and one which is not easy to negotiate. What was useful in the research for this dissertation was the ability to attend a number of festivals and whilst allowing for the dual role of participant/observer in all of them, to shift the focus away from the observational toward the participational. This shift was something of a natural one in the case of the Manx Music Festival as the identity of the researcher as a competitor and a known participant was one which developed over the course of time. The participation as a competitor, not only was the identity of the researcher raised in the festival society, but also the festival, and participation in the festival, became a part of the researcher's own identity. Had there just been one opportunity for participant/observation at one festival then I think the negotiation would have been more problematic. As it is, it has allowed for the researcher to experience the festival from two very different but very genuine perspectives.

One aspect mentioned above and seen throughout the account is the ever increasing significance of the festival as a part of the researcher's own identity and this raises the questions as to why this was. By providing some analysis of the researcher's changing motivations for competitive participation it is possible to provide some possible speculation as to the motivations of other competitors and why the event as a whole is, has been, and remains so successful. As outlined at the start of this chapter, the initial motivation of the researcher for participating as a competitor was to enable an approach to the field research having an established identity within the festival society and thus overcoming some of the problems encountered during the first field research period in 2000. By 2003 the researcher's own involvement with the festival had developed to the extent that the participation in the festival as a competitor was now as much motivated from a personal desire to continue being involved in the festival as a competitor as it was to use it as a tool for aiding field research. Self analysis leads the researcher to draw a number of conclusions as to why this change in motivation took place. Firstly, the festival provides a link with the researcher's childhood and participation as a competitor in the festival allows a link to be maintained with this time. Secondly, the researcher's unexpected success as a competitor - reaching the Cleveland Medal final, for example, was neither hoped for or expected but provided an extraordinary sense of personal achievement - provided a spur to

develop this aspect of the researcher's identity further. Thirdly, the atmosphere of the festival, and it is perhaps difficult to fully explain to those who have not attended, is such that it provides a feeling of expectation, excitement, enjoyment and opportunity for all participants in whatever capacity and allows escape from the 'real world' at least for one week of the year. These three points are quite general ones but the festival affords (use examples from Pitts book and footnote as to success of festival)...

The relationship between the researcher, the involvement with the festival and the research itself as presented here is a close one. By acknowledging the extent of the involvement, the researcher has been able to use this participation to view the festival from two perspectives whilst remaining aware of the need for reflexivity. By analysing the relationship of the researcher to the festival, particularly as a relationship that developed and changed throughout the course of the research, the researcher feels able to better understand the motivations and involvement of others participating in the festival. Without this involvement in this way it would have been difficult for the researcher to personally understand the significance of the festival in the lives and the identity of its participants – although, this is not to assume that the festival assumes the same importance to all of its participants.

Whilst the researcher has approached the research with a view to producing an academic study this chapter has aimed to highlight how

closely involved the researcher can become with the research subject when employing the participant observation technique. It has shown how at the centre of the research is the researcher whose own identity is shaped and formed through participation as much as any other participant and acknowledges this relationship as being an essential part of both the research process and the presented research.

CONCLUSION

This dissertation has considered the many ways in which participation in the amateur competition festival, in particular the Manx Music Festival, has contributed to the establishment, growth and maintenance of ideas and ideals of identity. This conclusion considers the findings of the individual chapters and looks at how these reflect upon the thesis posed at the outset of the dissertation.

This thesis was:

Participation in the amateur competitive music festival contributes the formation, development and maintenance of ideas and ideals of identity.

The empirical research undertaken for the dissertation was used to approach the thesis from a number of perspectives including historical contextualisation, ideas of community formation, aspects of society and its structure. Binding this research together was the idea that individuals use and adapt that in which they are participants to inspire, shape and form their own identities.

Having considered how the findings of the empirical research shown in each of the chapters reflect upon the thesis, the conclusion will also suggest possible future directions in which the research could be

expanded and built upon and finishes with a final reflection upon the research process and the dissertation as a whole.

