OPUS SORABJIANUM

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THE LIFE AND WORKS OF KAIKHOSRU SHAPURJI SORABJI

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Al carissimo amico PAUL RAPOPORT,
che rispose “That will be your job!” al mio suggerimento
di scrivere la biografia di Sorabji dopo la pubblicazione
del suo libro *Sorabji: A Critical Celebration*,
per la sua gentilissima ospitalità
e le sue risposte alle mie molte domande.
Ecco, dunque, il “libro grande sinfonico”.

À mon très cher ami ALISTAIR HINTON,
compositeur accompli et remarquable archiviste,
défenseur infatigable d’une noble cause,
pour son encouragement et sa générosité indéfectibles
depuis plus de trois décennies,
et pour son hospitalité et son aide inestimable à tous égards,
sans parler de sa patience.

If I must praise
Let me be partial to a friend of mine
Concealed as K.
Whose mind's a thousand miles from Mons Badonius,
Matter on which he is homo sardonicus…
A friend of mine for forty years
And more to come if faith can pray
For selfish comfort in its true desire.
A man whose very spirit is pure fire;
Who on a careful ground can raise cathedrals of majestic sound
With echoing roofs where rich mosaics glow;
Like those wise travellers know
In dark Ravenna, or his forebears knew
In sacred Cefalù.
Who tends in sensuous gardens perfumed flowers
Rich in subtle powers
That take the mind
Or those the curious find
On the margins of a Book of Hours
Or a Persian manuscript entwined
With grace, where a wind's breath softly blows
And stirs the fragrant Sa'di's living rose.

— Harold Morland (January 1975 at the latest,
from a poem intended to form the preface to *The Tree of Life*)

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Preface

Discovering Sorabji

I discovered Kaikhosru Shapurji Sorabji in 1975 while leafing through the *Guide to the Pianist's Repertoire* by Maurice Hinson (1930–2015). The extensive entry on this composer with a most unusual name described a massive work entitled *Opus clavicembalisticum* comprising, among others, a theme and variations and a passacaglia with forty-nine and eighty-one variations, respectively, not to mention several fugues, the last of which is based on four subjects. Being already interested in the works of other composers known for (then very) rarely played and difficult piano works, like Alkan, Busoni, and Godowsky, I was at once attracted. Although I immediately ordered most of the few available published scores, it was not until 1983 that I began to work seriously on Sorabji with a talk at McGill University (Montréal, Québec) and an introductory article for the music journal *Sonances*. Paul Rapoport, then a professor of musicology at McMaster University (Hamilton, Ontario), who had been working actively researching Sorabji for a number of years and was to edit a collective book on him (see below), had provided useful information in the preparation of my article. Unknown to me, Kenneth Derus had sent a copy of my article to Sorabji, as had Rapoport, whose comment I was amused to discover years later in the Sorabji Archive's collection of letters: "The article seems all right to me as far as it goes (which is not very far), despite some errors." Derus later mentioned to Sorabji that I was preparing a compilation of performances of his works for Rapoport's book.[1] He may have read this first article about him in French and known of my research, but I never heard from him—nor did I ever meet him.

On 9 November 1984 Rapoport travelled from Hamilton, and I from Toronto (where I was studying for my Ph.D.), to Montréal to attend Geoffrey Douglas Madge's performance of *Opus clavicembalisticum* for the Événements du Neuf (a series of new music concerts given at nine o'clock on the ninth day of the month). This first personal contact also enabled us to meet the pianist Marc-André Hamelin, then a master's student at Temple University (Philadelphia), who turned (or rather slid) the pages for parts one and three. During the reception that followed, Hamelin and I discovered that we shared a passion for the same repertoire (Liszt, Alkan, Busoni, Godowsky, Sorabji, Stevenson, etc.); we have been very close friends ever since. That evening was indeed very important for the development of research on Sorabji, as it eventually led to several editions on my part, and to editions, performances, and recordings on Hamelin's. In fact, he has often provided much expert assistance in the preparation of my editions.

On 8 March 1985 I visited Rapoport on the occasion of a performance by Ronald Stevenson of his *Passacaglia on DSCH*, which he had organized at McMaster University. This evening not only enabled me to meet Stevenson but led to an invitation from Rapoport to contribute the list of performances I had prepared for my own use to the collective book on Sorabji that he was editing. He was kind enough to give me a preliminary version of the catalogue of works that was to become the crowning glory of his book. This enabled me to begin further research based on comprehensive and reliable data, which

[1] PR to KSS, 16 May 1983; KD to KSS, 15 January 1983 {Derus, D072, p. 243}, and 14 May 1985 {Derus, D097, p. 350}.

was sorely lacking at the time. In 1989 I suggested to Rapoport that he would have many problems to solve in writing a biography of Sorabji, a project I thought would come after the publication of the book (which happened in 1992). To my surprise, he replied: "That will be your job!" Of course, I took the suggestion seriously and, in October 1990, mentioned my project to Sorabji's residual legatee, Alistair Hinton, who replied: "Loud cheers! I'll give you all the help I can." Hinton has always been supportive of all my projects and has provided detailed answers to countless queries with speed and accuracy as well as with an epistolary brio that would make his part of the correspondence worthy of an edition. Without his help—and that of Rapoport—I could not have written this book.

Starting in 1992 I began preparing a series of critical editions of shorter piano works by Sorabji, not only to contribute to a better knowledge of his music, but also to learn to read correctly the vast amount of music he left behind. Two grants from the Social Sciences and Humanities Research Council of Canada enabled me to travel to the United Kingdom four times. In addition to the research stays in London, I was able to visit places of significance for Sorabjian research, namely, Bournemouth and Glasgow. A trip to Palermo, the capital of Sicily, where Sorabji claimed to have his maternal ancestors, allowed me to confirm my intuition that he had created an imaginary world for himself. I was also fortunate enough to spend several days on two occasions at the Sorabji Archive, then located at Easton Dene, the Hintons' beautiful Bath home. There I lived a scholar's dream, with immediate and unfettered access to Sorabji's manuscripts and to his surviving correspondence, carefully arranged and preserved in plastic sleeves and binders. I will never forget the moment when Hinton, on the evening of my arrival, put back on the table his glass of the 26-year-old Springbank malt whisky I had bought in London to make our first meeting more memorable, disappeared for a moment, and returned with the three large bound volumes of the *Messa grande sinfonica* (weighing some 18 kg) and placed them on my lap. I also benefited from his gracious willingness to answer any question about Sorabji and his entourage, which he has done ever since; his wife, Terry, could often find a date or a detail by consulting her diary. On a weekend in July 1993, they kindly took me on a pilgrimage to Corfe Castle and Winfrith Newburgh, and asked Denise Vicars, who had been very close to Sorabji in his later years, to join us for a chat in a pub near Wareham. It would be hard to find a person more dedicated to helping others expand their knowledge of Sorabji than Hinton.

State of Research

Before outlining the structure of this book, it may be appropriate to review the antecedents of the present project. The reader will have to suffer the absence of bibliographical references in this state of research; full citations for the publications referred to here will be found in the notes and the bibliography; the point here is the larger picture, not the technical details.

My personal bibliography of titles relating to Sorabji consists of more than one thousand entries. Few are as significant as books and dissertations or scholarly articles in peer-reviewed journals; in fact, most are dictionary articles and reviews of concerts and recordings. Nevertheless, they all document the pioneering efforts of a handful of people who have helped bring Sorabji out of obscurity. Sorabji's friends—like those of his *magister in absentia*, Busoni—have worked hard to convince the music world of the validity of his music. Apart from reviews of the few published scores or occasional concerts, the earliest articles on the music were written by friends, such as Christopher à Becket Williams and Philip Heseltine. The only work to prompt extensive comments would be, in the early 1930s, the massive *Opus clavicembalisticum*, notably by the composers Havergal Brian and Edmund Duncan-Rubbra. The most notable early examination of Sorabji's music, using some technical language, was an article by a certain Arthur G. Browne (who seems to have met the composer) in *Music & Letters* for 1930.

Sorabji's name first appeared in a music dictionary in 1924. The entry by his friend Heseltine in Arthur Eaglefield Hull's *Dictionary of Modern Music and Musicians* was followed by entries in Walter Wilson Cobbett's *Cobbett's Cyclopedic Survey of Chamber Music* (1929), Carlo Schmidl's *Dizionario universale dei musicisti* (1938), and Percy Scholes's *Oxford Companion to Music* (1938). Further entries (updated as new editions appeared) were published in two American reference works, Oscar Thompson's *International Cyclopedia of Music and Musicians* (1939) and *Baker's Biographical Dictionary of Musicians* (1940). The sixth edition of the latter work (1978), edited by Nicolas Slonimsky, is notable for a number of inaccuracies concerning the reclusive composer. In this and later editions we read that Sorabji owned a castle (in fact a simple house in the village of Corfe Castle), that he had issued a declaration forbidding performances of his works around 1950 (which he did not), and that *Opus clavicembalisticum* lasted about five hours (the average of four modern performances is four hours and twelve minutes). Sorabji was included *Grove's Dictionary of Music and Musicians* in 1954. The very incomplete entry (representing what could be done at the time, given the composer's desire for privacy) was expanded and corrected by Donald Garvelmann in 1980, and completely rewritten by Paul Rapoport in 2001 (and revised by me in 2013). The other major reference work on music, *Die Musik in Geschichte und Gegenwart*, published a one-column article on Sorabji in 1965 by two writers not known for any expertise in the field, which was replaced in 2006 by my own commissioned entry (considerably shortened from what I had submitted, despite my protestations). As such a curious figure in the history of music, Sorabji has rarely been mentioned more than cursorily, if at all, in music histories or period surveys, even recent ones. Although his name appears three times in the *Blackwell History of Music in Britain* edited by Stephen Banfield (1995), Nicholas Cook's *Cambridge History of Twentieth-Century Music* (2004) and Richard Taruskin's six-volume *Oxford History of Western Music* (2005) do not grant him even a passing mention.

In the 1970s Paul Rapoport, then a doctoral student at the University of Illinois, became the pioneer of Sorabjian research. In addition to preparing sound files for some forty minutes of *Opus clavicembalisticum* from some 15,000 individually punched cards (those were the days), he included a chapter on Sorabji in his book *Opus est—Six Composers from Northern Europe* (1978). This, the most accurate and complete account of Sorabji available at the time, included a discussion of *Opus clavicembalisticum* using musical language and musical examples. Rapoport was also the first of several connoisseurs of Sorabji to give public lectures introducing the name to groups of interested people.

Sorabji's music has so far been heard in concert only rarely. The handful of isolated performances given by the composer and two of his friends between 1920 and 1936 were obviously not enough to make him a household name. Between 1962 and 1968 his close friend Frank Holliday made a series of private recordings of his playing for limited distribution. Sorabji, who had never been a professional pianist with a polished technique, had not played in public for more than twenty-five years; his recordings give only an idea—a very inaccurate one—of what the music really sounds like. Selections from these recorded performances were played in 1969 as part of a radio programme prepared by Holliday using material written by another close friend, Erik Chisholm. This programme, which was aired five more times in an expanded format in the early 1970s, generated a great deal of interest in the United States.

Another reason why Sorabji's music was not often heard was that, between 1936 and 1976, he objected to public performances, and there were very few unauthorized performances. His name only began to appear more frequently in the press when he softened his stance in favour of some enterprising artists (namely, Yonty Solomon, Michael Habermann, and Geoffrey Douglas Madge). The first commercial recording, by Habermann, was released in 1980; other recordings by the same pioneer and other dedicated performers, mostly pianists, soon followed. There have been two peaks

of activity. One was between 2002 and 2007, when Jonathan Powell made no less than seven recordings, including a three-CD set, with most works of the works being recorded for the first time. Another was in 2020, with the release of no less than eleven discs by Powell (a seven-disc set), Abel Sánchez-Aguilera, and Fredrik Ullén (two-disc sets in each case).

As early as 1957, Sorabji was mentioned several times (with four musical examples) in a doctoral dissertation by Henry Samuel Wolf (1915–90) on the twentieth-century piano sonata. An honours thesis by Bruce Posner, completed in 1975, was the first academic writing devoted entirely to the composer; surprisingly, the author was not enrolled in a music programme but was a biology major. Academic research began to appear with some regularity only in 1985. Considering only writings entirely devoted to Sorabji, as of 2023 there are six B.A. honours theses, eleven M.A. (or M.Mus.) theses, and six D.M.A. and six Ph.D. dissertations from universities in England, Canada, the United States, Italy, Australia, Northern Ireland, and Spain (in that order). The earliest ones were obviously written with limited access to the primary sources and prior to the publication of the present research, which has spanned a period of some twenty years and is the only one based on all the available documentation located in England and Canada. Two of the early writings, both from 1985, can be highlighted: Nazlin Bhimani's M.A. thesis consisted of a survey of Sorabji's critical writings for the *New Age*, and Michael Habermann's D.M.A. dissertation offered a detailed analysis of *Le jardin parfumé— Poem for Piano Solo*. In 2002 Simon Abrahams devoted his Ph.D. dissertation to a much needed reassessment of the myths surrounding Sorabji as a performer and as a composer. He especially dealt with the many problems of notation found in his manuscripts and with his attitude to dealing with mistakes. Sean Vaughn Owen, who had already written no less than six graduate papers devoted in whole or in part to Sorabji before his doctoral studies at the University of Southampton (where Abrahams had obtained his master's degree in 1995 with a thesis on Sorabji's use of the fugal form), completed an oral biography of Sorabji's Corfe Castle years in 2006. As well as preserving the fascinating recollections of eighteen people who were able to provide information and insight into the reclusive composer and his companion Reginald Norman Best, the author has made important discoveries about the composer's mother and her family. No less than three doctoral degrees were awarded in 2016. Kevin Bowyer produced a critical edition of the three organ symphonies. Sean McMenamin produced an extensive study of Sorabji's "counter-canon" of neglected works and obscure composers as seen in his critical writings. Lukas Huisman discussed among other works *Opus clavicembalisticum* and the *Symphonic Nocturne for Piano Alone* (the second of which he edited and performed) as part of a wider study of the relationships between complexity and human limitations. In 2022 Abel Sánchez-Aguilera, who recorded the *Toccata seconda* in 2020, completed a master's thesis devoted to the *Toccata terza*, this score being just one of four large-scale piano works he has edited since 2016.

Sorabji has long been under-represented, if at all, at academic conferences and in peer-reviewed journals. My own contributions, published between 1991 and 2002, then accounted for a fair proportion of the total, but the situation has improved considerably in the last fifteen years. Recent studies, in the form of chapters or symposia, include Lisa Hardy's *The British Piano Sonata, 1870–1945* (2001), Tomi Mäkela's contribution to Giselher Schubert's *Französische und deutsche Musik im 20. Jahrhundert* (2001), Robert Rimm's *The Composer-Pianists: Hamelin and the Eight* (2002), and Nalini Ghuman's contribution to Julie Brown's *Western Music and Race* (2007). In 2013, Sarah Collins included Sorabji in an article on British composer-critics of the "doomed generation", inspired by Arnold Whittall's article "The Isolationists" published in 1966. In 2016, Andrew Mead provided a detailed analysis of the two large variation movements from *Opus clavicembalisticum* and extensive comments on the second set of variations on the *Dies irae*. In addition, in 2017, Lukas Huisman, Bruno Gingras,

Geert Dhondt, and Marc Leman discussed the former work in light of musical complexity and "embodied notation" (see Huisman's dissertation mentioned above).

The book on which Paul Rapoport had begun working in the early 1980s was published in 1992, and its reprint two years later (with minor corrections) shows what a void it filled. The first publication to consider primary sources, *Sorabji: A Critical Celebration* offers two major contributions. The first is a substantial introduction to the composer by Alistair Hinton, his closest friend during the last sixteen years of his life. This is followed by a "continuation" in which Rapoport covers such topics as Sorabji's objection to revealing his age, his interest in occultism and number symbolism, the influence of his mother, his homosexuality, and the so-called ban on performances. The chapter most readers had been waiting for, also by Rapoport, was a "complete provisional" catalogue of Sorabji's compositions. It finally revealed, in their full splendour, the details of one of the most outstanding musical productions in the history of music. The book also contains an edition of Sorabji's letters to Heseltine by Kenneth Derus, a discussion of Sorabji's music criticism by Nazlin Bhimani and a study of the piano music by Michael Habermann (these two revised from the authors' M.A. thesis and D.M.A. dissertation, respectively), and a register of all known performances of the music by me. The subject of one of the book's chapters, the letters to Heseltine, has been taken up again by Brian Inglis and Barry Smith, whose critical edition was published in 2019. Despite all the work I have done, with access to many documents not available to Rapoport, I still marvel at his impeccable scholarship. My book in no way invalidates his, but rather complements it (and corrects some errors in the catalogue of works).

In September 1988, after lengthy discussions with Sorabji, Alistair Hinton founded the Sorabji Music Archive (renamed the Sorabji Archive in January 1993).[2] It houses a unique collection of literature by and about Sorabji, including as much of his correspondence as could be traced. Hinton inherited all the surviving manuscripts in the composer's possession at the time of his death, and his aim has always been to make them available to interested people. Although these precious manuscripts were transferred—should one say translated, as in the case of relics?—to the Paul Sacher Stiftung (Basel) in 1994, the Archive sells photocopies and PDF files of the manuscripts. A number of major research libraries in England (notably the British Library) and North America hold such photocopies. Also available from the Archive are copies of Sorabji's hundreds of articles, reviews, and open letters; these supplement the commercial reprints (1979 and 1986) of his two published collections of essays. Previously, a substantial part of Sorabji's works, both musical and literary, was available only in the form of microfilms prepared by (or under the supervision of) friends. They can be found in a few select libraries, most likely as non-circulating material; access was, to say the least, difficult.

Much energy has been expended during the last twenty years or so in making previously unknown works available in readable and accurate editions. The Sorabji Archive sells on-demand photocopies and PDF files of these editions—produced out of devotion to Sorabji's cause—by (among others) Alexander Abercrombie, Simon Abrahams, Jason Acuña, Donna Amato, Kevin Bowyer, Anthony Burton-Page, François Fabre, Marc-André Hamelin, Alistair Hinton, Charles Hopkins, Frazer Jarvis, Ramer Davey Lee, Jonathan Powell, Chris Rice, Abel Sánchez-Aguilera, David Wolfson, and Richard Younger. Between 1992 and 1994 I contributed editions of seven shorter piano works and one song, all with detailed introductions and critical reports; seventeen new editions followed between 2004 and 2008, mainly of chamber works and early songs, but also of works involving the orchestra, bringing the total to twenty-five, with two further editions of short pieces in 2013. In 2021 and 2022 I prepared second editions of four of my editions in view of performances.

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[2]The official name was The Sorabji Music Archive and is now The Sorabji Archive (i.e., with a capitalized initial article). In this book, the article is normally merged with the text and thus written with a lowercase letter.

While the Paul Sacher Stiftung (Basel) is now the primary source for Sorabji's musical manuscripts not in private hands, the Kaikhosru Shapurji Sorabji Collection at the William Ready Division of Archives and Research Collections at McMaster University (Hamilton, Ontario), has provided a unique source of information since 1988. It houses the correspondence and memorabilia (or Sorabjiana) collected between 1937 and 1988 by Sorabji's close friend Frank Holliday as well as two later accruals (1998, 2005) devoted to the documents owned by two other friends, Cecil Ewing and Norman Gentieu. The collection is a treasure trove of essential information on the composer and his entourage; despite the wealth of information it has provided for the present book, I must say that it could still be explored and exploited more fully.

As Sorabji's music became more widely known through concerts, recordings, and new editions, the need to share opinions and information grew. Erica Schulman Kane, a Ph.D. in physics from Columbia University who also plays the viola, set up a first website in 1996 and opened a Yahoo! discussion group on 17 February 2001. Inactive since 2014, it had 319 members when the hosting company closed the forums in December 2020. The Sorabji Archive, which launched its own website in 2006 (http://www.sorabji-archive.co.uk/), not only provides detailed information on the music, the performances, and the editions (generated from a database), but also offers since February 2007 a discussion forum (http://www.sorabji-archive.co.uk/forum/index.php) with 170 members as of May 2023.

The gospel has thus been spread by a small group, mostly people who had befriended Sorabji. They pioneered his music at a time when most people, on hearing his name, could say little more than "Who? How do you spell his name? Is he an Indian composer?" As with Busoni, whom he deified, it took many introductory articles, lectures, and non-technical descriptions of selected pieces to rescue him from purgatory. Sorabji is a high point—albeit an isolated one—in the history of music, especially piano music. Approaching his works, especially the longer ones lasting several hours, may be daunting at first, but they offer ample rewards to those who take the time to understand their unique nature. Thanks to the existence of the above-mentioned archival collections and editions, not to mention the recordings now appearing with increasing frequency, further research is not only possible but also much easier. Mentions of Sorabji are still rare in serious music literature, even though much of his musical output is readily available in printed editions and a substantial cross-section of it has been recorded. Reading the various postings on Internet piano newsgroups (where most of the non-academic discussion takes place these days) shows how his music is still largely misunderstood and how many people, under the cover of anonymity, do not hesitate to make misinformed and hasty judgments on very shaky grounds. May patient research such as the present one convince the musical world that Sorabji is worth taking seriously, however far from the norm he may be.

The composer's absence from noted music history books has already been mentioned in this section. Another gap is the lack of official recognition by the country where he was born and lived all his life. The composer Gavin Bryars sounded like a lone voice when, in 1983, he described Sorabji as "one of the greatest British composers".[3] Finally, it is appropriate to mention the efforts of the well-known actor and writer Stephen Fry, who was among the first to announce the release of *Opus sorabjianum* in a Twitter status on 15 August 2013 (https://twitter.com/stephenfry/status/368083926860197888). In 2004, as a member of the panel that vets candidates for the blue plaques affixed by English Heritage to the houses of "illustrious individuals", he had lobbied for Sorabji, unfortunately to no avail. Let us hope that his time will come and that a plaque will soon grace the building at

[3] "Gavin Bryars: Interview with Peter Dickinson on 4 August 1983 at the BBC", in Peter Dickinson, *Lord Berners, Composer, Writer, Painter* (Woodbridge: The Boydell Press, 2008), 128–37; 135.

Clarence Gate Gardens where he wrote so many works, just as one honouring John Ogdon, who performed and recorded *Opus clavicembalisticum*, was unveiled by the Old Mansfield Woodhouse Society in Mansfield Woodhouse on 19 July 2021.

Sorabji's Life in One Paragraph

Sorabji's life follows a simple course that can be told in a single paragraph or, in Schenkerian terms, the "fundamental structure" that this book will "unfold". In the late nineteenth century, a Parsi civil engineer from Bombay met an Englishwoman in London. The only child of this union, born on 14 August 1892 in Chingford, Essex, lived alone with his mother in London; his father had returned to Bombay some years later to look after his business of machinery for the cotton industry, leaving his family with a trust fund that freed them from the need to be gainfully employed. Sorabji was privately educated by tutors and, with no formal music training other than brief studies with an obscure London musician named Charles A. (Abraham) Trew, began composing in 1914, around the time he changed his first names from Leon Dudley to Kaikhosru Shapurji after joining the Parsi community. Apart from a few trips to Scotland for performances and a handful of holidays in Sicily, Sorabji rarely left London, where he spent his time composing works, many of which were far too long and complex for most musicians. With the financial help of his father, he was able to publish fourteen of his works between 1921 and 1931. As a music critic for two small newspapers edited by Alfred Richard Orage, the social thinker associated with guild socialism, he wrote hundreds of concert reviews (and later of broadcasts and records) between 1924 and 1949. Some of his essays were published in book form in 1932 and 1947. A self-taught pianist and by no means a virtuoso in the strict sense of the word, Sorabji was able to give (very problematic) readings of his works, in particular the first performances of eight of them, from 1920 onwards. In 1936 a particularly unsatisfactory performance by another of the first part of *Opus clavicembalisticum* led him to conclude that no performance was better than a mere travesty. It was also at this time that the misanthropic composer, who felt alienated from English society not only because of his mixed ethnic background but also because of his homosexual orientation, withdrew from any public life he might have had up to that point. He then devoted himself almost entirely to his music, spending the rest of his time reading on a wide variety of subjects and expressing his strong views on many non-musical issues through open letters. Having his music performed (and published) was no longer a concern; his audience remained limited to selected friends (usually one at a time) in the privacy of his home. Another important activity throughout Sorabji's life was an extensive correspondence with his limited circle of friends, whom he valued as much as he tended to despise the rest of the world. In 1951 he moved from London, a city he had long railed against, to the Dorset village of Corfe Castle, where he shared a house with his mother's godson, Reginald Norman Best. His meeting in 1972 with the young Scottish composer Alistair Hinton led him to resume composition, from which he had begun to distance himself in 1962, only to abandon it completely in 1968. Hinton's persuasion also led him to agree, starting in 1976, to selected performances and recordings. Sorabji died on 15 October 1988 in Winfrith Newburgh, near Dorchester, a little less than eight months after Best, with whom he had moved into a nursing home in 1987.

Format of the Book

Unlike most composers, the reclusive Sorabji shunned a public life dotted with publications, first performances, recordings, teaching and administrative duties, active membership in musical associations, interviews, awards, etc. He never had to make decisions that would affect people or corporate bodies and would have to be explained; the opinions he shared with others were simply the ideas of an individual. His limited contact with the world around him is reflected in the letters he

exchanged with his small circle of friends. Documenting such a life is made even more difficult by the paucity of surviving official documents and memorabilia. Fortunately, the Sorabji Archive holds a collection of letters from some 175 individuals or corporate bodies as well as copies of Sorabji's letters, and others are found in various public archives. The surviving letters to him obviously represent only a part of what he received, as he sometimes discarded many en masse, probably to make more space (the same also applies to books and periodicals); only later did he realize that he should have examined things more closely before proceeding. He destroyed what must have been several boxes of letters from Frank Holliday, with whom his friendship had come to a bitter end, but he did not keep the letters from Philip Heseltine and Erik Chisholm, although in those cases there was no such rupture. His lack of care in preserving a written record of his relationships with others has certainly deprived us of a considerable amount of information about his life. Working with limited sources, which usually tell only one side of the story, means that there are years when there is little to report. Novelists and authors of popular biographies would thus probably not hesitate to write narratives full of legends and exaggerations despite the need to dispel those that have accumulated over the years. A highly enthusiastic newspaper article published in 1937 is so amusing in this respect that a few passages deserve to be quoted.

> A distinguished visitor to St Andrews just now is Mr Kaikhosru Sorabji, the composer and critic.
>
> Son of a Parsee millionaire and a Spanish prima donna, Mr Sorabji has spent most of his forty years in Britain. [...]
>
> So difficult are his compositions that they have to be taken on trust by the man in the street. [...]
>
> [...] Mr. Sorabji speaks with distinction half a dozen European tongues [...]
>
> The most exacting and—on occasion—scarifying of critics, he is the most modest and cheerful of men. He shuns the coteries and cliques, and lives an ascetic existence, devoted to his music and Thomist philosophy.[4]

Opus sorabjianum (a Latin title referring to no less than six of Sorabji's works) is thus made up of thematic sections that follow the actual chronology or are placed at the most logical point. Some sections are devoted to the biographical narrative; others bring together facts scattered through Sorabji's life to document his development as a composer, writer, and human being. It has not been possible to offer more than one thematic discussion in five chapters (6, 8, 9, 22, 23). The reasons for this are: the large number of works written during a given period of the composer's career, the chronology of events, and the need to achieve a certain balance in the number of pages. It therefore seemed justified to break the rule that a section should have at least two subsections. Furthermore, the length of these thematic discussions is usually (and unfortunately) proportional to the available sources. Despite the number of topics covered, many of the issues raised by Sorabji's personality and by his attitude to music, composition, and performance can only be touched on briefly, and several others have been left to other writers; in many cases, the sources simply preclude going further without taking undue risks.

Much space is devoted to Sorabji's relationships with the dedicatees of his works. As he sometimes dedicated more than one work to a particular friend, his relationships with that person are described in the most appropriate place. For example, Sorabji's forty-two-year friendship with Frank Holliday is the subject of a substantial section. These discussions, usually associated with introductory comments on a musical work, are identified in the section titles by the addition of the dedicatee's name after a work title. In other words, the absence of a name after a title does not mean that the work is without dedicatee (although it may), but that the section devoted to that person is found elsewhere.

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[4] "Talk of the City and Round About: Famous Composer in St Andrews", *Dundee Evening Telegraph*, 9 July 1937.

The years of birth and death of people mentioned in the text are given very often, if they are no longer alive, but not systematically, especially if several names are mentioned in a row or if it seems superfluous. The same applies to years of composition of musical works and the like. In the case of the dedicatees of Sorabji's works and other people close to him, dates are given in full, with places. They are occasionally repeated in later chapters when it may be helpful in the context. Parenthetical references to chapters where a particular subject is discussed in full are used liberally (e.g., see chapter 10).

Opus sorabjianum, which usually follows the conventions of Canadian English (but uses British terminology for note names as a result of the publication context originally intended), begins with a substantial introduction summarizing my twenty-five years of close contact with Sorabji's manuscripts. It avoids the need to explain each time a particular feature is encountered, such as the format and binding of the scores, the notational peculiarities and the use of pianistic devices, the use of descriptive and evocative titles, the choice of languages for titles and inscriptions, etc. The reader, after having absorbed this primer, will be able to follow the descriptions of the works more easily—and reading it again from time to time may prove helpful. Readers who are not well versed in music theory will not feel lost.

Part 1 ("Family Background and Early Years") begins with an account of what little we know of Sorabji's real—and alleged—family background and his early years, then continues with his friendship with the Heseltine circle and his budding career as a composer at the time of his entry into the Parsi community. It also shows him as a fierce writer, engaging in controversies with fellow musicians through open letters.

Part 2 ("A Composer-Pianist at Work"), after documenting Sorabji's meeting with his idol, the composer and pianist Ferruccio Busoni, covers such topics as his contacts with music publishers, his interest in occultism and extrasensory perception, and his attitudes towards women and children and (what was then called) sexual inversion. His friendships with the critic Christopher à Becket Williams, the occultist Bernard Bromage, and the composer Erik Chisholm are also explored. Other topics include Sorabji's activities as a music critic and his trips to India to deal with matters related to the death of his father. This part, which also documents the composer's abilities as a pianist and his attitude to the piano and the organ, ends with an account of John Tobin's unfortunate partial reading of *Opus clavicembalisticum*, which was instrumental in convincing him of the appropriateness of restricting performances of his works.

Part 3 ("The Recluse Composer-Critic") begins by showing where Sorabji, now retired from public life, stood on society, politics, economics, and morals, issues strongly present in his readings and open letters. It also discusses how he found refuge in his friendships with Frank Holliday and Harold Morland at a time when his dislike of human nature and of England grew considerably. A chapter describes Sorabji's domestic life with Reginald Norman Best at Corfe Castle, where he had moved in the early 1950s, and his friendship with an American admirer, Norman Gentieu, who paid for the microfilming of his musical manuscripts. Other topics include the last years of the composer's mother and the problems that her instability of residence posed for him; his unsociable character and attitude to friendship; his relationships with the Scottish poet Hugh MacDiarmid; and his view of religions at the time of the composition of his large-scale symphonic Mass. This part ends with an account of the growing distaste for composition that led the aging Sorabji, more or less obsessed by health problems, to withdraw from this activity, and with an overview of his attitude to composers from Johann Sebastian Bach to the practitioners of *musique concrète*.

Part 4 ("Towards Rediscovery") begins in 1973 at the time of Sorabji's meeting with Alistair Hinton, who persuaded him to resume his compositional activity when unofficial performances of his works began to take place, followed by official ones after he had reconsidered his position, thus paving the way for rediscovery. (The reader should not expect criticism of post-1976 recitals and recordings; many of the performers have contributed to this book in one way or another, and it is best to leave that aspect to the concert and record reviewers.) The last chapter, before dealing with Sorabji's death and funeral, surveys various homages paid to him by composers and pianists through works written on his themes or in his style, and through dedications; it also discusses how various people and bodies have acknowledged his championship of composers such as Godowsky, Szymanowski, and Alkan. An account of a series of practical jokes played by an anonymous correspondent around 1970 brings a lighter note to this rather serious book.

The reader will find, interspersed chronologically between sections devoted to biographical information and thematic discussion, an introduction to Sorabji's entire compositional output, which amounts to 107 works (plus 8 never begun or completed but known by title) comprising 11,498 manuscript pages. Each work is the subject of a separate section ranging from a single paragraph for lost works to several pages for the larger ones or those with a performance history during the composer's public years. These descriptive sections are intended to clear away the undergrowth and provide the interested reader with a road map through what may at first appear to be an Amazonian forest or a hothouse in a botanical garden. (The reader should not expect value judgments about Sorabji's music at every turn; the aim of this book is to gather the facts as a starting point that will help others to make informed comments.) Most of the works are accompanied by a musical example illustrating a compositional or thematic feature explained in the text; the examples are collected at the end of the book (Appendix 4), where full explanations are given (hyperlinks make it possible to navigate to and from the examples when reading on screen). Each discussion may include the following:

(1) an account of the peculiarities of the manuscript (dedications or inscriptions, various notes);
(2) an explanation of the musical and extramusical references contained in the manuscript;
(3) a description of the compositional history of the work and the composer's views on it, as found in letters and prepared statements;
(4) biographical information on the dedicatee's relationships with the composer;
(5) a discussion of the most salient features of the work's formal structure and its compositional language and, when appropriate, an account of its first performance, if given by the composer himself or during his years of public life.

A unique characteristic of Sorabji's musical output is the sheer length of many of his works. The reader should be able to associate a title not only with the year of its composition but also with the number of pages of its manuscript. A piano work of 28 pages is very different from one of 100, 333, or 484. The year and number of pages are therefore given when a work is first mentioned or when the context justifies it ("0 p." means that a work is either lost or has not survived).

This book relies on an extensive documentation described in the section devoted to sources and abbreviations, which also explains the editorial conventions followed. Quotations from Sorabji's letters and writings allow him to for himself in his very colourful way, sometimes peppered with coarse language. Footnotes (of which there are quite a few, to say the least) provide sources for each statement based on documentary evidence. Any statement that is not footnoted can therefore be

assumed to be mine. However, I have often grouped successive references to letters, usually between the same correspondents and within the same paragraph, into a single note. Although many footnotes can be skipped over without harm, they remain close at hand (being footnotes rather than endnotes) to see the context and the time surrounding a statement.

In addition to the musical examples found in Appendix 4, three further back sections provide essential documentation resulting from years of painstaking research. Appendix 1 is a list of works by category that can be used as a quick reference, especially for years of composition, number of pages, and dedicatees. Appendix 2 consists of a detailed catalogue of works, showing how much work has been done on editions and first performances since the publication of Rapoport's *Sorabji: A Critical Celebration* in 1992. Appendix 3 is a complete discography (69 entries), giving all the technical and bibliographical details contained in the booklets. The bibliography is an extensive list (by category) of some 785 entries; it shows how much can be found if one digs deep enough, even if the subject seems at first to be poorly documented. The book ends with an index of names and subjects. The electronic edition, as will be seen below, offers direct access via the search facility.

The very nature of Sorabji's music will naturally prevent him from becoming a household name, especially to the concert-going public. Most writings on twentieth-century music still mention him only in passing, if at all, although this is beginning to change. Many people, whether they have heard his music or not, question the unusual length and inordinate difficulty of all but his shorter works and ask whether such music has enough validity to justify spending months, if not years, preparing engraved editions and performances—or writing a book, especially one as detailed as this one. Similarly, the highly improvisatory nature of his music makes some listeners wonder whether it has any structure or cohesion beyond its sectional layout. Now that Sorabji's music is attracting increasing attention, it is time to organize the existing data in a systematic and meaningful way, not only to dispel the long-standing legends, but also to provide a sound basis for further research. Whatever one may think of his music, there is no denying that such a fascinating body of works and writings deserves to be studied.

Sorabji Resource Site

Opus sorabjianum comes with a companion website that I prepared during a sabbatical leave (2008–2009) with the intention of making available to all, free of charge, much of the research data used in the preparation of this life and works. The Sorabji Resource Site (https://roberge.mus.ulaval.ca/srs/), launched in time for the 118th anniversary of Sorabji's birth on 14 August 2010, can be used as a fully searchable electronic handbook. The emphasis is on raw data: lists, compilations, sortable tables, analytical charts, links, etc. *Opus sorabjianum* has its own menu entry on the site, with a number of pages directly related to it. The full text can be downloaded, and illustrations and sound files for the musical examples can be viewed or downloaded. The visitor will not find much interpretation, critical comments, insights, etc., on the site. The introductory paragraphs are usually short and factual, and the emphasis is on providing extensive documentation gathered from the available sources (excluding the correspondence on which much of this book is based). If *Opus sorabjianum*, which my readers will have waited far too long for, and the Sorabji Resource Site lead to further research, editions, and recordings and thus to a better understanding of Sorabji's music, then my aims will have been fully achieved. Indeed, the years since the first release (2013) have seen a great deal of activity in all these areas.

Internet Edition and Printing Instructions

Publication of *Opus sorabjianum* occurs in an unusual fashion in that it is not released under the imprint of a commercial publisher. Rather, it is offered—free of charge—by its author on his Sorabji Resource Site (https://roberge.mus.ulaval.ca/srs/), its sole authorized download location, in the form of a fully bookmarked PDF file. Brief quotations and use of the results may be made in a research context if full credit is given according to accepted scholarly practices; see the detailed notice on the copyright page for more details. This contribution to knowledge is free and must always remain so.

This electronic book, which can be read on screen or printed, is fully searchable. The reader can also use the index of names and subjects, then enter the page number in roman or arabic numerals to reach the desired destination instantly. Words with accents can be found even if the diacritics are omitted from the search string; in other words, "Jami" will locate "Jāmī". In addition, all hyperlinks are active (although links to external sites may not remain valid, but are checked regularly). Internal hyperlinks make it possible to switch between a reference to a musical example and the example itself, and between the section discussing a work in detail and the catalogue entry. Choosing full-screen mode makes reading easier, with the search function still available, though without the bookmarks panel open on the left side.

Opus sorabjianum is not the work of a professional book designer. Yet it manages to be elegant and readable, despite being designed for paper sizes not commonly used in the book industry (and the need to use as much of the surface as possible to limit the number of pages). The book is formatted for letter-size paper, but can be scaled for the slightly narrower and longer A4 paper. It is best to take the latest version on portable media to a photocopy shop to have it printed and bound (blank pages are inserted where necessary to achieve a correct layout); using a photocopier with the highest possible resolution will ensure the best reproduction of the musical examples. The properties of the software and printer or copier must be set to the correct paper size and source, and double-sided printing selected. It is a good idea to print out a few test pages, either at one's computer or in the copy shop (or both) before committing to a full printout. The cost will be considerably less than what most academic publishers would charge for a book aimed at what is currently a small and unprofitable market—the bibliophilic pleasure will, admittedly, not be the same.

Anyone wishing to print the downloaded file should bear in mind that the book is updated from time to time to correct errors, complete data, and sometimes make significant revisions and additions. This is inevitable in the case of a book such as this, which has evolved over a period of three decades, with all the changes in approach and the fine-tuning of matters of both literary and technical style that have occurred over the years. Maintaining consistency, especially in a book of this size with a huge (to say the least) critical apparatus, is a constant challenge and never-ending task. The most important changes are listed on page "Version History of *Opus sorabjianum*" (https://roberge.mus.ulaval.ca/srs/07-versi.htm). It is therefore essential to check for any update on the Sorabji Resource Site before printing a copy. Despite all the work that has gone into making the book suitable for printing, it may not be wise to do so, as the content will be out of date within months, weeks or even days of downloading. I must confess that I have never printed the book except to mark up the index entries and do a final proofreading before the first release; nothing beats the convenience of the electronic file.

I consider it my duty to offer not what publishers deem appropriate in order to remain profitable, but what decades of contact with Sorabji's life and music has convinced me was essential. There is a need for comprehensive information about a composer whose life has long been obscured by misinformation and shrouded in legend. Fortunately, many archival documents now make it possible to paint an accurate picture. Although a few other people have specialist knowledge of Sorabji, I am still the only person to have worked extensively at both the Sorabji Archive and McMaster University,

which are located on different continents, and at several other institutions in the United Kingdom. If I were to refrain from giving such a detailed account of my research, there is a good chance that much material would remain hidden for years. However, whenever I begin to leaf through the voluminous correspondence with Erik Chisholm or Frank Holliday, I come across countless bits and pieces that had little or no significance when I first read them years ago, which I hasten to add here and there because they make it possible to document Sorabji's life and thought more accurately. I hope that my readers (especially my academic colleagues) will not resent this admittedly daring circumvention of the time-honoured channels of academic publication, which—at least from my point of view—are inappropriate in the present context.[5]

After providing such detailed background information, it is appropriate to write, as Sorabji did at the end of his often very long letters, "that's all for this nonce".

[5]For a detailed account of the history of this biography project, see my article "*Opus sorabjianum*: Les joies et les souffrances d'un biographe", *Intersections: Revue canadienne de musique*, no. 35/1 (2015 [publ. November 2016]): 105–21, https://www.erudit.org/fr/revues/is/2015-v35-n1-is02942/1038946ar/.

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Opus sorabjianum, partly because of its wealth of detail, has been very long (nay, too long) in the making. I began researching it in 1991, but did not actually start writing it until the end of 1996. I am now pleased to acknowledge the contribution of those who have provided essential help. First and foremost, I owe an immense debt of gratitude to Alistair Hinton and Paul Rapoport. Hinton, as Sorabji's closest friend in his later years and as his residual legatee, has always supported my research and, over the years, has dealt gracefully, expertly, and speedily with innumerable queries that only he could answer. I was and am still in very frequent (sometimes daily) contact with him and have always enjoyed reading his detailed replies, whose rather Sorabjian style is always a delight; readers of his numerous posts on Sorabji in discussion groups will be familiar with his virtuosic use of the language. On two occasions I enjoyed the generous hospitality that he and his wife, Terry, extended to me at Easton Dene, the beautiful house they then occupied in Bath, and made full use of the extensive documentary resources of the Sorabji Archive. Rapoport, to whom anyone doing research on Sorabji will be eternally grateful for his book *Sorabji: A Critical Celebration*, also helped me in so many ways. He and his wife, Karen J. Mathewson, kindly hosted me at their home in Ancaster during my three week-long research trips to McMaster University (Hamilton, Ontario). I can safely say that he has amply repaid me for my two proofreadings of his book. Both Hinton and Rapoport read all or parts of *Opus sorabjianum* in the two years prior to its publication, and I am fortunate to have benefited from their deep knowledge of the subject and their unique perspective over the years.

Apart from the immense resources of the Sorabji Archive, the most important source of information for such a research was Frank Holliday's collection of Sorabjiana at McMaster University. We must all be grateful to this close friend of Sorabji for not destroying this formidable documentary resource after his relationship with the composer ended in 1979, and to Paul Rapoport for arranging its acquisition by his university library. Here I must express my warmest thanks to the librarians Charlotte Stewart-Murphy and Carl Spadoni who, as custodians of the William Ready Division of Archives and Research Collections, made it an easy and pleasant task to work with this collection, making as many copies as I needed to work efficiently, and allowing me to quote as necessary.

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Sean Vaughn Owen kindly shared with me, before it was published, his remarkable doctoral dissertation, an oral biography of Sorabji's Corfe Castle years based on interviews with those people still alive who were in contact with him. Owen's many discoveries, particularly concerning the composer's mother and family, forced me to revise several passages. His work on the dissertation enabled him to devote all the time required to the genealogical research that I had barely begun during my London sojourns. In particular, he has made it clear that Sorabji's mother was wholly English and that her son was therefore half-English; her (and his) alleged "Spanish-Sicilian" origins have now been laid to rest.

Various people connected in one way or another with Sorabji, as correspondents or dedicatees (or heirs thereof), have kindly provided information, clarified details, sent copies of their correspondence and allowed their use. Among them, Kenneth Derus acceded to my request to examine his correspondence with Sorabji by preparing a carefully annotated compilation. The late Robert William Procter, custodian of the literary legacy of his friend Harold Morland, provided fascinating material from his collection and allowed me to reproduce the poet's words about Sorabji, which appear in the epigraph and at the end of the last chapter. The late Anthony Burton-Page and the late Neil Solomon wrote detailed memoirs of their contacts with Sorabji. Douglas Taylor drew my attention to a previously unknown article on "Hindoo Music" that Sorabji contributed to Ralph Dunstan's *Cyclopædic Dictionary of Music* in 1925. Judith Barger kindly provided me with a copy of her unpublished paper on the London Organ School, which contains the fullest portrait of a family friend and dedicatee, the organist Emily Edroff-Smith.

A specific enquiry to Pamela Thompson, chief librarian at the Royal College of Music, about their Sorabji holdings, led her to put me in touch with Dr. James Duncan Irving†, who had received from Sorabji, in 1944, a bound copy of *Concerto for Piano and Orchestra [no. 5]* and his "Working Copy of *Opus Clavicembalisticum*". Dr. Irving donated gave this unique copy of the well-known work's published score to the Sorabji Archive in 1997, which has become the original from which copies are now made. This is only one of the fortunate discoveries I have made during my years of research, others being the location of the manuscripts of *Opus secretum atque necromanticum* and of the libretto for the *Music to "The Rider by Night"*. Francis Firth and John Smith, librarian and archivist, respectively, at the Royal Birmingham Conservatoire, provided valuable information on Joy McArden and H. James Cooper.

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In early 2016 I had the pleasant surprise of receiving a message from Thomas E. Smith, who was reading the present book while helping his wife with genealogical research on an obscure group of amateur artists in Britain. He decided to look up the name of Sorabji's mother in the *British Newspaper Archive* and found various references listing her among the casts of pantomimes and light operas, works that were very popular in England in the 1880s. I am very grateful to him for contacting me, which has finally made it possible to provide at least a shred of evidence that the composer's mother did have something of a public career as a singer at some point in her life.

For their kind replies to my enquiries or for permission to reproduce, I would also like to thank the following friends and acquaintances of Sorabji: Anthony Burton-Page†, Cecil Ewing†, Norman P. Gentieu†, Frank Holliday†, Edward Gillespie Nairn† and Ian Watson, Clive Spencer-Bentley, Ronald Stevenson†, Denise† and Kevin Vicars, Harry Winstanley†.

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Alberto Vignani
Chris Villars
Joel Wapnick
David Wolfson
Electra Yourke

Although I have made every reasonable effort to locate all potential copyright holders, there may remain some who are simply unidentifiable, for whom no current contact information is available, or from whom I have never received a reply at the last known address, often obtained after several requests. (I must say that such research is difficult enough to test the detective skills and patience of

any scholar.) If such rightful owners contact me, I will be happy to come to an agreement and acknowledge permission in an updated version.

Last but not least, I would like to thank my wife, Cécile Gaudreault, who had to live (and still lives) with my obsession for this huge project, which often seemed (and still seems) to go on forever. If I may extend my acknowledgements as far as possible, I would like to thank the Internet and all its contributors, a resource that has allowed me, over the years, to do more and more of my research almost without leaving my desk. The exponential development of this resource has often forced me, when simply checking the accuracy of a detail I had found some years earlier, to embark on a completely new research path and to extend what I had already done. This situation is (only) one of the reasons why *Opus sorabjianum* has taken so long to complete and why it needs to be updated regularly.

Sources and Abbreviations

Archival Sources

Most of the documents and letters referred to or quoted in this book are originals or copies held in two archives in Canada and England, respectively (KSSC, SA). With the exception of Sorabji's letters to Philip Heseltine (BL), the documents held in other archives are referred to only occasionally. See also the sources listed under "Frequently Mentioned Correspondents".

BL — British Library. Letters from Sorabji to John Amis (Add. 71178, ff. 140–42), Cecil Gray (Add. 57786, ff. 73–77), Philip Heseltine (Add. 57963; now published in full as *LPH*), and Bernard Stevens (Add. 69025, ff. 18–33); letters from Philip Heseltine to Colin Taylor (Add. 54197) and between Sorabji and Alan Bush (MS Mus. 326–673, cataloguing in progress).

KSSC — Kaikhosru Shapurji Sorabji Collection, formerly known as "The Frank Holliday Collection of Material Relating to Kaikhosru Shapurji Sorabji" (accession number LB 114, 12R, c-d). William Ready Division of Archives and Research Collections, McMaster University (Hamilton, Ontario, Canada). Collection description and finding aid by Kathy E. Garay, initial version dated June 1990 (https://archives.mcmaster.ca/index.php/kaikhosru-shapurji-sorabji-collection). References to letters consist of the names of the correspondents (or their abbreviations) and the date, followed by the location code between braces. When appropriate, the title of the document cited is given. Location codes are given in the form {3/F.4} for box 3/folder 4, and {9/item #4) for box 9/item #4.

LAC — Library and Archives Canada (Ottawa), formerly the National Library of Canada. Percy A. Scholes fonds (R11530-0-1-E); George M. [Mackenzie] Brewer fonds (R12250-0-E).

NLS — National Library of Scotland (Edinburgh). Ronald Stevenson, Musicological Correspondence (Acc. 11567; Sorabji; letters, box 24).

SA — The Sorabji Archive, Warlow Farm House, Eaton Bishop, Hereford, HR2 9QF, England (formerly Easton Dene, Bailbrook Lane, Bath, BA1 7AA); Alistair Hinton, Curator/Founder. All archival documents cited in this book without a specific reference usually come from the Sorabji Archive, where they may be available as originals or as photocopies.

For British dates of births, marriages, and deaths, links are given to the extensive records formerly held until 2008 at the Family Records Centre, London, and now available (among other sources) on Findmypast at https://www.findmypast.co.uk/ (subscription required for full records, the URLs of which are given in the notes). This includes census records and the 1939 Register, which gives a picture of England and Wales on 29 September 1939. Partial records are available on FreeBMD at

https://www.freebmd.org.uk/. These sources have been used to determine the dates of many people not listed in standard reference sources.

Frequently Mentioned Correspondents

Listed below are the most frequently mentioned correspondents and the abbreviations used in references to their letters, with an indication of the location if other than the Sorabji Archive (see the "Archival Sources" section above). Date ranges are not necessarily continuous. Letters, telegrams, faxes, cards, and e-mails are referred to, for example, simply as "KSS to FH, 29 May 1969". Page numbers are given where there is more than one, and are often followed by "(section dated day month)" in the case of the long letters to Erik Chisholm.

ABP Anthony Burton-Page

AH Alistair Hinton

CE Cecil Ewing, 1945–71. KSSC {7/single unnumbered folder}.

CMG Christopher Murray Grieve, 1931–77. Edinburgh University Library, Special Collections, GB 237 Coll-18, MS 2960.17. Also includes (the draft of?) an open letter the *Daily Express* (Glasgow), dated 1 September 1930, and some letters from Frank Holliday to Grieve and to Francis George Scott, written at various dates between March and October 1952. Four of Sorabji's letters to Grieve are included in Hugh MacDiarmid, *New Selected Letters*, ed. Dorian Grieve, Owen Dudley Edwards, and Alan Riach (Manchester: Carcanet Press, 2001), 27–28 (no. 18), 312 (no. 54), 408–9 (no. 70), 518 (no. 88).

CSB Clive Spencer-Bentley

DG Donald Garvelmann, 1967–82. International Piano Archives at Maryland (University of Maryland, College Park, Md.).

EC Erik Chisholm, 1926–65. Royal Conservatoire of Scotland Archives and Collections, Erik Chisholm Collection, GB 2607 EC/2; https://archiveshub.jisc.ac.uk/data/gb2607-ec/1-12/ec/2. Quotations are taken from the typewritten originals and the single-spaced typewritten transcriptions (by Chisholm's sister-in-law, Phyllis Brodie), and from the few untranscribed handwritten originals, with occasional editing of the punctuation. Letters are referred to by date (or date on which the letter was begun), page number, and (when applicable) the actual date of the section (for letters written over several days). A few other letters are held in the Manuscripts and Archives Department of the University of Cape Town (BC 129, BC 1396).

FH Frank Holliday, 1939–78. KSSC {1–7}.

GR George Richards, 1934–41. Paul Sacher Stiftung (Basel).

KD Kenneth Derus, 1974–88. *The Sorabji-Derus Correspondence* (Bath: The Sorabji Archive, 1997), xxx, 408 pp. Consists of 120 letters to Sorabji and 74 from him (the latter mostly

handwritten starting on 25 December 1981); includes a detailed summary of each letter with a transcription of key passages (pp. v–xxvi) and complete transcriptions of selected letters. References to this collection compiled by Kenneth Derus are given as {Derus, D002, p. 2} or {Derus, S13, p. 55} for letters from Derus and Sorabji, respectively, after the date.

KSS Kaikhosru Shapurji Sorabji

MAR Marc-André Roberge

NG Norman Gentieu, 1946–94. KSSC {16–20}. The Gentieu collection was examined prior to its deposit in KSSC, and the numbers were added from the finding aid.

PH Philip Heseltine, 1913–22. BL, Add. 57963. All references give a letter's date followed, between braces, by the reference to the letter number in Brian Inglis and Barry Smith, eds., *Kaikhosru Sorabji's Letters to Philip Heseltine (Peter Warlock)* (London: Routledge, 2019). References to this edition are given as *LPH*, with the letter and page number. Short annotated excerpts are reproduced in Kenneth Derus, "Sorabji's Letters to Heseltine", in *SCC*, 195–255; the letter number is the same but for the former's no. 7, which is the latter's no. 6.

PR Paul Rapoport

RS Ronald Stevenson, 1958–86. National Library of Scotland (Edinburgh), Ronald Stevenson: Musicological Correspondence. Inventory Acc. 11567, box 24; http://www.nls.uk/catalogues/online/cnmi/inventories/acc11567.pdf.

RV Ronald Stuart Venning, 1963–70. Private collection.

RWLS Robert (Wilfred Levick) Simpson, 1948–51. Jürgen Schaarwächter, ed., "Kaikhosru Sorabji, Letters to Robert Simpson", *Tonic: The Journal of the Robert Simpson Society* 23 (Autumn 2014): 2–22.

Frequently Cited Sources

Sorabji's contributions to books as well as his articles, reviews, and open letters are available under the title *Collected Published Writings*, 2 vols. (Bath: Sorabji Archive, [1992]), ca. 1,250 pp. (unedited and unpaginated). The published collections of essays (see *AM* and *MCF* below) are indexed in Marc-André Roberge, *Annotated Indexes to "Around Music" (1932) and "Mi contra fa: The Immoralisings of a Machiavellian Musician" (1947) by Kaikhosru Shapurji Sorabji* (Bath: Sorabji Archive, 1992), xv, 47 pp.

Most of Sorabji's literary output is indexed in George Alexander Ross (with additional material by Roberge), *An Index of Proper Names to be Found in the Complete Published Writings of Kaikhosru Shapurji Sorabji* (Bath: Sorabji Archive, 1994), 285 pp.

The articles and reviews published in *The New Age*, *The New English Weekly*, *The Musical Times*, *The Chesterian*, and *The Sackbut* are available as "Collected Writings from Five Serial Publications", comp. Paul Rapoport and Kenneth Derus (Chicago: The University of Chicago, Joseph Regenstein Library, Photoduplication Department, 1977), microfilm, one reel (no. N4156). They are indexed in Roberge,

An Annotated Bibliography of Kaikhosru Shapurji Sorabji's Collected Published Writings (Bath: The Sorabji Archive, 1993), xiv, 141 pp.

Writings by Kaikhosru Shapurji Sorabji and Frank Holliday

A, FFN [*Animadversions. Essay about His Works Published on the Occasion of the Microfilming of Some of His Manuscripts*] (1953), 18 pp. (lacking pp. 1–3); *A Few Further Notes on the Writer's Published Compositions*, 4 pp., unpublished; accompanying a letter, Sorabji to Norman Gentieu, [between 21 and 30] May 1953. KSSC {17/F.17}. Annotated editions by Marc-André Roberge, forthcoming.

AM *Around Music*. London: The Unicorn Press, 1932. Reprint, Westport, Conn.: Hyperion Press, 1979.

FM *The Fruits of Misanthropy, being The Animadversions of a Machiavellian*, 90 + [6] pp., unpublished. KSSC {9/item #4}. Annotated edition with index by Marc-André Roberge, forthcoming. References give the sequential item number followed by the original (often incorrect) number, in roman numerals, and the page number in the manuscript, for example, "no. 128 (orig. no. CCXXX; p. 36)".

GS *Gianandrea and Stephen* (1954 at the earliest), 56 pp., unpublished. SA. Annotated edition by Marc-André Roberge, forthcoming.

MCF *Mi contra fa: The Immoralisings of a Machiavellian Musician* (London: Porcupine Press, 1947; reprint, New York: Da Capo Press, 1986).

RN Holliday, Frank. "Rough Notes on My Visit to Corfe Castle [followed by a date]". Various documents bearing more or less the same title, all found in KSSC. Notes exist for 1955–57 {1/F.17–19}, 1959–66 {1/F.21, 2/F.1–7}, 1969 {2/F.10}, 1971–75 {3/F.2–6}, and 1977 {3/F.8}.

Books and Periodicals

ECSM Purser, John. *Erik Chisholm, Scottish Modernist, 1904–1965: Chasing a Restless Muse*. Woodbridge, Suffolk: Boydell & Brewer, 2009.

LPH Inglis, Brian, and Barry Smith, eds. *Kaikhosru Sorabji's Letters to Philip Heseltine (Peter Warlock)*. London: Routledge, 2019. Paperback edition (Routledge, 2020) and eBook (VitalSource, 2019).

MO *Musical Opinion and Music Trade Review*

MT *The Musical Times*

NA *The New Age*

NEW *The New English Weekly*

OB Owen, Sean Vaughn. "Kaikhosru Shapurji Sorabji: An Oral Biography". Ph.D. diss., University of Southampton, 2006. http://www.sorabji-archive.co.uk/books/owen-thesis.php.

SCC Rapoport, Paul, ed. *Sorabji: A Critical Celebration*. Aldershot, Hampshire: Scolar Press (later Farnham, Surrey: Ashgate; Routledge since 2016), 1992, 1994. Paperback edition (Routledge, 2017) and eBook (VitalSource, 2017). Includes among other contributions a "'Complete Provisional' Chronological Catalog of Sorabji's Compositions", a register of all known performances given until the end of 1991, and a reproduction of all the texts set to music by Sorabji.

Iconography

References to published photographs of Sorabji's friends and acquaintances mentioned in the text are given when appropriate. See also the following source, not referred to in the text: *Portraits of the World's Best-Known Musicians: An Alphabetical Collection of Notable Musical Personalities of the World Covering the Entire History of Music*, ed. Guy McCoy (Philadelphia: Theodore Presser, 1946), https://archive.org/details/portraitsofworld0000etud/page/n263/mode/2up: Carl Engel (43), Dinh Gilly (61), Ursula Greville (67), Leigh Vaughan Henry (79), Philip Heseltine (80), Arthur Eaglefield Hull (88), Luisa Kirkby Lunn (130), William McNaught (129), E. J. Moeran (133), Egon Petri (152), Ebenezer Prout (159), Percy Scholes (183), Almon Kincaid Virgil (219), Christopher à Becket Williams (231).

Editorial Conventions and Abbreviations

Sorabji's letters can be an editorial nightmare, and there is no need to repeat his many errors and inconsistencies, usually the result of haste, carelessness, or (in later years) rheumatism. Except where it is essential to convey the author's exact meaning through typography, all letters have been edited to conform to standard practice and spelling, although words in capitals have been retained. Commas and dashes as well as incomplete pairs of parentheses and quotation marks have been added tacitly when necessary; multiple suspension points have been reduced to three or sometimes omitted altogether; minor slips of the pen have been corrected; capitalization has been normalized; and italics have been used for titles of works and for passages which have been given some form of emphasis (single, double, or triple underlining). Some of the original formatting may still be reproduced when there is a compelling reason to do so. Shifts to the red half of the ink ribbon, often used for emphasis in the typewriter era, are disregarded, especially since Sorabji very often neglected to return to black after typing the few words he wanted to emphasize. The text always gives priority to the language he used for his titles, inscriptions, and comments (usually French, Italian, or Latin). In such cases, an English translation is usually given in the notes, except for simple expressions that any reader will easily understand.

/ Used in running text to mark line breaks in quoted matter (poems, dedications, inscriptions) when desirable to achieve clarity.

… Suspension points in quoted matter.

[…] Editorial omission (words, sentences, paragraphs).

[ ] Editorial comments or changes of capitalization in quotations.

<> Illegible letter(s) or word(s); suggested (sometimes partial) readings.

{ } Superfluous letter(s) in a quoted document; reference (in the notes) to the archival repository of a document; unknown dates and estimated durations in the catalogue of works.

xx–xx References to sections of books give the title of the chapter or essay followed by the inclusive page numbers of the whole essay and the inclusive page numbers of the passage quoted, separated by a semicolon (e.g., 11–22; 15–17).

MS, ED Used in the first instance of a reference to a score to indicate whether the page numbers refer to the manuscript or the published edition (usually the latter). References are sometimes given as "ED p. 3/2/1", meaning "p. 3, second system, first complete bar" of the published edition. If more than one edition exists, a reference will appear as, for example, "ED/Editor p. 4/3/2". When bar numbers are given, the reference is to a printed edition that includes them or (more rarely) to a manuscript so provided.

Current Value of Money

The equivalent values in modern currency of the British pound (chaps. 1, 6, 9–12, 15, 17, 21–23) and the American dollar (chap. 22) are taken from "Purchasing Power of British Pounds from 1264 to Present" (http://www.measuringworth.com/ppoweruk/) and "Seven Ways to Compute the Relative Value of a U.S. Dollar Amount—1774 to Present" (http://www.measuringworth.com/uscompare/) (in both cases the real price for a commodity; latest available data is for 2021).

Chronology

The following chronology lists the major public and private events of Sorabji's life. It also includes some documented events in the lives of his parents and some key dates in the performance and reception history of his works. The date format is year–month–day; one or two "00" indicate that the month and/or day are unknown or irrelevant in a given context. Entries beginning with a verb in the third person singular refer to Sorabji himself; the other entries begin with a substantive or with the name of the person involved. A bullet (•) after a date means "at the earliest", and a square (▪) "at the latest". The dates of birth and death of Sorabji and his parents are in bold.

1863–08–18	Birth in Bombay of Shapurji Sorabji (Kaikhosru's father), as the eldest son of Shapurjee Cooverjee's daughter.
1866–08–13	Birth of the composer's mother, Madeline Matilda Worthy, in London.
1884–00–00	Shapurji Sorabji sails for England, where he works for three years for Hick, Hargreaves, and Co. (Bolton).
1887–00–00	Shapurji Sorabji returns to Bombay.
1892–02–18	Shapurji Sorabji (who regularly travels to England as part of his work) and Madeline Matilda Worthy marry due to an unexpected or unplanned pregnancy.
1892–08–14	Born in Chingford, Essex, as the only child of Shapurji Sorabji and Madeline Matilda Worthy; birth originally registered as Leon Dudley Sorabji.
1911–01–09	Passes the Matriculation at the University of London.
1913–00–00•	Joins the Parsi community and adopts the form of his name by which he has been known ever since.
1913–01–00▪	Studies music privately with Charles A. (Abraham) Trew until some time after the summer of 1916, but certainly before 1918, when "his old pupil" dedicates to him his *Concerto pour piano et orchestra da camera [no. 3]*.
1914–01–24	Publishes his first known open letter in the *Musical Standard*.
1914–03–28	Meets Philip Heseltine after five months of correspondence.

1914–08–00 Transcribes for piano at least part of *In a Summer Garden* by Delius, this being his first work believed to have survived.

1914–10–16 Shapurji Sorabji sets up a trust fund to provide a life income for himself, for Madeline Matilda Shapurji Sorabji after his death, and for Kaikhosru Shapurji Sorabji after her own death.

1916–05–03▪ Takes up residence (until 1951) at 175 Clarence Gate Gardens, near Regent's Park.

1919–11–25 Gives a private reading of the *Sonata no. 1 for Piano* in the presence of Busoni at the home of the dancer Maud Allan.

1920–11–02 Gives the first public performance of the *Sonata no. 1 for Piano* at Mortimer Hall (first known concert appearance).

1921–06–02 Gives the first public performance of the *Trois poèmes* with Marthe Martine at a concert of the Société Musicale Indépendante in Paris (first appearance outside England).

1922–01–13 Gives the first performance of the *Sonata seconda for Piano* at the Musikverein (Vienna).

1924–04–03 Publishes his first article in the *New Age*, for which he writes until 1934.

1929–07–17▪ Meets Erik Chisholm.

1930–04–22 Gives the first public performance of *Le jardin parfumé—Poem for Piano Solo* on the (as it was then called) British Broadcasting Company (only firmly established broadcast).

1930–12–01 Gives the first public performance of *Opus clavicembalisticum* in Glasgow under the auspices of the Active Society for the Propagation of Contemporary Music.

1931–12–31▪ Publication of *Opus clavicembalisticum* by J. Curwen and Sons (London), his last work to be published before 1969.

1932–04–28 Publishes his first article in the *New English Weekly*, for which he writes until 1945.

1932–07–07 Shapurji Sorabji dies at the age of sixty-eight years at the Sanatorium Groedel in Bad Nauheim (near Frankfurt am Main).

1932–07–08• Leaves on a first trip to Bombay to attend to matters concerning his father's estate, returning on 9 February 1933.

1932–11–00 Publishes his first book of essays, *Around Music*, with the Unicorn Press.

1933–05–29 Leaves on a second trip to Bombay, this time with his mother, returning on 23 January 1934.

1934–07–26 Publishes his last article in the *New Age*.

1936–03–10 John Tobin gives a problematic performance of *pars prima* of *Opus clavicembalisticum* at Cowdray Hall, which is instrumental in his objection to public performances of his works.

1936–12–16 Gives his last public performance as a pianist in Glasgow.

1938–10–01 Oxford University Press becomes the selling agent for all of his published music.

1939–00–00 Begins a long friendship with Frank Holliday.

1945–06–28 Publishes his last article in the *New English Weekly* and shortly afterwards stops attending concerts.

1948–01–00 Publishes his second book of essays, entitled *Mi contra fa: The Immoralisings of a Machiavellian Musician*, with the Porcupine Press.

1951–11–00▪ Moves to the village of Corfe Castle, Dorset.

1952–10–00▪ Norman Gentieu offers to finance the microfilming of Sorabji's complete works through his own Society of Connoisseurs.

1953–05–15 Frank Holliday sends Sorabji a cheque and a presentation letter signed by twenty-three friends and admirers.

1956–06–00 Moves with Reginald Norman Best into a house called The Eye, in Corfe Castle, Dorset.

1959–05–05 Madeline Matilda Worthy dies in Bournemouth at the age of ninety-two years.

1961–06–00 Publishes his last article (in the *Musical Times*).

1962–05–06 Frank Holliday begins a series of private tape recordings of Sorabji playing some of his own works.

1968–12–09 Turns away from composition after writing the *Concertino non grosso for String Sextet with Piano obbligato quasi continuo*.

1969–12–00▪ Donald Garvelmann publishes the *Pastiche on the "Minute Waltz" by Chopin* under his own imprint Music Treasure Publications (the first publication of any of his music since 1931).

1969–12–08 Donald Garvelmann broadcasts in New York a Sorabji programme of readings and excerpts from recorded performances; followed on 13 December 1970 by a three-hour Sorabji programme, also produced by Garvelmann.

1972–08–21 Receives Alistair Hinton for the first time at The Eye and begins a close friendship with him.

1973–02–20 Has resumed composition by writing the *Benedizione di San Francesco d'Assisi.*

1973–07–12 Michael Habermann gives the first of a series of unofficial Sorabji recitals; these are followed by his first official recital at Carnegie Hall, New York, on 22 May 1977.

1976–12–07 Yonty Solomon gives the first official Sorabji recital at Wigmore Hall.

1978–11–11 Breaks off his long friendship with Frank Holliday because of arguments about the appropriateness of some of his intentions and actions.

1979–12–06 Records for the British Broadcasting Corporation an interview about Nicholas Medtner with Alistair Hinton and Ronald Stevenson.

1980–02–02 The New Music Concerts (Toronto, Ontario) give the first performance of an orchestral work by Sorabji, the *Cinque sonetti di Michelagniolo Buonarroti*.

1980–11–00 Musical Heritage Society releases the first recording of music by Sorabji, played by Michael Habermann.

1982–05–03 The Delius Society, Philadelphia Branch, gives the first performance of *Il tessuto d'arabeschi*, Sorabji's first and only commission.

1982–06–11 Geoffrey Douglas Madge performs *Opus clavicembalisticum* in Utrecht (first public performance since 1930).

1987–03–20 Moves with Reginald Norman Best to Marley House, in Winfrith Newburgh, near Dorchester, following the sale of his Corfe Castle house, The Eye, by Alistair Hinton.

1987–07–00 Presentation of a second presentation letter prepared by Alistair Hinton and signed by twenty-six friends and admirers.

1988–02–29 Death of Reginald Norman Best at Marley House in Winfrith Newburgh, near Dorchester, Dorset.

1988–09–00 Alistair Hinton establishes the Sorabji Music Archive (renamed the Sorabji Archive in January 1993).

1988–10–15 Dies at Marley House, Winfrith Newburgh, near Dorchester, Dorset, aged ninety-six years, eight months, and one day.

Introduction / A Primer to Sorabji's Music

Stylistic Periods

Until the late 1980s, most of Sorabji's works were unpublished. They could only be studied from microfilms deposited in a few selected research libraries. Copies of his complete works, in many cases not only in manuscript form but also increasingly in engraved editions, are now available through the Sorabji Archive, and extensive collections of such copies can be found in institutions such as the British Library, the British Broadcasting Corporation, and the Paul Sacher Stiftung. The following pages therefore present an overview of Sorabji's production based on a detailed examination of all his known works as a primer for the study of this unique body of works. The main compositional features, having been described here, need not be mentioned or explained whenever they appear in a particular work.

Sorabji's known compositional output is perhaps the most extensive of any twentieth-century composer, but it is the staggering difficulty and sheer length of many individual works that place them in a special category, an isolated peak in a group of mountains. It totals 11,498 pages for 107 surviving works, plus 8 never begun or completed but known by a title. This vast production comprises 811 pieces, sections, or movements forming self-contained units, not counting individual passacaglia statements or variations within a movement.

Sorabji's output spans seventy years, from a piano arrangement of an orchestral work by Delius in 1914 (the whereabouts of which are still unknown) to a tiny piano piece in 1984. A first period, one of apprenticeship, ends with the song *Le mauvais jardinier* (1918 or 1919). Remarkably, by this time Sorabji had written four piano concertos, for more than 400 pages.[1] A second period begins in 1919 with the *Trois fêtes galantes de Verlaine* and ends in early 1923 with *Opusculum for Orchestra*. Sorabji now had enough compositional assurance to publish his works; he varied his idiom by writing his first chamber work, expanded his pianistic language with three one-movement piano sonatas of increasing complexity, and embarked on his first massive orchestral composition. A third period begins later in 1923 with *Le jardin parfumé—Poem for Piano Solo*, the first full realization of his nocturne style. He also confidently turned to grandiose multimovement works comprising variations, passacaglias, and fugues, such as the *Variazioni e fuga triplice sopra "Dies irae" per pianoforte* and the *Symphony [no. 1] for Organ*. In 1961, a few years after reaching the "golden section" of his composing career (1957), Sorabji completed his *Messa grande sinfonica*. The writing of such a massive work (1,001 pp.) left him so utterly exhausted and disgusted with composition that he wanted to stop writing. Nevertheless, he wrote three works of modest to large proportions (240, 149, and 48 pp., respectively) as well as a hundred or so aphoristic pieces before finally putting down his pen in 1968. His fourth and final period begins in early 1973, after Alistair Hinton had persuaded him to change his attitude. From the end of 1979, with advancing age and with difficulty in holding his pen and seeing his scores, he turned, understandably, to shorter works until his last piece, written at the age of ninety-two. It is striking how,

[1]The division into stylistic periods differs from the present book's division into parts. The book is divided according to biographical events, while the periodization of the compositional output is based on stylistic and musical features.

from the beginning of the third period, Sorabji's compositional style remained constant; he had by then found his way of doing things and simply let his unique compositional powers do the rest, completely aloof, unconcerned with fashions and trends.

Viewed in five-year periods, and in decreasing order, the most productive periods of Sorabji's life are 1930–34, 1960–64, 1950–54, 1920–24, and 1935–39, during each of which he completed an average of 1,325 pages. The years after the completion of the Mass—he was then in his seventies and had filled almost 9,800 pages of music paper—were much less productive: the years 1965–69, 1970–74, and 1980–84 average around 150 pages, but there is a peak of around 850 pages in 1975–79, when he was well into his eighties.

The Manuscripts and Their Editions

Sorabji found it difficult to tear himself apart from composition and devote time to other activities, such making recordings. He explained that

> [...] by the time I'd given it daily practice even such as I had time for, to do it adequately would take all my time and all my energy leaving me no time at all for anything else at all; everything else would have to go by the board, household matters, letter writing, composition, and I am not prepared to sacrifice my creative work to that extent. I already have to sacrifice far too much of my time away from it and invariably come to it only after the best of my energy is gone. You know WHAT my work is, its complexity and intricacy... It takes ALL the nervous energy I have. The time for it, when I can work quickly, easily and without undue exhaustion is MORNINGTIME, but THAT is the time which [is] always taken up with other, largely domestic matters, correspondence and/or such.[2]

Philip Heseltine wrote that—at least in the early 1920s—Sorabji composed "without any preliminary sketches, bar by bar into the fair copy; there is no improvisation or use of the piano at any stage of the composition, nor is there any rewriting or alteration when a work is completed".[3] Whether or not this is entirely or only partly true, Sorabji himself wrote in the early 1950s that "a long process of thinking about the general outlines and shape of the work precedes by a very long time the 'arrival' into the composer's mind of any of the musical 'stuff' of the matter, which arrives on the scene last of all".[4] Indeed, so few sketches (thirty-five pages) exist as to suggest that he may not have used this preliminary stage, unless he destroyed his jottings.

Sorabji was able to compose very quickly; he once mentioned that, although he had "reached such a stage of weariness that my head went absolutely *blank*", he had "accomplished my four pages quota for today".[5] For example, the *Sonata IV for Piano* (1928–29; 111 pp.), a work comprising a double fugue, was written in four months, and the piano line of *Opus clavisymphonicum—Concerto for Piano and Large Orchestra* (1957–59; 333 pp.) may have taken only a little more than a month and a half. However, it remains difficult to say how much time it took him to write a piece of music, as he rarely indicated when he started. It could have been a few weeks or months—sometimes a few years earlier, depending on the scale of the task involved and the number of projects on his desk at the same time. The concertante work may serve as an example. Sorabji wrote on 12 March 1957 that he had embarked on it, which is the basis for the start date given after the title,[6] and marked the end of the piano line in

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[2]KSS to FH, 13 March 1957 {1/F.19}; see also ibid., 12 July 1953 {1/F.15}. Much of the first half of the letter is written in full caps.

[3]P[hilip] H[eseltine], "Music", *Weekly Westminster Gazette*, 18 August 1923: 14–15; 14.

[4]*FFN*, 1.

[5]KSS to EC, 6 May 1931, 29 (section dated 20 May).

[6]KSS to FH, received 12 March 1957 {1/F.19}.

the main score with the date of 28 April 1957.[7] He could therefore have been working on the music entrusted to the piano (always composed first) since the date of the letter (48 days). He could also (but not necessarily) have begun composition right after completing his previous work, *Rosario d'arabeschi* (27 November 1956, which yields 152 days). From the completion of the piano line on 28 April 1957 until 13 November 1957, written at the bottom of the last page of the main score, gives 200 days. In addition, Sorabji had to prepare a small score for additional instruments, which was apparently completed in August 1959, up to 657 days later. During this period he also worked on the *Messa grande sinfonica* (1955–61; 1,001 pp.), but put it aside to devote himself to the *Third Symphony for Piano Solo* (1959–60; 144 pp.).[8]

Major works such as the *Symphonic Variations for Piano* or the *Symphony [no. 2], "Jāmī", for Large Orchestra, Wordless Chorus, and Baritone Solo* took between two and nine years to complete, with three years being the most common. Sorabji felt drained when reaching the end of such mammoth works —feats of compositional endurance with which he "outwagnered Wagner". Having "perfect mental auditory powers", with the piano passages "evolved without any reference to an instrument", as Heseltine once said of his friend, was certainly helpful in this respect.[9] For all his stamina, Sorabji did not deny himself a break from composition; he would sometimes lie "fallow" (his favourite word in this context) for some time, even up to three months. Nor did he "stick indoor all day, far from it, but I potter and dawdle in and out 3 or 4 times in the day instead of strenuously and labouriously going off the whole day—a thing which makes me feel physically sick".[10]

The numerous problems in most of Sorabji's manuscripts show that he did indeed write directly into fair copy without correcting the errors that inevitably crept into such extended manuscripts as he often produced. He hated to cross out passages and (almost) never felt the need to do so.[11] Few of his scores—especially the early ones—contain crossed-out sections. The most significant example is the *Sonata no. 0*, in which nearly 30 per cent of the systems are crossed out; another is the *Fantaisie espagnole*, in which he deleted several passages before preparing a definitive version. In another early work, *Quasi habanera*, he began with note values twice as fast as needed and, rather than starting anew, reverted to the normal values after a few pages, doubling the tempo to make up. Once he had decided how to something, Sorabji rarely considered an alternative. There are only nine ossias in his entire output, the most important of which is on the last page of the *Sonata III for Piano*, which offers two possibilities for the concluding flourish.

In acknowledging the gift of six autographs to the Library of Congress in 1928, Carl Engel, then head of the Music Division, recalled hearing Sorabji play from his works during a visit to Norman Peterkin's home. The manuscripts in front of him vividly renewed his recollections of the "tonal experience" he had heard. The manuscripts were "veritable museum pieces, exhibiting unique specimens of musical notation and calligraphy", and the pages betrayed "an orderliness of thought, a consequence of movement, an intensity of feeling that are rare indeed".[12]

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[7]Sorabji mentioned a few months later that he had completed the work's piano part, which may in fact be the piano line, and this may refer to doing so in March; KSS to FH, 6 June 1957 {1/F.19}. The solo piano part, that is, the separate 103-page manuscript containing only the music for the soloist, contains no more precise date than "MCMLXVII" (in three places).

[8]KSS to NG, 10 July 1957 {17/F.54}, where Sorabji writes "I broke off work upon it [*Messa grande sinfonica*] to start upon *Clavisymphonicum*."

[9]PH to Colin Taylor, 13 March 1916 {*LPH*, no. 20a, p. 101}. Heseltine was referring to *Concerto [no. 1] pour piano et grand orchestre*, which Sorabji was to complete three months later and dedicate to his friend. Alistair Hinton cannot confirm that Sorabji had absolute pitch, as he never asked him, but he firmly believes that he did.

[10]KSS to EC, 18 September 1931, 3 (among others); 3 June 1930, 5 (section dated 4 June).

[11]*RN* (1959), 4 {1/F.21}.

[12]Carl Engel to KSS, 30 March 1928 {Library of Congress}.

The elegance of Sorabji's autographs (when he had full control of his hand) suggests great accuracy, but this is very far from the truth. All his editors have had to deal with innumerable problems, ideally requiring critical reports. Such reports cover errors with missing ledger lines; notes out of range; missing beats in some instrumental parts with respect to the time signature; incorrect numbers of notes in irrational groups; missing or superfluous dots in overdotted rhythms; rhythmic inconsistencies between simultaneous parts; omission of articulations within an easily identifiable group; unnecessary use of additional staves or need for such; unjustified departures from notational conventions; errors in spelling, capitalization, and punctuation of French and Italian interpretative directions; etc. One must also decide whether a given note is the one above or below the written one and whether a squiggle is a sharp, a flat, or a natural. Two other recurring problems are (1) whether a change of mode in a series of successive chords is intentional, and (2) whether or not an accidental applies throughout a beamed group or not, for Sorabji is too often inconsistent in these aspects of his notation. The larger symbols and the thinner strokes that characterize his manuscripts from the mid-1970s onwards, when rheumatism began to cause his handwriting to become very shaky, even "spidery", make deciphering his manuscripts a nightmare. The years in which he did not write music (1968–72) certainly caused him to lose practice, so to speak. Editing Sorabji's music and writings is a long process full of doubts and questions that remain in the mind for years.

Unfortunately, Sorabji did not take the opportunity offered by the publication of his works to correct his many mistakes; his sloppy proofreading allowed countless problems to slip through. For example, Kevin Bowyer had to correct more than one thousand errors in the published score of the *Symphony [no. 1] for Organ*.[13] Sorabji himself was well aware of this problem, speaking of the "innumerable discrepancies between the published version and the manuscript" of *Opus clavicembalisticum*. Simon Abrahams, who has studied these problems in detail and has edited several of Sorabji's scores with astonishing accuracy and elegance, has suggested that "the anomalies to be found in his scores potentially compromise their integrity as structurally secure and performable compositions"; he has even suggested that Sorabji may have been "writing notes, but perhaps not *pieces*".[14] The scores published under the composer's supervision are not the last word, and slavishly reproducing his manuscripts is no solution if the music is to make sense. He wrote most of his works without an engraved edition in mind, let alone a performance, and would certainly have eliminated many problems if he had carefully revised them, but his urge to compose always led him to simply move on to the next work.

Throughout his career Sorabji wrote his music on high-quality yellowish deckle-edge folios with greyish or bluish staff lines, using black or, sometimes, violet ink. His preferred writing instruments, at least in his later years, were Montblanc pens such as the Meisterstück no. 149, which he used with Pelikan's Fount India ink.[15] His manuscripts consist of many signatures (or gatherings) of such folios. While the orchestral scores are usually laid out in portrait format, the piano works are usually written in landscape format. A piano manuscript with the composer's tiny and compact writing can easily fit up to twenty groups of four semiquavers per system, either unbarred or with barlines serving as

[13] Kevin Bowyer, "Kaikhosru Shapurji Sorabji (1892–1988) (Part One), (part ii)", *Organists' Review* 78, no. 2 (1992): 113–18; 78, no. 4 (December 1992): 283–85, 287–89; 283.

[14] See Simon John Abrahams, "Le mauvais jardinier: A Reassessment of the Myths and Music of Kaikhosru Shapurji Sorabji" (Ph.D. diss., University of London, King's College, 2002), chaps. 2–4. The quoted passages come from pp. 89 and 158.

[15] Montblanc was established in Berlin in 1906, while Pelikan was founded in Hanover in 1838.

occasional visual signposts.[16] Sorabji had his "gorgeous" music paper, which he needed to have ruled, made especially for him by the Papeterie du Bout du Monde (Saint-Alban-Leysse, Savoie), which operated between 1728 and the middle of the twentieth century.[17] He then switched to Whatman paper and used his last batch for *Opusculum clavisymphonicum vel claviorchestrale* (1973–75; 334 pp.).[18] Then, "with much difficulty and searching", he bought another brand.[19] To match the elegance of his manuscripts, Sorabji wore a black velvet tunic while composing, and was proud enough to describe it in detail.

> [...] it is slightly different from my other black tunics, [it has] the collar buttons at the side and swathes itself right round the neck and, instead of opening and buttoning down the middle, it has an opening down one side and not all the way down rather like a shirt or blouse opening to one side—I get into it head first like a shirt—it is most *frightfully* becoming and I look a perfect *lamb* in it!! I got the very best quality velvet I could which cost me nearly 30/= [30 shillings, i.e., £108.40 in 2021] a yard!) and had it made up by an old tailor at Swanage who was recommended to me some years ago.[20]

Understandably proud of his manuscripts, Sorabji had many of them bound (and some fitted with metal clasps) by Zaehnsdorf, one of the most important hand-bookbinding firms since the nineteenth century.[21] The feel in the hands—or on the lap—of the larger scores is unique. The *Symphony [no. 1] for Piano, Large Orchestra, Chorus, and Organ* weighs 4.5 kg, the *Symphonic Variations for Piano and Orchestra* 8.6 kg for the main score alone, and the three-volume score of the *Messa grande sinfonica* a total of 18.1 kg. In some of his orchestral works, Sorabji could not fit all the instruments on his large sheets of paper and had to use supplementary, smaller scores, which are bound to match the main scores. These small scores are generally used for the percussion instruments, but sometimes include vocal and instrumental parts.[22] Sorabji had to resort to this procedure in the *Symphony* and *Variations* mentioned above as well as in the *Concerto V for Piano and Large Orchestra [no. 8]*, the *Symphony [no. 2], "Jāmī", for Large Orchestra, Wordless Chorus, and Baritone Solo*, and *Opus clavisymphonicum—Concerto for Piano and Large Orchestra*. Curiously, the pitchless percussion instruments in both the *Symphony* and the *Concerto pour piano et grand orchestre [no. 4]* are notated in groups of four and three at the top and bottom of the score, as if the composer had decided to add them to his standard 36-staff paper at a later date.

Sorabji dated his manuscripts, at the end, using roman numerals, as he did in his correspondence, very often giving the exact time of completion. Unfortunately, in only eight cases did he specify the date on which he began composition. As is often the case in Rossini's autographs,[23] the last page often bears an inscription, such as a maxim, a proverb, a doxology, a dedication, or a comment on the prevailing

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[16]Sorabji's standard paper measured 15 1/4″ × 10 7/8″ (385× 275 mm) with fifteen staves of 12 ½″ (315 mm) in length. A given page can thus accommodate four three-staff or three four-staff systems alternating with one blank system.

[17]KSS to EC, 6 September 1936; KSS to Alan Bush, undated (after 14 August 1940), where the business is called "Papeteries de Leysse".

[18]Whatman paper is a type of wove paper used for special editions and art books; it was invented and manufactured by a company founded in 1740 by James Whatman the Elder (1702–59) in Maidstone, Kent. Its users included Napoleon and Queen Victoria.

[19]KSS to RS, 28 June 1980, 1.

[20]KSS to EC, 18 September 1931, 3.

[21]From 1890 to 1958, the shop of Zaehnsdorf, now Sagorski & Sutcliffe, was located at 144–146 Shaftesbury Avenue (Cambridge Circus, junction of Shaftesbury Avenue and Earlham Street, formerly Little Earl Street). For a history of the firm, see Frank Broomhead, *The Zaehnsdorf (1842–1947): Craft Bookbinders* (Pinner, Middlesex: Private Libraries Association, 1986).

[22]Such a supplementary score, in nineteenth-century Italian opera, was called *spartitino* (pl. *spartiniti*).

[23]See Philip Gossett, *Divas and Scholars: Performing Italian Opera* (Chicago and London: The University of Chicago Press, 2006), 294–95.

weather—invariably rainy or grey—at the time of completion; this last aspect seems to have become very important from the late 1940s onwards. Mistakes resulting from an approximate mastery of some of the finer points of language often mar his inscriptions; thus, the *Sonata III for Piano* was completed "a Londra. tempo fino: ventoso freddo e pluvioso [*recte* piovoso], cioé [*recte* cioè] giorno da [*recte* di] primavera inglese. FIN [*recte* FINE]." These inscriptions may be in either English, French, Italian, or Latin; some of them are so obscure or puzzling that years of research have not been enough to unravel their meaning.

Sorabji also used roman numerals for his opus numbers (and sometimes subdivisions of such), which are given for only thirteen works written up to and including 1917, the last one being the *Concerto II pour piano et grand orchestre* (op. X). If we include two works that have not survived and two manuscripts with crossed-out inscriptions that may have been opus numbers, the number rises to fifteen. There is no real need to use these opus numbers.

The Paul Sacher Stiftung (Basel) now owns fifty-nine of Sorabji's surviving musical manuscripts (for some 8,000 pages), which it acquired from the Sorabji Archive in 1994 (with subsequent acquisitions). Until then they had been the property of its founder, Alistair Hinton, who had inherited them as the composer's sole heir on his death. The rest are scattered among ten private owners and eleven research libraries on three continents: British Library (London), Trinity College of Music (London), Westminster City Archives (London), and Staatsbibliothek zu Berlin in Europe; International Piano Archives at Maryland (College Park, Md.), Library of Congress (Washington), McMaster University (Hamilton, Ontario), Northwestern University (Evanston, Illinois), Pierpont Morgan Library (New York), and Syracuse University in North America; and finally, University of Cape Town in Africa. Most of the manuscripts now in private hands—mostly those written up to the 1940s—had been given by the composer to friends, notably Philip Heseltine and Clinton Gray-Fisk, and passed down through inheritance. Some were sold by the owners' heirs and changed hands through private or auction sales. Sorabji's manuscripts are obviously very valuable documents, if only for the interest they offer to the bibliophile. Second-hand booksellers now regard the copies of the published scores and books that occasionally turn up as collectors' items, and price them accordingly.

Thanks to the financial help of his father, fourteen of Sorabji's works were published between 1921 and 1931 under the imprints of London and Continental Music Publishing, F. and B. Goodwin, and J. Curwen and Sons. Three works—the *Sonata seconda for Piano*, the *Concerto for Piano and Orchestra [no. 5]*, and *Opus clavicembalisticum*—were also published in special limited editions of twelve, twelve, and twenty-three numbered copies, respectively; they were all printed on handmade paper and signed by the composer. Some of these are to be found in public collections, but most are in private hands.

In 1938 Oxford University Press took over as selling agent for all of Sorabji's published works. The only other works to have been published between 1931 and the composer's death were the *Pastiche on the "Minute Waltz" by Chopin* and the *Fantasiettina sul nome illustre dell'egregio poeta Christopher Grieve ossia Hugh M'Diarmid*, issued by Music Treasure Publications and Bardic Edition in 1969 and 1987, respectively. The association with Oxford University Press continued until 1988, when the remaining copies were sold. Alistair Hinton then approached Sorabji with the idea of making master copies of all his manuscripts and published editions for distribution. The composer was reluctant to see error-ridden copies distributed, but welcomed the project of new corrected editions. Further discussion revealed that he objected to master copies because he could not afford the cost and did not want Hinton to bear it. Persistence paid off, and Sorabji finally agreed to the project, clearly the only

solution for a better knowledge of his music.[24] The various musicians and scholars who produce these editions—now with more diligence than ever—do so solely as a contribution to Sorabji's cause.

Despite the many problems that beset them, Sorabji's manuscript scores are "veritable museum pieces", as Carl Engel so aptly commented. The engraved editions, especially of the larger works for piano, which have been edited with such virtuosity by Alexander Abercrombie, Simon Abrahams, Kevin Bowyer (organ in this case), Jonathan Powell, and Abel Sánchez-Aguilera, are also an unforgettable treat for the eye. It is a visceral pleasure to leaf through page after page of scores laid out on such a grand scale. It is always fascinating to marvel at the infinite variety of uniquely complex figurations, the seemingly endless cascades of full chords, and the intricate scalar gestures, all often spanning an entire system in landscape format, with more demisemiquaver beams than have ever been written contributing to such a unique picture. For someone who has studied most of Sorabji's music from manuscripts over the years, it is always a great pleasure when a new edition is published to finally be able to gain a better understanding of the compositional language thanks to a text that is much easier to read and solves countless problems along the way. One thing is certain: the appearance of Sorabji's scores, either as manuscripts or as engraved editions, is an important part of the pleasure of studying his music.

Incomplete and Lost Works

Three of Sorabji's works are incomplete: the early song *Le mauvais jardinier*, of which only the first page is known (but completed by Chappell Kingsland in 2023); the *Music to "The Rider by Night"*, which is missing twenty-one pages in the middle; and a *Passacaglia*, which was set aside after forty-one of the intended seventy-five pages. A short piano piece, the *Fragment Written for Harold Rutland*, exists in three very different versions. Eight works exist in two (usually) almost identical manuscripts, although the reasons why the composer wrote more than one version are unknown. Four of them are songs, all early settings except the last, which is fragmentary: *The Poplars*, *Vocalise pour soprano fioriturata*, *Hymne à Aphrodite*, and *Trois poèmes du "Gulistān" de Saʿdī*. The other four are piano works: *Fantaisie espagnole*, *Sonata seconda for Piano*, *Pastiche on the "Minute Waltz" by Chopin*, and *Toccata seconda per pianoforte*. The second and third are in the hand of the composer's copyist, a certain A. J. [Alfred James] Collins (b. Dublin, ca. 1873), of 142 Sheepcote Lane, Battersea, and the fourth one is fragmentary. Collins, who received work from Arnold Bax as well, also made fair copies of *Chaleur—Poème*, the *Quintet no. 1 for Piano and Quartet of Stringed Instruments*, and the *Concerto for Piano and Orchestra [no. 5]* (1920; 144 pp.; solo piano part only).[25] The copy of the *Sonata seconda* was made for presentation to Ferruccio Busoni, and the others may have resulted from Sorabji's desire to show them to potential performers. The composer himself added interpretative directions in two of the five works copied by Collins. Sorabji wrote in 1940 that his friend and dedicatee Edward Clarke Ashworth, who was employed by Erik Chisholm, Terence White Gervais, and Oxford University Press, among others, worked for him, but there is no evidence of a manuscript prepared by a copyist after 1922.[26]

The works for piano and orchestra present special problems, the most important of which is their numbering. In this book, the titles of seven of the eight works designated "concerto" are given with a number between brackets. There are three reasons for this: (1) the concerto published as no. 2 (or II, to be precise) is actually no. 5, (2) those labelled by the composer nos. III and V were found to be nos. 6

[24] Alistair Hinton, introductory lecture to the concert of 1 February 2003 given as part of the "Rondom Kaikhosru Sorabji" concert series (Utrecht, Vredenburg), 6.

[25] I must acknowledge the help of Dr. Graham Parlett for finding Collins's full name and year of birth in data from the 1911 Census of England and Wales; https://www.findmypast.co.uk/transcript?id=GBC%2F1911%2FRG14%2F02150%2F0167%2F1.

[26] KSS to Alan Bush, 10 February 1940.

and 8 after previously unknown works were located in the late 1980s, and (3) nos. 1 and 4 were not numbered.[27] Furthermore, the actual no. 2 is a two-piano version, the third movement of which was revised for inclusion into no. 4.

Other peculiarities of these works can be summarized as follows: (1) an untraced piano reduction for no. 1 and an existing one for no. 2; (2) a missing full score for no. 2 (unless one was never written) and no. 5 (but published before the manuscript disappeared); (3) separate piano parts for nos. 5 and 8 and *Opus clavisymphonicum—Concerto for Piano and Large Orchestra*; and (4) separate small scores for additional instruments for no. 8, *Opus clavisymphonicum*, and the *Symphonic Variations for Piano and Orchestra*, the latter a concertante version of the first of three volumes of a work for piano solo written some twenty years earlier.

We know of several works simply from references in letters, most of them before 1940. Given the complexity of taking into account all the variables involved, and as a useful checklist for interested musicological detectives, the relevant details are given in tabular form below. Titles marked by a bullet (•) are listed in Rapoport's catalogue and mentioned or discussed in other chapters of his book.

Works lost, not extant, or known only through letters

Transcription of "In a Summer Garden"• (1914; 0 p.); piano transcription carried out up to rehearsal no. 16 (location unknown).[28]

"Have done one or two more French songs [*Chrysilla* and *Roses du soir* (?)] and also the very moving and heart-rending work enclosed" (untraced).[29]

The Reiterated Chord (1916; 0 p.); piano piece that would have been the composer's first original work in this medium (probably never finished).

Undated page with two lines of music: (1) the first line (two bars on three staves) reads "Full Orchestra" and "Fragment for a nonexistent poem for orchestra 'Passion'.—(The bursting of the bonds.) {!!!!!!!!?????}— — "; (2) the second line (four bars) is marked "In four parts" and "fin (!!!?)" at its end, continuing with "Study in 4-part writing 'not' [underlined sixteen times] according to Ebenezer Prout. No prize is offered for successful solution of the tonality of this piece. Virtue must be its own reward here" (probably never completed).[30]

Two-piano reduction of the *Concerto [no. 1] pour piano et grand orchestre*• (1915–16; 177 pp.); mentioned in letter, Sorabji to Philip Heseltine, 6 July 1916 (untraced).

Vocalise no. 2• (1916; 0 p.); mentioned in letter, Sorabji to Philip Heseltine, 6 July 1916 (untraced).

Medea• (1916; 0 p.); referred to as a music drama (abandoned).[31]

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[27]For an account of this problem, see Paul Rapoport, "'Could you just send me a list of his works?'", in *SCC*, 94–95.
[28]KSS to PH, 8 September 1914 {*LPH*, no. 11, p. 85}.
[29]KSS to PH, 24 August 1915 {*LPH*, no. 18, p. 97}.
[30]I was able to examine this sketch in a private collection, but see Rapoport, "'Could you just send me a list of his works?'", in *SCC*, 98, for another account with slight variants.
[31]KSS to PH, 6 July 1916 {*LPH*, no. 26, no. 106}; KSS to KD, 5 September 1983 {Derus, S52, p. 280}.

Orchestral score of the *Concerto II pour piano et grand orchestre*• (1916–17; 49 pp.); untraced, probably never written.

First version of the *Concerto pour piano et grand orchestre [no. 4]*• (1918; 100 pp.); written June–December 1917 and destroyed according to a note on the last page of the manuscript of the second version.

Pages beyond the initial one of *Le mauvais jardinier*• (1919; 1 p.); untraced, possibly never written.

Music to "The Rider by Night"• (1919; 54 pp.); pp. 21–40 missing from the manuscript (untraced).

Black Mass• (1922; 0 p.); for chorus and large orchestra, including organ (abandoned).[32]

"From an Imaginary String Quartet" (1926); two oblong folios (with music on the recto of the first one), marked "for my very good friend Francis George Scott" (the fragment surfaced in 2010 on the antiquarian market).

Work for pianola (begun in 1929; abandoned and destroyed?).[33]

Music for "Faust"• (ca. 1930; 0 p.); probably included a chorus (abandoned).[34]

Orchestral prologue (60 staves to a page) of the *Symphony no. 0 for Piano Solo*• (1930–31; 333 pp.), originally entitled *Symphony II for Piano, Large Orchestra, Organ, Final Chorus, and Six Solo Voices* (untraced).[35]

The Line (1932; 0 p.); piano piece (probably never begun).

> I shall, in all probability start on that short piano work "The Line"—(short, that is to say, only relatively, in comparison with my other works), which will consist of about 25 pages, and will be made up of one enormous melody, moving slowly through an experiment in the "genre" of which Sibelius's "Swan of Tuonela" is such a wonderful example.[36]

Series of "tiny short pieces hitherto written on your [Frank Holliday] name" (probably destroyed; incorporated into the *Toccata quarta* [1964–67; 149 pp.]).[37]

Le agonie• (1951; 0 p.); piano work (probably abandoned).[38]

Frammento aforistico e <u>*forse*</u> *la radice d'uno* [*recte d'un*] *lavoro molto più grande*; sketch dated 29 March 1973, limited to the title page.

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[32]KSS to PH, 24 June 1922 {*LPH*, no. 37, p. 137}.
[33]Sorabji, "Music", *NA* 45, no. 26 (24 October 1929): 308–10; 310.
[34]KSS to EC, 5 April 1930.
[35]KSS to EC, 17 September 1930, 3.
[36]KSS to EC, June 1932, 7 (section dated 6 June).
[37]KSS to FH, 21 April 1966.
[38]KSS to FH, 17 March 1951.

In addition to these works, of which we may never know much more, the manuscripts of six of the published works (all composed before 1922) disappeared after their publication. A later one was lost, fortunately after a manuscript copy had been made.[39] The composer, who gave, as mentioned above, six autographs to the Library of Congress, is said to have offered the manuscripts of his other published pieces but had "destroyed them".[40] There is reason to doubt this, as the manuscripts of several early works that Sorabji was said to have destroyed fortunately resurfaced in the late 1980s; he probably only destroyed their existence in his mind. In 1999 I was able to establish that the manuscript of *Opus secretum atque necromanticum*, reported as missing by Rapoport, had been in possession of the Syracuse University Library since 1982, having been donated to them by the dedicatee. Although Sorabji's copy of the libretto by Robert Nichols for his *Music to "The Rider by Night"* does not appear to have survived, I was able to locate the original full manuscript in the British Library.

Titles and (Extra-)Musical References

Sorabji's titles go far beyond those of other composers, even impressionists, in their evocative power. His titles can be (in descending order of frequency) in English, Italian, French, Latin, or German. Unfortunately, his handling of languages is far from perfect, and so the error-free editorial titles, as used in Rapoport's catalogue and in this book, are preferable.[41] However, it is their length and character—not to mention their sheer beauty—that are most striking. The largest category, accounting for just over 40 per cent, are the evocative titles, that is, titles that suggest an image or a programmatic intention, or refer to a literary work or a place. Examples are *Un nido di scatole sopra il nome del grande e buon amico Harold Rutland*, the *Passeggiata veneziana sopra la Barcarola di Offenbach*, *St. Bertrand de Comminges: "He was laughing in the tower"*, and *Villa Tasca: Mezzogiorno siciliano—Evocazione nostalgica e memoria tanta cara e preziosa del giardino meraviglioso, splendido, tropicale*. A second category, accounting for just over 30 per cent, is made up of "mixed titles", which go beyond the simple, generic, variety by means of some musical or extramusical reference. These include the *Fantasia ispanica*, the *Concerto da suonare da me solo e senza orchestra, per divertirmi*, and the *Variazione maliziosa e perversa sopra "La morte d'Åse" da Grieg*. A final category, accounting for just over 25 per cent, includes the strictly generic titles, that is, the sonatas, toccatas, quintets, concertos, and symphonies. Nevertheless, Sorabji often transformed a generic title into something more expressive by using Latin, as in *Opus clavicembalisticum* and the *Sequentia cyclica super "Dies irae" ex Missa pro defunctis*.

Despite the importance he attached to programmatic titles, Sorabji's attitude towards those who sought to explain the music on that basis was very negative, as the reader will see in the relevant chapters in connection with *Le jardin parfumé—Poem for Piano Solo* and the *Tāntrik Symphony for Piano Alone*. His only concern was whether the music could stand on its own. Nevertheless, an important part of the discussions of the works in this book will unravel and explain the many references, both musical and extramusical, found in the titles and in the numerous notes that adorn the manuscripts (consisting, for example, of quotations or warnings).

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[39]The lost manuscripts are: *Trois fêtes galantes de Verlaine*, *Trois poèmes pour chant et piano*, *Quintet no. 1 for Piano and Quartet of Stringed Instruments*, *Two Piano Pieces*, *Concerto for Piano and Orchestra [no. 5]*, *Prelude, Interlude, and Fugue for Piano*; the later one (1961) is *Fantasiettina sul nome illustre dell'egregio poeta Christopher Grieve ossia Hugh M'Diarmid* (copied by Ronald Stevenson).

[40]KSS to Carl Engel, 17 March 1928 {Library of Congress}. The autographs given were the three published sonatas, *Fantaisie espagnole*, *Symphony [no. 1] for Organ*, and *Valse-Fantaisie*.

[41]The problems affecting Sorabji's titles are discussed on page "Linguistic, Terminological, and Musical Problems in Titles of Works" of the Sorabji Resource Site (https://roberge.mus.ulaval.ca/srs/04-lingu.htm).

It will suffice here to give an overview of this web of references (examples are given in chronological order of appearance). Mostly through his transcriptions, Sorabji was able to pay homage to his favourite composers or at least to works that he liked. We find the names of Delius, Bizet, Chopin, Rimsky-Korsakov, Johann Strauss, Liszt, Ravel, Richard Strauss, Grieg, Gretchaninov, and Busoni. In other works, excluding the songs, he referred in one way or another to various literary figures, such as Robert Nichols, Sheikh al-Nafzāwī, Michelangelo, Saʿdī, Jāmī, Goethe, and Saint Francis of Assisi. The second most important category refers to various subjects or fields of activity and interest dear to the composer: occultism, tarot, Tantrism, ghost stories, and Hindu literature (sutras). A third category refers equally to two countries to which Sorabji was drawn: Spain, the favourite source of exotic *couleur locale* for European composers, and Italy, which he visited several times. The works in the fourth category are associated with some of his friends: Harold Rutland, Clinton Gray-Fisk, Sacheverell Sitwell, Norman Gentieu, and Christopher Murray Grieve. Sorabji sometimes incorporated a friend's name into a title or, more often, devised a theme based on the musical letters of the name. In addition, the titles of one or more individual sections, the interpretative directions found at the beginning, and the ancillary text matter to the works may lead to references of one kind or another, for example India, the mortal sins, Iran (or Persia), Scriabin, the waltz, Spain, Chopsticks, and Bach.

From the mid-1940s onwards—when he was composing strictly for himself, having decided against public performances—Sorabji inserted humorous references in several works. The first movement of the *Concerto da suonare da me solo e senza orchestra, per divertirmi* contains a score of amusing reactions from an imaginary listener and fanciful characterizations; "Corraggio! Bravo!"is just one of them. *Un nido di scatole sopra il nome del grande e buon amico Harold Rutland* consists of sixteen short sections, all preceded by amusing indications such as "Con raffinamento affettato, quasi di piccola borghese che vorebbe darsi delle arie d'essere gran dama". In the *Variazione maliziosa e perversa sopra "La morte d'Åse" da Grieg* and *"Il gallo d'oro" da Rimsky-Korsakov: Variazioni frivole con una fuga anarchica, eretica e perversa*, the humour is in the title, although the latter also contains directions such as "Come una macchina da cucire".[42] Such humour may come as no surprise to those who associate Sorabji only with monumental and complex contrapuntal edifices.

Dedications and Notes Written in the Manuscripts

About three quarters of Sorabji's works have a dedication, those without one being mostly the early songs. Six people received two dedications, seven received three, and three received four, two received five—and one, Alistair Hinton, with whom Sorabji was very close during the last fifteen years of his life, received eight. Some dedicatees with whom Sorabji eventually broke off relationships lost their dedications in favour of other friends; thus Bernard Bromage lost one to each of Christopher à Becket Williams, Clinton Gray-Fisk, and Frank Holliday, who lost two to Harold Morland and one to Paul Rapoport.[43] Sorabji was happy to return the affection of his close friends, but would not hesitate to withdraw his friendship if he felt betrayed.

Sorabji was fond of highly picturesque dedications matching the extramusical references found in his manuscripts. Standard dedications such "To my friend …" are few. He usually preferred a phrase

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[42]"With affected refinement, similar to that of a petty bourgeois wishing to put on the look of a fine lady"; "Like a sewing machine".

[43]Recipients of *two* dedications: Richard Henry Brittain, Edward Clarke Ashworth, Emily Edroff-Smith, Philip Heseltine, John Ireland, Hugh MacDiarmid; recipients of *three* dedications: Reginald Norman Best, Bernard Bromage, Ferruccio Busoni (one "in memory of"), Erik Chisholm, Clinton Gray-Fisk, Harold Rutland, Christopher à Becket Williams; recipients of *four* dedications: Norman Gentieu, Frank Holliday, Norman Peterkin; recipients of *five* dedications: Harold Morland, Madeleine Matilda Worthy (his mother).

—often up to thirty words—that allowed him to draw attention to a particular quality of the recipient. Many years later he commented on the Italian dedication of the *Variazioni e fuga triplice sopra "Dies irae" per pianoforte* to the "most holy memory of the divine master Busoni's superhuman and transcendental genius": it was "exaggerated and excessive", but in the flowery Italian tradition of dedications to some great person.

The opening pages of Sorabji's manuscripts often contain notes on some aspect of performance (including admonitions), prefaces, maxims, quotations from poetry or other literary works, prohibitions on performance, and expressions of distrust towards fellow citizens and musicians (including musicologists). In some cases, many years later, he would comment on one aspect or another of a particular work. For example, he has described his early songs as "rubbish", "trash", "bunk", etc.

