

Contemporary Irish Choral Music and an Outline of its Historical Origins

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2 Volumes

Volume I: Text

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Abstract

This thesis examines the unfamiliar new reality of Irish choral music. It is in a better state of health now in the early twenty-first century than at any point in its long and difficult history. Irish choral music today is increasing in quality, standing and output, driven by a generation of confident, talented and successful Irish composers. The purpose of this thesis, then, is to sample a cross-section of this generation. Eight diverse, contemporary *a cappella* pieces are critically investigated in order to demonstrate Irish choral music's exciting new position.

This position is relative, however. Ireland continues to lag well behind other European countries such as Belgium, Britain, Hungary, Germany, Finland, and the Baltic states, all of which boast music publishers generating significant quantities of good, new choral music every year. The current position of Ireland's choral music is also relative to its challenging history. This thesis outlines that history, identifying the earliest, pre-Christian record of the existence of music in general and of collective singing in particular. It continues with the arrival of Christianity and into monastic times, with chant and the evolution of music notation and polyphony, and from there to the Anglo-Irish 'golden age' in eighteenth-century Dublin, noting how this came at the expense of native musical development. The nineteenth century saw the end of the 'golden age'. In what appeared as a crippling blow to choral music's narrow and Protestant foothold in Ireland, there was a departure of Dublin's Anglo-Irish to London. Yet it was this absence that finally allowed a wider Irish choral music to take root, in association with the growth and interest of an emerging Catholic middle class.

This growth then continues into the twentieth century, through the revolutionary period and two world wars. There was not much composing of original music for choirs. Rather, this growth is evident in the commitment to choral singing of various institutions, including important new ones. It is not until the postwar twentieth century that the long-awaited beginnings of an original and now thriving Irish choral music take root.

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Note on Musical Examples and Identification of Pitch

Throughout this dissertation, note pitches are described using the system below:

CC	FF	C	B
Capital Letter			

Introduction

Irish choral music in the first quarter of the twenty-first century is in a better state now than it has ever been in a history stretching back millennia. In the past 30-40 years, a cohort of Irish composers has emerged who have generated and continue to generate choral music of strong artistic value that increasingly draws positive attention from outside Ireland as well as within. In what is the heart of this thesis, these claims will be justified through close, individual analyses of eight diverse, unaccompanied choral pieces from this cohort. This collection of analyses comprises Part II. Part I asks how Irish choral music has arrived at this point, tracing an outline of its unlikely journey from pre-Christian times to the present. While much research has been carried out on various aspects of the development of choral music in Ireland, there has so far been no attempt to assimilate it into an overall presentation of each stage and place it within a continuous timeframe. In order to enable a better understanding of Irish choral music's current situation, therefore, this thesis will attempt such an assimilation in the form of an outline of its history.

Part I is presented in three chapters. Chapter One identifies the earliest record of music in Ireland, and of collective singing in a rich, pre-Christian musical culture. It explores the detrimental impact of Ireland's unstable tribal society on musical development, followed by the impact of Christianity and the appearance of monastic settlements which introduced new vocal forms in psalmody, chant and hymns. This led to the evolution of music notation and subsequently to polyphony, and eventually to the growth of music in Irish cathedrals.

Chapter Two charts the consolidation of English colonial control and its impact on the development of choral music in Ireland. This control would soon give rise to a flourishing of artistic and cultural development, leading ultimately to an Anglo-Irish ‘golden age’ in Dublin in the eighteenth century. This came, however, at the expense of native musical development. Nevertheless, it was important for the development of choral music that music in the cathedrals thrived. In addition to this sacred music, there was a growing parallel tradition of secular, *a cappella* choral singing. Moreover, Ireland experienced a notable manifestation of the nineteenth-century’s European trend for the growth in performance open to the public: the charity concert. Musical performances were frequently tied to charitable events, such as fundraisers for hospitals, orphanages and prisons. By the close of the eighteenth-century there were about twenty such organisations expressly established in Ireland for this charitable purpose.

Against the backdrop of the emergence of a new Catholic middle class in the nineteenth century, Chapter Three traces both the positive development of the proliferation of choral societies and also the negative impact of restrictions generated by the Cecilian movement concerning choral music in the Catholic Church. The chapter then continues into the twentieth century which saw development on a much larger scale. Although initially there was little in the way of choral composition, overall choral activity experienced considerable growth, notably as the by-product of the establishment or maturation of institutions such as Radio Éireann, Feis Ceoil and the Cork International Choral Festival, and latterly in the founding of many choral societies and choirs. Regarding choral composition, the chapter outlines how, up to the Second World War, there was a pervasive culture of nationalistic reverence for Irish

folksong, this manifest in the ‘celtic twilight’ style of choral arrangement which dominated choral composing for several decades. Towards mid-century, however, this eventually gave way to greater influence from musical currents outside Ireland via pioneering composers such as Brian Boydell. This would lead ultimately to the current situation in which growing numbers of Irish composers now produce excellent music for choirs.

Part II makes the assertion that choral music in early twenty-first century Ireland is increasing in quality, standing and output. It then substantiates this claim by analysing a cross-section of eight pieces drawn from the wide spectrum of contemporary Irish choral music. The analysis – corroborated by first-hand conducting experience – establishes what makes these pieces good, or successful, or interesting, and concludes with practical guidelines for the preparation and performance for each piece.

PART I

Chapter One

Pre-Christian to Fifteenth Century

1.1 Music in Pre-Christian Ireland

The Irish musicologist Brian Boydell felt compelled to make the sixteenth century the surprisingly recent starting-point for his 1979 survey of music in Ireland.¹ He argues that this was due to the

almost complete lack of any precise evidence concerning the nature of music performed or produced in Ireland before the end of the sixteenth century. We do know that music played an extremely important part in the social life of medieval Ireland²

To uncover the ancient roots of choral music in Ireland – with the earliest settlers arriving over 9000 years ago³ – it is therefore necessary to look again at Ireland’s pre-Christian era, especially in light of recent research. This has uncovered a rich legacy of musical culture to rival that of other European countries of comparable size, population and background. Writing a quarter of a century after Boydell, Simon O’Dwyer shows that Ireland, for example

has one of the ‘greatest collections of prehistoric musical instruments in the world ... If music is to be seen as an indicator of a society and its complexity to be estimated through the excellence of the instruments, then there can be no doubt that early Irish society was both cultured and civilized. Musical performance must have had a vital role to play in the lives of the people. There may be no definite link back to prehistoric music but it is very likely that

¹ Brian Boydell, *Four Centuries of Music in Ireland: Essays Based on a Series of Programmes Broadcast to Mark the 50th Anniversary of the BBC in Northern Ireland* (London: British Broadcasting Cooperation, 1979), 10.

² *Ibid.*, 10.

³ Harry White and Nicholas Carolan, ‘Ireland’, *Grove Music Online. Oxford Music Online* (Oxford University Press), <<http://www.oxfordmusiconline.com/subscriber/article/grove/music/13901>> [accessed 22 February 2015].

some parts of very old songs, tunes and rhythms have made their contribution to the living music tradition which can be said to be uniquely of the Irish.⁴

O'Dwyer's research shows how Iron Age Celtic *trumpas*, Bronze Age wood pipes, bronze horns, and early medieval instruments reveal a 'musical world of great richness and diversity and the possibility that it may be the origin of the musical tradition which is so much a part of Irish life today'.⁵

Important musical artefacts from ancient times include the Wicklow Pipes, two late Bronze-Age horns, and crotales (rattles). The Wicklow Pipes (Figure 1.1) are believed to date from c2150 BC and to be older than any other multiple pipe instruments in the world.⁶

Figure 1.1: The Wicklow Pipes⁷



⁴ Simon O'Dwyer, *Prehistoric Music of Ireland* (Gloucestershire: Tempus, 2004), 11-12.

⁵ *Ibid.*, back cover.

⁶ *Ibid.*, 145; Colm Moriarty, 'Five Ancient Musical Instruments from Ireland', *Irish Archaeology* <<http://irisharchaeology.ie/2014/03/five-ancient-musical-instruments-from-ireland>> [accessed 21 June 2016].

⁷ Colm Moriarty, 'Five Ancient Musical Instruments from Ireland' [accessed 12 December 2016].

Horns clearly played a major role in Bronze Age Ireland – at least ninety survive and another thirty were found but subsequently lost.⁸ This is an exceptionally large number, which, according to Simon O’Dwyer and Maria Cullen O’Dwyer represents ‘forty per cent of the World total’.⁹ The two late Bronze Age horns housed in the National Museum of Ireland (Figure 1.2) date from 800-600 BC. According to Ann Buckley, side-blown horns in particular are rare in prehistoric Europe and therefore ‘may represent an indigenous Irish development’.¹⁰

Figure 1.2: Two late Bronze-Age horns, dated 800-600 BC¹¹



Little bells or rattles named *crotals* (from the Latin *crotalum*, meaning rattle) date from 800-600 BC and are similar to avocados in shape and size, hollow inside and containing a pebble or piece of stone (Figure 1.3). They are uniquely Irish with no record of anything similar being found anywhere outside the island of Ireland.¹²

⁸ Simon O’Dwyer, *Prehistoric Music of Ireland*, 27.

⁹ Simon O’Dwyer and Maria Cullen O’Dwyer, ‘Ancient Music of Ireland’, <<http://www.ancientmusicireland.com>> [accessed 2 February 2016].

¹⁰ Ann Buckley, ‘Music in Prehistoric and Medieval Ireland’ in Dáibhí Ó Crónín (ed.), *A New History of Ireland, 1: Prehistoric and Early Ireland* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2005), 746.

¹¹ National Museum of Ireland (Object Number: IA:1893.17), Simon O’Dwyer, *Prehistoric Music of Ireland* (Gloucestershire: Tempus, 2004), Illustration insert no 22. Top: end-blown Bronze Age horn from Drumbest, Co. Antrim. Bottom: side-blown Bronze Age horn from Derrynane, Co. Kerry. © National Museum of Ireland.

¹² Colm Moriarty, ‘Five Ancient Musical Instruments from Ireland’ [accessed 1 February 2017].

Figure 1.3: *Crotals*, National Museum of Ireland¹³



The Loughnashade bronze trumpet (Figure 1.4) dates from about 100 BC and required very skilled craftsmanship.¹⁴ The bell end is decorated with a floral design whose lotus-bed motif originated in Mediterranean art,¹⁵ therefore providing evidence that instrument makers in Ireland had links with the continent.¹⁶

¹³ Colm Moriarty, 'Five Ancient Musical Instruments from Ireland' [accessed 1 February 2017].

¹⁴ National Museum of Ireland <[<http://www.museum.ie/Archaeology/Exhibitions/Current-Exhibitions/The-Treasury/Gallery-1-Iron-Age-to-12th-Century/Loughnashade-Horn-\(1\)>](http://www.museum.ie/Archaeology/Exhibitions/Current-Exhibitions/The-Treasury/Gallery-1-Iron-Age-to-12th-Century/Loughnashade-Horn-(1))> 'It is a finely-made object, formed of riveted sheets of hammered bronze. It has four main components: two cylindrical tubes held together by a roughly biconical ring, and a decorated disc attached to the end of the horn. The larger tube is curved and flared and closed by a seam along the concave edge. The edges are carefully aligned, and a thin strip of bronze covers the seam internally. The outer seam is sealed by means of a ridged strip of bronze fastened by a series of rivets. Three patch repairs are visible on this tube. The edges of the second tube are not aligned but overlap and are fastened with rivets'.

¹⁵ Fintan O'Toole, 'A History of Ireland in 100 Objects', *Irish Times*, 11 June 2011.

¹⁶ Examples of what this trumpet may have sounded like can be heard via sound files of replicas produced by Simon O'Dwyer and Maria Cullen O'Dwyer, *Ancient Music of Ireland*, <[<http://www.ancientmusicireland.com/onlineshop>](http://www.ancientmusicireland.com/onlineshop)> [accessed 2 April 2016].

Figure 1.4: Loughnashade Trumpet, National Museum of Ireland, NMI W8



Although this treasure trove of ancient Irish instruments contains no information relating to the use of the human voice, it demonstrates the millenium-old foundation in music from which would grow the choral tradition yet to come.

1.2 Music in Irish Legend and Mythology

Although there are no specific references to choirs in Ireland's pre-Christian legends and mythology, there are enough references to singing to know that it was prominent within music's central role. Over and above the contribution of instruments, the human voice brings an additional layer of intensity to that function of music in Irish myth that is clearly a response to the most natural of human emotions and activity. 'The most important characteristics alluded to,' explains Ann Buckley, 'are the triad of weeping

music (*goltraige*), laughing music (*geantraige*), and sleeping music (*suantraige*)'.¹⁷ In the literature, the singing generated from these different musics was as often for many voices singing together as for the single voice, and it is here arguably that the seeds of an Irish choral tradition take root.

Music in Irish mythology and legend is credited with immense power. The magical harp of the Celtic god Dagda, for example, had the power to kill the people who heard it or else lull them to sleep. It could also embolden warriors going into battle and then soothe them on their return. Within this tradition there are plausible antecedents for group singing. The wicked stepmother Aoife in *The Children of Lir*, for example, magically transforms her four children into swans, leaving them their human voices so that they can sing beautiful songs and bring peace to the island:

Since there is no other help for me to give you now, you may keep your own speech; and you will be singing sweet music of the Sidhe, that would put the men of the earth to sleep, and there will be no music in the world equal to it; and your own sense and your own nobility will stay with you, the way it will not weigh so heavy on you to be in the shape of birds.¹⁸

It is appropriate to propose that the reason 'there will be no music in the world equal to it' is because these four sibling swans not only sang this music but sang it together.

The legends include at least one instance of an important figure with a stated musical preference for voice over instruments. In *Deirdre and the Sons of Uisneach*, for example, Deirdre laments the murder of three brothers, of whom one was her husband,

¹⁷ Ann Buckley, 'Music in Prehistoric and Medieval Ireland', 746.

¹⁸ Lady Augusta Gregory, 'Book Five: The Children of Lir' in Augusta Gregory, *Gods and Fighting Men: The Story of the Tuatha De Danann and of the Fianna of Ireland*, Arranged and put into English by Lady Augusta Gregory with a preface by W. B. Yeats (London: John Murray, 1904), 144.

Naoise. She recounts how she prefers the ‘sweeter strains’ of their singing voices to the sound of horns or pipes. Referring to Naoise’s deep voice, Ardan’s middle-range voice, and Aindle’s high voice, she says:

Though well your horns may music blow,
Though sweet each month your pipes may sound,
I fearless say that well I know
A sweeter strain I oft have found.
Though horns and pipes be sounding clear,
Though Conor’s mind in these rejoice,
More magic strain, more sweet, more dear
Was Usna’s Children’s noble voice.
Like sound of wave, rolled Naisi’s bass;
We’d hear him long, so sweet he sang:
And Ardan’s voice took middle place;
And clearly Aindle’s tenor rang.¹⁹

As with the quartet of swans, it is reasonable to infer a credible choral aspect to this trio of singing brothers, especially given the different voice ranges described by Naoise.

An even clearer choral antecedent in Irish mythology occurs when a chorus of fairies (‘*Sídhe*’) demonstrates healing powers that Irish mythology ascribes to music. It happens in the epic *Táin Bó Fraich* (‘The Raid for the Cattle of Fraech’) when the hero, Fraech, is injured by a water-monster. After treatment involving a bath in animal meat and special healing music played by trumpets (so powerful that thirty courtiers

¹⁹ William Graham (ed.), *Deirdre and the Sons of Uisneach*,
<https://archive.org/stream/deirdresonsofuis00grahuoft/deirdresonsofuis00grahuoft_djvu.txt>
[accessed 20 March 2017].

die upon hearing it), the story continues with the keening of 150 maidens of the Sídhe.²⁰ The women take him away and the following day, '50 faeries who cried' return with him fully healed:

And the sound floated in of their wailing

And it thrilled through the men, and they sighed.

Then first that mournful measure,

'The Ban Shee Wail' was heard

All hearts with grief and pleasure

That air, when harped, hath stirred²¹

In this instance, Irish myth demonstrates how sometimes one voice is not enough and that what is needed is a chorus.

In Irish myth, collective singing has the power not only to heal but also to cool human tempers. In his *Literary History of Ireland*, Douglas Hyde describes a quarrel during a great feast hosted by the legendary Irish warrior Fionn mac Cumhail. It could only be stopped by 'the intervention of the bards' who, it would appear, sang together in order to optimise their power:

'It was then,' says the romancist, 'that the prophesying poet of the pointed words, that guerdon-full good man of song, Fergus Finnbheóil, rose up, and all the Fenians' men of science along with him, and they sang their hymns and good poems, and their perfect lays to those heroes to silence and to soften them. It was then they ceased from their slaughtering and maiming, on hearing the music of the poets, and they let their weapons fall to earth, and the poets took up

²⁰ Arthur Herbert Leahy (trans.), 'Táin Bó Fraich' in *Heroic Legends of Ireland II* (London: David Nutt, 1906), 42.

²¹ *Ibid.*, 47.

their weapons and they went between them, and grasped them with the grasp of reconciliation.²²

References to humming or chanting occur regularly in the tales of the Fianna (mythological warriors led by Fionn mac Cumhail) with the term *dord* (variously deep sound, hum, drone, chant in deep voice) appearing in forms such as *dordán*, *andord* and *dordfhiansa*. In one account in *Acallam na Senórach* ('The Dialogue of the Old Men') there is a report of a band of herdsmen who sing sweet music for Cailte, reminding him of the singing of the Fian warriors when they were young men.²³ Again, terms include *dordán*, *dord*, *dord-fhiansa*, *cronán* and *fead* (whistling), all with similar meaning and occurring in settings of male group-bonding.²⁴

There may also have been a choral or collective element to what the old texts refer to as lamenting. It is unclear whether or not this was singing, intoning or chanting.²⁵ But generally, as in *Táin Bó Fraich*, this lamenting or keening had a dramatic effect on listeners so that they were either moved emotionally or healed. Sometimes they even died. This kind of lamenting usually involved a group component.

1.3 Music in Medieval Ireland

Collective singing existed not only within the native imagination of Irish myth but also within the reality of Irish medieval society. Somewhat ironically, for evidence of this, Irish history is indebted to monastic 'annals' (see Section 1.4, *Christianity in Ireland*

²² Douglas Hyde, *A Literary History of Ireland From the Earliest Times to the Present Day* (London: T. Fisher Unwin, 1899), 259.

²³ *Ibid.*, 32.

²⁴ *Ibid.*, 32.

²⁵ *Ibid.*, 33.

below). These are documents dating back to the early Middle Ages which chronicle the lives of kings and other high-ranking officials. More specifically, they include accounts of musicians who were associated with the clans of important chieftains, accounts which contain many references to singing and choral singing.²⁶

That said, the development of music in Medieval Ireland – including choral music – was severely hindered by a lack of social stability. This was the result of what Buckley calls ‘warrior society’.²⁷ In pre-Norman Ireland, overlords or kings battled constantly for control over numerous small kingdoms (as opposed to a single seat of power as was already the case, for example, in England and France). As a result, Irish rulers were in constant fear for their lives, a reality which undermined social stability.²⁸ Whereas the relative stability in England and France established the conditions necessary for the kind of grand edifices in which choirs could take root – such as cathedrals – warrior society prohibited an environment conducive to creative activity such as music or architecture. According to Buckley,

The kind of monopoly of wealth and power required to plan and produce, say, the Gothic cathedral of France or the Palace at Westminster – or the music which was performed in them – depended on long-term stability of political rulers ... and the resources to train specialist craftsmen, reserves of capital to pay them and leisure time to enjoy their products.²⁹

²⁶ Jeffrey William Benedict, ‘References to Pre-Modern Music and Performing Arts Culture in the Irish Annals: A Survey of Common Themes’, *Eolas: The Journal of the American Society of Irish Medieval Studies*, 5 (2011), 93. Specific references to singing have been identified by Benedict. These include, for example, twenty-one named individuals who are described as having sung or chanted (from the Latin word *cecinit* which can mean either), poetic accounts of battles or deaths; and twenty-four named liturgical singers, including seventeen choral canons (*canonach corach*), who appear in forty-three entries between 448 and 1518.

²⁷ Ann Buckley, ‘Music as Symbolic Sound in Medieval Irish Society’ in Gerard Gillen and Harry White (eds), *Irish Musical Studies 3: Music and Irish Cultural History* (Dublin: Irish Academic Press, 1995), 35.

²⁸ *Ibid.*, 34-35.

²⁹ *Ibid.*, 35.

The advantages that social stability afforded music in Britain and parts of the Continent, notably as regards the establishment and growth of cathedral choirs, were late in coming to Ireland where stability remained elusive.

Still, there exist very early references to group singing in the Middle Ages, such as at the Convention of Druim Cett – a gathering of leaders probably held in the 570s – at which groups of Irish poets sang praises to Colm Cille, the Irish abbot and missionary. In descriptions of real vocal practice which significantly echo those from mythology, vocal sounds are listed as *certán* and *crónán* (‘humming’), and a group of hummers is described as *crónánaigh*.³⁰

This was the journey so far of Irish choral music, prior to the arrival of Christianity. Important musical artefacts from ancient times – including Iron Age Celtic *trumpas*, Bronze Age Wicklow wood pipes, rare side-blown bronze-age horns, uniquely Irish crotals and the floral-designed Loughnashade bronze trumpet – reveal a world of great musical richness, which lays the foundation for all the Irish music yet to come, including choral music. Mythical Ireland tells of a time when music was credited with immense power, when the act of singing together could generate power capable of stopping a fight, healing the injured, or putting people to sleep. The historical record, too, includes references to collective singing such as humming and chanting in the medieval period. The stage was set for a new and powerful force to arrive on the island and invaluable advance Irish collective singing in numerous ways. This new force was Christianity.

³⁰ Ibid., 31.

1.4 Christianity in Ireland

While warrior society may not have been conducive to the overall evolution of creative activity, there was nonetheless substantial development in art and education within the setting of monastic life following the coming of Christianity. Monasteries – and subsequently churches and cathedrals – would later yield up the earliest evidence of what today is recognised formally as Irish choral music.

Sources show that the first Christian official in Ireland was St Palladius, sent by Pope Celestine in the early fifth century ‘as the first Bishop to the Irish believing in Christ’.³¹ This description confirms that pockets of Christianity already existed on the island prior to the arrival of the more celebrated St Patrick later in the century. Many monastic settlements appeared in the sixth century including Clonard, Clonfert, Bangor, Clonmacnoise and Killeaney and, in the seventh century, Lismore and Glendalough. These and other monasteries became great centres of teaching and learning which, before long, were sending missionaries to Britain and continental Europe and earning Ireland its famous epithet as ‘the land of saints and scholars’ (*insula sanctorum et doctorum*).³² Irish missionaries (*peregrini*) travelled across Europe and established small communities through the building of monasteries and hospices. A significant part of the learning transmitted and received related to music, all of it sung, most of it collectively.

³¹ Margaret Anne Cusack, ‘St. Palladius’ in Chapter VIII in *An Illustrated History of Ireland, from the Earliest Period* (Kenmare: Kenmare Publications, 1873), <<http://www.libraryireland.com/HistoryIreland/Birthplace-St-Patrick.php>> [accessed 23 February 2017].

³² John Healy, *Insula sanctorum et doctorum or: Ireland’s ancient schools and scholars* (Dublin: Sealy, Byers & Walker, 1890), vi.

Irish monks sang together. According to Ann Buckley, ‘it is clear that chant, psalmody and hymns were taught from the outset in Irish ecclesiastical centres in order to serve the requirements of the liturgy’.³³ This leads to further evidence of choral singing in Ireland in the form of hymns, in both Gaelic and Latin, recorded in documents such as the *Stowe Missal*, the *Antiphonary of Bangor* and the Irish *Liber Hymnorum*. These and similar were found in monasteries and later in cathedrals and churches.³⁴ The *Antiphonary of Bangor* (seventh century) may be the oldest extant Irish manuscript. According to Ann Buckley,

It contains antiphons for the Divine Office and the Communion of the mass, along with hymns, canticles and rhythmical collects, making it a hymnary and collectary as well as an antiphoner. Among the hymns are the earliest known copies of the *Gloria* and *Te Deum* ... and the earliest known copy of the Communion hymn *Sancti venite*.³⁵

The eleventh-century *Liber Hymnorum* contains predominantly Hiberno-Latin hymns (Latin works written either in Ireland or by Irish authors residing on the continent) and Anglo-Norman Latin hymns which are characterised by ‘short lines with extensive use of alliteration, internal rhyme, and assonance’.³⁶ Latin was the language of the liturgy but also the principal language of record-keeping and written communication. Local vernacular, however, was absorbed and new words created in the place of words that did not exist in Latin. For example, *Sen De don de for don te* (‘God’s blessing, bear

³³ Ann Buckley, ‘Music as Symbolic Sound in Medieval Irish Society’, 33.

³⁴ Patrick Brannon, ‘The Search for the Celtic Rite’ in Gerard Gillen and Harry White (eds), *Irish Musical Studies 2: Music and the Church* (Dublin: Irish Academic Press, 1993), 13, 26.

³⁵ Ann Buckley, ‘Bangor, Antiphonary of’ in Harry White and Barra Boydell (eds), *The Encyclopaedia of Music in Ireland* (Dublin: University College Dublin Press, 2013), i, 56.

³⁶ Ann Buckley, ‘Music in Prehistoric and Medieval Ireland’, 780.

us, succour us') is a macaronic verse (Latin and Irish) by the Cork abbot Colman moccu Cluasaig.³⁷

Although the singing or composition of such hymns was not allowed for use within the Roman rite until the twelfth century, it is clear that the practice was already thriving in Ireland. According to Buckley, 'The use of hymns in liturgical services seems to have been particularly cultivated in Ireland.'³⁸ Irish hymns are also found in English and continental manuscripts where they feature the celebration of Irish saints, notably St Patrick and St Brigid.³⁹

The *Stowe Missal* is believed to have been copied c800 from an older manuscript dated around 650. Its size of 15cm x 12cm means that it was probably small enough to have been carried around by a travelling priest.⁴⁰ It was discovered in Stowe House, Buckinghamshire but is now believed to have originated in Tallaght, Dublin (Figure 1.5). While the *Stowe Missal* is uniquely Irish – even featuring the Irish language in its last three pages – it also amalgamates continental influences, notably the use of the Roman rite, the labelling of the Eucharistic prayer as the canon of Pope Gelasius, the inclusion of the Nicene creed and a text for the breaking of the bread similar to that used in Milan.⁴¹

³⁷ John H. Bernard and Robert Atkinson, *The Irish Liber Hymnorum* (London: Harrison and Sons, 1898), 26, <<https://archive.org/stream/IrishLiberHymnorumV1#page/n71/mode/1up>> [accessed 13 March 2015].

³⁸ Ann Buckley, 'Music in Prehistoric and Medieval Ireland', 780.

³⁹ *Ibid.*, 781.

⁴⁰ The Royal Irish Academy, 'The Stowe Missal and Gospel of St John', <<https://www.ria.ie/library/catalogues/special-collections/medieval-and-early-modern-manuscripts/stowe-missal-and-gospel>> [accessed 1 March 2017].

⁴¹ Michelle Ziegler, 'The Stowe Missal and Early Irish Theology', <<https://psalterstudies.wordpress.com/2009/08/23/the-stowe-missal-and-early-irish-theology>> [accessed 3 March 2017].

Figure 1.5: The *Stowe Missal*, initial page⁴²



It was also within monasteries that another early form of choral music – liturgical chant – first developed. The chanting of words projected them better than merely speaking them, and also added ‘solemnity to Christian worship’.⁴³

1.5 The Development of Chant and Musical Notation

Emperor Charlemagne – in his capacity as protector of the papacy – dispatched an *Epistola generalis* (‘general letter’) from Rome which dates from some time between 786 and 800 and demands that all clergy ‘fully learn Roman chant’.⁴⁴ This was an effort to strengthen ecclesiastical power through uniformity. In 890, archbishop

⁴² IRL-Da MS D ii.3, *The Stowe Missal and Gospel of St John*, f.1r.

⁴³ David Hiley, ‘Plainchant in the Liturgy’ in David Hiley, *Western Plainchant: A Handbook* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1993), 1.

⁴⁴ Kenneth Levy, ‘Gregorian Chant and the Romans’, *Journal of the American Musicological Society* (2003), 7.

Agobard of Lyon described the demands made on monastic singers: ‘Most of them have spent all the days of their life from the earliest youth to gray age in the preparation and development of their singing.’⁴⁵ At this stage there was no system of notation, meaning that all instruction in singing and the transmission of these chants were entirely oral. Monks and priests needed phenomenal memories in order to retain the many texts and melodies. Saint Isidore of Seville (c560-636), a Spanish scholar and music theorist writing in an etymological encyclopaedia in the early seventh century, describes how ‘Their sound, because it is something perceived by the senses, vanishes as the moment passes and is imprinted in the memory ... for unless sounds are held by the memory of man, they perish, because they cannot be written down.’⁴⁶

Yet it is this period which sees the beginnings of musical notation, something inextricably tied to choral music. According to David Hiley, the need to record plainchant arose from the challenges presented by the constant arrival of new chants and by chants with unusual features.⁴⁷ He makes the point that as chant developed, it became less formulaic and therefore harder to memorise, making some sort of notation system absolutely necessary.⁴⁸ The earliest musical notation first began to appear sporadically around Europe in the ninth century within isolated collections of plainchant intended for choral singing. Hiley demonstrates how, initially, this chant notation was more preoccupied with pitch than rhythm.⁴⁹

⁴⁵ Agobard of Lyon, ‘De antiphonario’ in *Agobardi Lugdunensis Opera omnia*; quoted in L. van Acker (ed.), *Corpus Christianorum, Continuatio Medievalis*, no. 52 (Turnhout: Brepols, 1981), 350.

⁴⁶ Stephen A. Barney et. al., *The Etymologies of Isidore of Seville* (Cambridge and New York: Cambridge University Press, 2006), 95.

⁴⁷ David Hiley, ‘Notation’ in *Western Plainchant: A Handbook*, 362.

⁴⁸ *Ibid.*, 373.

⁴⁹ *Ibid.*, 373.

Central to the evolution of plainchant and therefore to the origins of choral music was the Roman Liturgy of the Hours and its local English variant, the Sarum Rite, which took over from the Celtic Rite in Ireland. This daily recitation or singing of prayers at fixed hours according to the discipline of the Church was at the core of monastic life.⁵⁰ Patrick Brannon, in his study of four Irish Sarum manuscripts in the collection of Trinity College Dublin, states that most ‘reflect the music and liturgy of several diverse and often conflicting cultures’, but he also demonstrates how one fifth of the melodies they contain are unique, showing no concordance with established Roman melodies.⁵¹ This strongly suggests that Irish monks were not just learning chants but also composing their own.

There are eighteen extant Irish liturgical manuscripts, all of which, according to Ann Buckley, contain ‘partial or complete music notation’, and which date from between the twelfth and fifteenth centuries.⁵² The oldest of these manuscripts, and the oldest to contain music notation, is the *Drummond Missal*, written in Glendalough⁵³ in the early twelfth century.⁵⁴ It is partially notated in adiastematic neumes (unheightened).

The fledgling notation revealed in this manuscript was intended for group singing and therefore represents the earliest written record of choral music in Ireland. Figure 1.6

⁵⁰ Frank Lawrence, ‘Sarum Use in Ireland’ in Harry White and Barra Boydell (eds), *The Encyclopaedia of Music in Ireland* (Dublin: University College Dublin Press, 2013), ii, 917. The Sarum variant was established in the eleventh century by Osmund, Bishop of Salisbury. Sarum, which included some of its own melodies and texts and which celebrated local feast days, gradually supplanted the previous diversity of plainchant from the early middle ages and ‘achieved a degree of codification in the early thirteenth century that conferred on it an unparalleled status and authority’.

⁵¹ Patrick Brannon, ‘The Search for the Celtic Rite’ in Gerard Gillen and Harry White (eds), *Irish Musical Studies 2: Music and the Church* (Dublin: Irish Academic Press, 1993), 36.

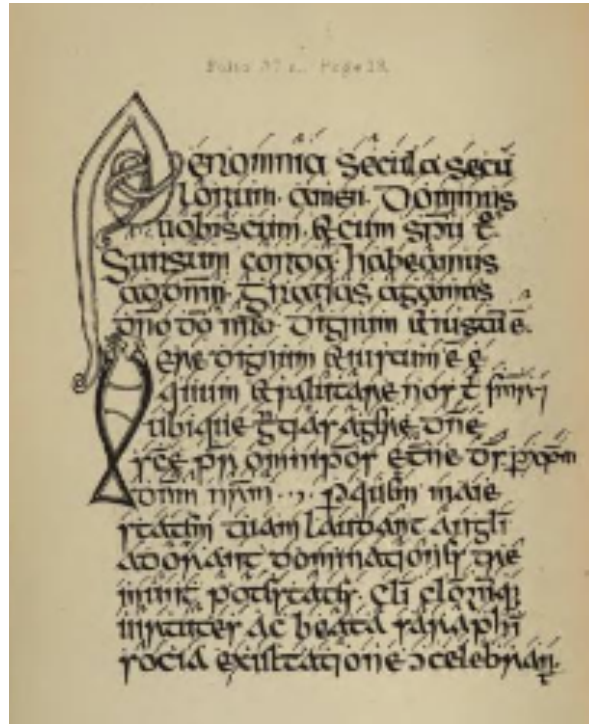
⁵² Ann Buckley, ‘Music and Musicians in Medieval Irish Society’, *Early Music*, 28 (2000), 176. They include six Missals, one Gradual, one Breviary, two Psalters, five Antiphonals, the Dublin Troper, and two Processionals. Buckley lists all eighteen in an appendix in this paper.

⁵³ Glendalough was a leading school and centre of Christianity.

⁵⁴ Sara Gibbs Casey, ‘Drummond Missal’ in Harry White and Barra Boydell (eds), *The Encyclopaedia of Music in Ireland* (Dublin: University College Dublin Press, 2013), i, 317.

shows lines, dots and squiggles arranged to show relative pitch.⁵⁵ They were not, however, precise indications. As Frank Lawrence explains, they were rather reminders of details already familiar to singers through oral transmission and memorisation.⁵⁶

Figure 1.6: The *Drummond Missal*⁵⁷



Theories by Sara Gibbs Casey for increasing the precision with which these neumes are deciphered remain speculative.⁵⁸ Her interpretation of neumes is contingent on corroboration with later manuscripts that use either heightened neumes or slightly more sophisticated staff notation and therefore confirm her suppositions. Casey establishes that Irish monks and scribes were very familiar with liturgical and musical

⁵⁵ George Hay Forbes (ed.), *Missale Drummondense; the ancient Irish missal, in the possession of the Baroness Willoughby de Eresby* (Burntisland: Pitsligo Press, 1882), 56.

⁵⁶ Frank Lawrence, 'Lismore Gradual (formerly known as the Downpatrick Gradual)' in Harry White and Barra Boydell (eds), *The Encyclopaedia of Music in Ireland* (Dublin: University College Dublin Press, 2013), ii, 594.

⁵⁷ US-NYpm MS M. 627 (*The Drummond Missal*), Pierpont Morgan library, New York, fol.37r.

⁵⁸ Sara Gibbs Casey, 'Drummond Missal', i, 317.

models from the Continent, and yet were capable of creating their own. Her exploration of the *Drummond Missal* uncovers the influence of various continental *sacramentaries* (prayer books whose contents were confined to those words of the mass and other liturgies which were spoken exclusively by the priest).⁵⁹ Having examined the ‘Sanctus’ in the *Drummond Missal* in minute detail, and compared it with over 400 others, she suggests that ‘what we see here is a ‘Sanctus’ of Irish composition which, while it shows some conformity to standard Continental practice, possesses its own unique melody.’⁶⁰

A further example of the continental influence and diversity of early Irish choral music is to be found in Ireland’s oldest surviving notated musical source: the *Lismore Gradual*. This is a cantor’s book from the mid-twelfth century. Although originally known as the *Downpatrick Gradual*, it was in fact copied at the monastery of Lismore, Co. Waterford.⁶¹ Example 1.1 shows the verse *Ad te levavi* on the opening page.

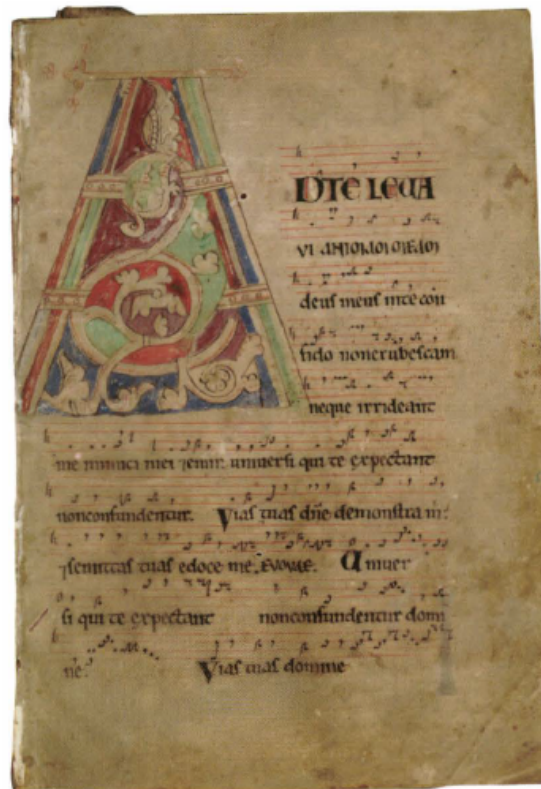
⁵⁹ Sara Gibbs Casey, ‘“Through a Glass, Darkly’: Steps Towards Reconstructing Irish Chant from the Neumes of the Drummond Missal’, *Early Music*, 28 (2000), 213.

Examples of continental sacramentaries include the tenth-century Gregorian Sacramentary, the Hadrianum Sacramentary (believed to have come from Pope Hadrian in the eighth century), the Gelasian Sacramentary, compiled near Paris c750, and the Frankish Gelasian Sacramentaries, which originated in the Vatican.

⁶⁰ Sara Gibbs Casey, ‘Through a Glass, Darkly’, 213.

⁶¹ Frank Lawrence, ‘Lismore Gradual’, ii, 593-594.

Example 1.1: 'Ad te levavi', *Lismore Gradual*⁶²



Frank Lawrence is able to trace this Irish chant's mixed continental and English origins, identifying how the music notation on a four-line red staff demonstrates Norman influence ('Norman notation *à points liés*'), while the melodies reflect the northern French 'Corbie-Saint Denis chant tradition transmitted to Ireland via pre-Conquest Winchester'.⁶³ Lawrence adds that it was written 'in a continental bookhand'⁶⁴ by two Irish scribes, and that the Norman notation '*à points liés* (tied dot) ... was written by the same scribes'.⁶⁵ The most up-to-date research on music notation

⁶² GB-ob MS. Rawl.C.892, The Bodleian Library, University of Oxford, fol.1r.

⁶³ Frank Lawrence, 'Lismore Gradual', ii, 594.

⁶⁴ A bookhand is a stylised handwriting script.

⁶⁵ Frank Lawrence, 'Lismore Gradual', ii, 594.

and the interplay of influence between Ireland and the Continent can be found in a collection of scholarly articles assembled by Ann Buckley in 2017.⁶⁶

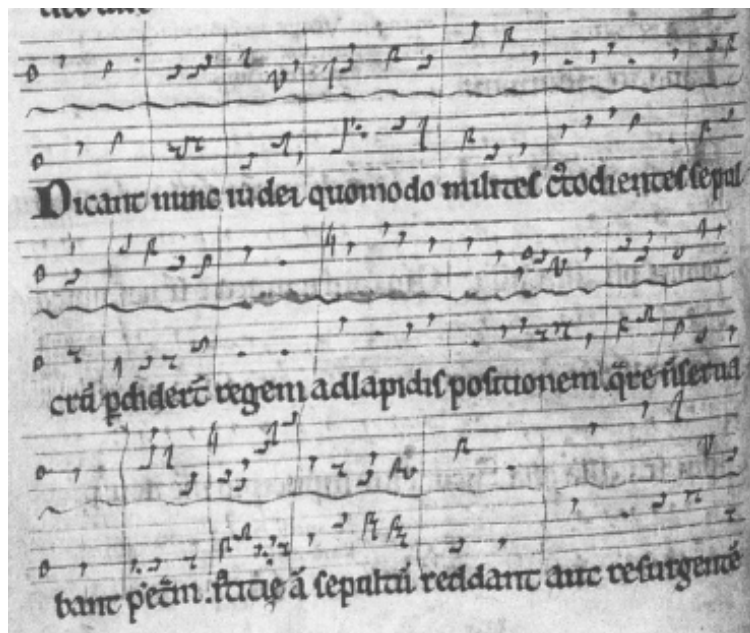
1.6 The Development of Polyphony within Irish Choral Music

Ireland's earliest written record of polyphonic choral music also appears in the *Lismore Gradual*. The chants of the Proper of the mass for the liturgical year include a two-part setting of the verse 'Dicant nunc Iudei' from the Easter processional antiphon *Christus resurgens* (Example 1.2). This is one of the few notated sources of early *organum* (the addition of one or more voices to an existing chant) in medieval Ireland.⁶⁷ Buckley's transcription to the modern stave (Example 1.3) shows how the two voices start from a unison and then move together note for note, mostly in thirds and fourths, and always returning to unison. The voices also move variously in parallel, oblique, and contrary motion, and at times they cross. 'Dicant nunc Iudei' is an example of free *organum*. It is reasonable to assume that this was preceded by several centuries of simple *organum*, where the voices moved in parallel fourths and fifths.

⁶⁶ Ann Buckley (ed.), *Music, Liturgy, and the Veneration of Saints of the Medieval Irish Church in a European Context* (Turnhout, Brepols Publishers, 2017).

⁶⁷ Frank Lawrence, 'Lismore Gradual', ii, 594. According to Lawrence, it is 'closely related to two other twelfth-century Irish sources, the Corpus Missal (GB-Occc 282) and the Rossllyn Missal (GB-En, Adv. 18.5.19), and it bears witness to the same fusion of Anglo-Saxon and diverse Norman liturgical traditions'.

Example 1.2: 'Dicant nunc Iudei', *Lismore Gradual*⁶⁸



Example 1.3: *Dicant nunc Iudei*, transcribed by Ann Buckley

A musical transcription of the text 'Dicant nunc Iudei quomodo milites custodientes sepulcrum perdidere regem ad lapidis positionem'. The transcription consists of two systems of music. Each system has a vocal line on a treble clef staff and a lute line on a bass clef staff. The lyrics are written below the notes. The first system contains the lyrics: "Di - cant nunc lu - de - i quo - - mo - do mi - li - tes cu - sto - di - en - tes". The second system contains the lyrics: "se - pul - crum per - di - de - runt re - gem ad la - pi - dis po - si - ti - o - - nem".