The amateur competitive music festival movement provided an ideal opportunity for participative identity formation for people from all aspects of society. Over time, individuals have used their participation in the festivals as something from which their own identity has been able to be adapted, shaped and formed to their own requirements. The festival movement and the festivals being used as vehicles to inform ideas and ideals of identity formation was discussed in the chapters of the dissertation as follows:

Chapter One

Overall the chapter considers the thesis from a historical perspective and from it the following conclusions can be drawn:

- The initial identity of the competition festival drew upon aspects of Welsh emigrant identity, in particular the Eisteddfod
- Aspects of the Eisteddfod were appropriated and combined with prevalent social ideals, such as music being a force for moral good, thus quickly making the amateur competition festival become a part of a national social identity
- The competition festival quickly established itself as part of the British cultural identity through its keen promotion by the

social and intellectual elite and its acceptance by the lower classes at whom it was aimed to educate

- That those who participated in the festivals adopted the festival on a local level and derived pride in local identity through the achievements at the festivals
- The adoption of the festival competition as part of the individual identity of those participating on any level of involvement from those at the head of the Association and Federation to the youngest competitor at the smallest festival
- The festivals and their participants were able to respond to a changing national social identity

Chapter Two

This chapter introduces the Isle of Man as the locus of the research and examines aspects of identity from both a historical and contemporary perspective. It is possible to draw the following conclusions from Chapter two of the dissertation:

- The current identity of any individual place is shaped by the history that has taken place before
- The Isle of Man in the twenty-first century has a diverse culture that is representative of the historical periods that have shaped and defined its modern day identity

- In the need to define as distinct, those living within a particular situation will draw upon aspects present in its culture and highlight these as being part of a national identity
- In the case of the Isle of Man such an aspect of character is a determination to see the Manx as being a musical nation
- Even within such a determination of being a musical nation the diversity of the Manx identity means that there is unease as to what constitutes 'Manxness'
- The identity of the Manx Music Festival within both this Musical Nation and the Manx nation as a whole is considered by comparing it with another festival often held as being representative of Manx culture, Yn Chruinnaght
- By comparing these two festivals, the place of the Manx Music Festival within the broad, diverse and complex sphere of Manx cultural identity is firmly established

Chapter Three

Chapter three considers the idea of a festival society and how this is formed and overall the chapter draws the following conclusions as to the society of the Manx Music Festival:

- The society of the Manx Music Festival allows for those participating to cast off the identity held by them in Manx

society as a whole and take on the identity held by them within the festival society

- The society of the Manx Music Festival has, throughout its history, allowed for the establishment of definable social groups
- By choosing to participate in the festival individuals identify themselves with one or more of the social groups found within the festival
- The location of the festival has contributed to affording the establishment, growth and expansion of the festival society and the identities found therein

Chapter Four

Chapter four builds on the previous chapters in the dissertation by defining the specific aspects of identity, national, family and individual, found in and through the Manx Music Festival:

- National identity as found within the environment of the festival through its participants
- National identity as found through the Manx Music Festival in the sphere of Manx cultural identity as a whole
- Family identity forged by the festival participants through a long association with the festival

- Individual identity found by the festival participants through their participation in the festival within the festival society
- Individual identity found by the festival participants within Manx society as a whole

Chapter Five

By including an account of the researcher's participation at the 2003 Manx Music Festival the following conclusions can be drawn about the role of the researcher within the research process:

- In research that involves long periods spent in the field environment as a participant in the society being studied it is impossible for the identity of the researcher to remain uninfluenced by the object of study
- By acknowledging the influence that participation in the research has upon the identity of the researcher, insight into a further level of identity found in and through the amateur competition festival can be gained
- Immersion in the Manx Music Festival society over a number of years signifies involvement with that society and it is difficult to separate personal involvement from objective research
- By acknowledging personal involvement the humanistic nature of the research process as an essentially subjective process is

seen and thus the research as an interpretative process is acknowledged

From the above it can be seen that the findings of the dissertation can be summarised as follows: the amateur competition festival has, through historical determination and participation, become a vehicle for the construction and formation of varying aspects of ideas and ideals of identity. The focus on the Manx Music Festival highlights the ways in which participation in the individual festivals contributes to the growth of identity on numerous levels. The longevity of the festival has allowed it to have the stability necessary for it to be considered part of the culture. The Manx Music Festival began at a time of swift cultural change and development and immediately became something that was for the Manx people, rather than the tourists who invaded the Island for five months of every year. This exclusivity found in the festival as being a 'Manx' event meant that it was enveloped into the social and cultural identity of the Manx people. For its participants the festival became a suitable vehicle for the construction of ideals of ethnicity, identity, success and family values whilst also becoming a contributory factor in the growth of musical prowess in the Isle of Man. In the 113-year existence of the festival, the profile of the Manx population may have changed beyond all recognition, but the festival has remained; it is, perhaps, one of a very small number of constants throughout this time. It is this constant presence that has enabled

this competitive music festival to foster ideas and ideals of identity both within and without its immediate confines and become the 'demonstration of the strength of Manx culture' as the late Sir Charles Kerruish suggests in the quotation used in chapter four.