Length and Virtuosity

For many newcomers, the most starling feature of Sorabji's music is its length, which often—but far from always, it must be said—exceeds anything in the history of Western music. This obviously excludes such (proto)minimalist, ritualistic, or repetitive works as Érik Satie's *Vexations* (ca. 1893; about eighteen hours), La Monte Young's *The Well-Tuned Piano* (1964; about five hours), or Morton Feldman's String Quartet no. 2 (1983; about six hours). We may disregard here very long works from which selections can be made, such as Charles-Valentin Alkan's *Douze études dans les tons mineurs*, op. 39 (1857; 125 minutes); Olivier Messiaen's *Vingt regards sur l'Enfant-Jésus* (1944; 130 minutes); Niels Viggo Bentzon's collection of thirteen sets of twenty-four preludes and fugues entitled *The Tempered Piano* (1964–96; 16 hours); or the opera cycles of Richard Wagner, August Bungert, and Karlheinz Stockhausen. But a number of composers, especially from the nineteenth century onwards, have written huge works designed to be played from beginning to end, such as Ferruccio Busoni's Concerto for Piano, Orchestra, and Male Chorus (1904; 70 minutes) and Havergal Brian's *Gothic* Symphony (1919–27; 105 minutes). Other composers who wrote works of vast dimensions are Claude Loyola Allgén, whose Sonata for Violin (1989) lasts 160 minutes, and Andrew Violette's Piano Sonata no. 7 (2001), which has a duration of 175 minutes. Other works comparable to Sorabji's longest ones are: Michael Finnissy's *The History of Photography in Sound* for piano (1995–2001; five and a half hours); John Tavener's *The Veil of the Temple* for chorus and instrumental ensemble (2002; about seven hours); Frederic Rzewski's *The Road* for piano (1995–2003; 539 pp.; about ten hours); and Jacob Mashak's *Beatus Vir* for two pianos (2008; 53 pp. in proportional notation, nearly eleven hours).

Given Sorabji's uncompromising attitude to composition, a work would have to reach a certain length to achieve his idea of perfect formal proportions. For him, "the musical necessities and not the convenience or comfort of the audience are what matters in these high regions of Brahman manifesting as Art".[44] Although he tells us in his notes to *Opus clavicembalisticum* that he forbade "separation and performance of any section or subsection"[45] (and this should be taken to apply to all his music), he nevertheless provided an alternative (and conclusive) ending to *pars prima* in his working copy (1932) of the publication (see chapter 10).

Although complex enough to intimidate many pianists, a programmatic piece like *"Quaere reliqua hujus materiei inter secretiora"* (16 pp.) is nothing compared to the *Third Symphony for Piano Solo* (144 pp.) or the *Symphonic Variations for Piano* (484 pp.), whose numbers of pages reveal the composer's

[44]KSS to EC, 3 June 1930, 15 (section dated 11 June).

[45]Sorabji, "Shortform-Analysis of Opus Clavicembalisticum", 1; repr. in booklet for John Ogdon's recording on Altarus AIR-CD-9075(4), 21–27.

fascination with squares, cubes, and other numbers of various properties. The last example is indeed Sorabji's largest solo work, but it should be borne in mind that more than two-thirds of his piano works are no longer than fifty pages, and that about half do not fill more than twenty-five pages; a good part of his music is thus within the reach of mortals. On the other hand, several works are between 100 and 400 pages—in fact, five works are over 300 pages, and all of them represent huge challenges that only few performers are willing to take on. Sorabji was often less expansive in the field of chamber music, although his *Quintet II for Piano and String Quartet* boasts dimensions comparable to the large piano works. The works for piano and orchestra are also huge affairs, running to 540 pages. However, it is in the category of symphonic music that Sorabji reached extremes: the *Symphony [no. 2], "Jāmī", for Large Orchestra, Wordless Chorus, and Baritone Solo* and the *Messa grande sinfonica* are spread over 826 and 1,001 pages, respectively.

An estimate based on actual performances and, for yet unrecorded works, the number of manuscript pages, suggests that Sorabji's entire output could take up to 160 hours to perform, that is, or about 120 compact discs. By comparison, the complete works of Johann Sebastian Bach span between 150 and 170 discs, and the Complete Mozart Edition released by Philips in 1991 consists of 180 discs. Although about two-thirds of the works last less than an hour, the rest can last up to nine hours. This is the case with the *Second Symphony for Organ*, the longest work to be given a public performance. Clearly, Sorabji's standards are alien to current (and probably future) musical practice.

A related characteristic of Sorabji's works is their degree of difficulty and, often, playability. As Erik Chisholm put it, his writing for the piano "goes as far beyond the technical requirements of Liszt and Busoni as these composers outstrip Couperin and Scarlatti in this respect".[46] This, together with the limited availability of the music and the composer's objection to performances, has always been a major obstacle to the dissemination of his music. Obviously, non-repetitive works of hundreds of densely packed pages written on systems of three or more staves are in a class of their own. Nevertheless, Sorabji's works *are* playable, although they require exceptional performers who are prepared to invest a considerable amount of time. The composer himself gave the first performances of eight of his works, including that of *Opus clavicembalisticum*, the longest of his compositions published under his supervision, and had to perform all but *Le jardin parfumé—Poem for Piano Solo* (and possibly also the *Trois poèmes pour chant et piano*) from his manuscripts.[47] He was far from a polished virtuoso in the usual sense, and those who listened to the private recordings he made in the 1960s with score in hand know that, at least at that time, he could do little more than a rough approximation of the written page, or at least did not care to do more.

Sorabji's pianistic writing is not in itself new. It is a logical extension and development, even an exponentiation, of the virtuosic style found in the music of Alkan, Liszt, Busoni, Godowsky, Scriabin, Reger, Szymanowski, and—by anticipation—Messiaen, Boulez, Stockhausen, Xenakis, and Ligeti. (One might be tempted to coin the word "herculeregerian" to describe the difficulty of his organ works.) Not surprisingly, most of the pianists attracted to his music are known for their interest in many of the composers mentioned above. Yet several of Sorabji's shorter piano pieces, including the piano parts of the songs, are well within the reach of professional musicians accustomed to the demands of twentieth-century music. On the other hand, the large works require unusual stamina, the ability to

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[46] *Kaikhosru Sorabji: An Essay by Erik Chisholm, with a Descriptive Catalogue of His Works* (London: Oxford University Press, undated [1938]), 4.

[47] The *Trois poèmes pour chant et piano* were published in 1921, but the exact date is not known. It would have had to be released much before June 1921 to enable the soprano Marthe Martine to learn them, unless Sorabji made for her a manuscript copy. On Sorabji's use of manuscript scores for his performances, see Abrahams, "Le mauvais jardinier: A Reassessment of the Myths and Music of Kaikhosru Shapurji Sorabji", 12n10, 47.

unravel complex polyphonic webs and to achieve careful voicing of superimposed lines using highly complex rhythmic shapes, and the ability to shape fugues with very long subjects and passacaglia statements filling several pages. Such music stands well beyond the reach of all but a few titans who must devote years to works they will have few opportunities to perform. In a way, this situation is probably for the best, since poor performance would only harm the composer's cause by offering misrepresentations.

Given the predominance of piano works in Sorabji's oeuvre, it is easy to focus too much on them. However, the larger chamber works and the orchestral symphonies (for there are also two groups of solo works, the symphonies for piano and for organ) have their own problems. One obvious difficulty is the sheer task of maintaining the concentration of a large group of musicians through hours of complex music with constantly changing metres. Another is keeping the string instruments in tune, unless the musicians have backup instruments on the floor, ready for use. Yet another is the need for sufficient rehearsal. Mere readings cannot be musically satisfying enough, and there is always the danger of offering nothing more than a seemingly endless flow of musical molasses. Since editions are needed to clarify the musical text and eliminate errors, an obvious solution is to use notation or sequencing software to produce sound files giving an approximation of how such works would sound if ideal performance conditions could be created. Such electronic versions, with their limitations, do exist and remain useful for study purposes.

Sorabji himself questioned the validity of such complexity in an essay entitled "Of Simplicity". He objected to two "old tags" that, through constant repetition, acquired the "sanctity of a religious dogma": (1) "that the supreme things in art are ever the simplest", and (2) "that the greatest works of art are always the widest in appeal". For him, this theory was "an aftermath of the slavish respect and servile adulation paid, during so many centuries in Europe, to Greek art and Greek aesthetic". On the other hand, he admired Oriental art, noting that "to the Oriental artist the ideal of simplicity as an end and aim in itself, as a thing to be striven for its own sake, is not only utterly meaningless and alien, but scarcely enters his head". He also liked "the rhyme schemes of Persian poetry, the rubaiyi or quatrain, the designs of Persian carpets, Hindu architecture, Chinese carving", all remarkable "for the lush intricacy and complexity, things symptomatic of an exuberantly rich and tropically fertile imagination, rejoicing in its own strength and teeming abundance of invention". In the field of music, works such as the Mass in B Minor, the *Hammerklavier*, or the *Ring* held an endless fascination for him, revealing new details on closer inspection. Sorabji also argued that both Art and Nature do not know "The Great Simple Things". He looked to Nature for its "infinitely intricate and complex processes, movements, organisms growing ever more and more complex and elaborate as they develop and rise higher". The end of his essay shows that he felt no need at all to limit his inspiration—or what he thought of himself as a composer.

> Surely the greater the transmitting medium—the greater the artist, that is—more of this unending richness and complexity will pour through him to find expression in his work, and we should be glad of it and rejoice exceedingly, not expect him to dam down the flood of his thought into a pitiful, piddling trickle because of our feebleness and weakness. If the Amazon at flood sweep[s] you away who try to breast its volume of waters, that is your misfortune, not the Amazon's fault. But you have no right to expect the Amazon to flow through a bath tap with just the force and volume you happen to be able to bear. In any case you could have kept out of the Amazon's way![48]

[48]Sorabji, "Of Simplicity", in *AM*, 115–19 (passim); the block quotation appears on p. 119.

Sorabji, with his usual independence of mind and indifference to fashions, liked to compare his rationale for writing elaborate works with that of the artists-craftsmen of countries like Iran, who produced "highly wrought work": "That was their way. It is also mine."[49] Working day after day on such a lofty plane of complexity was obviously exhausting. Thus, after completing his gigantic *Messa grande sinfonica*, Sorabji turned—though not systematically and forever—to "aphoristic fragments". At the beginning of his composing career, he had written, with reference to Schoenberg, that one becomes suspicious "when a man thinks it necessary to wrap up his thoughts in complicated verbose phraseology [...]. If he has really something of value to say, he will not swaddle it up in a mass of verbiage. [...] The same thing applies to words."[50] Like his own compositions, Sorabji's writings are complex, convoluted, full of long interpolated clauses without much punctuation, and extending over several lines. Many critics of literary style would accuse him of turgidity; what is probably the longest sentence in his *Fruits of Misanthropy* (item no. 218, orig. no. CCCXX) consists of 199 words.[51] Given the human propensity for contradiction, it is not surprising to see him oscillating between the two extremes.

Notational Techniques

The most obvious feature of Sorabji's piano works is the number of staves. Three-staff systems are standard right from his first extant solo works. The traditional two-staff systems are very rare in works other than the early songs. It is perhaps surprising, therefore, to find here and there a one-staff system, to which Sorabji sometimes resorts for the initial statement of a fugue subject. Although he had first used four-staff systems in two isolated passages of the *Sonata no. 1 for Piano*, it is only in the *Variazioni e fuga triplice sopra "Dies irae" per pianoforte* that he used them for several pages in a row (pp. 195–201). From this time onwards, four-staff systems became as common as three-staff ones. The piano part of *Opusculum clavisymphonicum vel claviorchestrale* shows Sorabji at his most systematic, with the entire first movement (96 pages) written entirely on four staves.

Few composers have written on four or more staves. An early example is to be found in the *Poems of 1917*, op. 41 (1918), by Leo Ornstein (1893–2002): the eighth of the ten pieces makes extensive use of four-staff systems, and the fourth one has ten bars written on six staves, thereby anticipating Sorabji by a dozen years. The last two pages of *Opus clavicembalisticum* show his first use of five-staff systems, which are found in selected passages of a dozen works from then on. Var. 16 of the *Second Symphony for Organ* is distributed over six staves plus one for the pedal. Sorabji would go on to use such systems, for a few pages at a time, in nine other works. The *Symphony no. 0 for Piano Solo* has two pages (pp. 250–51) on seven-staff systems, which are also found in two other works, the *Sonata V (Opus archimagicum)* (pp. 198–99, 224–27) and the *Symphonic Variations for Piano* (p. 117). Finally, the *Third Organ Symphony* has one page (p. 124) on *eleven* staves, two for each of the five manuals plus one for the pedal. Sorabji seems to have refrained from calling for two-staff systems in the pedal parts of his organ works. The above examples are all from the manuscripts, since engraved editions can reduce the number of staves without affecting legibility; this is indeed what Jonathan Powell does in his editions.

An unusual procedure is the systematic replacement of the traditional octava sign (8va) by the letter *I* with a caret above (**Î**) to indicate that everything that follows (up to the indication *loco*, or a downward-pointing arrow in the early works) should be played an octave higher. In fact, Sorabji began

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[49]Sorabji, "A Personal Statement" [dated 14 October 1959], first published as "Statement by Kaikhosru Shapurji Sorabji" in *Gambit: Edinburgh University Review*, Summer 1965: 4. See the full statement at the end of chapter 13.

[50]KSS to PH, early March [1914], 15 {*LPH*, no. 8, p. 66}.

[51]The *Fruits of Misanthropy* is an imposing unpublished collection of statements, mainly negative, on non-musical topics dating from the late 1920s; see chapter 9 for a full presentation.

by using the inverted version of this symbol (**Ḭ**), to indicate the octave below, in his first extant work, the song *The Poplars*. In his first extended work, the *Concerto [no. 1] pour piano et grand orchestre*, we find examples not only of the **Î** symbol, but also of its variant for two octaves (**ÎÎ**), which can also point downwards. It is only from 1924 onwards, with the publication of the *Prelude, Interlude, and Fugue for Piano*, that we find these signs in his published music, for the earlier scores use a variant consisting of the roman numerals *I* (with or without caret) and *VIII* superimposed. Sorabji's practice avoids the need for dotted lines on page after page. In fact, in works written on three staves and more, the **Î** symbol is present throughout. Some composers—including Ronald Stevenson, Michael Finnissy, Alistair Hinton, and Chris Dench—have followed Sorabji's example. Earlier examples of related symbols can be found in the *Rondeau pastoral*, op. 2, and the *Air créole varié*, op. 4 (both undated, ca. 1833?) by Amédée Méreaux (1802–74), the composer of the challenging if musically limited *Grandes études pour piano en soixante caprices caractéristiques dans le grand style libre et dans le style sévère*, op. 63 (1865). The symbol used in this score is a large staff-spanning number *8* followed by a centre-aligned colon in the first work, and the same symbol but with two vertical lines crossing the number and the dots in the first two spaces of the staff.[52]

Sorabji never used key signatures except in his transcriptions of tonal music and in his early song *L'heure exquise*.[53] Therefore, accidentals are written in the musical text as needed, provided the composer did not forget (or care) to insert them. His standard practice, as explained at the beginning of some of his manuscripts or published scores, is that an accidental applies only to the note before which it stands, except for those that are immediately repeated or tied. An editor often has to decide whether an accidental applies to the whole of a beamed group or has been cancelled without warning —not always easy in a non-tonal context. Prospective editors should use as many accidentals as necessary to avoid misunderstandings—there are many other problems to solve in order to play this music accurately. Sorabji noted that his "practice regarding 'meaningless' insertion of naturals is that of Schoenberg and his great pupil Alban Berg and I shall continue it."[54] Even in more or less tonal works such as the transcriptions, a performer will feel much more comfortable if accidentals are valid only for a beamed group, or even if they are used on a note-by-note basis.

Sorabji usually wrote barlines only as signposts, with no reference to metre. Sometimes there is only one bar on a page, while the music itself suggests several more. The composer did not care much for this aspect of his music, and an editor may feel authorized in breaking very long bars into shorter ones to make the structure clearer. Sorabji himself did just that when he wrote his *Symphonic Variations for Piano and Orchestra* (1935–37, 1953–56; 540 pp.): he copied the piano part of the first volume of his earlier work of the same name for piano solo into his new score and, breaking his long bars into more manageable units. Dotted rather than solid bar-lines began to appear around 1919 in the song *I Was Not Sorrowful*. In the piano part of the *Concerto for Piano and Orchestra [no. 5]*, Sorabji wrote of the need "to maintain a steady smooth extra-metrical proselike flow, except in such places as the contrary is clearly indicated by the character of the music". The music had to be "as an elaborate fabric wherein all the threads of warp and woof are plainly perceptible although each contributing to the substance of the weft of tone".

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[52]Copies of Méreaux's scores can be found on the website of the Bibliothèque nationale de France at https://gallica.bnf.fr/ark:/12148/btv1b7200565f and https://gallica.bnf.fr/ark:/12148/btv1b72005678.

[53]There are key signatures in the published edition of *Fantasiettina sul nome illustre dell'egregio poeta Christopher Grieve ossia Hugh M'Diarmid*, but we cannot know if they were present in the original manuscript, which was lost after Ronald Stevenson returned it to the composer. They are probably editorial additions.

[54]KSS to EC, 24 April 1931.

Sorabji used time signatures only in his early works, up to the *Sonata seconda for Piano*, and in the chamber and orchestral works, where they are essential. His time signatures consist of a variety of fractions with denominators of four or eight. Sometimes simple numerators are not enough, and he adds a fraction, such as 3½/4, to indicate seven quavers. Another feature of the orchestral works is that all but the very first such work, the *Concerto [no. 1] pour piano et grand orchestre*, are written at concert pitch; in this respect he is a forerunner, for this did not become more widespread until later in the century.

The paucity of expression marks may puzzle performers, and it is mostly indications of very loud dynamics that are marked. A note in the *Sequentia cyclica super "Dies irae" ex Missa pro defunctis* tells us that "the music itself makes clear what 'expression' is needed, if any, in any particular passage. The 'intelligence' of the player will do—or undo—the rest." Sorabji requires the score of *Le jardin parfumé—Poem for Piano Solo* to be played as softly as possible throughout, and this applies to all his works or sections in nocturne style. In practice, the dynamic level is proportional to the thickness of the texture.

One type of expression mark with which Sorabji was generous (perhaps overly so) is the slur. The piano scores, in particular, are replete with slurs spanning entire systems, often weaving elegantly between staves in sinuous curves, sometimes almost encircling passages. However, these are "pianist's slurs", in other words, slurs that are not really meant to indicate actual phrasing, but rather to indicate passages forming larger units. Furthermore, the positioning of the end points is not always precise, sometimes going a few notes too far.

Although some works contain very few tempo indications and no metronome marks,[55] others are rich in very evocative indications. Sorabji liked to provide detailed directions suggesting the atmosphere of a given section, either in French or in Italian, especially when writing in nocturne style. Words expressing languidness, languor, voluptuousness, somnolence, suavity, or warmth are common; for example, the *Passeggiata veneziana sopra la Barcarola di Offenbach* contains the marking "Sonnolento, languidamente, voluttuoso. Sonorità sempre piena e calorosa". At the other end of the scale are directions relating to anger, energy, noise, or thunder, as in the *Second Symphony for Piano*, where one reads "Con fracasso: Pesantissimo: ma con larga maestà e grandiosità". Sometimes the performer is asked to play in a delicate, subdued, obscure, occult, or veiled manner, as suggested by the marking "Il tutto in una ambienza [*recte* un'ambiente] di minaccia occulta" in the same work.[56] Taking his cue from Alkan and Scriabin, Sorabji was a highly expressive composer, and his instructions to the performer are a delight to the readers of his scores. However, a knowledge of French and Italian is nevertheless essential to appreciate this aspect of his art.

Sorabji often calls for the sostenuto pedal (the Steinway third pedal), which allows certain sounds (typically octaves in the lowest register) to sustained while others continue to be damped. He first required this pedal in his *Concerto II pour piano et grand orchestre* (1917), and in his *Concerto pour piano et grand orchestre [no. 4]* he specifically called for a "Piano:– (avec troisième pédale Sostenuto)". The third pedal, of which Busoni was the earliest proponent (1894), is essential in Sorabji's larger works, especially beginning with *Opus clavicembalisticum*. We find his most extensive use of it in the fiftieth of the *Études transcendantes*, marked "Per il pedale 3". Sorabji also resorted to sympathetic vibrations, what he often called "tocco silenzioso", referring to the silent striking of selected keys to

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[55]Exceptions to the absence of metronome indications are the early songs *Chrysilla* and *Hymne à Aphrodite*, *Concerto [no. 1] pour piano et grand orchestre*, the *Fragment Written for Harold Rutland*, *Opusculum for Orchestra* (not at the beginning in this case), no. 17 of the *Études transcendantes*, and the *Suggested Bell-Chorale for St. Luke's Carillon*.

[56]"Somnolent, languidly voluptuous. With a full, warm sonority throughout"; "Roaringly: very heavy, but with majesty and grandeur"; "All to be played in an atmosphere of occult threat".

release their dampers in order to induce vibrations by striking other keys; there are examples in a dozen works; the earliest one being the fourth concerto mentioned above.

Another requirement of Sorabji's piano music is the use of the Bösendorfer Imperial's 97-note (8-octave) keyboard, which extends the instrument's range by the interval of a sixth to reach a very low C at the threshold of the human hearing capacity.[57] This extension seems to have been the result of an experiment made by the Austrian piano manufacturer for Busoni, who wanted to reproduce the sound of a thirty-two-foot organ pipe in his Bach transcriptions. Apart from *Das Geisterschiff* (1860) by Carl Tausig, where a low G♯ is required, the first time we see these notes is in Busoni's works, namely, in his transcription of Bach's Prelude and Fugue in E-flat Major, BWV 552 (1890), then in the third movement of his Piano Concerto (1904). Sorabji had first seen the Bösendorfer keyboard put to use in a piano piece by Leonid Sabaneyev in 1915 and, for some reason, must have concluded that its keyboard also had additional notes also at the top.[58] This leads to problems in no less than six works written between 1922 and 1956. On the first page of the *Sonata III for Piano*, Sorabji wrote that two high notes still unavailable today (D, C♯) should be played an octave lower on instruments with a standard compass.[59] In his *Variazioni e fuga triplice sopra "Dies irae" per pianoforte*, he cued a note reading "Bösendorfer 8 octave Concert Grand" to a passage of semiquavers that would require D, E, and F at the top. The problem recurs four times in the *Sonata IV for Piano*, three times in *Opus clavicembalisticum*, twice in the *Études transcendantes (100)*, and once in the *Sonata III for Piano*, each of the two works on *Dies irae*, and *Rosario d'arabeschi* (1956), in the last of which a "conceptual" high E (in parentheses) is required to complete a thematic statement. Sorabji sometimes wrote for the instrument of his dreams, but he was not alone in this. Scriabin wrote a chord with a conceptual D as the top on the last page (bar 365) of his Sonata no. 6, op. 62 (1911).[60] Another example is found in the last bar of no. 23 (in B-flat minor) of the *Twenty-Four Preludes in All Major and Minor Keys*, op. 102 (1950), by Sorabji's friend York Bowen (see chapter 18). The last right-hand octave in an ascending run is D flat, and a note reading "Use top C as octave" provides the solution. In 1929, towards the end of the *Sonata IV for Piano*, we find the first correct use of the Bösendorfer keyboard in Sorabji's music, then in the *Sonata V (Opus archimagicum)*, completed in 1935. These examples remained isolated until the 1970s, when he regularly required the low notes, beginning with the *Symphonia brevis for Piano*. For some reason, he returned to various scores written between the late 1950s and the mid-1960s to add the possibility of using the low notes, the first such work being *Opus clavisymphonicum—Concerto for Piano and Large Orchestra*, but only in the solo part, not the full score. The only earlier work in which he did so was, this for a single instance, the *Sonata IV for Piano*, completed in 1929.

Formal Categories

In his catalogue of Sorabji's works, Paul Rapoport has divided the composer's output—but for one exception—on the basis of performing forces, into nine categories, three of which are subdivided. This division, shown in tabular form below, is also used in this book, although the figures have been updated to reflect the current state of research. For category 4b, Rapoport has six titles, of which *Symphony II*

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[57]For an extended discussion of extended keyboards, see Paul Corbin, "Why Extend the Range of the Piano?", (undated, 14 pp.), http://www.stuartandsons.com/uploads/2/7/3/9/27391915/range_of_the_piano.pdf, on the website of Stuart & Sons (Tumut, New South Wales, Australia), which has pianos with keyboards of 97, 102, and 108 keys.

[58]KSS to PH, 8 September [1914] (section dated 15 September, in a footnote) {*LPH*, no. 11, p. 87}.

[59]These unavailable notes can also be found in Sonatas nos. 2 (1924) and 3 (1924–28) by Sergey Protopopov (1893–1954).

[60]A note in Alexander Skrjabin, *Ausgewählte Klavierwerke*, ed. Günter Philipp, vol. 6, *Sonaten Nr. 6–10* (Leipzig: Edition Peters, 1972), 29, refers to "contemporary witnesses" of the composer according to whom he played a C instead of a D. An example of the Bösendorfer's low G♯ is found in his *Prelude*, op. 39, no. 4 (1903).

for Piano, Large Orchestra, Organ, Final Chorus, and Six Solo Voices (now called *Symphony no. 0 for Piano Solo*) is actually a work for piano solo already listed in the first category.

Breakdown of Sorabji's works into categories

Category	*Medium*	*Works (N)*
1	Piano solo	57
2	Organ solo	3
3	Piano and orchestra	11
4a	Orchestra without voices	2
4b	Orchestra with voices	5
5a	Chamber ensemble without voices	5
5b	Chamber ensemble with voices	2
6a	Voice and piano	19
6b	Voice and organ	1
7	Carillon	1
8	(Piano) transcriptions	10
9	Unknown	1

In terms of grouping into larger units, the works can be divided into three categories. They relate to the keyboard music, but the chamber and orchestral works follow the same pattern.

(1) single, usually rather short, pieces or songs, and one-movement sonatas, like *Quasi habanera* and the *Sonata no. 1 for Piano*;

(2) groups of pieces or songs, ranging from two or three, like the *Trois poèmes du "Gulistān" de Saʿdī*, to one hundred like the *Études transcendantes* (which can be performed separately), with the *Frammenti aforistici (Sutras)* consisting of 104 short pieces;

(3) large-scale multimovement or multisection sonatas, symphonies, and toccatas for solo piano and symphonies for organ, like the *Sonata IV for Piano* and the *Third Organ Symphony*.

Sorabji was fond of writing large-scale solo works entitled toccatas, sonatas, and symphonies, of which there are four, six, and ten, respectively. These works can be divided into up to sixteen sections, movements, or parts, usually labelled with roman numerals. We can find in Busoni's *Toccata: Preludio, Fantasia, Ciaccona* (1920) Sorabji's incentive for this use of multimovement toccatas. His model for a symphony for piano solo was obviously Charles Valentin Alkan's *Douze études dans les tons mineurs*, op. 39 (1857), of which movements 4 to 7 form such a work.

Some works consist of larger parts designated by the Latin word *pars* (pl. *partes*), and these are usually subdivided into smaller sections; in other composers, these would obviously be large enough

to stand alone. Busoni's use of such labels in his Piano Concerto certainly influenced Sorabji. The section titles often allude to some formal or stylistic feature, and the labelling is remarkably creative and inventive. The composer's original use of languages and of diminutives, as well as his coinage of compounds, transforms generic section titles into highly evocative ones. The full list of section titles given below shows six variants each for coda and interlude, and seven for cadenza and prelude.[61]

Section titles used in multimovement works

Adagio
Adagio-Epilogo
Adagio-Finale
Animato quasi scherzo
Arabesque-Nocturne
Aria
Aria fiorita
Barcarola
Cadenza
Cadenza de' pedali
Cadenza fantasiata (in Alexander Abercrombie's completion known as *Introduction, Passacaglia, Cadenza, and Fugue*)
Cadenza fiorita
Cadenza-fugata
Cadenza–Punto d'organo
Cadenza-Toccata
Cadenzetta
Canonica
Cantico
Capriccio
Coda-Epilogo
Coda-Finale
Coda-Ripieno
Coda-Ripresa
Coda-Stretta
Coda-Stretto
Corale-Fantasia
Corrente
Epilogo
Epilogue
Fanfare
Fantasia
Fantasia cromatica
Fantasiettina
Finale
Fuga
Fughettina
Imitationes
Interlude
Interludio
Interludio—Moto perpetuo
Interludio fugato
Interludio placido
Interludium
Intermezzo
Intrecciata
Intrecciata politematica
Introduction
Introduzione quasi preludio
Introito
Introitus
Ispanica
Marcia funebre
Moto perpetuo
Nexus
Notturnino
Notturno
Notturno-Fantasia
Ostinato
Ostinato doppio
Passacaglia
Passacagliettina
Piccola passacaglia maliziosa
Piccolo preludio corale tascabile
Postlude
Prelude
Preludietto
Preludio adagio
Preludio quasi toccata
Preludio-Corale

[61]The three entries with "punt**o** d'organo" in the list "Section titles used in multimovement works" read "punt**a** d'organo" in the manuscripts. Sorabji must have had one of the following in mind: the German *Orgelpunkt*, the French *point d'orgue*, or the English *organ point*, the last of which is now considered ambiguous and is properly called "pause", "fermata", "pedal", or "pedal point" (the last of which is used here for the index entries). He translated it into Italian as *punta d'organo* without realizing that *punta* (feminine) refers to the sharp tip of an object, instead of *punto* (masculine), which is a point. In Italian there is no such thing as *punto d'organo* to describe a pedal point, which is called *pedale* or *pedale d'armonia*. The term *punto d'organo* is found in some very old sources to refer to a cadenza at the end of a vocal or instrumental piece. The French *point d'orgue*, which corresponds to a fermata, is called *corona* or *punto coronato* in Italian. In the *Second Symphony for Piano* (1954; 248 pp.), Sorabji used *punta d'organo costanziata* for the fourth section of the fourth movement, when he should have written *punto d'organo costanziato*, if only to respect the gender of the term. However, the added adjective does not exist in Italian and should probably be *costante* (constant, continuous, steady). It would have been better to use *punto d'organo costante*, but the best choice is *pedale costante*. A reference to this explanation will be added to the discussions of the works using the incorrect expression.

Preludio-Introduzione
Preludio-Toccata
Prologo
Punto d'organo costante
Punto d'organo
Quasi cadenza
Quasi corale
Quasi fuga
Quasi fugato
Quasi habanera
Riflesso del Preludio-Toccata
Ripieno
Ripresa
Ritournelle–point d'orgue
Rota
Scherzo
Tarantella
Tema cum variationibus
Theme
Toccata
Toccata–Quasi cadenza—ovvero Moto perpetuo
Toccata variata
Toccatinetta
Variazioni

Stylistic Categories

Michael Habermann has divided Sorabji's output for the piano into five categories based on style, and there is no need to do otherwise here: (1) strict contrapuntal sections (fugues); (2) sections in variation form; (3) sections in the motoric genre; (4) free fantasies, paraphrases, and shorter works; and (5) nocturnes.[62]

The strict contrapuntal sections show Sorabji as the logical heir to the Reger of the *Variations and Fugue on a Theme of J. S. Bach*, op. 81 (1904), and to the Busoni of the *Fantasia contrappuntistica* (1910). For all their density and intricacy of voice leading and their massiveness, Reger's works pale in comparison to the massive creations of Sorabji, who refuted the frequent argument that the German composer's larger and more complex works contained too many notes by recalling that Mozart felt that his own works contained as many notes as he wanted. He added: "If Bach could do all he did with such comparatively simple means, why should Reger want such complex ones for what he has to do, the answer is that Bach was doing one thing, Reger another."[63]

Sorabji's output includes no fewer than thirty works containing one or more fugues, one of which was written by Alexander Abercrombie as part of his completion, and one of which is an arrangement of a work by Bach. Fifteen are in the last position, and a further six come last but for some "Coda-Finale" or "Coda-Epilogo" as a crowning section. The remaining nine have their fugues elsewhere in the work. Furthermore, only five works with variations or a passacaglia (or both) do not contain a fugue.

The earliest fugue was completed in late February 1920 as part of the *Prelude, Interlude, and Fugue for Piano* (1920, 1922; 17 pp.). Fugues on one subject appear in eight works; in addition, three of the *Études transcendantes* are or contain fugues, and the *Messa grande sinfonica* contains five. Seven works have fugues with two subjects, six with three, and four with five. Sorabji uses the Latin words *duplex, triplex,* and *quadruplex* five times, calling for up to six voices—in practice more if doublings are included. A striking example is *Opus clavicembalisticum*, where the total number of subjects developed reaches ten by the end of the *fuga quadruplex*. The composer often identifies the subjects and their presentations (*cancrizans, inversus, cancrizans inversus*) in addition to providing analytical notes.

Our aural experience of Sorabji's large-scale fugues is still limited, the most substantial examples heard in public performances or commercial recordings being the "Fuga triplex" from the *Second Symphony for Organ*, which lasts some 150 minutes, and the four fugue complexes of *Opus clavicembalisticum*, whose ten individual sections total some 105 minutes. However stimulating a study of Sorabji's fugal procedures may be to the analyst, such sections can be exhausting for the listener.

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[62]Michael Habermann, "Sorabji's Piano Music", in *SCC*, 345–60.
[63]Sorabji, "The Organ Works of Reger", in *AM*, 220–26; 221.

Firstly, the contrapuntal parts plough their way relentlessly in a more or less atonal language resulting from the use of a kind of counterpoint developing without regard to the resulting harmonic progressions. Secondly, the use of mostly similar rhythmic values, such as crotchets or quavers, for several pages in a row reinforces this uniformity. A given fugue often concentrates on a small subset of values, with the rhythms becoming more varied only in the second or third fugue of a complex. The fugues, especially the multiple ones, become more convincing as they progress, with the added themes providing a welcome variety. The subjects found in the *Sequentia cyclica super "Dies irae" ex Missa pro defunctis* and the *Second Symphony for Piano* are notable exceptions for their many polyrhythms. The third subject of the last of the *Études transcendantes*, a fugue with five subjects, uses triplets, but the consequences in terms of difficulty are not as far-reaching as in the first two works.[64]

Sorabji's contrapuntal constructions tend to begin slowly, softly, simply, and thinly, and then gradually increase in tempo, dynamics, complexity, and density. His subjects are usually long, sometimes so long that it is easy to lose the thread. The final subject of *Opus clavicembalisticum*, for example, consists of twenty-seven crotchet beats using mostly quick note values in various rhythmic combinations. A standard procedure for Sorabji is to insert a massive pedal point near the end that tends to focus attention on a certain pitch, and then to proceed to an extended stretto involving several themes. Such sections—and much of what precedes them—become so dense that one might wish they had been written for four hands (a medium for which Sorabji never composed). Since the voice leading forces Sorabji to write in a style that becomes less and less suitable for the pianist's hands as it progresses, one might wonder what kind of clarity and effectiveness can be achieved. In addition to the composer, Geoffrey Douglas Madge, John Ogdon, Jonathan Powell, and Daan Vandewalle have played *Opus clavicembalisticum* in public more than once, proving that such fugues *can* be played despite the unheard-of extremes of stamina. The only fugues entrusted to more than one player are found in the "Offertorium" of the *Messa grande sinfonica* and in the last movement of the *Concertino non grosso for String Sextet with Piano obbligato quasi continuo*.

Like Reger, Sorabji was strongly attracted to Baroque variation techniques such as theme and variations, passacaglia, ostinato, and chorale prelude (second category). Although only four titles contain the word "variation", the compositional procedure is present in thirteen works, and passacaglias are used in eighteen works, with six works containing both. For example, both *Opus clavicembalisticum* and the *Toccata quarta* contain a set of variations and a passacaglia. The *Sequentia cyclica super "Dies irae" ex Missa pro defunctis* and *"Il gallo d'oro" da Rimsky-Korsakov: Variazioni frivole con una fuga anarchica, eretica e perversa*, both of them variation works, have one large variation in the form of a passacaglia. Finally, the concluding movement of *Opusculum clavisymphonicum vel claviorchestrale* is a theme and variations in which one variation is an ostinato with variations (practically a passacaglia). As noted above, several of Sorabji's large works end with a fugue, but in one case the fugue and its accompanying introductory piece are in an inner movement: the five-section middle movement of the *Fourth Symphony for Piano Alone* ends with a theme with forty-nine variations, the last of which is a "Quasi cadenza–Toccata and Fuga" (with three subjects). Sorabji also uses Baroque variation techniques not only in piano and organ music, but also in a piano concerto, a string sextet, and a Mass.

The number of variations is, in all but very few cases, far greater than usual: between 24 and 81 for the variations, and between 16 and 102 for the passacaglias. In all, Sorabji wrote 735 variations and

[64]See Abrahams, "Le mauvais jardinier: A Reassessment of the Myths and Music of Kaikhosru Shapurji Sorabji", 188–89.

1,085 passacaglia statements.[65] Often the number of variations is—or, thanks to irregularities in the numbering found in the manuscripts, is forced to amount to—49, 64, 81, or 100, in keeping with the composer's interest in square numbers. Variations are used in keyboard works only, although one, *Opusculum clavisymphonicum vel claviorchestrale*, is for piano and orchestra. Passacaglias, on the other hand, can appear in concertante, chamber, and vocal-orchestral works, as in the *Concerto V for Piano and Large Orchestra [no. 8]*, the *Quintet II for Piano and String Quartet*, and the *Messa grande sinfonica*.

The sectional nature of the variation forms allows Sorabji to explore many techniques, textures, tempos, etc. These sections therefore hold the listener's interest much more than the fugues. The themes are often long, which explains why Sorabji's works are so extended. Consider the amount of paper needed to write a variation in which the semibreves of a long theme are overlaid with demisemiquavers.

Sections in the motoric genre (third category) are another stylistic category in which quick tempo and sheer virtuosity create interest and provide relief from the rigour of the contrapuntal style. The piano writing features complex scales and arpeggios, double notes, and cascades of chords. The sections featuring this motoric style are called cadenzas, fantasias, perpetual motions, preludes, and toccatas. Sometimes Sorabji combines such a virtuosic section with a pedal point, as in *Opus clavicembalisticum*, which contains two extended cadenzas based throughout on E♭ and A, respectively.

The fourth category includes the free fantasies, paraphrases, and shorter works. The free fantasies, to which the shorter pieces also belong stylistically, include works such as the first four sonatas (that is, the unnumbered one, and the first three, all in one movement), the programmatic pieces, the etudes, and the sets of fragments. Sorabji did not feel bound by the traditional formal designs associated with the sonata or, for that matter, the concerto. For him, "a real live musical organism conditions its own form (more or less) as it grows".[66] He saw such works as being "sounded" and played "during a fair duration of time"—and the word "fair" is quite an understatement in this context. As he explained in 1932, his own music brought to a climax the tendencies he had noticed in the work of other modern composers.

> The tendency of the modern piano sonata is […] in the direction of an organic growth, a living organism, an interplay and weft of themes approximating to the symphonic poem […]. Strictly speaking, the sonata is merely a generic label for any extended or large-scale work for one or more than one solo instrument. […] It is better therefore to accept, for practical purposes, the definition of sonata as an extended work on spacious lines for a solo instrument —something that is "suonata" [*recte* suonato]—that is to say, played during a fair duration of time.[67]

Given the range of moods, the extravagant gestures, and the variety of textures used, many other works, although in several movements, belong stylistically to the free fantasies: the last two numbered sonatas, the four toccatas, and the seven piano symphonies. It is no easy task to find one's way through these works, to understand the "interplay and weft of themes", and to give the whole a coherence. Poor performances are likely to lead critics to turn against Sorabji his comment on Arnold Bax's Second Piano Sonata: "The work is scrappy, incoherent, lacking in consistency of style, and wholly lacking in that 'interior logic' which alone can give a work that essential cohesion which reliance on formalistic-scholastic devices can[,] and will never give it."[68]

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[65]This number excludes the five editorial passacaglia statements in *Introduction, Passacaglia, Cadenza, and Fugue* (1929; compl. Alexander Abercrombie, 2004; 79 pp.).

[66]KSS to NG, 27 August 1954 {17/F.31}.

[67]Sorabji, "The Modern Piano Sonata", in *AM*, 52–65; 53–54.

[68]Sorabji, "Music", *NA* 35, no. 7 (12 June 1924): 79–81; 80.

Sorabji often expressed his admiration for the operatic fantasias and transcriptions of Liszt, Busoni, and Godowsky. Rejecting the standard arguments of many critics, he argued that what mattered was "the skill and resource wherewith the new medium is used, the ingenuity displayed in transplanting technical devices of the instrumental writing of the original into that of the new medium, or how far its deficiencies, if any, as compared with the old, are effectively substituted". He saw the transcription as "the *translation* of a work into another medium, as though it had been written for that medium, […] with technical devices peculiar thereto. It is a radically different thing, and is almost a rewriting of the work in terms of the new medium."[69] For him the transcriber "expounds, enlarges and amplifies matter and thought inherent or implicit in the original text, matter and thought that it has been left to him to discover and reveal, and as in Godowsky's case, makes the original a *point de départ* for a great new creation".[70] Thus, Sorabji either transformed short solo pieces or operatic excerpts by Chopin, Bizet, and Rimsky-Korsakov by adding dissonant notes and new voices, or adapted for the piano works of Bach, Ravel, and Richard Strauss, extending Busoni's techniques. He paid homage to traditions, such as the waltz and the use of Spanish *couleur locale*, and to composers such as Chopin, Johann Strauss, Offenbach, Rimsky-Korsakov, Grieg, and Busoni by suggesting their style, alluding to some of their works, or borrowing themes. These expressions of admiration are an important aspect not only of Sorabji, but also of the composers who influenced him and of those he influenced, such as Ronald Stevenson and Alistair Hinton.

The last category is the nocturnes, which are single-movement pieces that exponentiate the most lavish, sensuous, and ornate of impressionistic pieces, such as Szymanowski's *Song of the Night*. They are characterized by a superimposition of complex chromatic lines and lush figurations played at a low dynamic level. They are the most visually striking of Sorabji's manuscripts, and many pages would be good candidates for enlargment and framing. The hothouse, the English garden, or the rainforest easily come to mind when listening to these pieces, as in the early *In the Hothouse*, the first of his *Two Piano Pieces*. Although only *Nocturne, "Jāmī"* and *"Gulistān"—Nocturne for Piano* use the word "nocturne", the style can be found in several slow movements, sections, or variations from large-scale works, such as the fourth movement of the *Tāntrik Symphony for Piano Alone*, certainly one of the most visually appealing pieces ever written. As suggested by Habermann, the sections (erroneously) labelled "punta d'organo" can also be included in this category of "tropical" music, since the flexible strands Sorabji adds above his extended pedal points are in fact nocturne-style music.

Works Other than for the Piano

As well as the piano, Sorabji was also very fond of the organ, and he particularly liked the music of Reger, as shown by his reviews of organ recitals. According to Kevin Bowyer, who has edited and played Sorabji's organ music, his scores show a comprehensive knowledge of the instrument and an ability to determine what is possible and what is not, and what produces a good effect and what does not.[71] His organ output consists of three symphonies: two written between 1924 and 1932, and one between 1949 and 1953. We find organ parts in the *Symphony [no. 1] for Piano, Large Orchestra, Chorus, and Organ* and the *Symphony [no. 2] "Jāmī", for Large Orchestra, Wordless Chorus, and Baritone Solo* as well as in the *Messa grande sinfonica*. An organ part was to be included in what he called *Symphony II for Piano, Large Orchestra, Organ, Final Chorus, and Six Solo Voices* (now renamed *Symphony no. 0 for*

[69]Sorabji, "Music", *NA* 45, no. 23 (3 October 1929): 273–74.

[70]Sorabji, "The Opera Fantasies of Liszt", in *AM*, 194–97; "Leopold Godowsky as Creative Transcriber", in *MCF*, 62–70. The quotations come from the second title (pp. 62–63).

[71]Kevin Bowyer, "Kaikhosru Shapurji Sorabji (1892–1988)", in programme notes for a performance of *Symphony [no. 1] for Organ*, Pauluskirche, Darmstadt, 1 February 1998.

Piano Solo); it ended up as a solo piano work to which the orchestral texture was never added. The short *Opusculum for Orchestra* has a part for an organ pedal, and there is a very short *Benedizione di San Francesco d'Assisi* for voice with organ accompaniment.

The three symphonies mentioned above are multimovement works like the large piano sonatas and symphonies and include themes and variations, passacaglias, and multiple fugues. Sorabji's model for such works was obviously the series of organ symphonies by Charles-Marie Widor and Louis Vierne, the first of which date from 1876 and 1899, respectively. These works, which combine elements of the sonata and the suite, consist of movements called "Prélude", "Intermezzo", "Toccata", "Choral", or "Variations". Furthermore, the four-movement symphony from Alkan's *Douze études dans les tons mineurs* was certainly present in Sorabji's mind. An important peculiarity of his organ music is that, apart from indications for changes of manuals, registrations are missing. For him, an organist would never deface a work, however bad or unimaginative his registrations, as much as violinists, conductors, or pianists would deform the works they play.[72]

The works for piano and orchestra show the same attitude to musical texture as the free fantasias described above: they are really "sonatas" in an orchestral garb. All but the fourth of the eight works now known by number are in three movements, the exception being a single-movement piece, while the two later works (*Opus clavisymphonicum—Concerto for Piano and Large Orchestra* and *Opusculum clavisymphonicum vel claviorchestrale*) are in two movements. The *Symphonic Variations for Piano and Orchestra* are, of course, a series of variations. Sorabji always wrote the piano part of these works first, and then began "weaving the orchestra round it afterwards", a process he found long and arduous.[73] For him the piano part was "always the fons et origo of the whole thing".[74] He compared the procedure to that of the Italian composer Pietro Raimondi (1786–1853), who wrote fugues, oratorios, and masses that can be played independently or simultaneously in groups of up to six. In 1954 he wrote (for once opening the door to a female performer):

> I always write the piano parts of such things first, I envisage a Concerto like a spider's web with the spider, that is the solo instrument, in the middle of the work from which he—or she—as the case may be—spins and[/]or secretes the web of the orchestra part…[75]

As Sorabji originally conceived these works for the piano, one might conclude that they show unbroken continuity; indeed, there are hardly any bars of silence for the soloist. *Symphony II for Piano, Large Orchestra, Organ, Final Chorus, and Six Solo Voices* is a special case; Sorabji decided to leave the work as a complete piano work (which explains why it was editorially retitled *Symphony no. 0 for Piano Solo*), and the listener is left to imagine what the orchestral accompaniment might have been.

Sorabji defined the piano concerto in the early 1930s as "a work for piano and orchestra, in which all the resources of technique of the solo instrument are turned to the purposes of musical expression, heightened, coloured, and set in relief by the orchestra". He compared such elaborate works as Busoni's Concerto and his own contributions to the form, with "those intricate and highly-wrought Chinese embroideries, in which, into, or through, a background already closely worked, runs a motif itself, independently of and yet homogeneously with the whole, a tissue of still more elaborate workmanship". Sorabji did not write concertos for other instruments; it was for him "the only really

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[72]Sorabji, "Music", *NEW* 6, no. 4 (8 November 1934): 89–90; 89.
[73]KSS to EC, 8 April 1930, 8.
[74]KSS to KD, 10 January 1977 {Derus, S04, p. 23}. The Latin expression *fons et origo* means "source and origin".
[75]KSS to NG, 27 August 1954 {17/F.31}; see also KSS to EC, 6 May 1931, 28 (section dated 18 May), 18 September 1937, 4 May 1954.

satisfactory species of the genus, the only one in which the tone quality of the solo instrument is sufficiently and decisively differentiated from the tone quality of the surrounding instruments".[76]

Giving much insight into Sorabji's orchestral works will remain difficult until we can hear these gigantic scores (other than by means of sound files created with appropriate software). Therefore, much of what can be offered here is an idea of the orchestral forces involved. Some works are for chamber orchestra, whereas others call for Straussian or Mahlerian forces. The young Sorabji must have felt quite confident, or at least ambitious, in his abilities: the *Concerto [no. 1] pour piano et grand orchestre* calls for quadruple woodwind, including a contrabass sarrusophone, and the brass include eight horns and five trumpets. His next work, the short *Chaleur—Poème*, is more modest in its demands, omitting some categories of instruments being absent (here bassoons, trumpets, trombones, and tuba). This would happen in five later works, including his last one involving the orchestra, *Opusculum clavisymphonicum vel claviorchestrale*, written for single woodwinds and no brass. In fact, two of these works are concertos for chamber orchestra, hence the reduced scoring.

Otherwise, Sorabji's orchestral works call for a huge array of instruments, with up to sextuple woodwinds, eight horns, six trumpets, four trombones, and two tubas. The woodwind sections of the five largest works call for piccolo, alto flute, English horn, bass oboe, E♭ clarinet, bass clarinet, contrabassoon, and contrabass sarrusophone. In seven cases, the composer makes suggestions for the number of string instruments: up to twenty-four (and even thirty-two) violins, with the other sections in proportional numbers. His choral forces are in line with the main body, with requirements ranging from fifty to one hundred voices per part. Only one of his three works calling for a choir, the *Messa grande sinfonica*, uses a text; the others are wordless.

As mentioned earlier, Sorabji's orchestral music paper was not large enough to accommodate all the instruments he needed, especially in the percussion section. This sometimes forced him to relegate them to a separate, smaller score, whose pages (including several blank ones) must be turned with those of the main score. The percussion instruments, he wrote, were "the seasoning and should be used with lots of discretion, not out of a flour dredger but in discrete pinches".[77]

In 1923 Sorabji considered his orchestras to be "of the size necessary for the composer's needs, and any attempt to dictate to the composer in the matter is gratuitous impertinence". Although he agreed that a practical view of the matter was essential if performances were to be possible, the problem could be solved "by writing no scores at all", since the unwritten scores would require "no performance and therefore no performers".[78] Sorabji did write orchestral scores, however, and we will only know how idiomatic they are when these works are performed, if at all in the case of the larger ones. A prerequisite for any performance is the existence of editions and parts, and Sorabji never prepared parts; modern editors must therefore create them.

Like the free fantasias and the concertante works, the chamber works are sounding pieces for a few instruments, such as a piano or flute with a string quartet, or other combination. Sorabji did not devote much time to this genre, disliking the sound of the string quartet; the piano quintet (of which he wrote two) was the only form of chamber music that appealed to him. He described *Il tessuto d'arabeschi*, a work for flute and string quartet written in 1979, as consisting of a

[76]Sorabji, "The Modern Piano Concerto", in *AM*, 66–77; 66–67.
[77]KSS to CSB, 27 July 1979.
[78]Sorabji, "Letters to the Editor: Inflated Orchestras", *MT* 64, no. 963 (1 May 1923): 347; 347.

> SEAMLESS COAT, what I call a TESSUTO IN SOUND from which the threads cannot be disassociated or—if you like—disentangled without destroying the Tessuto… same as what happens if you pulled out strand by strand of a Persian rug until the rug qua rug non esiste più.[79]

Sorabji wrote twenty-seven songs with piano accompaniment (one of which is known only by its title) and one with organ accompaniment. At first he wrote individual pieces, but later he preferred groups of three songs (not necessarily devoted to a single poet); there are in fact four such groups. Three songs, including the one that has not survived, are wordless, in other words vocalises. One song is in Italian (a benediction by Saint Francis of Assisi), one translated from the Serbian into English (Jovan Dučić), and two in English (Ernest Dowson, Harold Morland). Another work is the *Music to "The Rider by Night"*, to a text by Robert Nichols; this incomplete manuscript consists mainly of speaking cues, although there is some singing. In fact, Sorabji "intensely dislike[d] the sound of the English language when sung";[80] no wonder he usually turned to French texts, or to French translations from the Persian of poems by Saʿdī, Jāmī, and a certain Šamsu'd-Dīn Ibrāhīm Mīrzā. He especially favoured the French Parnassian or symbolist poets, such as Charles Baudelaire and Paul Verlaine, and later writers who used a similar or related style, such as Henri de Régnier, Pierre Louÿs, Stéphane Mallarmé, Laurent Tailhade, Maurice Rollinat, and Iwan Gilkin. Finally, he set five sonnets of Michelangelo for baritone and chamber orchestra.

Compositional Language

A conspicuous absence from Sorabji's music is the idea of traditional form (other than the Baroque contrapuntal ones). As we have seen, his sonatas are far removed from the usual formal schemes. He was clear in his disdain for any kind of academic approach to composition.

> The complete and utter futility of what is considered by academic theorizing and method mongering is that it in no conceivable manner assists you to becoming articulate in and using your own language and developing your own true technique, which is as personal a matter as your own mind and spirit. No one who writes does so by trying to write in the language of others but in his own—and moreover the conspicuous and glaring fact remains that no distinguished academic thematician has ever produced one single form of music that was not almost utterly beneath contempt.[81]

His essay on "organic and inorganic form" shows how much he despised the teachings of the well-known theorist Ebenezer Prout (1835–1909). For him, "no glimmering of a suggestion is ever forthcoming that the nature of the musical ideas and their proliferation is the one and only essential driving force in moulding the form of a composition". He concluded his essay by saying that "the great masters of organic technique, Berlioz, Delius, Sibelius, van Dieren […] mould and shape their forms in accordance with the growth, development, and proliferation of these ideas. This, of course, is the real, the only, creative technique, and those who possess it […] are the Masters—the only Masters—of 'significant form' in music."[82]

An important element of Sorabji's compositional vocabulary is thus the "proliferation of musical ideas". For him a musical idea was often the result of his love of, and interest in, music imbued with an Oriental atmosphere. He despised the Orientalisms he saw in the music of Amy Woodforde-Finden

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[79]KSS to NG, 28 November 1981 {19/F.31}.

[80][British Broadcasting Corporation], script of an interview with Sorabji and Alistair Hinton about Francis George Scott, recorded at Corfe Castle, Dorset, 27 June 1979, no. 14767/2995, tape 6, p. 6.

[81]KSS to EC, 5 April 1931, 1.

[82]Sorabji, "Organic and Inorganic Form", in *MCF*, 47–52; 49, 52.

(1860–1919) and Granville Bantock (1868–1946), which he described as "the most superficial, least valuable, and least typical elements of the least important manifestations of Eastern music". What he was looking for was the kind of Orientalism to be found "in rhythmic intricacy, in richness and efflorescence of elaborate detail, in abundant, intricate arabesque, in melodic lines which, without imitating, suggest by their contours relationship with melodies of Oriental types".

The kind of "exotic" melodic writing that Sorabji favoured in his works in nocturne style consists mostly of long, highly ornamented, freely chromatic, asymmetrical lines in improvisatory style that create a unique notational picture. There is little point in trying to relate such free chromatic lines to the usual scales such as whole-tone, octatonic, gypsy, etc.; there may be correspondences for small parts, but the lines soon go off in other directions. Sorabji's influences are most probably Richard Strauss's *Salome*, which "writhes and twists like a coil of smoke rising from an incense burner", and Karol Szymanowski's *Song of the Night*, which he described as "a work saturated with the voluptuous and passionate languor of a Persian night, richly suggestive and evocative".[83] However, such lines can be found in the opening bars of "In modo esotico", the fifth of the *Nove pezzi*, op. 24 (1914), by Alfredo Casella (1883–1947); there is no indication in Sorabji's writings that he knew this piece.

The use of unusual scale formations has an effect on the pianistic difficulty, as the performer can seldom rely on usual fingerings and must adapt to each situation. The only manuscript containing some fingerings by the composer is *Sonata no. 1 for Piano*, and only on two pages. The performer is thus left to care for this aspect, and the difficulty of finding suitable fingerings is usually compounded by the complexity of the quick chromatic runs that often include, seemingly at random, two- or three-note chords, sometimes widely spaced. One of the main difficulties in playing Sorabji's works is their often unidiomatic character, quite unlike Godowsky's music, with its amazing fusion of musical expression and pianistic technique. There, a given note is always exactly the one that the position of the finger logically requires to be played after the previous note has been struck; similarly, this note is always the one that makes the most musical sense after the previous one. Such "keyboard ergonomics", sadly, are too often missing in Sorabji, whose lack of concern to secure performances probably led him to overlook these practicalities. Most of what he wrote is physically possible for the fingers to play on a keyboard, but it is often unwieldy, especially with so many difficulties present.

Sorabji's music often results from the superimposition of many strands in an improvisatory style, each with its own rhythmic pattern, full of irrational rhythms. Erik Chisholm rightly observed that "the web of sound is made up of long trailing lines of melody, which overlap and intermingle with one another like the vegetation of some fantastical tropical forest".[84] The idea of the tropical forest was already present in Sorabji's mind when he wrote his early piece *In the Hothouse*. His "web of sound" often calls for irrational groups contained within irrational groups, thus anticipating the rhythmic complexities of Karlheinz Stockhausen's *Klavierstücke* (1952–2004) not by a few years, but by decades. Complete independence of the hands and fingers is, of course, an essential requirement for anyone wishing to play Sorabji.

Michael Habermann has convincingly shown that Sorabji's music in nocturne style relies on several musical gestures that permeate an entire composition and recur in various guises by means of variation, development, combination, and juxtaposition. He identified fifteen musical gestures in *Le jardin parfumé—Poem for Piano Solo*, such as ostinato figures, passages for one hand in which single notes alternate with chords, rapid scales and glissandos, and chords with added notes. This analytical

[83]Sorabji, "Oriental Atmosphere", in *AM*, 147–51; 148, 150.
[84]"Kaikhosru Sorabji: An Essay by Erik Chisholm, with a Descriptive Catalogue of His Works", 3.

technique based on the observation of the "free association and meditation upon these recurrent basic ideas"[85] can be easily applied to other works—and not only those of the nocturne type.

Sorabji also generates melodic material by using the Renaissance technique of the *soggetto cavato* to extract notes from the musical letters of a name. This happens in twenty keyboard works. In addition to three instances of the name B–A–C–H, we find those of dedicatees, such as Alexis (Robert William Procter), Erik Chisholm, Edward Clarke Ashworth, Frank Davey, Clinton Gray-Fisk, Christopher Murray Grieve (Hugh MacDiarmid), Alistair Hinton, Frank Holliday, Harold Rutland, Clive Spencer-Bentley, and Sacheverell Sitwell. In a few cases, he clearly indicates the technique in the title (*sul nome…, sopra…*), but it is usually hidden, although a note in the manuscript reveals the technique at the appropriate place.

References to people are not limited to dedicatees but include other composers. Especially when using a foreign melody, be it by Chopin, Bizet, or Offenbach, Sorabji likes to distort it with a profusion of added notes and chromatic shifts that blur the original. It is not far-fetched to compare this aspect of his compositional language to the technique of anamorphosis used by Hans Holbein in his allegorical portrait of Jean de Dinteville and Georges de Selve known as *The Ambassadors* (1533).

That Sorabji conceived of his music as an interplay of several ideas or gestures is borne out by his use, in more than a dozen large-scale works from the late 1920s to the mid-1970s, of circled numbers to identify, at least in one movement or section, the various statements of as many as twenty different ideas, if not more. The combination of such ideas, cast in a style ranging from the "more or less tonal" to the "freely atonal", results in the composition itself. Simon Abrahams used the expression "symphonic tapestry" to describe such sections.[86]

Trying to explain Sorabji's harmonic procedures is not easy, and studying this aspect of his music in depth is an open field of research. In the present context, it is only possible to give a few pointers. The roots of his harmonic language and overall sonic atmosphere are to be found, apart from the works of Scriabin, above all in the progressive French music of the early twentieth-century, in which he was very interested at the time. The sensual atmosphere found in Debussy and Ravel comes naturally to mind, as does the sensuality and harmonic complexity of Szymanowski, whose music he discovered a few years later. Yet Sorabji's music has much in common with the language of Charles Koechlin (1867–1950), of whose works he must have had at least some knowledge in early 1915, when he thought of writing an article about him.[87] Koechlin's name does not otherwise appear in his writings and reviews. This is curious, since we can find many passages in his music that look and sound like the music of the progressive French composer, for example his cycle of sixteen piano pieces, *Les heures persanes*, op. 65 (1916–19)—a title most appropriate for a comparison with Sorabji, whose paternal roots go back to Persia.

Erik Chisholm wrote that Sorabji described as "metadiatonic" the result of harmonizing a simple melodic line in sustained block-chords, by which he meant "that the chords can all be explained within the diatonic system, but that the *relation* of the chords to one another is in the plane of no particular key".[88] Sorabji's vocabulary often consists of three- and four-note traditional chords, with or without added notes, in one inversion or another, and often heard in (very) long series. The composer usually juxtaposes several such chords—that is, chords with different roots—thus anticipating (as early as the late 1910s) some of Olivier Messiaen's techniques. Other possibilities are dissonant chords built from

[85]Michael Habermann, "Sorabji's Piano Music", in *SCC*, 364–65.
[86]Abrahams, "Le mauvais jardinier: A Reassessment of the Myths and Music of Kaikhosru Shapurji Sorabji", 164, 175–79.
[87]KSS to PH, 11 January 1915 {*LPH*, no. 13, p. 88}; see also KSS to PH, 21 April 1916 {*LPH*, no. 23, p. 104}.
[88]"Kaikhosru Sorabji: An Essay by Erik Chisholm, with a Descriptive Catalogue of His Works", 3.

superimposed thirds or of stacked fourths or fifths, always with the possibility of added notes. Sorabji very often uses "scales of chords" in the following contexts: (1) at a slow to moderate tempo, with reduced dynamics, to create highly impressionistic landscapes suggesting a walk in a hothouse or rain forest, and (2) at a relatively swift tempo, with loud dynamics, especially in virtuosic passages, to build up a climax. The use of widely spaced sonorities in the low register such as C–G–E or F–C–G–A, acting as a cushion of sound, tends to moderate the degree of dissonance in slow-moving, impressionistic pieces. However, one can also encounter a great deal of abrasiveness in other works that do not seek such a warm atmosphere. An appropriate description of the harmonic language of his many nocturnes would be "non-tonality", preceded by one of the following adjectives: "sensuous", "perfumed"—or, more simply, "impressionistic".

Sorabji often supports his superimposition of free, improvisatory lines mentioned above with massive chords acting as "pillars", in much the same way that steel beams underpin the structure of a building. The pillars can be either consonant—with full (or, rather, powerful) chords in both registers providing a framework on which the faster values develop—or dissonant, because of bitonal combinations. This simultaneous use of chords in bitonal relationship permeates most of his works. On the other hand, there is no systematic emphasis on minor seconds, tritones, major sevenths, and minor ninths, which are typical of Viennese-based atonality, and the result is a non-tonal music permeated with consonant sonorities. In other words, Sorabji does not usually try to avoid sonorities that recall tonal references. In fact, many of his works, especially the larger ones, end with a buildup that culminates in a series of powerful tonal chords, sometimes with added notes. In decreasing order of preference, Sorabji tends to favour final chords in C♯ or D♭, C, B, and A, that is, those that require low octaves providing the richest sound. Such chords are usually major, but a dozen works end in minor.

Sorabji's works are unique creations in the entire history of music, which explains why they are so fascinating to study—or just to leaf through. They contain many original elements—be it textual matter, musical and extramusical references, formal outlines, or compositional techniques—that give them a very special, albeit isolated, place in the history of musical endeavour. A full assessment of the artistic value of Sorabji's music may have to be left to another generation when (and if) it becomes possible to hear most of it—including the largest works—in highly professional and musically inspired performances. If bad performances (or sound files, for that matter) may leave listeners with lukewarm or unfavourable reactions, superlative ones show how compelling the music can be, even if it cannot be compared using the same criteria as other contemporary works. The above introductory remarks should suffice to give the reader a detailed map with which to chart a course in hitherto largely unexplored territory. Obviously, the comments on the music offered in this book can do little more than scratch the surface by providing a formal outline and highlighting some of the most salient features.

We may conclude this primer by giving Sorabji the last word on which works he considered the most successful and representative—and the least so. He often (understandably) expressed great satisfaction with a work he had just completed, and this could lead to a list that would not reflect his rather frequent changes of mind; therefore, the following list is based mostly on comments written in 1953 and on opinions expressed in his mature years.[89] In the case of a recording made by the composer

[89]For the best works: KSS to NG, 3 December 1953 {17/F.22}, 18 October 1964 {18/F.12}, 29 September 1975 {18/F.63}; KSS to CMG, 18 December 1959; see also *A*, passim; Frank Holliday, "A Few Recollections and Ruminations", in *SCC*, 90; and KSS to AH, 11 April 1972, reproduced in Rapoport, "Kaikhosru Shapurji Sorabji: An Introduction", in *SCC*, 29. For the worst works:

in the 1960s (see chapter 15), a bullet (•) is added at the end of the title; curiously, he committed to disc a work he had come to dislike. It is doubtful whether Sorabji really considered the third version of the *Fragment Written for Harold Rutland* to be one of his best works. It is included here because it forms part of his "Four Short Piano Works", the title of a bound volume containing this piece and the three medium-sized works completed in 1940. Potential performers should not take the composer's opinion of the *Fantaisie espagnole* as a warning to stay away from this excellent introduction to his early music, especially for the general public; indeed, he later considered it "not too bad".[90]

Best and worst works, according to Sorabji in the 1950s and after (• = works recorded by the composer)

Best works

Nocturne, "Jāmī" (1928; 28 pp.)•
Sonata IV for Piano (1928–29; 111 pp.)
Sonata V (Opus archimagicum) (1934–35; 336 pp.)
Fragment Written for Harold Rutland (1926, 1928, 1937; 2 pp.)
Tāntrik Symphony for Piano Alone (1938–39; 284 pp.)
Transcription in the Light of Harpsichord Technique for the Modern Piano of the Chromatic Fantasia of J. S. Bach, Followed by a Fugue (1940; 15 pp.)
"Quaere reliqua hujus materiei inter secretiora" (1940; 16 pp.)•
"Gulistān"—Nocturne for Piano (1940; 28 pp.)•
Études transcendantes (100) (1940–44; 456 pp.)• (12 of them)
Concerto da suonare da me solo e senza orchestra, per divertirmi (1946; 70 pp.)•
Sequentia cyclica super "Dies irae" ex Missa pro defunctis (1948–49; 335 p.)
Symphony [no. 2], "Jāmī", for Large Orchestra, Wordless Chorus, and Baritone Solo (1942–51; 826 pp.)
Third Organ Symphony (1949–53; 305 pp.)
Second Symphony for Piano (1954; 248 pp.)•
Fourth Symphony for Piano Alone (1962–64; 240 pp.)•
Toccata quarta (1964–67; 149 pp.)
Symphonia brevis for Piano (1973; 120 pp.)
Opusculum clavisymphonicum vel claviorchestrale (1973–75; 334 pp.)

Worst works

Fantaisie espagnole (1919; 23 pp.)
Prelude, Interlude, and Fugue for Piano (1920, 1922; 17 pp.)
Le jardin parfumé—Poem for Piano Solo (1923; 16 pp.)•
Variazioni e fuga triplice sopra "Dies irae" per pianoforte (1923–26; 201 pp.)

KSS to EC, 18 April 1930, 5, 3 June 1930, 7 (section dated 5 June). For a discussion of this matter, see Abrahams, "Le mauvais jardinier: A Reassessment of the Myths and Music of Kaikhosru Shapurji Sorabji", 227–31.

[90]KSS to AH, 3 March 1973.

Part 1 / Family Background and Early Years

1 / Before 1892 ■ Family Origins in India and England

Kaikhosru Shapurji Sorabji, the self-described misanthrope, ended his very modest public career in his forties and spent the last part of his life as a recluse in a small village. Writing his biography is no an easy task, given the paucity of available documents other than his correspondence, for which he had "only the power to write down my ideas as they come, and cannot fashion them into a presentable literary shape".[1] The documentation of his early life and career is a rather arduous task, as only very few documents relating to his immediate family—let alone his more distant relatives—have survived. This exercise, especially for the early years, consists largely of putting together the pieces of an incomplete jigsaw puzzle, and is an undertaking not unlike documenting the career of a medieval or Renaissance composer. Reconstructing the history of his parents and ancestors is, of course, even more difficult.

Shapurji Sorabji, the Absentee Parsi Father

For most of his life, but for a brief English interlude important for our purposes, Bombay, the second largest city in India, was the home of the composer's father, Shapurji Sorabji (b. Bombay, 18 August 1863; d. Bad Nauheim, near Frankfurt, 7 July 1932).[2] He was a prominent member of the city's Parsi community, the descendants of the adherents of Zoroastrianism who had immigrated to India after the Islamic victory at al-Qādisīyah in 635 over Yazdegerd III, the last king of the Sāsānian dynasty. Despite massive forced conversions in several provinces, they managed to survive as a persecuted minority until some groups began to immigrate to India in the tenth century, settling first in the state of Gujarāt. Initially devoted to agriculture, they became a prosperous community under British rule thanks to trade and industry; they also abandoned the language and dress of the host country to adopt British customs.[3]

By the early 1890s, the time of the composer's birth, the Parsis formed a community of around 90,000, which peaked at around 115,000 people in the early 1940s, with several leading figures throughout their history in Bombay.[4] Sir Jamsetji Jijibhoy (1783–1859) was a patron of social and educational reforms who became the first Indian to be knighted. Framji Cowasji Banaji (1767–1852) was one of the great shipowners of his time. Sir Cowasji Jehanghir Readymoney (1812–78) was a

[1]KSS to PH, 14 April 1914 {*LPH*, no. 9, p. 70}.

[2]What little we know of the life of Sorabji's father has already been detailed in *OB*, 40–43. Sean Vaughn Owen based his research on the few sources located at the Sorabji Archive (mostly official, thus public, documents) that I had used years earlier to draft this section; he was able to publish his results in 2006. My account benefits from some additional documents.

[3]Jacques Duchesne-Guillemin, "Zoroastrianism and Parsism", in *The New Encyclopædia Britannica*, 15th ed. (Chicago: Encyclopædia Britannica, 1992), Macropædia, 29:1116–21; 1117.

[4]Hormazdyar Dastur Kayoji Mirza, *Outlines of Parsi History*, 2nd ed. (Bombay: Mirza, 1987), 274; see also Pestanji Phirozshah Balsara, *Highlights of Parsi History* (Bombay, 1963); and Tanya M. Luhrmann, *The Good Parsi: The Fate of a Colonial Elite in a Postcolonial Society* (Cambridge, Mass.: Harvard University Press, 1996).

benefactor whose name comes from his willingness to advance money. Sir Dinshaw Manekji Petit (1823–1901) revolutionized the cotton spinning mill industry in Bombay, transforming the city into a "Manchester of the East". Jamshedji Nusserwanji Tata (1839–1904), considered the greatest of early Indian industrialists, was involved in iron and steel, cotton, and hydroelectric power.[5] Indeed, Shapurji Sorabji's family was active in the cotton industry and, like many members of his community, contributed significantly to its prosperity.[6]

The eldest member (and founder) of the family, the composer's grandfather, Sorabji Shapurji (1829?–69),[7] is variously described in the sources as a head of department, foreman, or engineer at the Military Gun Factory in Bombay in the 1840s. His position seems to have been a very honourable one at a time when trade and industry were not as developed as they were at the beginning of the twentieth century. He went to England in 1850 to purchase machinery for a factory that opened in 1852 as the Bombay Foundry and Iron Works, located in Khetwady and equipped with the best British-made machinery. The factory was the first of its kind in Bombay and one of the earliest in India, making him a pioneer of engineering and the iron trade in his country. In 1860 he was also the first industrialist to set up a flour mill and a factory for cleaning cotton and burring wool. This "most enterprising Parsee of his time in Western India", who was one of the first natives to travel to Europe before the opening of the Suez Canal, also used his visits to procure complete factories for the manufacture of cast iron pipes for the Bombay waterworks. He was also the first one in India to set up a brick-making plant using electricity. Sorabji Shapurji died at the age of forty, leaving behind him a considerable fortune.[8]

Sorabji Shapurji and his wife, Maneckbai, had only one child, a daughter called Hirabai, who married Hormusji Cowasji Shroff (1840?–76). This gentleman took over the business at his father-in-law's death. He and his wife, Hirabai, had five children, of whom Shapurji, the composer's father, was the second child and eldest son. Born in Bombay on 18 August 1863,[9] Shapurji Hormusji Shroff was adopted by his grandfather from the time of his birth and took his name; he thence became known as

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[5]Pestanji Phirozshah Balsara, "Some Leading Figures", in *Highlights of Parsi History*, 59–70.

[6]The biographical sources relating to Sorabji's father are: "Mr. Shapurjee Sorabjee: A Pioneer of India's Industrial Development", *The Textile Mercury* (Manchester), 1 April 1905: [2]-7 (p. 2 consists of a photograph of Shapurji Sorabji; the article was reprinted, probably at his request, for promotional purposes); Sorabji M. Rutnagur, *Bombay Industries: The Cotton Mills—A Review of the Progress of the Textile Industry in Bombay from 1850 to 1926 and the Present Constitution, Management and Financial Position of the Spinning and Weaving Factories* (Bombay: The Indian Textile Journal Limited, 1927), 47 (advertisement for "Sorabjee Shapurjee & Co., Ltd., Engineers and Machinery Merchants (Established 1850)"), 648–49 ("Messrs. Sorabji Shapurji & Company" and photograph of Shapurji Sorabji), 671 ("The Pioneer Factory"), 672 (photograph of Sorabji Shapurji), 724 (biographical sketch of Shapurji Sorabji), 725 (biographical sketch of Sorabji Shapurji). See also a short biographical sketch as "Shapurji Sorabji", *Grace's Guide to British Industrial History*, https://www.gracesguide.co.uk/Shapurji_Sorabji. There is also a draft for a genealogical tree, without birth and death dates, written in the hand of the composer (probably in 1932 or 1933) {SA}.

[7]In the *Textile Mercury* article, Shapurji Sorabji, referred to in one paragraph as "Shapurjee Cooverjee", is described in one instance as the "great grandfather" of the composer's father; the absence of a hyphen suggests that "great" is used to refer to his achievements rather than to his chronological place in the family's genealogy, which would place him one step back. The sources vary greatly in the spelling of the Indian names encountered in this section: the ending may appear as "ji" or "jee", in much the same way as the word "Parsi" is often spelt "Parsee". Some sources also use the spelling "Shapoorji" rather than "Shapurji". In this book, the names are spelled with the "i" form, regardless of how they appear in a particular source.

[8]For an extensive treatment of the history of Indians in Britain, see Rozina Visram, *Asians in Britain: 400 Years of History* (London and Sterling, VA: Pluto Press, 2002), which includes a presentation of the composer (see pp. 290-91, 360).

[9]The date appears in Shapurji Sorabji's British passport (no. 157273, issued on 29 October 1924). In KSS to KD, 31 July 1976 {Derus, S03, p. 17}, one reads: "My mother, father and myself are all under fiery signs immediately adjacent owing to our birthdays being August 13, 14 and 15 (ME in the middle if you please!)." Sorabji obviously changed the date to produce the kind of sequence he liked so much.

Shapurji Sorabji. He was thirteen years old when, as the above dates show, he lost his biological father. The reasons why his father did not bring him up are not known.

Shapurji Sorabji's 1924 passport describes him as an engineer and merchant from Bombay, 5 feet 3 inches tall, with brown eyes and gray hair; a mole on his right temple, listed under "Special peculiarities", is not visible in the accompanying photograph.[10] In 1880, a year after matriculating from Bombay University, he took over the business, which had fallen into the hands of the servants and was on the verge of ruin. He seems to have restored the firm to a "fair share of prosperity". In 1884 Shapurji Sorabji went to England and handed over the management of the firm to his brother-in-law Ratanshaw Dadabhoy (d. 1905), the husband of his elder sister Avabai. This gentleman, "an eminently enterprising and capable business man" according to his obituary, was a justice of the peace for Bombay. He travelled to England in 1887 to develop the firm's connections links with Europe and became an associate member of the Institution of Civil Engineers in London.[11]

Once in England, Shapurji Sorabji began working as an apprentice with Hick, Hargreaves, and Co. in Bolton, where he remained for three years. The choice of Bolton was a wise one for the young businessman, as the town northeast of Manchester was one of the oldest and most important textile centres in the Midlands. Now known as Hick, Hargreaves & Co. Ltd. (and still based in Bolton), the firm was founded in 1833 and manufactured machinery for factories, mines, railway, and marine engineering.[12] Curiously, the firm could not find Shapurji Sorabji's name in its records.[13] During his years with the firm, Shapurji Sorabji attended evening classes at Owens College (later to become Manchester University); he was the first and only Parsi student of mechanical engineering and a winner of an Ashbury Scholarship. He passed his examination at London's Finsbury Technical College in May 1885; contrary to claims made in the *Textile Mercury*, he did receive honours but only the ordinary grade.[14] Manchester provided some musical pleasures the young engineering student, as he appears to have had a subscription to the Hallé Concerts.[15]

Shapurji Sorabji became a member of both the Institution of Mechanical Engineers and the Institution of Civil Engineers. The archives of the former contain a "Proposal of Member", dated 13 April 1887, in which he is described as "Proprietor & Manager, Bombay Foundry & Engine Works; business address: Bombay Foundry & Engine Works, Bombay; 17 Monton Street, Greenheys, Manchester" and proposed "from personal knowledge by Thomas Ashbury", presumably the sponsor of the Ashbury Scholarship he had won.[16] Shapurji Sorabji also took steps to become an associate

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[10]Sorabji's father should not be confused with Sorabji Shapurji Adajania (1883?–1918), who is sometimes referred to as "Shapurji Sorabji" or "Shapurji Sorabji Adajania". This Sorabji was the educated Indian sent by his community to test the Immigration Restriction Act by crossing the border into the Transvaal. He became a close associate of Mohandas Karamchand Gandhi, who sent him to London to become a barrister; chapter 30 ("Sorabji Shapurji Adajania") of Gandhi's *Satyagraha in South Africa*, translated from the Gujarati by Valji Govindji Desai, authorized first American edition (Stanford, Calif.: Academic Reprints, 1954), 211–15, is devoted to him.

[11]"Mainly Parsi: The Late Mr. Ruttonshaw Dadabhoy", *The Parsi: The English Journal of the Parsis and a High Class Illustrated Monthly* 1, no. 10 (October 1905): 412–13, photograph on p. 414. A biographical sketch of Dadabhoy also appears in Rutnagur, *Bombay Industries: The Cotton Mills*, 704; there is also a photograph on p. 649.

[12]Hick, Hargreaves & Co. Ltd, *100 Years of Engineering Progress*, Centenary Booklet, n.d.

[13]E. R. Kenny (Hick, Hargreaves & Co. Ltd.) to MAR, 24 February 1997.

[14]City and Guilds of London Institute for the Advancement of Technical Education, *Reports—Sessions 1883–4 to 1894–5: Technological Examinations, May 1885—Report and Pass List*, 54.

[15]RN (1959), 1 {1/F.21}.

[16]Copy of proposal provided by the Institution of Mechanical Engineers (London); the document contains Shapurji Sorabji's signature. Thomas Ashbury (1836–1920) was at some point President of the Manchester Association of Engineers; see http://ashbury.one-name.net/getperson.php?personID=I77&tree=Ashbury.

member of the Institution of Civil Engineers and was elected on 24 May 1887.[17] The young engineer gave his year of birth as 1861 rather than 1863; he was thus lying about his age in order to be elected an associate member, for which, according to prefatory matter in the *Minutes of Proceedings of the Institution of Civil Engineers*, one had to be twenty-five.

Shapurji Sorabji returned home in 1887 after being presented at court by the Secretary of State for India,[18], where he acted as the Indian representative of various machinery firms to import their products into India. He made his brother-in-law Ratanshaw Dadabhoy a partner in his business and sent him to England. Shapurji Sorabji himself visited the country for a second time in 1889 and arranged for agencies. In 1896 the two men started the Globe Mills and in 1913 transferred the firm to Messrs. Turner, Morrison & Co., Ltd. "for valuable consideration".[19] By 1905 Shapurji Sorabji had sailed the Red Sea fifteen times and was about to make a sixteenth voyage. In 1927 his firm was called Sorabjee Shapurjee & Co., Ltd., Engineers and Machinery Merchants, with headquarters in the E. D. Sassoon Building, located on Dougall Road, Ballard Estate, Bombay.

It was on one of his business trips to England, in the second half of 1891 at the latest, that Shapurji Sorabji met Madeline Matilda Worthy who, probably became pregnant in November of that year. On 18 February 1892 the young couple—he was twenty-nine years old, she twenty-five—married because of the (most probably) unplanned pregnancy. The ceremony took place in the Parish Church of Camberwell in the County of London (St. Giles, Church Street, Camberwell, London SE) in the presence of two witnesses, one of whom was "Mabel Douglas", a false name used by Madeline's older sister, as we shall see. Madeline, whose condition (to use the term of the legal document's term) was given as spinster, declared her age to be twenty-one.[20] Shapurji Sorabji, who described himself as a bachelor and merchant, then resided at Houlgate, Dulwich, in the London Borough of Southwark; Madeline lived at 4 Lodge Road, London, within walking distance of the west end of Regent's Park.

On 14 August 1892, less than six months after their wedding, the couple witnessed the birth of their only child and registered his name as Leon Dudley Sorabji.[21] The family then lived on Buxton Road, Chingford, Essex,[22] a street with another small claim to fame as the place of residence (at no. 13 in 1901) of Sybil Muriel Foster (1884–1974), a sitter for the Pre-Raphaelite painter John William Waterhouse.[23] Chingford, located north of London, stood in rural isolation until the arrival of the railway in 1873. The opening of Epping Forest to the public in 1882 transformed it to some extent into

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[17]Institution of Civil Engineers (London), "Supplementary Notice for Election into the Institution", 17 May 1887. Shapurji Sorabji was proposed by William Inglis. This Institution also owns the original of one of the few of Shapurji Sorabji's known photographs (the one reproduced in the *Textile Mercury*). The photograph, taken in 1887 by Maull & Fox, 187a Piccadilly, is contained in a binder entitled *Photographs of Members, Associate Members, and Associates of the Institution of Civil Engineers—Cabinets*. For the other photograph, showing Shapurji Sorabji as an engineering student in the 1880s, see *SCC*, 206.

[18]It was not possible to consult the records of those who were presented at Court in the nineteenth century, which were held at the Public Records Office. The Royal Archives at Windsor Castle (Pamela Clark to MAR, 22 October 1996) provided a list of dates for Levées (the Courts at which gentlemen were presented) that were searched unsuccessfully in the *Times*.

[19]See a photograph of the Globe Mills in Rutnagur, *Bombay Industries: The Cotton Mills*, 649.

[20]Certified copy of an entry of marriage (Shapurji Sorabji and Madeline Matilda Wortley [*sic*]), registration district Camberwell, MB 191049; the witnesses were John Dillon O'Flynn and Mabel Douglas. See also https://www.findmypast.com/transcript?id=BMD%2FM%2F1856%2F3%2FMZ%2F000914%2F011.

[21]Certified copy of an entry of birth (Leon Dudley Sorabji), registration district Epping, sub-district of Chigwell, county of Essex, BXA 367460. The birth was registered on 3 October 1892 by the mother, identified as "Maddine Matilda formerly Worthy". See also https://www.findmypast.com/transcript?id=BMD%2FB%2F1892%2F4%2FAZ%2F000518%2F189.

[22]Buxton Road is located off Station Road (A1069), not far from its intersection with Kings Road (A110), close to the Chingford train station, Chingford Green, Essex.

[23]James K. Baker and Cathy L. Baker, "Miss Muriel Foster: The John William Waterhouse Model", *Journal of Pre-Raphaelite Studies*, n.s., no. 8 (Fall 1999): 70–82.

an inland tourist resort much visited at weekends. It became a municipal borough in 1894 and, thanks to its green spaces, served as a sought-after dormitory town; since 1965 it has been part of the London Borough of Waltham Forest.[24]

We do not know how long Shapurji Sorabji remained in England after his birth of his son. According to the 1901 census data, Madeline was "living on own means".[25] The father probably returned to Bombay soon afterwards and visited his English family regularly, at least in the early years.[26] He certainly had employees working for him in London, staffing an office that moved to various locations in the East Central district. His firm first appears in the directories in 1895 as Shapurjee & Ratanshaw, Engineers; there are entries until 1927, with several changes of address.[27] When in London, he frequented the Royal Societies Club at 63 St. James's Street,[28] whose members belonged to learned societies and universities or were prominent in the fields of literature, science, and the arts.[29]

The summer of 1914 provides the only documentary evidence of a "family life". After a trip to Paris at Easter,[30] in mid-May Sorabji and his mother received the first visit in six years from Shapurji Sorabji, who went on to Bad Nauheim, forty kilometres north of Frankfurt am Main, three weeks before the beginning of the war (28 July). Since 1835, the small town in the Wetterau valley, in the Taunus, had been a renowned spa specializing in the treatment of heart and circulatory problems thanks to its saline springs.[31] Mother and son had travelled to the seaside town of Whitby, in North Yorkshire, some 460 kilometres from London, for the duration of Shapurji Sorabji's cure. They were supposed to join him, but could not because the owners had refused to release them from their rental commitment. Then, in early August, the father joined his family in Whitby after having completed only a third of his six-week cure for heart treatment. The benefit was entirely "annulled by the turmoil and worry of his perfectly appalling return journey".[32]

Shapurji Sorabji may have remained in England until 1919, or may have travelled frequently between the continents, but there is no indication whether he was living with his family or not.[33] We do not hear from him again until February 1932, when he was due to leave India in mid-May, landing in Genoa, from where he was to go to Germany for six or seven weeks of cure and then to London. Sorabji had "considerable hopes of his visit and that as a result of it things [certainly financial matters] will straighten out a bit for my mother and myself but this remains to be seen"; he even thought of going to Germany to see his father.[34] The trip did not take place, nor did his father visit London, as he

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[24]Stephen Pewsey, comp., *Chingford*, The Archive Photographs Series (Stroud, Gloucestershire: The Chalford Publishing Company, 1996), 8; see also Kenneth Neale, *Chingford in History: The Story of a Forest Village*, Bulletin no. 5, 2nd ed. ([Chingford]: Chingford Historical Society, 1974).

[25]1901 England, Wales & Scotland Census, https://www.findmypast.co.uk/transcript?id=GBC%2F1901%2F0004935676.

[26]Diana Chisholm, "Kaikhosru Sorabji" (typescript, undated), 2, writes that he "came over every year to see them".

[27]*The Post Office London Directory for [year], Comprising, among Other Information, Official, Street, Commercial, Trades, Court, Law, Court, Parliamentary, Postal, City & Clerical, Conveyance and Banking Directories* (London: Kelly & Co. Limited).

[28]Among the composer's papers was a calling card bearing the name "Shapurjee Sorabjee, J.P. [Justice of the Peace], Royal Societies Club, St. James's St. S.W."

[29]Ralph Nevill, *London Clubs: Their History & Treasures* (London: Chatto & Windus, 1911), 273–74.

[30]KSS to PH, March. Early [1914], 21 (section dated 6 April) {*LHD*, no. 8, p. 68}.

[31]See Petra Simon and Margrit Behrens, "Bad Nauheim", in *Badekur und Kurbad: Bauten in deutschen Bädern, 1780–1920* (Munich: Eugen Diederichs Verlag, 1988), 127–46.

[32]KSS to PH, 14 April 1914 (section dated 22 May) {*LHP*, no. 9, p. 73}; 28 June 1914 {*LPH*, no. 10, p. 78}; 8 September 1914 {*LPH*, no. 11, p. 85}.

[33]"Suit No. 53,936: Copy of Decision of the Supreme Court of Justice", 1.

[34]KSS to EC, 24 January 1932, 7 (section dated 21 February); June 1932, 1.

died on 7 July 1932 at the Sanatorium Groedel in Bad Nauheim, at the age of sixty-eight.[35] Surprising as it may seem, he appears to have been buried in the Parsi ground at Brookwood.[36] Also known as the London Necropolis, the Brookwood Cemetery, located in Woking, Surrey (about 65 km from London), actually contains a Zoroastrian cemetery in its north-west corner. Sorabji (or his father's business associates) may have been able to bring back some of the ashes back from Bombay. As no details of the disposition of the body are known, it is difficult, if not impossible, to go beyond this hypothesis.

The death of Shapurji Sorabji was probably not an emotional tragedy for Madeline and her son; after all, the man had been absent for so many years, acting (so it seems) only as a financial provider. Nevertheless, they published "In memoriam" notices in the *Times* on three anniversaries of his death (1933, 1941, and 1945). The first described Shapurji Sorabji as a "beloved husband" whose memory was "unfading".[37] However, his death was soon to prove troublesome, for mother and son were in for a big surprise when the latter arrived in Bombay in October 1932 at the latest to deal with his father's will.[38] To understand the situation, it is necessary to go back a few years in Shapurji Sorabji's life in India in order to document, based on the public legal documents found among the composer's papers, an unusual course of events.

On 30 November 1932, four months after Shapurji Sorabji's death, a petition was filed in the High Court of Judicature at Bombay, Testamentary and Intestate Jurisdiction, for the probate of his will (signed on 8 August 1930). The testator had realized that his death would open a Pandora's box, as the last paragraph of the will suggested.

> In order to remove any doubt or misunderstanding whatsoever I hereby declare that the Lady described in this my Will as Bablibai Shapurji Sorabji is my wife [...]. She has been living with me as my wife for the last 25 years and I have always considered and treated her as my wife and she is also known by the name of Bablibai Shapurji Sorabji and she calls herself as such. I have given her the legacies mentioned in this my Will whatever may be the legal relationship between her and me.[39]

The will shows that Shapurji Sorabji was a wealthy man who owned several properties and shares in many companies.[40] He was also a governing director of the Grand Hotel (Bombay), which he built in 1923 and where he lived.[41] He left the entire net income of his residuary estate to his wife and asked her to help the poor members of the family, but not those who were "not leading good or useful lives".

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[35]The death on 7 July was reported on the next day by Rudolf Treupel, hotel director, in the *Sterbeurkunde*, Nr. 78, Bad-Nauheim, dated 8 July 1932. The Grant of Probate of Shapurji Sorabji with the Will and Schedules (will dated 8 August 1930, petition filed on 30 November 1932) writes "who died at Bad-Nauheim of Bombay in Germany on or about the 7th day of July 1932" (p. 1).

[36]KSS to RS, 5 April 1959.

[37]"In memoriam", *The Times*, 7 July 1933, 1; 7 July 1941, 1; 7 July 1945, 1.

[38]Sorabji played on the radio in Bombay on 19 October 1932, hence the proposed date of arrival. He went to India a second time, namely, from June 1933 to the end of the year, this time with his mother.

[39]Certified copy of Grant of Probate of Shapurji Sorabji with the Will and Schedules (will signed on 8 August 1930): probate (p. 1), will (pp. 2–8), schedules nos. I–VI (pp. 9–26). The quoted passage comes from p. 8, par. 17. See also KSS to KD, 4 June 1983 {Derus, S50, p. 257} and 25 August 1985 {Derus, S68, p. 365}.

[40]Sorabji's Indian family was obviously a prosperous one. He once wrote that "one of my family connections in Bombay is the managing director of a leading bank" and that "another relative was partially ruined when the hundred-odd mills of the Currimbhoy Trust packed up, knocked up by Japanese competition"; "The Charlatans of Congress", *Candour* 3, nos. 92/93 (29 July and 5 August 1955): 15–16; 16.

[41]The three-star Grand Hotel still exists at 17, Shri S.R.Marg, Ballard Estate, Mumbai 400 001; see Maharashtra State Gazetteers, Greater Bombay Districts, "Miscellaneous Occupations—Hotels and Restaurants", http://cultural.maharashtra.gov.in/english/gazetteer/greater_bombay/miscellanoues.html [*sic*]. According to "Bombay Heritage Walks 2008" (http://bombayheritagewalks.blogspot.ca/2013/04/grand-hotel.html), it is a "grade-I heritage structure".

Shapurji Sorabji also requested that educational institutions should receive enough money to feed twenty-five Parsi boys and twenty-five Parsi girls every school day; he also wanted to encourage the research and use of indigenous Indian (medicinal) drugs.

Around 1936 Madeline brought an action in the judicial district of Lisbon for the annulment of the marriage that her husband, Shapurji Sorabji, had contracted with Nobubai Visvonata Catcar (as her name appears in the court documents) in Ponda, Portuguese India, on 17 June 1929.[42] As the marriage took place on a territory governed by Portuguese law, the matter was debated under that law, which prohibited bigamy. According to the court documents, Shapurji Sorabji had contracted a bigamous marriage with this woman, also known as Bablibai Shapurji Sorabji, and had been living with her since 1905. The tribunal ruled that the court of the district of the Islands of Goa had jurisdiction to entertain the suit. In a judgment appearing at folio 371, the Goa court "declared the said marriage of the defendant [Nobubai Visvonata Catcar] to be void but with the effects in her favour". Madeline appealed against the latter part of the judgment (the effects), as did Nobubai, but the Court of Second Instance upheld the judgment in a decision appearing in folio 441. Both parties then decided to institute appeals to the Supreme Court, whose decision tells us that

> about 30 years ago [1919] Shapurji Sorabji returned from England to India and lived there for some years with a woman named Sorbai, also known as Novasbai, to whom he was married in 1883 and, she having died [year unknown], he some time afterwards, when widower, entered into relations with her the defendant [Nobubai Visvonata Catcar] and then came to live with one another as man and wife until, after a lapse of about 20 years, they were married on 17th June 1929 at Pondá [*sic*].

Since Shapurji Sorabji's marriage to Madeline had never been dissolved, his union with Nobubai was thus bigamous, although it was agreed that the latter had entered into the marriage in good faith. On 30 December 1949 Madeline published a statement in the *Times of India* clarifying that her late husband's bigamous marriage ceremony had been declared "null and void" by the court; she also had it printed on a card, presumably for selective distribution.

This concludes the account of Shapurji Sorabji's life as it can be reconstructed, mostly based on the few documents kept by his English son. We will return to India in chapter 11, when we describe the latter's two trips to Bombay to deal with matters relating to his inheritance.

Madeline Matilda Worthy, the English (and not "Spanish-Sicilian") Mother

Sorabji repeatedly said that his mother was of "Spanish-Sicilian" ancestry, which has been all too eagerly taken for granted and repeated at face value. Recent research by Sean Vaughn Owen has uncovered evidence (see below) that finally puts to rest the composer's alleged roots as pure fabrication.[43] As a young adult, in 1914, Sorabji did not deny that his mother was English: "I find that English people—whom with all due respect to your honoured self and my own dear mother, *herself English* [italics added], I detest, 'en masse'—do not respond to music of a deep profound nature."[44] This

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[42]The date of 1936 is derived from the sentence "It is about 13 years ago […]" that appears in a document entitled "Pleadings of the First Respondent Madeleine Matilda Sorabji" (7 pp.), which refers to the document dated 26 July 1949 and entitled "Suit No. 53,936: Copy of Decision of the Supreme Court of Justice" (6 pp., translated from the Portuguese).

[43]Unless otherwise stated, the biographical information in this section is taken from Owen's doctoral dissertation (*OB*, 30–40, 327–28, 330–32), which is based on extensive detective work, particularly at the Family Records Centre (London). Although I carried out exactly the same research using the sources available in the Sorabji Archive several years before he published his findings, he was able to find details of considerable interest about the composer's parents on the distaff side.

[44]KSS to PH, 3 February 1914 {*LPH*, no. 5, p. 53}.

was before he introduced Spanish *couleur locale* into his music, more specifically in *Quasi habanera*, written in August 1917; such an exotic background apparently became a useful justification for his fascination with southern Europe. Curiously, what appears to be the only instance of recognition of English nationality, which only became known in 1992 when Paul Rapoport's *Sorabji: A Critical Celebration* was published, was not cited by Owen or, it seems, by others. Sorabji, however, clearly mentioned to Rapoport that his mother, despite her (alleged) ancestry, was English.[45]

Only later did Sorabji begin to insist on an exotic connection. In addition to "some Phoenician forbears quite a way back, of course", he claimed that his mother came from "a very wealthy princely family, but my grandfather hated the union with Italy at the time of the Risorgimento […] and preferred to give up everything he had to come to England with his family". Another piece of fanciful heritage was that she was a member of "a great and ancient Sicilian family called Martorana" and that the Palermitan church known by that name was built by his "ancestress the famous Eloisa Martorana", who founded a Benedictine monastery in 1194 to which the Chiesa Santa Maria dell'Ammiraglio in Palermo was given in 1433. Sorabji also referred to "Ma's Sicilian family name" as Malvitrano De Sanctis in addition to estates and a "solid, long, rectangular house standing on its own" beneath Monte Pellegrino (Palermo), of which he claimed to have a photograph and that "by rights belonged to her".[46] The reference to Sorabji's grandfather leaving Italy in the nineteenth century once suggested that his mother might have been adopted by an English couple; we now know that this was not the case. She was English, and her son was consequently half-English, however much he may have disliked this status. She may have invented this "Spanish-Sicilian" connection herself, which her son was only too happy to make part of his background. Indeed, he once wrote: "Mother used to say to me 'Tesoro mio... in every true Sicilian heart smoulders a Mount Etna... from time to time it has to blow up.'"[47] As we will see in chapter 18, Sorabji, speaking of her in old age, said that she had always been "full of fantastically malicious imaginings".

Madeline Matilda Worthy (b. Camberwell, Surrey, 13 August 1866; d. Bournemouth, 5 May 1959)[48] was the fourth of the eight children (five sons, three daughters) of Francis John Worthy and Sarah Matilda

[45]PR to MAR, 23 July 1997; see also Paul Rapoport, "Sorabji: A Continuation", in *SCC*, 67n17 (first part of the last sentence).

[46]KSS to CE, 15 January 1960, and RN (23–26 October 1972), 5 {3/F.3}; KSS to EC, 3 February 1951, 1; RN (September 1957), 1 {1/F.19}; KSS to CMG, 16 December 1966; KSS to DG, 12 December 1970, 2.

[47]KSS to CMG, 16 December 1966.

[48]The date of birth of Sorabji's mother, which Rapoport ("Sorabji: A Continuation", in *SCC*, 67) suggested could be 1874, has been established with certainty by Sean Vaughn Owen as 1866, thanks to the birth certificate obtained from the Family Records Centre; see also https://www.findmypast.com/transcript?id=BMD%2FB%2F1866%2F3%2FAZ%2F000744%2F347. Curiously, she does not appear to have been baptised until 20 July 1873 (as Madeline Matilda Worthy); see https://www.findmypast.com/transcript?id=R_930949427. The date of death is documented later on in this section.

Wood.[49] Francis John, who seems to have come from Hampshire, became a messenger for the Admiralty.[50] Sarah, the daughter of John Wood, a tailor, died of senile decay in Tooting Asylum.

A puzzling problem in the biography of Sorabji's mother is the presence of her name in official documents under no fewer than seven forms.[51] As Owen discovered, she and her elder sister, Frances Caroline (b. 5 September 1862; d. ca. 1955), were living with a domestic servant at 4 Lodge Road at the time of the 1891 census, the address given on their marriage certificate.[52] Curiously, the two women listed themselves as "Madeline Kingston", a music student aged twenty, and "Flor L. Mabel Douglas", a widow aged twenty-four; the age difference between the two ladies matches the actual data, as do their places of birth. This "Mabel Douglas" is listed as one of Madeline's witnesses on her marriage certificate, strongly suggesting that her mother was not present. The mother, who died in Tooting Asylum (probably the Surrey County Lunatic Asylum, now the Springfield University Hospital), may have been confined there long before the wedding, which would explain not only her absence from the certificate, but also that the sisters lived alone. Madeline's marriage certificate shows that she also lied about her father's occupation, declaring him a captain rather than a messenger; she must have wanted to make a better impression on her husband. One wonders why the sisters lied in such an official context as a census, which genealogy websites suggest should always be taken into account.

No documents have survived other than passing mentions in letters to shed light on the life of Madeline, who seems to have been called "Maggie".[53] In 1916 Sorabji wrote: "my mother who is anything but a lover of English singing or singers and herself a competent authority having for long been the pupil of Delle Sedie", in addition to having attended Wagner's *Ring* a dozen times. He claimed that she had been one of his "favourite pupils".[54] The Italian baritone and teacher Enrico Delle Sedie (1822–1907) does not appear to have lived in London, although he sang there on several occasions. He taught at the Paris Conservatoire from 1867 to 1871, that is, when Madeline was still an infant. The association may therefore be wishful thinking on Sorabji's part; besides, everyone in the field of music

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[49]Francis John Worthy's dates are: b. Hampshire, [day and month unknown] 1822; d. London, 25 July 1879; https://www.findmypast.com/transcript?id=BMD/D/1879/3/AZ/000322/074. Sarah Matilda Wood's dates are: bapt. Southwark, 29 December 1833; d. London, 19 May 1915; https://www.findmypast.co.uk/transcript?id=R_941480426. They were married on 3 August 1856 according to a certified copy of an entry of marriage, Saint George the Martyr Southwark, no. M00879; see also https://www.findmypast.com/transcript?id=BMD%2FM%2F1856%2F3%2FMZ%2F000914%2F011. The groom was listed as being a Captain in the entry of marriage of Shapurji Sorabji and Madeline Matilda Worthy, registration district Camberwell, 20 February 1892 (where the family name is given as "Wortley" in both cases), MB 191049. The 1881 England, Wales & Scotland Census, https://www.findmypast.co.uk/transcript?id=GBC%2F1881%2F0002744484 (year of birth given as 1867), lists Sarah as a "Lodging House Keeper", with four boarders and an adopted son named Walter Barker (b. 1862), who worked as a clerk. See also the 1871 England, Wales & Scotland Census, https://www.findmypast.co.uk/transcript?id=GBC/1871/0003943934 (year of birth given as 1834).

[50]Certified copy of an entry of death (Francis John Worthy), registration district of St. Olave, no. DXZ 103628; see also https://www.findmypast.com/transcript?id=BMD%2FD%2F1879%2F3%2FAZ%2F000322%2F074.

[51]The following forms, which may be due to transcription errors (it is all too easy to confuse "Worthy" and "Wortley" is all too easy), can be seen in the surviving documents: Mad**el**ine Matilda Wort**le**y (certificate of marriage of Sorabji's parents, 1892; marriage licence allegation, 1932); Ma**dd**ine Matilda Sorabji formerly Wort**h**y (certificate of birth of Kaikhosru Shapurji Sorabji, 1892); Madel**a**ine Shapurji Sorabji; maiden name: Wort**le**y (passport, 1939); Madel**e**ine Matilda Sorabji (pleadings to the Judges of the Supreme Court of Justice, 1949 at the latest); Madeleine Matilda **Shapurji** Sorabji (notice published in the *Times of India*, 1949); Madeleine **Marguerite** Mat**h**ild**e** Shapurji Sorabji (certificate of death and tombstone, 1959).

[52]1891 England, Wales & Scotland Census, https://www.findmypast.co.uk/transcript?id=GBC/1891/0000926420.

[53]The name "Maggie" appears in the three "In memoriam" notices published in the *Times* on 7 July of 1933, 1941, and 1945.

[54]KSS to PH, 2 March 1915 {*LPH*, no. 15, p. 93}; Sorabji, "The Decline of Music and Musical Taste in England (With some Reflections upon the Future of Music)", in *MCF*, 89–106; 98.

knows what "to have been a pupil of" sometimes means. Sorabji also alleged that his mother sang the part of Micaela in *Carmen* with Emma Calvé (1858–1942).[55]

Madeline met her future husband in Covent Garden. Sorabji said that she was singing in the chorus and that his father "spotted her and made a bee-line for her", who was "beautiful in those days".[56] Unfortunately, the programmes from the early 1890s do not usually list the names of the members of the chorus and, when they do, the various forms of Madeline's name do not appear.[57] Sorabji's father apparently—and not surprisingly for the time—discouraged her from pursuing her career on the grounds that female singers were associated with the image of the fallen woman; she later accused him of ruining her career and warned him that she would not allow him to ruin his son's.[58] Although no profession was mentioned on her 1892 entry of marriage, in her 1939 passport she described herself as a "professor of singing";[59] there is no corroboration whatsoever for this activity, which she most certainly carried out privately, if she did at all. The same passport, in which she is described as having brown eyes and black hair and measuring (like her husband) 5 feet 3 inches, gives her place and date of birth as London on 13 August 1874 [*sic*], which would have made her seventeen (rather than twenty-five) at the time of her marriage. It also states, under "National Status", that she was a "British subject by birth, widow of a British subject".

Sorabji said that his mother was "a great singer at one time". Then aged "not more than eighteen or twenty months at most", he had attended her debut "at a Colonne Sunday afternoon concert in Paris during a hot Whitsun", singing Marguerite in *La damnation de Faust*."[60] In all likelihood, this claim of precociousness is a case of literary licence, all the more so as the orchestra could find no reference to her.[61] A systematic search of several volumes of the *Guide musical*, which covered musical life in Paris at the turn of the century, failed to yield either her name or a review of a performance of Berlioz's work given at the time. Although Madeline may have sung under a pseudonym if she ever had a career, she probably only performed in her son's imagination to give him an inherited musical background. She seems to have studied the organ in her girlhood, probably with the organist of St. George Church in Bloomsbury Way, between Bloomsbury Street and Southampton Row, and was "quite an excellent Organist".[62] As a teenager, Sorabji persuaded her to practise again and went round to various churches to see if she could use the instrument.[63]

The previous three paragraphs have reported a series of claims made by Sorabji in various writings and letters, in short, an account of the embellished reality he wanted his entourage to believe. Some evidence of a very modest stage career for Madeline finally surfaced in early 2016 with the discovery of her name as part of two productions of pantomime and comic opera.[64] On 22 December 1883, at the Crystal Palace, a seventeen-year-old Madeline, listed as "Miss Madeline Worthy", played "Heaviscore",

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[55]KSS to CE, 15 January 1960. Calvé's memoirs do not mention any singer who could have been Sorabji's mother; *My Life*, trans. Rosamond Gilder (New York: D. Appleton, 1922; repr., New York: Arno Press, 1977), and *Sous tous les ciels j'ai chanté…: Souvenirs* (Paris: Librairie Plon, 1940).

[56]RN (23–26 October 1972), 3 {3/F.3}.

[57]Cristina Franchi, Archives, Covent Garden, to MAR, 12 October 1998.

[58]Sorabji, in conversation with Paul Rapoport, 19 May 1978, 14 June 1976, reported in Rapoport, "Sorabji: A Continuation", in *SCC*, 68. See also KSS to CMG, 14 June 1936, 1, where Sorabji writes that his mother "sacrificed a brilliant career as a singer for his sake".

[59]Passport no. 196356 (Mrs. Madeleine Shapurji Sorabji; maiden name: Wortley), issued on 6 March 1939. For a photograph of Madeline taken in the first decade of the twentieth century, see *SCC*, 207.

[60]KSS to NG, 14 March 1947 {16/F.58}.

[61]Catherine Gallet, Orchestre Colonne, to MAR, 6 June 1997.

[62]KSS to Brian Trueman, undated (1952) {author's collection; gift of Brian Trueman}.

[63]RN (23–26 October 1972), 6 {3/F.3}. Holliday says "St. John Bloomsbury", in which area there is no such church.

[64]I am indebted to Thomas E. Smith for this discovery. More about the context in which this happened can be found in the acknowledgements.

one of the eleven cricketers in *Blue Beard* by Horace Lennard, with music by Oscar Barrett. This may have been a small part in an ensemble, probably with short lines standing out here and there and a few dance steps, suggesting that she was a member of the chorus. The critic for *The Era* reported at length on this example of very popular form of entertainment in Victorian England. He wrote that the "new version of the old story" introduced many details and that "personages and allusions of the most modern date" were used "evidently to the satisfaction of the audience, whose amusement and applause showed conclusively that Mr Horace Lennard knew how to hit their tastes and to keep them interested."[65] A census published in early 1884 showed that the work was shown nationwide in six theatres.[66] Another production was of the musical *Vetah*, given on 28 February 1887 at the Winter Gardens in Southport, Merseyside, by the Indian Comic Opera Company. The star performer was its librettist Kate Santley (ca. 1837–1923; real name: Evangeline Estelle Gazina), a German-born actress, singer, and comedienne who had a successful career in England after being educated in the United States, where her family had emigrated.[67] Madeline was listed in the cast of twenty artists as "Miss Maggie Kingston", this time using the familiar name by which she seems to have been known.[68] The production travelled in late March to the Theatre Royal in Belfast, where the music was described as "extremely fascinating, and by no means of a commonplace type", leading to "a decided success". Another performance took place at the end of April in South Shields, Tyne & Wear.[69]

Madeline lived in London with her son until he moved to Corfe Castle, in the early 1950s. After spending some time in Swanage, a seaside resort not far from Corfe Castle, she returned to London in 1953. Five years later the son decided to move his aging mother closer to him, in the large coastal resort town of Bournemouth, where she died of circulatory failure and arteriosclerosis on 5 May 1959, aged ninety-two.[70] She was buried three days later in the Bournemouth Catholic North Cemetery, plot E 5/2 (bought by her son). This burial place suggests that she may have become a Catholic at some point, although her parents, like herself, were married according to the rites and ceremonies of the Established Church, that is, the Church of England. The son may also have managed to have his mother buried in a Catholic cemetery, thus reinforcing the Spanish-Sicilian myth.

