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# Neoclassicism in the Music of William Alwyn

Selected Works 1938-45

Elizabeth Sweet

# Neoclassicism in the Music of William Alwyn

Elizabeth Sweet

## Material Abstract

In 1938 William Alwyn made the radical decision to abandon his previous composition methods and based future works upon the neoclassical compositional aesthetic. The second work to emerge was the *Divertimento for Solo Flute*, a composition on a single stave with substantial implicit contrapuntal writing.

This thesis will examine both the Continental European and British musical context in the period leading up to Alwyn's 1938 compositional crisis in order to provide a model for neoclassicism. This model will be used to assess Alwyn's neoclassical compositions to evaluate Alwyn as a composer in the light of his stated wish to become a Bach or Beethoven. It will also include a brief musical biography in order to contextualise Alwyn's neoclassical compositions within the wider body of his work.

# Neoclassicism in the Music of William Alwyn

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Selected Works 1938-45

Elizabeth Sweet

Submitted for the Degree of Master of Arts by Research

Department of Music

University of Durham

2016

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## **Dedication**

To my family for their support and patience in the preparation of this work.



## Introduction

William Alwyn (1905-1985) was an English composer and professional flautist; but being something of a polymath, he also wrote several unpublished novels and poems, translated French poetry into English and experimented with painting later in life. He is primarily known as a film composer, however his output was much broader than this suggests. In addition to his many film scores he composed five symphonies, two operas, three *concerti grossi*, five song cycles and numerous chamber works. His contemporaries included Benjamin Britten, William Walton, Lennox Berkeley, and Michael Tippett; he also developed a close relationship with his elder, Arnold Bax, who provided him with much encouragement.

In 1938 at the age of thirty three, Alwyn, intensely dissatisfied with the technique in his work to date (which he rather harshly described as incompetent) made the unusual decision to disown all of his previous works, to make what he called 'a new beginning'.<sup>1</sup> In a later autobiography he stated:

I must forge my individual style, regardless of all else, with absolute sincerity. Each work must be polished and re-polished until every join, every flaw was eliminated. My weak point [...] had been neglect of contrapuntal line in favour of ear-tickling harmony; so I turned to a form of neo-classicism as a first answer to my problems.<sup>2</sup>

The resulting neoclassical works attract particular attention because as yet they have not been the subject of extensive research; in addition very little has been written about his compositional techniques. Adrian Wright published an extensive biography entitled *The Innumerable Dance: The Life and Works of William Alwyn* and

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<sup>1</sup> William Alwyn, 'Winged Chariot', in *Composing in Words* ed. by Andrew Palmer (London: Toccata Press, 2009), pp. 13-50 (p. 27).

<sup>2</sup> *Ibid.*

Andrew Palmer has drawn together much of Alwyn's writings with editorial commentary in *Composing in Words*. There has been some research into other areas of Alwyn's compositional output, for example Ian Johnson's *William Alwyn: The Art of Film Music* and a recent thesis by Trevor Barrowcliffe examining Alwyn's Symphonies, but none of these address Alwyn the neoclassicist; further, existing research does not provide a framework for the analysis of Alwyn's music in a compositional context.

Neoclassicism is in itself a nebulous concept. Michael Squire writes that Neoclassicism is a term coined in the late nineteenth century to describe the paintings of the seventeenth century artist Poussin.<sup>3</sup> It has been used in the wider arts to describe the period spanning approximately 1760 to 1840 in which its art objects refer to an earlier age as in the classicism of ancient Greece and Rome, for example in Palladian Architecture. However, in music it has long been associated with studies of early twentieth-century music, but without providing a practical working definition.

The rise of the neoclassical aesthetic in music formed part of a wider anti-romantic movement in the arts. This is perhaps exemplified by the move away from the representational almost photographic paintings, beginning in the Renaissance and continuing through to the late nineteenth century, towards new methods of expression such as Picasso's cubism. Christopher Butler argues that Braque and Picasso paintings of the early twentieth century can be viewed as breaking down the conventions for perspective-based representation in a manner which might seem

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<sup>3</sup> Michael Squire, Review of Vicky Coltman, *Fabricating the Antique: Neoclassicism in Britain 1760-1800*, *Journal of British Studies* 40.4 (2007) pp. 955-957, 957.

entirely logical or 'progressive' in retrospect. Similarly in literature the prose of James Joyce, Virginia Woolfe and William Faulkner and others that disrupted and put into question the history and realism-derived causal logic of narrative.<sup>4</sup> In music this was demonstrated by the influence of Jean Cocteau's pamphlet *Le Coq et l'arlequin* which promoted the ideas of a 'new simplicity' which was both 'classic' and 'modern', primarily in Satie's music.<sup>5</sup>

Neoclassicism has been connected with the historicist movement and the rise in modern editions of early compositions, and is often described inaccurately as 'Back-to-Bach'. The use of the term 'neoclassical' within the literature is so varied and lacking in clarity that its meaning has become ambiguous. Of the available definitions for neoclassicism, Scott Messing has provided the following '[a] work is said to be neoclassical if it employs musical means that borrow from, are modelled on, or allude to a work or composer from an earlier era, often from the eighteenth century, but equally from any composition regardless of period that has somehow entered into the canon of 'great art''.<sup>6</sup>

While this delivers a certain level of definition for neoclassicism it does not provide a complete explanation; this description might equally apply to a pastiche, since it makes no reference to the modern elements in a neoclassical work. Arnold Whittall defines neoclassicism as a reaction against the romanticism of the nineteenth century and not 'regressive or nostalgic but ... expressing a distinct

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<sup>4</sup> Christopher Butler, 'Innovation and the avant-garde, 1900–20' in *The Cambridge History of Twentieth Century Music* ed by Nicholas Cook and Anthony Pople (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2004), <<http://dx.doi.org.ezphost.dur.ac.uk/10.1017/CHOL9780521662567>> pp. 69-89, p. 75 [accessed 19 September 2016].

<sup>5</sup> Jean Cocteau, 'Fragments d'une conference sur Erik Satie' in *La revue musicale*, (1924), p. 223 quoted in Straus, p. 77.

<sup>6</sup> Scott Messing, *Neoclassicism in Music: From the Genesis of the Concept through the Schoenberg/Stravinsky Polemic* (Rochester, NY: University of Rochester Press, 1988 repr. 1996), p. xiv.

contemporary multiplicity of awareness'.<sup>7</sup> Thus for Whittall neoclassicism is not merely a return to past styles, but more a revival of 'the balanced forms and clearly perceptible thematic processes of earlier styles to replace ... the increasingly exaggerated gestures and formlessness of late Romanticism.' However, this explanation also makes no mention of the modernist elements in a neoclassical composition.<sup>8</sup>

Joseph N. Straus in his definitive work on musical modernism and the influence of the tonal tradition, *Remaking the Past*, poses the notion that Bloom's anxiety theory concerning the romantic poets' attitude to their predecessors can equally be applied to early twentieth century composers. He argues that Bloom's theory is uniquely rewarding in understanding twentieth-century music with its interchange between distinct and conflicting elements, providing the best understanding of the connections between twentieth-century works and their predecessors.<sup>9</sup> For Bloom the relationship between a poet and their antecedents is not one of mutually beneficial borrowing, but one of anxiety, anger and repression in a struggle to clear creative space which takes the form misreading. Bloom asserts that to read is to be dominated, but to misread is to proclaim the poet's own primacy, using the predecessor's work for their own artistic ends.<sup>10</sup> Straus applies this concept of misreading as a means of asserting a composer's own priorities over their predecessor's work. He argues that Bloom makes possible a shift of critical

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<sup>7</sup> Arnold Whittall, 'Neoclassicism' in *Oxford Music Online* <<http://www.oxfordmusiconline.com>> [accessed 10 October 2014].

<sup>8</sup> Ibid.

<sup>9</sup> Joseph N. Straus, *Remaking the Past: Musical Modernism and the Influence of the Tonal Tradition* (Cambridge, Massachusetts: Harvard University Press, 1990), pp. 9, 14.

<sup>10</sup> Straus, pp. 12-14.

focus from the demonstration of organic unity to the appraisal of the elements of conflict and struggle within a work. For Straus the crucial concept is intertextuality – every text is interpenetrated by others; the older elements are recognisable but placed in a new context that confers on them new meaning in which old and new are locked together in conflict.<sup>11</sup> Bloom’s metaphor of an anxious struggle to clear creative space is particularly relevant to the performance or recording of twentieth century music which struggles to find a place in the repertoire which is dominated by the music of previous centuries.<sup>12</sup>

In contrast, Straus argues that when twentieth-century composers use triads they are responding to a widely shared musical element, or if they write in a recognised form such as sonata form, they are responding to an icon of a previous style not to a single predecessor. Bloom’s anxiety of influence when applied to music is different to this; it concerns the relationship between a piece and some earlier work. It refers to specific structural features of the two works and specific strategies by which the later work comes to terms with the earlier.<sup>13</sup> Straus adjusts Bloom’s ‘revisionary ratios’ or mechanisms of defence in which a later work simultaneously resists and remakes its predecessors into eight musical techniques which composers employ to remake earlier forms, style elements, sonorities and musical works.<sup>14</sup>

These are:

1. **Motivisation** in which the motivic content of the earlier work is intensified;

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<sup>11</sup> Straus, pp. 15-16.

<sup>12</sup> Straus, pp. 17-18.

<sup>13</sup> Straus, p. 18.

<sup>14</sup> Straus, pp. 16-17.

2. **Generalisation** whereby a motif from an earlier work is generalised into the unordered pitch-class set of which it is a member. That set is then used in the new composition in a post-tonal manner;
3. **Marginalisation** such that musical elements that were central to the structure of the source work are relegated to the margins of the new composition;
4. **Centralisation:** musical elements previously peripheral move to the structural centre of the new one;
5. **Compression** whereby elements that occur diachronically in the earlier piece are compressed into something synchronous in the new one;
6. **Fragmentation** in which elements that occur together in the previous work are separated in the new composition;
7. **Neutralisation:** traditional elements, such as the dominant sevenths, are stripped of their normal function and forward progress is impeded;
8. **Symmetricisation** whereby traditionally goal-oriented harmonic progressions and musical forms are inverted or made retrograde-symmetrical, and are thus halted.

This thesis will seek to understand how the practices used by twentieth-century composers to misread or reinterpret traditional forms in accordance with their own musical ideas can illuminate the compositional technique behind Alwyn's neoclassical works specifically examining them to determine which, if any, of Straus' eight musical recomposition techniques above have been employed in these pieces. In addition various analytical techniques, beginning with pitch-class set theory, will be applied to these compositions to understand them at various levels. This will

include the overall structure of each movement/work, to identify the source of the material if it has been taken from an earlier work and how that material has been employed in the new composition.

In examining Alwyn's neoclassical music, this thesis will summarise the background behind neoclassicism. In order to understand Alwyn's use of neoclassicism it is first necessary to comprehend the roots of this compositional aesthetic. For as Adorno states, study of the later generations of neoclassical composers will inevitably require a study of the first innovators because the music of the later generations inevitably derives from the work of the first.<sup>15</sup>

Firstly, this thesis will examine the genesis of neoclassicism in the European context, principally in France and Germany, for although neoclassicism was employed by composers throughout the Western world, its birthplace was primarily in these two countries. It will survey the roots of, and different approaches to, neoclassicism in France and Germany, from the late nineteenth century through to the 1930s. In the early decades of the twentieth century Stravinsky, who lived chiefly in France following the Russian Revolution, is the composer most closely linked with this compositional aesthetic. It will examine Stravinsky's neoclassical music with particular reference to his first neoclassical compositions, his ballet *Pulcinella* and his *Octet for Wind Instruments*.

In Germany, Busoni and Hindemith follow a similar, but distinct neoclassical path, which is linked to the *Neue Sachlichkeit* or objectivity aesthetic. This thesis will review compositions by both these composers and in addition it will briefly examine

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<sup>15</sup> Theodore Adorno, *Philosophy of Modern Music*, trans. by Anne G. Mitchell and Wesley V. Blomster (London: Sheed & Ward, 1973), p. 4.

the impact of Schoenberg upon tonality and the contrast between the compositional stance of Stravinsky with that of Schoenberg particularly their approach to the past, that is, to the musical canon. It will contrast Schoenberg's view that his music was a continuation of a musical tradition from Bach through Beethoven and Brahms in a form of what Frisch terms a 'historicist modernist' stance with Stravinsky's incorporation of old music into his own neoclassical compositions.<sup>16</sup>

Necessarily, I will also examine neoclassicism from the viewpoint of British music in the post-World War I environment, taking into account the rise of the second English School of Composition and the oft-disputed English Renaissance, together with the effect of nationalism and the rediscovery of Tudor and Jacobian music. It will consider the social and political effects of the First World War, the influence of the development of various media including recordings, the Promenade Concerts and radio upon British music. This, combined with the results of research into continental neoclassicism, will provide a model for neoclassicism to facilitate the analysis of Alwyn's neoclassical compositions using representative examples.

This dissertation will also seek to discover the causes of Alwyn's 1938 compositional crisis through his writings and correspondence, this combined with a comparison between his pre- and post-1938 compositions which may illuminate Alwyn's dilemma. Further, since Alwyn, in common with Stravinsky and Busoni, highlights use of the contrapuntal line as an essential element of his new compositional technique, it will compare Alwyn's use of contrapuntal writing with that of other twentieth century composers and that of those from the Baroque era,

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<sup>16</sup> Walter Frisch, 'Reger's Historicist Modernist', *The Musical Quarterly*, 87.4 (2004), 732-748, (pp. 733-5).



particularly J.S. Bach. Finally, it will seek to evaluate Alwyn as a composer in the light of his stated wish to become a Bach or Beethoven and his eventual bitterness that he as a composer did not achieve this desired fame.<sup>17</sup>

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<sup>17</sup> William Alwyn, 'Early Closing', in *Composing in Words*, ed. by Palmer (London: Toccata Press, 2009), pp.51-64 (p. 63).

# Chapter 1

## The European Context

Musicologists generally use the term 'neoclassicism' to designate those works of the first half of the twentieth century that look back to music before the latter half of the nineteenth century for inspiration or for technical processes. It is usually described using terms such as clarity, simplicity, purity and refinement and is regarded as a reaction against the excesses of Romanticism, especially the operas and music dramas of Richard Wagner with their complex texture, rich orchestrations and great length.

Joseph Straus argues that the relationship between a work of music and its antecedents became a particularly pressing problem in the early twentieth century.<sup>18</sup> Composers in this period felt an ambivalence towards their musical heritage, which they represented both as a source of inspiration and an inescapable burden. Straus argues that this conflict feeds into the neoclassical aesthetic. In music described as neoclassical there is a conflict between the traditional, more tonal, elements and its post-tonal idioms, producing musical tension in which the tonal elements preserve their traditional overtones and evoke the musical world from which they came. He maintains that in revisiting the past, a twentieth-century composer reinterprets it, rather than creating a pastiche.<sup>19</sup> As Adorno postulates, the question arises as to

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<sup>18</sup> Straus, p. 3.

<sup>19</sup> Straus, p. 1.

what characteristic in each composition forces it into this aesthetic, or alternatively, the connection between the neoclassical ideal, the material of the composition and its structural entirety.<sup>20</sup> This chapter will attempt to provide a model with which to answer Adorno's question.

The nebulous nature of neoclassicism is partly explained by the widely differing approaches to it adopted by twentieth-century composers. Stravinsky, having been exiled from his Russian spiritual home, used neoclassicism as a vehicle to mark his place in the French avant-garde, whilst Tippett employed neoclassicism in his *A Child of Our Time* by combining a baroque oratorio with Negro spirituals to express the horrors of *Kristallnacht*. Thus, in order to be able to comprehend a composer's use of the neoclassical aesthetic and identify its inherent creative tension, it is essential to discern which elements of the composition relate to the traditional and which belong to the post-tonal components. Thus it is important to determine the link between the compositional material and the neoclassical aesthetic.

The music of the first half of the twentieth century has traditionally been divided into two dichotomous camps, typified by the compositions of Stravinsky, the so-called neoclassicist, and Schoenberg, the progressive and modernist. Brian Etter describes these as two separate musical cultures, one with an impulse to preservation, typified by Stravinsky's works within the neoclassical aesthetic, which is more conservative, yet still pursuing a modernist direction and the other to innovation, represented by Schoenberg and the second Viennese school. He argues that this splitting of musical culture in the twentieth century is symptomatic of the

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<sup>20</sup> Adorno, pp. 4-5.

deep divide within society between two rival metaphysical visions: the vision of an ideal which orders human life and the denial of such an order.<sup>21</sup>

Adorno postulated that in the 1940s, while Schoenberg's music was often branded as destructive, in reality neoclassicism's backward-looking tendency, in conspiracy with the destructive tendencies of the age, were more damaging to progress.<sup>22</sup> Adorno held that the twentieth-century musical canon should exclude all tonality since these sounds were false, antiquated and untimely, and no longer fulfilled their function.<sup>23</sup>

Stravinsky used the past for his own ends, detaching pre-romantic forms and music from their context to create new compositions; in contrast, Schoenberg saw his music as a continuation of the continuum stretching back to Bach and beyond. According to Edward Lippman, Adorno saw Schoenberg as achieving a form of objectivity which was superior to that of Stravinsky. He considers Schoenberg to have established the authentic approach, a more cohesive and instinctive artistic view, also a higher objectivity than Stravinsky, which is appropriate to the historical condition which eventually lead to twelve-tone constructivism.<sup>24</sup>

Later in his life Stravinsky, in a conversation with Robert Craft, stated:

The music of Schoenberg, Berg and Webern in the twenties was considered extremely iconoclastic at that time but these composers now appear to have used musical form as I did, "historically". My use of it was overt, however, and theirs elaborately disguised... We all explored and discovered new music in the

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<sup>21</sup> Etter, p. 11.

<sup>22</sup> Adorno, p. xvi.

<sup>23</sup> Adorno, p. 34.

<sup>24</sup> Theodore Adorno, 'Motive III' in *Anbruch Monatsschrift für Music*, 10, pp. 214-5, quoted in Edward Lippman, *A History of Western Musical Aesthetics* (Lincoln, Nebraska & London: University of Nebraska Press, 1992), p. 413.

twenties, of course, but we attached it to the very tradition we were so busily outgrowing a decade before.<sup>25</sup>

By this Stravinsky implied that these two early twentieth-century strands of music were more closely linked than they first appeared, and were both a continuation of the evolution of musical styles than a revolution. Vlad comparably argues that the ostensibly divergent paths represented by Stravinsky and Schoenberg may eventually meet, their compositional principals and philosophical stand points being complementary rather than incompatible.<sup>26</sup>

In explaining the rise of neoclassicism, Straus notes that there has been a gradual, but increasing, shift in musical taste since the 1800s from contemporary to older music.<sup>27</sup> Before 1800 music-making was almost wholly contemporary, revolving around the relationships between composers, performers and their audience; however, as music progressed towards the early twentieth century there was an increasing pull towards the works of earlier composers. This was primarily due to the emergence of a musical mass-culture through the publishing, selling and performance of music to the public, leading to the formation of a canon, a body of universally admired composers and works. This in turn resulted in composers being taught through the study of masterworks of the past in addition to the more traditional study of harmony and counterpoint. As a consequence, and in contrast to eighteenth-century composition teaching such as Mozart might have experienced, the early twentieth century was dominated by the music of the past. Straus argues that composers consequently felt both inspired and constrained by their musical

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<sup>25</sup> Robert Craft, *Conversations with Igor Stravinsky* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1980), p. 126, quoted in Straus, p. 2.

<sup>26</sup> Roman Vlad, *Stravinsky* trans. by Frederick and Ann Fuller (London: Oxford University Press, 1960), p. 1.

<sup>27</sup> Straus, p. 3.

history. Webern spoke of the weight of the past pushing him inexorably forward – a need to break ground with each work, yet Stravinsky used the past to validate his own compositional procedures by finding examples for them in universally accepted masterpieces in a ‘misreading’ of the past.<sup>28</sup>

### **Russo-French Neoclassicism**

In France, the term neoclassicism originated in the nineteenth century to signify an imitation of Greek and Roman culture in the fine arts and architecture. This fashion for the classical style resulted from the discovery and admiration of antiquities by wealthy young men on their Grand Tours through southern Europe; it was more frequently known by names such as *l’art antiquisante*.<sup>29</sup>

In music, the use of the term neoclassicism originally had a derogatory undertone, underpinning nationalist leanings prevalent at that time, and notably used by French critics to undermine the dominance of German composers. The term was primarily applied to those composers who continued to employ musical forms made popular during the eighteenth century, but who, in the opinion of their French critics, forfeited originality and musical substance for the imitation of structure.<sup>30</sup> In addition to French distaste for Wagner’s strident, sexually charged operas, the turn of the twentieth century saw such criticism aimed at Brahms, but also at Schubert, Schumann and Mahler. French writers adversely compared their works with those

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<sup>28</sup> Straus, p. 36-7.

<sup>29</sup> Messing, p. 13.

<sup>30</sup> Scott Messing, ‘Polemic as History: The Case of Neoclassicism’, *The Journal of Musicology*, 9 (1991), 481-497, (p. 482).

of Franck and Saint-Saëns, amongst others.<sup>31</sup> Thus, in a nationalistic attempt to elevate French music above its German predecessors and contemporaries, post-Beethovenian German composers were pejoratively labelled as neoclassical. This partly resulted from the deteriorating political relationship between the two countries; most significantly the defeat of the French in the Franco-Prussian War (1870–1) led to a more general need for the French to re-establish themselves in the European theatre.<sup>32</sup> Roussel, in writing about the music of Wagner and German music in general, illustrated the nationalistic leanings accompanying the rise of French music. He stated:

[C]oncerning this question of influence, it is difficult to place aside the question of race, and it will be very fortunate that French music tries to personify in a manner more and more affirmatively and vigorously, the genius of our race, the qualities of clarity, sensibility, luminescence and pure joy, which form our artistic heritage.<sup>33</sup>

This nationalist fervour led to a revival of interest in the works of Couperin and Rameau amongst others, looking back to a previous era in which French music had been in ascendance; this was accompanied by publication of the complete works of pre-nineteenth century French composers and a returning interest in ‘authentic’ instruments.

The years leading up to the First World War saw a rise in compositions making reference to seventeenth- and eighteenth-century dance forms illustrated by the works of the composers Saint-Saëns and d’Indy; but these were concerned more with the use of titles rather than compositional technique or form, such as d’Indy’s

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<sup>31</sup> Messing, *Neoclassicism in Music*, pp. 14-15 and 24.

<sup>32</sup> Geoffrey Wawro, *The Franco-Prussian War: The German Conquest of France in 1870-1*, (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2003).

<sup>33</sup> Louis Laloy, ‘Wagner et nos musiciens’, *La grande revue* (1909), pp. 160-4, quoted in Messing, *Neoclassicism in Music*, p. 12.

*Suite dans le style ancien*. Although they made reference to pre-nineteenth century forms their individual styles still took precedence over the older forms.<sup>34</sup> Vincent d'Indy, Charles Bordes, and Alexandre Guilmant were the founders of the *Schola Cantorum* in 1894, initially intended as a society for sacred music, but in two years transformed into a school for the restoration of music of the past, exciting an enthusiasm for early music lacking from the established Paris Conservatoires. This is perhaps illustrated by the attitude of Vincent D'Indy who was particularly scornful of what he saw as the commonplace academic program of the Conservatoire, instead seeing music as a mission, not an occupation. The *Schola Cantorum*, with its expressed goal as the triumph of French music, was highly influential upon French cultural life, providing the most significant channel for the publication and performance of early music in turn of the century Paris.<sup>35</sup>

Debussy was also influenced by the *Schola Cantorum*, attending their 1903 performance of Rameau's *Castor et Pollux*, and was attracted by the reawakened interest in early music that this school stimulated.<sup>36</sup> However, although Debussy included a *Sarabande* in his *Suite Pour le Piano*, the piece owed more to his own personal style and the influence of Eric Satie's *Trois Sarabandes* than to earlier forms; however it should be noted that Debussy composed this movement in a manner more sympathetic to the older styles employing a similar rhythmic pattern to that characteristic of a seventeenth-century *Sarabande*. More significantly, Debussy places the strongest beat on the second beat of the bar in an imitation of the *Sarabande* style. However, such use of imitation of style is not limited to post-romantic composers;

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<sup>34</sup> Messing, *Neoclassicism in Music*, p. 32.

<sup>35</sup> Messing, *Neoclassicism in Music*, pp. 19-21.

<sup>36</sup> Messing, *Neoclassicism in Music*, p. 41.



many example of such use can be found in romantic music including Schumann's *Kreisleriana* or the first song from his *Frauenliebe und Leben*.<sup>37</sup>

Debussy, in common with many writers and critics of the period, was highly critical of Wagner. While he acknowledged Wagner's musical genius, he deplored his musical methods, particularly his use of symphonic techniques in his operas.<sup>38</sup> James Stuart argues that Debussy's longing for a return to clarity in opera was a germ of neoclassicism, which has since produced many different responses; among these Benjamin Britten, whose focus on modified formalism in operatic music was an important aspect of the anti-Wagnerian trend of his times.<sup>39</sup>

This concept of clarity so admired by Debussy extended into the next generation. Ravel continued this use of antiquated forms in the titles of his early works such as the 1899 *Pavanne pour une infant défunte*; but his later works were composed in a more retrospective style, with his use of parallel fifths and octaves providing them with an impression of age. This is illustrated by *Le Tombeau de Couperin* which formed a general homage to eighteenth-century French music in a direct reaction against romanticism.<sup>40</sup> The idea of musical retrospection was not however limited to France; by 1917 Prokofiev had already composed his *First Symphony* which displayed many of the now accepted features of a neoclassical work.

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<sup>37</sup> Charles Rosen, *The Romantic Generation* (Cambridge, Massachusetts: Harvard University Press, 1995), pp. 675-6.

<sup>38</sup> Charles Stuart, 'Fifty Years of Music Criticism', *Tempo*, 19 (1951), pp.12-18 (p. 13).

<sup>39</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>40</sup> Messing, *Neoclassicism in Music*, pp. 51 and 76.

## Stravinsky

By the 1920s the term neoclassicism, due to its uptake by Stravinsky, had ceased to be used in a derogatory manner. Instead it came to symbolise purity, clarity, refinement, and as having revived the classical ideas of balance and proportion. In France, the Russian émigré Boris de Schloezer made the first non-pejorative use of this term in 1923 to describe Stravinsky's music and highlight its dissimilarity to that of Schoenberg. His use of the term 'neoclassical' did not make any allusion to pre-Romantic composers; rather he considered Stravinsky's music to be pure, simple and graceful, terms which Taruskin argues that the French generally view as their national characteristics.<sup>41</sup>

Stravinsky interested himself in radical alternatives to the Austro-German symphonic tradition, describing himself as 'Wagner's Anti-Christ.'<sup>42</sup> However, Stravinsky also admitted that while learning his craft, he studied Wagner's scores eagerly; he wished to understand the Wagnerian methodology to enable him to integrate it into his own technique before he could react against it.<sup>43</sup>

As a result of the 1917 Russian revolution Stravinsky found himself in enforced exile. His acceptance of the neoclassical label, therefore, had more to do with providing himself with a new spiritual home in France than any ideological attachment to the philosophical and aesthetic concept. Taruskin argues that Stravinsky was influenced by the praise of French writers such as Rivière who esteemed him above their own composers, even the great Debussy; he therefore

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<sup>41</sup> Richard Taruskin, 'Back to Whom? Neoclassicism as Ideology', *19<sup>th</sup>-Century Music*, 16 (1993), 286-302 (p. 290).

<sup>42</sup> Igor Stravinsky and Robert Craft, *Expositions and Developments* (Berkeley and Los Angeles: University of California Press, 1981), pp. 101-3, quoted in Taruskin, p. 290.

<sup>43</sup> Vlad, p. 4.

composed music that would ensure the continuation of that acclaim.<sup>44</sup> But Maureen Carr argues that the emergence of Stravinsky's neoclassicism between 1914 and 1925 was closely tied to the changing aesthetic of the time; the year 1914 saw experiments in literature, art, music and dance that were introduced by influential such as Arthur Lourié, Sonia and Robert Delaney, Igor Stravinsky and Michael Fokine who spent their early years in St. Petersburg.<sup>45</sup> This changing aesthetic eventually led to the development of neoclassicism.

In reconciling his compositional style with the concept of neoclassicism, Stravinsky wrote: 'I attempt to build new music on eighteenth-century classicism using the constructive principles of that classicism.'<sup>46</sup> For Stravinsky this meant a re-working of elements from earlier composers' works in a re-composition of old masters to make their works his own. As new processes were introduced a new work resulted, but tradition was also observed. According to Carr the combination of form with content and the difference between tradition and process would endure for Stravinsky on his path to neoclassicism.<sup>47</sup>

Stravinsky viewed counterpoint as particularly important to composition. He believed it to be the architectural base of all music, regulating and directing all composition. For Stravinsky music without counterpoint loses all consistency and rhythm.<sup>48</sup> This belief may have arisen from his contact with Rimsky-Korsakov in Russia where he studied counterpoint and harmony with a pupil of Rimsky-

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<sup>44</sup> Taruskin, 286-302 (p. 292).

<sup>45</sup> Maureen A. Carr, *After the Rite: Stravinsky's Path to Neoclassicism (1914-1925)* (New York: Oxford University Press, 2014), p. 7.

<sup>46</sup> Stravinsky and Craft, p. 21 quoted in Straus, p. 5.

<sup>47</sup> Carr, pp. 21-2.

<sup>48</sup> Messing, *Neoclassicism in Music*, p. 133.

Korsakov before taking private lessons from the master himself.<sup>49</sup> Rimsky-Korsakov's teaching method combined the study of instrumentation and musical form. Rimsky-Korsakov was instrumental in developing Stravinsky's use of orchestration; it is notable that Stravinsky did not continue his studies with any other composer following Rimsky-Korsakov's death in 1908. However, Stravinsky took influence from many other composers, particularly symphonic technique from Glazunov, polyphony from Wagner, and borrowed thematic material from Richard Strauss and Tchaikovsky. He also made acquaintance with the new French school represented by Dukas, Debussy and Ravel.<sup>50</sup> Thus the influences upon Stravinsky are varied, but mainly centred upon Russia and France.

Stravinsky was not alone in emphasising the importance of counterpoint to contemporary composition. A similar movement was emerging simultaneously in Germany under Busoni, and also Schoenberg. Indeed Vlad argues that both Milhaud and Hindemith used poly-harmony and polytonality much more boldly and successfully than Stravinsky.<sup>51</sup> Adorno describes polyphony as the best means for the organisation of emancipated music and, in the hands of Schoenberg, the essence of uncontrolled harmony itself. He appears to equate polyphony with objectivity.<sup>52</sup>

A work often described as being the first neoclassical composition is Stravinsky's ballet in one act with songs, *Pulcinella*. It is based on the works of Pergolesi, Handel and other unnamed eighteenth century composers and concerns the characters of the sixteenth-century Italian *commedia dell'arte*. In 1922 Stravinsky

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<sup>49</sup> Igor Stravinsky, *An Autobiography (1903-1934)* trans. by Anonymous (London and New York: Marion Boyars, 1936 repr. 1990), p. 15.

<sup>50</sup> Vlad, pp. 3-5.

<sup>51</sup> Vlad, p. 1.

<sup>52</sup> Adorno, *Philosophy of Modern Music*, p. 58.

turned the ballet into a Suite comprising eight movements with baroque titles. By this time Stravinsky, at Diaghilev's behest, had already orchestrated Chopin's *Nocturne in A flat* and *Valse Brillante in E flat* for inclusion in *Les Sylphides*.

The idea for creating this work did not originate in Stravinsky; the inspiration for *Pulcinella* was instead provided by Diaghilev who proposed the ballet to Stravinsky in 1919 after first having been turned down by Manuel de Falla.<sup>53</sup> Roman Vlad suggests that Diaghilev was anxious to stage a work composed along the same lines as Respighi's arrangement of Cimarosa's music, the two-act opera-ballet *Le astuzie femminili*, which received its premiere in May 1920 and the highly successful *Good Humoured Ladies* by Vincenzo Tommasini based on Scarlatti's music. Diaghilev even sourced the Pergolesi and other manuscripts, having discovered and copied a number of unfinished works and fragments attributed to Pergolesi at the Naples Conservatoire together with other manuscripts at the British Museum.<sup>54</sup>

It might be argued that Respighi provided the inspiration for Stravinsky's neoclassicism; following in the footsteps of Debussy and Ravel, he produced his first suite of *Antiche danze ed arie per liuto* in 1917-18 which were based on Renaissance lute pieces by Simone Molinaro, Vincenzo Galilei and other anonymous composers. This first suite of antique lute pieces was followed by a second suite in 1923. Respighi, being a scholar Italian music of sixteenth to eighteenth centuries was perhaps a more appropriate composer to use older musical texts as a basis for new compositions and a more natural candidate for the neoclassical label. John Waterhouse argues that Respighi's skill in deploying and scoring the material in

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<sup>53</sup> Richard Taruskin, 'Parody as Homage', in *Stravinsky's Pulcinella: A Facsimile of the Sources and Sketches* ed. by Maureen A Carr, (Middleton, Wisconsin: A-R Editions Inc., 2010), pp. 61-2 (p. 61).

<sup>54</sup> Vlad, p. 74.

both *Antiche danze ed arie per liuto* and his ballet *La boutique fantasque* (1918) is noteworthy, and may even have helped to prepare the way for Stravinsky's more radical rewriting of borrowed ideas in *Pulcinella*,<sup>55</sup>

In composing *Pulcinella* Stravinsky left much of the eighteenth-century scores unaltered instead arranging them into a coherent work. He often made only minor changes to the rhythm or timbres (ex. 1), but at certain key moments the pitch structure was substantially altered to produce what Straus calls 'a new source of unification superimposed upon the old music' (ex. 2).<sup>56</sup> Arnold Whittall argues that Stravinsky's use of such archaic titles establishes his belief in the degree to which such models could be re-formed without losing their identities.<sup>57</sup>

The ballet *Pulcinella* consists of eight tableaux beginning with an Overture in the Italian style for orchestra (ex. 3). It contains very little re-composition of the original Pergolesi trio sonata, being effectively an arrangement with a much thicker texture than would have been acceptable in the eighteenth century. The music has been arranged for a solo quintet, here doubled by an orchestral quartet with the addition of two oboes, bassoons and horns in F in an imitation of the orchestration used in a Baroque Concerto Grosso, the Quintet providing the *Ripieno* and the rest of the orchestra the *Concertino*.

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<sup>55</sup> John G. Waterhouse et al., 'Respighi, Ottorino', in *Oxford Music Online* <<http://www.oxfordmusiconline.com>> [accessed 5 January 2015].

<sup>56</sup> Straus, p. 58.

<sup>57</sup> Arnold Whittall, *Music Since the First World War*, (London: J.M. Dent & Sons Ltd, 1977), p. 52.

Ex. 1: Stravinsky, *Suite de Pulcinella*, Sinfonia (Overture), bars 1-2

The image shows a musical score for two systems. The first system is for Oboe/Bassoon/Horn in F, and the second system is for Solo Quintet/Orchestral Quintet. Both systems are marked 'Allegro moderato' and 'f'. The music is in 4/4 time and G major. The first system starts with a rest in the first bar, followed by chords and moving lines. The second system starts with a rest in the first bar, followed by chords and moving lines.

The *Andantino* section (ex. 2) contains more intervention and re-composition by Stravinsky. While the solo violin line remain largely unaltered, Stravinsky reformed the accompaniment into an ostinato, which by both harmonizing and clashing with the melodic line interrupts the movement from tonic to dominant.<sup>58</sup> This use of dissonance helps to reinforce the musical fabric, to give it greater impact without betraying the essence and atmosphere of the source material.<sup>59</sup> Such a modification, or 'misreading' of the original material might be considered to be marginalisation of the musical elements central to the structure of the source material.<sup>60</sup>

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<sup>58</sup> Straus, p. 58.

<sup>59</sup> Vlad, p. 76.

<sup>60</sup> Straus, p. 17.

Ex. 2: Stravinsky, *Suite de Pulcinella*, Andantino, rehearsal marks 42-3

The image shows a musical score for Stravinsky's *Suite de Pulcinella*, specifically the *Andantino* movement. It covers rehearsal marks 42 and 43. The score is in 2/4 time and features three staves: Violin I/II solo, Flutes/Vln II/Vln, and Piano. The tempo is marked 'Andantino' and the dynamics are 'p' (piano). The score includes various musical notations such as notes, rests, and trills.

Stravinsky described *Pulcinella* as 'my discovery of the past, the epiphany through which the whole of my later work became possible. It was a backward look of course [...] but it was a look in the mirror too.'<sup>61</sup> It formed the first of a series of works in which Stravinsky, by referring to the works of the great composers of the past, re-forms a picture of the last two hundred years of Western musical culture in a reflection of his personal idiom.<sup>62</sup> In addition Rudolph Stephan argues that Stravinsky's neoclassical works are more concerned with parody and de-familiarisation of the works than imitation.<sup>63</sup>

Vlad argues that it is wholly feasible that the musical forms created by composers of the past are so altered by interaction with the taste and sensibility of

<sup>61</sup> Stravinsky and Craft, p. 113 quoted in Whittall, p. 51.

