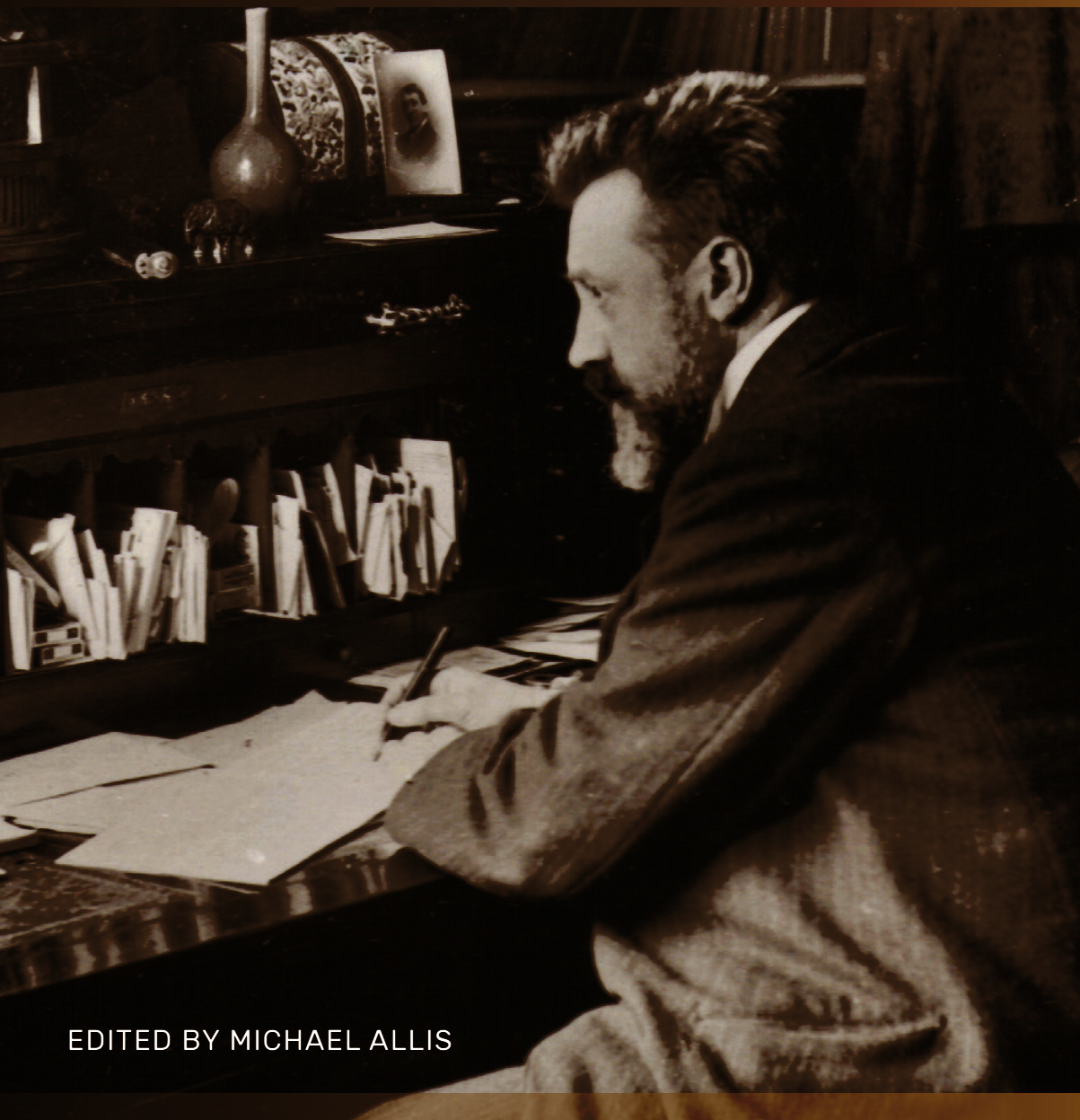


Granville Bantock's Letters to William Wallace and Ernest Newman, 1893-1921

'OUR NEW DAWN OF MODERN MUSIC'



EDITED BY MICHAEL ALLIS

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Ernest Newman, 1893–1921

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‘Our new dawn of modern music’

Edited by
Michael Allis

THE BOYDELL PRESS

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To my father, in memoriam.

Contents

Acknowledgements	viii
Abbreviations	ix
Sources and Editorial Conventions	xi
Introduction	1
The Letters	37
Select Bibliography	275
Index	281

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Abbreviations

<i>AJVS</i>	<i>Australasian Journal of Victorian Studies</i>
<i>AM</i>	<i>Atlantic Monthly</i>
<i>BDM</i>	<i>Birmingham Daily Mail</i>
<i>BDP</i>	<i>Birmingham Daily Post</i>
<i>BMMN</i>	<i>British Musician and Musical News</i>
<i>BSJ</i>	<i>Bantock Society Journal</i>
<i>CR</i>	<i>Contemporary Review</i>
<i>DT</i>	<i>Daily Telegraph</i>
<i>ERR</i>	<i>European Romantic Review</i>
<i>FR</i>	<i>Fortnightly Review</i>
<i>GB-Bu</i>	University of Birmingham, Cadbury Research Library, Special Collections
<i>GB-En</i>	National Library of Scotland, Special Collections
<i>GB-Lam</i>	Royal Academy of Music, London
<i>GH</i>	<i>Glasgow Herald</i>
<i>Id</i>	<i>The Idler</i>
<i>ISDN</i>	<i>Illustrated Sporting and Dramatic News</i>
<i>JMR</i>	<i>Journal of Musicological Research</i>
<i>LM</i>	<i>Liverpool Mercury</i>
<i>LSO</i>	London Symphony Orchestra
<i>MA</i>	<i>The Magazine of Art</i>
<i>MC</i>	<i>Manchester Courier</i>
<i>MG</i>	<i>Manchester Guardian</i>
<i>MH</i>	<i>Musical Herald</i>
<i>ML</i>	<i>Music & Letters</i>
<i>MMR</i>	<i>Monthly Musical Record</i>
<i>MN</i>	<i>Musical News</i>
<i>MO</i>	<i>Musical Opinion</i>
<i>MP</i>	<i>Morning Post</i>
<i>MQ</i>	<i>Musical Quarterly</i>
<i>MR</i>	<i>Monthly Review</i>
<i>MS</i>	<i>Musical Standard</i>
<i>MT</i>	<i>Musical Times</i>
<i>Mus</i>	<i>The Musician</i>
<i>MW</i>	<i>Musical World</i>
<i>NQMR</i>	<i>New Quarterly Musical Review</i>
<i>OC</i>	<i>The Organist and Choirmaster</i>
<i>Out</i>	<i>The Outlook</i>
<i>PMA</i>	<i>Proceedings of the Musical Association</i>
<i>PMG</i>	<i>Pall Mall Gazette</i>

RAM	Royal Academy of Music
RCM	Royal College of Music
<i>SA</i>	<i>Staffordshire Advertiser</i>
<i>SMR</i>	<i>School Music Review</i>
<i>Sp</i>	<i>The Speaker</i>
<i>SR</i>	<i>Saturday Review</i>
<i>St</i>	<i>The Standard</i>

Sources and Editorial Conventions

Granville Bantock's correspondence with William Wallace is mounted within twelve of the seventeen thin blue cardboard booklets (35.5 x 28 cm) that make up MS 21550 in Special Collections, National Library of Scotland, interspersed with a handful of concert programmes and leaflets. The manuscript forms part of the William and Otilie Wallace Papers, bought by the NLS in 1981. Bantock's letters to Ernest Newman (and Newman's one extant reply) are housed as MS 182 in Special Collections, the Cadbury Research Library, University of Birmingham, in one box measuring 39 x 30 cm. Whilst the letters from 1906 to 1913 are contained within a grey cardboard folder (36.5 x 24 cm), and Bantock's postcard of 27 July 1906 and Newman's letter of 10 March 1917 appear within individual cellophane wrappers, the remaining letters are organised in tied bundles according to chronology (1893, 1899–1901; 1902–1903; 1904–1905; 1917–1921). Several of the letters are contained within their surviving envelopes.

The majority of this correspondence represents handwritten letters, but any typed material or alternative communication media (postcards, telegrams, memoranda) is noted in the text. Printed and embossed letterheads are designated by small capital letters; these are crossed out where Bantock has done so, but several letters also include his own handwritten address beneath the letterheads. Bantock's placement of the address and date varies, so a consistent model has been adopted throughout the correspondence for ease; where specific dates are not present, these are suggested in square brackets. In terms of the content of the letters, any underlining of individual words has been retained rather than being replaced with italics, as has Bantock's spellings, capitalisation, use of either single or double quotation marks and other styling. Bantock's paragraph style is variable. Whilst he sometimes begins a new paragraph on a new line, he often creates a gap between sentences on the same line; this has been adopted wherever possible. Where '[deleted]' occurs, this indicates some text that has been deleted and cannot be deciphered. All postscripts are placed after the signature. Arabic and Persian text (the majority of which represents varying forms of Bantock's signature) has been reproduced as accurately as possible, with translations where required.