We know little about the relatives of Sorabji's mother, and the following refers only to those mentioned in documents found in his papers. Her younger sister, Blanche Winifred (b. St. Olave, Southwark, 6 March 1875; d. Berlin, July 1944 at the latest) was,[71] according to a draft for a will dated 1936, married

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[65]"'Blue Beard' at the Crystal Palace", *The Era*, 29 December 1883: 6. The British weekly newspaper *The Era* (1838–1939) was at first a general newspaper, with much emphasis on sports, but later featured extensive coverage of theatrical activity.

[66]Jeffrey Richards, *The Golden Age of Pantomime: Slapstick, Spectacle and Subversion in Victorian England* (London and New York: I. B. Tauris, 2015), 26–27.

[67]The music was by Claude-Firmin Bernicat (1842–83), completed and arranged by Georges Jacobi. The work premiered in Portsmouth, then went on tour for 156 performances. See Robert Ignatius Letellier, *Operetta: A Sourcebook* (Newcastle upon Tyne: Cambridge Scholars Publishing, 2015), 1: 278–79, 280.

[68]Advertisement in *The Era*, 26 February 1887: 6.

[69]"Theatre Royal—'Vetah'", *The Belfast News-Letter*, 22 March 1887, 5; "'Vetah' in South Shields", *The Shields Daily Gazette and Shipping Telegraph*, 22 April 1887, 4.

[70]Certified copy of an entry of death (Madeleine Marguerite Mathilde Shapurji Sorabji), registration district Bournemouth, IW 737371. Madeline was then living at 195 Holdenhurst Road but, for some reason, died at the Hollingbourne Nursing Home, 23 Howard Road, Queens Park. Her age at the time of death is given as eighty-five, which yields the same incorrect year of birth of 1874, as in her passport. See also https://www.findmypast.co.uk/transcript?id=BMD%2FD%2F1959%2F2%2FAZ%2F000934%2F085.

[71]Certified copy of an entry in the register of births (Blanche Winifred Worthy), registration district of Saint Olave Southwark, sub-district of St. John Horslydown in the County of Surrey, no. B48876; see also Surrey Baptisms, https://www.findmypast.co.uk/transcript?id=GBPRS%2FSURREY%2FFHS%2FBAP%2F000094850, which provides the birth date given here and the baptism date as 16 May 1875.

to a certain Ernest Dieckmann and lived at 5 Richmond Mansions, Old Brompton Road (London SW5 or SW7), where her sister Frances Caroline also seems to have lived. She probably spent some time in Germany before returning to London in 1936, where her will was drafted.[72] She must have returned to Germany later, for in 1944 Sorabji and his mother were "much distressed by the news from Berlin of the passing away of my Mother's youngest sister at hardly over middle-age from alleged 'heart-trouble'".[73] Blanche, a "lady of substance (physical as well as financial!)", appointed her nephew Kaikhosru as executor and trustee and left him £100 (£7,229 in 2021).[74] One wonders if this person might not be the "fat Aunt" whose "bulging extravagance" in her handwriting and expression Sorabji once compared to "the posterior-like contours of Rococo clouds".[75]

As well as leaving some of her jewellery to a certain Germaine Sknavo, a daughter by a previous marriage of her husband, Blanche made three bequests to three people. One was C. L. Worthy, probably her brother Lionel Claude (b. St. Saviour, 22 March 1871; d. London, 7 October 1955), of 54 Lower Road, Rotherhithe, London SE16, who had spent some years in Adelaide, Australia, as a ship's carpenter. Another was a nephew named Charles Gordon Johnson, of Beamsville, Ontario.[76] The last one was "Madeleine Worthy of Watford", a puzzling reference as there is no known connection between Sorabji's mother and that Hertfordshire town, north of London. The nephew may have been the son of Frances Caroline, an "aunt of erstwhile", as Sorabji described her. The son was a "bad lot", who was "packed off abroad" and never heard of again. This sister, who was jealous of Madeline, bequeathed Sorabji "a goodly sum" on her death around 1955. Mother and son had to cope with her somehow in 1930. She reduced Madeline "to a frenzy of exacerbated boredom—and me not much less so". Sorabji devoted a long paragraph to describing how she was "indescribably irritating and trying beyond words" and showed "abominable cruelty" to her sister, who "*slaved* for her". He also recalled, without describing them in detail, "affronts put on me as a child [...] humiliations purposeless and wanton".[77]

The foregoing paragraphs contain all that we know of Sorabji's mother and his relatives on the distaff side. Given his deep love for her, it is surprising that he would have discarded so many mementos, unless she had taken care of them herself over a period of years. He certainly also needed space for his many books and scores. Caring for his aging mother had probably become a burden and he preferred to live only with memories. In the end, what mattered most to him was to live in a world he had created for himself and for the enjoyment and delight of the few members of his close entourage, who eagerly believed his claims. It will never be clear, of course, how much of the fabrication actually came from his mother, who never seemed to strive for accuracy when it came to the exact form of her name and her year of birth. Sorabji certainly enjoyed enhancing his already "exotic" background by adding to it a layer or component that created a link with a culture playing such an important role in the composition of many of his works. To boast "Spanish-Sicilian" roots and high-ranking relatives in the Catholic Church, as we will shall see, was certainly prestigious for both mother and son, but especially for the latter, who never missed an opportunity to express his deep dislike of English society.

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[72]KSS to EC, 15 October 1930, 8 (section dated 28 October).

[73]KSS to FH, 7 July 1944 {1/F.6}.

[74]Will (draft) of Blanche Winifred Dieckmann, 1936 (J. Wescott & Sons, 112 Strand, [London] W.C.2), 1 p.; KSS to EC, 9 April 1930, 9 (section dated 11 April).

[75]*FM*, no. 224 (orig. no. CCCXXVI; p. 59).

[76]The Archives at Lincoln Town Hall (Beamsville, Ontario) could not find anything on Charles Gordon Johnson.

[77]RN (September 1960), 3 {2/F.1}; RN (23–26 October 1972), 5 {3/F.3}; KSS to EC, 3 June 1930, 12 (section dated 9 June); see also ibid., 17 June 1930, 7 (section dated 27 June).

Alleged Relatives in the Church Hierarchy

Sorabji did his best to make his entourage believe that his ancestry was to be found in Sicily and Spain: a Cardinal-Archbishop, an Abbess of a convent, a Cardinal who became Secretary of State, and a Benedictine nun. He also tried to pass himself off physically as hailing from the Italian island, saying "I am instantly accepted and recognised as being 'il tipo veramente siciliano' when in Sicily... as I am of being a genuine Parsi when among my people in Bombay".[78] When he was a small child, he claimed, the children of the Infanta Eulalia of Spain, Duchess of Galliera (1864–1958), kissed his hands. They called him as "la jolie petite Espagnole" because of the "indiscreetly sexually ambiguous" clothes he wore at a time when his "hair of a fabulous silkiness" made him more beautiful than the courtesan Thaïs.[79] Since we now know, thanks to Sean Vaughn Owen's careful research, that his mother's "Spanish-Sicilian" ancestry was the product of his fertile imagination, everything mentioned in the following paragraphs is simply an account of his fanciful and colourful claims about his imaginary ancestors in the Church hierarchy. As we shall see in chapter 19, Sorabji was very much attracted to the Catholic Church and its rituals; he also contributed several open letters to the *Catholic Herald.*

The first alleged ancestor that Sorabji never tired of mentioning (even to the same correspondent) was a high-ranking Palermitan of the late eighteenth century. He mentioned this "Cardinal-Archbishop-four-times-great-Grand-uncle" in the time of Admiral Nelson to more than one correspondent.[80] This gentleman was apparently "a gorgeous old blackguard who lived to the ripely sinful age of ninety-eight and a half". A seemingly unscrupulous person, he owned a ring: a "huge amethyst affair" that, by tradition, could only be worn by the male members of the family because of a curse on it. This 18-carat gold ring with a "gargantuan amethyst" was made "in the style of a bishop's ring", and Sorabji wore it on his left little finger. Experts at Sotheby's and the Victoria & Albert Museum concluded that it dated from 1914 and was made by the London-based firm of Paton & Co. The ring was one way for the composer to boast a prestigious heritage.[81] In 1934, Sorabji, speaking of Denis Saurat, the dedicatee of his *Quintet II for Piano and String Quartet*, wondered "what the poor man will make of it God only knows! Perhaps my own tutelary Goddess Sekkhet does!..." As suggested by Sean Vaughn Owen, there is a resemblance between the amethyst's intaglio and an Egyptian hieroglyph of the solar deity and warrior goddess shown in a book by the English Egyptologist E. A. Wallis Budge [1857–1957].[82]

It seems that the Holy Father could not decide whether a "top-notcher Cardinal" should be thrown out of the Church for his dabblings into black magic, or quietly allowed "to pursue his nefarious course technically inside it, to the great undoing of souls". Sorabji also claimed to be the "proud possessor of a sweet old great-Aunt who is the Abbess of a convent in Sicily, an enclosed order…"[83]

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[78]KSS to CMG, 20 August 1955.

[79]KSS to RWLS, 28 April 1949 (p. 17).

[80]KSS to KD, 29 September 1977 {Derus D13, p. 56} and 15 October 1977 {Derus S14, p. 61}. For other accounts, see KSS to Egon Petri, 16 February 1957; KSS to RS, 20 April 1966, 2; KSS to CMG, 18 June 1965, 1, and 16 December 1966, 1; and KSS to DG, 12 December 1970, 2, and 10 September 1972. The *Annuario dell'arcidiocesi di Palermo 1990* (Palermo: Edizioni Malù, [1990]) lists seven Archbishops of Palermo in the period 1775–1850; Sorabji's alleged relative could be any of them.

[81]KSS to CE, 15 January 1960. The history of the ring comes from *OB*, 31–32; for a photograph (Sorabji at his desk, 1977), see *SCC*, 92. This ring was sold by Bonhams in 2012 (auction 19830, lot 200), http://www.bonhams.com/auctions/19830/lot/200/ (includes a photograph).

[82]KSS to CMG, 17 June 1934. Sorabji had used the name of the goddess earlier, namely, in KSS to EC, 15 October 1930, 8 (section dated 28 October): "Our young Egyptologist friend who sits with Bernard [Bromage] and myself declares that Sekkhet the Cat goddess—*and* the *great Fire Goddess*—is coming closer and closer to our meetings and may shortly manifest herself [...]." For the hieroglyph of Sekhmet, to use the most current of the many spellings, see E. A. [Ernest Alfred] Wallis Budge, *Easy Lessons in Egyptian Hieroglyphics with Sign List*, Books on Egypt and Chaldaea (London: Kegan Paul, Trench, Trübner, 1899), 54 (no. 63). Sean Vaughn Owen kindly communicated his findings in emails of 29 November and 13 December 2020.

[83]KSS to NG, 27 November 1947 {16/F.59}; RN (August 1955), 1–2 {1/F.17}.

Sorabji was referring to a certain Maglione, apparently a second cousin, who was cardinal secretary of state at the Vatican. This person is most likely the Italian Louis Émile (Luigi) Maglione (1877–1944). A priest since 1901, he held various positions in the Church hierarchy before becoming nuncio in Paris in 1926. Pius XII raised him to the dignity of cardinal-priest in 1935 with the title of Sainte-Prudentienne and, in 1939, appointed him secretary of state.[84] In this capacity, he oversaw the Holy See's relationships with foreign governments and was thus the most important figure in the Vatican. His official duties during World War II obviously made him a key player in the Holy See's diplomacy. Sorabji must have been impressed by the cardinal's personality through newspaper accounts of him, and so decided to elevate him to the dignity of "relative".[85] The surviving documents do not tell us if he ever tried to call on him during his visits to Rome.

As noted above, among the "intimate biographical details" that Sorabji kept "for the knowledge only of my intimate and real friends", he claimed to be a descendant of the twelfth-century Eloisa Martorana. He was clearly so keen to identify himself with his mother's supposed Sicilian origins that he had no problem inventing such a prestigious ancestry. His telling of the story in two different letters to the same friend shows how much he had come to believe in it.[86] With such genealogical creativity, anyone could claim a direct link to Charlemagne or Elizabeth I.

Gianandrea, Stephen, and the "cugino inglese"

It was in a short story of fifty-six pages entitled *Gianandrea and Stephen* that Sorabji let his imagination run at its wildest. This elaborate expression of his homoerotic feelings probably dates from after 1954, and only Frank Holliday and Erik Chisholm knew a few bits and pieces of it.[87] The story concerns the amorous relationship between Gianandrea, his Sicilian "cousin", and Stephen, a young English naval officer, and his meeting with them in Palermo.[88] It must be said at the outset that, apart from a few actual biographical events (the Vienna recital, the holidays in Palermo, the performance engagement in Scotland), everything is most likely to have been invented, unless it is an (idealized) account of actual homoerotic encounters he had on holiday. The dates offered in the following summary do not appear in the short story, but can be deduced from it.

Travelling with his mother, Sorabji was away from England for about four months in early 1922. The journey began on 13 January with a recital at the Musikverein in Vienna. He then paid a first visit to his "maternal homeland Sicily", where he met "the few of my relatives on that side who still survived" and was "hailed by them as A TRUE SICILIAN".[89] Everyone in the family was curious to see the "cugino inglese". He met an uncle and an aunt and their grandson Gianandrea, whose eyes were like "great pools of black light"; he looked like the "wonderful Cefalù Christ clean shaven and in modern dress". Gianandrea (ca. 1898–1954 at the earliest) was no older than twenty-four years at the time and a remarkable surgeon. The patients and staff of the hospital called him "il nostro giovane Dottore

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[84]See *Annuaire pontifical catholique,* vol. 40, *Années 1937–1938–1939* (Paris, 1939), 55, 64; vol. 41, *Année 1948* (Paris, 1947), 40, and Salvador Miranda, "The Cardinals of the Holy Roman Church: Biographical Dictionary (1903–2000)", http://cardinals.fiu.edu/bios1935.htm#Maglione.

[85]RN (August 1955), 2 {1/F.17} contains some purportedly biographical data about this "relative".

[86]KSS to CMG, 18 June 1965, 16 December 1966.

[87]Sorabji provided a quick account in KSS to EC, 8 January 1954, postscript.

[88]"Gianandrea" was still "alive" when Sorabji told his story to Frank Holliday in 1954, and was "dead" when he wrote it. Therefore, the story dates from 1954 at the earliest, and the handwriting confirms the proposed date. The summary of Sorabji's short story includes elements from RN (10–12 September 1956), 2–4 {1/F.18}; see also KSS to EC, 8 January 1954. For bibliographical details of this manuscript, of which my critical edition is in preparation, see the section "Sources and Abbreviations".

[89]KSS to CMG, 16 December 1966, 2.

Santo" ("our young saint of a doctor"), because he lacked all the interests of young men of his age. Sorabji and Gianandrea—a passionate music lover—immediately became "like brothers", going to the opera two or three times a week. It was not long before Gianandrea asked "Kaiko", as he affectionately called him, if he was engaged. Sorabji replied that he had no interest in women and would never marry.

One day Gianandrea was called to operate on a certain Commander Stephen Mainwaring (d. 1937; pronounced Mannering), a young English naval officer who had been seriously injured on board his ship while it was carrying out exercises in the Mediterranean. The surgeon fetched Sorabji at his hotel and asked him to come with him to the hospital. The man on the stretcher looked exactly like the many drawings that Gianandrea had done and said that he was expecting "il mio". Stephen, a music lover like Gianandrea, had read about Sorabji's music and was eager to meet him. Sorabji was reluctant at first because of his very negative feelings towards the English people. Gianandrea insisted and prevailed, and Sorabji soon felt his hostility melt away. Stephen soon admitted to Sorabji that Gianandrea and his wonderful country had brought many feelings and emotions to the surface; he longed for a "great absorbing friendship with one of my own sex".

Stephen spent his convalescence at the villa of the Prince and Princess Castiorano outside Palermo, learning Italian under the tutelage of Gianandrea. One afternoon Gianandrea was asked to read Michelangelo' sonnet *Se nel volto per gli occhi il cor si vede* [Since through the eyes the heart's seen in the face]. (In 1923 Sorabji set this sonnet written for Tommaso de' Cavalieri, the Roman nobleman with whom the celebrated artist had fallen in love.) He stood up and, taking Stephen by the arms, said that what he felt for him was much more than what Michelangelo felt for Tommaso. This declaration of mutual love between the two friends moved Sorabji to tears. The three men became so inseparable that the locals called them *La Trinità*.

A few weeks later, Stephen had to leave for England to marry a certain Silvia, with whom he was to live near Winchester, the county town of Hampshire, in south-east England. His wife resented that he regularly corresponded with Gianandrea and kept photos of his friends. She feared that he was having "an affair with one of them, perhaps both" and decided to sue for annulment. A year and a half later, Stephen took his friend Sorabji to his home. When a spasm of pain crossed his face, which turned deathly pale, Sorabji was alarmed, but Stephen replied that it was "only a stitch".

After a performing engagement in Scotland (spring of 1930 or 1931), Sorabji travelled with Stephen to Palermo. Gianandrea and Stephen "stood for a moment clasping hands tightly, looking at each other with all their love and devotion streaming out of their eyes". To Sorabji, it looked "like two drops of quicksilver running together and coalescing, the complete fusion of two human beings who lived in and for each other in a very rare and lovely way". The two lovers turned to Sorabji, saying that they could not leave him out of this, and both put an arm around him, holding him close.

Stephen eventually left the Navy to live with Gianandrea, and the two friends spent some time in England every year. One day Gianandrea, who called Sorabji "my young tiger-cat English cousin", put his arms around him and kissed him on both cheeks, to which he responded in kind. Stephen then asked Sorabji to do to him what he had just done to his cousin and, after a few moments of embarrassment, Sorabji did the same "delightedly".

At some point during their friendship, Gianandrea and Stephen introduced Sorabji to a young man called Galeazzo Castiorano (1914?–July or August 1943), whom he described as "a most wonderfully beautiful fellow only 18 who had shown signs of being very interested in me" and "one of the most marvellously beautiful human beings I have ever seen". One day the conversation became quite emotional and Galeazzo fell to his knees, rested his head on the arm of Sorabji's chair and burst into "really heartbreaking desperate sobbing". Sorabji, who had been through "two catastrophic and completely disastrously futile emotional crises" (about which we know nothing), broke down

hysterically, "surrender[ing] only too gladly to their delightful petting and comforting, feeling I could never have too much of it".

Stephen's heart later began to show disturbing signs and he suffered several severe attacks, prompting Sorabji to spend as much time as possible at his bedside. Stephen died, "gently drawing his hand out of mine [and] la[ying] it on my head". After his death, Gianandrea left the medical profession and joined a Trappist order in a monastery in a remote hill town in central Sicily (where there is in fact no such order, which would be far too austere for the Sicilian temperament).

Some time during the following year, Sorabji visited the cemetery where Stephen was buried. Galeazzo was kneeling by the grave, and Sorabji became very attached to him. When someone suggested that Galeazzo should find a wife, his mother replied that he would never marry and that he was in love with Sorabji. He died in the fighting in Sicily. Sorabji felt that his contact with Gianandrea, Stephen, and Galeazzo had immensely deepened and intensified his emotional capacity. He felt "veramente siciliano, e qualche cosa in più" ("really Sicilian, but with something more").

Sorabji led a bachelor's life, living with his mother past the age of fifty. He had only occasional contact, usually through correspondence, with selected friends. They were those he described as "I miei", as "my greatly loved Sicilian cousin calls those whom he regards as his predestined friends, who can understand what I have to say, and whose 'simpatia' is vital to one of my temperament and who give it in such magnificently generous measure, bless them!"[90] He became fully aware of his homosexual inclinations in the 1920s, as is clear from the above story. Although he fully accepted the fact, he did not, as far as we know, have one or more regular homosexual partners. There are some hints that he may have engaged in same-sex activities (see chapter 9). His travels to Palermo probably enabled him to have affairs that could have provided a basis for his short story. However, the loneliness he must often have felt certainly explains his desire to create for himself an ideal world in which he could believe—and have his friends believe. A devoted friend like Frank Holliday seemed very happy to write down for posterity all that Sorabji told him during his visits. Fortunately, the present book will have subjected the fruits of his imagination to critical scrutiny, thus preventing the spread of further legends about his life. In any case, Sorabji's homoerotic literary fiction makes for fascinating reading that somewhat offsets the forbidding aspect that much of his music can have for many listeners.

Before Sean Vaughn Owen established that Sorabji's mother was English, I had tried my best to substantiate the biographical content of his short story by examining the Navy Lists at the Public Record Office in Kew in 1997. In the same year I made a "Sorabji pilgrimage" to Palermo, where I searched the files at the Stato civile for a family called Castiorano (or variants thereof, as Sorabji's handwriting is very unclear) and at the Ordine dei Medici for a doctor called Gianandrea. All my efforts failed miserably, and the absence of any documentary evidence led me to become increasingly convinced that much, if not all, of what Sorabji had said or written, not only about his mother but also about his Sicilian relative and the latter's homosexual friend, was the product of his fertile imagination. Reading Owen's dissertation, certainly one of the most instructive and fascinating moments in my years of research on Sorabji, confirmed that I was right.

[90]KSS to CMG, 3 January 1954, 2.

2 / 1892–1914 ▪ Childhood and Youth

First Contacts with Music

According to Frank Holliday, Sorabji's hair, abundant even in his later years, was a striking physical feature. He spoke of a young child with "still long blue-curls, coming down nearly to his shoulder, a beautifully shaped, full mouth suggesting warmth & flexibility, and very intelligent eyes". Sorabji himself reported that he was said to look like his father.[1] In 1914 he gave the following description: "For myself I am very 'sombre': les 'cheveux noirs foncés': of which there is a mop: and gold specs."[2] His 1939 passport states: "5 ft. 5 in., dark brown eyes, black hair."[3] Diana Chisholm (*née* Brodie), the first wife of his friend Erik, wrote of his "most wonderful head of jet black hair (entirely natural), almost shoulder length".[4] Sorabji himself was proud of his "wonderful head of black hair because I look absolutely *marvellous* in it".[5] At his friend's request, he once sent him a lock of hair "pressed between the pages of the Concerto", a unique relic that has survived.[6] Sorabji wondered if his friend wanted to use it for some black magic.[7]

We know little of Sorabji's early years before the last months of 1913, when he began to correspond with Philip Heseltine, his earliest recorded friend. He had no known friends until his early twenties. On the other hand, he may have begun attending concerts at an early age. Although this is most likely part of the fabrication he entertained about his family origins, he recalled attending a performance of *La damnation de Faust* in Paris with his mother singing the part of Marguerite at the age of "not more than eighteen or twenty months at most". If this were true, he would certainly have been in the wings, tended by his "French bonne".[8] He once described himself as having been "quite monstrously precocious in the matter, starting quite a time before the age of two".[9]

In 1964, recalling his many years of concert going, Sorabji presented things differently, saying that he was three at the time of the Berlioz performance. His replacement of the original "five" with "three" suggests that he may have wanted to present himself as even more precocious than he was. The memory was not clear, but he did recall the applause that supposedly greeted his mother's singing. The first precise memory described in his text, a recital by Louise Kirkby-Lunn (1873–1930), may refer to

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[1]RN (1959), 1 {1/F.21}.

[2]KSS to PH, [March 1914] {*LPH*, no. 7, p. 60}. The edition mistakenly writes "facés". This corresponds to Sorabji as seen in the photograph reproduced in *SCC*, 12.

[3]Passport no. 196363 (date of expiration: 6 March 1944; renewed until 6 March 1949).

[4]Diana Chisholm, "Kaikhosru Sorabji" (typescript, 3 pp.), undated (1946 at the earliest), 1 (the description must refer to the very early 1930s).

[5]KSS to KD, 30 September 1985 {Derus, S69, p. 369}.

[6]The lock is now in the Erik Chisholm Collection, Royal Conservatoire of Scotland Archives and Collections, no. EC/2/159, in an envelope marked "For Erik from his K.". It is reproduced in Stuart A. Harris-Logan, "Scotland's Forgotten Composer: The Archive of Erik Chisholm", *Archives Hub*, 1 September 2016, https://blog.archiveshub.jisc.ac.uk/2016/09/01/scotlands-forgotten-composer-the-archive-of-erik-chisholm/.

[7]KSS to EC, 8 April 1930, 6, and 8 (section dated 11 April).

[8]KSS to NG, 14 March 1947 {16/F.58}; KSS to CE, 15 January 1960.

[9]Sorabji, "'Il Gran Rifiuto'", in *MCF*, 141–48; 141, 142.

1912 or 1913, when he lived on Wigmore Street and had crossed the street to Bechstein Hall. He then occupied the seat that was to be his favourite for some fifty years, namely, the back row balcony gangway, from which he could escape "if and when the proceedings proved intolerable".[10]

Sorabji also attended many opera performances as a young boy. In 1936 he lamented the gossip regarding the "growing taste for opera" in London and recalled the number of performances taking place during the "wonderful pre-War years".[11] One of his "earliest boyhood's operatic memories" was the American mezzo-soprano (later also soprano) Edyth Walker (1867–1950),[12] who had debuted at Covent Garden in 1900. In any event, it would be safer to assume that Sorabji was at least eight years old when he began going to the opera.

Sorabji probably did not begin to play the piano before or around 1900.[13] Although he never mentioned any name, his "own early steps, although unspeakably dreary and boring, were in the hands of definitely old-fashioned teachers, who had the sense to know at least that you do not make things easier for a child by teaching him as though both you and he were utter idiots".[14] He may have been advised, or at least encouraged, to study the piano by Emily Edroff-Smith, a piano teacher who was a friend of his mother and for whom his admiration expressed itself in two dedications. Another possibility is a certain Heberden, probably related to Ernest Heberden, who was secretary and director of examinations at Trinity College of Music in the 1970s.[15] Sorabji also learned the organ, having pestered his mother to let him learn the instrument that she herself had studied. Furthermore, despite having "a voice like a crow", he seems to have taken singing lessons from "his old Maestro di Canto Giovanni Clerici".[16] In time, however, he acquired—probably mostly by himself—enough piano technique to plough through his own extremely difficult works, but never developed the professional technique required to give truly polished performances.

Private Education by Tutors

Sorabji attended a small school of about twenty boys run by a classics scholar, probably the one he called his tutor. The boys gave him a hard time, and the master, who had been educated at New College (University of Oxford), used to hit him on the side of the head with a large book, a treatment that left him with recurring headaches.[17] For this "Oxford man", "anything in the least progressive" was anathema.[18] Sorabji's working days as a teenager included his "ordinary scholastic duties" plus piano, organ, and harmony lessons, as well as German and Italian.[19] He kept negative memories of his "miserable experiences" at the hands of the "British brats" and resented his "old brute of a schoolmaster" ridiculing and insulting him in front of them.[20] He did not appreciate his tutor's methods of trying to make him an English gentleman, especially as he never lost "any opportunity of making

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[10]Sorabji, "Concert Going Memories" (undated typescript, 8 pp.), written before 19 July 1964 according to KSS to FH, 19 July 1964, 1 {2/F.5}.

[11]Sorabji, "Music", *NEW* 9, no. 12 (2 July 1936); 233–34; 233.

[12]Sorabji, "Music: Berne (Beromünster Broadcast) *Elektra*; Feb. 11th", *NEW* 16, no. 19 (29 February 1940): 285.

[13]*RN* (1959), 5 {1/F.21}.

[14]Sorabji, "Fashions in Piano 'Methods' with Animadversions on 'The Beautiful Tone' Fetish", in *AM*, 129–31; 130.

[15]Sorabji, in conversation with Alistair Hinton and Kevin Bowyer in the late 1980s; AH to MAR, 7 April 2000.

[16]KSS to CSB, 16 March 1969 [*recte* 1979]; *OB*, 287. Giovanni Clerici, who is mentioned in KSS to CMG, 10 August 1955, was a singing teacher in London around 1912; one of his pupils was Jessica Brett Young, the wife of the novelist Francis Brett Young (1884–1954).

[17]*RN*, April/May 1973, 6 {3/F.4}.

[18]KSS to PH, 8 December 1913 {*LPH*, no. 3, p. 45}.

[19]KSS to EC, 9 April 1930, 3. For the time Sorabji had to spend on his studies, see KSS to FH, undated (1974 or 1975?) {3/F.5}, which also refers to his organ lessons.

[20]KSS to CSB, 6 October 1970 [*recte* 1980].

derogatory comments about India and the peoples of it", which caused "the foul cads English schoolboys" to behave badly towards him. Sorabji made no distinction between Parsis and Indians at this time, and his very negative opinion of all things English was due to these negative childhood experiences.[21]

On the other hand, Sorabji had a fond memory of his German tutor, Ludmille Osterreid (b. 1855, d. after December 1921), who was a listed in the 1891 census as coming from Germany and working as a governess on Marylebone Road.[22] She met the Sorabjis in 1908 and seems to have been on friendly terms with Madeline. She had given her a sack jacket of "pepper and salt colour, lined with silk" that she was still wearing on Sundays, and Kaikhosru had brought her a brooch from Yorkshire. The tutor, who had to return home at the outbreak of war, wrote to her former pupil: "I well remember our German lessons & our walks. No, you were not at all troublesome. We got on very well." A very religious person, she recalled her visits to St. James Spanish Place, located near the former site of the Trinity College of Music, to pray and listen to music during High Mass and suggested to the young composer that he write a Mass. Her wish for a Mass was to be fulfilled in 1961, when Sorabji completed his longest work (in terms of the number of pages), the *Messa grande sinfonica*. Sorabji seems to have had at least two other tutors. One was a certain Dr. Usher, most probably his Latin teacher, who died some time in 1920; another was a Dr. Edwards, his mathematics tutor, with whom he was still in contact in 1914.[23]

Sorabji's studies had prepared him for the "Kondo Matric", that is, the Matriculation, an examination needed for formal admission to a university. He worked so hard that his schoolmaster was aghast at the standard required of him.[24] Unsurprisingly for someone who often tried to pass himself off as younger, he claimed to have taken the examination in 1908 at the age of sixteen, but the University of London's pass lists show that he actually took the series of exams on 9 January 1911, at the age of nineteen. The whole process took three and a half days and consisted of the following: one three-hour paper in English; two three-hour papers in elementary mathematics; one three-hour paper in Latin or one of several scientific subjects; two three-hour papers in scientific or humanistic subjects such as languages and history.[25] Furthermore, Sorabji did not make it into the first division, which contains the names of 176 of the 1,783 registrants; in fact, his name is found in the second division, which contains 707 names. The words "Private Study" follow his name, which is given as Leon Dudley Sorabji.[26]

Although he obtained the Matriculation, Sorabji did not pursue further studies. Philip Heseltine's "ghastly" accounts of public school and university life convinced the twenty-two-year-old musician how was lucky he was to have escaped both, especially as he could not have been away from his mother for long periods. He had met a "dozen specimens" from public schools and "had never heard nor never wish[ed] to hear such obscenity and utter filthiness of thought, sentiment and expression, from the basest coster or Billingsgate fish porter".[27]

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[21]KSS to EC, 18 April 1930, 9–10 (section dated 23 April).

[22]L. [Ludmille] Osterreid to KSS, December 1919?, 12 December 1920, 20 December 1921.

[23]L. [Ludmille] Osterreid to KSS, 12 December 1920; KSS to PH, March. Early [1914] (section dated 20 March) {*LPH*, no. 8, p. 67}.

[24]KSS to CSB, 16 March 1969 [*recte* 1979].

[25]University of London, *The Calendar for the Year 1910–1911* (London: The University of London, 1910).

[26]University of London Library, Palaeography, Archives & Special Collections, Matriculation Examination, January 1911 (P.a. 804.2/11), no. 1455 (p. 10), in *Matriculation Pass Lists, 1901 to 1917* (Ex 2/31).

[27]KSS to PH, 3 February [1914] {*LPH*, no. 5, p. 54}. A coster is a street seller of fruit and vegetables. Billingsgate refers to the United Kingdom's largest inland fish market; the word has also become a synonym for offensive language with reference to the cries of the fish vendors.

So Sorabji gave up his "other scholastic duties" to devote himself "entirely to musical study with a view of becoming a 'critic'". An academic qualification would be helpful, as people are impressed "by *tangible* results", and so he began planning to work towards an "Inter. Mus. with an eye to Mus. Bach." He intended to go to the University of London, whose "very very high" standards he had experienced when taking the Matriculation. He therefore saw "some credit in getting a London degree", which showed that one had studied for a purpose, as there was no chance "for a mere crammer to scrape through". Although he had not previously thought of taking up music seriously, he now found "that only with it, could I really be happy".[28] Having "realised the complete futility of such things",[29] he abandoned his project of a university curriculum and concentrated on private music lessons. His conclusion, apparently, was that he could write music and comment on it easily enough to dispense with formal education. However, despite his many years as a music critic, he was to come to despise the profession and its practitioners, especially in later life. Referring to "the more egregious of the New York Grub Street hacks called 'critics'", he quoted from Lord Byron's satirical poem *English Bards, and Scotch Reviewers* (1809): "Believe a woman or an epitaph, / Or any other thing that's false, before / You trust in Critics, [who themselves are sore;]."[30]

Musical Studies with Charles A. Trew

In an interview recorded in 1977 for the London Weekend Television programme *Aquarius*, Sorabji recalled his studies of traditional harmony and counterpoint with a private teacher, which he had begun at the very latest in January 1913.[31] The now completely forgotten English pianist and composer Charles A. (Abraham) Trew ([2 November?] 1855; d. Fulham, London, January–March 1929)[32] taught at a small private music school called the London Organ School, founded in 1865 by Frederick Scotson Clark (1840–83), where Sorabji's mother had apparently studied the organ as a girl.[33] Trew was also

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[28]KSS to PH, 3 February [1914] {*LPH*, no. 5, p. 55}.

[29]KSS to KD, undated (after 2 September 1984) {Derus, S61, p. 321}.

[30]KSS to KD, 15 July 1977 {Derus S05, p. 29}; see also KSS to KD, 2 August 1977 {Derus S07, p. 37}, for the same quotation. "Grub Street" refers to a nineteenth-century street in London described by Samuel Johnson as "much inhabited by writers of small histories, dictionaries, and temporary poems".

[31]For the earliest known mention of Trew, see KSS to PH, 3 October 1913 {*LPH*, no. 1, p. 38}. In KSS to PH, 6 January 1914 {*LPH*, no. 4, p. 50}, Sorabji mentions having attended a lecture on Scriabin by the music writer Rosa Newmarch "last January". He must have been referring to the previous year (1913), because Newmarch, in an undated letter, invited him to her club for that purpose on "Tuesday the 21st", which appears in the calendar for 1913. Attending lectures was certainly part of the curriculum. For more on Newmarch, see later in the present chapter and chapter 3.

[32]Trew is usually referred to as "Charles A.", for example in the British Library's catalogue. For his year of birth (Marylebone, October–December 1854), see https://www.findmypast.co.uk/transcript?id=BMD%2FB%2F1854%2F4%2FTZ%2F000026%2F001; for his year of death, see https://www.findmypast.co.uk/transcript?id=BMD%2FD%2F1929%2F1%2FAZ%2F001460%2F003. The 1911 Census for England & Wales, https://www.findmypast.co.uk/transcript?id=GBC%2F1911%2FRG14%2F00293%2F0115%2F1, gives him as a music teacher residing at 45 Greyhound Road Mansion, Fulham. When asked when Trew died, Sorabji replied "I think about the 30s sometime"; KSS to KD, undated (after 2 September 1984) {Derus, S61, p. 320}. The day and month, which could not be verified, come from a post of 21 September 2012 by Giles Enders, http://www.unsungcomposers.com/forum/index.php/topic,3803.0.html, which includes a list of works of both Trew and his wife.

[33]KSS to KD, mid-September 1984 {Derus, S61, p. 320}. The London Organ School was located at 3 Princes Street (next to Hanover Square, near the Oxford Circus tube station). An advertisement published in *MT* 22, no. 445 (1 January 1881): 44, reads: "Among the numerous advantages of the London Organ School and College of Music are the following: That pupils can enter at any time. Beginners and advanced pupils receive equal attention. No entrance examination. No fees of any kind beyond the £2 2s. for instruction. Weekly rehearsals of concerted music, vocal and instrumental. Students' concerts take place at the Royal Academy. Pianoforte pupils receive instructions in organ-playing (if desired), without extra charge." For more on the London Organ School, see Judith Barger, "'Can anyone tell us where the lady organ recitalist is to be found?' The Legacy of the London Organ School" (paper read at the Music in Nineteenth-Century Britain Conference, Royal Conservatoire of Scotland, Glasgow, 8 July 2015).

associated with the London College of Music, an institution founded in 1887 with the principal aim of examining students in practical and theoretical music; it was located on Great Marlborough Street until 1992, when it became part of Thames Valley University.[34] Sorabji probably went there for lessons with Trew without officially registering as a student; he may also have been registered after all, but this could not be verified.[35] There is a single mention in his correspondence, "when I was a small thing", of studying at the Hampstead Conservatoire. This private college for music and the arts was located at 64 Eton Avenue, Swiss Cottage, London, and operated until 1928. One of its principals was the song collector Cecil Sharp (1859–1924) and a notable pupil was Arnold Bax (1883–1953).[36]

Trew was at one time the organist at St. Paul's, Rusthall, Tunbridge Wells,[37] and seems to have given annual concerts in London.[38] He published at least two books written for teaching purposes: *Harmony Lessons, Adapted for Classes, or Tuition by Correspondence* (London: Schott, 1888) and *The Elements of Music Simply Explained* (Boston: The Boston Music Co.; New York: G. Schirmer, 1913). A contemporary reviewer, while finding "a large amount of valuable information", considered the former to be of no value for educational purposes because of its question-and-answer format.[39]

The British Library has some forty works by Trew, mainly songs, piano pieces, and chamber works published between 1878 and 1911, with a few dating from the early 1920s. Examples include: *Day Dream, for the pianoforte* (1892), *La tendresse pour violoncelle et piano* (1902), *La félicité: étude pour piano* (1909), *A May-Time Roundelay: Song, Words by E. Teschemacher* (1909). His *Gondellied* (1880) was described as "elegantly written", with passages that were "graceful and by no means difficult".[40] A virtuosic but short (22 pp.) *Concertstück* for piano and orchestra (1912) shows him to be fond of octaves.

Trew's wife, Susan (*née* Codd; 1853–1934), took part as a pianist in 1884 in a performance of his Pianoforte Trio in G Minor for the Musical Artists' Society.[41] She also wrote some music, mainly works for violin and piano.[42] Charles and Susan had a son, Charles Arthur Trew (1881–1960), who was active, among other things, as assistant music master of the Chichester and Godalming Orchestral and Operatic Societies.[43]

Trew seems to have encouraged his pupil to take up composition and to have recognized his talent. In the excerpt quoted below, Sorabji refers to having composed a concerto at the age of fifteen. This makes sense if we believe Sorabji, who often gave to understand that he was born in 1900 rather than 1892. In fact, it was fifteen years later than 1900 that he began work on the *Concerto [no. 1] pour piano et grand orchestre* (177 pp.). Indeed, one must have more than a modicum of talent to complete such an extensive work in 1916, at the age of twenty-four.

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[34]Today's authorities could not confirm or deny that Trew taught there; Keith Beniston, Chief Examiner, London College of Music, to MAR, March 1997.

[35]Erik Chisholm, in "Sorabji", in *"Men and Music": Lectures Given at University of Cape Town Summer School, February 1964* (Erik Chisholm Trust, June 2014), 103–14; 106, https://www.scottishmusiccentre.com/erik-chisholm-men-and-music, wrote that a certain Sam Rutland of Cape Town remembered Sorabji as a fellow student at the London College of Music.

[36]KSS to EC, August 1930, 8 (section dated 22 August).

[37]St. Paul's Church could not find any records relating to Trew; Bob Whyte, Vicar, St. Paul's Church, Rusthall, Tunbridge Wells, to MAR, 10 November 1997.

[38]James D. Brown and Stephen E. Stratton, "Charles A. Trew", in *British Musical Biography: A Dictionary of Musical Artists, Authors and Composers Born in Britain and Its Colonies* (London: William Reeves Booksellers, 1897), 417.

[39]"Reviews", *MT* 29, no. 546 (1 August 1888): 485–89; 489.

[40]"Reviews", *MT* 21, no. 446 (1 April 1880): 187–90; 190.

[41]Unsigned review in *MT* 25, no. 496 (June 1884): 353.

[42]"Susan Trew", in *The Catalogue of Printed Music in the British Library to 1980*, vol. 57 (1987), p. 172.

[43]"Arthur Charles Trew", in *Who's Who in Music*, ed. Sir Landon Robert (London: Shaw Publishing, 1937), 279.

> Oh, let me think. When I was fifteen, my old master said to me: "Look", he said, "you ought to start composing." "Oh! I said, I've never thought of doing any such sort of thing." "Well, he said, "Look here, forget all the things I've taught you." I'd been all through that sort of ordinary routine, you see, four-part, five-part harmony, counterpoint strict and free, I've got it. Thank God, I've forgotten it *all* now, various species. So, I thought, "All right", and I started writing sort of short cadences, you know, very much *à la* Ravel, and he said, "Oh, yes, yes, you must go on." So the next thing was a concerto! I never had a lesson in orchestration in my life, and yet people say I've got a marvellous command of orchestration.[44]

Like most teachers of the time, Trew used the treatises of the well-known editor and theorist Ebenezer Prout (1835–1909), whose *Harmony: Its Theory and Practice* (1889) reached its twentieth edition in 1903. Not yet ready for free composition, Sorabji was still using his books in 1914: "I do not compose! I have not yet reached that stage. I am plowing through 'Ebenezer'."[45] Given the kind of free, improvisatory music he was to begin writing shortly afterwards, his description of his Prout's *Musical Form* as "this the once-and-for-all time archetypical Nadir of nonsense" comes as no surprise.[46]

In reviewing Sorabji's production, we have come across a very short sketch entitled "Fragment for a nonexistent poem for orchestra", which he described as a "Study in 4-part writing 'not' [underlined sixteen times] according to Ebenezer Prout". Obviously he preferred not to follow staid rules, but he was fully aware of the need to acquire a "good groundwork of orthodox technical knowledge" and to avoid the extreme path taken by the Futurists.

> This is why[,] in my humble opinion, the Futurists proper are too extreme. They want to sweep away the past and everything connected with it. They forget that but for the past modern developments could never have come to pass anymore than a plant could grow if you go and cut away its roots. In any case I think one must—however ultra modern one's sympathies are or may be—be careful not to become bigoted. The extreme bigotry of ultra-modernism, i.e. Futurism is surely just as bad as the bigoted academicism of the Corders and Bridges, n'est-ce pas?[47]

Sorabji, "with the full consent of my professor, a man who fortunately for me is of the widest sympathies and most broadminded in his views", decided in 1913 to devote himself entirely to modern music.[48] The music writer Rosa Newmarch, on learning that the pupil was familiar with Scriabin and Medtner, agreed; his professor, "if I may say so, seems to be very go-ahead". She wondered, however, whether the line had been drawn at Schoenberg.[49] Indeed, Sorabji's study of Schoenberg's Piano Pieces, op. 11, with Trew had led him to conclude that the contention that the Viennese composer's music was "humbug" would not stand up to scrutiny.[50] Master and pupil probably also attended concerts together. In 1914 they went to buy tickets for a recital by the American composer Leo Ornstein (1893–2002), but were told none were available.[51]

We do not know when Sorabji completed his studies with Trew other than that they were obviously well behind him by August 1918, when he dedicated his *Concerto pour piano et orchestra da camera [no. 3]* "to Charles A. Trew, Esq.:— / his old pupil Kaikhosru Sorabji:—". By this time he had completed eighteen works, including three concertos and a piano sonata, totalling some five hundred

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[44]Camera script, *Aquarius*, produced by Derek Bailey, presented by Peter Hall, report by Russell Harty; rec. 1 March 1977, broadcast on 11 June 1977 (London Weekend Television, P/N: 11024), 12 (edited).

[45]KSS to PH, 3 February [1914] {*LPH*, no. 5, p. 55}.

[46]Sorabji, "Organic and Inorganic Form", in *MCF*, 47–52; 47.

[47]KSS to PH, March. Early [1914] (section dated 20 March) {*LPH*, no. 8, p. 66}. The quotation ends with references to the English composers and teachers Frederick Corder (1852–1932) and Frederick Bridge (1844–1924).

[48]KSS to PH, 3 October 1913 {*LPH*, no. 1, p. 38}.

[49]Rosa Newmarch to KSS, undated (early January 1913).

[50]KSS to PH, 8 December 1913 {*LPH*, no. 3, p. 41}.

[51]KSS to PH, March. Early [1914] (section dated 28 March) {*LPH*, no. 8, p. 68}.

pages. It seems safe to say that he completed his training after the completion of his *Concerto [no. 1] pour piano et grand orchestre*, that is, after the summer of 1916.

Sorabji also developed his knowledge of music by studying scores and visiting libraries or the British Museum. In January 1920 he had seen Boris de Chroustchoff (1898–1979), a friend of Heseltine's, in the Reading Room and, in 1931, he had "betaken myself for an afternoon's work and research."[52] And in 1955 he mentioned that, many years earlier, he had been "rooting about among obscure and familiar piano concertos in the British Museum Reading Room".[53] Curiously, the Central Archives at the British Museum could not find Sorabji's name in the Index to the Reading Room Applications, and it seems that the procedure of having readers register was taken very seriously even then. There are references to the other known Sorabjis (Cornelia, Mary Francina, Irach Jehangir, and Richard), but absolutely none to Kaikhosru, although the files do contain one to his father, for a six-month reader's ticket dating from 1917. Could Sorabji have escaped the net, or used other resources? What is certain is that his musical culture was extensive and in many ways went far beyond that of most musicians. He literally devoured contemporary music and was able to express himself easily about it, so he was well equipped to embark on a musical career.

Transcription of "In a Summer Garden" by Delius

Sorabji's entry into the creative field was a piano arrangement of the orchestral rhapsody *In a Summer Garden* (1909) by Frederick Delius (1862–1934), who was to become one of his favourite composers. The two do not appear to have met, but the older composer knew of Sorabji through Philip Heseltine, who was a mutual friend. In fact, four of his letters show that, as early as 1916 he wanted to know more about Sorabji's works and their performances; he even asked his friend why he had not sent him any comments on the young composer's music.[54]

After hearing *In a Summer Garden* for the first time at Queen's Hall on 27 March 1914, Sorabji described it as "truly exquisite" despite a bad performance.[55] As no manuscript has yet been found, all we know is what he told to Heseltine in early September 1914.

> I am attempting [...] a piano arrangement of "In a Summer Garden". Have got as far as [rehearsal number] 16 where it gets so big that one pair of hands cannot cope satisfactorily with it, though I am trying to manoeuvre it so that they can. It is an exquisite work. I know a lovely garden on a hillside at Robin Hood's Bay in Yorkshire where it might have been written and every time I see that lovely garden I think, Oh! to hear "In a Summer Garden" in such surroundings! All the languorous heat and quivering intensity of such a spot on a sultry summer's afternoon are conveyed with marvellous fidelity and power in this most perfect work.[56]

Whether Sorabji ever completed his arrangement and what he did with the manuscript remains to be seen. He may have abandoned his project when he learned that Heseltine had already reduced the same work for piano four hands in 1912–13. The latter also arranged it for two hands in 1921, which may have been motivated by his friend's abandonment of the task. We are left to wonder when the two friends discussed their respective transcriptions.

In 1915 Sorabji discussed a passage from Delius's *Appalachia* (orchestral version, 1896), which Heseltine feared would not sound good on the piano. The remarkable feature of Delius' music is that

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[52]KSS to PH {*LPH*; no. 30, p. 119}; KSS to EC, 6 May 1931, 2 (section dated 7 May), 22 (section dated 14 May).

[53]Sorabji, "Letters to the Editor: '... Totidemque vaccae'?", *MT* 96, no. 1346 (April 1955): 208.

[54]Frederick Delius to PH, 11 May 1916, 24 March 1920, 1 December 1920, 26 December 1920, in Barry Smith, ed., *Frederick Delius and Peter Warlock: A Friendship Revealed* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2000), 221, 331, 349, 351.

[55]KSS to PH, March. Early [1914] (section dated 28 March) {*LPH*, no. 8, p. 68}.

[56]KSS to PH, 8 September 1914 {*LPH*, no. 11, p. 85}.

"it sounds glorious even on the monochrome piano—and let me tell you that in my opinion, that is the supreme test of orchestral music—its sounding well in a piano arrangement".[57] Someone has yet to make a piano reduction of an orchestral work by Sorabji to see if it passes this "supreme test"!

England at War, Sorabji at Home

The declaration of war outraged Sorabji. Christianity had done nothing to prevent "that curse, that horror, War"; rather it had "connived at it and *supported* it".[58] His words for Germany were biting, and his comments are worth quoting for the insight they give into the young man's views on social and political issues. His "we of India" shows how he then identified with his father's country of origin, although there was still some confusion between Parsis and Indians, which he would not resolve until some years later. He also offers here a rare balanced assessment of the English, something he would rarely do during his long life.

> One great thing will come out of it together with the "Summum Bonum" of the crushing of Germany and that will be the explosion of the ridiculous myth of German "culture". [...] From posing as one of the highest types of civilization they have now shown themselves the very basest. "Beastlier than any beast." [...] Real culture is a nation's progress towards higher morality and humanity and it gives one great satisfaction to see the English—whom they have always ridiculed and insulted as they do everybody a bit better than themselves—as far above them in these respects as the sun above a farthing rushlight. I am no blind worshipper of the English, but they have many supreme qualities that shine forth very prominently in these times, and we of India thank the Supreme that we are associated with them and ruled by them instead of ces autres under whom our condition would be too terrible to imagine. We should be treated as outcasts—for all their "education" and "culture" has not enabled them to do is the fact that we are immeasurably above them in this respect—for we have not yet attained to that level or pinnacle of civilization whereon innocent inoffensive citizens are fiendishly murdered and young girls of tender years violated and outraged under their parents' eyes!! [...] A nation that repudiates every law of humanity and righteousness *cannot* endure. Evil destroys itself: and Germany is certainly doing that as much as anybody.[59]

Although the above letter suggests that Sorabji might have wanted to contribute to the war effort in one way or another, it seems that he actually "managed to escape the war".[60] Several questions will certainly remain unanswered. Where, when, and how did Sorabji express himself in such a way as to endanger his freedom? Why was he not drafted? Did he try to register as a conscientious objector? In the late 1920s, a few years after what he later called the "first explosion for freedom and democracy in 1914",[61] Sorabji wrote that the millions of young men who went to war were driven to do so "by fear of public opinion and mass suggestion". He praised the conscientious objectors who faced "outrage, abuse and execration" and showed courage in defying social pressure, "especially where it holds over you the blackmailing threat of loss of life or bread and butter as a result of flouting it".[62] This position is very reminiscent of his independence of mind as a composer who refused to write in the accepted way.

Sorabji was twenty-three years old when the first Conscription Bill, known as the Military Service Act, was introduced in January 1916. The Act stipulated that unmarried men or widowers with no dependent children between the ages of eighteen and forty-one were deemed to have enlisted.[63] Local

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[57]KSS to PH, March 1915 {*LPH*, no. 16, p. 95}.
[58]KSS to PH, 6 January 1914 {*LPH*, no. 4, p. 47}.
[59]KSS to PH, 8 September [1914] {*LPH*, no. 11, p. 84}.
[60]L. Osterreid to KSS, [December 1920], 1.
[61]Sorabji, "Music: The Days That Were", *NEW* 18, no. 18 (20 February 1941): 209–10; 209.
[62]*FM*, no. 153 (orig. no. CCLV, p. 42).
[63]John W. Graham, *Conscription and Conscience: A History, 1916–1919* (London: George Allen and Unwin, 1922; repr., The Garland Library of War and Peace, New York and London: Garland Publishing, 1971), 52.

courts could grant absolute, conditional, or temporary exemptions on the following grounds: (1) if national interest dictated that one should continue civil work; (2) serious hardship that would result from one's financial obligations or domestic position, (3) health problems or infirmity, and (4) conscientious objection.[64] Could Sorabji have claimed that he had to look after his mother or that he was in poor health? As someone who had always devoted himself exclusively to intellectual pursuits and is not known to have done any physical activity other than yoga, he was probably not a good candidate for the strenuous life of the army. Did he actually try to be recognized as a conscientious objector? He could have been given clerical duties or required to do alternative service or "work of national importance", but there is no evidence that this happened—and no explanation why it did not. Could his mixed racial origins or his homosexuality have had any influence on any decision taken by the authorities? Did he—as happened more than once—lie about his age in order to avoid military service?

Sorabji's close friend Philip Heseltine was a conscientious objector, but was declared unfit for service.[65] Others, such as George Butterworth, Ivor Gurney, Gustav Holst, E. J. Moeran, and Ralph Vaughan Williams, all served their country in one way or another. Sorabji managed to stay at home while the country was at war. He spent his time writing music, discussing various artistic subjects with Heseltine and inundating the *Musical Standard* with open letters that helped to make him a fierce debater—for words were his weapons.

Sorabji was forty-seven years old at the beginning of World War II and would certainly have been able to perform various non-combatant duties, such as watching for incendiary bombs during air raids. The surviving documents are silent about his status during this period, including whether he was a conscientious objector like Benjamin Britten, or like Michael Tippett and his later friend Ronald Stevenson (who both served prison sentences), or whether he was exempted from service because of health problems. His correspondence with Erik Chisholm, himself a conscientious objector, contains two separate paragraphs on the subject. His friend had "the right to total exemption upon the strength of your convictions"; he was pleased that he had been quickly and easily assigned a "reserved occupation" and concluded:

> [...] but don't fear, nor be apprehensive about you or yours, for I in my own way, and what that way is I may not yet tell you, though someday I may, am working with all my might for the peace and good of the world... and there are secret Eastern methods of doing that quite different from getting up on a soap box, agitating or running a freak religion as Westerners so often do.[66]

Throughout the conflict, Sorabji continued to write regular reviews for the *New English Weekly*, and everything reads as if nothing was happening around him. He did not contribute any musical works in honour of those who gave their lives for their country or related to the conflicts, as did Elgar and Parry during the first war, and Vaughan Williams during the second. He was such an individualist that he would probably never have even toyed with the idea of putting himself at the service of society.

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[64]Denis Hayes, *Conscription Conflict: The Conflict of Ideas in the Struggle for and against Military Conscription in Britain between 1901 and 1939* (London: Sheppard Press, 1949; repr., The Garland Library of War and Peace, New York and London: Garland Publishing, 1973), 209.

[65]PH to Frederick Delius, 22 April 1916, in Smith, ed., *Frederick Delius and Peter Warlock*, 206–16; 207–13.

[66]KSS to EC, 11 September 1939; 1 October 1939. On Chisholm's activities during World War II, see John Purser, *ECSM*, 83–101, esp. 86–87.

3 / 1914 ■ Making Friends in the Heseltine Circle

Discussing Modern Music with Philip Heseltine, the First Correspondent

Sorabji's letters to Philip Heseltine throw a unique—indeed the only one—light on his early years as a composer.[1] In addition to biographical data, they document in some detail the young man's discovery of the music that was to shape his outlook. Much of his time in the years before World War I was spent attending concerts, operas, and ballets, reading books and periodicals on music, browsing through scores, attending lectures, visiting exhibitions, and writing open letters. He also made "frequent visits Sohowards for shopping for my mother and myself". On one such occasion he passed the end of Archer Street and saw a "most unsavoury gang" of thugs gathered outside what he later discovered was the Orchestral Association. His reference to being a young person might lead one to take his statement "I think my pathological dislike of MUSEECIANS en masse must date from that" with a pinch of salt.[2] Sorabji lived for music (as opposed to musicians); in the winter of 1914, for example, he had bought seats at Drury Lane for all the operas and ballets of the forthcoming Russian season.[3]

Philip Arnold Heseltine (b. London, 30 October 1894; d. London, 17 December 1930) received no formal musical training. In 1920 he met Frederick Delius, who became a lifelong friend and an important influence. Another major influence, particularly in the field of contrapuntal writing, was the Dutch-born composer Bernard van Dieren (1887–1936), who was also to become a friend of Sorabji's. Under the pseudonym Peter Warlock, Heseltine wrote several songs and a few instrumental pieces, most notably the *Capriol Suite* for string orchestra (1926). He edited much music of the sixteenth and seventeenth centuries; by the mid-1920s he had become a recognized and published authority on Elizabethan music. He also wrote music criticism, including for a journal that he himself edited, *The Sackbut*, which published a few items by the young Sorabji. Heseltine's death in 1930 is usually regarded as a suicide.[4]

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[1]Sorabji's thirty-eight extant letters to Philip Heseltine are in BL, MSS Add. 57963. For an annotated edition of significant extracts, see Kenneth Derus, "Sorabji's Letters to Heseltine", in *SCC*, 195–255. A complete annotated edition is available in Brian Inglis and Barry Smith, eds., *Kaikhosru Sorabji's Letters to Philip Heseltine (Peter Warlock)* (London: Routledge, 2019). For a detailed account of the relationships between the two friends and extracts from Heseltine's letters dealing with Sorabji, see John Mitchell, "Peter Warlock and Kaikhosru Sorabji", *The Peter Warlock Society Newsletter*, no. 92 (Spring 2013): 1–15, and idem, "Mentions of Kaikhosru Sorabji in the Letters of Philip Heseltine", *The Peter Warlock Society Newsletter*, no. 95 (Autumn 2014): 16–20.

[2]KSS to ABP, 3 December 1979. Alistair Hinton recalls that Sorabji liked to quote Delius saying, with his Yorkshire accent, "these museecians, these leetle museecians"; AH to MAR, 29 January 2021. See also KSS to CMG, 9 November 1941, 2; 28 October 1943, 1; 18 June 1955, 1; 5 August 1972. The London Orchestral Association had its offices at 13–14 Archer Street in a building that has a reclining figure in relief of Euterpe, the muse of music, by Charles Pibworth (1878–1958). This narrow back street, located one street north of Shaftesbury Avenue, was a meeting point for the West End musicians in the 1920s.

[3]KSS to PH, March. Early [1914] (section dated 20 March) {*LPH*, no. 8, p. 67}.

[4]Among several sources, see Barry Smith, "The Mystery of Philip Heseltine's Death", in *Peter Warlock: A Centenary Celebration*, ed. David Cox and John Bishop (London: Thames Publishing, 1994), 64–83.

Sorabji initiated the contact with Heseltine, another admirer of Delius, on 3 October 1913 through a letter sent care of the *Musical Times* in response to an article by Heseltine on "modern musical criticism" published in the current issue.[5] He thanked the writer for administering "some good hard blows unto the academics and the rest of the musical 'stagnaters', if I may coin a word!" We see here the earliest indication of Sorabji's musical tastes and complete independence of mind from the thinking of traditional practitioners of music.

> Although myself a musician, an ardent music lover and a diligent student of our art, I have always freely confessed my extremely keen appreciation of, and lively sympathy with the ultra-modernist phase of contemporary music. At the same time I freely assert, as you say in your article, that Beethoven and Haydn do not appeal to me one scrap much as I have tried to force myself into sympathy with them, but it is no good. Much of Beethoven's music is absolutely repellant to me. To Bach and Mozart, Schumann, Chopin and Schubert I am faithful and thoroughly appreciate and enjoy their beautiful works but it is among the ultra-moderns that I am in my musical element, there is that in their music which satisfies me completely, what it is I cannot define, but whatever it is, this something is, for me at any rate, lacking in much of the older music.[6]

Heseltine's reply confirmed to Sorabji that they had to be "astonishingly alike in temperament". Happy to have broken the ice, the latter wanted to continue the correspondence. He sensed the presence of "chords in our nature which vibrate in sympathy with the Ultra-modern spirit".[7] Heseltine mentioned to Delius the letter he had received from a "very keen musician" who hated the classics more than he did and who had introduced him to several new composers. His "most gushing and enthusiastic letters" gave him "really great fun", and their musical content proved "sometimes really interesting".[8] Indeed, the correspondence that followed was largely devoted to the music of various composers, with Sorabji suggesting valuable works to his friend. By this time he was buying scores on a regular basis. After spending twelve shillings (£61.26 in 2021) on music in a week, he realized he would have to "lay low for a while".[9] The letters contain, either as passing mentions or as part of sometimes lengthy discussions, the names of some eighty composers, chief among them Scriabin (31 occurrences), Delius and Schoenberg (27), Ravel (21), Debussy (18), Kodály (10), Richard Strauss (9), and Busoni (5). Of course, Sorabji's attitude to some of these modern composers would change over time (see chapter 20).

The music of Alexander Scriabin (1871–1915) made a deep impression on Sorabji, whose early works recall the sonorities typical of the Russian composer. He later confessed how the "alleged 'Mystic' chord" had haunted him and how this composer's "researches into the higher dissonances" stimulated him.[10] A performance of *Prométhée, le poème du feu* under Sir Henry Wood (1869–1944), given on 1 February 1913 at Queen's Hall, led him to write that "no composer living or dead has written or could write music so transcendental as this: Scriabine stands absolutely alone, but *what* an isolation! *what* an eminence!!"[11] The work fascinated him so much that he began to amuse himself by playing over in turn the parts of the two-piano arrangement, which "sound so beautiful even separately". A month or

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[5]Philip Heseltine, "Some Reflections on Modern Musical Criticism", *MT* 54, no. 848 (1 October 1913): 652–54.
[6]KSS to PH, 3 October 1913 {*LPH*, no. 1, p. 37}.
[7]KSS to PH, 30 October 1913 {*LPH*, no. 2, p. 39}.
[8]PH to Frederick Delius, 28 December 1913, in Barry Smith, ed., *Frederick Delius and Peter Warlock: A Friendship Revealed* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2000), 101–12; 110–11; PH to Delius, 28 December 1913 {quoted in *LPH*, no. 3a, p. 48}, and 11 February 1914 {quoted in *LPH*, no. 5b, p. 56}.
[9]KSS to PH, 8 September 1914 {*LPH*, no. 11, p. 87}.
[10]Sorabji, "Music", *NA* 55, no. 12 (19 July 1934): 141–42; 141.
[11]KSS to PH, 8 December 1913 {*LPH*, no. 3, p. 43}.

so later, reporting on another performance of the "glorious and ineffable Prometheus", with the composer playing the "marvellous piano part", he could not "put into words the emotions and feelings which this music arouses in one. There is only one word for it, and that is, transcendental music."[12] His extensive comments are early example of his passionate enthusiasm—as passionate as the displeasure he would later show towards other composers, especially those who placed emphasis on percussive rhythm.

The music writer Rosa Newmarch (1857–1940), an early champion of Russian composers, seems to have been instrumental in Sorabji's discovery of Scriabin. In late 1912 or early 1913, he had written to her, asking if she could translate for him the poem by Fyodor Tyutchev (1803–73) that Nicolas Medtner, in whose music he was interested, had placed at the beginning of his Sonata for Piano in E Minor, op. 25, no. 2. She not only provided the translation, but also invited him to attend a lecture she was giving on Scriabin at her club.[13]

Frederick Delius was another composer for whom Sorabji's devotion was boundless. The only works he knew in 1913 were the Piano Concerto, for which he would have given all of Beethoven's piano concertos, and *A Mass of Life*. He took every opportunity to hear Delius's music—"the most beautiful of any music produced by an Englishman, if you can really call Delius an Englishman!" He asked Heseltine to urge his friend to write more for the piano, as he could not play four-hand arrangements with anyone except his teacher, Charles A. Trew, who did not have enough time.[14] The first title in his own catalogue of works, the *Transcription of "In a Summer Garden"*, was to be an arrangement of an orchestral piece by Delius.

On 17 January 1914 Sorabji was present at what may have been Arnold Schoenberg's first London appearance as a composer-conductor, performing his Five Orchestral Pieces, op. 16. The concert had been "a wonderful and interesting, nay enthralling experience" that had left him "consumed with curiosity" to hear anything by the composer. After playing with Trew the four-hand arrangement, he commented that "the discord was so frightful that it was quite impossible to see our way through them".[15]

In late 1913 or early 1914, Sorabji "enjoyed hugely" a concert of Maurice Ravel's music in which the composer acted as accompanist. He saw in his music a "disguised and hidden" feeling, which "often comes out with a little bit of most exquisite poignant melody". He expressed his admiration for its "marvellous delicacy, subtlety, exquisite taste and finish".[16] A few months later he described the *Trois poèmes de Stéphane Mallarmé* as "exquisite", but complained that the piano part was "monstrously difficult".[17]

Key works for Sorabji were Debussy's *Pelléas et Mélisande* and Strauss's *Elektra*. The former work prompted him to write that he "at once succumbed an easy prey to this most exquisite, ravishing work", whereas the latter "carried me away as it were a whirlwind". These two works, like *Salome*, he called "the finest music dramas in existence taken as a *whole*." On the other hand, the music of the two great Hungarian composers, Bartók and Kodály, did not have such a profound effect on the young Sorabji. The music of the former "does not move me a scrap" and only "interested" him, with the same thing for the latter's, "though not to such an extent".[18]

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[12]KSS to PH, March. Early. [1914] (section dated 14 March) {*LPH*, no. 8, p. 65}.

[13]Rosa Newmarch to KSS, undated (early January 1913). On Newmarch, see Philip Ross Bullock, *Rosa Newmarch and Russian Music in Late Nineteenth and Early Twentieth-Century England* (Farnham: Ashgate [now Routledge], 2009).

[14]KSS to PH, 3 February [1914] {*LPH*, no. 5, p. 53}.

[15]KSS to PH, 3 February [1914] {*LPH*, no. 5, pp. 52, 53}.

[16]KSS to PH, 6 January 1914 {*LPH*, no. 8, p. 49}.

[17]KSS to PH, March. Early [1914] (section dated 6 April) {*LPH*, no. 8, p. 69}.

[18]KSS to PH, 3 October 1913 {*LPH*, no. 1, p. 38}; 14 April [1914] {*LPH*, no. 9, p. 71}; 3 February [1914] {*LPH*, no. 5, p. 52}.

Although Sorabji was aware of Busoni's music and suggested to Heseltine that he take an interest in it, he rarely mentioned the Italian composer's name, considering how important he was to become for his music and in his writings. His interest in Busoni became an unquenchable passion and a tireless devotion bordering on idolatry only in 1919, when he played his own *Sonata no. 1 for Piano* (1919; 42 pp.) for him (see chapter 6). Another composer to whose music Sorabji later responded very positively, but whose name hardly appears in his early correspondence, is Max Reger. He compared his music with that of Sergey Taneyev and concluded that "Reger is dry as dust!"[19]

Sorabji's discovery of piano playing in the grand style, which was to fascinate him throughout his life, probably took place in late January 1914, when he attended a performance by Sergei Rachmaninoff playing his Second Concerto. He described the Russian composer as "a glorious pianist as well as an amazingly fascinating personality".[20] A few weeks later, on 7 March, he heard Benno Moiseiwitsch (1890–1963) at Bechstein Hall playing the "remarkably fine" *Sonata teutonica*, op. 24, by John Powell (1882–1963); he found the music to be of such quality that he was not "conscious of any abnormal length" (the work lasts more than an hour).[21] This recital probably planted the seed in Sorabji's mind that would lead him to write his massive creations.

Although Sorabji's correspondence with Heseltine was mainly on musical subjects, a letter written before their first meeting is particularly interesting as a rare example of his thinking about art. He had made seven and twelve visits, respectively, to two exhibitions of post-impressionist and futurist paintings at the Grafton and the Doré Galleries, finding them "most absorbingly fascinating and interesting".

> One thing that impressed me very much about these Exhibitions was the marvellous atmosphere or I ought more properly—I suppose—to say "aura"—(for it is an occult thing that atmosphere) of intense life, vitality, or "aliveness" about the work of these men as contrasted with the dead affe[c]té flabby nerveless flaccid stuff paraded annually on the walls of the R[oyal] A[cademy], another stronghold of academicism, that won't even tolerate such a firmly established thing as "Impressionism" let alone "Post-Impressionism".

On the other hand, if Picasso's paintings were "quite incomprehensible", "the new movement in Painting is going to be as powerful and irresistible as the new movement in Music".[22]

Sorabji and Heseltine corresponded from October 1913 to March 1914 before finally meeting some time before 28 March. He wrote: "I was so delighted to meet you that Friday. I will be honest with you. I was a little bit afraid."[23] But it was not until August 1915 that Sorabji began to use informal and friendly forms of address ("Sweetest and Best", "Mon très cher ami", "Mon très aimable et très cher", etc.) and parting formulas such as "I hug you & send you much love", which let his budding homosexuality shine through. By February 1914 Heseltine found the correspondence "amusing" but feared that he would have difficulty getting rid of the "blackamore", whose letters were becoming "more queer" and "much too personal"; by this time he did not even dare to visit him.[24] Although he was certainly exposed to homosexual practices at school and at the university, there is no evidence of

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[19]KSS to PH, March. Early [1914] {*LPH*, no. 8, p. 62}.

[20]KSS to PH, 3 February [1914] {*LPH*, no. 5, p. 54}.

[21]KSS to PH, March. Early [1914] (section dated 14 March) {*LPH*, no. 8, p. 64}.

[22]KSS to PH, [late February 1914] {*LPH*, no. 6, p. 58}. For other comments on art, see the letter dated 14 April [1914] {*LPH*, no. 9, p. 72}, and KSS to EC, 3 May 1930, 4 (section dated 7 May).

[23]KSS to PH, March. Early [1914] (section dated 28 March) {*LPH*, no. 8, p. 68}.

[24]PH to Colin Taylor, 4 February 1914, in *Frederick Delius and Peter Warlock: A Friendship Revealed*, 124n14, reproduced in *LPH*, no. 5a, pp. 55–56 (with related comments in a letter of 11 February 1914 as no. 5b); cited in Mitchell, "Mentions of Kaikhosru Sorabji in the Letters of Philip Heseltine", 17.

anything more than a "theoretical interest" in the subject.[25] Sorabji was very much looking forward to meeting Heseltine, who was reading classics at Christ Church College in Oxford, "that Toriest of Tory towns"[26]. He was delighted to hear that his friend was coming to London and was dying to meet him; he hoped that he would come and see him often, for he was very lonely and had no friends at all except his mother. A few months later, however, he felt compelled to decline his invitation to stay with him. He could not "*think* of accepting an invitation to stay unless I were in a position to reciprocate the kindness, which both my mother and I hope to be able to do before long when we are settled down in a home of our own".[27] Given Sorabji's very close relationship with his mother (see chapter 18), it is worth noting in the present context that Heseltine's mother, Edith Buckley-Jones (1861–1943), was a dominant personality and that mother and son were strongly attached; the latter confided to Delius in 1913 that he had only recently let go of his mother's apron strings.[28]

Heseltine moved from Oxford to London in October 1914, settling in Cartwright Gardens, in the Bloomsbury area. He enrolled at University College to read English language and literature as well as philosophy and psychology. The two friends probably met several times, although the correspondence is not clear. Declared unfit for military service (as may have been the case with Sorabji), Heseltine soon abandoned his studies to become a music critic for the *Daily Mail* beginning in February 1915. When he considered resigning after four months, he asked Sorabji, who was also contemplating a similar career, if he would replace him. The latter initially refused, then considered that, although the paper was "the most thoroughly sordid mercenary rag that ever issued from a printing press", it would be "something as a start".[29] In the end, Sorabji dropped any idea of working for the *Daily Mail* and, in keeping with his harsh assessment, never sent them anything, not even an open letter, at least as far as we know.

Heseltine was also instrumental in getting Sorabji to write what is most probably his first article on music (as opposed to open letters or reviews), published in February 1915. Its opening sentence announced the tone of much of his writing throughout his career: "The present time seems to be a most suitable one for having a grand spring-clean of musical life and conceptions, and discarding antiquated notions, effete dogmas, fetishes and exploded superstitions."[30] Sorabji had also agreed to write articles on the French composers Louis Aubert, Charles Koechlin, and Albert Roussel, and proposed one on the Russian composer and musicologist Leonid Sabaneyev; according to the publisher, he was the "*only* person who has bought anything by him".[31] All that came out of this was a "bit of scribble" about Aubert. He described it as something that would be "greeted by your fellow conspirators with howls of derision", but in March asked for what he feared had been thrown in the bin to be returned.[32] Heseltine had probably been soliciting such articles for *The New Hat*, a magazine planned by Thomas Beecham that never saw the light of day.

Sorabji inscribed to Heseltine his *Concerto [no. 1] pour piano et grand orchestre* "en témoignage d'amitié" after completing it in mid-June 1916. The correspondence then ceased in August 1917, when the dedicatee left London for Dublin to avoid a summons to a new medical examination after a revision

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[25]Barry Smith, *Peter Warlock: The Life of Peter Heseltine* (Oxford and New York: Oxford University Press, 1994), 56.
[26]KSS to PH, 8 December 1913 {*LPH*, no. 3, p. 45}.
[27]KSS to PH, 3 February [1914] {*LPH*, no. 5, p. 54}; 28 June 1914 {*LPH*, no. 10, p. 78}.
[28]Smith, *Peter Warlock*, 5, 6, 16–17, 41; but see p. 54, where the author refers to the "hostile relations" between them at that time.
[29]KSS to PH, 12 May [1915] {*LPH*, no. 17, pp. 96, 95}; cited in Mitchell, "Peter Warlock and Kaikhosru Sorabji", 8–9.
[30]Sorabji, "Musical Lumber", *The Musical Standard* 5, no. 113 (27 February 1915): 151.
[31]KSS to PH, 11 January 1915 {*LPH*, no. 13, p. 88}.
[32]KSS to PH, 24 January 1915 {*LPH*, no. 14, p. 90}; 2 March 1915 {*LPH*, no. 15, p. 94}.

of earlier exemptions from military service.[33] The correspondence was not resumed in August 1918, when Heseltine returned to London, but only in January 1920. Heseltine may have visited the Sorabjis, for the son wrote that "My Ma asks to be remembered to you".[34]

As mentioned above, Heseltine edited a new journal called the *The Sackbut: A Musical Review* (1920–34), the content of which he intended to be provocative and controversial.[35] An example of this would be the Sorabji-Newman controversy (see chapter 5); suffice it to say here that the preliminary prospectus of the *Sackbut* stated that it was "common knowledge that the average newspaper critic of music in this country is either a shipwrecked or worn-out musician or else a journalist too incompetent for ordinary reporting".[36] The least that can be said is that Heseltine plunged headlong into controversy with such statements. The writer and poet John Rodker (1894–1955) welcomed "the asperity of [the journal's] opinions and the violence of its correspondence"; it was "trying to do for music what the *Little Review* does for literature, and boosts chiefly Bernard van Dieren, Kaikhosru Sorabji, and in passing Delius".[37]

The journal also promoted concerts. Only two of the four planned events took place, and the second, given at Mortimer Hall on 2 November 1920, featured Sorabji in the first public performance of his *Sonata no. 1 for Piano*. Before the concert, he had already contributed three articles to the *Sackbut:* one on singing, one on modern piano technique (with eight musical examples, four of them of his own music, all in Heseltine's careful calligraphy), and a reply to a letter about his article on singing.[38] The periodical also carried an article by Heseltine on Ernest Newman's reaction (or lack thereof) to Sorabji's music. Sorabji later contributed a review of two concerts by Busoni in 1921 and an article on Sir Thomas Beecham's scheme for raising funds for opera performances in 1929.

In June 1921 John Curwen—whose firm was to publish Sorabji's works from 1925 onwards—took over the *Sackbut* and appointed as editor his protégée, the young singer Ursula Greville (1894–1991), with the September 1921 issue. From then on, Robert Lorenz (1891–1945), a mutual friend of Heseltine and Sorabji, nicknamed the journal "The Backslut".[39]

Heseltine spent the years 1921–24 in Wales, and Sorabji's remaining letters to him (up to 28 July 1922) mainly with his own music, his Vienna recital of January 1922, and his meeting with Aleister Crowley, the occultist in whom his friend was interested (see chapter 7). The two men were probably still in contact in 1923, when the published edition of Sorabji's *Quintet no. 1 for Piano and Quartet of Stringed Instruments* (completed in 1920) appeared with a dedication to Heseltine. The latter reported in the *Weekly Westminster Gazette* that a first hearing or reading of Sorabji's music was "bewildering in the extreme". He found the composer "nothing short of a phenomenon in musical history", one whose

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[33]Smith, *Peter Warlock*, 119.

[34]KSS to PH, 26 January 1920 {*LPH*, no. 30, p. 120}.

[35]The history of the *Sackbut* is detailed in Smith, *Peter Warlock*, 158–86. See also Sarah Collins, "'Never Out of Date and Never Modern': Aesthetic Democracy, Radical Music Criticism, and 'The Sackbut'", *Music and Letters* 95, no. 3 (August 2014): 404–28, esp. 418–28. Sorabji is mentioned on pp. 405n3, 407, and 427n98.

[36]Quoted in Smith, *Peter Warlock: The Life of Philip Heseltine*, 160.

[37]John Rodker, "Other Books: 'The Sackbut.' London. Monthly 10s. Nos 1–5", *The Little Review: A Magazine of the Arts Making No Compromise with the Public Taste* 7, no. 3 (September-December 1920): 68.

[38]For an example dating from 1911 of Heseltine's calligraphy, see his setting of Percy Bysshe Shelley's *Music, When Soft Voices Die* in Smith, *Peter Warlock*, 298–99 (Appendix 3).

[39]Fred Tomlinson, *Warlock and van Dieren, with a van Dieren Catalogue* (London: Thames Publishing, 1978), 24.

works exhibited "a mature and individual technique and a fully developed and entirely personal style of musical expression".[40]

Curiously, in July 1924, Heseltine decided that he would have to draw the line and stop writing about Sorabji because "there really are limits".[41] The last documented contacts between the two friends are Heseltine's Christmas greetings to Sorabji in 1927 and 1929, the year in which the latter contributed an article to *MILO* [Magazine of the Imperial League of Opera], a short-lived publication edited by Heseltine at the request of Sir Thomas Beecham.[42] Sorabji enjoyed his epistolary contact with a like-minded friend, whose letters were "always a *very great* delight to me". He added: "You are a man after my own heart; and I am sure I have never come across anyone so completely sympathetic as yourself outside my mother."[43] He praised his friend's "charming style" and complained that he could only write down his ideas as they came to him, without being able to "fashion them into a presentable literary shape".[44] Sorabji seems to have destroyed Heseltine's letters to him after their correspondence ceased.[45] This is probably because Sorabji saw much less of Heseltine in the years before his death than previously, having come to despise "so many of the people who latterly gravitated around him".[46] As he mentioned to Edward Arnold Dowbiggin (1898–1970), an amateur singer who was a friend of Heseltine's, he had an "inveterate habit of destroying letters" once read, and regretted having done so in this case.[47]

After Heseltine's death in December 1930, Sorabji nevertheless described him as "one of the finest musical minds of our time, a critic and writer further of unparalleled brilliance, insight, and subtlety" and a "song writer of exquisite delicacy, jewel-like craftsmanship, and flawless rightness of instinct". He could never adequately express what he owed to "his early encouragement, sympathy and championship". In writing that Heseltine had "the recognition and appreciation of those only whose recognition and appreciation matter to an artist", he expressed one of his favourite ideas, namely, that he was interested in being appreciated only by those few who could understand his music.[48] In 1931 Sorabji declined an invitation from van Dieren to contribute to a memoir of Heseltine. Van Dieren himself or Cecil Gray would do it "so immensely better", as the request was for "something on Philip as *controversialist* and champion of neglected works, which I felt gave one little scope".[49] On 23 February 1931 Sorabji's name appeared on a list of people whose generosity had made possible a memorial concert given at Wigmore Hall.[50]

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[40]P[hilip] H[eseltine], "Music", *The Weekly Westminster Gazette*, 18 August 1923: 14–15; 14; see also his article "Sorabji, Kaikhosru", in *A Dictionary of Modern Music and Musicians*, ed. Arthur Eaglefield-Hull (London and Toronto: J. M. Dent & Sons; New York: E. P. Dutton, 1924; reprints, New York: Da Capo Press, 1971; New York: AMS Press, 1973), 469.

[41]PH to Cecil Gray, 16 July 1924 {*LPH*, no. 38a, p. 139}; cited in Mitchell, "Mentions of Kaikhosru Sorabji in the Letters of Philip Heseltine", 20.

[42]On *MILO*, see Alexandra Wilson, "Gender Studies in Opera: From Characterization to Reception", in *The Oxford Handbook of Opera*, ed. Helen M. Greenwald (New York: Oxford University Press, 2014), 774–94 (two of the four sections are entitled "The Imperial League of Opera and Its Contexts" and "*MILO* and Classical Masculinity").

[43]KSS to PH, 6 January 1914 {*LPH*, no. 4, p. 47}.

[44]KSS to PH, 14 April [1914] {*LPH*, no. 9, p. 70}.

[45]KSS to KD, undated (after 2 September 1984) {Derus, S61, p. 321}.

[46]KSS to P. J. Lamb, 30 April 1944.

[47]KSS to Arnold Dowbiggin, 28 February 1933 {*LPH*, illustration 10, p. [36]}; cited in Mitchell, "Peter Warlock and Kaikhosru Sorabji", 4.

[48]Sorabji, "Music", *NA* 48, no. 11 (15 January 1931): 128–29.

[49]KSS to EC, 23 February 1931, 2.

[50]Tomlinson, *Warlock and van Dieren*, 37.

Two Friends from the Heseltine Circle: Bernard van Dieren and Cecil Gray

Sorabji shared two friends with Philip Heseltine: Bernard van Dieren and Cecil Gray.[51] Bernard van Dieren (b. Rotterdam, 27 December 1887; d. London, 24 April 1936) was born in Holland of a half-French father and a French mother. First trained in science, he began to study music at the age of twenty. In 1909 he settled in England, where he began to write music criticism for continental newspapers. His wife, the Dutch pianist Frida Kindler (b. Rotterdam, 21 March 1879; d. London, 26 January 1964), had been a pupil of Busoni at the Weimar masterclasses of 1900 and 1901. Sorabji found it a relief to hear "a woman pianist whose playing does not reek of 'feminine charm' (ugh!) but who plays from a fine musical mind instead".[52] She was "a very fine pianist (as only the Busoni pupils can be)".[53] Sorabji seems to have been in frequent telephone contact with her in 1930 about a concert of the Active Society for the Propagation of Contemporary Music that her husband cancelled because he was not satisfied with the orchestra.[54] Another link to Busoni, the revered master, was van Dieren himself, who had known him since at least 1910.[55] His book *Down among the Dead Men and Other Essays* (1935) contains a substantial novel-like chapter on the Italian composer, with many reported conversations and insights into his creative personality; it will come as no surprise that Sorabji reviewed it.[56]

Van Dieren met Heseltine and his friend Cecil Gray in June 1916 through Jacob Epstein (1880–1959), the sculptor on whom he was to publish a book in 1920, and the first contact with Sorabji may therefore date from this period.[57] They probably did not see much of each other at this time, as the van Dierens moved to Holland at the end of the war, only to return to London in March 1921; both before and after this absence, they lived in the St. John's Wood district,[58] located within walking distance of Sorabji's flat. Shortly afterwards, Sorabji first mentioned van Dieren to Heseltine, finding him looking "almost as bad as ever".[59]

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[51]On this circle of friends, see Hywel Davies, "Bernard van Dieren, Philip Heseltine and Cecil Gray: A Significant Affiliation", *Music & Letters* 69, no. 1 (January 1988): 30–48. See also Séamas de Barra, "Chosen Causes: Writings on Music by Bernard van Dieren, Peter Warlock and Cecil Gray", in *British Musical Criticism and Intellectual Thought, 1850–1950*, ed. Jeremy Dibble and Julian Horton, Music in Britain, 1600–2000 (Woodbridge: The Boydell Press, 2018), 235–54. On van Dieren, see Alastair Chisholm, *Bernard van Dieren: An Introduction* (London: Thames Publishing, 1984); see also Robert Williams, "The Life and Works of Bernard van Dieren" (Ph.D. diss., University of Wales at Aberystwyth, 1980). On Gray, see Pauline Gray, *Cecil Gray: His Life and Notebooks* (London: Thames and Hudson, 1989).

[52]Sorabji, "Music", *NA* 44, no. 6 (6 December 1928): 68–69; 68.

[53]KSS to EC, 18 April 1930, 6 (section dated Easter Day [20 April]).

[54]See KSS to EC, 25 December 1930, and (especially) 6 and 8 January 1931. For more on this concert scheduled for 17 December 1930, see Erik Chisholm, "Bernard van Dieren", in *"Men and Music": Lectures Given at University of Cape Town Summer School, February 1964* (Erik Chisholm Trust, June 2014), 115–18, https://www.scottishmusiccentre.com/erik-chisholm-men-and-music.

[55]Leslie East, "Busoni and van Dieren", *Soundings* 5 (1975): 44–54; 45, writes 1908 without offering a source. The earliest known letter, from Busoni to van Dieren, dates from 1 December 1910 {Staatsbibliothek zu Berlin – Preußischer Kulturbesitz, Musikabteilung mit Mendelssohn-Archiv, F. Busoni B I, 523 (*olim*: Mus.ep. F. Busoni 439), http://kalliope-verbund.info/DE-611-HS-561290}.

[56]Bernard van Dieren, "Busoni" (London: Oxford University Press, Humphrey Milford, 1935; reprints, Freeport, N.Y.: Books for Libraries Press, 1967; Salem, N.H.: Ayer Co. Pubs., 1989), 20–101. Sorabji, "Music", *NEW* 8, no. 16 (30 January 1936): 314–15; see also "Music", *NEW* 8, no. 13 (13 February 1936): 352–53; 352.

[57]Smith, *Peter Warlock*, 98–99; see also Jacob Epstein, *Epstein: An Autobiography*, 2nd ed. (London: Vista Books, 1963), 116. Van Dieren's book is entitled *Epstein, Illustrated with Fifty Reproductions in Collotype of the Sculptor's Work* (London and New York: John Lane, 1920).

[58]Chisholm, *Bernard van Dieren*, 15, 26, 31.

[59]KSS to PH, 8 November 1921 {*LPH*, no. 32, p. 128}. Van Dieren was suffering from a persistent kidney ailment and had to undergo many operations.

Reviewing a concert featuring a group of songs by van Dieren in late March 1925, Sorabji wrote: "That the wonderful songs could survive the rough handling from pianist and singer speaks volumes for them." A few weeks later, after the premiere of van Dieren's String Quartet no. 4, he wrote "that this work is so incontestable a proof of his powers in this respect [technical mastery] that this alone should be sufficient to establish him in the recognition of musicians at a time when so many incompetent fumblers and stammering futilitarians are hailed as masters of musical eloquence".[60] For Sorabji, a friend could do no wrong.

On 10 December 1928 Sorabji attended a recital of chamber music by "one of the most remarkable and individual figures in the music of our time" and commented on the "amazing and strange beauty that emerges from his marvellously flexible and subtle writing".[61] Van Dieren thanked him for his "very penetrating and clear observations", adding that it was a memorable experience to find such "wit, brevity, understanding and forceful prose" in one single criticism.[62] In 1930 Sorabji called him "the most extraordinary man I know; his culture is vast, his knowledge of the most obscure bypaths monumental, withal a personality of wonderful dignity and distinction."[63]

On van Dieren's death in 1936, Sorabji wrote that "no worse loss has befallen music since the equally untimely death of Busoni some years since". He described him as "perhaps one of the most astonishingly gifted human beings who have trod the earth since the universal geniuses of the Renaissance".[64] A long 1947 essay on van Dieren contains similar flowery comments. Besides comparing his intellectual and artistic greatness to that of men like Leonardo or Michelangelo, Sorabji mentioned his encyclopedic knowledge of European languages and literature, his mastery of complex melodic structures, and the congruity of mind between Busoni and himself. He could not fail to mention that his friend had bound some of his own books himself and to praise calligraphic quality of his manuscripts, both of which were of great interest to him.[65]

Sorabji's other friend from the Heseltine circle was the composer and critic Cecil Gray (b. Edinburgh, 19 May 1895; d. Worthing, 9 September 1951). Gray had become one of Heseltine's closest friends after they met in London in 1916. He was heavily involved in editing the *Sackbut* with him and had to take care of some issues himself when his colleague was away from London. In fact, he has written a memoir of his friend containing a chapter on their joint journalistic venture.[66] An unconventional music critic, Gray preferred to go against the grain. He championed not only the music of Heseltine but also that of Bernard van Dieren; his *Survey of Contemporary Music* contains an enthusiastic chapter on him—along with one on Busoni, which could only please Sorabji.[67]

The date of Sorabji's first meeting with Gray is unknown, but a 1917 letter to the *New Age* congratulated him "on his criticism of the 'musical' critics".[68] He described his *Survey* as "the most profound and important book on music since Heseltine's 'Delius'" and the work of someone who was unequalled by any of the younger critics for "deep and wide culture, keenness and subtlety of judgment". He greeted the publication of his *History of Music* (1928) and his *Sibelius* (1932) with

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[60]Sorabji, "Music", *NA* 36, no. 23 (2 April 1925): 272–73;"Music", *NA* 36, no. 26 (23 April 1925): 308.
[61]Sorabji, "Music", *NA* 44, no. 6 (6 December 1928): 68–69; 68.
[62]Sorabji, "Bernard van Dieren", in *MCF*, 149–57; 154.
[63]KSS to EC, 18 April 1930, 5–6; see also KSS to EC, 17 June 1930, 5–6 (section dated 25 June).
[64]Sorabji, "Music: Bernard van Dieren", *NEW* 9, no. 5 (14 May 1936): 92–93.
[65]Sorabji, "Bernard van Dieren", in *MCF*, 149–57.
[66]Cecil Gray, "The Sackbut", in *Peter Warlock: A Memoir of Philip Heseltine, by Cecil Gray, with Contributions by Sir Richard Terry and Robert Nichols* (London: Jonathan Cape, 1934), 200–237.
[67]Gray, "Bernard van Dieren", in *A Survey of Contemporary Music* (London: Oxford University Press, Humphrey Milford, 1924), 221–40.
[68]Sorabji, "Mr. van Dieren and His Critics", *NA* 20, no. 23 (5 April 1917): 550.

similar comments.[69] The few items of correspondence between Sorabji and Gray deal with congratulations and thanks for the books mentioned.[70] Two later letters from Sorabji relate to Gray's opera, *The Women of Troy* (1937–40, broadcast in 1940), "without any doubt *the* outstanding work in operatic form produced in this country during the last forty or so years".[71]

In his article for *Cobbett's Cyclopedic Survey of Chamber Music*, Gray emphasized the "purely Oriental aspect" of Sorabji's music: the plastic and decorative form-giving conceptions, the absence of repetition, and the minutiae of figuration and decoration; the composer thanked him in writing for his "admirable article".[72] In his memoirs Gray wrote that Sorabji's "aversion to fame and publicity" was greater than his own, for he objected to the performance of his music "on pain of death, or worse".[73] Sorabji described the author as "rather heavy going" and "lacking in van Dieren's charm and fascination […]. But it is a fine mind even though the personality be somewhat cold."[74]

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[69]Sorabji, "Music: Cecil Gray's Book", *NA* 36, no. 8 (18 December 1924): 93; "Reviews", *NA* 43, no. 15 (9 August 1928): 179; "Cecil Gray on Sibelius", *NA* 50, no. 16 (8 February 1932): 187–88.

[70]KSS to Cecil Gray, 11 July 1928; Cecil Gray to KSS, 14 July 1928, 23 February 1932 {BL, Add. 57786}.

[71]Sorabji, "Music", *NEW* 25, no. 3 (4 May 1944): 26–27. See also KSS to Cecil Gray, 6, 15 April 1944 {BL, Add. 57786}.

[72]Gray, "Sorabji, Kaikhosru", in *Cobbett's Cyclopedic Survey of Chamber Music*, ed. Walter Wilson Cobbett and Colin Mason, 2nd ed. (London, New York, and Toronto: Oxford University Press, 1929, 1963), 2:436–37. Sorabji's thanks are mentioned in KSS to EC, 9 December 1930, 11 (section dated 18 December).

[73]Gray, *Musical Chairs; or, Between Two Stools: Being the Life and Memoirs of Cecil Gray* (London: Home & Van Thal, 1948), 291.

[74]KSS to EC, 2 December 1930, 11 (section dated 19 December); KSS to EC, August 1930, 6 (section dated 21 August).

4 / 1914–20 ■ A Zoroastrian's First Steps as a Composer

Name and Nicknames

In the fifth edition of *Baker's Biographical Dictionary of Musicians* (1958), the editor, Nicolas Slonimsky (1894–1995), after some research, wrote that Sorabji's "real name" was not Kaikhosru Shapurji Sorabji but Leon Dudley Sorabji. To set the record straight, the infuriated composer had a card printed opening with the title "To Those Whom it May Concern, If Any, and Others Who Mind Anybody's Business But Their Own". It stated three things: the dates and places of his birth found in reference works were invariably incorrect; he had been given his real name as part of a ceremony performed, in his case, later in life than in childhood; he strongly objected to the attitude taken by "certain lexicographical *canaille*, one egregious and notorious specimen particularly", who wanted to pry their noses into his private life.[1]

A name as unusual as "Kaikhosru Shapurji Sorabji" is obviously prone to spelling mistakes. Sorabji himself experienced this problem quite often; even his friend Erik Chisholm seems to have made "a pretty foul massacre" of it once.[2] A letter he sent to the *Catholic Herald* turned out to be signed "Kaikhasra Shaparji Sorabyi";[3] certainly, his very peculiar handwriting and his careless typing certainly did not help. He himself agreed that his name was "a curious one" and added: "It is either Sorabji-Shapurji or Shapurji-Sorabji but as people make such a ghastly hash of it we generally call ourselves Sorabji 'tout court'. We have been called among other things Swabby; Soggy; Soralli, Swabby, Sorbu, Soppy, Serabby; Sorabeeji, etc: etc: etc: etc: to 40 places of decimals."[4] Another form would be "Kai-Khusrau Suhrābjī", under which he appears in the British Museum's *General Catalogue of Printed Books*.

For several years Sorabji called himself "Kaikhosru Sorabji", and this is the form he used in all his published works. In the mid-1930s, more precisely from the score of the *Sonata V (Opus archimagicum)* onwards, he changed to the full form "Kaikhosru Shapurji Sorabji".[5] In his private life, however, he resorted to other forms. His friends always called him "K" for short (also spelt "Kay"), and we have seen that the characters of his supposedly biographical short story *Gianandrea and Stephen* called him "Kaiko" (see chapter 1). Sorabji, who was fond of nicknames, signed several letters written to Heseltine between 1915 and 1922 with "Gote" or "Goté". It is an unidentified friend who gave him the nickname, which is reminiscent of the word "goat"; he never explained if and how he had one or more of the

[1]The entire statement is reproduced in Alistair Hinton, "Kaikhosru Shapurji Sorabji: An Introduction", in *SCC*, 25.

[2]KSS to EC, 17 June 1930, 8–9 (section dated 28 June).

[3]Sorabji, "Soldier's Report on India", *Catholic Herald*, 19 May 1944.

[4]KSS to PH, 3 February [1914] (postscript) {*LPH*, no. 5, p. 55}. In the same letter, he complained that his name was printed as "[Dudley] Soratji" in an open letter he had published; see "Our Letter-Box: Chaikovski", *The Musical Standard* 3, no. 56 (24 January 1914): 93.

[5]Sorabji decided to adopt the full name Kaikhosru Shapurji Sorabji after his visits to India after his father's death in 1932; KSS to CSB, 6 October 1970 [*recte* 1980].

characteristics or attributes of this animal.[6] The manuscript of his piano piece *Quasi habanera* also uses it in the signature. Another of his curious nicknames is "Hircus Olens", which means "redolent goat".[7] Heseltine must have appreciated his friend's use of affectionate names, for he himself used humorous names as pseudonyms. Sorabji once used the salutation "Belovedest Prosdoscimus", and Heseltine signed his 1927 Christmas card with "Pierre le Sorcier" (his pseudonym as a composer, Warlock, actually means sorcerer or wizard).[8]

In later life, Sorabji sometimes referred to himself as "Diabolus Ipsissimus" (The Devil himself)[9]. His correspondence with Frank Holliday shows how much he enjoyed inventing imaginative names: "The Purbeck Panda", "The Pandaemonic Patriarch of Purbeck", "Corfe Drop (a play on "cough drop" and "Corfe Castle", the village where he lived), alias the Warlock of Wareham, alias the Augur of Arne, alias the Seer of Swanage, alias the Wizard of Wimborne, and all…"[10] When inscribing his *Symphony no. 0 for Piano Solo* to Alistair Hinton in 1975, he described himself as a "Crotchetty [*recte* crotchety] Cross-Patch" (ill-tempered person). Later, in letters to Anthony Burton-Page, he called himself "Catamontanus Cantankerosus" (Cantankerous catamount, that is, quarrelsome cougar or lynx), "Il gattopardo" (The leopard), and "Catamontanus Corfiensis" (Cougar of Corfe). He also used "Il Malocchio" (The Bad Eye), a reference to The Eye, the name of his house, which he once identified in the date part of a letter as "The (more or less Evil) EYE".[11] He also often invented Latin nicknames for younger acquaintances: Burton-Page was "Frater Antonius", and the musicologist Paul Rapoport became "Paul non Apostle" (a reference to the Renaissance composer Clemens non Papa). He also called his younger friends, such as Robert William Procter, his "quasi nephews"—and styled himself "quasi uncle".

Sorabji's name, at the time of his birth, was registered as "Leon Dudley Sorabji". The first of his given names, probably a reference to his maternal uncle Leon Adonis Worthy (b. Newington, 21 July 1869; d. 3 March 1942), derives from his zodiac sign (he was born on 14 August). Dudley means "from the meadow" or may have to do with "Dudda's clearing" (Old English), from a surname that was originally a place name. Sorabji's earliest letters to Philip Heseltine show a bewildering variety of forms: circumflex accents (Dudley Sorabjî Shapurjî); hyphens (Dudley Sorabji-Shapurji); Leon's initial and the use of Cyrus, the English form for Kaikhosru (C.LDS [Cyrus Leon Dudley Shapurji] Sorabjî); etc. His first extant work, the song *The Poplars*, completed on 17 May 1915, uses "K. Sorabji", and the *Concerto [no. 1] pour piano et grand orchestre*, dated 17 June 1916, uses "Kaikh*u*sru Sorabji", as he spelled his name for a time. He also created a monogram by superimposing the diagonals of "K" and "S", as in the early song *Apparition.* Sorabji never used Leon independently, but signed his letters to Heseltine with Dudley for several years; this may be how his mother called him.

The name "Kaikhosru Shapurji Sorabji" means, according to the old Parsi system of naming, "Kaikhosru the son of Shapurji of the house of Sorabji". "Kaikhosru" (or Cyrus, to use the English form) is no mean name, referring to the Persian king Cyrus II the Great (d. 529 BCE), the founder of the Achaemenid power and of the Persian Empire who conquered Babylonia in 538 BCE and put an end to the captivity of the Jews. Sorabji's first Parsi name, "Kaikhosru", is a variant of Kaikhusrau, a name found in the *Shahnamah*, the Persian epic; it was borne by the thirteenth and greatest of the Iranian kings and means "exalted monarch". His second Parsi name, "Shapurji", means "son of a king", and was

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[6]KSS to PH, 2 March 1915, 12 {*LPH*, no. 15, p. 94}.
[7]KSS to PH, 26 January 1920 {*LPH*, no. 30, p. 120}.
[8]KSS to PH, 24 June 1922 {*LPH*, no. 37, p. 137}; PH to KSS, Christmas 1927 {*LPH*, no. 38c, p. 139}.
[9]KSS to GR, 2 March 1940.
[10]KSS to FH, 15 May 1953 {1/F.15}, 1 January 1954 {1/F.16}, 31 March 1965 {2/F.6}.
[11]KSS to ABP, 31 March 1981, 19 August 1981, 4 April 1984; KSS to DG, 23 August 1972.

used by three Persian kings named Shapur who reigned in the third and fourth centuries. The second Shapur was at war with the Arabs and Rome; he also defeated Constantius in 348 and conquered Armenia. Finally, the family name Sorabji probably derives from Sohrab, which means "having glowing features, illustrious".[12]

In replies to two friends who had asked how he pronounced his name, Sorabji explained that

> the medial KH in my name only indicates a very slight aspirate after the K, so slight as to be only, as you might say, a soupçon, like the Irish "H" in "when and where".
>
> KYKHOSRU with accent of FIRST syllable; Y long, as in EYE. Shapurji: SHAPOORji with accent on FIRST. Sorabji should really also have accent on FIRST syllable but English-speaking persons seem to have an innate tendency to lean upon the SECOND, so I've usually left it at that, but it SHOULD be on the FIRST. The vowels all with CONTINENTAL or, say, ITALIAN values.[13]

Sorabji is one of the very few persons of that name who are known in the West, or of whom the great libraries of the Western world are aware. The first such name is a certain Shapurji Sorabji (not the composer's father), who published a book on the "evil social customs" of the Parsis in the 1890s.[14] Another is Kharsedji Langrana Sorabji (1823–94), the author of a book of recollections of Sorabji Kharsedji Langrana, a scholar of the religions of the East who was ordained in the Church of England in 1878.[15] The latter had several children, including two daughters. Cornelia Sorabji (1866–1954) was a writer on the social conditions in her country; she published at least nine books, including her own memoirs. Her sister Susie (1868–1931) was a well-known educationist in West India.[16] One of the grandchildren of Sorabji Kharsedji Langrana is Richard (Rustom Kharsedji) Sorabji, emeritus professor of philosophy at King's College (London), and the author of several books on Aristotle.

Joining (and Breaking from) the Parsi Community

One of the most important events in Sorabji's life as a young man was his change of name when he joined the Parsi community. We know very little about this—whether his father wanted him to do it, whether the opportunity had been offered to him many years before the fact, etc. No document making his adoption of a new name official has survived. He was furious at having "beastly English-sounding names" (presumably Leon Dudley) imposed on him and decided to be accepted into the Parsi community as soon as he grew up.[17]

Sorabji's earliest reference to the Parsi religion dates from early January 1914: "It is the same among the Parsîs of whom I have, as I have already told you, the honour to be a compatriot, on my father's side."[18] So he may have already joined as early as 1913, although it was not until early April 1914 that he began using Cyrus, the English equivalent of Kaikhosru, in correspondence; it was an

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[12]Data on Parsi names come from Avesta—Zoroastrian Archives, *Zoroastrian Names*, http://www.avesta.org/znames.htm, and Maneka Gandhi and Ozair Husain, *The Complete Book of Muslim and Parsi Names* (New Delhi: Indus, 2004), 213, 411.

[13]KSS to DG, 23 September 1967; KSS to Harold Rutland, 18 August 1975.

[14]Shapurjī Sorabjī, *The Evil Social Customs at Present Prevailing among the Parsees and the Best Means of Eradicating Them* (1890?), British Library 8409. f. 30.

[15]Kharsedji Langrana Sorabji, *"Therefore": An Impression of Sorabji Kharsedji Langrana and His Wife Franscina* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, Humphrey Milford, 1924).

[16]Cornelia Sorabji, *India Calling: The Memories of Cornelia Sorabji* (London: Nisbett, 1934); idem, *Susie Sorabji, Christian-Parsee Educationist of Western India: A Memoir by Her Sister* (London: Oxford University Press, 1932).

[17]KSS to CSB, 6 October 1970 [*recte* 1980].

[18]KSS to PH, 6 January 1914 {*LPH*, no. 4, p. 48}.

"Anglomaniac" aunt who had imposed this "beastly bastardised Roman anglicised" name on him.[19] He was twenty-one years old at the time and therefore legally able of dealing with such matters himself. Several years later, he wrote that "it was my disgust at the spectacle of Europe that made me actively seek full absorption and adoption into my ancient Parsi community as a complete Zoroastrian Parsi... I felt it as a sort of expiatory purification ceremony cleansing me from this taint, this pestilence of the mind, the spirit and intelligence that is European war-mongering."[20]

The ceremony Sorabji must have attended is called *navjote*, meaning "a new initiate who is to offer Zoroastrian prayers". It was probably performed in his home by a visiting reformist priest.[21] After the ceremony, which is similar to confirmation for Christians, the child, who is usually seven years old, is considered responsible for offering prayers and observing the customs and rites of the cult. It is possible to postpone initiation until the age of fifteen for some reasons, such as the child's inability to understand the ceremony and its meaning. After this age, a child who has not received the sacred shirt (*sudre*) and the sacred thread (*kusti*), made of seventy-two strands of lamb's wool, is deemed to be outside the fold and may fall into evil ways.[22]

Sorabji had great respect for the Parsis, but not necessarily for those who represented them. Nietzsche's *Also sprach Zarathustra* had annoyed him because he had not found in it "anything more unlike 'Zarathustra's' teaching". He went on to emphasize the cleanliness of the Parsis—probably a reference to the sacred bath (*nahan*) taken just before the time of the *navjote* ceremony—and to discuss the importance of the symbolism of fire (used in cremation).[23] Sorabji was indeed to be cremated, though not according to the Parsi ritual (see chapter 23). In later life he wrote to a friend in connection with an open letter of his that "the fools cut out of it my warning that REAL Zarathustrianism has nothing ON EARTH to do with the flatulent rodomontade drivel and drivel and bosh of Nietzsche".[24]

In 1931, after visiting an exhibition devoted to Persia at Burlington House, Sorabji felt that he could "revel as in my spiritual home in the minute and intricate decorative designs of the carpets and miniatures!… For this is the world I belong to culturally for I'm more Persian than anything else." Yet a few years later he described the Parsis (or at least some of them) as "a crowd of canting sanctimonious money-grubbers with no soul nor imagination beyond it… narrow, insular and bigoted, something like English provincial bourgeoisdom, or Scottish ditto, which I take it is just as bad eh?"[25] He had just spent several difficult months in Bombay dealing with matters relating to the death of his father, which were probably his first close contacts with the community, as opposed to reading about it or occasionally meeting some of its members. One of his "most strenuous doings" while in Bombay had been "waging a scornful and indignant campaign against those members of my community who were so base, such bottom-kissers, as to demean themselves into speaking of our PARSI community as "Indians".[26]

In 1934, on his return from Bombay, Sorabji became a member of the Incorporated Parsee Association of Europe (now the Zoroastrian Trust Funds of Europe), which had been founded in 1861

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[19]KSS to CSB, 8 November 1980. His name appears as Cyrus Leon Dudley Sorabji in the 1911 Census for England & Wales, https://www.findmypast.co.uk/transcript?id=GBC/1911/RG14/00587/0411/2.

[20]KSS to CMG, 9 November 1941. World War I officially began on 28 July 1914.

[21]This hypothesis has been suggested in Shahpur J. Captain, World Zoroastrian Organisation, to MAR, 18 May 1999.

[22]A full description of the ceremony and its meaning is given in Sir Juvanju Jamshedji Modi (1854–1933), *The Religious Ceremonies and Customs of the Parsees* (Bombay: J. B. Karani's Sons, 1937; repr., New York: Garland Publishing, 1979).

[23]KSS to PH, [late February 1914] {*LPH*, no. 6, p. 59}.

[24]KSS to ABP, 12 July 1979. The open letter was published as "Zoroastrianism", *Prediction* 45, no. 6 (June 1979): 36.

[25]KSS to EC, 22 January 1931, 2; 22 August 1933, 2.