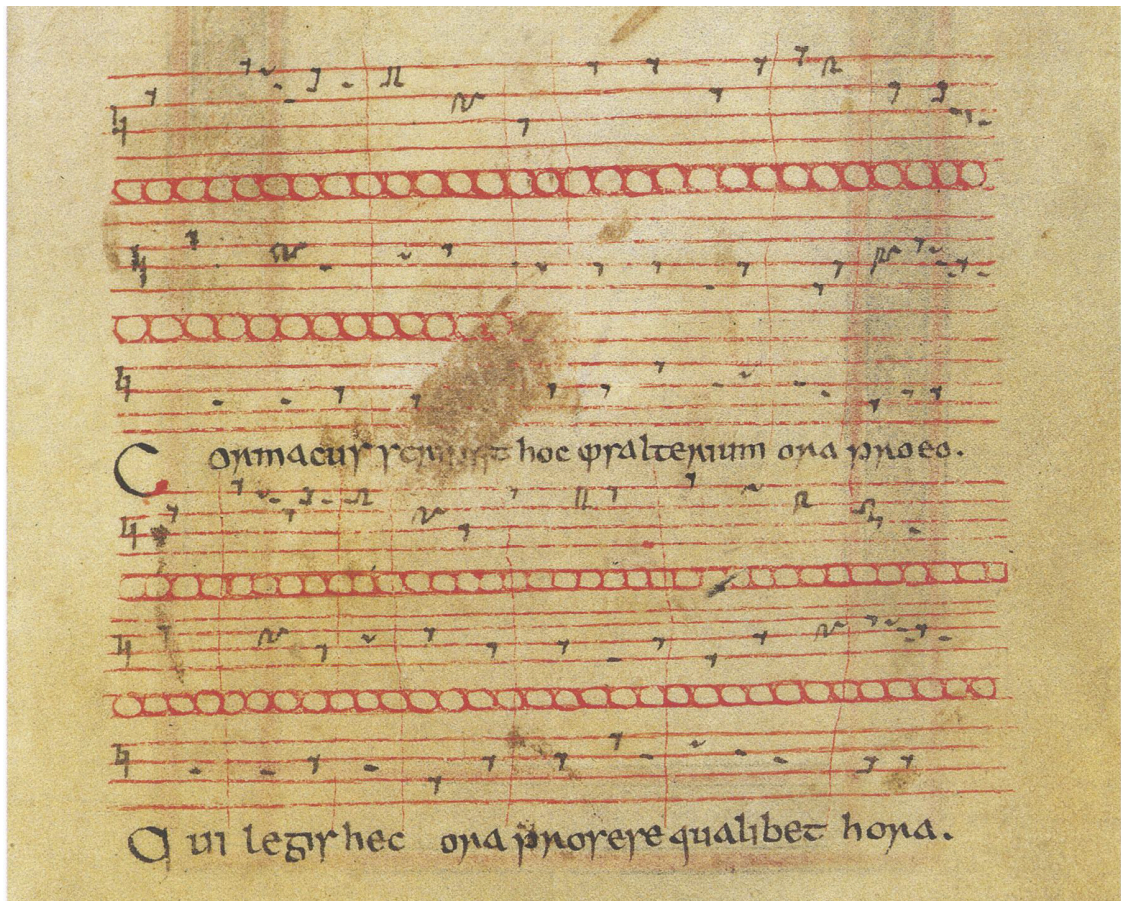
Another example of medieval notated polyphony in Ireland can be found in *Cormac's Psalter*, an ornately decorated twelfth-century psalm collection. It includes a very early three-part setting and again demonstrates close links with English and continental

⁶⁸ *Dicant nunc Iudei*, The Bodleian Library, University of Oxford, GB-Ob MS. Rawl. C. 892, ff.67v-68r; quoted in Ann Buckley, 'Music and Musicians in Medieval Irish Society', 180.

European practices'.⁶⁹ The psalm collection ends with a 'colophon' – often a scribe's personal emblem or else, as in this instance, a short musical statement composed by the scribe. Entitled *Cormacus Scripsit*, it is a three-part setting of a Sarum 'Benedicamus Domino' in which the scribe, Cormac, appeals for prayers. It is a simple and ingenious way for Cormac to be forever recorded in history (Examples 1.4 and 1.5).

Cormacus scripsit hoc psalterium	Cormacus wrote this psalm
Ora pro eo qui legis hec	Pray for him you who read these [words]
Ora pro te qualibet hora	Pray for yourself at any hour

Example 1.4: 'Cormacus scripsit', *Cormac's Psalter*⁷⁰



⁶⁹ Barra Boydell, *A History of Music at Christ Church Cathedral, Dublin* (Dublin: Boydell Press, 2004), 22.

⁷⁰ GB-Lbl Add. MS. 36929 (*Cormac's Psalter*) British Library, London, fol. 59r.

Example 1.5: ‘Cormacus scripsit’, *Cormac’s Psalter*, reconstructed by Ann Buckley⁷¹

(b)

Cor - ma - cus scrip - sit hoc psal - te - ri - um; o - ra pro e - o.

Cor - ma - cus scrip - sit hoc psal - te - ri - um; o - ra pro e - o.

Cor - ma - cus scrip - sit hoc psal - te - ri - um; o - ra pro e - o.

Qui le - gis hec, o - ra pro se - se qua - li - bet ho - ra.

Qui le - gis hec, o - ra pro se - se qua - li - bet ho - ra.

Qui le - gis hec, o - ra pro se - se qua - li - bet ho - ra.

Three distinct systems are visible in the original manuscript, each with the customary four red stave lines which are separated from each other by a line of conjoined red circles. The text appears beneath the lowest voice. According to Lawrence, the ‘type of notation used and the score format point to northern French and Burgundian, rather than English, influence.’⁷²

Ironically, denouncements of monastic polyphonic choral singing also provide evidence of its existence. The Cistercian Rule, for example, was quite severe in forbidding the singing of polyphony in some British abbeys. Stephen of Lexington, an

⁷¹ Ann Buckley, ‘Music in Prehistoric and Medieval Ireland’ in Dáibhí Ó Crónín (ed.), *A New History of Ireland, 1: Prehistoric and Early Ireland* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2005), 788. Ann Buckley reiterates that her reconstruction is conjectural: ‘the voices are not precisely aligned in the manuscript, and text is supplied only for the tenor’.

⁷² Frank Lawrence, ‘Notation, medieval’ in Harry White and Barra Boydell (eds), *The Encyclopaedia of Music in Ireland* (Dublin: University College Dublin Press, 2013), ii, 738.

English Cistercian monk (c1198-c1258), visited Irish Cistercian houses in 1228. After his visit, he warned each community:

The rule of the Order in chanting and psalmody shall be followed according to the writing of the Blessed Bernard. No one shall attempt to sing with duplicated tones [*vocibus duplicatis*] against the simplicity of the Order ... Anyone who transgresses this ... shall be on bread and water on the day following and shall be flogged by chapter.⁷³

It is reasonable to assume that ‘duplicated tones’ infers *organum* at the very least, if not polyphony. If some of the Cistercians in Ireland were singing in duplicated tones, it is likely that other less austere abbeys, such as the Augustinians in Christ Church Cathedral, were also singing in duplicated tones.

It is clear that later medieval Ireland boasted a culture rich in oral polyphony. Singers would have been singing polyphony fluently many years before it was written down. Darina McCarthy concludes with good reason: ‘It is now accepted that examples of notated polyphony in the eleventh and twelfth centuries are the exception rather than the rule, and that an extensive and highly developed ‘oral’ polyphonic performance tradition must have underlain these isolated examples of notated polyphony.’⁷⁴

1.7 The Growth of Choral Music in Irish Cathedrals

In the second half of the twelfth century, the Norman invasion ended Irish political independence and the Kings of England became the lords of Ireland – a domination that would last over eight hundred years. New cathedrals were built and existing

⁷³ Stephen of Lexington, *Letters from Ireland, 1228-29*, trans. B. W. O’Dwyer (Kalamazoo, MI: Cistercian Publications, 1982), 167; quoted in Barra Boydell, *A History of Music at Christ Church Cathedral, Dublin* (Dublin: Boydell Press, 2004), 21-22.

⁷⁴ Darina McCarthy, ‘Polyphony, Medieval’ in Harry White and Barra Boydell (eds), *The Encyclopaedia of Music in Ireland* (Dublin: University College Dublin Press, 2013), ii, 847.

monastic churches were integrated into the new cathedral system controlled by English clergy. The thirteenth century saw the steady growth of English colonists in Ireland, particularly in the east. An English government decree stated that ‘all the laws and customs which are observed in the realm of England should be observed in Ireland.’⁷⁵ Gradually English church music dominated. Ireland’s most active centres for the development of cathedral choral music were the two Dublin cathedrals, Christ Church and St Patrick’s. During the late Middle Ages, both consistently maintained high levels of musical activity and employed professional choirs and organists from the fifteenth century.

1.7.1 Christ Church Cathedral

Christ Church Cathedral is located at the heart of what was medieval Dublin. It was founded c1030 and re-established in the twelfth century as an Augustinian priory where the Archbishop of Dublin had his seat. Barra Boydell argues that although there is scant information on musical practice in Christ Church for the first 500 years of its existence, musical practice was subsequently well documented so that the cathedral ‘thus provides a unique perspective on music in Ireland, particularly over the past five centuries’.⁷⁶

The *Christ Church Psalter*, also known as the *Psalter of Stephen Derby*, is a magnificently illuminated manuscript made for Stephen of Derby, the cathedral’s prior from 1348 to 1382. It is the earliest source for music notation in the cathedral, and

⁷⁵ John A. Watt: ‘The Irish Church in the Middle Ages’ in Brendan Bradshaw and Daire Keogh (eds), *Christianity in Ireland: Revisiting the Story* (Dublin: Columba Press, 2002), 44.

⁷⁶ Barra Boydell, *Music at Christ Church before 1800: Documents and Selected Anthems* (Dublin: Four Courts Press, 1999), 14.

therefore the cathedral's earliest evidence of choral singing.⁷⁷ Alan J. Fletcher believes the *Psalter* began life 'in England as a commissioned manuscript and was imported to Dublin'.⁷⁸ Apart from its ornately decorated psalms and antiphons, the *Psalter* also contains records of priory business in the late fourteenth and early fifteenth centuries. In Figure 1.7, six monks appear to be singing *Cantate Domino canticum novum* ('O Sing unto the Lord a new song'), the first psalm of Friday matins, from a manuscript placed on a lectern. The monk at the front seems to be beating time with his right hand while another holds the manuscript open. The two grotesque figures in the top and bottom left corners appear to be parodying the singing of the monks. The music of the psalm is notated on four lines but it is not clear if it is plainsong or polyphony.

Figure 1.7: The *Psalter of Stephen of Derby* 1348-1374⁷⁹



⁷⁷ Kenneth Milne, 'Unique manuscripts reveal cathedral's rich history', *Irish Times*, 21 June 2004.

⁷⁸ Alan J. Fletcher, 'The de Derby Psalter of Christ Church Cathedral' in Raymond Gillespie and Raymond Refaüssé (eds), *The Medieval Manuscripts of Christ Church Cathedral, Dublin* (Dublin: Four Courts Press, 2006), 86.

⁷⁹ GB-Ob MS. Rawl. G.185, f.81, The Bodleian Library, University of Oxford.

Direct evidence of polyphonic singing in Christ Church is contained in a written endowment dated 1480. The endowment is from Thomas Bennet, a landlord (and son of a former lord mayor), with instructions for the provision of clothing and nourishment to

four Paraphonistae or four boys trained step by step in the science of music, and competently for the honour of God and the aforementioned church to be trained in that science in order daily and annually in perpetuity both to sing in the high choir of the aforementioned cathedral church in all divine services ... to be sung with plain chant and musical chants of this kind, called set song or priksong at the least, and other more learned musical chants.⁸⁰

‘Set song or pricksong’ means composed polyphonic music.⁸¹ A similar Christ Church deed makes reference to whether or not the boys are capable of singing polyphony, specifying that ‘the choir shall sing by note a mass with plainsong and set song, if it may be, and if no, at the least good and treatable plainsong’.⁸² By 1493 polyphony features specifically in a deed providing ‘for the stipend of a master to teach the four singing boys’ in ‘plainchant, polyphony, descant, and counter’⁸³ (Figure 1.8). ‘Descant and counter’ (*discantum et counter*) refers to the skills of polyphonic improvisation.⁸⁴ The significance of this document is that it establishes that the boys were trained in plainchant and in polyphony, both improvised and composed. It also shows enhanced commitment by the cathedral: the decision to employ a teacher to ensure that the boys would be able to perform as required was now more formalised and official than in 1480.

⁸⁰ Thomas Bennet, ‘Charter granting certain properties as endowment for the sustenance in food, drink and clothing of four singing boys to serve in the choir and Lady Chapel of the church’, 15 April 1480; quoted in Barra Boydell, *Music at Christ Church before 1800*, 238-239.

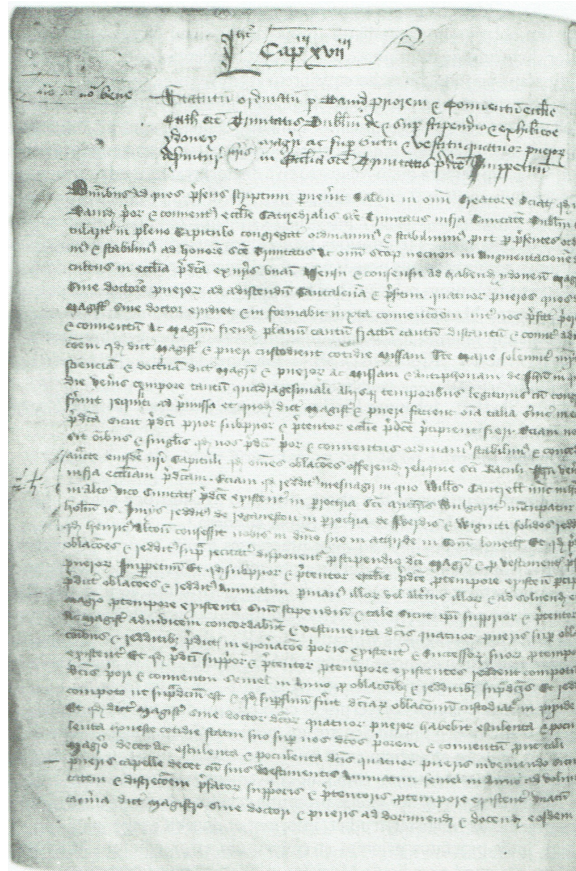
⁸¹ Barra Boydell, *Music at Christ Church before 1800*, 27.

⁸² ‘Deed providing for the stipend of a master to teach the four singing boys’, 28 August 1493, quoted in Barra Boydell, *Music at Christ Church before 1800*, 240-241.

⁸³ *Ibid.*, 240-241.

⁸⁴ Barra Boydell, *A History of Music at Christ Church Cathedral, Dublin*, 27.

Figure 1.8: Deed providing for the stipend of a master to teach the four singing boys, 28 August 1493. *Liber albus* (f 25v), copied 1505-1517⁸⁵



1.7.2 St Patrick's Cathedral

The site where Saint Patrick is traditionally believed to have baptised Christian converts in the fifth century was first consecrated in 1192. In 1254, the church on the site was raised to cathedral status, thus giving Dublin its second cathedral.⁸⁶ The two cathedrals co-existed under informal rules until 1300 when they signed the ‘Pacis composito’ which defined their relationship and acknowledged their shared status.⁸⁷

⁸⁵ ‘Deed providing for the stipend of a master to teach the four singing boys’, 28 August 1493; quoted in Barra Boydell, *Music at Christ Church before 1800*, 35.

⁸⁶ Kerry Houston, ‘St Patrick’s Cathedral Dublin’ in Harry White and Barra Boydell (eds), *The Encyclopaedia of Music in Ireland* (Dublin: University College Dublin Press, 2013), ii, 952.

⁸⁷ St Patrick’s Cathedral, ‘A History of Worship on the Site’, <<https://www.stpatrickscathedral.ie/a-history-of-worship-on-the-site>> [accessed 2 February 2017].

Amongst scant documentary evidence of the early existence of a choir in St Patrick's is a passing reference, within an early thirteenth-century administrative document, to 'William and Robert, vicars of Saint Patrick's'.⁸⁸ Otherwise there are few primary sources relating to the choir until after the restoration of the English monarchy in the mid-seventeenth century. According to Kerry Houston it is still possible to 'construct a probable picture' from these scant sources, and it is reasonable to presume that most choral singing in the early years of the cathedral consisted of plainchant.⁸⁹ W. H. Grindle outlines how St Patrick's Cathedral created 'a college of vicars choral, sixteen in number, who lived in the precincts of the cathedral and had a common hall'.⁹⁰ Houston also documents provision for six boy choristers in a St Patrick's charter dated 4 February 1432.⁹¹ Although this signifies the founding of the Choir School, – Ireland's first cathedral choir school – Houston considers it probable that boys' voices were already in use in the cathedral before this date and that therefore the charter is simply formalising its establishment. A brass engraving of Archbishop Richard Talbot (Figure 1.9) dated c1449 shows Talbot with a small group of four canons on the left and six boy choristers on the right.⁹²

⁸⁸ Hugh Jackson Lawlor, *The Fasti of St Patrick's, Dublin* (Dundalk: 1930), 34.

⁸⁹ Kerry Houston, 'Reformation to the Roseingraves, music 1550-1750' in John Crawford and Raymond Gillespie (eds), *St Patrick's Cathedral, Dublin: A History* (Dublin: Four Courts Press, 2009), 231.

⁹⁰ W. H. Grindle, *Irish Cathedral Music: A History of Music at the Cathedrals of the Church of Ireland* (Belfast: Institute of Irish Studies, 1989), 139. The number seems to have fluctuated but had settled at sixteen by 1531.

⁹¹ Kerry Houston, 'St Patrick's Cathedral Dublin' in Harry White and Barra Boydell (eds), *The Encyclopaedia of Music in Ireland* (Dublin: University College Dublin Press, 2013), ii, 952.

⁹² Harold B. Clarke, 'Cathedral, close and community, c.1220 to c.1500' in John Crawford and Raymond Gillespie (eds), *St Patrick's Cathedral, Dublin: A History* (Dublin: Four Courts Press, 2009), 51.

Figure 1.9: A brass of Archbishop Richard Talbot located in the quire in St Patrick's Cathedral



The music that these men and boys sang was predominantly polyphonic and *a cappella*. According to Barra Boydell, the evidence from English cathedrals and monasteries suggests that ‘by the thirteenth and fourteenth centuries polyphony had become a normal part of the musical celebrations of the office and mass especially on major feast days, with the practice of improvised descant being particularly widespread’.⁹³ He maintains that ‘even where sacred polyphony was most widely practised it was essentially an elaboration of plainchant.’⁹⁴

⁹³ Barra Boydell, *A History of Music at Christ Church Cathedral, Dublin*, 20.

⁹⁴ *Ibid.*, 21.

Primary evidence of the earliest singing includes the *Dublin Troper*, the oldest surviving Irish Sarum book.⁹⁵ It was compiled for use at St Patrick's Cathedral c1320.⁹⁶ Frank Lawrence claims that introducing the 'Sarum liturgical and chant tradition at St Patrick's Cathedral was seen more as a tidying up of the already familiar, rather than as the creation of something new'.⁹⁷ It remained in use until the mid-sixteenth century and is, according to Alan Fletcher, 'of singular importance to an understanding of the history of medieval liturgy and music in St Patrick's'.⁹⁸ Fletcher notes that, rather than an office book, the *Dublin Troper* is 'in the main a repertory of musical material compiled for consultative purposes', most likely by the vicars choral.⁹⁹ An example from the manuscript shows the opening of *Omnis caro peccaverat, viam suam corruperat* at the bottom of the page (Example 1.6). It is a song about the Flood and God's dealings with Noah. It is clear that the song was competently notated by learned and accomplished scribes, although there is evidence that it was done 'at speed'.¹⁰⁰

⁹⁵ Frank Lawrence, 'Sarum Use in Ireland' in Harry White and Barra Boydell (eds), *The Encyclopaedia of Music in Ireland* (Dublin: University College Dublin Press, 2013), ii, 917.

⁹⁶ Ann Buckley, 'Dublin Troper' in Harry White and Barra Boydell (eds), *The Encyclopaedia of Music in Ireland* (Dublin: University College Dublin Press, 2013), i, 331.

⁹⁷ Frank Lawrence, 'Sarum Use in Ireland', 917.

⁹⁸ Alan J. Fletcher, 'Liturgy and music in the medieval cathedral', in John Crawford and Raymond Gillespie (eds), *St Patrick's Cathedral, Dublin: A History* (Dublin: Four Courts Press, 2009), 131.

⁹⁹ *Ibid.*, 132.

¹⁰⁰ John Stevens, *Word and Music in the Middle Ages: Song, Narrative, Dance and Drama, 1050-1350* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1986), 144.

Example 1.6: Opening of *Omnis caro peccaverat, viam suam corruerat*¹⁰¹



Despite the uniqueness of some of the material in the *Dublin Troper*, Boydell concludes that plainchant sung in medieval Ireland ‘is unlikely to have differed significantly from what would have been heard in comparable English cathedrals.’¹⁰²

Of greater significance, the *Dublin Troper* contains the only extant medieval three-part setting of the Annunciation carol ‘Angelus ad Virginem’.¹⁰³ It is a version of the ‘Hail Mary’ in verse form which was very popular in the Middle Ages (even earning a mention in Chaucer’s *The Miller’s Tale*¹⁰⁴) and remains popular today. Example 1.7

¹⁰¹ GB-Cu Add. MS 710 (the *Dublin Troper*), Cambridge University Library, fols. 126-127.

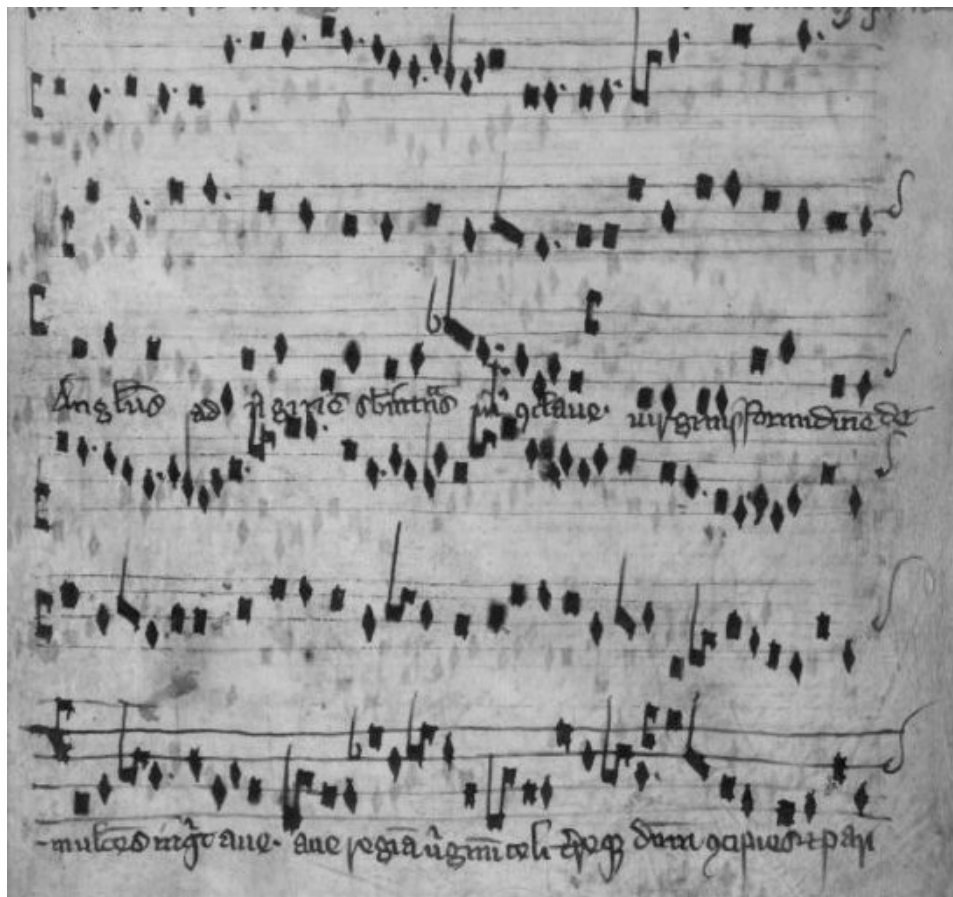
¹⁰² Barra Boydell, Barra Boydell, *A History of Music at Christ Church Cathedral, Dublin*, 20.

¹⁰³ Barra Boydell, *Music at Christ Church before 1800*, 26.

¹⁰⁴ The scholar Nicholas sings it to the accompaniment of his psaltery: ‘playing so swetely that all the chamber rong and Angelus ad virginem he song . . .’ in Geoffrey Chaucer, ‘The Miller’s Tale’ in Peter Levi (ed.), *Geoffrey Chaucer: The Canterbury Tales* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1985), 82.

shows the setting in three clear parts in *fauxbourdon* style with the melody in the middle voice. Example 1.8 shows a transcription by Ronan Scolard of verse two.¹⁰⁵ In the original, the text is placed underneath the lowest voice and the parts are written in black mensural notation (for a modern transcription, see Example 1.8). Where originally *fauxbourdon* style featured first inversion chords, this setting is less restrictive, and therefore shows the further development of polyphony. Both *Angelus ad Virginem* and *Cormacus scripsit* are valuable primary sources in tracing the development of Irish choral music from the twelfth to fourteenth centuries.

Example 1.7: ‘Angelus ad Virginem’, *Dublin Troper*, Cambridge University Library MS add. 710 f130



¹⁰⁵ *Angelus ad Virginem* transcribed by Ronan Scolard from Add. MS 710 known as The *Dublin Troper*, Cambridge University Library.

Example 1.8: *Angelus ad Virginem*, transcribed by Ronan Scolard

Angelus ad vir-ginem sub-intrans in con-cla - ve, Vir-ginis for - mi - di --nem de-

mul -cens in-quit a - ve, A - ve re - gi-na vir - gi-num, Coe - li ter-

rae-que do - mi-num, Con - ci - pi - es et pa - ri - es In-ta - cta Sa-

lu - tem ho - minum, Tu - por-ta coe-li fa - cta, Me - de-la cri - mi - num.

Choral singing in churches remained predominantly *a cappella* up into the late medieval period. Accordingly there is no reference to an organ in St Patrick's until two were presented as gifts in 1471.¹⁰⁶ Innovations which added harmony to plainchant (which includes *fauxbourdon*) first appear in St Patrick's around the fifteenth century.¹⁰⁷ This style of polyphony involved three voice lines, one singing the *cantus firmus* melody (usually a chant) and the other two improvising harmonies which were normally based on what would now be labelled first inversions and with predominately parallel movement. In England and Ireland the *cantus firmus* was usually in the middle voice. Houston also asserts that chant was still the predominant music in the early fifteenth century:

Any polyphony would have been performed by adult male soloists, so only a small number of singers was required. The boys would have sung the chant but they would not have participated in polyphony although they may have contributed to *faburden*. Polyphony (like *faburden*) normally utilized three voices up to the middle of the fifteenth century. However, by the end of the fifteenth century general practice moved to the use of a five-part chorus including boys' voices.¹⁰⁸

1.8 Polyphonic Singing outside Dublin

Evidence of early polyphonic singing outside Dublin also exists. For example, the *Smarmore Fragments* – discovered in Smarmore, Co. Louth in 1961 – are a set of four pieces of slate inscribed with three-part textless mensural notation (Figure 1.10). According to A. J. Bliss, they have been dated by Thurston Dart to about 1430.¹⁰⁹ They are 'thought to represent exercises for teaching choristers, especially since they belong

¹⁰⁶ Gerard Gillen, 'Church Music in Dublin, 1500-1900' in Brian Boydell (ed.), *Four Centuries of Music in Ireland* (London: British Broadcasting Corporation, 1979), 23.

¹⁰⁷ Kerry Houston, 'Reformation to the Roseingraves, Music 1550-1750', 232.

¹⁰⁸ *Ibid.*, 232.

¹⁰⁹ A. J. Bliss, 'Smarmore Inscribed Slates', *Journal of the County Louth Archaeological Society*, 15 (1961), 21- 22.

to a larger collection of other schoolwork activities in both English (medical and veterinary texts) and Latin (mainly ecclesiastical) from the same site'.¹¹⁰ This evidence of instruction in polyphonic singing in Co. Louth suggests that there may have been a tradition of choral singing in other areas removed from the cathedral cities.

Figure 1.10: Smarmore Fragments, National Museum of Ireland NMI1961: 12, 24, 34, 41



¹¹⁰ Darina McCarthy, 'Smarmore tablets' in Harry White and Barra Boydell (eds), *The Encyclopaedia of Music in Ireland* (Dublin: University College Dublin Press, 2013), ii, 938.

1.9 Conclusion

The early existence of a rich musical culture in Ireland is substantially supported by evidence including early instruments such as *trumpas*, Bronze Age wood pipes, bronze horns and crotales. This evidence extends beyond instruments to singing which, based on the quantity and centrality of references to it in legend and myth, enjoyed a prominent role in early Irish society and was associated with great power. Of particular relevance to the present study are descriptions in the historical record of ancient categories of singing such as weeping music (*goltraige*), laughing music (*geantraige*), and sleeping music (*suantraige*). By deduction these, arguably, could constitute the earliest existence of choral music in Ireland.

In pre-Christian medieval times, the tribal nature of Irish society was not conducive to the development of music. Society was unstable, with Irish rulers living in constant fear for their lives. The arrival of Christianity, however, precipitated development, particularly within the monastic setting which yielded the earliest evidence of what today is recognised formally as Irish choral music. This evidence includes the *Stowe Missal* (seventh century) the *Antiphony of Bangor* (seventh century), and the Irish *Liber Hymnorum* (eleventh century).

Despite the scarcity of primary sources, it is possible to trace the trajectory of polyphonic choral singing in Ireland from the twelfth to the fifteenth centuries. Evidence includes the *Dicant nunc Iudei* (two-part) and the *Cormacus scripsit* (three-part) from the twelfth century, the *Dublin Troper* – which contains the first extant three-part setting of *Angelus ad Virginem* – and the three-part vocal exercises on the Smarmore slates from the fourteenth century, all of which supports the conclusion that

polyphony in Ireland was in line with developments not only in England but also in various other European countries. In some instances it may even have been at the forefront.

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Chapter Two

Sixteenth to Eighteenth Centuries

2.1 Cathedral Choral Music in Dublin in the Sixteenth and Seventeenth Centuries

In 1537, royal commissioners arrived in Ireland to suppress religious houses. References to the Roman church were removed, relics and shrines destroyed.¹ The commissioners, successful with their task as they moved around the island, eventually met resistance when they arrived in Dublin. Local officials argued that Christ Church was comparable to St Paul's in London: central, where sermons were made, where congregations assembled and processed, where births and victories of royalty were celebrated, and where anthems of praise were sung to honour royalty.² Their argument was persuasive. In 1539, at the direction of Henry VIII, what had been a priory at Christ Church was reconstituted as a cathedral of the New Foundation with a dean and chapter.³

It also occasioned the institution of a cathedral choir. This, according to the 'Charter of the New Foundation' (1539), was modelled on that of St Patrick's Cathedral and involved the institution of vicars choral. Four were senior vicars and others were

¹ Barra Boydell, *A History of Music at Christ Church Cathedral, Dublin* (Dublin: Boydell Press, 2004), 32-33.

² State Papers, King Henry the Eighth, 545; quoted in Barra Boydell, *A History of Music at Christ Church Cathedral, Dublin*, 32.

'standith in the middles of the said cite ... hit is the verie station place, wher as the Kynges Gracs honorable Parliamentes and Counsaillies ar kepyn, all sermons ar made, and wher as the congregacions of the said cite, in processions and station daies, and at all other tymes necessarie, assemblith, and at all tymes of the birth of our mooste noble Princes and Princesses, and other tymes of victorie and tryumphe, processions are made, and 'Te Deum laudamus' customabilie is songe, to the laude and praise of God, and the honor of our said Princes and Princesses.'

³ Barra Boydell, 'Christ Church Cathedral' in Harry White and Barra Boydell (eds), *The Encyclopaedia of Music in Ireland* (Dublin: University College Dublin Press, 2013), i, 193.

referred to as ‘vicars minor’. There were several additional positions created including three choral clerks (additional singers who would later be known as ‘stipendiaries’):

... of whom the first shall be learned in the musical art as well as in playing the organ and in singing plainchant and polyphony, and equally in sufficient descant for instructing the boys, who shall be master of the boys under the precentor and shall minister in the daily mass of the Blessed Virgin Mary and in the high mass; as often as any mass with polyphonic singing shall be celebrated.⁴

Other newly established positions included the organist and master of the boys, the sacrist, who assisted the singers at choral services, and another clerk who assisted the celebrant.⁵ The organist and master of the boys was expected to be ‘learned in the musical art as well as in playing the organ and in singing plainchant and polyphony, and equally in sufficient descant for instructing the boys’.⁶ The musical material consisted predominantly of plainchant and polyphony. The duties of the earliest known holder of the post, Robert Heyward, are defined in a deed of 1546 which further formalises and establishes the existence of the choir and of polyphony.⁷ Notably, Heyward was expected to source new music and ‘... to instruct the choristers in pricksong and discant to four *minims* ...’⁸ One year later, King Edward VI provided funds and instructions for increasing the size of the choir by ‘six priests and two singing boys more than presently exist’.⁹ Other documents of this period address

⁴ ‘Charter of the New Foundation of Christ Church Cathedral’, 12 December 1539; quoted in Barra Boydell, *Music at Christ Church before 1800: Documents and Selected Anthems* (Dublin: Four Courts Press, 1999), 243-246.

⁵ Barra Boydell, *A History of Music at Christ Church Cathedral, Dublin*, 33.

⁶ *Ibid.*, 35.

⁷ Barra Boydell, *Music at Christ Church before 1800*, 250.

⁸ ‘Abstract of deed establishing the salary and duties of Robert Heyward, organist and choir master’, 16 March 1546, Deed 1201, Calendar of the Christ Church deeds, Appendix VII to the twenty fourth report of the deputy keeper of the Public Records of Ireland (Dublin, 1892), 140; quoted in Barra Boydell, *Music at Christ Church before 1800*, 42.

⁹ ‘Letters patent from King Edward VI increasing the choir by six priests and two singing boys’, 12 July 1547, Registrum Novum iii, RCB, C6/1/6/3, 1168; quoted in Barra Boydell (ed.), *Music at Christ Church before 1800*, 43

increased stipends for the vicars choral and choristers, and various orders of services as they were observed towards the end of Queen Mary's reign (1557-1558).¹⁰ All of this royal attention and funding played a crucial role in the development of the choir in Christ Church.

In 1559 the Act of Uniformity definitively established the Anglican Rite. As the sixteenth century wore on, Christ Church grew more and more closely associated with the state. The choir regularly sang in the law courts, for the lord mayor and lord deputy, and collaborated with the lord mayor's musicians for important performances, for example, on feast or state days.¹¹ Christ Church became 'the state chapel of British rule in Ireland.'¹² Accordingly, the numbers of organists and choral singers from England increased. Notable appointments include the English composer John Farmer (c1570-c1601) as organist and master of the boys in 1596, followed in 1609 by Thomas Bateson (c1570-1630), another renowned English composer, and by Randall Jewett, also an Englishman, in 1629. By the early seventeenth century, the practice of hiring English choirmen had become the norm in both Christ Church and St Patrick's.¹³ In both Dublin cathedrals there was a continuous supply of English musicians, many of whom had strong connections with the Chapel Royal in London.¹⁴ This meant that over the course of this key stage in the development of choral music in the two Dublin cathedrals there was little scope for local Irish organists, composers or singers. This was to have a significant and continuing impact on the development of choral music in Ireland.

¹⁰ Barra Boydell, *Music at Christ Church before 1800*, 36-46.

¹¹ *Ibid.*, 47.

¹² Barra Boydell, 'Christ Church Cathedral', i, 193.

¹³ *Ibid.*, 193.

¹⁴ Kerry Houston, 'St Patrick's Cathedral' in Harry White and Barra Boydell (eds), *The Encyclopaedia of Music in Ireland* (Dublin: University College Dublin Press, 2013), ii, 953.

Part of this impact was felt in the area of composition, with the 1620s and 1630s seeing ‘increased activity in providing new music’.¹⁵ Working with scant primary sources, Barra Boydell examined the purchase of paper and the payment of copyists and was able to confirm that there was ‘considerable activity in the copying and purchase of music’.¹⁶ There was, however, very limited involvement by Irish composers. Boydell, for example, catalogues twenty-two composers listed in a Christ Church collection of fifty-one anthem texts from 1662 (many were not associated with any composer). Many of them are well-known names: Orlando Gibbons (six anthems), William Byrd (four), John Bull (four), John Hutchinson (three), Nathaniel Giles (two or possibly three), Thomas Tomkins (possibly two), Adrian Batten (one), Thomas Morley (one), Martin Pearson (one), and John Ward (one).¹⁷ All twenty-two, however, were English.

This exclusion of the native, Catholic Irish from the niche area of choral composition was widely reflected on a grand scale in the bigger social and cultural picture. From the late seventeenth century, Protestants owned nearly all Ireland’s land. English law, language and culture were imposed, asserted in law by the passing in 1695 of the first of the Penal Laws which restricted Catholics in relation to religion, property and education.¹⁸ There was massive inequality, widespread poverty, social tension, and violence.¹⁹ By the time the laws were repealed in 1776, only 5% of Irish land was owned by Catholics, even though Catholics comprised 75% of the population.²⁰ By

¹⁵ Barra Boydell, *A History of Music at Christ Church Cathedral, Dublin*, 55-58.

¹⁶ *Ibid.*, 55-58.

¹⁷ *Ibid.*, 59.

¹⁸ Aidan Clarke, ‘The Colonisation of Ulster and the Rebellion of 1641’ in T. W. Moody and F. X. Martin (eds), *The Course of Irish History* (Dublin: Mercier Press, 3rd edn 1994), 219.

¹⁹ Arthur Young, ‘A Tour in Ireland 1776-1779’ (London: G. Bell & Sons, 1892), ii, pt 2, 35-36; quoted in Maureen Wall, ‘The Age of the Penal Laws (1691-1778)’ in T. W. Moody and F. X. Martin (eds), *The Course of Irish History* ((Dublin: Mercier Press, 3rd edn 1994), 221.

²⁰ Maureen Wall, ‘The Age of the Penal Laws (1691-1778)’ in T. W. Moody and F. X. Martin (eds), *The Course of Irish History* (Dublin: Mercier Press, 3rd edn 1994), 220.

the end of the eighteenth century, demographic records for Dublin along class lines indicate 37,305 upper and middle class, predominantly Protestant, and 144,489 servants and lower class, almost entirely Catholic.²¹

The paucity of Irish musicians and composers is a reflection of this cultural domination, and this was manifest in choral music where any development that took place was under English control. Although Catholic priests said mass in private houses and in the countryside, and there was Catholic education taking place in hedge schools, for almost 300 years the Irish Catholic church saw no development in liturgical music, choral or otherwise.

2.2 Choral Music in Dublin's 'Golden Age'

Musical taste in mid-eighteenth-century Dublin was inextricably linked to these unequal political and cultural conditions. With its population more than doubling from around 60,000 in 1700 to about 140,000 by 1760,²² Dublin was second in size only to London in the British Isles. Brian Boydell calls this period the 'golden age', in that 'a highly cultivated society encouraged and patronised the arts, including most notably architecture, literature, the theatre and music.'²³ Dublin boasted a vibrant, international musical scene modelled on that of London. There now existed in Ireland, however, a sharp division between two separate cultures – that of the Anglo-Irish ruling class and that of the now chronically subordinated Catholic, native Irish. Accordingly, music

²¹ John Warburton, James Whitelaw and Robert Walsh, *History of the City of Dublin* (London: Cadell and Davies, 1818), ii, Appendix 1, vii.

²² Brian Boydell, *A Dublin Musical Calendar, 1700-1760* (Dublin: Irish Academic Press, 1988), 24.

²³ Brian Boydell, 'Music in Eighteenth-Century Dublin' in Brian Boydell (ed.), *Four Centuries of Music in Ireland* (London: British Broadcasting Corporation, 1979), 28.

and musical taste in Dublin were dominated by the ascendancy and were not accessible to wider Irish society. According to Brian Boydell:

. . . the city of Dublin settled down in the eighteenth century to a period in which the elegance and idle affluence associated with a colonial governing class formed the ideal background for the cultivation of the arts which were considered to be an essential decoration of sophisticated and cultured life.²⁴

2.3 Cathedral Music

The pre-eminent expression of this artistic growth was to be found in cathedrals. By the mid-eighteenth century the two Dublin cathedrals were providing gainful employment to a number of choral singers. According to Gerard Gillen and Andrew Johnstone, ‘Up to the nineteenth century the history of cathedral music in Ireland is populated largely by English singers, organists and composers’.²⁵ Singers were able to earn double fees by singing in the choirs of both cathedrals, something the two cathedrals not only allowed but encouraged so as to attract the best possible English church musicians to Ireland.²⁶ A tradition also developed wherein the choirs sang at the services of the college chapel in Trinity College.²⁷

Henry Purcell was commissioned for celebrations of the centenary of Trinity College, Dublin and composed the ode for voices and strings, ‘Great parent, hail’.²⁸ It was performed alongside John Blow’s anthem ‘I beheld, and lo!’ in Christ Church Cathedral on 9 January 1694.²⁹ The chorus was most likely provided by the two

²⁴ Ibid., 28.

²⁵ Gerard Gillen and Andrew Johnstone (eds), *Irish Musical Studies 6: A Historical Anthology of Irish Church Music* (Dublin: Four Courts Press, Dublin 2001), 13.

²⁶ Barra Boydell, *Music at Christ Church before 1800*, 14.

²⁷ Gerard Gillen and Andrew Johnstone, *A Historical Anthology of Irish Church Music*, 18.

²⁸ Martin Adams, ‘Henry Purcell’ in Harry White and Barra Boydell (eds), *The Encyclopaedia of Music in Ireland* (Dublin: University College Dublin Press, 2013), ii, 865.

²⁹ Jonathan Keates, *Purcell: A Biography* (Boston: North Eastern University Press, 1995), 251.

cathedrals. According to Brian Boydell, ‘The event presaged the great vogue of oratorio which was to become so characteristic of music life in Dublin forty years later.’³⁰

Significantly, a substantial amount of the music sung in the Dublin cathedrals was being written in Dublin. This includes compositions by Robert Shenton (1730-1798), for example, who was appointed dean’s vicar in Christ Church in 1757, and by members of the Roseingrave family.³¹ The fact remained, however, that compositions originating in Dublin were still generally composed by English composers. Robert Shenton had been a chorister and lay clerk in Magdalene College, Oxford, and also a lay clerk at Hereford. Daniel Roseingrave was an English-born organist and composer who had been organist in Gloucester, Winchester, and Salisbury cathedrals before moving with his family to Dublin.³²

No Irishman was appointed to sing in the choir of Christ Church Cathedral until 1771.³³ The first was John Andrew Stevenson, born in 1767 [or c1761?] at Crane Lane, Dublin, to Scottish parents who died when he was young.³⁴ His adoptive parents helped him by-pass cathedral rules on nationality to enable him to become a choirboy in Christ Church. Ultimately, despite not being English, he ended up a vicar-choral in both Christ Church and St Patrick’s where he not only sang but also composed eight

³⁰ Brian Boydell, ‘Music before 1700’ in T. W. Cronin and W. E. Vaughan (ed.), *A New History of Ireland, IV: Eighteenth-Century Ireland* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1986), 558.

³¹ Gerard Gillen and Andrew Johnstone (eds), *A Historical Anthology of Irish Church Music*, 19-20.

³² Barra Boydell, *A History of Music at Christ Church Cathedral, Dublin*, 136.

³³ Gerard Gillen and Andrew Johnstone (eds), *A Historical Anthology of Irish Church Music*, 19.

³⁴ Lisa Parker and Elaine Sherwin, ‘Stevenson, John Andrew’ in Harry White and Barra Boydell (eds), *The Encyclopaedia of Music in Ireland* (Dublin: University College Dublin Press, 2013), ii, 959. Although his birth date is given as 1767 on his memorial in Christ Church Cathedral, Stevenson may have been born in 1761.

services and twenty-six anthems ‘in the style of Haydn’, according to the tablet beneath his memorial bust in Christ Church.³⁵ Chants and sets of responses by Stevenson are sufficient to place him among the fifteen composers in Gillen and Johnstone’s *Historical Anthology of Irish Church Music*.³⁶ According to Lisa Parker and Elaine Sherwin, ‘he was the leading Irish composer of cathedral music in the early nineteenth century and remained one of the most popular composers in the Irish cathedral repertoire throughout the 1800s’.³⁷

Alternatively, Richard Woodward (1743-1777) is sometimes credited as the first Irish composer to write choral music. Barra Boydell lists nine anthems, a revised version of the ‘Veni creator spiritus’, and ‘an attractive service in B flat and a number of chants’ in the publication *Cathedral Music*.³⁸ However, because he was English-born and only moved to Ireland aged eight when his English father was appointed to the Christ Church choir, his potential status as the first Irish composer of choral music depends on whether he is viewed as Irish at all, or English, or Anglo-Irish.³⁹

In Christ Church’s extensive music archives, even the local musicians listed were generally from an English background. Archived repertoire from the mid-eighteenth century includes the texts of 186 anthems of which 130 are verse anthems: forty-eight by Maurice Greene (1696-1755), thirty-nine by William Croft (1678-1727), fifteen by William Boyce (1711-1779) and thirteen each by John Blow (1649-1708) and Henry

³⁵ Gerard Gillen and Andrew Johnstone (eds), *A Historical Anthology of Irish Church Music*, 140.

³⁶ *Ibid.*, 127-139.

³⁷ Lisa Parker and Elaine Sherwin, ‘Stevenson, John Andrew’, 960.

³⁸ Barra Boydell, ‘Woodward, Richard [the younger]’ in Harry White and Barra Boydell (eds), *The Encyclopaedia of Music in Ireland* (Dublin: University College Dublin Press, 2013), ii, 1073.