Introduction

The correspondence reproduced in this book represents the letters written by Granville Ransome Bantock (1868–1946) to his fellow composer William Francis Stuart Wallace (1860–1940) and to the music critic Ernest Newman (1868–1959) between 1893 and 1921. Although none of Wallace’s replies have survived, and there is only one extant letter from Newman to Bantock,¹ this collection of letters provides a fascinating study of the personal and professional relationships between the three men and their contemporaries at a crucial stage in their musical careers. When this correspondence begins, Bantock had completed his studies with Frederick Corder at the Royal Academy of Music (after abandoning a potential career in the Indian Civil Service) and had already experienced some modest success as a composer. In addition to several early performances of his works at the Royal Academy of Music,² the Strolling Players had performed three movements from his ballet suite *Ægypt* (linked to his published Egyptian drama *Rameses II*),³ and his Wagnerian opera *Caedmar* – written to his own libretto – had been produced at the New Olympic Theatre by Signor Lago.⁴ Wallace had completed his one-year studentship at the RAM in 1889, having formerly studied medicine at Edinburgh and Glasgow universities, and ophthalmology in Vienna and Paris. He too had experienced some early compositional success; the Stock Exchange Orchestral Society had performed two movements from his music for *The Lady from the Sea* in February 1892,⁵ and his first symphonic poem, *The Passing of Beatrice* (based on canto 31 of Dante’s ‘Paradiso’ from *La Divina Commedia*), had been premiered by August Manns at the Crystal Palace on 26 November 1892. Like Bantock, Wallace’s Wagnerian enthusiasms identified him as an exponent of the ‘modern’ school of composition, which inevitably drew criticism from the more conservative press such as *The Standard*:

We are told that his Symphonic Poem [*The Passing of Beatrice*] is to be regarded as “more emotional than descriptive,” and it is, therefore, not to be

¹ The Wolfson Centre for Archival Research, Library of Birmingham, MS 1366/B/6/317, also contains what appears to be a book flyleaf, c.187mm x 123mm, upon which is written ‘To Granville Bantock from Ernest Newman. 3 Feb 1900’.

² See ‘Mr. Granville Bantock’, *MS* 43 (5 November 1892), 362.

³ See ‘Music’, *The Graphic* 45 (7 May 1892), 566.

⁴ Despite highlighting ‘a certain skill in writing and experience in orchestration’, ‘Music of the Week’, *The Academy* 1069 (29 October 1892), 394, described how ‘almost everything seems borrowed from Wagner – plot, method, and music ... in the plot we have a real “apotheosis of adultery,” ... but the personages are merely lay figures possessing no real interest, and commanding no real sympathy.’ ‘Signor Lago’s Royal Opera’, *MS* 43 (29 October 1892), 348, suggested that the orchestration was heavily indebted to Wagner, and that there was a ‘general want of dramatic grasp’ (citing the too sudden ‘falling in love of Cædmar and Hulda’), but concluded that the work showed ‘some originality’ and ‘promise of better things in the future’. For an overview of the plot see Amphion, ‘Musical Echoes’, *Bow Bells* 20 (21 October 1892), 404, which also noted that according to Bantock the ‘apotheosis ... may be performed either on the stage or as a “dramatic symphony”’.

⁵ See ‘Musicians of the Day. Mr. William Wallace’, *MS* 43 (10 December 1892), 462.

looked upon as programme music. Its distinguishing feature is the intensely Wagnerian feeling which pervades it throughout, the composer having apparently sought inspiration from *Tristan and Isolde* and *Parsifal*, and in a less degree from *Tannhäuser*. Meandering progressions, chiefly in chromatic chords, and themes deficient both in rhythmic scoring and clear tonality chase one another, and although according to the programme the piece does not greatly diverge from orthodox sonata form, it was difficult at a first hearing to follow its wanderings among related and unrelated keys. Mr. Wallace is an earnest student of modern orchestration, and it was probably due to his picturesque scoring that the work obtained a favourable, though scarcely an enthusiastic, reception.⁶

Newman, whose real name was William Roberts, had completed his studies in English literature, philosophy and art at University College Liverpool in 1886. As in the case of Bantock, an early ambition to take the examinations for the Indian Civil Service was abandoned owing to ill health, and instead he began work as a clerk in the Bank of Liverpool in 1889, where he remained until 1903. The first letter in this volume (where Bantock queries his pseudonym) marks the beginning of his working relationship with Bantock as a contributor to the *New Quarterly Musical Review*; Newman had yet to join the National Secular Society (which he did in 1894) and to publish his first book *Gluck and the Opera: A Study in Musical History* (1895).

The correspondence below is important for a number of reasons. On a general level, given the primarily factual nature of Bantock's diaries, it offers a welcome contrast, revealing the composer's sense of humour, his generosity of spirit, and his supportive friendship with both men. There are some references in the letters to world events such as the Dreyfus affair (including the assassination attempt on the defence barrister Fernand Labori in August 1899),⁷ literary allusions ranging from Shakespeare to Maeterlinck, reminders of Bantock's foreign language studies (with his use of Arabic and Persian script and Eastern-inspired vocabulary) and personal celebrations ('My son signified his protest on entering this world yesterday morning in the usual way by sundry exclamations and howlings, but today is improving in looks as well as tonality').⁸ However, the correspondence focuses primarily upon musical topics. Although it charts the details of Bantock's career – his work with touring opera companies in 1893 and 1896, the 431-day tour of America and Australia performing *A Gaiety Girl* and other musical entertainments in 1894–5, his appointment as Musical Director of the Tower, New Brighton in 1897, and his move to Birmingham to become Principal of the Birmingham and Midland Institute in 1900 and subsequently Professor of Music at Birmingham University from 1908 – more importantly it provides a fascinating account of the promotion of new music and modern ideas by a young generation of composers working in Britain at

⁶ 'Crystal Palace Concerts', *St*, 28 November 1892, 6. Despite 'a want of proper balance' causing 'diffuseness in the treatment of his thematic materials', 'Crystal Palace Concerts', *MP*, 28 November 1892, 3, was more positive, describing Wallace's 'great feeling for tone colour and an evident command over orchestral resources ... decided poetic intentions and no little imagination'.

⁷ See letters 80 and 83 below.

⁸ Letter 51 below.

the turn of the twentieth century. This is significant, given that, apart from selected reception studies and analysis of the music of Elgar and Bridge,⁹ some exploration of developments in music criticism,¹⁰ and an awareness of the impact created by Diaghilev's productions and the 1912 performance of Schoenberg's *Five Pieces for Orchestra*,¹¹ British music and musical life before the Great War have been relatively neglected in discussions of how we might understand the idea of the 'modern' in the early twentieth century. The sense of ownership predicated in the subtitle of this book, taken from Bantock's letter to Newman of 15 September 1902, places Bantock and his colleagues at the heart of this 'dawn' of modern music.¹² Four key areas detailed in the correspondence can be identified: (1) Bantock and Wallace's compositional practice: particularly their focus upon the potential of the symphonic poem to explore new paratexts and musical structures; (2) the identification of key 'modern' figures in British musical life (Richard Strauss, Sibelius, Elgar, Holbrooke, Delius) and the detailing of the vexed relationship between a young generation of British composers and the British musical establishment; (3) promotional strategies adopted in the performance of new music: in particular, Bantock's distinctive programming projects as Musical Director of The Tower, New Brighton, the development of the Musical League, and Newman's illustrated lectures; (4) the use of musical journalism, criticism and musicological writing as a promotional vehicle for modern music. These areas were not exclusive, of course, and in combination contributed to a deliberate promotion of the modern to which one correspondent in the *Musical Standard*, commenting on the article 'Musical Life in Birmingham' (which, as part of an 'extraordinary musical awakening' in Birmingham identified Elgar and Bantock as 'the two composers generally recognised as leaders of the modern British musical movement' and Newman as 'one of the few British critics whose work rises above the marshes of journalism to the level of literature'),¹³ took particular exception:

Whilst recognising the good work done by Mr. Bantock, both as a composer and teacher ... many of us ... are puzzled by the apparent desire of a few

⁹ See J. P. E. Harper-Scott, *Edward Elgar, Modernist* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2006); Charles Edward McGuire, 'Edward Elgar: "Modern" or "Modernist"? Construction of an Aesthetic Identity in the British Music Press, 1895–1934', *MQ* 91.1/2 (2008), 8–38; Meirion Hughes, '"A Thoroughgoing Modern": Elgar Reception in the *Manchester Guardian*, 1896–1908', in Matthew Riley (ed.), *British Music and Modernism, 1895–1960* (Farnham: Ashgate, 2010), 31–48; and Stephen Downes, 'Modern Maritime Pastoral: Wave Deformations in the Music of Frank Bridge', in Riley, *ibid.*, 93–108.

¹⁰ See Matthew Riley, 'Liberal Critics and Modern Music in the Post-Victorian Age', in Riley, *ibid.*, 13–30.