<sup>62</sup> Vlad, p. 76.

<sup>63</sup> Kenneth Gloag, 'Tippett's Second Symphony, Stravinsky and the Language of Neoclassicism: Towards a Critical Framework', in *Tippett Studies*, ed. by David Clarke (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1999), pp. 78-94 (p. 83).



the later artist that they attain a new meaning resulting in 'genuinely original works'.<sup>64</sup> This leads to the question as to whether *Pulcinella* is an original work and also as to the relationship between the aesthetic ideal of neoclassicism to the material in this ballet. Maureen Carr describes the work as a 'musical mosaic of complimentary colours' that allowed Stravinsky to place his own stamp on the pre-composed foundations.<sup>65</sup> While it is commonly acknowledged that all music is to a certain extent derived from and influenced by that which has gone before it can usually be considered to be original. However, it is doubtful that *Pulcinella* can be described as an original composition given the quantity of Pergolesi's and other composers' music which has remained unaltered. In some senses it might be considered to be a recomposition of the eighteenth-century sources rather than an essentially original work; indeed Stravinsky himself described the work as 'in collaboration' with Pergolesi.<sup>66</sup> However, the work still contains elements which relate to the neoclassical aesthetic, namely the combination of baroque forms and musical fragments with Stravinsky's post-tonal harmonies and thickened textures in a misreading of these original elements. Straus argues that this re-composition of these earlier fragments into a new work involves 'anxiety of influence'.<sup>67</sup>

There are many varying opinions as to which work could be classified as Stravinsky's first neoclassical composition although *Pulcinella* is often described as the first of these it contains so much materials from the compositions of earlier composers that a second work, his 1923 *Octuor*, the octet for wind instruments

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<sup>64</sup> Vlad, p. 76.

<sup>65</sup> Carr, *After the Rite*, p. 28.

<sup>66</sup> Messing, *Neoclassicism in Music*, p. 112.

<sup>67</sup> Straus, p. 133.

should be examined to understand further Stravinsky's approach to neoclassicism. Indeed Richard Taruskin states that its importance as the 'ostensible launching pad' for Stravinsky's neoclassical works has been greatly overstated since Stravinsky would not have embarked upon such a project on his own initiative, it having little to do with his creative interests at that time.<sup>68</sup> Further, Stephen Walsh states that Stravinsky stated that his 1914 Polka from *Three Easy Pieces* marked the birth of neoclassicism. Walsh asserts that a direct line can be traced from these pieces through *L'histoire du soldat* to the *Octuor*.<sup>69</sup> Stravinsky's sketchbooks indicate that in the first half of 1919, before beginning *Pulcinella*, the composer was working on sketches for the music that went into the *Octuor* in addition to the *Symphonies of Wind Instruments* and the Concertino for string quartet.<sup>70</sup>

James Wood argues that the *Octuor* is widely considered to be the first work of any composer to entirely personify the ideals of the neoclassical movement.<sup>71</sup> He argues that this octet is a strong retreat from the excessively emotional works of the Romantic era through its employment of classical forms, use of counterpoint, a smaller and purer orchestration, use of ostinato, exploration of distinct and unrelated intervals in its melodies and intricate rhythms. Maureen Carr states that with the *Octuor pour instruments a vent*, Stravinsky cemented his neoclassical style by

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<sup>68</sup> Richard Taruskin, 'Parody as Homage', pp. 61-2 (p.61).

<sup>69</sup> Igor Stravinsky and Robert Craft, *Dialogues and a Diary* (London: Faber, 1968), p. 41 quoted in Stephen Walsh, *The Music of Stravinsky* (London and New York: Routledge, 1988), p. 62.

<sup>70</sup> Igor Stravinsky, *Selected Correspondence II* (London: Faber, 1984), p. 452 et seq. quoted in Walsh, p. 87.

<sup>71</sup> James L. Wood, *A Historical and Analytical Examination of the Stravinsky Octet for Wind Instruments, with a Guide to Performance Preparation of the Two Trumpet Parts* (Unpublished doctoral dissertation: University of North Texas, 2007), p. 12.

adapting sonata form and adopting fugal techniques, even though these forms and techniques were present in his earlier works.<sup>72</sup> Aaron Copland, then studying with Nadia Boulanger in Paris, wrote that this work 'establishes a new, universal ideal of music, based on classical forms and contrapuntal procedures, while the melodic material is borrowed from different epochs but unified by the individuality of the composer'. Similarly, Jean Cocteau gravely greeted this change in Stravinsky's compositional manner writing: 'In 1916 our maître d'école was Satie. In 1923 we heard Stravinsky and discovered that he spoke our language better than we did.'<sup>73</sup>

The *Octuor* comprises three movements: a Sinfonia, Theme and Variations, and a Finale. It was composed for flute, clarinets in B-flat and A, two bassoons, trumpets in A and C with tenor and bass trombones. Stravinsky used wind in preference to strings because he believed that they produced a colder and more rigid timbre which led to a less emotive and thus purer sound. This particular ensemble was selected to form a complete sonorous scale which led to a rich register, although Stravinsky stated that he made his choice of instrumentation after completion of the first part, the ensemble was decided by 'the contrapuntal material, the character, and structure of what I had composed'.<sup>74</sup> Stravinsky stated that the instruments make the musical architecture of the *Octuor* more obvious.<sup>75</sup>

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<sup>72</sup> Carr, *After the Rite*, p. 248.

<sup>73</sup> Mikhail Druskin, *Igor Stravinsky: His Life, Works and Views*, trans. by Martin Cooper (New York: Cambridge University Press, 1983), pp.89, 181n, quoted in Carr, *After the Rite*, p. 254

<sup>74</sup> Stravinsky, *Autobiography*, p. 103.

<sup>75</sup> Eric Walter White, *Stravinsky: The Composer and His Works* (Berkeley, California: University of California Press, 1979), pp. 574-5.

In 'Some Ideas about my Octuor' Stravinsky discussed the work in what Walsh describes as starkly constructivist terms. He described it as 'a musical composition based on objective elements' and referred to its rigidity of form denying any role for expression in its performance. Stravinsky further stated that music is only able to solve musical problems and nothing else; that 'the play of musical elements is the thing'.<sup>76</sup>

The first movement of the *Octuor*, a symphony in the pre-classical format, is nonetheless composed in sonata form with an introduction, exposition, development section and recapitulation.<sup>77</sup> However, the harmonic relationships within the sections are not based upon the normal tonic-dominant basis, but upon semitones. Thus the normal dominant-tonic structure has been marginalised in a misreading of the past form.<sup>78</sup> In addition, chromatic alteration is used to blur the harmony, making the relation between keys less obvious (ex. 3).<sup>79</sup> Such a blurring of the harmony has parallels in Elgar's writing, such as that seen in his First Symphony, in which he composes long stretches where it is impossible to isolate the key, so that the tonality appears weakened and obscured.<sup>80</sup> The E-flat major of the opening bars begins to be altered by the second rehearsal mark in such a way that the key is no longer clear. Despite Stravinsky's employment of the classical sonata form, his use of harmony places this work securely in the twentieth century. In addition, Walsh argues that in Stravinsky's early neoclassical works, his use of classical forms is referential rather than organic and is best interpreted as symbolic.

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<sup>76</sup> Walsh, p. 119-20.

<sup>77</sup> Vlad, p. 81.

<sup>78</sup> Straus, p. 17.

<sup>79</sup> Wood, p. 23.

<sup>80</sup> Diana McVeagh, *Elgar the Music Maker* (Woodbridge: The Boydell Press, 2007), p. 117.

The second movement is in theme and variation form, the first time that Stravinsky used such a form in his composition. Ex.3 below illustrates Stravinsky's increasing rhythmic freedom in his use of time signature changes to disrupt the symmetry of his phrases, placing the bass sometimes on and sometimes off the beat.<sup>81</sup>

Ex. 3: Stravinsky, *Octuor pour instruments a vents*, Tema con Variazioni, rehearsal marks 1-2.

The image displays a musical score for the first two rehearsal marks of the 'Tema con Variazioni' movement from Stravinsky's *Octuor pour instruments a vents*. The score is written for four instruments: Flute (Fl.), Clarinet in Bb (Cl.), Bassoon I (Bsn.), and Bassoon II (Bsn.). The tempo is marked 'Lento' with a quarter note equal to 76 beats per minute (♩=76). The key signature is B-flat major (two flats). The score is divided into two sections, marked with rehearsal numbers 1 and 2. Section 1 (measures 1-16) shows the Flute and Clarinet playing a melodic line with a dynamic marking of *mf*, while the Bassoons play a rhythmic accompaniment with a dynamic marking of *p*. Section 2 (measures 17-32) continues the melodic development, with the Flute and Clarinet playing a more complex line and the Bassoons providing a steady accompaniment. The score demonstrates Stravinsky's use of time signature changes to disrupt the symmetry of his phrases.

<sup>81</sup> Louis Andriessen and Jonathan Cross, 'Composing with Stravinsky' ed. by Jonathan Cross in *The Cambridge Companion to Stravinsky* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2003), pp. 248-259 (p. 256).

The fourteen bar theme is based upon an octatonic scale divided into pitch class sets which are given below:<sup>82</sup>

Pitch Set	Pitch Set
A - B <sub>b</sub> - C - C#	D# - E - F# - G

These sets are re-ordered throughout the theme and variations to produce various motifs such as that given in example 4 below which is formed wholly from the first pitch set:

Ex. 4: Stravinsky, *Octuor pour instruments a vents*, Tema con Variazioni, rehearsal mark 24.

The image shows a musical score for two instruments: Flute and Clarinet in B $\flat$ . The tempo is marked 'Andantino' and the dynamics are 'ben cantabile mp'. The score consists of two staves. The Flute staff starts with a treble clef and a key signature of one sharp (F#). The Clarinet in B $\flat$  staff starts with a treble clef and a key signature of one sharp (F#). Both staves have a 3/4 time signature. The music is divided into two measures by a bar line. The first measure contains a sequence of notes: A4, B $\flat$ 4, C5, C#5, D5, E5, F#5, G5. The second measure contains a sequence of notes: D#5, E5, F#5, G5. The notes are connected by a slur, indicating they are part of a single melodic line.

Walsh argues that Fugue first entered Stravinsky's musical language in the final variation of this movement. It was employed as one of a network of symbolic allusions to traditional formal practise. However, it quickly mutates into a transition to the *Finale*.

The last movement is in the form of a rondo with a coda and is an exercise in counterpoint, a detailed analysis of which can be found in James Wood's thesis.<sup>83</sup> Thus the *Octet* provides a valuable example of Stravinsky's use of the neoclassical aesthetic. He employed a misreading of various traditional forms combining them

<sup>82</sup> Scott Charles Lubaroff, *An Examination of the Neo-classical Wind Works of Igor Stravinsky: The Octet for Winds and Concerto for Piano and Winds* (New York: The Edward Mellen Press, 2004) p. 48, quoted in Wood, p. 25.

<sup>83</sup> Wood, p. 27-8.

with post-tonal harmonies to produce an original composition that reflects one aspect of neoclassicism, in this case purity, through its use of timbre.

Vlad argues that Stravinsky's use of neoclassicism reached its climax in three ballets, *Apollo musagètes*, *Le baiser de la fée* (The Fairy's Kiss) and *Jeu de cartes*.<sup>84</sup> The second of these, *The Fairy's Kiss* is based on Hans Anderson's *The Ice Maiden* and uses melodic motifs taken from Tchaikovsky's music. In 1934 Stravinsky created a concert suite for orchestra from this ballet entitled *Divertimento*, which may have a direct relation to Alwyn's *Divertimento for Solo Flute* particularly since it was not published until 1938, the year in which Alwyn began to work on his *Divertimento*.<sup>85</sup>

Stravinsky's *Divertimento* has four movements consisting of a *Sinfonia*, *Danses Suisses*, a *Scherzo* and a *Pas de deux* comprising an *Adagio*, *Variation* and *Coda* which are based upon the main elements of a ballet and thus has a different structure to Alwyn's *Divertimento* which has more the structure of a baroque suite.<sup>86</sup>

In the period between the two World Wars, neoclassicism in France appears to have had two meanings; firstly it was associated with the increasing French nationalism and an idealised French character including purity, clarity, simplicity, objectivity, refinement, and sobriety. It was an aesthetic movement in which the music was distanced from the perceived excesses of the Romantic period

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<sup>84</sup> Vlad, p. 91-4.

<sup>85</sup> Walsh, p. 303. While it is impossible to prove whether this is the case, Alwyn, as a professional flautist may have performed in this concert suite or otherwise had access to the score. As an upcoming composer, it does not seem too much a stretch of the imagination to infer that Alwyn would have kept himself *au fait* with new works, especially with those of a composer such as Stravinsky. However, the use of the title is really all that links these two works, and it may be only that Alwyn was inspired to use the *Divertimento* title in his later flute piece.

<sup>86</sup> Igor Stravinsky, *Divertimento* (New York: Boosey & Hawkes, 1938), in *Alexander Street Press* <<http://search.alexanderstreet.com>> [accessed 1 April 2015].

represented by Wagner's operas together with an attempt to reassert French musical tradition over the predominantly German musical hegemony.

The second meaning of neoclassicism was most closely associated with Stravinsky, who, concerned with entering the mainstream of European music to replace his lost Russian homeland, played to French avant-garde tendencies. Through a deliberate analytical misreading of the works of his predecessors away from tonal harmony towards a motivic orientation, he recomposed their works in his own image. He employed the older forms, mixing them with more dissonance than would have been employed in the seventeenth and eighteenth centuries, also making frequent use of ostinato, intricate rhythms and unusual instrumental combinations, creating a characteristically twentieth century style. He stated that the establishment of order and discipline in the purely sonorous scheme should take precedence over more emotional elements which correspond to the French national character.<sup>87</sup> It is impossible to discern whether this is a genuinely held belief, or an attempt to align himself with the French ideal.

Stravinsky accepted the use of neoclassicism to label his works in the 1920s. It allowed him to carve a place in musical history while suiting his own compositional needs. It also provided a name with which to articulate his artistic position and gave the public a way of coming to terms with his works at that time. Although Stravinsky soon abandoned the term, using it later in life only as it suited him, the neoclassical label continues to remain associated with him to this day. Walsh argues that it is difficult to attribute the invention of neoclassicism to Stravinsky, instead he

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<sup>87</sup> Stravinsky, *Autobiography*, p. 109.



provides a focus for the various ideas underpinning this aesthetic. He argues that neoclassicism has its roots in the nineteenth rather than twentieth century and arose from a growing obsession with history and historicism.<sup>88</sup>

The ideas behind French neoclassicism continued through Nadia Boulanger who disseminated ideas about composition throughout the Western World based on her understanding of Stravinsky's music. She remained a highly influential teacher during the first half of the twentieth century. Her pupils included Lennox Berkeley, Elliott Carter, Aaron Copland, Darius Milhaud and many others.

### **German music**

Music in the period between the wars was divided between those who followed in the footsteps of Schoenberg and Webern towards atonality and eventually twelve-tone serialism, and the German version of neoclassicism in the music of composers including Federico Busoni and Paul Hindemith. In common with French neoclassicism these two musical styles also developed as reaction to the excesses of the late nineteenth-century romantics. Constant Lambert described this excessive romanticism in his usual acerbic manner, writing: 'German romanticism had come to resemble a stuffy and scented drawing-room, over decorated with silk flounces, and encumbered with vast padded sofas and downy cushions.'<sup>89</sup>The eventual effect of

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<sup>88</sup> Walsh, p. 111.

<sup>89</sup> Constant Lambert, *Music Ho! A Study of Music in Decline* (London: Faber and Faber Limited, 1937), p. 249.

such excessive romanticism was a move towards a more sober and refined music employing the concept of objectivity similar to Jean Cocteau's 'new simplicity'.<sup>90</sup>

## **Schoenberg**

Musicologists divide Schoenberg's music into four periods. Even though Schoenberg turned away from tonality during his second and third periods, using the twelve-tone system to provide a new structure to replace the preceding tonic and dominant based harmony, it still maintained a relationship with the past. Keith Chapin argues that even those twentieth century artists in seeking originality, mined their predecessor's compositions for 'tricks of the trade'.<sup>91</sup> When Schoenberg made the critical break to atonality in 1908, he did not see himself as overturning that tradition but rather as perpetuating it, continuing a natural process of development, thus taking preceding styles and aesthetics as a departure point. Adorno argues that Schoenberg develops the compositional techniques of Beethoven and Brahms, particularly their treatment of thematic material, in doing so he can lay claim to the heritage of traditional classical music.<sup>92</sup> Schoenberg viewed serialism as an aid to composing without tonality, creating new works in large instrumental forms.

Schoenberg and his pupils regarded consonance and dissonance as qualities arranged along a scale of degree of comprehensibility related to the overtone series rather than polar opposites. For Schoenberg dissonances were simply more remote consonances, a process that had been at work over the course of the nineteenth

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<sup>90</sup> Messing, *Neoclassicism in Music*, p. 78.

<sup>91</sup> Keith Chapin, 'Classicism/Neoclassicism' in *Aesthetics of Music: Musicological Perspectives* ed. by Stephen Downes (New York and London: Routledge, 2014), pp. 144-169, (p. 157).

<sup>92</sup> Adorno, *Philosophy of Modern Music*, p. 57.

century. Etter argues that Schoenberg believed that this process could be continued into the twentieth century and that what he called ‘the emancipation of the dissonance’ could make dissonance identical to that of consonance.<sup>93</sup>

Schoenberg frequently recomposed earlier works including the works of Bach, Handel and Brahms.<sup>94</sup> This is illustrated below in Schoenberg’s re-composition of Handel’s Concerto Grosso, Op. 6, Mo. 7 (ex. 5 and ex. 6). Schoenberg recomposed Handel’s work in the first movement in such a way that the pieces match bar by bar. Bars 1-2 of the Handel directly correspond that in Schoenberg’s arrangement. The motif in bars 1-2 of the first and second violins has are played by the clarinets and bassoon, the violoncello and basso continuo lines have been assigned to the piano and harp with the addition of extra harmony in piano, harp, solo and orchestral strings. This orchestration is very similar to that employed by Stravinsky in his *Pulcinella Suite* (ex. 1), however, Stravinsky’s orchestration merely reflects the ripieno/concertino split of the *Concerto Grosso*.

Ex. 5: Handel, *Concerto Grosso in B-flat Op.6 no. 7*, Introduction, bars 1-4

<sup>93</sup> Etter, p. 30.

<sup>94</sup> Straus, p. 45.

Although Schoenberg was a modernist composer who had rejected tonality and historical rules of composition, he still composed music that grew out of his musical heritage, he used the past to confirm his own compositional procedures by finding examples for them in universally accepted masterpieces in a 'misreading' of the past.<sup>95</sup> According to Straus, Bloom's notion of misreading the past illustrates the spirit of twentieth-century composers in that they deliberately reinterpreted traditional elements in line with their own musical beliefs.<sup>96</sup> Such an attitude to the past was not limited to Schoenberg; according to Straus, Webern spoke of the weight of the past pushing him inexorably forward – a need to break ground with each work.<sup>97</sup> Thus the past provided an impetus to move beyond tonality.

Ex. 6 below illustrates Schoenberg's recomposition of the Handel Concerto Grosso in the first movement of his Concerto for String Quartet. Schoenberg employs motivic development in a ten bar phrase forming two sequences using the motif bracketed in the first three bars of ex. 5. The first sequence occurs in bars 1-3 whereby the motif is exaggerated dynamically by the addition of a sharp crescendo in each of the first two bars with an added *sforzando* chord played by the oboes; this is repeated in the third bar by the horns with a reinforcement of the motif in the lower pitched solo instruments (ex. 6). The second sequence begins at bar seven. Here the motif is seen in diminution on the solo instruments with the addition of new material in the orchestra which reinforces the traditional contrast between the

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<sup>95</sup> Straus, p. 36-7.

<sup>96</sup> Straus, p. 16.

<sup>97</sup> Anton Webern, *The Path to the New Music*, ed. by Willi Reich trans. Leo Black (Bryn Mawr, PA: Theodore Presser Company, 1963), p. 45 quoted in Straus, p. 45.

soloist and orchestra.<sup>98</sup> The persistent repetition of the motif by the solo instruments in bar 7-10 might also be considered to be a quasi-ostinato passage.

Ex. 6: Schoenberg, Concerto for String Quartet, bars 1-4

The image displays a page of a musical score for Schoenberg's Concerto for String Quartet, bars 1-4. The score is for a full orchestra and includes parts for Oboe I & II, Clarinet in Bb, Bassoon, Horn in F, Trumpet, Trombone, Tuba, Percussion, Harp, Solo Violin I & II, Solo Viola, Solo Violoncello, Violin I & II, Viola, Violoncello, and Contrabass. The tempo is marked 'Largo' and the key signature is one flat. The score shows the first four bars of the piece, with various dynamics and articulations.

Such a relationship with the past flows through from the historicist modernism represented by Ferruccio Busoni, Franz Schmidt, and Max Reger, whereby a prominent use of musical technique from the remote past is employed in order to achieve a distance from the late Romantic styles.<sup>99</sup> For example, Schmidt's symphonies provide a synthesis of the Classical and Romantic traditions; he sought clarity with the aid of logical polyphony, relatively strict counterpoint linked to late

<sup>98</sup> Straus, p. 52.

<sup>99</sup> Walter Frisch, *German Modernism: Music and the Arts* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 2006), p. 139.

Romantic harmonies and traditional formal principles, features which connect him with Reger.<sup>100</sup>

Even in the period before the First World War the musical language and aesthetic notions of Richard Wagner did not receive universal approbation from German and Austrian musicians. Friedrich Nietzsche, having become disenchanted with Wagner, described his music as irrational and decadent. This resulted in nostalgia for a pre-romantic past to counterbalance the excesses of romanticism.<sup>101</sup> Historicist modernism represented an attempt to bridge the historical gap between the remote past and the present in a fusion of ancient and contemporary practice and as such was a precursor to neoclassicism. A late nineteenth century example is provided by Brahms who used the music of the past as a creative stimulus.<sup>102</sup>

The influence of the past can be seen in Schoenberg's arrangements of Bach such as his *Suite op. 29* and one of his earliest twelve-tone compositions, the *Wind Quintet op. 26*. While being composed with serial tone rows, the *Wind Quintet* employed historical forms: an opening sonata form, a scherzo and trio, a slow movement followed by a rondo thus forming a synthesis between old and new.<sup>103</sup>

Much of German neoclassical thinking appears to stem from the great German classical poet and philosopher Johan Wolfgang von Goethe (1749-1832).<sup>104</sup> Following the collapse of Imperial Germany in 1918, Goethe's emblematic importance was redefined when the First German Republic was founded in Weimar.

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<sup>100</sup> Carmen Ottner, 'Schmidt, Franz' in *Oxford Music Online* <<http://www.oxfordmusiconline.com>> [accessed 18 September 2016].

<sup>101</sup> Messing, *Neoclassicism in Music*, p. 61.

<sup>102</sup> Frisch, *German Modernism: Music and the Arts*, pp. 149-50.

<sup>103</sup> John Maxwell, 'Symmetrical Partitioning of the Row in Schoenberg's *Wind Quintet, Op. 26*' in *Indiana Theory Review* 5.2 (1982), 1-15 (p. 1).

<sup>104</sup> *Ibid.* p. 64.

Its senior politicians invoked 'the spirit of the great philosophers and poets' as inspiration for a country recovering from military defeat.<sup>105</sup> Despite some of his literary works being excessively emotional, he argued that classicism was the means of controlling art, and that romanticism was a sickness.<sup>106</sup>

The term *Neoklassizismus* did not appear in Germany until after the end of World War I, and at this time it was usually used to describe the art and architecture of late eighteenth century France. In an essay in 1911 in which Thomas Mann expressed his growing antipathy towards Wagner, a new term, *eine neue Klassizität*, similar to the French *nouveau classicisme*, was introduced into the Austro-German cultural language.<sup>107</sup> Ferruccio Busoni introduced a similar term, *junge Klassizität*, in 1920 in an open letter to the music critic Paul Bekker to describe the 'mastery, the sifting and the turning to account of all gains of previous experiments and their inclusion in strong and beautiful forms'.<sup>108</sup>

## **Busoni**

The composer Ferruccio Busoni is often referred to as the father of neoclassicism in Germany both as a composer and writer. Although of Italian birth, he was of Corsican and Austrian extraction and a long-time resident of Germany; he received a wholly German musical education both at the Vienna Conservatoire and from the composer W.A. Rémy.<sup>109</sup>

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<sup>105</sup> Leslie Sharpe, 'Introduction' in *The Cambridge Companion to Goethe*, ed. by Leslie Sharpe (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2002), pp. 1-5 (p.3).

<sup>106</sup> Philip Weller, 'Goethe, Johann Wolfgang Von' in *Oxford Music Online* <<http://www.oxfordmusiconline.com>> [accessed 14 January 2015].

<sup>107</sup> Ibid.

<sup>108</sup> Messing, *Neoclassicism in Music*, pp. 62-6.

<sup>109</sup> Edward J. Dent, *Ferruccio Busoni: A Biography* (London: Eulenberg Books, 1974), p. 36.

Busoni began his professional life as a child prodigy, giving concerts around Europe to support his family very much in the manner of the child Mozart and continued to be known mostly as a virtuoso pianist rather than a composer throughout his life.<sup>110</sup> His main influences were Bach, Mozart and Liszt; and later in life he produced annotated performing editions of the works of Bach and Liszt. He championed Liszt's lesser known compositions and introduced many contemporary works, including those of French composers such as Vincent d'Indy and his own compositions, on the concert platform.<sup>111</sup> He encouraged many emerging composers throughout his life the most prominent of whom are Jean Sibelius and Kurt Weil.

In 1905 Busoni published a small book entitled *Entwurf einer Neuen Aesthetik der Tonkunst* in which he outlined a collection of observations on various musical principles. Edward Dent states that this book is filled with 'stimulating and provocative thought'.<sup>112</sup> This first essay on aesthetics by Busoni was a first step into neoclassicism which was developed further in the 1920 letter to Paul Bekker mentioned above.

Busoni took many of his ideas from Goethe, Schopenhauer and Nietzsche, basing several of his compositions on six Goethe texts, most famously in his opera *Doktor Faustus*.<sup>113</sup> He defended new movements in music in his 1920 article and used the term *junge Klassizität* to describe a musical evolution that exemplified an on-going, rejuvenating process rather than a mere imitation of the past, a pastiche, which for Busoni was implied by the term *neue Klassizität*. This rejuvenating process

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<sup>110</sup> Dent, p. 24.

<sup>111</sup> Dent, p. 102.

<sup>112</sup> Dent, p. 180.

<sup>113</sup> Messing, *Neoclassicism in Music*, pp. 67-8.



might be considered to be similar to Straus' 'misreading' of the past. Busoni stated that *junge Klassizität* signifies completion both as perfection and as the conclusion of previous experiments in music.<sup>114</sup> This implies a frustration with previous experimentation and the necessity for a stability of style, which became pressing in the 1920s.<sup>115</sup> Busoni identified three characteristics which defined his 'young classicism': firstly *Einheit* (unity), secondly music created from horizontal lines and finally the denial of the sensuous.<sup>116</sup> Thus Busoni, like Stravinsky, viewed counterpoint as an important constituent of composition.

In his first concept, which he described as unity, Busoni believed that music should have no intrinsic dramatic, spiritual or symphonic qualities to provide it with meaning other than the setting in which it was placed, its title, or the text to which it was set. In other words, music could not represent moral conditions or symbolise ethical qualities. He believed that all music proceeded from a single source: all works existed within an 'eternal harmony' that sounded throughout the universe.<sup>117</sup> It was left to the creative genius of the artist to realize an individual work which is a somewhat Baroque notion of the performer. Thus Busoni introduced the concept of oneness in music, the idea that 'music is music, in and for itself, and nothing else, that it is not split into classes' – an absolute rather than programmatic music.<sup>118</sup> He contended that church music is in essence absolute music to which words have been

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<sup>114</sup> Ferruccio Busoni, *The Essence of Music and Other Papers*, trans. by R. Ley (New York: n.pub., 1965), pp. 22-3, quoted in Edward Lippman *A History of Western Musical Aesthetics* (Lincoln & London: University of Nebraska Press, 1992), p. 400.

<sup>115</sup> Edward Lippman, *A History of Western Musical Aesthetics* (Lincoln & London: University of Nebraska Press, 1992), p. 400.

<sup>116</sup> Messing, *Neoclassicism in Music*, pp. 67-70.

<sup>117</sup> Messing, *Neoclassicism in Music*, p. 69.

<sup>118</sup> Busoni, *The Essence of Music*, p. 21 quoted in Lippman, p. 399.

added, if a different text is substituted then it is no longer church music, it takes on a new character.

Busoni's second characteristic of *Junge Klassizität* was that music should consist of horizontal elements rather than vertical (harmonic) progressions, a movement away from the thematic towards melody and what Paul Bekker called polyphony.

The third and final characteristic of *Junge Klassizität* was that music should be detached, absolute, tranquil, refined and pure, very similar characteristics to that prescribed by French neoclassicists. He denounced the music that developed following the death of Wagner as subjective, descriptive, exaggerated and sensual, particularly the music that used tone painting and overripe harmonies.<sup>119</sup> Edward Lippman argues that there is an aesthetic of musical activity that is focused on the future rather than backward-looking and closely associated with composition. This aesthetic of objectivity arose in the 1920s resulting from a twentieth-century reaction to the complexity, emotionalism and realism of the nineteenth century. This objectivity was connected with comprehensibility and simplicity and also to the concept of absolute music. He argues that there has often been a return to forms, styles and stylistic features of the past, which seems to ensure a kind of objectivity.<sup>120</sup> This objectivity is reflected in Busoni's third characteristic of *Junge Klassizität* and is not so much a rejection of emotion, but its restraint.

Busoni formed a close friendship with Jean Sibelius beginning first in Germany and later when he took up the post of Professor of Piano at Helsinki

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<sup>119</sup> Messing, *Neoclassicism in Music*, p. 70.

<sup>120</sup> Lippman, p. 398.

Conservatoire.<sup>121</sup> It is probable that Busoni's ideas on the characteristics of composition influenced Sibelius' developing style; his works often displayed a sense of economy, purity and clarity and employed the use of polyphony. Similarly, Busoni composed a *Divertimento for Flute and Orchestra* in 1921 which is written in the style of Mozart and influenced by his regard for Goethe.<sup>122</sup> This use of the *Divertimento* as a title was common to many neoclassicists including Stravinsky and Alwyn and illustrates the revival of an eighteenth-century genre.

### **Hindemith**

Busoni was a well-known figure during the first half of the twentieth century, but his achievements have been eclipsed by Paul Hindemith (1895-1963) who composed chamber music, orchestral works, and operas in a heavily contrapuntal, chromatically inflected style. In 1926, some years after Busoni had introduced the concept of Young Classicism, the term *Neue Sachlichkeit*, meaning new objectivity or matter-of-factness, which had originally been applied to art, was applied to music. Heinrich Stobel, writing in an article entitled *Neue Sachlichkeit in der Music* of 1926, stated: 'In striving for absolute clarity of form the most recent music again coincides with plastic art and indeed with the newest movement, for which, since the Mannheim Exhibition, the general concept of *Neue Sachlichkeit* is current.'<sup>123</sup>

Bessler stated that the first composer to apply the principles of this *Neue Sachlichkeit* was Hindemith; further Erich Dofflein argues that the revolution in

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<sup>121</sup> David Burnett-James, *Sibelius* (Hungary: Omnibus Press, 1989), p. 18.

<sup>122</sup> Messing, *Neoclassicism in Music*, p. 74.

<sup>123</sup> Lippman, p. 400.

contemporary music is due to its new objective basis.<sup>124</sup> He states that it is not that the style of the music is 'objective', but that there is an objective attitude that lies beneath the composer's work and it is this objectivity that determines how he conceives the possibilities of his work.<sup>125</sup>

Hindemith's music received variable critical approbation. Arnold Whittall described Hindemith's first decade of mature work as remarkable,<sup>126</sup> but Straus makes no mention of him in *Remaking the Past* and Constant Lambert, while describing him as 'one of the most proficient musicians alive today' also wrote that he was incapable of the 'spiritual and technical concentration' of Sibelius or the 'melodic fertility' and popular appeal of Kurt Weill.<sup>127</sup> He wrote, damning him by too faint a praise:

[Hindemith's] neo-classicism is not so much a distortion and harmonization of phrases drawn from the classics [as in Stravinsky] as a translation into modern terms of eighteenth-century commonplace. [...] To confuse the arbitrary counterpoint of Hindemith with the expressive counterpoint of Byrd and Palestrina is to confuse the tightrope itself with the tightrope walker.<sup>128</sup>

In addition, David Neumeyer states that Adorno considered Hindemith to be bourgeois, unimaginative, lacking profundity and a dogmatic theorist. By this he considered Hindemith to have produced music that was too acceptable to the public in general in that he had not been effective in alienating his audience; his music was

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<sup>124</sup> Erich Dofflein, *Die Ausbreitung des Historismus über die Musik*, ed. by Walter Wiora (Regensburg, 1969), pp. 10-38, quoted in Alan Lessem, 'Schumann's Arrangements of Bach as Reception History', *Journal of Musicological Research*, 7:1 (1986) 29-46, (p. 30).

<sup>125</sup> Lippman, p. 401.

<sup>126</sup> Whittall, p. 69.

<sup>127</sup> Lambert, p. 270.

<sup>128</sup> Lambert, p. 247-54.

insufficiently *avant-garde*, having no genius and at the same time being too academic.<sup>129</sup>

At the end of the First World War Hindemith returned to his position as leader of the Opera orchestra in Frankfurt, and to the Rebner Quartet, in which as the viola player he gained experience of contemporary repertoire such as Schoenberg's first and second quartets.<sup>130</sup> Arnold Whittall praises Hindemith's 1918 String Quartet in F minor, which was completed before Stravinsky published his ballet *Pulcinella*, pre-empting Stravinsky's move into the neoclassical style. Whittall describes the opening of this string quartet as being composed with baroque gestures treated in modern terms.<sup>131</sup> However, rather than being neoclassical this work is composed following on from the modernist historicist tradition in which the past is appropriated and synthesised with modernism in order to produce a bridge to the past.<sup>132</sup>

Hindemith believed in the *Neue Sachlichkeit* in music. This suggested that the style of a particular work should depend on the character and function chosen for it. *Neue Sachlichkeit* was a conformist movement: it was exemplified in many of Hindemith's works, but more so in his numerous followers. Lippman observes that the concepts of neoclassicism and *Neue Sachlichkeit* are fundamentally contemporaneous in origin.<sup>133</sup> Lethen related the 'cool conduct' behind German neoclassicism, particularly that of new objectivity, to the trauma experienced by

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<sup>129</sup> David Neumeier, *The Music of Paul Hindemith* (New Haven and London: Yale University Press, 1986), pp. 10-11.

<sup>130</sup> Giselher Schubert, 'Hindemith, Paul', in *Oxford Music Online* <<http://www.oxfordmusiconline.com>> [accessed 13 January 2015].

<sup>131</sup> Whittall, p. 69.

<sup>132</sup> Frisch, *German Modernism: Music and the Arts*, p. 149-50.

<sup>133</sup> Lippman, p. 407-8.

Germans following the First World War.<sup>134</sup> As a consequence of its reliance upon function, Hindemith's music of the period is somewhat varied, employing an extensive variety of styles. This is illustrated by the *Kammermusik* set composed between 1924 and 1927, a succession of concertos for solo instruments and chamber orchestra which exhibit an assortment of influences from neo-Baroque forms to lyrical, intense nocturnes, waltzes and parodies of military marches. Whittall argues that the main fault to be found with individual movements of the *Kammermusiken* is that they comprise overly long formal schemes, where the material is insufficiently interesting or imaginative to deserve such exhaustive disclosure of its properties.<sup>135</sup>

In the early 1920s, Hindemith took to composing works with independent lines of music, identifying the *Neue Sachlichkeit* stylistically with the avowal of a primarily linear, polyphonic music that gave the impression of being new in the context of the time. However, such use of polyphony had previously been postulated by Busoni as part of his *junge Klassizität* and also by both Schoenberg and Stravinsky, though each in their own compositional styles. Giselher Schubert states that in Hindemith's *Neue-Sachlichkeit*-inspired works 'formal coherence was no longer supported and articulated by motivic-thematic developmental processes, tonal functional harmony, or regular syntax'; instead there was a rhythmically and metrically uniform structure or a sometimes supple, sometimes strict continuity of musical movement. The harmonic element is distinctly dissonant in these works, to enable the often extremely individualized voices in the musical texture to stand out

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<sup>134</sup> Helmut Lethen, *Cool Conduct: The Culture of Distance in Weimar Germany* (Berkeley, California: University of California Press, 2002), n.p., quoted in 'Classicism/Neoclassicism' in *Aesthetics of Music: Musicological Perspectives*, ed. by Stephen Downes (New York and London: Routledge, 2014), p. 167.