³⁹ *Ibid.*, 1073.

Purcell (1659-1695).⁴⁰ They were all English composers. There are also thirty-three surviving score-books, most dating from the eighteenth century. In these, the composers who wrote the most anthems were Boyce (who composed thirty), Greene (twenty-seven), Handel (twenty-one, including choruses from oratorios and other choral works), and Shenton (seventeen). Again, they are all English. The most popular composers of services were Aldrich, King and Stevenson (five each) and Child, Dupuis, and Shenton (four each).⁴¹

Kerry Houston provides much information about the music of that period in St Patrick's Cathedral.⁴² The quantity of new anthems, services and other settings being acquired and sung by the choir was growing rapidly. The cathedral regularly purchased new music publications, for example, Maurice Greene's *Forty Select Anthems* of 1743. In the space of only a few decades, the amount of music was almost double that recorded in the early eighteenth century.⁴³ Part of Houston's evidence resides in the work of a lay-vicar named William Taverner who, in 1738, began receiving an additional payment to produce sets of music books containing the choir's entire repertoire. The increasing quantity which his work recorded was matched by quality. Houston notes how the choir sang complex music 'of a comparable standard with cathedrals of the first rank in England and far ahead of the more provincial ones'.⁴⁴

⁴⁰ Barra Boydell, *Music at Christ Church before 1800*, 180-181.

⁴¹ *Ibid.*, 181.

⁴² Kerry Houston, 'Reformation to the Roseingraves, music 1550-1750' in John Crawford and Raymond Gillespie (eds), *St. Patrick's Cathedral, Dublin: A History* (Dublin: Four Courts Press, 2009), 231-253.

⁴³ *Ibid.*, 251.

⁴⁴ Kerry Houston, 'Music before the Guinness restoration, 1750-1860' in John Crawford and Raymond Gillespie (eds), *St. Patrick's Cathedral, Dublin: A History* (Dublin: Four Courts Press, 2009), 286.

The aforementioned Roseingraves were among the most important figures associated with St Patrick's around this time. They were a colourful family who contributed much to – perhaps even dominated – the musical life of the cathedral.⁴⁵ Daniel and son Ralph were accomplished musicians who wrote music for the cathedral. Daniel (1655-1727), originally moved to Dublin in 1698 when he was appointed joint organist for both cathedrals. He had a fiery temperament and was often in trouble with his employers. Only four of his compositions have survived.⁴⁶ His son Ralph (1695-1747) was organist in Christ Church from 1727-1747, having taken over when his father died. The Christ Church archives include the scores and part-books of nineteen anthems and two services by Ralph.⁴⁷ Daniel's other son Thomas (c1690-1766) was a prolific composer. A substantial number of his compositions have survived, although few of them are choral pieces. Once more, all three of these figures who dominated an area of Dublin's artistic and cultural life that was closely related to choral music were English.

2.4 Parish Church Music

While cathedrals were overwhelmingly the primary domain for choral music in Ireland, there is evidence of a certain amount of music in parish churches also. This was mostly in Protestant churches and mostly in the Pale.⁴⁸ All the old church and monastic buildings surviving intact through the centuries of enforced rule belonged to

⁴⁵ Kerry Houston, 'Music before the Guinness restoration, 1750-1860', 286.

⁴⁶ Douglas Gunn, 'Music in 17th and 18th Century Dublin', *The Journal of Music* (2003), <<http://journalofmusic.com/focus/music-17th-and-18th-century-dublin-part-1>>, <<http://journalofmusic.com/focus/music-17th-and-18th-century-dublin-part-2>> [accessed 13 July 2016].

⁴⁷ Barra Boydell, *Music at Christ Church before 1800*, 181.

⁴⁸ Harry White, 'Church Music and Musicology in Ireland: An Afterword' in *Irish Musical Studies 2: Music and the Church* (Dublin: Irish Academic Press, 1993), 333.

the Church of Ireland.⁴⁹ The inevitable result, as described by Denise Neary, is that ‘the study of parish church music of this period is, necessarily, overwhelmingly dominated by the music and tradition of the Church of Ireland.’⁵⁰ She finds that congregational music-making in parish churches was confined to ‘the unaccompanied metrical singing of psalms’⁵¹ Normally, with no one to lead the congregation, the singing was hesitant and untidy.⁵² In 1678, Edward Wetenall, while precentor of Christ Church Cathedral, wrote a treatise on singing which includes an entertaining section about parochial singing, providing suggestions for ways to improve leadership of the psalms, and ways to circumvent the problems created by those vocally challenged:

such a person begins the tuning of the psalm, as has himself a tuneable and harmonious voice, which may a little set the people in: then let some others who will keep tune tolerably be placed at meet distances, whose [sic] voices may be a kind of guide and government to the rest. And if there are any (as in most congregations there are some) who squeak, or bawl, or otherwise by indecent voices, disturb the rest, let those people be privately admonished by the ministers, not so much quite to desist from singing (for their hearts may be good) as to sing softly, and a little above a whispering tone, to be heard chiefly by God and themselves.⁵³

Nicholas Temperley describes how the less confident singers waited for the stronger singers to move to the next note, thus creating a drag.⁵⁴ This was known as the ‘old way of singing’. In its most raw form it must have been very hard to listen to, and yet

⁴⁹ Denise Neary, ‘Seventeenth-century Irish parish church music’ in Brian Boydell and Kerry Heuston (eds), *Irish Musical Studies 10: Music, Ireland and the Seventeenth Century* (Dublin: Four Courts Press, 2009), 168.

⁵⁰ *Ibid.*, 168.

⁵¹ *Ibid.*, 169.

⁵² Denise Neary, ‘Music in Late Seventeenth- and Eighteenth-Century Dublin Churches’ in Patrick F. Devine and Harry White (eds), *Irish Musical Studies 4: The Maynooth International Musicological Conference 1995 Selected Proceedings: Part One* (Dublin: Four Courts Press, 1996), 104.

⁵³ Edward Wetenhall, ‘Of gifts and Offices in the Publick Worship of God (Dublin, 1678)’; quoted in Denise Neary, ‘Seventeenth-century Irish parish church music’ in Barra Boydell and Kerry Heuston (eds), *Irish Musical Studies 10: Music, Ireland and the Seventeenth Century* (Dublin: Four Courts Press, 2009), 172.

⁵⁴ Nicholas Temperley, ‘The Old Way of Singing: Its Origins and Development’, *Journal of the American Musicological Society*, 34 (1981), 523.

it was eventually refined and formalised into a church-singing style called ‘lining out’ in which a hymn leader sang each line first on their own for the congregation to repeat.⁵⁵

In his study of the parish music in St Michan’s Church, Dublin (dating from 1095 and rebuilt in 1686), Barra Boydell examined the churchwarden’s account book and the minutes of vestry meetings.⁵⁶ The duties of the organist included playing a psalm tune (after the Third Collect at morning and evening prayer) and using stops to suit the number of the congregation as well as the sound of the organ so that ‘the voice of the people may be duly proportioned and equally mingled, that the instruments of music and singers may be as one ...’⁵⁷ It is assumed that this was unison choral singing. The organist’s duties also included one hour per week teaching children of local charity schools to sing ‘the common and usual psalm-tunes in perfect time and tune with the organ’, in order to lead the singing on Sundays.⁵⁸ Apparently there are many examples of children from charity schools leading the psalms.⁵⁹

According to Boydell, congregational hymn singing would not become a normal part of the service until the late eighteenth and early nineteenth centuries:

It was the metrical singing of psalm tunes which constituted the only form of singing in most Anglican parish churches. Church choirs in the modern sense were unknown, and the singing of psalms in parish churches might be led from the organ or, in the absence of an organ, by a clerk singing the melodies.⁶⁰

⁵⁵ Denise Neary, ‘Music in Late Seventeenth- and Eighteenth-Century Dublin Churches’, 104.

⁵⁶ Barra Boydell, ‘St Michan’s Church Dublin: The Installation of the Organ in 1725 and the Duties of the Organist’, *Dublin Historical Record*, 46 (1993), 101-120.

⁵⁷ *Ibid.*, 110.

⁵⁸ *Ibid.*, 111.

⁵⁹ Denise Neary, ‘Music in Late Seventeenth- and Eighteenth-Century Dublin Churches’, 104.

⁶⁰ Barra Boydell, ‘St Michan’s Church Dublin’, 111.

Wetenhall and other men of the church including William King, Joseph Boyse and Robert Craghead had regular discussions – some of them heated – regarding whether or not the psalms should be metrical and accompanied by organ or other instruments.⁶¹

2.5 Charity Concerts

Increasingly, the musical element of Dublin's 'golden age' was being generated outside the church, chiefly via the Europe-wide rise of the public concert. In Ireland, this was driven by charities. Eighteenth-century Dublin was a city of great affluence but also of poverty. Bordering the wealth of the elegant Georgian squares and Trinity College was poverty on a vast scale. High mortality rates were normal and the debtors' prison was always full.⁶² There was, on the other hand, much philanthropy and patronage.⁶³ Musical performances were frequently tied to charitable events, such as fundraisers for hospitals, orphanages and prisons. By the close of the eighteenth century there were about twenty such organisations expressly established in Ireland for this charitable purpose.

Accordingly, the growth of Irish choral music in contexts other than that of the cathedrals accelerated in the first half of the eighteenth century partially as a result of the establishment of seven prominent voluntary hospitals. Among these, Mercer's Hospital opened in Stephen's Street in 1734 and was the first to establish benefit concerts and the only one to hold annual and bi-annual concerts.⁶⁴ These ran from

⁶¹ Denise Neary, 'Seventeenth-century Irish parish church music', 172-175.

⁶² J. L. McCracken, 'The social structure and social life 1714-60' in T. W. Moody and W. E. Vaughan (eds), *A New History of Ireland, IV: Eighteenth-Century Ireland 1691-1800* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1986), 32-33.

⁶³ Denis Arnold, 'Charity Music in Eighteenth-Century Dublin', *The Galpin Society Journal*, 21, (1968), 162.

⁶⁴ Triona O'Hanlon, 'Music for Mercer's: The Mercer's Hospital Music Collection and Charity Music in Eighteenth-Century Dublin' (PhD Dissertation, Dublin Institute of Technology, 2012), 122.

1736 until at least 1780. A rich legacy of fifty manuscripts and seven printed volumes of music survive from these concerts and includes works by ten composers, albeit none of them Irish: Handel, Greene, Boyce, Purcell, Corelli, Humfrey, Avison, Barsanti, Stanley and Festing. According to Triona O’Hanlon:

The Mercer’s Hospital Music Collection is one of the most significant eighteenth-century music collections surviving in Ireland and its examination reveals important information about musical life and performance practice in eighteenth-century Dublin, setting the contents of the collection within the wider context of extant sources for works by George Frideric Handel, Maurice Greene and William Boyce.⁶⁵

The first benefit concert took place on 8 April 1736 when about seventy musicians performed Handel’s *Utrecht Te Deum, Jubilate* and *Coronation Anthem*.⁶⁶ According to Brian Boydell it is possible that this was the first time a Dublin audience had heard any of Handel’s sacred works.⁶⁷ O’Hanlon’s detailed analysis of the collection provides valuable information on a large Irish collection of eighteenth-century sacred music manuscript sources in use outside the two Dublin cathedrals.⁶⁸ The Mercer’s collection presents a useful sampling of the kinds of repertoire favoured by Dublin audiences in the eighteenth century. Handel dominated, with as much as two thirds of the manuscript collection and one third of the printed music collection containing his music. O’Hanlon demonstrates that the pieces most frequently performed were by Handel, Boyce, Greene, Purcell and Humphrey.

⁶⁵ *Ibid.*, i.

⁶⁶ Brian Boydell, ‘Music, 1700-1850’ in T. W. Moody and W. E. Vaughan (eds), *A New History of Ireland, IV, Eighteenth-Century Ireland 1691-1800* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1986), 576.

⁶⁷ *Ibid.*, 576.

⁶⁸ Triona O’Hanlon, ‘Music for Mercer’s’, 18.

Mercer's benefit concerts took place in venues including St Andrew's Church in Suffolk Street, St Michan's Church in Church Street, and St Peter's Church in Aungier Street. It was necessary to use churches since a benefit concert normally 'consisted of a church or cathedral style service'.⁶⁹ These Mercer's benefit concerts, therefore, provided an important outlet for the performance of sacred choral music outside of the two cathedrals. O'Hanlon describes the extensive crossover of performers involving the cathedral musicians, state musicians, theatre musicians and members of various musical societies, as well as the movement of musicians between Dublin and London.⁷⁰ The governors of the hospital had to apply formally to the Deans of both cathedrals for the participation of their singers. O'Hanlon concludes that the repertoire was predominantly sacred and that there was little expansion of repertoire during the years 1736-1780. For example, Handel's *Utrecht Te Deum* was performed every year from at least 1736 until 1745. O'Hanlon notes that, despite the existence of a number of Irish and Anglo-Irish composers active in Dublin at the time, most of the music performed at these concerts was imported.⁷¹

Even if these concerts took place in venues other than the cathedrals, cathedral musicians still made up the bulk of the performing forces. According to Brian Boydell, the oratorio choir of the eighteenth century was modest in size, 'seldom larger than two dozen voices, and in Dublin it consisted mainly of the semi-professional members of the cathedral choirs'.⁷² Boydell also notes that eighteenth-century repertoire

⁶⁹ Ibid., 122.

⁷⁰ Ibid., Chapter 4.

⁷¹ Ibid., 106.

⁷² Brian Boydell, 'Music, 1700-1850', 578.

consisted mostly of music that was very familiar in style and so generally did not need many rehearsals to attain performance standard.⁷³

Mercer's was not the only hospital providing strong support to music. The Rotunda Hospital (founded 1745) generated so much musical material that what Brian Boydell originally intended as a single chapter on the role of music in the hospital's early years resulted in an entire book, *Rotunda Music in Eighteenth-Century Dublin*.⁷⁴ He focuses on the period from 1749 to 1789 which covers a remarkable 2,400 concerts. His research provides a great deal of detailed insight into the Rotunda Concert series, one of Dublin's most successful musical initiatives of the eighteenth century. The series, established in 1749 by the Irish surgeon Bartholomew Mosse (1712-1759), was an instant success, with three concerts weekly every summer and totalling approximately sixty concerts per season in an almost unbroken sequence over forty years until around 1791.⁷⁵ Similar to the situation in Irish cathedral music, these concerts were highly dependent on visiting musicians, most of them from London.⁷⁶ The success of the concerts demonstrates a new and growing public context – as opposed to the existing ecclesiastical one – for Dublin's musical life. This encompassed choral music as well as all other musics. These concerts helped music to become an important and fashionable aspect of social life. According to Brian Boydell, two ways to guarantee audiences were either to advertise as 'by command of the Lord Lieutenant' which

⁷³ *Ibid.*, 578.

⁷⁴ Brian Boydell, *Rotunda Music in Eighteenth-Century Dublin* (Dublin: Irish Academic Press, 1992).

⁷⁵ *Ibid.*, Preface.

⁷⁶ Distinguished visiting musicians included Thomas Pinto who was the regular conductor of the concerts from 1776-1782, Tommaso Giordani, Mrs Crouch (Anna Philips), Dr Thomas Arne and his sister Mrs Cibber, and the Barthélemon and Passerini families; Catherine Ferris, 'Rotunda [Lying-in Hospital]' in Harry White and Barra Boydell (eds), *The Encyclopaedia of Music in Ireland* (Dublin: University College Dublin Press, 2013), ii, 895.

would draw the upper classes, or to advertise in association with a noble cause, ‘a grand and noble charity’.⁷⁷

Boydell examines the music that was performed in these concerts and reflects on the development of musical taste over forty years. Of the fourteen programmes that he analyses from 1749, for example, the works are predominantly instrumental and by Handel, but they also include a choral work: Bononcini’s *Funeral Anthem*.⁷⁸ By 1754, although the music remains predominantly instrumental, it also typically includes choral pieces, such as an ode or cantata, with lists including such works by Handel, Festing, Dubourg and Pasquali. Boydell assembles a calendar of the most important works performed in Dublin during the 1749-1750 season (Figure 2.1).⁷⁹ There was a total of thirty-six performances of sixteen large-scale choral works, including twenty-four performances of works by Handel and the Irish premieres of Handel’s *Joshua* and Pasquali’s *Noah*.

⁷⁷ Brian Boydell, ‘The Dublin Musical Scene 1749-50 and Its Background’, *Proceedings of the Royal Musical Association*, 105 (1978–1979), 78.

⁷⁸ *Ibid.*, 149.

⁷⁹ Brian Boydell, ‘Music in Eighteenth-Century Dublin’, 30.

Figure 2.1: Brian Boydell, A Summary of the More Important Musical Items Performed in Dublin during the 1749-50 Season

<i>Oratorios and Choral Works</i>		
Bononcini	<i>Funeral Anthem</i>	2 perfs.
Boyce	<i>Solomon</i>	2 „
Dubourg	<i>Birthday Ode</i>	1 „
Handel	<i>Acis and Galatea</i>	7 „
Handel	<i>Alexander's Feast</i>	4 „
Handel	<i>Deborah</i>	2 „
Handel	<i>Esther</i>	3 „
Handel	<i>Joshua</i> ('Never done here before')	3 „
Handel	<i>Jubilate and Anthems</i>	1 „
Handel	<i>Judas Maccabeus</i>	1 „
Handel	<i>Messiah</i>	2 „
Handel	<i>Samson</i>	1 „
Lampe	<i>Birthday Ode</i>	1 „
Pasquali	<i>Noah</i> (First perf.)	1 „
Pergolesi	<i>Stabat Mater</i>	4 „
Purcell	<i>Grand Te Deum</i>	1 „
	Total	36 „

This shows a distinct preference among Dublin concert-goers for Handel following his visit, particularly in oratorio and church music. The list, for example, includes *Acis and Galatea* (seven performances), *Alexander's Feast* (four performances), *Deborah*, *Esther*, *Joshua*, 'Jubilate and anthems', *Judas Maccabeus* and *Messiah*.⁸⁰

Another important charitable society was The Musical Academy, founded in late 1757 or early 1758 by Garret Wesley.⁸¹ Coming from a privileged background, Wesley was educated at Trinity College Dublin and was elected its first Professor of Music in 1764.⁸² The Musical Academy's membership came from the aristocracy who met weekly 'as an amateur choral and orchestral society', donating the proceedings of their

⁸⁰ Ibid., 30-31.

⁸¹ Barra Boydell, 'Mornington, Garrett Wesley [Wellesley], Earl of' in Harry White and Barra Boydell (eds), *The Encyclopaedia of Music in Ireland* (Dublin: University College Dublin Press, 2013), ii, 683.

⁸² Ibid., ii, 683. Wesley was the son of Richard Wesley, who became the first Baron Mornington in 1748, a title inherited by his son in 1758. Baron was a title of nobility bestowed by the English monarchy, entitling Wesley to a seat in the House of Lords.

monthly concerts to charity.⁸³ The Musical Academy admitted women, making it the first musical society in Britain or Ireland to do so.⁸⁴

2.6 Handel in Dublin

Despite being less than a year in duration (November 1741-August 1742), the visit of George Frideric Handel to Dublin had a considerable impact on the growth of choral music in Ireland.⁸⁵ A fading interest in Italian opera, and the composer's various artistic and political conflicts, had led to a decline in Handel's once immense reputation in his adoptive home of London. Needing a new audience, therefore, Handel came to Dublin to present a six-concert subscription series from December 1741 to February 1742. It was a huge success with all concerts completely sold out. The impact on Dublin's choral music scene was the result of the number of works in these hugely popular concert programmes that required a chorus: the odes *L'Allegro, Il Penseroso ed Il Moderato* and *Alexander's Feast*, the oratorios *Acis and Galatea*, *Esther*, *Messiah* and *Saul*, the cantata *Ode for St Cecilia's Day* and the opera *Imeneo*.⁸⁶

Famously, it was these concerts which paved the way for the first performance of *Messiah* on 13 April 1742. This and subsequent public performances in Dublin of *Messiah* required the choirs of both cathedrals, comprising the adult singers but possibly also boy choristers, with some of the men taking solos.⁸⁷ Handel had previously remarked in a letter to his librettist Jennens: 'the Basses and Counter Tenors

⁸³ Brian Boydell, 'Music, 1700-1850', 584.

⁸⁴ Catherine Ferris, 'Musical Academy' in Harry White and Barra Boydell (eds), *The Encyclopaedia of Music in Ireland* (Dublin: University College Dublin Press, 2013), ii, 713.

⁸⁵ Donald Burrows, 'Handel's Dublin Performances' in Patrick F. Devine and Harry White (eds), *Irish Musical Studies 4: The Maynooth International Musicological Conference 1995: Selected Proceedings Part One* (Dublin: Four Courts Press, 1996), 56.

⁸⁶ *Ibid.*, 48-51.

⁸⁷ *Ibid.*, 56.

are very good, and the rest of the Chorus Singers (by my Direction) do exceeding well'.⁸⁸ As Donal Burrows points out, one can only guess where Handel may have found the extra singers which he required. There was a near crisis when the dean of St Patrick's Cathedral – Jonathan Swift – withdrew permission for his vicars choral to take part in the performances.⁸⁹ He later relented, for reasons unknown, although it is presumed that it was due to the intervention of influential friends.⁹⁰

Following the success of *Messiah*, Handel's status expanded from respected musician to celebrity. Enjoying the attention his concerts attracted, he remained in Ireland much longer than originally intended. Even after he eventually returned to London in August 1742, his plan was to return to Dublin in November for a second season (although in the end this did not happen).⁹¹

2.7 Catch Clubs

Secular choral music was also enjoying growth at this time. This was primarily manifest in all-male singing groups, the earliest of which – and possibly Europe's earliest and longest-surviving musical society – was the Hibernian Catch Club, founded c1680 and initially comprising the vicars-choral of both Christ Church and St Patrick's Cathedrals.⁹² They sang catches in Dublin's pubs. These were 'comic rounds whose subject matter addressed mostly jocular topics such as drink, tobacco, sex, and

⁸⁸ Ibid., 56.

⁸⁹ Ibid., 56.

⁹⁰ Hugo Cole, 'Handel in Dublin', *Irish Arts Review (1984-1987)*, 1, (1984), 28.

⁹¹ Barra Boydell, 'Handel, George Frideric' in Harry White and Barra Boydell (eds), *The Encyclopaedia of Music in Ireland* (Dublin: University College Dublin Press, 2013), i, 459.

⁹² Catherine Ferris, 'The Use of Newspapers as a Source for Musicological Research: A Case Study of Dublin Musical Life 1840-1844' (PhD Dissertation, National University of Ireland, Maynooth, 2011), 76.

poor service in taverns.’⁹³ Thus the contrast in content with their cathedral repertoire could hardly have been greater. The catches themselves were usually written for three or four male voices. Some included clever overlaps in text-setting which produced parallel texts, often humorous or bawdy. The club’s repertoire also included glees which were generally similar to catches only more polite. Over the years the membership of the Hibernian Catch Club expanded to include clergymen, lords, judges, doctors, lawyers, fellows and the Provost of Trinity College, notably all middle to upper class.⁹⁴ A contemporary report from a weekly review notes that the club

gives another proof of the divine influence of music in harmoniously combining the most opposite elements among many of the members of the political and religious world. But here all is forgotten and laid aside in the enjoyment of most excellent music ...⁹⁵

According to Brian Boydell, the Hibernian Catch Club was influential in ‘establishing the popularity of part-singing, which became one of the most dominant vocal forms in Dublin’s amateur music-making circles during the early half of the nineteenth century.’⁹⁶ Apart from catches and glees, the club also performed madrigals, canons, and elegies. Other clubs included the Charitable Musical Society (founded 1724) which met weekly in the 1740s and concluded meetings with ‘catch singing, mutual friendship and harmony’, the Beefsteak Club (founded 1753) which was frequented by professional musicians and the aristocracy,⁹⁷ and the Irish Harmonic Society, a

⁹³ David Johnson, ‘Catch’, *Grove Music Online. Oxford Music Online* (Oxford University Press) <<http://www.oxfordmusiconline.com/subscriber/article/grove/music/05164>> [accessed 20 Jan 2016].

⁹⁴ Triona O’Hanlon, ‘Georgian Glees, Catches & Clubs (1700-1850)’, ‘Choral Music in Ireland: History and Evolution’, presented in association with Chamber Choir Ireland, 24 January 2017.

⁹⁵ *The Orchestra Musical Review*, 1 (12 December 1863), 166.

⁹⁶ Brian Boydell, ‘Music, 1700-1850’, 575.

⁹⁷ Estelle Murphy, ‘Catch and glee clubs’ in Harry White and Barra Boydell (eds), *The Encyclopaedia of Music in Ireland* (Dublin: University College Dublin Press, 2013), i, 171.

private glee club which was active from 1803 to 1810.⁹⁸ Additionally, and of some significance, such clubs also existed outside Dublin, for example, the Cork Catch and Glee Club and the Castlebar Harmonic Society.⁹⁹

In her examination of choral singing, private and public, in the eighteenth and early nineteenth centuries, Triona O’Hanlon describes how this kind of male choral club provided an important social outlet through singing music in harmony.¹⁰⁰ Noting that catches share some similarities with the English madrigal, she catalogues a wide range of recurring musical characteristics including changes of meter, tempo and key, the use of counterpoint and a range of dynamics and textures. Originally performed *a cappella*, catches were sometimes sung with piano accompaniment during the nineteenth century.¹⁰¹

The composers of this secular choral music were predominantly English. Significantly, however, there were also Irish composers, among them John Andrew Stevenson.¹⁰² As noted, he was a composer of anthems and services, but at the time he was best known for partnering with Thomas Moore to arrange his *Irish Melodies*. He went on to receive a doctorate from Trinity College Dublin in 1791 and a knighthood in 1803.¹⁰³ Example

⁹⁸ Catherine Ferris, ‘Irish Harmonic Club (Irish Harmonic Society)’ in Harry White and Barra Boydell (eds), *The Encyclopaedia of Music in Ireland* (Dublin: University College Dublin Press, 2013), i, 530-531.

⁹⁹ Estelle Murphy, ‘Catch and glee clubs’, i, 171.

¹⁰⁰ Triona O’Hanlon, ‘Georgian Glees, Catches & Clubs (1700-1850)’, 24 January 2017.

¹⁰¹ Ibid.

¹⁰² John Andrew Stevenson is mentioned as the first Irish singer accepted into a cathedral choir, pages 49-50.

¹⁰³ Lisa Parker and Elaine Sherwin, ‘Stevenson, [Stephenson] John Andrew’ in Harry White and Barra Boydell (eds), *The Encyclopaedia of Music in Ireland* (Dublin: University College Dublin Press, 2013), ii, 959.

2.1 shows the opening of a four-voice catch by Stevenson, ‘The Dublin Cries’, also known as ‘Come Buy my Cherries’.¹⁰⁴

Example 2.1: ‘The Dublin Cries’, John Stevenson

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THE DUBLIN CRIES.
CATCH FOR FOUR VOICES.
Dr. Stevenson.

Moderato.

1 Come buy my Cherries, beau - teous las - ses, fresh from the gar - den

2 Fine Ap - ples and choice Pears, Eat boys, for -

3 Fruit in a - bund - anee, sold by me, Fruit in a - bund - anee

4 Whey. fine sweet Whey, Come

Stevenson had managed to make his way in a musical culture dominated by England. His story demonstrates in microcosm both the challenging reality for native Irish composers but also some early signs of England’s exclusive grip on choral music starting to loosen.

Other Irish-born composers who helped erode English composers’ hold on secular choral music include Thomas Geary, born in Dublin in 1775. He was fourteen when he was awarded the Prize Medal by the Amateur Society for his six-part glee, ‘With

¹⁰⁴ John Stevenson, ‘The Dublin Cries: Catch for Four Voices’ in *The British Minstrel, and Musical and Literary Miscellany* (Glasgow: William Hamilton, n.d), <[https://imslp.org/wiki/The_Dublin_Cries_\(Stevenson%2C_John\)](https://imslp.org/wiki/The_Dublin_Cries_(Stevenson%2C_John))> [accessed 28 February 2017].

wine what blissful joy bestows'.¹⁰⁵ Geary's output, which included much choral music, was republished in a number of London editions long after his 'untimely' death¹⁰⁶ which Brian Boydell contends, 'robbed Ireland of a promising and already distinguished composer.'¹⁰⁷ Another Irish composer whose success contributed to this erosion was Garrett Wesley, mentioned above in connection with the Musical Academy.¹⁰⁸ He was noted for his catches and glees which earned prizes from the Catch Club of London in 1776, 1777 and 1779.¹⁰⁹

The membership of these clubs consisted primarily of aristocratic amateurs. Moreover, there was often overlap, with some singers being members of two or three clubs at once. The clubs generally supported charities. Their greater significance, however, to the growth of choral music in Ireland was how their existence represented a dramatic expansion of non-ecclesiastical choral music-making and marked the beginning of the provision of opportunities for the fledgling community of Irish composers.

2.8 Conclusion

Over the course of three centuries up to 1800, choral music in Ireland consolidated and grew. This growth was rooted in Dublin's two cathedrals where choirs were firmly established, providing music not only in the ecclesiastical setting but also – in the case of Christ Church – in association with the state. In a small but important step for the

¹⁰⁵ Freeman's Journal, 13-16 June, 1789, in Ita M. Hogan, *Anglo-Irish Music, 1780-1830* (Cork: Cork University Press, 1966), 186.

¹⁰⁶ Brian Boydell, 'Geary, Thomas Augustine [Timothy]', *Grove Music Online. Oxford Music Online* (Oxford University Press) <<http://www.oxfordmusiconline.com/subscriber/article/grove/music/10794>> [accessed 20 August 2017].

¹⁰⁷ Brian Boydell, 'Music, 1700-1850', 599-600.

¹⁰⁸ Garret Wesley, see page 62.

¹⁰⁹ Barra Boydell, 'Mormington, Garrett Wesley [Wellesley], Earl of' in Harry White and Barra Boydell (eds), *The Encyclopaedia of Music in Ireland* (Dublin: University College Dublin Press, 2013), ii, 684.

history of Irish choral music, performances in connection with state rather than religious events meant that, for the first time, choirs in Ireland began to develop a profile somewhere other than within the walls of a church.

Following on from that small step was a second one that concerned the diversifying of choral repertoire. With the evolution of catch clubs, not only did choral singing take place in pubs and taverns instead of cathedrals, but the non-sacred, frequently bawdy music they sang marked a new departure for choral composers. A third step emerged as the seventeenth century gave way to the eighteenth with the arrival and proliferation of public concerts supported by charities. It was largely these charity concerts that produced Dublin's musical 'golden age' in the mid-eighteenth century.

In all, these developments constituted an immense acceleration in the growth of choral activity in Ireland. At the same time, however, although the activity was taking place in Ireland, it was not native, being not only dominated by singers and composers from London, but also remaining intimately connected to Dublin's two Anglican cathedrals who generally provided the singers for performances calling for choir. If there were any native, Catholic singers and composers, they were on the outside, prevented from participating in the rapid developments of choral music taking place. This state of affairs could not persist indefinitely, however, and towards the end of the period a few solitary native Irish figures began to appear who represent the first signs of the next wave of development awaiting Ireland's choral music in the new century about to begin.

Chapter Three

Nineteenth to Twentieth Centuries

3.1 Introduction to the Nineteenth Century

Music in Ireland – including choral music – entered a new phase of change with the drawing to a close of the eighteenth-century ‘golden age’. This change is reckoned to have begun with the passing of the Act of Union in 1801. It abolished the Irish Parliament, with the loss of 300 members and 271 peers, thereby diminishing the status of Dublin which then grew isolated from the rest of Europe.¹ Among other things, this meant that international composers and performers were less inclined to include Dublin in their tours of Europe, so that just as the whole phenomenon of public concerts was rapidly expanding around Europe, it was decreasing in Ireland.

There was also a devastating effect on the strong links established during the ‘golden age’ between charities and music-making. The dramatic reduction in aristocratic involvement meant that income for a long-standing institution like the Rotunda concert series, for example, plummeted from ‘£1,450 to £300 per annum’ between 1795 and 1815.²

At the same time, while the negative impact of these developments was felt most sharply within the Anglo-Irish ascendancy, which had dominated the recent history of music in Ireland, there was a new community ready to fill the vacuum. It was the emerging Catholic middle class.³ While the Great Famine (1845-1849) had a

¹ Jeremy Dibble: *Charles Villiers Stanford: Man and Musician* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2002), 4.

² Constantia Maxwell, ‘Dublin under the Georges’ (London, 1956), 113; quoted in Ita M. Hogan, *Anglo-Irish Music, 1780-1830* (Cork, Cork University Press, 1966), 55.

³ Mary Regina Deacy, ‘Continental Organists and Catholic Church Music in Ireland, 1860-1960’ (MLitt. Dissertation, National University of Ireland, Maynooth, 2005), 9-10.

catastrophic effect on the poor in Dublin and the rural population, life continued with little change for the middle- and upper-classes. It was, for example, during this period that the Irish Academy of Music – later the Royal Irish Academy of Music (RIAM) – was founded in 1848 by a group of music enthusiasts. There was a sense that it would help to establish Ireland as culturally separated from England and that it would help inspire ‘a sense of “Irishness” in Dublin’s musicians’.⁴ The RIAM gave Ireland a school of music in line with those developing on the Continent. It remains one of the principal conservatories of music in Ireland today.

3.2 Choral Societies

Among the important markers for the steady growth of the involvement of the middle-class in music was a dramatic increase in the number of choirs. Over the course of the nineteenth century, eighty-five amateur musical societies and choirs were formed in Dublin alone. Significantly, there were substantially more choral societies than orchestral societies.⁵ Amateurs found access to music much more readily via singing and choirs than instruments and orchestras. The Sons of Handel, a large choral group, was reportedly founded in 1810 by Francis Robinson⁶ ‘for the production of large-scale works, especially George Frederick Handel’s oratorios.’⁷ The Ancient Concerts Society was founded in 1834 by Robinson’s youngest son Joseph, starting with ‘one or two violins and a chorus in Dawson Street ... and now he brings forward every

⁴ Aloys Fleischmann, ‘Music and Society, 1850-1921’ in *A New History of Ireland, VI: Ireland Under the Union, II: 1870-1921* (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1996), 500.

⁵ Ita Beausang, ‘Music societies (Dublin)’ in Harry White and Barra Boydell (eds), *The Encyclopaedia of Music in Ireland* (Dublin: University College Dublin Press, 2013), ii, 712-713.

⁶ Charles Villiers Stanford, *Studies and Memories* (London: A. Constable and Co. Ltd, 1908), 118.

⁷ Catherine Ferris, ‘Sons of Handel’ in Harry White and Barra Boydell (eds), *The Encyclopaedia of Music in Ireland* (Dublin: University College Dublin Press, 2013), ii, 944.

winter four or five oratorios performed solely by local artists.’⁸ Both societies were active until 1863 and played an important part in the musical life of Dublin.

Robinson was also the founding conductor of the University of Dublin Choral Society (UDCS) which was established in 1837 and remains the longest extant choral society in Ireland.⁹ Its membership was limited at first to eighteen men, with boys borrowed from St Patrick’s and Christ Church Cathedrals making up the soprano line.¹⁰ Its objective was ‘The cultivation of Choral Music in General’.¹¹ Membership was almost exclusively from the protestant ascendancy. Figure 3.1 shows the repertoire from 1850 to 1852.¹²

⁸ *Saunders’s Newsletter*, 12 December 1851; quoted in Ita Beausang, ‘Dublin Musical Societies 1850-1900’ in Patrick F. Devine and Harry White (eds), *Irish Musical Studies 5: The Maynooth International Musicological Conference 1995: Selected Proceedings Part Two* (Dublin: Four Courts Press, 1996), 169.

⁹ Ita Beausang, ‘Joseph Robinson’ in Harry White and Barra Boydell (eds), *The Encyclopaedia of Music in Ireland* (Dublin: University College Dublin Press, 2013), ii, 887.

¹⁰ Andrew Johnstone, ‘University of Dublin Choral Society’ in Harry White and Barra Boydell (eds), *The Encyclopaedia of Music in Ireland* (Dublin: University College Dublin Press, 2013), ii, 1024.

¹¹ University of Dublin Choral Society, ‘History’, <<http://www.udcs.org/history>> [accessed 4 June 2017].

¹² Collated from University of Dublin Choral Society Archive Records, September 1999. The Society has maintained records of almost all performances since 1850.

Figure 3.1: University of Dublin Choral Society Repertoire 1850-1852

1850		
M (Feb 1)	Handel	Acia and Galatea (Selections)
	M Stewart	The Skylark
	M Morley	Madrigal
	M Kucken	The Maid and the Bird
	M Cooke	Glee
	M Verdi	I Lombardi (Chorus of the Pilgrims)
	M Mendelssohn	The First Walpurgis Night
	M Gluck	How glad with Smiles...
	M Mendelssohn	The Song of Night
	M Mornington	Glee
	M Ame	Rule Britannia
H (Apr 19)	Handel	Messiah (Part 1)
	H Haydn	Hymns
	H Hayes	The Lord Descended...
	H Richardson	Anthem
	H Croft	Full Anthem
	H Battishill	Quartett
	H Chard	Offertorio
	H Mendelssohn	Hymns
T (May 31)	von Weber	Oberon (Selections)
	T Nelson	Madoline
	T Bishop	As you like it
	T Meyerbeer	Les Huguenots
	T Molique	31 st of May
	T Bellini	La Sonnambula
	T Barnett	Fair Rosamond
	T Handel	Alexander's Feast (Selections)
1851		
M (Jan 17)	Handel	Joshua
H (Apr 22)	Mendelssohn	The First Walpurgis Night
	H	Songs (Various)
	H Beethoven	The Ruins of Athens (Selections)
T (Jun 3)	Lock	Macbeth
	T	Glees, Songs, Madrigals (Various)
	T Purcell	The Tempest (Selections)
	T Beethoven	Adelaida
	T von Weber	Preciosa (Selections)
1851/52		
M (Dec 16)	Handel	Esther
	H von Weber	Der Freischütz (Selections)
	H	Songs and Madrigals (Various)
	H Meyerbeer	Il Profeta
T (Apr 23)	Handel	Israel in Egypt
S (June 8)	Stevenson	2 nd Ode of Anacreon
	S	Songs and glees (Various)
	S Purcell	King Arthur; Tragedy of Bonduca (Selections)
	S von Weber	Oberon (Selections)
1852/53		
M (Dec 22)	Handel	Messiah (Christ Church)
H (Feb 4)	Handel	Acis and Galatea

There was clearly within Trinity a substantial appetite for choral repertoire. As well as excerpts and short pieces, programming lists also include large-scale oratorios by Mendelssohn (*The First Walpurgis Night*) and Handel (*Messiah*, *Joshua*, *Esther*, *Israel in Egypt*, and the short opera *Acis and Galatea*). Handel remained very popular, and clearly the UDCS was a serious organisation with strong musical direction. This included an impressive, perhaps even surprising commitment to contemporary music. By giving what may well have been the Irish premieres of what were at the time new contemporary works such as Verdi's *Requiem* (completed 1874) in 1881, Sullivan's *The Martyr of Antioch* (completed 1880) in 1881, and Dvořák's cantata *The Spectre's Bride* (completed 1884) in 1888, the UDCS gave far greater support to the work of living composers in the nineteenth century than it does today. Other notable performances during the nineteenth century include Beethoven's *The Ruin of Athens* (1853), Spohr's *The Last Judgement* (1853), Handel's *L'Allegro ed il Penseroso* (1876), *Utrecht Jubilate* (1888) and *Dettingen Te Deum* (1888), Purcell's *Dido and Aeneas* (1892), and Beethoven's *Mass in C* (1899).¹³

More than twenty music societies were founded in Dublin in just three decades between 1840 and the late 1860s.¹⁴ These included the Dublin Mechanics' Choral Society (1850), the Royal Choral Institute (1851) and the Dublin Mercantile Choral Union (1854). According to Jeremy Dibble, these bodies reached out to the 'working classes in order to introduce them to the great choral works of the eighteenth and nineteenth centuries', and in general they achieved this.¹⁵ The Royal Choral Institute, for example, aimed to 'bring before the public in general the great choral compositions

¹³ Collated from University of Dublin Choral Society Archive Records, September 1999.

¹⁴ Jeremy Dibble: *Charles Villiers Stanford: Man and Musician*, 19.

¹⁵ *Ibid.*, 19.

of the ancient and modern masters, together with the training of a numerous body of choristers for that purpose'.¹⁶ There were no membership fees, and members were predominantly Catholic working-class. The choir often received good reviews including commendation for its 'careful training, unity and precision'.¹⁷

The Dublin Madrigal Society, founded in 1846, was more selective, accepting members exclusively by ballot and charging subscriptions.¹⁸ Significantly, it sang unaccompanied music. The group met weekly 'for the cultivation of vocal music, especially the madrigal', and performed regularly, at times including instrumental solos or vocal duets.¹⁹ This was a small but noteworthy milestone in the history of secular, *a cappella* choral singing in Ireland. Unfortunately it lasted fewer than twenty years, ceasing in 1864.²⁰

Joseph Robinson founded the Dublin Musical Society in 1875. It aimed to perform large-scale choral works. It was one of many choral societies formed in the late nineteenth century, most of which did not survive very long. Examples include Dalkey Church Choral Society (1890-1891), Dublin Choral Union (1891-1893), Dublin Glee Choir (1882-1887), Harold's Cross Choral Union (1873), Leinster Choral Union (1892-1897), St Catherine's Choral Union (1865-1878) and St Stephen's Choral

¹⁶ Adèle Commins, 'Royal Choral Institute' in Harry White and Barra Boydell (eds), *The Encyclopaedia of Music in Ireland* (Dublin: University College Dublin Press, 2013), ii, 897.

¹⁷ *Ibid.*, ii, 898.

¹⁸ Adèle Commins, 'Dublin Madrigal Society' in Harry White and Barra Boydell (eds), *The Encyclopaedia of Music in Ireland* (Dublin: University College Dublin Press, 2013), i, 328.

¹⁹ *Ibid.*, i, 328.

²⁰ *Ibid.*, i, 328.

Union (1879-1885).²¹ This huge increase in choral singing resulted in a corresponding increase in trade for publishers, printers, instrument makers and sellers.²²

3.3 The Catholic Church and the Cecilian Movement

With their music schools and centuries-long choral tradition, the Church of Ireland cathedrals continued to nurture not only singers and organists but also future audiences, and even composers. Many singers and organists went on to become prominent in the formation of music societies. But the nineteenth century's new wave of choral music was about to find long-overdue expression in the practice of another denomination: the Catholic Church. Harry White argues that

the impoverished condition of the Roman Catholics in Ireland between 1500 and 1800 excluded the possibility of a high culture of sacred music. The consequences of this exclusion for the development of church music after emancipation were ruinous: a vast population without any cultural base consonant with the prevailing aesthetic of church music as high art.²³

The emancipation to which White refers was enshrined in the Emancipation Act of 1829, among other things admitting Irish Roman Catholics to Parliament. It signalled the start of the journey for Catholics to reclaim what had been a thriving sacred music tradition in the monastic days. The Irish Catholic Church underwent huge development in the nineteenth century, including an ambitious building programme. The Catholic Directory of 1844 pointed out that 'within the last thirty years nine hundred Catholic churches have been built or restored in Ireland.'²⁴ For introducing music to at least

²¹ Ita Beausang, 'Music Societies Dublin', 712-713.

²² Barra Boydell and Catherine Ferris, 'Dublin Music Trade', <<http://www.musicresearch.ie/?q=dublinmusictrade>> [accessed 12 January 2018].

²³ Harry White, 'Church music and musicology in Ireland: an afterword' in *Irish Musical Studies 2: Music and the Church* (Dublin: Irish Academic Press, 1993), 333.