[26]KSS to Paul Howard, 27 January 1946.

and based in London.[27] By 1944 he was on good terms with the Association, and he and his mother made through it a substantial contribution to the cause of Indian famine relief.[28] Then, in 1953, he asked the association that had elected him a life member a few years earlier to remove his name from its roster as a protest at its support of people who had misgoverned India since the departure of the British.[29]

Sorabji believed that the Parsis did not admire him as much as he expected or felt entitled to, otherwise they would have financed him.[30] Recalling his contacts with them in the early 1930s, he wrote:

> When I went to India in 1932 after my Pa's death, the Parsis whom I met enthused me on no way at all. They showed NOT THE SLIGHTEST SCRAP of interest in who or what I was, how I was regarded by people like Delius, Busoni, van Dieren, THEN the numerous notices about self and work on my press cutting book which my cousin brought to their notice. They were the usual Parsis, proud vulgarians whom I would cross the road to AVOID here.[31]

On the other hand, he always retained his admiration for the Parsis as a race, but emphasized that they were Persians, not Indians, and that their presence in India was their misfortune.[32] When the Shah of Iran, Mohammad Reza Pahlavi (1919–80), was forced into exile in January 1979, he wrote that the events in Iran "inspire me with fury and disgust. Here is a VERY GREAT MONARCH who can only be compared with Peter the Great for what he has done for Persia."[33]

Another account of Sorabji's break with the London Parsis deserves mention. In the early 1980s, the chairman of the World Zoroastrian Organisation had proposed a function for the conductor Zubin Mehta and wanted to honour Sorabji at the same time. The composer replied that he was not travelling and declined the invitation. His mother had once been insulted at a social function of the organization, which led to a break with the association and to Sorabji ceasing his visits to the Zoroastrian House.[34]

Nevertheless, Sorabji always maintained an interest in his Persian heritage, and probably derived much of his knowledge from the four-volume *Literary History of Persia* by the English orientalist Edward Granville Browne (1862–1926).[35] He found inspiration for musical works in readings of masterpieces from the literary traditions of what we now call the Middle East. The 1920s were particularly productive in this respect. Sorabji composed a short song entitled *Arabesque* on a text by an obscure Persian poet. This was followed by two evocative pieces for piano, *Le jardin parfumé—Poem for Piano Solo*, inspired by a sixteenth-century Arabic treatise on erotology by Sheikh al-Nafzāwī, and *Nocturne, "Jāmī"*, drawing from *Yūsuf u Zuleykhā*. Finally, he wrote the *Trois poèmes du "Gulistān" de Saʿdī* for baritone and piano. In the 1940s the works of the two great Persian writers who had already inspired him, Saʿdī and Jāmī, prompted him to write *"Gulistān"—Nocturne for Piano*, one of his absolute masterpieces, and the *Symphony [no. 2], "Jāmī", for Large Orchestra, Wordless Chorus, and Baritone Solo*.

Throughout his life, Sorabji maintained this pride in the heritage he received (legitimately or not) from his parents. In the late 1950s he justified his unique compositional style by asking "Why do I write as I do? Why did (and do) the artists-craftsmen of Iran, India, China, Byzantine-Arabic Sicily (in the first

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[27]KSS to FH, 15 September 1977 {3/F.8}.
[28]KSS to P. J. Lamb, 30 April 1944.
[29]KSS to Incorporated Parsee Association of Europe, 2 May 1953, 14 August 1953.
[30]KSS to FH, 12 July [1977] {3/F.8}.
[31]KSS to FH, 15 September 1977 {3/F.8}.
[32]Unpublished letter to "Saturday Night Theatre", British Broadcasting Corporation, dated 7 May 1972, on being a Parsi {3/F.3}.
[33]KSS to KD, 26 January 1979 {Derus S28, p. 127}.
[34]Shahpur J. Captain, Chairman, World Zoroastrian Organisation, to MAR, 18 May 1999.
[35]Edward G. Browne, *A Literary History of Persia*, 4 vols. (Cambridge: At the University Press, 1902–24).

and last of which are my own ancestral roots) produce the sort of elaborate highly wrought work they did? That was their way. It is also mine."[36] He obviously had the visual and decorative arts in mind when he wrote this statement, although he clearly felt a connection and wanted to know more about this heritage.

Closely related to Sorabji's steps to make his Parsi origins official is his fierce determination *not* to be called British (even though he was half-English). He explained that English law based nationality not on racial origin but on place of birth, and he disapproved of any reference to him as a "British composer", for him the "ultimate of grotesqueries".

> Here is one who, without one single drop of specifically "British" blood in his veins (a fact of which he is childishly proud, so it is understood), looking, thinking and feeling as much unlike a Briton as can well be imagined, having no sort of connection with English musical life […], having no official status at any institution, combining, as he is wont to say himself, by a quaint device every quality most perfectly calculated to make him *persona ingratissima* with any official musical circle, an open and outspoken disbeliever in all the prescribed correct dogmas of the moment, musical, ideological, and political Left or Right, and far worse than all tracing his origin to a locale very far East of the East End or any handy Ghetto […;] even this freak, this *monstrum*, has on occasion been described as a "British Composer"![37]

As early as 1916 Sorabji had written: "I *will not* be called a '*British*' composer. Heart mind body and soul I am Indian and would wish to be nothing else, although duly grateful for the soupçon of Spanish—'avec un peu d'Espagne autour'!"[38] Six years later he wrote to the *Musical Times* that "it ought not to be necessary now for me to insist on the fact that neither by race, ideals, thought, aims, or method have I anything whatever in common with anybody whatever of the modern Englishman".[39] He was particularly enraged when his beloved Delius was described as British: "By the way, the absurdity of speaking of Delius as a 'British' composer is only surpassed by referring to the N.E.W.'s wretched musical critic in those terms!"[40]

In later life, Sorabji emphasized again the primacy of race over nationality: "You see a nationality means nothing, race everything. Nationality is changed by brigands sitting round a table, by writing graffiti, that is the beginning of nations… Race is what is born in you, what I've got in me from my Sicilian ancestors, that's what matters, nothing else on this earth."[41] He also mentioned that he was "a *RACIALIST*, that is, I realise the paramount importance in one's spiritual, physical and mental-moral make-up of THE RACE in one's blood; nothing, but NOTHING else *à mon avis* matters half a hoot".[42] What infuriated him most of all was "to be called ENGLISH or British for no better reasons than that I happen to have been born in this country. Is a kitten born in a dog kennel a puppy, I ASK YOU?"[43] Applying the same line of reasoning to his Parsi origins—and not without saying that "the English were the silliest race in Europe after the Swedes"—he wrote as follows.

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[36]Sorabji, "A Personal Statement" [dated 14 October 1959], first published as "Statement by Kaikhosru Shapurji Sorabji", in *Gambit: Edinburgh University Review*, Summer 1965: 4. See the entire text at the end of chapter 13.

[37]Sorabji, "Portmanteau Words: or Those 'British' Composers", in *MCF*, 76–79.

[38]KSS to PH, 11 February 1916 {*LPH*, no. 19, p. 99}.

[39]Sorabji, "Letters to the Editor: 'The Ballad in America'", *MT* 63, no. 951 (1 May 1922): 352.

[40]Sorabji, "Music: B.B.C. Sunday afternoon Broadcast Symphony Concert (May 4th)", *NEW* 19, no. 6 (29 May 1941): 664–65; 665. The *New English Weekly* is the newspaper for which Sorabji served as a music critic between 1936 and 1945.

[41][British Broadcasting Corporation], script of an interview with Sorabji and Alistair Hinton about Francis George Scott, recorded at Corfe Castle, Dorset, 27 June 1979, no. 14767/2995, tape 6, p. 12.

[42]KSS to DG, 3 September 1968.

[43]KSS to KD, 21 August 1977 {Derus S09, p. 41}. This is a close match for a sentence in the essay "Portmanteau Words: or Those 'British' Composers" quoted above: "English law decrees that a kitten born in a kennel is a puppy, a piglet born in a stable is a horse" (p. 76).

> How long is it going to be before they get into their goddam silly heads that a Parsi IS NOT NEVER WAS AND NEVER COULD BE INDIAN ANYMORE THAN A KITTEN BORN IN A KENNEL IS A PUPPY. That those who were born within the confines of India are CITIZENS of that beastly place IS THEIR MISFORTUNE AND NOT THEIR FAULT AND WELL AND TRULY THE MOST INTELLIGENT OF THEM REALISE IT AND KNOW IT.[44]

Quarrels with Lexicographers

The variety of ways in which Sorabji referred to his origins is quite puzzling: of Iranian descent,[45] Indian, Parsi, Spanish Sicilian–Parsi. Any description was satisfactory as long as it conveyed his dislike of the English and of their institutions. Lexicographers, of course, were to have problems identifying him satisfactorily. Their problems would be compounded by the uncertainty about his place and date of birth. Tracing the changes in the headings of the Sorabji entries in the various reference works in which he has appeared between 1924 (when his name first appeared in a dictionary) and the present day is quite entertaining.

It is Sorabji himself who has misled lexicographers about biographical information, particularly his year of birth. Paul Rapoport has discussed this "grand personal defense mechanism". Sorabji, who had an interest in astrology, numerology, the occult sciences, among other things, feared that knowledge of his year of birth might give others information that could be used against him.[46] The first victim of his deliberate deception was his own friend Philip Heseltine, who was querying him in view of an article for Arthur Eaglefield-Hull's *Dictionary of Modern Music and Musicians*.[47] In addition to giving his mother a completely false Spanish background, he supplied Heseltine with a false year of birth (1895) and began to spread the legend that he had destroyed his *juvenilia* ("has discarded all works prior to 1918 including a large number of songs and 2 piano Concertos, etc.").[48] This destruction of early works is also referred to in a letter to Erik Chisholm of 1938, when the latter was preparing his brochure on Sorabji's music for Oxford University Press ("Destroyed all early work including Sonatas, Concertos, Songs").[49] It would not be surprising to find more than one instance of him trying to pass himself off as even younger. He once claimed to have been "little more than a child" in 1913, at the time of a London performance of Scriabin's *Prométhée, le poème du feu*.[50] Finally, when commenting on programme notes or a preview article for his forthcoming Glasgow concert of 1 April 1930, he implied that he had been born in 1897: "But why has the writer put *eleven* years on my age? I am not yet *34*!!! Damn it all!!!"[51]

The lexicographers who included Sorabji in their respective reference works between 1929 and 1938 (Cobbett, Schmidl, and Scholes) used the available but incorrect data. In his review of the first edition of Scholes's *Oxford Companion to Music*, Sorabji remarked that he had "had a number of years clapped on to his age".[52] Scholes wrote to the composer, who "violently disapproved of this morbid curiosity".[53] In the second edition of his book (1939), he added that Nicolas Slonimsky had received

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[44]KSS to KD, 27 November 1980 {Derus, S37, p. 183}.

[45]Sorabji, "Letters to the Editor: Indian Music: Mild Reproof", *MT* 77, no. 1126 (December 1936): 1118–19; 1118 ("They of the East, of whom I, by virtue of my Iranian parental descent, am proud to consider myself one…").

[46]Paul Rapoport, "Sorabji: A Continuation", in *SCC*, 59–66, passim.

[47]P[hilip] H[eseltine], "Sorabji, Kaikhosru", in *A Dictionary of Modern Music and Musicians*, ed. Arthur Eaglefield-Hull (London and Toronto: J. M. Dent & Sons; New York: E. P. Dutton, 1924; reprints, New York: Da Capo Press, 1971; New York: AMS Press, 1973), 469.

[48]KSS to PH, 24 June 1922 {*LPH*, no. 37, p. 137}.

[49]KSS to EC, 15 April 1948 [*recte* 1938].

[50]Sorabji, "Music", *NA* 55, no. 12 (19 July 1934): 141–42; 141.

[51]KSS to EC, 3 March 1930. In ibid., 3 May 1930, 3 (section dated 5 May), Sorabji writes: "I remember you unpleasingly emphasized the fact that I was eight years older than you!" (Chisholm was born in 1904).

[52]Sorabji, "Music: The Oxford Companion to Music", *NEW* 14, no. 11 (22 December 1938): 174–75; 174.

[53]KSS to Percy A. Scholes, 1 January 1939 {LAC, Percy A. Scholes Collection}.

"a solicited biographical note" from the composer, which began with "I was born in 1895". Slonimsky had obtained official confirmation that the name Sorabji did not appear between 1875 and 1905 in records for Chelmsford, Essex (located some 50 km from Chingford, the composer's actual place of birth), and had to conclude "Here detective activity has ended".[54] Being uncertain of the place, he limited himself to "Born in England in 1895". Even several years after the exact date had been established and published (see below), Sorabji continued to mislead his correspondents and acquaintances. When he sent the autograph of his *Pastiche on the "Minute Waltz" by Chopin* to his American admirer Donald Garvelmann in 1967 (see chapter 8), he wrote that he was "22 when I did these three (in spite of vast errors and mistakes in various works of reference regarding myself)", which would put his year of birth to 1900.[55]

Later lexicographers based their entries on Scholes, who himself used the same information in four further editions. In 1946 Scholes received a letter from the registrar of the registration district of Epping, who had searched the register for the district including Chingford and found "only" an entry for Leon Dudley Sorabji, born in Chingford in 1892, whose parents were named Shapurji and Madeline Matilda.[56] The registrar concluded that this was not was the data Scholes was looking for; the latter, not having an exact name match, continued to use 1895 in the seventh and eighth editions (1947, 1950). Slonimsky later wrote to Scholes that the place and date were "Epping, on August 14, 1892", adding that "apparently Kaikhosru was a later inspiration".[57] Scholes therefore made what he thought were appropriate corrections in the ninth edition of his *Companion* (1955), quoting in his comment a letter from Sorabji dated 22 February 1952: "The composer, it appears, resents 'stupid and impertinent inquiries from lexicographical persons' and makes it a practice 'deliberately to mislead them as to dates and places.'"[58]

Meanwhile, in 1954, Eric Blom had included Sorabji in the pages of *Grove's Dictionary of Music and Musicians*. The place and date were given correctly for the very first time as "b. Chingford, 14 Aug. 1892". The author, Terence White Gervais, described Sorabji as an "Indian" composer; this was corrected to "Parsi composer" in the supplement published seven years later, probably after an angry letter to the editor.[59] This probably prompted Sorabji to have a card printed with the following warning: "Mr Kaikhosru Shapurji Sorabji wishes it to be known that he emphatically contradicts and repudiates certain inaccurate and objectionable public references to himself as an 'Indian' composer."[60]

In 1958 Slonimsky gave the (then) most reliable description in the fifth edition of *Baker's*: "(real Christian names Leon Dudley), English composer; b. Chingford, Aug. 14, 1892. His father was a Parsi, his mother of Spanish-Sicilian extraction."[61] Twenty years later, he recalled the events leading up to his discovery, quoting in full a letter in which Sorabji explained that he used to deliberately mislead

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[54]Percy A. Scholes, "Kaikhosru Sorabji", in *The Oxford Companion to Music* (London, New York, and Toronto: Oxford University Press, 1939), 885–86, 1128.

[55]KSS to DG, 18 July 196[7].

[56]A. V. Grout, Superintendent Registrar, Registration District of Epping, to Percy A. Scholes, 28 February 1946 {LAC, Percy A. Scholes Collection}.

[57]Note, [Nicolas Slonimsky] to Percy A. Scholes, undated {LAC, Percy A. Scholes Collection}.

[58]Scholes, "Kaikhosru Shapurji Sorabji", in *The Oxford Companion to Music*, 9th ed. (London, New York, and Toronto: Oxford University Press, 1955), 975–76.

[59]Terence White Gervais, "Kaikhosru Shapurji Sorabji", in *Grove's Dictionary of Music and Musicians*, 5th ed., ed. Eric Blom (New York: St Martin's Press, 1954), 7:970–71; 10 (supplement [publ. 1961]): 416. See chapter 8 for more on Gervais.

[60]Card received by FH on 28 January 1955 {1/F.17}.

[61]"Kaikhosru Sorabji", in *Baker's Biographical Dictionary of Musicians*, 5th ed., rev. Nicolas Slonimsky (New York: Schirmer Books, 1958, repr. 1965 with a Supplement), 1539.

lexicographers, but now realized that their enquiries should simply be ignored or refused.[62] Blom had told Slonimsky that he knew exactly what Sorabji's name was, but advised him not to print it for fear that the composer would fly to America to assassinate him.

One might think that, from the publication of the fifth edition of *Baker's* onwards, all lexicographers would make a correct entry. This was not the case, and uncertainties have long persisted. Recent research by Sean Vaughn Owen makes it clear that the best wording, *pace* Sorabji, is "Kaikhosru Shapurji Sorabji (birth originally registered as Leon Dudley Sorabji; b. Chingford, Essex, 14 August 1892; d. Winfrith Newburgh, near Dorchester, Dorset, 15 October 1988), English composer, pianist, critic, and writer born as the only son of a Parsi father and an English mother."

Love of Singing and Singers

Throughout his life, Sorabji had a deep interest in the voice and began attending opera performances at an early age. As a music critic for the *New Age* and the *New English Weekly*, he reviewed hundreds of vocal concerts and opera productions, never missing an opportunity to complain about the very sorry state in which he felt the art of singing had fallen. After retiring from public life around 1936, he continued to review broadcast performances and recordings of vocal music. He was very interested in the technique of voice production and attended the lectures on singing given in the late 1920s by the French baritone Dinh Gilly (1877–1940). For him, the current technique was "a sorry reflection upon the state of mind of our teachers and professors, their impudic [i.e., shameless] self-complacency, congealed fast into the vanity of their own ignorance that they did not fill the hall to crowding point".[63] He also devoted no less than five chapters of *Around Music* to singing and singers.

Sorabji defined singing as "a stream of vocal tone, even, pure, homogeneous, free, bright, clear and steady", examples of which he could rarely hear because so many singers let this stream "drop and sag in the middle after about a couple of bars". He complained of the wobbling caused by faulty muscle pressure and felt that the ears had been so corrupted by this "universal and ubiquitous vice" that its absence was considered a fault. He loathed "that pestilent atrocity, the fresh, unspoiled young voice, as the veiled, woolly, wheezy noise is called", and protested against "the present mania among women for the figure of a half-starved and consumptive hobbledehoy" who could only produce a "poor, thin, cottony little thread of sound".[64] Another type of voice that Sorabji railed against was the "gallon-jug chest tone" he attributed to English contraltos: a tone that "for sheerly ludicrous and stupid ugliness" was almost unsurpassable. He described the tone produced by the choirboys as "such a caricature that it is almost incredible that it should be admired"; what people called the "pure sexlessness" of the boy's voice was for him "what an ear sensitive to tone would call a crowing hoot".[65]

The treatment of the voice by contemporary composers was a major point of concern for Sorabji. Apart from Bernard van Dieren and "one or two Italians who more or less follow in the widely different Puccini track", he did not see anyone with "any genuine appreciation of the capacities of or feeling for the voice". For him, Stravinsky achieved his effects "by the violence with which a great gobbet of sound

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[62]KSS to Percy A. Scholes, 22 February 1952, quoted in the preface to *Baker's Biographical Dictionary of Musicians*, 6th ed., rev. Nicolas Slonimsky (New York: Schirmer Books, 1978), x-xi. For another example of admitting to misleading lexicographers, see KSS to CMG, 16 December 1966, 1.

[63]Sorabji, "Music", *NA* 42, no. 2 (10 November 1927): 22; for reviews of Gilly's lectures, see "Music", *NA* 42, no. 4 (24 November 1927): 45; 42, no. 7 (15 December 1927): 81–82; 43, no. 3 (17 May 1928): 32; 44, no. 12 (17 January 1929): 140–41.

[64]Sorabji, "Animadversions on Singing in General, with Remarks on the Misuse of the Word 'Coloratura'", in *AM*, 38–51; 40–41.

[65]Sorabji, "The Contralto and the Gallon-jug", in *AM*, 164–66; 164, 166.

is flung, so to speak, into the aural eye of the hearer", and Schoenberg wrote for the voice "with the perverse and barbarous insensibility with which he treats the piano".[66] *Sprechgesang* was for him "as remote from good speech as it is an outrage against good singing".[67] He deplored the ignorance of most composers of vocal technique and saw the daily bread of their methods as consisting of "meaningless, contorted and vocally unnatural phrases" in which "impossible syllables and words are pitched on impossible notes".[68] In the music of some modern French composers, even in Ravel and Debussy, he saw the vocal part becoming "a mere monotonic and monotonous mumble—little muttered phrases on one note that might as well be spoken as sung". It is not surprising that, in later life, he wrote deprecatory comments on the manuscripts of most of his own early songs, for they exhibit much of what he castigated: wide leaps, unnatural phrases, monotonous passages, etc.

Sorabji identified most clearly with the music of the modern French composers: Berlioz, Fauré, Duparc, Chausson, Ravel, Debussy. What he liked in French song was "the enormously greater variety, subtlety and fineness of inflection of its melodic lines" as well as a common denominator of "rhythmic variety, freedom of movement, richness and subtlety of inflection in contour". In the 1940s he wrote unequivocally about his preference for the songs of the above composers over lieder; he could hardly stand "the click-clack symmetry, the rhythmic and melodic poverty (yes, even that!) of much of Schubert, Brahms or Schumann".[69]

As he did with some pianists, Sorabji did not restrain his use of superlatives when commenting on his favourite singers. Among British singers he particularly praised the mezzo-soprano Louise Kirkby-Lunn (1873–1930) and the tenors John McCormack (1884–1945) and Frank Mullings (1881–1953). Kirkby-Lunn's death prompted him to write that "the magnificent purity of her singing method, the superb musicianship and masterly style, her wonderful imaginative insight in interpretation, […] were incomparable and unsurpassable".[70] A 1935 concert in which McCormack sang an aria from a Handel opera gave him an example of the "grand way of singing".[71] He praised Mullings's performance of arias by Verdi, citing "the colour and subtlety of the phrasing, the dramatic intensity and passionate vehemence, which were never allowed, however, to break the framework of genuine singing".[72]

Chief among the foreign singers in Sorabji's pantheon was the French soprano Blanche Marchesi (1864–1940), the dedicatee of his song *L'irrémédiable*, who once offered him "an experience the like of which no one living is in the least likely ever to repeat".[73] He also admired the Italian coloratura Toti Dal Monte (1893–1975), "probably the most perfect of living women singers, who can give present-day audiences some inkling of what it meant to be a singer when that department of musical executant-ship was still an art".[74] He wrote to her in 1947 and received a photograph with her thanks for his enthusiastic interest written on the back.[75] A 1934 recital by Luisa Tetrazzini (1871–1940) led him to write: "And the chances that anyone now living will be able to do one quarter as brilliantly as Tetrazzini does […] is fantastically remote."[76] The French soprano Emma Calvé (1858–1942) was another of his favourite singers, and, in her obituary, he lamented that "no one during any likely

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[66]Sorabji, "Animadversions on Singing in General, with Remarks on the Misuse of the Word 'Coloratura'", in *AM*, 38–51; 39.
[67]Sorabji, "Music", *NEW* 12, no. 16 (27 January 1938): 313–14; 314.
[68]Sorabji, "The Voice in Contemporary Composition", in *Around Music*, 92–98; 93, 95–97.
[69]Sorabji, "The Great French Song Writers", in *MCF*, 158–67; 159–60.
[70]Sorabji, "Music", *NA* 46, no. 17 (27 February 1930): 201–2; 202.
[71]Sorabji, "Music", *NEW* 7, no. 9 (13 June 1935): 176.
[72]Sorabji, "Music", *NEW* 1, no. 6 (26 May 1932): 139–40; 139.
[73]Sorabji, "Blanche Marchesi", in *MCF*, 133–40; 138.
[74]Sorabji, "Music", *NEW* 8, no. 22 (12 March 1936): 433.
[75]Toti Dal Monte to KSS, 25 June 1947.
[76]Sorabji, "Music", *NA* 54, no. 23 (5 April 1934): 272.

lifetime now in view stands any chance at all of ever hearing singing like this again".[77] A rare mention of a well-known later soprano is of Joan Sutherland (1926–2010), whom he congratulated on "refusing to submit to the drill-sergeant methods of a conductor in an old Italian opera".[78]

In 1932 Sorabji wrote that "those of my *New Age* readers who in the past may […] have been either amused or infuriated by the size of that bee in my bonnet regarding contemporary singing, had a few nights since, the opportunity for discovering how justified was the size of that bee!"[79] Indeed, right from the beginning of his career as a critic, he complained that "the flood of bad singers continues with unabated volume".[80] Ten years later he described the situation as "these days of vocal degeneration, decadence and depravity".[81]

Sorabji had enough to say about the problems of Italian opera singers to devote an essay to the subject in *Around Music*; the poor quality of music making in Italy, for example, was a subject he was happy to broach. He found it difficult to speak with restraint about "the false emphasis, tasteless and vulgar exaggeration and emotional exhibitionism […] of which the Italian operatic singer is habitually and persistently guilty". He added that "everything disappears in an orgy of hysterical and noisy bellowings, beauty of tone, style phrasing, musical sense being all torn to tatters".[82] He lashed out at the tenor Beniamino Gigli (1890–1957), whose "constant and extravagant misuse of aspirates […], the repeated reliance on the half-sob […,] were both an offence to those who know that these things have no place in true singing art". The breed of Italian tenor was practically extinct, although the country still produced some outstanding baritones.[83] Among the baritones he liked were Cesare Formichi (1883–1949), Carlo Galeffi (1884–1961), and Aristide Baracchi (1885–1964), who sang at Covent Garden.

French Influences and Early Songs

From 1915 to 1919 Sorabji became increasingly interested in the music and literature of France. His education certainly included, besides Latin and German, a serious study of the French language. He was proud to be congratulated, when playing the piano part of his *Trois poèmes pour chant et piano* in Paris in 1921, "on the correctness of my observation of prosody" by Frenchmen who were astonished "that a foreigner like me should have such a complete appreciation of it".[84] However, any performer of Sorabji's songs should be aware that the prosody (as well as the word divisions) in his early songs to French texts is very faulty; the severity of the problem fortunately diminished as he gained experience. Particularly problematic is his overreliance on the Scotch snap (a stressed semiquaver followed by an unstressed dotted quaver), a rhythm inappropriate to the French language, in which a slightly longer stress is applied to the *last* syllable of a breath-group.

It was Maurice Ravel who attracted Sorabji's attention during these years. In 1916 he toyed with the idea of writing a book on him, a task for which he felt "peculiarly qualified"; "an Eastern on Ravel" would be "great fun". Even at (or because of) such a young age, Sorabji felt very confident in his abilities, adding: "I am not only thoroughly conversant with everything he has written, but I understand

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[77]Sorabji, "Music: Emma Calvé", *NEW* 20, no. 14 (29 January 1942): 131.
[78]Sorabji, unpublished letter to the *Daily Telegraph*, 27 May 1961, in correspondence with Ronald Stevenson.
[79]Sorabji, "Music", *NA* 50, no. 8 (23 June 1932): 92–93; 92.
[80]Sorabji, "Music", *NA* 34, no. 25 (17 April 1924): 296–97; 296.
[81]Sorabji, "Music", *NEW* 5, no. 15 (26 July 1934): 352–53; 352.
[82]Sorabji, "Against Italian Opera Singers, in *AM*, 201–5; 203.
[83]Sorabji, "Music", *The New English Weekly* 2, no. 25 (6 April 1933): 591–92; 592.
[84]KSS to CSB, 11 March 1980.

and enter into the spirit of this super subtle personality in a way few can or do, being a passionate admirer to boot."[85]

The years 1915 and 1916 witnessed Sorabji's first essays in original composition in the form of eight songs with piano accompaniment. Two of these are settings of English texts (one of them a translation from the Serbian), while the others use poems by the French writers Henri de Régnier, Pierre Louÿs, Paul Verlaine, Stéphane Mallarmé, and Laurent Tailhade. Two songs entitled *Vocalise*, one of which is known only from a reference in a letter, call for a wordless voice. Such an insistence on French texts is not surprising for a composer who wrote, "*I have no interest AT ALL in English song writers who bore me stiff!* [...] I do not like English songs at all. I *loathe* the sound of English when sung. Almost as bad as those blasted German lieder, my pet *aversion*."[86]

Sorabji's songs, which "require first *consummate singers*, not interpreters who can interpret... and *nothing else*!!",[87] come in two varieties. Some are based on dark, mysterious, and gloomy texts, all in a free atonal and very dissonant style; others, based on more "positive" texts, are cast in a slightly dissonant and free language of impressionistic provenance. Referring to the *Trois fêtes galantes de Verlaine* and the *Trois poèmes pour chant et piano*, the two sets of songs to French texts published in the early 1920s, Stephen Banfield noted that they were "impressive, combining a most delicate impressionistic sensibility closely derived from Debussy with a telling complexity of rhythm and timbre".[88] Despite his love and knowledge of the voice and of singing, Sorabji was not really gifted in song composition, especially in his formative years. Many of these works sound quite experimental and represent the least impressive segment of his output. He often taxes the singer with an extensive use of the upper register, this with very loud dynamics against an expansive piano part. A note in the manuscript of his first attempt, *The Poplars*, explains that he was aiming for a "melodeclamation", of which there is too much to make for really compelling music. In later life Sorabji became dissatisfied with these youthful essays and, when Alistair Hinton insisted on microfilming his early manuscripts in 1978, he scribbled various negative comments—"Rubbish", "Muck", "Bunk", "Trash", "Tosh"—in large characters on six of them. He did the same with a later song, *L'irrémédiable*, marked "A Load of Rubbish".

The following sections provide brief notes on each of the songs written up to 1920, when Sorabji put aside song composition until 1926. My critical editions of several of these songs offer more detailed commentary, with full sources. All texts are reproduced in Appendix 1 of *Sorabji: A Critical Celebration* (pp. 460–79), after Rapoport's insightful discussion of the composer's choice of texts.

The Poplars

Sorabji's first song, *The Poplars* (1915; 3 pp.), was completed on 17 May 1915. It uses an English translation of a poem, originally entitled *Jablanovi*, by the Serbian poet Jovan Dučić (1871–1943). Dučić, who became a diplomat in Rome, Athens, Madrid, Geneva, and Cairo, emigrated to the United States after World War II, where he died. As a writer, he was influenced by the French Symbolist and Parnassian poets and is said to have acquired "a polished if cold perfection"; he had formed a literary circle in Serbia with nationalistic aims.[89]

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[85] KSS to PH, 23 February 1916 {*LPH*, no. 20, p. 100}.

[86] KSS to KD, 28 January 1986 {Derus, S72, p. 382}. The word "stiff" is double underlined. The omitted words are illegible.

[87] KSS to EC, 17 June 1930, 12 (section dated 25 June).

[88] Stephen Banfield, *Sensibility and English Song: Critical Studies of the Early 20th Century* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1985), 2: 340–41.

[89] *Lexikon der Weltliteratur: Biographisch-bibliographisches Handwörterbuch nach Autoren und anonymen Werken*, ed. Gero von Wilpert (Stuttgart: Alfred Körner Verlag, 1963), 360 (s.v. "Dučić, Jovan"); *Cassell's Encyclopedia of World Literature*, ed. John Buchanan-Brown and S. H. Steinberg, rev. ed. in 3 vols. (London: Cassell, 1973), 2:412 (s.v. "Dučić, Jovan").

The English translation of *The Poplars* was the work of Paul Selver (1888–1970), a prolific translator of Czech and other East European literature, who was close to Alfred Orage and the New Age circle.[90] Since Selver's translation did not appear until in a 1919 anthology,[91] Sorabji obviously had access to it in 1915. By the time he completed his setting, he had already published two open letters in the *New Age*, of which he was to become the music critic in 1924. The poem may have first appeared in the pages of this newspaper, or Sorabji may have known Selver, "that marvellous brilliant linguist, poet and translator", and obtained a copy from him.[92]

The poem describes a dark night in which the poplars rustle eerily alone, with leaden and grey visions "gloomily plunged in silence", the narrator trembling like the last mortal, afraid of his own shadow. Sorabji recreated the gloomy poem using dissonant sonorities in the low register of the keyboard; the tritone is probably the most commonly used interval. The piece sounds like Scriabin at his darkest with, as its opening sonority, the D♭–F♭–A♭♭–B♭♭–C chord used prominently in the latter's Sonata for Piano no. 7, op. 64 (1911) **(example 4.1)**. The climax ("I am in fear of myself") is accompanied by a long upward chromatic scale covering the keyboard in blind octaves. The song ends with three sonorities featuring the tritone in the low register. A note in the second manuscript describes the "angular and nonmelodic" style that "the executant must make no attempt at softening the outlines thereof in the interests of vocalization"; Sorabji called this "melodeclamation".

Chrysilla

The text of the second song, *Chrysilla* (1915; 4 pp.), is taken from the works of Henri de Régnier (1864–1936), one of the most sensitive and gifted among the lesser Symbolist poets. The manuscript, completed on 21 May 1915, is a setting of a sonnet taken from *Les médailles d'argile* (1900). This collection of poems marked a return to classical prosody for the author. The name Chrysilla appears in the Socratic dialogue on household management (*Oeconomicus*) by the Greek writer Xenophon (ca. 430–ca. 355 BCE). The wife of Ischomachus, Chrysilla seduces her son-in-law, drives out her daughter, and gives birth to a child by her son-in-law Callias. In the poem, the narrator begs the goddess, presumably Chrysilla, not to cut short his long life without regret. Rather, he asks that his youth appear to him before his death, silent, naked, and beautiful.

Sorabji's melodic lines are much less angular than in the previous song, although the upper segment of the register is used quite extensively. The piano part is the earliest example of the kind of advanced impressionistic style, neither tonal nor truly atonal and based on the free use of standard chords with added notes that Sorabji was to use in so many works **(example 4.2)**.

Roses du soir

For his third song, *Roses du soir* (1915; 4 pp.), Sorabji drew on *Les chansons de Bilitis* (1894), a collection of delicate poems by the French poet Pierre Louÿs (1870–1925), who wanted to recreate the sensual atmosphere of ancient Greece. In this collection, a Greek woman poet, a contemporary of Sappho, celebrates her passion for the young Mnasidika. The poem Sorabji used is from the first part of the collection, entitled "Bucoliques en Pamphylie". Curiously, he misread the poem's title, *Roses dans la nuit*, and substituted *Roses du soir*. In this prose text, a woman tells of a place—a bush of mysterious roses—known only to her lover and herself, and she wonders how, when she was alone, she was not

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[90] Selver wrote *Orage and the New Age Circle: Reminiscences and Reflections* (London: Allen & Unwin, 1959). For an obituary, see "Mr Paul Selver, Translator and Man of Letters", *The Times*, 16 April 1970, 12.

[91] Paul Selver, *An Anthology of Modern Slavonic Literature in Prose and Verse* (London: Kegan Paul, Trench, Trubner; New York: E. P. Dutton, 1919), 287.

[92] KSS to EC, 3 May 1930, 10 (section dated 10 May).

enraptured by its divine fragrance. Like the previous song, *Roses du soir*, completed on 8 July 1915, is cast in Sorabji's delicate impressionistic style, with many flowing arpeggios **(example 4.3)**, either by themselves or as support for chords whose upper note carries the melodic line.

L'heure exquise

For his fourth song, *L'heure exquise* (1916; 2 pp.), Sorabji chose his text from the works of Paul Verlaine (1846–96), to whom he would return several times. This poem from *La bonne chanson* (1870), also known by its first line ("La lune blanche"), is the writer's most frequently set poem, having been used by Gabriel Fauré and some 130 other composers.[93] It takes its title from the last stanza ("C'est l'heure exquise"). The narrator invites his beloved to dream as calm sets in under a white moon and the outline of a black willow is reflected in the pond.

Sorabji's manuscript, completed on 10 February 1916, begins and ends with much the same ascending arpeggio rooted on the dominant chord starting on C♯, as if to suggest that the exquisite hour is to remain in a state of suspension **(example 4.4)**. The voice part, accompanied by a very transparent and impressionistic piano part, alternates between series of repeated notes and ascending gestures. This is certainly Sorabji's easiest piece, accessible even to beginners.

Vocalise pour soprano fioriturata

Sorabji's fifth song, the *Vocalise pour soprano fioriturata* (1916; 3 pp.), is set for wordless voice, a procedure also used in the presumably lost *Vocalise no. 2* and in the later *Movement for Voice and Piano*. Citing examples by Ravel, Medtner, and Rachmaninoff, he wrote in 1932 that "a comparatively recent phenomenon is the wordless song or vocalise, which is susceptible of interesting and fruitful development". The "very dainty little" *Vocalise en forme de habanera* (1907) by Ravel, a composer in whom he was very interested early in his compositional career, could well have been his inspiration for this essay.[94]

Vocalise pour soprano fioriturata was completed on 23 March 1916. On this date, immediately after his meeting with Philip Heseltine, Sorabji wrote to him (in French) that he had composed a vocalise for coloratura soprano, a voice he felt was being neglected by contemporary composers. The letter ends with a request that he dedicate one of his songs to him, something he very much wanted. Sorabji chose something much more substantial, his *Concerto [no. 1] pour piano et grand orchestre*.[95]

The *Vocalise*, which is to be performed "in a fantastic and quasi Oriental style", has long, highly ornamented passages in the high register requiring considerable agility **(example 4.5)**. These passages contain up to twenty-six notes in a breath, and there is a treacherous angular staccato motive consisting of very wide leaps spanning almost two octaves. Towards the end, Sorabji writes a measured trill in hemidemisemiquavers (A♯–B♯); the high B♯ is the note on which the song ends.

The nineteen-year-old Debussy anticipated Sorabji's Vocalise as early as 1881 in his *Rondel chinois*, a song dedicated to his first love, Marie-Blanche Vasnier, then a married woman of thirty-two. In his dedication he described her as "la seule qui peut chanter et faire oublier tout ce que cette musique a d'inchantable et de chinois" (the only one who can sing this music and make you to forget all that is unsingable and Chinese in it). The music, unpublished at the time and therefore unknown to Sorabji,

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[93]See Anne-Marie Riessauw, *Catalogue des œuvres vocales écrites par des compositeurs européens sur des poèmes de Verlaine*, Publikaties van het Seminarie voor Musicologie (Gent: Rijksuniversiteit, 1980).

[94]Sorabji, "The Voice in Contemporary Composition", in *AM*, 92–98; 97–98.

[95]KSS to PH, 23 March 1916, 2 {*LPH*, no. 22, p. 102}; 31 May 1916 {*LHP*, no. 25, p. 105}.

is full of capricious motives in demisemiquavers; it also contains difficult passages in a high register, for which the text underlay is interrupted (bars 27–30), and high trills on G♯ and A (bars 31–32, 40).[96]

Apparition

The manuscript of Sorabji's sixth song, *Apparition* (1916; 5 pp.), was completed on 26 September 1916. It uses a poem by Stéphane Mallarmé (1842–98) written in 1862 and first published in 1883. The text, which Debussy had already set in 1884, was inspired by the poet's memories of a romance with Marie Gerhard.[97] It describes the day on which she gave him a first kiss and appeared to him like the fairy of his nights as a spoiled child. *Apparition* is remarkably imaginative in its melodic gestures. It is also very light in texture, with the piano using the lower part of the keyboard quite moderately. The vocal par, on the other hand, relies heavily on the "melodeclamation" used in *The Poplars* **(example 4.6)**.

Hymne à Aphrodite

Sorabji's seventh song, *Hymne à Aphrodite* (1916; 5 pp.), was completed on 15 October 1916. The text by Laurent Tailhade (1854–1919) is taken from *Le jardin des rêves* (1880). The poet asks the goddess of love to protect him from boredom, old age, and ugliness, and to let him die of love like Ovid and Sappho. Although harmonically very similar to the previous songs on texts with a positive content, *Hymne à Aphrodite* calls for a much more expansive pianistic language, with several passages consisting of chains of chords in both hands. The last stanza in particular is a long and powerful chordal crescendo, ending with quick chordal tremolos, ending ***fff***, with the voice reaching the high C. Sorabji is again too liberal with repeated notes, especially at climactic points in the upper register **(example 4.7)**.

L'étang

Sorabji turned to the French poet Maurice Rollinat (1846–1903) for his eighth song, *L'étang* (1917; 2 pp.). The sonnet comes from a group entitled "Les spectres", itself a part of *Les névroses* (1882 or 1883). Rollinat was attracted by the satanic and gruesome aspects of Baudelaire's works, and *Les névroses* draws its inspiration from the morbid. The poem describes a dark pond where one hears the terrible sounds of toads as the moon rises, similar to a death's head looking at itself in a dark mirror.

Sorabji's setting, which was completed on 25 April 1917, includes the phrase "shrouded in an atmosphere of intangible horror". Like *The Poplars*, it makes intensive use of the low register of the keyboard. The dark and brooding atonal language calls for chains of tritones in one hand pitted against chains of major sevenths in the other. The piano part uses the lowest B octave as a pedal point throughout, reflecting the stagnant water of the pond. Again, Sorabji calls for high notes at the frenetic climax, supported by an expansive chordal piano accompaniment with powerful sonorities in the lowest register. The vocal style, with its many repeated notes, is once again a "melodeclamation" **(example 4.8)**.

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[96]The music can be found in "Appendix II: Score of *Rondel chinois*", in Mark DeVoto, *Debussy and the Veil of Tonality: Essays on His Music*, Dimension and Diversity, no. 4 (Hillsdale, NY: Pendragon Press, 2004), 205–8.

[97]Stéphane Mallarmé, *Œuvres complètes: Poésies*, ed. Carl Paul Barbier and Charles Gordon Millan (Paris: Flammarion, 1983), 290.

I Was Not Sorrowful—Poem for Voice and Piano [Spleen]

After six songs to French texts, Sorabji turned to the decadent British poet Ernest Christopher Dowson (1867–1900), a prominent member of the Aesthetic movement, for *I Was Not Sorrowful—Poem for Voice and Piano [Spleen]* (between 1917 and 1919; 3 pp.). The poem, whose actual title is *Spleen*, had already been set by John Ireland in 1913 as part of *Marigold: Impression for Voice and Piano* (publ. 1916). Sorabji attended a performance of it in 1925 by one of his favourite singers, Blanche Marchesi, and spoke of its "poignant weary bitterness".[98] The text is from a group entitled *Verses*, dating from 1896. The narrator, looking at the river and the rain, says that he was not sorrowful, but only tired of everything he has ever wanted. Thinking of his beloved, he says that everything has become a shadow of a shadow and that he was left sorrowful and inclined to weep. Sorabji calls for a dramatic soprano or tenor in this ninth song, marked "With gloomy introspection. Morbid, wearily". The piano part relies heavily on series of chords with a melodic line as the upper note, used bitonally **(example 4.9)**.

Le mauvais jardinier

Sorabji's tenth song, *Le mauvais jardinier* (1919; 1 p.), has come down to us in an incomplete form limited to seven bars, that is, up to the penultimate word of the fifth verse. It uses a sonnet by the Belgian Parnassian poet Iwan Gilkin (1858–1924), one of the first members of the group Jeune Belgique, along with Émile Verhaeren, Albert Giraud, and Georges Rodenbach. Gilkin is said to have written a somewhat hermetic poetry, searching for unusual words that earned him the admiration of connoisseurs.[99] *Le mauvais jardinier* is taken from a collection entitled *La nuit* (1897). The narrator says that bizarre florists sow heinous and harmful plants that have made pale queens languish because they loved their beauty. He concludes that, like perverse gardeners, he watches his worms' poisons bloom. Sorabji's love of the tritone in the low register is again very evident, and repeated notes in the voice part dominate much of the fragment **(example 4.10)**.

Trois fêtes galantes de Verlaine

Some five years writtring *L'heure exquise*, based on Verlaine's well-known text, Sorabji turned to the same poet again for his *Trois fêtes galantes de Verlaine* (ca. 1919; 11 pp.). It is impossible to give an exact date of composition, as the manuscript disappeared some time after its publication. The set uses three successive poems (nos. 4–6) from the *Fêtes galantes*. "L'allée" describes a frail blond woman preciously walking along an alley under the darkened foliage. "À la promenade" tells of a casual stroll under a pale sky and spindly trees; teasing lovers talk, the man exchanging a slap for a kiss on the little finger. In "Dans la grotte" a man says that love has pierced his heart and that he does not need a sword to go down to Elysium.

The set is dedicated "alla mamma mia", and is the first of Sorabji's songs to bear a dedication. It was published by J. Curwen at the beginning of January 1924 (or probably even at the end of 1923, but with a later copyright date); for some reason, it appeared three years after the *Trois poèmes pour chant et piano*. The composer was rather critical of it in 1953: "very French in manner" and "fair specimens, if not very interesting ones, of their period".[100]

The mostly light, carefree, and sensual tone of the texts led Sorabji to use his freely dissonant yet subdued French-influenced impressionistic style, which resulted in delicate and mellifluous settings.

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[98] Sorabji, "Music", *NA* 36, no. 13 (22 January 1925): 150.

[99] "Iwan Gilkin", in *Iwan Gilkin*, Anthologie des écrivains belges de langue française (Brussels, Paris, and London: Association des écrivains belges, 1914), 8.

[100] *FFN*, 3.

The harmonic style is nevertheless much more adventurous than what contemporary French song composers would have done **(example 4.11)**. Sorabji was right to publish them, just as much as he may have been right to withhold his earlier essays as experiments.

Trois poèmes pour chant et piano

Around the same time as the *Trois fêtes galantes de Verlaine*, Sorabji grouped under the title *Trois poèmes pour chant et piano* (1918, 1919; 9 pp.) one poem by Charles Baudelaire (1821–67) and two by Verlaine. The Baudelaire sonnet is the famous "Correspondances" from *Les fleurs du mal* (1857, 1861). The poet draws analogies between the real world and an invisible, hidden, one; between perfumes and senses (touch, hearing, sight); and between sensations and moral concepts (corruption, triumph). The first Verlaine poem is "Crépuscule du soir mystique", from the *Poèmes saturniens* (1866). It it a sensual, sultry description of the poet's senses, soul, and mind, drowned in the sickly scent of heavy and warm perfumes. The other text is "Pantomime", from the *Fêtes galantes* (1869), set by Debussy in 1882; it consists of brief snapshots of characters from the *commedia dell'arte*, Pierrot, Cassandre, Arlequin, and Columbine.

The manuscript of "Pantomime", dated 2 November 1919, is the only one extant; it was "dashed off in an hour while waiting for two pages of the Quintet [no. 1] to dry!" The comments Sorabji made in 1953 about the previous set, quoted above, apply equally to this one.

The edition issued in 1921 by London and Continental Music Publishing gives years of composition on each initial page (1918, 1918, and 1919). The music was engraved in Vienna by Waldheim-Eberle at an initial cost of 21,000 crowns, for which Sorabji had to pay a further 51,000 crowns due to currency fluctuations; fortunately this was only £2 (£116.20 in 2021).[101] The piano parts are much easier than those of the previous set. The third song in particular is among Sorabji's easiest pieces; it recalls the lighter sections of the contemporary *Fantaisie espagnole*.[102]

The *Trois poèmes pour chant et piano* received their first performance on 2 June 1921 at the Société des Agriculteurs de France in Paris (8, rue d'Athènes) as part of a concert of the Société Musicale Indépendante (S.M.I.).[103] Sorabji had received the invitation through the composer Florent Schmitt, and Albert Roussel seems to have attended (but not Ravel).[104] The concert featured the French soprano Marthe Martine (*née* Boutte; b. Sedan, 4 March 1891; d. Paris, 29 April 1948), the dedicatee of the songs, with the composer at the piano. The wife of the composer Henri Cliquet-Pleyel (1894–1963), she specialized in the performance of works by the modern composers and was said to have a well-placed and attractive voice as well as an excellent musicality.[105] Sorabji was "very happy indeed" with her performance.[106]

The composer Darius Milhaud (1892–1974) wrote that the pieces owed much to Martine's flawless performance, in which she dashed off the great difficulties of the music. On the other hand, he did not

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[101]KSS to PH, 2 January 1922 {*LPH*, no. 33, p. 131}.

[102]An analysis of *Trois poèmes pour chant et piano* can be found in Brian Andrew Inglis, "The Life and Music of Kaikhosru Shapurji Sorabji" (M.A. thesis, London, City University, 1993), 34–41, 105–17.

[103]Works by Berg, Stravinsky, Honegger, Vermeulen, Szymanowski, and Alfano were also on the programme.

[104]Interview with Alistair Hinton, in *OB*, 304. That Sorabji's presence was "at the instance of Florent Schmitt" is confirmed in KSS to RS, 15 May 1960.

[105]Jean Messager, "La musique: À la Salle Comœdia—Mme Marthe Martine, cantatrice; M. Cliquet-Pleyel, pianiste et compositeur", *Comœdia*, 23 June 1926.

[106]KSS to KD, undated (after 2 September 1984) {Derus, S61, p. 321}.

understand the complexity of detail of the piano part, which was overloaded with details.[107] The musicologist André Schaeffner (1895–1980), writing in *Le Ménestrel*, complained that Sorabji's songs were too heavily dependent on the music of Debussy.[108] The music writer Roland-Manuel (1891–1966) clearly saw the French outlook of the young Sorabji, whom he described as a "hindoo" only in name and person, because his music spoke "the purest French with disconcerting ease".[109] This review must have gone down like velvet to Sorabji.

Of Sorabji's two published groups of songs, only the *Trois poèmes pour chant et piano* received reviews in the musical press. The anonymous reviewer for *Musical Opinion* was baffled by the pieces. He described all of them as "entirely incoherent and meaningless in its way".[110] For a certain "L.L.", writing in the *Musical Times*, two of the songs had an overwrought piano accompaniment, although he agreed that *Pantomime* was appropriately set (**example 4.12**).[111] The Polish-born French composer Alexandre Tansman (1897–1986) noted that one would find no Oriental influences in the music of Sorabji, who had assimilated the modern conquests of the musical language without retaining the exoticism of the Far East.[112] A final comment, based on the printed edition, came from Sorabji's friend Christopher à Becket Williams: "They are fiendishly difficult both to play and sing, and […] caused even Darius Milhaud to gape in astonishment when performed in Paris. The much-abused word 'atmosphere' must be used in connection with these most interesting songs."[113]

Sorabji's visit to Paris was probably the occasion for a meeting with Jan Śliwiński (1884–1950), who was to become the owner of a bookshop and gallery called "Au Sacre du Printemps".[114] In 1924, the dealer asked for copies of his works to add to his stock and for press material in order to arrange a concert of his music. Sorabji's reply is unknown, and no hearing of his music seems to have taken place in Paris until 1988, when Geoffrey Douglas Madge played *Opus clavicembalisticum*.

Arabesque

The last song to be discussed in this chapter, *Arabesque* (1920; 2 pp.), sets to music an aphoristic text by a Persian poet called Šamsu'd-Dīn Ibrāhīm Mīrzā, whose actual identity remains a complete mystery despite years of research. The name "Šamsu'd-Dīn" means "sun of religion", while "Mīrzā" is an Indo-Persian title of respect[115] identifying the person as a prince. One wonders where Sorabji could have found a French translation of a Persian poem in 1920. Did he see it quoted in a French scholarly book,

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[107] Darius Milhaud, "S.M.I., 2 juin.—Concert de musique étrangère", *Courrier musical* 23, no. 12 (15 June 1921): 62. Milhaud's review is the only source that specifically mentions Sorabji as an accompanist ("accompagnée par l'auteur qui venait d'arriver de Calcutta"). The singer, as announced in "Jeudi 2 juin", *Le Guide du concert: hebdomadaire musical illustré* 7, no. 34 (28 May 1921), 509, was to be accompanied by Juliette Lampre. Should we conclude that she was indeed scheduled to play but that the composer took over at the last minute, or that there was a mistake in the announcement? Sorabji was obviously not coming from Calcutta; indeed, his first visit to India was in 1932. He later confirmed that this was nonsense; KSS to KD, undated (postmarked 20 December 1984) {Derus, S65, p. 340}.

[108] A[ndré] S[chaeffner], "Les grands concerts: S.M.I.", *Le Ménestrel* 83, no. 23 (10 June 1921): 244.

[109] R[oland]-M[anuel], "Une séance de musique étrangère à la S.M.I.", *La Revue musicale* 2, no. 10 (1 August 1921): 164.

[110] "Reviews of Music: London & Continental Music Publishing Co.", *MO* 45, no. 539 (August 1922): 942–43; 943. The review also discussed *In the Hothouse* and *Toccata*, which likewise were beyond the critic's understanding.

[111] L. L., "New Music: Songs", *MT* 63, no. 957 (1 November 1922): 782.

[112] A[lexandre] T[ansman], "L'Édition musicale", *La Revue musicale* 4, no. 1 (1 November 1922): 92.

[113] Christopher à Becket Williams, "The Music of Kaikhosru Sorabji", *The Sackbut* 4 (June 1924): 315–19; 317.

[114] Jan Śliwiński to KSS, 3 June 1924. Śliwiński, whose real name was Hans Effenberger, translated into German the texts by Rabindranath Tagore set by Karol Szymanowski in his *Four Songs from Tagore's "The Garden"*, op. 41, and by Alexander Zemlinsky in the *Lyric Symphony*, op. 18. His gallery was the venue for an important exhibition, held in 1927, by the Hungarian-born photographer André Kertész (1894–1985). The whereabouts of Sorabji's letter of 3 March 1924 are unknown.

[115] *The Concise Encyclopedia of Islam*, ed. Cyril Glassé (San Francisco: Harper, 1991), 271 (s.v. "Mirzā").

or reproduced as a filler in a literary journal? Could he be the author himself, using a Persian pseudonym?

On 12 December 1920 Sorabji completed the manuscript of this song, once the property of his friend Clinton Gray-Fisk before being acquired by a private collector in the late 1970s. It is dedicated "À mon ami Rex qui ne se complait [*recte* complaît] point à [*recte* dans] ces choses-ci!"[116] Rex is Richard Henry Brittain, an English freelance journalist who owned a small advertising business in London (see chapter 8, in connection with the *Prelude, Interlude, and Fugue for Piano*).

Arabesque, which lasts just under two minutes, is an early example of the many aphoristic works that Sorabji was to write in later years. The song, which should be performed "with a precious and exquisite delicacy", features a very sparse piano part with the kind of sensual and capricious chromatic lines that Sorabji was to use so brilliantly in his piano works of the nocturne type **(example 4.13)**.

[116]"To my friend Rex, who does not revel in such things."

5 / 1915–18 ■ Putting a Sharp Pen to Work

Taking Up Residence at Clarence Gate Gardens

It took some time before Sorabji and his mother, with no father around, found what would be a permanent place to live. At an unknown date they left their original dwelling on Buxton Road, Chingford (or a later, undocumented, address), for Wigmore Street, near Bechstein Hall, a most convenient location for amateurs of music. They eventually moved to the Marylebone area, first to Osbourne Mansions, 9 Northumberland Street (now Luxborough Street), in 1901, then to 4 Hill Road in 1911.[1] In October 1913 they lodged at 25a High Street, St. John's Wood, in a mansion block of six-storey red brick and grey stone terraced houses called Hanover House, located between Barrow Hill (continuation of Wellington Place) and Greenberry Street. They lived until 1914 in this area once inhabited not only by artists, but also by wealthy Victorians, who had flats for their mistresses.[2] After a few months at 29 Clarence Gate Gardens, during which the son was "fearfully busy" helping his mother find a flat, they moved in November to what he called a "home of our own".[3] This was 10 Great Russell Mansions, located at 60 Great Russell Street, London WC1, just opposite the main entrance to the British Museum.

Curiously, the Sorabjis returned to Clarence Gate Gardens in the second week of March 1915,[4] this time to number 177, before a final move to number 175. They were due to move into no. 175 at the end of April 1916, but had to stay for a fortnight in an unidentified furnished flat because their new one was not ready for occupancy when their lease at number 177 expired. The final move took place before 31 May, and mother and son planned to stay there until the end of the war.[5] They were thinking of leaving England to "take up our abode either in France or Italy", as they were suffocating and choking, "especially my poor mother who loathes England with intense loathing and has for years desired nothing better than escape".[6] Indeed, mother and son remained at Clarence Gate Gardens until the end of 1950, when they left London for good, settling (separately) in Dorset.

Clarence Gate Gardens is the name of a ten-unit block of identical six-storey terraced houses of red brick and grey stone on either sides of Glentworth Street in the Regent's Park area, close to the Baker Street underground station, Madame Tussaud's, and the Royal Academy of Music. The block, built in 1909, is bounded by Ivor Place to the north and Melcombe Street to the south. The northern end of Glentworth Street intersects with Park Road. On the east side of the street, near Ivor Place, is Saint Cyprian's Church. On the corner walls of each row of houses at the south end of Melcombe Street, there are metal plates reading "Clarence Gate Gardens". The name refers to Prince William, Duke of St.

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[1] 1901 England, Scotland & Wales Census, https://www.findmypast.co.uk/transcript?id=GBC%2F1901%2F0004935676; 1911 Census for England & Wales, https://www.findmypast.co.uk/transcript?id=GBC/1911/RG14/00587/0411/2.

[2] Examples of well-known residents are the painters Edwin Landseer, James Tissot, and Lawrence Alma-Tadema.

[3] KSS to PH, 14 April 1914 (section dated 22 May) {*LPH*; no. 9, p. 73}; 8 September 1914 {*LPH*, no. 11, p. 85}.

[4] KSS to PH, 2 March 1915 {*LPH*, no. 15, p. 91}.

[5] KSS to PH, 21 April 1916 {*LPH*, no. 23, p. 103}; 3 May 1916 {*LPH*, no. 24, p. 105}; 31 May 1916 {*LPH*, no. 25, p. 105}.

[6] KSS to PH, 23 February 1916 {*LPH*, no. 20, p. 100}.

Andrews and Earl of Munster, the second brother of the Prince Regent, who became Duke of Clarence in 1789. The Prince is also commemorated in the area with a gate, gardens, and a terrace.[7]

The building has a basement, a ground floor, and five storeys. There are twenty-one flats in each of the ten blocks. The Sorabjis first lived on the west side in block 2 at number 29 (first-floor flat). Then they moved to the east side in block 8 at no. 177 (first-floor flat, looking to the back of the street, behind the front door) and, in the same block, at number 175 (first-floor flat, facing the street, on the left side of the block). There is a rear entrance to the building from Siddons Lane. There are balconies, each serving two flats. We are left to wonder what kind of relationships the composer, for whom privacy was paramount, had with his neighbours.

Mother and son seem to have had domestic help, at least for some periods. Those who were at their service in 1901 and 1911 are known by name: Edith Chambers (b. 1881) and Emily Mildred King (b. 1889).[8] When Madeline went abroad, Sorabji had to prepare his own meals and do the cleaning and washing because "my woman" arrived after he had finished. He described her as "one of those gentry who [...] wallow in indispositions, indulge in orgies of illness, a saturnalia of sicknesses—Marvellous (and infuriating) people!"[9] These are almost mild comments compared to other characterizations he left of domestic servants (see chapter 9).

The entry for Clarence Gate Gardens in *Kelly's Directory* for 1918 mentions "175 Sorabji Madame". During the 1920s, T. S. Eliot and his wife Vivien Haig-Wood were to stay at number 177, a flat that the Sorabjis briefly occupied, as mentioned above.[10] There is no evidence of any contact between the composer and Eliot, but the possibility exists since the latter joined the editorial board of the *New English Weekly* in 1934. Another resident (number 199, in block 10) was the composer George (W. S.) Lloyd (1913–98), who spent several years in Dorset after World War II while Sorabji was in London, and moved into the same group of flats as Sorabji after the latter had moved to Dorset. We know of no contacts between the two composers; in any case, Lloyd does not appear in Sorabji's writings. One wonders, therefore, whether they may have avoided each another.[11]

Sir Sacheverell Sitwell recalled in the late 1970s visiting the Sorabjis in their "very nice comfortable flat", where Madeline had a stuffed pug dog under the piano—a statement that could not be corroborated.[12] This may be the only recollection of the composer's life at Clarence Gate Gardens left by a friend.

Waging Wars with Open Letters

Sorabji did not go to war (see chapter 2); he preferred to fight with the pen, although it was a different enemy. Early in his career, he began to express his almost constant disapproval of just about everything, and his disappointment when one of his favourite composers did not receive what he felt was his fair share. His preferred channel for making his voice heard was the open letter, of which he

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[7]Gillian Bebbington, *London Street Names* (London: B. T. Batsdorf, 1972), 88.

[8]Listed in the 1901 England, Wales & Scotland Census, https://www.findmypast.co.uk/transcript?id=GBC%2F1901%2F0004935676, and the 1911 Census for England & Wales, https://www.findmypast.co.uk/transcript?id=GBC/1911/RG14/00587/0411/3. In the former, the composer is listed as Cyrus Leon Dudley Sorabji, his year of birth as 1894, and his occupation as student; in the latter, he appears as Dudley Sorabji, again born in 1894, with no occupation given.

[9]KSS to EC, 26 July [1930], 1; 9 December 1930, 6 (section dated 14 December).

[10]For Vivien's description of the flat, see Peter Ackroyd, *T. S. Eliot: A Life* (New York: Simon and Schuster, 1984), 177, 103, 344n43.

[11]Alistair Hinton, "Sorabji's Piano Concertos", http://www.sorabji-archive.co.uk/articles/hinton-concertos_1.php.

[12]Sir Sacheverell Sitwell, in an interview on the Aquarius television programme (broadcast on 17 June 1977), at 23:50. For a transcript of the segment in which this statement is made, see Kenneth Derus, "Letters to Heseltine", in *SCC*, 239.

was, in the words of his friend Erik Chisholm, an "incorrigible writer".[13] At first, from 1914, his only subject was music. Later in life, after retiring as a music critic in 1945, he pestered the editors of a surprisingly wide range of magazines and newspapers with letters on moral, economic, political, and social issues (see chapter 14). Excluding the letters sent to the *New Age* and the *New English Weekly*, for which he wrote between 1924 and 1934, and between 1932 and 1945, respectively, the number of open letters to such non-musical periodicals is at least 125, about the same number of letters as to music periodicals. The many carbon copies with no corresponding published versions found in the collection of Frank Holliday, whom Sorabji liked to delight with his strong opinions, suggest that many letters went straight into the editors' wastepaper baskets.

Erik Chisholm wrote the text of a talk in the 1960s, much of which dealt with Sorabji's open letters. His comments are worth quoting because they provide a rare occurrence of a close friend saying things in a straightforward manner.

> [His open letters] reveal him as a person holding the strongest possible opinions on every conceivable subject, expressing these opinions pungently, fearlessly, with biting wit, in a series of knock-out, sledge-hammer blows which admit the existence of no other point of view: no contradiction, no compromise, no possible argument can be held against his. Everyone is a fool, except himself, and a few—a very few—of the elite, naturally enough his friends! Sorabji believes that he is right—always right—absolutely right—that the huge majority of people are hopelessly wrong—or alternatively—humbugs, fools, or down-right crooks.[14]

So far, some 135 letters from Sorabji have been found in 18 music periodicals, the most important of which being the *Musical Times* (61 letters), *Musical Opinion and Music Trade Review* (40), and the *Musical Standard* (13).[15] It is easy to imagine the readers receiving their copy and turning to the letters section in feverish anticipation to see if the composer-pianist with the odd-sounding name had once again railed against some idea he found repugnant, attacked a composer of whom he disapproved, or laid a laurel wreath on the head of one of his favourite composers.

A side effect of having strong opinions is apparently an irresistible urge to engage in controversy, and this happened more than once in the young composer's career. In early December 1913 Sorabji sent a letter to the *Musical Standard* on the then much-debated question of performances of Wagner's *Parsifal* outside Bayreuth after the period of legal protection. The editor rejected the letter, apparently because it "contravenes in nearly every point, the ideal point of view!" Commenting on the situation to Philip Heseltine, Sorabji wrote that he "incidentally protested against *cant*, *humbug*, *hypocrisy*, and *sickly sentimentality*".[16] This gives an idea of the tone of many of his letters throughout his life.

The editor of the *Musical Standard* must have taken a more favourable view of Sorabji's next letters, for he published no less than six of them between January and June 1914. In his first letter, published

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[13]Erik Chisholm, in *The Composer Sorabji: A Talk by Dr. Erik Chisholm with Musical Excerpts, Introduced by Frank Holliday*, privately printed; undated (1965 at the earliest), 6.

[14]Erik Chisholm, in "Kaikhosru Sorabji", in *Men and Music": Lectures Given at University of Cape Town Summer School, February 1964* (Erik Chisholm Trust, June 2014), 103–14; 103, https://www.scottishmusiccentre.com/erik-chisholm-men-and-music.

[15]In chronological order of the first letter, the periodicals to which Sorabji sent letters are (the years of the first and last letters follow the titles): *The Musical Standard: A Journal for Musicians, Professional and Amateur* (1914–17), *Monthly Musical Record* (1914–30), *The Musical Times* (1916–65), *The Music Student* (1917), *The Chesterian* (1919), *The Sackbut* (1920–29), *Musical Opinion and Music Trade Review* (1920–58), *Musical America* (1921), *Musical News and Herald* (1924–25), *Musical Courier: Weekly Review of World's Music* (1924), *The Gramophone* (1926–41), *Music & Letters* (1926), *MILO* [Magazine of the Imperial League of Opera] (1929), *The Rotunda: A Journal of Artistic Organ Building and Musical Progress* (1930), *The Scottish Musical Journal* (1930), *The Musical Mirror and Fanfare* (1931–32), *Music Journal* (Leeds) (1972), *Music and Musicians* (1972–78). He also published articles in eleven of them.

[16]KSS to PH, 8 December 1913 {*LPH*, no. 3, p. 45}.

on 24 January, Sorabji dealt with the correct spelling of Chaïkovski's name, to use his suggestion. Ironically for a letter about spelling, the typesetter wrote the correspondent's name "Soratji".[17] On 7 February Sorabji complained against Scriabin "being spoken of as a 'rival' of Schoenberg in 'dizzy excursions into the land of discord'"; on 14 March he protested against the too frequent performances of Tchaikovsky's Concerto no. 1.

The next three letters were part of a controversy sparked by an article on Scriabin's works by the Welsh composer and critic Leigh Vaughan Henry (1889–1958). Sorabji had been "doing battle in all directions especially with Mr. Leigh Henry on Chopin and Futurist Music."[18] He had written to the critic, who had in turn replied through the *Daily Telegraph*. The controversy continued in the *Musical Standard* until the editor decided that "this correspondence must now close".[19] For Sorabji, an editor's gag must have been as good as an invitation to write again, albeit after some pause on his part. Indeed, other topics discussed in the *Musical Standard* did prompt letters from Sorabji, for seven more letters appeared in the journal between July 1915 and December 1917.

Sorabji's first letter to the *Musical Times*, published in July 1916, was to be the start of another series of letters. The source of his disagreement was an article by the critic Hugh Arthur Scott (1878–1951), who had developed a concept of "definite melody" in modern music.[20] Sorabji wrote to Heseltine that he had "castigated Hugh Arthur quite nicely".[21] In August the well-known critic Hugh Cope Colles (1879–1943) published an article entitled "Melody and Modern Music".[22] Lack of space had forced the journal to shorten Sorabji's much longer letter for publication in the September issue. The composer explained to Heseltine that the "Mcnaught creature"—William Gray McNaught (1883–1953), editor of the *Musical Times* from 1910 to 1944—wished to publish his letter against "Colleywobbles and Great Scott" in an "abbreviated expurgated form". He agreed if a footnote explained that the letter had been greatly abbreviated and "that the unexpurgated original *be either sent or shown*" to the two critics; the letter did not appear.[23]

There were times when Sorabji lashed out at people he later came to view favourably. One was "F.E.", most likely Frederick H. Evans (1853–1943), a designer of pianola mechanisms also known for his photographs of cathedrals in France and England, on whom he wished to have "an 'effet écrasant'", only to praise in later years his contribution to the player piano.[24] He also considered "administering reproof to an individual who has the effrontery to claim Delius as a British composer"; this person, Christopher à Becket Williams, was soon to become a very good friend of his.[25]

Sorabji waged another controversy in the pages of *Musical Opinion* between August and November 1924. He had come to the rescue of Williams, whom Eric Harding Thiman (1900–1975) had

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[17]KSS to PH, 3 February [1914] {*LPH*, no. 5, p. 53}.

[18]KSS to PH, 14 April [1914] (section dated 22 March) {*LPH*, no. 9, p. 74}.

[19]"Our Letter-Box: Chaikovski", *The Musical Standard* 3, no. 56 (24 January 1914): 93; "Our Letter-Box: Scriabin", ibid., no. 58 (7 February 1914): 141; "To the Editor", ibid., no. 63 (14 March 1914): 261; "Our Letter-Box: Mr. Leigh Henry and Chopin", ibid., no. 69 (25 April 1914): 401.

[20]Sorabji, "Correspondence: 'The Melodic Poverty of Modern Music'", *MT* 57, no. 881 (1 July 1916): 332; sent in reply to Hugh Arthur Scott, "The Melodic Poverty of Modern Music", *MT* 57, no. 880 (1 June 1916): 276–79. Scott was the father of the actress Margaretta Mary Winifred Scott (1912–2005).

[21]KSS to PH, 6 July 1916 {*LPH*, no. 26, p. 106}.

[22]H. C. Colles, "Melody and Modern Music", *MT* 57, no. 882 (1 August 1916): 360–62; Sorabji, "Correspondence: 'The Melodic Poverty of Modern Music", ibid., no. 883 (1 September 1916): 409–10.

[23]KSS to PH, 27 August 1916 {*LPH*, no. 27, p. 110}.

[24]KSS to PH, [June 1917] {*LPH*, no. 19, p. 111}; Sorabji, "Letters to the Editor: The Present Condition of Music", *NA* 21, no. 6 (28 June 1917): 214–15. On Evans, see Sorabji, "Music", *NA* 38, no. 21 (25 March 1926): 250; "Towards a New Keyboard Instrument of the Piano Type", in *AM*, 206–12; 211.

[25]KSS to PH, [June 1917] {*LPH*, no. 19, p. 111}.

accused of writing a "facile and cavalier criticism" of Rutland Boughton's *The Immortal Hour*, a work that Sorabji called "a tissue of abject commonplaces and banality, utterly without interaction of style, idea or expression".[26] The conductor Anthony Bernard (1891–1963) wrote to ask "Who is Kaikhosru Sorabji?", suggesting that the author should be more modest. Sorabji remarked how dangerous it was to "credit one's readers with intelligence". The longest contribution to this exchange of views came from Sorabji's friend Clinton Gray-Fisk, for whom most of the correspondents' contentions were based on bias rather than evidence.[27]

It was in the pages of *Musical Opinion* and the *Musical Times* that Sorabji most often expressed his views. After the Newman controversy (see below) and the *Immortal Hour* one mentioned above, no letter from Sorabji appeared between 1928 and 1942 in *Musical Opinion*, which he called "the blue litmus paper", apparently because of its pale blue covers.[28] In 1958, the last year in which his letters to that periodical appeared, he quenched the blood thirst of his readers with a discussion extending over five months. He was responding to a radio panel known as "The Critics", in which specialists in fields other than music ventured to comment on a recent production of Poulenc's *Dialogues des Carmélites*, although they had no particular qualification for expressing their opinions in public. After allowing two people, including Sorabji's friend Mervyn Vicars, to take part in the discussion, the editor allowed Sorabji one last short letter and decided that the correspondence, having lost all relevance to music, had to end.[29]

Sorabji continued to write letters to the *Musical Times* until 1965, although few of them elicited replies and counter-replies thereto. Vituperating is rarely a relaxing activity, and Sorabji must have grown tired of it after years of "castigating and correcting all and sundry".[30] He also grew tired of reading music periodicals, giving them up in the mid-1950s because he found them "so unutterably dreary dull and boring as to be unreadable". He was also convinced that he was doing a much better job himself, in fact "so astronomically better than any of them", and could not see why he should "bother to read any more of it".[31]

Controversy with Ernest Newman

In the autumn of 1920 Sorabji became involved in a controversy with the distinguished critic Ernest Newman (1868–1959).[32] Philip Heseltine had taken upon himself in late 1919 to send Newman some published scores by Sorabji (as well as by Bernard van Dieren). Outraged by the critic's failure to comment on these scores, Heseltine sent a letter to the *Observer*, for which the critic was then writing. As the letter remained unpublished, its author decided to pursue the matter in the pages of the second

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[26]Eric Harding Thiman was later known as a skilled improviser (on the organ) and a prolific composer of mainly educational works.

[27]Sorabji, "Letters to the Editor: 'The Immortal Hour'", *MO* 47, no. 563 (August 1924): 1085; written as a reply to Eric H. Thiman, "Letters to the Editor: 'The Immortal Hour'", ibid., no. 562 (July 1924): 992. See also replies by Eric H. Thiman and Anthony Bernard, "Letters to the Editor: 'The Immortal Hour'", ibid., no. 564 (September 1924): 1186; "Letters to the Editor: 'The Immortal Hour'", ibid., 48, no. 565 (October 1924): 42; Clinton Gray-Fisk and Eric H. Thiman, "Letters to the Editor: 'The Immortal Hour'", ibid., no. 566 (November 1924): 166–67, 167.

[28]KSS to EC, 3 May 1930, 3 (section dated 7 May).

[29]Sorabji, "Letters to the Editor: Critics on the Air", *MO* 81, no. 966 (March 1958): 373; reply by J. Beaumont Percival, "Letters to the Editor: Critics on the Air", ibid., no. 968 (May 1958): 511; reply from Mervyn Vicars to Percival, "Letters to the Editor: Critics on the Air", ibid., no. 969 (June 1958): 573; reply from Percival to Vicars, "Letters to the Editor: Semantics", ibid., no. 970 (July 1958): 639; reply from Sorabji, "Letters to the Editor: More Semantics", ibid. , no. 970 (July 1958): 639.

[30]Clinton Gray-Fisk, "Kaikhosru Shapurji Sorabji", *MT* 101, no. 1406 (April 1960): 230–32; 232.

[31]KSS to RS, 13 November 1959, 2.

[32]Paul Watt, *Ernest Newman: A Critical Biography*, Music in Britain, 1600–2000 (Woodbridge: The Boydell Press, 2017), contains no mention of Sorabji.

issue of the *Sackbut*, his own journal. He thus reproduced two letters to the editor of the *Sunday Times* as examples of how music critics were not always eager to help young promising composers: one of these was a letter addressed by Sorabji on 18 May, but rejected by the paper. Finally, to prove why Newman should have spent time studying his friend's music, Heseltine reproduced the letter of recommendation that Busoni had given to Sorabji in November 1919. Sorabji's attempts to show Newman some of his works, less than a week before his meeting with the Italian master, had failed because the critic refused to look at manuscript scores. Newman's "staggering revelation of his methods" led him to conclude that he was no longer "the most alert and enterprising of the critics".[33]

The first response to Heseltine's letter came from the *Musical Opinion*'s columnist "Schaunard", who found his case persuasive but noted how much time music critics had to spend advising people without any suggestion of a fee.[34] Sorabji suggested that "if the unknown composer wants any notice of himself and his work by the critics in their columns, he must pay for it".[35] In his lengthy reply, Newman proposed the formation of an "advisory board" for the "manuscript composer", as he preferred to call the young composer. He argued that the "public ventilation" of Sorabji's grievance might lead to the "setting up of some apparatus for discovering composers of genius in this country" and that Sorabji's scores might become famous. Heseltine had sent Sorabji to his house during the winter, at a time when Newman was away. On learning that Sorabji had called at the latter's instigation, Newman wrote to him to explain that personal reasons prevented him from reading manuscripts at that time. He rejected the idea of a critic being paid, as he might be accused of being influenced, but supported the efforts of the critic Arthur Eaglefield Hull (1876–1928) to set up an advisory board to deal with the scores of budding composers in return for a fee.[36]

In the August issue of the *Sackbut*, Heseltine had already tackled Newman for two *Sunday Times* articles, published on 18 and 25 July, discussing what he called the "manuscript composer" in the above article.[37] Then, in the October issue, he reacted again to Newman's ideas, accusing him of "ill-tempered abuse of Mr. Sorabji and myself". Heseltine objected to the critic's refusal "even to *listen to* the work of a composer who has been recommended to you by one in whose opinions you have both publicly and privately displayed a certain interest [van Dieren]". He then referred to an "indignant letter from Mr. Newman, together with the notorious printed slip, for all the world as though I had sent Mr. Sorabji on purpose to annoy him".[38]

The controversy was not over, and Sorabji replied to Newman in *Musical Opinion*. The editor appended a note to Sorabji's lengthy letter stating that "in order to facilitate the closing of the correspondence, we forwarded a proof of Mr. Sorabji's letter to Mr. Newman, who enumerated ten points and makes reply as follows: [...]." Newman's letter was attached, with call numbers inserted at various points in Sorabji's letter.[39] The whole affair left a sour taste in Sorabji's mouth who in 1928 would refer to Newman's refusal to look at or listen to his work, though without giving any names.[40]

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[33]Sorabji, quoted in [Philip Heseltine], "'Ille Reporter'", *The Sackbut* 1, no. 2 (June 1920): 52–56; 55–56.

[34]"Schaunard", "Stray Musings", *MO* 43, no. 515 (August 1920): 851–52.

[35]Sorabji, "The Modernists", *MO* 43, no. 516 (September 1920): 948.

[36]A. Eaglefield-Hull, "Wanted: An Advisory Board for Composers", *MO* 44, no. 517 (October 1920): 55–56 (does not mention Sorabji); Ernest Newman, "An Advisory Board for the Manuscript Composer", ibid., 49–50.

[37]P[hilip] H[eseltine], "Contingencies", *The Sackbut* 1, no. 4 (August 1920): 157–60; 160.

[38]P[hilip] H[eseltine], "Contingencies", *The Sackbut* 1, no. 6 (October 1920): 278–80, 281–82; 278, 280. See also excerpts of Heseltine's letters mentioning Sorabji in this connection: Frederick Delius, 23 October 1920; Anthony Bernard, 24 October 1920; Edith Buckley Jones, 28 October 1920 {*LPH*, nos. 31b–d, pp. 123–25}.

[39]Sorabji and Ernest Newman, "Correspondence: Mr. Sorabji and Mr. Newman", *MO* 44, no. 518 (November 1920): 134–35.

[40]Sorabji, "Music", *NA* 43, no. 4 (24 May 1928): 44.

Sorabji made it a habit to use such open letters to lash out at people whose ideas were at odds with his own—and to praise those whose ideas agreed with his. Sometimes his letters produced replies and counter-replies, but on no other occasion did he cross swords with a figure as well known in British musical life as Ernest Newman. Throughout his career as a music critic, Sorabji often referred to his writings—either to side with him or to disapprove of him. In 1929 he spoke of a series of "profoundly interesting and subtle articles" that had made "the most stimulating and thought-provoking contribution to musical criticism that I have seen in years".[41] A year later he wrote that "as a specimen of the shattering and abysmal ignorance of European, especially English, musicians upon Oriental music, Mr. Ernest Newman's remark […] is as typical as it is disgraceful".[42] Sorabji had great respect for Newman, but they disagreed on a number of issues. After John Tobin's reading of the first part of *Opus clavicembalisticum* in 1936, he sent to the senior critic a copy of the score (see chapters 10 and 13). He later described Newman as "one of the few bright spots in English musical journalism or musical life for that matter".[43] There is no evidence of contact with Newman until 1958, when he sent him a letter (whereabouts unknown) that the critic found "very welcome". He was pleased to read "a characteristic outburst from you on the brainlessness and vulgarity of much of the musical life of today" and was delighted to see Sorabji "keeping up your old high standard in this field".[44]

Concerto [no. 1] pour piano et grand orchestre

After writing his first five songs in 1915 and 1916, Sorabji suddenly turned his attention to a large-scale piano concerto. In fact, he would complete three similar works and a piece for orchestra, as well as various piano works, before his meeting with Busoni in late 1919. Of the works written up to 1919 one has not survived and the other was abandoned. Sorabji announced to Philip Heseltine on 6 July 1916 that he had "just finished a second vocalise" and had "started the music-drama 'Medea'". There is no manuscript for the former work; the latter project, about the cruel magician from Greek mythology who helped Jason to obtain the Golden Fleece, seems to have been abandoned early on, and we have no idea of Sorabji's intentions.[45]

If the first page of the manuscript is to be believed, Sorabji began his *Concerto [no. 1] pour piano et grand orchestre* (1915–16; 177 pp.) in April 1915 and completed it on 17 June 1916. He would thus have written a work for piano and orchestra as his first "real" composition project, begun even before his first song, *The Poplars*—quite a bold move for a young composer. As he would do in the slightly later manuscript of the song *Hymne à Aphrodite*, he added the inscription "É.l'inf." at the end of the date. This enigmatic inscription is the slogan—"Écrasez l'infâme!" (Crush the infamous one)—written by Voltaire, the eighteenth-century polemicist, in hundreds of letters as an exhortation against intolerance and superstition. Sorabji had first used it a few years earlier in a letter to Heseltine in a passage in which he railed against academics, "the priests of a worn out and affeté superstition".[46]

On 24 August 1915 Sorabji reported to Heseltine that the work "progresse[d] with measured tread".[47] He agreed with his friend's suggestion to send the score to Delius, but it would be some time before he could let him have it, as the "labour of copying is immense". He "dreaded the verdict" and,

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[41]Sorabji, "Music", *NA* 45, no. 24 (10 October 1929): 285–85; 285.
[42]Sorabji, "Music: Newman on Oriental Music", *NA* 46, no. 20 (20 March 1930): 237.
[43]Sorabji, "Music: Critical Intermezzo", *NEW* 14, no. 22 (9 March 1939): 336.
[44]Ernest Newman to KSS, 18 November 1958.
[45]KSS to KD, 5 September 1983 {Derus, S52, p. 280}.
[46]KSS to PH, 30 October [1913] {*LPH*, no. 2, p. 40}; see also 6 January 1914 {*LPH*, no. 4, p. 47}. The edition reads the French "affété" (effeminate, or one whose elegance lacks naturalness), whereas Sorabji's autograph has the (more likely) English "effete" (affected, ineffectual).
[47]KSS to PH, 24 August 1915 {*LPH*, no. 18, p. 97}.

as he once told Alistair Hinton, never sent the score.[48] Then, on 23 February, he suggested booking a studio in the showroom of the piano maker Bechstein on Wigmore Street, where he probably intended to play excerpts for his friend. He did not want his work published in England, and nothing would shake his conviction. For him, "any sort of English reputation has no attraction whatever for me except with such select souls as your own dear self".[49] He would change his mind about publishing a few years later, but he remained opposed to his music being heard in this country. Early in his career, he preferred his works to be heard and appreciated only by an elite, and this was to remain constant throughout his life.

On 3 May Sorabji suggested another session at Bechstein to let Heseltine "have a peep" at the score.[50] At the end of the month he asked his friend's permission to dedicate the work to him; he was "quite sure that but for your encouragement and 'bonté' the Concerto would never have seen the light of day". He had asked his mother's permission for this and awaited his friend's reply "with violent impatience".[51] The concerto, which Sorabji completed on 14 June 1916, bears the dedication "à Monsieur Philip Heseltine: en témoignage d'amitié. K.S." The dedicatee told his former piano teacher at Eton, Colin Taylor (1881–1973), about Sorabji's "soul-shattering" work, noting influences from Scriabin, Ravel, and post-*Petrushka* Stravinsky.[52] Heseltine also mentioned the work to Delius, adding that for Sorabji, as for Eugene Goossens, "technique does not seem to exist, as a thing separate from expression; what they have to express they can express to perfection".[53]

Sorabji toyed with the idea of submitting his work to the Orchestrelle Co. for producing a realization for player piano. He therefore considered the possibility of making a new reduction for this purpose, since the one made by Heseltine did not correspond to the full score (none of these reductions are known). The difficulty of securing copyright in all countries was an obstacle, as he feared he would have "no redress" if the work was pirated. Indeed, the reservation of rights was to become an important aspect of Sorabji's later publications.[54]

Sorabji did not care much for this and the other early concertos in later life. He told Alistair Hinton: "I don't know how many blasted concertos I wrote AND I DON'T BLOODY WELL CARE!! They were all written hundreds or years ago and are of absolutely no importance whatsoever! So there!"[55] Hinton managed to locate the manuscripts of some of them, bringing to eight the number of works entitled "concerto" composed in the 1910s and 1920s.[56] Sorabji was to produce three further works for piano and orchestra between 1935 and 1975.

Sorabji's first concerto consists of 484 bars, just the sort of number he was so fond of. Each of the three movements has a tempo indication. The middle movement, which follows the first without pause, conveys the hothouse feeling so often found in his music: it should be "Always surrounded by an

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[48]KSS to PH, 11 February 1916 {*LPH*, no. 19, p. 99}.

[49]KSS to PH, 23 February 1916 {*LPH*, no. 20, p. 100}.

[50]KSS to PH, 3 May 1916 {*LPH*, no. 24, p. 105}.

[51]KSS to PH, 31 May 1916 {*LPH*, no. 25, p. 105}.

[52]PH to Colin Taylor, 13 March 1916, in Barry Smith, ed., *Frederick Delius and Peter Warlock: A Friendship Revealed* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2000), 213n27; see also John Mitchell, "Mentions of Kaikhosru Sorabji in the Letters of Philip Heseltine", *The Peter Warlock Society Newsletter*, no. 95 (Autumn 2014): 16–20; 19, who has "soul-searching" instead of "soul-shattering".

[53]PH to Frederick Delius, 22 April 1916, in Smith, ed., *Frederick Delius and Peter Warlock*, 206–16; 213; see also Mitchell, "Mentions of Kaikhosru Sorabji in the Letters of Philip Heseltine", 16–20; 18.

[54]KSS to PH, 6 July 1916 {*LPH*, no. 26, p. 106}.

[55]AH to MAR, 20 April 1997.

[56]For an account of the confusion as to the number of early concertos, see Paul Rapoport, "'Could you just send me a list of his works?'", in *SCC*, 94–95.

atmosphere of tropical and languorous heat". The score calls for a large number of instruments: the woodwinds come in groups of three plus the complementary instruments (such as piccolo, English horn, bass clarinet). The brass section consists of eight horns, five trumpets, three trombones, and one tuba; and there are two harps and several percussion instruments. Sorabji obviously wanted to demonstrate his ability to handle large resources, and it is impressive that such a young composer could simply finish. Although he was to write half a dozen works for (much) smaller orchestral forces, he had similar requirements for another half a dozen compositions.

A striking feature of this work—and of all of Sorabji's concertos—is the number of passages in which the soloist rests: usually none. On only eight pages do we find passages of one, two, or three bars left entirely to the orchestra; otherwise the pianist must pay a hefty tribute before bowing to the audience. In other words, the word "concerto" should not be taken in its usual sense of dialogue or fight between the soloist and the orchestra, but as a symphony with piano obbligato, as in Busoni's Piano Concerto, a work for which Sorabji's admiration was boundless. As in most concertos, there is a cadenza ([MS]pp. 167–69), before which the pianist is allowed only fourteen bars of rest. Throughout, the piano part demands the kind of writing typical of Sorabji in these years: a virtuosic mixture of wild runs in single or double notes and long chains of chords, all set in a more or less atonal style.

Sonata no. 0

On 8 March 1917 Sorabji completed his first surviving work for piano solo, an unnumbered sonata known as the *Sonata no. 0* (1917; 30 pp.), like Bruckner's very first symphony, called *Die Nullte*. At the end, above the word "Finis" and the date, he wrote the word "Aum". This combination of letters, also spelt "Om", forms a syllable used as a prefix to many sacred formulas in Hindu mysticism.[57]

The work is unique in Sorabji's output for its several crossed-out passages. In fact, he completely or partially cancelled 42 of the 150 systems (or 48 bars out of 260). He seems to have done this quite arbitrarily, for there is no meaningful connection on either side of a cut making it logical for one bar to follow another. Sorabji must have simply found his work too long and decided to cut out systems. Looking at a work like this, many critics will be tempted to accuse him of composing by arranging chunks of music in random order; indeed, this impression is reinforced by the frequent changes of tempo.

Sorabji's sonata contains many highly evocative French directions reminiscent of Scriabin's works, such as "Avec charme et douceur", "Flamboyant, comme des traits d'étincelles", "Ondulant, limpide", and "Sauvage, avec colère".[58] These directions are so numerous as to suggest that the composer's priority was to outdo his model, as do the many gestures consisting of fast note values followed by trills (bars 112–14, 158–60, 205–6). The pianistic writing provides several examples of the fascination that strings of chords at a fast tempo, with dynamics either very soft or very loud, would hold for Sorabji throughout his career **(example 5.1)**. In one instance (bars 156–58) he more or less forgets human limitations and calls for a long trill on F♯ in *both* hands, to be played simultaneously with a rhythmic ostinato using repeated five-note chords in *each* hand; the passage obviously has to be tricked by temporarily interrupting the trills. The ending, with its series of repeated chords over low octaves, foreshadows the *Sonata no. 1 for Piano*. This youthful, exuberant, and excessive pre-first sonata also contains so many sequences as to question its originality.

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[57]John Garret, *A Classical Dictionary of India* (Madras: Higginsbothams, 1986), 430 (s.v. "Om or Omkara").
[58]"Charmingly, softly"; "Blazingly, like arrows of sparks"; "Undulating, limpid"; "Wild, with anger".

Chaleur—Poème

Sorabji's second piece calling for the orchestra, and the first one without a piano, is *Chaleur—Poème* (1916–17; 32 pp.). We learned the exact dates of its composition (between 26 August 1916 and 21 April 1917) only in 2008, when the manuscript finally surfaced. It was previously known only from a copy made by a copyist, most probably A. J. Collins, who prepared other scores between 1920 and 1922. Furthermore, this copy does not feature the dedication "To my Mother" that appears in the manuscript. Sorabji probably wanted to have a cleaner copy to submit to a conductor.

Chaleur is the first of Sorabji's works devoted entirely to the atmosphere of a promenade in a thick, humid hothouse, a style he would use repeatedly, notably in *Nocturne, "Jāmī"* and *"Gulistān"—Nocturne for Piano*. His introductory statement gives a good idea of the style he had in mind, fifteen years before his first trip to India.

> It is midday in a grove of Tropical India. The sun does not succeed in piercing the thick roof of leaves overhead, its rays being transformed into a green mysterious twilight. The whole life of the grove seems suspended in the tense quivering heat: not a sound to be heard but the hum of countless insects. Occasionally the subtle evil head of a krait [...] hovers for a moment above the dense undergrowth and vanishes with a venomous hiss. The air is heavy with the narcotic perfume of rare exotics and the languid voluptuous ecstasy of tropical heat pervades all things.

The short nine-minute piece is to be played very slowly, with a warm sonority ("dans une langueur d'extrême chaleur"). It calls for three each of flutes, oboes, and clarinets as well as four horns; there are no percussion instruments but two harps and a celesta. The two violin sections and the violas are divided into four parts, and the lower strings into two. This technique of multiple string divisions allows the composer to write a very transparent and shimmering texture that translates into sound the "hum of countless insects".

In particular, the opening section (bars 1–15^3) shows Sorabji—in 1916—to be a precursor of the Ligeti of *Atmosphères* (1961); it calls for tremolo figures of four to twelve notes per crotchet, using intervals ranging from a minor second to a fourth as well as wide arpeggio figurations **(example 5.2)**. The superimposition of several parts playing these quick alternations between notes creates a sonic background, and the rhythmic density produces a sound not far removed from that composer's micropolyphony. A second section (bars 15^3–25^1) is based on a tiny cluster made up of C, C♯, and D: some string parts hold a C♯ pedal while others play slow written-out C–D trills, then octave figurations, as a background to melodic motives in the woodwinds. A third section (bars 25^1–31^1) features further melodic ideas over a more active harmonic background. The fourth section (bars 31^1–40^1) begins with a cadenza for harp and celesta, again on a C♯ pedal, and continues with several short melodic ideas leading to a warm, rich-sounding harmonic progression in the low strings. The fifth section (bars 40^1–51), after a brief introduction in chromatic string tremolos, bursts into a magnificent climax based on a tonal progression of lush chords in the bass, all surrounded by active figurations in the strings. The passage is somewhat reminiscent of the style of the "Lever du soleil" from Ravel's *Daphnis et Chloé* (1909–12), a work that Sorabji greatly admired. The music subsides and ends on an eleventh chord on C♯, the notes of which are played from the lowest string instrument to the highest, following each other at a distance of a semiquaver—again a quite modernistic effect found only in much later music.

Quasi habanera

Shortly after completing the *Sonata no. 0* (1917; 30 pp.), Sorabji wrote a short piece entitled *Quasi habanera* (1917; 6 pp.). Written in Bournemouth between 10 and 14 August 1917, it is dedicated "to Norman Peterkin, a gifted and sensitive musician, his friend K.S.", one of the few known friends of Sorabji during his early years as a composer (see chapter 6, in the context of the *Fantaisie espagnole*).

The surviving manuscript, which is a second copy, may contain certain differences, as suggested by a note at the end of the score: "Gawd only knows if you will be able to make head or tail of this awful scrawl. I wrote the original MS. when still in Bournemouth. I have made a few alterations in my copy and have elaborated [?] here and there but the general framework is exactly the same. Your Gote."

This piece, which should be played with a languid and lazy rhythm, is Sorabji's first composition to use Spanish *couleur locale*, which may have been inspired by Ravel, in whose music he was interested at the time. He would soon draw inspiration again from the Spanish idiom in the *Fantaisie espagnole*. Other examples can be found in the "Quasi habanera" section of the *Fantasia ispanica*; no. 84 ("Tango habanera") from the *Études transcendantes*; the *Rapsodie espagnole de Maurice Ravel—Transcription de concert pour piano*; and var. 15 ("Ispanica") of the *Sequentia cyclica super "Dies irae" ex Missa pro defunctis*.

Quasi habanera is a much lighter work than the sonata that precedes it, both in terms of pianistic difficulty and texture, and it also sounds like a series of phrases not really held together cohesively. One finds the characteristic accompaniment rhythm (dotted quaver, semiquaver) almost throughout and, in the melody part, phrases with motives consisting of triplets followed by two quavers. There is no other form than an alternation of habanera phrases and cadenzas. The coda ends ***ppp*** with quasi clusters in the upper register above a dominant seventh chord in F♯ in the lower register that shows Sorabji anticipating by more than ten years the final chord of *Le banquet céleste* for organ (1928) by Olivier Messiaen **(example 5.3)**.

Désir éperdu (Fragment)

On 22 September 1917 Sorabji completed a very short work entitled *Désir éperdu (Fragment)* (1917; 1 p.), intended to be played "as if tormented by an insatiable desire". Despite its rather tonal style, its brevity anticipates the many later non-tonal "aphoristic fragments" of the 1960s, pieces consisting of one or two systems. The piano writing is similar to the easiest passages of the *Sonata no. 1 for Piano* (1919; 42 pp.). It consists of a series of melodic arches in chords in the right hand over ascending arpeggios in the left hand **(example 5.4)**.

Concerto II pour piano et grand orchestre

Sorabji's most substantial work of 1917 was the *Concerto II pour piano et grand orchestre* (1916–17; 49 pp.), which he began planning in July 1916. He announced to Philip Heseltine: "there seetheth at the bottom of the cauldron of my mind the plan of Concerto 2!!!!! But this is as yet quite nebulous and vague." He appended a bar of music consisting of a virtuosic gesture that would become bars 3–5 of the piano part, an opening written "in my usual mood of ungovernable violence".[59] In June 1917 or earlier, he suggested to his friend that he come to Bechstein's to hear parts of his new work as well as the *Sonata no. 0*, now completed. He had said what he wanted but, "as for the others, if they don't like what I say or my way of saying it, be damned to them. It is no business of theirs!!"[60] Sorabji's fierce independence of mind thus appeared very early in his career. At about the same time, he sent Heseltine a description emphasizing his choice of orchestral instruments; it cannot be commented on because we have only a two-piano version. The orchestra was to be "as 'megalomaniac' as before with the addition of *Organ*, a *4th Trombone*, a *picc. Clarinet*, a *Bass Oboe* (!!) and *Caisse Claire*, but it is used very sparingly". The work was "*miles* beyond [Concerto no.] I".[61]

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[59]KSS to PH, 6 July 1916 {*LPH*, no. 26, p. 106}.
[60]KSS to PH, June (or earlier) 1917 {*LPH*, no. 28, p. 111}.
[61]KSS to PH, [June 1917] {*LPH*, no. 23, p. 112}.

Sorabji completed his concerto on 27 December 1917; he estimated the length of the 49-page manuscript at 25 minutes. At the end of the score we read: "The fear of one's friends is the beginning of wisdom", a paraphrase of a quotation from the Bible (Ps. 111:10 or Prov. 9:10), "The fear of the Lord is the beginning of wisdom". The score also contains the first of his extended prefatory notes, in which he warns potential readers of the absence of programme.

> N.N.B.B. This concerto is based on no "programme" or "story" after the manner of the "Battle of Prague", "The Battle March of Dehli" or other masterpieces of the kind, so it would be wiser for the student of it not to rack his brains in trying to find any, but to remember the priceless maxim of the "King" in that incomparable classic "Alice in Wonderland":—
>
> "'If there's no meaning in it' said the King 'that saves a world of trouble, you know, as we needn't try to find any.'"[62]

The writing of the piano part is very similar to *Sonata no. 0*. One particularly striking passage consists of long chains of figurations using the same interval in both hands: sixths ([MS]pp. 5–6), four-note chords (p. 9), octaves (pp. 17–18), fifths (pp. 18–19), and seconds (pp. 20–21). The last gesture, as in the sonata, is a powerful ascending series of full chords in both hands, meant to be played as loudly and quickly as possible to the end.

While the first and second movements have standard tempo indications, the third movement is to be "Galvanique mais sans trop de hâte, avec beaucoup de staccato et une sécheresse de xylophone".[63] It begins with three bars of a rhythmic motive in the orchestra, which Sorabji—in the piano reduction—suggests should be struck "on the *wood* of the piano with something hard rather than play[ing] the actual notes"; this is probably an early example of such a request. With very few exceptions, the first movement is entirely in quadruple time, and the entire last one is mostly in a playful 7/8. We will see later in this chapter the important links between this work and the *Concerto pour piano et grand orchestre [no. 4]*.

Concerto pour piano et orchestra da camera [no. 3]

Sorabji's next work, the *Concerto pour piano et orchestra da camera [no. 3]* (1918; 100 pp.), was completed eight months after its predecessor and is twice as long. It is dedicated "To Charles A. Trew, Esq.: / —his old pupil Kaikhosru Sorabji—". This concerto may be the one that Sorabji played for the American photographer Alvin Langdon Coburn (1882–1966), of whose existence he first heard in 1916 before coming into closer contact in 1918.[64] Already an important artist-photographer during the first decade of the century, Coburn published two books of photographs of important men: *Men of Mark* and *More Men of Mark*.[65] Like Sorabji, he was interested in the pianola, which probably led to a meeting. Coburn saw a relationship between the mechanical instrument and the camera; freedom from mechanical rendering allowed the artist to concentrate on interpretation. He had begun taking photographs of musicians just before the war. Between 1913 and 1921 he made forty-eight portraits of musicians, of which he seems to have selected thirty-three for a book to be called *Musicians of Mark*, which nevertheless remained in his portfolio. Curiously, Sorabji does not seem to have been considered

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[62] *The Battle of Prague* (1788), by František Koczwara (1750–91), a programmatic sonata for piano or harpsichord, violin, cello, and drum ad lib, was once a standard parlour piece—of atrocious quality (or lack thereof). *The Battle March of Dehli: Descriptive Fantasia* (1857), by John Pridham (1818–96), is a similarly agonisingly simplistic piece. The final quotation comes from chapter 12 ("Alice's Evidence") of *Alice's Adventures in Wonderland* by Lewis Carroll.

[63] "Galvanic, but without haste. With much staccato and a xylophone-like dryness."

[64] KSS to PH, 21 April 1916 {*LPH*, no. 23, p. 103}.

[65] Alvin Langdon Coburn, *Men of Mark* (London: Duckworth; New York: Mitchell Kennerly, 1913); *More Men of Mark* (London: Duckworth, 1922).

for inclusion.[66] Coburn's two photographs, taken in 1918, are the earliest ones we have of the young adult composer.[67] Sorabji inscribed a photograph to him in November 1918.[68]

This third concerto calls for a chamber orchestra of forty-eight musicians, with celesta, harp, and various percussion instruments. There are changes of time signature in virtually every bar. The style is similar to that of the previous concerto, but on a more modest scale, with fewer grandiloquent gestures. The score, again, contains inscriptions at the end. One reads "À bas la bourgeoisie et les moralités de province"; the other, which includes the date of completion, is "FIN. Au nom d'Allah le tout-puissant, le tout-compatissant. 25–8–18".[69] The slogan about the bourgeoisie could be by Voltaire, like the exhortation "Écrasez l'infâme" that Sorabji used in the manuscripts of his first concerto and in the song *Hymne à Aphrodite*.

In 1930 Sorabji received a visit from a young German composer and conductor called Ludwig Wolfgang Simoni (1905–91; known after 1943 as Louis Saguer). Much impressed by the *Concerto V for Piano and Large Orchestra [no. 8]* that Sorabji had shown him, he wanted to play the *Quintet no. 1 for Piano and Quartet of Stringed Instruments* and possibly the concerto discussed here. Obviously, there was no piano part, no two-piano score, and—above all—no parts. Sorabji, who knew "of these gentries and their promises of performance", added "in fact whenever anyone […] authoritatively and magisterially announce their determination to do something of mine I look the other way to laugh… and *spit*!" Nevertheless, he played some of his works to the "nice-looking boy", who was very impressed.[70] At a conference in Darmstadt in 1949, Saguer mentioned Sorabji as belonging to the contemporary avant-garde that hardly anyone will be able to understand.[71]

Concerto pour piano et grand orchestre [no. 4]

Sorabji completed a fourth concerto on 20 December 1918, four months after the previous one. It is the earliest of his works to which he added a dedication only a few years after its completion. In or around 1953 he wrote the following inscription: "This baby piece is presented (for his diversion) to his dear friend Norman Gentieu Esq: by his obleeged [*recte* obliged] and grateful friend Kaikhosru Shapurji Sorabji." The word "obleeged" refers—among other things—to the kindness of this American friend in sending small gifts such as packaged food at a time (post-war England) when supplies were often scarce (see chapter 17).

On the title page of the *Concerto pour piano et grand orchestre [no. 4]* (1918; 100 pp.) is a pasted illustration, probably a card, of a crane-like bird with a full plumage and a long neck and a head turned backwards. There is nothing to explain its meaning. The orchestral part is reminiscent of the size of the *Concerto [no. 1] pour piano et grand orchestre*. The woodwinds include a contrabass sarrusophone, and the brass section calls for eight horns, five trumpets, four trombones, and a contrabass tuba. The

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[66] *Alvin Langdon Coburn: An Autobiography*, ed. Helmut and Alison Gernsheim (London: Faber & Faber, 1966), repr. New York: Dover Publications, 1978), 107, 112; for a photograph of Coburn, see p. 37. On p. 24 Coburn writes, "I regret that the intended third volume *Musicians of Mark*, for which I took thirty-three portraits, never reached the stage of publication." For a reconstruction of the book (from which Sorabji is missing and in which he is not even mentioned), see Valentina Branchini, "Reconstruction of the Musicians of Mark", in *The Photographs of Alvin Langdon Coburn at George Eastman House: A Characterization Study of Materials and Techniques* (Rochester, NY: George Eastman House, 2009), 76–94, https://photogravure.com/wp-content/uploads/2018/04/Branchini_Coburn.pdf.

[67] For reproductions of Coburn's two photographs, see *SCC*, 12 and 232.

[68] The inscription reads: "To my friend A. Langdon Coburn / Most Sincerely / Kaikhosru Sorabji. 20-11-18".

[69] "Down with bourgeoisie and provincial moralities"; "END. In the name of Allah, the almighty and compassionate one".

[70] KSS to EC, 3 June 1930, 3–4 (section dated 4 June), 13 (section dated 10 June).

[71] Louis Saguer, "Crise", in *Œuvres et jours*, ed. Bruno Schweyer and Laurent Feneyrou, Collection "Documents" (Paris: Basalte Éditeur, 2010), 79-113; 90.

large percussion section includes castanets and xylophone, and is completed by a celesta and two harps. The composer insisted in a note that the piano should not be drowned in a mass of sound except for the tuttis. The soloist must have sufficient latitude in tempo because of the great difficulty of the piano part. Finally, any haste that might impair clarity and accuracy should be avoided.

On the last page, the composer greets his "very dear performer" and hopes that he will not have bad dreams: "Bonsoir mon très Cher exécutant. Point de mavises [*recte* mauvais] rêves!" Much more problematic is the dating line, according to which the work had already existed in a first version, written at the same time as the *Concerto II pour piano et grand orchestre*, but apparently destroyed: "Finis. (Première version: Juin–Décembre 1917 [détruite.] (Deuxième version: Septembre–Décembre: 1918.)—(XX.)".[72] Rapoport notes in his catalogue that the two concertos have identical dates, but concludes that they are different, having "only a few measures and gestures in common scattered throughout the three movements".[73] Curiously, the tempo indications for the three movements of both concertos are almost identical. Closer examination of the scores reveals that the opening movements are completely different, with only bars 114–15 of the middle movement of the latter work matching those of the former ([MS]p. 25/2/1). On the other hand, almost the entire final movement is identical. Sorabji therefore never destroyed the first version—indeed, his second concerto, which survives only as a two-piano score—and orchestrated its final section as part of a new work.

We cannot rule out the possibility that Sorabji prepared a full score for the second concerto and destroyed (or gave) it, keeping only the reduction, but this is not very likely. On the other hand, we should bear in mind his practice of writing the piano part first and then weaving the orchestra around it. The second concerto's orchestral garb in piano form may not be a reduction, but rather a particella in view of an orchestral score that only emerged as part of the fourth concerto. One notes the replacement of a seven-bar orchestral passage (pp. 37/2/1–37/3/3) by an orgiastic tutti (bars 184–90). At bar 232, Sorabji asks the pianist to use the piano part (of the second concerto) for the final version of the cadenza; this corresponds to pp. 44/2/1–45/1/4 of the two-piano score. The vertiginous climax of the first version (from p. 47/3/1) is omitted in favour of an even more blazing conclusion (from bar 249). The similarities between the two versions li mainly in the piano parts: the piano reduction was dramatically altered and amplified in the final version.

Long lines consisting of chords in both hands abound in this work. A particularly striking passage occurs in the third movement (pp. 75–76), where the left hand plays incomplete seventh chords and the right hand plays major chords in second inversion **(example 5.5)**. More or less similar writing would be seen later in Olivier Messiaen, particularly in the "Regard de l'Esprit de joie" from the *Vingt regards sur l'Enfant-Jésus* (1944).

Sorabji wrote to Heseltine at the end of August 1920 of his decision "to get the Concerto cut" by the Aeolian Co.[74] The work in question may have been the fourth concerto,[75] or any of the four already discussed, or even the fifth, completed earlier in the month; it may also have been the second, which is the two-piano version of the fourth.

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[72]The "XX" is the roman numeral for the day of the completion date (20 December 1918).

[73]Paul Rapoport, "'Could you just send me a list of his works?'", in *SCC*, 115.

[74]KSS to PH, 21 August 1920 {*LPH*, no. 31, p. 122}.

[75]Kenneth Derus, "Sorabji's Letters to Heseltine", in *SCC*, 236, added to this suggestion that Sorabji did not remember such a plan later in life.