<sup>135</sup> Whittall, p. 71.

against each other.<sup>136</sup> His three organ sonatas formed part of Hindemith's project of writing sonatas for every instrument and demonstrate the composer's ambition to develop the sonata genre beyond the nineteenth-century tradition. The first, composed in 1937, is sub-divided diversely in contrasting characters and follows the Reger pattern. The second and third, written in 1940, are more in the neoclassical idiom. The second contains a concerto in the first movement, a Romantic style pastorage for the second and the third movement is a free fugue with BACH motifs. The third sonata develops three secular German folk songs.<sup>137</sup>

Hindemith described himself a craftsman, never a tone poet; he wrote music designed to be played for a performer's own pleasure. In addition, he created music written with an explicit purpose in mind. He called such compositions *Gebrauchsmusik* (utility music); it was specifically designed to lead amateur players in the direction of new music. To this end Hindemith wrote several collections of works including *Spielmusik for String Orchestra, Flutes and Oboes*, the *Lieder für Singkreise*, *Schulwerk for Instrumental Ensemble Playing*, and the *Sing- und Spielmusik für Liebhaber und Musikfreunde (for Amateurs and Friends of Music)*. This last work directly references the C.P.E. Bach series of piano sonata works bearing the title '*für Kenner und Liebhaber*', which were sold by subscription and intended for amateurs rather than professional; this is demonstrated by the *Kenner* (connoisseurs) and *Liebhaber* (amateurs) in the title to make them accessible to amateurs. Hindemith limited the technical difficulty in these works; he sometimes left the instrumentation

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<sup>136</sup> Schubert, 'Hindemith, Paul', in *Oxford Music Online* < <http://www.oxfordmusiconline.com> > [accessed 13 January 2015].

<sup>137</sup> Christopher S. Anderson (ed.), *Twentieth-Century Organ Music* (New York and London: Routledge, 2012), n.p. < <https://books.google.co.jp> > [accessed 20 September 2016].

open so that whichever instruments were available could be used. He also allowed for sections within works to be played together into different groups or left out. In describing this music Hindemith somewhat dismissively stated: 'One will always distinguish between two contrary types of music-making: performance and playing for one's self. Performance is the profession of the musician, playing for one's self is occupation for amateurs.'<sup>138</sup>

In his later years Hindemith rejected the term *Gebrauchsmusik* because he had decided that the 'ability to be useful' should be 'tacitly assumed' in all music.<sup>139</sup> In some senses the principle behind Hindemith's *Gebrauchsmusik* is similar to the works of Bach and Haydn even though there was no imperative for him to impose such a concept of functionality. Such functionality appears to have arisen from the absolute music aesthetic. Bach was an employee, be it in Cöthen, where he was required to provide music for the court, or Leipzig, where the music was for the four churches. Similarly, Haydn was considered merely to be an upper servant in the Esterházy Court, he was required to compose music for both private and state occasions, having little control over what he produced. There is a notable difference in the music that Haydn produced under servitude and that composed as a celebrated composer in London. It is unlikely that he would have produced such a powerful work as his *Creation* while under the yoke of the Esterházy's. Whatever the reason for its composition, much of the music of Bach and Haydn, their forebears and peers

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<sup>138</sup> Fondation Hindemith, 'Gebrauchsmusik (Music for Use)', in *Hindemith* (2015) <<http://www.hindemith.info>> [accessed 14 January 2015].

<sup>139</sup> Ibid.



was essentially utility music, but where it differs from that of Hindemith is that it also frequently serves the dual role of art-music.

One work that may have impacted on William Alwyn was the Hindemith *Sonata for Flute* (1936). While there is no evidence in the William Alwyn Archive that he owned a copy of the *Sonata* it is highly probable that as a professional flautist and supporter of new music he would have been aware of this work. While retaining many modernist features, it is one of Hindemith's more melodic works, having been composed under the weight of increasing Fascism and conservatism in Germany.

The *Sonata* mobilises an older style both in its title and form. It is in a typical fast-slow-fast three movement form, but with the shifting time signatures and harmonies more characteristic of a modernist composition. In addition, the first movement is not in a recognisable sonata form in that the primary theme does not return as a recapitulation in the opening key, which in a purely tonal classically based sonata form would have been described as the tonic.

Ex. 7 demonstrates Hindemith's use of horizontal lines of music, the melody played firstly by the piano is repeated by the flute, at first exactly as the piano part but then with increasing variation. The opening movement appears to begin in F major, but in reality no key is established and the harmony soon moves into new areas.

Ex. 7: Hindemith, *Sonata für Flöte und Klavier*, First Movement, bars 1-10

The musical score is presented in two systems. The first system (bars 1-5) shows the flute part starting with a rest, followed by a melodic line. The piano accompaniment begins with a rhythmic pattern of eighth and sixteenth notes. The second system (bars 6-10) continues the flute melody and piano accompaniment, featuring triplets and various dynamic markings.

Under the Weimar Republic of the 1920s composers such as Hindemith and Schoenberg were able to work relatively freely. However, a more conservative feeling also existed in Weimar Germany, which manifested itself in the periodical the *Zeitschrift für Musik*. In the 1920s, following a change of ownership, the editorial policy became strongly nationalist and musically conservative; by 1925 its sub-title had become the 'Journal for a Spiritual Renewal of German Music'. In an editorial, Dr. Alfred Heuss wrote: 'German youth must learn to differentiate great music from sick; they will become discriminating through exposure to the masterpieces of their

heritage, and such exposure can be promoted by the Government through the schools.’<sup>140</sup>

The journal promoted anti-French feeling, blaming the decline in German music upon Stravinsky and Debussy. Additionally it was stridently anti-Semitic, describing the atonal music of the Jewish Schoenberg as soulless, stating that modernist composers were preoccupied with technique and form at the expense of the soul.<sup>141</sup> Hindemith fared more favourably, but was pressured to remain closer to German musical tradition. While his music did not receive universal approval they ‘dared to hope that he might approve if not led astray’, which perhaps might explain his return to more tonal and melodic music in his Flute Sonata.<sup>142</sup> While this journal may not have been representative of the attitudes of the general public in Germany it was a mouthpiece for the extreme right: in the 1930s the journal increasingly carried advertisements for the National Socialist Party and progressively spouted Nazi opinions and propaganda, thus providing a tool for the Far Right to influence the direction of German music.

Like Hindemith, Busoni and the neoclassicists, the second Viennese school represented by Schoenberg, Berg and Webern also made use of complex forms of imitation between voices or instruments. It is possible that Alwyn’s use of imitation was indirectly influenced by this, as much as by Busoni or Hindemith.

German neoclassicism is very different in character to that developing in parallel in France. While both had nationalistic roots and arose from a reaction

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<sup>140</sup> Sachs, Joel, ‘Some Aspects of Musical Politics in Pre-Nazi Germany’, *Perspectives of New Music*, 9.1 (1970), 74-95, (p. 76).

<sup>141</sup> Sachs, pp. 77-9.

<sup>142</sup> Sachs, p. 86.

against the excesses of Romanticism, particularly that of Wagner, they were also directed by their own national characters. In France this stemmed from a need to re-establish the supremacy of French music over historical German dominance of the musical landscape; but in Germany it originated in Goethe however, following defeat in World War I it was tied to a more general need to rebuild Germany and the German national identity with an increasingly fascist slant as the century progressed. Although German neoclassicism followed a different path from Schoenberg's serialism it embraced many of his atonal ideas, particularly in the works of Hindemith.

Many musicologists have described the change in the language of music that occurred during the first half of the twentieth century. Arnold Whittall describes two principal and interrelated trends, which he calls 'harmonic' and 'thematic'.<sup>143</sup> They denote either a breakdown in the tonal system, or a shift of emphasis from harmonic to thematic organization in compositional technique. Whittall argues that one effect of the advance of Schoenberg into 'atonality' was to make conceivable the difference between composers who believed that the structural and expressive potential of tonality has been exhausted and those who believed that it was still possible to continue technically along the tonal path although Schoenberg's atonality had the effect of creating and extended tonality.

The neoclassical aesthetic movement belongs to the tonal path; it reached its peak in the 1920s and 30s led by composers including Hindemith and Stravinsky. It arose as a reaction to the excesses of romanticism in the late nineteenth century and

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<sup>143</sup> Arnold Whittall, *The Music of Britten and Tippett: Studies in Themes & Techniques* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1982), p. 2.

as one consequence of the catastrophic First World War. However, neoclassicism takes on a different character depending upon which composer employed the aesthetic. In formulating a model for neoclassicism with which to analyse Alwyn's neoclassical works it is possible to define common characteristics despite these differences: it is generally anti-romantic in character employing the aesthetic of objectivity combined with use of pre-twentieth century forms and post-tonal harmonies. This results in a tension between the traditional tonal elements and the post-tonal context in which these new elements attempt to subsume and revise the old ones.<sup>144</sup> A neoclassical composition may also include an element of borrowing or parody, particularly in Stravinsky's works. In addition, as Walsh argues, there is often a feeling for cadence combined with part writing with a highly self-conscious use of fugue and imitative counterpoint.<sup>145</sup>

In formulating this model for the analysis of Alwyn's neoclassical works and gain insight into his compositional style it is first necessary to apply the conclusions from this chapter to British music. This will involve an examination into the use of older forms and borrowing from earlier works by twentieth century composers in a misreading of the past for their own artistic ends to gain an understanding of neoclassicism in the Britain of the 1920s and 1930s and its roots in the late nineteenth century.

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<sup>144</sup> Straus, p. 11-12.

<sup>145</sup> Walsh, p. 151.

## Chapter 2

### The English Context

Musicological opinion about the existence of an English Musical Renaissance, beginning in the second half of the nineteenth century, is strongly divided between those who believe in this thesis and others who strongly challenge it. John Caldwell, who appears to support the existence of the renaissance, argues that this English Renaissance had two distinct aspects: firstly, an expansion of English musical life, with its dispersion more widely in society than before; and secondly a mounting independence from Continental compositional models.<sup>146</sup> If the viewpoint that an English Renaissance existed is accepted, while it can be argued that an attempt to establish an English musical renaissance was not wholly successful in both these aspects, it did lead, both directly and indirectly, to the establishment of many more English composers within the musical canon than had occurred in the previous century.<sup>147</sup> Thus this research project, basing argument upon the musical canon, will lean towards the existence of an English Musical Renaissance since it provides a fitting tag with which to discuss the growth of a new national music.

This English Renaissance began with Parry and Stanford with the support of Sir Arthur Sullivan and George Grove amongst many; indeed Parry and Stanford used the term 'Renaissance' to promote English music in the early twentieth

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<sup>146</sup> John Caldwell, *The Oxford History of English Music: Volume 2 c.1715 to the Present Day* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1999), p. 258.

<sup>147</sup> Meirion Hughes and Robert Stradling, *The English Musical Renaissance 1840-1940: Constructing a National Music 2<sup>nd</sup> edition* (Manchester and New York: Manchester University Press, 1993, 2001), p.285.

century.<sup>148</sup> The period between the end of the First World War and the early years of the Second World saw a revival in British born composers unknown since the late seventeenth century when the native Henry Purcell was in ascendance, this can in part be laid at the door of the English renaissance program. It should be noted that in the period after Henry Purcell, England was not without music, instead London in particular became a centre for international composers including Handel, Clementi, Dussek and Haydn but there were few English born composers of note. Those within the English Renaissance made it their goal to encourage a generation of native-born composers.

In order to form a model for British neoclassicism, it is first necessary to examine the historical context in which this music was composed both in terms of what came immediately beforehand, the effect of World War One upon the musical scene and developments in media. It will examine the role of the principal composers who were writing at this time together with the influences upon them both in terms of their musical education and the compositional practices and works of other composers.

### **A 'Land without Music' and the 'English Renaissance'**

Constant Lambert argued that there was a lack of an important composer in the Victoria era, Elgar being the first important figure in English music since Boyce.<sup>149</sup> Certainly between the death of Henry Purcell and the rise of Elgar, there have been few English composers of international renown, with perhaps the exception of

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<sup>148</sup> Hughes and Stradling, p. 45.

<sup>149</sup> Lambert, p. 283

William Boyce, John Field and Sir Arthur Sullivan, who is perhaps best known for his comic operettas. However, there have been many English-born composers since the late seventeenth century who have contributed greatly to the growth of British music, including Parry and Stanford.

The nineteenth century saw calls for the promotion of an English national music; Jeffrey Richards argues that Parry looked to folk-song as the most representative of the English temperament.<sup>150</sup> Jeremy Dibble states that Parry became a national celebrity following the success of his English Oratorio *Judith* and his 'Cambridge' Symphony' his influence, including his interest in folk-music and the music of Tudor and Jacobean England, was felt by not only Elgar, but by Vaughan Williams, Bliss, Howells, Walton and Finzi.<sup>151</sup> However, Brian Newbould argues that Elgar showed little sympathy for pre-baroque music, instead turning to the music of Bach for his models of counterpoint rooted in harmony and Stephen Banfield states that Elgar viewed Handel as the model for string writing.<sup>152</sup> This is also confirmed by Michael Kennedy who states that while Elgar viewed Purcell as one of the greatest English composers, he considered works by Byrd, Weelkes, Tallis and Dowland to be museum pieces. Further he states that Elgar told Herbert

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<sup>150</sup> Jeffrey Richards, *Imperialism and Music: Britain 1876-1953* (Manchester: Manchester University Press, 2001), pp. 10-12.

<sup>151</sup> Jeremy Dibble, *C. Hubert Parry: His Life and Music* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1992), pp. 258-273.

<sup>152</sup> Brian Newbould, 'Elgar and the Academicism 3: Devices and Contrivances' in *The Musical Times*, 146 (2005), 29-44, p. 31; Stephen Banfield, 'Elgar's Counterpoint: Three of a Kind' in *The Musical Times*, 140 (1999), 29-37, p. 34.

Elgar orchestrated Bach's *Fantasia and Fugue in C minor BWV537* for full orchestra to demonstrate 'how gorgeous & great & brilliant he would have made himself sound if he had had our means' (Elgar in a letter to Ivor Atkins), see Newbould, p. 31 n. 5.



Howells that the secret of the power and resonance of his string writing came from Handel.<sup>153</sup>

However, despite national acclaim, Parry did not achieve recognition abroad, perhaps with the exception of his *Symphonic Variations*.<sup>154</sup> Further, the end of the First World War saw Parry's music suffer a considerable decline; musical tastes veered towards new artistic ideals and away from the models of the Victorians and Edwardians. Evidence of this is provided by Jeremy Dibble who states that the music critic Ernst Newman denounced Parry as a composer 'who never was'.<sup>155</sup>

According to George Dyson, Stanford 'had aspired to be the acknowledged fount of a school of composers' indicating his wish to bring about a school of British music.<sup>156</sup> Jeremy Dibble argues that a central philosophy of Stanford's artistic ambitions was that it was essential for the nation to create a national musical infrastructure for the music profession, preferably with state sponsorship to provide employment for these composers upon graduation.<sup>157</sup> Stanford achieved more international success than Parry, particularly in Germany, but like Parry, and in common with many of his predecessors, he also suffered from a lack of interest in his works after his death.<sup>158</sup>

Germany, in an attempt to assert the superiority of their national music described Britain as 'the land without music' – this provided the title of a travelogue

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<sup>153</sup> Michael Kennedy, *Elgar: Orchestral Music*, p. 8.

<sup>154</sup> Dibble, *C. Hubert Parry*, p. 389.

<sup>155</sup> Dibble, *C. Hubert Parry*, p. 502.

<sup>156</sup> 'Charles Villiers Stanford by Some of his Pupils' *Music and Letters* V.3 (1924), p. 197 quoted in Jeremy Dibble, 'Parry, Stanford and Vaughan Williams: the Creation of a Tradition' in *Vaughan Williams in Perspective: Studies of an English Composer* ed. by Lewis Foreman (Ilminster: Albion Press for the Vaughan Williams Society, 1998), 25-47 (p. 39).

<sup>157</sup> Jeremy Dibble, *Charles Villiers Stanford: Man and Music* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2002), p. 133.

<sup>158</sup> Dibble, *Charles Villiers Stanford*, p. 193.

of Britain by Oscar Schultz in the early twentieth century.<sup>159</sup> While this German view is palpably incorrect it does reflect German hegemony, continental opinion as to the state of English music and the lack of an internationally recognised English-born composer since Henry Purcell. Where English composers have been stronger is in the field of Church music, with notable composers including Byrd, Tallis, Henry Purcell, Blow, Jeremiah Clarke, Boyce and the turn of the century composers Howells, Parry, Stainer, Sumsion and Stanford. Hughes and Stradling, while overlooking the notable British tradition of church and keyboard music (including virginals, organ, and piano over several centuries), argue that such a dearth of internationally recognised home grown composers can be explained by the lack of patronage for English composers in the late seventeenth and eighteenth centuries, the generally low opinion of Art Music in Victorian England and also the supremacy of literature dating from William Shakespeare's time.<sup>160</sup> This is confirmed by Colin Eatock who states that nineteenth-century musical Britain struggled with an inferiority complex.<sup>161</sup>

No formal monarchic patronage system appears to have existed to promote English music after the time of Henry Purcell. The most notable composer working in England during the early eighteenth century was of course Handel who had established a 'worldwide reputation' by 1709.<sup>162</sup> In 1710 he was appointed Kapellmeister to the electoral court of Hanover (the Elector of which later became

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<sup>159</sup>Oscar A.H. Schmitz, *Das Land ohne Musik: Englische Gesellschaftsprobleme* (Munich: Georg Müller, 1905).

<sup>160</sup> Hughes and Stradling, p. 3.

<sup>161</sup> Colin Eatock, 'The Crystal Palace Concerts: Canon Formation and the English Musical Renaissance' *19th-Century Music*, 34. 1 (2010), 89 (pp. 87-105).

<sup>162</sup> Anthony Hicks, 'Handel, George Frederick' in *Grove Music Online* <<http://www.oxfordmusiconline.com>> [accessed 14 February 2016].

George I) and in 1713 Queen Anne granted him an annual pension of two hundred pounds, which was continued when George I succeeded to the throne in 1714.<sup>163</sup> The obvious conclusion to be drawn from this was that home grown composing talent was largely eclipsed by Mr Handel; in the nineteenth century the growth of amateur choral societies further prolonged the veneration of the *Messiah* together with Handel's other oratorios.

Success in international trade and a burgeoning empire in the eighteenth and nineteenth centuries meant that England acquired a strong urban bourgeoisie before France and Germany. As a consequence a domestic, middle-class market for music developed in England at a point when Vienna was relatively dominated by aristocratic patronage and Paris was in the throes of revolution. The Victorians also had a thriving musical culture, but this was centred in the middle classes upon domestic music-making - the 'piano in the parlour' and for the upper classes through the Philharmonic Society Concerts and at the Italian Opera in London.<sup>164</sup>

In addition, Britain was dominated by a rich literary heritage stemming from Shakespeare and Chaucer, but also moving through novelists such as Daniel Defoe, Jane Austin and the Bronte sisters together with great poets including Blake, Wordsworth, Browning, and Lord Byron. This dominance of the Arts by plays and literature together with a lack of patronage and a ready acceptance of imported music had a negative effect upon the establishment of home-grown composers.

The London of the late eighteenth and early nineteenth centuries was highly cosmopolitan city being a wealthy centre for trade; as a consequence the musical

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<sup>163</sup> *ibid.*

<sup>164</sup> Hughes and Stradling, pp. 4-5.

world was also multinational, with Dussek and Clementi being the dominant figures. Handel had forged a successful career in London as later did Haydn and Mendelssohn, but their success was less due to direct patronage by one noble or King (although, as previously stated, Handel was in receipt of a substantial Royal pension) than the commercial success from the performance of their music and sale of sheet music; an example is provided by the subscription concerts organised by the concert promoter Johann Peter Salomon who brought Haydn to London in the late eighteenth century.

Hughes and Stradling argue that the most important performing traditions in the Victorian era were still based on Handel who, though of German birth, was anglicised in his lifetime and assimilated into the national culture following his death.<sup>165</sup> Hughes and Stradling contend that this dominance by German music was reinforced by Mendelssohn who, with the support of Prince Albert, was primarily responsible for the recuperation of Art Music into England's cultural mainstream.<sup>166</sup> Mendelssohn's classical Romanticism became the tradition with which English music could move forward and provided a model for future English composers.<sup>167</sup>

By the mid-1860s the idea that musical success could be a source of national pride was gaining ground. However, no English composer of major international standing had yet arisen. A decade later the Franco-Prussian war led to a new German nationalism, as a result English music and a 'great' English composer

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<sup>165</sup> Hughes and Stradling, p. 5.

<sup>166</sup> Hughes and Stradling, p. 8.

<sup>167</sup> Hughes and Stradling, p. 13-15.

became a political priority as an extension of competing nationalisms throughout Europe.<sup>168</sup>

As previously discussed, the existence of an English Renaissance is subject to substantial debate, for which there is little space to discuss here. However, whether or not the English Renaissance is believed to exist there is little doubt that there was a concerted effort to improve musical education in England by the creation of conservatoires and a political need for a national music. The word 'Renaissance' first occurred in relation to English music in 1882 by the critic Joseph Bennett, in a review of Parry's Symphony No. 1. Other writers supported the idea of an English Musical Renaissance in the 1880s including Francis Heuffer and J. A. Fuller-Maitland, from the *Times*, and Ebenezer Prout and Henry F. Frost of the *Athenaeum* but George Bernard Shaw was highly critical of the movement.<sup>169</sup>

The use of the term 'English Renaissance' provides a convenient label for the movement which was instrumental in the creation of a nationalist movement which led to a music academy in South Kensington: the Royal College of Music. There followed other conservatoires: Trinity College of Music (1872), London College of Music (1887), the Guildhall School of Music (1880) and the Royal Manchester College of Music (1893).<sup>170</sup> The Royal College of Music was musically conservative, its aesthetic orientation, established by its composition teachers Hubert Parry and Charles Villiers Stanford, was toward the music of Johannes Brahms and his

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<sup>168</sup> Hughes and Stradling, pp. 17-25.

<sup>169</sup> Eatock, p. 89-90.

<sup>170</sup> Hughes and Stradling, pp. 47-49.

followers.<sup>171</sup> Parry and Stanford's roles within these academic institutions placed them in a position to oversee the development of a 'great' English composer

Despite rising nationalism in England, Stanford and Parry were committed to the Schumann-Brahms tradition and viewed this as the model with which English Music should progress. For Parry particularly, all great music was the product of evolutionary forces, English music therefore had to develop in the German mainstream.<sup>172</sup>

However the first English composer to become a 'household name' was Edward Elgar who presented something of a challenge to Parry and Stanford's 'musical renaissance' having achieved recognition without the support of the movement. Elgar was a fervent admirer of Wagner and followed Berlioz's teachings on orchestration. His contemporary musical hero was Richard Strauss, and although he ascribed to the collective veneration for the Schumann-Brahms tradition, Elgar was persuaded that this should be combined with a more expressive compositional style.<sup>173</sup>

By the end of the First World War, which brought about a huge cultural change, Elgar's influence on English music was severely curtailed, partly due to his heavily German-influenced style. These social changes made his music appear old fashioned, too self-assured and overbearingly benevolent, speaking as it did the language of Germany and the Victorians.<sup>174</sup> However, Elgar's status as a composer of great standing did much to help the next generation of British composers to gain

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<sup>171</sup> Christopher Scheer, 'The Importance of Cheltenham: Imperialism, Liminality and Gustav Holst', *Journal of Victorian Culture*, 19.3, (2014), 365-382, (p. 367).

<sup>172</sup> Hughes and Stradling, pp. 37, 46.

<sup>173</sup> Hughes and Stradling, p. 63.

<sup>174</sup> Lambert, pp. 283-4.

confidence after 1918. They were able to express a national identity, emerging out of the nineteenth century, which differed from the earlier German tradition. In addition, certain of Elgar's works hinted at neoclassicism, such as the 1905 *Introduction and Allegro for Strings opus 47*, Elgar's tribute to Handel which revived the *concerto grosso*, but in romantic terms.<sup>175</sup>

While Elgar did become the first English composer to enter the musical canon since Purcell, he was not the product of the English renaissance or the newly formed conservatoires. However, Ralph Vaughan Williams and Gustav Holst, as students of the Royal College of Music, might be considered to be products of Stanford and Parry's 'English Renaissance'. Holst made little impact outside the Royal College of Music before the Great War, but became a major figure with the success of his *Planets Suite* (1919); however, he did not achieve the long-term success enjoyed by Vaughan Williams, his music proving either too experimental or too down-to-earth to be of enduring value.<sup>176</sup>

Vaughan Williams, through his studies with Parry, provided a solution to the dilemma of finding an English music: its future was to be found in the 'historical-pastoral', the folksong, its Tudor inheritance and the eternal truths of history and landscape. The Pastoral school which resulted offered a nationalist prospectus which, occupying the middle ground of English music, could also claim to certain modernist credentials perhaps typified by Vaughan Williams's *Pastoral Symphony*.<sup>177</sup> Jeremy Dibble argues that Vaughan Williams stands as a major force in

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<sup>175</sup> Diana McVeagh, 'Elgar, Sir Edward', in *Oxford Music Online* <<http://www.oxfordmusiconline.com>> [accessed 25 May 2015].

<sup>176</sup> Caldwell, p. 337.

<sup>177</sup> Hughes and Stradling, pp. 75-109.

the creation of a musical tradition in Britain. He states that more than any other composer he provides a tangible link with the predecessors of the 'Musical Renaissance' as well as being a mentor for composers including Finzi, Howells, Gurney, Walton and Moeran.<sup>178</sup>

However, in the 1920s Vaughan Williams began to move away from the pastoral style, composing several works with neoclassical characteristics including his *Concerto Accademico*, an experiment in the fusion of German and English modes, and his *Piano Concerto* which ended in a fugue. However, both these works still contained much of the pastoral idiom. In the 1930s Vaughan Williams composed his *Fourth Symphony* which received its première in 1934; this work also displayed certain neoclassical features, without any hint of the pastoral, including his borrowing of the BACH motif and use of a modernist harmonic language within a classical sonata form structure.<sup>179</sup> This reflected a growing distaste for the excesses of late Romanticism and a move towards abstract, or 'absolute' music.<sup>180</sup> While the *Fourth Symphony* represented a disturbing change in Vaughan Williams's music for many musicians and music-lovers, it was welcomed by the modernists, although some critics were not altogether convinced of his conversion from the pastoral.<sup>181</sup> The harsh language of the *Fourth Symphony* perhaps reflected the rise of Fascism and the economic difficulties of the early 1930s.

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<sup>178</sup> Dibble, 'Parry, Stanford and Vaughan Williams', p. 46-7.

<sup>179</sup> Hughes and Stradling, p. 159.

<sup>180</sup> Hughes and Stradling, p. 191.

<sup>181</sup> Hughes and Stradling, pp. 101-109.



## **The Effect of World War I and Economic Disorder**

Between the turn of the twentieth century and the Second World War, Britain underwent both an economic and cultural transformation. Britain's economic position and its role in the international economy were further diminished such that at the end of this period the economic liberalism and cosmopolitanism of the late Victorian period were at an end. This had its roots in two major events in the first three decades of the twentieth century: the First World War and the Financial Crash originating in the United States.

The end of The First World War provides a fundamental historic division throughout Europe. As a devastating and unparalleled event, the war marked a transformation of basic beliefs concerning human nature and the nature of civilisation. Robert P. Morgan argues that the war created a cultural split, separating an old world vision from a new one, bringing to an end the protracted tradition of positive rationalism that had ruled European thought since the Renaissance.<sup>182</sup> By the end of the War there was an almost universal reaction against the progressive approach of the pre-war years. This led to a more modest, sober and scaled-down approach to human activities, with emphasis on the present and its concerns rather than idealistic possibilities. This altered approach was reflected in the arts, which were required to be more down to earth and closer to everyday experience. In music this was reflected in an anti-romanticism and objectivity – absolute music; in turn this led to the genesis of two contrasting branches of music represented by neoclassicism and serialism.

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<sup>182</sup> Robert P. Morgan, 'The Modern Age' in *Modern Times* ed. by Robert P. Morgan (London: MacMillan Press Limited, 1993), pp. 1-32 (p. 1).

Schoenberg felt that the Age of Romanticism died in November 1918, for him there was no argument for continuing this aesthetic principle after World War I.<sup>183</sup> Etter argues that sentimentality, the expression of emotional idealism embedded in the idea of happiness or love, came to be feared in the post-World War I Twentieth Century. It became linked with banality and kitsch, a rejection of any emotional attachment to a conception of the ideal.<sup>184</sup> Further, Adorno contended that modernist musical styles came to represent the nihilism of modern humanity by means of rejecting the tonal order characteristic of music in what Etter calls the 'common practise period'.<sup>185</sup>

The First World War had a seismic effect on Britain. Life in the trenches had a levelling effect on the class system: suffering, injury and death were universal. Hubert Foss argued that while the War did much towards quickening the liberation of individual musical expression amongst composers it had a lesser effect upon the listening public and performing musicians who were largely untouched by modernist music.<sup>186</sup> The levelling effect of the War saw membership of trade unions doubled between 1914 and 1920 leading to the rapid rise of the Labour Party, which became a party of office after the War, forming a government in 1924.<sup>187</sup> In addition the change in women's working practices during the War inevitably accelerated female emancipation leading to many women gaining the vote in 1918.

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<sup>183</sup> Etter, p. 122.

<sup>184</sup> *ibid.*

<sup>185</sup> Etter, p. 3.

<sup>186</sup> Hubert J Foss, *Music in My Time* (London: Rich & Cowan Limited, 1933), p. 72.

<sup>187</sup> Chris Wrigley, 'The Impact of the First World War', in *A Companion to Early Twentieth-Century Britain* ed. by Chris Wrigley (Oxford: Blackwells Publishers, 2003), pp. 502-516 (p.512).

World War I did relatively little damage to Britain's financial situation other than to speed up the pre-existing demise of Britain's economic and global influence.<sup>188</sup> However, the Great Depression, while being less severe in Britain than in the United States led to more than three million people out of work with unemployment reaching more than seventy percent in some areas. Such hardship had an inevitable effect upon funding for the Arts. Alwyn provided witness to the deprivations suffered by the common man, writing in a letter to Elisabeth Lutyens:

Speaking of the 1929 slump, I have not forgotten a visit to Sunderland, and the pitiful sight of groups of idle grey-faced men loitering at street corners and shuffling aimlessly about with no aim or object, nor future in life.<sup>189</sup>

Later, the rise of Fascism and the outbreak of the Spanish Civil War in 1936 profoundly disturbed intellectual lives, radicalising composers such as Benjamin Britten.<sup>190</sup>

## **Culture and the Arts**

The Industrial Revolution in Britain in the eighteenth and nineteenth centuries created increasing wealth so that by 1900 an informal structure of sponsorship supporting the arts, intellectual activities, entertainments and leisure pursuits had been constructed with an added support from the upper middle class.<sup>191</sup> This replaced the Royal and aristocratic patronage enjoyed by composers such as Purcell and Handel. For example, the industrialist Samson Fox donated £46,000 to build a

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<sup>188</sup> Wrigley, p. 507.

<sup>189</sup> William Alwyn, *Letter to Elisabeth Lutyens*, 25<sup>th</sup> January 1974, held at the William Alwyn Archive, University of Cambridge Library.

<sup>190</sup> L. Foreman (ed.) *From Parry to Britten: British Music in Letters, 1900-1945* (Batsford: Amadeus, 1987) quoted in Hughes and Stradling, p. 194.

<sup>191</sup> Anthony Sutcliffe, 'Culture in the Sceptred Isle' in *A Companion to Early Twentieth-Century Britain* ed. by Chris Wrigley (Oxford: Blackwells Publishers, 2003), pp. 485-501 (p. 486).

new building for the Royal College of Music.<sup>192</sup> However, State funding in the form of the Arts Council only came into existence after the Second World War.<sup>193</sup>

The Twentieth Century witnessed a movement away from the culture and attitudes of the Victorian era. The term 'modernism' began to be applied to the arts and philosophies that rejected nineteenth century customs. The origin or the inspiration for the modernist arts, whether it be music, abstract art, architecture or literature, came mainly from Europe, since many British artists, such as Frederick Delius, chose to study or live in France and Germany. In Britain, the impact of the 'new' tended to produce compromises since public opinion and taste remained conservative.<sup>194</sup>

The Promenade Concerts introduced by Sir Henry Wood, held in London from 1895 were instrumental in extending classical music to the middle classes especially through their broadcast on the radio following their takeover by the BBC. The 'Proms' provided high quality performances combined with good value for money which extended the scope of music listening to the general public; however in the early days, under the baton of Henry Wood, the programming was skewed towards Wagner rather than English composers.<sup>195</sup>

The British Broadcasting Corporation first went on the air in November 1922. It was instrumental in supporting music broadcasting classical music from its formation; this led to a widespread dissemination of musical culture throughout the country. The director general, John Reith, sought to encourage a national identity

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<sup>192</sup> Hughes and Stradling, p. 33.

<sup>193</sup> Stephen Banfield, 'England, 1918-45' in *Modern Times* ed. by Robert P. Morgan (London: Macmillan Press Limited, 1993).pp. 180-205, (p. 183).

<sup>194</sup> *ibid.*

<sup>195</sup> Hughes and Stradling, p. 58.

and culture viewing serious music as a valuable resource with which to achieve this end. The importance of music as a staple element of broadcasting was recognised by the appointment in May 1923 of Percy Pitt as Music Controller. In 1924, despite opposition and controversy, the BBC sponsored six public symphonic concerts in London. This eventually led to the formation of the BBC Symphony Orchestra in 1930; and in 1931 Adrian Boult was appointed its conductor. Regional symphony orchestras were later formed in Glasgow, Manchester, Birmingham, Cardiff, and Belfast.<sup>196</sup> In 1934 the BBC responded to a growing demand for patronage of national music by staging a series dedicated to living British composers. This led to an increased profile for the National School and led to the formation of a canon of national music.<sup>197</sup>

In addition to the radio broadcasting, the period between the Wars also saw the rise of the gramophone and the cinema. Alwyn stated that the gramophone provided an advantage in that it could 'register an authentic interpretation of [a composer's] own works for all time'.<sup>198</sup> The cinema provided employment for many musicians during the silent era. The effect of such support for Western Art music was to extend it to the general public; however, most serious composers still required a private income or teaching position in order to live.<sup>199</sup>

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<sup>196</sup> 'BBC', in *The Oxford Dictionary of Music*, ed. by Michael Kennedy <<http://www.oxfordmusiconline.com>> [25 May 2015].

<sup>197</sup> Hughes and Stradling, p. 199.

<sup>198</sup> Alwyn, 'Winged Chariot' p. 24.

<sup>199</sup> Banfield, p. 183.

## The Second School of British Composers

British composers of the early Twentieth Century divide into two groups, one of whom might be called the 'elders' and are made up of those born before the turn of the century (table 1). Included in this table is Arnold Bax; although he is now considered a minor figure in relation to Holst and Vaughan Williams, he composed seven symphonies in the period between the Wars which are highly individual in style, having a strong influence from the Russian School while making reference to Debussy, Dukas, Bartók and Gershwin.<sup>200</sup> While Bax's music has largely disappeared from the widely acknowledged musical canon (in that it is unlikely that his name or music would be familiar to the average 'classical' music admirer), he was a highly influential figure during the first half of the twentieth century. He was a close associate of William Alwyn and a senior establishment figure, being Master of the Kings Music.<sup>201</sup>

The second group consists of composers born after the turn of the century, including Britten, Tippett, Berkeley and Walton. In addition to Stravinsky, Schoenberg, Sibelius and other continental composers, they were inevitably influenced by the elder British composers, particularly Holst and Vaughan Williams, both of whom taught at the Royal College of Music and composed well into the twentieth century.

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<sup>200</sup> Banfield, p. 186.

<sup>201</sup> Rob Barnett, 'Biographical Sketch', in *The Sir Arnold Bax Website* (n.d.) <<http://www.arnoldbax.com>> [1 December 2014].

Table 1: A Summary of the influences upon the major 'Elder' British Composers

Composer	Dates	Teachers	Influences
Elgar	1857-1934	Self taught	Bach, Handel, Schumann, Dvořák, Brahms, Liszt and Wagner
Holst	1874-1934	Stanford	Sullivan, Wagner, Bach, Vaughan Williams, Mendelssohn, Grieg and Purcell.
Vaughan Williams	1872-1958	Parry, Wood Stanford and Ravel	Folk music, Hymn tunes, Beethoven and Holst
Bridge	1879-1941	Stanford	Scriabin, Debussy, Stravinsky, Bartók, Schoenberg
Grainger	1882-1961	Iwan Knorr	Grieg, Herman Sand by, Balfour Gardiner, Delius
Ireland	1879-1962	Stanford	Beethoven, Brahms Debussy, Ravel, Stravinsky and Bartók
Bax	1883-1953	Corder	Wagner, Strauss, Glazunov, Sibelius, Debussy, Ravel & Stravinsky
Delius	1862-1934	Thomas F. Ward	Grieg, Grainger and Wagner

Inevitably many composers are missing from this including George Butterworth (1885-1916) who died during the First World War, which inevitably curtailed his influence on future composers.<sup>202</sup> While Delius was British by birth, he was of German descent and spent such little time in England that he has little to do with English neoclassicism.<sup>203</sup> In addition, according to Hughes and Stradling he only attempted to associate himself with the growing school of English composers at the end of his life having achieved limited success on the Continent.<sup>204</sup>

<sup>202</sup> Stephen Banfield, 'Butterworth, George', in *Oxford Music Online* <<http://www.oxfordmusiconline.com>> [accessed 1 December 2014].