¹¹ See Gareth Thomas, 'Modernism, Diaghilev and the Ballets Russes in London, 1911–1929', in Riley, *ibid.*, 67–92; David Lambourn, 'Henry Wood and Schoenberg', *MT* 128 (August 1987), 422–7; John Irving, 'Schoenberg in the News: the London Performances of 1912–1914', *Music Review* 48.1 (February 1988), 52–70; Deborah Heckert, 'Schoenberg, Roger Fry and the Emergence of a Critical Language for the Reception of Musical Modernism in Britain, 1912–1914', in Riley, *loc. cit.*, 49–66.

¹² Bantock uses this phrase several times in the correspondence. Letter 13 below confirms a 'dawn' of new music following Bantock's orchestral concert of 15 December, 1896; in letter 148 below, Bantock suggests that although a musical 'dawn' was 'visible', Wallace was not ready to take advantage of it. Similarly, Newman's article 'The New School of British Music. I.', *Sp* 5 (7 December 1901), 272, argued that 'English music is facing the dawn, while in almost every other nation it is sadly following the setting sun.'

¹³ Rubato, 'Musical Life in Birmingham. I.', *MS* 28 (23 November 1907), 322.

journalists, to elevate this gentleman to a position beyond his seeking. As a composer his mastery of orchestral technique, and the interest and fascination of his music, needs [*sic*] no demonstration, but at the same time, clima[c]teric writing with original effects and reposeful episodes few and far between, does not give lasting or permanent satisfaction. As a conductor, his sympathies with, and interpretations of pre-Wagnerian music, are open to question, as also the advisability of feeding students on ultra-modern music ... [Mr. Newman's] criticisms, generally, lack that moderation of tone and expression which we expect from experienced writers, whilst his partiality for Mr. Bantock is too transparent. The whole thing savours too much of a clique with a partisan purpose, and this savour naturally discounts their expressions of mutual admiration.¹⁴

Compositional practice: Bantock, Wallace and the 'modern' symphonic poem

In reassessing Bantock as a 'modern' composer, the orchestral works written in the years 1899–1911 are particularly significant. These represent a distinctive musical refiguring of poetry (Southey's *Thalaba the Destroyer*, Shelley's *The Witch of Atlas*, Browning's *Fifine at the Fair*, Samuel Butler's *Hudibras*), drama (the *Overture to a Greek Tragedy* of 1911, based on Sophocles' *Oedipus at Colonus*) and 'dramatic phantasy' (Dowson's *The Pierrot of the Minute*), tales (Thomas Moore's *Lalla Rookh*), biography (*Dante and Beatrice*, related to *La Vita Nuova*), and the novel (the 1896 *Eugene Aram* overture). Bantock's letter to Newman of 8 August 1901 confirmed his plan to expand this list further with works entitled *King Lear*, *El Islam*, *Comedy and Tragedy*, *Paradise Lost*, a refiguring of Ibsen's extended drama *Emperor and Galilean*, and, most striking of all, *Heroes and Hero-Worship*, based on Thomas Carlyle's lectures, which had 'yet to be written'; sadly, along with *Hudibras*, none of this latter group of works survives. All these examples are suggestive of a deliberate exploration of music's potential to translate different types of literary text meaningfully.

Given that the correspondence identifies Bantock as the author of the short article 'The Idea in Music' in the *New Quarterly Musical Review* (under the thinly-veiled pseudonym 'G. Ransome'),¹⁵ this text helps to contextualise Bantock's approach to programme music. Describing how, in contrast to the pedantry of critics, the composer 'eschews prescribed limitations, forms his own rules, and strikes out a new path for himself ... tramp[ing] orthodoxy under foot', Bantock suggests that 'all music should aim at the true expression of an Idea, conveying to the mind of the listener a similar emotion to that experienced by the composer'. Defined as 'the "act of thought on a given subject"', the Idea (aiding 'true comprehension' of a work) is manifest in Wagner's *Walkürenritt* ('a picture of wild romantic scenery, in which the howlings of the storm accompanied by flashes of lightning are vividly

¹⁴ Letter from A. Seymour Reeves, 'Musical Life in Birmingham', *MS* 28 (30 November 1907), 347; the suggestion of a clique was subsequently challenged by Rubato, 'Musical Life in Birmingham. II.', *MS* 28 (7 December 1907), 353.

¹⁵ G. Ransome [Granville Bantock], 'The Idea in Music', *NQMR* 3.12 (February 1896), 184–8.

depicted, as the war-maidens pursue their furious ride'), but sadly lacking in 'a Symphony in A or a Concert-Overture in D'.¹⁶ Hence, in privileging descriptive music over abstract music, Bantock promotes the overtures and orchestral works of Berlioz, Rubinstein's 'Ocean' Symphony and Schumann's piano works (*Carnaval*, *Fantasiestücke*, *Kinderszenen*) rather than his symphonies, leading to the prediction that 'the symphonic poems of Liszt will outlive the symphonies of Brahms'.¹⁷ However, the most significant passage concerns the relative restrictions of orthodox compositional forms:

It is only in the realm of Romance that we find the descriptive and illustrative element. Here are to be found new forms, which, although they may owe their origin and development to the Classics, are condemned by the scholastic upholders of orthodoxy. Classicism is bound down by pedantry; while, on the other hand, we find Romanticism free in the pursuit of its theme. The Sonata, or Symphony, as it stands at present, may be regarded as an arid form of abstract musical thought ... The composer of modern days who would present his work to the world in an abstract form, conceived upon no definite or titled Idea, is injuring his own position, and seriously handicapping the progress of Art, which must ever advance ... Cut away the useless encumbrances of classic form, and we find ourselves free to act. The air that we breathe is fresher, and untainted by the musty odour of the midnight lamp.¹⁸

This mirrors the frustrations voiced by Richard Strauss, and his suggestion that the poetic idea behind a work should inform its musical structure:

I have found myself in a gradually ever increasing contradiction between the musical-poetic content that I want to convey a[nd] the ternary sonata form that has come down to us from the classical composers ... If you want to create a work of art that is unified in mood and consistent in its structure ... [then] this is only possible through the inspiration by a poetical idea, whether or not it be introduced as a programme. I consider it a legitimate artistic method to create a correspondingly new form for every new subject.¹⁹

Thus Bantock's end-focused structure, rotational form and obsessive B minor tonality in *Thalaba the Destroyer* reflects the inevitability of fate in Southey's poem, and the multiple returns in *Fifine at the Fair* represent an effective response to Don Juan's vacillations between wife and mistress in Browning's dramatic monologue;²⁰ if we add the rondo deformation in *The Witch of Atlas* (representative of the central

¹⁶ Ibid., 184–5.

¹⁷ Ibid., 186, 187.

¹⁸ Ibid., 186–8.

¹⁹ Willi Schuh and Franz Trenner (eds), trans. Anthony Gishford, *Hans von Bülow and Richard Strauss: Correspondence* (London: Boosey & Hawkes, 1955), 82–3.

²⁰ See Michael Allis, 'Bantock and Southey: Musical Otherness and Fatalism in *Thalaba the Destroyer*', *ML* 95.1 (February 2014), 36–69, and *British Music and Literary Context: Artistic Connections in the Long Nineteenth Century* (Woodbridge: The Boydell Press, 2012), Chapter 3, 'Bantock and Browning: Reformulated dramatic monologue in *Fifine at the Fair*', 133–88.

presence of the witch in Bantock's abridged version of Shelley's poetic text),²¹ and the use of the secondary key area (D flat major) at the end of *Dante and Beatrice* to suggest the lovers' reunion in Heaven, this situates Bantock among the composers associated with the 'first, active phase' of musical modernism: Sibelius, Mahler, Strauss and Elgar.²²

Readers of this volume will be aware that Wallace has been relatively neglected in discussions of British music in the late nineteenth and early twentieth centuries.²³ In identifying reasons for Wallace's general neglect, Newman suggested that his multifarious activities of 'writing music and poetry, drama, fiction, and criticism, painting, drawing in black and white, working in metal, engraving on wood, bookbinding, studying Japanese prints like a specialist, and ... qualifying as a doctor of medicine' prevented him 'from giving to any one of them the proper amount of time and labour', but also highlighted Wallace's 'tendency to remain rooted in certain defined habits of expression'.²⁴ For Edwin Evans the problem was Wallace's creation of 'vocal' rather than 'instrumental' themes – whilst these were undoubtedly part of Wallace's 'keen appreciation of all the beauties of artistic utterance', they were not necessarily conducive to 'symphonic development', often resulting in 'rhapsodical' music.²⁵ Although the letters include references to several of Wallace's early works – the 1892 orchestral suite *The Lady from the Sea* (a revision of incidental music to Ibsen's play of the same name), the symphonic prelude *The Eumenides* (1893), the overture *In Praise of Scottis Poesie* (1894), the 'exquisitely beautiful' scena *The Rhapsody of Mary Magdalene* for soprano and orchestra (1896),²⁶ the *Suite in Olden Style* (1896–7), the unfinished symphonic poem *The Covenanters* (1898), a *Pontius Pilate* symphonic overture (1899), the Fantasia in G minor, the ballad for male voices *The Massacre of the Macpherson* (published in 1899), the choral symphony *Kohleth*, the 'Song of the Klepht', plus the ambitious *Creation* Symphony (1896–9) and the *Pelléas and Mélisande* suite (1897–1900) – like Bantock, Wallace's primary contribution to 'modern' music at the turn of the twentieth century remains his series of symphonic poems: *The Passing of Beatrice* (1892), *Amboss oder Hammer* (1896),²⁷ *Sister Helen* (1897), *Greeting to the New Century* (1901), *Sir William Wallace A.D. 1305–1905* (1905) and *Villon* (1909).²⁸

²¹ See Michael Allis, 'Reading Music through Literary Scholarship: Granville Bantock, Shelley, and *The Witch of Atlas*', *JMR* 36.1 (2017), 6–28.