Part 2 / A Composer-Pianist at Work

6 / 1919 ▪ Encounter with an "Artistic and Intellectual Titan"

Playing for Busoni, the Revered Master

The work that was to be of paramount importance to Sorabji in 1919 is the *Sonata no. 1 for Piano*. It was soon to be the occasion of his only meeting with Ferruccio Busoni (1866–1924).[1] Despite the importance of the great Italian composer and pianist in his compositional career, there are few mentions of him in his correspondence with Philip Heseltine. In the early part of 1914 he encouraged him "to know something of the later Busoni", such as the *Sonatina seconda*; he was also aware of the publication of the *Nocturne symphonique*, but added that he knew nothing about it.[2]

Although Sorabji may have heard Busoni during his regular visits to London as a pianist from about 1898 onwards, there is no surviving document to prove that he attended any of his concerts before 1919. He may have been present at the first London performance of the Piano Concerto, given on 8 June 1910 by Mark Hambourg and the New Symphony Orchestra conducted by the composer. By 1930 he had known it "for well-nigh twenty years" and "the towering grandeur and massive magnificence of the conception are impressed on me more and more every time I play it through."[3] He may also have heard Busoni's music or seen him conduct his own works at Queen's Hall in 1912, 1913, and 1919. His writings show a very good knowledge of the master's music, and he must have had an extensive collection of scores. Busoni truly became a *magister in absentia* for him, to use Ronald Stevenson's expression to describe his own relationship with the revered composer.[4]

The Italian composer spent the last three months of 1919 in London, and Sorabji managed to arrange a meeting, although we do not know whose help he needed. This momentous event took place on the morning of 25 November at the latest at the home of Maud Allan (1883–1956). The Canadian dancer, who became famous in England in 1908 with "Vision of Salome", her version of the Dance of the Seven Veils in Oscar Wilde's play, had studied the piano briefly with Busoni at his 1901 Weimar masterclass. She hosted her former teacher at her home in the "West Wing", a section of Holford House (destroyed in 1944), the most palatial and expensive of the villas in the Regent's Park area, within walking distance from Sorabji's flat.[5] The young composer probably did not know Allan personally, but he was at least interested in her work. Two years earlierhe had written a letter to the *Musical Standard*,

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[1]For a detailed account of the relationships between Sorabji and Busoni, see my article "Producing Evidence for the Beatification of a Composer: Sorabji's Deification of Busoni", *The Music Review* 54, no. 2 (May 1993): 123–36 [published in May 1996]. See also Giovanni Guanti, "Busoni e Sorabji", in *Ferruccio Busoni e il pianoforte del Novecento: convegno internazionale di studi*, ed. Marco Vincenzi (Lucca: Libreria Musicale Italiana, 2001), 189–209.

[2]KSS to PH, 6 January 1914 {*LPH*, no. 4, p. 49}; 14 April [1914] {*LPH*; no. 9, p. 77}.

[3]Sorabji, "Music: Busoni and Philip Levi: March 7", *NA* 46, no. 20 (20 March 1930): 237.

[4]See Malcolm MacDonald, *Ronald Stevenson: A Musical Biography* (Edinburgh: National Library of Scotland, 1989), 19–29.

[5]For a photograph of the house (ca. 1918), see Felix Cherniavsky, *The Salome Dancer: The Life and Times of Maud Allan* (Toronto: McClelland & Stewart, 1991), between pp. 128 and 129. For a photograph of Busoni, taken at Allan's house, see Ferruccio Busoni, *Selected Letters*, trans. and ed. Antony Beaumont (London and Boston: Faber and Faber, 1987), 215 (no. 15).

suggesting works by Delius as "peculiarly suited" to her art.[6] In 1922, while on holiday in Bournemouth, he visited her "chiefly for the purpose of hearing Mrs. van Dieren play who's touring with her".[7]

On 9 November 1919, thus about two weeks before the meeting, Busoni referred to Sorabji as one of a group of "disciples without brain and heart" who addressed his friend Bernard van Dieren (1887–1936) as "Master" and who, like him, had drawn "the most unfortunate consequences" from his *Entwurf einer neuen Ästhetik der Tonkunst*. There may be a little (or a lot) of irony or exaggeration of the kind often found in conversation or private correspondence in this letter described by its author as containing "dissonances". It is therefore difficult to comment on what he really meant, but we do learn that he had previously leafed through some of Sorabji's music. This suggests the existence of a manuscript copy, the whereabouts of which are unknown. Furthermore, there is no document to tell us from whom Busoni received the "vivid nonsense" that sounded "entirely like his name (pronounced "Sorabdschj" in England)".[8] In an open letter published a few months after their meeting, the young composer boasted that his work had reached Busoni "entirely without introduction or recommendation of any kind".[9]

According to Sorabji's later recollections of the event, Busoni shook his hand with "the courteous grace of manner impossible to the Northern Barbarians", pulled out the manuscript of his sonata (which suggests that he had already received the music) and asked him to play it. The young composer protested that he was not a pianist and fasted for the third day in a row. Nevertheless, he had practised carefully for the audition, as evidenced by the fingerings in the manuscript, the only original ones in his entire oeuvre. He thus "got through it, trembling and pouring with sweat", whereupon Busoni said that he could not have played it better. Sorabji asked for a letter to help him get his work accepted for publication. Busoni, who expressed his surprise that such music had been written "in this country", admitted that it had given him "the most extraordinary sensations… it is like a tropical forest". Sorabji, who hastened to reply that there was "nothing, but *nothing* English about me", mentioned the possibility of letting him have the manuscript, of which he had a copy. Busoni replied that he would appreciate it and asked that it be inscribed "given to Signor Busoni". Sorabji's recollections are imprecise, since he kept the manuscript, which does not contain such an inscription but a dedication in Italian, as will be seen we discuss the music itself.[10]

Busoni agreed to write (in French, a language common to both men) the letter Sorabji needed to persuade a publisher to accept his sonata for publication. He understood the unusual nature of the young composer's music but did not try to underplay characteristics resulting from a lack of maturity. He had obviously studied the music more closely after his somewhat harsh comments, or had formed a better opinion of it after listening to the composer's performance.

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[6]Sorabji, "Our Letter-Box: Maud Allan and the Classical Dance", *The Musical Standard* 10, no. 255 (17 November 1917): 332.

[7]KSS to PH, 28 July [1922] {*LPH*, no. 38, p. 138}. Mrs. van Dieren is the pianist Frida Kindler, who also studied with Busoni (see chapter 3).

[8]Ferruccio Busoni to Gerda Busoni, 9 November 1919, in *Ferruccio Busoni, Briefe an seine Frau, 1889–1923: Gesamtausgabe,* ed. Martina Weindel, Quellenkataloge zur Musikgeschichte, vols. 66A, 66B (Wilhelmshaven: Heinrichshofen-Bücher, 2015), 1: 706 (no. 796).

[9]Sorabji had sent his letter to the *Sunday Times*, which did not print it; it was thus published as part of Philip Heseltine, "'Ille Reporter'", *The Sackbut* 1, no. 2 (June 1920): 53–56; 55–56.

[10]"Meeting with Busoni", undated (1970s); typescript (1 p.) by Sorabji and corrected transcription by Alistair Hinton. For Sorabji's account, see the liner notes to Marc-André Hamelin's recording of *Sonata for Piano no. 1*. See also KSS to CSB, 22 November 1980, where Sorabji recalls the events and writes (or pretends) that Busoni "told everybody he met that mine was the ONLY work that interested him that he had seen on his visit".

> [...] Mr Sorabji's talent finds itself at home amid a kind of profusely ornamental harmonic complexity which seems to come easily and naturally to him. The freedom inherent to his style still appears at this time disorganised and exuberant. His music, though consciously written, is unconscious of its own irregular features, especially as regards proportions; in disregarding tradition it crosses a threshold which is no longer European, producing a quasi-exotic kind of vegetation (not in the sense of our "charming" Oriental dances, however!).[11]

In a letter postmarked 25 November 1919, which may be the actual date of the meeting, or the day after, Busoni reported on his meeting with his English admirer: "Kaikhusru Sorabji turns out to be an Indian, quite young. I gave him a letter of introduction for which he asked me. A fine, unusual person, in spite of his ugly music. A primeval forest with many weeds and briars, but strange and voluptuous." He also mentioned that he had recommended van Dieren to Emil Hertzka (1869–1932), the owner of Universal Edition, as he was "still always ready to help....."[12] The multiple suspension points suggest how tired he must have grown of being approached repeatedly by budding composers and performers asking him to write for them, but somehow saw it as a duty to the younger generation. Busoni wrote to Hertzka on 5 January 1920: "I became the dedicatee of a piano sonata (from the pen of a 20-year-old Indian, Kahushru Sorobdji [*sic*]) with tropical ornamentation, luxuriant foliage, absorbing."[13] Sorabji would proudly use Busoni's letter as an argument in his controversy with Ernest Newman (see chapter 5). He was quick to point out that the Italian master had described "at some length the qualities in my work that had seized his attention".[14]

Sorabji sent Busoni a copy of his work in April 1921, after it had been published (not by Universal but by London and Continental Music Publishing), and asked for permission to dedicate it to him. As Busoni had not given his definite consent at their meeting, the composer refrained from including a dedication in the published score for fear of offending him; instead, a flowery dedication appears only in the manuscript, which was returned to him after publication, unless a copyist's copy was used for engraving. Sorabji also sent a manuscript copy of his *Sonata seconda for Piano*, which he hoped to publish shortly, and asked permission to dedicate it, which would be "an opportunity of showing my gratitude and respect towards you."[15]

There was to be no further meeting, although Sorabji certainly attended some (if not all) of Busoni's subsequent London performances.[16] The Italian composer was to return at least three more times, either to play or to conduct. Sorabji reviewed for the *Sackbut* the concerts of 19 and 26 February 1921

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[11]The quotation is from the letter found in the composer's papers and translated by Marc-André Hamelin in his liner notes (with facsimile) to his recording of Sorabji's *Sonata for Piano no. 1*. The letter is also reproduced in Kenneth Derus, "Sorabji's Letters to Heseltine", *SCC*, 254 (French original and Hamelin's translation). Antony Beaumont's translation, published in Busoni, *Selected Letters*, 300n3, was made from an autograph found in the papers of Edward J. Dent (King's College, Cambridge), EJD/2/1/1/4, https://archivesearch.lib.cam.ac.uk/repositories/7/archival_objects/276000). It differs in some twelve points, and there are four deletions, whereas Sorabji's copy contains only one. The Cambridge copy is most likely a preliminary version given to Dent by Busoni's wife, Gerda, in the early 1930s, when he was working on his biography of the composer. Heseltine, "'Ille Reporter'", 55–56, had printed the French original to show that Ernest Newman would not have "spent an hour amiss in listening to Mr. Sorabji's compositions". He added that Signor Busoni, who had "doubtless been deluged with unoriginal and worthless manuscripts in his time", had not "closed his door to the potential genius".

[12]Busoni to Gerda Busoni, 25 November 1919, in *Ferruccio Busoni, Briefe an seine Frau, 1889–1923*, 1: 716–18 (no. 806).

[13]Busoni to Emil Hertzka, 5 January 1920, in Busoni, *Selected Letters*, 303 (no. 283); see also Busoni to Philipp Jarnach, 1 December 1919, in ibid., 300 (no. 281). Sorabji, who wrote his name as "Kaikh*u*sru" until late 1919 or early 1920 and again lied about his age, was actually twenty-eight years old at the time.

[14]Heseltine, "'Ille Reporter'", 56.

[15]KSS to Busoni, 18 April 1921 {Staatsbibliothek zu Berlin – Preußischer Kulturbesitz, Musikabteilung mit Mendelssohn-Archiv, F. Busoni B II, 4850 (*olim*: Mus. ep. K. Sorabji 1), http://kalliope-verbund.info/DE-611-HS-750300}. The entire letter is transcribed in Roberge, "Producing Evidence for the Beatification of a Composer", 128. No letter from Busoni authorizing the dedication has yet been found.

[16]Sorabji clearly said that he did not meet Busoni again; see KSS to KD, 21 January 1985 {Derus, S66, p. 346}.

in which Busoni played at Wigmore Hall and then with the New Queen's Hall Orchestra conducted by Sir Henry Wood. His comments, of course, show his idol to be a larger-than-life figure.

> Once again the incomparable, the unapproachable Mahatma of the piano has been with us, showing us a splendour of intellect, a re-creative power, and spaciousness of style that no other living artist possesses. It matters not a bit that what Busoni plays sounds totally different from what it does under the hands of other great pianists[, …] that a childish and ridiculous little Weber sonata is transmuted into an epic, that the B Minor sonata of Chopin assumes under those marvellous fingers a volcanic power and a steel-like strength which generations of pianistic sentimentalists have taught those among us sufficiently foolish to accept the teaching is foreign to the "real genius" of Chopin. […]
>
> The *Toccata*, the *Fantasia da Camera* on *Carmen*, and the *Indian Fantasy* of Busoni […] I have no hesitation in ranking among the most important and significant works of our time, and with them, Busoni definitely takes his place with the five or six really great figures in contemporary music. All the qualities of Busoni as interpreter are revealed again in his compositions—aristocratic dignity, austerity and aloofness coupled with a creative individuality of a rarity, fastidiousness and absolute originality in the highest degree remarkable.[17]

Sorabji's articles and reviews alone contain some 120 references to Busoni, and the name appears repeatedly in his two collections of essays. The most extensive statement comes from the obituary he wrote in 1924 and expanded for inclusion in *Around Music* in 1932. Two passages, one near the beginning, the other near the end, show the profound influence of Busoni—almost an *Übermensch*—on Sorabji, who could no longer be objective.

> In his playing, that immense lofty aloofness, that curious sense of existence in some superhuman Deva-chan world […], that extraordinary cold white fire of intellectualized and sublimated emotion, emotion so great, so intense, and at once so intellectualized and sublimated as to transcend and wholly obliterate the commonplace physical and nervous sensations that are dignified by the name, that almost terrifying personal and mental power all made together of Busoni, compared with other pianists, what one feels a great Brahmin Rishi would be, alone in his Himalayan heritage, compared with the peripatetic yogis, fakirs and jugglers, who will perform their tricks, mystifying and marvellous enough for what they are, where and whenever there is prospect of reward. […]
>
> […] Merely to see Busoni come on a platform, but, above all, to stand in his presence and speak with him, was to feel oneself in the presence of an artistic and intellectual Titan like those divine men of the Renaissance, Da Vinci or Buonarroti—men so great that they cease any more to be human beings, and to whom the application of conventional human standards is like trying to measure the lightings by an electric light meter.[18]

Sorabji always described Busoni as the greatest pianist, the mind who was the first to grasp the significance of an important work, the composer who could do wonders with anything, the sadly neglected composer, etc. He had no need to be objective because he was championing the cause of a composer whose music was barely known at the time. He wrote in 1954: "I'm a fanatical Mahlerite, Regerite, Alkanite, Busoni-ite and have been for twenty years before it became the fashion."[19] Like many admirers of Wagner, he saw no fault in Busoni himself or in his works, likening listening to his music to a religious experience.

Curiously, none of the Busoni Societies has thought it worthwhile to offer Sorabji any form of recognition for his tireless advocacy. The only acknowledgement he received was from Busoni's wife, Gerda (1862–1956), who was staying at the home of Rosamond Ley (1882–1969), the English translator of Busoni's writings and letters, and who expressed a wish to meet him to thank him for

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[17]Sorabji, "Contingencies: Busoni", *The Sackbut* 1, no. 9 (March 1921): 417–18.

[18]Sorabji, "The Death of Busoni", *NA* 35, no. 16 (14 August 1924): 189; expanded version (the one quoted here) as "Busoni", in *AM*, 21–30; 21–22, 30.

[19]Sorabji, "Letters to the Editor: A Disclaimer", *MT* 66, no. 994 (February 1954): 90.

what he had written about her husband in *Around Music*.[20] When a "Festival Musicale Busoni" was organized in the Italian composer's birthplace Empoli, Sorabji refused to attend, describing the whole scheme as "utterly impudent and inept" because his operas would not be performed. He had written to the organizers "in no ambiguous terms" to explain what he thought of the "whole setup".[21]

Busoni became a major influence on Sorabji, and there are several links between the works of the two composers. The Italian composer's pianistic style was obviously an important model. One need only think of the complex chromatic runs in the style of the so-called "Busonian figurations" of Sonatina no. 1 (1910). Sorabji also regularly called upon the piano's third pedal to sustain powerful sonorities as well as the extra notes of the Bösendorfer Imperial piano, which Busoni was probably the first to use. The peculiarities of Busoni's Piano Concerto influenced him in many ways. The Italian title page and the opus number written in Roman numerals (Opera XXXIX) left a mark, for Sorabji used Italian for twenty titles of works and sections of works, and he resorted to Roman numerals for dates. He was also fond of dividing large works into sections using variants of the "prima pars", "altera pars", and "ultima pars" of the Concerto's third movement. Finally, some of his interpretative directions —especially the flowery ones expressing sensuousness, delicacy, and warmth—are in Italian.

Busoni and Sorabji are both outsiders and isolated pinnacles in twentieth-century music, towering personalities long appreciated only by an elite. Both were, in a sense, foreigners in their country of activity: Busoni, an Italian living in Germany; Sorabji, a half-Parsi living in England, with a dark complexion and a foreign name. Both were pianists, composers, and writers as well as highly cultured artists whose readings covered a wide range of subjects. It was only natural for Sorabji to feel a deep kinship with such an artist.

Fantaisie espagnole / Norman Peterkin

One of the best and most attractive among Sorabji's early works is the *Fantaisie espagnole* (1919; 23 pp.). It exists in two manuscripts: one went to the dedicatee, Norman Peterkin, whose name we have already know as the dedicatee of *Quasi habanera*; the other to the Library of Congress (in 1928). The early manuscript bears the dedication "To my very good friend Norman Peterkin, his immeasurably K.S.", whereas the published edition bears simply "To Norman Peterkin". The longer dedication is followed by the inscription "Tout comprendre c'est tout pardonner". Could there have been a small skirmish that Sorabji tried to calm by saying that to understand is to forgive?

Besides Philip Heseltine, Norman Peterkin (b. Liverpool, 21 December 1886; d. East Horsley, Surrey, 15 December 1982) was one of Sorabji's best friends during his young adult years. An Englishman of Scottish and Irish descent, he had studied the piano, the organ, and the violin privately.[22] In 1917, on his return to Liverpool from a seven-year stint in the Singapore and Hong Kong branches of the music merchants Rushworth and Dreaper, he became a partner in the business of a Mr. Lang, an art dealer of Bavarian origin. In 1924 he began a career with Oxford University Press: first as sales manager and later as music editor. He took early retirement in 1947, partly because of his wife's failing health, which was a source of great concern to him until her death in 1960. A self-taught composer who

[20]KSS to RS, 13 November 1959, 1. It is not clear whether the meeting actually took place.

[21]KSS to RS, 26 September 1958.

[22]Biographical information on Peterkin comes from Alastair Chisholm and Colin Scott-Sutherland, "Norman Peterkin, 1886–1982", *British Music* 16 (1994): 3–5. There are entries in the 1954 and 1980 editions of *Grove's Dictionary* (both by Colin Mason). Photographs can be found in Hubert Foss, "Personal Portraits: Norman Peterkin, Man behind the Scenes", *Music Lover*, January 1948: 13–14, and in *SCC*, 140. See also Alastair Chisholm, "The Songs of Norman Peterkin", liner notes for the Lyrita SRCD.362 recording (2017) by Charlotte de Rothschild, soprano, and Adrian Farmer, piano, 3–7 (the booklet includes three photographs).

wrote in a conservative idiom, Peterkin left behind forty-two songs, some part songs, and various instrumental pieces.[23] Several of his works reveal the influence of the Orient as well as of the composers Cyril Scott and Peter Warlock (Philip Heseltine).[24]

Peterkin left little more of his friendship with Sorabji than a brief memoir, which is far from reliable because it mixes events and dates.[25] He had a London flat in addition to his Liverpool home and met the composer in the metropolis in 1917. It is through his "critical writings" that he discovered him, by which he certainly meant his open letters. He felt "a most powerful intellect at work writing of the contemporary musical scene in incisive and masterly fashion" and, "stirred and excited at his writings", wrote to him "out of the blue to express what I felt".

Sorabji must have found a congenial friend in Peterkin, as the dedication of *Quasi habanera*, completed in the year of their first meeting, shows. He dedicated three other works to him: the *Fantaisie espagnole*, the *Toccata seconda per pianoforte*, and the *Concerto da suonare da me solo e senza orchestra, per divertirmi*. The dedication of the *Fantaisie espagnole*, completed in March 1919, was certainly the occasion for the dedication by Peterkin, the first one to be offered to him. "Ronggend (Malay Dancing and Singing Feast)", the first of the three pieces from *Betel – Jade – Ivory: Suite for the Piano* (Boston Music Company, 1920), is inscribed "For Kaikhosru Sorabji"; it is obviously inspired by his experiences abroad. After Sorabji's move to Corfe Castle, meetings with his friend could take place when he travelled to London to attend to various matters, especially medical ones. Sorabji also made occasional visits to East Horsley (Surrey), where Peterkin later lived.

In 1938, in his capacity as music editor at Oxford University Press, Peterkin was instrumental in getting the Press to become the selling agent of Sorabji's compositions published between 1921 and 1931. Forty years later, when Sorabji's works had begun to be performed in public with his consent, he successfully persuaded him to become a member of the Performing Right Society in order to receive royalties from performances and broadcasts.

Sorabji wrote little about Peterkin. In 1937 he merely deplored "astounding omissions" from a *Who's Who in Music* edited by Sir Landon Ronald (1873–1938).[26] Thirty years later he described him as "a very dear and valued old friend, a really *good* person" and praised the kindliness he had retained despite having had to deal with the "odious contemptible and despicable crew that are the run of the mill musicians" he had met during his professional life.[27] Frank Holliday, one of Sorabji's closest friends between 1937 and 1979, met Peterkin in 1952, and this led to an extensive correspondence filling fifteen thick folders in Holliday's collection of Sorabjiana. Both men were very fond of their friend and never tired of discussing their contacts with the composer and his relationships with others.

Several (mostly forgotten) composers, including Lord Berners (Sir Gerald Hugh Tyrwhitt-Wilson, 1883–1950), have used the title *Fantaisie espagnole*. Sorabji described his 1919 orchestral piece (arranged for piano four hands in 1920) as a "frivolous, very amusing, and brilliantly clever" work that "always makes one feel that in Lord Berners the English have a composer who can really do in music

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[23]The *Catalogue of Printed Music in the British Library to 1980*, 62 vols., ed. Laureen Baillie and Robert Balchin (London, Munich, New York, and Paris: K. G. Saur, 1981–87), 44:39–41, lists sixty-four works, most of which were published by Oxford University Press.

[24]For assessments of Peterkin as a composer, see Hermon Ould, "Two English Song-Writers: Hubert Foss and Norman Peterkin", *The Sackbut* 11 (1930): 77–81, and Colin Scott-Sutherland, "Peterkin and His Music", *British Music* 16 (1994): 5–31. See also "Obituary: Norman Peterkin", *MT* 125, no. 1691 (January 1984): 44.

[25]Norman Peterkin, "A Note on Kaikhosru Sorabji", programme booklet for a recital by Yonty Solomon, Wigmore Hall recital, 7 December 1976, 8–9.

[26]Sorabji, "Music", *NEW* 11, nos. 16–20 (29 July 1937): 315–16; 315.

[27]KSS to FH, undated (1968) {2/F.9}.

what Stravinsky so often tries to do and never does".[28] In a discussion of neglected works, he described it in similar terms. The success of its first performance was "so great that one would have thought an early repeat assured". Moreover, despite the same "emphatic success" it received each time it was played, it had not taken its "quite justifiable place" in the repertoire.[29] One work for which Sorabji had a special affection was the "delightful little 'Carrosse du Saint Sacrement'" (1923), which was "persistently and laboriously ignored in all public references to opera and English composers on the part of the scribes and clerks of Fleet Ditch".[30] Lord Berners does not seem to have left an opinion about Sorabji. However, Sir Richard Rodney Bennett (1936–2012) once called Lord Berners a "very odd musical character", and went on to say that he was "not disappointing", unlike van Dieren and Sorabji, who were also among the "strange composers in English music" of the 1920s, who were, "when you get close to them".[31]

As mentioned above, the *Fantaisie espagnole* exists in two manuscripts. In addition to various minor changes, the first manuscript contains four passages, all but one of them quite substantial, that did not find their way into the final copy submitted to the Viennese engraver Waldheim-Eberle. Sorabji omitted four cadential passages and, for some reason, abandoned his original numbering and division into sections: "I. Prélude et introduction", "II. Mouvement de habanera", and "III. [Modérément animé]".[32]

The "Prélude" consists of a long cadenza-like pedal point on the dominant C♯, leading to a languid "Introduction" in moderate tempo ([ED]p. 5), beginning in F♯.[33] This introduction is based on two themes. One is a sinuous melodic line played over a chordal accompaniment, and is typical not only of Sorabji's Spanish-inspired, but also his Persian-inspired music. It begins on a note (here C♯), circles around it, descends a few steps (here to F♯), and returns to the starting point—or to another note if the composer wishes to explore a different tonal region. This theme is used twice more in A (pp. 6, 9) **(example 6.1)**. The second theme is an ascending stepwise line harmonized with chords, played nonchalantly; it is heard four times, in C, E♭, C♯, E (twice on p. 7, and twice on p. 11). Sorabji inserts a cadenza-like passage after each pair of statements.

The second section is a habanera (p. 13), with the traditional dotted rhythm in the bass and the quaver triplet followed by the two quavers in the upper parts. Sorabji explores the tonal regions contained within the fourth G♯–C♯, but the overall focus is on B, the fourth degree in F♯. This section ends with a flourish-like cadenza on a pedal point of G, and we later understand that this G is the beginning of a 6–5–1 large-scale melodic movement, as the cadenza ends on F♯, the fifth degree and dominant of B, in which key the last section begins. However daring it may have seemed on the surface to contemporaries, the *Fantaisie espagnole* is tonal music.

The final section, which should be played nimbly and gaily, is mostly in 6/8 and usually has an open fifth as its harmonic basis. Each bar usually alternates two harmonies, like the tonic-dominant relationship of the jota, but it is not a jota, a dance usually in 3/8 or 3/4. This most exciting section,

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[28]Sorabji, "Music", *NA* 37, no. 1 (7 May 1925): 7.

[29]Sorabji, "On Neglected Works", in *AM*, 99–106; 104.

[30]Sorabji, "Music", *NEW* 5, no. 9 (14 June 1934): 208–9; 209; see also "Music: The Promenades", *NA* 49, no. 23 (8 October 1931): 272–73; 272, and "Opera in the Vernacular", in *AM*, 31–37; 34.

[31]"Sir Richard Rodney Bennett: Interview with Peter Dickinson on 4 August 1983 at the BBC", in Peter Dickinson, *Lord Berners, Composer, Writer, Painter* (Woodbridge: The Boydell Press, 2008), 138–42; 138.

[32]The omitted passages would be just before pp. 9/4/2, 10/4/1, 17/1/3, and 19/1/2 of the published edition, and the section titles on pp. 3, 13, and 21.

[33]The analysis of the *Fantaisie espagnole* draws in part on the work of one of my former students (and later a colleague), Serge Lacasse, "Une introduction à Kaikhosru Shapurji Sorabji et à la *Fantaisie espagnole*" (dissertation de fin de baccalauréat [B.A. honours thesis], Université Laval, 1992), iii, 43 pp.

which includes a lightly textured interlude (pp. 26–27), consists of two main sections, each ending with a blazing cadenza (pp. 28, 31). The first one calls for an ascending series of forty-one chords repeated sequentially in groups of three or five, followed by flashing arpeggios of several sevenths and ninths. The second one is again a series of forty-two ascending chords. (Could Sorabji have marked his cadenzas *ad libitum* because he feared they might frighten potential performers? It would be sad if anyone playing this entertaining piece were to deprive the listener of such fireworks.) It leads to a brilliant coda on a C♯ pedal point ending on an F♯ resolution with C♯ as root. This third section of the *Fantaisie espagnole* explores several tonal regions and can be seen as an extended passage with harmonic tension seeking a resolution; we might speak of a substitution of the dominant. The overall structure therefore becomes a clear I–IV–V–I.

Several pianists have performed the *Fantaisie espagnole*, the first of Sorabji's works to become known. Ten years before Sorabji authorized public performances, the American pianist John Gates (1913–92), of Indianapolis, Indiana, gave its first hearings in 1966, notably at Carnegie Hall on 20 October.[34] The work was taken up in 1973 (again before official performances could take place) by Michael Habermann, who, after several semi-public performances in colleges in the New York State, played it, also at Carnegie Hall, on 22 May 1977.[35] A few months earlier Yonty Solomon had included the piece in the first of his authorized Sorabji recitals.

The publication of the *Fantaisie espagnole* in 1922 by London and Continental Music Publishing led to some reviews and comments. One rather conservative reviewer, writing in *Musical Opinion*, had difficulty with the piece's "spicy" language. He failed to discover "any principle of construction or any beauty of idea, harmonic or melodic"; the piece remained "all dark and meaningless". The only consistency in this "very baffling production" was that the composer never deviated into euphony".[36] Harvey Grace (1874–1944), the editor of the *Musical Times*, was much more positive, but asked for more clarity. He sensed an "uncannily clever musical brain at the back of it all", but wished Sorabji "would write music as clear and easy of comprehension as his excellent letters to the press".[37] The composer Percival Garratt (1877–1953), in the *Sackbut*, spoke of a "superlatively difficult" work and suggested that a pianola version would make it possible to judge the musical content.[38] Sorabji's friend Christopher à Becket Williams remarked of the final pages that "for sheer brilliance of piano-writing they seem to me to stand alone".[39] For the pianist and composer David Branson (1909–97), then a student of piano and composition at the Royal College of Music, the work showed "too little evidence of development", although it "pulls itself together and ends well and with splendid bravura".[40]

Sorabji later dismissed the *Fantaisie espagnole* as a "baby-piece", calling it "a rather trivial and unimportant work". It was time for Peterkin to have "something to […] take the insipid taste of a baby-piece dedicated to him years ago out of his mouth!"[41] This led to the dedication of the *Toccata seconda*

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[34]Harold C. Schonberg, "Music: Pianistic Exotica—John Gates Performs at Carnegie Hall", *The New York Times*, 21 October 1966, 36.

[35]Donal Henahan, "Recital: Habermann Plays Sorabji Piano Works", *The New York Times*, 24 May 1977, 30. A preparatory article to this recital was published a few days before: Robert Sherman, "Lifting the Veil of Silence from a Musical Enigma", *The New York Times*, 20 May 1977, C14.

[36]"Reviews of Music: London & Continental Music Publishing Co.", *MO* 46, no. 548 (May 1923): 837.

[37]H[arvey] G[race], "New Music: Pianoforte Music", *MT* 44, no. 965 (1 July 1923): 479.

[38]Percival Garratt, "New Publications", *The Sackbut* 5, no. 4 (August 1924): 24.

[39]Christopher à Becket Williams, "The Music of Kaikhosru Sorabji", *The Sackbut* 4 (June 1924): 315–19; 316.

[40]David Branson, "Kaikhosru Sorabji", *The British Musician and Musical News* 5, no. 11 (November 1929): 311–12; 311.

[41]KSS to EC 18 April 1930, 5 (section dated Easter Day); KSS to EC, 1934 (no day and month given).

per pianoforte. In later life, though, thinking of his beloved Palermo, he felt "over all Sicilian-Spanish" and dashed through his early piece, judging it "really not too bad".[42]

Sonata no. 1 for Piano

Sorabji completed his *Sonata no. 1 for Piano* (1919; 42 pp.) on 5 August 1919 at Christchurch (Twynham), Hampshire. The manuscript, which he gave to the Library of Congress in 1928, bears the dedication "all'Illustrissimo Maestro Signor Cavaliere Ferruccio Busoni". As mentioned above, the published edition lacks a dedication, as Busoni had not given his consent when the two met. The one-movement sonata, which lasts about twenty-two minutes, begins with a bold, (Richard) Strauss-like gesture. Underlying this sweeping gesture is a descending cell (C♯–B–G–F♯; [0,1,4,7] or 4–18 in set theory parlance) that extends down to C♯ and then chromatically ascends to D♯; it recalls some melodic fragments from Sonata no. 8, op. 66 (1912–13) by Scriabin, whose shadow hovers over the whole piece **(example 6.2)**. Sorabji explained that the work was "built up around a theme which is enunciated with such clarity and emphasis, and which is woven into almost every single bar of the music [...] that a confession of inability to find it is like being unable to find or hear the *Dresden Amen* in 'Parsifal'".[43]

Like most of Sorabji's early works, the sonata is strongly reminiscent of Scriabin's music, with which it shares massive, unbridled chordal climaxes ([ED]pp. 5–6, 20–21, 42–43).[44] It begins in a moderate but spirited tempo with a ***ff*** statement of two interlocking statements of the main motive, in octaves, over a dominant sonority on A, as mentioned above. Various restatements of modified forms of the opening motive make up the rest of the sonata. The end of the first section is reached with an initial climax consisting of series of repeated chords over a dominant ninth chord on B♭, after which the music breaks down in the lower register (p. 7). A second section, which begins languorously, climaxes with a furious ascending quasi-octatonic scale (p. 13). The third section begins rough and wild, with a hard sound, and leads to a restatement of the opening motive with the same harmonic colour (p. 17). Through a series of climaxes (pp. 18–19, 20–21, 26–27, 30, 32), the penultimate of which is a rare instance of a strictly octatonic scale in Sorabji's music, we arrive at another restatement of the original form of the motive (p. 39). On the p. 24/3 we find the first example in Sorabji's music (marked "Très vif et dur") of the fragmented style common in piano music of the 1950s and 1960s. A long and difficult cadenza-like passage in octaves, with each hand going its own way (p. 41), leads to a very fast "Coda", which is meant to be played blazingly and radiantly. It consists of a final statement of the opening motive, this time with D in the bass, which may be the resolution of the dominant sonority heard periodically. The theme is heard in long note values, surrounding series of ***fff*** repeated chords, ending with powerful octaves on A, thus returning to the dominant sonority rather than resolving it. The music slowly dies out, ending ***pppp*** on an E–B♭ tritone in the lowest register (the loose-leaf errata sheet corrects the C♭ to a B♭).

In March 1920 Sorabji played his sonata several times for Philip Heseltine, who hoped that his friend Delius would find the time to come and hear the work of his "Indian friend". He spoke of the "bigness of his conceptions and the sheer, overwhelming emotional power of his music" and praised the

[42]KSS to AH, 3 March 1973.
[43]Sorabji, "Music", *The New Age* 43, no. 4 (24 May 1928): 44.
[44]For detailed comments on this work, see Lisa Hardy, "Piano Sonatas by Sorabji and Bridge", in *The British Piano Sonata, 1870–1945* (London: The Boydell Press, 2001), 101–26; 101–12.

"technical mastery of means" and the "novel and peculiar chord-combinations".[45] He invited Sorabji to give the first performance of his work at London's Mortimer Hall[46] as part of the Second Sackbut Concert on 2 November 1920.[47] There is no known review of this concert, which was Sorabji's first known public appearance as a pianist, but a letter from Heseltine to Frederick Delius tells us that bad acoustics made the work sound "like a mere mist of notes".[48] Sorabji then played it with his *Sonata seconda for Piano* at the Kammersaal of the Musikverein on 13 January 1922. Shortly after his arrival in Vienna, he sent a copy of the earlier work to Arnold Schoenberg, writing in French and duly insisting on the praise he had received from Busoni.[49] We do not know the Austrian composer's reaction.

The *Sonata no. 1 for Piano* was engraved by Breitkopf & Härtel and published by London and Continental Music Publishing in April 1921 at the latest. It seems to have cost Sorabji only £20 (£944.00 in 2021) and sold forty-four copies in three months.[50] Christopher à Becket Williams, who had heard the composer play the work several times ("a revelation in technical facility which few would even attempt to emulate"), offered the following comments in his review of the published score, insisting on Sorabji's "Oriental" origins.

> As regards its musical content, let it be said at once that it is caviare to the general. Mr. Sorabji is a revolutionary, and discord is too mild a term to use for his harmonies. [...] [The figure contained in the first bar] is elaborated, augmented and diminished, inverted, diverted and turned inside out, with all the skill of which Mr. Sorabji is a master. The composer appears to think almost entirely horizontally, and his consequent audacious counterpoint would cause the old savants to turn in their graves.
>
> As I have implied, at first sight his works appear to be a sort of chaos of incoherence and over-elaboration, but it is not so. It must be always remembered that he is an Oriental, and his music must be looked at from a distance as it were. It is like an intricate piece of Benares work or Chinese ornamentation. The arabesques, which are a feature of such work, when examined closely are exquisitely conceived, but appear meaningless at close sight; yet from some way off they sink into their place and the whole design becomes apparent.[51]

Robert Lorenz, who was to become a friend, wrote in the *Musical News and Herald* that the sonata had made the composer "a household word amongst the more controversially inclined musicians".[52] The anonymous reviewer of *Musical Opinion* simply reported on Sorabji's use of three staves and of the unusual octava sign, promising (in vain) "to resume on another occasion our consideration of this work".[53] Harvey Grace (1877–1944), in the *Musical Times*, called it "the most difficult pianoforte work in existence" and suggested that it be cut for the player piano; nevertheless, if played properly, it "should prove wildly exciting". On the other hand, it suffered "from a want of contrast" and missed "an occasional bit of simplicity".[54] Ernest Fowles (1864–1932), a Fellow of the Royal Academy of Music, wrote in a graded list of new repertoire: "Here we have modernism—of a type—in full garb, to which

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[45]PH to Frederick Delius, 15 March 1920, in Barry Smith, ed., *Frederick Delius and Peter Warlock: A Friendship Revealed* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2000), 309–10; see also John Mitchell, "Mentions of Kaikhosru Sorabji in the Letters of Philip Heseltine", *The Peter Warlock Society Newsletter*, no. 95 (Autumn 2014): 16–20; 18.

[46]Mortimer Hall was located at 93 Mortimer Street, London W1, near Queen's Hall, east of Regent Street, halfway between Oxford Circus and the Broadcasting House.

[47]"Philip Heseltine and Cecil Gray Announce Two Sackbut Concerts", *The Sackbut* 1, no. 5 (September 1920): 231.

[48]PH to Frederick Delius, 2 January 1921{*LPH*, no. 31f, pp. 125–26}.

[49]KSS to Arnold Schoenberg, 23 December [1921] {Arnold Schönberg Center, Vienna, http://archive.schoenberg.at/letters/name.php?id_name=2175&action=view&sort_letters}.

[50]Philip Heseltine to Fritz Hart, 15 November 1921 {*LPH*, no. 32a, p. 129}.

[51]Williams, "Kaikhosru Sorabji's First Piano Sonata", *The Musical Standard*, 26 March 1921: 104. The author used the same material in his article "The Music of Kaikhosru Sorabji", *The Sackbut* 4 (June 1924): 315–19; 315–16.

[52]Robert Lorenz, "Letters to the Editor", *Musical News and Herald* 60, no. 1521 (21 May 1921): 657.

[53]"Reviews of Music: London & Continental Music Publishing Co.", *MO* 44, no. 525 (June 1921): 758.

[54]H[arvey] G[race], "New Music: Pianoforte Music", *MT* 62, no. 945 (1 November 1921): 781–82; 781.

is added not a little executive difficulty." He left it to future generations to decide on the ultimate value of the music, which should at least be examined by "the artists of to-day".[55]

Sorabji was critical of this youthful work when he wrote about it in 1953, although it still held a special place because of the recommendation it had received from Busoni.

> This, written at a very early age, betrays the fact pretty well all over itself. The influence of Scriabine is ubiquitous and almost all-pervasive, but the work has a boldness and impetus that Scriabine lacks, for what that is or may be worth. The entire work grows virtually out of the opening motive where it is enunciated in two forms at one and the same time in differing note-duration values. […]
>
> It can easily be imagined the immense excitement and encouragement this tribute to a very immature, as the composer now sees it, imitative and very derivative work, gave him at the time, and still gives him in retrospect.[56]

Music to "The Rider by Night"

On 13 November 1919, four months after the *Sonata no. 1 for Piano*, Sorabji completed a short work for voices and small orchestra. The *Music to "The Rider by Night"* (1919; 54 pp.) is based on a libretto by the English poet and playwright Robert (Malise Bowyer) Nichols (b. 6 September 1893; d. 17 December 1944), who wrote it for Sorabji at the urging of his friend Philip Heseltine, whom he knew from their Oxford days (1913–14). Nichols, who won critical acclaim for his series of war poems *Invocation* (1915) and *Ardours and Endurances* (1917), went on to become a Hollywood scriptwriter. An important work of this period was the Broadway show *Wings over Europe* (1929).[57]

Nichols recalled Heseltine's request for librettos urgently wanted by Sorabji and Bernard van Dieren. He described the result—*The Rider by Night* for Sorabji, and *The Tailor* for van Dieren—as "so gosh-awful they was jus' t'rrible", as he put it in "Hollywood studio-slang". Heseltine had given him at most a week for Sorabji's libretto and less than two weeks for the other, and was not at all moved by the author's explanations that such haste had "impoverished the strictly dramatic interest".[58]

Although the text was commissioned in 1916, it was written until July 1919, in three days. For reasons unknown, the surviving manuscript lacks a title page and any dedication page as well as pp. 21–40. Sorabji was delighted when Paul Rapoport discovered it in the Heseltine collection of letters at the British Library (where I myself was able to locate the uncatalogued libretto in 2006); his comment was: "Fancy that Rider by Night thing being still in existence! For a small theatre-orchestra as far as I can remember."[59]

The action of *The Rider by Night* takes place in the 1810s, in a moorland cottage, probably in Bohemia, at night in early November. The mother of a twelve-year-old boy called Peter is singing a lullaby to her dying son. The Man in Black (later called Death) enters, carrying a violin in a case, and is confronted by Godmamma about a bargain with him. He begins to play a gay, mocking air, causing the Boy's breath to become short as the crisis approaches. Death tells Godmamma that the end has come, whereupon the gale enters the cottage and everything seems to be whirled around in darkness.

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[55] "A List of the Month's Best Classified and Graded by Ernest Fowles, F.R.A.M.", *The Music Student* 13, no. 10 (July 1921): 593.

[56] *FFN*, 2.

[57] For a photograph of Nichols, see *Peter Warlock: A Centenary Celebration*, ed. David Cox and John Bishop (London: Thames Publishing, 1994), between pp. 128 and 129.

[58] Anne Charlton and William Charlton, *Putting Poetry First: The Life of Robert Nichols, 1893–1944* (Norwich: Michael Russell, 2003), 65 (quoted from the manuscript). The passage is also reproduced in Robert Nichols, "At Oxford", in Cecil Gray, *Peter Warlock: A Memoir of Philip Heseltine, by Cecil Gray, with Contributions by Sir Richard Terry and Robert Nichols; Foreword by Augustus John* (London: J. Cape, 1934), 61–92; 77.

[59] KSS to KD, 10 September 1978 {Derus, S22, p. 106}.

There is then a mysterious peace as the Boy seems to be dreaming. The Father, realizing that Godmamma is dead, kneels before her as the sun rises to the sounds of awakening nature.

Sorabji scored the music for one each of flute, oboe, clarinet, bassoon, and horn, with two cornets and a bass trombone, three violins, viola, violoncello, and double bass, plus five percussion instruments. The manuscript contains spoken cues for the Mother, Godmamma, Peter, and Death; only the first two have some sung passages. But except for two interjections, all the music from p. 40 onwards is instrumental. Sorabji made it clear in a note to his copyist that he intended to have parts prepared; it is doubtful whether such parts ever existed.

The score begins with an appropriately dark introduction, with the *Dies irae* melody in the winds against figurations in the strings. The Mother is heard singing two lullabies; one is described as "childish and foolish like a nursery rhyme", while the other is to be "sung in a vague, quivering, indefinite sort of way. It would be preferable for the actress to sing anything that comes into her head for these short shreds of song." The music becomes very animated and forceful as the action climaxes, with the entire ensemble being summoned and the brass blaring forceful chorale-like lines. The climax then subsides and the work ends very softly to portray the rise of the sun and the "innumerable sounds of awakening nature" referred to in the libretto.

7 / 1920–22 ■ Discovering Other Worlds

Contacts with Music Publishers

The few works published under Sorabji's supervision enabled him to maintain a certain bibliographical presence until the late 1970s, when authorized recitals began to bring his music to life. All but two of the standard commercial editions of his works appeared between 1921 and 1931,[1] the two exceptions being the *Pastiche on the "Minute Waltz" by Chopin* and the *Fantasiettina sul nome illustre dell'egregio poeta Christopher Grieve ossia Hugh M'Diarmid*, published in 1969 and 1987, respectively, by Music Treasure Publications and Bardic Edition.

Sorabji probably began looking for a publisher in 1920, while working on the *Prelude, Interlude, and Fugue for Piano*. Universal Edition, when approached with his "most interesting opus", could not promise to publish; another attempt, with Peters, did not produce the expected results.[2] Sorabji's first five publications were finally published between 1921 and 1923 by London and Continental Music Publishing, a little-known firm (with offices at 40–41 Great Marlborough Street) whose stock was acquired by J. Curwen and Sons in 1922. For the next two scores, he dealt with F. and B. Goodwin Ltd., who used J. and W. Chester (of 11 Great Marlborough Street) as distributors; he may have been introduced to this publisher by his friend Eric Blom (1888–1959), who had worked for Chester as a young man. In 1924 he made a deal with Curwen, who also published the *Sackbut* and the *Musical News and Herald*, two periodicals to which he contributed articles and open letters. Curwen (with offices at 24 Berners Street) published seven of Sorabji's scores engraved in Vienna by Waldheim-Eberle between 1924 and 1931.[3]

In 1938 Sorabji transferred his music from Curwen to Oxford University Press through the offices of his friend Norman Peterkin, who worked for the venerable publishing house. This association continued until November 1988, after all remaining copies had been sold (see chapter 14). In the late 1930s the composer investigated the possibility of reprinting his music, should it ever become out of print. Breitkopf & Härtel told him that the plates of his first published works had been melted down as they had not heard from him for a long time, but that reprints would be possible.[4] Needless to say, no publisher before the Sorabji Archive had ever reprinted Sorabji's music.

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[1]On Sorabji's publishers, see Maria Rosaria Margiotta, "Sorabji: A History of the First Publishers and an Edition (Transcendental Study no. 99)" (thesis, Master of Philosophy, City University [London], 1999), 12–26 (chap. 2).

[2]KSS to PH, 21 August 1920 {*LPH*, no. 31, p. 122}.

[3]Waldheim-Eberle was a Viennese firm of printers, lithographers, and music engravers owned by Rudolf von Waldheim (1832–90) and Josef Eberle (1845–1921). The firm, founded by Waldheim in 1892, was located at Seidengasse 3–11 from 1918. Although it was aryanized in the late 1930s, it continued to operate until 1974 and printed the scores published by Universal Edition until 1960; see Schenker Documents Online: Waldheim-Eberle, https://schenkerdocumentsonline.org/profiles/organization/entity-002402.html, and Paul Banks, "Josef Eberle & Co. – Erste Wiener Zeitungs-Gesellschaft –Waldheim-Eberle", https://www.mahlercat.org.uk/Pages/Publishers/Eberle.htm.

[4]Breitkopf & Härtel to KSS, 13 September 1938.

Sorabji had a keen interest in typography, paper, and binding, and was passionate about discussing with printers all aspects of layout "down to the smallest detail", with covers being "the result of my own very careful and detailed instructions".[5] He considered himself "something of a connoisseur of books, printing, printing-layout and so on", and this once led him to offer to his friend Erik Chisholm "a few criticisms of the *typographical* aspect of your programmes". He called them "the proper thing for the village concert at which the vicar's and squire's daughters open their faces" but "entirely and even grotesquely inappropriate for an interesting and important series of concerts given in a megalopolis". He therefore recommended better typefaces, in particular the striking sans serif titling typeface Neuland, used on the title pages of his scores of the *Symphony [no. 1] for Organ* and *Opus clavicembalisticum*, which looks as if the letters had been roughly carved out of wood.[6] He emphasized that such things were "worth looking" and explained how persistent he could be.

> It is the difference, let us say, between the horrors of ordinary little pages on music and my own, which happen to be fine specimens of typographical excellence, because I ordained the *size* and *position* of *every single word*; it meant a good deal of fighting, especially the Organ Symphony, when I had one of the new German fonts, the "Neuland" of Rudolf Koch, used as a result of violent insistence. As it all had to be done by correspondence [...], it was something of an achievement to have imposed my will on that notoriously ignorant, notoriously stupid, obstinate, notoriously timid and convention hagridden of animals the commercial printer. But I *did* it!![7]

Another example of Sorabji's love of typography are the three scores published in special limited editions in half-binding and printed on handmade paper, signed and numbered by the composer: the *Concerto for Piano and Orchestra [no. 5]*, the *Sonata seconda for Piano*, and *Opus clavicembalisticum*. These editions, now divided more or less equally between private and public collections, have much larger margins than the standard ones, and the paper bears the marks of the lithographic press. (In fact, Sorabji disliked the ordinary copies, whose margins were "by quite half an inch too narrow, which has a most unfortunate effect on the appearance of the page".[8]) He also liked to have selected scores of works by other composers bound, for example Schoenberg's *Pierrot lunaire*, which he entrusted to the firm of McLeish and Sons and then offered to Erik Chisholm.[9]

Sorabji benefited from his father's financial help for the publication of his works.[10] This support ended in late 1931, after the publication of *Opus clavicembalisticum*, the most massive of the works to

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[5]KSS to PH, 19 June 1922 {*LPH*, no. 36, p. 135}.

[6]Neuland was cut in 1923 by Rudolf Koch (1876–1934) for the Klingspor type foundry (Offenbach am Main). In 1928 the Monotype company released Othello as a competitor, which Ronald Stevenson, "*Opus Clavicembalisticum*—A Critical Analysis", in booklet for John Ogdon's recording on Altarus AIR-CD-9075(4), 1989, 28–49; 28, confused with the typeface chosen for the work discussed. Newfoundland, a modern variant of Neuland, is used as the display type on the title page of the present book. The *Occult Review*, to which Sorabji sent several open letters, began to use Neuland in advertisements for new books in or around vol. 49, no. 2 (February 1929) of the American edition (The Blavatsky Association, p. i). In vol. 49, no. 5 (May 1929), the publisher used Othello (Sylvan J. Muldeon and Hereward Carrington, *The Projection of the Astral Body*, inside front cover). Othello's stories in Shakespeare's play are associated with the occult according to Pável Drabek, "'There's Magicke in the web of it': The Occult Dimension of Shakespeare's *Othello*", *Theory and Practice in English Studies* (Proceedings from the Eighth Conference of British, American and Canadian Studies, Brno: Masarykova univerzita) 4 (2005): 43–50, https://studylib.net/doc/8356994/%E2%80%9Cthere-s-magicke-in-the-web-of-it%E2%80%9D--the-occult. The sans serif typeface used by Curwen for the two works by Sorabji published in 1927 (*Le jardin parfumé—Poem for Piano Solo* and *Valse-fantaisie for Piano*) has not yet been identified. It is not the Curwen Sans font (ca. 1928) created for the Curwen Press; see "Reviving Curwen Sans", 18 February 2018, https://www.k-type.com/reviving-curwen-sans/.

[7]KSS to EC, 3 June 1930, 14 (section dated 11 June).

[8]KSS to EC, 24 January 1932, 1.

[9]KSS to EC, 17 June 1930, 14 (section dated 30 June). The firm of McLeish and Sons operated from 1909 to 1957, first as binders, then as booksellers.

[10]*RN* (23–26 October 1972), 9 {3/F.3}.

appear under his control. The devaluation of the pound and the rupee had hit Shapurji Sorabji hard, and this prevented him from continuing to help his son in this matter.[11] A list of "Other Compositions of Kaikhosru Sorabji" at the end of two of the Curwen scores indicates that six more works would have appeared.[12] Realizing that the cost of producing editions of his large works would be astronomical, Sorabji concluded: "So I just write them, have them well and securely bound and sent to join my other mss. on their shelves."[13] At least in the late 1940s, when he spent much time in Corfe Castle looking for a permanent home, he seems to have preferred to leave them in the safe custody of his bank.[14] As he once remarked: "I am apt to lose interest and even forget about works that I've finished and done with in so far as writing the damn thing is concerned!"[15]

Quintet no. 1 for Piano and Quartet of Stringed Instruments

At the end of January 1920 Sorabji completed his *Quintet no. 1 for Piano and Quartet of Stringed Instruments* (1919–20; 72 pp.).[16] The original manuscript is missing, but a copyist's copy, formerly in the collection of the Central Music Library, is now in the Westminster City Archives. This copy came from the London Contemporary Music Centre, which the composer probably approached with a view to a performance. The score contains various annotations, mainly tempo markings, some of which do not appear in the published score. The dedication "To my very good friend Philip Heseltine" appears only in the published score, which was issued by London and Continental Music Publishing in June 1923 at the latest.[17]

The work, which lasts some twenty-six minutes, begins with what Christopher à Becket Williams has described as an ever-changing "motto".[18] This takes the form of a capricious ascending melodic line in the piano, rising from a low D and covering three octaves. Such melodic shapes pervade all of Sorabji's music. In fact, the whole work grows out of a series of ascending gestures consisting of a variable number of irregular groupings. Descending gestures are not absent, but the upward pull is so frequent as to really dominate the piece. The piano part also includes another (and related) gesture, consisting of a series of powerful chords in both hands, mostly in bitonal relationship, usually outlining an ascending line (see [ED]pp. 12/2/1, 15/2/2, 17/2/2, 44/1/2); this is a grandiose extension of the three accented crotchets in the middle of the motto **(example 7.1)**.

As with most of Sorabji's single-movement works, it is difficult to suggest a formal outline because the composer rarely uses a given style for long stretches. In fact, the music begins by spinning a web of lines at the beginning and ends after a while. Nevertheless, one might wish to see first a section in moderate tempo beginning with the motto, then a scherzando section (p. 18/1/1), followed by an

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[11]KSS to EC, 18 September 1931, 8–9.

[12]The works that remained unpublished are: *Symphony [no. 1] for Piano, Large Orchestra, Chorus, and Organ*, *Pastiche on the "Minute Waltz" by Chopin*, *Concerto for Piano and Orchestra [no.] III [no. 6]*, *Opusculum for Orchestra*, *Cinque sonetti di Michelagniolo Buonarroti*, and *Variazioni e fuga triplice sopra "Dies irae" per pianoforte*.

[13]KSS to NG, 8 June 1949 {not listed in KSSC; the date may have been notated incorrectly}.

[14]KSS to RWLS, 26 November 1949 (p. 20).

[15]KSS to KD, 10 January 1977 {Derus S04, p. 23}.

[16]KSS to PH, 26 January 1920 {*LPH*, no. 30, p. 119}.

[17]The music library at the University of North Carolina at Chapel Hill has a copy of the published score with the inscription "Au quatuor for <?> / avec le [*recte* les] compliments de l'Auteur / 15–4–23". The illegible word looks like "Gote", which should in fact read "Goté", the nickname Sorabji used for Heseltine, the dedicatee of the work. The music librarian was unable to establish the provenance of the score but believes that the library acquired it in 1985. A copy of the inscribed score is available on IMSLP, where it appears as "Complete Score and String Parts".

[18]Christopher à Becket Williams, "The Music of Kaikhosru Sorabji", *The Sackbut* 4 (June 1924): 315–19; 317.

extended slow section (p. 24/2/3), a substantial final section (p. 44/1/4), and a coda (p. 55/2/2).[19] A feature of the last section is the use of four ascending irregular chromatic scales covering several octaves (pp. 46–48), all but the first one over a pedal point. The last two pages bring back powerful statements of the motto and a final reference to the chromatic scale. The music of the last page is supported by a low D, thereby linking the end to the very beginning. However, Sorabji defeats the idea of a tonal centre by moving away from D for the last few chords.

Ferruccio Bonavia (1877–1950) reviewed the *Quintet no. 1*—not too favourably—for the *Musical Times*. He applauded the composer's use of an index of beats (a series of numbers aligned below the piano part and cued to each quaver, shown in the first part of the example), which was most needed by the "harassed reader" faced with accidentals on every chord, piano writing on three staves, and frequent directions. The "Enigmatique équivoque" direction over the last bar aptly defined the music, but he did not care if anyone wanted to solve the problem.[20] An anonymous reviewer, in an unidentified source, called Sorabji's quintet "one of those excessively modern works that stagger the reviewer and leave him flat". He found it "highly interesting", could "feel the direction of the passing chords and altered chords", and found its construction "masterly".[21] Christopher à Becket Williams, one of the composer's friends, called it so "involved" as to be "quite impossible of performance".[22] In 1953 Sorabji described his quintet as a "not very representative nor very good work, and probably more fun for the pianist than for the members of the string quartet, if, indeed, it is fun for anybody".[23] Some twenty-five years later he described his first attempt at the genre as "very immature".[24]

Sorabji's *Quintet no. 1* was to be performed by the pianist Norah Drewett (1882–1960) and the Hart House String Quartet, then Canada's most famous chamber music ensemble, on 29 November 1925 at Aeolian Hall in New York, as part of a concert sponsored by Edgard Varèse's International Composers' Guild.[25] The Guild may have learned of Sorabji's recently published quintet through his friend Bernard van Dieren, who was on the Guild's advisory committee in 1924. Another possibility could be the Canadian organist and pianist George Mackenzie Brewer (1889–1947), who had spent an afternoon with Sorabji at his flat in July 1923 and knew "two or three enterprising and vital personalities in Toronto" who could pay attention to his music.[26] The ensemble had so many difficulties with the work, especially its rhythmic intricacies, that they could never play it in its entirety. Their heavily annotated score and parts (obtained from the Guild) show the difficulties they encountered.[27] The reasons for which the work was dropped are not clear. For Sorabji, people without the right background "were […] ignored in favour of nonentities with the 'background'". In his case, there was the "complicating factor of race prejudice".[28]

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[19]For a different approach, see Christopher Berg, "Sorabji's Piano Quintet (1920)", *BMS News* (British Music Society) 79 (September 1998): 211–12, and the same author's notes in the programme for the first performance of the work at Merkin Concert Hall, New York, on 6 December 1998.

[20]F.B. [Ferruccio Bonavia], "New Music: Chamber Music", *MT* 44, no. 965 (1 July 1923): 480.

[21]"London and Continental Publishing Co., Ltd. / Quintet for Piano and Strings by Kaikhosru Sorabji", 1 p. (incomplete).

[22]Williams, "The Music of Kaikhosru Sorabji", 317.

[23]*FFN*, 3.

[24]KSS to ABP, 5 May 1979.

[25]For a detailed history of this non-concert, see Marc-André Roberge, "Kaikhosru Shapurji Sorabji's Quintet for Piano and Four Stringed Instruments and Its Intended Performance by Norah Drewett and the Hart House String Quartet", in *Music in Canada/La musique au Canada: A Collection of Essays, Volume I*, ed. Guido Bimberg, Kanada-Studien, im Auftrag des Instituts für Kanada-Studien der Universität Augsburg, vol. 25 (Bochum: Universitätsverlag Dr. N. Brockmeyer, 1997), 91–108.

[26]George Mackenzie Brewer to KSS, 7 December 1923 {LAC}.

[27]Milton Blackstone, the violist of the ensemble, donated the material to the Edward Johnson Library of the Faculty of Music at the University of Toronto in 1969.

[28]Sorabji, "Music", *NA* 43, no. 4 (24 May 1928): 44.

Another performance may have taken place in Glasgow, for which Sorabji sent the parts to Erik Chisholm in May 1930. He wanted to arrive a few days before his recital at which he was to play *"Nocturne, Jāmī"* (29 April 1931) to "hear a few rehearsals of the Quintet", but would not play the piano part "at all" and "at any price". Ten days before the recital Chisholm had concluded that a performance was impossible, and Sorabji saw no reason to arrive earlier than the day before the performance.[29]

The work was finally heard on 6 December 1998, in the city where the Hart House String Quartet's performance was to take place, thanks to the composer and pianist Christopher Berg, who not only organized the concert but also played the piano part.

Two Piano Pieces / Theodore Jenkins

In 1921, probably in August at the latest, London and Continental Music Publishing published two short works under the title *Two Piano Pieces* (1918, 1920; 20 pp.), which Sorabji later described as "of no particular value nor interest".[30] The score bears a dedication "to my friend Theodore Jenkins", a gentleman whose identity could not be established but who seems to have been younger than the composer.[31] The pieces are entitled "In the Hothouse" and "Toccata", and their dates of composition are given in the published edition as 1918 and 1920. Philip Heseltine suggested that these two pieces and the *Fantaisie espagnole* would be the best approach to Sorabji for "anyone whose piano technique is below virtuoso standard".[32]

"In the Hothouse", an eight-page piece in a slow tempo, is an attractive work whose sensuous musical language is strongly reminiscent of Debussy and Scriabin. Chords built out of superimposed fourths, seventh chords, chains of parallel triads in second inversion, etc., are used in free interplay. The improvisatory style recalls the more sensuous moments of the *Sonata no. 1 for Piano*. The piece ends with a dissonant chord comprising all but one note of the octatonic scale **(example 7.2)**. "Toccata", a twelve-page piece to be played dryly and coldly, requires a more advanced technique, although it is well within the requirements of most twentieth-century toccatas **(example 7.3)**.

The Polish-born French composer Alexandre Tansman (1897–1986), writing in the *Revue musicale*, liked the harmonic and rhythmic aspects of Sorabji's *Two Piano Pieces* and their sometimes "laden" pianistic writing.[33] Four months later, another review appeared in the *Revue musicale*, this time by the conductor and composer Daniel Lazarus (1898–1964), who was quite enthusiastic about the "flavourful language" and the composer's remarkable gifts, but wished for more steadiness in the outlining of the themes and more decisiveness regarding form.[34] The anonymous reviewer of *Musical Opinion* was completely baffled by the pieces and by the *Trois poèmes pour chant et piano*, reviewed at the same time: he described the whole as "entirely incoherent and meaningless in its way, and written with an immense care for detail".[35] Harvey Grace (1877–1944), in the *Musical Times*, viewed the "fiendishly difficult" pieces in a very favourable light. Sorabji had played the pieces to the critic,

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[29]KSS to EC, 28 May 1930; 23 February 1931; 19 April 1931.

[30]*FFN*, 2.

[31]Two possibilities are offered. One was born in Hitchin, Hertfordshire, on 2 May 1900 and died in Newbury, Berkshire, in 1981 (second quarter, April–June), https://www.findmypast.co.uk/transcript?id=BMD%2FD%2F1981%2F2%2FAZ%2F000558%2F100. Another was born in 1908 (place unknown) and died in Coventry, Warwickshire; he was buried on 15 April 1941, https://www.findmypast.co.uk/transcript?id=BMD%2FD%2F1941%2F2%2FAZ%2F000559%2F099. The London telephone directory for 1900 lists a Theodore Jenkins living at 73 Broadway, Bexleyheath (a town in south-east London), who would obviously have been born at least twenty years earlier.

[32]P[hilip] H[eseltine], "Music", *The Weekly Westminster Gazette*, 18 August 1923: 14–15; 14.

[33]A[lexandre] T[ansman], "L'Édition musicale", *La Revue musicale* 4, no. 1 (November 1922): 92.

[34]Daniel Lazarus, "L'Édition musicale", *La Revue musicale* 4, no. 5 (1 March 1923): 191–92.

[35]"Reviews of Music: London & Continental Music Publishing Co.", *MO* 45, no. 539 (August 1922): 942–43; 943.

who could testify that they did "come off". He recommended them to pianists "who want something really craggy at which to throw themselves".[36]

The composer's friend, Christopher à Becket Williams, recommended the "study in so-called 'impressionistic' writing" and the toccata to "a good, industrious pianist" who should be able to play them—"but not from memory".[37] For David Branson (1909–97), who was then studying piano and composition at the Royal College of Music, the thought of the first piece was "much more connected" than in the *Fantaisie espagnole*. However, the "Toccata" he found "rambling, and uneventful, though the last page and the ending show what might have been done all through with the subject matter".[38]

The *Two Piano Pieces* were not performed after their publication. It was not until 17 May 1946 that Cecil Cameron Ewing (b. Huddersfield, Yorkshire, 13 November 1925; d. Saskatoon, Saskatchewan, 24 March 2006) played the first piece during the annual concert held in the Reception Room at the University of Bristol. Ewing, who had studied the violin and the piano during his youth, was then a medical student at the University of Bristol. In 1963, after moving to Canada, he became a lecturer in ophthalmology at the University of Saskatchewan, later becoming head of the department. He also made music in choirs, orchestras, and chamber ensembles and served as a director of the American Liszt Society.

Ewing had written to Sorabji in late 1945, asking for permission to perform "In the Hothouse". The composer was "sorry to disappoint such an obviously intelligent and understanding student of my work", as he had to maintain his veto over performances of his works, having done so with the BBC and even with a planned performance of his *Trois poèmes* by its dedicatee, the soprano Joy McArden (see chapter 15). Ewing must have tried his luck again, for on 20 March Sorabji softened his stance and allowed him to do as he wanted, but "on your own head". As the affair was "not a public one in the recognised sense", he would be "exceeding my just rights in forbidding you to play it".[39] Ewing paid a very brief visit to Sorabji in September 1947, so brief in fact that the composer did not even offer him "a cup of dried horse-droppings alias tea"; he hoped that he would return and, if he was "in a good temper", he would show him some of his large-scale piano works.[40] Ewing eventually became friends with Sorabji, who called him "a deeply perceptive music-lover, and it seems a great admirer of mine!"[41] He corresponded until at least 1984 with one whom he described as "a sweet man, so polite and warm and appreciative and considerate".[42]

Concerto for Piano and Orchestra [no. 5] / Alfred Cortot

Only one of Sorabji's eleven works for piano and orchestra was published during his lifetime: it is labelled *Concerto for Piano and Orchestra* on the cover and *Concerto II* on the first page of music, but it is in fact the fifth one. The manuscript of the full score of the *Concerto for Piano and Orchestra [no. 5]* (1920; 144 pp.) disappeared after its publication by F. and B. Goodwin Ltd. of London in 1923. The work's dedicatee, the French pianist Alfred Cortot (1877–1962), is referred to in very simple terms on the cover of the full score: "À Monsieur Alfred Cortôt [*sic*]". Sorabji had his copyist make a presentation copy of the piano part for the dedicatee (with interpretative directions and dynamic markings in his own hand); it bears a more expansive inscription: "To M. Alfred Cortôt [*sic*]: in admiration and respect".

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[36]H[arvey] G[race], "Pianoforte Music", *MT* 63, no. 955 (1 September 1922): 640.
[37]Williams, "The Music of Kaikhosru Sorabji", 316.
[38]David Branson, "Kaikhosru Sorabji", *The British Musician and Musical News* 5, no. 11 (November 1929): 311–12; 311.
[39]KSS to CE, 16 January 1946; 20 March 1946.
[40]KSS to CE, 21 September 1947.
[41]KSS to FH, 10 August 1971, 2 {3/F.2}.
[42]CE to MAR, 8 March 1993.

Reviewing a broadcast performance by Cortot of Saint-Saëns's Fourth Concerto in 1931, Sorabji wrote that "the delicate exact skill, the matchless taste with which the more 'tender' passages were endued with just the exactly right perfume of sentiment they could stand, was something to which it was impossible to listen without amused delight".[43] An undated letter, probably written while Sorabji was in Paris in early June 1921 to perform his *Trois poèmes pour chant et piano*, suggests a possible meeting. A few months later Cortot wrote from London; he was just passing through the city and might have more time in November to acquaint himself with his new work.[44] Cortot would have wanted a whole year "to work up that baby piece the Concerto".[45]

In the prefatory note to the piano part, Sorabji asked his performer not to attempt to memorize the work; he considered the risks of disaster too great and refused to torture his executant with something he could not achieve himself. He also demanded a "steady smooth extra-metrical proselike flow, except in such places as the contrary is clearly indicated by the character of the music". The music should sound like "an elaborate fabric wherein all the threads of warp and woof are plainly perceptible although each contributing to the substance of the weft of tone". None of the 285 bars is given to the orchestra alone, so the pianist plays constantly, without a moment to breathe, for nearly thirty minutes—Sorabji was never kind to his potential performers.

At some unknown time after the publication of the full score, Sorabji transcribed what may be the greater part of an as yet unidentified review (reminiscent in style of Christopher à Becket Williams).[46] It may be worth reproducing it in full.

> [illegible word] K. Sorabji's 2nd Pianoforte Concerto I merely record a few facts. The score has been extremely well printed by Waldheim-Eberle of Vienna and worth 25 shillings or a ½ a page, which, considering that each page must have taken hours merely to lay out, is ridiculously cheap. The last chord of it, which contains incidentally eleven out of the twelve notes of the scale, was written at "1.35 P.M. August 1st 1920 under a cloudy sky". We are not told when the first note was written. The composer reserves the right of performance, in that there must be few people who both could and would play it besides himself and M. Cortôt [*sic*] to whom it is dedicated, that is not a severe restriction. The piano has 3 pedals and its part has an additional little stave an octave higher. The hands are for much of the time in contrary motion and there is not a single bar's rest. […] The work is in one movement beginning slowly and settling down to a quick pace for the latter half. I have spent time hunting for a theme but have not found one: perhaps it does not contain anything so commonplace, as a piece of mathematics such a bar as that which occupies page 99 looks interesting: it lasts two seconds and the harp has incidentally 90 notes so that if it could be heard at all over the din of the pianoforte, brass and full percussion (for full strings and wind hardly count) this would produce a definite hum-note independently of any actually played. To think what this page will sound like passes my eye, brain and patience. I barely take refuge behind Vaughan Williams' dictum that "music does not exist till it is heard."
>
> Suitable for writing on handmade paper, on which the ordinary gold pen is apt to behave rather badly and obstinately-jitting, catching or otherwise behaving in an undesirable manner.
>
> Required a very large pen—some 4 sizes again larger than the ink pad.

As Sorabji wrote in 1953, the piece was the best of his early published works, "although there is still too much of the atonal stuff still clinging about it; but it does […] mark progress in the inner cohesion indeed, having a logical continuity that some of the other works of this time lack more than somewhat".[47] The element of cohesion could be the opening motive, an ascending meandering line, whose outline recurs a few times throughout the work.

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[43]Sorabji, "Music", *NA* 48, no. 4 (28 May 1931): 41.

[44]Alfred Cortot to KSS, in French, undated (Saturday); 21 October 1921.

[45]KSS to EC, 15 October 1930, 3 (section dated 20 October).

[46]Sorabji, "Note in K.S.S.'[s] hand (in pencil), (possibly purporting to be) by someone else, regarding his Piano Concerto No. 5 (published as No. 2)" (title by Alistair Hinton).

[47]*FFN*, 2.

The anonymous reviewer of *Musical Opinion* spoke "of a complexity which is positively amazing". Although he could not understand the composer's aims, he could "only pay tribute to his industry and manipulative skill".[48] Harvey Grace, in the *Musical Times*, expressed his amazement at such complex music; he wished Sorabji would write works more accessible to mere mortals, and "cut his coat to suit the present straitened supply of cloth, and speak to us in a less than bewildering and costly tongue".[49]

On 29 June 1920 Sorabji replied to Busoni, who had sent him two days earlier a letter that has not survived; the young composer wanted to show him the finished piano part of his concerto, half orchestrated, because it was difficult "to give opinions definitely about one's own work". The concerto represented to him "a considerable change from the Sonata, *not* I would say in *technique* (which is quite as elaborate and intricate) but in *expression* and *thought*".[50] There is no evidence of a reply from Busoni, who had been in London since 19 June at the latest, having played at Queen's Hall. In any case, since Sorabji gave the piano part to Cortot, it clearly did not reach Busoni, and there is no trace of a personal meeting with him other than that of November 1919.

Writing about his friend's music in 1924, Christopher à Becket Williams rightly pointed to an essential approach to understanding such music: the importance of judging it on its own terms. It represented the "beginning of a new phase" and there was "still greater harmonic change and a further move towards what the composer declares to be his ideal". This ideal, as the composer expressed it to his friend, was that music should "stand by its own interior logic and coherence, and not by any reliance on controversial or more or less free developments of academic conceptions of musical form".[51]

Sorabji sent a copy of the published score to the French composer André Caplet (1878–1925), whom he had probably met while in Paris for his 1921 recital at the Société Musicale Indépendante, of which he was a founding member. As mentioned in his letter of thanks, Caplet had already seen the score in the hands of Gabriel Pierné (1863–1937), the chief conductor of the Concerts Colonne.[52] Other famous contemporaries also looked at the work. One was the conductor Sir Henry Wood (1869–1944), who had kept Sorabji's "first [published] Concerto" without a word of acknowledgement and could not see how he could rehearse such a work. Nevertheless, he offered to see the composer with his "new Concerto" once the Proms were over.[53] This may have something to do with Peter J. Pirie's anecdote about a group of conductors, including Sir Henry, standing on a street corner in the West End in the 1930s, and discussing how to conduct Sorabji's concerto.[54] Another is Sir Thomas Beecham (1879–1961), to whom he sent a score "with the composer's compliments" on 10 December 1923.[55]

Donald Francis Tovey, who was teaching at Edinburgh University, showed Sorabji's score to Paul Hindemith at a concert of 12 November 1930, who was a guest violist with the Reid Orchestra he had founded in 1917. When asked how he would conduct the opening bars, the German composer turned pale, said he could not do it, and suggested the composer himself as conductor. For Tovey, this would

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[48]"Reviews of Music: J. Curwen & Sons", *MO* 47, no. 561 (June 1924): 889–90.

[49]H[arvey] G[race], "New Music: Scores", *MT* 65, no. 980 (1 October 1924): 911–12; 912.

[50]KSS to Ferruccio Busoni, 29 June 1920 {Staatsbibliothek zu Berlin – Preußischer Kulturbesitz, Musikabteilung mit Mendelssohn-Archiv, F. Busoni B II, 4849, http://kalliope-verbund.info/DE-611-HS-750289}. In his letter, Sorabji again thanked Busoni "for your precious kindness to me", which may be a reference to the letter of recommendation that he had written in November 1919 (see chapter 6). There is no letter from Sorabji in the Busoni-Nachlass that would help us understand why Busoni wrote to him after the letter of recommendation.

[51]Williams, "The Music of Kaikhosru Sorabji", 317.

[52]André Caplet to KSS, 3 February 1924.

[53]Henry J. Wood to KSS, 29 September 1921.

[54]Peter J. Pirie, "The Search for Sorabji", *Music and Musicians* 28, no. 3 (November 1979): 16–20; 20.

[55]The copy is found in the Sir Thomas Beecham Music Library, University of Sheffield Library, Special Collections and Archives, Ref. MS 203 (BEECHAM Q314, 200471314).

be asking too much of him, as Sorabji was the only person who could play the solo part.[56] Sorabji, of course, would have none of it. He "wouldn't play with an Orchestra, not ever—anywhere. I draw the line at that—we should never keep together for the fraction of a second—Orchestra and me I mean!"[57] Finally, in 1934, the Italian composer Vittorio Gnecchi (1876–1954) thanked Sorabji (in French) for having his publisher send him some of his "superb" published scores. He was flabbergasted ("ahuri") by such imposing works, which showed the hand of a master. Put off by their modernity, he felt that their individual character warranted a close study. One of these works was the piano concerto, and Gnecchi praised Sorabji for the blending of soloist and orchestra and for the startling effects produced by the former, who was set off by the contrasting rhythms of the other instruments. He regretted having sent a work from his "ancien régime" because he was so impressed by the composer's harmonic language.[58]

Occultism, Extrasensory Perception, Yoga, and Number Symbolism

Throughout his life, but especially up to the time of World War II, Sorabji showed a deep interest in various beliefs and traditions related to an awareness of spiritual matters, especially occultism.[59] This interest dates back at least to November 1917, when he objected to remarks made by W. J. Turner (1889–1946). The Australian music critic confused "the vulgar charlatanry he describes with that vast body of superphysical knowledge cultivated and developed […] by the Brahmin adepts and initiates of India, and which for want of a better name is called in Europe 'Occultism'".[60] Sorabji's preoccupation with the occult and related beliefs may have been a side effect of his joining the Parsi religion, a faith outside the mainstream in Britain. Another may have been his interest in the music of Busoni, who had a strong interest in occultism around 1912–13, when he was writing his darkest works, such as the *Sonatina seconda* for piano, and the *Nocturne symphonique* for orchestra. Sorabji would also became friends with Bernard Bromage (1899–1957), a lecturer on the occult (see chapter 12). Another influence may have been Scriabin, whom he described to Philip Heseltine as an ardent theosophist whose music has "this wonderful intensely *spiritual* quality".[61]

Sorabji soon made friends in occult circles as a result of his contacts with Heseltine, who owed his own interest in the subject to his discussions with the poet and novelist D. H. Lawrence (1885–1930) and the occult writer Meredith Starr (real name: Herbert Close, 1890–1971). After a meeting in 1917, Sorabji described the latter to Heseltine as "our very good friend" and, as an occultist, "a deeply sincere one". Later in life he had only a vague recollection of him.[62] Heseltine's occult period was one in which he experimented with drugs, particularly *cannabis indica*.[63] He may have tried to share some with his friend Sorabji, although there is nothing to prove this. In 1930 Sorabji wrote to Chisholm: "I have been

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[56]Erik Chisholm, *The Composer Sorabji: A Talk by Dr. Erik Chisholm with Musical Excerpts, Introduced by Frank Holliday*, privately printed; undated (1965 at the earliest), 4. The reference to the date of the concert comes from University of Edinburgh, "Reid Concerts: Concerts in the University of Edinburgh from 1841—Historical Concert", http://www.reidconcerts.music.ed.ac.uk/concert/historical-concert-23.

[57]KSS to EC, 8 April 1930, 9 (section dated 11 April).

[58]Vittorio Gnecchi to KSS, 3 February 1934.

[59]The topics to be discussed in this section are also treated very perceptively, although briefly, by Paul Rapoport in "Sorabji: A Continuation", in *SCC*, 62–66.

[60]Sorabji, "Our Letter-Box", *The Musical Standard* 10, no. 253 (3 November 1917): 298; written in reply to "Notes and Comments: On Mystery", *The Musical Standard* 10, no. 252 (27 October 1917): 271.

[61]KSS to PH, 8 December 1913 {*LPH*, no. 3, p. 43}.

[62]KSS to PH, [June 1917] {*LPH*, no. 29, p. 112}; KSS to KD, undated (after 2 September 1984) {Derus, S61, p. 320}.

[63]Barry Smith, *Peter Warlock: The Life of Philip Heseltine* (Oxford and New York: Oxford University Press, 1994), 210.

experimenting with smoking—but it pleases me even less than before,—a stupid tasteless and really rather disgusting habit necessary doubtless to certain infantile creatures to keep them quiet…"[64]

During a trip to Sicily after his Vienna recital in January 1922, Sorabji, at Heseltine's insistence, tried to meet the well-known English occultist Aleister Crowley (1875–1947) in Cefalù (Sicily), where he had established his "Abbey of Do What Thou Wilt" in 1920. One of the "priestesses"—as Sorabji described the First and Second Concubines (Leah Hirsig [1883–1925], also known as Alostrael or the Scarlet Woman; and Ninette Shumway [1894–1989])—told him that Crowley had left and was going to London; the composer therefore wrote to him to express his and Heseltine's desire to meet him.[65] In his recollections of Crowley, Bernard Bromage recalled a friend of his who called at the Abbey one day and was greeted "by a lady dressed in a sailor suit and carrying a small child on her arms".[66] Could this friend be Sorabji?

Sorabji met Crowley in mid-June 1922 and reported his impressions of the meeting with the one he called "Beast Salvarsan". He had derived this nickname "in view of his sexual shall we call them 'activities'" from one of the occultist's nickname, "The Great Beast 666", and the name of an antisyphilitic compound called 6*0*6.[67] The encounter with the man he called "as much a fraud as that much boomed 'remedy' [Salvarsan]" was quite disappointing. This "dullest of dull dogs", who looked like a "prosperous overfed fox-hunting Tory squire", nevertheless wanted to hear him play, and he was to come "to hear some of my demons" at the end of the composer's solstitial fast.[68] Crowley's name no longer appears afterwards in Sorabji's life after this.

An interest in occultism began to appear in Sorabji's compositions in the form of quotations and inscriptions in his manuscripts, such as those of the *Sonata seconda for Piano* and the *Symphony [no. 1] for Piano, Large Orchestra, Chorus, and Organ*. The idea of magic is also evident in his *Black Mass*, a composition for chorus and large orchestra with organ that he soon abandoned. As mentioned earlier (see chapter 1), Sorabji claimed to have among his relatives a cardinal-archbishop of Palermo in Admiral Nelson's time who was into "Black-Magical dabblings" (see chapter 1). Four other works from the years of friendship with Bromage contain references to rites, black magic, Satan, and the Tarot: *Opusculum for Orchestra*, *Le jardin parfumé—Poem for Piano Solo*, the *Sonata V (Opus archimagicum)*, and the *Tāntrik Symphony for Piano Alone*. From the early 1940s Sorabji curiously abstained from any further reference to the occult and related subjects until his *Toccata quarta*, completed in 1967.

During his years of friendship with Bernard Bromage, Sorabji referred to the "sinister depths in me when I look into myself—depths of a capacity for diabolical cruelty—and a slow implacable crouching cat-like brooding for my chance for revenge". His thoughts had been "hovering lovingly round certain black magical rituals, ceremonies and practices—more than once I have deliberately gone through a ceremony, more than once that has had for its object the injury and hurt of another". One target of these rituals, if there were more than one, may have been a certain "Master M." to whom he had lent money (see chapter 11) and who is the subject of the following paragraph in the quoted letter.[69]

From 1923 Sorabji was a frequent contributor to *The Occult Review: A Magazine Devoted to the Investigation of Supernatural Phenomena and the Study of Psychological Problems* (1905–48), a publication edited (for twenty-one years) by Ralph Shirley (1865–1946). Regular contributors included

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[64]KSS to EC, 17 September 1930, 4 (section dated 26 September).

[65]KSS to PH, 12 April 1922 {*LPH*, no. 34, p. 134}. See also John Symonds, *The King of the Shadow Realm* (London: Duckworth, 1989), especially the chapter entitled "The Abbey of Do What Thou Wilt" (pp. 252–72).

[66]Bernard Bromage, "Aleister Crowley", *Light* 79 (1959): 149–61; 156.

[67]KSS to KD, 23 January 1982 {Derus, S44, p. 219}.

[68]KSS to PH, [24 June 1922] {*LPH*, no. 37, p. 137}; 19 June 1922 {*LPH*, no. 36, p. 136}.

[69]KSS to EC, 18 September 1931, 6.

the composer Cyril Scott, who appears a few times in Sorabji's writings,[70] and Meredith Starr, the occultist mentioned above; another is a friend of Sorabji's, the music critic Clinton Gray-Fisk.[71] Sorabji himself contributed no less than twelve letters between 1923 and 1943, expressing his reactions to ideas he had read, in some cases about sexuality. He must have been proud of one of his contributions, in which he objected to an article discussing the "vice of homosexuality" as evidence of the workings of "dark forces" (those of ignorance), for he revised it for inclusion in his *Fruits of Misanthropy*.[72] Although his interest in the occult seems to have waned after 1942, Sorabji read another specialized journal called *Prediction: Magazine for the Occult and Astrology, Incorporating "Weekly Horoscope" and "Fantasy"*, to which he contributed letters on reincarnation and Zoroastrianism in 1947 and 1979.

It is perhaps appropriate to mention here that Sorabji owned a pen, ink, and wash drawing made in the late 1920s by the English artist, painter, and occult magician Austin Osman Spare (1886–1956), described as "An ascending plume of faces, figures and atavistic forms".[73] The two men appear to have known each other, as Sorabji happened to be in possession of vellum-bound copies of two of Spare's books, suggesting a personal relationship.[74] The whereabouts of a portrait listed as "K.S. Sorabji Esq' (No.176)" in Spare's catalogue for his 1937 studio exhibition are unfortunately unknown.

Especially in the early 1930s, Sorabji showed great interest in extrasensory perception and in April 1935 he joined the Society for Psychical Research, a body founded in 1882 (and still active) to investigate paranormal phenomena in a scientific spirit.[75] He may have first heard of it through Philip Heseltine who had been invited to join while he was studying at Oxford in 1914.[76] The subject remained present in his readings (see chapter 14) and, in 1936, he called the *Encyclopaedia of Psychic Science* (1934) by the parapsychologist Nandor Fodor (1895–1964) "the most important book of the century". He described it as "a serious scientific work, and is staggering in its revelations as to the potencies in human beings, of certain gifts and types, naturally". Eventually he "got that fed up with their very dull mechanical methods; all these statistical results of E.S.P. applied to cards and so on used to become increasingly boring, and the lectures seemed latterly to consist of little else."[77]

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[70]For an early mention, see KSS to PH, March. Early [1914] (section dated 14 March) {*LPH*, no. 8, p. 65}. In 1917 Sorabji wrote enthusiastically about Scott's Piano Concerto (1913), although he later expressed serious reservations about its piano part; "The Cyril Scott Piano Concerto", *The Music Student* 10 (December 1917): 142; "The Modern Piano Concerto", in *AM*, 66–77; 70–71. There are no documented contacts between Sorabji and Scott, whose writings he discussed in "Music", *NA* 35, no. 9 (26 June 1924): 103–4; 103. On Scott's *Music, Its Secret Influence throughout the Ages* (1933), see "Music", *NEW* 3, no. 3 (4 May 1933): 62–63; 62. Sorabji's name does not appear in Scott's *My Years of Indiscretion* (London: Mills & Boon, 1924).

[71]Other important contributors to the *Occult Review* were Gerald Arundel, Theodore Besterman, Hereward Carrington, A. Conan Doyle, William Loftus Hare, and Arthur Lovell.

[72]Sorabji, "Correspondence: The Psychology of Sex", *The Occult Review* 49, no. 3 (March 1929): 194–95, repr. in *FM*, no. 112 (orig. no. CXIII, pp. 28–33). On the *Fruits of Misanthropy*, see chapter 9.

[73]Description of sale, Christie's, Live auction 16044, Modern: British & Irish Art, 21 March 2018, lot 112, https://www.christies.com/lot/lot-austin-osman-spare-1886-1956-an-ascending-plume-6131424/?lid=1&sc_lang=en.

[74]Robert Shehu-Ansell [Ansell] to MAR, 7 April 2006, 7 May 2010. See also his "The Living Word of Zos", *AOS: A Celebration*, 14 May 2006 (commemorative publication), available at http://www.fulgur.co.uk/authors/aos/articles/the-living-word-of-zos/ (link no longer active).

[75]"New Members", *Journal of the Society for Psychical Research* 29, no. 514 (April 1935): 51.

[76]Smith, *Peter Warlock*, 118.

[77]KSS to NG, 12 December 1960 {not listed in KSSC; the date may have been incorrectly notated}. The Society for Psychical Research could not find Sorabji's name in their records from 1940 onwards (letter to MAR, 22 December 1992); so Sorabji may have resigned at an earlier date. He may also have been a member of the short-lived International Institute for Psychical Research (1934–38).

Letters from 1930 onwards letters to Erik Chisholm, who himself held seances with mediums in his house,[78] document Sorabji's fascination with extrasensory perception. He went several times with Bernard Bromage to see a certain Mrs. Lewis, "that wonderful astrologer woman we know" who "does horoscopes so wonderfully". He went to this woman, whom he had known for ten years, with Chisholm's place and time of birth to obtain his horoscope. He found her "sometimes a little difficult to follow, being very much absorbed in the quite definitely abnormal life she leads, full as it appears to be of supernormal experiences". He had "never known her to be either mistaken or wrong about anything that she has said or foretold".[79] Sorabji also brought to a seance "THAT which you sent me in an envelope a short while ago" (a lock of his hair) and asked if he had felt anything "between 10.15 and 11.5 p.m. this evening—Saturday 14th?" A week later, after directing "his thoughts and will" at his friend on a specific day and time, he asked the same question.[80] Once he woke up during the night and said his friend's name out loud, feeling that they were "moving you know in our psychic progress I mean". After several months of "work" in scrying, Sorabji saw his friend's head "*quite plainly* for a while, [with] a lot of things partially formed and dissolved" in a crystal ball; Mrs. Lewis told him that he was about "to become very clairvoyant and mediumistic in the near future".[81] When Sorabji stopped attending seances (often with Bromage and one called Augustus) is unknown, but references are limited to 1930.[82] Nevertheless, he was preoccupied with ghosts and once asked Frank Holliday to come and stay with him while his companion Reginald Norman Best was away for some time. He wanted his friend to keep him "from being scared stiff o'nights by the things that gang bump […] and the various sinister uncanny soft rustlings and movements of ALL THOSE who 'return at evening'".[83] Another way in which Sorabji conjured up his fears was through the writing two pieces based on ghost stories by Montague Rhodes James: *"Quaere reliqua hujus materiei inter secretiora"* and *St. Bertrand de Comminges: "He was laughing in the tower"* (see chapter 15).

In later life, Sorabji recalled an incident that happened shortly before he learned of the death of his father in Germany. He was staying with his mother at an inn that had a breed of short-haired grey cats. They were having tea in her bedroom when he said "'Oh there's one of the grey cats in the room', but the moment I'd said it I realised it WASN'T a physical cat at all. I pulled myself up quickly but my Mother said, 'I saw it too' and the next day came news of my father's passing." He also mentioned feeling "out of my physical body and seeing my mother doing something in the kitchen" while he was in bed with the flu.[84]

Sorabji was interested in hand reading, an activity he practised with Bromage, who told him "to distrust, avoid and be on my guard against fair people, also against Russian Poles, all Scandinavians and Slavs—also Spaniards and my father's people are not by any means good for me. Italians, Germans, Austrians all excellent." Sorabji "had always felt that and never really liked or trusted them, especially blue-eyed people, who are the worst of the lot, I always feel".[85] In 1930, concerned about the disappearance of lines in his hands, he contacted Katharine St. Hill. The author of *The Grammar of*

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[78]John Purser, *ECSM*, 152.

[79]KSS to EC, 8 April 1930, 6; 15 October 1930, 2 (section dated 19 October); June 1932 (no day given), 3. For Sorabji's interest in astrology and his fear related to knowledge by others of his place and year of birth, see Paul Rapoport, "Sorabji: A Continuation", in *SCC*, 65–66.

[80]KSS to EC, 3 June 1930, 16 (section dated 13 June); 17 June 1930, 2 (section dated 22 June).

[81]KSS to EC, 9 December 1930, 6 (section dated 14 December).

[82]"Augustus" is mentioned in KSS to EC, 6 May 1931, 30 (section dated 20 May). There is nothing in the existing documentation to suggest that this is the painter Augustus John (1878–1961), who made a portrait of the occultist Aleister Crowley.

[83]KSS to FH, undated (mid-September 1956) {1/F.18}.

[84]KSS to KD, 30 December 1980 {Derus, S38, p. 189}.

[85]KSS to EC, 18 September 1931, 7, 9.

Palmistry (1889) and founder of the Chirological Society of Great Britain in the same year, she remembered him well, having read his hands "quite a long time ago". A few years later he protested that the *New English Weekly* had failed to mention the pioneer research carried out by St. Hill, whose lectures he had attended.[86] Finally, in the late 1950s, he reported having a faculty for feeling big earthquakes happening elsewhere.[87]

In the mid-1930s Sorabji was "engaged in certain ancient Eastern practices "aimed at […] the arousing into activity of the inner faculties, and the progress I make is astonishing". His life, "from being chaotic, without form or shape, now has an ordered pattern and design, and I feel myself complete and utter master of my fate".[88] In 1953 he began to work on a new form of yoga, which gave him "great spiritual and psychological benefit". His book *Mi contra fa* includes a chapter entitled "Yoga and the Composer", which takes its title from an "epoch-making" article by Ernest Newman that "should be dinned into the ears of all musicians, more especially those of the composers" for the "energy-tapping power that is conferred by various methods of Yoga". For Sorabji, the importance of yoga lay in "the power certain practices of its techniques confer of commanding what is called inspiration".[89] According to Alistair Hinton, the period between six and seven o'clock in the evening was devoted to this activity and could not be interrupted.[90] However, the colourful inscriptions at the end of manuscripts giving the moment of completion show that Sorabji did this precisely between these two hours on (at least) eight occasions. A direct result of his yoga practice was the composition of the *Tāntrik Symphony for Piano Alone*.

Sorabji was also strongly attracted to the symbolism of numbers. This can be seen in the number of pages of some two dozen of his works and in his habit of often deciding the total number of pages of a work before writing (or at least completing) it. In 1920 he wrote to Philip Heseltine that the "Sonata II. grows steadily: 7 pages of the 49 completed!!"[91] Two years later he reported on the "as yet incompleted Symphony the flames of which have however risen as far as page 230 of the 300 allotted span".[92] In 1930 he had "turned the 32nd variation of the 1st interlude of the 'Clavicembalisticum' today—there are to be 49 of them (49 = 7 × 7 i.e. a perfect square)".[93]

As impressive as Sorabji's understanding of large-scale planning is, he sometimes achieved his results with a little "tweaking". His usual procedure was to write works whose length could be expressed by a number with certain characteristics, or whose last page would carry such a number. In several cases his page numbering is chaotic: numbers are omitted or used twice, sometimes with added letters to distinguish them, the idea being that the last page number should have the desired characteristic. One such example is *Opus clavisymphonicum—Concerto for Piano and Large Orchestra*, which has no pages 158 and 159, two pages no. 168 and two no. 169 (in the order 168–169[a]-168–169[a]).

Many works consist of numbers of pages that are the squares of smaller numbers (16, 49, 64, 81, 100, 144, and 484) or cubes (27, 343). Other possibilities are repeated digits (111, 333) and ascending

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[86]Katharine St. Hill to KSS, 4 February 1930; Sorabji, "Hand-reading", *NEW* 10, no. 11 (24 December 1936): 220. The first name is often spelt Kath*e*rine, and the British Library's catalogue lists her as "Katharine Saint Hill".

[87]KSS to NG, 10 July 1957 {17/F.54}.

[88]KSS to EC, 6 September 1936; 4 November 1953. In the second letter Sorabji wrote that he had begun "dabbling with Yoga for thirty years or more", that is, in the early 1920s.

[89]Sorabji, "Yoga and the Composer", in *MCF*, 71–75.

[90]*OB*, 297–98.

[91]KSS to PH, 21 August 1920 {*LPH*, no. 31, p. 122}.

[92]KSS to PH, 2 January 1922 {*LPH*, no. 33, p. 131}.

[93]KSS to EC, 18 April 1930, 3 (section dated Holy Saturday [19 April]).

or descending series of digits (456, 432). The *Messa grande sinfonica*, Sorabji's largest work with its 1,001 pages, corresponds to the multiplication of three prime numbers (7, 11, 13) and is not only a palindromic number but also a reference to the *One Thousand and One Nights*. For works without any such number of pages, one may have to look within a movement (or part) to see that the final subdivision is one so numbered. Variations and ostinato or passacaglia statements usually come in groups of 16, 24, 27, 33, 48, 59, 64, 81, and 100. This is of so important in Sorabji's compositional planning that (as suggested above) he sometimes inserted inconsistencies in the numbering to ensure that the last number would look right. A good example is the "Ostinato doppio" from *Rosario d'arabeschi*, which actually contains one statement less than the expected sixty-four.

Sonata seconda for Piano

Sorabji completed his one-movement *Sonata seconda for Piano* (1920; 49 pp.) on 24 December 1920. He gave the autograph manuscript to the Library of Congress in 1928, while the other, prepared by his copyist but with several tempo and interpretative markings in his hand (not found in either the manuscript or the first edition), went to the dedicatee, his beloved Ferruccio Busoni, whose name appears on no less than three preliminary pages. William A.P.M.'s work on a new edition enabled him to conclude that this copy was not used for the (very problematic) engraving. The dedications, in increasing order of complexity, read: "To Signor Busoni in profound veneration"; "To Signor Busoni in profound veneration and homage"; and "al [*recte* all'] illustrissimo Maestro Signor Ferruccio Busoni con somma venerazione e omagio [*recte* omaggio]. Il autor [*recte* L'autore] K.S."[94]

In addition to the date and time of completion, the last page of the manuscript bears the inscription "AMÎN".[95] This form of the word "Amen" suggests that he must have been familiar by then with *La reine de Saba*, as translated by Joseph-Charles Mardrus, which contains a text beginning with "Quant aux coriaces de la sensibilité" and ending with that very "Amîn". He would later quote it in the score of the *Symphony [no. 2], "Jāmī", for Large Orchestra, Wordless Chorus, and Baritone Solo*.

The first page contains a puzzling Latin quotation, probably related to Sorabji's interest in the occult, which reads "Nec opus sit tibi null… credoni… malef… H. N. Sabbaticus". The "H.N." is probably a variant of "Hircus Olens", a nickname he had used in a letter to Philip Heseltine.[96] The addition of the letter *n* seems to make it "Nolens" (unwilling or refusing), as in "nolens volens" (willy-nilly). The whole expression would thus be translated as something like "May this work not be harmful to you, Unwilling Goat of the Sabbath". The word "Sabbaticus" appears in Heseltine's Christmas wishes for 1927 ("Au Grand Bouc Sabbatique").[97] Sorabji probably thought at first of a more or less secret dedication to him, but later decided in favour of the official dedication to Busoni.

In his preliminary notes, Sorabji discouraged the performer from playing from memory. He asked that the work be played with the "strictest integrity", adding that "rhythmic and formal pointmakings in accordance with prepossessions with which the author has no concern he severely deprecates". Rather he wanted "an act of interpretation and not a demonstration of a certain popular system of mental training". The manuscript also contains a very puzzling inscription that has yet to be explained (p. 44): "Line 21–12.20: maximo penno ex Atlantidis terris diu exopinato". The line reference suggests

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[94]"To the most illustrious master, Signor Ferruccio Busoni, with the highest veneration and homage. The author."

[95]In previous editions of this book, the "no G." that appears immediately after and below the "AMÎN" was thought to be a reference to "Gote", a nickname Sorabji used in his correspondence with Philip Heseltine. As William Penafiel has pointed out, Sorabji added this remark to refer to a G that he had crossed out at the top of the left-hand chord. There is a thin vertical line connecting both the remark and the note.

[96]KSS to PH, 26 January 1920 {*LPH*, no. 30, p. 120}.

[97]PH to KSS, Christmas 1927 {*LPH*, no. 38c, p. 139}.

a quotation from a work from classical antiquity, and the reference to Atlantis recalls Plato's *Timaeus* or *Critias*, in which the words could not be found. Sorabji's rather odd Latin may mean "at the highest point that was long thought to come from the lands of Atlantis".

The *Sonata seconda for Piano* was published in 1923 by F. and B. Goodwin in both a standard run and a special limited edition of twelve copies half bound and printed on handmade paper. In his review, Harvey Grace, who had attended a private performance, aptly pointed out that such complex and dissonant music, which makes mental hearing impossible, must be played at the right tempo to have any effect. Sorabji should write for the player piano or express himself so that people could play his music as easily as the standard classical repertoire.[98] Christopher à Becket Williams and David Branson also commented on the work. For Williams, the (Scriabinesque) influences of the previous sonata had all but disappeared and "an increasing use of contrapuntal devices (as of *texture* as opposed to *block*)" was becoming evident.[99] Seeing no evidence of "coherence and clarity of thought", Branson argued (quite perceptively) that "the lack of the vital principle in these sonatas destroys the reason for the existence of the physical counterpart and leaves it unbalanced and in a state of either stagnation or chaos".[100]

Sorabji described his sonata to Heseltine with the words "Ein staunendes werk schätzlein" [*recte* "Ein staunendes Werk, Schätzlein", that is, "a stunning work, my little treasure"]. To Busoni he wrote more objectively that it showed "great changes from no. I and much greater maturity".[101] He "dosed" with it his friends William Walton and Sacheverell Sitwell, who said that it had "impressed them enormously".[102] A few months later he gave a performance for Cecil Gray that caused him "acute distress", for which he stoically showed "no sign of what I was undergoing", although this did not prevent him from writing (or at least intending to write) a letter of recommendation to Emil Hertzka (1869–1932), the head of Universal Edition.[103]

Sorabji himself gave the first performance of the *Sonata seconda for Piano* in Vienna in 1922, and another in London two years later. He was one of a number of foreign musicians who, thanks "to the 'valuta' misery of our State", had made their debut in the city at an insignificant cost to them.[104] Probably in the last days of December 1921, he met, apart from Hertzka, Alfred Kalmus (1889–1972), who had joined the publishing house in 1909, and the musicologist Egon Wellesz (1885–1974). He had not yet received a reply from Schoenberg, to whom he had sent a copy of his *Sonata no. 1 for Piano*, and hoped to meet Berg through Wellesz.[105]

The programme of the concert given on 13 January 1922 in the Kammersaal of the Musikverein also included the *Sonata no. 1 for Piano*. For Paul Bechert (1886–1952), the correspondent of the *Musical Courier*, some passages sounded beautifully, but Schoenberg was "a tame reactionary" compared to Sorabji. Although he sensed in him a "fully sincere personality" and one "in whose

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[98]H[arvey] G[race], "New Music", *MT* 65, no. 976 (1 June 1924): 520; he came back on the idea of the pianola in a second review; "New Music", *MT* 65, no. 982 (1 December 1924): 1102.

[99]Williams, "The Music of Kaikhosru Sorabji", 317.

[100]David Branson, "Kaikhosru Sorabji", 312.

[101]KSS to PH, 21 August 1920, 3; KSS to Ferruccio Busoni, 18 April 1921 {Staatsbibliothek zu Berlin – Preußischer Kulturbesitz, Mus.Nachl. F. Busoni B II, 4850 (*olim*: Mus. ep. K. Sorabji 1), http://kalliope-verbund.info/DE-611-HS-750300}.

[102]See also KSS to PH, 8 November 1921 {*LPH*, no. 32, p. 128}. For Hugh Macdonald, there are "certainly similarities" in that composer's *String Quartet* (1922) with Sorabji's *Sonata seconda* and *Prelude, Interlude, and Fugue*; "Preface", in *William Walton Edition*, vol. 19, *Chamber Music* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2008), v–xii; vii.

[103]Cecil Gray to PH, December 1921 (no day given) {BL, Add. 57962}, cited in *SCC*, 238.

[104]Paul Bechert, "Vienna", *MT* 63, no. 954 (1 August 1922): 586–87; 586; see also Christopher à Becket Williams, "Random Notes on a Recent European Tour", *MT* 63, no. 951 (1 May 1922): 319–20; 319.

[105]KSS to PH, 2 January 1922 {*LPH*, no. 33, p. 131}.

madness there must be some sort of method", he left it to future generations to discover what that method implied; he saw the two sonatas as "probably the very acme of musical modernism".[106] For Christopher à Becket Williams, who had made the trip, Sorabji seemed "to have bemused the good Viennese with his music, and amazed them by the astounding skill of his performance".[107] Back in London, Sorabji reported that the concert had been given to a small invited audience, including pupils of Schoenberg. Wellesz had told him that his music was "so difficult to us, so new and strange, that you must give us time… such things in music we have never before heard: it is an order of mind and feeling we have never realized to exist."[108]

Sorabji was persuaded by his friend Robert Lorenz to play the *Sonata seconda for Piano* and its predecessor, around late June 1922, at the studio of a friend of Heseltine's, the painter Adrian Allinson (1890–1964), who had expressed a wish to hear it. Upset by the work's length, complexity, and lack of contrast, he complained that Sorabji had not taken into account the "limitations of the human ear". Also present was Harvey Grace, who sighed for "diatonic discords—like expecting a cat to have a [*recte* the] penis of a paradoscure—otherwise quite sympathetic and reasonably intelligent";[109] he was to review the published score for the *Musical Times*.

The work's second public performance took place on 13 May 1924 at a concert of the London Contemporary Music Centre under the auspices of the British Music Society. It was given at the Art Workers' Guild Hall, located at 6 Queen Square, Bloomsbury (near Russell Square Gardens). Sorabji shared the programme with Arnold Bax, Frank Bridge, and John Ireland. For Herbert Antcliffe (1875–1964), writing for the *Musical News and Herald*, the work had "ideas, some original, others quite commonplace but pleasant", but was "so full of notes, of chords complicated for the sake of complication, of scales put in for the sake of brilliance and elaboration […] and is so lacking in any control or balance". Sorabji should stop trying to write down "the largest number of notes in the smallest possible space"; only then would there be hope for him as a composer.[110] The critic of the *Times* was puzzled by the work's lack of "organization" and by the absence of a "map" or "touch of human hand".[111] Finally, the correspondent of the American magazine *Musical Courier* commented that the composer "exhibited an astounding facility in executing erratic cascades and whirlpools on the keyboard, the thematic import of which was not always apparent. There was a continuous ebb and flow of emotion, expressed in a predilection for major sevenths and 'tone clusters' of uncertain harmonic genealogy. It was the sort of performance that happily leaves one speechless."[112]

Sorabji himself reviewed the concert, not without first pointing out the "greatest breach of etiquette to criticise a programme in which oneself took an active part". Before quoting the review summarized above, he added: "As for the writer's own work I cannot do better than give my readers

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[106]Bechert, "Fuertwangler [*sic*] Now the Idol of Vienna" [section entitled "Persian Composer-Pianist Baffles"], *Musical Courier* 84, no. 9 (2 March 1922): 7; idem, "British Music at Vienna", *MT* 63, no. 952 (1 June 1922): 395–96; 396.

[107]Williams, "Random Notes on a Recent European Tour", *MT* 63, no. 951 (1 May 1922): 319–20; 319.

[108]KSS to PH, 12 April 1922 {*LPH*, no. 34, p. 133}.

[109]KSS to PH, 19 June 1922 {*LPH*, no. 36, p. 136}.

[110]Herbert Antcliffe, "Bach and a Medley of Music", *Musical News and Herald* 46, no. 1678 (24 May 1924): 492.

[111]"London Contemporary Music Centre", *The Times*, 15 May 1924, 12.

[112][Author and title unknown], *Musical Courier*, June 1924. The quoted passage comes from a clipping accompanying a copy of *Sonata seconda for Piano* given by Sorabji to the Leschetizky pupil George Woodhouse (1877–1954) in the collection of the Westminster Music Library. It is marked as being taken from the June 1924 issue of the *Musical Courier*, whose typography it matches but where it could not be found in the issues from mid-May to the end of July in the microfilm consulted (some pages of the copy consulted appear to be missing). The author could have been the French-born American critic César Searchinger (1884–1971), who was the journal's correspondent in London at the time and would become a pioneer of transatlantic broadcasting in the 1930s.

the opinion of the authoritative Mr. Herbert Antcliffe."[113] *Musical Opinion* published a humorous piece by Christopher à Becket Williams in its June 1924 issue. Pretending not to have attended the concert, he wrote four short reviews the likes of which he was sure the reader would see somewhere. The first saw only an "impression of chaos", while the second praised the work's clarity of outline and the pianist's digital dexterity. The third accused Sorabji of knowing nothing about composition and piano playing and hoped that a pianola recording would help overturn the verdict, and the fourth dealt with the audience's appearance as it would have been in a ladies' magazine.[114]

Contemporary listeners were clearly baffled by the idiom of Sorabji's *Sonata seconda for Piano*, which is clearly a rather impenetrable work. Its unifying gesture stated at the beginning as an irregular ascending line does not really succeed in leaving an imprint on the ear. Another recurring gesture giving the listener a tiny grip is a short series of plain chords that contrast with the prevailing "wild" atonal style (see for example [ED]pp. 12/3/1, 15/1/1, 28/1/4, 54/1/2). There is no point in trying to divide the piece into sections based on fermatas and tempo changes because they are far too frequent. The shape is more like a succession of waves, a series of climaxes alternating with quieter episodes. Sorabji sometimes writes a few fragmented passages consisting of bursts of quick chords and short figurations. They suggest a bursting of the texture (already foreshadowed one year earlier in a short passage of the *Sonata no. 1 for Piano*), as in various piano pieces of the 1950s and 1960s (pp. 23/2/1, 57/2/1, 64/3/2 to the penultimate bar)—this in 1920 **(example 7.4)**. Sorabji is at his most Ivesian here; indeed, Ives's Sonata no. 2 ("Concord, Mass., 1840–60") had just been completed only a year earlier, but Sorabji could not have known of this privately published work.