<sup>203</sup> Delius, although born in England, received the majority of his musical education in Leipzig and then established himself in France, dying there in 1934. His musical style is eclectic and largely within the late Romantic era, taking inspiration from English, Norwegian, Danish, German and French literature, medieval romance, North American Indians and Negroes, the Florida landscape and the Scandinavian mountains. 'Biography' in *Delius* (2010) <<http://www.delius.org.uk/biography.htm>> [accessed 14 February 2016]; Kara Gardner, 'Delius, Frederick', in *Oxford Music Online* <<http://www.oxfordmusiconline.com>> [accessed 14 February 2016].

<sup>204</sup> Hughes and Stradling, p. 170

Of the six composers listed in table one, four attended the Royal College of Music and were taught by Stanford and thus might be considered to be a product of the English renaissance movement. Although Stanford's own compositions began to be influenced by French music, his teaching was based predominantly on Classical principles typified in the music of Brahms, which may perhaps have set the seeds of neoclassicism in these composers and their pupils.<sup>205</sup> Therefore, although Stanford has not been included in the above table, he was influential upon the development of neoclassicism in Britain along with Parry, whom Hubert Foss credits with the revival of music in England but through an Austro-German model.<sup>206</sup>

Although French composers of this period sought to distance themselves from the German musical heritage on nationalistic grounds, German music, while subject to some negative nationalism, was still a major influence on English composers. For as Lambert states, the strength of the British tradition in art is that it has always been open to rewarding imported influences, which have been joined onto the 'native plant' without causing it to decline.<sup>207</sup>

Of the younger generation, those most closely associated with neoclassicism are William Walton, Michael Tippett and William Alwyn, and to a lesser extent, because of his youth, Benjamin Britten; but the list should also include Gerald Finzi for his recovery of eighteenth-century English works and Lennox Berkeley who studied with Nadia Boulanger and through her was influenced by Stravinsky (table 2).

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<sup>205</sup> Jeremy Dibble, 'Stanford, Sir Charles Villiers', in *Oxford Music Online* <<http://www.oxfordmusiconline.com>> [accessed 3 December 2014].

<sup>206</sup> Foss, p. 172.

<sup>207</sup> Lambert, p. 173.



Table 2: The Younger Generation of Neoclassical Composers

Composer	Teacher	Influences
Walton	Hugh Allen (Oxford)	Stravinsky, Schoenberg, Ravel, Debussy and Prokofiev
Tippett	Vaughan Williams and Holst	Britten, Beethoven, Stravinsky and Hindemith
Britten	Bridge and Ireland	Bridge, W H Auden, Purcell, Mahler, Debussy and Ravel, Delius, Schoenberg, Berg and Walton
Finzi	E. Farrar and R.O. Morris	Thomas Hardy, Elgar, Vaughan Williams, Parry
Berkeley	Boulanger	Mozart, Chopin, Ravel, Stravinsky and Britten

In attempting to define the general meaning behind the term neoclassicism (when applied to British music in the period leading up to the Second World War) it is beyond the scope of this research project to examine all works composed at this time. Therefore it will attempt to define British neoclassicism by concentrating on a limited number of major works for each of three composers, Michael Tippett, William Walton and Benjamin Britten.

### **Michael Tippett**

Tippett was a highly individual composer whose earlier works place him in a tradition extending back to early 19th-century Romanticism but with a very English character. His harmony was based on diatonic and modal melodies and the contrast of distantly related triadic sonorities, for example in the C minor Piano Sonata (c.1928) and the string quartets in F major (1928, revised 1930) and F minor (1929). This British style was enhanced by a developed intellectual sensibility and openness to other cultural traditions, for example the black American popular jazz and blues styles.

In his first period Tippett's central focus was the rescue and revival of materials and aesthetic ideas from the past most particularly elements of the English Renaissance, Baroque, and Beethoven.<sup>208</sup> Tippett was also fascinated by Tudor and restoration genres, his *Concerto for Double String Orchestra* (1938-9) in which Beethoven and folk-song serve a mutually critical purpose, is of the same tradition as Elgar's *Introduction and Allegro* and Bliss's *Music for Strings*.<sup>209</sup> Such works should not be described as a pastiche, since Tippett combined these older forms with his own ideas in a neoclassical aesthetic together with many modernist mannerisms gathered from Continental composers including Stravinsky and Schoenberg. He incorporated ideas from other composers into his compositions while maintaining a degree critical distance from these Continental influences and his own unique style.

Although Tippett was a relatively prolific composer, the work which stands out from the period between the Wars is his *A Child of Our Time*, a secular oratorio written in response to the events leading up to *Kristallnacht* of November 9 and 10 in 1938.<sup>210</sup> Tippett stated that in addition to the events of November 1938 the impulse to write an oratorio in particular came from the subsequent Christmas day broadcast of Berlioz's *Childhood of Christ*.<sup>211</sup> Kenneth Gloag states that the political climate throughout the 1930s had large-scale implications for Tippett's music; he believes that the interaction of his political (in the form of involvement with work-camps and a fleeting entanglement with the Communist Party) and musical activities lead

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<sup>208</sup> David Clarke, 'Tippett, Sir Michael', in *Oxford Music Online*

<<http://www.oxfordmusiconline.com>> [accessed 28 January 2015].

<sup>209</sup> David Clarke, *The Music and Thought of Michael Tippett* (Cambridge: Cambridge University, 2001), p. 163.

<sup>210</sup> 'Kristallnacht: A Nationwide Pogrom, November 9-10, 1938', *United States Memorial Museum* <<http://www.ushmm.org>> [accessed 4 December 2014].

<sup>211</sup> Kenneth Gloag, *Tippett, A Child of Our Time* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1999), pp. 5-6.

directly to *A Child of Our Time*.<sup>212</sup> Arnold Whittall argues that Tippett believed that ‘while the traditional forms of oratorio do lie behind *A Child of Our Time* they are somehow turned and twisted to carry the charge of our contemporary anxiety’.<sup>213</sup> Thus for Tippett, *A Child of Our Time* is not only neoclassical in a musical sense but also reflects modern political times.

Ex. 8: Tippett: *A Child of Our Time*, Part I no. 1 Chorus, rehearsal mark 2-3<sup>214</sup>

The image shows a musical score for the Chorus of *A Child of Our Time*, Part I, rehearsal mark 2-3. The score is arranged in two systems. The first system includes parts for Soprano, Alto, Tenor, Bass, and Piano. The vocal parts enter with the lyrics "The world turns" and "The world turns on its dark side". The piano accompaniment features a "Sostenuto" tempo and "pp sempre" dynamics. The score includes dynamic markings such as "pp", "mf", "dim.", and "p", and performance instructions like "cresc." and "Sostenuto".

<sup>212</sup> Gloag, pp. 3-5.

<sup>213</sup> Michael Tippett, 'The nameless hero' in *Music of the Angels* (London: Eulenberg Books, 1980) pp.192-3 quoted in Arnold Whittall, *The Music of Britten and Tippett: Studies in Themes & Technique* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1982), p. 72.

<sup>214</sup> Michael Tippett, *A Child of Our Time* (London: Schott & Co. Limited, 1944), p. 2

The oratorio *A Child of Our Time* is divided into three parts, reflecting the influence of Handel's *Messiah*. This use of a historical model is in itself a neoclassical trait, but by combining this form with the addition of borrowed Negro spirituals to express the theme of racial persecution, he evolved the oratorio into something new. However, Tippett did not confine himself to employing the musical structure of Handel's oratorios; in addition he made reference to recitative in the narration sung by the bass solo in Part I of the score and employed fugal textures in his choral sections.<sup>215</sup>

Tippett went further when he included sections of Wilfred Owen's poetry (ex. 8) and elements of T.S. Elliot in his libretto, which he reconstructed, using Jungian terminology into new text, thus extending the idea of re-composition of borrowed elements to the libretto in a manner similar to that seen in the works of Stravinsky. The words displayed in ex. 8 are taken from Wilfred Owen's poem *The Seed*. The original text is: 'War broke. And now the winter of the world/ with perishing great darkness closes in.'<sup>216</sup>

Tippett uses further quotes from this Wilfred Owen poem, converting the lines 'But now the exigent winter, and the need / Of sowings for new spring, and flesh for seed' to 'We are as seed before the wind, We are led to a great slaughter' in the third song in the first section. Tippett originally asked T.S. Elliot to provide the libretto for his oratorio, but Elliot encouraged Tippett to write his own for two possible reasons. Firstly, Tippett was initially unable to provide Elliot with a suitably fixed structure on which Elliot could provide the words, and secondly because Elliot

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<sup>215</sup> Gloag, pp. 10-15.

<sup>216</sup> Gloag, p. 10.

considered the sketch Tippett provided him with to be of suitable quality to provide a complete libretto.<sup>217</sup>

Tippett described himself as a lover of Stravinsky, describing the composer's move to neoclassicism as 'the sublimated summit of neo-classicism and the absolute objectivity of the art work'.<sup>218</sup> Thus Tippett appears to have admired Stravinsky's neoclassical works, seeing in them the pinnacle of his achievements. Tippett's continued use of neoclassicism can also be seen in his 1957 Second Symphony which has parallels with Stravinsky's neoclassical Symphony in C. Tippett himself stated that his Second Symphony was 'a more concentrated example of neo-classicism'.<sup>219</sup> Gloag summarises Tippett's neoclassicism as being a relationship to a sense of a past, a diffracted form of an even earlier classical order, a quality which he states is a constant presence in Tippett's music, and central to *A Child of Our Time* in which Tippett redefines the past in the light of modernism.<sup>220</sup> Such redefining of the past is akin to Straus' idea of misreading the past in which various musical techniques are employed for remaking earlier forms.<sup>221</sup>

## **William Walton**

Walton gained his earliest musical experiences as a choirboy in his father's church choir and in 1912 he won a scholarship to become a chorister at Christ Church Cathedral, Oxford, later entering the University at the age of 16. Thus Anglican

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<sup>217</sup> Gloag, p. 9.

<sup>218</sup> Michael Tippett, *Moving into Aquarius* (St Albans: Granada Publishing, 1974), pp. 41 and 85.

<sup>219</sup> Kenneth Gloag, 'Tippett's Second Symphony, Stravinsky and the language of neoclassicism: towards a critical framework' in *Tippett Studies* ed. by David Clarke (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2006), pp. 78-94 (p. 79).

<sup>220</sup> Gloag, 'Tippett's Second Symphony, Stravinsky and the language of neoclassicism', p. 80.

<sup>221</sup> Straus, p. 17.

anthems, in addition to the secular vocal music at home, formed the basis of his musical habits and set the groundwork of his later style.<sup>222</sup>

While studying at Oxford Walton composed a Piano Quartet modelled on the music of Howells, which attracted the attention of the wealthy Sitwell family.<sup>223</sup> He formed a close friendship with Sacheverell, Osbert and Edith Sitwell, friends with whom he lived for over a decade in both Chelsea and Italy. The Sitwells protected Walton from the need to provide himself with an income, giving him the valuable freedom to compose combined with exposure to a cultural education.

Walton composed many important works during the 1920s, the first of which was *Façade* (1922-9), written to accompany a reading of Edith Sitwell's poetry and close in spirit to the French *Les Six*; this was followed by his overture *Portsmouth Point* (1924-5) and the *Sinfonia Concertante* (1926-7) both of which enhanced his growing reputation. The Viola Concerto (1928-9), the style of which reveals Stravinsky's influence along with that of Hindemith (who performed the solo part in the work's 1929 première), Prokofiev, Ravel and Gershwin, displayed Walton's deepening expressive range and contrapuntal technique; with this concerto his musical language had advanced far ahead of his contemporaries. Constant Lambert states that this concerto exists in no category – 'neither English nor cosmopolitan, neo-classic or neo-romantic – [...] a finished and well-balanced work

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<sup>222</sup> Byron Adams, 'Walton, William', in *Oxford Music Online* <<http://www.oxfordmusiconline.com>> [accessed 28 January 2015].

<sup>223</sup> Banfield, p. 191.

of art.’<sup>224</sup> This was followed by the cantata *Belshazzar’s Feast* which proved a further success, although received somewhat tepid critical praise.<sup>225</sup>

Ex. 9: Walton, *Symphony No. 1*, Movement 1 *Allegro assai*, bars 4-12

The musical score for Walton's *Symphony No. 1*, Movement 1, bars 4-12, is presented in a multi-staff format. The top staff is for Horns in F, followed by another staff for Horns in F, then Timpani, and finally Violin II. The tempo is marked 'Allegro assai' with a metronome marking of approximately 112-116. The Horns play a series of chords, with dynamics ranging from *ppp* to *pp*. The Timpani plays a steady pattern of chords, marked *pp sempre*. The Violin II plays a rhythmic pattern, marked *ppp sempre* and *leggiero e ritmico*. The score is in 2/2 time and features various musical notations such as slurs, accents, and dynamic markings.

Walton described himself as a romantic composer with a strong preference for classical structures.<sup>226</sup> His First Symphony, composed between 1931 and 1935 was inspired by his tempestuous love affair with the Baroness Imma Doernberg, an attractive widow to a German Baron to whom the Symphony is dedicated.<sup>227</sup> Three movements of the Symphony were premiered on 3 December 1934, and the complete work was performed on 6 November 1935. The Symphony further extended Walton’s international reputation and it is the work that will be examined by this thesis.

<sup>224</sup> Lambert, p. 329.

<sup>225</sup> Lambert, p. 279.

<sup>226</sup> John Coggrave, ‘Sacred Music’ in *William Walton: Music and Literature* ed. by Stewart R. Craggs (Aldershot: Ashgate, 1999), pp. 22-33 (p. 24).

<sup>227</sup> William Walton, *Symphonies, No.1* (Oxford and New York: Oxford University Press, 1988), p. v.

Despite Walton's assertion that he was essentially a Romantic composer the use of the symphonic title and overall form at this period are indicative of neoclassical properties. Further, the first of the four movements, being in a modified sonata form, gives an added indication of neoclassicism. Walton was greatly influenced by Sibelius; Harper-Scott asserts that this work was hailed as a great modern symphony precisely because of its Sibelian influences.<sup>228</sup> The work is opened by four bars of timpani followed by ascending horn calls (ex. 9) which are reminiscent of the opening bars of Sibelius' Fifth Symphony. This, together with a widespread use of pedal points, timpani rolls and menacing low brass timbres, also owes much to Sibelius.

In common with other modernist composers, following the ideologies of the time, Walton employed strong and acute discord together with contrapuntal textures within this symphony, which meant that he needed to employ a unifying device able to bear the disruptive tension put upon it. Walton employed the pedal point in the form of a single note or chord in the bass as his tonal centre to this effect.<sup>229</sup>

Adams argues that while Walton struggled against the weight of symphonic tradition particularly that set by Sibelius, his use of ostinato to organise extensive passages, here demonstrated in the second violin line (ex. 9), is his own particular invention. He also states that the thematic structure of this symphony is closer to Beethoven than Sibelius, which again indicates the neoclassical character.<sup>230</sup>

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<sup>228</sup> J.P.E Harper-Scott, "'Our True North': Walton's First Symphony, Sibelianism, and the Nationalization of Modernism in England' *Music & Letters*, 89.4 (2008), 562-89 (p. 563).

<sup>229</sup> Frank Howes, *The Music of William Walton* (London: Oxford University Press, 1973), p. 24.

<sup>230</sup> Byron Adams, 'Walton, William'.



Constant Lambert, a friend and great influence on Walton drew attention to the neoclassical nature of Walton's compositions during the 1930's; while later describing the viola concerto as being without label, he stated that Walton, by using material that can be related to both Handel and Prokofiev, addressed an international audience with approachable music without losing his national and personal qualities.<sup>231</sup>

Additionally, James Hepokoski makes the link between Walton and Sibelius. Walton employs a very Sibelian technique in his First Symphony; he suggests that like Sibelius he composes deformed sonata forms based on rotational usage of his material. By this he means that musical material is recycled or 'rotated' in several repetitions during a movement. The original material might be rearranged or extended, or it may be rotated in the same order each time. The onset of each new rotation may correspond to a traditional formal boundary, such as the beginning of the development or recapitulation.<sup>232</sup>

It is difficult to label Walton's First Symphony as purely neoclassical since its composition was so influenced by Sibelius. However, it does exhibit certain elements which relate to neoclassicism: the use of the symphonic form is in itself a neoclassical gesture, but in this symphony Walton has employed rotation in place of the traditional tonic and dominant based harmony which might be considered to be a marginalisation of this traditional harmony. Harper-Scott argues that Walton borrowed more or less directly from the end of Sibelius's Fifth Symphony with its alternating E-flats and B-flats which was too uniquely daring a conclusion to be

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<sup>231</sup> Lambert, p. 151.

<sup>232</sup> Hepokoski, *Sibelius Symphony No. 5*, p.28, quoted in Harper-Scott "'Our True North": Walton's First Symphony', 562-589 (pp. 565-6).

passed off as his own idea, so Walton quoted it in its entirety.<sup>233</sup> In combination with the four movement classically based symphonic form, Walton's First Symphony was composed in modernist terms that employed dissonance and both borrowed from jazz polyphony and, in the first two movements spoke a largely anti-romantic language, although the third movement is more lyrical and closer to a post-romantic aesthetic.<sup>234</sup>

### **Benjamin Britten**

Benjamin Britten's music achieved success early on, and has maintained, wider international circulation: he remains Britain's most internationally respected and successful twentieth-century composer. Britten's ambition was to inhabit Vaughan William's role as the leading national composer. His musical and professional achievements include the revival of English opera begun by the success of *Peter Grimes* in 1945, the construction of institutions to ensure the continuing sustainability of musical drama, and outreach to a wider audience, particularly children, in an effort to increase national musical literacy and awareness.

Britten's juvenile work *Variations on a Theme of Frank Bridge* was commissioned by the Boyd Neel Orchestra to perform at the Salzburg Festival in 1937 and was written as a tribute to Bridge.<sup>235</sup> Although this work falls early in Britten's opus, it remains a work of some maturity and importance. Frank Bridge, with whom Britten studied from 1928, was a major influence upon Britten's

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<sup>233</sup> Harper-Scott, 562-589 (pp. 584-7).

<sup>234</sup> Banfield, p. 194.

<sup>235</sup> Philip Brett et al. 'Britten, Benjamin' in *Oxford Music Online* <<http://www.oxfordmusiconline.com>> [accessed 8 December 2014].

compositional development. Christopher Mark surmises that Bridge's principle role was to refine Britten's compositional technique and to encourage his pupil's interest in some of the more radical continental figures.<sup>236</sup> Britten himself stated that Bridge was important to him: 'I studied at the RCM from 1930-1933 but my musical education was perhaps more outside the college than in it. Although my teacher for composition was John Ireland, I saw Frank Bridge almost daily and I showed him every "major" work.'<sup>237</sup>

The theme for this work was taken from Bridge's 1906 *Idylls for String Quartet*.<sup>238</sup> Britten, in adopting the variation form in this work has reprocessed the past into a modern context, which is a neoclassical gesture. The work consists of an Introduction and Theme, followed by ten variations entitled: *Adagio*, *March*, *Romance*, *Aria Italiana*, *Bourrée Classique*, *Wiener Walzer*, *Moto Perpetuo*, *Funeral March*, *Chant* and *Fugue and Finale*.

Mellers states that the *Introduction* is mercilessly modern, employing bi-tonal harmony based on C and E major.<sup>239</sup> His use of these keys appears to be deliberate: referring back to the eighteenth-century psychological connotation of ever-increasing strength and brightness with the number of sharps.<sup>240</sup> Thus E major represents paradise or heaven contrasting with the worldly reality of C major.

Britten exploited the fact that triads in mediant relationships (such as E and C) had

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<sup>236</sup> Christopher Mark, 'Juvenilia' in *The Cambridge Companion to Benjamin Britten* ed. by Mervyn Cooke (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1999), pp. 11-35 (p. 24).

<sup>237</sup> Benjamin Britten, 'Preface' in *The 1931 String Quartet in D major* (London: Faber Music, 1975) quoted in Mark, 'Juvenilia', p. 30.

<sup>238</sup> Peter Evans, *The Music of Benjamin Britten* (London: J. M. Dent & Sons Ltd, 1979), p. 40.

<sup>239</sup> Wilfrid Mellers, 'Paradise, Panic and Parody in Britten's Frank Bridge Variations', *Tempo*, 217 (2001), 26-36 (p. 26).

<sup>240</sup> Rita Steblin, *A History of Key Characteristics in the Eighteenth and Early Nineteenth Centuries* (Ann Arbor: UMI Research Press, 1983) p. 187, quoted in Clive McClelland, *Ombra: Supernatural Music in the Eighteenth Century* (Plymouth: Lexington Books, 2012), p. 23.

been used by Beethoven, especially in his later work, as means of release from the dominance of classical tonic and dominant.<sup>241</sup> Yet Peter Evans argues that this C and E major bitonality is oversimplified and that in essence the piece is deliberately tonally ambiguous.<sup>242</sup>

However, whether or not the opening is bitonal is of less importance to this thesis than its relationship to neoclassicism. The work does contain neoclassical gestures: it is composed in a theme and variation form which looks back to pre-twentieth century music and in addition the variations have pre-romantic titles. Although essentially tonal, it employs a modernist musical language and the employment of parody is in itself an anti-romantic gesture.

Each variation has its own character and international reference. The *Adagio*, which follows the *Introduction and Theme* makes reference to the elegiac adagios of Bruckner and Mahler, referencing the waning Viennese symphonic tradition that had dominated the nineteenth century.<sup>243</sup> Mellers argues that the *March* makes reference to the humorous marches of Prokofiev and Shostakovich while commenting wryly upon the loss of Empire for the British and the *Romance* reflecting upon salon and palm court music of a previous era.<sup>244</sup> The *Aria Italiana* makes reference and parody upon Italian opera combined with Italian street music, with the first violins emulating an operatic soprano. The *Bourrée Classique* has the most obviously neoclassical title with its memories of a classic French bourrée, Rameau

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<sup>241</sup> Mellers, p. 27.

<sup>242</sup> Peter Evans, *The Music of Benjamin Britten* (London: J.M. Dent & Sons, 1979), p. 41

<sup>243</sup> Mellers, 26-36 (p. 29).

<sup>244</sup> *Ibid.*

and the French Sun King combined with the ballets of Tchaikovsky.<sup>245</sup> The sixth variation, the *Wiener Waltz*, returns to the salons of Austria and Germany, making reference to the waltzes of the Strauss family, Chopin, Schumann, Liszt and Ravel.<sup>246</sup> Of the final four variations, for Mellers the *Funeral March* represents the death of Europe and perhaps represents the rise of Fascism and the Chant related to this with religious and ritualistic dimensions.<sup>247</sup> The *Fugue and Finale* which constitute the final variation has obvious neoclassical features, indicating as it does Bach and his fugues.

The features highlighted above, when combined with Britten's parody of various musical styles within the variations, which is itself a form of borrowing, leads to the conclusion that the work was composed within a neoclassical aesthetic.

### **Foreign Musical Influences**

British music has long been open to external influences, in the eighteenth and nineteenth centuries this was primarily in the Austro-German. However, towards the end of the nineteenth- and beginning of the twentieth-century the influence of German music, which still strong, began to weaken and other nationalities became influential. Along with Stravinsky, Schoenberg, and to a lesser extent, Busoni the composer most influential in the Britain of the 1920s and 30s was Jean Sibelius and before him, Edvard Grieg.

The most prominent Scandinavian composers writing at the turn of and into the first half of the twentieth-century were Edvard Grieg, Jean Sibelius, and Carl Nielsen. While none of these composers wrote in the neoclassical aesthetic, their

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<sup>245</sup> Mellers, 26-36 (p. 31).

<sup>246</sup> Mellers, 26-36 (pp. 31-2).

<sup>247</sup> Mellers, 26-36 (p. 32).

music was highly influential upon the British music of the early twentieth century. In addition Grieg was close personal friend of Frederick Delius, who is considered among the most significant and characteristic of English compositional voices towards the end of his life and so had both a direct and indirect influence upon British music.<sup>248</sup> Similarly, Sibelius achieved cult status in the 1930s and 1940s in England through the championship of conductors and critics alike.

Sibelius, along with Stravinsky, is often associated with neoclassicism however, his compositions were written in a completely individual style. Constant Lambert asserts that it is impossible to attach any label to Sibelius because he had both popular and intellectual admiration: his *Valse Triste*, *Swan of Tuonela*, and *Finlandia* spoke to the ordinary concert-goer, but his symphonic music, particularly the fourth and seventh symphonies, appealed to the intellectual elite such as Cecil Gray, together with the more educated and adventurous amongst the listening public.<sup>249</sup> Thus, with his rejection of the excesses of romanticism illustrated by the huge orchestras seen in the works of composers such as Mahler, and employment of formal severity with a more stripped back, clearer soundscape and his renewal of traditional forms he was much more an influence on composers writing in a neoclassical style rather than a neoclassicist.

English critics including Constant Lambert and Cecil Gray set Sibelius apart from the German tradition by emphasising the Finnish element of his music. In England this distinction worked in Sibelius' favour, appealing to a growing anti-German sentiment. The enormous success achieved by Sibelius, which was in part

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<sup>248</sup> Robert Anderson, Anthony Payne and Lionel Carley, 'Delius, Frederick' in *Oxford Music Online* <<http://www.oxfordmusiconline.com>> [accessed 5 March 2015].

<sup>249</sup> Lambert, pp. 304-5.

due to support by Thomas Beecham, reached cult proportions in the 1930s and 1940s: both Vaughan Williams and Bax dedicating their fifth symphonies to Sibelius.<sup>250</sup> In a visit to England in 1912, his fourth symphony received praise at the expense of Schoenberg's music, being more appealing to British taste.<sup>251</sup> In apparently solving the symphonic 'problem', Sibelius proved, for many critics including Gray, Lambert, and Tovey, that he was one of the most vibrant forces in contemporary music.<sup>252</sup> Indeed, Constant Lambert described Sibelius as the greatest orchestral innovator of his time.<sup>253</sup> However, Alwyn appears to have viewed the appeal of Grieg and Sibelius as detrimental to his own success writing 'why wasn't I born a Finn or a Norwegian' to John McCabe when decrying the lack of interest in performing his own Fifth Symphony.<sup>254</sup>

The objective in examining Sibelius' music is to identify the characteristics that are absorbed into the works of English later composers, particularly those employing the neoclassical style. Robert Simpson identified a series of what might be considered to be surface characteristics in Sibelius' music, which are illustrated by his Fifth Symphony. These characteristics include passages in thirds with little curling turns, use of pedal notes and long notes swelling from obscurity. Sibelius also makes use of low registers in woodwind and brass and cross-hatching in the strings.<sup>255</sup>

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<sup>250</sup> Laura Gray, 'Sibelius and England' in *The Sibelius Companion* ed. by Glenda Dawn Goss (Westport, Connecticut and London: Greenwood Press, 1996), pp.281-296 (pp. 281-2).

<sup>251</sup> James Hepokoski, *Sibelius Symphony No. 5*, (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1993), p. 17.

<sup>252</sup> Laura Gray, pp. 281-286, (p. 288).

<sup>253</sup> Lambert, p. 309.

<sup>254</sup> William Alwyn, *Letter to John McCabe* 11<sup>th</sup> March 1975, held at the William Alwyn Archive, University of Cambridge Library.

<sup>255</sup> Robert Simpson, *Sibelius and Nielsen* (London: BBC Publishing, 1965), p. 36.

Ex. 10: Sibelius, *Symphony no 5 in E-flat major*, First Movement, bb. 11-12

The image shows a musical score for measures 11-12 of the first movement of Sibelius's Symphony No. 5. The score is for Oboes, Bassoons, and 2 Horns in F. The tempo is 'Tempo Molto Moderato' and the time signature is 12/8. The Oboe part features a melodic line with a triplets and a 'mf' dynamic. The Bassoon part has a static pedal point with a 'mf' dynamic. The Horns in F part consists of a static pedal point.

Ex.10 above illustrates many of these features together with the triple motional texture often seen in Sibelius' music. In addition Timothy Howell makes the link between the long shifting periods of constant or absent Nordic light alongside Finland's abrupt seasonal change which affects the perception of time and in turn Sibelius' handling of time. This manipulation of time is achieved by his use of a triple motional texture including repeated static pedals which may refer to the long periods of dark and light (here represented by the four horns in F), cyclic ostinato repetition representing revolving days and nights, and the use of inlayed motivic 'blocks' which give the sense of Finland's abrupt seasonal colour changes (illustrated here by the oboes).<sup>256</sup>

Beyond the features listed by Robert Simpson, James Hepokoski identified a further set of what might be considered deeper characteristics, some of which link in with the surface features. The first of these is his use of rotational form, a large-scale restatement of multi-thematic blocks which is discussed in the following section.

<sup>256</sup> Timothy Howell, 'Sibelius' *Tapiola*: Issues of Tonality and Timescale', in *Proceedings from the Second International Conference on Sibelius*, 1995 ed. by Veijo Murtomäki (Helsinki: Sibelius Academy, 1998) pp. 237-246 (pp.243-4).



Secondly the idea of *telos*, the gradual building to a climax, which is similar to Robert Simpson's long notes swelling from obscurity; *telos* is also related to the sense of *Klang*, the physicality of the sound-object itself including timbre and chord spacing. The final characteristic is a system of non-dominant-oriented colour shifts which moves away from the historic tonic and dominant harmony of preceding centuries.<sup>257</sup>

Much has been written about the cyclical nature of Sibelius's music, for instance James Hepokoski describes it as 'rotational form.' In his diary, on 23 April 1912, Sibelius wrote 'The musical thoughts – the motives, that is – are the things that must create the form and stabilize my path'.<sup>258</sup> Thus the motif is the building block upon which Sibelius creates his symphonic forms. James Hepokoski contends that Sibelius considered these content-based forms as his primary contribution to symphonic thinking. However, he argues that a rotational structure is more of a process than an architectural formula. In applying rotation, Sibelius presents a 'referential statement' of contrasting ideas, which may either end in a cadence or recycle back through a transition to a second rotation. Further rotations rework all or most of the referential statement's material, parts may be omitted, alluded to, compressed or expanded with the addition of new material.<sup>259</sup> Each rotation may be heard as a deepened, thoughtful reflection on the material contained in the referential statement.

The first two bars of the opening movement of the Fifth Symphony form a short introductory passage (ex. 11) which Hepokoski describes as a pre-rotational

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<sup>257</sup> Hepokoski, *Sibelius Symphony No. 5*, p. 26-8.

<sup>258</sup> Hepokoski, *Sibelius Symphony No. 5*, p. 21.

<sup>259</sup> Hepokoski, *Sibelius Symphony No. 5*, pp. 22-5.

incipit. The use of horns in the opening bars invokes historic use of such instrumentation in a quasi-neoclassical gesture and also functions as a beginning, leading from silence into sacred space, representing nature.<sup>260</sup>

Ex. 11: Sibelius, *Symphony in E-flat*, First Movement, *Tempo molto moderato*, bars 1-2

The image shows a musical score for the beginning of Sibelius's Symphony in E-flat, First Movement, bars 1-2. The score is for Bassoons, Horns in F, and Timpani. The tempo is 'Tempo molto moderato' and the time signature is 12/8. The key signature has two flats (B-flat and E-flat). The Bassoon part starts with a whole note G2. The Horns in F part starts with a whole note G2, followed by a melodic line. The Horn in F part starts with a whole note G2. The Timpani part starts with a whole note G2. Dynamics include 'p sempre' and 'mf'.

The primary materials are stated in bars 3-35. Even within this first section Sibelius repeats and develops the upper wood wind motif stated in measure three in a cyclical manner (ex. 12). This further develops throughout the section marked by rehearsal mark A, the motif extending and developing as it is passed between the woodwind. According to Hepokoski the first movement forms a gradual motion from inactivity into forceful activity. Similarly the harmony moves from a weak repetitive language in the first half towards the more traditional cadential format at the end. However, the tonal language deviates from the normal tonic and dominant behaviour of the preceding centuries, instead in the Fifth Symphony he alternates large blocks of tonic and what Hepokoski calls 'off-tonic' meaning that the whole

<sup>260</sup> Hepokoski, *Sibelius Symphony No. 5*, p. 62.

work is heard as a prolonged E-flat major sound sheet set into hierarchies of surface and sub-surface motion which ties in with the Klang of the E-flat chord.<sup>261</sup>

Ex. 12: Sibelius, *Symphony in E-flat*, First Movement, *Tempo molto moderato*, bars 3-11

Thus Sibelius does not take the listener on a tonal journey in the manner of Beethoven or Haydn; instead by use of rotation, ostinato, and pedal points, Sibelius sustains one principal tonal ground for large sections of music. In such sections, the harmony does not move, it freezes, much as the Finnish landscape in winter.<sup>262</sup>

Hepokoski makes the link between traditional sonata form and rotation in Sibelius' fifth symphony. He describes the first movement as a series of four broad and increasingly free rotations.<sup>263</sup> This use of rotation was echoed by William Walton,

<sup>261</sup> Hepokoski, *Sibelius Symphony No. 5*, p. 58.

<sup>262</sup> Zach Wallmark, 'Representations of "Nature" in Sibelius's Fifth Symphony', *The Taruskin Challenge* (2010) <<http://taruskinchallenge.wordpress.com>> [Accessed 26 January 2015].

<sup>263</sup> Hepokoski, *Sibelius Symphony No. 5*, p. 61-2.

who was perhaps the composer most influenced by Sibelius. This use of rotation in Walton's First Symphony is illustrated in table 3.<sup>264</sup>

Table 3: A Comparison of the use of Rotation with Sonata Form in the First Movements of Sibelius' Fifth Symphony and Walton's First Symphony

Sonata Form	Exposition	Exposition (R)	Development	Recapitulation
Sibelius	Rotation 1	Rotation 2	Rotation 3	Rotation 4
Walton	Rotation 1 (a) – primary material Rotation 1 (b1) – transition 1 Rotation 1 (b2) – secondary material – transition 2 – secondary material – secondary material 2		R2 (a) – P R2 (b) – S2 – Tr 1 – Tr 2	R3 (a) – P R3 (b) – Tr – S2 Coda R4 – primary

The rotational view of this movement is not universally accepted, for example Robert Miekle makes the case for the movement being written wholly in sonata form, but without the repeats employed in the first movement of a classical symphony.<sup>265</sup> However, Harper-Scott does make a good argument for Walton's use of rotation within the first movement of his first symphony.

James Hepokoski argues that Sibelius composed his fifth symphony on the other side of what he calls his 'confrontation with the New Music revolutions'.<sup>266</sup> Partly as a result of German critical rejection of his music Sibelius had refused to embrace the musical revolution represented by Stravinsky and Schoenberg. Instead being reconciled to a self-contained, interior journey of self-aware concentration that seems to have had as its aim the discovering the hidden core of what Sibelius described as *Klang* (the physicality of the sound-object itself, including timbre and

<sup>264</sup> J.P.E. Harper-Scott, 'Our True North: Walton's First Symphony, Sibelianism and the Nationalism of Modernism in England' in *Music and Letters* 89.4 (2008), 562-589 (p. 578).

<sup>265</sup> Robert Miekle, 'The Symphonies and Concertos' in *William Walton: Music and Literature* ed. by Stewart R. Craggs (Aldershot: Ashgate, 1999), pp. 67-108 (p. 76).

<sup>266</sup> Hepokoski, *Sibelius Symphony No. 5*, p. 10.

chord-spacing, as a primary expressive and structural element). This is often described as a musical representation of nature in which the sound remains ostensibly unmoving but inwardly in continual motion. This takes the form of a static harmony which is unaffected by the rhythm, whether it be gentle or violent. Carl Dalhaus argues that the sound-sheet, or *Klang*, conveys a landscape because it is freed from the norm of 'teleological progression' and from the normal rules of musical texture based on 'thematic-motivic' manipulation.<sup>267</sup>

Ex. 13: Sibelius, *Symphony no 5 in E-flat major*, First Movement, rehearsal mark J (first 8 bars)

The image displays a musical score for Sibelius's Symphony No. 5, First Movement, rehearsal mark J. The score is divided into two systems. The first system includes parts for Clarinets in Bb, Bassoon, Violin I, Violin II, Viola, and Violoncello. The second system includes parts for Clarinet, Bassoon, Violin I, Violin II, Viola, and Violoncello. The score features various dynamics such as *fp*, *poco f*, *dim. molto al*, *ppp*, and *p*. Performance instructions include *Solo affettuoso* and *sotto voce*. The time signature is 12/8, and the key signature is E-flat major.

<sup>267</sup> Carl Dahlhaus, *Nineteenth-Century Music*, trans. by J. Bradford Robinson (Berkeley and London, 1989), p. 307 quoted in J.P.E. Harper-Scott, "'Our True North": Walton's First Symphony, Sibelianism, and the Nationalization of Modernism in England', *Music & Letters*, 4 (2008), 562-589 (pp. 566-7).