²² James Hepokoski, *Sibelius: Symphony No. 5* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1993), 7.

²³ For an overview of Wallace and his music, see Valerie Carson, "'A Protean spirit": William Wallace, Artist, Composer and Catalyst' (MA thesis, University of Durham, 1999).

²⁴ Ernest Newman, 'The New School of British Music. V. William Wallace', *Sp* 5 (1 February 1902), 499–500.

²⁵ Edwin Evans, 'Modern British Composers. III. Mr. William Wallace', *MS* 19 (13 June 1903), 370.

²⁶ Rutland Boughton, 'Studies from the Young British School. V. William Wallace', *MS* 12 (25 November 1899), 339; see also W.A.R., 'Music at New Brighton', *MN* 15 (13 August 1898), 143, who described 'a moving and tenderly beautiful tone-picture'.

²⁷ Wallace referred to this phrase from Goethe's *Kophtisches Lied* in his article 'Song-Impressionism', *MS* 46 (6 January 1894), 8.

²⁸ A New Brighton programme for 17 August 1898, detailed in Paul Watt, 'A "gigantic and popular place of entertainment": Granville Bantock and Music-making at the New Brighton Tower in the late 1890s', *RMA Research Chronicle* 42 (2009), 150, refers to Wallace's symphonic poem *Thor the Thunderer*; however, this was simply an alternative title (which Bantock preferred) to *Amboss oder Hammer*.

Three of these works are highlighted in the correspondence below. Although Bantock was unable to attend an 1893 performance of *The Passing of Beatrice*,²⁹ closer acquaintance with this work – which may have influenced his own *Dante and Beatrice* – made him ‘more than ever [Wallace’s] admirer’;³⁰ consequently, it was programmed several times in Bantock’s New Brighton concerts (despite doubts over its inclusion in 1898, when Bantock’s harpist was sacked for drunkenness), including in the all-Wallace programme of 30 July 1899 discussed below. By 1908 the *Musical Standard* bemoaned the fact that ‘There could be no better instance of the injustice suffered by English composers of the past’, given that ‘its beauties have remained unknown or unrecognised even if its existence were generally known’.³¹ Bantock’s letter of 16 September 1897 includes a fascinating critique of Wallace’s third symphonic poem, *Sister Helen*. This work was apparently suggested to Wallace by the music critic J.A. Fuller Maitland and was initially conceived as incidental music to a stage version of Dante Gabriel Rossetti’s ballad in the form of ‘a duologue, continuously accompanied by music, the refrain which complements each verse being sung by a contralto behind the scenes’.³² Wallace completed the music, but the play was never staged, so he adapted the score as a symphonic poem. The ‘weird’ subject matter was described by the *Musical Times*:

Sister Helen ... is a spinster who has been “crossed in love” and causes the death of her faithless swain by melting his waxen image before a fire, in accordance with a mediaeval superstition. Malignant hatred is thus the keynote of the poem, and consequently that of the music. This being so, no loftiness or nobility of expression or treatment would be compatible with the subject-matter; but its absence none the less prevents Mr. Wallace’s music attaining a high level of artistic value. In its entirety the work is masterly, virile, powerful, but leaves a wish that the composer had elected to be inspired by a damsel of more civilised sentiments.³³

Bantock’s critique found ‘little fault’ in this ‘most interesting work’ that displayed ‘coherence of ... ideas’, suggesting one particular improvement to the representation of the melting wax, and noting some problematic similarities to the music of Wagner; Wallace responded to the advice he was given, including the addition of a final bar with a *sforzando* chord.

More problematic for Bantock, however, was Wallace’s fourth symphonic poem. To place this in context, Wallace’s lecture to the Musical Association on 9 May 1899, subsequently published as ‘The Scope of Programme Music’,³⁴ is significant. Here Wallace confirmed that the symphonic poem reflected the spirit of the age;

²⁹ See letter 3 below.

³⁰ Letter 31 below.

³¹ Wm. Henry Caunt, ‘Musical Activity in North Staffordshire’, *MS* 29 (18 April 1908), 250.

³² ‘Crystal Palace Concerts. Mr. W. Wallace’s Symphonic Poem “Sister Helen.”’, *MT* 40 (April 1899), 246.

³³ *Ibid.*

³⁴ William Wallace, ‘The Scope of Programme Music’, *PMA* 25th session (1898–9), 139–56.

‘resting secure in his conviction that the various musical forms have reached their highest technical development’, he argued, the contemporary composer could impart ‘some modern quality’ to his work by ‘giving to his composition a definite poetic significance’.³⁵ However, he distinguished between three types of programme music: (i) ‘music which attempts to symbolize sounds not primarily produced by musical instruments, as, for example, the wind, thunder, the song of a bird’; (ii) ‘music which attempts to symbolize in sound visual impressions’; and (iii) ‘music which attempts to symbolize in sound ideas which are entirely subjective and appeal to the intellect, such as love, revenge, grief – all the emotions’.³⁶ The latter was identified as ‘of infinitely greater value, musically, than the others’.³⁷

When a composer comes to treat a literary idea which is purely subjective he is less hampered by any sequence of incidents such as a more objective scheme would offer, and he therefore is the more free to exercise his own judgement regarding the symbolism of his theme as well as the treatment of his musical material. He is further at the advantage of working on the lines of formal construction, without allowing himself to be dominated by the stricter requirements of academic dictates, and he is able to express himself with more latitude than the severe restrictions of classical usages would permit. At the same time, by working to a poetical idea, he is less likely to be led away from the point by attempting to display his abstruse learning, and by piling up effects which are merely the legerdemain of the skilful craftsman and not the moods of the poet in sound.³⁸

If his first two symphonic poems explored this ‘subjective’ idea of focusing on mood rather than prescribed events – *The Passing of Beatrice* exploring the image of transfiguration and *Amboss oder Hammer* intending to ‘convey the idea’ of Goethe’s *Kopftisches Lied* ‘rather than to offer a piece of distinctive programme music’³⁹ – *Sister Helen* was a clear departure. Here, despite some representation of emotional states, there was a more ‘objective’ refiguring of specific poetic events, including the melting of the waxen image, and the ride of the horsemen as they attempt to save their cursed kinsman. Frustratingly for Wallace, the critics seemed much more interested in the subject matter of *Sister Helen* – as the comments of the *Musical Times* reproduced above suggest⁴⁰ – than in the music, which may have been a significant factor in his decision to promote the ‘subjective’ approach, hoping to elicit a more musical focus from critics in the future.

Ominously, in the months leading up to Wallace’s lecture Bantock’s letters revealed signs of disagreement (albeit good-natured) between the two men over this topic. Bantock suggested that the composer Arthur Hinton ‘does sometimes get on my nerves – even more than you do when we argue about programme music’,⁴¹ and noted:

³⁵ Ibid., 149.

³⁶ Ibid., 140.

³⁷ Ibid.

³⁸ Ibid., 143.

³⁹ ‘The Week’, *Athenaeum* 3600 (24 October 1896), 571.

⁴⁰ *MT* 40 (April 1899), 246; similarly, ‘New Brighton Tower. The Wallace Concert’, *LM*, 31 July 1899, 8, later highlighted the work’s ‘gruesome story of superstition’.

⁴¹ Letter 40 below.

I hope to see you for a chat, and perhaps an argument!!! In the meantime I am convinced that music should be both subjective and objective. Life is so short, that I see no reason for wasting time over abstract music only.⁴²

He also raised the question of terminology, highlighting a phrase in the *Musical Standard* which suggested that programme music had not been ‘clearly defined yet’, and appealing to Wallace, ‘I wish you would invent another name for Programme Music. How would Modern Music do?’; Bantock later advocated the term ‘realistic music’ to Newman.⁴³ One of Bantock’s specific difficulties with Wallace’s lecture was that it apparently contained an attack on orientalism – an area close to Bantock’s heart, and one with which he was primarily associated. In a letter to Wallace of 10 August 1897 Bantock had already complained that Robin Legge in the *Daily Telegraph* had ‘been having a few ill-natured smacks at me, and orientalisms lately’, and he might also still have been smarting from the critique in *The Era* of a performance of ‘Jaga-Naut’ from *The Curse of Kehama*, which concluded that ‘there has never been any great enthusiasm for Indian subjects’.⁴⁴ His reaction to Wallace’s comments was therefore somewhat inevitable:

I have read your lecture, & return it herewith. It amused me not a little. But why preferably Oriental subjects? It seemed to me at the time to be hardly good taste to sneer in such a public manner at your friend’s proclivities. Surely if you entertain such thoughts, they would be better left unsaid. I, for one, would not think of making game of your musical technique. I respect your sincere, honest intentions too much, and at least if my efforts do not command your respect, they might surely merit your silence ... Southey’s poems were good enough for such a great man’s appreciation as Cardinal Newman, and they are good enough for me ... It would be a most unhappy state of affairs were any dissension to arise between us.⁴⁵

Wallace’s letter to his future wife Otilie McLaren of 29 June 1899 noted that he had written to Bantock to reassure him that the derogatory remark about orientalism was not an attack upon his music, and that it would be ‘very uncomfortable’ if there were ‘any strained terms’ between the two composers.⁴⁶ His worry that he might have offended Bantock was compounded by the fact that he received no reply from the composer for some time; on 5 and 6 July Wallace explained to Otilie that his remark was ‘directed chiefly at a certain French school’, and that he had written to Bantock confirming that he had asked the printers to delete the offending words from the published text of the lecture, and offering to withdraw from the all-Wallace New Brighton concert on 30 July.⁴⁷ In the event, the concert went ahead as planned, but the problematic text was removed; it is likely to have originally appeared within the following passage:

⁴² Letter 39 below.