As we have seen earlier, Sorabji was satisfied with his sonata at the time of its composition. He later remarked that the "Second and Third Piano Sonatas show […] some further progress in expelling this foreign matter [Spanish *couleur locale*] from his musical system, but neither of them are, he feels, fully mature or even typical works, he not having yet sufficiently mastered one of his musical ideas of ceaseless musical fabric, self-cohesive and self-coherent by reason of its own inner logic without any extraneous support from 'themes' or 'subjects'".[115]

Sonata III for Piano

Sorabji completed his one-movement *Sonata III for Piano* (1922; 75 pp.) on 5 May 1922 in Palermo; he called it "a gehenna[-]like work of some hour and a quarter's duration" and "a piano symphony" that he soon hoped to play "to my Phee" (Philip Heseltine) and possibly also to the occultist Aleister Crowley.[116] The score was published in 1924 by J. Curwen and Sons. Unlike its two predecessors, it was not discussed in the musical press except by Percival Garratt (1877–1953), who simply noted that Eastern composers were now writing in Western idioms and that Sorabji's latest sonata "appears to begin where Scriabin left off".[117] As the work was still in manuscript when his *Sackbut* article appeared

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[113]Sorabji, "Music", *NA* 35, no. 7 (12 June 1924): 79–81; 79–80. For extensive comments in connection with Sorabji's reaction to Antcliffe's review, see Paul Rapoport, "Sorabji: A Continuation", in *SCC*, 72–73, 75. After working as a music critic for the *Sheffield Daily Telegraph*, Antcliffe wrote for the *Evening Standard* from 1916 until 1925, when he became the *Daily Mail*'s correspondent in Holland, where he lived until 1949. He was the author of several introductory books on music. His papers are now in the Special Collections of the University of Sheffield (http://www.shef.ac.uk/library/special/ant). There is no known correspondence between him and Sorabji.

[114]"Sinjon Wood" [Christopher à Becket Williams], "Charivaria", *MO* 48, no. 565 (June 1924): 888–89.

[115]*FFN*, 2.

[116]KSS to PH, 19 June 1922 {*LPH*, no. 36, p. 136}.

[117]Percival Garratt, "New Publications: A Japanese Composer", *The Sackbut* 2, no. 8 (February 1926): 35–36; 36. The subtitle refers to Yoshiji Tanimura, also discussed in the review.

in June 1924, Christopher à Becket Williams could do no more than mention the existence of "long fugal and contrapuntal stretches" and a duration of about an hour and a half.[118] Therefore, the only contemporary writer to offer an opinion (for no review has yet been found) was David Branson, whose comments have already been quoted in connection with the *Sonata seconda for Piano*.

In 1930 Sorabji described the style of the work as a turning point in his output.

> This work does not lend itself to ordinary formal analysis at all—the work however grows out of the initial rising sequence of quavers which I call a *radix*. It is not a *theme* in the ordinary sense at all. It pervades in one form or another the entire work. Development proceeds rather I think on the lines of what the biologists call *mitosis* i.e. cell-fission and division. The work is asymmetrical and polyrhythmic; it is an attempt to create a music that shall stand entirely on its own feet by reason of its inner logic and sense-cohesion without any support from formalistic or formalistically derived adjuncts. […] Extensive use is made however in all this apparently anarchic freedom, of scholastic devices applied in rigid strictness, canons, fugato and the like which you will spot easily enough for yourself on investigation that the work marks a turning point I feel… my later manner in it with its strongly marked architectonic prepossessions is I think foreshadowed in it fairly plainly.[119]

The comment made in 1953 about the *Sonata seconda for Piano*, quoted above, also applies to the present work: his grasp of the techniques required to give coherence and cohesiveness to a "ceaseless musical fabric" was not yet up to the par.

Like its predecessor(s), the *Sonata III for Piano* consists of discrete sections with frequent changes of tempo. Sorabji sometimes calls for a "fragmented" style found in scores by several composers in the 1950s and 1960s. The work, also like the previous sonata, is dominated by a generating motive: a meandering upward gesture that recurs in many shapes throughout **(example 7.5)**. Another important motive outlines the melodic movement 3–2–1, sometimes expanded, and used as the top note in chordal passages ([ED]pp. 67, 71, 77); one may wish to see a preliminary form earlier in the work (pp. 8, 27, 35). There are also strettos or short canonic passages (pp. 6, 25–27, 66–67, 76–77), sections built on quick scales (pp. 69–70), and powerful chordal climaxes (pp. 8, 39, 60–61, 64, 71, 77–80). The last such passage occurs as the culmination of a stretto; it is the first appearance in Sorabji's work of an extended section in which long chains of powerful chords in both hands, covering the entire range of the keyboard, are used to create a most massive effect, unheard of in piano music at the time. The sonority of C♯ assumes great importance in this passage; indeed, the climax leads to a series of four powerful chords in C♯ major, with fermatas. The melodic movement of the upper line (p. 80) can be seen not only as almost identical to the opening motive, but also as a retrograde form of the 3–2–1 outline. The concluding scalar gesture ends on A, the lowest note on the keyboard, but Sorabji would probably have extended it to C♯ had the Bösendorfer Imperial keyboard been as present in his mind as it was from the 1970s onwards. Obviously, only an acute musical intelligence can make sense of such tortuous atonal music and give it the forward thrust it needs to take off.

The manuscript contains an additional page with two ossias for the final "cataclysmic" scale run in both hands: one uses instead so-called blind (alternating) octaves, the other "blind chords", if one may coin the expression. Sorabji preferred the single octave rush and felt that the performer should ignore two ossias.[120]

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[118]Williams, "The Music of Kaikhosru Sorabji", 317.
[119]KSS to EC, 3 June 1930, 14 (section dated 11 June).
[120]KSS to Yonty Solomon, 30 March 1977 {private collection of Yonty Solomon}.

Symphony [no. 1] for Piano, Large Orchestra, Chorus, and Organ

Sorabji completed his most ambitious work to date, the *Symphony [no. 1] for Piano, Large Orchestra, Chorus, and Organ* (1921–22; 300 pp.), on 12 February 1922 in Palermo, like the *Sonata III for Piano*. The work is dedicated "To my darling Mumsie"; a supplementary dedication, "Alla carissima Mamma Mia", was added later. The source (not biblical but probably occult) of the inscription ".....and in that darkness they come" remains to be identified, unless it is invented.

The present work now shows Sorabji in full command of his compositional technique and able to write scores on a gigantic scale. In addition to the standard instruments (often in groups of three), the score calls for a bass flute, a piccolo clarinet, a contrabass sarrusophone, a bass oboe, eight horns, five trumpets, and four trombones. There is a vast array of percussion instruments as well as "2 or more harps"; at one point (^{MS}p. 98), the harp part carries the unusual direction "The strings to be plucked with a guitar or zither *metal* plectrum". The two violin sections should contain sixteen to twenty-four players and the other string groups twelve to sixteen. The score also calls for a four-part chorus with fifty to one hundred singers per part plus an organ, a solo piano, and percussion instruments. Below the main score one must place a small supplementary score for instruments that do not fit on the forty-staff paper (completed in London on 6 September): contrabassoon, chorus, organ, bass oboe, and bells. The entire score, with its binding, weighs 4.5 kg; heavier ones, also with supplementary scores, were to follow.

The *Symphony* has a highly developed solo piano part, such as would later be found in Messiaen's *Turangalîla-Symphonie* (1946–48). There is not a single silent bar for the pianist in the three hundred pages of the score. The composer is sometimes kind enough to grant this intrepid person a "breathing pause", the longest of which seems to be the duration of a crotchet. The piano part requires the same stamina as the piano concertos; the work is, after all, a "symphony for piano and large orchestra"—and the pianist, whatever the difficulties the composer may impose, is only one instrument among others. There is no initial tempo indication; the work begins sharply, and one might easily think that the first page was missing, were it not for the presence of the names of the instruments, written in full, at the beginning. As often in Sorabji, the texture dictates the proper tempo.

In addition to the piano, the *Symphony* features Sorabji's first use of the (wordless) chorus. The passages for massed voices (mostly confined to the "Cadenza", described below) are few; only one or two parts sing at a given time, and only for short periods—sometimes a few punctuating chords, a short melisma, a brief polyphonic outburst. The parts are often divided or solo voices are made to stand out, sometimes in a free virtuosic style (pp. 40, 52, 73, 109, 150, 169). The voices are treated as instruments that play only infrequently, and the choral staves are empty on only 47 out of 300 pages (although many others may contain only one or a few beats).

In 1930 Sorabji called this huge work "the crowning achievement of my earlier period; it contains an amusing canonical cadenza in which the entire orchestra takes part with a whole swarm of independent canons of every imaginable kind superimposed in contrapuntal *strata*. […] The score is two miles high like 'Alice' at the end of the Court scene."[121] The "amusing canonical cadenza" to which he refers (pp. 273–83) is a complex accumulation of entries. Its first two pages contain no less than five different strands played in canon, while the piano soon moves from a single run of semiquavers to runs of double notes, chords, and octaves until it reaches a series of ascending and descending glissandos (**example 7.6**). The work ends with a "Coda" (pp. 284–300).

Sorabji left a bound score containing a solo piano part surrounded by blank staves for orchestral instruments. This score in oblong format, which was not discovered until September 2019, bears no

[121]KSS to EC, 18 April 1930, 3 (section dated 19 April).

date other than "MCMXXI" on the cover. The composer had already taken the trouble to write down such parts for two piano concertos and would do so again twice. His intentions, as always in such cases, are as unclear as they are undocumented. The existence of this piano part, which was probably written before the full score, exemplifies his practice of starting with the piano part prior to "weaving the orchestra round it afterwards".[122] Since the instruments for which there are blank staves are fewer than those in the final full score, it can be assumed that Sorabji did not intend to produce a separate piano part. He therefore began to lay out his score according to his original plan, but changed his mind at some point. After completing the piano part, he began a new score in large portrait format with the final orchestral layout and rewrote the piano part, either *en bloc* or as he progressed through the orchestral texture.

Black Mass

Sorabji wrote to Philip Heseltine on 24 June 1922 in view of the article his friend was preparing for the *Dictionary of Modern Music and Musicians* by Arthur Eaglefield Hull (1876–1928): "You can add to the list of works 'Black Mass' for Chorus Large Orchestra and Organ—'in preparation'." He finally "abandoned this silly idea" probably prompted by Scriabin's Sonata no. 9, op. 68 (1912–13), known as "Messe noire".[123] He was probably still toying with the project in July 1923, when he mentioned it to a Canadian visitor, George Mackenzie Brewer (see chapter 18). The latter spoke of "a drama in dumb-show, a sort of mystery-play such as Scriabin planned with a chorus of about a thousand and an orchestra of gigantic size entirely surrounding the audience in a huge temple".[124]

[122]KSS to EC, 8 April 1930, 8.
[123]KSS to PH, 24 June 1922 {*LPH*, no. 37, p. 137}; KSS to KD, 5 September 1983 {Derus, S52, p. 282}.
[124]George Mackenzie Brewer, travel diary, summer 1923 (manuscript), 41 {LAC}.

8 / 1922–25 ■ "Sinjon Wood"

Christopher à Becket Williams, the Early Admirer

One of Sorabji's good friends from the 1920s was Christopher à Becket Williams (b. Dorchester, 2 July 1890; d. Chandler's Ford, Hampshire, 3 November 1956).[1] It was Sorabji who seems to have initiated the contact, in June 1917, with an open letter to the *Musical Standard* in reply to Williams, who had made "the extraordinary statement that Hungarian music to-day 'non est'".[2] The two men obviously came into closer contact, for Sorabji dedicated two works to him in adjacent years (1922, 1923), the *Three Pastiches for Piano* and *Le jardin parfumé—Poem for Piano Solo*. At some point, probably in 1942 at the earliest, he removed a dedication to Bernard Bromage in the *Concerto for Piano and Orchestra [no.] III [no. 6]* (1922; 144 pp.) and replaced it with one to Williams, to whom he gave the manuscript.

Williams, an Oxford-educated English writer and composer of Welsh extraction, was married to the pianist Amy (Aimée) Violet Evelyn Theyre (1886–1962), known as Violet Clarence, whom one critic described as "a living proof of the now established fact that it is not necessary to be a sort of exotic hot-house plant in order to be a musician".[3] Sorabji had met the gentleman through the organist E. Emlyn Davies, who was to give a partial public performance of his *Symphony [no. 1] for Organ* in 1928.[4] Williams wrote two articles about his friend, which have been quoted several times. One of the few people to have had a direct acquaintance with his music, he called him an "amazing composer" who soon would "make our present little gods take a back seat".[5]

According to an anonymous critic, Williams's literary gifts had "borne fruit in many amusing but acute articles in the musical press as in magazine stories, fables and satirical poems".[6] Between 1923 and 1929 he contributed an entertaining column entitled "Charivaria" to *Musical Opinion* under the pseudonym "Sinjon Wood", derived from St. John's Wood, the area of London north-west of Regent's Park where Sorabji lived in 1913–14.[7] According to one of his readers, he had "laughed to scorn many

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[1]The name is often given as "Becket Williams", for example in several catalogue entries in the collection of the British Library, but the last name is Williams. See articles in *Grove's Dictionary of Music and Musicians* (5th ed.), *Die Musik in Geschichte und Gegenwart* (1st ed.), and *Baker's Biographical Dictionary of Musicians* (7th ed.). See also "Personal and Otherwise: Christopher à Becket Williams", *MO* 62, no. 620 (May 1929): 721; "Obituary: Christopher à Becket Williams", *MT* 97, no. 1366 (December 1956): 659; A. F. Leighton Thomas, "Becket Williams (1890–1956)", *Welsh Music* 2, no. 2 (1957): 12–14. All articles except the obituary include a photograph. An undated photograph of him, looking like a proud man, was found in Sorabji's papers. The John Ireland Trust Archives own the unpublished manuscript of Ireland's "Obituary of Christopher à Becket Williams (1890–1956) (English composer and writer)".

[2]Sorabji, "Our Letter-Box: To the Editor", *The Musical Standard* 9, no. 235 (30 June 1917): 439.

[3]"Miss Violet Clarence (With portrait)", *The Musical Standard* 13, no. 203 (26 April 1919): 139. She later became interested in Christian Science and acquired a reputation as a faith healer; A. F. Leighton Thomas to MAR, 26 July 1990.

[4]Sorabji, "E. Emlyn Davies: A Personal Tribute", *MO* 74, no. 888 (September 1951): 673.

[5]Christopher à Becket Williams, "Charivaria", *MO* 45, no. 537 (June 1922): 771.

[6]"Captain C. a Becket Williams (With portrait)", *The Musical Standard* 13, no. 298 (15 February 1919): 59.

[7]Early examples of names containing the rare preposition *à* are Thomas à Becket (ca. 1119–1170; not the modern form) and the German canon regular Thomas à Kempis (ca. 1380–1471). Other examples include the humorist Gilbert Abbot à Beckett (1811–56) and his wife, the opera composer Mary Anne à Beckett (1815–63), and their sons, the writer Gilbert Arthur à Beckett

of those who should be shot at dawn".[8] As well as two travel books,[9] he wrote some songs, choral works, and pieces for organ and piano. The catalogue of the British Library lists fifty-two works and twelve transcriptions, mainly of music by Bach. None of this music seems to have survived from a composer whom the *Manchester Guardian*'s critic Samuel Langford (1863–1927) described as a genius.[10] In 1920 Williams, with a group including Sir Adrian Boult, founded—and was apparently the moving spirit of—the Decentralisation of Music Committee, which sought to give concerts "of what may be called West-End quality elsewhere than in that over-favoured (and not too appreciative) locality".[11]

At his request, Williams dedicated his *Impromptu and Double Fugue for Two Pianos* (1924) to Sorabji. The score contains a humorous dedicatory paragraph, signed "Cantuar", expressing his surprise that "such a rigidly diatonic composition" should appeal to Sorabji. The dedicatee, who attended a performance given by the composer and his wife in April 1924, described it as "a jolly, frank, honest, open-faced piece of music, attractive by reason of its utter lack of pretentiousness, subtlety, or the current cant of contemporary composition".[12]

Sorabji appreciated his friend's "sterling honesty, integrity and blunt frankness and downrightness" and that his "equally frank downright and direct musical thinking should be expressed in a vocabulary uncontorted and suited to it in simplicity and uncomplicated directness".[13] Curiously, Sorabji, a composer of such complex music, defended his friend against those who accused him of being naive and incompetent. He also liked his grasp of politics, his "knowledge and diagnosis of the hidden wellsprings of international politics", and his "occasional and refreshing Rabelaisian bonhomie". He felt compelled to thank the editor of the *Musical Times* for his warm tribute to his old friend, and to say how disgusted he was by the "'modern' *Machmusikanten* [composers of shoddy music] whose 'musical' utterances are *démodé* even before they are half out their silly mouths".[14]

Three Pastiches for Piano

On 29 September 1922 Sorabji completed three of his most attractive and accessible piano pieces. The *Three Pastiches for Piano* (7, 6, and 4 pp.) offer versions of well-known pieces as seen through the Sorabjian lens. In the order in which they appear in the manuscript, the pieces are transcriptions of (1) the Waltz in D-flat Major, op. 64, no. 1 (*Minute Waltz*), by Chopin, (2) the "Habanera" from *Carmen* by Bizet, and (3) the "Hindu Merchant's Song" from *Sadko* by Rimsky-Korsakov. In 1933 Sorabji would write another, entirely different, transcription of the *Minute Waltz* under the title *Pasticcio capriccioso sopra l'op. 64, no 1 del Chopin*. Inscriptions in the upper-left corner of the manuscript—most probably dedications in the case of the first two pieces—have been blotted out. However, the autograph of the *Sadko* piece clearly shows a dedication to Christopher à Becket Williams.

The word "pastiche", when not applied to eighteenth-century opera, describes "a literary, artistic, or musical work that imitates the style of previous work" (*Webster*). A pastiche, then, is a work written

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(1837–91) and the journalist Arthur William à Beckett (1844–1909). There was also a family of musicians active in Philadelphia: Thomas A'Becket (1808–90) and his sons James A. (1847–1904) and Thomas (1843–1918). Other people known to lexicography, named "à Beckett" and "a'Beckett", were active in law and cricket in Australia, such as the solicitor and judge Sir Thomas à Beckett (1836–1919).

[8]C. A. Davies, "Letters to the Editor: 'Sinjon Wood' and the Modernist", *MO* 62, no. 626 (November 1929): 129.

[9]Williams, *The High Pyrénées: Summer and Winter* (London: Wishart & Company, 1928); *Winter Sport in Europe* (London: G. Bell & Sons, 1929). An obituary published in *The Musical Times* mentions a third book, *Sketches at Oxford*.

[10]A. F. Leighton Thomas, "Becket Williams", 14.

[11]"Occasional Notes", *MT* 61, no. 934 (1 December 1920): 816.

[12]Sorabji, "Music", *NA* 34, no. 25 (17 April 1924): 296–97; 297.

[13]Sorabji, "CHRISTOPHER A BECKET WILLIAMS—An appreciation by Kaikhosru Shapurji Sorabji", 38 lines (undated).

[14]Sorabji, "Becket Williams and Scriabin", *MT* 98, no. 1369 (March 1957): 152–53.

in the style of another composer, either as an academic exercise to parody his or her style. What Sorabji wrote is in fact a transcription or, even more precisely, a *Nachdichtung*, a term often used in connection with Busoni to describe reworkings containing so much new material that they become original works, as in the *Sonatina brevis "in signo Joannis Sebastiani Magni"* (1918).

***Pastiche on the "Minute Waltz" by Chopin*.** Sorabji was rather negative about Chopin's waltzes in general, describing as "some of the feeblest of these feeble products of Chopin's genius".[15] Nevertheless, he shared the affection of Golden Age pianists for the *Minute Waltz*, which he transcribed again in 1933 (see chapter 12). The piece begins on the dominant A♭ with a long cadenza based on a chordal statement of the main motive. This leads to the beginning of the work itself, marked "À la Godowsky" and to be played with grace and impertinence. The transcription corresponds bar for bar to the original, although the repetition of the section corresponding to bars 21–36 is written in full and is entirely different. A striking passage is the trill (bars 69–72 of the model), which is progressively amplified from a trill on one note to five-note chords in each hand. Like several other transcribers, Sorabji plays with the themes by using them together **(example 8.1)**.

Sorabji described the piece as "quite an amusing sort of thing, I think, rather Godowsky-ish, if you might say, with a lot of contrapuntal imitations and interweavings. It begins in the key of E Major [Sorabji is actually thinking of his second transcription here] with a lot of introductory flourishings [*recte* flourishes] before settling down into D-flat major."[16] For him, it was "of no particular value; it's the *second* one that is the real one"; the first one was "meant as a joke".[17] As a "small return" for sending a copy of Godowsky's transcription of the piece, Sorabji decided to give the autograph of his own work to his American admirer Donald Garvelmann (see chapter 12).[18] The latter soon mentioned to Sorabji the existence of several transcriptions, some of which aroused "my violent curiosity",[19] and must have offered to include his piece as part of a self-produced anthology of transcriptions of Chopin's piece, which appeared in late 1969. This was to be the first publication of any of his music since *Opus clavicembalisticum* in 1931. Sorabji made it clear that he wanted "NIX, GAR NIX, as the Marschallin says in ROSENKAVALIER... either as fees, royalties or what not for the printing of the pastiche"; what mattered was that no one connected with the BBC should "get hold of it or any recording of it".[20] Sorabji, who had seen proofs twice, received his first copies on 15 November 1969.[21] He soon asked for "half a dozen more copies of your kindness and charity", presumably to offer to friends, and lost no time in sending two similar requests.[22] Public performances, however, did not interest him at all.

> I shall be on the lookout for concert pianists of whom I take the DIMMEST of views, laying hands on PASTICHE NO I. BUT you can trust me to do THAT! If need be, I shall shower them with such abuse and insults that they'll be only too willing to give up any designs they MAY harbour on PASTICHE NO I!!! From which you'll deduce that I take no very kindly view of the race.[23]

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[15]Sorabji, "Leopold Godowsky as Creative Transcriber", in *MCF*, 62–70; 69.
[16]KSS to DG, 4 August 1967.
[17]KSS to FH, 1 September 1967 {2/F.9}.
[18]KSS to DG, 18 July 1967.
[19]KSS to DG, 4 August 1967.
[20]KSS to DG, 28 September 1967.
[21]KSS to DG, 20 July 1968, 27 September 1968.
[22]KSS to DG, 1 March 1970; see also ibid., 4 April 1970 and 17 August 1973, for the other requests. He had received his first copies by 15 November 1969.
[23]KSS to DG, 17 August 1970.

However, he had given the Austrian pianist Hans Kann (1927–2005) permission to go ahead with his project—which remained so—of recording the piece. He did not see it "as in anyway a representative or important work. It is just a bit of fun, no more than that."[24]

The piece also exists in a copy made by Sorabji's copyist, A. J. Collins, on which we read an amusing inscription: "Dedicated with no permission and even less respect to the Pecksniffs and Grundies prurient purists. Prudish Puritans and lugubrious long upperlippers of Music."[25] The existence of this copy probably explains why the piece is mentioned in the list of "Other Compositions of Kaikhosru Sorabji" appended to two of his scores published by Curwen (see chapter 7), but without a price, as it was then considered to be forthcoming.

Another arrangement in the style of Godowsky would have lengthened Sorabji's list of arrangements if he had written down his version of the pianist-composer's version of Saint-Saëns's *Le cygne*, to which he "added little trimmings of my own when I play it over for my own amusement".[26]

***Pastiche on the Habanera from "Carmen" by Bizet*.** Sorabji's early *Quasi habanera* was the first example of his interest in this dance, which he would also include in various later works. His version of the most famous of all habaneras is a transcription of a transcription, since Bizet had adapted what he thought was a folk song; it is in fact a song by the Spanish composer Sebastián Iradier (1809–65) called *El arreglito, ou La promesse de mariage*. Moreover, the *Carmen* Pastiche is a transcription inspired by a transcription, namely, Busoni's *Kammer-Fantasie über Bizets Carmen* (1920), which includes the habanera. Sorabji had heard the latter work played by the master himself at Wigmore Hall on 19 February 1921, one year before he decided to transcribe it. Never short of an exaggeration, he ranked it "among the most important and significant works of our time, and with them, Busoni definitely takes his place with the five or six really great figures in contemporary music" (see chapter 8 for the full quotation). Fifteen years later, after a performance by Egon Petri, he described it as "a piece of real magic, whose subtlety, finesse and grace of style are all the while coloured with the sinister under-current that is such a striking quality of Busoni's work, an almost necromantic quality".[27]

The piece begins with a long cadenza on a dominant pedal point announcing the habanera rhythm and the descending chromatic opening line of the melody ("L'amour est un oiseau rebelle"). The entire habanera proper, in both Bizet and Sorabji, develops over a tonic pedal. Sorabji's treatment, however, is obviously freer. Sometimes the pedal point is heard later than on the first beat. At other times it is simply absent; this is particularly evident in bars 85–95, where the harmony departs significantly from that of the model. Unlike Bizet, who uses a simple monophonic and barely changing ostinato for the habanera rhythm, Sorabji writes dissonant chords (or at least dyads) for almost all the notes of the motive **(example 8.2)**. He applies the same treatment to the melodic ideas, which are entrusted either to the upper part or to an inner part. He often distorts the melody by changing a few notes. The core of this piece consists of a transcription of the two strophes; unlike Bizet, who simply repeats the same music with a different text, Sorabji adds chromatic runs in either single or double notes above the theme. Instead of concluding with the standard dominant-tonic movement, he abruptly breaks the

[24]KSS to FH, 1 September 1967 {2/F.9}; 3 August 1972 {3/F.3}.

[25]"Pecksniff" is the name of a character in Charles Dickens's novel *Martin Chuzzlewit* (1844), who is "represented as an unctuous hypocrite, habitually prating of benevolence, etc." (*Oxford English Dictionary*). "Grundy" is "the surname of an imaginary personage (Mrs. Grundy) who is proverbially referred to as a personification of the tyranny of social opinion in matters of conventional propriety" (ibid).

[26]KSS to DG, 28 September 1967, 1.

[27]Sorabji, "Contingencies", *The Sackbut* 1, no. 9 (March 1921): 417–18; "Music", *NEW* 8, no. 21 (5 March 1936): 412–13; 413.

music and adds a cadenza ending on a dominant tremolo in the lowest register of the keyboard. This low A is repeated several times until an ascending run in the upper register ends the piece without resolving the dominant.

***Pastiche on the Hindu Merchant's Song from "Sadko" by Rimsky-Korsakov*.** The third pastiche is based on the opera *Sadko* (1894–96) by Nikolay Rimsky-Korsakov (1844–1908). The Hindu Merchant's Song, often called "Song of India", comes from scene 4 of the opera, which takes place on the Novgorod quayside, on the shores of Lake Ilmen. The singer Sadko, addressing the foreign merchants, asks them to sing him ballads of their respective homelands to help him decide where best to sail to see all the marvels and wonders of the world. The scene consists of three songs, one each from the Viking, Hindu, and Venetian merchants. The Hindu Merchant's song ("Pesnja indejskogo gostja") tells of the riches, gems, and precious stones of India as well as of the Phoenix, a bird with a woman's face whose song is so seductive that listening to it causes makes you everything. The melody returns in two passages of the Finale (scene 7), when the Hindu Merchant adds his voice to the chorus and praises the hero, saying that his songs are bolder than the phoenix's singing. Sorabji, who insisted that he was "*not* an Indian composer", ironically chose "Song of India" for one of his most attractive works; given his Parsi parentage, he should probably have called it "Song of Persia", as Alistair Hinton once remarked.

In the late 1970s Sorabji wrote *"Il gallo d'oro" da Rimsky-Korsakov: Variazioni frivole con una fuga anarchica, eretica e perversa*, in the model for which the Queen of Shemakha's "Hymn to the Sun" (act 2) strongly recalls the melodic motives found in the Hindu Merchant's song. His reception of the Russian composer does not seem to have been entirely positive in earlier years. A concert performance of *Antar*, op. 9 (1868, rev. 1875, 1891), in 1925 led him to describe the work as "extraordinarily enchanting and fantastically fairy-tale-like in character". He added: "The work is weak, no doubt: it consists of little else but repetition of a handful of ideas, but its charm and imaginativeness are undeniable. It is an infinitely more pleasing work than the much better known and more popular 'Schéhérazade'".[28] In a review of a 1931 London performance, he again criticized the Russian composer's overreliance on repetition. Nevertheless, he must seen the Hindu Merchant's Song as an inspired melody that ought to be varied and developed to prevent it from "peter[ing] out miserably in lame repetitions".

> Like all the Russians, one always feels that Rimsky-Korsakov is a little weak in the head, that obsession with pleasant tunes like a silly child with a tin trumpet that he blows and blows till one is nearly demented, which he repeats over and over again. […] In Rimsky-Korsakov's case this is all the more enraging because […] his ideas are often really charming and delicious, and might, had he had the intellectual imaginative creative power, have fructified into exquisite and enchanting creations. The music of the Sea Princess in *Sadko* […] is a case in point. Fantastic, imaginative, and captivating, it falls on the ear at first entry to peter out miserably in lame repetitions in which nothing is added nor varied, nothing new drawn from it, no fresh light shed on it.[29]

Sorabji's transcription consists of seventy-two bars compared to the model's sixty-nine. His rendering is in the remote key of D♭ major (compared to the original's G major); this transposition allows him to achieve a much richer and mellower sound. As in the *Carmen* Pastiche, the tonic is used as a pedal point throughout. What is fascinating about Sorabji's piece is the extent to which he transforms the original material. He rewrites the introduction as a series of superimposed independent sinuous chromatic lines. From bar 5 onwards, virtually every quaver of the original is transformed into

[28]"Music", *NA* 36, no.21 (19 March 1925): 246.
[29]Sorabji, "Music", *NA* 49, no. 9 (2 July 1931): 104.

a luscious chromatic chord, with considerable modifications to the harmonic structure. From a thematic and polyphonic point of view, Sorabji far surpasses his model by combining snatches of themes **(example 8.3)**.

Prelude, Interlude, and Fugue for Piano / Richard Henry Brittain

In later life, Sorabji did not think much of his first work to include a fugue. Indeed, he described his *Prelude, Interlude, and Fugue for Piano* (1920, 1922; 17 pp.) as being of "no particular value nor interest".[30] The piece was a token of gratitude to "R. H. Brittain", also the dedicatee of the song *Arabesque*. An English freelance journalist, Richard Henry (Rex) Brittain (b. 1876; d. Derbyshire, 1957) was the proprietor of "Rex Brittain Advertising, Business-getting 'Copy' and Ideas for Booklets, Folders, Leaflets, Press Ads, etc.", located at 8 New Square, Lincoln's Inn, London WC2.[31] He wrote a pocket guide to the city of Ripley, whose first page shows an advertisement for G. C. Brittain & Sons, Ltd., Wholesale & Retail Stationers, Paper Merchants, General & Commercial Printers, etc., which may have been his father's business.[32] Sorabji described Brittain, who had "helped me over many a bad time emotionally" (probably a reference to his sexual identity problems), as "one of my greatest friends". He himself had helped Brittain and his "perfect dear of a wife who makes a great fuss of me" out of a "filthily difficult time with money matters". In 1967 he had his chauffeur Ron Venning take him to lunch with Mrs. Brittain, who was then living in Bournemouth, at the Red Lion Hotel in Wareham.[33] Rex deserved something better than this "ludicrous and somewhat pathetic baby-piece".[34] Sorabji also called it "a baddish work taken altogether—the Fugue is shoddy and the Interlude is lacking in the flexibility of texture that it aims at, but poor as it is, good enough to make the reputation of half a dozen Hindemiths or Prokofieffs".[35]

Only three (rather rambling) letters have survived from Brittain, who seems to have been an amateur of music. In one of these, addressed to "Dear Boy", he commented on the sound of the instrument used in the broadcast of the *Le jardin parfumé—Poem for Piano Solo* in April 1930, describing it as "a bit white in the extreme top bits" although he had never heard such a sound "over the aether" since or before Petri.[36]

The "Prelude" ([ED]pp. 3–7) is a formidable *perpetuum mobile* consisting of 456 groups of semiquavers in both hands but for the first three beats, given to the right hand alone. Although it would be an exaggeration to say that no group is repeated, the configuration of the intervals is constantly changing. The performer is also faced with several problems: (1) there is no strictly parallel movement (scale movements are usually pitted against broken figurations); (2) the hands are often at some—or much—distance from each other; and (3) the tempo is intended to be very fast **(example 8.4)**. The very slow "Interlude" (pp. 8–10) provides the earliest extended (but rather simple) example of Sorabji's nocturne

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[30] *FFN*, 2.

[31] According to the 1911 Census for England & Wales, https://www.findmypast.co.uk/transcript?id=GBC%2F1911%2FRG14%2F20976%2F0275%2F1, Brittain was married to Mary Payne (1876–1952); they had one daughter, Hilda Brighouse (1898–1957), and one son, George Cyril (1905–77).

[32] R. H. Brittain, *The "Borough" Pocket Guide to Ripley (Derbyshire), specially compiled by R. H. Brittain, Containing: A Street Plan, A Map of the District, 20 Views, and Descriptive Letterpress. Being No. 325 of the "Borough" Guides* (Cheltenham: Edmond J. Burrow, 1919), 40 pp. (British Library, pressmark 10354.a.734).

[33] KSS to RV, 25 January 1967.

[34] KSS to EC, 22 January 1931, 1.

[35] KSS to EC 18 April 1930, 5 (section dated Easter Day).

[36] Richard Henry Brittain to KSS, undated [after 22 April 1930], 1. The other letters are addressed to "My dear old thing" and "Adored but evil Child".

style, that is, music consisting of free chromatic strands, often with conflicting rhythms, and played very softly throughout. The brisk "Fugue" (pp. 11–19) is reminiscent of Reger; its 9/8 rhythm and articulation recall the latter's *Variations and Fugue on a Theme of Mozart*, op. 132 (1914). From p. 15/4/2 the music gradually builds up with snatches of the augmented subject until p. 17, where the full augmented subject is heard against a scale of chords that cover the keyboard up and down. A very powerful pedal point on A (p. 18) leads to the massive and powerful final page, which features a chordal presentation of the augmented subject, as in Reger's fugues. This conclusion foreshadows the gigantic climaxes of many of Sorabji's future works.

Percival Garratt, in the *Sackbut*, described the fourteen-minute work published by J. Curwen as a "colossal" work for super-pianists. He also noted that the fugue "cannot be without pedal [...], and yet the use of the pedal would reduce the Fugue to chaos". David Branson, in the *British Musician*, was only partially satisfied with the piece; he saw "some good structural development" in the fugue, but found the first two sections "still diffuse and—in that respect—unsatisfactory".[37]

Concerto for Piano and Orchestra [no.] III [no. 6]

Sorabji had stopped composing piano concertos after completing his fifth such work in August 1920. On 16 December 1922 he completed the *Concerto for Piano and Orchestra [no.] III [no. 6]* (1922; 144 pp.), which once bore a dedication "To Bernard [illegible word(s)] token of warm affection". This Bernard is undoubtedly Bernard William Bromage (1899–1957), the writer and lecturer on mysticism (see chapter 12). At a much later date Sorabji added a new dedication reading "To my own dear old from his still Old (not still-born!!)", the "own dear old" most likely being Christopher à Becket Williams, to whom he gave the manuscript.

In the manuscript, Sorabji transcribed an aphorism by the Belgian painter Alfred Stevens (1823–1906), which reflects his view of the artist as someone who flies above the crowd: "L'Art est fait pour les délicats et passe par-dessus la tête du vulgaire, sans cela ce ne serait plus de l'art."[38] The epigraph on the last page of the score is closely related to the Stevens quotation: "The artist creates not what others *think* beautiful but what is necessary to himself." Sorabji credits Arnold Schoenberg, but it has not been not possible to find the quotation in his published writings. The last page of music features two invocations followed by a line of text that disappears too deeply into the gutter to be guessed: "ALLAH.AKBAR. To Ganesa [*recte* Gaṇeśa] Glory-Shiv-Reverence (<><><>) and <> <>". Here Sorabji refers to two religious traditions in one inscription. "Allah Akbar" (God is greater [than all else]) is the opening invocation of the Muslim prayer. "Gaṇeśa" is the Hindu deity said to remove obstacles; it is represented by an elephant's head and is the patron of traders, travellers, and thieves. Sorabji would refer to the latter deity again in the manuscript of his *Valse-fantaisie for Piano*.

This sixth concerto is less ambitiously scored than its published predecessor, with all woodwind and brass instruments used individually. The number of strings is given for each section: 8, 8, 6, 4, 4 (with an alternative 6, 6, 4, 4, 2). The strings, with the exception of the double basses, are divided into two sections throughout. The work is thus very much in the spirit of a chamber concerto, like the *Concerto pour piano et orchestra da camera [no. 3]*, although the score calls for several percussion instruments. The three-movement work includes a "Cadenza fugata" ([MS]pp. 114–19) in the last

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[37]Percival Garratt, "New Publications", *The Sackbut* 5, no. 4 (August 1924): 24; David Branson, "Kaikhosru Sorabji", *The British Musician and Musical News* 5, no. 11 (November 1929): 311–12; 312.

[38]"Art is made for delicate people and flies over the heads of vulgar ones; it would otherwise no longer be art." The quotation by Alfred Stevens—not be confused with the English sculptor, designer and painter (1817–75)—comes from *Impressions sur la peinture* (Paris: Librairie des Bibliophiles, 1886), 26 (item no. LXXXIII). It is quoted as a postscript in KSS to EC, 7 July 1930, 2.

movement, which is to be played machine-like ("Machinalement"). Pages 142 and 143 contain ossia readings for eight bars—a rare occurrence in Sorabji's music. As in the published concerto, the work is a symphony with piano obbligato. Unfortunately, the composer did not comment on this work at all.

Opusculum for Orchestra

Sorabji devoted much of his energy to orchestral music in the early 1920s. During the last stages of writing the massive *Symphony [no. 1] for Piano, Large Orchestra, Chorus, and Organ* he began work —which he soon abandoned—on the *Black Mass*, intended for chorus and large orchestra, including organ. He must thus have felt the need to write something on a more modest scale. This new work, *Opusculum for Orchestra* (1923; 36 pp.), completed on 19 May 1923, is dedicated to John Ireland (1879–1962), with whom he exchanged a few letters over some twenty-five years. The English composer is also the dedicatee of *Opus clavisymphonicum—Concerto for Piano and Large Orchestra* (see chapter 18).

Sorabji scored his seventeen-minute work for a chamber orchestra of flutes, oboes, clarinets, bassoons, horns, trumpets, and strings. Not listed are a harp, a celesta, and an "organ pedal" as well as timpani, glockenspiel, xylophone, triangle, cymbals, drum, and tenor drum. Sorabji's bar numbering is incorrect; the piece contains not 95 but 100 bars, which is much more in keeping with his interest in number symbolism. The manuscript contains a puzzling quotation that underlines the composer's growing interest in the occult at this time and for which no source has yet been found: ".....a rite not to be spoken, a deed of high Black Magic". Could there be a link with Ireland's orchestral poem *The Forgotten Rite* (1913), which reflects his interest in pagan mysticism?

A very striking feature of *Opusculum* is the intricacy resulting from the superimposition of several parts using different rhythms with complex irrational values. Although this is most evident in the string parts, examples can also be found in the woodwinds; the irrational values can often only be played correctly when the minim is used as the pulse **(example 8.5)**. The overall style of the work is polyphonic, although Sorabji sometimes reduces the number of voices to almost nothing. The piece proceeds at a very moderate pace until bar 50, where a very slow tempo is required with a metronome mark (crotchet = 25–30), an unusual procedure for Sorabji. The music becomes more animated for the final buildup from bar 76. This section features, among other lines, a pounding F♯–C♯ pedal point in the low strings and timpani underlying very long trills in the piccolo and flute outlining a melodic third. A final burst of polyphony follows at the end of bar 87, building to a rather daunting climax of complexity. The "worklet" ends with two very sparse bars of epilogue.

Opusculum can be viewed as a toccata and fugue (bars 1–87, 87–100).[39] The toccata, with its free, virtuosic orchestral writing, is based on a single sinuous theme first stated by the cellos at the beginning. This theme is heard regularly, either in its entirety or elided, or only through its rhythmic or melodic contour. The toccata consists of three main sections (bars 1–50, 51–76, 76–87). The first of these can be divided into five subsections (bars 1–9, 10–12, 13–32, 32–45, 45–50) in which the theme is presented in full in one part and followed by an episode featuring various recalls. The second section is divided into four subsections (bars 51–53, 54–66, 67–72, 72–76) in which two styles alternate: superimposition of several motives of varying length without a cycle resulting from repetition, and free writing. The third section uses Sorabji's ostinato technique over the F♯–C♯ pedal already mentioned; from bar 84 is a sevenfold augmentation of the theme in the organ pedal. The fugue begins with a statement of the theme, a typical Sorabjian capricious line in semiquavers heard over an

[39]Benjamin René, "Présentation et analyse de l'*Opusculum pour orchestre* de Kaikhosru Shapurji Sorabji" (M.A. thesis, Université Laval, 2001), esp. 41–47.

augmentation of the theme in the lower register, and reaches a climax in bars 94–95, after which the music diminishes until the end for a last statement of the opening theme of the work.

Le jardin parfumé—Poem for Piano Solo

The nocturne style that Sorabji had first used in 1920 at the latest in "In the Hothouse", the second of the *Two Piano Pieces*, reached its first climax in *Le jardin parfumé—Poem for Piano Solo* (1923; 16 pp.). He called it the "first extended study by the composer of his 'Rose Garden of Shiraz' mood".[40] The piece is inspired by a treatise on Arabian erotology by the sixteenth-century writer Sheik al-Nafzāwī (ʿUmar ibn Muḥammad, al-Nafzāwī). This favourite of the censors was translated into French in 1848 with what appears to be the first official edition in 1886.. There is an English translation by Sir Richard Francis Burton (1821–90), the English orientalist and explorer.[41]

As we read in the last lines of Burton's introduction, each chapter is devoted to a physical or anecdotal subject or deals with "the wiles and deceits of women". There are twenty chapters in all, containing technical advice on sexual practices and problems, with titles such as "Concerning Everything That Is Favourable to the Act of Coition" (chap. 6) and "Prescriptions for Increasing the Dimensions of Small Members and for Making Them Splendid" (chap. 17). Sorabji was saddened to report that the author's wife had destroyed a chapter dealing "in the fullest possible detail with the amorous doings (if and when they get down to them) of the likes of you know whom!!!!" He looked forward to an unexpurgated translation of this chapter.[42] The reference to additional material dealing with sexual activity between men must have been an additional incentive for Sorabji to write such a sensuous work. In the late 1950s he was to view it harshly, calling it "only a baby-piece, shockingly immature" and "not a patch" on *"Gulistān"—Nocturne for Piano* and *Nocturne, "Jāmī"*. He then added: "Not at all bad… Languorous, voluptuous hot-housy and all that… VERY much ME… a goddam sight too much, it might be said… Still ME…"[43]

The organist Thomas Armstrong (1898–1994), then studying with Holst and Vaughan Williams at the Royal College of Music, dismissed the music for its "unreasonable and capricious" difficulties, describing it as an attempt to "extend explorations" of Scriabin, but without the Russian composer's logic. Although many of the sounds produced were beautiful, he saw no "logical structural basis" that the ordinary musician could feel, which made the whole thing pointless.[44] Sorabji immediately objected that the critic had not taken his music for what it was: his own. He also lifted the veil on the main compositional procedure of the work: the use of a melodic shape and its transformations, which we also encounter in several works such as the sonatas.

> This piece is no manner of way "an attempt to extend the explorations of Scriabin" or anyone else, nor is it intended as a crossword puzzle for those who take months to grasp (and then don't) its quite moderate technical and musical problems. And as it is *my* work the fact that it lacks "Scriabin's logic" is surely not only natural but very right and proper. It has my logic, and that, I think, is what matters. And although no one can accuse me of being optimistic as to the powers of the "ordinary musician's" intelligence, I think that even I would have hesitated before expressing an opinion so insulting to the latter as that implied by your reviewer's remark, "there is no logical structural basis at all in Mr. Sorabji's work that is to be discovered by the ordinary musician." That is to say that "the ordinary musician" cannot discover the theme around which, with its derivatives and variants, the entire work is woven—a theme worked

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[40] *FFN*, 2.

[41] *Le jardin parfumé du cheikh Nefzaoui: Manuel d'érotologie arabe (XVI siècle)* (Paris: I. Lisieux, 1886). Burton's English translation appeared as *The Perfumed Garden for the Soul's Delectation: A Manual of Arabian Erotology (XVI. Century)*, revised and corrected translation (For the Kama Shastra Society of London and Benares, 1886).

[42] KSS to FH, 10 August 1971 {3/F.2}.

[43] KSS to FH, 2 November 1957 {1/F.19}.

[44] T[homas] A[rmstrong], "New Music: Pianoforte", *MT* 69, no. 1029 (1 November 1928): 997–98; 997.

> in one form or another into the fabric of almost every page—and for no other reason apparently than that it is not docketed off into two-, three-, or four-bar phrases![45]

Sydney Grew (1879–1946), the editor of the *British Musician*, was much more positive than Armstrong. Although the piece eluded both his eyes and fingers, he was sure that a poet-musician with a piano "of celestial tone" and a "transcendently delicate technique" could make something out of it. He would have something to say if the composer played it to him several times.[46]

Much later, in 1947, Sorabji wrote an essay discussing the "reckless fantasies of the school of the verbal interpretation—or it might be called translation—of music". His only concern as a musician was the music, "whether it be good or bad and whether it stands on its own feet as music". He referred to his *Le jardin parfumé* in words that strike an unusual note in a serious essay on music.

> I well remember my own flattered astonishment when some good simple soul told me, after listening to my own *Jardin parfumé*, of the various rustic sounds he said he heard therein; the brook, the bees, the birds doing all the things you expect birds, bees and brooks to do—in their publishable moments. I could not forbear to ask the good soul if he also heard the rich *purée d'épinard* plop of the cows emptying their bowels, those least—so admirably least—costive of creatures, whose evacuations, performed with such nonchalance and brio, and full-bowelled ease, are such a shining example to the constipated idiot who live on and by them. … At any rate, I hastened to assure him that he ought to have heard it, if he heard all the other things he said he did … *I'd* no idea they were there![47]

Sorabji himself gave the premiere of *Le jardin parfumé* on the British Broadcasting Corporation's London Regional network. On the eve of the recording, he referred to "that blasted B.B.C. affair" and looked forward that it be "over and done with".[48] The programme aired on 22 April 1930 at 9:05 p.m. featured the piano piece from 9:25 to 9:40 p.m., heard between string quartets. The composer recalled that someone "saw my mug in the 'Radio Times' just recently and remarked to a man I know [...] that mine was one of the cruellest, most ruthless and coldly contemptuous human faces they had ever seen but didn't doubt that I could make myself perfectly charming to a very few people who took my fancy".[49] He had returned from the broadcast "mad with neuralgia from an ice cold room". Fortunately, it was "not one of those cottonwool deadened ones in which you feel as though you were in an air-exhausted bell-jar, but had quite a good, although not at all excessive amount of resonance". Of his performance, he wrote: "I couldn't get into the right heavy hot languid atmosphere of it, so I contented myself with darkening the shadows and intensifying the highlights, which seems to have worked very successfully if one can believe what is said."[50] Much as he did not want to see anyone perform his music in London, an engagement with the BBC was "a means of earning a few guineas, and I would accept that if it came along for that reason and no other".[51] As this was written after the broadcast, he had certainly found something positive in the experience and was willing to repeat it.

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[45]Sorabji, "Letters to the Editor: 'Le jardin parfumé'", *MT* 69, no. 1030 (1 December 1928): 1120.

[46][Sydney Grew], "Kaikhosru Sorabji: 'Le Jardin Parfume [*sic*]': Poem for Piano", *The British Musician* 4, no. 3 (May 1928): 85–86; 85.

[47]Sorabji, "Music and Muddleheadedness", in *MCF*, 21, 23 (text); 24 (block quotation).

[48]KSS to EC, 18 April 1930, 7 (section dated 21 April).

[49]KSS to EC, 3 May 1930, 3 (section dated 5 May). The photograph (of a very stern Sorabji) can be seen in the announcement published as "Tuesday, April 22. London Regional", *Radio Times* 27, no. 342 (18 April 1930): 157, http://nvhrbiblio.nl/biblio/tijdschrift/Radio%20Times/1930/Radio%20Times%20342%2019300418.pdf. Another announcement was published as "Broadcasting: The Programmes—Mr. Macdonald on the Conference", *The Times*, 22 April 1930, 18. The chamber ensemble was the Kutcher String Quartet, which was active between 1922 and 1940.

[50]KSS to EC, 18 April 1930, 9 (sections dated 22 and 23 April).

[51]KSS to EC, 17 June 1930, 16 (section dated 2 July).

The next few days brought some "laudatory and congratulatory notices".[52] The most valuable letter for him was from Frederick Delius (who dictated it to his wife Jelka), saying that *Le jardin parfumé*, which had "real sensuous beauty", had interested him very much.[53] He found it "rather charming" to read such an appreciation from a composer who was "known for his detestation of most contemporary music"; eighteen years later he still considered this letter to be one of his "most greatly treasured possessions".[54]

Michael Habermann, who played and recorded the piece, has identified fifteen basic gestures, or *idées fixes*. The most important of these is the main melodic material marked "en dehors" ([ED]p. 4), which recurs in various transformations **(example 8.6)**. The other gestures consist of "pianistic-musical ideas which function alternately as background, decorative, transitional, and episodic material". The work itself results from a "free association and meditation upon these recurrent basic ideas".[55] All of this is to be played languidly and never louder than ***pp*** from beginning to end; despite Sorabji's instructions on dynamics, this aspect of performance is obviously subject to variation as the texture changes. Habermann has divided the piece into three parts and nine subsections, the second of which is in two halves. The beginning of these subsections (usually) corresponds to the recurrence of the arpeggiated initial accompaniment figure. Habermann sees the middle part as a development functioning as an interlude to prepare the entrance of the final part, a climax characterized by increased rhythmic activity and textural density.

Like the *Three Pastiches for Piano*, *Le jardin parfumé* (1923; 16 pp.) is dedicated "To my dear friend Christopher à Becket Williams". The manuscript of this piece, which was published by J. Curwen in 1927, gives, like others seen earlier, an example of Sorabji's interest in the occult. On the last page, under a very large ink blot, is the phrase "here Satan is invoked to rend asunder all such as we hate", the source of which is still a mystery.

Cinque sonetti di Michelagniolo Buonarroti

Sorabji's early vocal works, written between 1915 and 1920, call for the female voice. In 1923 he turned for the first (but not the last) time to the male voice, more specifically a high baritone with a voice similar to that of Mattia Battistini (1856–1928), for his *Cinque sonetti di Michelagniolo Buonarroti* (1923; 40 pp.).[56] The texts, dating from 1531–47, are taken from the sonnets of Michelangelo, the Renaissance artist and poet (1475–1564), for Tommaso de Cavalieri (1509–87), a Roman nobleman renowned for his incomparable beauty, with whom he had fallen in love.

Sorabji's short story *Gianandrea and Stephen*, set in 1922, shows him moved to tears by the declaration of love of his two homosexual friends, prompted by the Sicilian doctor's reading of Michelangelo's sonnet "Se nel volto per gli occhi il cor si vede" (see chapter 1). It is no wonder this is one of the texts he has chosen to set. In 1940 Benjamin Britten wrote his *Seven Sonnets of Michelangelo* for tenor and piano, op. 22 (1940). Sorabji's review of Peter Pears's 1943 recording reveals his

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[52]KSS to EC, 18 April 1930, 12 (section dated 24 April).

[53]Frederick Delius to KSS, 23 April 1930, in *Delius: A Life in Letters*, ed. Lionel Carley (Aldershot, Hampshire: Scolar Press, 1988), vol. 2, *1909–1934*, 366–67, and in Nazlin Bhimani, "Sorabji's Music Criticism", in *SCC*, 280. The manuscript is reproduced in S.F.S.L. [Stephen Francis Seymour Lloyd], review of EMI CMD 7 66054 2 (Delius, *Dance Rhapsody no. 1*), *The Delius Society Journal*, no. 109 (Summer-Autumn 1992): 23–25; 24. The review also quotes Sorabji's comments on *The Song of the High Hills* found in an open letter published in the February 1948 issue of *Musical Opinion*.

[54]KSS to EC, 18 April 1930, 12 (section dated 25 April); KSS to NG, 4 April 1948 {16/F.61}.

[55]Michael R. Habermann, "A Style Analysis of the Nocturnes for Solo Piano by Kaikhosru Shapurji Sorabji, with Special Emphasis on *Le jardin parfumé*" (D.M.A. diss., Peabody Institute of the Johns Hopkins University, Peabody Conservatory of Music, 1985), reworked as "Sorabji's Piano Music", in *SCC*, 333–89; esp. 364.

[56]KSS to EC, 17 June 1930, 1.

"amused incredulity" when seeing that Britten had set "poems that, for transcendentally glowing ardour and passion, you would have to go to Hafiz, Jami or Jaláluddin Rúmi perhaps, to find their equal".[57] Elsewhere he referred to "these glorious radiant sonnets to his beloved friend Tommaso de' Cavalieri, the most transcendentally beautiful and glowing things in existence", and again complained of Britten's impertinence in setting them to music.[58]

The *Cinque sonetti*, completed on 16 December 1923, bear no dedication, although inscriptions obliterated beyond deciphering suggest that there was one. The twelve-minute work is scored for a chamber orchestra composed of one each of flute, oboe, clarinet, and bassoon plus two players for each string group except the double bass, of which there is only one; the piano part, for once, is very simple. The five sonnets of the poet for whose name Sorabji used a variant spelling are "turned into music", as the full title reads ("tornati in musica"), without pause. One to three bars of music set each setting apart from the next. The music is very simple and lightly textured throughout, at least by Sorabjian standards; only the fifth setting requires more activity from the winds and strings **(example 8.7)**.

The music consists of long bars, sometimes containing up to eleven beats, mostly quavers and crotchets. Paul Rapoport, in his programme notes for the first performance given thanks to his involvement (Toronto, 2 February 1980),[59] wrote that Sorabji's music does not emphasize the rhyme scheme and metre of the poems, nor their major formal divisions. The music, rather than relying on motives, proceeds in "long waves of phrases of elusive melodic shapes". For Sorabji, writing about singing in the early 1930s, "intelligent atmospheric vocal noises are no substitute for that line-drawing in terms of tone" demanded by several celebrated excerpts from various works by Bach, Berlioz, Bellini, and others—and by his own setting of the Michelangelo sonnets.[60] After listening to a tape of the Toronto performance, Sorabji declared himself pleasantly surprised, if not entirely satisfied: "Vastly better than I thought they would be… indeed was quite gratified. The singer [Henry Ingram] had quite the right ideas but was vocally below the scale needed, poor lamb, but he phrased nicely and had proper feel for the incomparable words."[61]

Concerto per pianoforte e piccola orchestra, "Simorg-Anka" [no. 7] / Havelock Ellis

Following what seems to have become his standard practice of writing a piano concerto every two years, Sorabji completed his seventh such work in October 1924 as the *Concerto per pianoforte e piccola orchestra, "Simorg- Anka" [no. 7]* (1924; 100 pp.). He dedicated it "To Dr. Havelock Ellis.— / in respectful admiration, homage and gratitude". Almost thirty years later, he added another dedication "To my dear and very generous friend Norman Gentieu, Esq., January 7th MCMLIII". Norman Gentieu (1914–2009), who worked as a technical writer and editor in Philadelphia, had generously undertaken the task of microfilming all of Sorabji's music manuscripts (see chapter 17).

The original dedicatee, Havelock Ellis (1859–1939), was an English psychologist and writer on the psychology of sexuality. The most important of his many publications is his seven-volume study, *Studies in the Psychology of Sex* (1901–28), the second volume of which is entitled *Sexual Inversion* (first

[57]Sorabji, "Music", *NEW* 22, no. 16 (4 February 1943): 138.
[58]KSS to FH, 17 March 1951 {1/F.13}.
[59]Alistair Hinton, "Kaikhosru Shapurji Sorabji: An Introduction", in *SCC*, 44.
[60]Sorabji, "Animadversions on Singing in General, with Remarks on the Misuse of the Word 'Coloratura'", in *AM*, 38–51; 39.
[61]KSS to ABP, 5 October 1980; see also KSS to NG, 23 October 1980 {19/F.17}, and KSS to KD, 23 October 1980 {Derus, S36, p. 171}.

published in 1897).[62] For Ellis, homosexuality was congenital and a statistical anomaly, but not a disease.[63] Some time after 1929, Sorabji called him "the first and greatest name in the field, the first to forecast and adopt the modern standpoint nearly 40 years ago when the pathological conception held the field".[64]

Sorabji's mother must have been concerned for her son's psychological well-being, for she induced him to write to Ellis at a time of "much emotional distress".[65] The young composer consulted him, as he later reported, on "an intimate personal matter into which I do not propose to go".[66] As Frank Holliday reported, he experienced "pain and anguish" and feared the "threat of blackmail" at the idea of coming out. His "tendencies", as his friend described them, had appeared when Sorabji was young; he had mentioned the fact to his mother, saying "I know; I've known it all along".[67] The earliest letter from Ellis to Sorabji is dated 20 July 1922, when the psychologist suggested a meeting at the British Society for the Study of Sex Psychology, of which Sorabji was still a member in 1930.[68] About three months later he asked if Sorabji would care to dedicate a work to him, which he did in October 1924 with the *"Simorg-Anka"*, and in February 1925 he received a copy of the published concerto, his fifth such work. Sorabji seems to have benefited from his meetings, as had Mahler, who had consulted Sigmund Freud ten years earlier. In 1927 the sexologist was delighted to hear that his patient was now doing well.[69] Sorabji had a strong intellectual interest in homosexuality and eventually joined Ellis's society (see chapter 9). Finally, it is appropriate to mention that Philip Heseltine corresponded with Ellis in 1923 when he was editing songs from the Elizabethan period with indelicate texts (which he never published).[70] On a lighter note, let us add here that Sorabji, "in ribald moments", liked to refer to "psychoanalists".[71]

The "Simorg-Anka" (or Sīmurgh-ʿAnqā, in proper transliteration) in the title of Sorabji's concerto is a compound of two names, the first being the Persian form of the name and the second the Arabic one, describing a legendary gigantic bird with wings the size of clouds. This bird of great beauty, which sits on a magical tree that produces the seeds of all plant life, is said to have been created by God with a human face and four wings. The first part of the compound is found in several variants, such as Saena, Semuru, Senmury, Simorg, and Simurg.[72] The French writer Gustave Flaubert (1821–80), in his prose poem *La tentation de saint Antoine* (1849, 1856, 1870), described it as a large bird with orange feathers covered with crisscrossing black stripes and looking as if chiselled in metallic scales; it lands on the

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[62]On Ellis, see Vincent Brome, *Havelock Ellis, Philosopher of Sex: A Biography* (London and Boston: Routledge & K. Paul, 1979), and Phyllis Grosskurth, *Havelock Ellis: A Biography* (New York: Knopf, 1980), according to whom there is nothing about Sorabji in the psychologist's papers; PR to MAR, 29 September 1997. Ellis's autobiography, *My Life* (Boston: Houghton Mifflin, 1939), makes no mention of Sorabji.

[63]C. S. Peyser, "Ellis, Havelock", in *Encyclopedia of Psychology*, ed. Raymond J. Corsini (New York: John Wiley & Sons, 1984), 1:426.

[64]*FM*, item no. 112 (orig. no. CXIII, pp. 28–32).

[65]KSS to NG, 8 March 1978 {19/F.4}.

[66]KSS to PR, 25 January 1975, quoted in Paul Rapoport, "Sorabji: A Continuation", in *SCC*, 70.

[67]*RN* (August 1955), 3, 2 {1/F.17}.

[68]KSS to EC, 8 April 1930 (sec. dated 10 April).

[69]Havelock Ellis to KSS, 13 October 1922, 28 February 1925, 5 February 1927.

[70]Barry Smith, *Peter Warlock: The Life of Philip Heseltine* (Oxford and New York: Oxford University Press, 1994), 207.

[71]KSS to RS, 17 May 1960 (among other letters to close friends).

[72]Anthony S. Mercatante, "Simurgh", in *The Facts on File Encyclopedia of World Mythology and Legend* (New York and Oxford: Facts on File, 1987), 590–91 (includes a drawing); and Jean-Paul Clébert, "Anqa", in *Bestiaire fabuleux* (Paris: Éditions Albin Michel, 1971), 41 (includes a drawing).

head of the Queen of Sheba, causing a blue powder to fall on her shoulders.[73] Sorabji had known Flaubert's work since 1916, when he found a beautiful edition containing all three versions; he wanted "to try and set it 'un bel di'"[74], which finally happened eight years later.

The manuscript of the *Concerto per pianoforte e piccola orchestra* contains a drawing of a large, sad face (not a bird's face) with large eyes and an open mouth. It bears as motto the caption "Après une lecture de 'Simorg-Anka', n'est-ce-pas???", inspired by Liszt's "fantasia quasi sonata", from the second year of the *Années de pélerinage*, S. 161 (1837–49). Was Sorabji suggesting that the listener or reader would be left incredulous or puzzled?

The work is scored for a small orchestra comprising one each of flute, oboe, clarinet, bassoon, trumpet, and horn. The strings are used in the following proportions: 4, 4, 4, 2, 2. A celesta and a harp are also needed as well as a handful of percussion instruments, which have four bars to themselves at the beginning of the rather playful third movement. Sorabji leaves the dynamics to the performer with a long direction: "En matière de nuances dynamiques le compositeur se fie à l'intelligence et au bon goût du soliste qu'il ne voudrait point trop étroitement lier par des indications multiples et despotiques."[75] The concerto is divided into three movements following the standard tempos (fast, slow, fast) and, as in most of Sorabji's other concertos, the soloist rests for one or two beats here and there. Notable exceptions are the first bar of the second movement and the first four of the final movement, in the latter case left to the percussion instruments alone.

There are two different dates at the end of the score. One (10 August 1924) is written next to the piano line, the other ("FINIS. 3.X.XXIV") at the bottom of the page, referring to the orchestral score. This is the first indication that Sorabji centred everything around the piano, writing this part first and adding the orchestral material only later. There are several references to this compositional procedure in his correspondence, the first of which is perhaps in a 1930 letter to Erik Chisholm: "As always I shall do the piano part first, weaving the orchestra round it afterwards."[76] In this particular case, the dates in the score show Sorabji writing the orchestral part in less than two months.

Symphony [no. 1] for Organ / Emily Edroff-Smith

Sorabji completed the first of three massive organ symphonies on 17 December 1924 and wrote in the manuscript a dedication "To Mrs. Emily Edroff-Smith" (slightly expanded in the published score with the addition of "my dear friend" after the preposition). Emily Susan Edroff-Smith (1867–1953 at the latest)[77], to whom Sorabji would later dedicate his *Transcription in the Light of Harpsichord Technique for the Modern Piano of the Chromatic Fantasy of J. S. Bach, Followed by a Fugue*, was one of the few

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[73] *Œuvres complètes de Gustave Flaubert* (Paris: Club de l'Honnête Homme, 1973), vol. 9, *La première et la deuxième tentation de saint Antoine, 1849 et 1856*, 196–97 (from *La première tentation de saint Antoine*, 1849); see also a slightly different version in *La deuxième tentation de saint Antoine* (1856) on pp. 375–76.

[74] KSS to PH, 11 February 1916 {*LPH*, no. 19, p. 99}.

[75] "When it comes to dynamic nuances, the composer relies on the intelligence and good taste of the soloist, whom he would not want to link too closely with multiple and despotic indications."

[76] KSS to EC, 8 April 1930, 6 (with reference to the *Symphony no. 0 for Piano Solo* [1930–31; 333 pp.], written for Chisholm).

[77] For Emily Susan Edroff's year of birth, see https://www.findmypast.co.uk/transcript?id=BMD/B/1867/3/AZ/000189/307 (third quarter, July–September); for her year of death, https://www.findmypast.co.uk/transcript?id=BMD%2FD%2F1953%2F1%2FAZ%2F001225%2F006 (first quarter, January–March). The 1939 Register gives her birth date as 6 June 1869 and her occupation as "Musical Composer", and married to Sidney H. Smith (b. 4 January 1867), a director of a manufacturing firm, living at Hardwicke House, 387 Finchley Road, London NW3; see https://www.findmypast.co.uk/transcript?id=TNA/R39/0246/0246F/009/33. Details of her career are from Christine Fornoff, "Edroff, Emily", https://www.sophie-drinker-institut.de/edroff-emily, where the year of birth is given as "ca. 1870/71", based on a review cited later in this paragraph. See also Judith Barger, "'Can anyone tell us where the lady organ recitalist to be found?' The Legacy of the London Organ School" (unpublished paper read at the Music in Nineteenth-Century Britain Conference, Royal Conservatoire of Scotland, Glasgow, 8 July 2015).

female concert organists in nineteenth-century England. She had studied at the London Organ School with its founder, Frederick Scotson Clark (1840–83), from 1883 at the latest. According to a reviewer who attended a student recital in 1884, she had "a 'great future' in store".[78] She taught organ at the London Organ School from 1893 until at least 1900. A reviewer for *Musical News* in 1899 called her "one of our best lady organists, and her performance should attract a large audience, not only of the fair but of the sterner sex".[79] In 1923 the composer Alexander M. Gifford, one of her former pupils, described her "one of the best lady organists England ever produced".[80]

Edroff-Smith seems to have been a fellow student of Sorabji's mother. They called her "Auntie Edroff", and the composer remembered her as "a very dearly loved old friend, who has known ME literally since my cradle-days".[81] He described her as "the first great woman Organist of modern times, indeed the pioneer of women organists".[82] In 1909 she became an Associate of the Royal College of Music and worked as a piano teacher. Sorabji called her a notable exception in the field because she had "no method—or, rather, a different one for every pupil—hence her extraordinary and astonishing success with the averagely stupid child with little or no musical ability […]".[83] In 1926 Enoch published her collection of various well-known songs and dances arranged "simply and effectively" for elementary players under the title *What Shall I Play?*[84] When his friend Frank Holliday was looking for someone to give him piano lessons, Sorabji could recommend no one but this "delightful woman, no longer very young, with a keen sense of humour".[85]

In Edroff-Smith's copy of his *Sonata III for Piano* Sorabji wrote a humorous piano exercise consisting of a bar of eight semiquavers with leaps of more than an octave and spanning some four octaves, to be played by either hand with a particular fingering. He added a curious drawing with the inscription "Charm to ward off devils" and an amusing text with references first to the sonata and to the above exercise.

> To darling Auntie Edroff
> with K's love / [8.2.25]
> Thiss iss a pritty littel peece—play itt bye hart.
> Good-nite.
> Repeat till green in the face and black in the eyes (neighbours!)
> in *orl* the kees—Practice also with tip of nose, left ear, and right foot toes
> The exercise may also be profitably studied by standing on one's head *behind* the piano and reaching over the top.

Another archival item showing Sorabji's affection for Edroff-Smith is a page from *Musical America* for December 1932, when the Metropolitan Opera gave its first performance of Richard Strauss's *Elektra*. The magazine reproduced a cartoon by an unidentified artist showing an opera house "in a state of pandemonium as the Strauss score is disclosed to suffering ears".[86] To the left of the title "'Elektra' Has Come To Town", an unidentified hand (probably Edroff-Smith herself) wrote "Do come

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[78]"Concerts: The London Organ School", *The Musical World* 62 (1884): 705, quoted in Barger, *Elizabeth Stirling and the Musical Life of Female Organists in Nineteenth-Century England* (Aldershot and Burlington: Ashgate, 2005), 71. The reviewer gave her age as thirteen, which is much younger than what the official records quoted above tell us.

[79]Cited in Barger, "'Can anyone tell us where the lady organ recitalist is to be found?'", 11.

[80]Alexander M. Gifford, "Letters to the Editor: 'Englishmen Are Nowhere'", *MT* 64, no. 959 (1 January 1923): 57–58; 58.

[81]KSS to Brian Trueman, undated (1952) {author's collection, gift of Brian Trueman}.

[82]*FFN*, 3.

[83]Sorabji, "Fashions in Piano 'Methods' with Animadversions on 'The Beautiful Tone' Fetish", in *AM*, 129–31; 130.

[84]G.G., "New Music: Easy Pianoforte Music", *MT* 67, no. 1004 (1 October 1926): 909–10; 909.

[85]KSS to FH, 22 October 1939 {1/F.1}. See also Sorabji, "'Il Gran Rifiuto'", in *MCF*, 141–48; 143–44.

[86]"'Elektra' Has Come to Town", *Musical America* 52 (10 December 1932): 17. The cartoon was originally published in the 29 January 1910 issue, shortly before the work's New York premiere at the Manhattan Opera House on 1 February.

home soon", and to the right Sorabji added "& so has Aunty Edroff". Sorabji was certainly expressing his pleasure at receiving an invitation from the family friend to visit her after an absence from London.

In his review of the published score for the *Musical Times*, Harvey Grace (1877–1944) questioned whether Sorabji's energy and ingenuity had been well spent on such a complex work as the *Symphony [no. 1] for Organ*, describing it as "Reger with knobs on". The two hands, though satisfactory in themselves, had little or no relation to each other; this seemed to him as monotonous and conventional as time-honoured progressions. Although he objected to the giddiness induced in him by the remorselessly worked-out fugue, he imagined that Sorabji would one day devote his "unusual mental gifts and contrapuntal skill" to music suitable for ordinary players. In the second of four musical examples, he drew attention to a passage near the beginning of the third movement ([ED/Bowyer]p. 56/2), which demonstrates one of Sorabji's problematic and "barely negotiable (if at all)" tremolos, saying: "It is not enough to possess a fist capable of dealing with the chords separately and experimentally. The point is, can a player take both handfuls (and the pedal part) in his stride? Soon the elbow and forearm will be called on!"[87] He did not, however, refer to the "*swarms* of misprints" averaging "a *dozen* to a page" that Sorabji had discovered and wanted to discuss with Erik Chisholm.[88]

Sorabji's attitude to Grace was ambivalent. In the 1950s he recalled playing some of his works to fellow musicians in a friend's studio during his early years as a composer; on that occasion the critic had proved to be "the *one* person present to make any really intelligent and percipient comment upon my work".[89] However, he also referred to that "certain London reviewer who didn't like either Reger *or the present writer*" (italics added) and described the work as "Reger with knobs on". He called him "one of those people… so prevalent in the world of music who generalise hysterically about a composer" but, because of his own admiration for Reger, took the comment as "an unwitting… but all the same immense compliment".[90]

In 1930 Sorabji described his organ symphony as "a very *great* work", one that is "firm in contour, closely woven in texture and satisfying to *ME* personally", and the most mature of his published works.[91] Some twenty years later, he still considered it, along with *Opus clavicembalisticum*, to be "the only two of his hitherto published works that the composer regards as fully representative and mature".[92]

The first hearing of the *Symphony [no. 1] for Organ*—in fact a slightly abridged performance of the second of its three movements[93]—was given by E. Emlyn Davies on 17 May 1928. The concert took place in the Westminster Congregational Church (built in 1865, now Westminster Chapel), which is located at the south-west corner of Buckingham Gate and Castle Lane, London SW1. Its four-keyboard organ was built by Henry Willis & Sons in 1879 and rebuilt by Rushworth & Dreaper in 1920. E[dward] Emlyn Davies (1885–1951), a musician of Welsh origin, became organist at the Westminster Congregational Church in 1916 after appointments at the Chester Street Congregational Church (1903–10), the Welsh C. M. Church in Rhosllanerchrugog (1910–15), and the Congregational Church at

[87]H[arvey] G[race], "New Music: Organ Music", *MT* 67, no. 1001 (1 July 1926): 615–17; 615–16.
[88]KSS to EC, 17 June 1930, 17 (section dated 2 July); 12 July 1930.
[89]Sorabji, "E. Emlyn Davies: A Personal Tribute", *MO* 74, no. 888 (September 1951): 673.
[90]*FFN*, 3.
[91]KSS to EC, 8 April 1930, 9 (section dated 11 April); 18 April 1930, 5; 27 May 1930, 9 (section dated 31 May).
[92]*FFN*, 3.
[93]Sorabji, "Letters to the Editor: Sorabji's Organ Symphony", *MO* 52, no. 613 (October 1928): 57.

Bishops Stortford (1915–16).[94] He was one of the first organists to broadcast on the radio. Sorabji must have met him sometime between 1917 and 1921, for it was through him that he made the acquaintance of Christopher à Becket Williams.[95]

Very shortly after the performance of his organ symphony, Sorabji felt it his duty "publicly to express my appreciation of the splendid performance given by Mr. Davies". He praised his "lively intelligence and wonderfully keen insight into exactly what is wanted in registration".[96] His appreciation of the organist's musicianship must have been very sincere, for he returned to the subject several times, especially through inscriptions in scores. Sorabji was soon convinced

> that a work of such extreme difficulty […] was well within his capacity, both technically and musically, and I can say, with my hand on my heart, that *never* had I *hoped*, let alone *expected*, to hear a performance of such power, conviction, enormous insight and understanding as his truly staggering performance of as difficult a work as anything perhaps in organ literature.[97]

The performance was announced in *Musical Opinion* by none other than the witty Christopher à Becket Williams. Although he admitted that he did not mentally understand Sorabji's music, he noted that "it always has a very pleasing effect on me—a sort of agreeable bath of sound". He wondered how many people would go to hear this "ultra-ultra-modern and present-day" work and feared that even highbrow people were too highbrow to attend to organ recitals, that instrument being "a dull dog and a dreary".[98] Sorabji, perhaps ironically, protested against some of his friend's comments in the next issue of the magazine. He denied that the difficulties of the work were "insurmountable by a human player" and doubted the validity of having all of his music cut for a mechanical instrument for better understanding. Finally, he wanted to "indignantly repudiate" the claim that his work was "ultra-ultra modern".

> In the essentials of manner, matter, treatment and texture, the work not only ignores but flouts all the foolish conventions. It is of enormous length, immense complexity, most profuse and elaborate in detail, of very great difficulty; it is not at all "witty," "ironic," "mocking" nor "amusing:" in fact, it does all the things that are *not done* in well-bred musical circles to-day, in the circles of which Monsieur Igor Stravinsky and Monsieur Serge de Diaghilev are the centre, for instance.[99]

Of the twenty to thirty invitations sent out, only one or two members of the press seem to have attended the concert.[100] The unidentified author of the only known review noted that, thanks to the composer's sincerity, the performance was listened to "with a tense attention and an obvious desire to overcome the perplexity it created". He went on to write that, despite its novelty, the work was "perfectly accessible to Western ears" and would ultimately "prove irresistible".[101]

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[94] *Dictionary of Organ and Organists*, 2nd ed. (London: Geo. Aug. Mate & Son, [1921]), 330 (s.v. "E. Emlyn Davies"). For an early account of Davies's career, see Cyfaill, "Ein Cerddorion, Rhif 151: Mr. E. Emlyn Davies, F.R.C.O., Rhosllanerchrugog [place of birth]", *Y Cerddor* (April 1911): 38–39 (includes a portrait). For an (unsigned) obituary, see "Death of Mr. E. Emlyn Davies", *The Rhos Herald*, 19 May 1951.

[95] Sorabji, "E. Emlyn Davies: A Personal Tribute", *MO* 74, no. 888 (September 1951): 673; "Mr. E. Emlyn Davies, F.R.C.O.: Memorial Service—Tributes by Dr. D. Martyn Lloyd-Jones and Mr. C. à Beckett-Williams [*recte* Becket Williams], given in Westminster Chapel, S.W.1, on 18th May, 1951", *The Westminster Record* (Journal of the Westminster Chapel), June 1951: 83–87.

[96] Sorabji, "Music", *NA* 43, no. 6 (7 June 1928): 70.

[97] Sorabji, "E. Emlyn Davies: A Personal Tribute", *MO* 74, no. 888 (September 1951): 673.

[98] "Sinjon Wood" [Christopher à Becket Williams], "Charivaria", *MO* 51, no. 607 (April 1928): 689–90.

[99] Sorabji, "Letters to the Editor: Sorabji's Organ Symphony", *MO* 51, no. 608 (May 1928): 813.

[100] Sorabji, "Letters to the Editor: Organ Recitals and the Press", *MT* 70, no. 1036 (1 June 1929): 540.

[101] "London Recitals: New Works for Organ and Piano", unidentified source (not the *Times*) found in the composer's collection of clippings.

As with the *Sonata seconda for Piano*, Williams made up for the lack of official reviews with a humorous text describing the negative reactions of seven (probably fictitious) people present, with whom he had gone to a restaurant "to imbibe beer and sausages".[102] The text prompted a response from the American critic Clinton Gray-Fisk, who was soon to become a friend and champion of Sorabji. Obviously, Gray-Fisk did not understand—or did he really?—Williams's intentions and questioned the representativeness of his circle of friends. He doubted that beer and sausages were conducive to clarity of thought and considered it impossible to pass judgment based on a first performance that was "not even note accurate". Davies ought to give a complete performance of what was probably "the most important contribution to modern organ literature".[103] Despite the lack of time for adequate preparation, Sorabji appreciated the organist's reading, saying "one such performance in ten years is better than ten in a week of the ordinary sort".[104]

Among those present was William Walton, who enjoyed hearing the work and wished he could have heard it in its entirety. He added: "I was much struck to find it so clear, logical, and easy to follow (a fact, which you may admit, does not seem obvious when it is seen on paper),—and it makes the most beautiful patterns of sound, especially towards the end—and the climaxes are very exciting".[105] In 1947 he included Sorabji's music, possibly played by the composer himself (described as a "magnificent pianist"), in a list of recommendations he sent to the BBC for their Third Programme, which seemed intent on presenting much atonal music.[106] Several years earlier, in 1926, Constant Lambert had written in the *Boston Evening Transcript* that Walton's Toccata for violin and piano (1922–23) was "a rhapsodical work showing traces of Bartók and even Sorabji".[107]

Two other performances might have taken place during Sorabji's lifetime if two projects had materialized. One would have involved Erik Chisholm and Patrick Shannon in a concert sponsored by their Active Society for the Propagation of Contemporary Music, scheduled for 31 March 1931 at St. Matthew's Church of Scotland, where Chisholm was organist.[108] Another was with Terence White Gervais (1913–68), a music writer and organist who would contribute the entry on Sorabji to the 1954 edition of *Grove's Dictionary*.[109] Gervais, of whom Felix Aprahamian recalled that he wanted to become "the Busoni of the organ",[110] had sent Sorabji a copy of his book on organ playing, "which a certain high-falutin flap-doodlery apart would appear at first glance to be not too silly". He wanted to play his work,

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[102]"Sinjon Wood" [Christopher à Becket Williams], "Charivaria", *MO* 51, no. 610 (July 1928): 975–76.

[103]Clinton Gray-Fisk, "Letters to the Editor: Sorabji's Organ Symphony", *MO* 51, no. 612 (September 1928): 1194.

[104]Sorabji, "Letters to the Editor: Sorabji's Organ Symphony", *MO* 52, no. 613 (October 1928): 57.

[105]William Walton to KSS, undated (18 May 1928 at the earliest). Also quoted in Nazlin Bhimani, "Sorabji's Music Criticism", in *SCC*, 280.

[106]The passage is quoted in full in Stephen Lloyd, *William Walton: Muse of Fire* (Woodbridge: The Boydell Press, 2001), 22–23.

[107]William Walton, "Fresh Hand; New Talent; Vital Touch—Brief Record of William Walton, Composer of 'Portsmouth Point' and a Score or Two Besides", *Boston Evening Transcript*, 27 November 1926, section 4, p. 5, repr. in Stephen Lloyd, *William Walton: Muse of Fire* (Woodbridge: The Boydell Press, 2001), 267–70; 268.

[108]John Purser, *ECSM*, 216.

[109]Terence White Gervais, who appears to have had some activity as a composer, is the author (as Terence White) of an opuscule entitled *New Organ Principles and Their Interpretation: A Guide to and Suggestions on Phrasing and Registration, with a View to Improved Organ Playing, with 54 Music Examples* (London: William Reeves, [1936]), 50 pp. His few known publications include three articles on Busoni in the *Chesterian* and an article on Sigmund Freud in the *British Journal of Psychology* (1955). In addition to doing some translation work, he also published *Patrice Freed, and Other Poems* (London: Fortune Press, 1948), 95 pp., and *Chastisement across the Ages* (London: Fortune Press, 1956) under the pseudonym "Gervas d'Olbert". A photograph (with Ronald Stevenson and John Ogdon) can be found in the booklet of the Altarus AIR-CD-9063 (2) recording entitled "In Memoriam John Ogdon, 1937–1989".

[110]Felix Aprahamian, *Diaries and Selected Writings on Music*, edited by Lewis and Susan Foreman (Woodbridge: The Boydell Press, 2015), 115 (diary entry for 15 January 1934).

"I presume in private, for he would hardly have the cheek to say that if he meant a public performance, in face of my copyright note".[111]

The score of the *Symphony [no. 1] for Organ* (1924; 81 pp.), published by J. Curwen in 1925, tells us that it is "to be played with pauses of not more than 5 or 10 minutes between each movement—also by reason of its great dimensions—is intended to be the sole work of any programme". In fact, a complete performance takes almost two hours. Sorabji also specifies: "Organ requirements: 4–5 manuals CC to C′′′, pedal compass CCC to G′′′". The structure of the symphony foreshadows the multisectional works to which the composer was to turn, for example, in the *Sonata IV for Piano* and, to a much greater extent, in *Opus clavicembalisticum*. The first movement ([ED/Bowyer]pp. 1–32) begins with a short but massive "Preludio", immediately followed by the first statement of the two-bar passacaglia theme in the pedal (followed by eighty-one variations). The theme is typical of the many such themes Sorabji would use in the years to come: a sinuous melodic line cast as a series of crotchets and quavers. This is followed by a more or less cadenza-like "Postlude" (p. 28).

The second movement, marked "Lento", consists of "Introductio—Fuga—Coda" (pp. 33–50). The very slow and meditative introduction leads to the first part of the double fugue (pp. 34–48). Its subject consists of a series of quavers, like the passacaglia theme; but for one tiny ornament, it consists in an uninterrupted, uniform, flow of quavers. It is divided into two sections (pp. 34–38, 38–42), the second of which treats the subject in inversion. The subject of the second fugue (pp. 42–48) consists of groups of semiquavers; it is heard with the first subject as a countersubject. After a short cadenza for the pedal part (p. 45), a rather massive development leads to a very calm coda (pp. 48–50).

The final movement provides an impressive conclusion to the symphony, with restatements of the passacaglia theme (p. 64/3/1–2) and of the second fugue subject (p. 79/2/1) serving as unifying links. Sorabji provides a "Cadenza dei Pedali" (pp. 67–68) and a "Cadenza-Toccata" (pp. 82–85), the latter preceded by a fugal exposition on a new subject (pp. 80/3/3–82/2/1). This powerful virtuosic passage reaches a climax with seven powerful statements of the B–A–C–H theme—with a different harmonization on each repetition—in full chords in both hands over a fast running bass of sextuplets in the pedal part (p. 86) **(example 8.8)**. The movement ends with a "Coda-Stretta" (pp. 89–92) recalling the passacaglia theme (p. 89/3/1). The work ends on a powerful C♯ major sonority with many added notes, preceded by a last restatement of the inverted second fugue subject in the pedal.[112] In the 1950s Sorabji referred to the "free-structured Finale with allusions ('Je peux la chercher si ça m'amuse'… of Jules Renard… La Pintade) to tags from the other two."[113]

Valse-fantaisie for Piano / Harold Vincent Marrot

Three years after completing his *Three Pastiches for Piano*, Sorabji wrote a "lengthy and elaborate Valse-Fantaisie [that] is a deliberate and studied pastiche in the manner and matter of Johann Strauss".[114] The *Valse-fantaisie for Piano* (1925; 16 pp.) was originally entitled *Wienerische Weisen* [Viennese Melodies] and was intended as an "Hommage à Johann Strauss". His inspiration was

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[111] KSS to EC, 22 August 1933, 3.

[112] For some notes on the work, see Kevin Bowyer, "Kaikhosru Shapurji Sorabji (1892–1988) (Part One), (part ii)", *Organists' Review* 78, no. 2 (1992): 113–18; no. 4 (December 1992): 283–85, 287–89. See also Justin Henry Rubin, "Thematic Metamorphosis and Perception in the *Symphony* [no. 1] *for Organ* of Kaikhosru Sorabji", [18] pp., http://www.d.umn.edu/~jrubin1/pJHR%20Sorabji%20Article.pdf (2005); see also http://www.sorabji-archive.co.uk/articles/rubin_1.php.

[113] *FFN*, 3. Sorabji quotes the penultimate sentence of Jules Renard's "La pintade", which Ravel set as the sixth and last number of his *Histoires naturelles*.

[114] *FFN*, 2.

certainly Busoni's *Tanzwalzer* (1920), a short work for orchestra dedicated "To the memory of Johann Strauss", of which he happened to have a copy in the piano transcription (1921) by the composer's disciple Michael von Zadora (1882–1946). Sorabji later described the original orchestral work as "the apotheosis of the waltz—richly imaginative, subtle, and finely coloured, with all that intellectual certainty of style and polish of manner which delight us in the Busoni of the less 'serious' works".[115]

The manuscript of the *Valse-fantaisie* contains another example of the kind of invocations of which Sorabji was fond: "Deo gratias, et laudes.—To Ganès [*recte* Gaṇeśa] Remover of Obstacles, Salutations and Obeisances. To Allah praise". The Hindu deity Gaṇeśa is the patron of traders, travellers, and thieves and is said to remove obstacles, as mentioned in the composer's invocations; he is represented by an elephant's head. This reference to Gaṇeśa is also found in the *Concerto for Piano and Orchestra [no.] III [no. 6]*.

The dedicatee of the *Valse-fantaisie*, Harold Vincent Marrot (1898–1954),[116] was an English author on typography, in which capacity he translated Giovanni Battista Bodoni's *Manuale tipografico*; he is also remembered as the biographer of John Galsworthy.[117] Marrot had been a friend of Sorabji's since at least 1925, when he wrote "For Kaikhosru Sorabji" a poem entitled *Candour*.[118] The composer spoke of "good judges of typography like Vincent Marrot who is one of the best authorities" and was proud that the latter had approved of his own insistence on typography for his published scores.[119] Percy Horace Muir (1894–1979), a partner in the firm of Elkin Mathews & Marrot, which published many of Marrot's books, described Sorabji's friend as a young man with eclectic tastes and with an intense musical sense. He seems to have been attracted by the unusual and was fond to commissioning a recording of the broadcast of a particular work, or acquiring a first edition of the score and studying it with the recordings in order to conduct the gramophone performance with much gesticulation.[120]

No listener will fail to hear a certain resemblance between Sorabji's *Valse-fantaisie for Piano*, which was published in 1927 by Curwen, and Ravel's *La valse* (orchestra, 1919–21; two pianos, 1921), in which "breaks in whirling clouds give a glimpse of waltzing couples". Both pieces indeed sound as if veiled by the stacks of added notes, and the French composer's piece obviously inspired Sorabji. The opening cadenza, based on G♯, serves as an extended dominant–tonic upbeat leading to a substantial first waltz (^{ED}pp. 5–10) beginning in D♭ (= C♯). It is a "Moderato con grazia e fantasia" with, here and there, snatches of a waltz melody, set in chords within a complex polyphonic texture **(example 8.9)**. A transition section on a D♭ pedal point paves the way for a four-part second waltz (pp. 11–18). The music is more flowing, with a single melodic line at the top, through which melodic snatches emerge; the single line soon gives way to double notes. After a second transition on an E♭ pedal point with some resemblance to the previous such section (p. 18), a third waltz leads to a climactic return of the theme from the first waltz (p. 21). The climax subsides and gives way to a fourth waltz (pp. 22–23), a fragile and delicate one. Another transition (p. 24), marked "Quasi Cadenza", recalls the left-hand motive heard in the opening cadenza; it begins on a double pedal point (alternating C♯ and G) and

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[115]Sorabji, "Music", *NA* 42, no. 10 (5 January 1928): 117.

[116]Marrot is mentioned in Mervyn Vicars to FH, 30 March 1953 {7/F.23}.

[117]H. V. Marrot, *G. B. Bodoni's Preface to the Manuale tipografico of 1818. Now first translated into English, with an introduction by H. V. Marrot* (London: Elkin Mathews, 1925); *A Bibliography of the Works of John Galsworthy* (London: E. Mathews and Marrot, 1928; repr., New York: Burt Franklin Bibliography and Reference Series #184, 1968); *The Life and Letters of John Galsworthy* (London: William Heinemann, 1935).

[118]Marrot, "Candour", in *Littered Spaces* (London: Elkin Mathews, 1925), 1.

[119]KSS to EC, 3 June 1930, 14 (section written on 11 June).

[120]Percy H. Muir, *Minding My Own Business: An Autobiography* (London: Chatto & Windus, 1956; repr., New Castle, Del.: Oak Knoll Books, 1991), 33, 34; see also pp. 26, 38, 39.

continues into a fifth waltz (pp. 25–29), also a delicate and elegant one. A sixth waltz section (pp. 30–34) begins after only four bars of transition; its triplet figurations in the upper register recall the second waltz. During the final transition (pp. 32–33), in which the opening motive of the first waltz recurs, Sorabji gradually amplifies the texture chordally and, after a fiery run in blind octaves, ends with a triumphant coda (pp. 34–35) recalling the theme of the first waltz and the massive chordal statement at the bottom of p. 21. The largely tonal structure of the concluding section clearly shows through the many dissonances, thanks to alternating dominant and tonic pillars in the lower register.

9 / 1926–29 ■ Emotional Life

Women, Children, and "Sexual Inversion"

Throughout his life, Sorabji preferred men and considered himself an "invert", as homosexuals were often called in the late nineteenth and early twentieth centuries. Whether or not he acted on his homosexuality is another matter, to which there are only a few brief allusions in his writings. His circle of friends was almost exclusively male, and most of the women with whom he had contact were the wives of friends. In fact, he disapproved of their being or getting married; he once told Erik Chisholm that he "should not marry 'any female' at all" if he was to achieve success or reputation as a composer.[1] As for himself, in 1922 he wrote to Philip Heseltine what appears to be the first written evidence of his attraction to men.

> I shall go on as I have begun; regarding no one[']s taste & prejudices or wishes on earth but my own. I should scarcely consult the Art critics on the question of what sort of a... wife I should take unto myself were I of the breed that takes wives unto themselves the which praise be to God that I am not—still less shall I allow them to influence me in the infinitely more important matter of creating my monsters![2]

In later life, he explained his position on celibacy to his friend John Dean (1930–92), a resident of nearby Swanage who, like him, wrote open letters to the *Swanage Times*: "When I think of the number of very dear friends of mine whose lives have been spoilt or warped by females I go down on my knees and thank all my Gods that they made me a natural-born celibate."[3]

The most important woman in Sorabji's life was his mother, to whom he dedicated four works between around 1919 and 1933. They lived together in London until they moved to Dorset in the early 1950s. He called her a "remarkable woman", with a "very great character and force of personality… else how could she have had *ME* for a son?"[4] In addition to her, he made dedications to five women. Three were singers: Marthe Martine (1921), Blanche Marchesi (1927), and Joy McArden (1941, with her husband); he performed once with the first one and dedicated songs to the other two. Another was Emily Edroff-Smith, a friend of his mother's, who received two dedications (1924, 1940). And in 1968, Denise Vicars, who was to be a great help in his old age, was included as part of a dedication to the Vicars family.

The *Fruits of Misanthropy*, written mainly between 1925 and 1930, contain such disparaging comments about women (other than those he allowed himself to think positively about) that the *Fruits*

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[1]Diana Chisholm, "Kaikhosru Sorabji", typescript (3 pp.), 1.

[2]KSS to PH, 19 June 1922 {*LPH*, no. 36, p. 136}. Sorabji's expression is a reference to Noah, who "had not married until he was four hundred and ninety-eight years old. Then the Lord had bidden him to take a wife unto himself." See Louis Ginzberg, *The Legends of the Jews*, 7 vols. (Philadelphia: The Jewish Publication Society of America, 1909–38), vol. 1, *Bible Times and Characters from the Creation to Jacob*, trans. from the German manuscript by Henrietta Szold (1913), 159.

[3]KSS to John Dean, 29 December 1965, quoted in *OB*, 158; chapter 7 of Owen's dissertation (pp. 154–64) is devoted to the relationships between Sorabji and Dean.

[4]KSS to EC, 18 February 1960, 1.

of Misogyny might be a more appropriate title. The document contains Sorabji's own very private ideas, jotted down for his amusement (or release)—though many of his published writings are almost as bold in their language.

> 128. A friend of mine once remarked that he didn't wonder that there was so much homosexuality about, the women being so uninviting in these days!
>
> 132. To call the usual specimen of human race a beast, a swine, a cow, a monkey or, if a female, a cat, a vixen, a bitch or a sow are no longer terms of abuse to the humans, but they are an abominable slander on the animal world.
>
> 150. A friend asked me, in the proximity of two phenomenally poisonous and obnoxious specimens of the species last minute modernity females whether, if I were a woman, I would prefer to be a *very* modern young woman or a whore…. I replied "What's the difference?"[5]

In 1930 Sorabji recalled "an amusing encounter" with the wife and sister-in-law, respectively, of a friend. The wife said to her husband: "You must have noticed, Kit, Mr. Sorabji's completely detached and aloof manner where women are concerned [...] there's always a wall around him. I'm sure he loathes us really, but is much too polite to say so." After explaining that other roads could be taken, Sorabji drew their attention to "some very illustrious men who had no use for *le beau sexe*", mentioning several historical figures including Michelangelo—and the saints.[6]

Sorabji clearly disliked women, whom he sometimes referred to as "cats".[7] Not surprisingly, he despised feminism. He considered himself "an ABSOLUTE ANTIFEMINIST… contemptuously rejecting their vastly impudent claims on behalf of themselves. I believe with all the great ancient peoples that they should be kept VERY strictly in their place…"[8] One group of women he particularly despised were cleaning ladies. Every utterance was to despise them with very strong language, such as "dirty smelly messy old bitches who muck about" and force one "to fumigate the place to get rid of the pestilential reek of their filthy carcases…"[9] Once he had moved to Corfe Castle for good, he developed this idea into a long diatribe on social classes.

> Of course, we do own work here, we can't and WON'T afford the fantastic wages that have to be paid to dirty, smelly, incompetent proletarian females filled with the notion that they are, as they call it, "just as good as you are", whatever that may mean in the added mess that class calls its mind. [...] [M]y loathing and execration for the rabble, the scum, the canaille increases by leaps and bounds as I get older, and I am more than ever convinced that, with the decline of the aristocratic tradition in any country, THAT is not only the beginning of the end, but a damn good way towards it... but don't mistake me and think that the cretinous ninnies who form a large part of our so-called—or what remains of our so-called "best families"—are in any true sense of the word aristocrats... their plebeian faces betray the rottenness of their origin... AND... in any case, the greater majority of them are only (a) descendants of a prostitute, bastards, or (b) descendants of receivers of stolen property.[10]

It may be appropriate to mention here that Sorabji, in 1929, had written open letters in favour of birth control and abortion (see chapter 14).

Sorabji considered most women as unwelcome on the stage. His essay "Against Women Instrumentalists" contains some of the most pugnacious comments he ever made. He argued that

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[5]*FM*, nos. 128, 131, 132, 150, 173 (orig. nos. CCXXX, CCXXXIII, CCXXXIV, CCLII, CCLXXV; pp. 36, 37, 37, 41, 47).
[6]KSS to EC, 27 May 1930, 6 (section dated 28 May). No details on Kit are available.
[7]*OB*, 105, 112.
[8]KSS to NG, 1 April 1956 {17/F.48}.
[9]KSS to EC, 3 March 1953.
[10]KSS to EC, 3 February 1951, 1.

"practically under no circumstances and almost never, are women artists or musicians of the first order, and that the one or two exceptions to the general rule have been or are women of such manifestly masculine type". For him, "the smirks, the mops and mows, the frank appeal to the basely sentimental side of the public's nature […] are simply so many devices to distract attention from musical shortcomings". Women instrumentalists, who show "almost invariably lack of grip and power", have "physiques that can only be described as miserable, narrow-chested, shallow bodies, bad carriage, emaciated arms, undeveloped muscles, feeble tissues; they look like the poor, mean, thin, pinched, anæmic sounds they produce from their instruments—pale, wan changelings of tone." Furthermore, their physical weakness "communicates itself to the playing, inevitably and inexorably, with the result that we get the feeble, debile, thoroughly depressing and sickly playing that ninety-nine out of a hundred women give us".[11] Obviously, few, if any, would dare to print such comments today, and there is no need to dwell here on the attitudes towards women common in Edwardian England that made it possible for some men to write as they sometimes did.

Sorabji was able to make an exception for a few female instrumentalists, such as the pianist Frieda Kwast-Hodapp and the harpsichordist Violet Gordon Woodhouse. He had also a very positive view of several female singers; that his mother was a singer (or so he tells us) undoubtedly helped him to see the activity in a favourable light. Among his favourite singers were the aforementioned Blanche Marchesi and Joy McArden as well as Marguerite d'Alvarez, Emma Calvé, Astra Desmond, Maria Jeritza, and Toti Dal Monte. He had a great interest in singing, which is clearly (and often) reflected in his writings (see chapter 4).

It seems that Sorabji was much less vituperative, if not at all, when meeting women than when writing about them. The anecdote in chapter 10 about chatting with Neil Solomon's wife while recording his music clearly suggests this. He was certainly very nice to Denise Vicars or any other woman who made life easier for him in later life, as he depended on good relationships for his own well-being. Another example was the mother of his friend John Dean, mentioned above, whom he hoped he would bring her to tea. He was "DYING to show off the cottage to her", where she would be able to "run her fingers over my two marvellous pianos".[12] We will never know how he behaved when meeting with his favourite female singers, assuming he ever went backstage to see them after a concert or opera.

We have seen above Sorabji's comments on women's "miserable, narrow-chested, shallow bodies". His attitude to those of men, especially those he encountered in everyday activities (as opposed to intimate encounters), was hardly more positive. Referring to "that strange monstrosity the English summer", which was about to begin, he wrote that the Italians were subtly advertising the delights of summer holidays in their country, with no restrictions but, apparently, a disapproval of "shorts". This was

> a disapproval with which, given most of the misshapen physically depraved and botched specimens of so-called manhood generally seen in these islands flaunting their uninviting carcasses thus, one cannot but sympathize on high aesthetic grounds. For that really *is* indecent publicly to display an ill-made body—profoundly indecent and immoral in the *wider* sense, for it does the incalculable harm of instilling a dislike of the exposure of *any* human body, even a fine well-made and shapely one, and that is abominable.[13]

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[11]Sorabji, "Against Women Instrumentalists", in *AM*, 138–41; passim. For another example of his description of piano playing by women, see "Letters to the Editor: Musical Criticism", *NA* 36, no. 4 (20 November 1924): 45–46; 46.

[12]KSS to John Dean, 7 January 1969, quoted in *OB*, 159.

[13]KSS to EC, 6 May 1931, 32 (section dated 23 May).

Sorabji, the confirmed bachelor, loathed children. In his later years, he could be seen sticking his tongue out at them and doing so when poking his head into prams;[14] it is difficult to say whether he did this to frighten the young or simply as a humorous gesture. In 1936, in his earliest recorded statement on the subject, he wrote to Erik Chisholm that he should be ashamed of producing children "in THESE times", unless he could give them "an assured and independent income for life without their having to slave for it".[15] In other words, he could only approve of children if they could live entirely on their father's income, as he had been and would do all his life. Twenty years later he reported hating little children—"and most of their bloody parents!!!"[16] He was able to congratulate Ronald Stevenson on the increase in his family, but not without adding "if a natural born celibate who DETESTS children may so far presume".[17] All his affection and regards went to his "man friends".[18] Talking or listening to young people infuriated him. He may adopted a more positive attitude when Mervyn and Denise Vicars called with their two children, then teenagers, but he had no conversation "with young things" and was happy for Mervyn and himself to do all the talking.[19] As a child, he cried when he was taken to a "brats party" and always found his way to the adults.[20] He once jokingly described himself as the founder and president of a "Society for the Strangulation of Brats at Birth", with Chisholm as "dishonorary Secretary".[21] Sorabji's music contains only one reference to childhood: var. 38 of the "Interludium primum" from *Opus clavicembalisticum*, a very simple counterpoint in four parts, must be played gently and melodiously but *not* with a "childish simplicity" ("Il tutto soavemente melodioso ma *non* con simplicità infantilistica").

Sorabji's discovery of sexuality is barely documented. He felt "pain and anguish in finding congenial adjustment" and was twenty-seven, that is, in 1919, "before he was awakened (sexually)—threat of blackmail".[22] We do not know what his mother's attitude was in this respect, and whether and how she might have influenced him, for example by warning him of the "perils" of encounters with women, whom he never liked, or by reinforcing his ideas and feelings by offering a sympathetic and understanding ear.

An important reading in Sorabji's young years was *Mes communions* (1895) by the writer Georges Eekhoud (1854–1927), the author of *Escal-Vigor* (1899), the first Belgian novel in French to deal with homosexuality. In the early 1950s, in a letter to Frank Holliday, he transcribed an entire paragraph from the earlier book and described the author as "an idol of mine [...] since I first struck his work as a boy of 15, when its marvellous insight into and sympathy with the feelings and emotions of, among others, odd creatures akin to myself [made a strong impression on me]". The "impassioned glow of his style", like the "searing scorn for the base and unworthy", moved him "as intensely now as they ever did".[23]

Sorabji's awakening to sexual matters led him to join two societies devoted to the study of sexuality. One was the British Society for the Study of Sex Psychology (1914–40s), established by, among others, Havelock Ellis (see chapter 8) and George Cecil Ives (1867–1950), who had founded the Order of Chaeronea, a secret society for homosexuals, in 1897. The other was the English branch of the

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[14] *OB*, 79, 88.
[15] KSS to EC, 6 September 1936.
[16] KSS to FH, 20 [month illegible] 1957 {1/F.19}.
[17] KSS to RS, 3 April 1961, 3.
[18] KSS to KD, 27 March 1984 {Derus, S57, p. 300}.
[19] KSS to FH, 19 July 1964 {2/F.5}; 20 December 1969 {2/F.10}.
[20] KSS to ABP, 5 May 1979.
[21] KSS to EC, 3 March 1953, 2.
[22] *RN*, August 1955 {1/F.17}.
[23] KSS to FH, 12 December 1951, 2 {1/F.15}.

Institut für Sexualwissenschaft (1919–33), founded in Berlin by Magnus Hirschfeld (1868–1939), the German psychiatrist known for his efforts to repeal the penal provisions for homosexuality. Sorabji was proud to say that he and a consulting physician at the French Hospital in London had been responsible for having the name of the former body changed in 1930 from "an appallingly cumbersome goods train of a name like that" to British Sexological Society.[24]

Some time after 1925, "yielding to the instances of my good friend Mr. Dion Byngham, our redoubtable and Dionysiac secretary", Sorabji wrote an essay entitled "Music and Sex". It contains his "casual observations and random reflections" on the "apparent influence of music on the erotic sensibilities of those who are given up wholly or in part to the practice and pursuit of this art". He never delivered his paper "owing to lack of sufficiently well-developed exhibitionist tendencies".[25] It should be recalled here that he had consulted the sex psychologist Havelock Ellis to gain a better understanding of his attraction to men (see chapter 8).

Sorabji's first public expression of an "academic interest" in homosexuality appeared as "Sexual Inversion" in the *Medical Times*, the journal of the General Practitioners' Alliance, "under the auspices of a very distinguished and enlightened Scotch doctor—James Burnet of Edinburgh".[26] He wrote of his text, signed only with his initials "K.S.", that it had been "very highly praised by other medical men".[27] It had been prompted by the recent addition to the Criminal Law Amendment Bill of a clause making "gross indecency" between women a criminal offence. The research of Ellis and Hirschfeld, Sorabji argued, had shown that none but the most ignorant could regard the invert "merely as a moral monster, a 'degenerate,' or a perverted vicious sensualist"; the inverted instinct was rather congenital, and no invert could be cured by imprisonment. He called for the law to be brought into line with the medical knowledge and for cases brought before the courts to be heard by "experienced medical men and medical psychologists only". Only adults who forced others into unwanted sexual activity and adults who had sexual intercourse with persons under the age of seventeen should be punished.

Sorabji often responded to events making the headlines in Britain and to magazine articles. In 1931 he reported that his Society was "moving with vigour over the Hull case" and, in the following year, was so concerned about the plight of a young Chichester theology student who had committed suicide that he sent a letter of sympathy to the mother, who replied with a "touching letter".[28] Writing to the *Catholic Herald* in 1954, he objected to an article that failed to show any awareness of the work of psychiatrists in matters of homosexuality, stressing that "England maintains barbarous, inhuman, irrational and completely futile penal laws against overt manifestations of homosexuality".[29] He also sent a long article on homosexuality to the *European*.[30] Finally, probably in early 1959, after reading

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[24]KSS to NG, 24 (25?) December 1960 {17/F.76}. Sorabji's membership is corroborated in his letter entitled "Homosexuality", *The European*, February 1956: 61–62.

[25]The paper exists in two versions: "Music and Sex", in *AM*, 227–31, and *FM*, no. 111 ("A Short Paper on Music and Sex"; orig. no. CXII; pp. 22–27); there is also an unpublished "Addition to the Chapter 'Music and Sex'" (1953). Byngham (1896–1990), who is mentioned in the first paragraph of the item found in *FM*, was secretary of the British Society for the Study of Sex Psychology; see KSS to EC, 8 April 1930, 7 (section dated 10 April). The word "Dionysiac" refers to the reason why Byngham had changed his first name from Harry to Dion.

[26]Sorabji, "Sexual Inversion", *The Medical Times* 49 (October 1921): 148–49. See the full text in *LPH,* Appendix 2, 149–51; see also section "Sexuality" in the introduction, 9–12.

[27]KSS to PH, 12 April 1922 {*LPH*, no. 34, p. 134}.

[28]KSS to EC, 20 December 1931; 24 January 1932, 5–6. The "Hull case" refers to Augustine Joseph Hull, a transvestite sentenced to an eighteen-month prison term for gross indecency. See Angus McLaren, "National Responses to Sexual Perversions: The Case of Transvestism", in *Sexual Cultures in Europe: Themes in Sexuality*, ed. Franz X. Eder, Lesley A. Hall, and Gert Hekma, Sexual Cultures in Europe (Manchester and New York: Manchester University Press, 1999), 121–38.

[29]Sorabji, "Christians and Homosexuality", *Catholic Herald*, 26 January 1954, 2.

[30]Sorabji, "Homosexuality", *The European*, no. 36 (February 1956): 61–62.

about "the horrible Bilston case and its two unhappy victims",[31] he joined the newly formed Homosexual Law Reform Society, following the publication in 1957 of the report of the Departmental Committee on Homosexual Offences and Prostitution. Known as the Wolfenden Report after Sir John Wolfenden (1906–85), who chaired the committee, it recommended the decriminalization of homosexual conduct between consenting adults in private.

The *Fruits of Misanthropy* contain many passages dealing with homosexuality in a straightforward manner. Some of these items are worth quoting in full as examples of Sorabji's private thoughts on the subject. Among the subjects discussed are: the delight in coarse old English words descriptive of sexual intercourse, the importance for an artist of not being a virgin, and the practice of sex between public school and university students.