In Ex. 13 all motivic activity comes to a stop and fragments into chromatic splinters. For nineteen bars, there is nothing but an empty musical canvas: strings fluctuate through chromatic pitches in an iridescent texture while the bassoon, joined by the clarinet on occasion, wanders through a meandering solo. Such a section has no subject; the composer appears to have set the musical process into motion then given control to the repetitive process itself.<sup>268</sup> Kennedy argues that Elgar's symphonic method is closer to that of Sibelius than classical, here the prolonged sequences and counter motif are close to Elgar's more modernist compositions.<sup>269</sup>

Sibelius' withdrawal from the modernist majority is illustrated in a letter of 10 November 1911 to his wife Aino in which Sibelius wrote: 'Let's let the world go its own way. If you, my dear love, want things as I do, let's not allow anything to drag us away from the path on which we know we must go. I mean the direction of my art. Let's leave the competition to the others. But let's grasp our art with a tremendous grip'.<sup>270</sup>

At this point, Sibelius appears to have viewed this isolation from the modernist mainstream as a positive occurrence. He also declared Schoenberg's theories to be interesting, but one-sided; but by 1912 he had decided that the younger generation of composers were his 'natural enemies', a more negative and isolationist stance.<sup>271</sup>

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<sup>268</sup> Wallmark, 'Representations of "Nature" in Sibelius's Fifth Symphony' [accessed 26 January 2015].

<sup>269</sup> Michael Kennedy, *Elgar Orchestral Music* (London: British Broadcasting Corporation, 1970), p. 14.

<sup>270</sup> Ferruccio Tammaro, *Le sinfonie di Sibelius* (n.p.: G. Giappichelli, 1982), pp. 159-60 quoted in Hepokoski, *Sibelius Symphony No. 5*, p. 16.

<sup>271</sup> Hepokoski, *Sibelius Symphony No. 5*, p. 16.

Following the success of his visits to England in 1905, 1912 and 1921, Sibelius became a pronounced influence upon British composers. The critics Cecil Gray and Constant Lambert viewed Sibelius as the modernist master of the symphony who provided definitive answers to the problems of the modern symphony and as the standard with which to judge all other composers.<sup>272</sup> His influence might be described as both a restraint, a withdrawal from the excesses of the Romantic era and a rejection of the extremes of modernist composers, particularly Schoenberg, Berg and Webern, while employing elements of post-tonal harmony in conjunction with national and folk characteristics. Above all he taught British composers to follow their own path.

### **British Neoclassicism**

The majority of the features prevalent in British neoclassical works might be summarised by borrowing the traditional wedding rhyme: Something Old / Something New / Something Borrowed / Something Blue. This rhyme provides a model for neoclassicism in the post-first World War years. Within the four classifications, 'old' relates to the use of and reference to pre-romantic forms such as an oratorio or Sonatina which are subsumed by a combination with the 'new', which takes the form of original music along with post-tonal, modernist harmonies. In addition, the revival of interest in Bach by Mendelssohn and heightened awareness of Tudor polyphony in England led to an increased use of polyphony with a modernist twist. Although counterpoint has been used in music since the baroque, for example in Beethoven's symphonies, it saw a particular revival during this

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<sup>272</sup> Harper-Scott, 562-589 (p. 564).

period. This use of 'classical' forms and polyphony together with modernist harmonies might be considered to be redefining the past in the light of modernism.

The borrowing element is often the most difficult to isolate within the music and is not restricted to neoclassical music: borrowing has occurred throughout Western Art Music since time immemorial. It may take the form of direct quotation from another composer's work, such as Vaughan William's use of the BACH motif in his Fourth Symphony or alternatively the use of parody such as Benjamin Britten's *Variations on a Theme of Franck Bridge*. Equally, the borrowing may be very subtle and difficult to determine. Finally, the 'blue' relates to the anti-romantic tendencies of the neoclassicists and relates to the concept of 'absolute' music seen in the works of Stravinsky and Hindemith. Brian Etter argues that one of the most prominent characteristics of twentieth-century intellectual culture, particularly within the musical realm, has been the predominant hostility to Romanticism when used as a style to express ordinary feeling. Stravinsky stated: 'Do we not, in truth, as the impossible of music when we expect it to express feelings, to translate dramatic situations, even to imitate nature?'<sup>273</sup> This anti-romanticism was common to most schools of music, but when combined with other elements can indicate a neoclassical work. Thus, a work can be classified as having been composed in the neoclassical aesthetic if it contains all four elements included in the rhyme above.

These are encapsulated in a smaller scale work: the *Sonatina in A minor* for recorder and harpsichord or piano by Lennox Berkeley. It was composed in 1939 for Carl Dolmetsch who was associated with the early music revival and 'authentic'

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<sup>273</sup> Igor Stravinsky, *Poetics of Music: In the Form of Six Lessons* trans. by Arthur Knodel and Ingold Dahl (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 1970), p. 77 quoted in Etter, p. 121.



instrument movements. Firstly this *Sonatina* makes reference to the past in its name. The *Sonatina* is a three movement work mostly prevalent in the seventeenth and eighteenth centuries. This use of older form names was a neoclassical device frequently employed by Berkeley, including the *Suite* for Oboe and Cello (1927) which had Bach as a model and his *Suite* of 1927 which included a *Sinfonia*, *Bourrée*, *Aria* and *Gigue* which has a Baroque orientation and regular rhythmic patterns based equally on Stravinsky and Bach.<sup>274</sup> The *Sonatina* employs the fast-slow-fast form most commonly employed in the past and makes reference of older instruments by its setting for recorder and keyboard. The harmony is essentially tonal, but of an extended form seen in the early twentieth century and the first movement ends in a device often employed by J.S. Bach, the *Tierce de Picardie*.

The *Sonatina* also contains several allusions to modernism: the opening keyboard accompaniment of the first movement (ex. 14) is reminiscent of the fierce motor rhythms in Stravinsky's *Rite of Spring*. These motor rhythms are also a historical reference to the use of this compositional device in the baroque toccata.<sup>275</sup>

Ex. 14: Lennox Berkeley, *Sonatina* in A minor, First Movement, bar 1



<sup>274</sup> Peter Dickinson, *The Music of Lennox Berkeley* (Woodbridge, Suffolk: Boydell Press, 1988), pp. 10-12.

<sup>275</sup> Arnold Whittall, 'Motor Rhythm' in *Oxford Music Online* <<http://www.oxfordmusiconline.com>> [accessed 30 September 2015].

In this composition Berkeley combined the eighteenth-century form common to a *Sonatina* with the variable bar lengths seen in the works of Walton and Stravinsky and syncopated rhythms across bar lines employed by Britten. The one element often seen in neoclassical compositions missing from the *Sonatina* is the use of counterpoint; however, in such a short work there are only so many musical devices that can be included, here Lennox Berkeley has substituted antiphonal passages between the two instruments in the outer movements in a backward looking gesture.

Thus Berkeley has adopted a historical model in a reference to the past, which he has recycled, but not recomposed, into a new context; by extension neoclassicism in Britain might be described as a reinvention of the past in which British composers have taken on the best of foreign influences such as that of Sibelius and Stravinsky.

The term 'neoclassicism' remains nebulous; it takes various meanings depending upon the composer to which it is applied. However, the review of the neoclassical works of English composers in this chapter certain common characteristics which have been combined into a model to be applied to Alwyn's neoclassical works. General to all is an often self-conscious reference to the past, but with modernist traits, which are recycled into a new context; further, it concerns a rejection of the sensuality and excess of emotion perceived in the music of the Romantic era.

This neoclassical model would therefore point to an attempt to return music to the stricter classical style creating a pure aesthetic feeling, an 'absolute' music. Further, the reference to the past, the appropriation of a historical model, can be

limited to the title, but will often extend to form and use of polyphony. Beyond that composers may include devices such as pedal point, allusions to recitative, use of modes and parody. In addition to a return to past forms, the neoclassical model includes modernist traits. These include extended tonality: a gradual breakdown of accepted harmonic formulae, rhythmic features such as syncopation across bar-lines or the method of scattering bar-lines and drumming gritty chords together with the inclusion of material from popular culture.

By using pre-romantic forms and borrowing from earlier works, twentieth century composers confront their predecessors by reinterpreting musical elements common amongst works of what is known as the common practise era. Post-tonal composers misread these works in order to avoid compromising their own distinctive style so that an earlier work becomes entangled and changed within the new one.<sup>276</sup>

Straus identifies seven techniques used by composers in the early twentieth century by which they misread earlier works employing post-tonal harmonies, borrowing and an anti-romantic sentiment.<sup>277</sup> This model will be applied to Alwyn's neoclassical works in chapter four to determine his use of this style and the techniques identified by Straus. In addition, I will attempt to apply unordered pitch-class set theory to explain what might otherwise seem random pitch organisation within works. While the notion of pitch-class set theory was only raised in the late twentieth century, Straus contends that it provides a consistent method for analysing

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<sup>276</sup> Straus, p. 133.

<sup>277</sup> Straus, p. 17.

works in any musical context.<sup>278</sup> While this may not be an entirely valid assertion it does provide a starting point from which to approach twentieth century music.

In order to understand Alwyn's use of neoclassicism the following chapter will examine his life, musical influences and the compositional crisis leading up to his move towards neoclassicism.

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<sup>278</sup> Straus, p. 3 n.5.

## Chapter 3

### A Brief Musical Biography of Alwyn

It is not the intention behind this chapter to provide a detailed biography of William but to highlight certain events and influences in his life, which may have affected his attitude to composition, since the biographical information on Alwyn is, for a relatively unknown composer, fairly comprehensive. In addition to the extensive William Alwyn Archive held at the University of Cambridge, Adrian Wright, under the supervision of Alwyn's second wife Mary, compiled a detailed biography published under the title *The Innumerable Dance* and Andrew Palmer has pulled together various autobiographical and other of Alwyn's writings into the book, *Composing in Words*, both of which provide valuable insight into the life of the composer. However, Alwyn wrote very little about his compositional technique because he believed that he wished only to communicate his feelings to others, implying that there was no formal reason behind his compositions.<sup>279</sup> However, Alwyn gives one small clue to his thoughts about composition in his autobiography *Ariel to Miranda*, which suggests that there is method behind his compositions:

The composer uses patterns, rhythms, themes and thematic development, harmony and counterpoint, not for their intellectual satisfaction that he derives from these things for their own sake, nor in the wish that they should be regarded and examined for their own sake, but as a means to an end: to achieve through them a complete expression of the emotional content he is striving to present, to produce a composition which is satisfactory as an entity.<sup>280</sup>

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<sup>279</sup> Alwyn, 'Winged Chariot', p. 16.

<sup>280</sup> William Alwyn, 'Ariel to Miranda' in *Composing in Words* ed. by Palmer (London: Toccata Press, 2009), pp. 65-230 (p. 103).

In addition Alwyn, in a talk given at the 1970 Cheltenham Festival, indicated that music's controlled passage through time and its form was more important than harmony. He stated that he used all the combinations of sounds which were his musical inheritance independent of any harmonic system, what he described as 'all the colours in the palette': he would use concord and discord, chromaticism and atonality as required.<sup>281</sup> According to Palmer, Alwyn also discouraged musicological debate about his works:

Proud of his technique and the mental discipline behind it, he nevertheless insisted that they were nothing more than a means to an end. 'My works do not need the analytical dissection and microscopic searching for formal reasons as to why I did this or that', he wrote.<sup>282</sup>

Alwyn believed that no analysis could ever attain the truth of a work of art.<sup>283</sup> Therefore to analyse his works for this thesis is to contravene the composer's wishes. However, musicological study of Alwyn's compositions will provide answers to issues that may arise in the performance of post-tonal music. Hindemith believed that musical and theoretical studies were an essential element in the development of performers, he argued: 'without an intellectual grasp of the structure of compositions, thoughtful interpretation and the training of musical thinking are impossible.'<sup>284</sup> Thus, in order to produce a convincing performance of any work, it is essential for a musician to understand its structure, harmonic language and the social and historic background in which the work was composed.

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<sup>281</sup> William Alwyn, 'Meet the Composer' in *Composing in Words* ed. by Palmer (London: Toccata Press, 2009), pp. 231-241 (p. 240).

<sup>282</sup> Andrew Palmer, 'Winged Chariot', in *Composing in Words* ed. by Palmer (London: Toccata Press, 2009), pp. 13-50 (p. 16).

<sup>283</sup> Alwyn, 'Ariel to Miranda', p. 80.

<sup>284</sup> Peter Cahn, 'Ein unbekanntes musikpädagogisches Document von 1927: Hindemiths Konzeption einer Musikhochschule', *HJB* 6 (1977), pp. 162-3 quoted in David Neumeyer, *The Music of Paul Hindemith* (New Haven and London: Yale University Press, 1986).

Alwyn wrote that as a budding musician about to enter the Academy he hoped to be the next Bach, Beethoven or Grieg.<sup>285</sup> Unfortunately, this was not to be the case. He proved to be a very successful film composer, being something of a pioneer in this medium and was made a fellow of the British Film Academy in 1951 but he appears to have placed little value upon his film music, seeing it only as a means to support his other composition work.<sup>286</sup> Indeed in a review of his First Symphony in *The Times* the author suggested that, despite a warm reception by the audience, Alwyn would be wiser to compose music which lies within his powers rather than composing symphonies. A later review described Alwyn's First Symphony as lacking personality and propelling ideas that did not have symphonic import.<sup>287</sup>

Alwyn was unusual, but not unique, amongst twentieth-century composers in that he composed in a generally expressive and tonal idiom rejecting much of twentieth-century atonality which made his music acceptable to the general concert-goer. He wrote that he could never agree to abandon what he considered to be the foundations of Western music: tonality, concord and discord, and a 'singable' melodic line.<sup>288</sup> Andrew Palmer asserts that Alwyn, in rejecting the excesses of serialism in favour of melody, foretold a 'sea-change in musical taste'.<sup>289</sup>

Alwyn studied composition at the Royal Academy of Music initially under an unnamed sub-professor to Sir Alastair Mackenzie, who taught him Harmony and

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<sup>285</sup> Alwyn, 'Early Closing', p. 63.

<sup>286</sup> Andrew Knowles, 'Biographical Sketch' in *William Alwyn: A Research and Information Guide* ed. by John C. Dressler (New York: Routledge, 2011), pp. 1-2 (p. 1).

<sup>287</sup> 'Alwyn's First Symphony' *The Times*, (24 February 1953), p. 5, in *The Times Digital Archive*, <<http://find.galegroup.com.ezphost.dur.ac.uk>> [accessed 11 August 2015].

<sup>288</sup> Alwyn, 'Winged Chariot', p. 34.

<sup>289</sup> Andrew Palmer, 'Introduction' in *Composing in Words* ed. by Palmer (London: Toccata Press, 2009), pp. 7-12 (p. 7).

Counterpoint but soon moved to the tutelage of J. B. McEwan who not only widened his knowledge of music to include modern composers including Stravinsky and Schoenberg, but also introduced him to philosophy and aesthetics.<sup>290</sup> Indeed Alwyn expressed a fascination for the works of Nietzsche in a later biography.<sup>291</sup> However, Alwyn later stated in a radio interview that he had left the Academy knowing very little about compositional technique.<sup>292</sup> McEwan had a revolutionary attitude to teaching composition: he told Alwyn to cease his studies of Harmony and Counterpoint, instead he should experiment with writing piano pieces and study the scores of modern composers such as Strauss and Debussy.<sup>293</sup> This lack of formal training may well lie at the root of the 1938 compositional crisis.

Alwyn initially entered the Academy as a flautist rather than composer. Adrian Wright states that modern music was viewed with suspicion by the Principle, Sir Alexander Mackenzie, to the extent that he did not even allow performance of the widely accepted and popular music of Debussy.<sup>294</sup> While Alwyn reportedly did not agree with such an attitude, being regarded as something of an *avant-garde* composer, it must have been influential in shaping his approach to post-tonal music.<sup>295</sup> Although Palmer argues that the Second Viennese School's reaction against tonality was an experiment, a cul-de-sac from which music would have to return before it could continue to evolve from its historic roots, Alwyn's more tonal music was considered unfashionable for many years. Palmer explains that Alwyn's

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<sup>290</sup> Alwyn, 'Winged Chariot', p. 20-21.

<sup>291</sup> Alwyn, 'Ariel to Miranda', p. 106.

<sup>292</sup> Alwyn, 'Ariel to Miranda', n. 12, p. 106.

<sup>293</sup> Alwyn, 'Ariel to Miranda', p. 133.

<sup>294</sup> Adrian Wright, *The Innumerable Dance: The Life and Works of William Alwyn* (Woodbridge and Rochester, NY: Boydell Press, 2008), p. 23.

<sup>295</sup> Alwyn, 'Winged Chariot', p. 26.



compositional style arose from a belief in communicating with the broadest audience possible.<sup>296</sup> Alwyn confirmed this in writing 'I feel that the contemporary search for new modes of expression is in the main stimulated by the mistaken desire for originality ... at all costs... originality is not confined to the invention of new language'.<sup>297</sup> Thus for Alwyn, new did not necessarily mean better and in searching for a compositional aesthetic to replace his old style he was inclined towards neoclassicism rather than dodecaphony.

### **The Life of Alwyn**

Alwyn appears to have learned an over-developed sense of his own status at his mother's knee in that she appears to have been overly conscious of her higher social standing in relation to her neighbours. She resisted Alwyn's association with the other children in the neighbourhood, giving the impression that there was a social difference between them.<sup>298</sup> When writing of the customers in his father's shop he stated: 'I used to hate, loathe, the people who came in there.'<sup>299</sup> He later wrote:

I have not forgotten that I too was born of a working-class family, and remember, sometimes with bitterness, the long hours of drudgery in our ramshackle grocery shop as a mere boy of 14 - when Saturday nights were a sea of faces, and every order was a fresh goad in the flesh ('and the next please') - a barrier between my dream - world of beauty which I had discovered, by some freak of nature, in music.<sup>300</sup>

He appears to have resented his roots and the very store providing the income which enabled him to study music. In the same letter he also expressed his

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<sup>296</sup> Palmer, 'Introduction', p. 7

<sup>297</sup> William Alwyn, *Lecture to the University of Leicester Music Society* (typescript), pp. 2-3 quote in Wright, p. 70.

<sup>298</sup> Wright, p. 11.

<sup>299</sup> Wright, p. 7.

<sup>300</sup> William Alwyn, *Letter to Elisabeth Lutyens*, 25<sup>th</sup> January 1974, held at the William Alwyn Archive, University of Cambridge Library.

dislike of piano teaching and role as a working musician in cinemas in order to support himself when a student.<sup>301</sup> This sense of superiority evidenced itself in his name. Alwyn was born William Alwyn Smith, only dropping the Smith in later life, which suggests a certain snobbery and distaste for such a common surname, although Adrian Wright viewed this in a more positive light believing that the change of name arose from his devotion to his role as a composer.<sup>302</sup> Additionally, Alwyn stated that his roots could be traced back to Sir Nicholas Alwyn, a Lord Mayor of London in the fourteenth century.<sup>303</sup> He explained his link to the Lord Mayor in a letter to Elisabeth Lutyens:

I am told on good authority, that, although my disreputable grandfather who, to avoid bringing disgrace on his family, changed his name as frequently as the chameleon changes its colours and who originally bore the name with which my father endowed me, that my ancestry can be traced back to Sir Nicholas Alwyn, the first Lord Mayor of London in the 14<sup>th</sup> century [...].<sup>304</sup>

Whether this tale is true or not, it indicates a wish to distance himself from his rather plebeian surname. Elisabeth Lutyens was the daughter of the celebrated architect Sir Edwin Lutyens and as such was a member of the social elite, therefore Alwyn may have felt the need to raise his social standing by claiming Sir Nicholas Alwyn as an antecedent.

Despite the recognition of Alwyn's musical talent by his mother and her encouragement to pursue it, Alwyn had a difficult relationship with her. When writing of his mother he stated that he could only bring to mind a general sense of

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<sup>301</sup> Ibid.

<sup>302</sup> Wright, p. 38.

<sup>303</sup> Wright, p. 4.

<sup>304</sup> William Alwyn, *Letter to Elisabeth Lutyens*, 9<sup>th</sup> June 1973 held at the William Alwyn Archive, University of Cambridge Library.

disapproval.<sup>305</sup> Upon the death of his father William appear to have made little effort to help his mother. Following the untimely death of his elder brother, Alwyn was destined to take over the shop, but was described as 'a square peg in a round hole' by his father so was allowed to pursue a study of music at the Royal Academy.<sup>306</sup> While, given his talents, it is understandable that he did not wish to work in the shop himself, however, it is not beyond the bounds of credulity to expect him to put in place someone to run the shop to support his mother. Instead the shop was sold and Alwyn took up a teaching post at Fernden School in Surrey.<sup>307</sup>

Alwyn left very few clues about his compositional stance, therefore in order to understand his music further it is helpful to understand the composer's personality including his personal relationships. Andrew Palmer described Alwyn's character as 'a mixture of hyper-sensitive introversion and confident extroversion'.<sup>308</sup> This complexity manifested itself in his three breakdowns and his relationship with women, which was both dominating and highly sexually charged. Alwyn called his first wife Olive by the name Peter (presumably in a reference to Peter Pan and her child-like personality) and marriage to Alwyn saw Doreen change her name to Mary, at her husband's request; marriage also appears to have led to a dwindling of Doreen's own career as a composer. Andrew Palmer stated that he only discovered that Mary Alwyn was a composer after Alwyn's death and that he found it difficult to reconcile the quiet, placid and subdued woman he had come to know with the vibrancy of her music, suggesting that Alwyn in some way was responsible for

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<sup>305</sup> Wright, p. 10.

<sup>306</sup> Alwyn, 'Winged Chariot', p. 20.

<sup>307</sup> Adrian Wright, p. 38.

<sup>308</sup> Palmer, 'Introduction', p. 9.

suppressing the real Doreen Carwithen.<sup>309</sup> Notwithstanding this, she was a fierce defender of his reputation and was largely responsible for pulling together the documents for the William Alwyn Archive.

Adrian Wright attests to Alwyn's obsession with the female form.<sup>310</sup> This is confirmed by Alwyn who described his own music using sexual metaphor; in describing one of his symphonies Alwyn wrote: 'At a climax my phrases always seem to have a phallic up-thrust followed by a dying ecstasy, a sublimated fusion of the sexual and spiritual – a striving for release from the body and yet not a denial of material self-hood.'<sup>311</sup>

### **Musical Influences**

In determining the reason behind Alwyn's turn towards neoclassicism it is necessary to understand his musical influences. As has already been discussed in the preceding chapters, music had split into two interconnected but divergent paths represented on one hand by Stravinsky and the neoclassicists and on the other by Schoenberg and the serialist school of composition.

In rejecting his previous compositional technique Alwyn had a choice between these two new musical paths. In his unpublished autobiography, *Winged Chariot*, Alwyn stated that he could never agree to the loss of the foundations of Western music, which included tonality, concord and discord and a 'singable' melodic line. For Alwyn Schoenberg's twelve-note system was more of a mental exercise in which composers were losing their individuality thus it seems highly

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<sup>309</sup> Wright, p. 267.

<sup>310</sup> Wright, pp. 9, 201.

<sup>311</sup> Alwyn, 'Ariel to Miranda', p. 76.

improbable that Alwyn would follow the serial route.<sup>312</sup> However, Alwyn later expressed some admiration for Schoenberg, writing that he 're-examined music through the wrong end of a telescope to his, and the world's advantage'.<sup>313</sup>

Alwyn stated that his musical gods were Bach, Mozart, Schumann, Puccini, Debussy and Stravinsky.<sup>314</sup> He described Schumann as the first composer who thought pianistically.<sup>315</sup> He also named Dvořák as an influence from childhood having heard the famous *Humoresque* No.7 in G major in his early teens and fell 'under the spell of this greatest of all Czech composers' lending further evidence to Alwyn's leaning towards tonality.<sup>316</sup> In a letter to John McCabe, Alwyn expressed his admiration for Scriabin, particularly his use of formal design to control the 'almost improvisatory nature' of his music and asserted that Stravinsky's *Firebird* owed more to Scriabin than to Rimsky-Korsakov.<sup>317</sup>

Alwyn reflected to some extent the anti-romantic sentiment of the neoclassicists in describing 'the symphonic problem', although he was not entirely accurate with regards to Elgar in the quotation below:

I firmly maintain that you cannot combine romanticism with classical formulae, and I find it increasingly wearisome to bear the long-winded repeats of the recapitulation section of sonata form, even in the cases of composers I love (for example Chopin, Brahms, Dvořák and Elgar). How much better adaptable to romantic expression is Liszt's solution to the problem: the 'Wagnerian' flow and metamorphosis of leading themes.<sup>318</sup>

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<sup>312</sup> Alwyn, 'Winged Chariot', pp. 34-5.

<sup>313</sup> William Alwyn, *Letter to Elizabeth Lutyens*, 15<sup>th</sup> July 1973, held at the William Alwyn Archive, University of Cambridge Library.

<sup>314</sup> Alwyn, 'Winged Chariot', p. 26.

<sup>315</sup> William Alwyn, *Letter to John McCabe*, 27<sup>th</sup> July 1975, held at the William Alwyn Archive, University of Cambridge Library.

<sup>316</sup> William Alwyn, 'My Debt to Czech Music' in *Composing in Words* ed. by Palmer (London: Toccata Press, 2009), pp. 339-346 (p. 341).

<sup>317</sup> Alwyn, *Letter to John McCabe*, 27<sup>th</sup> July 1975.

<sup>318</sup> Alwyn, 'Winged Chariot', p. 34.

It might be argued that 'Liszt's solution' eventually led to serialism which Schoenberg saw as the evolution of music from its historic roots. However, it seems clear that in choosing a compositional route forwards, Alwyn only had one option: neoclassicism, since serialism and atonality were such an anathema to him.

There is little evidence concerning Alwyn's relationship with other British composers other than his membership of the Composers' Guild of which he was a founding member and the Society for the Promotion of New Music.<sup>319</sup> His correspondence gives some insight: he stated that as a student his 'Gods' were Stravinsky, Scriabine [sic] and Debussy rather than British composers and his loves were Irish music from the Petrie collection and Grieg's subtle harmonization of folk tunes. He stated that Delius had a very little influence upon him but that he could not understand Vaughan Williams.<sup>320</sup> He described Benjamin Britten's *Death in Venice* as being overly indulgent in its use of percussion but also declared his admiration for Peter Warlock's 'folk song Preludes'.<sup>321</sup>

Alwyn appears to have had a particularly difficult relationship with Benjamin Britten; there were rumours that Britten was personally responsible for having the careers of possible rivals ruined, but no direct proof that he did anything to suppress Alwyn's work, except that in later life Alwyn struggled to have his work performed at the Aldeburgh Festival, although, this might equally be due to his general lack of popularity at time.<sup>322</sup> However, Alwyn appears to have demonstrated some rivalry towards Britten being critical of his work; Adrian Wright raised the possibility that

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<sup>319</sup> Andrew Knowles, p. 7.

<sup>320</sup> William Alwyn, *Undated Letter to Elisabeth Lutyens*, held at the William Alwyn Archive, University of Cambridge Library.

<sup>321</sup> William Alwyn, *Letter to John McCabe*, 27<sup>th</sup> July 1975.

<sup>322</sup> Wright, p. 266.

Alwyn composed his two operas *Juan* and *Miss Julie* in order to show that he could create better operas than Britten.<sup>323</sup> This is perhaps more illustrative of Alwyn's self-perception than Britten's. Alwyn felt himself to be 'the other Suffolk composer', his more successful rival being, of course, Britten.

Perhaps the most enlightening excerpt arises from Alwyn's correspondence with Brian Murphy, Alwyn's first biographer in which he describes his attitude to music:

I have had to reduce my thoughts to a few suggestions which may help you to understand my attitude to my music – or any music which has no stated 'programme'

- 1) Do not look for inner meaning in music. Music is an abstract art as abstract as a Jackson Pollock though often more formal in shape than that of a Pollock.
- 2) All symphonies are dramas – dramas of contrast and emotion whether by classic composers or romantics. You might say each is a drama consisting of contracted male and female elements, e.g. in a Beethoven or Mozart symphony the first subject is male and the contrasted 2<sup>nd</sup> subject female.
- 3) Music appeals from the emotions to the emotions – it expresses feelings and is appreciated only by reciprocal feelings.
- 4) The circumstances in which a composer writes a work does not affect his music: e.g. a happy work might be written under extremely adverse conditions. Thus, my Symphony No. I was composed in the weeks preceding a major operation on my throat.<sup>324</sup>

## The Compositional Crisis

As previously discussed, the roots of the compositional crisis mostly lie in Alwyn's informal training in composition under J.B. McEwan.<sup>325</sup> He was encouraged to abandon his study of harmony and counterpoint, instead to examine the scores of more contemporary composers including Stravinsky, Schoenberg and Szymanowski

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<sup>323</sup> Wright, p. 272.

<sup>324</sup> William Alwyn, *Letter to Brian Murphy*, 10<sup>th</sup> May 1984, held at the William Alwyn Archive, University of Cambridge Library.

<sup>325</sup> Alwyn, 'Winged Chariot', p. 20.

but also Strauss, Scriabin, Liszt and Debussy.<sup>326</sup> By 1936 Alwyn appears to have become aware of his lack of technique, writing:

I continued to brood on what now seemed to be the woeful inadequacy of my technique as evinced,... in the mass of my previous works. Did my technique match that of my musical gods Bach, Mozart, Schumann, Puccini, Debussy and Stravinsky? No, a hundred times no! First ideas had been too readily accepted; forms ... to prone to accept classical formulae; and although my musical mind had long been aware and open to the best music of my contemporaries, ... my romantic inclinations were tentative and lacked both intensity and mental control.<sup>327</sup>

The above passage was written towards the end of Alwyn's life and may possibly have been written viewing his earlier life through 'rose-tinted spectacles'. Given his self-criticism in use of classical forms it is a little surprising that he turned towards neoclassicism rather than neo-romanticism as a solution to his compositional problems. However Walton had already very successfully occupied that particular niche and neoclassicism, with its demand for technical rigour provided a solution to Alwyn's lack of compositional technique.

The most likely catalyst for the so-called 'crisis' was the lack of success in having his serious works performed and published - Alwyn was being left behind by his peers. In the three years from 1935 to 1938 Alwyn composed thirteen documentary film scores, eight instrumental chamber music works, five works for solo piano, four orchestral works, ten arrangements of other composers works including J.S. Bach, Handel and Tchaikovsky, a cantata, six stage works and a violin concerto. With the exception of the film scores and incidental music for theatre, all of which must have been commissioned, Alwyn had little success in having his work published. Of his two major works during this period, the *Cantata* (1933-8) was

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<sup>326</sup> Wright, p. 28-9.

<sup>327</sup> Alwyn, 'Winged Chariot', p.26.



based upon a text by William Blake. Alwyn struggled to complete the *Cantata* so consequently it has no traceable first performance and was only posthumously published by the Alwyn Foundation, presumably in its incomplete state. However, the *Cantata* did result in the award of the Collard Fellowship of the Worshipful Company of Musicians which provided Alwyn with a much-needed annual income.<sup>328</sup> Similarly the Violin Concerto (1937-9) only received a private performance with a piano reduction in 1940 and was also published posthumously by the Alwyn Foundation. He was more successful with his arrangements of earlier music and Negro spirituals, five of which received performances on the BBC and one of which was published in 1936.

However Alwyn's success fades to insignificance when contrasted with his contemporaries. Walton had produced his first Symphony in 1935, composed several film scores, a Violin Concerto between 1936-9 and his *Crown Imperial* was used at the coronation of King George VI in 1937.<sup>329</sup> Similarly Tippett had composed his first String Quartet which received its premiere at the Mercury Theatre in London; in 1938 his first *Piano Sonata* received its première at the Queen Mary Hall, and his *Concerto for Double String Orchestra* composed 1938-9, was premiered at Morley College.<sup>330</sup> Even the much younger Britten had composed his *Variations on a Theme by Frank Bridge* in 1937, and a Piano Concert in 1938 which received its première with the BBC Symphony Orchestra, conducted by Henry Wood. Further

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<sup>328</sup> Alwyn, 'Winged Chariot', p. 24.

<sup>329</sup> Michael Kennedy, 'Biography' in *The William Walton Trust* (2014) <<http://www.waltontrust.org>> [accessed 3 December 2014].

<sup>330</sup> Anonymous, 'Biography', The Tippett Foundation <<http://www.tippettfoundation.org.uk>> [accessed 3 December 2014].

Lennox Berkeley came into greater prominence with the oratorio *Jonah*, when it was broadcast by the BBC in 1936 and performed at the Leeds Festival a year later.<sup>331</sup>

It must have grated with Alwyn that Lennox Berkeley's *Jonah* received such public performances while he proved unable to complete his own oratorio; consequently it received no recital, merely an award. Similarly, what few of Alwyn's works received recitals during this period were performed by friends such as the pianist Clifford Curzon. In contrast, Walton's music was used for a Royal Coronation, and Britten's work was performed by the BBC Symphony Orchestra. However, what must have been notable to Alwyn was that many of these successful works had been composed in the neoclassical aesthetic and it is perhaps this that provoked his move to neoclassicism.

The following chapter will examine several of Alwyn works composed in the years between the 'compositional crisis' and the end of the Second World War. It will evaluate Alwyn's use of the neoclassical characteristics developed in this thesis together with the seven compositional techniques identified by Joseph N. Straus used for remaking earlier forms.<sup>332</sup> It will attempt to identify the source of borrowed materials, where possible and evaluate how Alwyn uses this source material in his new compositions - whether he employs the methods identified by Straus together with the influence of other composers. It will also employ Pitch-Class Set Theory together with other analytical techniques in order to attempt to understand Alwyn's compositional technique.

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<sup>331</sup> Dickinson, Peter and Joan Reading, 'Berkeley, Sir Lennox', in *Oxford Music Online* <<http://www.oxfordmusiconline.com>> [accessed 3 December 2014].

<sup>332</sup> Straus, p. 17.

## Chapter 4

### Alwyn and Neoclassicism

Alwyn's turn to neoclassicism as a compositional model provided him with a means with which to develop his compositional craft, since neoclassicism was associated with a return to pre-romantic models and a strong compositional technique. It coincided with the birth of his son Nicholas and was overshadowed by the looming war with Germany.

The advent of the Second World War severely limited Alwyn's ability to fully explore the neoclassical compositional aesthetic since he was required to turn his attention to war work, including the composition of incidental music for radio together with film and documentary music. Nevertheless three major works emerged from this new compositional method: the *Rhapsody* for violin, viola, violoncello and piano in 1938 which was followed by the *Divertimento for Solo Flute* composed between 1939 and 1940 and the *Concerto Grosso No 1* in 1943. Several other pieces were composed during the war years which are listed in table 4 below. Alwyn himself stated that the *Rhapsody* and *Divertimento* were respectively his first and second neoclassical compositions.<sup>333</sup> However the titles for the movements in the 1939 *Sonata quasi Fantasia* appear to be indicative of a neoclassical work suggesting that this work may have escaped Alwyn's recollection when later writing about his first neoclassical compositions. In addition Adrian Wright states that the first major works to mark Alwyn's determination to better his technique were the 1939 *Rhapsody*

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<sup>333</sup> Alwyn, 'Winged Chariot', p. 27.

Table 4: Compositions by William Alwyn from 1938 and during the War Years

Date	Title	Description	Dressler Ref. <sup>334</sup>
1938	<i>Rhapsody</i> for Piano Quartet	Dedicated to the London Piano Quartet	III/31
1938-9	Novelette for string quartet	BBC broadcast 7 November 1941: Westminster Players	III/24
1939	Movement for string trio	An unpublished work dedicated to the Philharmonic Trio	III/21
	<i>Pastoral Fantasia</i> for viola and string orchestra	First performance 3 March 1940 for viola and piano reduction with Clifford Curzon at the piano.	X/4
	<i>Sonata quasi Fantasia</i> [Sonata Impromptu] for violin and viola	1. <i>Prelude</i> 2. Theme and Variation 3. <i>Finale alla Capriccio</i> Dedicated to Frederick Grinke and Watson Forbes.	III/39
1939-40	<i>Divertimento</i> for Solo Flute	Première 6 March 1941, Gareth Morris, London.	III/6
	<i>Night Thoughts</i>	Piano piece dedicated to Peter Latham.	IV/36
1940	<i>Overture to a Masque</i>	Première cancelled due to the War.	VI/13
	<i>Piece for Piano</i>	Unpublished, dedicated to Angela Latham	IV/44
	<i>Suite</i> for viola and piano	1. <i>Prelude</i> 2. <i>Canzonetta</i> 3. <i>Dance</i> 4. <i>Ara</i> 5. <i>Finale</i>	III/60
1941	<i>Short Suite (Sonatina)</i> for viola and piano	1. <i>Prelude</i> 2. <i>Dance</i> 3. <i>Aria</i> 4. <i>Finale</i>	III/34
1943	<i>Concerto Grosso I</i>	Commissioned by Arthur Bliss for the BBC	VI/4
1943-4	<i>Concerto for Oboe, String Orchestra and Harp</i>	1. <i>Andante e rubato</i> 2. <i>Vivace</i>	X/2
1944	<i>Short Suite II (Sonatina)</i> for viola and piano	1. <i>Allegro giusto e marziale</i> 2. <i>Allegretto</i> 3. <i>Andante piacevole</i> 4. <i>Vivace</i>	III/35
1944-5	<i>Suite</i> for oboe and harp	1. Minuet 2. Valse Miniature 3. Jig	III/59

and the *Pastoral Fantasia* for viola and string orchestra (1940).<sup>335</sup>

<sup>334</sup> John C Dressler, *William Alwyn: A Research and Information Guide* (New York: Routledge, 2011).