⁴³ Letter 105 below. The problem is discussed also in letters 34 and 50.

⁴⁴ ‘Stock Exchange Orchestra’, *The Era*, 12 February 1898, 17.

⁴⁵ Letter 75 below.

⁴⁶ GB-En 21519.

⁴⁷ Ibid.

A further point is that if a composer must write programme music, he should show distinction in selecting his theme. In composing to a set idea there is as much need for the evidence of a keen and dignified appreciation of that which is good in literature, as for musical technique. There must also be added the instinct that the theme admits of musical treatment and deals strongly with the subjective side of poetic conceptions.

In these days of ours, a musician must show that in his general way of thinking he is as distinguished as he is in his musical equipment, and the most brilliant musical technique will not always avail to redeem a threadbare subject, or the turgid style of a deservedly-forgotten poetaster. Dramatic fire, passion, grim tragedy, the lightness of humour will always reach the listener, but the composer must be on his guard lest his exaltation of some trivial unworthy theme result in bathos.⁴⁸

The second issue was the relationship between a musical work and its programme. By privileging the 'subjective' approach to programme music, promoting the musical representation of mood rather than poetic detail, Wallace's comments may have been interpreted by Bantock as a criticism of his own *Thalaba the Destroyer*, where 'prominent ideas and dramatic episodes' from Southey's poem were 'associated with the themes', and there was 'hardly a phrase or modulation without its special significance tending to the elucidation of the subject'.⁴⁹ 'Meditative music is agreeable enough', wrote Bantock to Newman in 1901, 'but it is not reflective of the modern spirit'.⁵⁰ If his subsequent *Fifine at the Fair* and *The Witch of Atlas* represented close readings of the poetry of Shelley and Browning, only later did Bantock's programmatic works suggest a move away from detailed narratives. Bantock's explanation to Newman that his overture *The Pierrot of the Minute* was meant only 'to create an atmosphere for the play' with no 'sequence of ideas' is not convincing, given his subsequent reference to specific music for the birdsong, the appearance of the Moon Maiden, the arrival of love, the Pierrot's 'sink[ing] into forgetfulness' and final awakening.⁵¹ However, he was clear that in the *Overture to a Greek Tragedy*, apart from the 'Antigone' theme, 'the remainder is all concerned with Œdipus, the story of which is followed pretty closely, but without any incident, except in a purely abstract sense', with 'dignity, horror, fear, gloom, and the desire for peace & rest' representing 'the most substantial material'.⁵²

In this context, therefore, Wallace's decision to present his fourth symphonic poem of 1901 without a programme, simply offering it as 'Symphonic poem no. 4', outraged Bantock; he described the strategy to Newman as 'a piece of pure cowardice': 'Wallace could not write abstract music, & yet he puts forward programme-music, for such it is ... without even the title. Therein he hangs himself. Well, let him.'⁵³

⁴⁸ Wallace, 'The Scope of Programme Music', 150.

⁴⁹ Reproduced in Newman's programme note, *GB-Bu* GB/4/1/53, and referred to by E.A.B. in 'The London Musical Festival. Some Symphonic Poems and a Moral.', *MS* 13 (12 May 1900), 289.

⁵⁰ Letter 119 below.

⁵¹ Letter 244 below.

⁵² Letter 258 below.

⁵³ Letter 105 below. Wallace's *Creation* Symphony was also problematic for Bantock. Whilst he felt it

The press were similarly bemused; the *Monthly Musical Record* suggested that ‘A definite title or written programme – neither has been provided – would not, of course, affect the music, *qua* music, but it would help hearers to realize the composer’s intentions, by surrounding them with, as it were, a fitting atmosphere’.⁵⁴ *Sir William Wallace A.D. 1305–1905* was also frustrating as ‘an uncomfortable specimen of programme music without a programme’.⁵⁵ Wallace’s final symphonic poem *Villon* – in part inspired by Strauss’s *Till Eulenspiegel’s lustige Streiche* – represented a more complex amalgam of the objective and subjective; in the process it explored a more ‘modern’ musical structure reflective of the unstable nature of Villon’s fifteenth-century poem *Le Testament* – a radical rondo deformation, with conflation and blurring of rondo and episode, examples of musical retrospection, and tonal ambiguity.

If Bantock was clear in the earlier correspondence in this volume that ‘the orchestra is ... the most effective medium through which music can and ought to be heard’,⁵⁶ he also began to apply a sense of the modern to other genres. He suggested to Newman that few listeners would be able to ‘grasp *Ferishtah’s Fancies* ‘at first hearing’ (even the writer and promoter of Russian music Rosa Newmarch ‘was only beginning to feel the ground with her feet’ after a third reading), and the scoring of *Omar Khayyám* was deliberately ‘new and interesting, if difficult at first, by breaking away from old traditions’, involving a revised seating plan ‘to produce the intended effects’.⁵⁷ This idea was expanded upon by Newman in his analytical notes for *Omar*:

The string portion of the orchestra is handled in a novel manner ... On the right of the conductor ... is a full string orchestra of first violins, second violins, violas, cellos and basses, balanced by a similar string orchestra on his left. This ... makes possible a number of devices that would be unworkable on the ordinary plan. The composer can have his complete string orchestra playing all together, or each half separately; one half can be muted, the other un-muted; one half can be playing legato, the other tremolo, or staccato, or pizzicato ... all kinds of permutations and combinations are possible ... The composer also wishes a similar plan to be adopted with the chorus, which must be arranged in two complete semi-choruses ... one on each side of the platform.⁵⁸

The demanding Choral Symphony *Atalanta in Calydon*, an ‘experiment’ which Bantock described as his ‘most profound’ and ‘best’ work, also promised to ‘provide singers & audience with something to think about’.⁵⁹ Underpinning his compositional practice, therefore, was the central belief that ‘Music must evolve’;⁶⁰ this

was inferior to Wallace’s other symphonic poems ‘as Programme music’, on the other hand he could not ‘accept it at all as abstract music’; see letter 59 below.

⁵⁴ ‘Musical Notes’, *MMR* 31 (May 1901), 105; see also The Philharmonic Society’, *MT* 42 (May 1901), 326.

⁵⁵ ‘Musical Gossip’, *Athenaeum* 4065 (23 September 1905), 409.

⁵⁶ Letter 39 below.

⁵⁷ Letters 192 and 204 below.

⁵⁸ Newman, *Omar Khayyám ... by Granville Bantock. Book of Words with Analytical and Descriptive Notes* (London: Breitkopf & Härtel, c.1906), 4.

⁵⁹ Letters 259 and 258 below.

⁶⁰ Letter 105 below.

coloured his opinions not only of contemporary composers, but also of the British musical establishment.

Modern music and the British musical establishment

To identify some of the modern composers that Bantock admired, when this correspondence begins Bantock had a high opinion of the music of Tchaikovsky; his daughter Myrrha described his reaction to Tchaikovsky's visit to London in 1893:

My father was so enthralled by those of Tchaikovsky's works included in the programme that he made up his mind to meet the great composer. He searched the hotels of London until he found him.

'What can I do for you?' asked Tchaikovsky in French, when the young man had presented himself. Granville, pale with excitement and enthusiasm, spoke of his determination to become a composer himself.