> 45. The banning and condemnation of what is called "obscenity" is a most unwholesome [example] of emotional and sexual anæmia, a complaint that is so deplorably prevalent in these days. "Obscenity" has a place and function and to drive it out and replace it by sneaking furtive hints, lies and circumlocutions is an appalling mistake. And its importance as an additional stimulant and perfectly legitimate adjunct to sexual intercourse cannot be over-estimated. To let the frank, free, delightful and coarse old English words descriptive of sexual intercourse come spurting out like semen at the height of orgasm is a joy that must be experienced. I can conceive of nothing more puritanically dull and stupid than, with the naked body of one's mate palpitating with lust against one's own, nothing more inhuman and senseless than to bridle one's tongue any more than one's kisses, one's mouth or [one's] hands.
>
> 88. No virgin male or female ever produced a great work of art.
>
> 198. It is really most deplorable that our public school and University young men should shed the admirable habit of homosexual intercourse they so generally and freely practise during their school and scholastic days. Not only would our shockingly copious birthrate thereby receive a check, if an almost imperceptible one, and a most obnoxious type of human being cut off from supply at source, so to speak, but a splendid example would be set to the rest of the Community which, out of sheer snobbery and ape-monkeyishness, would invariably follow suit.[32]

The above paragraphs suggest that Sorabji may well have enjoyed sexual pleasures with men. There are also some indications that he entertained desires. When he was in Vienna for a recital in 1922, he was very angry to see a strumpet snatching up a "nice-looking English boy".[33] By 1940 at the latest he had a studio at 9 Regent Square in Bloomsbury, and in 1946 used another studio, the existence of which he asked Frank Holliday to keep strictly secret and private and between them.[34] Sorabji probably liked to have a place suitable for sexual encounters, away from the flat he shared with his mother. The following item from the *Fruits of Misanthropy* opens up the possibility of some intimacy, but there is nothing to prove it.

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[31]KSS to Rev. Andrew Hallidie-Smith, 27 December 1958. It has not been possible to determine what the Bilston case was and when it was in the news.

[32]*FM*, nos. 45, 88, 198 (orig. nos. XLVI, LXXXIX, CCCI; pp. 7, 16, 53). Other items deal for example with the perfect expression of masculine beauty by homosexual artists (no. 44, orig. no. XLV; p. 7), the cartoonist and scribe of the public lavatory as a depictor of the wonderful spectacle of a "fine large penis in erection" (no. 76, orig. no. LXXVII; p. 12), and the preference for sexual activity between men before they achieve sexual ripeness (no. 146, orig. no. CCXLVIII; p. 40).

[33]KSS to PH, 22 January 1922 {*LPH*, no. 33, p. 132}.

[34]KSS to FH, 5 February 1940 {1/F.2}, 26 January 1948 {1/F.8}; see also Frank Holliday, "A Few Recollections and Ruminations", in *SCC*, 88.

> 65. One of the rarest and most precious things in intercourse with a beloved friend are the silences that fall between yourself and him: silences rich with emotional and spiritual significance, charged full of unspoken and even unutterable communications: they fall when words fail to express—when words in fact are exhausted.[35]

Being such a reclusive and asocial person, and one living in a social environment and at a time not at all conducive to overt homosexual behaviour, Sorabji does not seem to have actively sought out encounters with many partners. (As seen in chapter 2, partly because he could not be away from his mother for long periods, he was happy to have escaped public school and university life, both of which were hotbeds of homosexual relationships.[36]) He left only rare glimpses of the most private aspects of his life, and for this confession to "seeking relief" deserves to be quoted in full.

> I suppose you think this letter is *never* going to materialize! The truth is I have been in a ghastly ferment —sexual—which has driven me nearly crazy once or twice I felt like going quite mad and I've had a hell of a struggle to keep myself under control and within bounds successfully except for one slip—but one cannot write about these intimate and private things... I'll talk about it when I see you if as I devoutly hope and pray I've not forgotten about it by then. I seem to have passed under a sort of obsessing cloud of erotic frenzy—and have been forced to seek the only relief available three times in 24 hours—thank the Lord it's subsiding now. I haven't been able to work properly or anything—its been *bloody*! But the worst is gone now and I'm more my normal restrained (up to a point!) self!

A few paragraphs later, he opens up further, most likely in reference to his "slip"—raising the possibility that he may have walked through the door of a gay nightclub or bathhouse.

> I am living through a curious and interesting phase—changing and shedding still further of my inhibitions—a thing recently happened to me—which I *allowed* to happen (and welcomed it) which would have been unthinkable to me 5 years ago—or perhaps it should be said that my cowardice then would have held me back rather than my own personal inclinations!... What it was cannot be said... I doubt even if I should have the courage to *tell* you without a good deal of coaxing.[37]

In characterizing the Parsis as puritanical, Sorabji wrote that they did not seem to realize that "a certain pair of glands in the human body are just as much to be used as any other pair of glands, and that the absurdity of placing the exercise of the sex glands under any sort of moralitarian prohibitions is not more by one scrap imbecile than it would be to place the sweat glands under a similar interdict". They were upset by "the fact that the exercise of the sex glands is so pleasurable, just as it is in the case of the prohibitionists in connection with wine and so on".[38] A reference to this exercise of the sex glands, but in the context of his own field of activity, comes from the appropriately titled essay "Music and Sex" in *Around Music*. He writes how he was "moved to indignant protest" when music was described as an "outlet for sexual energy", and then goes on to say:

> I absolutely refuse to regard the very deliberate, very intellectual, and, as the sentimental amateur who imagines the artist paddling and plopping about in inspiration like a duck in warm cow-dung would say, very cold-blooded processes of music-making, as a sort of substitutional self-abuse, a mystical masturbation, a psycho-sexual whoremongering.[39]

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[35] *FM*, no. 65 (orig. no. LXVI; p. 12).

[36] See Florence Tamagne, "Le renversement des valeurs: Le culte de l'homosexualité", in *Histoire de l'homosexualité en Europe—Berlin, Londres, Paris, 1919–1939* (Paris: Éditions du Seuil, 2000), 161–226.

[37] KSS to EC, 18 September 1931, 4, 5–6. On gay bathhouses in London, see Matt Houlbrook, "The Baths", in *Queer London: Perils and Places in the Sexual Metropolis, 1918–1957* (Chicago and London: The University of Chicago Press, 2005), 93–108.

[38] KSS to EC, 22 August 1933, 2.

[39] Sorabji, "Music and Sex", in AM, 227–31; 227.

Sorabji did not hide his homosexual inclinations from his trusted friends and sometimes made humorous references to his inversion in letters, for example to a "Pudden-dirty-faced-own Symphony damn and blast and bugger the little sod" in a letter to Erik Chisholm.[40] His longest letters to this friend are full of sentimental outpourings and passionate pleas for intimate friendship; they also contain some "love-hate" poems (see chapter 10). Sorabji was very open (but always with carefully chosen words) about his homosexual orientation with his friend, whose reactions are unknown to us, as the latter's letters have not survived—which would certainly have added a few dozen pages to this book. The Scottish musician must have put things right at some point, for Sorabji's letters become much less effusive after a one-year hiatus in 1932–33 (Chisholm was now married). He was not the first correspondent to be addressed in this way. Some fifteen years earlier, Sorabji had used very expressive greetings and parting formulas that had worried his friend Heseltine (see chapter 3).

In 1930 Sorabji prepared a new copy of his *Trois poèmes du "Gulistān" de Saʿdī* and dedicated the group of songs to Chisholm. The three texts by the thirteenth-century Persian poet that he set to music are remarkable for their expression of intense and intimate friendship between men. As we will see later in this chapter, Sorabji probably wanted to send a message to his friend by making a new copy of this work and offering the manuscript. A few years earlier, he had set the *Cinque sonetti di Michelagniolo Buonarroti* for baritone and chamber orchestra using poems addressed by the Renaissance artist to his male lover. These poems were therefore full of meaning for him at a time when attraction to persons of the same sex was boiling in his mind. When he mentioned his setting to Chisholm, he did not fail to note (again) that, "like many other towering and *super-virile* geniuses Buonarroti had no need nor use at all for 'le beau sexe [or?] son altesse la femme".[41]

Sorabji had also mentioned Michelangelo's sonnets in the context of a declaration of homosexual love in his supposedly autobiographical (but fictional) short story *Gianandrea and Stephen*, set in Palermo. Despite (or because of) Sorabji's spurious partly Sicilian origins, the choice of city is not surprising. There is a long tradition of homosexual fascination with the Mediterranean, where artists from northern Europe sought not only cultural but also sexual hospitality. One thinks of A. E. Housman, E. M. Forster, Thomas Mann, to name but a few of Sorabji's literary contemporaries.[42] In the field of music, the name of Karol Szymanowski, who had travelled to Sicily in 1911 and 1914, comes to mind, especially since he wrote a homoerotic novel called *Ephebos*. Although Sorabji did not refer to the Polish composer's homosexuality, he reacted most ecstatically to his music, which gave him "a spiritual and emotional response of an unearthly poignancy and intensity the like of which is not to be found elsewhere".[43] He was also drawn to the creative world of other homosexuals: his settings of texts by Verlaine and Saʿdī are examples.

Reginald Norman Best, his companion of more than thirty years in Corfe Castle, was the only man with whom Sorabji was in close, even constant, contact. Unmarried and reclusive like Sorabji, he was homosexual. Sorabji once wrote to Frank Holliday that "both of the old faggots [i.e, he and Best] were so pleased to get your letters"; indeed, they did not hide the fact from the locals, and Best himself once told one of them that he was gay.[44] Posing as Sorabji's manservant, godson, cousin, or friend was

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[40]KSS to EC, 24 January 1932, 14 (section dated 7 March).

[41]KSS to EC, 17 June 1930, 1; see also ibid., 27 May 1930, 5–6 (section dated 28 May), quoted above. Sorabji is probably making a reference to Octave Uzanne, *Son altesse la femme* (Paris: A. Quantin, 1885), illustrated in part by Félicien Rops.

[42]See Robert Aldrich, *The Seduction of the Mediterranean: Writing, Art and Homosexual Fantasy* (London and New York: Routledge, 1993), and John Pemble, *The Mediterranean Passion: Victorians and Edwardians in the South* (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1987).

[43]Sorabji, "Karol Szymanovsky [*sic*]", in *MCF*, 178–87; 187.

[44]KSS to FH, 31 October 1972 {3/F.3}; see also *OB*, 118, 201.

obviously very useful in avoiding any prejudice resulting from a behaviour that remained illegal in Britain until 1967, but many villagers were nevertheless not blind.[45] As late as 1977 Sorabji explained his attitude by placing himself among a group of figures he admired.

> Like the great Iranian poets, like Buonarroti and other towering geniuses, I know that deep affection and indeed LOVE between men is the *greatest thing in life*, at any rate it is IN MY LIFE as it was in theirs. And don't, please DON'T trot out silly labels about this sort of temperament. The great old cultures thought it no more a matter of comment or remark than the colour of your hair or eyes, or whether you like mustard with mutton as well or better than with beef. If it's French mustard of the right sort, you like it with all sorts of meat.[46]

Sorabji must have had sexual activity with men at some point during his London years, but it is safer not to draw any conclusions about the exact nature of his relationship with the severely depressive Best. Until and unless it becomes possible (if ever) to document well-guarded affairs or occasional escapades, it must be concluded that Sorabji mostly found an outlet for his desires by expressing them in writing and, as mentioned above, by seeking "the only relief available".

Variazioni e fuga triplice sopra "Dies irae" per pianoforte

In January 1923 Sorabji began planning his longest work for solo piano to date, the *Variazioni e fuga triplice sopra "Dies irae" per pianoforte* (1923–26; 201 pp.); he completed it in March 1926. As with his first two numbered sonatas, he dedicated it to Ferruccio Busoni or, more precisely, to his memory, since the *magister in absentia* had died in July 1924.

> All santissima memoria dell'ingegno trascendente e sovrumano del divino Maestro BUSONI—Colla somma umiltà, fede e devozione dello scrittore [*recte* dell'autore].[47]

He later added various inscriptions in the autograph or on separate sheets that deserve quotation in full. In the longest of these, he apologized for having exaggerated his dedication.

> Exaggerated and excessive but in the XVIIIth-Century flowery Italian tradition of dedications to some great person: cf. the great Rossini's engraving of St Peter (you know it in my sitting room) and the very fulsome dedication to "Henry IX" the Cardinal Duke of York. You can lay it on yards thick in Italian!! In English it sounds just goddam silly.[48]

Around 1978 he wrote on a separate sheet an allusion to his fiery temperament, which he attributed to his imaginary Sicilian origins.

> For Alistair to amuse himself with.—from a very faithful and long burning Fire Spirit—blood relative of "Mongibello."* ('Ignis Fatuus?' Maybe!!) *The Sicilian dialect name for Mount Etna.[49]

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[45] *OB*, 46, 118; 47, 131, 201.

[46] KSS to KD, 30 December 1977 {Derus, S17, p. 80}.

[47] "To the holiest memory of the superhuman and transcendental genius, the divine master Busoni—with the utmost humility, faith, and devotion of the author".

[48] Rossini is not the opera composer but rather Luigi Rossini (1790–1857), an Italian architect and engraver famous for engraving sketches of the Basilica of St. Peter. Henry IX refers to the Jacobite claimant to the English, Scottish, and Irish thrones of England, Henry Benedict Stuart (1725–1807), known as the Cardinal-Duke of York.

[49] "Ignis fatuus" refers to a phosphorescent light that hovers over swampy ground at night because of spontaneous combustion of gases emitted by rotting organic matter; also called will-o'-the-wisp. The title of the fifth of Liszt's *Études d'exécution transcendante* is "Feux follets", its French equivalent.

He commented on the quality of the paper used at the time of composition, another indication of his interest in typography and bookmaking.

> In those days one could get very good ms. paper like this from Novello. But NOW!! Quantum mutatus ab illis!!! "Où sont les neiges (ou les papiers) d'antan??"[50]

He conveyed the negative feelings that he had developed towards his variations in two separate inscriptions.

> Can't for the life of me remember why I was so long over it!! / You may stick to this if you like, with my love! It's not very good, much too obvious in many places.

Another inscription (on a separate sheet) makes clear his preference that only his closest friends should see the work.

> NB. NB. NB. To be kept out of sight from all but one's own sort. sc. Frank [Holliday], & Norman [Peterkin] and such…[51]

He also expressed doubts about the relationship between the last seven variations and his description.

> The Seven last Variations are entitled after the Seven Deadly Sins: Don't know if at all they typify!!!"

As early as 1930, Sorabji looked at his variations with "a sour cold eye" and contemplated writing another work on the same melody.[52] Some forty years later, he wrote: "Early variations and fugue on Dies Irae (BAD work)".[53] By then, twenty years had passed since he had composed the second set of variations on the liturgical melody already present in his mind in 1930; fortunately, he refrained from destroying his early set. Rather, it was his friend Erik Chisholm who may have had to destroy some variations he had copied without permission, thus committing "a *gross* infringement of my rights", although the tone suggests that Sorabji was making the comment tongue-in-cheek.[54]

It may be appropriate to include here some material on the composer and conductor Constant Lambert (1905–51), whom Sorabji met in 1925 at the home of Sacheverell Sitwell (see chapter 18). In a letter to Philip Heseltine, Lambert mentioned "a ga-ga evening" spent with Sorabji on 8 November 1926. On this occasion Lambert pointed to a bar in one of Sorabji's concertos that seemed to be written in several metres at the same time, and asked for explanations; Sorabji replied that it was "in no particular time, it's just a swurge". In the same letter Lambert also recalled how Sorabji "pointed out with undisguised glee the numerous trills in the Lechery section" of his new variations. Lambert was to review *Around Music* for the *Sunday Referee* in late 1932 (see chapter 11).[55] In his essay on the modern piano concerto in that book, Sorabji called Lambert's Concerto for Piano and Nine Players (1930–31) "one of his most successful works". He praised it for being written in a "*toccata*-like manner" rather than in the "fashionable monomaniacal percussion way", it was written in a. On the other hand, he was rather critical of his earlier work, which he described as having "sour crudities" and

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[50]This corresponds to the last verse ("Mais où sont les neiges d'antan?) of each of the four strophes making up the *Ballade des dames du temps jadis* by François Villon (ca. 1431–after 1463).

[51]The Latin abbreviation *sc.* (*scilicet*), which means "it is permitted to know", is often used in the sense of namely, to wit, or that is to say.

[52]KSS to EC, 3 June 1930, 7 (section dated 5 June).

[53]KSS to FH, 29 May 1969 {8/F.9}.

[54]KSS to EC, [before 8] August 1930, 5.

[55]Stephen Lloyd, *Constant Lambert: Beyond "The Rio Grande"* (Woodbridge: The Boydell Press, 2014), 92 (and note 91).

"sandpaper-acetic-acid flavours".[56] In 1934, in his book *Music Ho! A Study of Music in Decline*, Lambert wrote that there was nothing "more complicated" in modern music than what had been done twenty years earlier, with the exception of Sorabji's piano writing, Milhaud's polytonal choral writing, and Alois Hába's quarter-tone writing. He also noted that Sorabji—"an authority on Oriental music" who recognized the "Asiatic affinities" in Debussy's music—"brilliantly pilloried" the "usual oriental fantasies" of Western composers in his book.[57]

The *Variazioni e fuga triplice sopra "Dies irae" per pianoforte*, like Busoni's Piano Concerto, are divided into three *partes*, the last of which is a triple fugue of fifty-two pages, Sorabji's second full-fledged piece using the technique. The work is based on the medieval sequence for the Mass for the Dead, the *Dies irae*, which Sorabji would use again for variations in the *Sonata V (Opus archimagicum)* and the *Sequentia cyclica super "Dies irae" ex Missa pro defunctis*, completed in 1935 and 1949, respectively. As in the sonata, he set the theme in F Dorian, although for the latter work he would prefer F♯. He certainly set a precedent by not confining himself to the opening phrase of the sequence but by setting the entire melody minus its many repetitions. Thus, the first nine of the sixteen bars correspond to tercets 1, 3, and 5 of the chant. Sorabji then jumps to stanza 18, where the poem changes from three to two verses, and the music begins, for the first and only time, with an ascending fifth ("Lacrimosa dies illa") and reaches the fifth degree half-way through. From then on we hear the rest of the sequence including the final "Amen" (stanzas 19–20).[58]

Sorabji's setting of the theme, which lasts about three and a half minutes, consists of phrases of seven to thirteen beats set in three-note chords in the left hand and four-note ones in the right hand (with a few single notes and dyads here and there), all affected by tenuto marks. The 166 chords are notated as crotchets, except at the end of phrases, where minims are used for the last or the last two chords. Occasionally, a sonority chosen to support the right-hand chord does not produce a perfect consonance, for example D♭–A♭–D♭ against E♭–G♭–B♭–E♭, as on the sixth beat of the first bar (**example 9.1**). Such a long theme can only produce a very long work; one needs only think of the variations where each beat becomes a series of semiquavers or demisemiquavers.[59]

The last seven of the sixty-four variations (nos. 58–64) are named after the seven capital sins (in Latin: Ira, Gula, Avaritia, Inertia, Luxuria, Invidia, and Superbia [Anger, Gluttony, Avarice, Sloth, Lechery, Envy, and Pride]). Despite his overall negative opinion of the work, Sorabji was quite positive about this section: "I like it very well myself [*Opus clavicembalisticum*]—though the *Seven Deadly Sins* […] sound attractive, don't they?"[60] One of the inscriptions quoted above shows his later doubts about this section.

The three fugue subjects are long, freely spun-out themes unrelated to the *Dies irae*. As he would do in later works, Sorabji provided a basic breakdown of the subsections and of the contrapuntal manipulations. Each fugue consists of four expositions of its respective theme. There is a constant acceleration in rhythmic values: the first fugue has a steady movement of crotchets and quavers, while the second one introduces semiquavers, and the last one demisemiquavers. The final buildup begins on p. 194 with stretto-like entries, just before the layout changes from three- to four-staff writing.

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[56]Sorabji, "The Modern Piano Concerto", in *AM*, 66–77; 76.

[57]Constant Lambert, "The Age of Pastiche", in *Music Ho! A Study of Music in Decline* (London: Faber & Faber; New York: Charles Scribner's Sons, 1934), 63–68; 67–68. The second reference comes from the essay "The Cult of the Exotic", 185–92; 189, 185.

[58]The chant's structure is AA BB CC (stanzas 1–6), AA BB CC (stanzas 7–12), AA BB C (stanzas 13–17, the repetition of the C being omitted), D E F (stanzas 18–20). Sorabji thus sets stanzas 1, 3, and 5, followed by 18–20.

[59]Sorabji reproduced the words of the sequence only for two of the first tercet's three verses, thus omitting "Teste David cum Sybilla", which therefore appears in brackets in the example.

[60]KSS to EC, 8 April 1930, 8.

Fragment: Prelude and Fugue on FxAxx DAxEx

Probably shortly after writing the first of the *Trois poèmes du "Gulistān" de Saʿdī* on 12 July 1926, Sorabji wrote a short piece based on the name of an obscure friend. The *Fragment: Prelude and Fugue on FxAxx DAxEx* (1926; 3 pp.), which appeared on the auction market in 2004, is dedicated "Al gentilissimo amico Frank Davey per suo sposalizio. MCMXXVI. Tutta la fede e tutte le speranze di Kaikhosru Sorabji".[61] Frank G. Davey's name appears in two letters from 1961, in which Sorabji enquired whether his friend, whom he had recently visited, had received a copy of *Mi contra fa* that he had sent him.[62] This copy of the composer's second book of essays contains an inscription reading "To my true friend Frank Davey, in commemoration [or commiseration?] (if so he will) of XIII.VI.MCMLXI., from Kaikhosru Shapurji Sorabji". What happened on 13 June 1961 is a mystery. He may have been a book reviewer for the left-wing *Daily Chronicle* (1872–1930).[63]

Sorabji wrote the short Prelude in his free improvisatory style. The opening motive is a short descending stepwise quintuplet that recurs later on in the Prelude and in the last system of the four-voice Fugue. This is followed by an ascending line in thirds in the left hand, heard three more times in the Prelude. The first statement of the fugue subject, in quavers, consists of the musical notes of the dedicatee's name (F–A–D–A–E), followed by a free, faster, chromatic continuation **(example 9.2)**. The head of the subject returns on various degrees, with two four-voice strettos towards the end. This leads to a massive statement in chords, followed by a final powerful presentation in augmentation.

Trois poèmes du "Gulistān" de Saʿdī

Sorabji had not written any songs since his short *Arabesque* of 1920 when he began his *Trois poèmes du "Gulistān" de Saʿdī* (1926, rev. 1930; 16 pp.). For the texts of these songs for baritone, he went back to his Persian origins, namely, to Abū Abdiʾllah Mušarrifuʾd-Dīn Ibn Muṣliḥud-Dīn Saʿdī (ca. 1213–91), the Persian poet celebrated for his *Būstān* (The Garden of Fruits, 1257) and *Gulistān* (The Rose Garden, 1258). Saʿdī is considered the most important figure in Persian literature, and his *Gulistān*, an "ethical and humorous miscellany in prose", has been described as "the gem of Persian prose".[64] Sorabji would return to it for one of his masterpieces, *"Gulistān"—Nocturne for Piano*.

The work is a setting of three poems in a translation—as *Le jardin des roses*—by the French orientalist writer Franz Toussaint (1879–1955), the author of a number of translations of works from Sanskrit, Chinese, and Persian, as well as of original works inspired by the Orient. Saʿdī's *Gulistān* consists of sixty-one stories ("histoires") followed by fifty-three aphorisms ("sentences") and a farewell to the reader ("Adieu au lecteur"). Sorabji used the second, fourth, and ninth stories, entitled "La lampe", "La jalousie", and "La fidélité". These expressions of intimate friendship between men enabled Sorabji to convey through poetry his feelings for the dedicatee, Erik Chisholm. "La lampe" tells of one whose beauty is such that it would illuminate the darkest of nights. "La jalousie" deals with two inseparable men, one of which blames the other for not considering his sadness during a long absence. And "La fidélité" is about two men who shared bread and salt (see the next paragraph) in such a way

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[61] "To the most distinguished friend Frank Davey, for his wedding. MCMXXVI. [With] all the faith and all the hopes of Kaikhosru Sorabji." Two possibilities of people with this name who married in 1926 are: one Frank Davey who married Edith A. Nott in the district of Tiverton in Devon, https://www.findmypast.co.uk/transcript?id=BMD%2FM%2F1926%2F4%2FAZ%2F000255%2F008, whose county (Devon) matches a Frank G. Davey born in 1885 in Staverton, Devon, in the 1901 England, Wales & Scotland Census, https://www.findmypast.co.uk/transcript?id=GBC%2F1901%2F0014477101.

[62] KSS to Frank G. Davey, 7 July 1961; Davey to KSS, 10 July 1961 {private collection}.

[63] A Welsh tenor called Frank Davey was active between 1939 and 1948 according to various citations in the *Times*, but the *Daily Chronicle* connection seems more likely based on correspondence in a private collection.

[64] "Sa'di, Musliḥ-al-Dīn, Shaikh", in *Cassell's Encyclopaedia of World Literature*, rev. ed. by J. Buchanan-Brown (London: Cassell, 1973), 3:448–49. Some sources give Saʿdī's year of birth as "between 1213 and 1219?".

that their intimacy was complete; their fidelity to each other remained unbroken even after the desire of one of them to make money caused a break in their intimacy.[65]

In 1932 Sorabji received a "red-ink letter" (not extant) from Erik Chisholm in which he wrote "what right have *you* if you please even to *think* of waxing what you are pleased to call 'ironic' at my expense over the bread and salt ceremony? If your idea of irony is like other specimens of your alleged humour to which I have been treated, I *much* prefer you in a dreary and doleful mood—you are so much more amusing then." After complaining that he had to write several letters before receiving one, Sorabji insisted on the significance of this ceremony for him. He had probably tried to perform it on the occasion of his recital of 29 April 1931 in an attempt to convince his friend of his (unrequited) love and wanted to insist on its meaning for him. He stated plainly that making fun of it could be forgiven but never forgotten (see chapter 10 for Sorabji's feelings towards his friend).[66]

The *Trois poèmes du "Gulistān" de Saʿdī* exist in two manuscripts. The first has dates at the end of the first and third songs, 12 July 1926 and 27 September 1926, respectively. Sorabji blotted out beyond deciphering what was probably a dedication. Bernard Bromage is a good guess, as the composer later withdrew three dedications to him. It was probably only in the 1940s, after he had severed his links with his occultist friend, that he returned to his earlier manuscript to cross out the original inscription.

In early April 1930 Sorabji wrote to Chisholm that he was going to copy out a work he had written some years earlier and would dedicate it to him "as much out of sheer mischief as anything". He described it as "not bad" and having "an authentically trans-Suez feeling". On 13 April the new manuscript was ready, and Sorabji asked his friend to "accept them […] with the heart and in the spirit with which they are sent to you". He was confident of having expressed "something of the *ambiance* of passionate and voluptuous tenderness" of those poems that some might consider "questionable".[67] Following the example of several writers from the Renaissance to the eighteenth century or the example of the 1611 King James Authorized Version of the Bible, Sorabji couched his dedication as an "epistle dedicatory".

> Ami très cher—this dedication is not by any manner of means an attempt to fob you off what we have agreed to call "your" Symphony, (that is, though still in germ, irrevocably yours) but as it may be rather a while before you get it, this is sent as an earnest of good faith so to speak. Thus it goes dedicated to the dearest best and most loyal of friends that is to Erik Chisholm from Kaikhosru Sorabji: cœur léal—oncques féal April MCMXXX.[68]

The later manuscript is limited to pages 1–2 and 15–16, and the fate of the others is unknown. There are fourteen minor differences between the first manuscript and the surviving pages of the second one. Of the eight minor changes—all but one in figuration—found on p. 1 (in "La lampe") is the addition of a "Très modéré" indication at the start. Of the remaining changes, on p.16 (in "La fidélité"), the significant ones are the addition of two indications at the words "comme jamais tu ne l'as été!": "De plus en plus doux et tendre jusqu'à la fin" and "sottilizzando sempre di più in più".[69] Sorabji also added the letters corresponding to all but the last three crotchets in the vocal part: B–A–B–E–E♭–D–[B–A–B].

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[65]"Bien des fois, nous avions partagé le pain et le sel. C'est vous dire que notre intimité était absolue. Un jour, désireux de réaliser un gain, il se permit de me blesser, et notre intimité cessa. Malgré ce pénible événement, nous nous aimions encore, lorsque j'appris qu'il récitait, dans les assemblées, cette kacida, que j'avais composée."

[66]KSS to EC, 24 January 1932, 13 (section dated 7 March). In the Middle East, the bread and salt ceremony expresses a bond between the two persons who eat together and entails a moral obligation to gratitude.

[67]KSS to EC, 5 April 1930, 2; 8 April 1930, 2 (section dated 13 April); 18 April 1930, 1.

[68]"Cœur léal—oncques féal" is old French for "Loyal heart, in any circumstance faithful". The symphony referred to in the text is the *Symphony no. 0 for Piano Solo*.

[69]"More and more sweet and tender until the end", "becoming more and more subtle".

The initial B–A–B segment could be read as a transposition of E–D–E, where the outer notes (E = *mi*) match the initial letter and the *i* of "Erik", and D (*ré*) corresponds to the letter *r*. The E–E♭–B segment corresponds to three successive inner letters of "Ch*ish*olm", with *i* again represented by E, followed by *s* for E♭ and *h* for B (Es and H in German terminology) for the other two letters.

This melodic line forms the main musical text in the original manuscript, but Sorabji added a second vocal part below the main one (though not marked as an ossia), starting three words earlier (with "Tu seras aimé"). The main line found its way into the later manuscript. It is not clear whether the composer added the musical letters simply because they were difficult to read due to a collision with the first of the two French interpretative markings, or because he wished to inscribe his friend's name in the line—whatever contortions were necessary to read it, as done above. In any case, the motive does not spell out the friend's name.

A separate page has survived; it is marked "Codetta added to the Saadi Song (based on the letters of the dedicatee's name with much love). Kaikhosru Shapurji Sorabji VI.I.MCMLXXVIII". Curiously, this was written *thirteen* years after Chisholm's death. Sorabji probably suddenly remembered the days when he was trying to convince his friend of his love and wanted to make another plea—as if the original song had not been clear enough. The codetta probably begins on the eighth beat of the last bar, where the bass note is a C♯ on the word "[é]té" of "comme jamais tu ne l'as été!". The musical text repeats the supplication "Reviens" that leads to the words revealing the positive consequences of the return, thus reinforcing the message **(example 9.3)**. As for the musical letters in Chisholm's name, or at least his initials, they do not seem to appear in the musical text of the codetta, or the songs, for that matter. The presence of the note E at the beginning of each song in the set, especially with the very local significance (or lack thereof) they have, makes it far-fetched to read the initial letter of the name "Erik".

The freely dissonant, subdued style with reduced dynamics recalls the idiom of *Le jardin parfumé—Poem for Piano Solo*, written in 1923. The complete manuscript contains interludes of a few (long) bars between the songs, for which the composer offered the following direction: "The interludes absolutely to be played when the songs are sung *en suite.*" The first song is in two sections corresponding to the division of the text. An ascending double glissando, on both the white and the black keys, leads to the substantial interlude leading to the second song, which is followed by an even longer interlude. The very slow final song begins with an arpeggio outlining the notes E–A–C♯, probably a reference to the opening of the set. It alternates between active sections in which the piano part calls for superimposed composite arpeggios in quintuplets and sections marked "Quasi recitativo". In the latter sections, the singer is barely supported for very long stretches.

The autograph of the first page of "La lampe" graces the cover of the prospectus for the concerts held between March and June 1958 at the University of Cape Town's Faculty of Music, where Chisholm was dean and director. This opens up the possibility of a performance. Three years earlier, Chisholm had sent Sorabji a prospectus for their concerts, which would include "a Sorabji item, which no amount of protest from the composer will induce us to withdraw". It is not known whether such a performance took place.[70]

[70]EC to KSS, 24 January 1955.

L'irrémédiable / Blanche Marchesi

Shortly after completing his *Trois poèmes du "Gulistān" de Saʿdī*, Sorabji wrote a song entitled *L'irrémédiable* (1927; 8 pp.), a setting of the penultimate poem from *Les fleurs du mal* (1857, 1861) by the French poet Charles Baudelaire (1821–67). It is dedicated to Blanche Marchesi (b. Paris, 4 April 1863; d. London, 15 December 1940), a French soprano who settled in England after the enthusiastic reception of her London debut in 1896. Sorabji was an ardent admirer of this singer, who became a highly regarded teacher after her farewell recital in 1938. He had met her on 25 November 1919, the same day he played for Busoni at Maud Allan's house, although he did not say whether it was at her house.[71] In his review of her memoirs, he described her as "a figure of European importance in music, an interpretative artist of enormous gifts and a vivid and magnetic personality, to whom none but human suet puddings could remain insensible". According to his account of a recital given on 7 January 1925, she was "a supreme example of the heights to which a phenomenal artistic intelligence, a clairvoyantly recreative power of interpretation, and a technique of virtuosic power can carry one not gifted with what is commonly known as a beautiful voice".[72] He later devoted a chapter of *Mi contra fa* to her.[73]

Sorabji not only dedicated *L'irrémédiable* to Marchesi ("à l'incomparable musicienne—Madame Blanche Marchesi, hommage profond de l'auteur"),[74] but also sent her a copy of the manuscript, the format and whereabouts of which are unknown. The dedicatee thanked the composer for his most interesting song and intended to give her impressions when she would see him in London.[75] Born in the 1860s and therefore steeped in the Romantic tradition, Marchesi, aged around sixty-five, could hardly have wished to sing something as "unvocal" from a traditional point of view as *L'irrémédiable*. Her son, Freiherr Friedrich Leopold Salvator Popper von Podhragy (1886–1986), husband of the famous soprano Maria Jeritza (1887–1982), thanked Sorabji in 1944 for one of his open letters. Then living in London, where he had found refuge from the Gestapo in 1939, he asked if it would be convenient to make the acquaintance of someone about whom his mother often spoke.[76] The outcome of this request is unknown.

The tone of Baudelaire's poem is very dark, gloomy, and satanic: it refers in turn to the Styx, a deformed figure, a damned one, a viscous monster with phosphorescent eyes, and the Devil. The poet paints the symbols of human existence—the irremediable, or irreparable, of the title—as a fall.[77] Sorabji's setting, written largely in his free atonal style, calls for an expansive piano part. There is a textural climax of virtuosic writing at the end of the first section of the poem (bars 19–21), where the word "irrémédiable" is used. The piano part in the interlude leading into the second section of the poem (bar 22) contains the only thematic recurrence of the opening gesture of the piece. The syllabic vocal part is characterized by frequent wide leaps, especially at the words "clair et noir" **(example 9.4)**. There are also two bars in which the note E♭ is repeated no less than thirty-four times (bars 11–12), thus recalling the "melodeclamation" of his early songs.

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[71]Sorabji, "Meeting with Busoni", undated, typescript (1 p.).

[72]Sorabji, "Music", *NA* 35, no. 9 (26 June 1924): 103–4.; "Music", *NA* 36, no. 13 (22 January 1925): 150. For Sorabji's obituary, see "Music", *NEW* 18, no. 13 (16 January 1941): 149–50.

[73]Sorabji, "Blanche Marchesi", in *MCF*, 133–40.

[74]"To the incomparable Mrs. Blanche Marchesi, as a deep homage of the author".

[75]Blanche Marchesi to KSS, Friday, June 1927, postmarked 18 [Saturday] June 1927. The two other surviving letters from Marchesi date from 29 July and 6 October 1940.

[76]Leopold Podhragy to KSS, 27 September 1944. The letter is "In Defence of the Pope", *Catholic Herald*, 22 September 1944.

[77]Charles Baudelaire, *Les fleurs du mal*, ed. Antoine Adam (Paris: Garnier Frères, 1961), 371–73; 371 (editorial notes to the text).

Sorabji was initially proud of *L'irrémédiable*. As part of a general discussion of French poetry, he said that it had been "magnificently set by ME".[78] However, in 1978, looking through his early manuscripts, he scribbled a strongly negative comment for Alistair Hinton, who wanted to microfilm them: "On your own head! You asked for it!! A Load of Rubbish".

Concerto V for Piano and Large Orchestra [no. 8] / Aldo Solito De Solis

In 1928 Sorabji completed his eighth work explicitly entitled "Concerto for Piano"—his longest and most ambitious to date. The *Concerto V for Piano and Large Orchestra [no. 8]* (1927–28; 344 pp.) consists of two scores: a large one (dated 12 February 1928), and a small one, which includes percussion instruments that do not fit into the main score (dated 20 March 1928). At the end of what must have been an enormous amount of work, the composer thanked God: "DEO Laudes et Gratias". There is also a separate piano part (104 pp.), dated 1927; this suggests that Sorabji followed his practice of writing the piano part first and then weaving the orchestra around it in a next step. There is no list of instruments in the score. Careful examination reveals that (contrary to what appears in Paul Rapoport's catalogue) the work calls for five flutes (including alto flute), five oboes (including bass oboe), six clarinets (including two bass clarinets), four bassoons and two sarrusophones, seven horns, six trumpets, four trombones, and four tubas. Sorabji also writes parts for two harps, four timpani, a glockenspiel, a xylophone, and a number of percussion instruments.

The first movement begins with what Sorabji called in his notes a "radix" from which the entire work is derived; it ends with an accompanied "Cadenza" (pp. 139–45). This leads to a slow movement with an "elaborate and intricate" orchestral part, as the composer wrote in 1953;[79] he indicated its mood by quoting (with some inaccuracies) three verses from the *Crépuscule du soir mystique* by Verlaine: "Parmi la maladive exhalaison / De parfums lourds et chauds, dont le poison / – Dahlia, lys, tulipe et renoncule –." The rude and brutal third movement—"an eldritch Scherzo-Finale"—has an interesting structural layout. Towards the end, the piano has the longest period of silence in any of Sorabji's concertos (pp. 301–12). At this point, the orchestra has a "Vivace" section leading to a climax. Sorabji wrote of "a bedevilment through which runs a sort of *danse macabre* as of one of whom it is said that 'he fell into a trance' and was seen thus 'dancing in the black glory of his heart'".[80] Then comes an extended solo section entitled "Cadenza: fantasia, passacaglia, punta d'organo" (pp. 313–17).[81] The passacaglia —the second in Sorabji's output—consists of forty-eight variations (not forty-nine, as one might have expected) on a short one-bar theme that develops the opening radix **(example 9.5)**. The (so-called) "punta d'organo" is a long section on two pedal points: first B, then A. The cadenza does not really end; it is the orchestra that joins the piano until the "Coda-Stretta" (p. 328) and the final climax, which is followed by one bar marked ***ppp*** *subito*.

Sorabji dedicated his concerto "Al Signor Conte Aldo Solito de [*recte* De] Solis. Omaggio e amicizia del Compositore".[82] An Italian pianist who studied at the Milan and Leipzig conservatories, Aldo Solito De Solis (b. Castrovillari, 25 May 1905; d. Los Angeles, 7 May 1973) was knighted by the King of Italy for his talents and honoured by the French government in 1933. In 1942 he became an American citizen and lived in New York; he was married to the American actress Gale Page (*née* Sally Rutter, 1913–83).

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[78]KSS to EC, 6 May 1931, 22 (section dated 14 May).

[79]*A*, 16 [*recte* 15a]–16.

[80]The second part of the quotation refers to chapter 15 of the novel *Catriona* (1893) by Robert Louis Stevenson (1850–94): "and then I mind upon Tod Lapraik dancing a' the hours by his lane in the black glory of his heart".

[81]See the note on Sorabji's incorrect use of "punta d'organo" in the introduction.

[82]"To the Count Aldo Solito De Solis, with the composer's homage and friendship".

He wrote songs and piano pieces, most of which have popular titles such as *Fiesta mexicana*, *Evening in Venice*, and *The Palms and the Stars*.[83] In 1924 Sorabji described him as a pianist who "stands out with a giant's stature and takes his place already among the half-dozen or so supreme masters of the instruments"; he had not heard since Busoni himself "such a remarkable command of diversified tone quality".[84] His review of a 1927 concert, after which his name disappeared from his writings, tells us that "there is no living pianist of his age who can approach him".[85] We do not know if they ever met, as there is no surviving correspondence, not even about the dedication.

Toccata [no. 1] for Piano

On 6 June 1928 Sorabji completed the first of his four piano toccatas, all of which are substantial multi-movement works ranging from 66 to 149 pages. The *Toccata [no. 1] for Piano* (1928; 66 pp.) was originally dedicated to the writer on the occult Bernard Bromage (see chapter 12). The wordy dedication reads: "To a very good, true and sincere friend:—loyal and upright—fine of mind—sensitive and receptive of feeling: a cultured, imaginative and keen intellect—or, in other words—to Bernard Bromage—his friend. K.S." In 1964 Sorabji crossed out this exhuberant dedication and replaced it with "To my very dear friend Frank (Holliday) with much love from his very devoted and deeply grateful friend K. (Kaikhosru Shapurji Sorabji)". Sorabji's friendship with Holliday, also ended in a sharp break, as we shall see in chapter 15.

The manuscript begins with a quotation "of almost apocalyptic inspiration" from the English poet and orientalist John Payne (1842–1916), who had translated into English Boccaccio's *Decameron* as well as the *One Thousand and One Nights* and Omar Khayyām's *Rubaiyat*.[86] Sorabji, who had discovered Payne's writings when he was about fifteen years old, lamented that he was still unknown "except to those who *know* and whose knowing *matters*".[87] He called his translation of the *Rubaiyat* "a MARVEL and especially the long introduction with the mincemeat he makes of all the popular 'correct' ideas, especially the democratic-cloacal filth thereof... counting heads according to how little is inside them..."[88] His "Motto" is the third of five paragraphs from the extended epigraph, entitled "Sine me, Liber.....", that the poet had used as an introduction to the collected edition of his poetical works. The quotation, which begins with "This world which is to be is none of mine: / Its Gods are not my Gods, not mine its aim", reflects how the composer felt about the world in which he had to live.[89]

The five-part toccata, whose design owes "much to the example of the wonderful Busoni Toccata, that is to say works of some extension in numerous smaller sections of varying character",[90] is unified by the similarity of outline in the themes of the "Preludio-corale", the "Passacaglia", and the two fugues, all of which begin with a stepwise ascending motion. Sorabji achieves large-scale tonal unity by using a G♯ minor chord as the final sonority for the first two and the last sections; one might wish to see the D♯ octave at the end of the "Cadenza figurata" as a dominant upbeat to the "Fuga".

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[83]Michael Sonino, liner notes to "Music of the Masters: Aldo Solito De Solis" (Kapp KCL-9010, date unknown).

[84]Sorabji, "Music", *NA* 34, no. 23 (3 April 1924): 269–70.

[85]Sorabji, "Music: Solito de [*recte* De] Solis, February 15", *NA* 40, no. 17 (24 February 1927): 197.

[86]On Payne, see John Foster Kirk, *A Supplement to Allibone's "Critical Dictionary of English Literature and British and American Authors"*... (Philadelphia: J. B. Lippincott, 1891; repr., Detroit: Gale Research Company, 1965), 2:1219–20; *Who Was Who in Literature, 1906–1934*, Gale Composite Biographical Dictionary Series, no. 5 (Detroit: Gale Research Company, 1979), 2:876–77; and Charles Dudley Warner, ed., *Biographical Dictionary and Synopsis of Books, Ancient and Modern* (Akron, Ohio: The Werner Company, 1902; repr., Detroit: Gale Research Company, 1965), 420.

[87]KSS to EC, 18 April 1930 (section dated Easter Day [20 April]), 6, 7.

[88]KSS to KD, 16 October 1978 {Derus S24, p. 114}.

[89]*The Poetical Works of John Payne*, 2 vols. (London: The Villon Society, 1902; repr., New York: AMS Press, 1970), vol. 1, *Narrative Poems*, vii-viii. See the text in Paul Rapoport, "'Could you just send me a list of his works?'", in *SCC*, 185–86.

[90]*A*, 4.

The "Preludio-corale" ([MS]pp. 1–11) uses even quavers throughout in Andante tempo but for a more expansive concluding passage in semiquavers. It contains several statements of the theme or variants thereof, usually played in octaves. The "Passacaglia" (pp. 11–37) consists of sixty-four variations followed by a "Cadenza" (pp. 37–41) based mostly on rapid scalar gestures. The "Fuga" (pp. 41–61) works out two subjects: a short one using mostly quavers, and a longer one, mostly in semiquavers. Each fugue has four sections developing the theme in the four standard presentations: original form, retrograde, inversion, and retrograde inversion. The "Coda-Stretta" (pp. 61–66) brings together the four themes listed in the "Thematic Table" **(example 9.6)** plus the retrograde inversion of the second fugue's subject. The work ends with a chordal gesture for which Sorabji offers an ossia that he calls a definitive and better version. He grossly underestimated its duration; Jonathan Powell's recording (2003) lasts seventy-five minutes instead of the forty-five minutes he suggested.

Nocturne, "Jāmī"

Two years after setting poems by Saʿdī, Sorabji turned again to Persia for one of his finest works. *Nocturne, "Jāmī"* (1928; 28 pp.) was inspired by his reading of various translations by the English orientalist Edward Granville Browne (1862–1926) of works by the Persian poet mentioned in the title, whose name, in proper transliteration, is Mawlānā Nūruʾd-Dīn ʿAbduʾr-Raḥmān Ǧāmī (1414–92).[91] Sorabji copied into his manuscript a brief characterization he had found in Browne's *A Literary History of Persia*: "Jami—at once a great poet, a great scholar and a great mystic… one of the most remarkable geniuses Persia ever produced."[92] He also reproduced six verses from the poet's *Yūsuf u Zuleykhā*, beginning with "Be thou the thrall of love; make this thine object; / For this one thing seemeth to wise men worthy", again in Browne's translation.[93]

Sorabji was very proud of his *Nocturne*, which he completed on 15 November 1928. He described it in 1939 with one of his favourite expressions: "It's a dam good piece tho I sez it wot didn't oughter".[94] At a later date he replaced the original dedication "To my dear friend Reginald Norman Best" by a more elegant one in Italian: "al mio carissimo e dilettissimo...";[95] he also took the opportunity to add a few interpretative markings. His relationships with his companion during his Corfe Castle years are discussed in chapter 17.

Nocturne, "Jāmī" takes the style of *Le jardin parfumé—Poem for Piano Solo* to a new degree of complexity and refinement. It foreshadows the full maturity of this mode of expression as achieved in *"Gulistān"—Nocturne for Piano*. The work is organized around three alternating elements. First there is a melodic line set in bitonal three- and four-note chords in both hands over an A pedal point ([ED]pp. 1–2, 15, 22, 26), transposed once to B♭ (p. 19) and twice to C♯ (pp. 4, 9) **(example 9.7)**. Then we hear a capricious, improvisatory Oriental-sounding melody with dotted notes and quick note values (pp. 2,

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[91]KSS to FH, 10 August 1971 {3/F.2}. The name "Ǧāmī" (scholarly transliteration) is also spelt "Jāmī" (used throughout this book). Sorabji used "Djâmî", which is a French transliteration, on the binding of his manuscript and on the first page of music, but wrote "Jami" as part of his signature at the end. In his two quotations from Browne's writings, he used "Jâmî" and "Jami", not the source's "Jámí". The name refers to one of the ninety-nine names of God in Islam and means "The Gatherer" or "The Unifier"; it also used for a type of mosque.

[92]Edward G. Browne, "Jámí", in *A History of Persian Literature* (Cambridge: At the University Press, 1920), repr. in 1951 as *A Literary History of Persia*, vol. 3, *The Tartar Dominion (1265–1592)*, 507–48; 507. Browne's original reads: "one of the most remarkable geniuses whom Persia ever produced, for he was at once a great poet, a great scholar, and a great mystic."

[93]Edward Granville Browne, *A Year amongst the Persians: Impressions as to the Life, Character, & Thought of the People of Persia Received during Twelve Months' Residence in That Country in the Years 1887–1888* (London: Adam and Charles Black, 1893), 139 (3rd ed., 1950). The text is reproduced in Rapoport, "'Could you just send me a list of his works?'", in *SCC*, 186.

[94]KSS to FH, 14 November 1939 {1/F.1}.

[95]"to my dearest and most beloved Reginald Norman Best".

10, 18, 20). Finally, there is a "quasi saltando" passage in which series of delicate stepwise chords in demisemiquavers in the high register serve as decoration for a melodic line played over rich chords in the low register (pp. 3, 14, 24). As in all of Sorabji's nocturnes, the most active passages offer a stunning graphic image.

Sorabji himself gave the first performance of this most sensuous piece on 16 January 1930 at the Westminster Congregational Church, where E. Emlyn Davies, in 1928, had premiered the second movement of his *Symphony [no. 1] for Organ*. Davies had persuaded "that extraordinary genius" to play his piece as part of his own recital given on 16 January 1930.[96] For Eric Blom, the work was of "such unusual interest" that its length did not matter. He found himself in the presence of a work "constructed on an unaccustomed plan and profusely ornamented by lavish detail". Sorabji had proved that his works were far from unplayable and that pianists no longer had excuses for not playing them.[97] He described the audience as "large and apparently appreciative".[98] Philip Heseltine, who was present, spoke of "a long, difficult, and extremely ornate composition, a single hearing of which was insufficient".[99]

After Sorabji's second performance, given on 29 April 1931 at Glasgow's Stevenson Hall for the Active Society for the Propagation of Contemporary Music, the anonymous critic of the *Scotsman* mentioned only that the "brilliant Indian pianist" had given "a splendid rendering" of a piece on a Persian theme.[100] For "H.K.W", of the *Bulletin*, the composer was "never long able to restrain his craving for ornament, for florid passages, cascades of notes which overdecorated his theme—to our Western ears".[101] The *Glasgow Herald*'s critic praised Sorabji for his "remarkably subtle command of the keyboard"; he described the piece as "finely atmospheric and rich in imaginative quality", but argued that less of the "usual arabesque quality of texture" would have been more effective.[102] "H.S.R.", in *Musical Opinion*, characterized Sorabji and his music as an enigma and a solitary figure, "seldom understood and largely misunderstood". He was impressed by a colossal technique, but found the impressions conveyed by the music "too vague to bear analysis".[103] Finally, Hugh Reid noted that the Active Society's last season had enabled concertgoers to hear works they would not otherwise have heard.[104] Sorabji gave another (probably private) performance of *Nocturne, "Jāmī"* on August 1930 at a place in the Corfe Castle or Swanage area called "The Barn", owned by two "delightful and charming women", Misses Wilson and Horne.[105]

Despite the positive reviews he received, Sorabji was "*seriously* thinking of making it a condition of any further appearances of mine with the Active Society or the performance of any works of mine thereat that on these occasions *no press tickets* be issued". No "*imaginable* purpose" could be served "by asking cretins [...] to listen to the work of one whose outlook, racially and culturally, is not merely of the last remoteness from theirs, but who does not even use the *alphabet*, let alone the language that they use? And is it not conceivably insulting and humiliating to me to have to play before such

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[96]E. Emlyn Davies, "An Appeal to Organists", *MO* 53, no. 628 (January 1930): 351.

[97]E[ric] B[lom], "Recital and a Concert: Royal Philharmonic Society", *The Manchester Guardian*, 17 January 1930: 14.

[98]KSS to EC, 17 January 1930.

[99]P[eter] W[arlock], "In the Concert Room: Some Players and Singers", *Monthly Musical Record* 60, no. 710 (1 February 1930): 46.

[100]"Glasgow Active Society—Final Concert of the Season: Sorabji and Walton", *The Scotsman*, 30 April 1931, 12b.

[101]H.K.W, "Parsi Pianist: Sorabji and Sitwell-Walton 'Facade' in Glasgow", *The Bulletin* (Glasgow), 30 April 1931, 22. Sorabji called this review "that nasty common vulgar silly blurb"; KSS to EC, 11 October 1936.

[102]"Active Society—Final Concert of the Season: Sorabji and Walton", *The Glasgow Herald*, 30 April 1931, 12b.

[103]H.S.R., "Music in Scotland", *MO* 54, no. 645 (June 1931): 800.

[104][Hugh Reid], "Music in Scotland", *MO* 54, no. 648 (September 1931): 1049.

[105]KSS to EC, 27 August 1930, 1–2.

cattle?"[106] There would be another such occasion for Sorabji to play in Glasgow, in 1936, and there were reviews, all of them rather lukewarm.

To conclude this section, it may be appropriate to reproduce an unpublished text written by Sorabji for Alistair Hinton on Christmas 1974.

The Wine of Jāmī: A quasi-Sufi Fragment for a Most Dear and Precious Friend

Ask of a Well only the Water it can give you
    And thank Allah for it we are told:
But when the beloved Saki gives you
    The Wine that warms you,
Enchants your senses, opens the Heart's Eye,
For all else, Jāmī warns,
Is soulless <stupour> and self-seeking
How then do you give *him* thanks…
    The Saki?

Sonata IV for Piano / Francis George Scott

Sorabji's *Sonata IV for Piano* (1928–29; 111 pp.) came almost seven years after its predecessor. Begun in November 1928 and completed on 22 March 1929, it is dedicated "To my friend Francis George Scott:—that rare being—a musician of percipience and imagination—his always—Kaikhosru Sorabji: MCMXXIX". The Scottish composer Francis George Scott (b. Hawick, Roxburghshire, Scotland, 25 January 1880; d. Glasgow, 6 November 1958) is best known for his songs, some of which are settings of poems by Sorabji's friend and dedicatee Hugh MacDiarmid. Sorabji and Scott probably met around 1921 at the home of the playwright George Reston Malloch (1875–1953), whose wife was a relative of a friend of his; on this occasion he probably gave a private performance of one of his sonatas. The second of Scott's four children, Lillias (1918–2013), became Erik Chisholm's second wife in 1963; she was a poet known as Lillias Scott Forbes after her marriage to the clarinettist John Forbes. Sorabji met her once while visiting her father, probably in 1930. He was much impressed by an old Scottish custom of "providing the visitors with a pair of slippers so that they could ease their feet from the burden of outdoor shoes" and by "the row thereof of all sorts of sizes by a wall in the hall".[107]

In 1944 Sorabji described Scott as "one of the major song-writers of Europe to-day" and a scholar of "immense power and distinction". He represented "the admirable and unfortunately increasingly rare phenomenon of a creative artist *totus in illis*, wholly possessed by the urgency of the matter in hand, that is to say, the creation of the work of art…"[108] In 1959, after his death, Sorabji praised his "utter independence of mind, his complete refusal to lick the boots that it is indispensable to lick in order to 'arrive'".[109] Twenty years later he "agreed immediately" to participate with Ronald Stevenson and Alistair Hinton in a filmed interview on BBC Scotland to mark the centenary of Scott's birth. The interview took place on 27 June 1979 at The Eye, with Sorabji and Hinton to the left and right of Stevenson, seated at the composer's Mason & Hamlin piano.[110]

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[106]KSS to EC, 6 May 1931, 20–21 (section dated 13 May).
[107]KSS to CMG, 1 July 1965, 2.
[108]Sorabji, "The Songs of Francis George Scott", *Scottish Arts and Letters* 1 (1944): 22–23; revised version in *MCF*, 217–23.
[109]Sorabji, "Letters to the Editor: Francis George Scott", *MT* 100, no. 1393 (March 1959): 147.
[110]Alistair Hinton, "Kaikhosru Shapurji Sorabji: An Introduction", in *SCC*, 45; idem, reply to post "Films and recordings of Sorabji himself", Yahoo! discussion group on Sorabji, 5 July 2004, https://launch.groups.yahoo.com/group/sorabjigroup/message/761 (link no longer available). Whether the programme was shown or not could not be established, and it appears that the footage was discarded. There is a transcript identified as "Francis George Scott. 14767/2995, Location: Corfe Castle, Dorset. Date: 27.6.79", tapes 6 (pp.1–11), 7 (pp. 1–5). Sorabji wrote an unpublished (and unused) one-page text for the

Sorabji completed the *Sonata IV for Piano* in Rome, where he had gone for his spring holiday. He visited Palermo again, where the gardens of the beautiful Villa Tasca served as the inspiration for the second movement, as evidenced by the words "Count Tasca's Garden" at the top of the first page. He called the movement an "extended and elaborate nocturne, sultry and exotic in character" in his extensive "Analytical Note". Fifty years later he devoted an entire piece to his memories of this oasis of vegetation (see chapter 23).

Sorabji described his *Sonata IV for Piano* as "one of a number of very large works filling a whole programme to themselves. It has movements, themes, a slow movement and even pushes conventionality to the extent of a Finale with a quite elaborate fugue."[111] The manuscript contains a detailed table of contents with a "Schemata of voice entries in Fugues". The score of the fugue also contains some analytical markings, but this is not done systematically.

The opening of the first movement ([ED]pp. 1–53) states seven thematic ideas, labelled *A* to *G*, with motive *A* (two demisemiquavers followed by a dotted quaver) serving as the work's "Dominant Theme", which is "always more or less perceptibly pervading the music".[112] Sorabji, without giving details, speaks of an exposition, a transition, a development, and a "Stretto-Recapitulation" (probably from p. 29 [bar 156], immediately after a short "Quasi cadenza") followed by a "very short abrupt codetta-like passage based entirely on the Dominant Theme". The second movement (pp. 54–77), a nocturne inspired by the garden that had impressed him so much, works out four more ideas. Here motives "of a drowsy insinuating nature twine their way in and out of the ever-increasing luxuriance of the vegetation so to speak". The final movement (pp. 78–129) begins with a "Preludio" (pp. 78–81) in a swift *perpetuum mobile*–like movement over an E♭ pedal point. This leads to a "Fantasia" (pp. 81–91) "of eldritch scherzo-like character with abrupt broken phrases and rhythmics", whose fragmented texture anticipates much music of the 1950s and 1960s (**example 9.8**). A "Cadenza" (pp. 92–97) on an A pedal point recalls the style of the opening "Preludio" with its constant semiquavers; it ends triumphantly on a radiant A major chord—without any added notes, a rare occurrence in Sorabji. The double "Fugue" (pp. 98–129) that follows is very uniform rhythmically: the first is based mostly on quavers, the second on semiquavers. Sorabji achieves more variety in the "Coda-Stretta" (pp. 121–29) when the two subjects are fused. He described it as "extremely involved and complex", with "some amusing problems of digitation" resulting from his entrusting the two hands with as many as seven real parts. The last pages rely heavily on the "Dominant Theme".

Sorabji arrived in Glasgow on 31 March to give a performance of his *Sonata IV for Piano* at Stevenson Hall, in the Scottish National Academy of Music, for the "Fourth Recital of National Music" presented by Erik Chisholm—not for his Active Society for the Propagation of Contemporary Music (see chapter 10), as had been previously believed.[113] The press reported that a group of friends and Indian students greeted him at the station; he "appeared bareheaded, is short statured and pleasant looking, but extremely shy, and he drove off to his hotel before any demonstration could be staged".[114] The recital by "The Famous [English or Indian?] Composer Kaikhosru Sorabji" had been announced for

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programme entitled "Francis George Scott" {8/F.4}. He seems to have had some "not printable" correspondence with the BBC Scotland about a proposed contribution on Scott twenty years earlier; KSS to CMG, 18 December 1959.

[111] *A*, 4.

[112] In the second movement, on p. 61 (bar 29), Sorabji marks ideas identified as (in this order) *M*, *J*, *H*, and *K*; and on p. 66 (bar 51), he identifies ideas *H* and *J*. He did not label any of the recurrences.

[113] See Marc-André Roberge, "*Un tessuto d'esecuzioni*: A Register of Performances of Sorabji's Works", in *SCC*, 425–51; 433.

[114] "Shy Indian Musician Evades Glasgow Admirers", *The Greenock Telegraph and Clyde Shipping Gazette*, 1 April 1930, 3.

26 March (whereas it took place on 1 April) on a sheet; Sorabji, in his copy, blotted out beyond deciphering what was for him a problematic word, preceding it with no less than seven exclamation points. Moreover, Patrick Shannon, Chisholm's associate in the organization of concerts, had described Sorabji in a leaflet as the "greatest musical enigma of all time", an "astonishing phenomenon", adding that "the Greatest Virtuosi of the world are helpless as babes in handling his music—music which he himself executes without turning a hair".[115] What Sorabji called a "preliminary circular letter" angered him, but not for the same claims. He was rather annoyed to read that the London critic Ernest Newman had, as far as he knew, "never either heard nor seen" his work. We therefore warned Chisholm to "keep a firm hand on Mr. Shannon's pen"; he would not countenance the use of the critic's name in this way, "more especially still that we are more or less enemies of years' standing". A few days later he approved of his friend "keeping tight hold on Mr. Shannon", insisting wryly that "any repetition of that and I should deal drastically and savagely with him". Six months later he suggested that Chisholm "kick him out of participation in the Active Society".[116] The Glaswegian pianist and organist Archibald Martin Henderson (1879–1957) also complained to Chisholm about Shannon's remarks, saying that they "may well do more harm than good to the case".[117]

This visit to Glasgow enabled Sorabji to meet Francis George Scott again. In the BBC interview mentioned above, he recalled that after the first performance of the fourth sonata, his Scottish friend persuaded him to play at the Jordanhill Teacher Training College, where he was teaching; he played the "first correnti movements", and Scott made "some extraordinary penetrating remarks".[118] There is no record of such a performance, which would have taken place on 2 April. With particular reference to London, to which he had just returned, Sorabji wrote that it would never see a performance of this or "any other big work of mine". He saw no reason to "expend my vital and nervous energy to give these blocks, these stocks and stones that are the Londoners an opportunity to jeer at insult and attempt to humiliate me? No dam fear!"[119]

Sorabji apparently managed to pack Stevenson Hall on the night of the performance of the *Sonata IV for Piano*.[120] He was wearing his black Parsi tunic, which looked "very well and effective and it is eminently both appropriate and becoming". According to the programme sheet, Chisholm was to give a "detailed and illustrative analysis" of the work before each movement, probably relying heavily on Sorabji's own detailed analysis. However, the composer did not want to "spit up verbiage on the spur of the moment about a profoundly serious topic".[121] Despite his desire not to mix with people, lest the "direct trains of one's thought" be diffused, he admitted that, while it might be "a good thing, a change for a very short while—(like tippling cherry brandy as I did at Stevenson Hall on the night of April 1st), it is far from good as a general rule".

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[115]Flyer dated 12 March 1930, Erik Chisholm Papers, University of Cape Town, Manuscripts and Archives Department (BC 129), box 10, folder 42, cited in John Purser, *ECSM*, 59.

[116]KSS to EC, 27 May 1930, 7–8 (section dated 30 May); 3 June 1930, 4 (section dated 4 June); 9 December 1930, 6 (section dated 14 December).

[117]Erik Chisholm, "Nikol[a]i Medtner", in *Erik Chisholm, Men and Music: Lectures Given at University of Cape Town Summer School, February 1964* (Erik Chisholm Trust, June 2014), 123–31, https://www.scottishmusiccentre.com/erik-chisholm-men-and-music. Henderson was the dedicatee of Medtner's *Sonata romantica*, op. 53, no. 1.

[118]Sorabji uses the word "correnti" to refer to the fast movements. Obviously, only the fast tempo of the triple-metre dance and instrumental form of the late sixteenth to mid-eighteenth centuries called "corrente" applies.

[119]KSS to EC, 8 April 1930, 3.

[120]H.K.W., "Musical Activity: Glasgow's Crowded Season of Novelties, Composers to Appear", *The Bulletin* (Glasgow), 22 September 1930.

[121]KSS to EC, 26 January 1930, 1–2; 14 March 1930.

The composer, who estimated that he would need "a good 2 hours", intended to make "good long pauses about 10 minutes each between the movements".[122] Arthur Collingwood (1887–1982), writing for *Musical Opinion*, noted Sorabji's "amazing technique" and praised the music for its "consummate craftsmanship and a significance which combines intellect and imagination". Although unconventional, the composer's idiom compelled him with its "strange and indefinable beauty". For him, "the extraordinary technical command was not merely a diabolical cleverness but the inevitable means in the expression of a rare and significant poetic mirage".[123]

According to a reviewer from an unidentified newspaper, the composer's "compatriots and coloured members of our community were interspersed among the inquisitive people of the musical sets". Chisholm must have been referring in his spoken comments to Sorabji's use of the Virgil Clavier, a silent practice keyboard requiring thirty ounces of pressure (see chapter 12), for the critic complained that "sometimes it did sound like it".[124] Another reviewer, also writing for an unidentified newspaper, described Sorabji as "a law unto himself". He struck him as an iconoclast whose scores "bear much the same relation to the scores of the classic composers as an abstruse algebraic problem bears to the multiplication table". He compared his music to the later prose writings of James Joyce for a mode of expression whose ends are incomprehensible. Nevertheless, the work could be appreciated and a listener willing to "let the music speak for itself" could have an experience.[125]

For the critic of the *Glasgow Herald*, the themes were not easy to follow because of a lack of individuality. Surprisingly, there was nothing in the vocabulary to "offend even the inexperienced listener", as the work was "devoid of those hard knocks" typical of other modern composers. The first and third movements seemed "to journey on in a whirling texture of notes and to be without any immediate thought of an end in view"; nevertheless, he saw "an unmistakable dramatic quality in the peroration".[126]

"P.", in the *Scottish Musical Magazine*, complained that the work seemed to make sense only to its composer and not to the audience. He wondered whether "Mr Sorabji inhabits a mental world so remote from that inhabited by most people that his music can mean something only to one or two unusual spirits". The outer movements seemed to be "exhibitions of technical virtuosity, yet as music were too unrelieved in their exuberant velocity".[127] "P." also noted the attentive behaviour of the large audience, which is confirmed by Sorabji himself. Back in London, he bore "public witness to the wonderful kindness and sympathy I received on all hands", especially as he had previously endured "crucifixions of apprehension before an event of this kind".[128]

Toccatinetta sopra C.G.F. / Clinton Gray-Fisk

After having produced a series of very substantial works, Sorabji obviously felt the need for an unambitious and shorter work. The *Toccatinetta sopra C.G.F.* (1929; 8 pp.), which was completed on 24 June 1929, bears a long descriptive title.

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[122]KSS to EC, 26 January 1930, 2. Jonathan Powell's public performance lasted just over two hours, but his recording is 140 minutes long.

[123]Arthur Collingwood, "Music in Scotland", *MO* 53, no. 632 (May 1930): 695–96; 696.

[124]"Indian Pianist", unidentified clipping from a Glasgow newspaper, 2 April 1930.

[125]"Sorabji", unidentified clipping from a Glasgow newspaper, 2 April 1930 at the earliest.

[126]Our Music Critic, "Sorabji, Composer and Pianist: Recital in Glasgow", *The Glasgow Herald*, 2 April 1930, 8d.

[127]P. (Our Music Critic), "The Problem of Sorabji: Strange Music of Indian Composer", *The Scottish Musical Magazine*, 4 April 1930.

[128]Sorabji, "Music", *NA* 46, no. 24 (17 April 1930): 284.

> Toccatinetta: sopra C.G.F: si costituisce da uno Preludietto, quindi una piccola passacaglia maliziosa e per finire una fughetta, da Kaikhosru Sorabji compilata Giugno. MCMXXIX A.D.N.S. [Anno Domini Nostri Salvatoris?] per suo giovane e abbastanza piacevole amico: Clinton Gray-Fisk, musicista americano-inglese [Per Dio!].[129]

The eight-minute *Toccatinetta sopra C.G.F.*—a glimpse of the composer's later interest in minuscule works—consists of a "Preludietto" beginning with the musical letters corresponding to the initials of the dedicatee. The "Piccola passacaglia maliziosa", with thirty-three variations, uses a theme of eleven notes (but only nine pitches), again beginning with the three musical letters. (The word "maliziosa" is an early example of the kind of humour that would recur in later works such as the *Variazione maliziosa e perversa sopra "La morte d'Åse" da Grieg* and *"Il gallo d'oro" da Rimsky-Korsakov: Variazioni frivole con una fuga anarchica, eretica e perversa*.) The somewhat longer "Fughettina", to use the term used at this point in the score, also calls upon the dedicatee's musical letters **(example 9.9)**.

The dedicatee, Clinton (Bowen) Gray-Fisk (b. New York, 7 July 1904; d. London, 28 May 1961), was an American music critic and writer domiciled in England. The son of the writer May Isabel Fisk (1885–1956), he studied the piano with Moura Lympany (1916–2005) at the Tobias Matthay School, but did not pursue a career as a pianist, having started too late. From 1945 until his death he was the chief critic of *Musical Opinion*, in which Sorabji published several open letters.[130] He was the British representative of the International Godowsky Society, in which capacity he recruited Sorabji as a member.[131] In 1960 he published an introductory article on his friend that, despite a number of important inaccuracies, was an important source of information for several years.[132] He is also the dedicatee of the *Sonata V (Opus archimagicum)* and the *Toccata terza*.

Sorabji called Gray-Fisk "that forceful and sensitive younger critic and writer upon music" who was kind enough to present him with records he had long sought.[133] His obituary shows that he shared with him a dislike of modernist tendencies and an appreciation of neglected figures. He described him as "a discriminating, penetrating, deeply intelligent and sensitive critic, and his complete freedom from musico-ideological indoctrination enabled him unerringly to size up and see through the charlatan posturing and pretentious twaddle of tone-row confidence-trickery and the serialist swindle". In addition, he was "a man of wide interests, chairman of the League against Cruel Sports" and "a man of means who tended to be exceedingly generous"; indeed, he bequeathed to Sorabji the sum of £1,000 (£23,680 in 2021).[134]

Gray-Fisk had a deep admiration for Sorabji and his music. In 1934 he complained that the "Portland Place Pundits" (the BBC) were wrong not to feature the music of someone who had received high praise from various personalities. His music was "characterised by a force, originality, breadth, and nobility of conception that simply transcends everything that is now being written". The BBC should use its resources to give Sorabji the necessary number of rehearsals; hearings of his music

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[129]"Toccatinetta: on [the letters] C.G.F.: comprising a little prelude, then a short malicious passacaglia and, to conclude, a short fugue, compiled by Kaikhosru Sorabji, June 1929, in the year of Our Lord Saviour for his young and rather peaceful friend: Clinton Gray-Fisk, American-English musician (By God!)". The brackets around "Per Dio!" are Sorabji's.

[130]Some of the biographical information on Gray-Fisk comes from Delphine Gray-Fisk to AH, 16 January 1991. See also Lemy Sungyoun Lim, "The Reception of Women Pianists in London, 1950–60" (Ph.D. diss., City University London, 2010), 84–86, https://openaccess.city.ac.uk/1210/1/Lemy_LIM__PhD__Reception_of_Women_Pianists_in_London1950-60_.pdf (includes passing mentions of Sorabji).

[131]Paul Howard, "British Isles", *After Midnight Thoughts on Godowsky, Etc.*, no. 12 (undated, between 1945? and 1951): 13.

[132]Clinton Gray-Fisk, "Kaikhosru Shapurji Sorabji", *MT* 101, no. 1406 (April 1960): 230–32.

[133]Sorabji, "Music", *NEW* 15, no. 26 (12 October 1939): 345.

[134]Sorabji, "Obituary: Clinton Gray-Fisk", *MT* 102, no. 1421 (July 1961): 445; copy of Clinton Gray-Fisk's will, 25 March 1961.

would then show their favourite idols—Stravinsky, Hindemith, and Prokofiev—"as the poor pygmies that they are".[135]

Sorabji gave to Gray-Fisk several of his early manuscripts. These titles remained unknown to Sorabji scholars until they appeared on the auction market in the 1980s. A bookseller who was asked to look at Gray-Fisk's collection was told to pick out any novels that interested him, but apparently took more than he was told to.[136] Curiously, it was Gray-Fisk who, in his *Musical Times* article, spread the legend started by Sorabji that he had burnt a "mass of *juvenilia*". Fortunately, this turned out not to be true.

Introduction, Passacaglia, Cadenza, and Fugue

At Christmas 1929 Sorabji mentioned to Erik Chisholm a work that was half-finished—and remained so—entitled *Passacaglia* (1929; 41 pp.). It consisted "of a Prelude, 100 Variations on an 11-bar theme in conventional Passacaglia rhythm, a cadenza and a Fugue. All of which is what it is only rather more so!" We do not know when he abandoned it, although he spoke positively of it in October 1931. It would be the size of the *Toccata [no. 1] for Piano* and was "well worth finishing". In January 1932 he referred to "a smallish work of about 75 pp. for the feeble minded" which he intended to work on after turning his attention to his *Quintet II for Piano and String Quartet*.[137] As the last page of the manuscript is not entirely filled in, he most likely abandoned the piece, and no separate continuation has survived.

The *Passacaglia*, according to the outline on the first page, was to consist of four parts: Introduzione, Passacaglia, Cadenza fantasiata, and Fuga. The first movement, also entitled "Introduzione quasi preludio", is a mostly cadenza-like piece, especially given the presence of a "Velocissimo" section involving runs. This is followed by the Passacaglia proper, of which seventy-six out of the one hundred intended variations have not survived; the last variation stops at the end of the second bar. The ten-bar theme in triple time, set in octaves, contains eleven semitones, with only the D♯ missing **(example 9.10)**. The passacaglia is very much in the style of Sorabji's large-scale works, though not as expansive. Its first statement is strongly reminiscent of the theme of Reger's *Introduction, Passacaglia, and Fugue*, op. 96 (1906), for two pianos four hands; as in Reger's work, the D♯ is missing.

In 2004 the Scottish/Welsh pianist Alexander Abercrombie completed the torso and provided the two remaining sections. He dedicated the *Introduction, Passacaglia, Cadenza, and Fugue*, as the work is now known, to the memory of Busoni. The work is seventy-nine pages long and would require about seventy-five minutes to perform. Abercrombie chose not to extend the Passacaglia ([ED]pp. 1–56) to one hundred variations as the composer had intended. Rather, he stopped at eighty-one variations (another of those square numbers Sorabji repeatedly used for such purposes), because by the time the manuscript breaks off, the work had already accumulated enough energy to suggest an imminent conclusion. The last two beats come with an ossia making a partial performance possible. The "Cadenza fantasiata" (pp. 51–56) alternates between "Largo" canonic passages in bare octaves and fast, improvisatory sections, the last of which is followed by a very slow four-part stretto on the passacaglia theme stated in triads. The four-voice fugue (pp. 57–77) follows the typical Sorabjian model of three contrasting subjects—the third one being "alla giga"—submitted to the usual contrapuntal manipulations. The passacaglia's theme returns once in each of the first two fugues, and four times in the third one. The "Coda-stretta" (pp. 77–79), which begins with a stretto statement of the three fugue themes, culminates in a joint statement of the passacaglia's theme in augmentation and retrograde

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[135]Clinton Gray-Fisk, "Music: B.B.C. Concerts of British Music, Queen's Hall, January 5, 8, 10, 12", *NA* 54, no. 16 (15 February 1934): 190.

[136]Delphine Gray-Fisk to AH, 16 January 1991.

[137]KSS to EC, 25 December 1929, 2; 18 September 1931, 5; 24 January 1932: 14 (section dated 7 March).

inversion. The work ends "Cataclismico: calamitoso" in C♯ minor, a standard "tonal pillar" in Sorabji's music.

Music for "Faust"

A work for which no manuscript survives bears the editorial title of *Music for "Faust"* (ca. 1930). With reference to his *Symphony no. 0 for Piano Solo*, Sorabji had to "clear everything off first that's on the stocks in order to devote myself entirely to it—when I say everything I do not mean '*Faust*'!!!" By 1932 he was "somewhat dubious and politely unenthusiastic" about it and thought of dropping it for good. He added: "Something in mimo-drama might be fruitful and interesting, we shall see, perhaps."[138]

In 1934 Sorabji rejected Erik Chisholm's project for an opera to be performed by the Glasgow Grand Opera Society, for which he had been conductor from 1930 to 1939. The proposal induced "a cold sweat of boredom" in him.

> I have long since abandoned the idea of Faust; moving as I am, more and more away from the "human" aspects of music, to its magical and necromantic implications, I cannot be tied by the constraining bonds of a merely human emotional story, and I found the conventional "love" element in Faust, which is inescapable, becoming so revolting that I could no longer stomach it.[139]

The "necromantic implications" mentioned above obviously refer to the composition of the *Sonata V (Opus archimagicum)*, the movements of which bear titles referring to the tarot. As late as 1937 a "projected opera utilising both parts of 'Faust'" was mentioned in a newspaper article.[140] Sorabji later said that he had "set the opening choruses" for *Faust* and that he "long since gave up the idea, coming to the conclusion that the whole thing was altogether too 'Northern' for me".[141] No such manuscript has survived.

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[138]KSS to EC, 5 April 1930, 2; June 1932, 7 (section dated 6 June).
[139]KSS to EC, undated (before 17 July 1934).
[140]"Talk of the City and Round About: Famous Composer in St Andrews", *Dundee Evening Telegraph*, 9 July 1937.
[141]Paul Rapoport, "'Could you just send me a list of his works?'", in *SCC*, 135; KSS to KD, 19 August 1978 {Derus, S21, p. 99}.

10 / 1929–30 ■ Erik Chisholm and *Opus clavicembalisticum*

Erik Chisholm, the Realistic Glaswegian Friend

Apart from Philip Heseltine and later Frank Holliday and Alistair Hinton, Erik Chisholm was Sorabji's closest friend. Given the distance between London (or Corfe Castle) and Glasgow (and later Cape Town), contacts were mostly by letter. The extensive collection of nearly 140 letters to Chisholm covers the years 1926, 1929–34, 1936–39, and 1948–65 (with gaps); its 350-odd pages (in the single-spaced typewritten transcription) contain a wealth of information about his activities and the genesis of several works and document his thinking on many subjects. These letters, replete with paragraphs of up to twenty-five lines or more, are also an unusually detailed diary of his innermost feelings.

After studying the organ with Herbert Walton and the piano with Lev Puishnov, Erik Chisholm (b. Cathcart, Glasgow, 4 January 1904; d. Rondebosch, South Africa, 8 June 1965) became active as a pianist, touring Canada and the United States.[1] Returning to Scotland in 1926, he studied composition at Edinburgh University with Donald Francis Tovey, obtaining a bachelor's and a doctor's degree in 1931 and 1934, respectively. He founded in Glasgow the Active Society for the Propagation of Contemporary Music "as an immediate outcome of two years of propaganda [...] on behalf of contemporary composers in order to carry on the work under the more effective conditions that will result from organised support and a wider sphere of interest".[2] Between October 1930 and February 1937, it sponsored concerts in which composers performed their own works: Walton, Hindemith, van Dieren (who cancelled), Medtner, Casella, Bax, Bartók, Ireland, Schmitt, Scott, and Szymanowski.[3] After his first Glasgow appearance on 1 April 1930, also organized by Chisholm but in a different context (see chapter 9), Sorabji was to be heard on 1 December 1930, 29 April 1931, and 16 December 1936.

Together with his mother, Sorabji was a member of the Society from its inception.[4] He was also one of its many honorary vice-presidents, for Chisholm had recruited several eminent musicians to become

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[1]For a biography of Chisholm, see John Purser, *ECSM*, esp. the "Interlude: The Love of Sorabji", 59–67. See also Alistair Hinton, "Kaikhosru Sorabji and Erik Chisholm", *Jagger Journal* (University of Cape Town Libraries), no. 10 (1989–90): 20–35. For excerpts from thirty letters written in 1929–30, see Paul Rapoport, "Sorabji's Other Writings", in *SCC*, 298–311 (photograph of Chisholm on p. 299). The Erik Chisholm Trust (established in 2001), until around 2022, had a website with its own domain; it is now hosted by the Scottish Music Centre at https://www.scottishmusiccentre.com/erik-chisholm. Several documents from the previous site are no longer available.

[2]Purser, *ECSM,* 19, writes that the ASPCM was founded "around June 1930", but "not formally constituted until 13 October 1930". For a list of board members and vice presidents, see Erik Chisholm, "Introduction", in *"Men and Music": Lectures Given at University of Cape Town Summer School, February 1964* (Erik Chisholm Trust, June 2014), 11. See also The Active Society for the Propagation of Contemporary Music, *Prospectus, 1930–31*, [2], and Colin Scott-Sutherland, "A Peek into Erik Chisholm's Archives", *British Music* 21 (1999): 67–71; 68.

[3]For a list of programmes, see Purser, *ECSM*, 214–21 (Appendix 1), with the caveat that the dates in the sources are "at odds with one other".

[4]KSS to EC, 17 June 1930, 1.

officers of the Society. Chisholm was honorary president, and Patrick Shannon honorary secretary of the society.[5] Concerts were held at Stevenson Hall on West George Street. Originally built as the Glasgow Liberal Club, it housed the Scottish National Academy of Music at the time of the Society's formation.[6]

At some of these concerts, Chisholm was either a pianist or a conductor (he would also devote much time to conducting opera and ballet during this decade). Sorabji greatly appreciated the Society's "complete freedom from the revolting party spirit and clique-mongering that are so distressingly familiar in anything of the kind with which we of London are so familiar". He could only rejoice that "this admirable and Jehad-inspired young man" was "deliberately braving the odium, and flouting deeply-rooted prejudices in devoting three entire programmes to my own work".[7]

An appointment as director of the South African College of Music at the University of Cape Town in 1946 led Chisholm to settle in a new continent. Between 1956 and 1959, one of his pupils, a young pianist called Yonty Solomon (1937–2008), discovered Sorabji thanks to his master; he began in 1976 a historic series of authorized recitals of his music. Chisholm's adopted country, like his homeland, benefited from his interest in new trends as founder of the South African section of the International Society for Contemporary Music in 1948. The author of a posthumously published monograph on the operas of Leoš Janáček,[8] Chisholm died in Cape Town in 1965, a few days after the manuscript of his book had reached the publisher.

The composer of at least five operas, three ballet scores, and a number of concertos and many instrumental pieces, especially for the piano, Chisholm has been called a "MacBartók".[9] In addition to works inspired by Scottish folk music, he wrote music influenced by the East or the occult; here we can see a link with, or possible influence by, Sorabji. In 1930 Sorabji called him "a very complete, distinct and well-defined musical and artistic personality—thoroughly Scottish and, as far as a non-Scot can judge, expressing itself in thoroughly Scottish terms, while having freely assimilated what modern European practice can teach him in the way of harmonic vocabulary". Although his aversion to nationalism in music led him to fear that Chisholm was "in merely for a Bartok *epigonus*", he was soon "won over by the force, sincerity, the purity of spirit, the personally expressive, and *Echt* quality of this music".[10]

Sorabji's favourable opinion of Chisholm as a composer soon raised the eyebrows of some unidentified figures of the "London musical world", who attributed his championship of the Scottish composer to the latter's endorsement of his own works. His response was that "it *would* take a musician to put forward a notion of such thoroughgoing baseness and mean-mindedness […] and it *would* take a musician to think it inconceivable that anyone else should do the smallest action of generosity from disinterested motives—as inconceivable, in fact, as *would* be such an action on *his*

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[5]Patrick Shannon (1909–95) became Bishop of Aberdeen according to Chisholm, "Introduction", in *"Men and Music"*, 12, and Provost of St. Andrew's Cathedral in Aberdeen according to the Wikipedia article at https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Paddy_Shannon.

[6]At some point in the 1990s, Stevenson Hall was the Town House Hotel's "Music Room". For a photograph, see F. H. Bisset, "The Scottish National Academy of Music", *MT* 71, no. 1048 (1 June 1930): 497–501; 499.

[7]Sorabji, "Letters to the Editor: Concerts of Contemporary Music at Glasgow", *MT* 71, no. 1051 (1 September 1930): 837.

[8]Chisholm, *The Operas of Leoš Janáček*, The Commonwealth and International Library of Science, Technology, Engineering and Liberal Studies, Music Division (Oxford and New York: Pergamon Press, 1971). The entire book is available in electronic form at http://www.musicweb-international.com/classrev/2007/Dec07/Chisholm_Janacek.htm.

[9]Murray McLachlan, liner notes for *Erik Chisholm—Piano Music* (Olympia OCD 639), 1998.

[10]Sorabji, "Music", *NA* 47, no. 20 (11 September 1930): 236. An earlier version of this appreciation of Chisholm as a composer is contained in a letter to the editor of the *Daily Express*, dated 1 September 1930, found among his letters to Christopher Murray Grieve. He had been "steadily won over to this personal expression of musical thought that finds utterance in terms that are definitely Scottish".

part".[11] This reaction, in turn, prompted "Diogenes the Younger", a columnist for *Musical Opinion*, to rise in protest and suggest to Sir Edward Elgar, in his capacity as president of the London Musicians Club, "that an effigy of Mr. Sorabji be burnt at the next club dinner".[12]

The first surviving epistolary contact between Sorabji and Chisholm dates from 25 November 1926, when the Scottish musician sent Sorabji a copy of a piano arrangement of movements from an unidentified organ concerto by Handel.[13] This may not have been the first letter from a young composer wishing to introduce himself to an older composer, some of whose works he had probably discovered through reviews or seen in print. He found it "very encouraging to find such an enthusiastic partisan *in another musician*".[14] The next surviving letter, dated 17 July 1929, written a few days after their first meeting, shows Sorabji "thrilled" by Chisholm's intention to publish an article about him. On the other hand, making a two-piano arrangement of the piano part of his published piano concerto for a performance would be "fruitless labour", and Tovey's refusal was an "*extremely* likely event".[15] A hearing of this work in its full form seems to have remained part of Chisholm's plan, but Sorabji remained adamant, having decided that no performance of his works with the orchestra would take place "in these islands".[16]

Some time before Christmas 1929, the two men began to discuss the possibility of Sorabji playing some of his music at Edinburgh University. However, the latter warned his friend that he was "a composer—who *incidentally, merely*, plays the piano".[17] Sorabji thus played his *Sonata IV for Piano*, on 1 April 1930, at the "Fourth Recital of National Music" that Chisholm organized at Stevenson Hall. It is his three other performances in Glasgow were sponsored by the Active Society for the Propagation of Contemporary Music.

The performance had given Sorabji and Chisholm their first opportunity to meet in person. On his return to London on 3 April, Sorabji dropped "My dear Mr. Chisholm" in favour of increasingly intimate forms of address. After this first visit to Glasgow, the closing forms, which had begun with a simple "ever" or a variant like "Yours ever sincerely", also became more effusive, for example "Your most devoted and affectionate" on that April date, or "Your eternally loving and devoted" (12 July 1930), or something along these lines. Sorabji could only think of "the wonderful time you have all given me", as his visit had "brought us two so close together"; they had even walked "arm in arm". He emphasized how, as a "Southerner", the intensity of his feelings, "when they are strongly roused or moved, make silence impossible".[18] From that day on, his letters became longer and longer, the correspondent often adding page after page, dating each new section begun on a subsequent day, until he finally signed and posted them. The years 1930 and 1931 were the most prolific, with 79 letters filling 249 pages in the single-spaced typewritten transcription. An extreme example of these "epistles of symphonic proportions" that formed "booklets"[19] was begun on 6 May 1931 and completed on 23 May—36 pages, of which 25 survive. Chisholm remarked that "long letters are definitely out of fashion", but Sorabji

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[11]Sorabji, "Music: The Promenade and Other Matters", *NA* 47, no. 25 (16 October 1930): 297.

[12]"Diogenes the Younger", "Thoughts from My Tub", *MO* 54, no. 639 (December 1930): 211.

[13]KSS to EC, 25 November 1926. No such arrangement is listed in Michael Tuffin's *Catalogue raisonné* of Chisholm's works, https://www.scottishmusiccentre.com/erik-chisholm-catalogue-raisonne (consulted when previously available on the Erik Chisholm Trust's own website in 2021; a single PDF is announced to be in preparation on the new website).

[14]KSS to EC, 23 July 1929.

[15]KSS to EC, 17 July 1929.

[16]KSS to EC, 8 July 1930 (first letter on that date).

[17]KSS to EC, 25 December 1929, 2.

[18]KSS to EC, 3 April 1930 (in both letters so dated).

[19]KSS to EC, 18 September 1931, 7; 6 May 1931, 31 (section dated 22 May); 20 December 1930.

insisted: "did you really think I was going to be such a boob as indignantly to repudiate any such thing? You don't yet know me, it is plain!"[20]

Like many of Sorabji's letters to close friends, few of those sent to Chisholm are strictly factual. Most alternate between facts and condemnations of well-known figures in music and musical life (pitting them against his favourites), tributes to his heroes (opposing them to his enemies, real or imagined), attacks against institutions, pieces of advice on health matters, and (in this particular case) streams of sentimental effusions and pleas for more intimate friendship and closeness—even love. They show how deeply Sorabji, the celibate man in his mid-thirties, who was living with his mother and fully aware of his homosexual inclinations, was in love with Chisholm, then in his mid-twenties, and still living at his parents' house until his marriage in 1932.[21] He was clearly living out his infatuation by putting it into words, and had begun to do so "after barely a week of really knowing you"—clearly a *coup de foudre*.[22] His "repeated dreaming of you night after night" was his proof that "you are twined so deeply in the very roots of my being, so that my whole self, conscious and unconscious, is permeated by you, interpenetrated by your spirit, nay possessed by you".[23]

Another way in which Sorabji felt closer to Chisholm was by attending seances with his other close friend in the early 1930s, Bernard Bromage (see chapter 12). Returning from one such seance, to which he had brought "THAT which you sent me in an envelope" (a lock of his hair, to be mentioned later on), he wondered whether his friend had felt "anything between 10.15 and 11.5 p.m. this evening". On another occasion, when he saw "clouds of faintly luminous vapour flashes of light", he "directed my thoughts and will you-wards with all my might and intensity, praying hard all the time".[24]

Several letters, which often showed "what sort of a nervous overwrought state I'm in", must have been quite disturbing to the recipient.[25] We can only wonder how Chisholm's first wife, Diana Brodie (1911–84), whom he married in November 1932, felt if he let her read them. That she was initially prejudiced against Sorabji, and remained so for some years, but grew out of her antagonism, is clear from the first sentence of her memoirs. She identified three causes: Sorabji felt that they were living in the "Back o' Beyond", which was not as conducive to the development of her husband's career as London would have been; he did not approve of their engagement; and he had a "most wonderful head of jet black hair" of which she was jealous (see chapter 2).

As we saw when discussing Sorabji's homosexuality (see chapter 9), he felt that Chisholm should not marry if he was to achieve a reputation as a composer.[26] Nevertheless, he often included his friend's wife in his final salutations and seems to have appreciated her. In a rare documented instance of him enjoying a social activity, he wanted his friend to ask her if she remembered "how we both gazed with indignant hungry eyes at the helping of that delicious pie we had at that weird dinner party [...] and most of which helping you left uneaten on your plate". He had so much enjoyed this episode, which had taken place "on the occasion of that never-to-be-forgotten visit to St. Andrews", that he mentioned it again a few months later.[27]

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[20]KSS to EC, undated (before 10 July 1934).

[21]KSS to EC, 8 March 1931, 2. Sorabji offered to make alternative arrangements if Chisholm's mother felt she could not cope with him in the house.

[22]KSS to EC, 8 April 1930, 3.

[23]KSS to EC, 6 May 1931, 30 (section dated 20 May). For accounts of dreams, see ibid., 24 (section dated 16 May), 28 (section dated 18 May).

[24]KSS to EC, 3 June 1930, 16 (section dated 14 June); 17 June 1930, 2 (section dated 19 June).

[25]KSS to EC, 17 June 1930, 3 (section dated 22 June).

[26]Diana Chisholm, "Kaikhosru Sorabji" (typescript), undated (1946 at the earliest), 1.

[27]KSS to EC, 4 November 1952, 2; 3 March 1953, 2 (in which he wonders whether it was rather Morag, Chisholm's eldest daughter).

Chisholm's third daughter, Fiona, left an account of a brief meeting with Sorabji in 1957. After warning his daughter that Sorabji did not like women, Chisholm told her not to go further than the front gate and left her to amuse herself in the village. When she returned to The Eye to collect her father, she saw him come out, followed by "a short nuggety little man with busy grey hair and spectacles with a light coloured raincoat over his arms". The owner was "extremely courteous" and polite, unlike the forbidding portrait she had seen in her father's office. Sorabji allowed himself to be photographed by a neighbour, surrounded by his two visitors.[28]

The Scottish friend had an "appalling script" and could not type, leaving this task to his sister-in-law and personal secretary Phyllis Brodie.[29] His letters to Sorabji, had they survived, would need to be fully transcribed to be usable. The absence of Brodie's transcription of Sorabji's letters would have made the task of extracting information much more difficult. Only a dozen of Chisholm's letters to Sorabji (all late ones) survive, which sadly deprives us of his reactions to his friend's outbursts. Sorabji occasionally made it clear that some of his friend's comments or questions had slightly offended him or made him uncomfortable. However difficult it is to determine how much, if any, teasing is contained in the expressions of dissatisfaction quoted below includes, it is clear that most of the correspondence was directed to Glasgow. Sorabji often made mock "threats", saying he would keep quiet until he heard from his friend. He resented having to send "at least *four* letters and a prepaid telegram before I could get an answer out of you", and using "that bloody telephone" made not seeing him all the worse. On one occasion, the wording was quite "virulent", at least if taken at face value.

> I suppose you are wondering when you are going to get this letter? Well, I'll tell you... *when it arrives*, which won't be for some time yet... you can just bloody well wait and stew in *your* own juice for a change as you've so often made me do—what's sauce for the goose, sonny... I'm sick of writing enormous long letters that may or may not (as often as not may *not*) be answered and anyhow if my letters are worth having at all they are worth waiting for. So put *that* in your nasty Gold Flakes or Woodbines or whatever the pestilent stinking weed it is that you consume, and smoke it![30]

The "threats" extended to performances, such as never setting foot in Glasgow again and never playing *Opus clavicembalisticum* there "till the next time when it will only be to abuse and insult and vilify you!!!"[31]

Sorabji had to pour out his loneliness and longing for intimate companionship, working himself up into a sentimental frenzy, which may have served as a fuel for inspiration. The very first letter he wrote on his return to London already contained the kind of outpourings that he would repeat with increasing passion in each successive letter.

> It is not only your wonderful sympathy with and understanding of my work but your whole feelings towards me that have drawn us so close together. By and by I shall tell you something of the inner unhappiness and suffering that has been so large a part of my life—I let you into the secret of it slightly because—well, what could I do but let in such a friend as you into those secret places of the heart that one keeps jealously guarded and closed from all others except those who by spiritual right *must* have access there unto? […] My powers grow daily—not only my musical ones, but

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[28]Fiona Chisholm, "I Meet Sorabji" (undated, ca. 2014; includes the photograph); no longer available on the current Erik Chisholm website (consulted in 2021).

[29]Fiona Chisholm, "Dad's Writings" (undated, ca. 2014); no longer available on the current Erik Chisholm website (consulted in 2021).

[30]KSS to EC, 24 January 1932, 3, 7; 18 September 1931, 3. Gold Flakes and Woodbines were brands of cigarettes manufactured by W. D. & H. O. Wills, a company founded in Bristol in 1786. For another example of a related, but more strongly worded "threat", this time to keep him company over a meal, see KSS to EC, 13 January 1937, 2. This was Sorabji's last such warning, the first on record being on 20 July 1930.

[31]KSS to EC, 3 June 1930, 5 (section dated 4 June).

> my *superphysical* ones and we shall, and *at no distant time* be able to see each other as often as we wish... that is to say if *you* want to... *Do* you? *will* you? [...] I ask of you just as the Arabs do of a well-loved friend—"Love me and be my brother"—do you think you can do it?[32]

Sorabji, who led Chisholm to believe that he was "eight years older than you" (i.e., born in 1897 rather than 1892), wondered how long it would be before he would have him "walking again beside me arm im arm". At his request, he sent him a lock of his hair "pressed between the pages of the Concerto" (see chapter 2). The recipient does not seem to have thanked him, although he did send the promised photograph of himself.[33]

It was not long before Sorabji was sending Chisholm publications from the British Society for the Study of Sex Psychology, of which he was a member; they would "put to you facts and points of view perhaps new to you". These were "things I want you to understand *intellectually* (if not emotionally, for that is a coat of another colour) in order that you may feel with your *mind* as well as you heart some of the difficulties with which your unhappy friend has had to content".[34] Sorabji sent not only copies of publications, but also gifts. Overjoyed to learn of his appreciation of Mahler's symphonies, he once asked which ones he did not yet have so that he could give them as Christmas or birthday presents.[35] He even hoped to be able to give him a first-class Zeiss astronomical telescope, as stargazing was a lifelong passion.[36]

One way in which Sorabji pressed his friend was by referring to his *Cinque sonetti di Michelagniolo Buonarroti*, emphasizing that the author of the poems had "no need nor use at all for 'le beau sexe'".[37] Thinking of the Italian artist, he suggested using other languages and poetry to express his feelings. He wrote a nine-line *prosa lirica* in Italian, with a full paragraph in German, asking Chisholm if he was really his only, beloved, and faithful friend.[38] Foreign languages created the distance necessary to express his feelings even more freely than he did in English—in a way like wearing a mask at a ball (see chapter 16).

In May 1930 Sorabji sent the first of five love—or "love-hate"—poems, one of them in French. Two of these, entitled *Capriccio infantilesco* and *Capriccio kaikhosrienso*, strike a strange note with their childish pleas from a man aged thirty-eight. These variations on the "He loves me... he loves me not" game show him using himself as the subject. They take the form of acrostics, with the name "Erik" in the first and the name "Kaikhosru" in the second, alternating verses beginning with "I love my love with a *K*..." and "I hate him with a *K*...", all continuing with an accumulation of fanciful adjectives. The last of these poems ("To E.") is more traditional in tone, and shows him expressing the difficulty of the distance separating him from his friend was.[39]

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[32]KSS to EC, 3 April 1930, 2.

[33]KSS to EC, 3 May 1930, 3; 3 April 1930 (second letter), 1; 8 April 1930, 6, and 8 (section dated 11 April).

[34]KSS to EC, 3 May 1930, 2.

[35]KSS to EC, 23 February 1931, 2.

[36]KSS to EC, 9 December 1930, 4. For Chisholm's interest for astronomy, see Purser, *ECSM*, 152.

[37]Sorabji had referred to "*le beau sexe*" in two consecutive letters quoted in chapter 9; see KSS to EC, 27 May 1930, 5–6 (section dated 28 May), and 17 June 1930, 1.

[38]KSS to EC, 17 June 1930, 1; ibid., 2 (section dated 19 June).

[39]KSS to EC, 27 May 1930, 5 (section dated 29 May), entitled "À mon cher Erik" (twelve-line poem in French); 3 June 1930, 13 (section dated 10 June), entitled "Capriccio infantilesco" (nine distichs); 17 June 1930, 13 (section dated 30 June), entitled "Capriccio kaikhosrienso" (forty-three lines); 8 August 1930, beginning with "Life, blood, faith and deepest truth" (twelve lines; transcribed in Stuart A. Harris-Logan, "Scotland's Forgotten Composer: The Archive of Erik Chisholm", *Archives Hub*, 1 September 2016, https://blog.archiveshub.jisc.ac.uk/2016/09/01/scotlands-forgotten-composer-the-archive-of-erik-chisholm/); 30 March 1931, untitled poem inscribed "To E.", beginning with "Not loneliness nor distance dearly loved" (eleven lines, quoted in the main text).

Not loneliness nor distance, dearly loved—
Crucifixion though they be are half my pain,
But hunger for that heart
Whose love I count a prize
Beyond all good imaginable,
Nay life itself, and lacking which
Life is not life for me—
For bitter aching need of which I starve,
Grow faint and sick in spirit unto my death,
Which if you deny, the help of all the Gods
Will not avail, to heal nor cure me...

Sorabji repeatedly made it clear to his friend that he could not imagine life without him. He wondered how he, "with *my* temperament and *my* racial inheritance on top of it", could remain unmoved by the "wondrous appreciation and understanding of my work as a creative artist". He even placed on his shoulders "a responsibility you owe the world to take care of me and see that I come to no tragic nor dolorous mischance".[40] Not only was he fully aware of his abilities and importance as a composer, but he was also attempting a form of blackmail, trying to make his friend feel guilty if he did not reciprocate similar feelings. Sorabji, who valued the friendship of a few people very highly, was extremely exclusive, and in no other case than Chisholm's was this expressed so forcefully—he wanted him all to himself. This went so far as to refuse to share him with his family on his weekend visits to Glasgow, or at least to hope to do so.[41] Realizing that he would not receive sexual fulfilment from Chisholm, Sorabji longed for a communion of bodies expressed through the gift of life, that is, the transfusion of blood.

> What a *marvellous* thing it must be to give one's blood to someone you love in that operation known as transfusion of blood... to feel your very life flowing *literally* into them to give them strength and health... It must be the purest joy on earth! God forbid that such a thing should ever be necessary or that such a dire pass should ever come about... *but with what more eager gladness can you imagine any one more ready for it than I* if... I will not write such omened words but here you *may* read in the blank[s] and between the lines as much as you like... [M]y blood I hope is pretty clean and pure: I'll have it tested one of these days.[42]

Indeed, a recurring theme in the correspondence concerns visits by Chisholm to Corfe Castle, where Sorabji used to spend a few weeks each summer. The letters suggest that there were at least two such visits, namely, in August of 1930 and 1931. On these occasions, the friend would bring his bathing suit for a dip in nearby Studland, while Sorabji watched him "meditating Yogi-wise in the Buddha posture".[43] There is evidence that Sorabji visited his friend much more regularly than he did. He would have liked to "scrounge a visit to Glasgow *once in six weeks* instead of *eight*". Should he be "independent" (that is, financially), it is where he would "spend each year a few months (besides *innumerable* weekends of course!)".[44] In 1939, however, Sorabji turned down an invitation to the Isle of Arran (80 km from Glasgow), saying "that's no place for me; far too dreary and far too cold. I can't stand places like that." He had found St. Andrews "bad enough" despite some facilities, but Arran was

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[40]KSS to EC, 27 May 1930, 1.
[41]KSS to EC, 27 May 1930, 3 (section dated 28 May).
[42]KSS to EC, 3 June 1930, 16 (section dated 13 June).
[43]KSS to EC, 6 May 1931, 30 (section dated 20 May).
[44]KSS to EC, 13 April 1930, 19 May 1930; 27 May 1930, 1 (section dated 28 May), 4 (section dated 29 May); 1 June 1930, 2, 3; 3 June 1930, 2.

more than he could tolerate.[45] Nine years after the emotional peak of his love had begun to fade, there was a distance he was not prepared to travel to see his friend.

Chisholm must have felt increasingly bothered, if not upset, by his friend's letters, with their many references to love, kisses, and eternal blessings, along with pleas for a passion similar to his own.[46] This must have convinced Sorabji that the time was ripe to make his attitude clear. Returning from one of his short trips to Glasgow on 23 May, he wrote "a secret letter to you by the way which can only be safely be *handed* to you and by myself alone in case I cannot summon up courage or what to tell you with my own lips as it is my duty and as I ought to do really".[47] He had completed it by 28 June and probably gave (or showed) it to his friend when he arrived in Corfe Castle on or after 8 August. Chisholm had thought that Sorabji might wish to make "indecent overtures", but that he never meant, hoped for, asked for, or expected this. He assured his friend that there had never been "the smallest subterranean hankering for sexual relations between us" and that "the mere thought that anything I do should be repellent or go against the grain with you makes me shrivel up inside, and you cannot imagine my shrinking *dread* of it!"[48]

In the weeks leading up to Chisholm's visit, Sorabji raised the subject again. Asking for forgiveness if he had said or done anything to offend him, he wrote: "By all the Saints I swear to you *never never* would I wish to say or do anything that goes against the grain with you". He insisted that "it was better for one of *my* temperament to have a deep and devoted affection for one of *your* temperament, than for one of his own". So he wanted "your regard and affection for me to grow and increase *along its own natural lines* as is right and proper but *along no others*!"[49] Fearing that Chisholm might think of him as "an unscrupulous self-seeking creature out for my own ends and objects regardless", he wanted him to "believe in the existence of a deep and devoted attachment that is unselfish, in *that it neither seeks nor asks selfish personal gratification of any kind whatsoever*".[50]

Sorabji's outpourings continued more or less unabated throughout 1930, then varied greatly in their intensity until 5 August 1931, when he enclosed with his letter a recommendation that Chisholm must have asked for. That year Chisholm had received his B.A. from the University of Edinburgh and "turned his mind towards Diana Brodie".[51] Sorabji must have realized that he was now walking on eggshells and that his friend would not risk jeopardizing his new relationship, or at least made it clear that his attitude had to change.

In September 1930, in connection with the composition of the "Adagio" from his *Symphony no. 0 for Piano Solo*, written for Chisholm, he recalled his confession, saying that he would, "as Walt Whitman said 'pour forth the meanings which I of all men know'… and you too since I've confessed… what I have…!"[52] Recalling an "evening at the Bankes Arms sitting in your room in the dark", he spoke of himself as "one who has made to you the utmost confession one human being can make to another

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[45]KSS to EC, 10 June 1939.
[46]KSS to EC, 27 May 1930, 3–4 (section dated 28 May).
[47]KSS to EC, 14 April 1930; 17 June 1930, 11 (section dated 25 July); 8 July 1930 (second letter on that date).
[48]KSS to EC, undated, between 23 May (ATE) and 28 June (ATL). The matter is also discussed in Purser, *ECSM*, 59–62.
[49]KSS to EC, 1 June 1930, 1, 2.
[50]KSS to EC, 3 June 1930, 2.
[51]Purser, *ECSM*, 68.
[52]KSS to EC, 8 April 1930, 5; 7 September 1930, 1. Sorabji is quoting verse 60 of "Out of the Cradle Endlessly Rocking", from *Sea Drift* (1855) by Walt Whitman (1819–92). See also KSS to EC, 17 June 1930, 2, where he used the same quotation in connection with a "never to be forgotten evening in the basement of St. Matthew's Church [...] when I played that blasted concerto". Chisholm was organist at St. Matthew's Church in Glasgow, which Sorabji described as "quite one of the most hideous churches I ever saw in my life"; KSS to EC, August 1930, 15 (section dated 25 August). The concerto may have been the last of eight such works, unless Sorabji had forgotten that it was a movement from a piano symphony.

whom he loves as deeply as I do you".[53] He took the lock of hair he had received "to bed with me *EVERY NIGHT* of my life in the envelope tucked away in my pyjama pocket... *I could not sleep peacefully without it*, and if by chance I *do* get into bed I jump out again in a few minutes to get it." As usual when his love fever reached an unbearable point, he resorted to French to cry out his pleas for love and pity.[54]

Correspondence ceased on 24 June 1932. By the time it resumed on 22 August 1933, Sorabji had toned down his effusive closing salutations to a simple "Yours ever", which he then used most of the time, while the letters were couched in a much less intimate tone. By this time Chisholm had married and the couple saw the birth of Morag, the first of their three daughters. From 1937 Sorabji began his letters with a simple "My dear Erik" rather than intimate forms such as "Chère âme et cœur tant aimé" or "My own sweet Erik".[55] This did not prevent him from using expressions such as "chicken", "angel", or "precious lamb" in the body of his letters as late as 1960. Commenting on his friend's letters, he asked whether the change from "sundry expressions of endearment" to "a bleak and chilly 'regards'" was a way of cooling him off "in case after what had gone before I might 'presume' and 'take liberties', as the saying goes".[56]

The two men probably saw each other less between 1933 and the declaration of war, one notable occasion being Sorabji's fourth Glasgow concert on 16 December 1936, his final public appearance. They must have been in contact around 1939, when Chisholm was preparing the text of a brochure on Sorabji's works for Oxford University Press (see chapter 14). There are no surviving documents giving details of these contacts and the dedication of the *Tāntrik Symphony for Piano Alone* in late 1939. It was also at this time that *Grove's Dictionary of Music and Musicians* approached Chisholm for an entry on Sorabji in their 1940 edition. The composer warned that he would have to see and edit the text—"and remember no birth date or any of that sort of nonsense!" He would not approve anything he had not seen and corrected.[57] The project never materialized, and the first Sorabji entry (by Terence White Gervais) dates from the 1954 edition.

There is no surviving correspondence for the period between 1 October 1939 and 19 June 1948. During this period Chisholm was very much on the move, conducting in many English cities, in Italy, India, and Singapore, and finally settling in South Africa in 1946. Chisholm must have visited London occasionally, as he did in March 1962, resulting in two long meetings, "which was a great joy to me". Sorabji found that his friend had "more good sense and perception in the fingernail of his little finger than almost any other thousand and one musicians put together in their whole nasty carcasses".[58] The letters then resumed, one after the other, at rather long intervals. Sorabji's last letter is dated 16 February 1965.