Whilst this study has concentrated on the ideas and ideals of identity formation found through the Manx Music Festival, the scope of this research extends far beyond this one festival.

Future Directions for Research

The piece of research presented here, whilst complete for its own purposes, is something that affords itself to ultimately being a single piece of a wider research project. As seen in the opening historical chapter the overall scope of this research is not merely concerned with the Isle of Man - in broader terms, it is a discussion of how a particular musical practice has contributed to the formation and maintenance of ideas and ideals of identity on a number of levels. The Isle of Man has, in this instance, been chosen as it provides a place with a strong musical tradition, identifiable physical boundaries, an important sense of cultural identity and one of the oldest music festivals that was formed directly upon the Wakefield formula. The consideration presented here, however, is only the beginning in a research process which, if it is to provide a full picture of the contribution of the amateur competitive music festival to ideas and ideals of identity, needs to be used in comparison to similar studies on

other festivals. In order that a comparative study may be carried out, it is suggested that further study using other festivals follow a similar pattern to this study:

1. An in-depth consideration of the history of an area providing a point of contextualisation for the presentation of cultural identity as it is today.
2. A contextualisation of the place of the festival within the identity of the area under study - perhaps provided by a comparative study with a similar cultural event (such as that between the Manx Music Festival and Yn Chruinnaght).
3. A consideration of the individual festival within the area under study, including the history of the festival drawing upon local sources examining the reasons behind its establishment, its growth and spread, the place it now occupies within the local society and the size and structure of the festival.
4. An examination of how the society of the festival is constructed and what the prevalent social groups within the festival are and how membership of these groups strengthens the identity of the society and the identity of those who are members of the groups.
5. A consideration of the further ways in which the festival contributes to identity on national, local, familial, and individual levels.

6. The place of the researcher within the research process – i.e. is the researcher a native researcher? Have they had prior involvement within the festival process? How has undertaking the research affected the researcher? - and so on.

What the feasibility of undertaking such study would be is not, at this stage, quantifiable. What is clear from the outcome of this dissertation is, however, that the amateur competitive music festival contributes to ideas and ideals of identity formation on a number of levels and its importance as a movement that has a presence throughout the British Isles and beyond should not be underestimated.

Separate from the idea of the amateur competitive music festival movement as a vehicle for the construction of ideas and ideals of identity, there is great scope for research on specific issues growing from the competition festivals on a number of levels. A further important direction for research - and certainly one that is practically quantifiable - is the contribution that has been made to the British choral and vocal repertoire through the existence of such a movement. It has been briefly mentioned in the introduction to this dissertation that several well-known exponents of British music were involved in the movement both as adjudicators and on an organisational level, but it was also these people who were responsible for setting the test pieces to be performed in the various festivals. As a result of

standards improving and the need to have a variety of new test pieces with which to challenge the competitors as the years went on, these individuals responded to this need by writing new music. When one considers that among some of the more high profile figures attached to the movement were the likes of: Edward Elgar, Ralph Vaughan Williams, Granville Bantock, Michael Head, Herbert Howells and so on, these compositions comprise an important part of the appearance of a vast number of part-songs and solo pieces that make up a significant proportion of what is considered to be the English musical renaissance. Whilst outside the scope of this research, an examination into the role played by the competitive music festival movement in the compositional output of these composers is surely something which would form an important contribution to scholarship on British music.

Final Comments

This dissertation is an exercise in interpretative ethnomusicology and ethnography, and has aimed to prove the thesis set in the introduction that the amateur competitive music festival is a vehicle for the construction of ideas and ideals of identity creation, formation and maintenance. Using the idea of participative identity formation as its basis the dissertation considers the thesis from the perspective of the establishment and growth of a festival movement, from the perspective of the individual festival, and from the perspective of the individuals involved in the festival. By using an approach that has

drawn upon both anthropological and ethnomusicological scholarship and that has considered the reflexive nature of the research it has been proven that the amateur competition festival is, indeed, a vehicle for the formation, construction and maintenance of identity on numerous levels. By participating in the festivals individuals are responsible for shaping their own identities through membership of a festival community and the place they choose to occupy within that festival community.

The amateur competitive festival may not be all things to all men but to those who choose to participate, in whatever way, it forms an important part of their identity be it part of their musical identity, personal identity, national identity or local identity. The contribution it has made towards identity formation and maintenance since its inception cannot be underestimated and it is hoped that this dissertation has illuminated just some of the ways in which this cultural event has contributed to shaping identity through participation.