²⁴ Louise Fuller, *Irish Catholicism since 1950: The Undoing of a Culture* (Dublin: Gill and Macmillan, 2004), Prologue, xxv.

some of these churches, the clergy had to look to the Continent for help from experienced church musicians. Among the first of these was Haydn Corri (1785-1860) who became the organist and choir director in the recently-opened Pro-Cathedral in 1827 where he remained until 1852.²⁵ British of Italian descent,²⁶ Corri's first invitation was to direct the choir for the dedication ceremony in 1825, performing Mozart's *Grand Mass in C Minor*, *Ave Verum* and Graun's *Te Deum*.²⁷ This programme was probably typical of those heard in churches on the Continent at the time according to Mary Regina Deacy.²⁸ She cites an 1847 programme proposed by Corri for Mass and Benediction which included the *Kyrie* and *Agnus Dei* from masses by Haydn, the *Sanctus* from Mozart's *Requiem*, the *Credo* from Cherubini's *Mass no. 3*, and *Laudate pueri* by Italian operatic composer Niccolo Antonio Zingarelli.²⁹

This post-Emancipation surge in choral activity within the Catholic church encountered a sudden and major setback in the person of Paul Cullen, Irish Catholicism's dominant figure of the nineteenth century. A committed ultramontanist who spent eighteen years as rector of the newly formed Irish College in Rome, he was appointed Archbishop of Armagh in 1849 whereupon he set about his mission to 'romanise' the Catholic Church in Ireland. Within two years he had been transferred to the see in Dublin where he would pursue his conservative agenda for the next

²⁵ Ita Beausang, 'Haydn [Joseph Lewis] Corri' in Harry White and Barra Boydell (eds), *The Encyclopaedia of Music in Ireland* (Dublin: University College Dublin Press, 2013), i, 253.

²⁶ Mary Regina Deacy, 'Continental Organists and Catholic Church Music in Ireland', 10.

²⁷ St Mary's Pro-Cathedral, 'History of the Pro-Cathedral', <<http://www.procathedral.ie/about-us>> [accessed 2 February 2018].

²⁸ Mary Regina Deacy, 'Continental Organists and Catholic Church Music in Ireland', 12.

²⁹ Haydn Corri, Letter to Dr John Hamilton, 29 November 1847; quoted in Mary Regina Deacy, 'Continental Organists and Catholic Church Music in Ireland', 11-12.

quarter-century until his death in 1878.³⁰ The church's choral music did not escape his restrictive agenda. Cullen's decrees from the synod of 1850 declared:

38. No singing is to be carried out in the church unless is it solemn and ecclesiastical in nature.

The rectors of seminaries must ensure as a primary responsibility that their students are well instructed in chant so that they may properly learn the sacred ceremonies.

39. During the ceremonies nothing but Latin may be sung, neither is anything to be found outside of mass in churches, unless it is contained in the approved Ecclesiastical books, or permitted by the Ordinary.³¹

These prescriptions, which effectively established the pre-eminence of Gregorian chant and the 'Palestrina style', were in keeping with the ideals of the continental Cecilian movement. This had its roots in the Renaissance but was reinvigorated in Germany in 1870 with the creation of a new, papally-recognised organisation in Regensburg. The new body consolidated existing Cecilian commitments to traditional values in liturgical music through the performance of chant and *a cappella* polyphony (the Palestrina style). Archbishop Cullen subscribed fully to Cecilian ideals and 'strongly supported the campaign to purge profane music from the liturgy and agreed with the objective of introducing the restored Gregorian chant to the Irish church.'³² Following Regensburg, Cecilian groups began to appear in centres around Europe, with the Irish Society of St Cecilia founded in 1878. It produced a 'white list' of pieces deemed 'simple, liturgical and devotional in character.'³³ The 'Palestrina style' was favoured, and secular and operatic music shunned. In 1878, the first issue of *Lyra*

³⁰ Ian Curran, 'Cecilian Movement in Ireland' in Harry White and Barra Boydell (eds), *The Encyclopaedia of Music in Ireland* (Dublin: University College Dublin Press, 2013), i, 178.

³¹ Harry White, *The Keeper's Recital: Music and Cultural History in Ireland, 1770-1970* (Cork: Cork University Press, 1998), 75-76.

³² Patrick O'Donoghue, 'Music and Religion in Ireland' in Gerard Gillen and Harry White (eds), *Irish Musical Studies 3: Music and Irish Cultural History* (Dublin: Irish Academic Press, 1995), 127.

³³ Ian Curran, 'Cecilian Movement in Ireland', 178.

Ecclesiastica, the journal of the Cecilian movement in Ireland, in 1878 included this telling entry:

We have heard with great regret that the latest addition to the repertoire of the choir of the Church of the Three Patrons, Rathgar is an adaptation of ‘chi me frena’ from Donizetti’s Lucia di Lammermoor ... it is a satisfaction to know that, thanks to the initiative of his Grace, the Archbishop, the recurrence of such scandal will be rendered impossible before long.³⁴

The Cecilian movement, which also concerned itself with education, appointed Heinrich Bewerunge (1862-1923) to the newly-created chair of church chant and organ at St Patrick’s College Maynooth, the National Seminary for Ireland, in 1888. He had studied with the founders of the Cecilian movement, and during thirty-five years in Maynooth he actively promoted the Cecilian ideals, training seminarians in chant, composing, and writing, and in directing the college choir.³⁵ He also arranged motets by Palestrina and his contemporaries for male-voice choir and introduced pieces by approved Cecilian composers.³⁶

The Cecilian movement remained an active force in Ireland and Europe for the rest of the century, eventually receiving official endorsement from Rome in the form of *Motu proprio* which was issued by Pope Pius X in November 1903. His recommendations reflected those of the movement and called for restoring Gregorian chant ‘as the supreme model for sacred music’, liturgical piety, Latin mass, Palestrina as the ideal,

³⁴ Gerard Gillen, ‘Church Music in Dublin, 1500-1900’ in Boydell, Brian (ed.), *Four Centuries of Music in Ireland: Essays Based on a Series of Programmes Broadcast to Mark the 50th Anniversary of the BBC in Northern Ireland* (London: British Broadcasting Corporation, 1979), 26-27.

³⁵ Frank Lawrence, ‘Bewerunge, Heinrich [Wilhelm Joseph]’ in Harry White and Barra Boydell (eds), *The Encyclopaedia of Music in Ireland* (Dublin: University College Dublin Press, 2013), i, 89.

³⁶ A catalogue of Bewerunge’s compositions and arrangements is available in Gerard Gillen and Harry White (eds), *Irish Musical Studies 2: Music and the Church* (Dublin, 1993), 78-107.

choir schools attached to large churches, musical education of the clergy and the exclusion of women's voices.³⁷

Among foreign musicians imported to Irish cathedrals and churches to implement and uphold Cecilian principles during the nineteenth century were the Germans Alois Volkmer in St Andrew's Westland Row, Dublin, Alessandro Celini in Whitefriar Street, Dublin, Herr Thinnes and Hans Conrad Swertz in Cork, Alphonse Haan in Longford and Leo Kerbusch in Belfast.³⁸ They were all appointed in the 1870s. There were also many Belgian organist appointments in the nineteenth and early twentieth century, including, by 1916, six graduates of the Lemmens Institute in Mechelen, all strong Cecilian advocates.³⁹

One of the Irish manifestations of this cultural transformation in Catholic church music was the creation of a choir for St Mary's Church, the Pro-Cathedral, in Dublin in 1903, the same year as the Pope's *Motu proprio*. Although its construction was completed in 1825 and a major triumph for post-Penal Law Ireland, the Pro-Cathedral had never formally established a choir, despite the centuries-old choral traditions of its two Church of Ireland counterparts in Dublin. The new choir was first mooted in 1898 by the critic and arts patron Edward Martyn who, on hearing the choir of the Carmelite Church in Dublin's Clarendon Street singing Palestrina, began to work towards creating a choir for the Pro-Cathedral to be modelled on those he had heard in Cologne

³⁷ Jerry Nolan, 'Palestrina Choir, The' in Harry White and Barra Boydell (eds), *The Encyclopaedia of Music in Ireland* (Dublin: University College Dublin Press, 2013), ii, 818.

³⁸ Gerard Gillen, 'Church Music in Dublin, 1500-1900', 26; Mary Regina Deacy, 'Continental Organists and Catholic Church Music in Ireland', 37-42.

³⁹ Paul Collins, 'Strange Voices in the 'Land of Song': Belgian and German organist appointments to Catholic cathedrals and churches in Ireland, 1859-1916' in Michael Murphy and Jan Smaczny (eds), *Irish Musical Studies 9: Music in Nineteenth-Century Ireland* (Dublin: Four Courts Press, 2007), 114-116.

and Paris.⁴⁰ When the choir was inaugurated in 1903, the director was Vincent O'Brien – the man conducting the Carmelite choir on the day Martyn heard them – and, in keeping with Pius X's prohibition of women's voices in that same year, was confined to men and boys.⁴¹ Furthermore, Martyn, who provided an endowment of £10,000, stipulated that 'the music sung should be Gregorian or works of Palestrina and the Palestrina school; no music after 1700 was to be sung.'⁴² Both conditions were difficult to enforce because a mixed-voice choir was already in place (with two female members) and because of the restrictiveness of the repertoire.

3.4 Charles Villiers Stanford (1852-1924)

Charles Stanford was a leading figure in the British music establishment who warrants special mention in relation to Irish choral music in the period under discussion here. Dublin-born, he wrote a great deal of choral music, both secular and for church use, much of it unaccompanied. In many ways, therefore, he might be considered a grandfather figure to the Irish composers of the eight *a cappella* choral pieces analysed in Part II of this thesis. There is an habitual question, however, concerning Stanford's identity regarding whether he was in fact Irish or British. This question, in relation to this thesis, can be translated as, to what extent can Stanford's output for choirs be reasonably considered part of the history of choral music in Ireland. The issue is summarised by Axel Klein who notes that 'his strong unionism and protestantism as well as his residence in England ... made later generations doubt his sincerity. Too

⁴⁰ Jerry Nolan, 'Palestrina Choir, The', 817.

⁴¹ Gerard Gillen, 'Pro-Cathedral, Dublin' in Harry White and Barra Boydell (eds), *The Encyclopaedia of Music in Ireland* (Dublin: University College Dublin Press, 2013), ii, 863.

⁴² Patrick O'Donoghue, 'Music and Religion in Ireland', 129; quoted in Mary Purcell, *Dublin's Pro-Cathedral* (Dublin: Pro-Cathedral, 1975), no page numbers.

Irish for the English, too English for the Irish and too German for both, he fell between all stools'.⁴³

On the other hand, the Irish choral community would be justified in trying to reclaim Stanford, irrespective of however he may have appeared to identify himself. This reclamation would have less to do with his Dublin birth to Irish parents than with the exceptional beauty of some of his choral music, examples of which — for instance 'The Bluebird' and *Three Motets Op. 38* (including 'Beatus vir') — are widely loved and firmly established in the global canon. Irish choirs and conductors share pride and inspiration in identifying these gems with an Irish composer. One likely benefit of such a reclamation would be the potential for leading beyond such well-known pieces and into the exploration of other some of his other output including large-scale works such as *The Three Holy Children* (1882), *Elegiac Ode* (1884), and *Requiem* (1897).

3.5 Introduction to the Twentieth Century

The opening decades of the twentieth century witnessed fundamental change in Western classical music, notably via new directions pioneered in Paris and Vienna. This change was manifest less in choral music than it was in orchestral, chamber and piano music and in opera. In Ireland, this discrepancy was very pronounced, with little change or development taking place in choral music until after the end of the Second World War. Until then, the composing of Irish choral music was dominated by a single genre – the folksong arrangement. In contrast with this delayed development in choral composition, however, there was in the early century a growing appetite for choral singing. Since new choirs came and went, the real measure of this new appetite was a

⁴³ Axel Klein, 'Charles Villiers Stanford', <<https://www.cmc.ie/composers/charles-villiers-stanford>> [accessed 19 March 2018].

positive attitude in important institutions, both established ones such as Feis Ceoil, and new ones like Radio Éireann.

3.6 Choral Composition 1900-1950

Originality, newly emerging techniques, and the assimilation of influences from outside Ireland were all stifled or ignored by nearly everyone who composed music for choir in the first half of the twentieth century. Instead, there was the all-pervasive genre of the folksong arrangement. This was due in part to the surge in official Irish nationalism that accompanied the infancy of the new state, and in part also to the ‘celtic twilight’ sentiment which sprang from the Celtic Revival. In the early century, in the Ireland of the Gaelic League, an ‘attitude of xenophobic suspicion often greeted any manifestation of what appeared to reflect cosmopolitan standards. An almost Stalinistic antagonism to modernism ... was combined with prudery ... and a deep reverence for the Irish past.’⁴⁴

This ‘deep reverence’ found expression in the work of Ireland’s composers of the inter-war period and up to mid-century. They drew heavily on late nineteenth-century harmony and lyricism which they combined with aspects of traditional Irish music such as modes and characteristic rhythms, as well as with texts and melodies. Among composers working in this narrow way was John Larchet (1884-1967). The nationalist focus of art music composition in Celtic Revival Ireland is exemplified in Larchet’s choral, orchestral and vocal works, many of which are either based on Irish texts or are arrangements of Irish melodies.⁴⁵ His *Legend of Lough Rea*, for example, published

⁴⁴ Terence Brown, *Ireland: Social and Cultural History* (London: Fontana, 1981), 147.

⁴⁵ Úna-Frances Clarke, ‘Larchet, John Francis’ in Harry White and Barra Boydell (eds), *The Encyclopaedia of Music in Ireland* (Dublin: University College Dublin Press, 2013), ii, 579-580.

in 1921, is a dramatic, well-crafted piece for mixed *a cappella* choir that draws on local legend. Typically, it combines aspects of late nineteenth-century German music with traditional Irish music.

A. J. Potter (1918-1980) and Edgar Deale (1902-1999) were similarly conservative. Deale penned many choral arrangements of Irish folksongs, including eight published by Roberton Publications. Potter was prolific. Throughout the 1950s he showed much flair in arranging large quantities of Irish folk music and popular ballads for the Radio Éireann Singers, as well as for the RÉ Light Orchestra. Potter evolved, however, changing with the times in the postwar period to explore more forward-looking and contemporary kinds of composing. His 1968 *Sinfonia de Profundis*, for example, is ‘certainly one of the most remarkable modern works by an Irish composer’, says composer Kevin O’Connell, reminding him of Charles Ives.⁴⁶ In this way Potter was quite exceptional.

Another exceptional composer was Ina Boyle (1889-1967), a prolific and serious composer whose teachers included Vaughan Williams with whom she studied for fourteen years.⁴⁷ The first Irish woman to write a symphony (1925), a concerto (1933) and a ballet (1936),⁴⁸ Boyle also composed a substantial amount of choral music,⁴⁹ among which are pieces that set her apart from her predominantly folksong-dependent contemporaries. These include the set *Gaelic Hymns* for unaccompanied mixed choir which was published by Chester in 1930 and drew considerable attention and very

⁴⁶ Kevin O’Connell, ‘Where’s the Irish Bartók?’, Royal Irish Academy of Music, 3 October 2016. <<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=LDNnhFscpmg>>.

⁴⁷ Patrick Zuk, ‘Boyle, Ina’ in Harry White and Barra Boydell (eds), *The Encyclopaedia of Music in Ireland* (Dublin: University College Dublin Press, 2013), i, 120.

⁴⁸ *Ibid.*

⁴⁹ Ina Boyle – Composer, ‘Choral Works’, <<http://www.inaboyle.org/new-page>> [accessed 1 May 2018].

good reviews.⁵⁰ Vaughan Williams wrote to Boyle: ‘I thought that your motets were splendid and very well sung – it’s a pity that the programme led people to think that the music as well as the words were traditional.’⁵¹ They are settings of old Scots-Gaelic prayers in English translations, and their musical style – although rich with the pastoral style in which she was immersed in her studies – reveals a clear individual voice already exploring a harmonic language beyond that of the folksong arrangement. Séamas de Barra, for example, describes the third of the set – ‘The Light’ner of the Stars’ – as ‘substantial and elaborately worked.’ It is composed in six parts, de Barra continues, in which the ‘balance between a homophonic, chordal style and more flowing contrapuntal material is very finely judged.’⁵² De Barra suggests that Ina Boyle is overdue for revival and reappraisal, that ‘a serious critical re-evaluation of her creative achievement has long been overdue’.⁵³

Other composers writing choral music outside the ‘celtic twilight’ in the first half of the twentieth century include Belfast-born Norman Hay (1889-1943) whose output includes a 1908 madrigal *The half of music* which earned him his second Feis Ceoil composition prize, as well as various church anthems, settings of poets including Keats and Christina Rossetti, and a cantata on texts by Yeats.⁵⁴ Also worth noting as an exception is Dublin-born Rhoda Coghill (1903-2000) whose small output includes a setting of Walt Whitman in the form of a substantial rhapsody for tenor, choir and orchestra, *Out of the Cradle Endlessly Rocking*, composed in 1923, and which Axel

⁵⁰ Ita Beausang and Séamas de Barra, *Ina Boyle: A Composer’s Life* (Cork: Cork University Press, 2018), 24-25.

⁵¹ *Ibid.*, 24.

⁵² *Ibid.*, 89.

⁵³ *Ibid.*, 128.

⁵⁴ David Byers, ‘Norman Hay’, <https://www.byersmusic.com/norman-hay.php> [accessed 2 April 2018].

Klein insists pre-emptively Frederick May's C minor String Quartet as 'the first large-scale Irish work which was influenced by contemporary European developments'.⁵⁵

3.7 Choirs in Twentieth Century Ireland

Virtually none of the choirs founded in the nineteenth century survived into the twentieth. Among exceptions, however – which included choirs in Trinity College and the cathedrals – was the Orpheus Choral Society, founded in 1898 by James Culwick (1845-1907). It would prove an important champion of choral music in Ireland in the new century, quickly gaining a reputation not only for its performance of part-songs and madrigals, but also – and most significantly for this thesis – of 'new settings of Irish songs.'⁵⁶ Unusually in this era, women featured among the choir's conductors. Following his death in 1907, Culwick was succeeded by his daughter, Florence Culwick, who renamed the choir the Culwick Choral Society in honour of the founder.⁵⁷ She was succeeded by Turner Huggard in 1929, after whom it was another woman who became conductor in 1944. This was Alice Yoakley who had been a member of the choir since 1917.⁵⁸

The Culwick, which remains Ireland's longest established non-university choral society, followed a development path comparable to that of the University of Dublin Choral Society in Trinity. Initially the choir performed small-scale repertoire and

⁵⁵ Axel Klein, 'Roots and directions in twentieth-century Irish art music' in Gareth Cox and Axel Klein (eds), *Irish Musical Studies 7: Irish Music in the Twentieth Century* (Dublin: Four Courts Press, 2003), 170.

⁵⁶ Mary Stakelum, 'Culwick Choral Society' in Harry White and Barra Boydell (eds), *The Encyclopaedia of Music in Ireland* (Dublin: University College Dublin Press, 2013), i, 270.

⁵⁷ The Culwick Choral Society continued to be successful and had the distinction of winning first prizes at the Welsh National Eisteddfod and also Dublin Feis Ceoil; Jane Clare, Magdalen O'Connell, Ann Simmons (eds), *The Culwick Choral Society celebrates one hundred years: 1898-1998* (The Culwick Choral Society, 1998), 9.

⁵⁸ Jane Clare, Magdalen O'Connell, Ann Simmons (eds), *The Culwick Choral Society celebrates one hundred years: 1898-1998* (The Culwick Choral Society, 1998), 15.

excerpts from the great choral works.⁵⁹ Gradually, chamber pieces were introduced such as Vaughan Williams's *Mass in G minor*, Britten's *A Ceremony of Carols*, and Byrd's *Mass for Four Voices*, followed eventually by the introduction of full-scale choral works such as Bach's *Mass in B Minor* in 1950 and Brahms's *Ein deutsches Requiem* in 1951. Since the 1960s the choir has performed a huge range of major choral works with orchestra and soloists.

Nearly half the new century had passed before the next new large choir was established. This was Our Lady's Choral Society, founded in 1946 at the instigation of the Dublin Catholic Archdiocese. It arose from a one-off gathering of singers from Dublin parish choirs to perform *Messiah*,⁶⁰ and today the choir's reputation continues to rest primarily on its annual performances of *Messiah* in Dublin. Thereafter large choirs began to proliferate: Belfast Philharmonic Choir (1950s), Guinness Choir (1951), Limerick Choral Union (1964), Carlow Choral Society (1965), Goethe-Institut Choir (1965), Tallaght Choral Society (1967), Mullingar Choral Society (1968), Dublin County Choir (1975), Dun Laoghaire Choral Society (1982), Galway Baroque Singers (1983), RTÉ Philharmonic Choir (1985), Bray Choral Society (1986), Fleischmann Choir (1992) and Dublin Bach Singers (2002). All of these larger choirs were formed in the latter half of the twentieth century, mostly within the past fifty years. This is a strong indicator of the blossoming of postwar choral singing in Ireland.

Eventually different kinds of choirs began to emerge. *A cappella* and chamber choirs experienced sudden and dramatic growth, spear-headed in the 1960s and 1970s by four

⁵⁹ The Culwick Choral Society, 'The First 100 Years' <<http://awacsband.com/the-first-100-years>> [accessed 2 February 2018].

⁶⁰ Our Lady's Choral Society, 'About Us', <<http://www.olcs.ie/wp/about-us>> [accessed 4 February 2018].

excellent choirs which boasted an international outlook and international experience. Notably, all four were female-voice choirs: Cantairí Óga Átha Cliath (1960),⁶¹ The Lindsay Singers (1958),⁶² The Park Singers (1970) and St Mary's College Choir (1955) (incorporating St Mary's Pupils' Choir, Arklow).⁶³ All four broke new ground by performing outside Ireland. In particular Cantairí Óga Átha Cliath had success at competitions including the Llangollen International Musical Eisteddfod in Wales, the European Music Festival for Young People in Neerpelt, Belgium, the Seghizzi International Choral Singing Competition in Gorizia, Italy, and the Béla Bartók International Choir Competition in Debrecen, Hungary.⁶⁴ The Lindsay Singers – who won the international trophy at the Cork International Choral Festival in 1998 – gradually ceased to function in the early 2000s once their founding conductor Ethna Barror reached her late eighties.⁶⁵

Barror's conducting, and in particular the sound she created, had drawn the admiration of Brian Ó Dubhghaill and Seán Creamer, founding conductors of Cantairí Óga Átha Cliath and the Park Singers respectively.⁶⁶ In contrast with the Lindsay Singers, both of these choirs have continued to exist following the deaths of their founding directors – in 2013 and 2016 respectively – performing regularly and competing with success

⁶¹ Martin Adams, 'Cantairí Óga Átha Cliath/ Brian Ó Dubhghaill', *Irish Times*, 23 January 1999. 'Listening to Bartók, Bárdos and Kodály, you could hear why this choir has won so many competition prizes, including some of the most prestigious in these composers' native Hungary. I was especially impressed by the confident swagger achieved in György Orbán's *Lauda Sion*, which had an infectious relish for elaborate rhythm and harmony for compositional flair and choral sonority'.

⁶² Ray Comiskey, 'Lindsay Singers at NCH', *Irish Times*, 25 September 1990. 'The choirs tonal qualities, superbly sung harmonies and sense of dynamics were impressive, especially on the more substantial material ...'

⁶³ The stability and continuity of each of these choirs was enhanced by establishing junior 'feeder choirs' which continued to provide a steady stream of new singers.

⁶⁴ 'Cantairí Óga Átha Cliath',

<<http://www.corkcitylibraries.ie/music/corkinternationalchoralfestival/1998/1998ccfseminarbrochure/1998%20CCF%20Seminar%20brochure.pdf>> [accessed 10 January, 2018].

⁶⁵ Niamh McDonough, 'Ethna Barror: Profile of a Successful Choral Conductor' (MPhil. Dissertation, Dublin Institute of Technology, 2008).

⁶⁶ *Ibid.*, 117-124.

throughout Ireland and occasionally abroad. The female-voice choirs based in St Mary's College in Arklow also continue to exist but are much less active since the retirement (c2000) and death (2010) of their inspirational founder and long-time conductor Sr Agnes Nolan.

Development in the area of mixed-voice choirs came even later. Two full decades after the establishment of the upper-voice St Mary's College Choir in 1955, the twentieth century's first mixed-voice choir of note was established in 1975. This was Madrigal 75, founded by students of University College Cork. Its wide repertoire includes a number of world premieres and it has toured in both France and Switzerland. Twelve years would elapse before the next Irish choir of note appeared: Anúna, founded in 1987 by the singer and composer Michael McGlynn. It has a long track record of international touring and commercial success, having released fifteen albums of choral music, virtually all of it composed by McGlynn. Stylistically the choir belongs to the 'celtic' tradition, thus providing continuity with the folk-influenced Irish music and choral culture of the first half of the twentieth century. The Lasso Scholars (and junior partner Piccolo Lasso) came into existence in 1996 when their founder, Ita O'Donovan, resigned the music directorship of Dublin's Pro-Cathedral in 1995. Her choirs 'seek to experience and preserve the richness of the cathedral choral tradition'.⁶⁷ Galway-based Cois Cladaigh was founded in 1982 and continues to explore early and contemporary repertoire and makes regular trips abroad.

Other choirs of interest include Codetta (Derry), Cantairí Avondale (Dublin), Tribal Chamber Choir (Galway), and Resurgam (Dublin) and Sestina (Belfast), both

⁶⁷ Dublin Choral Foundation, 'The Lasso Scholars', <<https://www.dublinchoralfoundation.ie/home/auybout/lassus-scholars>> [accessed 13 March 2018].

professional project-based choirs. The Mornington Singers, founded in 1997, has released five CDs, has taken part in several international competitions, and has commissioned a number of new Irish works. New Dublin Voices, founded in 2005, has consistently won awards at international choral competitions and performed at choral festivals throughout Europe and in the United States, as well as giving concerts throughout Ireland. It has premiered approximately sixty works, mostly by Irish composers, and released four CDs of which two are devoted entirely to Irish choral music.

There is a lively choral tradition amongst the longer established third-level institutions in Ireland. In addition to large choral societies, this tradition encompasses chapel choirs and equal-voice and mixed-voice choirs. Most of these smaller ensembles are student-run, although directorship of the chapel choir in Maynooth is a paid position. No Irish university choir has attained anything approaching the level of the American-style collegiate funding of the recently re-branded Choral Scholars of University College Dublin. Since its founding by Desmond Earley in 1999, the choir has secured salaried posts for the conductor and arts manager, plus annual scholarships for eighteen singers. The choir has toured abroad a number of times and released a CD on the British label, Signum Classics, in 2015.

3.8 Catholic Church Music

Catholic church music underwent dramatic changes in the twentieth century. In France, a French-Latin bilingual rite was introduced in 1947, an innovation that spread to other countries. ‘Active participation’ was encouraged. A Papal encyclical of 1955 allowed for hymn-singing in the vernacular. Another encyclical, *Sacrosanctum*

concilium, produced in 1963 during the Second Vatican Council, undertook to ‘adapt more suitably to the needs of our own times those institutions that are subject to change’, encouraging composers ‘to develop sacred music and to increase its store of treasures’.⁶⁸

Subsequent to the loosening of rules regarding music and worship contained in the Vatican II reforms, developments in the composition of church music in Ireland have been substantial. New hymnals appeared featuring hymns in Irish and English as well as Latin, and in popular as well as traditional style. Irish composers have produced numerous mass settings, again variously in English, Irish or Latin, with examples by composers such as Seóirse Bodley, Patrick Cassidy, Liam Lawton, Mary McAuliffe, Ronan McDonagh, Tomás Ó Canainn, Fintan O’Carroll, Seán and Peadar Ó Riada and Gerard Victory. There has been an increase in church music in both contemporary style (Paul Flynn, Oliver Hynes, John O’Keefe et al) and in popular style (Ian Callanan, Liam Lawton, Bernard Sexton et al).⁶⁹

3.9 National Institutions in Twentieth-Century Ireland

While the first half of the twentieth century saw few choirs of note in Ireland, or any choirs recorded as responding to international developments in art music at that time, there were new or recently established national bodies which would prove important for Irish choral music. Foremost of these was Feis Ceoil.

⁶⁸ Pope Paul VI, *Constitution on the Sacred Liturgy Sacrosanctum Concilium*, in Patrick O’Donoghue, ‘Music and Religion in Ireland’, 135-137.

⁶⁹ ‘National Centre for Liturgy’, <<http://www.liturgy-ireland.ie>> [accessed 1 May 2018].

3.9.1 Feis Ceoil

Feis Ceoil – Ireland’s annual, national and competitive festival of classical music – was founded in 1896 as a result of concerns about ‘the neglect of music development in this country’.⁷⁰ Key musicians of the time, both classical and traditional, were supportive or involved.⁷¹ Music was not its only concern. Part of its early initiative was derived from the active championing of the Irish language. Irish was being powerfully fostered by the Gaelic League, founded three years earlier by Eoin McNeill and Douglas Hyde whose 1892 address to the National Literary Society, ‘The Necessity for De-Anglicising Ireland’ was instrumental in garnering momentum.⁷² For this reason Feis Ceoil’s initial brief was specifically to advance music that could be considered Irish. By the 1920s, however, this had broadened to ‘music in Ireland.’⁷³

Choral music and choirs were catered for from the earliest years of Feis. A review of 1903 shows healthy numbers competing in the adult choir categories. Of interest is the fact that this included eight competitors (including the Arnott & Co Choir which was awarded third place) in the ‘Commercial Choirs’ competition – demonstrating a tradition for corporate choral activity in Ireland which continues in the present day.⁷⁴ There were also eight competing choir in the Ladies’ Competition.⁷⁵ Feis Ceoil has continued to thrive over the years, currently offering almost 200 competitions for instruments, singers, ensembles and choirs, attracting over 5,000 participants from all

⁷⁰ Feis Ceoil, ‘What is Feis Ceoil Association?’, <<http://www.feisceoil.ie/About-Us/What-is-Feis-Ceoil-Association.asp>> [accessed 4 March 2019].

⁷¹ Key musicians involved include Dr Annie Patterson, Edward Martyn and Dr James Culwick.

⁷² Adrian Scahill, ‘Gaelic League/Conradh na Gaeilge’ in Harry White and Barra Boydell (eds), *The Encyclopaedia of Music in Ireland* (Dublin: University College Dublin Press, 2013), i, 415.

⁷³ Karol Mullaney-Dignam and Jimmy O’Brien Moran, ‘Feis Ceoil’ in Harry White and Barra Boydell (eds), *The Encyclopaedia of Music in Ireland* (Dublin: University College Dublin Press, 2013), i, 372.

⁷⁴ ‘Workplace Choir of the Year’, <<http://workplacechoir.com>> [accessed 2 February 2018].

⁷⁵ ‘The Feis Ceoil’, *The Musical Times and Singing Class Circular*, 44 (London: Musical Times Publications Ltd., 1903), 405.

over Ireland.⁷⁶ Within its choral programme it continues to support and promote the Irish language by having four Irish language competitions for youth choirs and one for adult choirs. Of greater importance for the purposes of this discussion, however, is that it also actively supports Irish composers, annually awarding a gold medal for the best choral piece by an Irish composer under the age of forty.

3.9.2 RTÉ Choirs

Another national body to be of significance to choral music in Ireland was the national broadcaster. The first radio broadcast of what began as 2RN took place on 1 January 1926.⁷⁷ With the new state not yet quite four years old, the influence of cultural nationalism remained strong at this time, with broadcasting – as ever – regarded as an essential part of nation-building. However, it was not until sixteen years after its founding that the national broadcaster established its first radio choir, the twenty-four-voice part-time choir Cór Raidió Éireann, created in 1942 for concerts and broadcasts.⁷⁸ This timeframe roughly corresponds with the establishment of radio choirs by other European national broadcasters.⁷⁹ Music clearly played a large part in Radio Éireann's remit for many years. For example, the 1946 Radio Éireann Annual Report (Figure 3.2) lists 77,742 minutes of music out of a total of 169,372 broadcast minutes, which is approximately 46%.⁸⁰

⁷⁶ ESB Feis Ceoil, 'What is Feis Ceoil Association?', <<http://www.feisceoil.ie/About-Us/What-is-Feis-Ceoil-Association.asp>> [accessed 1 April 2018].

⁷⁷ RTÉ Archives, 'Douglas Hyde Opens 2RN 1 January 1926', <<http://www.rte.ie/archives/exhibitions/681-history-of-rte/682-rte-1920s/289997-first-radio-broadcast-from-2rn-1-january-1926>> [accessed 3 March 2018].

⁷⁸ Pauline Graham, 'RTÉ Singers', in Harry White and Barra Boydell (eds), *The Encyclopaedia of Music in Ireland* (Dublin: University College Dublin Press, 2013), ii, 908.

⁷⁹ BBC Singers (1924); Swedish Radio Choir (1925); Berlin Radio Choir (1925); Flemish Radio Choir (1937); Latvian Radio Choir (1940); Netherlands Radio Choir (1945).

⁸⁰ RTE Archives, 'Radio Éireann Annual Report 1946', <<http://www.rte.ie/archives/exhibitions/681-history-of-rte/684-rte-1940s/322287-annual-report-1946>> [accessed 3 March 2018].

Figure 3.2: Radio Éireann Annual Report 1946

(v)

APPENDIX 'B'—TABLE (1) FIGURES IN MINUTES SHOWING HOW BROADCASTING TIME IN 1946 WAS FILLED AS BETWEEN THE DIFFERENT PROGRAMME CLASSIFICATIONS.

	Jan.	Feb.	March	April	May	June	July	Aug.	Sept.	Oct.	Nov.	Dec.	TOTALS
MUSIC ...	6825½	6053½	6933½	6106	6360	6504½	6057½	7188	6611½	6112	5896	6304	77,742
ADVERTISING (Mainly Music) ...	944	808	944	1707½	2000½	1904½	2004½	2063½	2004	2064½	1968	2114½	20,701½
TALKS, PROSE, POETRY, STORIES, etc. ...	1529½	1363	1348½	1384½	1388½	1131½	1225	1078	1044	1314½	1465½	1317½	15,503
VARIETY AND PLAYS (incl. Dramatisations) ...	1242	909½	1288	1053	1001½	1000½	1000½	837½	1299½	1375½	1239½	1577	13,863
*NEWS IN (a) IRISH (b) ENGLISH ...	311	281	513	380½	408	290½	309½	313	317	329½	428	291½	4,172½
RELIGIOUS SERVICES ...	—	131	134	144	204½	220	91½	—	48	122	184½	224	1,509½
WOMEN'S & CHILDREN'S PROGRAMMES (a) FOR CHILDREN ...													
(i) Music ...	288½	309½	270	308	347½	284½	305	317½	412	436	404½	325	4,098
(ii) Competitions, Plays, Talks ...	647½	644	740	654	715½	709	628	788	580½	631½	615½	464½	7,752
(b) FOR WOMEN — Talks ...	377½	386	378	274½	227½	164½	44½	119½	115	193½	223	210½	2,814
TOTALS ...	13,485	12,073½	14,138	13,509	14,634½	13,094	14,653½	14,603	14,625½	14,742½	14,292	14,632	169,372½

* including Sporting Commentaries.

In 1953 Cór Raidió Éireann was replaced by the Radio Éireann Singers which consisted of ten professional full-time singers. This was the first fully-professional choral group in Ireland outside of the cathedrals. A German – Hans Waldemar Rosen – was appointed conductor and stayed in that post until 1974. Under his directorship the choir developed a strong presence both in concert and broadcasts, with Rosen presenting a wide repertoire that included Irish commissions and other contemporary music – and building an international profile by bringing the choir on tour in Europe.⁸¹ Following the advent of television, Radio Éireann became Radio Telefís Éireann (RTÉ) in 1960. Accordingly, the chamber choir was renamed the RTÉ Singers and was directed at different stages by Proinnsias Ó Duinn and Eric Sweeney.⁸² The English organist, composer and conductor Colin Mawby took over in 1979, at which point he persuaded RTÉ to establish a younger choir of seventeen part-time singers

⁸¹ Gareth Cox, 'Rosen, Hans Waldemar' in Harry White and Barra Boydell (eds), *The Encyclopaedia of Music in Ireland* (Dublin: University College Dublin Press, 2013), ii, 894.

⁸² Proinnsias Ó Duinn: 1974-1978; Eric Sweeney: 1978-1979; Pauline Graham, 'RTÉ Singers', 909.

called the RTÉ Chamber Choir. It gave its first concert in 1986. Giving regular concerts and broadcasts, Mawby pursued a wide exploration of the choral canon and was responsible for introducing much interesting repertoire to the Irish public.

The RTÉ Chamber Choir was disbanded in 1990 due to cutbacks at RTÉ. The public outcry that ensued was partially responsible for the creation of The National Chamber Choir (NCC) in 1991 with Colin Mawby in charge. In 2002 he was succeeded by the Brazilian Celso Antunes, a colourful and dynamic conductor who broadened the repertoire considerably, notably in the area of contemporary choral music. He was also more exacting in terms of fine detail in performance, and he drew predominantly favourable reviews from critics. During Antunes's tenure the NCC also performed under many renowned guest conductors.⁸³

Crisis hit in January 2007 when RTÉ announced plans to reduce its financial support for the NCC. Antunes, chief executive and founder Karina Lunstrum, and a board member resigned in protest at the commercially-driven way forward that was being favoured.⁸⁴ English conductor Paul Hillier was now announced as the new artistic director and chief conductor of the NCC in February 2008. In 2013 the choir was re-branded as Chamber Choir Ireland (CCI), controversially removing the word 'National'.

The choir is currently an independent body with principle funding from the Arts Council. It also receives funding from Dublin City Council and from the National

⁸³ Renowned guest conductors during Antunes's tenure with the National Chamber Choir have included Marcus Creed, John Duijck, Robert Hollingsworth, Stephen Layton and Sarah Tennent-Flowers.

⁸⁴ Michael Dervan, 'Three leave National Chamber Choir in policy rift', *Irish Times*, 31 January 2007.

Lottery through the Arts Council of Northern Ireland. It is a resident ensemble at the National Concert Hall. Net funding remains low, however, and CCI does not enjoy the kind of visibility and productivity attained by its predecessor – the National Chamber Choir – under Mawby and Antunes. Against all that, however, CCI has a good record in contemporary music, including music from Ireland, and including many world premieres.

The RTÉ Philharmonic Choir was founded by Colin Mawby in 1985, just after he had guided the dissolution of the RÉ Singers and the creation of the RTÉ Chamber Choir. Mawby said ‘the new choral policy ... had as its main aim to try and involve more people in choral music for RTÉ.’⁸⁵ Today, having existed for thirty-four years, the RTÉ Philharmonic Choir is the national broadcaster’s longest-standing choral group. It is unquestionably ‘the country’s premier symphonic choral ensemble’,⁸⁶ performing an average of five concerts each year at a high standard, predominantly in partnership with the RTÉ National Symphony Orchestra. In 1987 Mawby also founded the children’s choir, RTÉ Cór na nÓg. Despite a membership of sixty-five children and a busy schedule, RTÉ Cór na nÓg has yet to establish a strong profile within Ireland’s choral landscape.

3.9.3 The Cork International Choral Festival

The Cork International Choral Festival is arguably the institution to have done most to connect Ireland to the international world of choral music and to bring that world into

⁸⁵ Michael Dervan, ‘RTÉ Takes a Fresh Look at its Choirs’, *Irish Times*, 14 June 1985.

⁸⁶ RTÉ Philharmonic Choir, ‘Our Story’,
<<https://orchestras.rte.ie/performinggroup/rte-philharmonic-choir>> [accessed 12 April 2018].

Ireland. It was established in 1954 and has taken place every year since except 2001.⁸⁷ The country's premiere choral festival, it was originally founded as part of An Tóstal, a short-lived national sporting and arts festival established in 1953 by industry minister and future taoiseach Seán Lemass to help lift spirits during the economic depression.⁸⁸ Over the years the Cork Choral Festival has largely retained its remit: to bring outstanding international choirs to Ireland while also providing a platform for Irish choirs, to provide high level entertainment to audiences, to promote the development of new Irish choral music, and to encourage choral music in schools.⁸⁹ How these aims have given significant support to the growth of Irish choral music over the decades is actually contained within the stipulations of the festival's various competitions. For example, the premiere national competition – 'Ireland's Choir of the Year' – requires choirs to perform an original work by a living Irish composer.⁹⁰

The roll-call of composers commissioned by the festival provides a further indication of the international value it brings to Ireland. The list includes Milhaud, Kodály, Rubbra, Walton, Maconchy, Henk Badings, Tavener, Petr Eben, Miklós Csemiczky, Roxanna Panufnik, Jaakko Mäntyjärvi and Javier Busto. Once the festival had established its support for importing of new music from outside Ireland, the composer Aloys Fleischmann – who became Director of the Festival in 1962 – set about championing the composition of Irish music by commissioning Irish composers.

⁸⁷ The Cork International Choral Festival did not take place in 2001 due to concerns about the spread of Food and Mouth disease.

⁸⁸ Ruth Fleischmann (ed.), *Cork International Choral Festival 1954-2004: A Celebration* (Herford, Germany: Glen House Press, 2005), Introduction, 10.

⁸⁹ *Ibid.*, 10-11.

⁹⁰ Cork International Choral festival, 'National Syllabus', <<http://cdn5.corkchoral.ie/wp-content/uploads/2018/02/National-Syllabus-2018.pdf>> [accessed 1 February 2018]. There is also an award for the best performance of an original choral work written by an Irish composer after 1975 and chosen from the library collection of the Contemporary Music Centre.

Furthermore, in 1967 he initiated the ‘Seminar on Contemporary Choral Music’, intended to ‘provide a context, therefore, for the reception of the newly commissioned pieces.’⁹¹ This has continued to the present. Its principle value lies in adding new pieces to the *a cappella* repertoire (although confined to mixed-choir pieces since 1998⁹²) and introducing world-renowned composers to the Cork audience. In the past, invited presenters would analyse the new pieces and discuss them publicly with the composer and attendees, and the piece(s) would be performed in an informal environment in advance of the premiere. The seminar has undergone various changes over the years. In the current format, new pieces are presented in rehearsal by Chamber Choir Ireland whose conductor, Paul Hillier, puts questions to the composers, invites questions from the floor, and presents a preview performance.

Another fixture of the Cork festival that has made an important contribution to the postwar growth of Irish choral music is the Seán Ó Riada Composition Competition. It was initiated in 1972 and created exclusively for Irish composers. Like the seminar, it has gone through various formats. For example, since 2010 competitors have entered under pseudonyms to mask their identity and avoid bias in the judging panel. Winners attend a workshop of their pieces with Chamber Choir Ireland and Paul Hillier, after which the piece is premiered at the Festival. Previous winners include Solfa Carlile, Rhona Clarke, Patrick Connolly, Frank Corcoran, Séamas de Barra, Eoghan Desmond, Amanda Feery, Michael Holohan, Marian Ingoldsby, Donal Mac Erlaine, Simon

⁹¹ Séamas de Barra, ‘Cork International Choral Festival: Seminar History and Background’, <<http://www.corkchoral.ie/portfolio/seminar-on-new-choral-music>> [accessed 1 February 2018].

⁹² ‘Cork International Choral festival: 1998’, <<http://www.corkcitylibraries.ie/music/corkinternationalchoralfestival/1998>> [accessed 1 April 2018].

MacHale, Michael McGlynn, Kevin O’Connell, Criostóir Ó Loingsigh and the winner in 2018, Donal Sarsfield.⁹³

3.8.4 Other Festivals

Other new festivals have emerged, some of them very recent, and notably none in the capital. The City of Derry International Choir Festival was founded in 2013 by Dónal Doherty, since when it has established a presence in the national and international choral calendar. In addition to its international competition (adjudicated by a panel of five internationally-renowned musicians), the festival also runs an extensive range of school and national competitions, non-competitive performances, and educational workshops. These competitions in Cork and Derry provide Irish choirs with the opportunity to measure themselves against visiting choirs from countries where choral music occupies a more central and prominent place in artistic life.

The Mayo International Choral Festival was also founded in 2013. Although its panel also includes international adjudicators, the emphasis is different from that of either Cork or Derry: ‘The theme of the festival is to allow choirs to meet with other choirs, relax and enjoy a great weekend in the beautiful West of Ireland.’⁹⁴ Sligo International Choral Festival cannot really claim to be international, either in terms of choirs taking part or in its adjudicators who are generally Irish or English. But it is a popular, well-attended national festival with competitions for adult and school choirs. Other national competitions include Navan Choral and Instrumental Festival (1970), New Ross

⁹³ Cork International Choral Festival, ‘Seminar on New Choral Music’, <http://www.corkchoral.ie/portfolio/seminar-on-new-choral-music> [accessed 5 March, 2018].

⁹⁴ The Mayo International Choral Festival, ‘About’, <http://www.mayochoral.com/sample-page> [accessed 2 February 2018].

Choral Festival (1986), Limerick Choral Festival (2004), and Arklow Music Festival (1969).