'Then you must be prepared to work hard,' said the great man.⁶¹

However, apart from the plethora of composers included in Bantock's concerts along with those singled out for promotion in print, in terms of continental figures two emerge from the letters as particularly significant: Richard Strauss and Jean Sibelius. Bantock was introduced to Strauss, 'the Great One', in 1902 at the Strauss Festival in London, but had already gained some familiarity with his music through his 'pound[ing] Glazounow & Strauss to death' with Joseph Holbrooke 'every day in the form of duets'.⁶² He enjoyed studying the scores of *Don Juan*, *Don Quixote*, *Also sprach Zarathustra*, *Tod und Verklärung*, the *Burleske* for piano and orchestra, and *Wandrer's Sturmlied*, which he described (despite its technical difficulties) as 'the finest work of its kind that I have so far met with';⁶³ by 1908 he remained convinced of 'the grandeur' of *Ein Heldenleben*.⁶⁴ Although the deformational practices in Bantock's own orchestral works were no doubt influenced by Strauss's models of aligning poetic content and structure, Bantock was clear that whilst 'Strauss is the master ... each of us must say his best in his own way, not in Strauss'[s] way'.⁶⁵ Bantock also considered performing one of Strauss's early symphonies, and diary entries from 1911 onwards suggest a working knowledge of *Hymnus*, the Piano Quartet, the *Symphonia Domestica* and the 'Gesang der Apollopriesterin', Op. 33 no. 2, which Bantock conducted at the Birmingham and Midland Institute on 15 December 1913.⁶⁶ In terms of Strauss's operas, Bantock's excitement over acquiring a copy of the full score of *Salome* in 1910 was tangible – hence his invitation to Newman to 'come over ... for a "peep" at it';⁶⁷ he played through *Salome*, *Der Rosenkavalier* and *Feuersnot* with Beecham in 1911, *Ariadne auf Naxos* in 1912

⁶¹ Myrrha Bantock, *Granville Bantock: A Personal Portrait* (London: J. M. Dent & Sons, 1972), 30–31.

⁶² Letters 141 and 135 below.

⁶³ Letters 141, 142, 144 and 150 below.

⁶⁴ Letter 232 below; Bantock had heard *Ein Heldenleben* in December 1902.

⁶⁵ Letter 149 below.

⁶⁶ See letter 232 below, and Bantock's diaries: 3 October 1911, 25 February 1917, 12 January and 18 March 1919, 26 August 1917, 15 December 1913.

⁶⁷ See letter 248 below.

(noting tersely in his diary, 'did not like it') and *Die Frau ohne Schatten* in 1921,⁶⁸ attended performances of *Elektra* and *Der Rosenkavalier* in 1913⁶⁹ and saw the ballet *Josephslegend* on 25 June 1914. Although Bantock's Straussian studies may have been partly for private pleasure, they would also have informed the series of lectures that he gave on Strauss's music at Birmingham University.⁷⁰

Whilst some of Sibelius's piano and vocal music had been performed in Britain in the 1890s, it was the first decade of the twentieth century that saw the introduction of his larger-scale works, with British premieres of the First Symphony on 13 October 1903 by Henry Wood at a Promenade Concert and the Second Symphony by Richter and the Hallé Orchestra in Manchester on 2 March 1905.⁷¹ If the First Symphony had mixed reviews,⁷² initially the Second Symphony was even less successful. For the *Musical Standard*, despite its 'marked individuality', it suffered from the 'sombre hue' of the thematic material, a 'sense of monotony' in the 'working out', and an 'absence of tonal colouring' suggestive of an 'academic' composition reflective of 'some of the characteristics of his country and its people';⁷³ the *Musical Times* was similarly unimpressed, noting the work's failure to create 'any pronounced impression'.⁷⁴ As the correspondence in this volume reminds us, along with Newman, Henry Wood and Rosa Newmarch, Bantock can be clearly identified as an early advocate for Sibelius's music, describing the Finnish composer in 1905 as 'already a master' and referring to the 'fine originality' of *En Saga*.⁷⁵ As a conductor, Bantock had already introduced Sibelius's *King Christian II* music and the increasingly popular *Finlandia* in Birmingham on 18 March 1905, and repeated the latter on the same day in Liverpool where, deputising for Sibelius at short notice owing to political troubles, he also conducted the First Symphony (where the 'strange tongue' of Sibelius's 'musical dialect' made the symphony 'to a certain extent unintelligible' for the *Musical Standard*).⁷⁶

Sibelius eventually travelled to Britain at the end of November 1905 at Bantock's request, staying at the latter's home, Broad Meadow in Kings Norton.⁷⁷ This trip

⁶⁸ Bantock's diary, 21 November 1911; 9 November 1912; 22 March, 28 June and 1 July (the latter two with Donald Francis Tovey) 1921.

⁶⁹ Bantock's diary, 16, 20 and 24 September 1913.

⁷⁰ These included lectures on Strauss's songs (13 May 1912, 3 June 1914, 28 May 1915, 30 May 1917, 30 May 1919, 18 February 1920, 20 May 1921), *Salome* (6, 8, 19 and 29 March 1912, 18 February 1920), *Ein Heldenleben* (24 and 26 April 1912, 9, 22 and 24 April 1913), *Till Eulenspiegels lustige Streiche* (31 May 1912, 16 May 1913), *Elektra* (15 June 1917) and *Der Rosenkavalier* (22 June 1917). Bantock also read Romain Rolland's chapter on Strauss in *Musicians of Today* (London: Kegan Paul, Trench, Trübner & Co., 1915) on 11 October 1917.

⁷¹ There were also London premieres of *En Saga* and *Finlandia* on 4 and 13 October 1906 and the British premiere of the Violin Concerto (with Henri Verbrugghen as soloist) on 1 October 1907; see 'Comments and Opinions. Music at the Queen's Hall', *MS* 26 (13 October 1906), 223, and H.H. 'Queen's Hall Promenade Concerts. Sibelius' Violin Concerto', *MS* 28 (5 October 1907), 209.

⁷² 'Promenade Concerts at Queen's Hall', *MT* 44 (November 1903), 742, highlighted the opening introduction as 'remarkable for a plaintive melody announced by clarinet over a roll of the drums', but suggested that in the finale 'the composer's pen seems to have run away with his discretion'.

⁷³ W.H.C., 'Manchester', *MS* 23 (11 March 1905), 156.

⁷⁴ 'Music in Manchester', *MT* 46 (April 1905), 266.

⁷⁵ Letters 194 and 199 below.

⁷⁶ See 'Music in Birmingham', *MT* 46 (April 1905), 263; W.J.B., 'Liverpool Orchestral Society' *MS* 23 (25 March 1905), 188. Bantock also conducted *The Swan of Tuonela* in 1907; see W.J.B., 'Liverpool Orchestral Society', *MS* 27 (23 February 1907), 126.

⁷⁷ See Erik Tawaststjerna, trans. Robert Layton, *Sibelius Volume II: 1904–1914* (London: Faber & Faber, 1986), 38–43.

allowed him to meet Alexander Mackenzie, Wood, Newmarch and Ferruccio Busoni and to conduct the First Symphony and *Finlandia* in Liverpool on 2 December; the *Musical Standard* was able to 'revise' its opinion of the symphony, confirming it as 'a work of great force and originality', mirrored by Newman's advocacy in the *Manchester Guardian*: 'The impression it makes on one is the same as that made by the Second Symphony – that here we have a man really saying things that have never been said in music before ... here in England the bulk of his utterance is of an order quite different from anything we have hitherto met with in music.'⁷⁸ Bantock was rewarded with being the dedicatee of the Third Symphony, whose British premiere Bantock gave in Liverpool on 21 November 1908, again to mixed reviews.⁷⁹ Sibelius visited Britain again in February 1909, based once more at Broad Meadow;⁸⁰ in addition to conducting the Third Symphony, *En Saga* and *Finlandia* and attending the London Music Club (where some of his chamber music and songs were performed), Sibelius heard the second part of Bantock's *Omar Khayyám*. His subsequent visit in 1912 was notable for a performance of the Fourth Symphony at the Birmingham Festival, which he conducted. Although *The Times* highlighted the 'disconcertingly new' orchestration, where Sibelius 'scarcely ever makes instruments of different colours do the same thing', the critic of the *Musical Times* felt it 'impossible ... to discuss the new work' as he did 'not at present understand it sufficiently'; F.H. Bond in the *Musical Standard* suggested that it was 'too obscure', with 'the gloom of the primeval forest' hanging 'like a pall over everything' and describing how 'queer little thoughts which come near to being fascinating dart out ever and anon only to scurry away into the gloom almost as soon as they have shown themselves' – although like the *Musical Times* critic he welcomed a 'second hearing'.⁸¹ If by then Sibelius could be seen 'almost as an honorary member of [Britain's] musical avant-garde', a symbol of musical modernity in Britain that would 'hold firm against contestation for nearly thirty years',⁸² Bantock therefore had a central role in securing this perception.

The final letter in this volume also confirms Bantock's familiarity with Sibelius's smaller-scale works; in 1921 – the year of Sibelius's final visit to Britain – Bantock hosted a reception for the composer at Birmingham University which included performances of the string quartet 'Voces intimae', along with selected songs and piano works.⁸³ He also marked Sibelius's visit with an appreciative overview of the

⁷⁸ 'Liverpool Orchestral Society', *MS* 24 (9 December 1905), 377; E[rmest] N[ewman], 'Sibelius in Liverpool', *MG*, 4 December 1905, 7.

⁷⁹ Whilst W.J.B., 'Liverpool Orchestral Society', *MS* 30 (28 November 1908), 352, described it as 'earnest', yet 'baffling', S[amuel] L[angford], 'A New Symphony by Sibelius', *MG*, 23 November 1908, 9, suggested that here Sibelius was 'vitalising the whole art of music, enriching it with new feelings and new ideas of expression.'