Appendix A

Account of the first music competitions of the Isle of Man Fine Arts and Industrial Guild. Taken from the Isle of Man Times, December 1892

Music Competition

The great feature on Thursday was the musical competition, the first that had been held in connection with the exhibition, and which it is proposed shall in future be held annually. The competing choirs were divided into juvenile and adult. There were ten juvenile choirs in the competition. The juvenile choirs from Douglas were:- Girls' Singing Class, Hanover-street School (boys), Tynwald-street School (girls), Thomas-street Boys' and Thomas-street Girls'. The juvenile choirs from other towns were:- Castletown Board School (boys), King William's College (boys), Ramsey National Boys' School, Peel Boys' School and Peel Girls School. The adult competing choirs were the following:- Peel New Church Choir, Douglas Cantata Society and Peel Choral Society. The subject of competition for the juveniles was "the Hunt is up" (15th Century); and for the adults, the anthem, "Let us now go even unto Bethlehem" (Hopkins), and the part song, "When evening twilight" (Hatton). The order of the competition was as follows:- 10.30, juvenile sight singing, Douglas; 11.30, Juvenile choirs (Douglas); 12.30, adult sight singing, Douglas; 2.15, juvenile sight singing, choirs outside Douglas; 3, Ramsey, Castletown and Peel Juvenile choirs; 4 Adult choirs; 5.30, adult sight singing, Ramsey, Castletown, Peel &c. There was a large gathering of auditors, chiefly the relatives and friends of the numerous competitors, and there was an even larger assembly in the evening, when the prizes were distributed by Mrs Walpole. The distribution of the prizes was preceded by a concert, in which anthems and part songs were sung by the combined choirs, conducted by Mr F. Maskell, lecturer on music at the Edge-hill (Liverpool) Training College, and who had been the judge in the competitions. The choirs sang in concert with admirable precision, and were heartily applauded. Only one of the anthems was encored, but no doubt there would have been more re-demanded if it had

not been that the distribution of the prizes was to follow the concert. As to the vocal soloists and instrumentalists who gave their aid, it will be sufficient to name them as their talent as public entertainers is well known throughout the Island. The soloists were Miss W. Adams, and Miss Cannell, Miss Lizzie Cannell (pianoforte) and Mr H. Wood (violin). The accompanists were Miss Wood, Miss McKnight, Miss Clinch and Mr H. Wood. The Programme opened with the anthem "Let us now go even unto Bethlehem" (Hopkins), followed by the part song commencing "The deep repose of night is ending (Mendelssohn), by the combined choirs. The succeeding items on the programme were:- Song, "Tell me, my heart", Miss Winifred Adams, encored; pianoforte solo, "Valse Classique" (Delionx); part song, "When evening's twilight" by the Choir; violin solo, "Air varie de Beriot" Mr H. Wood; Chorus, "Galatea, dry thy tears" (Acis and Galatea); song, "By the river" (Wadham), Miss Cannell, encored; part song, "Allan-a Dale", by the Choir; pianoforte solo, "Fete Champetre", Miss Lizzie Campbell; and part song, "The Campbells' are comin'", by the Choir.

At the close of the concert, in announcing the winners of the prizes, a list of which is appended to the full prize list which follows.

MR F MASKELL (the judge) said he saw that he was down to make a speech at this stage. He certainly could not think of anything to say which could be dignified by being described as a speech, but he would like to say a few words about them in a friendly and homely way about the day" competition. Competition was a good thing, for they would soon be in a stagnant state without it; and it was a great pleasure, therefore, for him to be present at that competition today, as it could but have a wholesome effect in promoting a love of music and the cultivation of the voice. In remarking upon the competition, he would begin with the juvenile sight singing. He gave the competitors three tests in sight singing: one in the key of F, one in transition, and one in the minor mode. The greater number failed in the minor mode. The first prize went to No. 9 whose name he did not know.

MISS WOOD here called out the name of the successful competitor as Maria Watterson, of Peel Girls' School; and also subsequently called out the names of the other competitors as the judge gave their number in the competition.