3.9.5 Other Organisations

The latter half of the twentieth century also saw the emergence of other kinds of choral institutions as well as festivals. The Association of Irish Choirs (AOIC) was established in 1980, originally as Cumann Náisiúnta na gCór, ‘to promote and develop choral singing in Ireland’.⁹⁵ Its key programmes now include an annual, intensive, accredited, seven-day choral-conducting summer school with an international faculty; the management of the Irish Youth Choir which provides an annual week-long summer-camp for singers aged 18-28 leading to concert performances; management of the recently-founded Irish Youth Training Choir (2015) which provides an annual five-day course for singers aged 14-17; and a one-year conductor-in-training position in conjunction with the Irish Youth Choir and the RTÉ Philharmonic Choir (2008).⁹⁶ This relatively modest remit could be expanded significantly with greater funding from the Arts Council.

Another late-twentieth-century institution of importance for Irish choral music is the Contemporary Music Centre (CMC), established in Dublin in 1985 by the Arts Council. As an archive and resource centre it contains the only major specialist collection of choral music by contemporary Irish composers. It also houses a sound archive and collections of related material including ‘a series of graded catalogues of

⁹⁵ Association of Irish Choirs, ‘Mission and History’,
<https://www.aaic.ie/footer_links/about/mission_history> [accessed 3 February 2018].

⁹⁶ Irish Youth Choir, ‘Conductor in Training’,
<https://www.aaic.ie/iyc/about_us/iyc_rte_conductor_in_training> [accessed 9 February 2018].

selected works with a comprehensive set of guidelines about each work by curators'.⁹⁷

The CMC promotes new Irish choral music in Ireland and abroad to some degree.

Unfortunately it has proven slow in digitising its resources. Consequently, hard copies of choral scores remain relatively – and in some cases prohibitively – expensive.

3.9.6 The Study of Conducting

One of the biggest hindrances to the health of choral music in Ireland is the continuing absence of a full-time specialist choral conducting course at third level.⁹⁸ Anyone with serious ambition in conducting is obliged to study abroad. In recent years the Arts Council has looked favourably on applications for grants to study conducting in countries with a tradition of choral excellence such as Hungary, Germany, Finland, England and the U.S.A. This in turn provides a boost to the development of choral singing in Ireland although in a sporadic manner. Trained conductors returning to Ireland find that it is impossible to sustain a career in choral music. Most have to teach full-time while doing their conducting work as a sideline.

3.10 Composers of Choral Music in Postwar Ireland

It was not until the latter half of the century that choral music in Ireland began to experience growth, a timeline, incidentally, which it shared with other post-colonial countries such as Finland, the Baltic states, and Hungary. After the war, Irish composers began composing in ways that reflected developments on the Continent, so that art music in Ireland was finally looking beyond its shores – and beyond musically conservative Britain, whom traditionally it had followed – and starting to import

⁹⁷ The Contemporary Music Centre Ireland, 'CMC Catalogues', <<https://www.cmc.ie/projects/catalogues>> [accessed 12 January 2018].

⁹⁸ Choral conducting does appear as part of some undergraduate and post-graduate courses.

aspects of an avant-garde, European aesthetic. For this late development to make any real impact specifically on choral music would require several more decades. Meanwhile, in Irish art music in general, major developments were driven by the emergence of certain institutions and key figures, notably Aloys Fleischmann, Brian Boydell and Frederick May. Key institutions included Radio Éireann – ultimately Radio Teilifís Éireann – and the maturation of its choirs; Feis Ceoil; Cork International Choral Festival (CIFIC); the founding and maturation of various choral societies and *a cappella* choirs; the birth of organisations such as the Association of Irish Choirs (Cumann Náisiúnta na gCór) and the Contemporary Music Centre of Ireland; and the external influence of new international developments in choral music outside Ireland.

The Second World War marked a watershed in Irish music. Irish composers began to look beyond Ireland for new ideas, with some actively avoiding features that were connected to nationalism or to traditional music. These forward-looking composers included Aloys Fleischmann (1910-1992), Frederick May (1911-1985), Brian Boydell (1917-2000), A. J. Potter (1918-1980), Gerard Victory (1921-1995), James Wilson (1922-2005), Seán Ó Riada (1931-1971), John Kinsella (*b*1932) and Seóirse Bodley (*b*1933). Each studied outside Ireland,⁹⁹ some assimilating avant-garde techniques including atonality, twelve-tone technique, serialism, aleatoricism and octatonicism. Some, such as Potter, Bodley and Ó Riada attempted syntheses of traditional music with contemporary techniques.

⁹⁹ Axel Klein, 'Irish Composers and Foreign Education: A Study of Influences' in Patrick F. Devine & Harry White (eds), *Irish Musical Studies 4: The Maynooth International Musicological Conference 1995: Selected Proceedings Part One* (Dublin: Four Courts Press, 1996), 271.

It required several more decades before this new, outward-looking aesthetic in art music in general made any notable impact on Irish choral music in particular. In this Brian Boydell took a leading role. He composed a substantial amount of choral music, both *a cappella* and accompanied.¹⁰⁰ Gareth Cox suggests that ‘The hallmark of Boydell’s style ... is manifestly revealed in the study of the juxtaposition of diatonicism (both implied and overt) and octatonicism, evident in most of his major works’.¹⁰¹ Boydell himself described his style as a reaction to ‘the Stanford-Harty Anglo-Irish tradition’¹⁰² which he also labelled ‘plastic shamrock, the sort of thing that exported extremely well to America and in fact, I think, has done the image of serious music in this country a lot of damage’.¹⁰³ He claimed many influences, among them Bartók and Prokofiev, but had avoided serialism and the influence of composers such as Webern and Schoenberg.¹⁰⁴

His *Three Madrigals* (op.60, 1967), for example, featured a very contemporary sound for their day. In the first, *O My Thoughts Surcease* (for SATB), Boydell fuses highly contemporary harmonic language with classic features of the renaissance madrigal. Similarly, his large-scale *Under No Circumstances* is divorced of any reference at all to Irish traditional music. Commissioned by the University of Dublin Choral Society for its 150th anniversary in 1987, it is in oratorio form with a text constructed from press reports and the minutes of committee-meetings from the society’s first fifty years of existence.¹⁰⁵ Boydell manages to create music that is fitting for the occasion and

¹⁰⁰ Gareth Cox, Axel Klein, Michael Taylor (eds), *The Life and Music of Brian Boydell* (Dublin: Irish Academic Press, 2004), Appendix 1.

¹⁰¹ *Ibid.*, 26.

¹⁰² Charles Acton, ‘Interview with Brian Boydell’, *Éire-Ireland*, 5 (1970), 104.

¹⁰³ Michael Taylor, ‘An Interview with Brian Boydell’ in Gareth Cox, Axel Klein, Michael Taylor (eds), *The Life and Music of Brian Boydell* (Dublin: Irish Academic Press, 2004), 80.

¹⁰⁴ Gareth Cox, ‘The Musical Language of Brian Boydell’ in Gareth Cox, Axel Klein, Michael Taylor (eds), *The Life and Music of Brian Boydell*, 25-26.

¹⁰⁵ University of Dublin Choral Society <<http://www.udcs.org/history>> [accessed 3 March 2018].

therefore rather nostalgic, at times humorous, even though the harmonic language is often astringent and dissonant. The score includes a part for speaking voice and baroque-style recitative passages in an updated contemporary idiom.

Pieces like these initiated Irish choral music's overdue transition from 'celtic twilight' to an open, unrestricted kind of writing which led eventually to the growing choral culture of the present time. After getting off to such a slow start for half the twentieth century, however, there was no sudden acceleration and the process remained slow. The decades separating Boydell and the cross-section of twenty-first-century composers analysed in Part II of this thesis are only sporadically punctuated by composers who show an interest in writing choral music in the new postwar manner.

The stylistic trajectory of Seóirse Bodley (b1933), for example, almost mirrors that of the entire century. While his early work is dominated by an interest in and use of elements of Irish traditional music, he acquired a wider outlook following several periods of study in Darmstadt over the course of the 1960s.¹⁰⁶ Choral music was not a focus for him, yet a handful of pieces mark him out as one of the composers of this transitional phase, among them *A Chill Wind* from 1977. This was a cycle of five settings for unaccompanied mixed choir of old poems translated from the Irish by Brendan Kennelly. It was premiered by the RTÉ Singers under Proinnsias Ó Duinn at the Dublin Festival of Twentieth-Century Music in January 1978. Musically the cycle is characterised by a single prevailing technical feature which is the creation of sonorities by superimposing pairs of triads. Sometimes these triads clash, because one is major and the other minor, or because one is augmented. Bodley still allows himself

¹⁰⁶ Gareth Cox, 'Bodley, Seóirse' in Harry White and Barra Boydell (eds), *The Encyclopaedia of Music in Ireland* (Dublin: University College Dublin Press, 2013), i, 105.

‘Irish’ characteristics such as traditional vocal ornaments and some Irish nonsense syllables, and indeed in later decades his style would gravitate towards the synthesis of the Irish and international elements that he uses. But here in the 1970s he presented a piece which helps sign-post Ireland’s path from pre-war folksong arrangement to the fully open and original choral music of today.¹⁰⁷

Other composers active in this period who provided similar sign-posts include Aloys Fleischmann whose *Poet in the Suburbs* of 1973 features aleatory, dissonance, and quotation from Sibelius. The prolific Gerard Victory included many choral pieces in his output, including one involving tape (*Processus*, 1975), and culminating in the massive, orchestrally-accompanied *Ultima Rerum* which he completed in 1985 following six years of work.¹⁰⁸ Lasting over an hour and a half, it brings together multiple elements including texts from Blake, Flecker, Leopardi, Tennyson, Whitman, the Bible, and the Qur’an, and from Navajo Indian, Norse, and Old Irish traditions. This textual diversity is matched by a wide range of compositional elements including twelve-tone technique, atonality, impressionism, and aleatoric writing.¹⁰⁹

In various ways, other Irish composers writing during this transitional period increased the growing distance between the forward-looking Irish choral music of their own times and the folksong arrangements no longer holding primacy of place. This is evident in, for example, Eric Sweeney’s steady output since the 1970s of pieces for cathedral choir which reflect various styles of contemporary sacred music. In 1979,

¹⁰⁷ Gareth Cox, *Seoirse Bodley* (Dublin: Field Day Publications, 2010), 87-90.

¹⁰⁸ Philip Graydon, ‘Victory, Gerard’ in Harry White and Barra Boydell (eds), *The Encyclopaedia of Music in Ireland* (Dublin: University College Dublin Press, 2013), ii, 1030.

¹⁰⁹ Gerard Victory, *Ultima Rerum*. Background Notes by the composer. 1992. Compact disc. Marco Polo.8.223532-3.

John Buckley (b1951) used chord clusters in a setting of Horace for ten-part mixed choir and piano, *Pulvis et umbra*.¹¹⁰ In her *Moods* of 1978, Eibhlís Farrell (b1953) deploys vocal glissandi in a sound-world based on dissonant harmonies. In *Suantraí Ghráinne*, written for the Lindsay Singers in 1983, Rhona Clarke (b1958) foreshadows what will grow into the mature voice that characterises the choral output upon which her reputation primarily rests. These features include a gentle rhythmic complexity, changing meters, and a sensitive facility in the setting of Irish texts. The main thrust of Seán Ó Riada's immense importance to the history of music in Ireland lies outside what he wrote for choirs, yet his two settings for unison choir and organ of the mass ordinary in Irish, *Ceol an aifreann* (1968) and *Aifreann 2* (1970), belong in any discussion of the transition away from the 'celtic twilight', irrespective of his use of traditional song. John O'Keefe calls this 'vernacular church music' in that it emanates from a 'living oral culture of native traditional song; as part of a historical continuum of monophonic liturgical composition for the Roman rite.'¹¹¹

3.11 Conclusion

Music in Ireland – including choral music – entered a new period of change as the artistic 'golden age' of the eighteenth century came to a close. The passing of the Act of Union in 1801 and the abolition of the Irish Parliament saw the wealthy Anglo-Irish moving *en masse* from Dublin to London. Having been a vital element of the audience for choral music, above all in Dublin's now fading culture of charity concerts, their departure had a devastating effect on concert life. Responding to this, international composers and performers now became less inclined to include Dublin in their tours

¹¹⁰ John Buckley, 'Choral', <<http://www.johnbuckleycomposer.com/compositions.html#choral>> [accessed 1 April 2018].

¹¹¹ John O'Keefe, *The Masses of Seán and Peadar Ó Riada: Exploration in Vernacular Chant* (Cork: Cork University Press, 2017), 1.

of Europe. On the other hand, choral music in the Dublin cathedrals continued as previously, seemingly little affected by the end of the 'golden age'.¹¹²

The departure to London of so much wealth created a vacuum. The foremost feature of the next phase in Ireland's choral history was the gradual filling of this vacuum by an entirely different element within Irish society: the emerging Catholic middle-class. In terms of choral activity, this segment of society dramatically increased its involvement in the traditionally Protestant preserve of choral singing, contributing steadily to the tally by 1900 of eighty-five new choirs in Dublin alone. The Catholic Church, newly emancipated after so many years of foreign suppression, began to address the issue of music. Looking to the Continent for guidance, Irish cathedrals and churches began to draw Belgian and German organists and choir directors who brought with them the various influences of European repertoire at that time. This surge in the long-delayed growth of Irish choral music suffered a cruel setback with the coming to power of Paul Cullen, appointed Archbishop of Armagh in 1849 and of Dublin two years later. An ultramontanist, Cullen dedicated himself to 'romanising' the Irish church. Among the consequences for choral music were that Cullen's restrictions included a return to what was considered the ideal church music according to the Cecilian movement: chant, polyphony in the style of Palestrina, and polyphony by modern imitators. Nothing else, and certainly nothing new, was acceptable.

¹¹² See Barra Boydell, 'A Bright Exception to the General Rule? Musical Standards at Christ Church Cathedral Dublin in the Early Nineteenth Century,' in *Nineteenth-Century British Music Studies*, ed. Jeremy Dibble and Bennett Zon (Aldershot, 2002), and Kerry Houston 'Reformation to the Roseingraves, music 1550-1750' in John Crawford and Raymond Gillespie (eds), *St Patrick's Cathedral, Dublin: A History* (Dublin: Four Courts Press, 2009).

The twentieth century brought development on a much larger scale. Although initially slow, overall choral activity experienced significant growth, notably as the by-product of the establishment of particular institutions. In line with developments elsewhere in Europe, Radió Éireann established the first professional choir in 1942, Cór Raidio Éireann, and gradually added the RTÉ Philharmonic and Cór na nÓg in the 1980s. Feis Ceoil, although established in 1897, continued to grow with annual competitions for workplace and school choirs as well as competitions for composers. The Cork International Choral Festival brought a strong international element with an emphasis on composition, both national and international. In the latter half of the century, many choral societies and chamber choirs were formed, demonstrating the healthy state of choral activity. After passing the mid-century, the culture of nationalistic reverence for the Irish folksong – manifest in ‘celtic twilight’-style choral arrangements – began to give way to greater influence from musical currents outside Ireland via pioneering composers such as Brian Boydell, A. J. Potter, and Frederick May. This led finally to the current situation in which growing numbers of Irish composers are now producing excellent music for choirs.

Part II

Chapter Four

Choral Pieces by Contemporary Irish Composers

4.1 Introduction

Part II of this thesis returns to the opening assertion, that, in the early twentieth-first century, the composition of Irish choral music is in the healthiest state of its long but difficult history. In support of this assertion, this thesis presents a cross-section of contemporary, *a cappella* choral composition in Ireland. This sampling comprises close analysis of eight pieces, each one selected to represent a different aspect of Irish choral composition. The pieces are as follows:

<i>Mother Goose's Melodies</i> , Eoghan Desmond (b1989)	2015
<i>O Frondens Virga</i> , Ben Hanlon (b1952)	2010
<i>Long Time</i> , Gerald Barry (b1952)	2011
<i>Down by the Salley Gardens</i> , arr. Mark Armstrong (b1963)	2014
'Regina Coeli' from <i>Two Marian Anthems</i> , Rhona Clarke (b1958)	2007
<i>Bagairt na Marbh</i> , Michael Holohan (b1956)	1982 (rev 1986, 2002)
<i>Geantraí</i> , Michael McGlynn (b1964)	1995
<i>Snow Dance for the Dead</i> , Seán Doherty (b1987)	2017

These are eight pieces of high quality, primarily of the early twenty-first century, of which six were composed within the ten-year span 2007-2017. While Michael Holohan's *Bagairt na Marbh* dates back to 1982, it received its second revision in 2002. The oldest piece is Michael McGlynn's *Geantraí*, composed in 1995.

4.2 Eoghan Desmond, *Mother Goose's Melodies*

Wit and sophistication do not automatically translate into music that engages listeners. In this set of nursery-rhyme settings, however, they do. For this reason, and because they provide a sample of a young generation of new Irish composers, Eoghan Desmond's *Mother Goose's Melodies* – which won the 2015 Seán Ó Riada prize for composition at the Cork International Choral Festival – is included here for analysis and discussion. This author has already conducted *Mother Goose's Melodies* (2014) on several occasions in its brief lifetime, and it has never failed to delight and engage audiences, whether in Ireland or – which is really significant – in front of non-English-speaking audiences in France and Finland. The set has earned a contract for Desmond with Finland's Sulasol, one of Europe's leading publishers of choral music. This is all the more remarkable given that *Mother Goose's Melodies* is one of his first compositions for choir.

Several factors make this set of pieces effective. It is music composed by a choral 'insider', repeatedly demonstrating a deep and detailed understanding of voice range and colour, word-setting, breathing and phrasing. These come naturally to Desmond who is steeped in choral tradition, having sung in cathedral choirs from the age of nine, now a long-time lay-vicar choral of St Patrick's Cathedral, Dublin, and who has sung with Ireland's leading choirs including the only professional one, Chamber Choir Ireland.¹ Such a background, of course, is not a prerequisite for writing successfully for choirs – there are many fine composers of choral music with little or no significant choral experience of their own. But with these pieces Desmond reveals an insider's

¹ 'Eoghan Desmond', <<http://www.eoghandesmond.com>> [21 August, 2017].

understanding of writing for voice and writing for combinations of voices within a choir.

Choral facility is not enough, however, to produce pieces of such engagement and impact, nor is the technical assurance he has acquired in the course of his studies. What *Mother Goose's Melodies* reveals is a distinctive creative spark. Desmond has a capacity for capturing the essence of words and narrative. Audiences readily relate to the sophisticated musical expression he gives them. It is possible to get some idea of how he achieves this by making a close examination of these pieces.

The nursery rhymes Desmond sets in *Mother Goose's Melodies* are organised as follows:

1. 'Cock-a-doodle-do! My dame has lost her shoe!', 'Doctor Foster went to Gloucester', and 'Goosey, Goosey Gander' (these first three as 'A Comic Triptych')
2. 'Bobby Shaftoe'/'A Sailor Went to Sea, Sea, Sea'
3. 'Hey Diddle Diddle, the Cat and the Fiddle'

Although the central pairing ('Bobby Shaftoe'/'A Sailor Went to Sea, Sea, Sea') provides a moment of poignant contrast, the overall impact of this work is a comic one. The texts in the two outer sections are, typically for nursery rhymes, nonsense verse, and Desmond responds differently to each one, but always successfully capturing their comic essence. It is not something easily achieved, yet audience responses consistently show that Desmond achieves it. The following analysis attempts to show how.

Mother Goose's Melodies

- i. Cock-a-doodle-do!
My dame has lost her shoe!
My master's lost his fiddlin' stick,
And doesn't know what to do.

With the opening note of ‘Cock-a-doodle-do!’ Desmond proclaims immediately that all is silliness. An alto soloist, under the dynamic marking ‘cocky’, sings the initial ‘cock-a-doodle-do’ according to very specific instruction (Example 4.2.1).

Example 4.2.1: Desmond, *Mother Goose’s Melodies*, bars 1- 6

The musical score is for the piece 'i. Cock-a-doodle doo!' in 3/4 time, with a tempo of 120. It features an Alto soloist and a four-part choir (Soprano, Alto, Tenor, Bass). The Alto part begins with a 'Solo cocky mp' dynamic marking. The lyrics are '[k]-o-[k]-a-doo-dle-doo!' and '[k]-o-[k]-a-doo-dle-doo!'. The score includes dynamic markings such as *mf* and *molto*, and a crescendo hairpin. The Soprano, Tenor, and Bass parts are mostly silent, with some notes in the final bar.

The opening ‘k’ sound must begin before the beat and the closing ‘k’ must be placed exactly at the beginning of the second beat. The effect is percussive and dramatically emphatic, with the result that the audience is smiling already. The notes of the solo cock-crow initially form a G-major broken chord but then arrive at and rest on the tritone, C sharp. The soloist repeats the cock-crow, this time with an exaggerated *molto crescendo* on the C sharp. From these opening six bars and with just one voice, Desmond creates the suggestion of a noble alpenhorn call gone wrong, or perhaps even an allusion to the title music from *The Simpsons*. The audience immediately recognises the humour and anticipates more of the same.

The rest of the choir joins in and the ensuing choral writing is quirky. The lower voices take up a lurching ostinato on ‘cock-a-doodle-do’ as accompaniment to the sopranos

who have the melody and who recount the nursery rhyme’s list of mishaps. Both melody and accompaniment are rooted in the comic tritone of the opening cock-crow which helps keep up the spirit of silliness (Example 4.2.2).

Example 4.2.2: Desmond, *Mother Goose’s Melodies*, bars 7-10

This spirit is also evoked via Desmond’s meticulous markings concerning articulation – notably staccato – and the start and finish of consonants, so that a highly fastidious, po-faced enunciation ends up hopelessly at odds with the blatant silliness of the nonsense verse.

It is a short rhyme and is suddenly over, followed immediately by the next rhyme in the triptych, ‘Doctor Foster went to Gloucester.’

- ii. Doctor Foster
 Went to Gloucester
 In a shower of rain.
 He stepped in a puddle
 Right up to his middle,
 And never went there again.

The story of this important man disappearing into an impossibly deep puddle is already very funny, something Desmond must match in the musical layer he adds. For the tale of so learned a man the music must be correspondingly learned, and there is no music with a greater reputation for being learned than what Desmond uses here: a fugue. It is for three voices – the tenors are silent, held in reserve for a surprise a little later – and authentically fugal. The sopranos announce the subject (in B flat major) which two bars later receives a real answer at the fifth (in F major) by the altos, after which the subject returns in the bass line in B flat major (Example 4.2.3).

Example 4.2.3: Desmond, *Mother Goose 's Melodies*, bars 18-22

ii. Dr Foster's Fugue

18 *mp* 3 3 3 3 3 3 3 3 3

S. Do - ctor Fo - ster weh - nto Glou - cester ih - na show 'rof rai - na show 'rof

A.

T.

B.

20 *p*

S. rain, a show'r of rain. a show'rof rain? in

mp 3 3 3 3 3 3 3 3 *p*

A. Do - ctor Fo - ster weh - nto Glou - cester ih - na show 'rof rain a show'r of

T.

B. *mp* 3 3 3 3

Do - ctor Fo - ster weh - nto Glou - cester

He is again meticulous about the placing of consonants, much of it contrary to normal expectation (e.g. ‘Do-ctor’ not ‘Doc-tor’; ‘we-nto’ not ‘wen – to’). Desmond deploys conventional fugal techniques such as inversion. In bar 9, for example, the subject is inverted in the soprano line while the countersubject is inverted in the bass. He also plays with the overall harmonic integrity, generating polytonality out of phrases that are mostly tonal. For example, bars 34-35 combine F major in the soprano, B flat major in the alto, A minor in the baritone and a B flat pedal in the bass. As with the alpenhorn gone wrong earlier, the effect of this tonal congestion is a kind of precariousness and the suggestion that the good doctor is not quite as learned as he thinks.

And then suddenly all his dignity and educated self-assurance are shattered when the long-silent tenors finally burst in with their entry, abruptly terminating the fugue with a long shout marked *fff possible: ARGH!*. They continue on a single note in the first person, *I stepped in a puddle!*, which the rest of the choir echoes. A call-and-echo dialogue then proceeds to the end of the text, with a few comic distortions and with the dynamic gradually softening.

Even before the tenors have completed their last, self-pitying diminuendo on ‘... and never went there again’, the sopranos, altos and basses are already intoning the sad opening unison of the triptych’s final rhyme, *Goosey, goosey gander*.

iii. Goosey, Goosey Gander,
 Where do you wander?
 ‘Upstairs, Downstairs,
 In my lady’s chamber.
 There, I met and old man
 Who would not say his prayers.

I took him by the left leg
 And threw him down the stairs!’

The opening is slow and mock-serious, setting up a dissonant dialogue between the basses and altos from bar 48, with the divided basses singing ‘Upstairs, downstairs’ and the divided altos answering in inversion, ‘Downstairs, upstairs’ (Example 4.2.4).

Example 4.2.4: Desmond, *Mother Goose’s Melodies*, bars 44-51

iii. Goosey goosey gander

44 *ff senza vib* *d. = d.*

S. Goo-sey goo-sey gan-der, where shall I wan-der?

A. Goo-sey goo-sey gan-der, where shall I wan-der?

T. gain!

B. *ff senza vib* *f (vib)*
 Goo-sey goo-sey gan-der, where shall I wan-der? Up-stairs,

49

S.

A. *f (vib)*
 Down-stairs, up-stairs, Down-stairs, up-stairs,

T.

B. *f (vib)*
 down-stairs, Up-stairs, down-stairs, Up-stairs,

Their motifs match the text, with an awkward descending interval of a major 7th for ‘downstairs’ and a corresponding and ascending major 7th for ‘upstairs’. They are marked *f (vib)* and so are dramatically loud and with vibrato.

By bar 53 the soprano and tenors are interjecting with stabbing chords, and the texture becomes cacophonous, marked *ff(stressed)* in bar 55. Then it begins to fade, eventually finishing calmly and *expressivo* on the word ‘in my lady’s chamber’. But suddenly there is an intrusion by that element of nursery rhymes that is always lurking never too far away: violence. ‘There I met an old man who would not say his prayers, I took him by the left leg and threw him down the stairs!’ The line is sung *tutti* in a loud, angry unison which proceeds almost frantically from *accelerando* to *molto accelerando* and then abruptly ceases, thus bringing the *Triptych* to an uproarious end. The violence, which Desmond makes explicit, is nevertheless slapstick violence and the audience always laughs. Desmond describes this passage as:

... the displaced stretto of *Dr Foster’s Fugue*, which was previously interrupted by his falling into a puddle in bar 36. In fact, if you skip from bar 33 to bar 57, and then end at bar 61, you get a perfectly reasonable and complete 3 voice fugue with stretto. The implication, of course, is that the ‘old man’ found there is none other than our old friend Dr. Foster.²

The central pairing of ‘Bobby Shafto’ and ‘A Sailor Went to Sea’ provides a quiet contrast with the madcap antics just concluded.

Bobby Shafto went to sea,
Silver buckles on his knee.
He’ll come back to marry me.
Bonny Bobby Shafto.

² Eoghan Desmond, email correspondence, 9 April 2018.

Bobby Shafto's bright and fair,	(A sailor went to sea
Combing out his yellow hair.	To see what he could see
He will love me evermair.	But all that he did see was
Bonny Bobby Shafto.	The bottom of the deep blue sea.)

Bobby Shafto's dead and gone.
 I remain and must go on,
 Carrying his only son.
 Poor old Bobby Shafto.

Desmond plays with expectations, transforming the jaunty character of both nursery rhymes by replacing the lively maritime tunes that are traditionally associated with these verses. He re-works the words of 'Bobby Shafto' with the gentle renaissance hymn tune *Song 13* by Orlando Gibbons,³ sung by soprano solo and upper voices (Example 4.2.5).

Example 4.2.5: Desmond, *Mother Goose's Melodies*, bars 67-70

And in a nice moment of word-painting, he sets 'A Sailor Went to Sea' in quietly descending scales, each of four male-voice lines entering canonically and ultimately

³ Orlando Gibbons, 'Song 13', <<https://hymnary.org/media/fetch/138910>> [accessed 13 April 2017].

holding in unison to the bottom note in sombre allusion to the fate of the titular sailor (Example 4.2.6).

Example 4.2.6: Desmond, *Mother Goose's Melodies*, bars 74-80

The musical score consists of four vocal staves: TENOR 1, TENOR 2, BASS 1, and BASS 2. The music is in 3/2 time and F major. The lyrics are: "A sail - or went to sea to see what he could see, but all that he did see was the bot - tom of the deep blue sea." The score shows the vocal lines for bars 74-80, with the bass parts providing a harmonic accompaniment.

The scales are interesting (Example 4.2.7). In the first passage (bars 74-80), it is a straightforward F harmonic minor scale, rather melancholic. But in the second and third passages (bars 87-92 and bars 94-97) it is a whole tone scale, creating an eerie effect when they are superimposed canonically.

Example 4.2.7: Desmond *Mother Goose's Melodies*, bars 74-75; 87-88; 94-95



Initially Desmond alternates verses of ‘Shafto’/Gibbons with the canonic scales of ‘A Sailor’. Then, for the third verse, these two elements arrive simultaneously, brilliantly combined and thus musically identifying Bobby Shafto, now ‘dead and gone,’ with the doomed ‘Sailor’ whose fatal curiosity ultimately revealed only ‘the bottom of the deep blue sea’. These are only nursery rhymes, yet Desmond invests them with a poignant feeling of grief, adding a hint of bereaved bitterness to the upper voices in the final line (‘carrying his only son’) by replacing any hint of the Renaissance represented by Gibbons with a harmonic setting that is chromatic and tonally uncertain (Example 4.2.8).

Example 4.2.8: Desmond, *Mother Goose's Melodies*, bars 97-100

97 on - ly

S. Car - ry - ing his on - ly son. Poor old Bob - by Shaf - to.

A. Car - ry - ing his on - ly son. Poor old Bob - by Shaf - to.

T. bot - tom of the sea.

T. of the sea.

B.

attacca

Hey! Diddle-diddle! The cat played the fiddle!
 The cow jumped over the moon!
 The little dog laughed to see such fun,
 And the dish ran away with the spoon!

The moment for grieving is gone in a flash. With the first of many shouts of ‘Hey!’, Desmond launches into his wild, concluding *Bacchanale – Hey-diddle-diddle* – with the markings ‘*orgiastically*’ and ‘*as fast as humanly possible*’. He divides his forces into two four-part choirs, the second of which mimics the open strings of the fiddle starting on G in the bass, each string taken up by the corresponding voice-line in succession and sustaining a break-neck semiquaver ostinato on repetition of the words ‘fiddle-iddle’. Once all four strings are engaged, Choir I enters above them with a weird chorale setting of the full text marked ‘*senza espressione e molto legato*’, ‘*like a newsreader*’. Meanwhile, frequent and unpredictably placed shouts of *Hey!* interject from the high-speed ostinato which appears to be getting out of kilter and eventually

gives way to rapid unpitched scales, up and down, up and down, halting only when the original ‘Cock-a-doodle-do’ alto soloist steps forward and, as though unaware of her surroundings, quietly begins some other song (of her own choosing!). It is the last of Desmond’s surprises and it brings *Mother Goose’s Melodies* to a close.

Preparation and Performance Notes

‘Cock-a-doodle-doo!’ has very specific enunciation challenges. Desmond takes great care to indicate precisely what he wants in the text. In bar 9 the sopranos must place the ‘k’ of ‘cock’ exactly on the second semiquaver, and it is staccato; ‘dame’ must be enunciated with two syllables: ‘day’ and ‘muh’ (Example 4.2.9). This will require careful practice. Very clear enunciation will make the text sparkle.

Example 4.2.9: Desmond, *Mother Goose’s Melodies*, bars 7-10

The musical score for soprano voice (S.) is in 5/8 time with a tempo marking of c. 144. It begins with a rest for two bars, followed by a melodic line starting in bar 3. The lyrics are: '[Koh][k] a-doo-dle-doo, my [day] [muh]has lost her shoe, my'. Performance markings include 'Tutti f' and 'mf'.

The opening ‘k’ sound must begin before the beat and the closing ‘k’ must be placed exactly at the beginning of the second beat. ‘Doctor Foster’ requires the same clarity of enunciation (‘Do-ctor Fo-ster weh-nto Glou-cester ih-na show-‘rof rain’).

Bars 7-17 are difficult to sing accurately because of the harmonic shifts between the chord of G major and a major chord with an added ninth on the tritone C sharp (Example 4.2.10).

Example 4.2.10: Desmond, *Mother Goose's Melodies*, chords in bars 7-17



It will help singers (particularly sopranos) to acclimatise to both of these chords. Warm-up exercises can be devised to practice moving between G major and C sharp major with a ninth (Example 4.2.11).

Example 4.2.11: Desmond, *Mother Goose's Melodies*, warm-up exercise



The subject of the fugue in 'Doctor Foster' is best rehearsed at first in unison by the sopranos, altos and basses in B flat major (as sung by sopranos and basses), and then in F major (as sung by altos and sopranos), but then also inverted as it is in bars 26-27 and 28-29. This will give a very good foundation for the passage which is difficult to pitch accurately as the harmonies are angular and dissonant.

'Bobby Shafto', written for the upper voices only, is not particularly difficult musically but needs to capture the change of atmosphere from the optimistic start, with Bobby fully expected to return and marry his loved one, and the gradual realisation by his loved one – who is expecting their child – that he will never come back. 'A Sailor Went to Sea', however, is quite challenging because of the canonic nature of its minor and whole tone scales (Example 4.2.12). Basses and tenors must be thoroughly familiar and secure with the various minor and whole-tone scales before attempting to perform them in canon.

Example 4.2.12: Desmond *Mother Goose's Melodies*, bars 74-75; 87-88; 94-95

F minor



E flat whole tone scale



F whole tone scale



Choirs 1 and 2 should work separately to prepare the final movement, ‘Hey-diddle-diddle!’. Choir 2 has to overcome two challenges. The first is to emulate fiddle-playing (on G, D, A, E) as they sing their semiquavers ‘*as fast as humanly possible*’. The second is to interject shouted ‘hey’s – ‘unpitched, high, short and loud’⁴ – at irregular intervals (Example 4.2.13). The irregularity is what poses the challenge. Choir 2 needs to memorise this movement to ensure total accuracy in the placement of each ‘hey’.

⁴ Eoghan Desmond, *Mother Goose's Melodies* (Sulasol: Helsinki, 2017), programme note.

Example 4.2.13: Desmond, *Mother Goose's Melodies*, bars 107-109

The image shows a musical score for two choirs, Choir 1 and Choir 2, across two systems of music. The first system (bars 107-109) is marked *mf senza espressione e molto legato* and *like a newsreader*. Choir 1 has the lyrics "Hey - did - dle did - dle! the". Choir 2 has the lyrics "Hey - did-dle [etc.]". The piano accompaniment for both choirs consists of a steady eighth-note pattern. Red circles highlight specific notes in the piano parts: in bar 108, the first note of the piano part for both choirs; in bar 109, the first and second notes of the piano part for both choirs. The second system (bars 110-111) features Choir 1 with lyrics "cat played the fid - dle! The cow jumped" and Choir 2 with lyrics "Hey - did-dle [etc.]". The piano accompaniment continues with similar patterns, and red circles highlight notes in the piano parts: in bar 110, the first and second notes of the piano part for both choirs; in bar 111, the first and second notes of the piano part for both choirs.

Once all four voices of Choir 2 have entered, Choir 1 sings a dissonant chorale (in B flat minor). Their first chord of E flat major is difficult to pitch against the ‘open strings’ chord (G D A E) of Choir 2 (Example 4.2.13). This difficulty can be eased with a preparatory exercise in which the full choir sings the ‘open-string’ chord and then moves to the E flat major chord. It is initially difficult to combine the two choirs because of the bi-tonal writing, which is why both choirs need to be fully secure separately before they are combined.

Desmond's *Mother Goose's Melodies* is very challenging for any choir, amateur or professional. But when well performed, with a nicely balanced blend of musical slapstick on the one hand and high-brow technical wit on the other, the comic impact and effectiveness is unfailing.

4.3 Ben Hanlon, *O Frondens Virga*

An important constituency within Ireland's contemporary choral music scene is the part-time composer. Typically, such composers have full-time jobs and do their creative work in their own time. These time constraints – and the absence of a day-to-day immersion in the process of composition – present additional challenges not only to the completion of work but also to ensuring that the final result is of a standard sufficient to place it in the company of music by full-time composers.

Ben Hanlon is such a composer.⁵ He has always had a particular interest in choral music and, over the course of thirty years as music teacher in the Waterford boys' school De la Salle College, he established and honed an all-pervasive choral culture.⁶ Despite the immense commitment that this requires he also found time to compose, writing pieces of great quality which challenge and engage choirs, which demonstrate both a great awareness of the choral tradition and a facility in contemporary style, and which reveal expert handling of the expressive potential of his chosen texts.

These features are evident in *O Frondens Virga*, commissioned by New Dublin Voices which gave the premiere at the 2010 Cork International Choral Festival. The piece earned the choir the Special Award for performance of a work by a living European composer.⁷ The text is from an antiphon by the German abbess, thinker and composer Hildegard Von Bingen (1098-1179) whose interest in botany is reflected in her poetry which 'abounds in colourful images of natural, organic things – gardens, growth,

⁵ The Contemporary Music Centre Ireland, 'Ben Hanlon', <<https://www.cmc.ie/composers/ben-hanlon>> [accessed 15 January 2017].

⁶ Hanlon retired from his position as a full-time music teacher in De la Salle College, Waterford, in September 2017.

⁷ 'Cork International Choral Festival', <<http://www.corkchoral.ie/portcat/2010-festival>> [accessed 2 January 2017].

fecundity, flowers, jewels’.⁸ Meaning ‘O leafy branch’, *O Frondens Virga* is a reference to Mary who reaches out and frees the faithful from evil ways and weakness. ‘It is a hopeful text,’ says Hanlon, ‘which tells us that in spite of our weakness, we will be saved.’⁹

O Frondens Virga

O Frondens Virga,	O leafy branch,
in tua nobilitate stans	standing in your nobility
sicut aurora procedit.	as dawn advances:
nunc gaude et laetare	rejoice now and be glad
et nos debiles dignare	and deign to free us weak ones
a mala consuetudine liberare;	from evil habits
Atque manum tuam porrige	and stretch forth your hand
ad erigendum nos. ¹⁰	to lift us up.

Typical of Hanlon’s pieces, *O Frondens Virga* takes elements from Renaissance sacred choral tradition – such as plainchant, modes, canon and polyphony – and fuses them with twentieth-century features including irregular rhythms, chord clusters, and the whole-tone scale. Moreover, he uses word-painting and exploits his strength in setting Latin in order to harness the expressive potential of the words.

⁸ Owen Hopkin, ‘Hildegard of Bingen: life and music of the great female composer’, <<http://www.classicfm.com/composers/bingen/guides/discovering-great-composers-hildegard-von-bingen>> [accessed 1 May 2017].

⁹ Ben Hanlon, *O Frondens Virga* (Dublin: The Contemporary Music Centre Ireland, 2010), Introduction.

¹⁰ Hanlon sourced the prayer from Monks of Glenstal Abbey, *The Glenstal Book of Prayer: A Benedictine Prayer Book* (Collegeville, MN, Liturgical Press, 2001).

Hanlon's blending of old and new is immediately evident in the opening. The piece opens with a dorian plainchant fragment on the words *O Frondens Virga* ('O leafy branch'), evoking reverence and the medieval era (Example 4.3.1).

Example 4.3.1: Hanlon, *O Frondens Virga*, opening plainchant fragment

VOICES

O — fron — dens — vir — — ga, —

The image shows a single musical staff for voices in treble clef. The melody consists of a series of notes: G4, A4, B4, C5, B4, A4, G4, with a fermata over the final G4. The lyrics 'O — fron — dens — vir — — ga, —' are written below the staff, with hyphens indicating syllable placement under the notes.

The first bar, however, brings a quiet but abrupt updating to twentieth-century choral language with a static and delicately hummed lydian cluster (F, G, A, B) in the sopranos and altos, marked *ppp* and *Mysteriously* (Example 4.3.2).

Example 4.3.2: Hanlon, *O Frondens Virga*, bars 1-5

Mysteriously $\text{♩} = 44$

ppp

SOPRANO *Mm*

ppp

ALTO *Mm*

TENOR *p*

BASS *p*

O fron — dens — vir — ga,

O fron — dens, —

The image shows a four-part vocal score for Soprano, Alto, Tenor, and Bass. The tempo is 'Mysteriously' with a quarter note equal to 44 beats. The Soprano and Alto parts are marked *ppp* and feature a static hummed lydian cluster (F, G, A, B) in the first four bars. The Tenor and Bass parts have a slow rising melodic line starting in the second bar. The lyrics 'O fron — dens — vir — ga,' are written under the Tenor staff, and 'O fron — dens, —' under the Bass staff.

Under this hum the lower voices have a slow rising melodic line beginning with Bass 1 and taken over by Tenor 1, again on the text *O Frondens Virga*. It is built on the same lydian toneset as the cluster chord. All voices now sing *O Frondens Virga* as the

sopranos take over the melody and climb to a D, and a crescendo builds from *piano* to *mezzo-forte* (Example 4.3.3). This word-painting depicts the flowering which blossoms from the gentle, initial plainchant into a fuller-voiced *mezzo-forte* chord. The phrase ends in bar 9 with another four-note cluster chord, this time on B, C, D, E.

Example 4.3.3: Hanlon, *O Frondens Virga*, bars 6-11

The musical score for 'O Frondens Virga' by Hanlon, bars 6-11, is presented for four voices: Soprano (S.), Alto (A.), Tenor (T.), and Bass (B.). The score includes the following details:

- Staff S. (Soprano):** Melody starting on a half note G4, moving to A4, B4, and ending on a half note D5. Dynamics: *p* to *mf*.
- Staff A. (Alto):** Melody starting on a half note G4, moving to A4, B4, and ending on a half note D5. Dynamics: *p* to *mf* to *mp*.
- Staff T. (Tenor):** Accompaniment with chords. Dynamics: *mf* to *pp*.
- Staff B. (Bass):** Accompaniment with chords. Dynamics: *mf* to *pp*.
- Lyrics:** O frondens virga, O frondens virga, O frondens virga, In Mm.
- Tempo/Markings:** A tempo marking of 8 is present at the beginning of the Tenor part.

The second line of the prayer (bars 10 – 26) means ‘standing in your nobility as dawn advances’ (‘in tua nobilitate stans sicut aurora procedit’), and Hanlon masterfully portrays the coming of dawn with another exciting build-up. Almost repeating the previous section (bars 1-9), he varies his texture by inverting the material between the lower and upper voices: the phrase opens with the hummed, *subito ppp*, lydian cluster-chord in the lower voices while the upper voices take up the melody (altos followed by sopranos).

Following another cluster-chord cadence in bar 19 (similar to the one in bar 9), sopranos, altos and tenors sing a new phrase that starts in C major and builds dramatically through shifting chords over seven bars towards a bright, widely-spaced and *fortissimo* D major cadence in bar 26. This is capped by the first sopranos on a thrilling, long-sustained high A from bars 22-26, graphically evoking the appearance of the dawn sun over the horizon (Example 4.3.4).

Example 4.3.4: Hanlon, *O Frondens Virga*, bars 22-26

The image shows a musical score for four vocal parts: Soprano (S.), Alto (A.), Tenor (T.), and Bass (B.), covering bars 22 to 26. The score is written in 2/4 time and features a dramatic build-up towards a fortissimo (ff) D major cadence in bar 26. The Soprano part includes a long-sustained high A note from bar 22 to 26. The lyrics 'ce - - - - - dit:' are written below the notes.

A sharp change of texture follows this monumental chord as the piece quickly and quietly sets off in a wholly new direction. From bar 27, Hanlon's central idea is the invitation to 'rejoice' ('gaude'). His expression marking is 'dance it!' and he almost doubles the metronome marking from 44 to 120 and again fuses old and new by combining *organum*-sounding parallels and canons with funky, off-beat changing metres. He carefully structures an exciting build-up of texture and dynamics, taking obvious delight in the use of rhythm and irregular patterns to express joy. The passage consists of increasingly interlaced repetitions of the words 'nunc, nunc gaude et

laetare' ('now rejoice and be glad') on a little dorian motif derived from the plainchant melody at the opening of the piece. The first tenors introduce it, complemented by the second tenors in parallel at a perfect fourth beneath them, clearly harking back to organum, and all *pp* (Example 4.3.5).

Example 4.3.5: Hanlon, *O Frondens Virga*, bars 27-34

4

$\text{♩} = 120$, dance it!