⁸⁰ See Peter Franklin, 'Sibelius in Britain', in Daniel Grimley (ed.), *The Cambridge Companion to Sibelius* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2004), 185–6.

⁸¹ 'Birmingham Musical Festival', *The Times*, 3 October 1912, 9; 'The Birmingham Musical Festival', *MT* 53 (November 1912), 724; F.H. Bond, 'Birmingham Triennial Musical Festival', *MS* 38 (12 October 1912), 225.

⁸² Franklin, 'Sibelius', 187.

⁸³ Sibelius's final visit also included receptions at Claridge's Hotel and the Royal College of Music in London, and at Oxford University. He conducted performances of the Third, Fourth and Fifth Symphonies, *The Swan of Tuonela*, *En Saga*, 'Festivo' from the first *Scènes historiques* suite, *Valse triste*, *Valse lyrique*, *The Oceanides*, the *Karelia* suite, the Romance in C major for strings, *Finlandia*, movements from the

composer in *The Times*.⁸⁴ Although Bantock identified a ‘sincerity ... tenderness and beauty’ in Sibelius’s music, it was its national quality that was striking as ‘the outcome of the racial psychology and of its special embodiment in the *Kalevala*’; highlighting *En Saga*, *Finlandia*, *Pohjola’s Daughter* and *The Swan of Tuonela*, whose ‘wild *cor anglais* solo ... once heard, can hardly be forgotten’, Bantock noted a ‘primitive savagery of wild and untamed races’, and even suggested parallels with ‘Old Väinämöinen, the singer and magician’ in Sibelius’s constant ‘seeking for the “word of origin” which bestows power over the thing named ... to refine away the superfluous’.⁸⁵ However, given the identification of musical form in Sibelius as ‘the source of the music’s progressiveness and its intellectual engagement with the broader modernist project in the arts’,⁸⁶ Bantock’s structural experimentation in his orchestral poems is suggestive of shared compositional concerns. Bantock’s admiration for Sibelius never wavered; in a 1941 introduction to Sibelius recordings for the BBC, identifying Sibelius as ‘the greatest living composer in the world today’, he concluded:

As a creative artist he [Sibelius] stands alone on a mountain summit high above and far removed from all rivalry and idle slander of the multitude. His thoughts are with the eternal mysteries of nature and the hero-legends of his race. He is like a sensitive microphone making new and strangely original records of the musical impressions as they germinate and develop in his mind. His music brings its own message to all who are willing to learn and are hoping to unravel some of the hidden secrets of nature in the soul of man.⁸⁷

In the context of these European models, the letters in this volume also chart Bantock’s and Wallace’s relationship with the British musical establishment in the early part of their careers. Bantock’s correspondence with Wallace frequently employs the derogatory term ‘Masterbuilderism’ to refer to the workmanlike and relatively uninspired music of their older contemporaries such as Frederic Cowen, Mackenzie (Principal of the Royal Academy of Music, also termed the ‘copper-smith’), Parry, Stanford and Sullivan. In a letter to Ottilie McLaren, Wallace explained that this term came from Ibsen’s play *The Masterbuilder*, where ‘an architect tries to destroy the sketches & drawings of his apprentice because they are better than his’, hence the phrase that came to define the Bantock–Wallace movement: ‘the younger generation is knocking at the door’.⁸⁸ Wallace’s relationship with Mackenzie

King Christian II suite and the slow movement of the Violin Concerto; see Erik Tawaststjerna, ed. & trans. Robert Layton, *Sibelius Volume III: 1914–1957* (London: Faber & Faber, 1997), 196–205. Letters in GB-Bu MS 140 confirm that Bantock attempted to organise a further visit by Sibelius to Britain in the autumn of 1925; he contacted various institutions such as the BBC, the Liverpool Philharmonic Society, the Hallé Orchestra, the Reid Symphony Orchestra, and the Eastbourne Municipal Orchestra, to see if Sibelius might be able to conduct a concert of his own works, but the idea was abandoned.

⁸⁴ Granville Bantock, ‘Sibelius. The Man and Artist’, *The Times*, 26 February 1921, 8.

⁸⁵ Ibid.

⁸⁶ J.P.E. Harper-Scott, ‘“Our True North”: Walton’s First Symphony, Sibelianism, and the Nationalization of Modernism in England’, *ML* 89.4 (November 2008), 563.

⁸⁷ BBC Radio recording, 11 March 1941, reproduced on the CD recording *Bantock: The Song of Songs & Other Historical Recordings* (Dutton, CDLX 7043, released in 2000).

⁸⁸ Letter from William Wallace to Ottilie McLaren, 16 December 1896, GB-En MS 21507.

was obviously a difficult one – Bantock enquired as to whether they emerged from a meeting in 1898 ‘without scratch or injury’, and suggested that Wallace would have been cheered by the description of Mackenzie’s music by the Chairman of the Liverpool Philharmonic, John Wilson, as ‘wishy-washy’.⁸⁹ In Bantock’s case, whilst he was apparently happy to credit the RAM publicly for some of his compositional successes, he was more critical of Mackenzie and the institution in his letters to Wallace. When William Henry Bell (with Bantock) was made an Associate of the Academy rather than Wallace, Bantock was incensed, and after the ‘Academy ragsheet of ARAM’ arrived, he planned to return it unopened; he was also piqued that Mackenzie was taking credit for his own success as a conductor – as he could ‘only remember conducting on two occasions’ at the Academy, ‘and then it was a mere farce’.⁹⁰ However he was astute enough to know that Mackenzie could help in career terms. Not only did Bantock promote Wallace’s works to Mackenzie with the hope of getting them performed by the Philharmonic Society and consistently urge Wallace to use Mackenzie as a referee for a range of job opportunities,⁹¹ but he was on good terms with Mackenzie personally, hence Mackenzie’s contacting Bantock in relation to conducting posts in London, Bantock’s dedication of his symphonic overture *Saul* to Mackenzie and, as discussed below, his inclusion of Mackenzie’s works (along with those of several other British composers) in the New Brighton concerts.

Of other prominent figures in British musical life, initially Bantock was not impressed by the ‘loathsome weak-hearted creature’ and ‘scurvy knave’ Henry Wood; on hearing that Wood had resigned from the Queen’s Hall Choral Society, Bantock was not surprised that ‘the swollen head concealing his illiterate brains would show itself before long’.⁹² However, Bantock obviously changed his mind, dedicating the score of *Dante and Beatrice* ‘to my friend Henry Wood’ in 1911.⁹³ Similarly, Bantock’s opinion of Frederic Cowen as a conductor was not high; noting that Cowen had ‘overreached himself at last’ in his work with the Hallé Orchestra, Bantock looked forward to the appointment of Hans Richter as his replacement.⁹⁴ Bantock also had little time for the ‘impudence’ and condescending manner of his fellow composer Hamish MacCunn,⁹⁵ whose tardiness in responding to Bantock’s attempts to promote his music meant that he was not ultimately represented in the series of concerts devoted to single composers at New Brighton; typically, Bantock still programmed MacCunn’s orchestral ballad *The Ship o’ the Fiend* and the songs ‘Over a Shining Land’ and ‘The Waterfall’ on 13 August and 1 October 1899.⁹⁶ Some establishment figures do emerge from the correspondence as sympathetic towards Bantock and Wallace’s cause: Henry Coward (who planned to promote their concerts

⁸⁹ Letters 39 and 33 below.

⁹⁰ Letters 69 and 50 below.

⁹¹ See letters 41, 49, 54 and 55 below.

⁹² Letters 47, 59 and 50 below.

⁹³ Wood had a high opinion of Bantock as a composer; see Henry J. Wood, *My Life of Music* (London: Victor Gollancz, 1938), 82–3, where he highlights *Omar Khayyám*, *The Pierrot of the Minute* overture, the *Sappho Songs* and the Chinese songs.

⁹⁴ Letter 41 below.

⁹⁵ Letter 59 below.

⁹⁶ Watt, ‘Granville Bantock and Music-making’, 158–9.

in his Sheffield lectures on British music),⁹⁷ Alfred Rodewald, and Frederick Corder. Given that Corder ‘secretly’ admired Bantock and Wallace’s ‘revolution’, the hope was that he would be able to work ‘silently’ in their favour without jeopardising his academic position.⁹⁸ Bantock was keen to convince Wallace of Corder’s genuine interest, but despite several references to potential meetings to ‘discuss possibilities and the future’,⁹⁹ it is difficult to identify specific examples of his assistance.