This thesis will examine the three neoclassical works, the Rhapsody, Divertimento and Concerto Grosso No. 1, together with the *Sonata quasi Fantasia*, the Pastoral Fantasia, the Suite for Oboe and Harp and the Concerto for Oboe and String Orchestra and Harp in order to determine how Alwyn's use of neoclassicism fits into the British model from chapter two. It will examine Alwyn's use of pre-romantic forms in a neoclassical context to understand how his employment of these forms differs from their original use, with particular reference to Straus' ideas of misreading older forms.

### **Rhapsody for Piano Quartet**

Alwyn described the *Rhapsody* as the first major work to emerge from his new attitude to music, a 'work concise in form' but which he defined as fully exploiting the medium.<sup>336</sup> It was composed in March 1938 for the London Piano Quartet, who performed it at the Duke's Hall on 6 May 1940.<sup>337</sup> However, it received its première on 8<sup>th</sup> November 1938 at the Wigmore Hall by the Reginald Paul Pianoforte Quartet who also performed the *Rhapsody* for a BBC broadcast on 20<sup>th</sup> December 1938. A review of the première described the *Rhapsody* as having 'little distinction or originality apparent in the music'.<sup>338</sup> A later review in *Music and Letters*, following the publication of the score, stated 'Mr Alwyn may not have written this work at the height of his inspiration, but he has certainly approached the problem

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<sup>335</sup> Wright, p. 78.

<sup>336</sup> Alwyn, 'Winged Chariot', p. 27.

<sup>337</sup> Wright, p. 78.

<sup>338</sup> 'Recitals Of The Week', *The Times*, (11 November 1938), p. 12, *The Times Digital Archive* <<http://find.galegroup.com.ezphost.dur.ac.uk>> [accessed 13 August 2015]

intelligently'.<sup>339</sup> This suggests that in the opinion of contemporary critics Alwyn had over thought his first neoclassical work and more damningly shown little originality in this new style.

A *Rhapsody* is usually an instrumental work in one movement with no specific form; it was often based on popular, national, or folk melodies.<sup>340</sup> Late nineteenth-century composers were particularly attracted to the rhapsodic style by its lack of a formal structure: composers were not restricted as they were by the configuration of earlier more traditional forms, for example sonata form.

The character of a rhapsody is passionate, nostalgic, or improvisatory; in the late nineteenth century several composers extended the style, composing rhapsodies in the style of Hungarian and Gypsy violin music. Examples of such works include Liszt's *Hungarian Rhapsodies* (1846–55), Dvořák's *Slavonic Rhapsodies* which were based on folk tunes (1878) and Brahms who wrote three Rhapsodies for the piano in his *Klavierstücke* (op. 79 and op. 119). In the twentieth century Debussy, inspired by the improvisatory element of the rhapsody, composed two rhapsodies; similarly Gershwin created his jazz-influenced *Rhapsody in Blue* and Rachmaninov composed the *Rhapsody on a Theme of Paganini* which was based upon Paganini's *Caprice no. 2* in A minor. In addition, British music includes many examples of rhapsodies many of which were influenced by folksong; these include Vaughan William's *Norfolk Rhapsody*, Butterworth's *A Shropshire Lad*, Stanford's *Irish Rhapsodies* and Delius' *Brigg Fair* which was subtitled 'An English Rhapsody'. Given Alwyn's stated aim to

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<sup>339</sup> E. L., 'Reviews of Music', *Music & Letters*, 24.3 (1943), 184 (p. 184) <<http://www.jstor.org>> [13 August 2015]

<sup>340</sup> Wendy Thompson and Jane Bellingham, 'Rhapsody' in *The Oxford Companion to Music* <<http://www.oxfordmusiconline.com>> [accessed 13 August 2015].

begin composing in the neoclassical aesthetic, which primarily employ pre-romantic forms for their structure, it is unclear the reasoning behind Alwyn's choice of a Rhapsody, with its romantic associations and usual lack of formal structure, as his first neoclassical composition. Alwyn had many examples upon which to model this work and may well have been following the trend set by the Rhapsodies listed above. It is possible that Alwyn took his inspiration from the 1924 Gershwin and 1932 Rachmaninov rhapsodies, but these works have little connection with the neoclassical aesthetic other than their use of borrowing, a feature common to many works. Unfortunately, Alwyn left no clue as to the motivation behind his use of the rhapsodic style so it is only possible to surmise what lies behind this work.

Alwyn's *Rhapsody* is a work in one movement marked *Moderato e deciso* and is scored for violin, viola, violoncello and pianoforte. Listening to this work from the perspective of the early twenty-first century reveals a work of more charm and interest than described in the contemporary review above, but of little originality having hints of Stravinsky, Vaughan Williams and even Gershwin in his use of the occasional jazz chord. The work has rhapsodic elements, but does not have much of the Gypsy violin music which forms the basis of nineteenth century rhapsodies, nor the folk song inspiration of the later English rhapsodies. Instead, it provides a post-romantic interpretation of the style with an anti-romantic twist and post-tonal harmonies.

The piece opens with a dry rhythmic, rather than rhapsodic, theme on the piano (ex. 15) which permeates the majority of this work. The theme makes use of the driving motor rhythm seen in Stravinsky's music, particularly from his primitive

period. It also has something of the 'phallic up-thrust' with which Alwyn later described his first symphony.<sup>341</sup>

In composing this *Rhapsody*, Alwyn orchestrates the quartet in such a manner that the piano and strings play together only infrequently, thus making the work closer to a Rhapsody for piano with string trio. Although Alwyn does not appear to have left any clues as to his reason for writing the quartet in this way it is possible that he may have agreed with Tchaikovsky, who believed that the piano did not mix well with the orchestra, or in this case, strings.<sup>342</sup> However, the piano is so dominant within this quartet that it may well have forced Alwyn to compose the music so that the strings were largely separated from the piano.

This Rhapsody has a strongly anti-romantic, yet passionate character, which is at odds with the generally romantic nature of a rhapsody, thus it might be considered that the musical character of the earlier form has been subverted, or marginalised, by Alwyn's neoclassical treatment in a Strausian misreading of the style.

As the music progresses it does become more rhapsodic before building to an animated re-statement of the opening theme. This then decreases, moving onto a more thoughtful lyrical section which reaches an ardent climax; this is succeeded by a repeat of the vigorous opening theme leading to a coda. The basic structure for the *Rhapsody* is given in table 5 below.

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<sup>341</sup> Alwyn, 'Ariel to Miranda', p. 76.

<sup>342</sup> David Brown, *Tchaikovsky: A Biographical and Critical Study Volume II: The Crisis Years (1874-1878)* (London: Victor Gollancz, 1982), p. 20.



Table 5: Alwyn: *Rhapsody for Piano Quartet* – basic structure

Section	Theme	Bars	Sonata Form Equivalent
1	A	1-22	Exposition
2	B	23-69	
3	Bridge/codetta	70-98	
4	C	99-121	Development
5	Bridge	122-164	
6	A'	165-212	Recapitulation
7	Coda	213-219	

Although rhapsodies are generally a style without form, here Alwyn's *Rhapsody* appears to have been composed in a very loose thematically based sonata form which moves in and out of focus as the work progresses echoing Stravinsky's move away from harmony towards a motivic orientation. Themes A and B together with the first bridge (or is it codetta?) might be considered to form an exposition of sorts, theme C with the second bridge (retransition) the development section and the restatement of theme A, without theme B, the recapitulation with coda.

Straus argues that the sonata is the paradigmatic form of tonal music in that it is the epitome of common-practice tonality. As such, in the minds of early twentieth-century composers, it is laden with the weight and status of the repertoire from the nineteenth century and before.<sup>343</sup> By using a version of sonata form in this normally formless style Alwyn is attempting to appropriate the form for his own means as an archetypal element of an earlier style in order, as Straus argues, to confront and master his predecessors on their 'home ground'.<sup>344</sup> Further, by moving the form in and out of focus through the work, Alwyn is subverting, or misreading, the form to his own compositional style.

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<sup>343</sup> Straus, p. 96.

<sup>344</sup> *ibid.*

Ex. 15: William Alwyn, Rhapsody for Piano Quartet bb. 1-4 – Theme ‘A’ (piano)

The musical score is for a piano quartet, marked 'Moderato e deciso'. It is in 3/4 time. The first system (bars 1-4) is labeled 'basic idea' and 'basic idea repeated'. The second system (bars 5-8) is labeled 'continuation'. Motifs are labeled 'a', 'b', 'c', and 'c''. Dynamics include 'f' and 'mf'. A triplet of eighth notes is marked with a '3' in the first system, and a triplet of quarter notes is marked with a '3' in the second system.

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Similarly, Alwyn composed the primary theme (ex. 15) in a modernist take on a classical form in a neoclassical gesture. He has used a sentence-based structure employing a four rather than eight bar phrase omitting the cadential idea at the end; it comprises three motifs, the first of which might be considered to borrow from Stravinsky’s primitive barbaric period. The opening motif ‘a’ may well have been borrowed from an earlier work, but it has not been possible to identify the work from which it was taken. This basic idea is repeated as a sequence in the ensuing bars modulating through various keys in a manner similar to Elgar’s mosaic of sequences but Alwyn’s use of harmony differs from that of Elgar. Where Elgar’s harmony remains essentially tonal, Alwyn’s is post-tonal.

In common with many composers of the period, Alwyn introduces a contrapuntal element using all three motifs within the partial re-statement of this

theme; this is repeated a further three times (ex. 16) before the theme is fractured into motif 'a' and then liquidated further into the pedal note on D providing accompaniment for the strings:

Ex. 16: William Alwyn, Rhapsody for Piano Quartet b. 5 - Theme 'A' (piano)



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Theme 'A' is taken up by the strings in D major/Ionian mode on D in a fundamentally linear fashion beginning with a heterophonic texture moving to a form of polyphony, but underpinned by non-tonal triadic movements between the strings. Alwyn's use of polyphony does not follow the rules of species or fugal counterpoint (for example, no consecutive fifths and octaves or false relations) which governed Bach and other baroque composers, rather it is similar to the collection based harmony employed by Bartók, and as such is a further neoclassical gesture both in his use of polyphony and post-tonal harmony. This use of collection based harmony is demonstrated in Table 6 below.

Thus within each bar Alwyn employs all seven pitches of the D major scale but separated between the strings in a polyphonic texture. The introduction of accidentals in bars 14-16 heralds a move towards a brief statement of motifs 'a' and

'b' on the Locrian mode on D before returning to the Mixolydian mode of the opening.

Table 6: Alwyn's Use of Collection-based Harmony in his *Rhapsody* for Piano Quartet

Bar	Violin	Viola	Violoncello	Comments
9	2 3 5	1 2 6	4 5 6	All pitches but 7 (C#)
10	2 5 6 7	1 2 3 4 5	2 3 4 5	All pitches
11	3 4 5	1 2 4 5 6	1 3 5 6	All pitches but 7
12	1 2 3 4 5 6	1 2 3 4 6	1 2 3 6 7	All pitches
13	1 2 3 6 7	1 3 4 5 6	1 2 4 5 6	All pitches
14	1 2 4 5 6	1 2 3 6 7	2 3 4 6 7	All pitches except F <sub>4</sub>
15 & 16	3 4 6	1 2 4 5 6	1 2 6 7	All pitches except E <sub>b</sub>

Alwyn's development of these motifs within the *Rhapsody* follows a classical pattern: he initially groups together several motifs into a single gesture – the basic idea within the A theme. This idea is sufficiently small to group with other ideas into new phrases and themes but large enough to be broken down, or fragmented, to allow develop its constituent motifs within this work.<sup>345</sup> In composing this *Rhapsody* Alwyn takes the motifs from theme A and combines them together into a new theme and also combines them with new materials into a further theme.

Alwyn's first classically based development of motifs occurs within theme 'B'. He combines motif c and c' with an arpeggiated pattern in the left hand to form the second theme 'B' initially in Aeolian on D (ex. 17). This appears first in the viola and 'cello accompanied by an arpeggiated motif on the piano at rehearsal mark A. This theme is taken up briefly by the piano in B minor before returning to the strings at rehearsal mark B which play a rhapsodic improvisatory passage in imitation

<sup>345</sup> William Caplin, *Classical Form: A Theory of Formal Functions for the Instrumental Music of Haydn, Mozart and Beethoven* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1998), p. 37.

between the violin and viola based upon the motifs within theme B in the Aeolian mode on A.

Ex. 17: William Alwyn, Rhapsody for Piano Quartet bb. 30-4 – Theme 'B' (piano)

The musical score for Ex. 17 is presented in two systems. The first system shows the piano part with a melodic line and chords, and the string part with a rhythmic accompaniment. The second system continues the piano part with a melodic line and chords, and the string part with a rhythmic accompaniment. The score includes dynamic markings such as 'mf' and 'brillante', and articulation markings such as 'c'' and 'c'.

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This theme moves back to B minor and is fragmented between piano and strings at rehearsal mark C before moving to the piano at rehearsal mark D modulating briefly to F# minor. The theme fragments gradually into motif c passing through various keys until at rehearsal mark E the music moves into a linking passage based upon motif 'a' from the opening theme before the piano briefly restates the first two bars. The bridge continues in the strings employing a motif based upon an augmentation of motif c. Rehearsal mark G introduces the entry of the third theme on the viola (ex.18) accompanied by chords on the other strings. This theme, despite having a very different, more lyrical character, too has its roots in theme A and is echoed on the piano at bar 116.

Ex. 18: William Alwyn, Rhapsody for Piano Quartet bb. 99-104 – Theme ‘C’ (viola)



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Motif a’ then develops into a new chromatic motif and combines with a form of motif b to form a second bridge at rehearsal mark J, or what might be described as the retransition leading to the recapitulation in sonata form. This leads to a partial restatement of the ‘A’ theme (ex.19) and a contrapuntal passage in the Aeolian mode on D which is based upon elements of the C theme. This eventually results in the return of the first theme at rehearsal mark M.

Ex. 19: William Alwyn, Rhapsody for Piano Quartet bb. 135 - 8 – partial restatement of theme ‘A’ (piano)

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In assessing this work against the model for neoclassicism, this piece contains many neoclassical gestures. It is based upon a classical model employing not only a loose sonata form but also a classical phrase structure. This is combined with contrapuntal writing which employs collection based harmony and use of various modes. The element of borrowing is subtle; the string writing owes much to

Vaughan Williams, Alwyn has incorporated Stravinsky's motor rhythms and in addition has employed jazz elements which are reminiscent of Gershwin's music. This piece may well have been based upon a quotation from an earlier work, but it may be so transformed as to be unidentifiable.<sup>346</sup> Finally, although some of the writing is rhapsodic in nature, it cannot be called romantic having more of an absolute character. Therefore the piece shares the anti-romantic character in common with other neoclassical works.

It is difficult to identify which of Straus' compositional techniques might have been employed by Alwyn since it has not been possible to find the earlier music from which his themes might have been borrowed. However, in a more general sense the overall form, particularly the sonata form from the first movement, has been remade in a modernist style. In addition, Alwyn has so subverted the character of a rhapsody in this work that it is difficult to describe the work as recognisably rhapsodic, in that it does not follow the model for a rhapsody employed by earlier or contemporary composers. It may be this overall that places the *Rhapsody for Piano Quartet* within the neoclassical aesthetic.

The criticism published following the *Rhapsody's* première as having little originality appears to be rather harsh. Alwyn has successfully combined his own taste for a strong melodic line with the neoclassical aesthetic, but given that by the time this work was composed neoclassicism had been in existence for nearly twenty years, it is difficult to understand how he could have written something of glaring originality since he was following an existing compositional aesthetic.

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<sup>346</sup> Straus, p. 134.

The lack of interest in this Rhapsody might be explained by Straus who argues that those twentieth-century composers who employ sonata form in a nineteenth-century sense, as in solely based upon thematic material, have tended to write uninteresting sonatas. In such works the form merely floats upon the musical surface, being a simple arrangement of themes, lacking in real connection to the harmonic structure beneath.<sup>347</sup> It may be that the criticism for unoriginality may be due to Alwyn's use of sonata form.

### **Pastoral Fantasia for Viola and String Orchestra**

The *Pastoral Fantasia* was composed between June and October 1939 but, like many of Alwyn's works, was only published posthumously in 1994.<sup>348</sup> It received its first performance in 1940 by Watson Forbes and Clifford Curzon as a reduction for viola and piano. This version will also form the basis for the examination of the work since the full score is not available to the author. However, according to John White, the editor for the piano edition of the *Pastoral Fantasia*, there is close correlation between the piano reduction and the full score, the only element missing is the scoring for the orchestra, which can be gained from listening to a recording.<sup>349</sup>

The word *Pastoral* in music relates to a genre that portrays the characters and scenes of rural life or expresses its atmosphere and is essentially programmatic in style.<sup>350</sup> The term *Fantasia* originated in the Renaissance; it described an instrumental

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<sup>347</sup> Straus, p. 97.

<sup>348</sup> Dressler, p. 177.

<sup>349</sup> John White, 'Commentary' in *Pastoral Fantasia for Viola & String Orchestra* (St Albans: Corda Music Publications, 1994), p. 1.

<sup>350</sup> Geoffrey Chew and Owen Jander, 'Pastoral' in *Oxford Music Online* <<http://www.oxfordmusiconline.com>> [accessed 28 August 2015].



composition whose form and invention arose solely from the fantasy and skill of its composer. In the period between the sixteenth and nineteenth centuries the *fantasia* retained these features; its formal and stylistic characteristics vary widely between free and improvisatory styles to strictly contrapuntal and standard sectional forms.<sup>351</sup> The *fantasia* provides the same lack of a formal structure as the rhapsody which so attracted late nineteenth-century composers. Alwyn's choice of a fantasia to follow his rhapsody (with two shorter works in between) may be linked by their shared informality. Certainly the first five works following the 1938 compositional crisis all contained music for strings. This is contrary to Stravinsky's choice of wind instruments for his *Octuor*, which he considered to have had a colder and more rigid timbre which produced a less emotive and therefore purer sound. Possibly Alwyn was attempting to distance his own neoclassical works from Stravinsky's *Octuor* by choosing a different instrumentation.

Alwyn's *Pastoral Fantasia* conforms closely to the definition above, having a lyrical opening melody (ex. 20) underpinned by lush modally based harmonies in the string orchestra. Although composed after Alwyn's *Rhapsody* this *Pastoral Fantasia* has much more affinity with Vaughan Williams's pastoral music than with neoclassicism. Despite Alwyn's professed lack of understanding of Vaughan Williams's music, he appears to have subconsciously absorbed much of his writing style.<sup>352</sup> Adrian Wright describes this *Pastoral Fantasia* as 'a complete withdrawal

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<sup>351</sup> Christopher D.S. Field, et al, 'Fantasia' in *Oxford Music Online* <<http://www.oxfordmusiconline.com>> [accessed 28 August 2015].

<sup>352</sup> William Alwyn, *Undated letter to Elisabeth Lutyens* held at the William Alwyn Archive, University of Cambridge Library.

from the troubles of the times' in which Alwyn shut away the real world.<sup>353</sup> As such it might not be a withdrawal from neoclassicism, but more a reaction to the war-based tensions that surrounded Alwyn.

Wilfrid Dunwell argues that the use of a modally-based melody is the simplest form of divergence from the classical method of musical organisation in the transition from traditional triadic based tonal harmony to modernism.<sup>354</sup> Modes were principally in use in the middle ages, therefore the employment of modes in the early twentieth century might be considered a reference to earlier musical eras but in combination with post-tonal harmonies is closer to a misreading of the past. It also looks back to the historically informed compositions of Parry and Vaughan Williams.

Ex. 20: Alwyn: *Pastoral Fantasia for Viola and String Orchestra*, bb. 5-9.



The work opens with modally based chords on the strings which are followed by a four bar, improvisatory passage performed by a string quartet (ex. 21) before a linking bar, reflecting the opening . Alwyn may have borrowed this idea from Stravinsky's *Pulcinella*, which contains a similar sub-division of the orchestra to form a string quartet, but equally it follows the concertino/ripieno orchestral split of the Concerto Grosso and as such exhibits one neoclassical characteristic. The title might

<sup>353</sup> Wright, p. 78.

<sup>354</sup> Wilfrid Dunwell, *The Evolution of Twentieth-Century Harmony* (London: Novello and Co. Ltd., 1960), p. 123.

be considered to be a further neoclassical gesture; however the Fantasia is such a widely used form from the early Baroque to the current day that it is more difficult to associate with neoclassicism than many other forms. It is possible that Alwyn's use of pastoralism might also be considered a retrospective gesture but there appears to be little misreading of this style within this work (other than illustrated by ex. 22) – it is a work written within the style rather than an imitation or pastiche.

The opening theme on the viola (ex. 21) is a repeat of the introduction employing the Mixolydian mode on G with its flattened seventh over a sustained G major triad in the accompaniment. Thus Alwyn appears to deliberately combine modality with tonality.

Ex. 21: Alwyn: *Pastoral Fantasia for Viola and String Orchestra*, bb. 11-15.

Straus argues that the use of such a triad within a post-tonal work is merely on the musical surface and does not imply a triadic middle ground and background, thus having no structural function. Instead the triad become the locus of a conflict between old and new; twentieth-century composers misread the triad, striving to neutralise its tonal implications and redefine it within a post-tonal context.<sup>355</sup> It is not clear whether this is Alwyn's intent in the extract given above (ex. 21); instead the

<sup>355</sup> Straus, p. 74.

triad appear to serve the function of a pedal chord over which the soloist plays their part.

Straus categorises seven techniques employed by twentieth century composers in misreading works of the past. One such technique is neutralisation, here traditional musical elements such as dominant seventh chords are stripped of their usual purpose, particularly their forward moving impulse. Alwyn employs such a chord from bar 40 (ex. 22) where the G major chord seen in ex. 21 becomes a static thirteenth chord on D. Such writing by Alwyn was in all probability influenced by Debussy, who frequently employed such chords. It is also an extension of the pedal chord illustrated in ex. 21.

Ex. 22: Alwyn: *Pastoral Fantasia for Viola and String Orchestra*, bb. 40-43.



The initial performances of the work attracted no published reviews suggesting that it was not considered sufficiently original to warrant critical comment. This might have been due to wartime restrictions, but does not appear to have prevented commentary upon other contemporary works.<sup>356</sup> This work owes much more to late romanticism and English pastoral music, perhaps even neo-romanticism, than to neoclassicism. Indeed neoclassicism in common with much

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<sup>356</sup> Dressler, pp. 177, 201, 206, 208.

post-World War I modernist music is anti-romantic; this, with its highly romantic musical language, places this work outside the neoclassical classification. Thus although it might be a temporary lapse from the neoclassical style, it might be inferred that Alwyn's change to neoclassicism was not as absolute as implied by his short autobiography. It appears that the pull of his natural romanticism was more difficult to leave behind than he supposed.

### **Sonata Impromptu for violin and viola (Sonata quasi fantasia)**

The New Grove Dictionary defines an impromptu as:

A composition for solo instrument, usually the piano, the nature of which may occasionally suggest improvisation, though the name probably derives from the casual way in which the inspiration for such a piece came to the composer. It was apparently first used in 1817 as the title of a piano piece by J.V. Voříšek published in the *Allgemeine musikalische Zeitung*.<sup>357</sup>

However, this *Sonata Impromptu* was composed for violin and viola employing a largely baroque model for this sonata. Alwyn may well have taken inspiration to write a duet for string instruments from the J.S. Bach *Concerto for Two Violins in D major BWV1043*, possibly the most famous Baroque violin duet or Ravel's *Sonata for Violin and Cello* (1922).<sup>358</sup> But equally he may have been inspired to create a work in the Baroque style for his friend, the viola player, Watson Forbes, to whom it is dedicated along with Frederick Grinke. Unfortunately, Alwyn has left no clue as to the motivation behind the composition of this work - it is not even mentioned in his

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<sup>357</sup> Maurice J.E. Brown, 'Impromptu', in *Oxford Music Online* <<http://www.oxfordmusiconline.com>> [accessed 1 September 2015].

<sup>358</sup> 'Sonata for Violin and Cello (Ravel, Maurice), *IMSLP Petrucci Library* (2012) <[http://imslp.org/wiki/Sonata\\_for\\_Violin\\_and\\_Cello\\_\(Ravel,\\_Maurice\)](http://imslp.org/wiki/Sonata_for_Violin_and_Cello_(Ravel,_Maurice))> [accessed 18 February 2016].

autobiography. Whatever the reason behind its genesis, the *Sonata Impromptu* echoes the imitation between the two instruments heard in the Bach *Concerto for Two Violins*.

The *Sonata Impromptu* comprises a *Prelude, Theme and Variations* and a *Finale alla Capriccio*. Thus there is no classically based sonata form, here the 'sonata' relates to the baroque *sonare* concerning instrumental music as opposed to the sung *cantare*. Alwyn's employment of a baroque style sonata may be an attempt to come to terms with his musical heritage by appropriating an earlier style to confront and master their predecessor's on that antecedent's musical territory.<sup>359</sup> Alwyn stated that he wished to become another Bach or Beethoven.<sup>360</sup> By employing forms common in Bach's time, Alwyn may be attempting to challenge his forebear, to become another Bach.

Straus states that this form of sonata should focus upon harmonic contrast, which is the essential form-generating element.<sup>361</sup> Analysis of the movements within this sonata will determine whether Alwyn follows the harmony based path suggested by Straus. The *Sonata Impromptu* does however echo the structure of Stravinsky's *Octuor* which comprised a *Sinfonia*, *Theme and Variations* and *Finale*; it is therefore possible that Alwyn borrowed this structure from Stravinsky.

The *Sonata Impromptu* was completed in November 1939 but extensively revised in March 1940 and, like the *Pastoral Fantasia*, published in 1994. Also in common with the *Pastoral Fantasia* its early performances received no review, the only critical comment being made in the *Times* on 3 March, 1948.<sup>362</sup> Due to its

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<sup>359</sup> Straus, p. 96.

<sup>360</sup> William Alwyn, 'Early Closing', p. 63.

<sup>361</sup> Straus, p. 96.

<sup>362</sup> Dressler, p. 245.

extensive revision in 1940, Alwyn may have considered this work to have been completed after the *Divertimento* for Solo Flute. This may explain the lack of commentary upon this work by Alwyn in his writings.

*Prelude (Moderato con alcuna licenza)*

Ex. 23: Alwyn: 'Prelude' from *Sonata Impromptu* for Violin and Viola, bb. 1-7.

The image shows a musical score for Violin and Viola. The title is "Moderato con alcuna licenza". The score is in 3/4 time and G minor. The Violin part starts with a treble clef and a key signature of one flat. The Viola part starts with a bass clef and a key signature of one flat. The score includes performance directions such as *f*, *p*, *dim.*, *poco tenuto*, and *pp*. The score is divided into two systems, with the second system starting at measure 5.

The performance directions indicate that this *Prelude* should be played with a certain amount of freedom, suggesting a slightly improvisatory character; it commences with an introductory baroque style chord of G minor between the two strings (ex. 23). Such a chord has echoes of baroque preluding used as an introduction to a piece to establish the key and was either a virtuosic improvisatory display or, in the case of a harpsichordist, an opportunity to familiarise themselves with a different instrument.

Following this short introduction the prelude then follows a thematic A B C A' form. Theme 'A' follows a break leading to further chords, here based upon the

interval of a sixth or eight semitones, one formed in G minor and the second on the sub-dominant C minor, suggesting a bitonal harmonic scheme echoing that used by Britten in the 'Introduction' from his *Variations on a Theme of Frank Bridge* (see page 76). This is followed by a short passage in imitation in which the viola echoes the violin in inversion (bars 3-4). This moves onto more improvisatory writing for the violin. Due to the chromatic nature of the writing the key is difficult to define, however it appears to be closest to the Locrian mode in G although by the end of the section the music has moved to A minor. Such writing combines baroque techniques with twentieth-century post-tonal harmonies and the borrowed opening which appears to come directly from Bach and the baroque.

The 'B' theme, beginning at rehearsal mark A and marked *Più mosso* (*Tempo scherzando*) comprises a two part free canon in which the violin echoes the viola at an interval of a fifth similar to a two-part invention (ex. 24).

Ex. 24: Alwyn: 'Prelude' from *Sonata Impromptu* for Violin and Viola, bb. 13-19.

The image displays a musical score for two staves: Violin and Viola. The title above the score is "Più mosso (Tempo scherzando)". The top system shows the Violin part in treble clef and the Viola part in alto clef. The bottom system shows the Violin part in treble clef and the Viola part in bass clef. The music is in 3/4 time. The top system includes a dynamic marking of *mf* and a triplet. The bottom system includes a dynamic marking of *mp* and a tremolo. The score illustrates a two-part free canon with a fifth interval between the parts.

The interval of a fifth continues from bar 45 which introduces the 'C' theme, a passage of semiquaver double stopping on both instruments in which the viola plays a pedal note on G, a fifth below the D pedal note played on the violin and the upper voices on each instrument are primarily a major or minor third apart (ex. 25).



This passage imitates a very familiar baroque style, but with the phrase structure overlapping the bar line in a modernist twist as indicated by the bracketing in ex. 25. The extract above begins with mostly consonant harmony, however this breaks down at bar 52 (ex. 25). At this point the consonance becomes dissonant with the interval of a ninth between the pedal notes on violin and viola. Such a breakdown of harmony might be considered to be the ‘marginalization’ compositional technique identified by Straus.<sup>363</sup> As such the progressions spanning triadic intervals (the thirds between the upper voices) are relegated to the periphery of the new work.

Ex. 25: Alwyn: *Sonata Impromptu* for Violin and Viola, ‘Prelude’, bb. 45 - 52.

The image shows a musical score for Violin and Viola, measures 45-52. The score is in 2/4 time and marked *pp*. The Violin part is in the treble clef and the Viola part is in the alto clef. The score shows overlapping phrase structures across bar lines, with a dissonant interval of a ninth between the violin and viola pedal notes at the end of the extract.

The overall harmonic and thematic structure of the movement is illustrated in table 7 below.

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<sup>363</sup> Straus, p. 17.

Table 7: A Thematic and Harmonic Structure for Alwyn: *Sonata Impromptu* for Violin and Viola, 'Prelude'

Theme	Bar	Key
A	2	Bitonal g/c → Locrian on G → a
B	13	No identifiable key, appears to cadence to g at the end
C	45	Closest to g → no key
A'/Coda	65	Bitonal g/c → Locrian on G → a

Straus suggest that eighteenth-century sonatas the form was essentially a two-part structure shaped by contrasting harmonic areas in which harmonic contrast is the principal determinant of the form.<sup>364</sup> There is no indication that Alwyn has applied a harmonic structure in this movement, indeed structure is indicated by themes and the largest section is essentially without key.

### *Theme & Variations*

The theme (ex. 26) is composed with the rhythm and metre characteristics of a Sarabande (although the form of a baroque Sarabande was most usually based on the bipartite AABB, it was also composed in variation and rondo forms) with occasional imitation between the two instruments, most notably in bars eight and nine. In addition the 'A' theme is formed by combining the two instruments (ex. 27). The theme contains three basic motifs which are employed to form the variations, here marked 'a', 'b' and 'c'. The 'a' and 'b' motifs are repeated later in the theme but with slight variation. These motifs are formed from the pitch sets indicated in table 8. When the pitches of these three motifs are reduced to their unordered pitch set it becomes obvious that all three are based upon scales, although out of order.

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<sup>364</sup> Straus, p. 96.

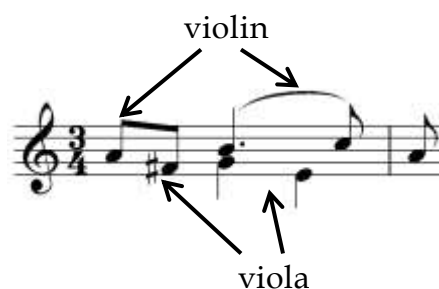
Table 8: A Unordered Pitch Sets and Interval Class Profiles for Alwyn: *Sonata Impromptu* for Violin and Viola, 'Theme and Variations'

Motif	a	b	c
Unordered Pitch Set	A B C	E F# G	D E F#G A
Interval Class Profile	[2, 1]	[2,1]	[2,2,1,2]

Ex. 26: Alwyn: *Sonata Impromptu* for Violin and Viola, 'Theme', bb. 1 - 18.

The theme comprises a 5 +5 (+1 beat) +3 (+1 beat) +4 (+1 beat) bar phrase structure in which the phrase moves one beat further on each time, comprising eighteen bars in total. The second phrase within the theme can be seen as a repeat of the first with decoration in the form of a second voice in the violin part and additional harmony on the part of the viola. The third and fourth phrases might be considered the 'answer' to the first two phrases.

Ex. 27: Alwyn: *Sonata Impromptu* for Violin and Viola, 'A' Theme, bb. 1-2.



There are seven variations, but Alwyn instructed that the first six should be played as one continuous movement without breaks between the variations. A description of the variations is given in table 9.

Table 9: A Description of the Variations in Alwyn's *Sonata Impromptu for Violin and Viola*

Variation	Structure	Before repeat	After repeat
I	10 bars [repeat] 9 bars	Decoration of flattened 'a' and 'b'	Flattened 'a' over D pedal on the viola
II	10 bars [repeat] 6 bars	Decoration of 'a' on violin, in imitation with viola at the ninth	Viola 'c' with semiquaver accompaniment on violin
III	9 bars [repeat] 9 bars	Dotted chromatic variant of 'a' with pizzicato 'b'	Dotted variant of 'a' using 'c' pitches
IV	18 bars	Triplet variant on 'a' and 'b'	
V	10 bars [repeat] 6 bars	Transposition of a on viola with triplet semiquaver decoration	Decorated inversion of a in canon with viola
VI	18 bars	Augmented a motif accompanied by pizzicato triads on viola; at b.116 instruments swap roles with inversion of a.	
VII	24 bars	See below	

The first six variations follow a fairly 'classical' variation form such as might be seen in the variations of Haydn or Mozart, but with the addition of a post-tonal musical language. In contrast, the seventh variation is very different. While the first two bars remain in a fairly classical form, by the third bar rhythms have become more complex and two bars later Alwyn introduces frequently shifting time

signatures mostly alternating between 3/4 and 4/4, but also introducing 5/8, a very twentieth century metric style.

The movement ends in an almost romantic, improvisatory passage in which the music moves from the violin to viola playing in quintuplet and septuplet demisemiquavers, moving far away from the baroque style of the rest of the work.

### *Finale alla Capriccio*

The opening section of Alwyn's *Finale alla Capriccio* begins in the imitative style of the early seventeenth century capriccio.<sup>365</sup> Alwyn's performance indication *Allegretto con burla* indicates that the movement should be played in a lively and jokey manner.

Ex. 28: Alwyn, *Sonata Impromptu* for Violin and Viola, 'Finale alla Capriccio' – 'A and A' themes, bb. 1-3.

**Allegretto con burla**

The image shows a musical score for Violin and Viola. The Violin part is in treble clef with a key signature of one sharp (F#) and a 2/4 time signature. The Viola part is in bass clef with a key signature of one sharp (F#) and a 2/4 time signature. The Violin part starts with a motif 'a' (a quarter note G4, eighth notes A4-B4, quarter note C5). The Viola part starts with a motif 'b' (a quarter note G3, eighth notes A3-B3, quarter note C4).

The imitation (played at the octave) begins with the opening motif 'a' (ex. 28) which is used to create the A and A' themes. A further theme 'B' is developed at rehearsal mark A. The A theme is later developed into an A'' theme at bar 30 where it is joined by the B theme (ex. 29).

<sup>365</sup> Wendy Thompson and Jane Bellingham, 'Capriccio' in *The Oxford Companion to Music* ed. by Alison Latham, <<http://www.oxfordmusiconline.com>> [accessed 1 December 2015].

Ex. 29: Alwyn, *Sonata Impromptu* for Violin and Viola, 'Finale alla Capriccio' – A'' and B themes, bb. 30-5.

**Allegretto con burla**

Alwyn employs the different versions and variants of the A theme together with the later B theme in a fairly standard version of a capriccio which is more of a pastiche than a neoclassical composition. In this *Sonata Impromptu*, Alwyn appears to have been experimenting with different Baroque forms in an attempt to develop his compositional technique along neoclassical lines. However, Alwyn has included very little misreading of the past, including the compositional techniques identified by Straus or any of the neoclassical characteristics identified in chapter 2. This work was substantially revised in 1940, and although its first incarnation was composed after Alwyn's move to neoclassicism, it may not have begun life as a neoclassical work. It is possible that Alwyn did not consider this work to be in the neoclassical aesthetic, more a training exercise in compositional technique, since, as previously stated he makes no mention of it in his autobiography.<sup>366</sup>

<sup>366</sup> Alwyn, 'Winged Chariot', p. 27.