27 *pp*
T. nunc, nunc gau - de et lae-ta-re, nunc,
T. nunc, nunc gau - de et lae-ta-re, nunc,
B. gau - de et lae-ta-re,
B. gau - de et lae-ta-re,

31 *p* *mp*
T. nunc, nunc gau - de et lae-ta-re, nunc, nunc, nunc
T. nunc, nunc gau - de et lae-ta-re, nunc, nunc, nunc
B. gau - de et lae-ta-re,
B. gau - de et lae-ta-re,

The motif has a clipped and busy energy generated by the brevity of the notes, some marked *staccato* and separated by rests to intensify the articulation, while others are

accented. The repetition of the word ‘nunc’ to start each iteration of the motif exemplifies Hanlon’s fresh and effective ideas about the setting of Latin, with its cleanly articulated hard ‘c’ introducing an element of percussion to the passage’s rhythmic edge and energy. The motif passes in playful dialogue between the tenors and basses who are joined in bar 35 by the second altos entering *mp* and then in bar 37, the first altos entering *mf*. They likewise pass the melody to and fro at the fifth in G dorian. The dynamic level has also risen to *mf* in the tenors and basses. The two soprano lines enter in bar 40 with a contrasting descant which they sing in *fauxbourdon* style in parallel fourths. After beginning *mf* with ‘Gaude gaude’ (‘rejoice’) and with *tenuto* marks on some notes, they swell to *forte* three bars later. It is strong and joyous.

The next line of the prayer, ‘et nos debiles dignare’ (‘and deign [to free] us weak ones’) arrives in the soprano lines at bar 46, where Hanlon reduces the dynamic of all voices to *mp*. This prepares a new *crescendo* leading to the climax of this passage on the text ‘a mala consuetudine liberare’ (‘free us from evil habits ’), the dynamic level rising to *fortissimo* and the first sopranos reiterating an accented and staccato high A. The music then ebbs away from bars 51-56 on the plea to ‘free us’ (‘liberare’) (Example 4.3.6). The voices gradually drop out, leaving the second altos alone on a sustained and fading pianissimo D.

Example 4.3.6: Hanlon, *O Frondens Virga*, bars 53-56

53 unis. *pp*

A. ra - re, li - be - ra - re, li - be - ra - re, li - be - ra - re,

T. unis. *pp*
li - be - ra - re,

B. unis. *p*
et lae - ta - re, nunc,

For the final two phrases of the prayer – ‘Atque manum tuam porrigere ad erigendum nos’ (‘Stretch forth your hand to lift us up’) – Hanlon exploits the expressive potential of the text to great effect. He pairs a slow whole-tone section (bars 57-74) for ‘Stretch forth your hand’ with a final *last dance!* for ‘to lift us up’ (bars 73-95), ending on a joyously loud and full D major chord.

At bar 57 Hanlon’s indication is *smooth and sustained*, with a return to the very slow metronome marking of 44. He builds up a whole-tone scale from a *pianississimo* C sharp in the second basses, followed by sequential voice entries from lowest to highest, and all sustaining the cluster for the whole passage (Example 4.3.7).

Example 4.3.7: Hanlon, *O Frondens Virga*, bars 57-62

10

♩ = 44, smooth and sustained

S. Soli At - que ma - num tu - am por - ri -

T. Soli At - que ma - num tu - am por - ri -

S. *ppp* *Mm*

S. *ppp* *Mm*

A. *ppp* *Mm*

A. *ppp* *Mm*

T. *ppp* *Mm*

T. *ppp* *Mm*

B. *ppp* *Mm*

B. *ppp* *Mm*

With this cluster in place, a soprano and tenor soloist sing a whole-tone melody with text (Example 4.3.7), asking the Virgin to stretch out her hand. The whole-tone cluster and melody gives the passage a fitting other-worldly quality as the Virgin is addressed as though she is human and present. The melody is repeated, this time with the tenor

in harmony, mostly in thirds and sixths. On the final syllable of the word 'porrige' the intensity increases as the tenor rises a minor sixth from A to F (bar 69).

Following the quiet stasis of this moment, Hanlon's lively conclusion begins in the same slow tempo in bar 73. Within two bars, an *accelerando* brings it to 126 crotchet beats per minute and the label 'last dance!' It echoes the earlier dance section in that it is quick and canonic, starting with the sopranos followed by the tenors in imitation and then the altos a perfect fifth higher and finally the basses. It is in the dorian mode, which provides an additional unifying link with the opening of the piece (Example 4.3.8).

Example 4.3.8: Hanlon, *O Frondens Virga*, bars 70-78

70 *pp* *accel.*

S. Soli

T. Soli

ad e - ri - gen - dum nos!

S. *mp* ad e - ri - gen - dum, ad e - ri -

S. *mp* ad e - ri - gen - dum, ad e - ri -

♩ = 126, last dance!

75

S. gen - dum nos, ad e - ri - gen - dum, ad e - ri - gen - dum

A. *mp* ad e - ri - gen - dum, ad e - ri - gen dum nos, *mf* ad e - ri

T. gen - dum, ad e - ri - gen - dum nos, ad e - ri - gen - dum, ad e - ri

B. *mp* ad e - ri - gen - dum, ad e - ri - gen -

The build-up to the final chord is more intense and dramatic than that leading up to the conclusion of the piece's opening section, here moving from *mp* to *mf*, *f* and reaching *ff* at bar 90 with an expansion to eight-part texture. The final D major chord (bar 93) is exuberant, widely-spaced and *fff*, capped by the first sopranos on a thrilling, long-sustained *fff* high A. It resolves fully in the final bar (bar 95) with the arrival of the F sharp in second altos and second tenors. Hanlon's closing image is a graphic depiction of the Virgin raising up the faithful.

Preparation and Performance Notes

The opening unison dorian melody should emulate the freedom of plainchant. The next passage from bars 1 to 26 is predominantly in the lydian mode. This is one of the least familiar modes and so it will require careful preparation so that singers become accustomed to its characteristic interval, the raised fourth. The theme from the popular television show *The Simpsons* could be adapted as a warm-up exercise (Example 4.3.9).

Example 4.3.9: Theme from *The Simpsons*



Example 4.3.10 shows a more advanced lydian scale exercise. It can be sung with relative solfa or appropriate syllables such as ‘yah’ or ‘vuh’.

Example 4.3.10: Lydian mode vocal exercise (a)

d r m fi s l t d' t l s fi m r d d r m fi s l t d'

7

t l s fi m r d d r m fi s l t d' t l s fi m r d

The notes could also be grouped in two or four and sung with a variety of vowels (Example 4.3.11).

Example 4.3.11: Lydian mode vocal exercise (b)

ah eh ee oh oo

Once singers have become fully comfortable with the Lydian toneset, this passage is not difficult to put together since it is composed of a strong melodic line and harmony parts in homophonic style. Challenges in the second section (bars 27-56) – ‘nunc nunc gaude’ – are primarily concerned with rhythm and articulation. It is advisable to rehearse this passage very slowly so that every detail is in place from the start, including staccato, accents, subtle dynamics, and the projection of the melody which is mostly in the highest voice. It has been found very useful to rehearse this passage by singing in numbers rather than text (Example 4.3.12). In the 7/8 bar, for example, singers sing the 1, 2, 3, 4, audiate the 5 and 6, and then sing the 7.¹¹ Singers will not be able to do this properly until they are fully secure in the placing of each note.

Example 4.3.12: Hanlon, *O Frondens Virga*, bars 30-32



The third section of *O Frondens Virga* (bars 57-73) requires familiarity with the whole-tone scale, a scale that is initially difficult to sing accurately. Warm-up exercises can be devised that involve singing the whole-tone scale descending and ascending in unison, in contrary motion, and in canon. It would also be very helpful to practise the C sharp whole-tone scale in clusters as found in this section of the piece. Each singer should be able to join the scale at any stage and sustain the pitch (Example 4.3.13).

¹¹ ‘Audiation’ is a term coined by Edwin Gordon in 1975 to refer to the internalisation of music – more commonly known as inner hearing. James M. Jordan, ‘The Pedagogy of Choral Intonation: Efficient Pedagogy to Approach an Old Problem’, *The Choral Journal*, 27 (1987), 9-16.

Example 4.3.13: Whole-tone scale on C sharp



The final section (bar 73 to the end) is similar to the second section (bars 27-56). It stays in four-part SATB texture from bar 73 until bar 90, dividing into eight parts for the last six bars. The final chord of D major spans two and a half octaves and is marked *fff*. The challenge is to sing this chord with excellent intonation and resonance rather than with a harsh loudness.

Ben Hanlon is painstaking and precise in the directions he indicates for *O Frondens Virga*. When these are followed in preparation and performance, the piece's duality of old and contemporary features combine to produce music of great energy, spirit and intensity.

4.4 Gerald Barry, *Long Time*

Gerald Barry has composed just five pieces for unaccompanied choir. Despite this very small choral output, his position as arguably Ireland's leading composer makes it important to include one of his choral pieces for discussion here.¹²

Setting words to music has been central to Barry's work almost from the beginning, although chiefly for operas rather than choirs. After coming to international prominence in the late 1970s through his piano and chamber music, his works for orchestra widened his visibility, notably via his first BBC Proms commission in 1988, *Chevaux-de-frise*. His international standing was then significantly enhanced by the success of his operas, starting in 1994 with his second, *The Triumph of Beauty and Deceit*, which was broadcast to millions on the UK's Channel 4 network. *The Importance of Being Earnest* (2010) and *Alice's Adventures Underground* (2015) have further extended and reinforced his reputation outside Europe, particularly in the USA. However, despite the text-based nature of opera and Barry's affectionate, often quirky engagement with the setting of words both in opera and in other works with singing, his output for a *cappella* choir remains minuscule: a mere five pieces.

Within these five choral pieces, however, are contained in miniature the same characteristic features found in his large-scale instrumental, chamber, orchestral and operatic works, features which clearly identify Barry's unique voice. Attempting to describe this voice, Paul Griffiths says Barry's music is 'fiercely individual' and 'at

¹² Gerald Barry was born in Ireland in 1952, attended University College Dublin and furthered his studies in Amsterdam and Cologne. This included the 'liberating experience' of studying with Kagel and Stockhausen; Contemporary Music Centre Ireland, 'Gerald Barry (b. 1953)', <<https://www.cmc.ie/composers/gerald-barry>> [accessed 2 September 2017].

once highly formal and iconoclastic, perky and suave, sensuous and brittle. Wit and intensive persistence are key features ...'¹³

A number of these characteristics feature in his six-minute *a cappella* piece for SATB, *Long Time*. It was composed in 2011 and premiered by Paul Hillier and the National Chamber Choir of Ireland at the Cork International Choral Festival in May 2012. It is a setting of the opening passage of Marcel Proust's vast, seven-volume novel *In Search of Lost Time* (*À la recherche du temps perdu*). The passage depicts the narrator as a young boy with insomnia, eventually sleeping but with confusing dreams, waking to see a crack of light under the door which suggests comfort is coming at last, only for the light to be extinguished and the boy left to face the rest of the long night alone with his suffering. Proust (1871-1922) was asthmatic as a child and suffered ill-health throughout his life, dying of pneumonia in 1922.¹⁴ According to George Duncan Painter, *À la recherche du temps perdu* 'is the story of Proust's own life, told as an allegorical search for truth.'¹⁵ Barry's expressive setting is as stark and unforgiving as the stress and anxiety of the child, and the eventual accumulation of its scale-based content seems to reflect the young narrator's increasingly troubled mental state.

The feature of *Long Time* that makes the strongest initial impression on listeners – and also on singers approaching the score for the first time – is the illusion of simplicity and ease. Initially, Barry's ingredients suggest music that is straightforward: the key

¹³ Paul Griffiths, 'Contemporary composer - Gerald Barry', *Gramophone The World's Best Classical Reviews* (March 2015),

<<https://www.gramophone.co.uk/feature/contemporary-composer-gerald-barry>> [accessed 2 September 2017].

¹⁴ George Duncan Painter, 'Marcel Proust', *Encyclopedia Britannica* <<https://www.britannica.com/biography/Marcel-Proust>> [accessed 12 March 2017].

¹⁵ *Ibid.*, [accessed 12 March 2017].

of C major, the choir singing almost exclusively in scales in unison, the absence of complexity in the word-setting, and the near absence of counterpoint or independent lines. Barry's publishers, Schott, contribute to this impression, advertising the piece as unfolding 'over gently rising and falling C major scales, voice parts handing over to each other in the strict rhythmic regularity that prevails throughout the piece.'¹⁶

In performance the reality is quite different: the music is neither simple nor easy to sing. Major challenges facing the singers include Barry's peculiar and often fragmented word-setting, the demands of continuous and exposed unison singing – especially given the piece's extremities of range – and the intense concentration required by these factors, compounded by the sheer number of words which flow relentlessly and with almost no repetition. Some of these challenges are immediately evident in the piece's opening passage. Barry sets Proust's famous opening sentence – 'For a long time I used to go to bed early' – to a series of three ascending C major scales, rising a twelfth to g" in crotchets (Example 4.4.1).

¹⁶ Schott Music, 'Gerald Barry', <<https://en.schott-music.com/shop/long-time-no303276.html>> [accessed 15 March 2017].

Example 4.4.1: Barry, *Long Time*, bars 1-10

The musical score for Example 4.4.1 consists of two systems. The first system features four vocal staves: Soprano, Alto, Tenor, and Bass. The Soprano part begins with a tempo marking of quarter note = 116, a dynamic of *mf*, and a crescendo leading to *ff* for the syllable 'ly'. The lyrics for the Soprano are: "For a long time I used to go to bed ear - ly. Some- times, when I had". The Alto, Tenor, and Bass parts are silent in this system. The second system starts with a double bar line and a fermata. It features two vocal staves: Soprano (S.) and Alto (A.). The Soprano part has lyrics: "put out my can- dle, my eyes e - ven time". The Alto part has lyrics: "would close so quick-ly that I had not to say 'I'm go- ing to". The Alto part begins with a dynamic of *mf*.

What appears straightforward on the score – C major scales – is notoriously difficult in execution because of the word-setting. For the first 81 bars, almost every syllable is a crotchet in length (or, half a beat, with the pulse primarily in minims), and receives no accent, thus upsetting the natural stresses of the English language. Only occasionally do certain words receive unexpected expressive emphasis. As a result there is no shaping of text. To singers – accustomed to phrasing melodic lines – this feels unnatural, even robotic. The first scale, for example, has no melodic shape and simply moves in *crescendo* from *mf* to *ff* from middle C up a twelfth to G. The syllable that ends up with the strongest emphasis is simply the last syllable of the scale: the ‘ly’ of ‘early’. Such features are characteristic of Barry’s style as it appears in his instrumental works – for example, the scales in the solo piano piece ‘Au milieu’ (1981)

– and his operas – for example, the unstressed, one-note-per-syllable of Robert Paradie’s opening monologue in *The Intelligence Park* (1990).

The passage introduces further challenging features: the fragmenting of sentences and vocal lines, and the absence of any apparent alignment of scales with the sentences they set. The sopranos plunge down a twelfth to begin a second ascending scale on middle C to the text ‘Sometimes, when I had put out my candle’. After blowing out his candle the narrator says, ‘My eyes would close so quickly that I had not even time to say I’m going to sleep’. The sopranos have just completed the two syllables of ‘candle’ on the D and E at the top of the stave. After half a beat’s rest in bar 7, however, Barry assigns only the first two words of the new sentence – ‘My eyes’ – to the next notes of this second scale – F and G – before removing the line from the sopranos and dramatically plunging a twelfth again and introducing the alto line which continues the sentence with the third ascending scale, starting on middle C. When this new scale approaches the top of the stave, the sopranos take over again, albeit for only three notes, before a third plunge of a twelfth, after which the altos resume the line, again with no natural-feeling alignment between the words and the scales in which Barry sets them.

In the next phrase – ‘And half an hour later the thought that it was time to go to sleep, would awaken me’ – Barry introduces the piece’s first descending scale. This he fragments by spreading it between all four choral lines (Example 4.4.2), beginning in the soprano line – mid-sentence – on the high A in bar 15, passing through the altos and tenors, and finally to the basses who finish on a low E, three and a half octaves lower. The word ‘go’ on the high A is clearly emphasised with *ff* and a *tenuto* mark, but it is an unnatural emphasis as the word is not strong in this context.

Example 4.4.2: Barry, *Long Time*, bars 11-19

11 A *f* \leftarrow *fff*

S. *f* *fff* time to go to sleep

A. *mf* *f* *f* sleep." And half an hour la-ter the thought that it was would a -

16

A. -wa-ken me;

T. *f* I would try to put a-way the book which, I i-

B. *f* - ma-gined, was still in my

By the end of this scale Barry has involved all four choral lines and set out the range within which they will normally sing throughout the piece. At certain moments, when he wants notes which exceed this range, he specifies the use of a soloist (Example 4.4.3).

Example 4.4.3: Barry, *Long Time*, bars 41-45

41 *f* *f* (solo) *f* (solo) *f* (tutti)

S. -wake; it did not dis-turb my mind, but lay like scales up-on my eyes and pre-

The first feeling of a cadence in the piece does not occur until the 49th bar (Example 4.4.4). It is a pause in a long sentence – whose scale has been passed between soloist and various combinations of vocal lines in unison – which ends with the words ‘the fact that the candle was no longer burning’. The two syllables of the word ‘burning’ incorporate respectively the note of an ascending scale (E) and the drop of a perfect fifth to A.

Example 4.4.4: Barry, *Long Time*, bars 46-51

46

S. $< fff$
- ven- ted them from re - gis - ter - ing the fact that the can - dle was no

A. f ff fff
re - gis - ter - ing the fact that the can - dle was no lon - ger burn - ing.

T. f ff fff
the fact that the can - dle was no lon - ger burn - ing.

B. ff fff
lon - ger burn - ing.

There follow four full beats of rest, underlying the sense of cadence and also the possibility that Barry has chosen this moment in the text for emphasis. In the next bar, the sopranos and altos recommence their scales. Again, such abrupt, unprepared pauses and resummptions are a characteristic which features in Barry's other music, for example, in the orchestral piece *Chevaux-de-frise* (1988, his first commission for the BBC Proms) and his most recent work involving choir, *Humiliated and Insulted*, from 2017.¹⁷ The phrase 'Humiliated and Insulted' from Fyodor Dostoevsky's passionate novel of the same name¹⁸ is repeated over and over again in unison and *fortissimo* for the entire ten minutes.

These ascending and descending unison scales continue without interruption until bar 81 where there is a new texture. The soprano soloist ascends to a very long high B, *ff*, punctuating the words 'a matter dark indeed' with a minim on each syllable (Example 4.4.5).

¹⁷ Premiered by the RTÉ National Symphony Orchestra and RTÉ Philharmonic Choir with conductor Hans Graf, National Concert Hall, 10 February 2017.

¹⁸ The novel was published in 1861 in the monthly magazine *Vremya*.

Example 4.4.5: Barry, *Long Time*, bars 78-94

78 *solo* (*mf*) - com - _____ *tutti* *ff* a mat - ter dark in - *solo* (*ff*)

A. (*mf*) - pre - hen - si - ble, with - out a cause,

83 *tutti* *fff* *angry* *solo* *ad lib.* (tutti) - deed. _____ I would ask my - self what o' - clock it could be;

A. *fff* *angry* I would ask my - self what o' - clock it could be;

T. *fff* *angry* I would ask my - self what o' - clock it could be;

B. *ff* my - self what o' - clock it could be;

90 I could hear the whist - ling of trains, which, now nea - rer and now

A. I could hear the whist - ling of trains, which, now nea - rer and now

T. I could hear the whist - ling of trains, which, now nea - rer and now

B. I could hear the whist - ling of trains, which, now nea - rer and now

This is followed by the full choir, still in minims, singing a dramatic (*ff*) unison two-octave descending scale in C major (with some octave displacement in altos and tenors) to the text ‘I would ask myself what o’clock it could be; I could hear the whistling of the trains’. Although it is unison once again, the full-choir texture and the reduction in pace as a result of the switch to minims makes this passage feel very different from what has gone before. The change comes at the point in the text when

the child has adjusted to the darkness and no longer finds it stressful. He wonders what time it is, using as a reference the sound of trains drawing nearer and then fading.

The first break from unison does not arrive until bar 177. The piece's first instance of part-writing takes the form of scales in contrary motion between the soprano and bass lines. They arrive at a cadence with a low E (e') in the sopranos and a high B (b) in the basses (Example 4.4.6). At this moment Barry brings to an expressive end the passage in which the hopes of the lonely child have been raised by the appearance of light under the door, only to be dashed when this light 'is extinguished'. The cadence has a phrygian quality which adds to the sense of terrible disappointment.

Example 4.4.6: Barry, *Long Time*, bars 177-182

The musical score for Example 4.4.6 consists of three vocal parts: Soprano (S.), Alto (A.), and Bass (B.). The music begins at bar 177 with a *(mf)* dynamic. The Soprano part starts with a *solo* marking and ends with a *tutti* marking. The time signature changes from 5/4 to 3/2, then 5/4, 3/2, 4/4, 3/2, and finally 4/4. The lyrics are: "The ray of light be-neath his door is ex-ting-uished. It is mid- night;". The Alto part has a *(mf)* dynamic and lyrics: "It is mid- night;". The Bass part has a *(mf)* dynamic and lyrics: "The ray of light be-neath his door is ex-ting-uished. It is mid- night;".

This contrary motion continues in the ensuing bars (Example 4.4.7), involving different combinations of choral lines and soloist. It concludes with the basses holding a bottom D and the soprano soloist a high C, creating a cadence point at the extreme ends of their ranges and separated by a chasm of nearly four octaves.

Example 4.4.7: Barry, *Long Time*, bars 188-194

188

S. *(mf)* tutti *solo* *fff*
and he must lie all night in a-go-ny with no one to bring him a-ny help. _____

A. *(mf)*
and he must lie all night in a-go-ny with no one to

T. *(mf)*
and he must lie all night in a-go-ny with no one

B. *(mf)* *fff*
and he must lie all night in a-go-ny with no one to bring him a-ny help. _____

This is the piece's climax with its wide span on an unresolved compound minor seventh (D to C) which is held at the extreme dynamic marking of *fortissimo* for two full bars. The moment illustrates the child-narrator's awful recognition that no one is coming and that he must face into the rest of his night of pain and insomnia alone.

The feeling of cadence is further reinforced by a bar's rest, after which Barry introduces a new element for the piece's final page: whistling. The full choir whistles a slow, descending, two-octave C major scale in unison. They then repeat the scale but now singing the text's last sentence *fortissimo*: 'I would fall asleep, and often I would be awake again for short snatches only, just long enough to hear ... _____'

Each voice part drops out of the scale in sequence until only the bass remains, ending on a sustained bottom E (Example 4.4.8).

Example 4.4.8: Barry, *Long Time*, bars 208-213

There is a bar's rest of five minims, after which the whistling is resumed by two soloists who repeat a quiet, sustained major 2nd (D and E) five times (Example 4.4.9). This is followed by one singer whistling twelve semibreve C sharps – the first and only note in the piece that is alien to its C major tonality – at which point the piece ends.

Example 4.4.9: Barry, *Long Time*, bars 214-226

* All C sharps to be whistled by one singer from the choir only.

Using a minimum of ingredients and operating within tight, self-imposed constraints including the predominance of unison singing, the C major tonality, and word-setting confined to one beat per syllable, Barry's *Long Time* succeeds in creating a highly

expressive, representative and engaging response to the insomniac child at the centre of Proust's famous opening pages.

Preparation and Performance Notes

Despite this success, however, the reality is that choirs – whether amateur or professional – tend not to perform this piece (nor any of Barry's other four *a cappella* pieces). *Long Time* was premiered in 2012 by Chamber Choir Ireland who sang it for a second time in 2016 as part of the 'Composing the Island' festival commemorating one hundred years of Irish music.¹⁹ There is no record of any other performances, either in Ireland or abroad. What this suggests is that the rewards of performance are simply not equal to the effort required to be able to perform it.

In preparation, singers will first need to manage the fragmented word-setting. It is very difficult to make the text intelligible when almost every beat is a crotchet with only the occasional syllable – strong or weak – receiving stress. It requires singers to think counter-intuitively, to use unnatural phrasing while at the same time giving great attention to enunciation. Simply speaking the text with the correct rhythm at the correct tempo is a useful preparatory tool in this context. This is also an opportunity to work on enunciation, so crucial to the intelligibility of the text. Each line needs to take particular care when taking over from another line in the middle of a word (for example, 'comprehensible' in bars 78-79, 'delightful' in bars 125-126, 'nearly' in bar 144).

¹⁹ 'Composing the Island: Choirland – 100 years of Irish Choral Music', National Concert Hall, 15 September 2016.

Singers will need to develop their range as each voice part is expected to sing to the extremes. Warm-up exercises that take singers both above and below their normal range will help extend them towards the extremes. Each section will also need to focus on blend in the continuous and exposed unison passages. For both amateur and professional singers, unison singing in C major is much more difficult than might be expected. The biggest challenge is accuracy and precision. Singers need to have highly developed aural skills as well as technical skills. It will help to practise C major scales in a variety of combinations and permutations. For example, Example 4.4.10 shows an exercise that involves singing ascending octave scales in C major starting on different notes of the scale (ideally in relative solfa). Apart from the descending leap of a seventh at the end of each scale, singers will also be obliged to move to a lower octave as the range becomes too high.

Example 4.4.10: Vocal exercise in C major

The musical notation for Example 4.4.10 consists of three staves of music in C major, 3/4 time. The first staff starts on C4 and ascends to G4. The second staff starts on D4 and ascends to A4. The third staff starts on E4 and ascends to B4. Each staff ends with a descending leap of a seventh back to the starting note of the previous staff (G4 to C4, A4 to D4, B4 to E4). The notes are: Staff 1: C4, D4, E4, F4, G4; Staff 2: D4, E4, F4, G4, A4; Staff 3: E4, F4, G4, A4, B4. The exercise concludes with a final note on E4 followed by a double bar line.

This exercise can be done with the scale to a range of a seventh (from C to B, D to C etc.); the range of a sixth from C to A, D to B etc. This will develop a thorough familiarity with the seven pitches of the scale and also the capacity to change octaves with ease.

This is virtuosic music for choir, requiring excellent professional-level musicianship, vocal technique and stamina. There is a possibility that the severe challenges presented to choirs by *Long Time* will continue to consign this difficult but masterly response to Proust's words to the rarest of performances.

4.5 Mark Armstrong (arr.), *Down by the Salley Gardens*

Programming for concerts, recordings or competitions will often benefit from the inclusion of lighter music. Lighter music includes a vast quantity of pieces in elevated pop-music style and intended for a *cappella* performance, a genre that has been in vogue for most of the past decade. It began enjoying considerable prominence in popular culture, notably in the United States of America, following massive boosts to its profile as a result of television programmes such as the *a cappella* competition *The Sing Off* (NBC, 2009), the series *Glee* (Fox, 2009) about a high school glee club, the popularity of groups like Straight No Chaser and The Pentatonix (who won *The Sing Off* in 2011), and the film *Pitch Perfect* (Universal, 2012) about a *cappella* singing in university.

While it is important for choirs and conductors to be aware of this current surge in popularity, various versions of the genre have had a long and steady following since the 1960s and the births of elite, one-to-a-part groups like The Swingle Singers, The King's Singers and The Real Group. The lighter pieces programmed by such groups are often challenging, even virtuosic, with arrangements sung by the Swingles normally featuring seven or eight independent lines. This is the more sophisticated side of light music for choirs, and, like all high-quality light music, requires great skill in the writing. Only a very small number of Irish composers has attempted it with any success, but among them is Mark Armstrong whose arrangement of *Down by the Salley Gardens* for SSAATTBB is on a par with the best current arrangements in this style.²⁰

²⁰ Mark Armstrong is a Dublin-based conductor, composer and arranger with wide-ranging experience of working with Irish orchestras and choirs, both amateur and professional. He has been Director of the Defence Forces School of Music since 2010.

Down by the Salley Gardens

Down by the Salley Gardens
my love and I did meet;
She passed the Salley Gardens
with little snow-white feet.
She bid me take love easy,
as the leaves grow on the tree;
But I, being young and foolish,
with her would not agree.

In a field by the river
my love and I did stand,
And on my leaning shoulder
She laid her snow-white hand.
She bid me take life easy,
as the grass grows on the weirs;
But I was young and foolish,
and now am full of tears.

Unlike many Swingles and King's Singers pieces, the text here is a poem and not a pop-song. However, William Butler Yeats (1865-1939) based his poem on a traditional song, the spirit of which is retained in the poem and which may explain why it lends itself so readily to arrangement in popular style.²¹ The tune normally associated with *Down by the Salley Gardens* was appropriated from the Ulster air *The Maids of*

²¹ Edward Larrissy (ed.), *W. B. Yeats The Major Works* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1997), 488. Yeats originally called it 'An Old Song Re-Sung' as 'it's influenced by a ballad he heard sung in the village of Ballysodare, Co. Sligo'. The lyrics were published in his first book *The Wanderings of Oisín and other Poems* in 1889.

Mourne Shore by Hubert Hughes in 1909.²² It, too, helps make the song amenable to a setting in pop-choral style.

The vocal imitation of instruments is a typical feature in this genre. In *Down by the Salley Gardens*, Armstrong uses broken chords to evoke an instrumental accompanying figure in his nine-bar introduction. This is where he establishes the piece's wistful mood while also previewing various figurations, harmonies and melodic motifs prior to the first statement of the tune. Among first-rate models of this structure is the Swingle Singers' arrangement of the Beatles' song *Ticket to Ride*. Over the course of a long introduction, arranger Alexander L'Estrange (b1974) starts with complementary lines in the two bass parts and gradually builds up the texture line by line until, by bar 13, all eight parts are contributing to a detailed broken-chord instrumental figure (Example 4.5.1).

²² *Down by the Salley Gardens* was published in the first volume of Hughes's *Irish Country Songs* in 1909.

Example 4.5.1: Arr. Alexander L'Estrange, *Ticket to Ride*, bars 1-13

Ticket To Ride

Words and Music by
John Lennon and Paul McCartney
arr Alexander L'Estrange

♩ = 110

The musical score is arranged in two systems. The first system (bars 1-7) includes parts for Soprano, Alto, Tenor, and Bass. The Soprano and Alto parts feature a broken-chord pattern in quavers, with the syllable 'doo...' written below. The Bass part is marked *p* (piano) and *(misterioso)*. The second system (bars 8-13) includes parts for Soprano, Alto, Tenor, and Bass. The Soprano and Alto parts continue the broken-chord pattern, while the Tenor and Bass parts have more complex rhythmic patterns. The Tenor and Bass parts are marked *p* and include the syllable 'doo doo'.

In *Down by the Salley Gardens* the vocal entries are arranged to create the effect of a broken-chord pattern in quavers, effectively mimicking instrumental accompaniment by a guitar or string quartet which will continue throughout the piece (Examples 4.5.2(a) and 4.5.2(b)). Additionally, Armstrong uses the syllable 'doo' for the

accompaniment texture, just as L'Estrange does in *Ticket to Ride* (Example 4.5.1). The wordless syllables that choral arrangers use to mimic instruments are borrowed from scat singing in jazz improvisation and represent a standard and effective feature in this style.²³

Example 4.5.2(a): Armstrong (arr.), *Down by the Salley Gardens*, bars 1-4

DOWN BY THE SALLEY GARDENS

Words W.B. Yeats
Music trad. arr. Mark Armstrong

Gently flowing ♩ = 90

S
A
T
B

mp Ah
mp Ah
mp Doo doo mf doo doo mp doo doo mf doo doo
mp Doo doo mf doo doo mp doo doo mf doo doo
mp Doo doo mf doo doo mp doo doo mf doo doo
mp Doo doo mf doo doo mp doo doo mf doo doo

Example 4.5.2(b): Armstrong (arr.), *Down by the Salley Gardens*, bars 1-2

Doo doo doo doo doo doo doo doo

²³ Rosanna Vitro, 'An Introduction to Scat Singing: How to do bah', in *Jazz Times*, <<https://jazztimes.com/columns/chops/an-introduction-to-scat-singing>> [accessed 2 June 2017].

The melody's original form is a very traditional AABA, four four-bar phrases, two verses. Armstrong uses this structure, adding a nine-bar introduction and a seven-bar codetta, but he also uses phrase extension, another characteristic of modern *a cappella* arrangements. He adds two bars to each A phrase and three bars to the B phrase: he divides each A phrase into its two natural sub-phrases and extends each by one bar, by simply repeating the second bar (Example 4.5.3). The B phrase is performed without subdivision but is extended by three bars at the end.

Example 4.5.3: Armstrong (arr.), *Down by the Salley Gardens*, bars 10-21



These extensions bring innovation to this otherwise familiar melody and create a sense of space in the arrangement, transforming the traditional AABA melody into something more expressive and yearning, a tune entirely fitting for a heartfelt lament by a young man who ends up ‘full of tears’.²⁴ This has similarities with Jonathan Rathbone’s blended arrangement of two Beatles’ songs *Blackbird* and *I Will*. Rathbone melds the two songs into an eight-part *a cappella* piece and uses phrase extension (Example 4.5.4) and also a substantial reduction of tempo in *I Will* in order to transform what was originally quite a cheerful song into something more reflective.²⁵

²⁴ *Down by the Salley Gardens* is a lament by a young man who meets his loved one in a garden of willows. He fails to take her advice to ‘take things easy’ and so he ends up ‘full of tears’. A salley (from the Irish *saileach*) is a willow tree which is native to the suitably damp soil of Ireland. The long flexible willow rods were, in the past, used for basket-making and thatching roofs. The Tree Council of Ireland, ‘Native Species: Willow’, <<https://treecouncil.ie/project/willow>> [accessed 2 May 2017].

²⁵ Paul McCartney performs this solo with guitar at 120 BPM while Rathbone’s arrangement is marked 80 BPM <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=JGnNQM_9q-w> [accessed 3 July 2017].

Example 4.5.4: Arr. Jonathan Rathbone, Blackbird/I Will, bars 1-6

Blackbird/I Will

Music and Words by
John Lennon and Paul McCartney
arr. Jonathan Rathbone

Soprano

The musical score is written for Soprano in a single staff. It begins with a tempo marking of quarter note = 88. The key signature has two flats (B-flat and E-flat). The score starts with two bars of rest. The third bar begins with a melody in a 3/4 time signature, marked *mp*. The lyrics are: "Black -bird sing -ing in the dead of night _____ Take these bro -ken". The melody continues through the fourth and fifth bars, which are in a 2/4 time signature, and ends in the sixth bar.

Armstrong uses a jazz-based harmonic vocabulary, another standard feature in this style but one that does not yet appear much among pieces by Irish arrangers. Chords found in jazz provide Armstrong with a harmonic palette that is much richer than the simple primary chords common in arrangements of folk melodies such as this.²⁶ The main harmonic vocabulary of the piece is established in the first two bars: a gentle rocking back and forth between a tonic-function chord and a dominant-function chord. Bar 1 opens with a slightly ambiguous tonic chord of D major with a fifth and ninth (A and E) but no third. The chord in bar two is based on the flattened seventh chord of C natural, with an added flattened seventh (B flat) and flattened thirteenth (A), making it very rich harmonically but also slightly ambiguous since there is no fifth (Example 4.5.5).

Example 4.5.5: Armstrong (arr.), *Down by the Salley Gardens*, bars 1-9

The musical score is written in a single staff in treble clef with a key signature of one sharp (F#) and a 4/4 time signature. It consists of nine bars of music, each containing a complex chord with multiple notes, including some accidentals. The chords are stacked vertically on the staff.

After these two bars are repeated, the sopranos enter with a gentle five-bar introductory melody that appears to state the melody but in fact only foreshadows it. The harmony

²⁶ Examples include arrangements of *Down by the Salley Gardens* by Edward Higginbottom (Oxford University Press, 1999) and John Rutter (Oxford University Press, 1994).

is substantially the same as in bars 1-4 but with both chords now enhanced by the addition of the third (F sharp) in the D major chord and the fifth in the flattened seventh chord (G). It now feels as though the tonality has settled (Example 5). This rich flattened seventh chord characterises the whole arrangement: it is heard seventeen times in total in verse one and six times in verse two. Called a ‘flat-seventh’ or ‘subtonic’ by pop-musicologists, this chord was a favourite of the Beatles, incorporated into ‘about 66 of the 187 canonical Beatles songs’.²⁷

Armstrong expands the harmonic palette at particular moments. He adds a subdominant function chord in bar 13 for the second sub-phrase of A (chord VI with a thirteenth), and then for the climax of the melody, phrase B, he increases the rate of harmonic change (Example 4.5.6).

Example 4.5.6: Armstrong (arr.), *Down by the Salley Gardens*, bars 22-28

22

vi⁷ iii⁷ IV⁷ I⁶ IV⁹ iv_{b3}⁹ I⁹ bVII_{b13}

This increased harmonic sophistication adds colour to the four bars of phrase B, thus providing a stronger contrast with the three A phrases. Example 4.5.6 shows eight different chords from bars 22 to 28 compared with, for example, a total of only three chords from the beginning of the piece to that point (bars 1-21). Armstrong uses simple

²⁷ Ger Tillekens, ‘A Flood of Flat Sevenths’, Soundscapes.info, 9 (2006), <http://www.icce.rug.nl/~soundscapes/VOLUME09/A_flood_of_flat-sevenths.shtml> [accessed 7 September 2017].

diatonic seventh chords of vi, iii, IV and I, introducing a minor subdominant for the first time in bar 26. This is a standard jazz chord which adds flavour to Armstrong's harmonically interesting passage. For verse two he avoids repeating the same harmonies, thereby increasing the interest for both listener and performer. Varying the harmonies is a feature of the best contemporary *a cappella* arrangements in this style which is also reflected in Armstrong's distribution of the melody among the voices in verse two. The sopranos sing the first verse while verse two is shared between the basses, tenors, altos, and sopranos in that order.

The increased rate of harmonic change is particularly pronounced in verse two in phrase A and its repeat. The melody in phrase A is in the bass. This has implications for all chords since the moving melodic bass line is still providing the bass note for each one (Example 4.5.7). It gives bar 39, for example, four changes of chord. The repeat of phrase A has a C tonic pedal in the bass part, greatly increasing the harmonic interest and colour of the phrase.

Example 4.5.7: Armstrong (arr.), *Down by the Salley Gardens*, bars 37-44

The musical score for Example 4.5.7 consists of two systems of music, each with a treble and bass clef staff. The first system starts at bar 37. The bass line (left hand) contains a melodic phrase: quarter notes G2, A2, B2, C3, D3, E3, F3, G3, quarter note A3, quarter note B3, quarter note C4, quarter note D4, quarter note E4, quarter note F4, quarter note G4, quarter note A4, quarter note B4, quarter note C5. The right hand (treble clef) contains chords: a whole rest in bar 37, a whole note chord G2-B2-D3 in bar 38, a whole note chord A2-C3-E3 in bar 39, a whole note chord B2-D3-F3 in bar 40, a whole note chord C3-E3-G3 in bar 41, and a whole note chord D3-F3-A3 in bar 42. The second system starts at bar 41. The bass line continues the melodic phrase: quarter notes E4, F4, G4, A4, quarter note B4, quarter note C5, quarter note D5, quarter note E5, quarter note F5, quarter note G5, quarter note A5, quarter note B5, quarter note C6. The right hand contains chords: a whole note chord D3-F3-A3 in bar 41, a whole note chord E3-G3-B3 in bar 42, a whole note chord F3-A3-C4 in bar 43, a whole note chord G3-B3-D4 in bar 44, and a whole note chord A3-C4-E4 in bar 45. The piece ends with a double bar line at the end of bar 45.

Armstrong uses subtle key changes in a way that can be found in many Swingle Singers arrangements (for example, Jonathan Rathbone's *Silent Night* which begins in A flat major, moves to E major and then D flat major). The first verse of *Down by the Salley Gardens* is in D major; there is a modulation down a tone to C major for verse two, and the coda from bars 56 to 62 moves down a tone again to B flat major. Both modulations use the flattened chord vi as a pivot: it becomes the flattened chord vii in the new key. Again the flattened chord vii permeates the texture in a very dominant way and gives it a special colour.

This analysis shows that Armstrong's arrangement of *Down by the Salley Gardens* is at a very high artistic level. It is a very individual setting while at the same time using stylistic features and techniques that are common to other highly experienced and successful international arrangers for some of the best ensembles in the world. Other Irish arrangers who use similar techniques in successfully arranging lighter music include Eoin Conway, Desmond Earley, David Mooney and Conor O'Reilly.²⁸

Preparation and Performance Notes

Mark Armstrong's *Down by the Salley Gardens* is moderate in terms of difficulty. The biggest challenges for choir include intonation and effective modulations from D major to C major and B flat major, gentle onset in the repeated 'doo', and dynamic shading.

²⁸ Very good arrangements of Irish folk tunes include David Mooney's *Dulamán, She Moved Through the Fair, Thugamár féin an samhradh linn, Wexford Carol*; Des Earley's *Mo Ghile Mear, Sí do Mhaimó í, The Gartan Mother's Lullaby*; Conor O'Reilly's *Danny Boy*. Eoin Conway's steadily increasing output ranges from Irish folksongs, Christmas songs and carols, barbershop and pop songs. His finely crafted arrangements of Christmas songs and carols include *O Holy Night, Christmas Time is Here, God Rest ye Merry, Gentlemen, The Twelve Days of Christmas, and All I want for Christmas is You*.

An effective way to work on the intonation is to remove the rhythmic accompaniment patterns and reduce the text to homophonic chords, and playing a D for reference every time the Bass 2 returns to a D. This will help singers understand and feel the jazz-style chords and will ensure staying in the tonality of D major. A similar strategy could be used when the piece modulates to C major and then B flat major. Example 4.5.8 shows a harmonic reduction of the entire piece.

Example 4.5.8: Armstrong (arr.), *Down by the Salley Gardens*, harmonic reduction

Intro

10 A (sop)

20 B (sop)

29 A (sop) A (bass)

38 A (tenor with tonic pedal)

45 B (alto) A (sop)

54 Coda

The syllable 'doo' is most effective when sung with a soft D, when the tongue has more contact with the front of the hard palate than the teeth. Repetition of the 'doo' syllable can be incorporated into warm-up exercises to develop a greater awareness of how to produce it. Armstrong's dynamics are very carefully mapped out on the score. Performing them as marked brings a wide range of expressivity to the piece. The most common shading used is the two-bar *crescendo* followed by a *decrescendo* (Example 2(a), bars 1-4). It can be challenging to control the *decrescendo* so that it is not too sudden. This generally requires careful and repeated practice. Again this can be incorporated into warm-up exercises.

Armstrong's arrangement of *Down by the Salley Gardens* is very subtle. It requires a strong sense of ensemble because of the constantly syncopated accompaniment patterns. An exercise that is very useful for developing this is to sing these passages staccato. It is much more challenging to be precise when singing staccato, and therefore this will also help with accurate pitching. Singers would also benefit from listening to performances by the most advanced contemporary *a cappella* ensembles such as The Swingle Singers, Voces 8, and The King's Singers.

4.6 Rhona Clarke, ‘Regina Coeli’ from *Two Marian Anthems*

Irish women composers of choral music are a small subset within what is already a small subset. The Contemporary Music Centre’s catalogue of 597 unaccompanied choral pieces includes just 111 by women. Only two of these women have written more than ten pieces.²⁹ Once shorter, easier pieces in conventional styles – for example, pieces for school or church choirs – are removed from this meagre total of 111, what remains is a very small number of forward-looking, innovative pieces which can challenge and engage singers and audiences, or make an impression at international choral festivals and competitions.³⁰

Rhona Clarke is a Dublin-born, Dublin-based composer³¹ who has written a significant amount of choral music within a highly varied output which also spans chamber, orchestral, and electronic music. Her instincts for choral music evolved during her years as a member of the Lindsay Singers, the internationally successful, elite female-voice choir founded and directed by Ethna Barror.³² This formative experience gave her an intimate acquaintance with high levels of programming and performance, and – more importantly given the creative career she would ultimately pursue – with the inner technical workings of high-quality choral music.³³

²⁹ The Contemporary Music Centre Ireland, < <https://www.cmc.ie> > [accessed 13 September 2017 and 15 February 2018].

³⁰ Some of Ireland’s leading female composers – such as Jennifer Walshe, Deirdre Gribbin and Linda Buckley – have main interests that lie elsewhere so their output for choir may amount to only one or two pieces.

³¹ Rhona Clarke is Associate Professor at the School of Theology, Philosophy, and Music, Dublin City University. She is a member of Aosdána, Ireland’s affiliation of creative artists. <<https://www.cmc.ie/composers/rhona-clarke>> [accessed 12 January 2018].

³² The Lindsay Singers were active for approximately forty years from its foundation by Ethna Barror (1915-2011) in 1958.