MR MASKELL (continuing) said the second prize was won by No. 12 (Emily Clague), the third by No. 10 (Florence Smith), and the fourth by No. 11 (Jessie Kelly) all of Peel Girls' School. He had a word of advice to give to

those who would compete next year, and that was, that whatever they had to do they had to do it slowly; some of them in that competition had gone on with railway speed. The adjudication in the juvenile choirs were announced in the afternoon, and it was not necessary, therefore, for him to give them out at this time. He might say that, with regard to the test given, "The hunt is up," that it was much too fast; but that was the fault of the teachers and not of the pupils. He hoped the teachers would take warning, and let the little ones have a chance. The boys were worse than the girls; but then that was to be expected. After some remarks as to the proper mode of training boys' voices, Mr Maskell referred to the competition of the adult choirs. He said he thought they must all have been pleased with the performance of the adult choirs. One choir especially distinguished itself in his opinion - the choir down on his list as No. 2, which was known as the Douglas Cantata Society, and which was awarded the first prize. This choir was specially distinguished for a variety of things. First, for the attack, that was commencing exactly at the beat or the pulse; next for expression, and next for the enunciation of the words. The difficulty of the choir which won the second prize (the Peel Church Choir) was that it was lacking in tenors; the choir which took the third prize suffered from another deficiency, the lack of altos. He thought the test which he gave in singing to the adults was very severe. The two who most distinguished themselves in transition and modulation combined were No. 12 (Mr Jenkinson of Peel) and No. 5 (Mr Fennah of Ramsey). Mr Maskell, who did not go through the whole list of the successful competitors, concluded by asking those who formed his audience to cultivate their voices by joining singing classes, so that next year they might be among the competitors instead of among the audience, and by advocating the formation of such classes in every village on the Island.

At the conclusion of Mr Maskell's remarks, Mrs Walpole, punctual to the announced time, 9.30, came upon the platform to distribute prizes, accompanied by His Excellency, and by Colonel Freeth and Miss Moore (Secretary to the Guild).

At the close of the distribution, a vote of thanks, on the proposition of Colonel Freeth, was passed by acclamation to Mrs Walpole, who bowed her acknowledgements, and then retired with his Excellency; the singing of the National Anthem, in which choirs and audience joined, concluding the proceedings.

Appendix B - Statistics

The purpose of the statistical appendix is to enable comparison between varying entry and orientation levels throughout the festival history highlighting aspects of change, continuity and growth. The data displayed here concentrates entirely upon information taken from the music classes. This provides a more accurate comparison given that the drama classes did not exist at the beginning of the festival and to include drama figures from 1950 onwards would distort the overall data which concentrates on the growth and change in the music classes.

One area in which the festival has continued to grow from inception to 2000 is in the number of classes offered:

1892	1900	1925	1950	1975	2000
9	25	53	60	84	119

Table one: Number of music classes offered

The entry levels reflect the number of offered classes, growing proportionally with the number of classes on offer. Where these levels may be somewhat misleading is that they do not show how many individuals are competing in the festival, each group entry only being counted as one complete entry.

1892	1900	1925	1950	1975	2000
32	unavailable	313	583	931	1053

Table two: Entry levels

The individual classes now provide the main elements of the festival, however it can be seen from the data that this was not always the case. Initially, the number of group classes was equal to the individual and indeed, in 1900 the group classes outweighed the individual. Although the number of both group and individual classes have grown, the rise in the offered individual classes has been proportionally much greater, perhaps reflecting the shift in emphasis in modern society from group and village unity to the pursuit of individual success

	1892	1900	1925	1950	1975	2000
Group	4	15	25	23	23	43
Individual	4	10	28	37	61	76

Table three: Comparison between number of offered group and individual classes

Where the festival has not changed is in its primary orientation. Although there is now much more scope for the instrumental and pianistic sections of the festival society, it is the vocal classes that attract the most attention and that are still the most prominent. There is, and always has been a greater number of vocal classes than the other classes combined:

	1892	1900	1925	1950	1975	2000
Vocal	8	25	39	44	59	69
Piano	0	0	7	9	14	22
Inst.	0	0	7	7	11	28

Table four: Class orientation

Overall, these statistics show that the festival has obviously adapted to change in demand and change in society. However, the original focus of the festival, the vocal classes, still remains at the centre of the modern festival and it is unlikely that this will change. Statistically, if trends continue, the festival looks set to continue its growth in both entry levels and number of classes available. While the statistics are important, what they do not show is personal meaning created in and through the festival, the focus of the dissertation. For this reason, I have chosen to include statistics in an appendix rather than include them in the main body of the dissertation.

Appendix C

W.H. Gill's reasoning and justification behind the composition of the Manx National Anthem

A Manx National Anthem

'Mona', Abingdon on Thames

February 21st 1907

Dear Mrs Laughton,

I am very sensible of the honour done me by yourself and the Guild committee in affording me this opportunity of saying a few words respecting one of the items in the programme of your Festival concert on the 21st march.