### ***Divertimento for Solo Flute***

The *Divertimento* was composed between 1939 and 1940 and received its première on 6 March 1941 at the Royal Academy in London performed by Gareth Morris; it subsequently received its international première at the International Society for Contemporary Music festival on 19 May 1941 with René LeRoy.<sup>367</sup> Due to wartime restrictions Alwyn was unable to be at the New York première or hear its reception until the end of the War.<sup>368</sup>

John Dressler was unable to locate the manuscript when compiling his Research Guide to Alwyn; however, in the course of the research for this thesis it was located at the offices of Boosey & Hawkes in London by the Alwyn Archivist Margaret Jones and a digital copy is now available for viewing at the Alwyn Archive at Cambridge University Library.

Alwyn described this *Divertimento* as having been his second contrapuntal work in his short autobiography:

[The *Rhapsody*] was followed by a contrapuntal work composed for that most unlikely single-line instrument, the flute. I called the work *Divertimento for Solo Flute*, and by exploiting my intimate knowledge of the instrument I contrived a suite which contained a Prelude and Fugue (!), Variations on a Ground, a Gavotte and Jig, often written on several staves but all performable by the single soloist.<sup>369</sup>

This work is one of only a few of Alwyn's compositions that have become more established within the musical canon, having been performed by many professional flautists including Christopher Hyde-Smith and William Bennett, which perhaps attests to the quality of Alwyn's writing. It has also been included on the Associated Board's FRSM in flute performance for many years.

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<sup>367</sup> Dressler, p. 75.

<sup>368</sup> Wright, p. 78.

<sup>369</sup> Alwyn, 'Winged Chariot', p. 27.

In contrast to Alwyn's pre-neoclassical works, this *Divertimento* received International exposure and almost universal approbation from the critics. The New York Times critic and Sibelius champion, Olin Downes reviewed the entire 1941 International Contemporary Music Festival at which the *Divertimento* received its international première. He was damning of most of the music aired at the festival, stating that 'Most of the music was very bad' but was fulsome in his praise for Alwyn's work writing:

A simple divertimento for unaccompanied flute, well played by René LeRoy, was so clear and graceful that by contrast it was sheer delight. Moreover, it's cleverly made music, done with an ingenuity which in one place suggests a fugal development in different parts for the single-voice flute, and in another a lively air with an accompaniment figure which seems to emerge now and then between phrases of the melody. Welcome indeed after the tortuous twaddle which had gone before!<sup>370</sup>

Olin Downes obviously had tastes more inclined towards tonal music than the majority of the offerings at the Contemporary Music Festival, but even so, such praise must have been comfort to Alwyn when it finally reached him. Further, a review of the 1942 première in London in the *Musical Times* described the *Divertimento* as 'ingenious' and a critic from *Music & Letters* was fulsome in their praise for Alwyn's solo flute piece, admiring his 'illusion of real part-writing'.<sup>371</sup> However, Lazare Saminsky, writing in the *Musical Courier* although generally positive about the work commented that 'the over-extended form with its fughetas and giges made too much of a good thing'.<sup>372</sup>

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<sup>370</sup> Olin Downes, 'Concert is Given by World Society: Contemporary Music Group Offers Fourth Program of Eighteenth Season', *New York Times* (20 May 1941), p. 27.

<sup>371</sup> A., G. 'London Concerts', *Musical Times*, 83 (1942), p. 352; L., E. 'Reviews of Music' *Music & Letters*, 24 (1943), p. 249.

<sup>372</sup> Lazare Saminsky quoted in 'In the News: Notes on Men and Matters of Interest Mentioned in the News' in *Musical Opinion*, 64 (1941), p. 496.



The original Italian meaning of a musical '*divertimento*' related to a work intended primarily for the entertainment of both listeners and players without excluding great artistic attainment, examples are provided by the *divertimentos* of Haydn, Boccherini and Mozart. A *divertimento* could also serve as background music for a social gathering such as a banquet and from 1780 onwards the title '*divertimento*' was most frequently applied to music of a light character.<sup>373</sup> Alwyn's *Divertimento* has little to do with the definitions given above, it is instead a virtuosic work intended to display the skills of both performer and composer; it contains four rather than the three of an Austrian style *divertimento* and as such is more like a Baroque Suite.

Mary Alwyn, in her introduction to the *Divertimento*, made the connection between Alwyn's contrapuntal writing in this work and that of Bach in his solo instrumental works.<sup>374</sup> The most obvious comparison can be made with Bach's *Partita for Solo Flute in A minor BWV1013* (ex. 30), which must have been very familiar to Alwyn. Bach, unlike Alwyn, wrote his counterpoint on a single line, the performer being expected to understand the essence of the counterpoint, providing their own interpretation by employing the varied tones and registers of the flute to highlight the different voices.

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<sup>373</sup> Hubert Unverricht and Cliff Eisen, '*Divertimento*' in *Oxford Music Online* <<http://www.oxfordmusiconline.com>> [accessed 2 September 2015].

<sup>374</sup> Mary Alwyn, '*Commentary*' in *William Alwyn: Divertimento for Solo Flute* (London: Boosey & Hawkes Music Publishers Ltd, 1993), n.p.

Ex. 30: J.S. Bach, *Partita for Solo Flute in A minor BWV1013*, 'Allemande' bb. 1-8.



The above extract begins with a statement in A minor but by bar two the counterpoint is revealed through various sequences. Thus Alwyn might have written out the above passage as shown in ex. 31, but of course this provides only one interpretation of Bach's score, it does however illustrate the inspiration behind Alwyn's use of counterpoint in his *Divertimento*.

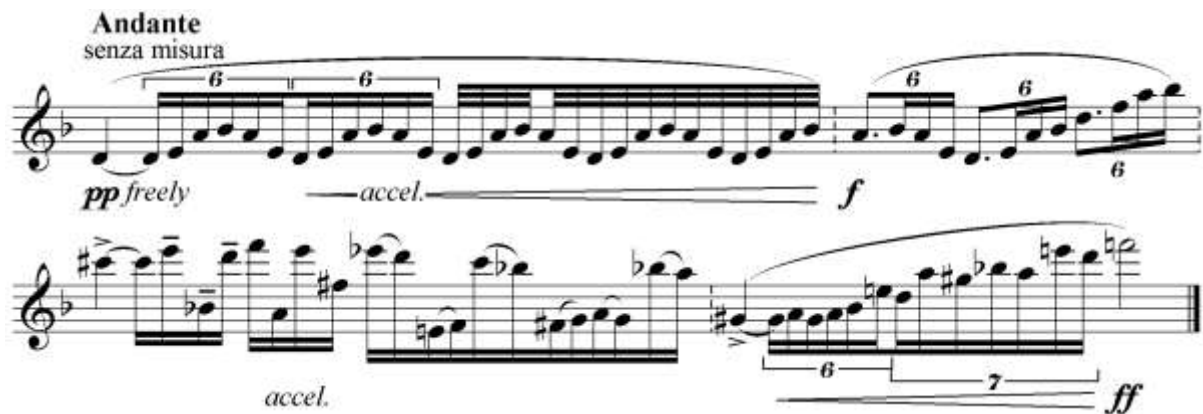
Ex. 31: Voice Separation in J.S. Bach, *Partita for Solo Flute in A minor BWV1013*, 'Allemande' bb. 1-8.



## Introduction and Fughetta

The Introduction, marked *Andante senza misura* is composed in the style of a baroque Fantasia. Indeed the opening (ex. 32) appears to have been borrowed, not from Bach, but from the first of Telemann's twelve *Fantasias for Flute without Bass*, TWV 40:2-13 (ex. 33). This borrowing marks the first characteristic of a neoclassical work.

Ex. 32: Alwyn, *Divertimento for Solo Flute*, 'Introduction and Fughetta' bb. 1-4<sup>375</sup>



Ex. 33: George Philipp Telemann, *Twelve Fantasias for Flute without Bass* TWV 40:2-13, 'Fantasia in A' b. 1



There is a telling similarity between the opening of Alwyn's *Divertimento* and the first two beats of Telemann's *Fantasia* (ex. 33) such that Alwyn's borrowing from Telemann appears obvious. While the Telemann is in A major and the Alwyn in D minor, both begin on their relative key note with a crotchet tied to a semiquaver. They then follow the same pitch pattern based on intervals of seconds and fourths, with the exception that the Telemann uses a B (thus forming a major second) and the Alwyn a B-flat (leading to a minor second).

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Alwyn's employment of a single motif from the Telemann *Fantasia* is an example of Straus' misreading in which the technique of 'motivization' is used to remake the earlier form. In the 'motivization' compositional technique the motivic content of the past work is drastically intensified.<sup>376</sup> Here Alwyn employs the motif borrowed from Telemann in an accelerating palindromic pattern in which the interval class profile follows 2,5,1,1,5,2 and which ends on the leading note, C#.

From this point the tonality becomes less clear as the music moves into an improvisatory passage (ex. 32 line 2) which is primarily formed from intervals of a major or minor second or the interval class profile 2, 1 (which is a further development of the Telemann motif) modulating to A minor indicated by the long G sharp at the beginning of the final bar in this introductory passage and the final note, a sustained A. Such use of these unordered pitch intervals might be considered to be a 'generalization' of the Telemann motif which continues throughout this movement.<sup>377</sup>

Straus argues that when a tonal motif, such as the Telemann fantasia motif employed here, is generalised into a pitch-class set a *clinamen* has taken place.<sup>378</sup> It might be argued that Alwyn's use of this motif as the basis for his new work involves a *clinamen*, although he has transformed the motif into unordered pitch intervals described below rather than the pitch-class set defined by Straus.

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<sup>376</sup> Straus, p. 17.

<sup>377</sup> *ibid.*

<sup>378</sup> See Straus, p. 134. This relates to a revisionary ratio described by Harold Bloom in his *Anxiety of Influence* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1973), p. 14, in which a later work incorporates elements of its precursor, but then takes them in a new direction.

There appears to be no relationship between the notes in the first three beats of the improvisatory passage (ex. 32 line 2), however, if the pitches are separated into two voices, the intervals between the pitches make more sense:

Ex. 34: Alwyn, *Divertimento for Solo Flute*, 'Introduction and Fughetta' b. 33<sup>79</sup>

The above analysis of the pitches within this passage (ex. 34) makes it clear that the lower voice moves only by semitones and the upper voice firstly by minor thirds and then alternating tones and semitones. Thus Alwyn has introduced a passage in counterpoint in a single line in the manner of Bach; however, unlike Bach it does not follow the rules of fugal counterpoint, but instead, in a more modernist fashion, is governed by rules which follow an intervallic, or even motivic, pattern.

A further pattern appears in the sextuplet and septuplet at the end of ex. 32. The sextuplet is formed from semitones but then ends with an interval of six semitones, the interval class profile being 1, 1, 1, 1, 6. Similarly, the septuplet is made up of different inversions of the 2, 7, 1 interval class profile. It appears to have been a deliberate action to include an interval of six semitones in the sextuplet and seven semitones in the septuplet.

The pitch patterns displayed in ex. 34 reappear in the short contrapuntal passage in the introduction (ex. 35). In the upper voice the first two bars are formed

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from alternating tones and semitones while the lower voice initially repeats the notes F# E♭ D, though at different pitches and in a different order followed by an ostinato pattern formed from semitones reflecting Stravinsky's use of ostinato in his *Octuor*. Many of the pitches in this passage reflect the 'upper voice' from ex. 35.

Ex. 35: Alwyn, *Divertimento for Solo Flute*, 'Introduction' bb. 15-19.<sup>380</sup>

**Andante**

Alwyn's use of rhythm within this first movement exhibits both backward looking and modernist traits. He gave no time signature, reflecting the '*senza misura*' performance indication but possibly also medieval music which was unmeasured; however, he sub-divided long passages into smaller sections of variable lengths using dashed bar lines presumably to make the passage easier to read for the performer. In addition he employed triplets of varying length which reflect the fantasia style of the *Introduction*.

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Ex. 36: Alwyn, *Divertimento for Solo Flute*, 'Fughetta' – theme, bb. 1-5.<sup>381</sup>



Ex. 37: Alwyn, *Divertimento for Solo Flute*, 'Fughetta', bb. 23-33.



The *Fughetta* (ex. 36) which follows the *Introduction* begins in a fairly conventional three voice fugal form in D minor; the exposition, in which the voices enter on the tonic, dominant and tonic, is followed by a series of episodes and restatements of the main theme either in part or whole and with or without decoration and with imitation between the voices. The theme begins with the 2, 1, 7 interval class profile (ex. 36, motif a), an inversion of the 2, 7, 1 intervallic set which marked the end of the first part of the *Introduction* (ex. 32). Straus argues that the presence of triadic patterns, here represented by the outer tonic and dominant, on the musical surface does not imply a similar relationship in the middle and background. Instead they form the locus of a conflict between old and new.<sup>382</sup> While there is an undoubted tension between old and new in this *Fughetta*, it should also be noted that the 2,1,7 intervallic set can also be described as being formed from a

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<sup>382</sup> Straus, p. 74.

major and minor second with a perfect fifth – fundamentally tonal intervals. It is unclear here whether Alwyn is employing a modernist or tonal language, or indeed a combination of the two. It is possible that he makes his purpose intentionally unclear.

Alwyn reintroduces the ostinato rhythm from the *Introduction* (ex. 35) into the 7/8 bars of the *Fughetta* (ex. 37) employing the same pitch in bar 29. While the *Fughetta* begins in D minor, the tonality soon strays away from the initial key and becomes nebulous. It is notable that Alwyn composed the theme within a baroque pitch range, but gradually expands the pitch to encompass much of the range of the modern Boehm flute. Similarly, rhythm and meter begin in a conventional manner, but as the movement progresses the meter changes from bar to bar and rhythms cross bar lines in a more modernist style (ex. 37).

While the contrapuntal writing continues through the *Fughetta*, the end of the exposition sees the form within this part of the movement appears to turn from fugal towards a variation form with four variations on the original theme, thus the older form becomes subverted, or ‘misread’ by the transformation into variations.

The movement ends with a brief restatement of the *Introduction*; the overall form of the ‘Introduction and *Fughetta*’ is an ABA’ ternary form in which the ‘B’ section is formed by the *Fughetta*.

### **Variations on a Ground**

Alwyn’s model for this movement is taken from the *Ground for Variations* usually written for string music which proved particularly popular in seventeenth century



England. The Ground Bass, or Basso ostinato, is a short thematic motif in the bass which is repeated with varying harmonies while upper parts proceed and vary and originated in the cantus firmus of choral music. Examples of these *Divisions on a Ground* were composed by Byrd, Purcell, Frescobaldi, Carissimi and Cavalli.<sup>383</sup>

Grounds have been used in music from the Renaissance and Baroque to modern day but they were relatively uncommon during the Classical and Romantic periods.<sup>384</sup> Twentieth century music in particular has demonstrated a significant interest in the ground for example the third movement of Holst's *Double Concerto for Two Violins* also entitled 'Variations on a Ground' and Benjamin Britten's 'Storm' from *Noye's Fludde*. Therefore Alwyn is following a growing trend by including this Ground in his *Divertimento*.

Ex. 38: Alwyn, *Divertimento for Solo Flute*, 'Variations on a Ground' – Ground, bb. 1-8.<sup>385</sup>



While it is not clear which work provided the inspiration behind Alwyn's Ground (ex. 38) it is possible that Alwyn may have borrowed from or been inspired by one of several Grounds composed by William Byrd, the closest of which appears to be his *Second Short Ground in G minor, BK 9*.<sup>386</sup> Given the revival of English music

<sup>383</sup> Michael Kennedy (ed.) 'Ground Bass' in *The Oxford Dictionary of Music*, 2nd ed. *Oxford Music Online* <<http://www.oxfordmusiconline.com>> [accessed 25 October 2015].

<sup>384</sup> Richard Hudson, 'Ground' in *Oxford Music Online* <<http://www.oxfordmusiconline.com>> [accessed 8 November 2015].

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<sup>386</sup> Gustav Leonhardt, 'William Byrd, Ground' *YouTube* (2012)

<<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=jlFUSG58J9Y>> [accessed 26 October 2015].

of the Tudor period during the 'English Renaissance' and an increased interest in use of the Ground Bass in contemporary works it is quite possible that Alwyn would have been aware of this work.

Byrd composed his *Grounds* in triple time, the minim beat indicating a slower tempo; assuming that inspiration was provided by Byrd's music, Alwyn, in a misreading of the sources modernised the 3/2 time signature from the Byrd scores to 3/4 with the addition of the *Andantino* tempo indication. Straus describes such misreadings as an anxiety of style which is revealed in the way composers reinterpret aspects of an earlier style, here the time signature and tempo.<sup>387</sup>

This *Ground* appears to be divided into two 'phrases' each beginning with a rising fifth followed by a descending semitone bracketed in ex. 38 which can be described as the interval class profile 7, 1. It is notable that the opening motif shares two intervals in common with the 7, 2, 1 interval class profile from the first movement, although this may have more to do with Alwyn's use of a perfect fifth (or a pitch interval of 7) than anything else.

The *Ground* begins in D minor and ends with a II-V-I perfect cadence, but is without key throughout the remainder of the movement, employing nine out of the possible twelve pitches. Thus Alwyn begins this movement in tonality and ends it in a more post-tonal context. Following the first statement of the *Ground* Alwyn introduces counterpoint by adding a second voice to provide a counter-melody. This second melody is varied with increasing speed and complexity through the eleven repetitions of the *Ground* in a classic version of this form (see table 10) but without

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<sup>387</sup> Straus, p. 133.

following traditional rules of counterpoint, thus providing a further example of Straus' misreading.

Table 10: The Variations from William Alwyn, *Variations on a Ground*

Variation	Description
1	Ground as per original statement with syncopated upper voice based principally upon semitones.
2	Ground as per original statement with scale based counter-melody.
3	Ground as per original with inverted triadic upper voice.
4	Ground as per original with sequence in upper voice.
5	Ground as per original with semiquaver scale movement alternating with pedal note in style of Clementi
6	Ground is arpeggiated with the upper voice imitating the ostinato pattern from the opening.
7	Ground moves to upper voice, countermelody formed from descending scales.
8	Ground returns to lower voice but raised one octave, upper voice formed from descending demisemiquaver scales.
9	Ground rhythm now broken by rests, but still recognisable, minimal upper voice.
10	Ground rhythm as per variation 10 at the beginning, but becomes enmeshed within the countermelody.
11	Restatement of the Ground, but with decoration and no countermelody.

The sixth variation is possibly the most noteworthy for its unusual notation based upon an arpeggiated triad – Alwyn provided an explanation of how to play this section in a footnote to the score (this is also present in the autograph). E.L. (Elizabeth Lutyens?) writing a review of a performance in October 1943 described this variation as ‘an ingenious adaptation of the technique of the violin cadenza’.<sup>388</sup> The theme, or *Ground*, is arpeggiated in a triadic pattern while counterpoint is provided in the middle register of the flute (ex. 39). Again the use of triads may be

<sup>388</sup> E.L., ‘Reviews of Music’, *Music and Letters*, 24 (1943), p. 249.

viewed as merely on the music's surface rather than part of the middle or background.

Ex. 39: Alwyn, *Divertimento for Solo Flute*, 'Variations on a Ground', bb. 49-50.<sup>389</sup>

The image shows a musical score for two staves, likely a flute and piano accompaniment, in 3/4 time. The top staff contains a melodic line with eighth-note patterns and rests. The bottom staff contains a piano accompaniment with chords and moving lines. The text 'To be played' is written below the bottom staff.

As the variations progress, the ground becomes enmeshed within the variations, losing its rhythmic pattern and at times disappearing through transformation by the new material, particularly within the tenth variation. Thus in the conflict between the old in the form of the *Ground* and the new, the secondary voice, the new elements subsume and revise the old ones in a misreading of the past.

### *Gavotte and Musette*

The *Gavotte* saw a widespread revival during the last quarter of the nineteenth century. This was reflected in the music of composers including Busoni and Richard Strauss each of whom included the title 'Gavotte' or a gavotte movement in their first publications. In a form of historicist modernism these composers looked back to eighteenth-century models for inspiration, adopting the phrase structure and agogic patterns of well-known gavottes from Baroque instrumental suites. Such gavottes were often composed in ternary form, with a pastoral *musette* acting as a

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contrasting middle section.<sup>390</sup> This *Musette* is a variation on a gavotte in which a persistent drone bass suggests the instrument which shares its name. Vaughan Williams's 1944 Oboe Concerto contains a musette in the second movement.<sup>391</sup>

Thus Alwyn's *Gavotte and Musette* follows the late nineteenth-century historicist model, being in ternary form, the 'B' theme being provided by the *Musette* and also initially the duple-metre of the original French Court Dance. However, it also follows a twentieth-century aesthetic in that it has a jaunty, but angular, five and a half bar theme initially based upon the interval of a fourth, but no longer includes the 7,2,1 interval set upon which most of the first two movements were based (ex. 40). While it is difficult to identify whether Alwyn borrowed from an older work he has employed an arpeggiated motif common in the first movement of many baroque works as illustrated by Vivaldi's *Concerto in D minor for two violins* (ex. 41). There is no suggestion that Alwyn borrowed from this Vivaldi work, it is provided merely as an illustration of this commonly used opening. Straus states that the more an earlier work becomes enmeshed and transformed within a later one, the more difficult it is to identify the predecessor.<sup>392</sup> However, it is equally possible that there was no direct source material used in this work.

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<sup>390</sup> Meredith Ellis Little and Matthew Werley, 'Gavotte' in *Oxford Music Online* <<http://www.oxfordmusiconline.com>> [accessed 8 November 2015].

<sup>391</sup> 'Musette' in *The Oxford Dictionary of Music*, <<http://www.oxfordmusiconline.com>> [accessed 8 November 2015].

<sup>392</sup> Straus, p. 133-4.

Ex. 40: Alwyn, *Divertimento for Solo Flute*, 'Gavotte and Musette', bb. 1-5.<sup>393</sup>



Ex. 41: Vivaldi, *Concerto in D minor for two Violins RV514*, 'Allegro non Molto', b. 1-2.

If Alwyn did use the Vivaldi excerpt above as a source material for his *Gavotte*, despite the difference in form – the Vivaldi is not a gavotte, it might be argued that his use of two fourths in the Alwyn version is a misreading of the Vivaldi original in a compression/compositional technique.

The key is somewhat ambiguous: while the movement opens in F major, by bar ten appears to have modulated to D minor before moving briefly to the Phrygian mode on D at the double bar line then alternating between D minor and its Phrygian mode before moving back to F major at the end of the 'A' section.

The Musette has a much calmer, pastoral character beginning with a drone on A in typical Musette style alternating with short motivic patterns (ex. 42). The use of a drone in this form simulates the musette de cour, an instrument from the bagpipe

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family.<sup>394</sup> Tonality appears to be based around A minor, although Alwyn introduced an element of chromaticism which obscures the tonality. In addition he employed rhythmic ambiguity with motifs crossing bar lines, a device popular with Britten.

Ex. 42: Alwyn, *Divertimento for Solo Flute*, 'Musette', bb. 1-7.<sup>395</sup>



Similarly, although the metre reflects the duple-time of a traditional Musette the rhythm soon becomes asymmetric reflecting Alwyn's twentieth century misreading of this traditional model to create an original work.

### *Finale alla Gigue*

In composing this final movement, Alwyn has returned to J. S. Bach for inspiration, namely the final movement of his B minor *Sonata for Flute and Clavier* BWV 1030 (ex. 43), a gigue composed in the Italian style. Alwyn, as a professional flautist would have been very familiar with this work since it is part of the standard repertoire for any flute player.

<sup>394</sup> 'Musette' in *The Oxford Dictionary of Music* <<http://www.oxfordmusiconline.com>> [accessed 8 November 2015].

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Ex. 43: J.S. Bach, *Sonata for Flute and Clavier in B minor BWV 1030, 'Allegro'*, bb. 1-4.



There is an obvious similarity between the Bach Sonata and Alwyn's version (ex. 44), not only in key, but also rhythmic pattern such that it might almost be considered to be a pastiche except that the Bach movement contains significant hemiolas and anacrusis. However, this rhythmic regularity is broken down at bar four with the introduction of a bar in 10/8 which is later followed by various different bar lengths and an intricate rhythm at bar seven (ex. 44) in the manner of Walton and Stravinsky. Thus the rhythmic pattern of the older form is subsumed by Alwyn's reinterpretation of its elements.

Ex. 44: Alwyn, *Divertimento for Solo Flute, 'Finale alla Gigue'*, bb. 1-9.<sup>396</sup>



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The overall form of the *Finale all Gigue* takes an extended ternary form, comprising ABABA; the 'A' sections in the style of an Italian giga, illustrated by ex. 33 and the 'B' sections being closer to the French style gigue (ex. 45). The *Finale* opens with a nine bar phrase which remains principally in D major and is repeated with minor decoration at bar 20. With the exception of the variable bar lengths, intricate rhythms and ambiguous tonality, Alwyn's misreading of the Italian gigue form was limited, remaining principally within the seventeenth century style.

While the first two bars of the 'B' section (ex. 45) conform to a seventeenth century French style gigue it soon moves away from this style with the introduction of variable bar lengths, ambiguous tonality and distinct and unrelated intervals in the melody in the manner of Stravinsky in a misreading of the form. Thus Alwyn alternates a fairly standard interpretation of an Italian *Giga* with a more modernist version of the French *Gigue* in this movement.

Ex. 45: Alwyn, *Divertimento for Solo Flute, 'Finale alla Gigue'*, bb. 31-42.<sup>397</sup>

The image shows a musical score for a solo flute piece. It consists of three staves of music. The first staff begins with the tempo marking 'Poco meno mosso' and a dynamic marking 'p'. The music is written in a key with one sharp (F#) and a 6/8 time signature. The second staff starts at bar 36 and continues the melodic line. The third staff starts at bar 40 and includes an 'accel.' (accelerando) marking. The score is characterized by complex, irregular rhythms and variable bar lengths, with some bars containing multiple measures of music.

In his *Octuor* Stravinsky deliberately chose his orchestration to create a timbre that would reflect the anti-romantic element of his neoclassical composition;

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however, although this *Divertimento* is composed for a solo wind instrument, this can most likely be attributed to Alwyn's extensive knowledge of the flute rather than any deliberate choice of timbre; Alwyn entered the academy as a flautist than a composer, later performing in Elgar's *Dream of Gerontius*, at the Three Choirs Festival under the composer's baton, introducing Roussel's *Joueurs de Flûte* to Britain and playing in the first performance of Ravel's *Chanson Madécasse*, one of many premières in which he participated.<sup>398</sup> This is further reinforced by Alwyn's orchestration in his other neoclassical works, which do not emphasise the use of wind.

Thus, in assessing this *Divertimento* against the neoclassical model, the following conclusions might be drawn. The work was composed in an essentially Baroque style with self-conscious addition of modernist traits in a misreading of various Baroque forms. In addition, Alwyn borrowed his themes from Telemann, Bach and possibly Byrd. It is more difficult to assess this work in terms of an anti-romantic stance since Alwyn was essentially a romantic composer and was unable to resist the occasional brilliant run on the flute, but other than this it has little of the romantic character. According to Dahlhaus the concept of absolute music was the leading idea of the classical (and romantic) era in musical aesthetics.<sup>399</sup> Such music was detached from its text, program or function. This work, being un-programmatic (since it tells no story) can thus be classified as 'absolute' and thus essentially unromantic. In essence this movement conforms closely with the model developed in chapter two.

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<sup>398</sup> Wright, pp. 50, 55-6.

<sup>399</sup> Carl Dahlhaus, *The Idea of Absolute Music* trans. by Roger Lustig, (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1989), p. 3.

However, Alwyn appears to employ few of the twentieth techniques for reshaping earlier forms and musical works highlighted by Straus in this *Divertimento*.<sup>400</sup> The exceptions are 'motivization' in the opening of the first movement and 'generalization' of the motif from the earlier work into an unordered pitch-class set within the first two movements.

### **Concerto Grosso No. 1**

Alwyn considered his Concerto Grosso No. 1 to be one of his most important works from the Second World War years. In his biography he wrote:

During these war years the output of my serious music was necessarily restricted [...], the one work of importance was the *Concerto Grosso* No. 1, commissioned by the BBC and dedicated to "my friends in the L[ondon] S[ympphony] O[rchestra]". The solo parts in the Concerto were allotted to the leaders of each section of the orchestra and gave them ample opportunity to display their skills. The work is in three movements, the first vigorous *Moderato* based on a trumpet fanfare which initiates a series of permutations, the second a quietly lilting *Siciliano*, and the third a brilliant *Allegro* closing with a restatement of the original trumpet theme on full orchestra.<sup>401</sup>

It is notable that this work was commissioned by the BBC, possibly the first occasion upon which Alwyn had received a commission for a concert hall work indicating his growing recognition as a contemporary composer. It was composed in 1943 and dedicated to 'George Stratton and my friends in the L.S.O.' but received its première by the BBC Symphony Orchestra under the baton of Clarence Raybould on 18 November 1943.<sup>402</sup> There is no record of any review of the première in the Dressler Research Guide; the earliest known review is from 1946.<sup>403</sup> This review is

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<sup>400</sup> Straus, p. 17.

<sup>401</sup> Alwyn, 'Winged Chariot', p. 28.

<sup>402</sup> Dressler, p. 131.

<sup>403</sup> Dressler, p. 212.

very brief merely stating that 'The music has a likeable Handelian burliness of manner, without in any sense being a slavish copy of the antique.'<sup>404</sup>

The term Concerto Grosso was used by twentieth-century composers such as Bloch and Vaughan Williams to name works based on earlier models.<sup>405</sup> Thus in composing a twentieth century version of the Concerto Grosso Alwyn is following in the steps of an English master, Vaughan Williams and also after the model provided by Elgar's *Introduction and Allegro Op. 74*. Straus argues that post-tonal composers cannot openly replicate tonal works such as the Concerto Grosso without fundamentally compromising their own individual style. As a result they must misread so that the earlier work becomes enmeshed and distorted within a later one.<sup>406</sup>

Alwyn's Concerto Grosso is scored for a flute, oboe and cor anglais, two horns in F, a trumpet in B flat, and solo violin – this forms the *concertino*; the *ripieno* is formed by the orchestral string section. Alwyn's choice of instrumentation for the concertino sprang from his admiration and knowledge of the leaders of each section of the London Symphony Orchestra rather than being inspired by instrumental timbre as in Stravinsky's *Octuor*.<sup>407</sup> Alwyn's reasoning for choosing this orchestration being that he wished to give the soloists he most admired 'ample opportunity to display their skills'.<sup>408</sup>

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<sup>404</sup> 'Week-End Concerts', in *The Times* (8 April 1946) in *The Times Digital Archive* <<http://find.galegroup.com>> [accessed 1 December 2015].

<sup>405</sup> 'Concerto Grosso' in *The Oxford Dictionary of Music*, 2nd ed. rev. Ed. Michael Kennedy <<http://www.oxfordmusiconline.com>> [accessed 2 December 2015].

<sup>406</sup> Straus, p. 133.

<sup>407</sup> Wright, p. 79.

<sup>408</sup> Alwyn, 'Winged Chariot', p. 28.

Alwyn stated that his models for the use of groups of solo instruments against the main tutti of strings were the Handel Concerti Grossi and the Bach Brandenburg Concertos.<sup>409</sup> In composing his own Concerto Grosso he may also have been following the example of Schoenberg's re-composition of Handel's Concerto Grosso in B-flat op. 6 no. 7.<sup>410</sup> Of Bach's six Brandenburg concertos, three are most obviously scored as concerti grossi: the second in F (BWV 1047), the fourth in G (BWV 1049) and the fifth in D (BWV 1050); the sixth in B flat major (BWV 1051) shares its key with Alwyn's first Concerto Grosso. In addition, David Thomas argues that the first Brandenburg Concerto in F major (BWV 1046), although not directly scored as a Concerto Grosso, can be regarded as such since Bach gives the majority of the material in the episodes to the horns, oboes and *violin piccolo* as the concertino.<sup>411</sup> Both the third and sixth Brandenburg concertos are scored for solo instruments which also provide the tutti.

The Alwyn Concerto Grosso follows the convention for most music in this form in that it comprises three short movements which are examined below.

### ***Moderato Molto***

The first movement of a Concerto Grosso is normally, but not exclusively, composed in *Ritornello* form in which the tutti sections are all based upon the same material.<sup>412</sup>

Alwyn appears to have employed a more complex version of the basic ritornello

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<sup>409</sup> William Alwyn, 'Why a Concerto Grosso?', *London Symphony Observer*, 1.4 (1950), p. 27 quoted in Wright, p. 79.

<sup>410</sup> Straus, p. 45.

<sup>411</sup> David Thomas, 'Brandenburg Concertos: Work Analysis' in *Naxos Music Library* (2015) <<http://dur.naxosmusiclibrary.com>> [accessed 4 December 2015].

<sup>412</sup> Lalage Cochrane, 'ritornello' in *The Oxford Companion to Music* ed. by Alison Latham, *Oxford Music Online* <<http://www.oxfordmusiconline.com>> [accessed 14 December 2015].

which uses a short motif (ex. 46), a 'solo theme' (ex. 47) and a 'concertino theme' (ex. 48) – the instrumentation for each of these themes is not restricted to either the *concertino* or *ripieno*, instead each section plays all themes during the movement. The structure of this first movement is given in table 11.

Ex. 46: Alwyn, *Concerto Grosso No. 1 in B-flat*, 'Moderato Molto' – Motif 'a', bb. 1-2.



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This short motif introduces the solo theme and appears both in the *concertino* and the *ripieno* throughout the movement. This short motif acts as the *ritornello* in what might be considered a misreading, what Straus terms a marginalisation of this element which would have been central to the Baroque *Concerto Grosso* form. The concertino theme (ex. 48) is introduced before the second appearance of the *ritornello* to form an expanded version of the *ritornello*.

Table 11: The Structure of Alwyn, *Concerto Grosso No. 1 in B-flat, 'Moderato Molto'*

Bar	Theme/motif	Ritornello/solo	Instrumentation
1	Motif 'a' (ex. 46)	R1	Concertino and solo violin
2	Solo theme (ex. 47)	S1	Trumpet
11	Concertino theme (ex. 48)	R2	Concertino
13	Motif 'a'		Ripieno - horns
14	Solo theme	S2	Violin
23	Concertino theme	R3	Concertino
26	Motif 'a'		Concertino and Horns
27	Solo theme varied	S3	Concertino
40	Motif 'a'	R4	Concertino and Solo Violin
41	Solo theme varied	S4	Percussion
46	Liquidation of solo theme		Ripieno and Concertino
50	Solo theme		Flute and Oboe in imitation
66	Motif 'a'	R5	Ripieno - Horns
68	Solo theme		Solo Violin and Concertino
72	Improvisatory passage based on Solo theme		Solo Violin
78	Partial solo theme	S5	Trumpet
80	Concertino theme	R6	Concertino
82	Liquidated solo theme	S6	Solo violin
87	Cadenza		Solo violin
88	Solo theme	R7/coda	Flute and Oboe in imitation
93	Motif 'a'		Ripieno - Horns

Ex. 47: Alwyn, *Concerto Grosso No. 1 in B-flat, 'Moderato Molto'* – solo episode (B flat trumpet at concert pitch), bb. 2-13.

**Moderato Molto** ♩ = c. 72  
*Ritmico*

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The solo theme, like the 'a' motif which introduces it, is primarily based around the B flat triad though based upon the Mixolydian mode on B-flat employing the flattened seventh. It is therefore unlikely that it is based upon a quotation from an earlier work, instead being a development of the prevailing key.

Ex. 48: Alwyn, *Concerto Grosso No. 1 in B-flat*, 'Moderato Molto' – concertino, bb. 6-8.



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This third element of the opening movement is based upon a contrary motion scale based upon the Mixolydian mode on B-flat and therefore is also unlikely to have been based upon borrowed materials from older works.

As previously stated, Alwyn based his Concerto Grosso on those of Handel and J.S. Bach; however in those of these earlier models employing the *Ritornello* form, the *Concertino* would be confined to performing the *ritornello* and members of the *Ripieno* the solos. In addition to the misreading of the *ritornello* mentioned above, Alwyn has also misread the entire form. He has given solos both to the members of the *Ripieno* but also to the *Concertino* as at bar 23. In addition he has treated the *Ripieno* members as part of the tutti.

The Coda, in which the flute and oboe in imitation make a final, but partial, statement of the 'solo theme' is accompanied by tremolando chords alternating between sevenths and ninths on the *ripieno* strings ending in a 'tonic' eleventh chord.



This is followed by a final statement of the 'a' motif on the horns also sees a change in harmony. The prevailing Mixolydian mode is interrupted by the additional of A naturals and the movement ends with a perfect cadence formed from a modified dominant seventh (with the addition of a C sharp and E natural) leading to the root position tonic triad of B-flat major, thus confirming a return to a fundamental tonal harmony.