The correspondence with Newman places some of these earlier opinions in perspective. By 1901 Bantock was clear where his musical sympathies lay in terms of his British contemporaries, supplying his own rankings. Elgar was at the top of his list at one hundred per cent; whilst Joseph Holbrooke was next at seventy-five per cent, Wallace achieved third place at forty-nine per cent, with MacCunn (despite his ‘unsufferable conceit’), Henry Erskine Allon, Bell (‘incoherent’) and Coleridge-Taylor at forty-five, forty, twenty and ten per cent respectively. Of the other ‘likely men’ – Frederic Austin, Hinton, Reginald Steggall and Pitt – Bantock viewed the latter ‘most favourably’.¹⁰⁰ Bantock’s admiration for Elgar was clear, describing him as ‘a really true-hearted artist & broad-minded man’ and ‘the finest product of the dying generation’, possessing a ‘perfect’ technique that created a music of ‘refinement & sincerity’ and ‘delicacy of ease and grace’ that, at its best, could rise ‘to heights of magnificent grandeur’.¹⁰¹ Bantock’s *Helena: Orchestral Variations on the theme H.F.B.* (1899) was a direct response to Elgar’s ‘Enigma’ Variations (indeed, Bantock was worried that Rodewald viewed his work as ‘a weak infusion of Elgar’s’, despite ‘no intentional plagiarism’),¹⁰² and he was particularly moved by a performance of *The Dream of Gerontius* at the Worcester Festival in 1902:

Never have I experienced such an impression before, as I did on hearing “Gerontius” this morning in the Cathedral ... It is a great, great work, & the man, who wrote it, is a Master, and a Leader. We were all deeply affected, and gave way to our feelings ... I want to hear nothing better. Twice I have felt as if transfixed by a spike from the crown of my head to my feet. Once at on hearing Parsifal at Bayreuth, when the dead swan is brought on, & today, at the words “Novissima hora”.¹⁰³

However, there were criticisms. Bantock preferred ‘crude effects’ that were ‘reflective of the modern spirit’ rather than ‘polished beauties’, and ‘strength and virility’ rather than ‘emasculated chivalry’. Despite Elgar ‘flash[ing] out occasionally’, this was felt to be awkward, ‘as though he were on strange ground’, given that Elgar derived ‘more satisfaction in tracing the gentler & more tender moods, all this being characteristic of his own nature’. For Bantock, the main difference between them related to structure and genre: whilst Elgar was ‘at liberty to work in the old forms

⁹⁷ For Coward’s opinion of Bantock’s music, see his *Reminiscences of Henry Coward* (London: J. Curwen & Sons, 1919), 279–80.

⁹⁸ Letter 13 below.

⁹⁹ Letter 18 below.

¹⁰⁰ Letter 116 below.

¹⁰¹ Letters 119 and 118 below.

¹⁰² Letter 119 below.

¹⁰³ Letter 148 below.

if he chooses', Bantock preferred 'the new paths'. Condemning the 'extravagant enthusiasm at present surrounding him & fettering his actions' and his having to 'temporise with the ancients who are satisfied only with convention & classicism, & eschew modernity', Bantock was hopeful that Elgar 'may yet fling off traditions and lead the van of the coming race'; Elgar's 'future schemes' suggested that he would be able to develop his 'liberal tendencies' to 'break from convention yet', and develop into a 'really great leader'.¹⁰⁴

While this view dates from 1901, when Elgar had yet to explore the deformational structures of works such as *In the South* (1904), the First Symphony (1908) and *Falstaff* (1913), the subsequent years saw Elgar replaced in Bantock's estimation by an alternative model for modern British music: Frederick Delius.¹⁰⁵ In 1907 Bantock described how *Appalachia* had 'bowled [him] over', beating anything he had 'ever heard' as a 'truly wonderful work'; in comparison, Bantock was inclined to 'burn everything [he had] written'.¹⁰⁶ Combined with the 'stupendous' *A Mass of Life*,¹⁰⁷ this confirmed Delius as 'the Great Man we have all been waiting for ... an Artist whom we may hail as our Leader':

In Delius, we have got a musician, who can surpass the greatest giants of the Continent. He is sane, defiant, sincere, and as true as gold. Here at last is a man who can do something. A man with a heart & a temperament ... We've every reason to rejoice.¹⁰⁸

More problematic for Bantock was the music of his friend, Joseph Holbrooke (1877–1958).¹⁰⁹ In December 1900 Bantock could report to Newman that Holbrooke's Piano Concerto in F minor was 'excellent, most melodious & difficult as usual, but well worth a production' with the 'orchestra not too severe', and an early String Quintet contained 'many beautiful passages & pages'.¹¹⁰ As he initially considered Holbrooke 'a real genius' in his earlier works,¹¹¹ Bantock may also have admired Holbrooke's orchestral poem *The Raven* (1900), given its distinctive structure

¹⁰⁴ Letters 119 and 118 below.

¹⁰⁵ For a recent discussion of Delius and modernism, see Sarah Collins, 'The Composer as "Good European": Musical Modernism, *Amor fati* and the Cosmopolitanism of Frederick Delius', *Twentieth-Century Music* 12.1 (March 2015), 97–123.

¹⁰⁶ Letters 220 and 221 below.

¹⁰⁷ Letter 221 below. This view pre-echoed that of 'A Mass of Life', *MT* 50 (July 1909), 466, commenting on the work's premiere at the Queen's Hall on 7 June 1909: 'the most conservative of hearers could not resist or deny the attraction of the manifold effects of great beauty and originality in which the score abounds – effects that appeal both to the intellect and the sense ... Delius is in the forefront of the movement that has of late years altered the character of choral music'.

¹⁰⁸ Letter 221 below. Bantock also owned the 1907 two-piano arrangement of Delius's Piano Concerto (premiered in its final revised version in London at a Promenade Concert on 22 October 1907 by the Hungarian pianist Theodor Szántó); see letter 259 below. Bantock's diary, 27 June 1920, also confirms that he played over several works by Delius on the piano with Donald Tovey, including the First Violin Sonata, the Cello Sonata, *Paris*, and *Appalachia*.

¹⁰⁹ For an overview of the Bantock–Holbrooke relationship in the context of the letters from Holbrooke to Bantock housed at *GB-Bu*, see David Craik, 'Friendship with Granville Bantock', in Paul Watt and Anne-Marie Forbes (eds), *Joseph Holbrooke: Composer, Critic, and Musical Patriot* (Lanham: Rowman & Littlefield, 2015), 23–39.

¹¹⁰ Letter 104 below.

¹¹¹ Letter 149 below.

(incorporating a scherzo and slow movement within the one-movement design), compulsive repetition and undermining of expectations that represents a novel response to the uncanny quality of Edgar Allan Poe's poem.¹¹² However, Bantock became increasingly dissatisfied with Holbrooke's approach; although he felt that he had made some headway with 'a more systematic plan for the "Masque of the Red Death" ... discard[ing] much of the present extravagances, & ... not handicapping himself by 8 horns & other fads ... writing more simply, & using more extended melody throughout, instead of at the end',¹¹³ he lamented Holbrooke's 'retrogression from the rational to the insane' – a tendency to undermine his scores 'with the most extravagant imitations of Strauss' that made successful performance unlikely owing to the limited rehearsal time. An example was Holbrooke's orchestral poem, *The Skeleton in Armour*, premiered by Bantock in 1900, but performed in a revised version in 1902, in which the Strauss-inspired changes had transformed his 'charming work' into 'a distorted nightmare'. 'To continue to regard H[olbrooke]'s music as truly great', Bantock suggested, 'there must be evidence of a saner and more real art in his music than his latest work discloses'.¹¹⁴

In clarifying working relationships between some of the British composers in this period, the letters also discuss early plans for a Society of British Composers. This idea was mooted as early as 1898 by Arthur Hinton, with Hinton, Wallace, Algernon Ashton, Pitt and Coleridge-Taylor as potential committee members. Although Bantock was invited to join, he recommended Stanley Hawley in his place, as he felt it impolitic to 'join a crew, which is sure to meet with derision from several quarters', and was suspicious about some of the motives of those involved. He initially regarded Pitt as '[Henry] Wood's satellite', Ashton was 'a great self-advertiser', and, given that Taylor was considered 'a recognised genius', he felt that Wallace and he were in danger of being marginalised. As for Hinton, whilst Bantock respected him as a musician, he was less enamoured of him as a colleague, and suggested that 'the scheme would be good if entrusted to other, & more capable hands'.¹¹⁵ More humorously, Bantock suggested awarding Hinton 'a new degree to tack on to his A.R.A.M.' (the 'A.S.S.').¹¹⁶ There are also several references to Hinton's appearance – Bantock professed, like Wallace, to have 'little confidence in long hair', and suggested that they would be 'a greater strength' in their promotion of British music as a duo, rather than associating too closely with 'poor weak, pusillanimous creatures of the capillary genus'.¹¹⁷ Bantock was also unconvinced by Hinton's apparent idea to promote chamber music, as he felt this was 'an effete art, lacking in sonority & effect, & there are not enough supporters of it in this country',¹¹⁸ and consequently by 9 October 1898 Hinton's scheme was regarded as 'hopeless'. It was not until 1905 that a Society of British Composers

¹¹² See Michael Allis, 'Holbrooke and Poe Revisited: Refiguring *The Raven* as the Musical Uncanny', in Watt and Forbes, *Joseph Holbrooke*, 117–51.

¹¹³ Letter 131 below.

¹¹⁴ Letter 149 below.

¹¹⁵ Letter 40 below.

¹¹⁶ Letter 43 below.

¹¹⁷ Letter 40 below.

¹¹⁸ Letter 41 below.