A Nation without a National Anthem of its own is an anomaly: and yet up to the present time, our little Manx Nation, so unique in its history and constitution among the great nations of the world, and enjoying all the blessings of civilisation, has lacked one important possession – I mean the possession of a National Anthem exclusively and characteristically its own – not Irish, nor Scottish, nor Welsh, nor commonly pan-Celtic, but *Manx* pure and simple. However, it is never too late to mend; and, though not without considerable diffidence, I have ventured with a boldness akin to presumption, to do for our Nation now, what far abler hands ought to have done long ago. Such a production must, I perceive, be constructed by a Manxman and of Manx material, and must be a sincere expression of the Manx spirit and character which is essentially religious and patriotic.²¹⁵ Out of

²¹⁵ Dr Fenella Bazin recalls the patriotic reasoning behind the choice of the air 'Mylecharane' when she states 'What people don't realise is that that song had been used at least 140 years earlier. It was a political song thought to express Manxness. So it was described as a ancient Manx Air, some time around the 1770's not long after the re-vestment and then each time there was a political unrest in the Island that tune came to the fore one way or another. So what Gill was doing was really interesting because until then the

Manx Material? Certainly. Look at Castle Rushen! There you've got an ideal structure from the foundation to the top most battlements. Not only is it *made* of our native rock, but it *grows* as it were *out of the rock*. It will stand as long as the Island, which is itself a rock. Which think is an allegory. Just let me explain, without being too technical, my *Modus Operandi* in constructing the Manx National Anthem out of native material. The most typical of our recently recovered Manx Music is 'Mylecharane.' But tradition has so twisted and distorted the tune that nobody can tell for certain what the original 'Mylecharane' was like except by a long train of reasoning and speculation. The very fact that we have two quite distinctly different types of the tune, one minor and the other major, is very significant and I can only account for the quality by supposing the original tune was substantially minor embodying (as it did) some very sad mythical, and pathetic story of the forlorn or forsaken one, which, after several verses, concludes with a bright ending in the major. Right or wrong this was a happy thought. I wrote a little poem carrying out that idea and to my great delight, I have thus (to my own satisfaction at least) solved the problem which has sorely puzzled me for thirteen years past. Premising that I entirely renounce and apostatise my treatment of the tune and melody in the 'Royal Edition,' I have disposed of 'Mylecharane' proper by turning it not only into a really singable form, but one such as the great singers of the day will, if I am not greatly mistaken, delight to sing, for thus treated it makes a gracious and lovely tune which can never die.

That disposes of the minor version of 'Mylecharane' but what of the Major? Well I have turned that into a companion picture to the other. By a little management I have coaxed it not only into harmonic form, but strictly choral form, viz., as a National Anthem distinctly Manx in character, and yet separating itself from the other version of the tune which is essentially a song, and one, moreover, which to quote our old

time had been used as a secret code and then Gill brought it out into the open and people stopped using it as a secret code.' (extract from interview with Dr Bazin - Thursday 20th April 2000.

friend T.E.Brown, suggests 'a depth of ineffable melancholy.' Then to utilise still further this precious nucleus or germ of *Manx Material* I have supplied enough verses to serve two purposes, 1st as an anthem proper to use on state occasions, and 2nd, as a hymn for public worship to be used during the prevalence of stormy weather. In this connection I would suggest for festival use verses 1, 2, 3, 6, 7, 8, and for public worship 6, 4, 5, 8.

In the building up of this composition (I mean the music) I have added as little new matter as I possibly could consistently with good musical taste, and the result is what I hope my fellow countrymen will consider to be a solid and stately choral hymn that will compare favourably in force and dignity with any other National Hymn in Europe, and worthy to stand side by side, although at a respectful distance from, our justly famous 'God Save the King.'

Our best thanks are due to Mr J J Kneen for his skilful translation of the verses into Manx. I should love to hear them sung by your big chorus.

While on the subject of Manx Music you will be glad to know that Messrs. Boosey, of London, are now contemplating and issue of a 'selection of Manx songs' from their 'Royal Edition' to be offered to the public at the almost nominal price of 6d. Having already repudiated my treatment of 'Mylecharane' in that edition as unworthy and sacrilegious – in fact an artistic blunder – I gladly avail myself of this opportunity to explain how I have tried to make atonement for the same. Both the remodelled song and the National Anthem will be included in the 'Selection.'

Yours Sincerely

W.H. Gill.

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