³³ Rhona Clarke had ‘an interest in voices singing in harmony’ ever since she can remember and had a teacher in primary school who had the class ‘singing in three parts from 4th class’. During her time with the Lindsay Singers, she notes in particular the influence of presenting pieces at the Seminar in Contemporary Choral Music at the Cork International Choral Festival. Rhona Clarke, email correspondence, 19 March 2018.

Her combination of facility and imagination in choral writing is readily evident in ‘Regina Coeli’, a jubilant and uplifting piece for mixed choir (SSATB) composed in 2007, as part of *Two Marian Anthems*, for the National Chamber Choir.³⁴ Clarke writes that ‘Regina Coeli’ was written to ‘complement and contrast’ with ‘Salve Regina’, the other anthem of the set. It was ‘sketched in a single day ... it has a more exuberant style – lively and rhythmic.’³⁵ The original Latin prayer is an anonymous twelfth-century celebration of the Virgin Mary and the resurrection of Jesus. It is one of four Marian antiphons traditionally said or sung during the Easter period, often at noon, as a seasonal substitution for the ‘Angelus’.

Regina Coeli

Regina coeli, lætare, alleluia:

Quia quem meruisti portare, alleluia,

Resurrexit, sicut dixit, alleluia,

Ora pro nobis Deum, alleluia.

Queen of Heaven, rejoice, alleluia:

The Son whom you merited to bear, alleluia.

Has risen, as He said, alleluia.

Pray for us to God, alleluia.

Clarke carefully assigns different musical ideas to each of the prayer’s four lines, thus the piece is structured as follows:

³⁴ The National Chamber Choir was rebranded as Chamber Choir Ireland in 2013.

³⁵ Rhona Clarke, ‘Regina Coeli’ from *Two Marian Anthems* (Dublin: The Contemporary Music Centre Ireland, 2007), preface.

- | | |
|--|------------|
| 1. Regina coeli, lætare, alleluia: | bars 1-27 |
| 2. Quia quem meruisti portare, alleluia, | bars 28-43 |
| 3. Resurrexit, sicut dixit, alleluia, | bars 44-61 |
| 4. Ora pro nobis Deum, alleluia. | bars 62-80 |
| 5. Coda: Alleluia | bars 81-96 |

She expands the opening line – ‘Regina coeli, lætare, alleluia’ (‘Queen of Heaven, rejoice, alleluia’) – into a 27-bar ternary structure. The prayer’s sense of joy is established from the outset with an energetic Scotch-snap on the very first syllable (Example 1), sung by first and second sopranos. They then come to rest on a sustained interval (B and D), beneath which an alto solo answers, taking what was an undefined tonality and steering it towards G major, reinforcing a feeling of joy. This solo contains a single bar of 6/8, a brief shift from the initial 2/2 and the first of many instances of changing metre that will feature throughout the piece.

Example 4.6.1: Clarke ‘Regina Coeli’, bars 1-5

A second recurring feature is the pedal-note, the first of which is the long B sustained by the alto solo while the opening dialogue is virtually repeated in bars 6-10 (Example 4.6.2).

Example 4.6.2: Clarke 'Regina Coeli', bars 6-10

6 *mf*
S I Re - gi - na coe - li

mf
S II Re - gi - na coe - li

A Re - gi - na - coe - - - - li

Clarke now brings in the full choir, *forte*, for the words 'laetare' ('rejoice') and 'Alleluia', on a bright G-based chord with an added eleventh in bar 11 (Example 3a). This fortifies the opening's unmistakable sense of rejoicing. Where there were fragmentary two- and three-bar motifs at the start, there is now a full melody which spans six bars (11-16) sung by first sopranos (Examples 4.6.3 and 4.6.4).

Example 4.6.3: Clarke 'Regina Coeli', first sopranos, bars 11-15

11 *f*
S I Re - gi - na coe - li, lae - ta - re, lae - ta - re al - le - lu - ia, al - le - lu - ia

f
S II Re - gi - na coe - li, lae - ta - re, lae - ta - re al - le - lu - ia, al - le - lu - ia.

f
A *altri (tutti)* Re - gi - na coe - li, lae - ta - re, lae - ta - re al - le - lu - ia, al - le - lu - ia.

f
T Re - gi - na coe - li.

f
B Re - gi - na coe - li, al - le - lu - ia, al - le - lu - ia

Example 4.6.4: Clarke 'Regina Coeli', first sopranos, bars 11-16

By shuffling the metre constantly from 7/8 to 8/8 to 11/8 and back to 7/8, and with the pulse busily alternating between two and three quavers, Clarke creates a feeling of joyful abandon, thereby adding to her sense of rejoicing. She next moves into an equally bright C-based tonality by way of a circle of fifths in the bass in bars 15-16 (C-F, B flat-E flat, G-C). This is reinforced with rising fourths (its inversion) in the first sopranos (Example 3a). At this point the second sopranos take over the melody. First the altos then the tenors accompany this by reprising the opening's two-part style, now also with a five-bar sustained pedal (C) in the basses which consolidates the shift in tonality. Bars 21-26 create a strong sense of unity via the return of the opening 'Regina Coeli' motif. It is heard first in the altos in an F-based tonality (bars 21-23). This time the descending interval from the first to second beat is a fifth rather than a fourth (Example 4.6.5). This is one of many subtle variations which permeate the whole piece.

Example 4.6.5: Clarke 'Regina Coeli', bars 21-22 and bars 1-3

This motif is now passed first to the first sopranos and then to the basses who both sing inverted versions (Example 4.6.6). The motifs are also subtly transformed and more condensed, and they increase the sense of urgency in the lead-up to the next section.

Example 4.6.6: Clarke ‘Regina Coeli’, bars 21-26

The musical score for Example 4.6.6 shows five vocal parts: S I, S II, A, T, and B. The time signature is 2/2, with a final 7/8 measure. The lyrics are 'Re - gi-na coe - li'. Red boxes highlight specific melodic motifs in the S I, A, and B parts. The S I part has a motif in bars 24-25. The A part has motifs in bars 22-23 and 24-25. The B part has a motif in bars 24-25.

Clarke creates a change of mood for the second line: ‘Quia quem meruisti portare’ (‘The Son whom you merited to bear, alleluia’). She gives it a more reverent character featuring imitation and repetition as well as the continuation of her shorter motivic lines. The melody is based on that of bars 11 and 12 and starts in the second sopranos before passing through the other voices (Example 4.6.7). Like many passages in the piece, the tonality here is ambiguous. It could be interpreted as A aeolian or E dorian.

Example 4.6.7: Clarke 'Regina Coeli', bars 28-34

The musical score for Example 4.6.7, 'Regina Coeli' bars 28-34, is presented for five vocal parts: Soprano I (S I), Soprano II (S II), Alto (A), Tenor (T), and Bass (B). The score begins at bar 28. The lyrics are: 'Qui - aquem me - ru - is - ti - por - ta - re.' and 'Ah me - ru - is - ti - por - ta - re.' The dynamics are marked as *mf* (mezzo-forte), *mp* (mezzo-piano), and *p* (piano). The score shows a sequence of dynamic changes: *mf* for S II and T, *mp* for S II and A, and *p* for B. The lyrics are: 'Qui - aquem me - ru - is - ti - por - ta - re.' and 'Ah me - ru - is - ti - por - ta - re.'

Clarke reinforces feelings of calm and reverence by following the new section's initial *mezzo-forte* entries with a softening to *mezzo-piano* when the altos and second sopranos enter, followed by a gentle *piano* in the basses. This quietness is short-lived, however: the dynamic builds back to *forte* with a return to noisy celebration on 'alleluia' in bar 35. Clarke here returns to the circle of fifths in the bass, paired with rising fourths in the second sopranos, and restores her earlier rhythmic vitality with a return to shifting metres (7/8, 5/8 and 6/8) (Example 4.6.8). She then repeats the softer, imitative 'meruisti' section although varying the sequence of voice entries. This time there is no 'alleluia' and the section ends gently.

Example 4.6.8: Clarke 'Regina Coeli', bars 34-38

34

S I

S II
al - le - lu - ia, al - le - lu - ia.

A
al - le - lu - ia, al - le - lu - ia.

T
8 Qui - a quem me - ru - is - ti por - ti

B
ta - re. al - le - lu - ia, al - le - lu - ia.

The third line of the prayer is a celebration of the resurrection: 'Resurrexit, sicut dixit, alleluia' ('[The Son] Has risen, as He said, alleluia'), bars 44-62. Clarke introduces a new melody featuring classic word-painting on 'Resurrexit' with a falling then rising seventh as well as two-bar dialogues between various groups of voices (Example 4.6.9).

Example 4.6.9: Clarke 'Regina Coeli', bars 40-45

40

S I
Re - su - rex - it si - cut dix - it...

S II
me - ru - is - ti por - ta - re. Re - su - rex - it si - cut dix - it...

A
me - ru - is - ti por - ta - re, me - ru - is - ti por - ta - re.

T
Re - su - rex - it si - cut dix - it.

B
ta - re. me - ru - is - ti por - ta - re.

Having opened the section at *mezzo-forte*, Clarke now enhances the feeling of celebration with another ‘alleluia’ in bar 52 and a feeling of driving forward with the rising fourths in bars 51 and 53. This leads in bar 55 to a unifying return of the ‘Regina coeli’ theme from bar 11 which is now specifically in G major. The section closes in a gentle manner. The first sopranos, altos and basses move gradually downwards, with the circle of fifths in the altos and its inversion in the basses, towards a sustained B on the text ‘alleluia’. Unlike previous passages featuring the circle of fifths, this one creates a very definite unwinding effect (Example 4.6.10).

Example 4.6.10: Clarke 'Regina Coeli', bars 56-69, circle of fifths

56 *f*

S I Re - gi - na coe - - - li al - le - lu -

S II

A coe - li, lae - ta - re, - lae - ta - re al - le lu - ia, al - le - lu - ia, al - le -

T coe - li, lae - ta - re al - le - lu - - - -

B coe - li, lae - ta - re, lae - ta - re al - le - lu - ia, al - le - lu - ia, al - le -

Meno mosso
Legato sostenuto

61 *p* *mp*

S I ia. O - ra pro

S II *p* *cresc.* O - ra pro no - bis, O - ra pro no - bis,

A *p* *cresc.* lu - ia. O - ra pro no - bis, O - ra pro no - bis,

T *p* *mp* ia. O - ra pro

B *p* *cresc.* lu - ia. O - ra pro no - bis, O - ra pro no - bis, pro

The fourth line of the prayer is 'Ora pro nobis Deum' ('Pray for us to God'). Clarke characterises this supplication with a gentle, slow-moving homophonic passage marked *Meno mosso* and *Legato sostenuto*. Rhythm values now give way to a slow, steady tread of minims and semibreves, and for the first and only time in the piece the

metre is fixed: a suitably prayerful 2/2 (Example 4.6.11). The texture is bare as there are no chords until bar 68. The B, which has a pedal-like presence until bar 75, gives the passage a phrygian flavour.

Example 4.6.11: Clarke ‘Regina Coeli’, bars 61-69

Meno mosso
Legato sostenuto

61 *p* *mp*
S I ia. O - ra pro
S II O - ra pro no - bis, O - ra pro no - bis, *cresc.*
A lu - ia. O - ra pro no - bis, O - ra pro no - bis, *cresc.*
T ia. O - ra pro *mf*
B lu - ia. O - ra pro no - bis, O - ra pro - no - bis, pro *cresc.*

Detailed description: The image shows a musical score for five vocal parts (S I, S II, A, T, B) and piano markings. The tempo is 'Meno mosso' and the performance style is 'Legato sostenuto'. The score begins at bar 61. The vocal parts are: S I (Soprano I), S II (Soprano II), A (Alto), T (Tenor), and B (Bass). The lyrics are: 'ia. O - ra pro' (S I), 'O - ra pro no - bis, O - ra pro no - bis,' (S II), 'lu - ia. O - ra pro no - bis, O - ra pro no - bis,' (A), 'ia. O - ra pro' (T), and 'lu - ia. O - ra pro no - bis, O - ra pro - no - bis, pro' (B). The piano markings are: *p* (piano) for S I, S II, A, and B; *mp* (mezzo-piano) for S I; *mf* (mezzo-forte) for T; and *cresc.* (crescendo) for S II, A, and B. The score is in 2/2 time and features a phrygian flavour.

In the same way that they are spoken by the faithful in prayer, the words ‘Ora pro nobis’ are repeated. The third iteration initiates a crescendo rising towards the piece’s most colourful chords, reserved for the word ‘Deum’, centred on a bright E major-based cluster chord in bar 72 (Example 4.6.12).

Example 4.6.12: Clarke 'Regina Coeli', bars 70-76

70 *f* *mp*
 S I no - bis De - - - um, De - - - um,
 S II no - bis De - - - um, De - - - um,
 A no - bis De - - - um, *mp* *mf* Re - gi - na cae - li
 T no - bis De - - - um, *mp*
 B no - bis De - - - um. *f* *mf* *mp* O - ra pro - no - bis

A *decrescendo* follows naturally on from these 'Deum' chords and a six-bar link leads to the final section of the piece. This link reprises fragments of the opening material in the alto and tenor lines (Example 4.6.13), keeping the dynamic subdued and approaching the final section with a *poco rall.* in bar 80.

Example 4.6.13: Clarke 'Regina Coeli', bars 75-80

75 *mf* *mp* *poco rall.*
 ALTO Re - gi - na coe - li Re - gi - na coe - li
 TENOR *mp* O - ra pro no - bis

Clarke's final section is an exuberant coda (bars 81 to the end) which returns to the words of the prayer's celebratory opening, 'Regina Coeli' and 'Alleluia'. She restores the opening's fast tempo, changing metres and irregular pulse, but this time with all

voices. It begins gently with ‘Alleluia’ sung twice. The second ‘Alleluia’ swells from *piano* to *mezzo-forte* as the tenors enter *forte* with a repeat of the main melody in bar 84 (Examples 4.6.14(a) and 4.6.14(b)).

Example 4.6.14(a): Clarke ‘Regina Coeli’, bars 77-84

Poco rall. *Tempo I*

S I Al - le - lu - ia, Al - le - lu - ia, *mf*

S II Al - le - lu - ia, Al - le - lu - ia, *mf*

A *mp* Re - gi - na cae - li. *p* Ah

T *mp* O - ra pro no - bis. *p* Ah *f* Re - gi - na

B *p* Ah

Example 4.6.14(b): Clarke ‘Regina Coeli’, bars 85-89

f

S I al - le - lu - ia. *f* Al - le - lu - ia.

S II al - le - lu - ia. *f* Al - le - lu - ia.

A *f* Re - gi - na lae - ta - re, lae - ta - re al - le - lu - ia

T cae - li lae - ta - re, lae - ta - re al - le - lu - ia, al - le - lu - ia, al - le - lu - ia

B

This leads to a thrilling build-up on ‘Alleluia’. The first sopranos ascend from C sharp to a soaring high A (a'') while the tenors descend in a powerful circle of fifths to E and A, and the altos hold an E pedal. The basses re-enter with their own deep A to anchor that of the sopranos singing three octaves higher. The resulting open-fifths – solid and *fortissimo* – represent the piece’s climax at bar 90 (Example 4.6.15). Intensity is sustained through to the final cadence with two reiterations of ‘Regina coeli’ providing momentum. In the final three bars the first tenors recap the opening motif one last time as though in farewell. The piece ends on an open fifth (A and E) with an added ninth (B).

Example 4.6.15: Clarke ‘Regina Coeli’, bars 90-96

90 *ff* *Allargando*

S I

Ah

S II *ff*

Re - gi - na cae - li, Re - gi - na coe - li.

A *ff*

ia.

T *ff*

lu - - - ia.

Re - gi - na coe - - - li.

B *ff*

Re - gi - na cae - li, Re - gi - na cae - li.

Preparation and Performance Notes

Clarke composed ‘Regina Coeli’ for a professional choir and it places greater technical demands on choral singers than many of her other pieces.³⁶ For example, among the challenges which it poses for non-professional choirs are its constantly changing meters. Preparatory rhythmic work should be done on the text alone prior to pitching the notes. This applies particularly in bars 11-61 and from 81 to the end. Initially it is best for singers to think in quavers. Singers can tap a quaver pulse on their knee while speaking the text, thereby acquiring a feel for the length of every note (a quaver will be one pulse, a crotchet two, a dotted crotchet three, etc.). This should lead to greater comfort with unequal beat patterns, a persistent feature of the piece. To take this to the next level, Robert Shaw’s ‘count singing’ can be used.³⁷ This entails singers replacing the text with numbers, counting out in quavers the exact length of each note. In Example 4.6.16a, the pitches are sung with the note values 1-2-3 for a dotted crotchet, 1-2 for a crotchet, and 1 for a quaver.

Example 4.6.16(a): Clarke ‘Regina Coeli’, bars 11-16, first soprano

11

123 12 12 1 2 3 12 3 2 1 2 3 12 12 3

14

12 3 1 2 3 1 2 3 12 12 12 12 3 1 2 123 12

³⁶ Clarke has a good record of matching her pieces to the level of the choirs for which she writes. *Mo Phaistín Fionn* and *Síofra Sí* are examples of fine pieces Clarke has composed for upper-voice school choirs. Both have a good balance between being manageable for three to four-part upper voice school choirs, while at the same time being rhythmically challenging and demanding a strong sense of tonality and balance in the voices.

³⁷ The count-singing system was developed by Robert Shaw (renowned founder of the Robert Shaw Chorale in New York City) in the mid-twentieth century as a way to deal with the poor rhythmic skills of amateur and sometimes even professional singers. Pamela Ellrod Huffman, ‘Essential Building Blocks: The Rehearsal Techniques of Robert Shaw’, *Southwestern Musician* (2012), 41.

This exercise can be applied to all sections featuring changing meter as follows: bars 11-27; bars 28-43; bars 44-61; bars 62-80; and bars 81-96. It can be intensified further by asking the choir to ‘count sing’ according to the total number of quavers in each bar (Example 4.6.16(b)). In other words, using bar 11 as an example, whereas Shaw’s method would render the singing as ‘1-2 1-2 1-2-3’, relating the counting to the total number of quavers (7) would be sung as 1-2 3-4 5-6-7. This is a challenging exercise that will require each singer to know exactly where he or she is in each bar, thus ensuring total precision.

Example 4.6.16(b): Clarke ‘Regina Coeli’, bars 11-16, first soprano

The image shows a musical score for the first soprano part of Clarke's 'Regina Coeli', bars 11-16. The score is written on two staves. The first staff starts at bar 11 and ends at bar 13. The second staff starts at bar 14 and ends at bar 16. Below each bar, the number of quavers is indicated. The first staff has bars with 7, 7, and 7 quavers respectively. The second staff has bars with 7, 7, 7, and 7 quavers respectively. The quaver counts are: 123 45 67, 1 2 3 45 6 8, 1 2 3 45 67 8, 12 3 4 5 6 7 8 9, 12 34 56 78 9 10 11, 12345.

Singers will benefit from an awareness of the interconnections between the different sections and the economy of the material. For example, the opening motif appears in different guises in each section, usually in a different tonality and with subtle changes. Singers will also grapple with tonality since most passages are difficult to label and could be interpreted as diatonic, pentatonic, or modal. Guidance on where the main tonal centre is will help.

With total security in pitching and with rhythmic accuracy, and with commitment to all articulation and dynamic markings, a performance of Rhona Clarke’s ‘Regina

Coeli' will be exhilarating and will demonstrate why it deserves to be considered among the very best *a cappella* choral pieces by Irish composers.

4.7 Michael Holohan, *Bagairt na Marbh*

One of the challenges facing Irish composers of choral music is the setting of texts in the Irish language. If a composer is at least comfortably literate in Irish and therefore capable of setting Irish words, there may well remain concerns about an Irish piece's accessibility to non-Irish-speaking audiences, both inside Ireland and out. On the other hand, accessibility is not always the top priority, given that composers often have no control over what inspires them. Michael Holohan was probably not worrying about accessibility when, in 1982, he decided to set *Bagairt na Marbh* (The threat of the dead) by Seán Ó Ríordáin (1916-1977), one of Ireland's most important Irish-language poets.³⁸ Holohan's profound interest in Ó Ríordáin comes alongside his setting and collaborating with English-language Irish poets including Samuel Beckett, Seamus Heaney, and Paul Durcan. The composer notes how 'death and his messengers are constant companions and often move in a ghostly way through his poems.'³⁹

It is understandable how death has such a steady presence in Ó Ríordáin poems. Diagnosed with tuberculosis at the age of thirteen, he remained in poor health for the rest of his life. As was common at that time, he was quarantined in his own home. Yet he was able to transform the feelings of isolation he experienced into the major themes which feature widely in his poetry. His biographer Seán Ó Coileáin explains how Ó Ríordáin's adult life was punctuated by:

³⁸ *Bagairt na Marbh* was subsequently revised in 1986 and again in 2002. It is the second piece of the composer's Ó Ríordáin trilogy and was commissioned in 1982 by Gabrielle Holohan of the Parnassian Singers, through the Cork International Choral Festival Fund for the Seán Ó Riada Memorial Trophy. The two other pieces were *An Stoirm* (1981) and *Sos* (1983). Holohan had previously made a setting of another Ó Ríordáin poem *Siollabadh* in the late 1970s.

³⁹ Michael Holohan, 'Note and thoughts on Seán Ó Ríordáin's poem *Bagairt na Marbh*', email correspondence, 25 March 2017.

frequent visits to sanatoria, beginning with Heatherside, Doneraile, in 1938, followed by periods of recuperation in a specially constructed isolation room at home, which increased his sense of alienation from society and his resentment of what he perceived to be its overbearing authority ... His mother's death, on 21 January 1945, severed what had been the most meaningful link; it was also a significant event in his poetic development ...⁴⁰

In *Bagairt na Marbh*, which appeared in Ó Ríordáin's second collection, *Brosna*, in 1964, Michael Holohan found a poem which was primed for musical setting with its expression of the feelings of bitterness, loss and alienation that characterise so much of Ó Ríordáin's output. Holohan penned his own English translation, into which he also interposed lines from the Roman Catholic requiem mass for the dead in Latin:

***Bagairt na Marbh* 'The Threat of the Dead' by Seán Ó Ríordáin**

Tá an seomra teann le bagairt na marbh'	The room is tense with the threat of the dead,
Ní féider a bhfearg a shásamh,	Nothing can relieve their anger,
Níl duine beo faram,	There is no living person beside me,
Ach braithim í i m'áice	But I feel her presence around me
D'ainneoin í bheith curtha le ráithe;	Although she is buried a while;
Níl torann dá ndeinim	Any sound I make
Ná cuireann i ar tinneall,	Aggravates her,
I riochtaibh teacht dúisithe im láthair,	And awakens her to my world,
Bí ciúin, is ná cloiseadh an té atá nua-marbh,	Be quiet; listen to the one who is newly dead

Requiem in aeternam,	Eternal rest grant unto them,
Lux aeterna luceat eis,	May eternal light shine upon them,
Domine, cum sanctis tuis in aeternam,	O Lord, with Thy saints for evermore,
Quia pius es.	For Thou art gracious.
Nua- thitithe í néalaibh an bháis tú. ⁴¹	Newly fallen into the sleep of death. ⁴²

⁴⁰ Seán Ó Coileáin, 'Seán Ó Ríordáin', in *Seán Ó Ríordáin - Beatha agus Saothar* (Dublin: An Clochomhár, 1982) <https://www.ria.ie/sites/default/files/o_riordain.pdf> [accessed 1 May 2016].

⁴¹ Seán Ó Ríordáin, 'Bagairt na Marbh', in *Seán Ó Ríordáin Na Dánta* (Co. na Gaillimhe: Cló Iar Chonnacht, 2011), 146-147.

⁴² Translation to English by Michael Holohan, email correspondence, 25 March 2017.

Bagairt na Marbh exemplifies a very high achievement in the setting of Irish language verse. It is also a graphically evocative and deeply moving piece of choral music which illustrates the composer's understanding of the poem.⁴³ Holohan says:

The poet speaks about a personal human presence from the past which surrounds him and causes feelings of great tension and disturbance within his room. The presence is identified as a 'she'. Is it the ghost of the poet's mother who is revisiting the house? We are not sure, but Ó Ríordáin wrote a number of poems about his mother previously and we know from his writings that her death affected him deeply. The poem also explores the idea of human isolation which is a recurring theme in the poet's work. Ó Ríordáin's vision and his art are essentially tragic.⁴⁴

Not only does Holohan produce an effective choral version of the text, he also transcends linguistic barriers and overcomes the problem of accessibility by composing music that – irrespective of text or language – conveys to listeners much of the essential feeling of the poem: fear, isolation, and ultimately comfort. The following analysis attempts to illustrate how Holohan achieves this.

Fear is conveyed from the outset by a cluster-chord based on the very first word of the poem – the verb 'Tá' (is) with its wide vowel sound 'á' (Ah). This is built up one voice-line at a time, starting on the opening's single pianissimo c' in the tenors. It ends up combining all the notes of the C harmonic minor scale except G (Example 4.7.1(a)).

⁴³ Holohan composed *Bagairt na Marbh* in 1982, revising it in 1986 and 2002. It won the first prize, the O' Riada Memorial Trophy, at the 1982 Cork International Choral Festival (CICF). It has consistently won prizes at the CICF since then, including on many occasions the Perpetual Trophy for the Performance of Irish Contemporary Choral Music and the Trofaí Cuimhneacháin Philip Uí Laoghaire for the performance of a piece in Irish.

⁴⁴ Michael Holohan, 'Note and thoughts on Séan Ó Ríordáin's poem *Bagairt na Marbh*', email correspondence, 25 March 2017.

Example 4.7.1(a): Holohan, *Bagairt na Marbh*, bars 1-5

The image shows a musical score for seven vocal parts: Soprano 1 (S1), Soprano 2 (S2), Alto 1 (A1), Alto 2 (A2), Tenor 1 (T1), Bass 1 (B1), and Bass 2 (B2). The music is in 4/4 time with a key signature of two flats (B-flat and E-flat). The tempo is marked 'SLOW' with a metronome marking of quarter note = 60. The piece is titled 'ADAEIO'. The score covers bars 1 through 5. In bar 1, there is a cluster-chord. In bar 2, there is a period of silence. In bar 3, there is another cluster-chord. In bar 4, there is a second cluster-chord marked 'pp' and 'subito explosive!'. In bar 5, there is a 'Tutti' marking and a 'ppp' dynamic. The vocal lines are written in various clefs: S1 and S2 in soprano clef, A1 and A2 in alto clef, T1 in tenor clef, and B1 and B2 in bass clef. The notation includes notes, rests, and dynamic markings.

There is an expectant, rather nervous pause on this cluster-chord, followed by silence and then a second cluster-chord in bar 6 which is marked *sff* and ‘*subito explosive!*’ (Example 4.7.1(b)).

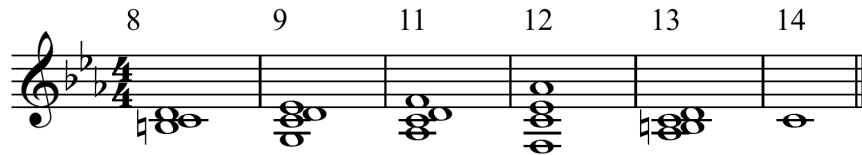
Example 4.7.1(b): Holohan, *Bagairt na Marbh*, bars 5-7

The image shows a single vocal line in treble clef for bars 5, 6, and 7. The key signature is two flats and the time signature is 4/4. In bar 5, there is a cluster-chord. In bar 6, there is a period of silence. In bar 7, the line resolves to a unison c' note.

The additional G in the first soprano and first bass lines changes the function of this chord to that of the dominant. It then resolves in bar 7 onto c' in the altos, the same unison c' which opened the piece. He builds the first line of the poem, ‘Tá an seomra teann’ (‘The room is tense’) in the same way: starting with the unison c' and then each

line entering one by one. Holohan places three dissonant chords on the three iterations of 'teann' ('tense') in bars 8, 9 and 11 (Example 4.7.2(a) and 4.7.2(b)).

Example 4.7.2(a): Holohan, *Bagairt na Marbh*, bars 8-9; 11-14



Example 4.7.2(b): Holohan, *Bagairt na Marbh*, bars 8-14

Example 4.7.2(b) Musical Score:

Section 1 (Bars 8-14):

- Tempo: *SP.* (Subito Explosive!)
- Time Signature: $\frac{4}{4}$
- Key Signature: Two flats (B-flat, E-flat)
- Performance Instructions: *SFF*, *NON DIVISI*, *P*, *MP*, *PIU CRESC*, *MF*
- Vocal Lines (Soprano, Alto, Tenor, Bass):
 - Soprano: SEOM-RA TEANN SEOM-RA TEANN
 - Alto: TA SEOM-RA TEANN
 - Tenor: TEANN SEOM-RA TEANN
 - Bass: AN SEOM-RA TEANN

Section 2 (Bars 10-14):

- Tempo: *TUTTI CRESC.*
- Time Signature: $\frac{4}{4}$
- Key Signature: Two flats (B-flat, E-flat)
- Performance Instructions: *F*, *SF >*, *dimin*
- Vocal Lines (Soprano, Alto, Tenor, Bass):
 - Soprano: SEOM-RA TEANN LE BAG-AIRT NA MAR-BH
 - Alto: SEOM-RA TEANN LE BAG-AIRT NA MAR-BH TA
 - Tenor: LE BAG-AIRT NA MAR-BH
 - Bass: SEOM-RA TEANN LE BAG-AIRT NA MAR-BH

Holohan uses a short-long rhythmic figure and an accent on ‘bagairt’ to make it more speech-like, and the same elements in bar 13 for ‘marbh’ (‘the dead’). Both are declamatory in effect and contribute to the intensity. The chord on ‘marbh’ in bar 13 is a simpler version of the dominant in bar 6; and bar 14, like bar 7, again brings the resolution of the unison c’. This short passage of 17 bars shows the methods that Holohan has used to create an eerie atmosphere for Ó Ríordáin’s unsettling words.

Holohan continues to feature C as the tonal centre for the rest of the piece. It is present in every bar except bar 59, sometimes as a harmony note, sometimes as a colour, and other times as a pedal note. The next two phrases (bars 17-22) show Holohan’s judicious use of natural speech-like rhythms, here in the utterance of an emotionally disturbed person (Examples 3(a) and 3(b)), for example, ‘a bhfearg’ (‘her anger’) and ‘Níl duine beo’ (‘There is no living person’). Holohan marks both of these with a jarring *sforzando* on the first syllable. The motifs are angular, leaping either upwards or downwards (Example 4.7.3(a) and 4.7.3(b)). His use of intervals is also an important feature of the work, notably descending sevenths, rising and falling sixths and inversions of intervals.

Example 4.7.3(a): Holohan, *Bagairt na Marbh*, bar 18

Handwritten musical notation for Example 4.7.3(a). It consists of four staves. The top staff has a treble clef and a key signature of one flat. It contains a melodic line with notes G4, A4, Bb4, and C5. The second staff is empty. The third staff has a treble clef and contains notes G4, A4, Bb4, and C5. The fourth staff has a treble clef and contains notes G4, A4, Bb4, and C5. Dynamics include 'sf' and 'p'. Lyrics include 'A BHFÉARG'.

Example 4.7.3(b): Holohan, *Bagairt na Marbh*, bars 19-20

Handwritten musical notation for Example 4.7.3(b). It consists of a single staff with a treble clef and a key signature of one flat. It contains a melodic line with notes G4, A4, Bb4, and C5. The lyrics are 'A SHAS - AMH' and 'NÍ! Dúin-E BEO'.

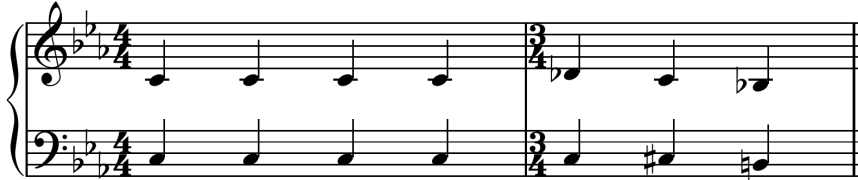
In the second section of the piece (bars 27-45), Holohan continues to use the speech-like rhythm patterns in a passage that gradually builds from disquiet to explosive terror. For the words ‘Níl torann dá ndeinim Ná cuireann i ar tinneall’ (‘Any sound I make Aggravates her’), he emphatically repeats the same short-long rhythmic figure for the word *torann* (‘noise’). This section also features a chromatic melodic ostinato – centred on and around C – eight times in the first bass (Example 4.7.4).

Example 4.7.4: Holohan, *Bagairt na Marbh*, Bass 1 melodic ostinato, bars 27-28

Handwritten musical notation for Example 4.7.4. It consists of a single staff in bass clef with a key signature of one flat and a time signature of 4/4. It contains a melodic line with notes C3, D3, E3, F3, G3, A3, Bb3, and C4.

After four bars, the first altos join with the repeated C in the first bar but clashing in compound minor seconds in the second bar (Example 4.7.5).

Example 4.7.5: Holohan, *Bagairt na Marbh*, melodic ostinato, bars 35-36



This has the effect of increasing the intensity along with a *crescendo* to *fortississimo* and an *accelerando* beginning in bar 39, while ‘torann’ is repeated on each beat. Extended vocal techniques contribute to the dramatic build-up. These include *tongue glocks* (tongue clicks) in the tenors, a whistling glissando in the upper voices, and harshly enunciated spoken text in the bass line. The climax is a shattering scream by solo soprano above the choir’s chord on the word ‘torann’ in bar 43 (Example 4.7.6).

Example 4.7.6: Holohan, *Bagairt na Marbh*, bars 41-43

Handwritten musical score for Example 4.7.6, showing vocal parts for Soprano (S), Alto 1 (A1), Alto 2 (A2), Tenor 1 (T1), Tenor 2 (T2), Bass 1 (B1), and Bass 2 (B2) from bars 41 to 43. The score includes dynamic markings (mp, mf, ff), tempo changes (120 to 60), and a 'SCREAM!' instruction with 'SLOW GLASS' written above it. The lyrics are in Irish Gaelic.

The rest of the choir stops abruptly when the scream reaches its highest point. Then they ‘hush’ the screaming soprano and for a moment there is an expectant silence (Example 4.7.7).

Example 4.7.7: Holohan, *Bagairt na Marbh*, bars 44-48

Handwritten musical score for Example 4.7.7, showing vocal parts for Soprano (S), Alto (A), Tenor (T), and Bass (B) from bars 44 to 48. The score includes dynamic markings like "Tutti Whisper", "Hush - (SH)", "pp", and "fff", and performance instructions such as "Tempo Primo" and "w/ = 1 beat". The lyrics "LUX RE-TER - NA LU CE-AT E - IS" and "ciú" are visible.

Holohan then recalls the opening of the piece by returning to the unison c' in the tenors and offbeat entries in the altos, basses and sopranos. This time, however, the cluster is different and shorter. What began with C, D, B natural, E flat is now C, D, B natural and E natural. The result of this slight change is that this time the chord feels major.

In the music that follows there is a series of tranquil chords oriented around F major and not C minor. Instead of fear and tension there is – magically – warmth, relief and comfort (Example 4.7.7). As the cluster gently holds and slowly changes, a ‘white voice’⁴⁵ soprano solo sings the interpolated Latin requiem verses in the style of Gregorian chant with a lydian flavour: ‘May eternal light shine upon them, O Lord, with Thy saints for evermore, For Thou art gracious’.

This insertion from the requiem text occurs just before the poem’s final two lines which, in sharp contrast with the fear and tension that characterised the opening, create an atmosphere of acceptance: ‘Be quiet; listen to the one who is newly dead, Newly fallen into the sleep of death’. The passage begins in bar 53 with the re-introduction of familiar elements: the unison *c'*, the build-up of C minor cluster-chords, the semiquaver-dotted-quaver pattern, and the angular motifs. It builds gradually towards a dramatic *ff* chord on ‘néalaibh’ (‘newly fallen’) in bar 60. A brief but gripping codetta follows from bar 61 to the end. The altos sing a unison *c'* for the final time in bar 61 and the full choir sings a five-chord homophonic progression gradually diminishing from *ff* to *f* to *mp* and *p* (Example 4.7.8).

⁴⁵ Michael Holohan, ‘White voice please! No vibrato’, *Bagairt na Marbh*, 11.

Example 4.7.8: Holohan, *Bagairt na Marbh*, bars 62-64

The piece ends optimistically with a cadential 6/4, ending on C major instead of C minor. Over a quiet, widely-spaced ethereal C major chord in second inversion, a soprano soloist echoes ‘Requiem aeternam’ high above, while the choir ‘dies away to nothing’. To sustain the atmosphere, Hololan directs the conductor to beat an extra bar of silence and then to hold hands in position for another few seconds.

Preparation and Performance Notes

Bagairt na Marbh is a highly effective piece in performance with its particular blend of intensity and tension and then its concluding calm and relief. Once singers have prepared the pronunciation correctly, the next challenge is intonation. The opening cluster is particularly difficult to tune precisely because it combines all the notes of the C harmonic minor scale, with the exception of the G. This can be rehearsed first as a

scale with every voice initially singing every note (Example 4.7.9), and then with each voice-part sustaining its own note. Once these are secure the passage can be sung with Holohan's syncopated entries.

Example 4.7.9: Opening cluster as a scale, *Bagairt na Marbh*, bars 1-6



The chords in bars 5, 6, and 7 represent the functions of sub-dominant, dominant (with the G as added in first soprano and first bass) and tonic (Example 10). They can be isolated and rehearsed as a chord progression until the tonality of C minor is secure.

Example 4.7.10: Holohan, *Bagairt na Marbh*, bars 5-7



Every passage in the piece leads back to C and so it can be helpful to play a C on a fixed-pitch instrument at key moments. Appropriate bars include 7, 14, 20, 26, 31, 46, 53, 61. With a choir experiencing intonation difficulties, the C could be played more frequently as every bar contains at least one C (with the exception of bar 59).

The second section from bars 27-45 is texturally complex. It requires a fine balance between various separate elements including spoken text in the second basses (later joined by the second tenors); the ostinato in the first basses (later joined by the first altos); the dialogue of rising and falling intervals on the word 'torann'; the whistling glissandi and the tongue glocks. Each element can be rehearsed separately and then

gradually put together. Combined together and with careful control of the balance, they produce a powerful climax. The soloist's scream, marked *slow gliss*, can be difficult to execute as it requires a sense of abandon and excellent timing. When it reaches the piercing high point, the rest of the choir utters 'Hush' and there follows a dramatically different atmosphere for the plainchant passage from bars 46-52. The Latin text for soprano solo is gentle, as is the text assigned to the rest of the choir, which comprises just the two words 'bí ciúin' ('be quiet'). The choral chords need to glide, therefore breathing should be carefully planned so as not to intrude. It would be advisable to align the breathing of the choir with that of the soloist.

The final section from bar 53 recalls a number of familiar elements. The codetta from bar 61, which lasts just four bars, requires the choir to reduce dramatically the dynamic level from *ff* to *f* to *mp* and *p* and then to die away 'to nothing'. The challenge here will be to effect a gradual *decrescendo* above which the soprano soloist can float and therefore achieve a magical, ethereal quality.

Bagairt na Marbh, if carefully prepared and performed, expresses Seán Ó Ríordáin's poem in a way that transcends a recitation of the poem and arrestingly communicates to an audience the sequence of emotions which it expresses. As described, Holohan transcends his text by creating a prevailing mood of tension and dread via eerie cluster chords based on C minor. The mood intensifies with the angry declamation of text in natural speech rhythm, and rises to a climax with the aid of extended vocal techniques, culminating in a long scream. Even a non-Irish-speaking listener will be in no doubt concerning the music's strong depiction of anger and dread, nor of the calm release that follows when the clusters return but in a major tonality beneath a softly shaped

melodic line that beautifully sets words of comfort from the Latin mass for the dead,
whether Latin is understood by the listener or not.

4.8 Michael McGlynn, *Geantraí*

This sampling of contemporary Irish choral music has so far presented a variety of reasons for including particular composers: their use of the Irish language, for example, or being a part-time composer, or, in Gerald Barry's case, simply for being arguably the country's leading composer. Michael McGlynn's music needs to be sampled because he is, in a completely unrivalled way, Ireland's most successful composer of choral music. No other Irish composer comes anywhere close to matching him for output, sales, numbers of performances, or overall exposure. This success is intricately tied to that of the choir he founded in 1987 as an instrument for his compositions – Anúna.⁴⁶ The choir has a long track record of international touring and has released fifteen albums of choral music, virtually all of it composed by McGlynn.

His output is chiefly choral. It comprises arrangements of traditional Irish melodies and early Irish music, and also original works that are often based on melodies which he composes in traditional-Irish style. His pieces are light, easy to listen to, moderately easy to learn and perform, and identifiable as a brand. They can be broadly classified as 'Celtic' in style and mood.

In performance Anúna reinforces this romantic evocation of Celtic Ireland. Costuming typically includes long black velvet capes, and atmosphere is created with low lighting and candles. The strongest response has been from the Irish diaspora, with the majority of the choir's performances taking place outside Ireland.⁴⁷

⁴⁶ Anúna was originally 'An Uaithne', and re-branded in 2010 as 'Anúna, Ireland's National Choir'.

⁴⁷ 'Anúna: Our Story', <<http://www.anuna.ie/timeline>> [accessed 3 September 2017].

McGlynn is a promoter as well as a composer, and the profile of his music benefits a great deal from his business acumen. His 'Sheet Music Store' website accommodates interested singers or conductors by providing short descriptions of each piece, partial scores for viewing, and links to performances on *soundcloud* and *youtube*. Scores are reasonably priced and can be purchased in digital format followed by a certificate granting permission to photocopy on receipt of payment. Pieces in Irish, Scots Gaelic and Middle English are provided with mp3 files for pronunciation, some also with IPA guides.

McGlynn has spoken of the need to 'reinterpret the choral canvas',⁴⁸ a notion that is difficult to understand given his radical views concerning choral music in Ireland. 'Ireland has no indigenous history of choral music,' asserts the McGlynn biography that accompanies scores downloaded from his website. It continues: 'he created Anúna with the intent of developing a uniquely Irish form of ensemble singing that wove convincing connections between the ancient singing traditions of this country and the literature of his homeland.' This view is reiterated elsewhere.⁴⁹ Such assertions may provide effective support to McGlynn's branding of his product, they are at odds with the historical evidence as presented in this thesis.

⁴⁸ Contemporary Music Centre, Ireland, 'An Interview with Michael McGlynn', XML podcast, 9:24. This interview, and other material, have subsequently been removed from the Contemporary Music Centre at the request of Michael McGlynn.

⁴⁹ Michael McGlynn, <<http://www.michaelmcglynn.com/about-1>> [accessed 2 December 2017].

McGlynn's *Geantraí* (1995, SATB or SSAA *divisi*, duration *c*2 minutes) is well-known and popular both in Ireland and abroad and is representative of many aspects of McGlynn's writing. Although listed as an original work on his website,⁵⁰ it draws on some of the text, rhythm patterns, structure and melodic shapes of the old traditional Irish melody *Dilín Ó Deamhas*.⁵¹ *Geantraí* means happy music or happy song. It includes optional percussion, for example on bodhrán or hand drum. Like *Dilín Ó Deamhas* it is a 'dandling' song or song for amusing a baby. The striking, rather dark humour of the lyrics refers to throwing a baby up in the air while expressing the hope that she does not explode and that it will not take until tomorrow for her to come back down.

***Geantraí* 'Happy Song'**

Caithfimid suas is suas	We will throw her up and up
Caithfimid suas go héasc í	We will throw her up easily
Caithfimid suas is suas í	We will throw her up and up
Seachain a chroí ná pléasc í	Hopefully she will not explode
Curfá:	<i>Chorus (after each verse)</i>
Déanfaidh sí damhs' is damhs'	<i>She will dance and dance</i>
Déanfaidh sí damhs' le pléisiúr	<i>She will dance with pleasure</i>
Déanfaidh sí damhs' is damhs'	<i>She will dance and dance</i>
Mé féin 'sí féin le chéile	<i>Myself and her together</i>
Caithfimid suas is suas	<i>We will throw her up and up</i>
Caithfimid suas an pháiste	<i>We will throw the child up</i>

⁵⁰ Michael McGlynn, 'Sheet Music Store', <<http://store.michaelmcglynn.com/Sheet-Music/Choral-Music/Mixed-Voice>> [accessed 15 October 2017].

⁵¹ Mícheál Ó hEidhin, *Cas Amhrán 1* (Indreabhán: Clódóirí Lurgan 1975), 77.