### *Adagio con Moto (alla Siciliano)*

The central movement comprises a lilting nine bar theme introduced by the *cor anglais* accompanied by a pulsing ostinato from the violins and violas of the *concertino*. Alwyn appears to have taken inspiration for this movement from the fifth movement of Handel's Concerto Grosso in C minor op. 6 no. 8 although there are marked differences between the two versions of the *Siciliano* suggesting that Alwyn merely took this idea of this movement from Handel rather than borrowing directly from his work.

The original Handel work was composed in a compound quadruple time but the Alwyn version in triple compound time. The *Siciliano* was a style popular in the eighteenth century: which typically employed a compound duple or quadruple time with a swaying rhythm.<sup>413</sup> Alwyn, by employing triple time presents a continuation of his misreading of the original form, placing a twentieth century twist upon the style, particularly in his use of rhythm – his employment of quadruplet semiquavers in a compound meter (ex. 49).

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<sup>413</sup> Siciliano(a)' in *The Oxford Dictionary of Music*, 2nd edition revised, ed. by Michael Kennedy, *Oxford Music Online* <<http://www.oxfordmusiconline.com> > [accessed 11 January 2016].

Ex. 49: Alwyn, *Concerto Grosso No. 1 in B-flat*, 'Adagio Con Moto (alla Siciliano)' – Concertino Theme, bb. 2-10.

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Despite Alwyn's rhythmic alterations, the movement retains a *Siciliano's* pastoral feel and is essentially an interlude between the two outer movements.

### *Vivace*

The final movement follows the standard *Concerto Grosso* structure in that it is also written in *Ritornello* form. The structure of this movement can be found in table 12.

The opening theme, here labelled 'Concertino theme' (ex. 50) is a development of the 'a' motif (ex. 46) from the first movement, which is restated on the horns, flute and oboe along with the initial entry of the 'Concertino theme'. This is followed by a new 'Solo theme' (ex. 51) played on the flute and between a fourth and sixth lower on the oboe.

Table 12: The Structure of Alwyn, *Concerto Grosso No. 1 in B-flat*, Third Movement: 'Vivace'

Bar	Theme/motif	Ritornello/solo	Instrumentation
1	<i>Concertino</i> theme in B-flat (ex. 50)	R1	<i>Concertino</i> and Solo Violin/ (Flute/ Oboe/Horns)
9	Solo theme A (ex. 51)	S1	Flute/ Oboe
14	Partial Solo theme		Solo Violin/ Percussion
19	Partial <i>Concertino</i> theme	R2	<i>Concertino</i> and Solo Violin
22	Solo theme A'	S2	Trumpet
31	Solo theme A''		Flute/ Oboe
42	Solo theme A'''		Solo Violin
47	Antiphonal <i>Concertino</i> theme (complete)	R3	Horns/ Trumpet/ Solo Violin
56	<i>Concertino</i> theme rhythm		Timpani
58	Solo theme B (ex. 52)	S3	Horns/ Trumpet
63	<i>Concertino</i> theme rhythm	R4	Timpani
65	Solo theme B'	S4	Flute/ Oboe/ Horns/ Trumpet
70	<i>Concertino</i> theme rhythm	R5	Timpani
74	Solo theme C	S5	Flute/ Oboe
81	Solo theme C'		Horns
86	Solo theme C''		Solo Viola
94	Liquidated Solo theme A		Timpani
95	Counter melody		Flute/ Oboe
99	Liquidated Solo theme A		Percussion/Horns
99	Counter melody		<i>Concertino</i>
109	Counter melody		Horns
112	Solo theme A		<i>Concertino</i>
117	Solo theme A		Solo Violin
122	Solo theme A		<i>Concertino</i> Violins/ Violas
127	Solo theme A		Solo Violin
130	Solo theme A	Flute/ Oboe/ Solo Violin	
132	Antiphonal <i>Concertino</i> theme	R6	Trumpet/ Solo Violin/ <i>Concertino</i>
142	Solo theme C (ex. 53)	S6	<i>Ripieno</i> and <i>Concertino</i>
149	Triadic fanfare based on A		Trumpet
158	<i>Maestoso</i>	Coda	<i>Ripieno</i> and <i>Concertino</i>
163	<i>Adagio Molto</i>		<i>Ripieno</i> and <i>Concertino</i>

Ex. 50: Alwyn, *Concerto Grosso No. 1 in B-flat, 'Vivace'* – Concertino Theme, bb. 1-9.



© Alfred Legnick & Co. Ltd. – Courtesy of Ricordi London (UMPG) This theme is based on motif 'b' and is formed from a modified or 'misread' version of the sentence thematic structure in which the 'b' motif is repeated in the second bar, but in a different position. Its first appearance is on a weak beat, but the second is on the first beat of the bar and is accompanied by an accent. It is then twice repeated in the answering element of the theme.

Ex. 51: Alwyn, *Concerto Grosso No. 1 in B-flat, 'Vivace'* – Solo Theme A, bb. 9-14.



© Alfred Legnick & Co. Ltd. – Courtesy of Ricordi London (UMPG) Alwyn, in a variation of the *ritornello* form adds a second chromatically based solo theme at bar 58 (ex. 52) which is introduced by the brass of the *ripieno*. This new theme alternates with the rhythm of the *Concertino* theme played on the timpani.

A final solo theme 'C' appears at bar 142 which has characteristics in common with the Solo Theme A, particularly the 'b' motif and an inversion of the 'c' motif.



### **Suite for Oboe and Harp**

Although only a minor work, this was the last of Alwyn's concert piece to be composed during the War Years. This *Suite*, dedicated to Léon and Sidonie Goosens was first performed by its dedicatees (Léon as oboist) for a BBC broadcast on 11 November 1945.<sup>415</sup> There is no review of this performance to indicate its reception; however, it is notable that much of Alwyn's music was regularly performed on the BBC, a vast improvement on the reception of his pre-war and pre-neoclassical works.

Adrian Wright states that this *Suite* seems to exist purely as music, with no programmatic agenda, in other words, what Carl Dahlhaus terms absolute music.<sup>416</sup> There are many definitions for absolute music, but Eduard Hanslick described it as music which is 'dissolved from functions, texts and characters while exalting itself to an "imitation of the infinite"'.<sup>417</sup> By composing absolute music, Alwyn was exhibiting one neoclassical characteristic, but one which is not the sole domain of neoclassical works.

### ***Minuet***

The traditional minuet danced at the French court was based upon a two bar unit of 3/4 time. The Baroque Minuet was usually treated in a straightforward manner, with its characteristic rhythmic clarity and phrasing preserved. The late nineteenth and early twentieth century saw a revival of interest in the minuet, it appeared in a variety of works including Fauré's *Masques et bergamasques* (1919), Debussy's *Suite*

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<sup>415</sup> Wright, p. 80.

<sup>416</sup> Ibid.

<sup>417</sup> Dahlhaus, p. 129.

*bergamasque* (1890), Jean Françaix' *Musique de cour* (1937), Bartók's *Nine Little Pieces* (1926) and his *Mikrokosmos volume II*, Schoenberg's *Serenade* op. 24 (1920–23) and *Suite for piano* op. 25 (1921–3) and Ravel's *Sonatine* (1903–5), his *Menuet antique* (1895) and *Menuet* (1909).<sup>418</sup> Thus Alwyn, in including a minuet in this short suite is following in the footsteps of illustrious predecessors.

Ex. 54: Alwyn, *Suite for Oboe and Harp*, 'Minuet' – A Theme, bb. 3-10.



© Alfred Legnick & Co. Ltd. – Courtesy of Ricordi London (UMPG) This *Minuet*, mainly in E minor but with a raised sixth and occasional flattened second, contains three themes interspersed by short linking passages provided by the harp. The overarching form is a version of the ternary form with an A-A'-A''-B-B'-A-A''' structure rather than the traditional A-B-A minuet with coda. In addition, Alwyn has omitted or modified the two-bar unit central to the traditional minuet in the A theme (ex. 54) in a 'marginalised' misreading of the form. The theme begins on the first beat of the bar but the strongest beat is the second, pushing the phrase structure over the bar line into the third bar, this is repeated for the second phrase and the third phrase is three bars long, again syncopated as indicated by the brackets.

<sup>418</sup> Meredith Ellis Little, 'Minuet' in *Grove Music Online* <<http://www.oxfordmusiconline.com>> [accessed 13 January 2016].

Ex. 55: Alwyn, *Suite for Oboe and Harp*, 'Minuet' – B Theme, bb. 27-31.



© Alfred Legnick & Co. Ltd. – Courtesy of Ricordi London (UMPG) The 'B' theme is a short 'three bar 'answer' to the 'A' theme beginning with the fourth bar from the 'A' theme (bracketed and marked 'a' in ex. 54). The 'B' themes (ex. 55) again employ the 'a' motif, it follows more closely the traditional two-bar model for the minuet, but in a misreading of the form, the two phrases which make up the theme extend into the following bar.

In addition to the misreading of the form, the tonality is unclear: while the key signature indicates E minor, the use of a flattened second and raised sixth indicates a post-tonal harmony. Thus Alwyn has included elements of misreading in this short movement combined with an old form, modernist harmony and written absolute music. However, while borrowing may have occurred, it is not immediately obvious as to the source material.

### *Valse Miniature*

This short waltz in E major follows a ternary form followed by a short coda. The A section follows a fairly conventional model comprising three four bar phrases in a sentence form-type but the B theme, while employing a motif 'b' from the A theme in a more syncopated rhythm in which the waltz rhythm is interrupted by a series of hemiolas (ex. 56).



Ex. 56: Alwyn, *Suite for Oboe and Harp*, 'Valse Miniature' – B Theme, bb. 15-22.



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### *Jig*

Alwyn has deliberately employed the use of the English 'Jig' in the title rather than the more commonly used Gigue which was one of the most popular of Baroque instrumental dances and a customary movement in the suite. The jig or gigue originated in the British Isles, there were several kinds of jig including the 'slip jig' written in compound triple time and comprising three groups of triplet quavers and the 'single jig' written in 6/8 time and comprising two groups of a crotchet and quaver.<sup>419</sup>

Alwyn, in composing this Jig appears to have combined the both the slip and single jigs both by employing the two rhythmic patterns but also by alternating between the two time signatures. In addition he introduces the more modern 15/8 time signature. However, his most important deviation from the form, or misreading was to introduce a central slower section in 5/4 time. Thus in this central section he has misread the form by marginalising the compound nature of the pulse which is so central to the original form and also by slowing the tempo so markedly has subverted the form to his own ends.

<sup>419</sup> Margaret Dean-Smith, 'Jig' *Grove Music Online* <<http://www.oxfordmusiconline.com>>[accessed 13 January 2016].

## **Concerto for Oboe, String Orchestra and Harp**

The *Concerto for Oboe* was Alwyn's final major work of the war, being composed between 1944 and 1945. Like the *Suite for Oboe and Harp* this work was also composed as absolute music, having no programmatic content. According to Andrew Palmer the Concerto did not suit the mood of the listening public and was 'unwanted'; it eventually received its first performance at a 1949 Promenade Concert by the London Symphony Orchestra with Evelyn Rothwell as the soloist.<sup>420</sup> Indeed a review of this Promenade Concert described the work as 'not a brilliant concerto but its simple appeal is for Everyman'.<sup>421</sup> This perhaps reflects the lack of virtuosic passages that had come to be expected from a twentieth-century concerto. A review in the *Musical Times* describes the work as being reminiscent of Delius and as being insufficiently 'self-assertive' for a concerto. The reviewer comments that the character of the work as a whole 'suffers from a lack of individuality and momentum'.<sup>422</sup> These reviews perhaps explain why the work was 'unwanted': it did not stand out sufficiently from all the other new music that surrounded it and had nothing new to say. Contemporary reviews describe the work as being pastoral yet Adrian Wright described it as 'never even conventionally pastoral'; notwithstanding this, given the mood of renewal at the end of the War, a work with a perceived pastoral character, whatever the composer's intentions, must have appeared to pull back to a time from which people wished to escape.

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<sup>420</sup> Palmer, p. 81.

<sup>421</sup> 'Novelties At The Proms', *The Times*, 8 (19 August 1949), *The Times Digital Archive* <<http://find.galegroup.com.ezphost.dur.ac.uk>> [accessed 16 Jan. 2016].

<sup>422</sup> W. S. M., 'New Music at the Promenades' *The Musical Times* 90.1279 (1949), 328-329 (p. 329).

While this concerto was not the first to be composed by Alwyn, his composition of a concerto during this neoclassical period is a logical progression from his first *Concerto Grosso*. The form applied to the composition of a concerto is dependent upon the period in which it was created. The concerto form developed by Vivaldi, which formed the model for most Baroque concerti, generally employed three movements and was based around the *ritornello* of the *Concerto Grosso* interspersed by virtuosic passages on the solo instrument(s). The form of later, classical concertos, especially those of Mozart, has been subject to extensive debate, some argue that the first movement is based around the *ritornello* structure, but others, particularly Tovey, believe it to be organised around sonata form.<sup>423</sup> Later concertos saw further developments in style and form.<sup>424</sup> Given that a neoclassical work was usually based around pre-romantic forms, analysis of the first movement should determine the structure employed by Alwyn in composing this concerto. However, one 'misreading' immediately becomes apparent in that Alwyn has composed a concerto with two rather than the three movements employed in earlier versions of this form; in addition, the second movement follows on immediately from the first leading to the impression that the work is in one movement.

### *Andante e rubato*

The first movement begins with a substantial introductory section based around modes on G and follows a *ritornello* structure in which the concertino

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<sup>423</sup> A discussion of this subject is beyond the scope of this thesis. For a more in-depth discussion please see James Hepokoski and Warren Darcy *Elements of Sonata Theory* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2011).

<sup>424</sup> Paul Griffiths, 'Concerto' in *Grove Music Online* <<http://www.oxfordmusiconline.com>>[accessed 25 January 2016].

establishes the key and is alternated with free improvisatory passages on the oboe. These oboe passages are reminiscent of Debussy, particularly his *Syrinx* and *L'Après Midi d'un Faun* together with hints of Vaughan Williams. The structure for this opening movement is given in table 13.

Ex. 57: Alwyn, *Concerto for Oboe and String Orchestra and Harp*, 'Andante e rubato' – *Concertino* introductory theme, bb. 1-2.



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The configuration indicated by table 13 gives no suggestion of sonata form, more a loose *ritornello* structure based upon a binary form with introduction, perhaps reflecting a more standard twentieth-century approach to the concerto form rather than neoclassical.

Table 13: The Structure of Alwyn, *Concerto for Oboe & String Orchestra & Harp*,  
'Andante e rubato'

Bar	Theme/Instrument	Structure	Description
<b>Introduction</b>			
1	Concertino Intro.	R1	Hint of Lydian and Phrygian
4	Solo Introduction	S1	Improvisatory, begins and ends on V
6	Concertino Intro.	R2	
8	Solo Introduction	S2	Improvisatory, begins and ends on vii
10	Concertino Intro.	R3	
13	Solo/Concertino	Bridge	Transition passage introducing motif 'a'
<b>Section A</b>			
16	Solo A	S4	Theme based around motif 'a' (ex. 59) in imitation between oboe and strings
39	Concertino A	R4	'Ancora piū mosso (tempo moderato e ritmico)' New theme based upon diminution of Concertino introduction theme.
43	Solo A'	S5	
49	Concertino A	R5	
58	Solo A'	S6	
64	Concertino	R6	Modulating passage
69	Solo A'	S7	
90	Solo A'		'Meno mosso ed appassionato'
<b>Section B</b>			
99	Concertino B	R7	'piū tranquillo' transitional passage
106	Solo B	S8	'tranquillo'
116	Concertino B		'Andante tranquillo ma con moto'
119	Solo B		
129	Concertino		
132	Solo/ Concertino	Bridge	
143	Solo/concertino C		'Piū mosso' New theme - single appearance
163	Oboe/harp		Cadenza type passage
171	Solo A''	Coda?	

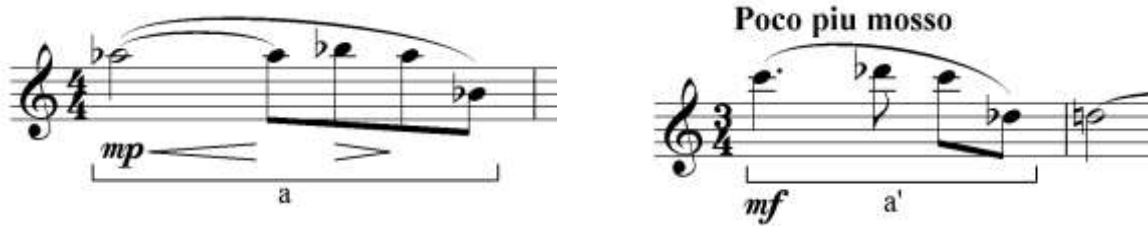
Ex. 58: Alwyn, *Concerto for Oboe and String Orchestra and Harp*, 'Andante e rubato' – Introductory Solo theme, bb. 4-6.

© Alfred Legnick & Co. Ltd. – Courtesy of Ricordi London (UMPG) The opening introductory section comprises sustained slow moving chords in two slightly different patterns (ex. 57) played by the strings and a more improvisatory passage performed by the oboist. In a pre-romantic concerto, the opening *ripieno* passage would have established the tonality, however here while it begins with a strong G major chord, the next and final chord in each set upsets this tonality with their hints of modality, in what might be considered a misreading of the material's formal function. Additionally, as previously discussed, the triadic writing is on the musical surface rather than forming its harmonic structure.

In addition, Alwyn has provided no written out cadenza or opportunity for the soloist to create one within the body of the concerto. However, the two improvisatory passages within the introduction might be considered to be displaced cadenzas. This opening section has a very pastoral feel with its hints of modality and improvisatory passages, but little of the absolute music seen in the neoclassical style.

The 'A' section is based around two motifs, 'a' and 'b', the first (ex. 59) being introduced by the oboe in a transitional passage between the Introduction and the 'A' section and the second being based upon a scale (ex. 60). The a' and b themes combine into a twelve bar phrase in which elements of the a' motif are motivicised.

Ex. 59: Alwyn, *Concerto for Oboe and String Orchestra and Harp*, 1<sup>st</sup> movement – a and a' motifs, b. 15 and bb. 23-4.



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Ex. 60: Alwyn, *Concerto for Oboe and String Orchestra and Harp*, 1<sup>st</sup> movement – b motif, bb. 16-9.



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In addition The A section, marked *Ancora più mosso* (*Tempo moderato e ritmico*) introduces a new theme in the string orchestra which alternates with a version of the soloist's A theme. This new theme is briefly taken up by the oboe at bar 64 before returning to its original theme now accompanied by the orchestra in thirds.

Ex. 61: Alwyn, *Concerto for Oboe and String Orchestra and Harp*, 1<sup>st</sup> movement – bb. 116-119.



© Alfred Legnick & Co. Ltd. – Courtesy of Ricordi London (UMPG) The 'B' section introduces new and rhythmically related themes in both the oboe and strings

(ex. 61 and ex. 62) and a slower tempo with a more pastoral feel created by the rocking rhythm in the strings. One notable harmonic feature is the false relation between the pair of chords which make up motif 'd' – the G-sharp followed by the G-natural.

Ex. 62: Alwyn, *Concerto for Oboe and String Orchestra and Harp*, 1<sup>st</sup> movement – bb. 119-129.

Andante tranquillo ma con moto  
*mp express.*

Andante tranquillo ma con moto  
*pp*

125

*mf* *pp*

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A further C theme is briefly introduced with a more contemporary character before a brief coda brings the movement to a close.



*Vivace*

Table 14: The Structure of Alwyn, *Concerto for Oboe & String Orchestra & Harp*, 'Vivace'.

Bar	Instrument	Structure/theme	Description
1	Orchestra	A	Based upon the E minor scale
3	Solo		Introductory theme over tremolando strings
12	Solo	A'	Main theme over introductory scale
18	Orchestra		Theme A
24	Solo	A''	Modified theme A
34	Orchestra	Linking passage	
37	Solo A	A'''	Fragment of A
42	Orchestra	Linking passage	
43	Solo A	A''''	
52	Orchestra	A'''''	Development of A
60	Solo	B	New Pastoral theme
74	Orchestra	Linking passage	
78	Orchestra Solo B	B	Orchestra and solo violin in imitation
85	Violin & Oboe		Instruments in imitation
93	Orchestra	Linking passage	
96	Oboe	B'	
108	Orchestra	Linking passage	
111	Oboe	A	Fragmentation of introduction over scale
117	Orchestra	A''''''	Variant of A
119	Oboe		
125	Solo violin & Orch.	A'	Instruments in imitation
133	Violin & Oboe		Instruments in imitation
139	Orchestra		
144	Oboe		
153	Orchestra	Linking passage	
158	Harp & Oboe	A	Repetition of introduction - three times
178	Orchestra	Linking passage	
180	Oboe	A''	
194	Orchestra		
198	Oboe		
208	Orchestra		
223	Oboe	A'	
227	2 Solo Violins/Viola	Linking passage	
232	Oboe	A	
236	2 Solo Violins/Viola	Linking passage	
243	Oboe/Violins/Viola	A'	Fragment of A, alternated between instruments

Bar	Instrument	Structure/Theme	Description
259	Oboe/orchestra	C	<i>L'istesso tempo</i>
275	Orchestra	C'	<i>A tempo meno mosso (Andante espressivo)</i>
283	Oboe/orchestra	C''	<i>Stretto ma sempre espressivo e cantabile</i>
290	Oboe/orchestra	C'''	<i>Meno mosso e molto tranquillo</i>
298	Orchestra	Coda	Introduction from the First Movement
302	Oboe/orchestra		<i>Adagio</i>

The second movement, which segues directly from the opening movement, is closer to a baroque gigue, such as those composed by Bach in his flute sonatas (ex. 43). The structure of this movement is given in table 14 below.

The movement appears to have a loose rondo structure in which the themes go through various developments and are interspersed by linking passages in the orchestra.

The second movement exhibits more neoclassical features in the A theme sections: they make reference to older material in that they take the form of a gigue with the addition of twentieth century harmonies – particularly the addition of false relations in the orchestral parts, in addition the music has an absolute character and is thus anti-romantic. However, the B and C themes are more pastoral in character, having more in common with the first movement.

This *Concerto for Oboe, String Orchestra and Harp*, along with the *Pastoral Fantasia for Viola and String Orchestra* appear to represent the ‘real’ Alwyn. Both are works of an earlier period, perhaps of twenty years before, being essentially pastoral and post-romantic in nature rather than neoclassical. Alwyn’s decision to turn to neoclassicism in 1938 was an intellectual one, based upon his perceived need to improve his compositional technique following a lack of confidence in his own training and abilities. His decision to move away from neoclassicism at this point

does not go against this choice; it is perhaps more a reaction to the horrors of the war, a wish to write a style that reflects his true nature – a case of heart ruling head.

The Concerto does not stand against other concerti with which Alwyn, as a professional flautist, must have been aware: Nielsen's *Flute Concerto* of 1926, with its tonal ambiguity and highly *avant garde* style which received its première in Paris, and Ibert's unique *Flute Concerto*, with its American Jazz influences, written in exile in Switzerland in 1932-3. The Nielsen concerto, although written some nineteen years earlier has a much more modernist feel than Alwyn's oboe concerto. Similarly, the Ibert concerto, like Strauss' oboe concerto is much closer to a neoclassical work than Alwyn's work. However, it does not appear that it was Alwyn's intention to compose either a modernist or neoclassical concerto.

### **After Neoclassicism**

Before Alwyn turned to neoclassicism as a solution to his compositional problems, he had had little success as a serious composer, most notably abandoning his oratorio *The Marriage of Heaven and Hell* in 1938 due to his inability to complete such a large-scale work.<sup>425</sup> He had been more successful in the field of writing documentary music, beginning to carve a career in this area; his accomplishments as a documentary music composer eventually led to his very successful work as a composer of film music leading to overtures from Hollywood.

By the time Alwyn's *First Concerto Grosso* received its première he had achieved much greater success than with his pre-neoclassical works: his name had become familiar to the readers of the *Radio Times* both as composer and

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<sup>425</sup> Wright, p. 75.

performer, this increased recognition perhaps reflecting his growing confidence in his compositional technique.<sup>426</sup>

Alwyn's musical skills developed not only through his neoclassical compositions but also through his experimentation with film music.<sup>427</sup> Indeed the reviewer of *his Oboe and Harp Concerto* in *The Musical Times* drew attention to the cinematic feeling of this music.<sup>428</sup> However, Alwyn, in common with many twentieth-century film music composers, made a great distinction between the craft he put into what he termed his serious work and the haste with which he completed his film scores.<sup>429</sup> This improvement in his compositional technique and resulting confidence in his own abilities through with his experiments with neoclassicism led to the composition of much larger scale works including five symphonies, two further *Concerti Grossi*, and a wide range of film music.

The experiment with neoclassicism may not have lasted much beyond the end of the War, Alwyn stated that his last essay in the style was the *Concerto Grosso No. 2 for String Orchestra*, but it left Alwyn more confident in his own abilities 'technically competent to write my First Symphony' and to create a large scale scheme:

I started work on a long-cherished scheme, grandiose in scale, but a project that I hoped might constitute a major contribution to the development of the symphony. I planned four symphonies as a sequence – No. 1 was the exposition; No. 2 was the slow movement; No. 3 a march-scherzo with coda; No. 4 the epilogue. You will find the thematic for all four in No. 1.<sup>430</sup>

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<sup>426</sup> Wright, p. 80.

<sup>427</sup> Wright, p. 78.

<sup>428</sup> W. S. M., 'New Music at the Promenades' *The Musical Times* 90.1279 (1949), 328-329, (p. 328).

<sup>429</sup> Alwyn, 'Winged Chariot', p. 26.

<sup>430</sup> Wright, p. 119.

Such new-found confidence in his abilities and plans for such a large-scale scheme contrasts markedly with his failure to complete *The Marriage of Heaven and Hell* in the 1930s.

## Conclusion

The aims of this thesis have been threefold. The first has been to gain an understanding of the meaning behind the term 'neoclassicism' by examination of the existing literature and academic opinion, both generally and specific to pivotal composers. This understanding has been used to formulate a model for neoclassicism in general which would be applied to English neoclassicism, taking into account Straus' ideas of misreading of the past.

Secondly the model for English neoclassicism would be applied to an analysis of Alwyn's neoclassical works. The purpose of this analysis was to gain an understanding of the compositional principles he employed in these neoclassical works and to determine whether he achieved his aim in strengthening his compositional technique. In addition this analysis would provide a basis with which to evaluate Alwyn the composer in the light of his stated wish to become a Bach or Beethoven and to understand why he was unsuccessful in achieving this goal.

The third aim was to examine the roots of the 1938 compositional crisis, through his biographies and correspondence combined with a comparison between the success of his pre- and post- compositional crisis compositions in order to discover its cause.

It was not possible within the remit of this research to investigate English neoclassicism in the depth such a wide subject requires. However, through analysis of major neoclassical works of pivotal English composers it was possible to provide a

basic model for neoclassicism. As Scott Messing states, neoclassicism has two contexts. Firstly it was an aesthetic idea a return to the ideals of clarity and balance seen in the 'classical' era and arose as a reaction to the excesses of romanticism; further it was tied to the rise in nationalism and as a response to German hegemony. Secondly neoclassicism is an indication of style; these musical gestures have been summarised in at the end of chapter two and include the elements of pre-romantic forms, a new post-tonal language, an element of borrowing (which is sometimes difficult to identify) and anti-romanticism.

However, there is a further element to neoclassicism, the application of the idea of a misreading of the past in which there is a tension between the old and new elements within a composition in which the new elements attempt to subsume and revise the old. Straus identified seven compositional techniques (motivization, generalisation, marginalisation, centralisation, compression, neutralisation and symmetricisation) which composers employ for remaking past forms, styles and sonorities.<sup>431</sup> By analysing scores to identify these compositional techniques it is possible to explain how a composer puts their own interpretation upon an earlier form in a neoclassical work.

Straus further extends Harold Bloom's ideas theories of influence in poetry to identify two ways in which twentieth-century composers react to the works of their predecessors. Firstly an 'anxiety of style' which relates to the way composers misread fundamental aspects of an earlier style. These are often manifested in the seven compositional techniques noted above. Secondly, an 'anxiety of influence' in

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<sup>431</sup> Straus, p. 17.

which a single earlier work is reinterpreted by a later composer, usually through re-composition into a new work. The neoclassical works examined here show that Alwyn's reaction to works of his antecedents were restricted to the anxiety of style, he did not attempt to re-compose any single work or combination of works such as those of Stravinsky.

In composing the neoclassical works examined within this research project, Alwyn experimented with a variety of baroque and classical forms together with the rhapsody which was most prominent in the second half of the nineteenth century. With the exception of the *Pastoral Fantasia* and the *Concerto for Oboe, String Orchestra and Harp*, both of which cannot be described as neoclassical, each work contained an old form with new elements in combination with a generally anti-romantic, or absolute, character. Alwyn's use of borrowing ranged from outright quotation of Telemann in his *Divertimento* to a much more subtle reference to Stravinsky's motor rhythms in his *Rhapsody for Piano Quartet*. It was also not always possible to identify the source for what appeared to be borrowing, such as in the 'Jig' from his *Suite for Oboe and Harp*.

Neoclassical music provides certain difficulties for the analyst, having a foot in the tonal path but in combination with a post-tonal harmonic language. No one technique appears to have worked in analysing the works examined in this dissertation. Straus argues that the best analytical tool for the entire early twentieth century repertoire is pitch-class set theory since it reflects a motivic orientation.<sup>432</sup> However, although this technique was attempted during this research it appeared to

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<sup>432</sup> Straus, p. 24.



shed little light upon Alwyn's music, instead the intervals between notes was more illuminating combined with a thematic based analysis to highlight the form and to determine how such a form might depart from the pre-twentieth century structure upon which it was based.

In investigating Alwyn's so-called 'compositional crisis' in which he abandoned (though did not destroy) his pre-1938 works, Andrew Palmer's biography of Alwyn provides evidence as to a lack of formal training in composition during his time at the Royal Academy. However, Alwyn was not the first composer to have had a somewhat unconventional training: Elgar, who came from a similar lower middle class background, also received no formal teaching other than from a local tutor during his childhood, and in 1877 and 1878, from Adolf Pollitzer, a Hungarian violinist and teacher, on brief visits to London.<sup>433</sup> The similarities between Elgar and Alwyn are striking: both came from relatively impoverished backgrounds and rejected 'safer' careers to become freelance musicians, Elgar abandoning his apprenticeship to a solicitor and Alwyn turning his back on the shop he inherited. Elgar undertook numerous local jobs including assistant church organist and violin teacher, learning his craft as he went, but Alwyn was always very dismissive of his role as a music teacher, seeing it as a distraction from his composition. Elgar was singularly unaffected by his lack of formal training and did not have Alwyn's benefit of attending a Conservatoire, therefore the root of this crisis must lie elsewhere.

A comparison of Alwyn's success with that of his contemporaries was more illuminating. While the likes of Tippett, Walton and even the younger Benjamin

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<sup>433</sup> Diane McVeagh, 'Elgar, Sir Edward' in *Oxford Music Online* <<http://www.oxfordmusiconline.com>> [accessed 25 May 2015].

Britten were successfully carving careers as noted composers, Alwyn had had little success in publishing and having performed his 'art music', the reasons for which will be discussed below in the evaluation of Alwyn the composer. However it should be noted that Alwyn had learned a strong sense of his own importance and place in the world at his mother's knee. His own lack of success in comparison with his peers must have irked him greatly. His explanation in his later autobiography *Winged Chariot* that the change in direction was due to inadequate technique may probably be revealed to be more about shedding a positive light upon his early lack of success as a composer.

Although Alwyn became an extremely successful film music composer, earning more than enough to support his pursuit of 'serious' music he never achieved the fame of other English composers, in particular Benjamin Britten, which was to cause him much bitterness in later life. Alwyn stated 'I am bitter and disillusioned at the lack of recognition I have received in my native land'.<sup>434</sup> In evaluating Alwyn as a composer it is possible to explain this lack of recognition. As previously discussed Alwyn was overly concerned about his position in the world, an attitude that he learned from his mother. However, it is possible that in trying to find his place as a composer and achieve the recognition he craved that he tried too hard. An opinion shared by the critic Tim Ashley of the Guardian who opined 'Alwyn has rarely been taken seriously [...] he wrote too much'.<sup>435</sup> This overworking of his pieces may have had a stultifying effect upon his compositional style. This is confirmed by his son Nicholas' reaction to the opera *Miss Julie* stating to

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<sup>434</sup> Wright, p. 25.

<sup>435</sup> Wright, p. 272

Adrian Wright: 'That was how he always over-hyped what he was doing instead of letting the music tell its own story. Everything had to be recognised as nation-breaking'. Wright postulates that Alwyn had always wanted his work to be 'ground-breaking, something that would change the face of British music, something that had never been achieved before'.<sup>436</sup> However, Alwyn failed to achieve this goal. From the analysis performed as part of this research project, the conclusion can be drawn that much of what Alwyn composes lacks the originality to help it stand out from other contemporary music.

In addition, despite Alwyn's efforts to improve his compositional technique by experimenting with neoclassicism, he failed to find his own voice or sound-set. One notable feature of the music of the greatest composers is that they have a unique and immediately recognisable sound; this cannot be said of Alwyn's music, each of the works examined in this thesis has overtones of other composers. A pertinent example is his *Pastoral Fantasia for Viola and String Orchestra*. This is a very beautiful work and demonstrates Alwyn's deeply romantic nature, but it speaks too strongly of other composers, particularly Vaughan Williams – it is probably best described as 'The Lark Ascending for Viola'.

Alwyn was essentially a post-romantic composer rather than modernist despite his claims to be otherwise in his youth, a characteristic that he shared with Walton. However, rather than embrace his essential nature, allowing himself to develop naturally into the composer he might become, he forced himself to experiment with techniques developed by others. Thus his music is always heard

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<sup>436</sup> *ibid.*

through the prism of other composers. Critics were not slow to notice the similarity of Alwyn's work with that of other composers. In reviewing *Miss Julie*, *The Times* critic stated 'The libretto is occasionally banal and the duet "In Lugano where the sun is always shining" is distinctly Ivor Novello-ish'.<sup>437</sup> Similarly, a review of Alwyn's First Symphony by Donald Mitchell stated that 'Strauss flirted with Sibelius quite informally in the most impolite meaning of the word'.<sup>438</sup>

Alwyn, as a composer appears to be been born in the wrong time, either fifty years too early or too late. If he had been born earlier he would have been placed at the heart of the English Renaissance, writing the romantic and pastoral music that came most naturally to him and while there is no guarantee that he would have achieved his desired recognition, he would at least have been composing in a more natural style. However, his lack of a private income or other sponsorship would have made his entry into the role of a serious composer difficult.

Alwyn began his compositional career at a time when classical music had become almost entirely separated from the popular tradition and overwhelmingly led by music of previous times through the establishment of a musical canon. The expanding music industry and mass audience contributed to a preference for music of the old masters: as a venerated and familiar product, older music could be more easily sold. Therefore, although the late nineteenth-century movement to establish a school of English composers had been successful in training a generation of home-grown composers, there was a very limited market for their music.

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<sup>437</sup> Wright, p. 272.

<sup>438</sup> Wright, p. 118.

Alwyn's career provides a barometer of British Musical culture at this time. He found a ready market for his film music, which appealed to a mass audience, being essentially popular in style. However, his attempts to write art music were less readily accepted since modernist music was restricted to a very limited elitist audience. Further, his art music was not sufficiently *avant garde* to appeal to these elitists. He was guilty of 'falling between two stalls', appealing neither to the popular audience nor to the artistic elite. Walton had effectively occupied the more popular middle ground and Britten and Tippett were more successful in appealing to modernist tastes. Alwyn career reflects that of numerous British composers of the early twentieth century who did not make the premiere league and who have now fallen out of popular memory.

Alwyn, was never entirely comfortable in his role as a composer of film and documentary music despite being in good company with other 'serious' composers such as Benjamin Britten. Alwyn first achieved fame with his music for *The Future's in the Air* which led to many offers of work and what Wright describes as 'a ready audience for his music'.<sup>439</sup> Alwyn viewed film music only as a means to provide him with an income and the ability to compose 'serious' music. In viewing his compositions this way Alwyn missed an opportunity to achieve the recognition he so desired. He composed music that was popular with the general public and open to a much wider audience than his 'serious' music. He was invited to work in Hollywood on several occasions, an invitation which he rejected for fear of having his 'talents dimmed and even obliterated by the demands of the film world', though

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<sup>439</sup> Wright, p. 69-70.

why he believed Hollywood to any different to the British film industry is unclear.<sup>440</sup>

In addition he received a commission to compose the film music for Disney's *Swiss Family Robinson*.<sup>441</sup> Had he taken up the offer from Hollywood he might have achieved lasting fame, becoming another John Williams or Leonard Bernstein.

Word Count 49,062

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<sup>440</sup> Alwyn, 'Winged Chariot', p. 29.

<sup>441</sup> Wright, p. 186.

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