Caithfimid suas is suas í	<i>We will throw her up and up</i>
‘Stiocfaidh sí ‘nuas amárach	<i>And she'll come down tomorrow</i>
Caithfimid suas is suas	We will throw her up and up
Caithfimid suas go héasc í	We will throw her up easily
(Caithfimid suas an pháiste	<i>We will throw the child up (for the repeat)</i>
Caithfimid suas is suas í	We will throw her up and up
Seachain a chroí ná pléasc í	Hopefully she will not explode

Geantraí begins with a 9-bar introduction which introduces the key elements of the piece: a melody with a homophonic accompaniment, the mode of E dorian (E to E within the toneset of D major), the Irish language, the slip jig style of 9/8, simple four-bar phrases with repetition in traditional folk style, the use of drones, syncopated rhythm patterns and mostly straightforward harmonies but with some slight jazz colouring (Example 4.8.1).

Example 4.8.1: McGlynn, *Geantraí*, bars 1-10

GEANTRÁÍ
MIXED VOICE CHOIR

Music Michael McGlynn
Text Traditional Sources, Irish

Rhythmically, and not too Fast ♩ = 105

The musical score is for a mixed voice choir in 3/8 time, D major. It consists of two systems of staves. The first system includes Soprano 1 (S1), Soprano 2 (S2), Alto (A), Tenor (T), and Bass (B). The second system includes Soprano 1 (S1), Soprano 2 (S2), Alto (A), Tenor (T), and Bass (B). The lyrics are in Irish. Dynamic markings include *mp* and *mf*. The tempo is marked 'Rhythmically, and not too Fast' with a quarter note equal to 105 beats per minute.

System 1:

- Soprano 1: Rests.
- Soprano 2: *mp* ha rim ha ró, ha rim Di-lín ó, di-lín ó ró, ha rim
- Alto: *mp* ha rim ha ró, ha rim hó ró ha rim
- Tenor: *mp* Hum hum__ Hum hum__ Hum hum__ hó ró Hum hum__
Hum hum__ rim bó, hum hum__ ró, hum hum__ ró, hó ró hum hum__ ró,
- Bass: *mp* Hum, Hum, Hum, hó ró Hum,

System 2:

- Soprano 1: Rests. *mf* Caith-fi - mid suas is suas,
- Soprano 2: ha ró, ha rim Di-lín ó, di-lín ó ró, hum *mp*
- Alto: ha ró, ha rim hó ró hum *mp*
- Tenor: Hum hum__ Hum hum__ hó ró hum__
hum hum__ ró, hum hum__ ró, hó ró hum *mp*
- Bass: Hum, Hum, hó ró hum *mp*

In bars 1-3 the tenor and bass parts establish the D dorian mode (E to E) with a sustained drone on the open fifth (E and B) and the syllable ‘hum’. The Bass 2 sustains the E for the three bars; the tenors and Bass 1 add harmonic interest by rising from the E up to the B on the third quaver of the three bars and the Bass 1 adds a syncopated motif and a different text: ‘Hum hum rib bó’ (Example 4.8.2) on the third beat of bars 1 and 3.

Example 4.8.2: McGlynn, *Geantraí*, bar 1



Using the syllables ‘ha rim’, the sopranos join with a repeated E on the 6th and 7th quavers and altos with an E followed by a D. The result is that the texture is brought to life with the syncopation in both tenor and bass lines, the emphasis on the third beat by the upper voices, and the subtle variations in text. The gentle variation of E falling to D in the alto, along with the movement of the Bass 1 to A and F sharp on the third beat, hints at the exotic harmonic colour of chord I with an eleventh. There is a feeling of subdominant moving to dominant in bar 4 before the return to D dorian and a repeat of the first four bars. McGlynn lengthens the repeat with a simple one-bar extension of bar 8 with a tie on the final chord. This creates a pause on the final chord, thereby building anticipation for what comes next.⁵²

Following this short introduction the melody first appears in the first soprano line in bar 10. It is traditional in structure: two phrases of four bars each, both phrases repeated: AABB (Example 4.8.3).

Example 4.8.3: McGlynn, *Geantraí*, bars 10-17



⁵² This delaying on the last note of a phrase is also characteristic of *Seán nós* style in which phrases are often extended; Róisín Nic Dhonncha, ‘Sean-nós Singing’ in Harry White and Barra Boydell (eds), *The Encyclopaedia of Music in Ireland* (Dublin: University College Dublin Press, 2013), ii, 924.

The A phrase functions as the verse throughout the piece while the B phrase functions as the chorus, repeated after each verse with the same words each time (Déanfaidh sí damhs' is damhs'). In verse 1, the A phrase is accompanied by a repeated open fifth pedal on E and B in the four other lines (Example 4.8.4, bar 10), evoking the unadorned drone of the traditional Irish uilleann pipes or medieval *organum*. The B phrase also features the open fifth drone, but in the last two bars (16-17) the harmony opens out to an E minor with a ninth and D major with a ninth and, in the next bar, to C major with a ninth and A minor with a ninth (Example 4.8.4). These notes and the passing D sharp and G sharp in the melody add colour to the otherwise straightforward diatonic chords.

Example 4.8.4: McGlynn, *Geantraí*, bars 11-17

11

S 1
Caith-fi-mid suas go heasd' Caith-fi-mid suas is suas í seach-ain a chroí na pléasc í Déan-faidh sí damhs' is damhs'

S 2
hum hum hum hum *p*

A
hum hum hum hum *p*

T
hum hum hum

B
hum hum hum

15

S 1
Déan-faidh sí damhs' le pléi - siúr Déan-faidh sí damhs' is damhs' mé fein 'sí féin le chéi - le *mp*

S 2
hum Hum, hum, hum, hum, *mp*

A
hum Hum, hum, hum, hum, *mp*

T
Hum, hum, hum, hum, *mp*

B
hum, hum, *mp*

With syncopation and mildly jazz-tinted chords, McGlynn adds a contemporary feeling to the otherwise traditional features of dorian mode, slip jig patterns and Irish language. Such crossover is typical of his pieces, for example, *Dúlamán* which likewise uses the dorian mode, a jig-style time signature (6/8) and the Irish language while at the same time introducing mildly jazzy chords and changing metres (Example 4.8.5).

Example 4.8.5: McGlynn, *Dúlamán*, bars 26-32

26

T
Dúl - a - mán na binn-e buí, dúl - a - mán na binn - e buí Gae - lach, Dúl - a - mán, dúl - a - mán,
ff *p*

B I
Dúl - a - mán na binn-e buí, dúl - a - mán na binn - e buí Gae - lach, Dúl - a - mán, dúl - a - mán,
ff *p*

B II
Dúl - a - mán na binn-e buí, dúl - a - mán na binn - e buí Gae - lach, Dúl - a - mán, dúl - a - mán,
ff *p*

29

T
dúl - a - mán na binn - e buí, dúl - a - mán na binn - e buí Gae - lach, Dúl - a - mán na binn - e buí,
farr- aig - e, *ff*

B I
dúl - a - mán na binn - e buí, dúl - a - mán na binn - e buí Gae - lach, Dúl - a - mán na binn - e buí,
farr- aig - e, *ff*

B II
dúl - a - mán na binn - e buí, dúl - a - mán na binn - e buí Gae - lach, Dúl - a - mán na binn - e buí,
farr- aig - e, *ff*

McGlynn similarly uses drones in other traditional-style pieces and pieces based on early Irish music. Examples include *Cormacus Scripsit* (Example 4.8.6), a dramatic arrangement of an Irish chant from the twelfth-century,⁵³ and *Christus Resurgens*, another arrangement of a twelfth century Irish chant (example 4.8.7).

⁵³ See Chapter One, 25-26.

Example 4.8.6: McGlynn, *Cormacus Scripsit*, bars 7-16

MzS.
T.
B.
ma - cus Scrip - sit
ma - cus Scrip - sit
Cor
ma - cus Scrip - sit
Cor
ma - cus Scrip - sit

MzS.
T.
B.
hoc psal - ter - i - um Cor
ma - cus Scrip - sit
Cor
ma - cus Scrip - sit

Example 4.8.7: McGlynn, *Christus Resurgens*, bars 1-17

CHRISTUS RESURGENS

IRISH CHANT C. 1150

With Energy ♩ = 140
Arrangement by Michael McGlynn

Soprano
Alto
Tenor
Bass
Floor Tom or Tenor Drum
Low Tom or Bass Drum
T.
B.
Drum 1
Perc. 2

oh
Chri - stus re - sur - gens ex mor -

To vary the texture in verse 2 (bars 23-35) McGlynn accompanies the A phrase with the little figure first heard in the introduction rather than with the fifth drone (Example 4.8.8).

Example 4.8.8: McGlynn, *Geantraí*, bars 21-24

The musical score for Example 4.8.8 consists of five staves, each representing a different voice part: S 1 (Soprano 1), S 2 (Soprano 2), A (Alto), T (Tenor), and B (Bass). The music is in the key of D major (two sharps) and 4/4 time. The score begins at bar 21, marked with a '21' above the first staff. The lyrics are in Irish and English. The Irish lyrics are: 'fein 'sí féin le chéi - le', 'Caith - fi - mid suas is suas, Caith - fi - mid suas an pháí - ste', 'hum, hum, ha rim ha ró, ha rim ha ró, Hum hum rim bó, hum hum ró, hum, hum, Hum, Hum,'. The English lyrics are: 'I am myself with myself', 'I stay with me I stay, I stay with me the party - ste', 'hum, hum, ha rim ha ró, ha rim ha ró, Hum hum rim bó, hum hum ró, hum, hum, Hum, Hum,'. Dynamic markings include *mp* (mezzo-piano) and *mf* (mezzo-forte). A repeat sign is used between bars 22 and 23, with first and second endings. The piece concludes with a crescendo in the final two bars.

In the B phrase (bars 27-30), a fuller harmonic accompaniment is provided featuring the chord of G major extended with a ninth and thirteenth, A major with a ninth, C major with a seventh and D major with a ninth. In verse 3, the tenors and basses sustain an E pedal and the 2nd sopranos and altos harmonise the melody while singing the text for the first time. The introduction is reprised between verses 3 and 4, although this time without the one-bar extension. The piece ends as verse 2 ends, on a D major chord with a seventh and ninth. The crescendo in the final two bars gives a strong sense of finality to this jazz-tinted chord.

Preparation and Performance Notes

The first challenge in learning *Geantraí* is pronouncing and singing in Irish, particularly for the first soprano line, the only part with continuous text. When scores are purchased electronically, McGlynn helpfully provides translations, IPA guides and mp3 files with correct pronunciation.⁵⁴

The rhythm is quite challenging as there are many different patterns, most featuring syncopation. In the early stages of learning, singers need to feel the subdivision of the three beats into nine quavers in order to be absolutely precise. It may be valuable to sing the lines in numbers with Robert Shaw's method of 'count-singing'⁵⁵ (Example 4.8.9).

Example 4.8.9: McGlynn, *Geantraí*, bars 1-2



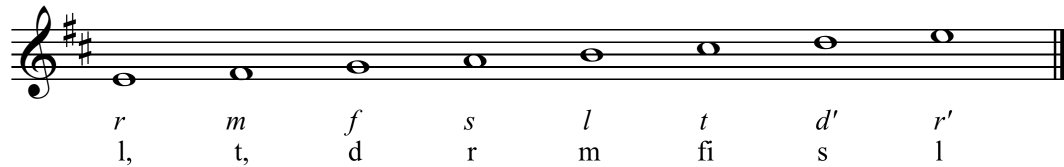
The piece's tonality of D dorian may also present a challenge. The teaching of modes, although a fundamental aspect of traditional Irish melodies, is generally avoided in school and conservatory music syllabuses because it is deemed too complex. To singers who are unfamiliar with it, the dorian mode can be explained as a natural minor scale with a raised sixth. In *Geantraí* this means the scale of E natural minor with C sharp. For singers accustomed to relative solfa it can be rehearsed in E minor with a

⁵⁴ 'Michael McGlynn', <<https://store.michaelmcglynn.com/Sheet-Music/Detail/Geantraí>> [accessed 13 March 2017].

⁵⁵ See Chapter 4.6, 180-181.

raised sixth: l, t, d r m fī s l. For singers more accustomed to modes, it could be rehearsed in dorian solfa: r m f s l t d' r' (Example 4.8.10).

Example 4. 8.10: Dorian mode



Essentially *Geantraí* is a dance in slip-jig style and therefore needs to be light. In spite of its references to an exploding baby, this is joyful music with a playful spirit. Its popularity is understandable. It is very effective as an Irish-language piece in the traditional style of a jig while also being enriched with contemporary features such as syncopation and the more colorful inflections of mild jazz harmonies.

4.9 Seán Doherty, *Snow Dance for the Dead*

All art forms give expression to the inner experiences, reflections, appetites and emotions of the artists who create them. This sometimes extends to the expression of social and political viewpoints or, for example, statements on human rights. Among artists producing this kind of expression are composers, and these include composers of choral music.

Amongst a small number of Irish composers who have composed pieces in this way is Derry-born Seán Doherty.⁵⁶ His Christmas piece *This Endris Night*, for example, combines a medieval English Christmas carol with the French renaissance song 'L'homme armé', and gently masks a poignant response to the war in Syria. 'It warns of an approaching army,' says Doherty, 'a faint, gentle, and hopeless warning to the innocents of the Middle East, written at the start of the Syrian civil war'.⁵⁷

In *Snow Dance for the Dead* his purpose is significantly more direct and more powerful. What follows is an analysis of this extraordinary piece, identifying the technical and imaginative mastery that Doherty deploys to produce choral music with the potential to make a harrowing impact not only on audiences but on performers as well. The intense and emotional nature of audience responses to this piece supports the assertion that Doherty's optimal blend of text, music and movement is in fact masterful.

⁵⁶ Doherty is active as a choral singer and a member of New Dublin Voices which has premiered several of his works. He has a music degree from The University of Cambridge, and a PhD from Trinity College, Dublin. He has composed extensively for choir and has won numerous awards for both choral and orchestral pieces.

<https://store.seandohertymusic.co.uk/wp-content/uploads/2016/09/Doherty_Choral-Catalogue_2016.pdf> [accessed 20 January 2017].

⁵⁷ Sean Doherty, 'Doherty Choral Catalogue',

<https://store.seandohertymusic.co.uk/wp-content/uploads/2016/09/Doherty_Choral-Catalogue_2016.pdf> [accessed 20 January 2017].

Composed for the centenary of Russia's October Revolution (1917), the piece combines a representation of the 'Cheka' – the notorious Bolshevik secret police force – with lines from the poem 'Snow Dance for the Dead' by the Dublin-born radical poet Lola Ridge (1873-1941). Some historical context is necessary for a full appreciation of Doherty's achievement. In a spoken introduction for the world premiere at the 11th World Symposium on Choral Music in July 2017, Michael Dungan detailed how the officers of 'the Cheka', the forerunners of the KGB, were

ruthless agents of what would come to be known as 'the Red Terror' in which an estimated 1.5 million civilians were shot or tortured to death. The Cheka used a callous, mocking euphemism for the act of killing: *Natso. Kal.* It was onomatopoeia, imitating the sounds of the trigger being cocked and the gun being fired – these were the last sounds that hundreds of thousands of ordinary men, women and children ever heard.⁵⁸

Lola Ridge was a political activist whose championing of the working class extended to taking part in protests, marches, and pickets. In 1927 she celebrated the Russian Revolution with a collection of poems entitled *Red Flag*, among them 'Snow Dance for the Dead' from a sequence called *In Russia*.⁵⁹ In it, little children dance in the snow 'beneath the Kremlin towers'

Where the snow throws out a faint lustre
Like the lustre of dead faces ...
Snow downier than wild-geese feathers ...
Enough filling for five hundred pillows ...
By the long deep trench of the dead.

⁵⁸ Michael Dungan, 'Introduction to Sean Doherty's *Snow Dance for the Dead*', presented at world premiere in L'auditori, Barcelona on 24 July 2017.

⁵⁹ Dominic Head, 'Lola Ridge', in *The Cambridge Guide to Literature in English* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 3rd edn, 2006), 942.

For Doherty, Ridge's poem is 'a plea for peace from amid the horrors of war, for the sake of the innocent children'.⁶⁰ Although he includes the full poem on the inside cover of his score, Doherty actually sets only one line: 'Dance little children, to the rhythm of the snow.' However, he also incorporates the following lines, not by setting them to music but by assigning actions to them:

Cup your hands like tiny chalices . . .

Let the flakes fill up the rosy

Hollows of your palms....

Using actions was a first for Doherty – 'keen to experiment with new sounds and performance techniques'⁶¹ – who is among the first Irish composers to employ the theatrical use of movement within a choral piece. He is judicious in his blending of elements – words, music and movement – resulting in music that is beautiful but utterly harrowing. Commentary and analysis follow that identify the technical means through which *Snow Dance for the Dead* achieves its powerful impact.

The piece opens not with sound but with movement. The score instructs the singers to raise one arm and mime the act of aiming a handgun. With the other hand they 'cock the trigger', signified by shouting 'natso!' No shot follows, but 'Chekhov's Gun' – the theatrical trope to which Doherty alludes in his written introduction – has been graphically established.

⁶⁰ Seán Doherty, email correspondence, 9 April 2017.

⁶¹ 'Seán Doherty: 'A conversation on Choral Sketches'', 15 February 2017
<<https://www.chamberchoireireland.com/sean-doherty-a-conversation-on-choral-sketches>> [accessed 3 July 2017].

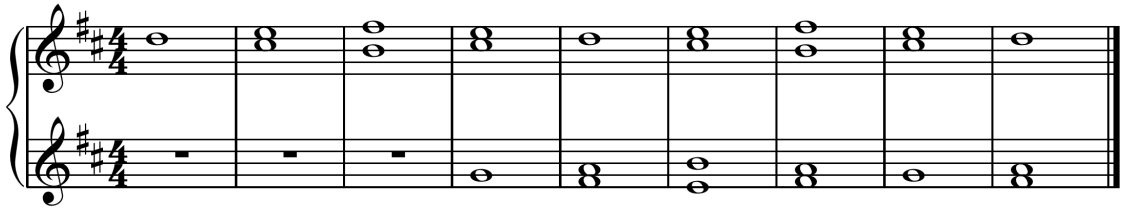
stage in all ten voice parts. In bar 3, a pulse arrives to complement the polyrhythms in the form of straight crotchets sung alternately by Soprano 2 and Alto 2. In bar 4, the Soprano 1 line opens a second cross-rhythm pattern with eight dotted crotchets over three bars (or two evenly-spaced notes every three beats). Once established, this pattern passes back and forth between the Soprano 1 and Alto 1 lines.

The resulting texture is continuously varied and mesmerizing. Doherty had experimented with quite a variety of rhythmic patterns before arriving at the one that produced the texture that most effectively matched the imagery created by the words.⁶² The three-bar phrases are marked ‘delicately’ and ‘*piano*’ and are further shaped with a slight *crescendo* and *decrescendo* during each repetition, resulting in a restless and delicate texture that beautifully evokes the gentle falling and dancing of the snow.

This complex rhythmic environment which evokes Doherty’s beautiful and lively imagery actually masks an underlying simplicity. Example 4.9.2(a) presents a section of this passage but with the rhythm stripped out, thus revealing a pattern of very straightforward intervals and chords. This pattern, tied to the sequence of cross-rhythms described above, repeats continuously through the first 30 bars, with the three soprano lines repeating their pattern seven times and the altos repeating theirs six times at the interval of a fifth below.

⁶² A draft of *Snow Dance for the Dead* was the subject of a public workshop (27 February 2017) at the Royal Irish Academy of Music, as part of the Contemporary Music Centre’s ‘Choral Sketches’ project, in partnership with Chamber Choir Ireland, directed by Paul Hillier, and mentored by the composer Tarik O’Regan.

Example 4.9.2(a): Doherty, *Snow Dance for the Dead*, bars 2-9



Paradoxically, alongside this simplicity, Doherty has created a deceptive complexity in his imitative melodic writing that is reminiscent of Renaissance style. To appreciate this it is helpful to restore the barest melodic outlines to the rhythmically stripped out sample (Example 4.9.2 (b)).

Example 4.9.2(b): Doherty, *Snow Dance for the Dead*, bars 2-9



The three soprano lines sing a short, three-step descending figure in imitative sequence. At the same time the first note of each figure (circled in red) creates a little three-note ascending figure spread between the soprano lines. Represented in solfa this

ascending figure is *do-re-mi*. The same construction is given to the altos except at the interval of a fifth lower where in solfa their corresponding figure is *fa-so-la*. Both figures – descending and ascending – in both voices – sopranos and altos – are confined to the span of a major or minor third.

With the children and the falling snow now fully established, it is at this point that Doherty presents in its entirety the single line that he quotes from Ridge’s poem: ‘Dance little children, to the rhythm of the snow’. He sets it with a lyrical motif introduced by Tenor 1, starting on A, bar 11 (Example 4.9.3).

Example 4.9.3: Doherty, *Snow Dance for the Dead*, bars 11-13

T. 1 *mp semplice*
 Dance, lit-tle child - ren to the rhy - thm of the snow.

This is followed in sequence by Tenor 2 four bars later (starting on B, bar 14), Bass 1 (on G, bar 17) and Bass 2 (on F sharp, bar 20), by which stage the tenors have already recommenced the sequence (Examples 4.9.4(a) and 4.9.4(b)).

Example 4.9.4(a): Doherty, *Snow Dance for the Dead*, bars 14-16

T. 1
 T. 2 *mp semplice*
 Dance, lit-tle child - ren to the rhy - thm of the snow.

Example 4.9.4(b): Doherty, *Snow Dance for the Dead*, bars 17-19

Example 4.9.4(b) shows the vocal parts for bars 17-19. The score includes three parts: T.1 (Tenor 1), T.2 (Tenor 2), and B.1 (Bass 1). The lyrics are: "snow. Dance, lit-tle child - ren_ to the rhy - thm of the snow." Dynamic markings include *mp* and *mp espress.*

Therefore, beneath the dancing 'snow' cross-rhythms which are continuing in the upper voices, there is now an echoing, overlapping presentation of Ridge's verse in the men's voices (Example 4.9.5).

Example 4.9.5: Doherty, *Snow Dance for the Dead*, bars 20-22

Example 4.9.5 shows the vocal parts for bars 20-22. The score includes Soprano (S.1, S.2, S.3), Alto (A.1, A.2, A.3), Tenor (T.1, T.2), and Bass (B.1, B.2) parts. The lyrics are: "Dance, dance, rhy - thm of the snow. snow. Dance, lit-tle child - ren to the rhy - thm of the snow." Dynamic markings include *mp*, *p*, and *mp semplice*.

Notably, these two contrasting textures in the upper and lower voices are unified by the presence in both of the little descending figure. The Tenor 1 sings a motif that

begins on B, descends to A, descends to G and then to F sharp but returns to end on G (Example 4.9.3).

There is a change at bar 28, presaged by the stronger dynamic of *mf* in Soprano 1 and Bass 2. Doherty here swaps the material. The Soprano 1 now takes up the men's lyrical line which spreads sequentially through the other five upper parts. Meanwhile the lower voices now sing the upper voice material with repetitions of the word 'dance': Bass 2 and Tenor 1 have the punctuating crotchets while Bass 1 and Tenor 2 have the cross-rhythmic lines. There is a suggestion of menace in the deep pulse of the Bass 2 line as they descend by step in bars 28-30 and again in bars 36-38. Overall, while the texture is highly complex, the underlying harmony is fundamentally simple.

The initial sense of play and innocence, somewhat undermined by the pulsing menace in Bass 2, begins to erode from bar 40 as the end of the piece's first half approaches. Here Doherty introduces a new dramatic element: *glissandi*. These rise slowly in the male voice parts, starting on B in Tenor 1 and climbing a scale of B natural minor to E. It is then taken over by Bass 1 and continues to rise up in *crescendo* to C sharp. This rising *glissando* is accompanied by a series of *stretto* entries in the six upper parts (Example 4.9.6). The effect is one of rising tension.

Example 4.9.6: Doherty, *Snow Dance for the Dead*, bars 40-43

8

40

S. 1 Dance, lit-tle child-ren to the rhy - thm of the snow.

S. 2 Dance, lit-tle child-ren to the rhy - thm of the snow.

S. 3 snow. Dance, lit-tle child-ren to the rhy - thm of the snow.

A. 1 Dance, lit-tle child-ren to the rhy - thm of the snow.

A. 2 Dance, lit-tle child-ren to the rhy - thm of the

A. 3 of the snow. Dance, lit-tle child-ren to the rhy - thm

T. 1 *mf* *gliss.* Snow

T. 2 *mf* Snow

B. 1 *mf* Snow

B. 2 *mf* Snow

Physical movement returns now. The *glissandi* are accompanied by a renewed raising of the arms and aiming of guns. To this point Doherty's sequencing and layers have been generating a steadily increasing tension that is now clearly felt to be growing towards an immense climax. It arrives – once all the *glissandi* have peaked and all the guns have been aimed – with a loud, widely-spread chord cluster on the word 'snow', followed immediately by an abrupt silence.

The silence – brief, yet increasing the tension and anticipation by one further degree – is then shattered by the full choir shouting 'Kal!', in effect completing the shooting sequence initiated in the opening bar with the word 'Natso'. This 'shot' launches the second half of the piece. From now on the movement is highly choreographed, with the generalised pointing of guns replaced by the different voice lines now aiming and firing at each other in precise sequences.

Here Doherty introduces a new action to represent lines from the poem which are not actually sung in the piece: 'Cup your hands like tiny chalices ... Let the flakes fill up the rosy/Hollows of your palms ...'. The action occurs in sequence according to voice line. Singers cup their hands and slowly raise them high, matching the *glissandi* which they are singing. These singers become the targets of other voice lines, and at the 'shot', on the shouted 'Kal!', their arms collapse to their sides. Meanwhile the continuous *glissandi* are interlinked from one line to the next, each one starting on the next note of a B natural minor scale until the first sopranos reach the highest note in the piece, A sharp (a^{'''} sharp) in bar 70, supported by the full choir *fortissimo*. Now the shooting descends into a frenzied chaos (although fully written out rather than aleatoric) before suddenly coming to a dramatic stop. In the ensuing silence, the singers slowly take aim once more, this time at the conductor who turns away as if to

flee. The choir gives one final unison shout of ‘Natso! Kal!’ and the conductor falls to the ground.

So well has Doherty calculated his music and movement that this piece always has a devastating impact on audiences. Following several ‘preview’ performances by New Dublin Voices in Dublin in June 2017, *Snow Dance for the Dead* went on to receive its world premiere one month later at the World Symposium for Choral Music, the triennial international choral event, which took place in Barcelona. At every performance the response was the same: audience members – some in tears – used words like ‘guttled’ and ‘devastated’ to describe the effect which the piece had on them. This was particularly noteworthy in the rarified choral environment of the symposium where, despite official instructions to withhold applause until the conclusion of the choir’s full programme, the audience burst into applause at the end of *Snow Dance for the Dead*, not finally stopping until Seán Doherty had taken several bows. At a subsequent performance in Latvia, where the experience of the Red Terror is a very real part of collective memory, a significant number of the singers themselves wept upon leaving the stage at the end, and members of the audience thanked the choir for addressing an awful chapter in Latvian history.⁶³ The intensely emotional nature of the response to this piece is recorded here to support the assertion that the optimal blend of text, music and movement that Doherty achieves is truly masterful.

⁶³ International Baltic Sea Choir Competition 2017, 22-24 September 2017 in Jurmala, Latvia. An audio-visual recording of a live performance by New Dublin Voices, conducted by Bernie Sherlock, at the International Baltic Sea Choir Competition 2017 is available online. See Seán Doherty, *Snow Dance for the Dead*, online video recording, YouTube, 27 November 2017, <<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=TOyEQfqRntQ>> [accessed 18 June 2018].

Preparation and Performance Notes

Snow Dance for the Dead is a piece consisting for the most part of straightforward components. The complexity which is created by the combining of these components, however, makes it a very challenging piece to bring to performance level. The first key to success, therefore, is to ensure the security of each individual component.

The first of these, and the most challenging, is the primary pattern of cross-rhythms. It begins in the Soprano 3 and Alto 3 lines, eventually featuring in every part (although for only two bars in Bass 2). It is therefore valuable to teach it to the full choir at once. Singers may have difficulty fitting four dotted quaver notes evenly into three crotchet beats, so it may prove helpful to reduce each note to its constituent semiquavers. This will reduce each dotted quaver, for example, to the length of three semiquavers. All singers could work on the opening pattern as presented by Soprano 3 beginning on D (or Alto 3 beginning on G if this is too high). The D/G is sung eight times, the C sharp/F sharp three times and the B/E five times (Example 4.9.7).

Example 4.9.7: Doherty, *Snow Dance for the Dead*, Soprano 1, bars 2-4

The musical notation consists of two staves in 4/4 time, D major. The first staff begins on D and contains 12 notes: D, C#, D, C#, D, C#, D, C#, D, C#, D, C#. The notes are grouped into six pairs of two dotted quavers. Below the notes are rhythmic markings: '123' under the first pair, '123__' under the second, '123__' under the third, '123' under the fourth, '123__' under the fifth, and '123__' under the sixth. The second staff begins on B and contains 12 notes: B, A, B, A, B, A, B, A, B, A, B, A. The notes are grouped into six pairs of two dotted quavers. Below the notes are rhythmic markings: a blank space under the first pair, '123' under the second, '123__' under the third, '123__' under the fourth, and '123' under the fifth. The first staff is labeled 'D' above the first note and 'C#' above the last note. The second staff is labeled '4' and 'B' above the first note.

This exercise is uncomplicated in isolation. So is the next stage, which is to sing it against a quaver pulse. This means singing two dotted quavers in the time of three

quavers, something most experienced singers will have little difficulty doing. The third stage is to sing it against a crotchet pulse and this is much more challenging.

A sound file featuring percussion instruments is another possible support for singers. The percussion instrument playing the cross-rhythm could then be replaced by a melodic instrument playing the actual motif. A further useful resource is these sound files in video format, where singers can press play and follow the patterns on screen (Example 4.9.8).⁶⁴

Example 4.9.8: Doherty, *Snow Dance for the Dead*, rhythm practice

The image displays four systems of musical notation for percussion instruments, arranged vertically. Each system consists of two staves: the top staff is for the Snare Drum (S.D.) and the bottom staff is for the Triangle (Tri.). The time signature for all parts is 4/4. The tempo markings are as follows:

- System 1: Tempo $\text{♩} = 60$. The Snare Drum part consists of a steady quarter-note pulse. The Triangle part plays a complex cross-rhythm pattern of eighth and sixteenth notes.
- System 2: Tempo $\text{♩} = 80$. The Snare Drum part is marked with a '5' above the first measure, indicating a five-measure rest. The Triangle part continues with the same cross-rhythm pattern.
- System 3: Tempo $\text{♩} = 100$. The Snare Drum part is marked with a '9' above the first measure, indicating a nine-measure rest. The Triangle part continues with the same cross-rhythm pattern.
- System 4: Tempo $\text{♩} = 112$. The Snare Drum part is marked with a '13' above the first measure, indicating a thirteen-measure rest. The Triangle part continues with the same cross-rhythm pattern.

⁶⁴ Seán Doherty, email correspondence, 17 May 2018.

It is important that each voice line is very secure with this dotted quaver pattern. It features in the following passages:

Soprano 1 and Alto 1:	bars 2-28
Bass 1:	bars 29-39; bars 87-79 (rhythm only)
Tenor 2 and Alto 2:	bars 50-52
Soprano 2:	bars 53-55
Bass 1:	bars 54-59
Alto 2:	bars 56-58
Tenor 1:	bars 61-63
Alto 3:	bars 64-66
Tenor 2:	bars 71-73; 75-77; 79-81; 83-85
Bass 2:	bars 89-91 (rhythm only)

The other syncopated line, featuring dotted crotchets, is presented first in Soprano 1 (bars 5-7) and Alto 1 (bars 7-9). This should not require special attention for precision.

Before attempting to combine these components, it is advisable to rehearse with a reduced texture, like that presented in Example 4.9.2(a) where the rhythm patterns are omitted with only the core tonal ingredients remaining. This focuses the attention on where exactly the pitch changes. Those singing the dotted quaver pattern should be made aware that the pitch descends a semitone on the third beat of the second bar and a tone on the second semiquaver of the third bar, with the final move the most difficult to perform precisely. Those singing the dotted crotchet pattern should see that the pitch descends a tone on the third beat of the second bar and a semitone on the second beat of the third bar.

Once the polyrhythmic element is secure, the lyrical motif in the tenors and basses can be added from bar 11. This is comparatively undemanding but it needs to project through the dense texture of ‘snow dancing’.

The next challenge for singers is in relation to the *glissandi* which occur continuously from bar 40 onwards. Singers must match the pace of each *glissando* with the pace at which they raise their cupped hands, also ensuring that the related ‘collapse’ gesture occurs on the *glissando*’s final note. It is better to perfect the singing first. Singers need to be fully aware of the size of the interval they are singing, noting the different durations required for *glissandi* that move within either major or minor seconds. What is to be avoided is a *glissando* in which all the movement happens at the last moment. Singers have found it beneficial to use a *Sibelius* soundfile of the *glissando* as it passes from part to part (Example 4.9.9). The music software adjusts the pitch at an evenly distributed pace calculated mathematically.

Example 4.9.9: Doherty, *Snow Dance for the Dead*, *glissandi* bars 40-50

The image shows a musical score for three vocal parts: TENOR 1, TENOR 2, and BASS 1. The score is written in 4/4 time with a key signature of one sharp (F#). The notation for each part shows a series of rests followed by a glissando (a line with a wavy arrow) that spans across several bars. The glissando for TENOR 1 starts on a note and moves up to a higher note. The glissando for TENOR 2 starts on a lower note and moves up to a higher note. The glissando for BASS 1 starts on a low note and moves up to a higher note. The score ends with a double bar line.

There are challenges in relation to movement. These will emerge particularly with choirs or individual singers who are unused to incorporating such an intense physical component into their performance. Raising the arm and mimicking the use of a gun,

cocking the slide, firing, shouting, raising cupped hands, and collapsing the arms – all while singing complex music – would challenge most choirs. It is not just the actions themselves, but also the effect of personal inhibition that is likely to pose difficulties and should not be underestimated. Icebreakers and physical improvisation can help singers grow more comfortable with their own bodies.

The piece can only be performed from memory, making it essential that every singer knows exactly where each action is placed. Doherty's score is very clear in labelling the actions with numbers.

Time spent perfecting the composer's instructions will be rewarded with security in performance, thereby fulfilling the huge potential impact of the piece and realising the profundity of its message.

4.10 Conclusion

Part Two of this thesis presented a cross-section of the state of contemporary *a cappella* choral composition in Ireland by analysing eight compositions, mostly composed in the early twenty-first century and each representing different aspects of choral composition in Ireland. This close analysis revealed that each composition is a masterpiece that can rightly take its place among the best of contemporary choral pieces worldwide. Each is diverse in style and the level of difficulty varies from moderate to highly complex. From the writer's deep knowledge of contemporary repertoire, each analysis is followed by preparation and performance notes designed to help in approaching what is predominantly challenging repertoire.

Desmond's *Mother Goose's Melodies* is an example of the first-rate composition being produced by of a number of younger-generation Irish composers. Desmond combines sophistication and wit in a humorous collection of chorally challenging nursery-rhyme settings. Ben Hanlon is typical of the part-time Irish composer who combines a full-time job with creative work in their own time. Hanlon's *O Frondens Virga* demonstrates both facility in contemporary style as well as expert handling of the expressive potential of his chosen text. Gerald Barry is arguably Ireland's leading living composer. His choral piece *Long Time* presents in miniature a number of the same key characteristics found in his large-scale instrumental and orchestral works: music that is apparently simple but requires excellent professional-level musicianship, technique and stamina.

Mark Armstrong is another composer combining a full-time job with creative work. His skilful and sophisticated arrangement in popular style of *Down by the Salley*

Gardens is on a par with those in similar style performed by world-class *a cappella* groups such as the Swingle Singers or Voces 8. Rhona Clarke is among the small subset of successful contemporary Irish women composers. Her combination of facility and imagination in choral writing is readily evident in her jubilant ‘Regina Coeli’.

Michael Holohan’s *Bagairt an Marbh* is the sensitive setting of a text in Irish, in this case by one of Ireland’s most important Irish language poets, Seán Ó Ríordáin. *Bagairt na Marbh*, is a graphically evocative and moving piece of choral music about the death of a loved one. Michael McGlynn is Ireland’s most successful composer of choral music. His popular *Geantraí* is also a setting of an Irish text. It is a slip-jig dandling song which playfully refers to throwing a baby up into the air, effectively combining traditional Irish characteristics with contemporary features. Seán Doherty is another representative of the current young generation. In his extraordinary piece *Snow Dance for the Dead*, Doherty uses his technical and imaginative mastery to produce harrowing music that combines a representation of the Bolshevik secret police – the ‘Cheka’ – with lines from Lola Ridge’s poem ‘Snow Dance for the Dead’.

CONCLUSION

In the first quarter of the twenty-first century there exists a substantial and growing body of contemporary Irish choral music which is high in artistic value, crafted with refinement, and strong in its impact on audiences. Forty years ago it would not have been possible to give any such ringing endorsement of choral music in Ireland. Indeed, it could not have been made at any point previously. It is only now, in the early twenty-first century, that Irish choral music has come of age. This follows a slow and lengthy gestation and maturation which were frequently stalled for long periods by historical circumstances.

It took a long time for Ireland to arrive at this point. How the history of choral music began and unfolded in Ireland was the subject of the outline in the first section of this dissertation. After ancient beginnings featuring evidence of a musical culture comparably rich to those of other European countries of similar size, population and political background, the arrival of Christianity and its monastic settlements gave rise to the earliest primary evidence of what today is recognised formally as Irish choral music: psalmody, plainchant and hymn. Irish monks travelling abroad both influenced the development of chant on the Continent and brought back European influences to Ireland. In Ireland, the evolution of music notation and subsequently of polyphony was in line with that elsewhere in Europe.

In stark contrast with this promising start, what followed was musical stagnation over several centuries. As outlined in Chapter Two, English rule in the early modern period eventually deprived most Irish people of religion, property and education, creating an almost impossible environment for the growth of art. As a result, the only context

where choral music survived in Ireland – and indeed flourished – was in the Protestant cathedral choirs of Dublin and other cities, and in the parallel secular, male-voice ‘catch-club’ choirs emerging from them. These Protestant choirs were then closely integrated with the eighteenth-century ‘golden age’ of Anglo-Irish musical life, nourished by the Europe-wide rise of the public concert which in Dublin was driven by charities and hospitals such as the Rotunda and Mercer’s. This ‘golden age’ was essentially foreign, thriving at the expense of native music-making. When it came to an end, the resulting withdrawal of Dublin’s Anglo-Irish to London at last opened the door to a native force which would eventually become the chief drivers of the development of choral music: the new Irish middle class.

Two centuries still stand between them and, for example, the international publishing of choral works by composers such as Eoghan Desmond or Gerald Barry, but it was an important beginning, however small. The nineteenth century saw Irish people begin slowly to reclaim their music as they likewise reclaimed their land, language, culture, faith and identity. One potentially rich avenue for development, however, was sealed off with the backward-looking constraints imposed by the Catholic Church on its own music in conjunction with the Cecilian movement. In the twentieth century, almost mirroring these ecclesiastical restrictions on repertoire and style, was a new, politically-driven nationalist culture directed at all art forms. Here was a dreadful irony: Irish choral music surviving foreign oppression only to face fresh kinds of restrictions at the hands first of the Catholic Church and then of the new Irish state. It lasted until mid-century and represented the final retardation to the composition of Irish choral music, an obstacle without parallel in countries such as Hungary where native choral music was able to thrive for most of the century. Postwar breakthroughs,

however, were eventually spearheaded by Brian Boydell and a handful of other key composers. These, crucially, side-stepped the nationalist demands of the new post-colonial state and began looking outside Ireland for creative inspiration from Europe and eventually beyond. The production of choral music of lasting value remained sporadic in the coming decades but would finally lead to the long overdue flourishing on which this thesis is based.

The impetus for this thesis was the new choral music which I have continuously encountered over the past fourteen years as the conductor of New Dublin Voices, as well as prior to that. This is a strong, high-achieving chamber choir that relishes challenge, so that degree of difficulty was rarely a consideration in the selection of new pieces. This ongoing search, dating back twenty-five years, resulted in a thorough acquaintance not only with the available repertoire – both within Ireland and outside – but also with the quality of Irish choral composition in relation to international standards. Accumulated experience shows that not only the quantity but also the quality has grown with exceptional speed in Ireland in the twenty-first century. This achievement is all the more remarkable given how the historical record – outlined in Part I above – identifies a number of very substantial obstacles which stunted choral music's development in Ireland for centuries. After failing to overcome these obstacles for so long, choral music is now properly established in Ireland.

This has meant different things to different composers. Out of the cross-section of eight discussed in this thesis it has meant deals with leading international publishers, such as Eoghan Desmonds' – not yet thirty – with Sulasol. For Seán Doherty it has meant attracting world-wide interest during a major international event like the

triennial World Symposium on Choral Music in 2017.⁶⁵ For both Doherty and Desmond, and also for Mark Armstrong, Rhona Clarke, Ben Hanlon, and Michael Holohan, it has meant having a presence on new CDs which have received international attention, as well as further exposure outside Ireland via international festivals and competitions. For a composer like Michael McGlynn it has meant remarkable business success, while in the case of a leading composer like Gerald Barry, whose priorities are instrumental, orchestral and operatic rather than choral, it has meant that any choral pieces they write will have choirs to sing them and an increasingly informed audience to hear them.

Irish choirs are growing in number and standard, and there is a corresponding growth in the capacity of Irish audiences to appreciate them. As a result, every time a new piece of Irish choral music succeeds in engaging an Irish audience, it reinforces the interest and support of the Irish public, not just for that particular composer but for the writing and performing of Irish choral music in general. This in turn helps to generate more and better music and to sustain and expand Irish audiences. It has been a recurring experience for New Dublin Voices, for example, that audience members express surprise that contemporary choral music can encompass such a broad palette of expressive possibilities, which often leads them to ask about where they can hear more. Whereas previously hearing more would have required going abroad, today – slowly but steadily – it is possible to experience this kind of music in Ireland. The widening of horizons for Irish audiences feeds back significantly to the composers. Combined with expanding opportunities for exposure, the growing appreciation of audiences reinforces composers' incentive to write pieces for choir, or encourages

⁶⁵ 11th World Symposium on Choral Music, Barcelona, 22-29 July 2017, International Federation for Choral Music.

them to try for the first time. This helps demonstrate how Ireland has caught up at an international level and how progress continues and accelerates.

A piece that epitomises this new reality is Sean Doherty's *Snow Dance for the Dead*. Of particular interest is how it combines such a wide diversity of essential elements. To begin with, *Snow Dance* is expertly crafted. Doherty is thoroughly confident in the mechanics of composition and knows how to write for choral singers. He combines this facility in crafting with a wide-ranging creativity to compose music that communicates with great directness with listeners. Further, for *Snow Dance* he chose a relatively obscure but compelling and beautiful text in verses by the well-travelled, Irish-born rebel poet Lola Ridge. Trusting his instincts he took the additional step of incorporating physical movement into the piece, movement that signified violence and suffering. He did this in order to evoke something dark from history – the culture of violence underlying Russia's Bolshevik revolution – which he makes audiences reflect on and relate back to their own times, and which gives expression to something he himself feels at a deep level.

The result was a piece of music – a work of art – of great power. After giving a number of first performances in Ireland and Spain, New Dublin Voices performed *Snow Dance for the Dead* in a city directly affected by the particular historical circumstances to which the music alludes. This was Riga, capital of Latvia in the former Soviet bloc, where the audience response was emotional and grateful in equal measure. It was a humbling experience for a choir to be in the presence of such power while only partly in control of it. What makes this piece great art is its wider capacity to resonate with anyone appalled by the role of large-scale violence in history, recent or otherwise.

There is no previous era in the entire history of Irish choral music when the conditions existed for the creation of a piece as multi-faceted, self-confident and effective as *Snow Dance for the Dead*, nor when there was the environment necessary for its existence and public performance. It is important to reiterate that it is not only this piece, nor the seven others analysed in this thesis, that reflect this new reality. Rather, it is a reality manifest in pieces by a growing number of Irish composers. Such pieces illustrate how Irish choral music has finally overcome the worst of the obstacles that so drastically slowed its development and has now entered a rich, exciting and rapidly expanding new phase in its history.

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