Chisholm received three dedications: one is the second manuscript of the *Trois poèmes du "Gulistān" de Saʿdī* of 1930, another the *Tāntrik Symphony for Piano Alone* completed in 1939 already mentioned. The dedication of the *Symphony no. 0 for Piano Solo* of 1931 is found in a letter (see chapter 11). In 1933 Sorabji lamented that he could not have from his friend "a piano work or a piano concerto that I can play myself".[59] Sixteen years later he was intrigued by Chisholm's recent Piano Concerto no. 2 ("The Hindustani"), adding "It's *more* than time that I had something dedicated to me, you know."[60] This was not enough to persuade him to dedicate it to Sorabji; rather, although it could

[53]KSS to EC, 15 October 1930, 1.
[54]KSS to EC, 15 October 1930, 2.
[55]KSS to EC, 31 December 1931 ("Dear heart and beloved soul"); 10 July 1934.
[56]KSS to EC, August 1930, 8 (section dated 22 August).
[57]KSS to EC, 15 April 1939; 10 May 1939.
[58]KSS to RS, 3 March 1962.
[59]KSS to EC, 22 August 1933, 3.
[60]KSS to EC, 10 May 1949, 3.

not be ascertained, he chose the three-part orchestral work *Pictures from Dante* (1948).[61] In 1954 Sorabji listened, reduction in hand, to a performance of the concerto by the Scottish pianist Agnes Walker (d. 2001). He found it "a VERY interesting, VERY accomplished work, and no modern British Piano Concerto surpasses let alone equals it" and offered "a clever compromise between atonality and tonality, or rather a blend of the two".[62]

By the end of 1950 Chisholm had asked Sorabji whether he could be persuaded to make some private recordings at His Master's Voice. This was something he had never considered, having retired from the stage completely in 1936. In January 1953 Chisholm suggested the possibility of lecturing on his friend's works during a trip to the United States, regretting that he had no recordings for this purpose. Sorabji replied, "it's in the highest degree unlikely that I shall make recordings". The friend then suggested recording excerpts, which seemed "much more to the point"; he had even approached two private recording companies, but to no avail. Sorabji, who was willing to pay for the recording of excerpts, had begun to prepare for the sessions, but overwork and anxiety forced him to "stop all practice and preparations".[63] Chisholm does not appear to have delivered the intended lectures, and the recording of excerpts never took place.

During a year's leave of absence from Cape Town in 1962, Chisholm held recording sessions on 22 and 27 February at the home of the pianist and composer Neil Solomon (1931–2015) at 18 Sussex Place (London W2), on his Blüthner grand.[64] These recordings included the *Passeggiata veneziana sopra la Barcarola di Offenbach*, a "short extemporization" (which is all that is known of it), readings from his "artistic creed" (most probably the 1959 statement beginning with "I am not a 'modern' composer") and from (part of?) the chapter entitled "Yoga and the Composer", from *Mi contra fa*, and a performance of the *Third Symphony for Piano Solo*.[65] On the subject of improvisations, Sorabji once recalled how his mother was "exceedingly disgusted" by a recent article in the *Times* about the lack of ability of modern composers to improvise. She wondered "why can't I get someone to write and contradict it, drawing attention to *my* powers in that direction!"[66] The deviations from the music as written in the autographs that we can hear in his recordings are all we have to document this aspect of his creativity.

Chisholm had originally booked a studio at Wigmore Hall, where he had taken Solomon's machine. Problems crept up, and Chisholm asked Solomon if he could use his flat, insisting that no women be present so as not to put Sorabji off. The composer, wearing a Persian wool hat that was "a cross between a bishop's mitre and a mortarboard", was dressed in a long gold, black, and orange scarf trailing at the back of his legs and with items of clothing each of its own colour. The session continued with Sorabji producing three miniature bottles of liqueur from his pocket at each pause in the recording. At one point Solomon's wife returned from her enforced "exile" to prepare tea and scones

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[61]The dedication is mentioned (without source) in Purser, *ECSM*, 63, who discusses the work in full on pp. 102–11. Michael Tuffin's *Catalogue raisonné* of Chisholm's works lists no such dedication.

[62]KSS to EC, 1 December 1954. See EC to KSS, 24 January 1955, for the composer's thanks for his friend's comments and his agreement with his comments on the performance.

[63]EC to KSS, 19 December 1950; 28 January 1953; KSS to EC, 3 March 1953, 1; EC to KSS, 2 April 1953; KSS to EC, 13 April 1953; 13 May 1953; EC to KSS, 15 June 1953; KSS to EC, 29 December 1953.

[64]Much about the circumstances surrounding Sorabji's recordings comes from a fifteen-page memoir accompanying Neil Solomon to MAR, September 2001 (summarized in Fiona Chisholm, "I Meet Sorabji"); see also KSS to NG, 19? March 1962 {18/F.4}. Neil Solomon met Erik Chisholm while studying at the South African College of Music of the University of Cape Town, where he himself taught the piano between 1966 and 1996.

[65]EC to NG, 23 February 1962 {20/F.33}. See also Paul Rapoport, "The Recordings of Sorabji's Music", in *SCC*, 480–81.

[66]KSS to EC, 22 January 1931, 3. Sorabji once recalled sitting "for about 3/4 of an hour in the little drawing room in pitch darkness improvising"; KSS to EC, 22 August 1931, 4.

for her husband to bring into the lounge after the session. After Chisholm and Solomon had left the room for a few minutes, she decided to go in and found herself face to face with Sorabji. Hearing her voice coming from the lounge, the two men returned to find her happily chatting with the composer instead of witnessing the feared catastrophe. A few days after the session, a parcel arrived for both Solomon and his wife, containing a box of twenty miniature liqueur bottles.

Solomon kept the tapes, made on his Grundig TK5 twin-track machine, until Chisholm borrowed them in 1964 (a year before his death); their whereabouts are unknown. Chisholm was due to go to Corfe Castle later in 1962 to record further works, but as far as we know this did not happen; in fact the two friends never saw each other again.[67] The two reels resulting from this project were obviously far removed from Chisholm's 1954 idea, namely, the possibility of recording and performing the *Symphony [no. 2], "Jāmī", for Large Orchestra, Wordless Chorus, and Baritone Solo*, a very costly undertaking, especially given the absence of parts.[68]

Sorabji greatly appreciated Chisholm's "preaching the gospel according to Kakodaemon Corfiensis [*recte* Corfiense] wherever he goes" as well as his "declaiming aloud about my supreme genius... as if I fucking well didn't know that MYSELF... Bless me!"[69] An example of this is an article he wrote for the *Evening News of India*, the country he was visiting as a conductor.[70] When Chisholm died in 1965, Sorabji told friends that his loss was "very acute". He was "deeply shocked and distressed" by his untimely death, which had "greatly grieved me", and considered him "the best, most loyal and faithful of friends".[71] In only one case did he add a little criticism to his praise, which is negligible compared to the highly perceptive and fully justified criticism Chisholm made of his own piano playing (see chapter 12).

> I loved dear Erik Chisholm dearly, for his admirable personal qualities, his loyalty, his essential soundness of judgement where music is concerned, but, like yourself, I was constantly being surprised and even a bit shocked by his lack of "background", as you call it, when he told me of his intention, or rather that he was actually engaged in making a sort of "musical" out of, I think, *The Importance of Being Earnest*. I scolded him quite sharply about it. The fact is that he wore himself out in a quantity of unnecessary and even futile activities instead of concentrating his energies.[72]

It seems strange that someone who maintained such a fervent friendship should not have published a full-scale account. Sorabji wrote ten obituaries, five of them of friends or dedicatees, but all he wrote about Chisholm is contained in a few private letters.[73] His only public appraisal of him—a rather lengthy one— dates from 1930, not long after the beginning of their friendship (quoted near the beginning of this chapter).

The Composition and First Performance of *Opus clavicembalisticum*

The work most immediately associated with Sorabji has always been *Opus clavicembalisticum* (1929–30; 253 pp.), the longest and most complex of those whose publication he supervised. He chronicled

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[67]KSS to NG, 10 March 1962 {18/F.4}.
[68]EC to KSS, 2 July 1954.
[69]KSS to FH, 6 June 1957 {1/F.19}.
[70]Chisholm, "Who Is Kaikhosru Shapoorji [*sic*] Sorabji", *The Evening News of India*, before 1948 or 1949.
[71]KSS to NG, 10 July 1965 {18/F.15}; KSS to RS, 11 September 1965.
[72]KSS to CMG, 1 July 1954, 1–2. *The Importance of Being Earnest* (1963), after Oscar Wilde, was an opera, not a musical. It is not mentioned in Sorabji's correspondence with Chisholm, so he must therefore have made his comment in conversation.
[73]Sorabji published obituaries of (in chronological order) Ferruccio Busoni, Kirby Lunn, Philip Heseltine, Bernard van Dieren, Blanche Marchesi, Ignacy Paderewski, Emma Calvé, Sergei Rachmaninoff, and Clinton Gray-Fisk.

its genesis in thirty letters to Erik Chisholm with sentences like "Schéhérazade-Kaikhosru resumes his (her) tale—she sees the dawn is breaking—that is to say a page more has to dry and she interrupts the story of her *Adagio* to continue her more or less artless prattle about other things."[74] The need to pause was a good opportunity to add paragraphs to his long letters.

The first known reference to *Opus clavicembalisticum* dates from 25 December 1929. Sorabji was no doubt in a Busonian mood, having attended three recitals by Egon Petri and two performances of the *Fantasia contrappuntistica*, one by Petri and one by another of Busoni's pupils, Eduard Steuermann (1892–1964).[75] He wrote of the "rather terrifying quality of the work, its monumental grandeur, its severe and ascetic splendour, its eerie magnificence, its utter uniqueness", adding that it was "a terrible as well as a mighty work, for, like the *Hammerklavier*, it will turn and rend any rash weakling who dares to try to invoke it". Busoni's work and its performance were for him a religious, even mystical, experience—and this was to be true of *Opus clavicembalisticum*.

By 25 December 1929 Sorabji had reached the end of "Fuga I" of the "very large and complex new piano work" then called *Opus sequentiale*. Recognizing Busoni's *Fantasia contrappuntistica* as an inspiration, he provided a "Constitution of the Work"; but for matters of terminology, it corresponds to that of the published score's title page.[76] He must have put his new work aside for a few days in early 1930 to prepare for the first public performance of *Nocturne, "Jāmī"*, which he was to give at Westminster Congregational Church on 16 January. From 14 March he again devoted himself to the preparation of another performance, namely, that of the *Sonata IV for Piano*, which was to be given on 1 April. Shortly after his return from Glasgow, when he had reached the end of the second variation of "Interludium primum", he decided to change the title of the work to *Opus clavicembalisticum*.[77]

Discussions about a first performance in Glasgow began a week later. Sorabji had written "the sternest, most uncompromising work I have ever done, austere, ascetic". He also toyed with the idea of playing the last seven of the sixty-four numbers from his *Variazioni e fuga triplice sopra "Dies irae" per pianoforte* (representing the seven deadly sins), if not the whole work, but feared that he would be a corpse if he did so.[78] His radio performance of *Le jardin parfumé—Poem for Piano Solo*, given on the BBC on 22 April 1930, forced him to interrupt composition again.

Sorabji explained to Chisholm the meaning of the Latin title: "*Opus* = a work: *Clavicembalum* = a cymbalon with keys: plus termination = *isticum* = adjectival indicating belonging to or pertaining to."[79] We do not know whether came across a similar title or invented it. Related titles had been used, for example, by Renaissance composers such as Jacob Praetorius and Jacob Handl for *Opus musicum excellens et novum* (1566) and *Opus musicum* (1586–91), respectively. There are examples in twentieth-century music (by Joonas Kokkonen and Nikolay Lopatnikov, among others) as well as Paul Rapoport's book *Opus est*, which includes a chapter devoted to Sorabji, and the present *Opus sorabjianum*.[80]

In early May Sorabji reported that the work was "amazingly good: *much* better than *Dies Irae*", and a month later he and Chisholm had agreed on a performance in December in Glasgow.[81] On 10 June,

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[74]KSS to EC, 27 May 1930, 5 (section dated 29 May). See ibid., 18 September 1931, 3, for another reference to returning to a letter while a page of music was drying.

[75]Sorabji, "Music", *NA* 45, no. 22 (26 September 1929): 261; "Music: Egon Petri. Wigmore 11th", *NA* 45, no. 26 (24 October 1929): 308–10; "Music: Egon Petri. Wigmore, November 9", *NA* 46, no. 3 (21 November 1929): 32–33; "Music: B.B.C. Chamber Concert", *NA* 46, no. 3 (21 November 1929): 32.

[76]KSS to EC, 25 December 1929.

[77]KSS to EC, 5 April 1930.

[78]KSS to EC, 8 April 1930, 8–9 (section dated 11 April).

[79]KSS to EC, [18] April 1930, 9 (section dated 23 April).

[80]The title of Rapoport's book means "There is (or 'there must be', or 'there is a need for') a work".

[81]KSS to EC, 3 May 1930, 1; 1 June 1930, 3.

on reaching var. 63 of the "Passacaglia", he felt "full of weary bitterness, most intense morbid despondency", and described himself as "a *miserable* creature!... a *wretched* worm for all my proud spirit..." Nevertheless, he was "very pleased with the whole work", adding: "The thing I feel has an imperious majesty of movement and breadth of style that I don't think I have yet reached in any of my other works—don't you think so?"[82] On 25 June he was finally able to announce that he had completed the composition.

> With a racking head and literally my whole body shaking as with ague I write this and tell you that I have just this afternoon early *finished Clavicembalisticum* (252 pages—*longer* than Dies Irae and immeasurably better...) [...] The closing 4 pages are as cataclysmic and catastrophic as anything I've ever done—the harmony bites like nitric acid, the counterpoint grinds like the mills of God to close finally on this implacable monosyllable: [musical example representing the work's final G♯ minor chord in the left hand with a quasi-cluster chord (B–D–F–G–A–B) in the right hand] "I am the Spirit that denies!"

Sorabji is referring here to the final dissonant chord that confounds the listener's expectation of a powerful and rich consonant sonority (most likely that of C♯ major, given its importance elsewhere in the work). He quoted the verse "Ich bin der Geist, der stets verneint!" (line 1338), which is Mephistopheles's answer to Faust as to who and what he is in the first *Studierzimmer* scene in Goethe's *Faust*. He called the poet's words a "clairvoyant insight" and "a wonderful stroke with all the insight of genius behind it".[83] He likened his state of exhaustion to that of Christ, adding that he needed a rest before he could devote himself to other works—but that he might write some music to ease the wait for Chisholm's visit to Corfe Castle. Sorabji could not live long without composing, at least at that time.[84]

Not more than a week after completing *Opus clavicembalisticum*, Sorabji began writing the *Symphony no. 0 for Piano Solo*, which was to be "Erik's symphony". In the early days of July he went to Corfe Castle, where Chisholm seems to have joined him in August. He was able to practise on a Challen piano at the Albany Rooms in Swanage, where he had tea with (strangely, given his misogyny) "charming and clever women who do that beautiful leather work". *Opus clavicembalisticum* was "getting nicely into my fingers and I think (at least I *hope*) I shall play it much better than I did the 4th Sonata".

Back in London on 11 September, Sorabji continued to prepare for the first performance, now scheduled for 1 December 1930 at the concerts of the Active Society for the Propagation of Contemporary Music. He passed on to Chisholm his friend Harold Rutland's suggestion that someone should make introductory remarks between the sections, and hoped that Chisholm himself would do so "provided you don't talk of lot of nonsense!!!"[85] There is no evidence that this happened. Sorabji also refused to sell any of his music at the concert.[86] There was some talk of a private performance in Edinburgh, but the composer refused in order to avoid playing to a "damned crew of professional musicians and pundits".[87] With only a few weeks to prepare the concert, Chisholm should not expect much, "but it will *sound* well, as well as *any* audience deserves, even that of the A.S.P.C.M."[88]

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[82]KSS to EC, 3 June 1930, 12 (section dated 10 June); 3 June 1930, 15 (section dated 11 June).

[83]KSS to EC, 18 April 1930, 1. Sorabji had already written "Being myself, in my function as a composer, a 'Geist der stets verneint'" [spirit that always negates], in "Music", *NA* 39, no. 24 (14 October 1926): 277.

[84]KSS to EC, 17 June 1930, 4 (section dated 25 June).

[85]KSS to EC, 17 September 1930, 5.

[86]KSS to EC, 14 October 1930.

[87]KSS to EC, 7 September 1930, 1.

[88]KSS to EC, 15 October 1930, 2 (section dated 19 October).

Then came a series of demands and requests. Hoping that his visit would be as incognito as possible, he warned his friend that he did not want to see "a damned gang waiting for me like the last time" but only himself and his two other Scottish friends, the composer Francis George Scott and the poet Christopher Murray Grieve, the work's dedicatee. As he often did, he added a mocking threat, saying that he would "see an aspect of me you will not at all like and which has been concealed from you so far".[89] Although Grieve's correspondence with friends makes it clear that he intended to be in Glasgow for the performance in early December, he did not attend, much to Sorabji's disappointment.[90]

Sorabji had asked Chisholm whether his purple Parsi tunic would be too outrageous, as he did not want to "scandalize the good Glaswegians". He also wanted the hall to be completely dark except for a low light on the platform near the piano, and hoped that this would be higher than the existing one, which was "decidedly too low for comfort... for the comfort of such as *me*, that is". He would also not allow anyone but Chisholm to see him after the concert.[91]

Chisholm, who had written detailed programme notes that supplemented an "admirable introductory address" by Francis George Scott,[92] later included in the text of a lecture a "light-hearted account of the first and only public performance" of the work. The text, actually written by his wife, Diana, gives a vivid account of the event.

> On the night of the concert Sorabji came dressed in a typical Parsi suit of deep purple silk (it may have been satin). The unusual oriental style made him look somewhat like a Chinese Mandarin […].
>
> But don't misunderstand me! This amazing little man had all the majesty, dignity and presence of his proud and honoured race, and if some of us found his style of dress rather peculiar for a concert platform, no one would have dreamt of saying that he was other than outstanding in character and manner, with a powerful (indeed over-powerful) and dynamic personality.
>
> Our President, Dr. Chisholm, as usual at these concerts, was turning the pages. I knew he was rather anxious about the turning this time because of the terrific speed with which Sorabji skipped over the keyboard, and the almost illegible MSS. he had to follow. […] The first ten minutes of that recital was a nerve-racking experience for our President (he told me after) before he realised that Sorabji was entirely oblivious of the fact that he was nodding his head practically all the time, sometimes with such ferocity that I thought he would crack his skull on the piano keyboard. Chisholm was jumping up and down in his seat like a Jack-in-the-box. Yes, he was to turn! No, he shouldn't! But somehow or other always managing to get the page over at the psychological moment.[93]
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> […] But it went on and on. The whole audience was spell-bound. Never have I known such absorbed listening. […] Sorabji had his audience mesmerised. At last the first part came to an end, but if some of the audience, myself included, were showing signs of strain it appeared that the composer was just beginning to get into his stride. I, along with other members of the audience, had just reached the door, when an announcement was made that the composer did not wish an interval at this point, as it would upset the continuity of the work. Little did we know that a similar announcement was to be made at the end of the second part and there was to be no interval at all.
>
> […]
>
> By the time the performance had been in progress for two hours and five minutes (never have I looked at my watch so assiduously), even Sorabji was beginning to show signs of wear and tear. […] The last ten minutes were almost unbearable; the perspiration was pouring down Sorabji's face. […]

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[89]KSS to EC, 15 October 1930, 5 (section dated 21 October).

[90]CMG to Helen B. Cruickshank, 7 October 1930, and to Neil M. Gunn, 2 October 1930, in *The Letters of Hugh MacDiarmid*, ed. Alan Bold (London: Hamilton; Athens: The University of Georgia Press, 1984), 111–13; 112 and 229–30; 230. KSS to CMG, 7 March 1931, 1.

[91]KSS to EC, 15 October 1930, 7, 8 (section dated 25 October); August 1930, 7 (section dated 21 August).

[92]"The Active Society's Fifth Concert: Pianoforte Recital by Kaikhosru Sorabji—Monday, December 1st, 1930, Stevenson Hall, Glasgow. Programme Notes by Erik Chisholm", *The Scottish Musical Magazine* 12, no. 2 (December 1930): 25–27. For the address, see KSS to EC, 9 December 1930, 1.

[93]Sorabji himself confirmed that Chisholm turned the pages; AH to MAR, 16 February 1998. However, he seems to have entrusted this task to the English conductor Lawrance Collingwood (1887–1982), for whom it was difficult because the composer's playing differed considerably from the printed page; James Duncan Irving to MAR, 16 October 1998.

> There was an utter stillness in the hall and then a tremendous applause broke out. Whatever one thought of the music one could not fail to admire the virtuosity of the performance.
>
> Slowly, so very slowly, Sorabji took out his pocket handkerchief and wiped his face. Slowly inch by inch he lifted himself out of the piano stool and holding on to the piano lid supported himself to give an enfeebled bow and left the platform to return many times. […][94]

"P.", of the *Scottish Musical Magazine*, could see "no possible future" for such a work or imagine "its being necessary by humanity at large". He noted the same "exploitation of the percussive power of the piano, and its decorativeness" (as in the *Sonata IV for Piano*, which the composer had played in April) and complained of "its complexity, its piling up of climaxes, and its dashing chords". The work thus seemed to be "an extraordinary labour out of all proportion to the ultimate result". Sorabji had played "with great spirit", but his tone was not very beautiful, with loud chords in the upper register being extremely unpleasant.[95] The critic of the *Glasgow Herald* regretted the "little variety in the manner of utilising the keyboard for so long a work", adding that most of it consisted in "single thematic ideas lavishly decorated with whirling figures in very rapid tempo", which "prevented the texture from declaring itself". The few changes in compositional style made for "very attractive quiet episodes", but the prevailing element, that is, the "restless, rushing passage work", lacked variety in nuance. Nevertheless, he found Sorabji "more astonishing than on the previous occasion", playing the last pages "with amazing power and abandon".[96] Arthur Collingwood, in *Musical Opinion*, simply emphasized the monumental conception of the work, which he described as "a big conception of a big and very individual mentality", and the difficulty of assessing it on first hearing.[97] One of the reviews, by someone identified as "J.B.", provoked a reaction from Erik Chisholm, who would consider it flattery to call the report "criticism of any sort when it clearly was only a string of 'blethers'". He responded to the critic's assertion that Sorabji was "too slight in artistic importance to merit serious discussion" by suggesting that he would find such discussion in credible music journals rather than the *Family Herald*.[98]

Sorabji summarized his reading of the reviews by saying that, on the whole, "the Glasgow press was not by any means as abjectly and utterly cretinous about the 'Opus' as their London confrères would have been, and that after all is to say *quite* a lot!"[99]

The duration of *Opus clavicembalisticum* has always been the subject of much confusion both in contemporary accounts and in the literature on Sorabji, which has contributed to the creation of legends. Estimates range from two to three hours (sometimes including intervals, sometimes not), and there is a claim of "about 5 hours" in *Baker's Biographical Dictionary of Musicians*.[100] Sorabji, in his

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[94][Diana Chisholm], quoted in Erik Chisholm, "Sorabji", in *"Men and Music"*, 108–10. See almost complete quotations in Fiona Chisholm, "Mum's Writings Including the Sorabji Concert" (undated, ca. 2014; no longer available on the current Erik Chisholm website but consulted in 2021), and Purser, *ECSM*, 64–65.

[95]P. (Our Music Critic), "Parsi Composer: Sorabji's 'Largest Scale' Pianoforte Work", *The Scottish Musical Magazine*, 2 December 1930.

[96]Our Music Critic, "Sorabji in Glasgow: Active Society Recital—'Opus clavicembalisticum'", *The Glasgow Herald*, 2 December 1930, 6e.

[97]Arthur Collingwood, "Music in Scotland", *MO* 54, no. 640 (January 1931): 329–30; 329.

[98]Chisholm, "Sorabji's Music", unidentified and undated cutting (between December 1930 and December 1936). The article was probably not written in connection with the December 1930 recital, but with one of the two later ones (April 1931 and December 1936). The full title of the magazine to which Chisholm was referring was *The Family Herald: A Domestic Magazine of Useful Information & Amusement* (1843–1940).

[99]KSS to CMG, 7 March 1931, 2.

[100]"Music in Scotland: Glasgow", *MT* 72, no. 1055 (1 January 1931): 77; *Kaikhosru Sorabji: An Essay by Erik Chisholm, with a Descriptive Catalogue of His Works* (London: Oxford University Press, undated [1938]), 7; Diana Chisholm, "Kaikhosru Sorabji" (typescript), 3.

"Shortform-Analysis of Opus Clavicembalisticum", wrote that the work occupied "the length of a full ordinary programme (2½ hours approximately)"; yet, in 1983, he referred to this "blasted nonsense about 2½ hours of my performance of O.C. It took *far far longer* than that."[101] John Tobin took 80 minutes to play *pars prima* (54 pages), which lasts about 50 minutes in recorded performances; how then could he have played the remaining 194 pages in 70 minutes? All of this is very surprising because Geoffrey Douglas Madge's 1982 recorded performance takes three hours and fifty minutes (not counting the intervals) and John Ogdon's 1989 recording lasts four hours and forty-three minutes—and both proceed at a more than reasonable pace, although the latter is sometimes very slow. The story goes that "Sorabji left the stage at the end of Part I, drank some scotch whisky, said 'let's get on with it', and resumed playing while the audience was still getting up for the first intermission. He played straight through to the end, soaked like a rat in perspiration, whereupon it was necessary to wrap him up in blankets."[102] We cannot rule out the possibility of cuts here and there, but there is no evidence of this.

Sorabji never played *Opus clavicembalisticum* again. Although he turned down a private performance in Edinburgh to avoid playing in front of professionals, he asked Chisholm in 1933 what was happening with the proposal to give the work at Edinburgh University. However, he could not consider such a performance until the autumn of 1934, as he was too preoccupied with matters relating to the "business of my late father's unlamented death"; he also needed to do more than the five-finger exercises that his stay in India had enabled him to do.[103] There is no trace of such a performance, and the next time he played in Glasgow was in December 1936 for the premiere of the *Toccata seconda per pianoforte*.

The Music of *Opus clavicembalisticum*

At 253 pages, the manuscript of *Opus clavicembalisticum* is the longest work for solo instrument that Sorabji had produced before 1930. In 1931 he gave the precious artefact as a Christmas present to Erik Chisholm, so that he could "amuse himself noticing the innumerable discrepancies between the published version and the manuscript, which ought to keep what he is pleased to call his mind (!!?) well occupied for a long time to come!" He dedicated the work with a misanthropic (and carefully laid out) dedication to two people who are in fact only one ("e duobus unum", that is, "out of two, one"): the Scottish writer Christopher Murray Grieve (1892–1978), who wrote under the pseudonym of Hugh MacDiarmid (sometimes spelled M'Diarmid).

To my two friends:—(e duobus unum)
Hugh M'Diarmid
and
C. M. Grieve
likewise
To the everlasting glory of those Few
MEN—
Blessed and sanctified in the Curses and Execrations
of those MANY—
Whose Praise is Eternal Damnation.

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[101]KSS to KD, 26 January 1983, 3 {Derus, S49, p. 246}.

[102]Kenneth Derus, programme notes for the North American first performance of *Opus clavicembalisticum* by Geoffrey Douglas Madge, University of Chicago, 24 April 1983, ii. Neil Solomon (recalling Erik Chisholm's description) confirmed the story in a letter to MAR, September 2001.

[103]KSS to EC, 18 December 1933, 2.

June MCMXXX.[104]

Sorabji also incorporated the dedicatee's name twice into the musical texture of the last two pages of the "Fantasia" ([ED]pp. 38 and 39), first in single notes, then in chords, using the notes C–G–H (= B)–D. The first such instance is marked "dedication" in the manuscript.

As Sorabji later dedicated to Grieve his *Fantasiettina sul nome illustre dell'egregio poeta Christopher Grieve ossia Hugh M'Diarmid*, a discussion of their relationship will be deferred until chapter 19. Suffice it to say here that the Scottish poet intended to treasure the presentation copy of *Opus clavicembalisticum* that he received and was deeply moved by the dedication, which he later considered a great honour.[105]

The wording of Sorabji's dedication, with its expression of distrust in humanity, is not surprising when one considers that he was in the process of rewriting his *Fruits of Misanthropy*, in which he privately expressed his displeasure at various vicissitudes of life. The work ends with a long Latin benediction stating that the piece was written "amidst the most barbaric and crapulous Britons". This aspect of the composer's personality will be discussed with elsewhere (see chapter 16), and suffice it to say for the moment to say that six other manuscripts and the two published collections of essays contain dedications featuring derogatory comments.

Opus clavicembalisticum has received a great deal of attention in the last forty-five years or so.[106] Probably the largest single work for the piano ever engraved with punches and the only such mammoth item from Sorabji's entire output to have been in print at a time when only microfilm copies were available, it was the obvious candidate for extended discussions. Had Sorabji instead chosen to publish the *Sonata V (Opus archimagicum)*, then that work would have reaped all the comments (and the fuss). It is the availability (and size) of *Opus clavicembalisticum* that has made it more or less into a cult object. Furthermore, the limited knowledge of Sorabji that was long the norm led to *O.C.* or *Opus clav.* (to use its nicknames) being called—quite erroneously—the most extensive work ever written for the piano, among others in the *Guinness Book of World Records*. The popular press has, of course, taken this claim at face value. However, for those who have studied all of Sorabji's scores in detail, or at least examined the catalogue of his works, it is one of several large-scale compositions consisting of fugues, variations, and cadenzas. Its main advantage, at least in the years when editions and recordings of large works were scarce, was its availability in printed notation (despite the numerous errors) and, eventually, the existence of more than one recorded performance.

In his extensive notes, Sorabji described *Opus clavicembalisticum* as "admittedly an essay in the form adumbrated by the immortal BUSONI in his great FANTASIA CONTRAPPUNTISTICA which, with the *Hammerklavier* Sonata and the REGER *Variations on a theme of BACH,* are three of the supreme

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[104]The passage beginning with "To the everlasting glory" first appeared in a letter to Chisholm, 17 June 1930, 5 (section dated 25 June).

[105]CMG to KSS, 5 January 1932; CMG to Sorley MacLean, 5 June 1940, in *The Letters of Hugh MacDiarmid*, ed. Alan Bold, 839–40; 610–12; 610.

[106]See Ronald Stevenson, "*Opus Clavicembalisticum*—A Critical Analysis", in booklet for John Ogdon's recording on Altarus AIR-CD-9075(4), 1989, 28–49; Bruce Posner, "Sorabji" (honours thesis, B.S., Department of Fine Arts, Fordham University, New York, 1975), 35–249; Paul Rapoport, "Kaikhosru Shapurji Sorabji and His *Opus Clavicembalisticum*", in *Opus est—Six Composers from Northern Europe* (London: Kahn & Averill, 1978; New York: Taplinger Publishing, 1979; paperback reprint, 1985), 160–90; 169–85; Nigel C. Scaife, "'Out of the Fashion': A Study of K. S. Sorabji's Piano Music" (M.Mus. diss., Royal College of Music, 1986), 34–70; Marjorie Maulsby Benson, "The *Opus clavicembalisticum* by Kaikhosru Shapurgi [*sic*] Sorabji: An Analysis, with References to Its Model, the *Fantasia contrappuntistica*, by Ferruccio Busoni" (D.M.A. diss., American Conservatory of Music, 1987), 11–99; Brian Andrew Inglis, "The Life and Music of Kaikhosru Shapurji Sorabji" (M.A. thesis, London, City University, 1993), 57–66. For an extensive discussion, including a tabular analysis of the two large variation movements, see Andrew Mead, "*Gradus ad* Sorabji", *Perspectives of New Music* 54, no. 2 (Summer 2016): 181–218; 185–213.

works for the piano". He noted that it "continues the task of my contribution to the theory (my own) of 'one programme one work' which it still further extends occupying the length of a full ordinary programme (2½ hours approximately) for its performance". He insisted that "separation and performance of any section or subsection" was "absolutely prohibited", the work being intended "for pianist-musicians of the highest order".[107] Indeed, its intellectual and technical difficulties place it beyond the reach of all others. On the other hand, as mentioned in the introduction to the present book, Sorabji modified the ending of *pars prima* in his "Working Copy",[108] which he gave to Dr. James Duncan Irving, by adding the note "NB. To finish at this point add", with emendations that allow it to end on a G♯ minor chord.

Opus clavicembalisticum consists of three *partes* consisting of five, three, and four movements, respectively. The movements are arranged so that each *pars* contains a balance of fugues, virtuosic sections in toccata style, and variations. The very short "Introito" ([ED]pp. 5–7) begins with a strongly declaimed motto of fourteen notes leading to a low D♯, which becomes the top note of a D♯ minor chord in first inversion; both the motto and the chord recur several times as a unifying device. The motto uses ten of the twelve chromatic pitches except C♯ (a major structural axis in the work) and D. The "Introito" also features two other chorale-like motives; these are closely related to the theme of the "Preludio corale" from Busoni's *Fantasia contrappuntistica*. In his "Working Copy" Sorabji expanded the motto "With sub and superoctave ad. lib.", and in the copy given to Harold Rutland (now at Trinity College of Music), he amplified the opening gesture so that each note becomes a full triad (either a three- or four-note chord) in each hand.

The ensuing "Preludio-corale" (pp. 8–19), an even clearer link to the opening section of Busoni's masterpiece, begins with a modified statement of the motto. It develops the thematic ideas heard earlier and twice anticipates the incipit of "Fuga I" (pp. 17/1/2, 19/2). Throughout this section, the runs of thirds, the chords built from superimposed thirds, the series of tremolos, and the pedal points recall both the techniques and the sound of Busoni's work.

"Fuga I" (pp. 19–30), in a moderate tempo, uses a very short subject in slow values against two countersubjects. This subject is quite similar in outline to "Contrapunctus XIV" from Bach's *Art of Fugue*, also found in Busoni's *Fantasia contrappuntistica* as the subject of the first fugue.[109] The fugue ends on a G♯ minor chord in the low register; this chord is also found in the left hand of the final sonority of the entire work. The present work is a good candidate for reproducing all its fugue subjects as an illustration of Sorabji's writing **(example 10.1)**.

A virtuosic "Fantasia" (pp. 30–39) provides relief from the contrapuntal texture. This toccata-like section prominently displays the opening motto and the incipit of "Fuga I" and, towards the end, the dedicatee's musical initials (pp. 38/1/1, 39/2/2), as can be seen in the last two sections of **example 19.3**, in the context of the *Fantasiettina sul nome illustre dell'egregio poeta Christopher Grieve ossia Hugh M'Diarmid*.

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[107]Sorabji, "Shortform-Analysis of Opus Clavicembalisticum", 1; repr. in booklet for John Ogdon's recording on Altarus AIR-CD-9075(4), 21–27.

[108]In 1996 a fortunate turn of events enabled me to learn from Dr. James Duncan Irving (1922–2015), a diagnostic radiologist who worked as an interventional radiologist in the National Health Service until about 1987, that Sorabji had given to him his "Working Copy: / with Corrections / MCMXXXII" on 10 July 1944. In his letter of 11 July 1944 to the composer, Dr. Irving thanked him for the score, which is no. 3 of the special edition. He had received it the previous day together with no. 6 of the special edition of *Concerto for Piano and Orchestra [no. 5]*. Dr. Irving, then a medical student in Newcastle-upon-Tyne, donated this copy (of which 130 pages contain annotations) to the Sorabji Archive on 18 April 1997.

[109]Posner, "Sorabji", 98.

The first subject of the "Fuga II (duplex)" (pp. 39–48, 49–58) is a long animated theme in quavers, with only two instances of semiquavers as ornamentation; the second one (p. 49) is more rhythmically varied. The result is essentially a massive movement in even values.

The theme of the "Interludium primum" (pp. 59–98) consists of two almost similar strains in slow and long note values in the middle register over a series of rich chords in crotchets, each ending on a noble C♯ major chord, a sonority that will become prominent later; the second statement is a fourth higher than the first one. The mostly stepwise shape of the theme recalls the Busoni-inspired motive and the theme of "Fuga I". The variations are grouped into six sections ending with a fermata (nos. 1–6, 7–14, 15–23, 24–32, 33–38, 49).[110]

"Cadenza I" (pp. 99–104), a furious toccata, begins with a semiquaver run notated on a single line. The first page recalls the second countersubject of "Fuga I" (p. 99/5) as well as the dedicatee's initials (p. 99/6; two statements). The music grows until a brief fanfare-like, pompous, and heavy bitonal chordal passage, after which the toccata style resumes over an E♭ pedal point (= D♯) held almost throughout. In its sharp version, this note refers to the opening chord of both the "Introito" and the "Interludium alterum".

"Fuga tertia triplex" (pp. 105–37), which is longer than the previous two at more than thirty minutes , has long, sinuous subjects consisting mostly of crotchets and quavers, with very few instances of semiquavers (these only in the initial subject). It ends very slowly and massively on a C♯ major sonority (with added notes).

The three-part "Interludium alterum" (pp. 137–93) is the most imposing movement of the work. It lasts about an hour and requires Herculean stamina. The introductory "Toccata" (pp. 137–47) begins with the D♯ minor sonority heard at the very beginning, above which we hear a variant of the motto. Like the previous two virtuosic sections, it relies largely on capricious semiquaver runs; long bitonal ascending and descending scales are also used extensively. The "Adagio" (pp. 147–53) is the only section in nocturne style in the work, and the only one that is slow throughout. The C♯ major sonority is again emphasized in three contrasting passages consisting of long series of chords (pp. 150/2/2, 152/1/1, 153/1). The final gesture is "a stately procession of 37 chords in ever changing harmony right down from the top of the keyboard on a held C sharp major chord—very impressive I think".[111]

The eighty-one variations of the "Passacaglia" (pp. 153–93) are based on an ostinato that has much in common with the third subject of "Fuga IV". Some sections may be singled out. Var. 53, marked "Quasi tambura", consists of a highly ornamented, Oriental-sounding, melody pitted against an F♯–B ostinato played in semiquavers over the whole range of the keyboard; the pedal point, reduced to F♯, continues into var. 54. The last two variations, spread over four staves, present the theme in chords; the remaining space between the thematic notes is filled with terrifying runs consisting of alternating dyads and triads; the last variation intensifies the climax by filling the space between the notes with the chordal equivalent of blind octaves. It is doubtful whether anyone, including Sorabji, has ever written a more powerful passage for two hands. As one might expect, this gigantic peal of bells ends on a C♯ major chord; it is followed by a brief "Epilogo" consisting of a final statement of the theme.

"Cadenza II" (pp. 194–97) requires the pianist to have some stamina left—the "Passacaglia" is not the end of *pars altera* but the third section of the opening movement of *pars tertia*—in orderto attack an expansive toccata, marked "Vivo", all over an A pedal point throughout, that is, a distance tritone away from "Cadenza I".

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[110]Nigel C. Scaife, "'Out of the Fashion'", 47–48.
[111]KSS to EC, 1 June 1930, 1.

"Fuga IV quadruplex" (pp. 198–240) offers more variety in its choice of subjects than the previous fugues. Whereas the first one is the usual mixture of quavers, crotchets, and minims, the second one is a very swiftly moving line of twenty-eight beats, mostly in semiquavers. For the third subject, Sorabji returns to a more austere style, mostly in long note values. The last subject, again very long (twenty-seven beats), is a very capricious line with considerable rhythmic variety. The fourth fugue ends with three strettos ("Le strette"), in which the final subject is presented five times in very close succession (pp. 238–40). Sorabji described it as "a finger twister right royally", and the entire composition "a marvellous work although I say it as shouldn't".[112]

The "Coda-Stretta" (pp. 240–52) is marked to be played "Quasi organo pieno", although one might argue for dropping the "quasi". At one point, after a final statement of the opening motto (p. 247/2/2) and amidst the gigantic peal of chords into which he has transformed the second subject of "Fuga IV", Sorabji recalls the theme of "Fuga I" (p. 248/2). He then reaches a powerful D♭ (= C♯) sonority, which forms the basis for a blazing run across the entire keyboard. This paves the way for a final contrapuntal section involving the first subjects of the first three fugues. This leads to a final surge of radiant sonorities when a glorious C♯ major chord marks the end of the stretto (p. 251) and the beginning of the concluding "Più largo". From the active chordal figurations in quick note values emerges a magnificent sequence of chords, whose top notes match those of the subject of "Fuga I", thus rounding off the whole structure with a powerful reminder of how this huge complex of ten fugues began. The final G♯ minor chord, a link with the end of "Fuga I", is sounded again in the lower register with a major ninth chord on G in first inversion above it. As mentioned earlier, Sorabji almost sadistically frustrates the listener's expectation of a C♯ major sonority, so often heard at important structural points, preferring to be the "spirit that denies".

The Published Edition of *Opus clavicembalisticum* and Its Reception

Sorabji was always very concerned about the appearance of his manuscripts (see chapter 7). He described himself as a "fastidious bibliophile" who liked to send things to Paris ("the greatest and most bibliomaniac and bibliophilic city in the world") for binding. The pain of a bound book containing two different sizes of paper was something that made him go "in a fury that cruelty to animals or children does in less tender-hearted people"—note that animals come first! This happened with *Opus clavicembalisticum*, and he feared that he would have to recopy ninety pages. Fortunately, Zaehnsdorf, the reputable firm to whom he entrusted the binding of his scores, found a solution to the paper problem and spared him this nightmarish task.[113]

In September 1930, prompted by Erik Chisholm's "urgency of insistence upon the desirability of publishing" his massive score, Sorabji had already asked the Viennese firm of Waldheim-Eberle for a quote for the engraving. At something between £250 and £300 (£16,820 and £20,180 in 2021), it was much less than he had feared. So he "concocted a persuasive and appealing letter to my parent in Bombay to see if he will do it" and soon reported that "my noble and admirable Sir Father" had agreed to pay the expense. A more serious concern was the mammoth task of correcting the proofs, which he called "that appalling and hateful and dreariest of tasks", and he asked Chisholm for help in putting in expression marks and preparing the score for the engravers. For publication, he turned to Kenneth Curwen, whose firm had published six of his works since 1924. His suggested retail price of two

[112]KSS to EC, 3 June 1930, 17 (section dated 15 June).
[113]KSS to EC, 18 April 1930, 10 (section dated 23 April); 18 April 1930, 11 (section dated 24 April).

guineas (or £2.10; £168.20 in 2021) seemed to the publisher "not at all excessive considering its magnitude and scope".[114]

A few days after the Glasgow performance on 1 December 1930, Sorabji sent his manuscript, as bound by Zaehnsdorf, to Waldheim-Eberle for engraving. This caused great concern to the composer, who had to be assured by the engraver that "neither manuscript nor binding of Opus Clavicembalisticum shall come to any hurt or damage". He insisted that "the manuscript *is solemnly pledged for presentation*—and that seems to have impressed them!"[115] By September 1931 the work had reached the proof stage, and Waldheim-Eberle's request for a fee of £25 (£1,807 in 2021) led to "a little tussle". Sorabji, who had already spent many hundreds of pounds with them, protested "bitterly", arguing that the vast majority of the errors were misprints rather than corrections. For the engraver, his handwriting, though "beautiful and of high intelligence", was to blame. Sorabji only checked the first corrections and did not intend to "bother about further ones"; although he later considered issuing an errata slip, this never happened.[116] Such a slip would have had to be a booklet given the large number of corrections required to produce an accurate representation of the music. When asked by a friend who wondered about such a list, he replied that he had "never bothered to make one, and certainly have no intention of doing so now".[117]

A copy of the first set of proofs (dated 11 June 1931) ended up in the hands of Alban Berg, who corrected in red the number of variations of the sixth section, as it appears in the "Constitution of the Work", from forty-four to forty-nine (an error that remained in the published score).[118] It is unlikely that he would then have had to read other composers' proofs. He probably remembered Sorabji's name from Milhaud's review of the 1921 Paris concert, where his Four Pieces for clarinet and piano had been performed on the same programme as Sorabji's *Trois poèmes pour chant et piano*.[119] Some time after the publication of *Opus clavicembalisticum* in late 1931, Berg probably went to see Waldheim-Eberle about one of his own scores and was shown the proofs of a most unusual engraving project. He probably wanted to examine the work more closely and was given proofs that were no longer needed. Sorabji later said that he never met Berg, but added that the Austrian composer had mentioned to Chisholm "how much he was interested in my work".[120] Should memory have failed the old composer, it cannot be ruled out that the two men may have been introduced when Berg visited England in January 1931 as a jury member for the International Society for Contemporary Music, which was meeting in Cambridge. Furthermore, Sorabji's name is mentioned in a letter to Berg from Edward Clark (1888–1962), the Schoenberg pupil who acted as a contact in England.[121]

In the months before publication, Chisholm had approached Berg with a view to having Sorabji play *Opus clavicembalisticum* "*outside* and *apart*" from a festival to be held in Vienna. Sorabji was strongly opposed to travelling because it was far too expensive, partly because of what he had to pay for correcting the proofs; he found it "humiliating and undignified to have to detail all this". On the other hand, he would not veto a concert if a pianist like Egon Petri were to play, but the latter had already

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[114]KSS to EC, 17 September 1930, 3, 5 (section dated 26 September); 15 October 1930, 7 (section dated 25 October); 18 September 1931, 4.

[115]Sorabji referred to "YOUR manuscript (to be) of Op. Clav."; KSS to EC, 9 December 1930, 1.

[116]KSS to EC, 2 December 1930, 12 (section dated 19 December); 18 September 1931, 4, 5.

[117]KSS to RS, 7 November 1961, 2.

[118]Regina Busch (Alban-Berg-Stiftung) to MAR, 7 May 1999. The set of proofs, now the property of the Alban-Berg-Stiftung, bears the stamps "11. Juli 1931" and "1. Korrektur" as well as the initials "E.S.", which may be those of the engraver.

[119]Berg had received a copy of Milhaud's review; see Berg to Helene Berg, 22 June 1921, in *Briefe an seine Frau*, ed. Helene Berg (Munich and Vienna: Albert Langen–Georg Müller Verlag, 1965), 469–70; 469 (letter no. 364).

[120]KSS to KD, 29 September 1983 {Derus, S53, p. 284}.

[121]See Alban Berg to Helene Berg, 15 January 1931, in *Briefe an seine Frau*, 581–82; 581 (letter no. 482).

said that he would need three years to prepare for such a performance. A hearing of the work was therefore completely ruled out.[122] It may be wise to doubt Clinton Gray-Fisk's statement that Berg was one of the composers and critics who had paid "handsome tribute" to Sorabji's major works, and to regard it as yet another legend about the composer.[123]

Following the signing of a memorandum of agreement in November 1931,[124] J. Curwen & Sons published two versions of the score: one a limited edition, priced at five guineas (or £5.25; £451.80 in 2021) and published very late in 1931; the other, the standard edition, priced at two guineas (or £2.10; £184.60 in 2021), and published no later than early 1932. The limited edition consists of twenty-three copies, each numbered and signed by the composer. It is printed on Whatman handmade paper, which Sorabji found to be of "superb quality and beauty",[125] and bound in golden mottled pewter paper, with the title page set in *Othello*.

Sorabji sent out several copies of *Opus clavicembalisticum*, either in the numbered or the standard edition to various friends, writers on music, and musicians he admired, such as Arthur G. Browne, Carl Engel, Ralph Hill, Ernest Newman, Egon Petri, and Alec Rowley.[126] The publication attracted eight reviews. In the *Chesterian*, Ralph Hill (1900–1950), whom Sorabji described as "one of the best men writing in London at the present time", drew a connection between the admiration aroused by the pyramids' stupendous proportions and a work of musical art such as the *Art of Fugue*. He noted that the music never became mere display but had "deep inner meaning".[127]

Alec Rowley (1892–1958), to whom Sorabji would dedicate his *Fantasia ispanica*, referred to the "unforgettable experience" of hearing the composer play *Opus clavicembalisticum*, suggesting that he had attended a private performance or even the Glasgow premiere. He hailed the work as a "great musical event" that "summed *all the things we have never heard*". As a "re-incarnation of Bach" and as a figure entirely new in the pianoforte world, Sorabji would eventually be as much accepted and understood as Chopin and Liszt.[128]

Because of the diversity of opinions that the work would provoke, the *Musical Times* appended to Rowley's review, with an example from the score, a note from an unidentified reviewer for whom the work was in a class of its own, with nothing to compare it with, especially in terms of technical difficulties.

A fourth review was by Havergal Brian (1876–1972), a composer who knew something about music laid out on a grand scale. Sorabji called him "a composer of sorts, quite an unimportant one, which makes it all the more remarkable that he should publicly express admiration of my work, who

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[122]KSS to EC, 23 November 1932; 15 October 1930, 3 (section dated 20 October).

[123]Clinton Gray-Fisk, "Kaikhosru Shapurji Sorabji", *MT* 101, no. 1406 (April 1960): 230–32; 232.

[124]Copy of the memorandum of agreement between J. Curwen & Sons and Sorabji {4/F.19}.

[125]KSS to EC, 2 December 1930, 7 (section dated 15 December). On the cost of the Whatman paper, see ibid., 9 December 1930, 7 (section dated 15 December); see the introduction for a note on this type of paper.

[126]Arthur G. Browne to KSS, 16 January 1932; Carl Engel (Library of Congress) to KSS, 30 January 1932; Ralph Hill to KSS, 2 January 1932; Alec Rowley to KSS, 31 December 1931; Egon Petri to KSS, 6 May 1932, 1. Sorabji offered an inscribed copy to Ernest Newman, to whom he had already sent copies of his published piano concerto as well as of two other scores. See Paul Watt, "The Catalogue of Ernest Newman's Library: Revelations about His Intellectual Life in the 1890s", *Script & Print* (The Bibliographical Society of Australia & New Zealand) 31, no. 2 (2007 [publ. 2008]): 81–103; 101 (no. 528), https://search.informit.org/doi/10.3316/ielapa.200805413.

[127]Ralph Hill, "New Music Reviewed", *The Chesterian* 13, no. 101 (March 1932): 142–43. For the appreciation of Hill, see KSS to EC, 22 April 1932, 1.

[128]Alec Rowley, "'Opus clavicembalisticum'", *MT* 73, no. 1070 (1 April 1932): 321–22. The example is from var. 7 of the "Interludium primum" (p. 63). On the presence of the critic, see Rowley, "Opus clavicembalisticum", *NEW* 9, no. 5 (14 May 1936): 100.

most undoubtedly AM!"[129] Brian described *Opus clavicembalisticum* as "an adventure in fugue making", with many new elements added to fugue themes with a shape recalling those of Bach. He concluded by hailing the work as a phenomenon like Wagner's *Tristan* and hoped that Sorabji would give a public performance.[130]

The unidentified author of a fifth review described the work as "a tour de force of remarkable musical ingenuity and contrapuntal scholarship"; he recommended it, along with Busoni's *Fantasia contrappuntistica*, to every serious student of modern music "for the sake of their educational value if for nothing else".[131]

A sixth review, probably the most brilliant one, came from the composer Edmund Duncan-Rubbra (1901–86). He presented *Opus clavicembalisticum* as the most provocative work yet produced in the twentieth century under the heading of "cerebral excitement", a work of such an "audacious and baffling character" that it produced in him "a sensation of nervous excitement". Emotion was for Sorabji "an outcropping of an intellectual arrangement" rather than the "product of an emotional experience", and this made his work "intensely significant". Only time would tell whether it was "part of the organic tissue of life, or the product of a lonely mental brilliance".[132]

The seventh review, in the Dutch periodical *De Muziekbode*, was signed by its editor, M. C. [Marinus Cornelis] van de Rovaart (1871–1939), who described the work as "long, very long, but not boring, and at times moments of overwhelming beauty and the measureless musical stream carry us away". The reviewer also noted the wealth of ideas and the original pianistic treatment, but refused to criticize the work further for lack of points of comparison.[133]

The eighth review to be mentioned here, by the Scottish novelist, essayist, and translator Willa Muir (1890–1970), appeared in the *Modern Scot*, a literary magazine (1930–36) edited by the American advocate of Scottish nationalism James Huntington Whyte (1909–62), in whose pages Sorabji's friend Hugh MacDiarmid was featured. The author, who claims to have attended the Glasgow performance, was astonished by the work, which set "a record for the most 'advanced' atonalists". She wondered whether "Sorabji really [had] to let out all that tremendous mesh of net to catch the musical ideas teeming in his amazing head". Finally, she did not want to question the composer's integrity, but regarded him as a "sport" and a "genius unique in music", which did not mean that "musically, he is a genius".[134]

The publication of the score of *Opus clavicembalisticum* soon prompted an offer from Thomas Appleby Matthews (1881–1948), the conductor of the (then called) City of Birmingham Orchestra, who wanted to know "how the work was to be split up, whether it was to be played in one or two recitals".[135] Another musician who expressed interest was the composer Philip Christian Darnton (1905–81), who dedicated to Sorabji his unpublished Suite no. 2 for Piano, op. 1932, no. 2 (1932), the second of his

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[129]KSS to EC, June 1930, 5 (section dated 6 June).

[130]Havergal Brian [signed "La main gauche"], "On the Other Hand", *MO* 55, no. 657 (June 1932): 747–48; repr. in *Havergal Brian on Music: Selections from His Journalism*, ed. Malcolm MacDonald, Musicians on Music, no. 3 (London: Toccata Press, 1986), vol. 1, *British Music*, 310–12.

[131]"New [Music?]", *Disques* [?; title handwritten by Sorabji; text in English], August 1932.

[132]Edmund Duncan-Rubbra [later Rubbra], "Sorabji's Enigma", *The Monthly Musical Record* 62, no. 738 (September 1932): 148. See also Ralph Scott Grover, *The Music of Edmund Rubbra* (Aldershot: Scolar Press, 1993), 13–14.

[133]M C. van de Rovaart, "Een merwaardige compositie [A notable composition]", *De Muziekbode: geillustreerd tijdschrift*, 1932? [Sorabji mistakenly dated the translation 1930]; English translation in FH to DG, 16 August 1971, 3–4.

[134]Willa Muir, "Two Modern Musicians" [Cecil Gray and Kaikhosru Shapurji Sorabji]", *The Modern Scot* 3, no. 1 (April 1932): 71–74; 73–74. For Sorabji's comments on this review, see KSS to EC, June 1932 (no day given), 1.

[135]KSS to EC, June 1932 (no day given), 2.

three such works, which begins with a *perpetuum mobile* that suggests the first movement of Sorabji's *Prelude, Interlude, and Fugue for Piano*.[136]

Opus clavicembalisticum was not to be heard in England (or anywhere) until John Tobin's problematic reading of *pars prima* in 1936 (see chapter 14). For a long time it remained a mere footnote but for the few historians who cared about it, and a complete performance and recording was only a dream for a small group of musicians and serious amateurs interested in large-scale piano music (such as myself). Apart from a private performance by John Ogdon in 1959 and partial semi-public performances by Michael Habermann and Geoffrey Douglas Madge from 1978 and 1980, the work did not reappear in its complete form until 11 June 1982, when the latter played it in Utrecht. It only went out of print at the end of 1977—then still sold at the incredibly low price of less than five pounds (£33.05 in 2021)—and would be the last of Sorabji's compositions to be published until 1969. In the context of his entire output, *Opus clavicembalisticum* is just one of many peaks. Between 1931 and 1964, Sorabji was to write eight works for solo piano of approximately the same length or even longer. It is one of the longest and most ambitious works ever written for a solo instrument only when one does not know what was to follow.

[136]The unusual opus number was given later, when the composer collected his three suites, written in 1930, 1932, and 1932, respectively.

11 / 1931–32 ▪ Professional Life and Finances

Reviewing Music for the "No Wage"

Writing about music occupied much of Sorabji's time, especially from 1924 to 1945. For almost two decades, he spent much of his time reviewing concerts, broadcasts, and records for the *New Age* and the *New English Weekly*,[1] two London newspapers associated with Alfred Richard Orage (1873–1934), the social thinker associated with guild socialism, a movement that advocated workers' control of industry through trade-related guilds.[2] After moving to London in 1906, Orage and Holbrook Jackson (1874–1948), a lace merchant and freelance journalist with whom he had founded the Leeds Arts Club, bought, with the help of George Bernard Shaw, a dying Christian Socialist weekly called *The New Age: A Democratic Review of Politics, Literature and Art*. The publication had its offices in Rolls Passage, just below Cursitor Street, which intersects with Chancery Lane, in London EC1. Founded in 1894, it lasted until 1938, with a peak circulation of over 20,000 copies in 1908, although in other years it was negligible.[3] In 1908 Jackson left to pursue other journalistic ventures, leaving Orage as the sole editor.

Described as an "unparalleled arena of cultural and political debate", the *New Age* is considered to be one the most important periodicals of the early twentieth century for the literary historian.[4] Among its contributors were writers such as George Bernard Shaw, G. K. Chesterton, and Hilaire Belloc as well as George William Russell ("Æ"), John Galsworthy, Katherine Mansfield, and Ezra Pound. Another contributor was Paul Selver (1888–1970), whose translation from the Serbian of a text by Jovan Dučić Sorabji had set in 1915. This may have played a role in Sorabji's decision to join the weekly.

The number of contributors to the *New Age* was limited, and pseudonyms were used to give the opposite impression.[5] Its contributors did not earn a living from their articles; the paper could not pay them because it was in the red. The authors wrote out of admiration for Orage or for the socialist cause, but above all because they enjoyed intellectual freedom.[6] The paper's "initiative and independence" were paid for "at the price of poverty", and Orage himself had nicknamed his publication "No Wage".[7]

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[1] On the history of these two newspapers, see Alvin Sullivan, ed., *British Literary Magazines*, Historical Guides to the World's Periodicals and Newspapers (Westport, Conn.: Greenwood Press, 1983–86), vol. 3, *The Victorian and Edwardian Age, 1837–1913*, 250–56 (Alvin Sullivan, on the *New Age*); vol. 4, *The Modern Age, 1914–1984*, 276–82 (Christina C. Stough, on the *New English Weekly*).

[2] See Herbert B. Grimsditch, "Orage, Alfred Richard (1873–1934)", in *The Dictionary of National Biography, 1931–1940*, ed. L. C. Wickham Legg (London: Oxford University Press, 1949), 659. For photographs, see Philip Mairet, *A. R. Orage: A Memoir* (London: J. M. Dent, 1936; rev. ed., New Hyde Park, N.Y.: University Books, 1966), 24.

[3] Tom Steele, *Alfred Orage and the Leeds Arts Club* (Aldershot: Scolar Press, 1990), 6; Samuel George Hobson, "Orage and 'The New Age'", in *Pilgrim to the Left: Memoirs of a Modern Revolutionist* (London: Edward Arnold, 1938), 138–49; 138.

[4] Wallace Martin, *"The New Age" under Orage: Chapters in English Cultural History* (New York: Barnes and Noble, 1967), 1, 3, 4.

[5] Paul Selver, *Orage and the "New Age" Circle: Reminiscences and Reflections* (London: George Allen & Unwin, 1959), 17. Martin, *"The New Age" under Orage*, 295–96, has counted seven hundred contributors (or at least names) between 1907 and 1928.

[6] Martin, *"The New Age" under Orage*, 37.

[7] Mairet, *A. R. Orage: A Memoir*, 60; Paul Selver, *Orage and the "New Age" Circle*, 16.

This would not be an obstacle for Sorabji, who lived from a trust fund set up by his father. He had "no emoluments at all, of *any* kind visible, except free copies of books on music on which one would not ask one's worst enemy to wipe his back-side".[8]

Independence of opinion was paramount in Sorabji's mind when it came to expressing himself on music or any other subject, and he found a receptive ear in Orage. As Hilaire Belloc noted, allowing contributors to voice their own ideas was fundamental to this "pioneer, in its modern form at any rate, of the Free Press in this country". He saw the *New Age* as "the only paper in which the truth with regard to our corrupt politics, or indeed with regard to any powerful evil, could be told".[9] Sorabji favoured many publications outside the mainstream, such as "small private sheets", which he described as "the ONLY ones which provide the REAL news as opposed to the propaganda sodden trash pumped out by the corrupt media at the behest of their corrupt manipulators[:] money, power and their puppets and tools the politicians".[10]

Orage became an advocate of the Social Credit doctrine in 1918 after a meeting with its originator, the British economist Clifford Hugh Douglas (1879–1952).[11] He gave up the editorship of his publication in that year to join the well-known Russian mystic George Ivanovitch Gurdjieff (1866?–1949), leaving the paper in the hands of Arthur Moore, who was succeeded in 1923 by Arthur Brenton, its last editor. In 1923 he left for the United States where he gave lectures to raise funds for Gurdjieff's Institute. In 1930 he returned to England where, two years later, he founded the other paper for which Sorabji was a regular critic, *The New English Weekly: A Review of Public Affairs, Literature and the Arts*, which ceased publication in 1949.[12] Like the *New Age*, it did not reward its contributors financially. It continued publication after the death of his founder under the direction of its assistant editor, Philip Mairet (1886–1975), who wrote a book on Major Douglas and a memoir of Orage, and translated works by various modern French philosophers.[13]

Sorabji, who had wanted to become a music critic as early as 1914,[14] had two well-known predecessors at the *New Age*. One was Cecil Gray (1895–1951), the co-founder (with Philip Heseltine) of the *Sackbut* in 1920; the author was the American poet and amateur composer Ezra Pound (1885–1972), who, from December 1917 to January 1921, wrote alternately on music (under the pseudonym of "William Atheling") and art (as "B. H. Dias"). The hostility of the latter's reviews shows the great freedom enjoyed by the writers.[15] Controversial subjects such as abortion and birth control were welcome, an attitude that was certainly instrumental in securing the services of Sorabji. He described

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[8]KSS to CMG, 17 June 1934.

[9]Hilaire Belloc, "Prefatory Letter to A. R. Orage", in *The Free Press* (London: George Allen & Unwin, 1918), quoted in Martin, *"The New Age" under Orage*, 38.

[10]KSS to KD, 3 April 1981 {Derus, S39, p. 193}. One such "small sheet" was the typewritten *On Target: A Fortnightly Review of News Highlights, Commonwealth Affairs, Background Information* (London: Intelligence Publications, 1970–?), of which he sometimes included a copy in letters to Derus and, especially, Anthony Burton-Page.

[11]The doctrine of Social Credit proposed that governments should issue money to consumers to compensate for the lack of purchasing power. It had its followers in Britain in the early 1920s and in the Canadian province of Alberta, where the Social Credit Party, founded in 1935, existed until 1972.

[12]Mairet, *A. R. Orage: A Memoir*, 108.

[13]Mairet, *The Douglas Manual; Being a Recension of Passages from the Works of Major C.H. Douglas* (London: J. M. Dent, 1934). On Mairet, see "An Autobiographical Compilation" and "Some Further Notes", in C. H. [Charles Hubert] Sisson, ed., *Philip Mairet: Autobiographical and Other Papers* (Manchester: Carcanet, 1981), 3–125, 126–35, as well as the editor's "Introduction", x–xxii (Sorabji is not mentioned at all).

[14]KSS to PH, 3 February [1914] {*LPH*, no. 5, pp. 54–55}.

[15]A good example of a review by Pound is "The Pye-Ano", *NA*, 1 January 1920: 144–45, reproduced in R. Murray Schafer, ed., *Ezra Pound and Music: The Complete Criticism* (New York: New Directions Books, 1977), 203–6; 205.

the *New Age* as "the only intelligent weekly published in London which is why its circulation is so small—but it permeates amazingly and has a very brilliant and distinguished history".[16]

Orage, whom Arthur Brenton replaced in 1922, probably had nothing to do with Sorabji's appointment as a music critic. However, he may have been involved in the decision to publish nine open letters written by Sorabji between 1915 and 1918—letters that already showed his strongly worded views. Orage certainly continued to read the *New Age* after his resignation; he would therefore have been familiar with Sorabji's writings. It was in connection with his next editorial venture that he would meet his critic in person.

Sorabji's first article for the *New Age*, dated 3 April 1924, was a very positive review of recitals by the Italian pianist Aldo Solito De Solis, followed by comments on the "indifferent, ragged, unkempt performances and frequently execrable singing that the British 'National' Opera Company offers".[17] His first piece thus juxtaposed the two opposing attitudes that would characterize his critical style for the years to come.

Sorabji published his first article for the *New English Weekly* on 28 April 1932, although he continued to write for the *New Age*, where his last contribution appeared on 26 July 1934. Two months earlier he had taken tea with Christopher Murray Grieve and Orage, whom he described as "a really tremendous person, an immense intellect but of such harmoniousness, serenity and breadth".[18] In March he met again with Orage, who asked him to become a contributor, allowing him to write on subjects of his own choice without insisting on a regular schedule. In fact, Sorabji's articles did not appear on a strictly regular basis; more often than not, he submitted an article every two or sometimes three weeks. He was obviously proud that "the most brilliant editor of his time has preferred my critical work above anyone else's in this country" and looked forward "to the undoubted attempts that will be made to queer my pitch".[19]

Orage wrote an extended foreword to Sorabji's first collection of essays, published in 1932 as *Around Music*. He expected a music critic to have a first-hand experience not only of the music of others, but also of the making of music, as well as the ability to write. Sorabji's writings attracted him because of the authority of his opinions and their emphatic expression.[20] After Orage's death in 1934, Sorabji hailed him as a "universal mind, so immense in its grasp, so lucid, so serene in its outlook, so much so that almost one has to go to some great Eastern sage to find, in this respect, his equal".[21]

In 1945 Philip Mairet accepted Sorabji's resignation with regret, but not without understanding that the job had become more "tedious than diverting". He recalled sometimes having to shorten the reviews of his "outspoken and vigorous" contributor to avoid legal proceedings. His contributions either delighted or infuriated their readers, but rarely failed to raise their musical awareness. After adding that the "warmth of his enthusiasms and his liberality of praise" exceeded his severities, he hoped that Sorabji's farewell letter would not be his last.[22]

The composer-critic was well aware that, even when the sharp edges were removed, some of his tempestuous reviews were quite pointed. In the following review, an excellent example of an angry Sorabji, the writer has safely omitted the singer's name.

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[16]KSS to EC, 18 April 1930, 10 (section dated 23 April).
[17]Sorabji, "Music", *NA* 34, no. 23 (3 April 1924): 269–70.
[18]KSS to EC, 24 January 1932, 7 (section dated 21 February).
[19]KSS to EC, 24 January 1932, 14 (section dated 20 March).
[20]A. R. Orage, "Foreword", in *AM*, 9–12.
[21]Sorabji, "Correspondence", *NEW* 6, no. 5 (15 November 1934): 117.
[22]Mairet, "Valediction to Mr. Sorabji", *NEW* 28, no. 4 (8 November 1945): 34.

> The scoundrelly law of libel […] prevents one holding up, as is one's duty, to public execration and ridicule the sort of "singer" to whom it was my fate to listen […]. As however, neither I myself, nor our Editor wishes to run risks of a libel action, I must perforce content myself with a general denunciation of this sort of shameless *affichage* of incompetence in a leading West-End concert-hall hallowed by several decades of great artists and performances. Such a series of hideous and ear-lacerating noises delivered with truly appalling lung-power it has rarely befallen me to hear from any human throat. Of vocal material beyond that which would have fitted the owner thereof to take a job in Billingsgate auctioning fish, there was no discoverable trace, nor any evidence whatsoever of any musical ability, however exiguous, and however buried under vocal and technical incompetence. One is left wondering how a reputable Concert agent […] can risk so far compromising himself by being publicly associated with this sort of charlatanry. […] Surely when exhibitionism is pushed to these lengths it constitutes what the law in another, but I venture to think, much more innocuous and innocent connection, calls an indecent exposure.[23]

Ironically, Sorabji did not discuss the subject of libel until one of his last articles. Reporting on a suggestion by Percy Scholes (1887–1958) that critics should insure themselves against libel suits, he recommended the information to "all of us who pursue (or are pursued by) this sorry trade" and concluded by suggesting that the advice be followed at once; it is not known whether he actually did so.[24]

Sorabji never tolerated incompetence and wanted it to be known. Remarks of a "grotesque impudence" about Busoni once prompted him to refer to his "frequent strictures upon the incompetence of the usual musical criticism to which we are treated in England".[25] He also replied to a reader that he did not feel "called upon to conform to the standards of 'gentlemanly criticism' that are current in England".[26] This comes as no surprise from someone who cherished "public music-making for its few events of excellence and execrate[d] it for its plethora of rubbish".[27]

With such a gift for provoking his readers, it is not surprising that some of them expressed displeasure or sent praise. One reader complained that "the language of fish-porters applied to musical criticism would be more tolerable if Mr. Sorabji's distribution of ecstatics [*sic*] and abuse were discriminate".[28] Another wrote to congratulate the paper on its choice of music critic, one who had managed to "pull down the mighty from their seat".[29] A third lamented: "I have read your paper since the days of Orage, and I have never been so disgusted as I am now at the venomous and ignorant articles by that foreigner Sorabji."[30] In another context, someone suggested that "the circulation might increase among people who matter if, for example, the violent opinions of Sorabji were omitted".[31] And in 1936, referring to Sorabji's description of the Piano Concerto (1926–31) by Ralph Vaughan Williams (1872–1958) as the nadir of musical composition, a reader wrote that the critic had descended "to such inhumanity and 'spiritual hooliganism' as he appears to me to do sometimes".[32]

Sorabji's sometimes vituperative comments would hardly be tolerated today, especially those relating to race, obviously not as sensitive a subject then as it is now. Most editors, at least in mainstream publications, would try to come to an agreement with contributors of such potentially damaging outbursts to avoid problems. The publications he wrote for were not exactly mainstream,

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[23]Sorabji, "Music: Concerts", *NEW* 6, no. 2 (25 October 1934): 41–42; 41. Billingsgate is a borough in south-east London where a fish market has existed since 1699.

[24]Sorabji, "Music", *NEW* 27, no. 3 (3 May 1945): 27.

[25]Sorabji, "Music", *NA* 42, no. 17 (23 February 1928): 198.

[26]Sorabji, "Letters to the Editor: Mrs. Woodhouse's Harpsichord Recital", *NA* 42, no. 22 (29 March 1928): 263.

[27]Sorabji, "Music", *NEW* 14, no. 19 (16 February 1939): 286.

[28]W.T.S., "Letters to the Editor: Music Criticism", *NA* 36, no. 1 (30 October 1924): 10.

[29]Sorabji, "Letters to the Editor: Musical Criticism", *NA* 36, no. 4 (20 November 1924): 45–46; 46.

[30]J. Mackenzie, "Letters to the Editor: Musical Criticism", *NA* 36, no. 6 (4 December 1924): 71.

[31]"What Our Readers Are Saying", *NA* 38, no. 3 (19 November 1925): 35.

[32]E. D. Needham, "Correspondence: Criticism of Our Musical Critic", *NEW* 10, no. 7 (19 November 1936): 120. Sorabji's article had appeared as "Music", *NEW* 9, nos. 17–21 (3 September 1936): 334–35.

and very strongly worded opinions were tolerated. Moreover, public expressions of anti-Semitism were not unknown at the time. Examples include some of the writings of Ezra Pound, who wrote for the *New Age*, and T. S. Eliot, who joined the editorial board of the *New English Weekly* after Orage's death.

If he often took risks when expressing himself in print, Sorabji's harshness knew no bounds in his private correspondence, shielded from any reply. The following paragraph, prompted by his public remarks about Erik Chisholm, is a particularly devastating criticism that he wisely kept in the private realm.

> Unfavourable comment is going around among the stinking malignant vermin called the London musicians apropos my various public remarks about you and your work. Human scum, trash and muck, they cannot imagine nor conceive the motives of anyone else being free from the same stench of corruption, jerry-mandering and log-rolling that clings about all *their* doings.[33]

There are very few examples of appreciation of Sorabji's work as a critic; it should be remembered, however, that admirers do not congratulate as much as detractors remonstrate. In 1931 Sorabji found a sympathetic reader in the Welsh Irish-born novelist James Hanley (1897–1985), the author of *Boy*, which was to be banned in England in 1935 for obscene libel (it tells the story of a young boy who stows away on a merchant ship bound for Egypt and is sexually abused and exploited by crew members). It seems that Hanley, whom Sorabji described as "a very prominent literary man […] who is making recently something of a sensation among the *cognoscenti*", was a great admirer of his work.[34] As happened with his music, Sorabji found staunch supporters in his circle of friends. One of them, George Richards, who was to become the dedicatee of the *Third Symphony for Piano Solo* (see chapter 19), wrote to say how "grievously disappointed" he had been to find no contributions in recent issues from someone whose "acuity of perception" was only equalled by his "brilliance of expression".[35] The editor assured his reader that the critic, who was away in Italy, would "shortly return to the ordeals both of our climate and our concert rooms".

Sorabji's decision to tend his resignation to the *New English Weekly* has been briefly mentioned above. Although Mairet's valedictory testimony appeared in November 1945, Sorabji had published his last review in July. There is no indication why his resignation was announced a full three months after his last article; the editor probably tried to persuade him to change his mind for a while before finally bowing to his wishes. Eight open letters published between November 1945 and May 1949 show that retirement did not prevent Sorabji from contributing. The first of these letters began with his own "final bow".

> Sir,—May I take my final bow to your readers and depart from them, like a certain irascribe [irascible?] prophet (wasn't it) clothing myself with curses as with a garment?—not, of course, of them or you, Sir, but of the crass imbecilities which have been written of late in matters germane to music, to an extent never before—I trust—known.[36]

As Sorabji explained in 1951, reviewing records had broken him down: he was "fast approaching the stage of homicidal mania and gave it up, having accumulated by this means as many records as I

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[33]KSS to EC, 15 October 1930, 1.
[34]KSS to EC, 18 September 1931, 5.
[35]George Richards, "Correspondence: Our Musical Critic", *NEW* 10, no. 16 (28 January 1937): 320.
[36]Sorabji, "Correspondence", *NEW* 28, no. 4 (8 November 1945): 40. Sorabji alludes to verse 18 of Psalm 109 (King James Version): "As he clothed himself with cursing like as with his garment".

had room for".[37] He found that "the concert world continues vacuous, banal and null, even more boring and uninteresting to write about that it is to go and listen to, and Heaven knows that's bad enough".[38] From a writer for whom "the abject state of writing upon musical subjects has long been a matter of humiliation to musicians and music lovers in this country", we can only expect a great deal of weariness. Sorabji had thus done his share to counteract the "lamentable trash" he saw regularly appearing in English music magazines.[39]

The *New Age* published an average of eighteen articles a year from Sorabji's desk. This number rose steadily to reach a peak of twenty-six in 1929, then fell to seven in 1933, followed by a final spike of fourteen in 1934. The lower number of articles in 1932 and 1933 can be explained partly by his extended stay in Bombay after the death of his father, but also by his new duties with the *New English Weekly*. His 1934 output of thirty-nine articles marked the peak of his career as a music critic. For the *New English Weekly* Sorabji wrote an average of twenty-two articles a year, peaking at thirty-five in 1936.

Sorabji's contributions usually consisted of opera and concert reviews, with occasional book reviews and even rarer score reviews, obituaries, and accounts of lectures he had attended. He usually covered musical life in London; only in a few cases did he send texts from Italy and India, where he spent a few weeks or months. Although concert tickets poured in, none of them justified "submitting to the boredom of listening to, nor gave any reason for wasting valuable space in the *New Age* with accounts of these multitudinous insignificances".[40] Nevertheless, he reviewed several hundred offerings.

In early 1931 Sorabji had "a fine and very expensive wireless set" built for himself, the name then given to a non-portable radio. Its installation by "no less than six of these thugs in the flat at once" caused him to have "hysterics, a brainstorm, an epileptic fit and convulsions on the spot" while he was trying to work (during the seventh day of a nine-day fast).[41] The spread of the wireless (as the radio was then called) would obviously reduce the burden of attending concerts seated among unwelcome strangers. Broadcast concerts, and later the increasing availability of records, enabled him to listen to music in the comfort of his own flat. By 1933, his already strong tendency towards "concert-room agoraphobia" had increased, and he regarded the wireless as a "Heaven-sent blessing".[42] Although his first review of a broadcast concert dates from May 1928, such reviews became more frequent from November 1930. Nevertheless, he continued to visit the concert hall and the opera house quite regularly until mid-1935.

Sorabji liked to keep his readers abreast of technological developments, reporting for example enthusiastically about his own wireless set, built by F. E. Godfrey.[43] He also regularly described his experiences with various brands of gramophone. After a demonstration organized by the *Gramophone* magazine, he wrote of "the most appalling and devastating exposure of the pretensions of the average gramophone as a reproducer of *music* that can well be imagined". In 1930 he recommended the purchase of Ellis Michael Ginn's Expert, which was "not approached by anything else on the market at the present time"; he himself used the machine to listen to recordings.[44] In 1933 the company

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[37]KSS to NG, 3 April 1951 {16/F.69}.
[38]Sorabji, "Music", *NEW* 20, no. 12 (15 January 1942): 114.
[39]Sorabji, "On Current Musical Literature", *NEW* 24, no. 8 (9 December 1943): 69–70.
[40]Sorabji, "Music", *NA* 48, no. 1 (6 November 1930): 8–9; 8.
[41]KSS to EC, 22 January 1931, 4–5 (section dated 28 January).
[42]Sorabji, "Music", *NEW* 4, no. 17 (8 February 1934): 400–402; 401.
[43]Sorabji, "Music", *NA* 48, no. 4 (28 May 1931): 41.
[44]Sorabji, "Music", *NA* 47, no. 11 (10 July 1930): 130–31; 131; "Music", *NA* 54, no. 26 (26 April 1934): 308.

published an advertisement listing "K. Sorabji, Esq." as part of a group of "Musicians, Critics, Etc." who were among "a few notable owners" of their acoustic gramophones; other well-known names were Lord Berners, Compton Mackenzie (founder of the *Gramophone*), and Sacheverell Sitwell.[45] Curiously, he seems to have delayed upgrading to long-playing records, which appeared in 1948, although 78 rpm discs were still being produced in England in the early 1960s.[46]

Sorabji, who certainly owned a gramophone by 1926, believed that technical improvements would make gramophone reproduction "virtually a performance" and that the number of public performances would be greatly reduced. Even at this stage he saw no read to go out to hear performance of Debussy's *Prélude à "L'après-midi d'un faune"* when he could to listen to Leopold Stokowski and the Philadelphia Orchestra giving "a marvellous performance of it on my gramophone".[47] He began to contribute regular record reviews in March 1934. However, the manufacturers were sending him "such a hefty cargo of records" that he could do little more than mention the most interesting ones in passing.[48] Indeed, many of his record reviews are indeed often limited to a single paragraph per record, with several grouped together in a single review.

Sorabji's coverage of live performances peaked in 1928 and 1929 with an average of twenty-five. Inevitably, it almost came to a halt in 1932 and 1933, when he travelled to Bombay to attend to matters relating to his inheritance. From 1934 to 1938 he reviewed an average of eighteen concerts a year, but the number dropped considerably when war was declared in 1939. His dislike of public concerts grew as the production of recordings increased, and he reviewed 127 releases between 1934 and 1944. In 1942, with much humour, he explained that the "irritatingly repetitive, stereotyped and conventional" programmes had led him to review fewer and fewer concerts.

> I feel sure that your (and my) readers must be as boredly uneager to hear how (or indeed why) Dame Thyra Please played the Waldstein Sonata at her 1,001th Royal College of Surgeons' Museum Concert, at which the Queen of Shemakhan who was present, wearing her famous necklace of new-laid eggs, shook Dame Thyra by the hand and decorated her with the Grand Double Cross of the Order of Dodon, as I am to listen to her doing so.[49]

A few years later Sorabji wrote a three-part essay explaining why he no longer wanted to attend concerts: "Reasons for not going to Concerts", "Reasons for having nothing to do with Musicians", and "Reasons for living in a Granite Tower". The main title of the essay, "'Il Gran Rifiuto'" is a clear allusion to the "Inferno" from Dante's *Divina commedia*, at the point where Dante and Virgil are in the vestibule of Hell and the narrator mentions having seen the shadow of an unidentified person who, through cowardice, has made "the great rejection" (canto 3, lines 58–60). Could it have been a form of cowardice, or a lack of the courage needed to face others, that led Sorabji to simply give up on society, and to go into "inner emigration" rather than fight? He could not see the need to write about thousands of performances out of which only one or two would be given by the "Masters of the Art". Staying away from the concert hall was also a way of avoiding all the people he did not want to see. He obviously did not like to see others as a reflection of himself.

> I find my dislike of my fellow-creatures increases by leaps and bounds: I find my own failings and foibles as much as I can bear with a becoming equanimity; those of others added I find an intolerable burden. The sight of them in their various degrees and kinds of physical and mental ugliness is a distasteful and humiliating reminder that I am one of

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[45]"'Expert' Hand-Made Gramophones'" , *The Gramophone* 11, no. 125 (October 1933): advertisements xxiii.
[46]KSS to RS, 18 October 1965.
[47]Sorabji, "Music", *NA* 39, no. 10 (8 July 1926): 110.
[48]Sorabji, "Music", *NA* 55, no. 11 (12 July 1934): 130.
[49]Sorabji, "Correspondence: 'From the Music Critic'", *NEW* 20, no. 10 (1 January 1942): 96.

> them; that displeases me. […] I find also that the vocal and phonetic noises with which they think it necessary to announce to the world that their brains are working […] do not, so far as I am concerned, make a suitable, pleasing nor helpful background against which to listen to music.[50]

Another reason why Sorabji was happy to stop attending concerts was his constant displeasure at the bad manners of some members of the audience, a subject he often raised. In 1951 he wrote a "code of behaviour to guide the poor things in Royal Festival Hall manners", a concert venue whose acoustics led him to call it "Royal Pestilent Hall".[51] This shows that he still attended concerts from time to time, for example a performance of Mahler's Symphony no. 8 conducted by Sir Adrian Boult at the Royal Albert Hall on 10 February 1948.[52] Although his residence in a small village in the south of England and his refusal to travel except when absolutely necessary considerably reduced his opportunities for attending concerts, he felt that he had "heard all the public music making I want to" and noted that, as the Marschallin says in *Der Rosenkavalier*, "Jedes Ding hat seine Zeit".[53] Moreover, for years he had lamented "the shocking state of the English concert platform, which makes it the mock and derision of the entire European continent".[54]

Sorabji longed for the demise of the public concert, or at least a reduction in the quantity of concerts; this would contribute to an increase in quality, as people would be less inclined to leave the comfort of their homes and the convenience of their wireless and gramophone. He also hoped for "the elimination of the journalistic critic with all his subterranean activities". For him, need to publish reviews as quickly as possible after the events reduced daily newspaper criticism to a farce, "and when to that is added the type of man upon whom this work usually devolves—one generally without the slightest trace of imagination, sympathy, musical sensibility, or wide culture—the thing becomes an obscene farce".[55] By 1941 he was clearly disgusted with reviewing. As sometimes happened, scatological language helped him to express his feelings.

> Indeed writing about concerts becomes almost as tedious as going to them... it never changes, it never varies, the same tricks of concert-platform "expression" like some manufactured sauce out of a bottle, only probably not so wholesome... the same dreary round of pieces mauled, battered and pawed about like a telephone directory that, having spent its best days in a public telephone box, is now relegated to the public lavatory W.C. to perform its final task of essuyage of posteriors.[56]

Sorabji's retirement from the position of music critic in 1945 was not, however, a complete withdrawal from the field. He continued to express his views through open letters and occasional short articles, his favourite vehicle being *Musical Opinion*, to which he contributed at least thirty-five pieces between 1945 and 1958. In second place came the *Musical Times*, which had already printed forty-two items before the end of the World War II; twenty-four more were to follow until 1965. Sorabji increasingly turned his attention to matters other than music and, until about 1965 and 1975, respectively, he bombarded publications such as the *Catholic Herald* and the *Swanage Times*, a newspaper published in a town located near Corfe Castle, where he then lived, with open letters. This was simply a respite from composing the five thousand or so pages of music he would produce from that time until the early 1980s.

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[50]Sorabji, "'Il Gran Rifiuto'", in *MCF*, 141–48; 141–43. See also KSS to RWLS, 7 April 1949 (pp. 13–14; 14).
[51]Sorabji, "Letters to the Editor: Concert Manners", *MO* 74, no. 886 (July 1951): 541, 543; KSS to RWLS, 20 June 1951 (p. 21).
[52]KSS to RWLS, 9 March 1948 (p. 3).
[53]KSS to ABP, 21 April 1969 [*recte* 1979].
[54]KSS to EC, 3 May 1930, 2.
[55]Sorabji, "Music", *NA* 39, no. 11 (15 July 1926): 121–22; 121.
[56]KSS to CMG, 9 November 1941.

The Publication of *Around Music*

After several unsuccessful submissions, Sorabji's first book of essays, *Around Music*, finally reached its readers.[57] He had given up on his project "as a bad job"[58] until the return to London in October 1931 of his friend Christopher Murray Grieve, who had been offered a directorship at the Unicorn Press, opened up a new avenue.[59] By November he had received a "gratifying report" from the press's readers, but it would be impossible to publish the book because his misguided decision to help others without the possibility of repayment and the losses suffered by his father had left him in a poor financial position.[60] We are thus led to believe that he would have had to subsidize its publication. On the assumption that "all publishers are potential, if not actual crooks", Sorabji took the "wise precaution of submitting a draft agreement to the Society of Authors", which he had joined a few years earlier. They identified a number of legal traps of which he was unaware, and the publisher made modifications "without a murmur". The book, which required a "great deal of revision, some 70 pages of entirely new matter, and every page with extensive alterations", was published by the Unicorn Press in November 1932.[61] Sorabji had hoped that it would be produced "in a high class style, as a specimen of fine book production", with a few copies on fine paper signed by the author. It is plainly bound in beige cloth with a gold embossed unicorn in the lower-right corner; at the top of the spine there is a dark green rectangle surrounded by a gold rule with "Around Music / Sorabji / Unicorn Press" in gold letters. Failure to register the book for copyright in the United States opened the way for Hyperion Press to publish a reprint in 1979—without the author's permission or even knowledge.[62]

The aforementioned foreword by Alfred Orage is followed by a "Præludium" by the author, who explained that his book was "chaotic—deliberately and of set purpose". This is followed by an eight-verse epigraph ("And what the people but a herd confused / A miscellaneous rabble who extol / Things vulgar, and, well weighed, scarce worth the praise?") taken from the third chapter of *Paradise Regained* (1671) by John Milton (1608–74), which again shows that Sorabji had no need for his the approval of his readers. Although he hoped to "arouse a hornet's nest", he refrained from including a "derisive addenda consisting of some imaginary press-notices written in a tone of jeering mockery". He expected "some fun out of it all at any rate", but doubted he would sell more than the three hundred copies needed to start receiving royalties. What mattered was that he had written things that "badly wanted saying, and which no one else has either had the knowledge or guts or both to say. I HAVE BOTH! Said he brazenly."[63]

The book's preliminary pages mention two of the author's friends: Robert Lorenz and Bernard Bromage. Robert Lorenz (1891–1945) was an English businessman who, from 1920, published articles on music in the *Sackbut* and the *Musical Times*. In 1934 he referred to the latter's readers "who, like myself, are amateurs" and confessed that he had "not studied musical criticism sufficiently to endorse" a view expressed by Ernest Newman.[64] After giving up his business at the start of World War II, he joined the recruiting department of the BBC and later its music department.[65] Sorabji, who had met this

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[57]Unless otherwise stated, details of the publication of *Around Music* are taken from KSS to EC, [before 6] June 1932, 1–5.

[58]KSS to EC, 18 September 1931, 5 (section dated 2 October).

[59]Alan Bold, *MacDiarmid—Christopher Murray Grieve: A Critical Biography* (London: John Murray, 1988), 261. The Unicorn Press seems to have existed at least since 1897, when it began publishing the *New Century Review*, which lasted until 1900. It later passed into the hands of Martin Secker of Secker and Wartburg.

[60]KSS to CMG, 1 November 1931.

[61]*The English Catalogue of Books*, ed. James D. Stewart (London: The Publishers Circular, 1932), vol. 12 (January 1931 to December 1935), 1622.

[62]In the reprint, page 85 appears twice, so page 86 is omitted.

[63]KSS to EC, June 1932 (undated, before 6 June), 4–5.

[64]Robert Lorenz, "What is a 'Great' Composer", *MT* 75, no. 1096 (June 1934): 497–99; 497.

[65]"Obituary: Robert Lorenz", *MT* 87, no. 1237 (January 1946): 30.

"dear creature" in 1922 at the latest, dedicated *Around Music* to this "admirable friend" who, like him, was "all out against the flaccid, mealy-mouthed, gentlemanly eunuchism that is the bane of musical criticism".[66] An example of his tendency to speak out came at the first performance of the second Piano Concerto by Herbert Howells (1892–1983) in 1925. He stood up and shouted "Well thank God that's over", which was instrumental in the composer's decision to withdraw his work. Howells later said that this was done for political reasons, Lorenz being part of Philip Heseltine's clique.[67] Sorabji's relationships with the second friend, the writer and lecturer on mysticism Bernard Bromage (1899–1957), will be fully documented in chapter 12 in connection with the *Sonata V (Opus archimagicum)*. At the end of the "Præludium", Sorabji had expressed his indebtedness to him "for his kindness in seeing this book through the press" while he was in Bombay after his father's death. Bromage had produced a grossly inaccurate index, which angered the author, who would describe the book as "acrawl with misprints".

Around Music consists of thirty-four numbered chapters followed by a "Postludium" entitled "The Good—the Beautiful—the True". Nine chapters had already appeared in five different journals, including the two for which he was a critic. These articles make up more than one third of the book. Sorabji therefore had to write more essays to complete the collection. The largest category (nine chapters) deals with various musical topics, with titles such as "The Decline of the Public Concert", "Against Women Instrumentalists", and "Music and Sex". Two other categories (nine essays in all) are devoted to opera and singing, subjects close to Sorabji's heart. There are six articles on the author's favourite composers: Busoni, Medtner, Mahler, Liszt, Alkan, and Reger. The piano (with five chapters) is also a constant preoccupation. Finally, there are five chapters on themes of a more general nature, such as "Of Simplicity" and "The Judgment of Posterity".

The two weeklies for which Sorabji worked as a critic carried reviews by friends. Writing in the *New Age*, Clinton Gray-Fisk (1904–61) said that only two writers on music, Ernest Newman and George Bernard Shaw, could match Sorabji in power of expression, erudition, and breadth of sympathy. He described his "outspoken treatise on music" as "the most downright and uncompromising work of its sort that has yet been published in England" and one in which "every conceivable superstition, fallacy, superannuated convention and humbug is rapidly reviewed, considered, and annihilated with an apparently inexhaustible fund of vitriolic vituperation".[68] Sorabji's friend Bernard Bromage (1899–1957), writing in the *New English Weekly*, singled out the "terrific common sense in that all the enthusiasms and the dislikes are tempered by the keenest inspection and by the justice of the mariner for his ship, of the mother for her child".[69]

Scott Goddard (1895–1965) noted in *Music & Letters* that Sorabji's sound knowledge of music and of "some aspects of life" redeemed the outspoken essays. He recommended the book to "any who can think as they read".[70] Harvey Grace (1877–1944), writing in the *Musical Times*, pointed out that the author sometimes went too far and belaboured his points, though he had the courage of his opinions.[71] Peter Latham (1894–1970), in *The Gramophone*, saw behind the author's "feline clawishness" a "genuine and passionate idealism that deserves to win our respect". That this blended with "a streak

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[66]KSS to PH, 19 June 1922 {*LPH*, no. 36, p. 135}; "Music", *NA* 44, no. 3 (15 November 1928): 30. Lorenz resided at 26, St. James's Mansions, London NW6, according to his signature in "Letters to the Editor: Garbled Reviews", *MT* 64, no. 960 (1 February 1923): 125.

[67]Paul Spicer, *Herbert Howells* (Bridgend, Wales: Poetry Wales Press, 1998), 81–82; see also Richard Georg Marshall, "The Career and Reputation of Herbert Howells" (master's thesis, Durham University, 2006), 23–24.

[68]Clinton Gray-Fisk, "*Around Music*", *NA* 52, no. 16 (16 February 1933): 190–91.

[69]Bernard Bromage, "Around Music", *NEW* 2, no. 14 (19 January 1933): 330–31.

[70]Scott Goddard, *Music & Letters* 14, no. 3 (July 1933): 287–88.

[71]H[arvey] G[race], *MT* 74, no. 1081 (March 1933): 232–33.

of fanaticism" causing him to do less justice to others" points of view should be seen as "the defect of a rare and admirable quality".[72] An anonymous reviewer in the *Modern Scot* (probably its editor, James Huntington Whyte [1909–62]) found the book to contain "enough intellectual pabulum to set lesser commentators up in business for life". He praised Sorabji's expertise in vocal matters, but noted that he "piles up abuse or praise until it all but topples over"; furthermore, his writing was "the often impatient proclamation by a composer and executant of nothing short of genius, of where the good is to be found and what bad ousts it from its rightful place".[73] For the composer and conductor Constant Lambert (1905–51), writing in the *Sunday Referee*, Sorabji's "enthusiasm for the complex" led him to overvalue some composers whose music displayed an "often unnecessary elaboration of method"; he nevertheless praised his justification of the operatic fantasies of Liszt and Alkan. The book also suffered from "certain obsessions [...] which crop up like King Charles's head and lose their force" through the repetition the author denounced, although Lambert could find himself agreeing with such obsessions.[74]

Sorabji responded to various points made by Eric Blom (1888–1959) in a review probably published in the *Birmingham Post*. He was "painfully surprised" to see one whom he had "always regarded as of a different fibre from some of his *confrères*" accusing the Mahler chapter of being the most overly aggressive one.[75] As well as reading these reviews, Sorabji enjoyed several positive comments from friends and acquaintances, such as Ralph Hill (1900–1950), the editor of the *Musical Mirror and Fanfare*, who offered him the possibility of sending an article, and Alec Rowley (1892–1958), who had reviewed the score of *Opus clavicembalisticum* for the *Musical Times*.[76] Bernard van Dieren rejoiced at the "concentrated bitterness, vitriolic acidity, the explosive violence, the magical incisiveness and many more extreme qualities of these essays" that he had seen in the original editions of the essays. He wanted his friend to know what a high opinion he had of his literary powers, musicianship, and erudition.[77]

The extreme characteristics highlighted by van Dieren had long been part of Sorabji's arsenal as a writer. They can also be found in his unpublished *Fruits of Misanthropy* and his second book of essays, *Mi contra fa: The Immoralisings of a Machiavellian Musician* (1947). Sorabji never seems to have run out of boiling ink with which to animadvert. Never settling for anything and always sharing his opinions, whether with a small group of readers or a white page for his own release, was a way of life for him.

Symphony no. 0 for Piano Solo

Two days after the first performance of the *Sonata IV for Piano*, given on 1 April 1930 under the auspices of Erik Chisholm's Active Society for the Propagation of Contemporary Music, Sorabji began planning a new work with his friend in mind for dedicatee. At this early stage, the work he called "your Symphony" consisted of eight sections rather than thirteen. He wondered, "what will you give me in return? I ask of you just as the Arabs do of a well-loved friend—'Love me and be my brother'."[78]

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[72]Peter Latham, "Book Reviews", *The Gramophone* 11, no. 121 (June 1933): 8.

[73]"A Composer Critic", *The Modern Scot* 3, no. 4 (January 1933): 80–83. On Whyte (and a portrait by David Foggie), see "James Huntington Whyte, 1909–1962. Editor of 'The Modern Scot'", http://www.nationalgalleries.org/object/PG 2310.

[74]Constant Lambert, "Sorabji and Pannain", *The Sunday Referee*, 25 December 1932 (Literary and Entertainment Supplement), 9.

[75]Sorabji, "Music", *NEW* 2, no. 19 (23 February 1933): 446.

[76]Ralph Hill to KSS, 3 January 1933; Alec Rowley to KSS, 26 January 1933.

[77]Bernard van Dieren to KSS, 8 June 1933, 1, 2; repr. in Sorabji, "Bernard van Dieren", in *MCF*, 149–57; 155–56.

[78]KSS to EC, 3 April 1930, 2.

The *Symphony no. 0 for Piano Solo* (1930–31; 333 pp.), whose original (but very misleading) title is *Symphony II for Piano, Large Orchestra, Organ, Final Chorus, and Six Solo Voices*, consists of a piano part only. An inscription in the score tells us: "Got bored with this: *and no wonder!* A grotesque extravaganza:". In fact, Sorabji had decided early on that the piano part should be "thematically independent from the orchestral part, almost self-contained, in fact somewhat à la Raimondi", referring to the Italian composer who wrote works that could be superimposed (see the introduction). The work was "simmering like a real hell-broth in my brain—it will be crammed with necromantic magical feeling—as the work of a Fire Spirit should be".[79] In 1934 he had not yet begun the orchestration and even thought of destroying the piano part; forty years later his opinion was unchanged (although he did not commit the irreparable).[80] Abel Sánchez-Aguilera, who has edited the last two of the symphony's three parts, believes that it is perhaps the most difficult of Sorabji's piano works.[81]

It was a few months before Sorabji was to "start going in real earnest on your Symphony", as he had other things to attend to. On 1 July he reported having written the first page, adding "ain't I a blinking *marvel*?"[82] At the beginning of August, having composed nearly forty pages of this "Symphony in *E* and *C*" (referring to the initials of the dedicatee's name), he wrote that the instrumentation was to be "tremendous, strings throughout in at least 20 parts with an organ part as well" and that there would be twenty-seven themes.[83] As expected, the first gesture includes the dedicatee's musical letters, but surprisingly in reverse order (C, E). In September Sorabji explained his compositional process while working on the third section ("Fantasia").

> The piano part is now at its 65th page, the treatment of the themes gradually getting more and more free and involved… this is a gradual process from quite clear recurrence of theme to a progressive transformation and disguise which goes on continually until all apparent semblance disappears, passing into the Cadenza, then the Coda in which they (the themes) reappear again fairly distinctly. [...] [The movement] is astonishingly flexible, limbed and elastic in treatment—while rhythmically it is of Oriental subtlety and complexity—more akin than anything to the *rhyming prose* of the Arabian poets of which you may know.

He also characterized (and quite poetically) the "Adagio" at the beginning of the second part as moving "slowly about in the pregnant darkness of my subliminal self... an occasional lovely shred of metoped peeps above the surface to disappear again... In it I shall, as Walt Whitman said, 'pour forth the meanings which I of all men know'... and you too since I've confessed... what I have...!"[84]

Sorabji then "started the *Orchestral prologue of the Symphony* (60 staves to a page)". He carried it at least to the third page, but put it aside to work on *Opus clavicembalisticum*; he probably destroyed all the orchestral material he had written. In one of his typical (and almost daily) sentimental outbursts, he prayed to the gods that "they help me to make *your* Symphony such a glowing love-offering to you that it may win me a little more of your affection... *that* is the prayer that goes up from me with *all my might and strength*". He returned to the work after Christmas and by mid-January 1931 had reached the third section ("Cadenza"), at which point he was "*starving* spiritually and emotionally for sight, sound and touch of the dear *dearest* dedicatee!…" The first movement was finally completed on 29 January, ending "abruptly and laconically after some passage work following the Coda Stretta".

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[79]KSS to EC, 3 April 1930, 2; 8 April 1930, 4, 6.
[80]KSS to EC, 17 July 1934; KSS to FH, 2 April 1975 {3/F.6}; KSS to DG, 2 April 1975.
[81]Abel Sánchez-Aguilera to MAR, 17 March 2021.
[82]KSS to EC, 5 April 1930, 2; 17 June 1930, 15 (section dated 1 July).
[83]KSS to EC, [before 8] August 1930, 5.
[84]KSS to EC, 7 September 1930, 1. See chapter 10 for the Whitman quotation in the context of Sorabji's confidences to Erik Chisholm.

Sorabji further described the conclusion as "a quiet sort of retrospective murmur of the name of the dedicatee, brooding and introspective".[85]

Composition continued while Sorabji was on holiday in Italy from 23 February to 8 April. He characterized the theme of the "Toccata" as "a series of imperceptibly varying variations on *3 themes* which as they progress will gradually draw in themes from the earlier part of the work: it's a marvellous work!" The character of a symphony that would "unavoidably be of Titanic size" was such that it would take on "the festal and solemn aspect of a performance of the St. Matthew Passion or the B Minor Mass".[86]

Sorabji played through *Symphony no. 0 for Piano Solo* (probably in fact only the first two parts) for Chisholm while in Glasgow for his recital of 29 April 1931. Describing the moments leading up to this private performance, he recalled how "we maudled over each other like the pair of tipsy idiots we were on that Tuesday evening in the sitting room at the Grand".[87] In the final stages of composition, he conveyed the importance of the work to him as part of one of the longest pleas for love he had ever addressed to his friend.

> And all my love and devotion I'll go on pouring into *YOUR* Symphony till it is all one glowing fire like its luckless creator—till I make of it one great love poem so that those *few*, those *very* few with eyes to see and ears to hear, will know how greatly I loved ONE... as I would *wish* them to know... for such only it is, *first* and *last*; it is yours, Erik dearest—inspired *by* you, written *for* you, *through* you and *to* you... from you it came and to you it shall go.[88]

Composition proceeded at a feverish pace as Sorabji wanted to complete the work before leaving for his summer holidays, which he did on 18 June 1931.[89] He had written something that was "living fire and flame, should it indeed not be so considering *whence, wherefore* and *whither*?" and proposed the following dedication: "To the one through whom and for whom it came into existence, ERIK CHISHOLM, Best, dearest and truest of all imaginable Friends (LIAR! I mean me!!!), in deepest affection, his devoted Kaikhosru Sorabji."[90] In 1975 he added another inscription before giving the score to Alistair Hinton: "For my very dear and precious Alistair, a sort of birthday present—(and how!!), to amuse and maybe infuriate him: Ton tout dévoué: K, for VI.X.MCMLXXV. All loving blessings for all time from a Crotchetty Cross-Patch."[91]

As mentioned above, Sorabji "got bored", and the work remained without orchestra. As he neared the end of the piano part, he blamed the immensity of the task and how it would affect further creative work.

> [...] the finished piano part which I have *vowed* and *sworn* to finish [...] then it must be bound in readiness for copying into the full score. Oh, my Gawd—How *shall* I do it? *No* one can help me with that, no *human person* that is! That is the only part I *really* dread, for it's so tedious that it will take me much longer than the actual *writing* and all the time I am doing it I shall be fretting and fuming at not being able to get on with the work itself. You know the mere work of copying in that piano part is going to take me *months* to do! Cheery prospect, eh? I shall however strictly limit the amount of copying I do each day as else I shall get so nervy and brain weary that I'll go clean off my poor little noodle.[92]

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[85]KSS to EC, 17 September 1930, 3 (sections dated 20, 26 September); 28 December 1930 (see also KSS to EC, 30 March 1931); 16 January 1931; 22 January 1931, 6 (section dated 30 January).

[86]KSS to EC, [5] April 1930, [5]; 6 May 1931, 28 (section dated 18 May).

[87]KSS to EC, 6 May 1931, 28 (section dated 18 May). The hotel is most probably the Grand Central Hotel on Gordon Street.

[88]KSS to EC, 6 May 1931, 2.

[89]KSS to EC, 6 May 1931, 23 (section dated 15 May).

[90]KSS to EC, 22 January 1931, 1; 22 August 1931, 3 (section dated 23 August). The dedication does not appear in the manuscript, from which part of the title page has been cut off.

[91]See chapter 21 for a link between the ending of *Symphony no. 0 for Piano Solo* and *Symphonia brevis for Piano*.

[92]KSS to EC, 6 May 1931, 28 (section dated 18 May).

The three-part structure of *Symphony no. 0 for Piano Solo* is reminiscent of *Opus clavicembalisticum*, whose pianistic style it also shares, for example in the frightening passage consisting of "blind chords", that is, scales consisting of very fast alternating chords ([ED]pp. 13–18, 105–6, 422–23, 453–55), as at the end of the "Passacaglia" of the earlier work. The work contains a passage written on seven staves ([MS]pp. 250–51), the earliest of three examples in Sorabji's entire output, the others being the *Sonata V (Opus archimagicum)* and the *Symphonic Variations for Piano*, both from the mid-1930s. Like its predecessor, this "pre-first" piano symphony consists of sections such as "Prologo", "Introito", "Fantasia", etc. A new label in his music—but not a new technique—is the (so-called) "Punta d'organo", that is, a section based on a pedal point, in this case a C♯ that may or may not be the lowest voice and is often within the texture.[93] This "Punta d'organo" ([ED]pp. 141–53), which is the second section of the second part, returns in a varied form as "Ritournelle—Point d'orgue" (pp. 205–9) as the fourth and concluding section. Sorabji uses it again in the "Coda epilogo. Punta d'organo" of the *Symphonia brevis for Piano* more than forty years later. The *Symphony no. 0 for Piano Solo*, unlike *Opus clavicembalisticum*, includes a single fugue on a single subject (very long, as usual) rather than multiple fugues on multiple subjects. At the end of this "Cadenza-Fugata" is a note reading "Segue il Cantico. Durante tutto il cantico tace il pianoforte".[94] The "Cantico" is obviously a reference to the final movement of Busoni's Piano Concerto. Had the work reached its intended final form, there would have been a choral movement between the fugue and the final "Coda-Epilogo". It is ironic that Sorabji was unable to complete a work invested with such a sentimental value in the form originally intended. At least Chisholm—whose initials appear at the beginning of the "Coda-Stretta" (p. 127) and as the theme of the "Toccata variata" (p. 229)—heard part of it at least once, some time before May 1931, when the composer played it to him (**example 11.1**).[95]

We can see Sorabji's reference to the recurrence of themes quoted earlier in the many numbered ideas. After completing "two very big complex and intricate variations" (nos. 32 and 33), he explained that "from this point onwards gradually there is to be drawn into the fabric of the variations all the themes from the first movement, which means some brain work!"[96] These can be found in the "Fantasia" (pp. 13–107), where twenty-seven ideas and their modified statements are identified from p. 19 (bar 61). This numbering continues in part of the ensuing "Cadenza" (only on pp. 108 and 109), then intensively in the "Coda-Stretta" (pp. 127–40). As the musical example shows, Sorabji also numbered three ideas at the beginning of the "Toccata variata" (p. 229) for a "series of imperceptibly varying variations", as mentioned above. Finally, for vars. 37–44, 46–60, and 62–64, he indicated that each of them uses one more theme than the previous one with labels such as "Var. XL (1.2.3.4.)". By the end of the movement, allowing for a number of irregularities, all twenty-seven ideas (the themes that have been "gradually draw[n] in") should have been used.

Movement for Voice and Piano

In 1926 and 1927 Sorabji wrote two songs: the *Trois poèmes du "Gulistān" de Saʿdī* and *L'irrémédiable*. He also began a third one, entitled *Movement for Voice and Piano* (1927, 1931; 9 pp.), but, for unknown reasons, put it aside for a few years. Completed on 28 September 1931, it is "a wordless movement with a very broad flowing albeit intricately curved *cantilena*—it calls for real beautiful singing as the

[93]See the note on Sorabji's incorrect use of "punta d'organo" in the introduction.
[94]"Then follows the Cantico. The piano remains quiet during the entire cantico."
[95]KSS to EC, 6 May 1931, 28 (section dated 18 May).
[96]KSS to EC, 6 May 1931, 26 (section dated 17 May).

great singers understood it, not as your modern interpreter gentry understands or rather *mis*understands it."[97]

The *Movement* is one of four works that the composer dedicated to his mother ("To Mumsie"). Unlike the earlier *Vocalise pour soprano fioriturata*, this wordless piece, which is marked "Adagissimo" and intended to be played very softly throughout, does not require virtuosity despite two bars near the end where the layout of rhythm is somewhat more complex. It calls for a mezzo-soprano or a baritone, in which case the predominantly stepwise, meandering, vocal part would have to be transposed an octave lower. The piano part, which becomes increasingly complex as the piece progresses, consists mostly of series of quaver chords, with occasional widely spaced triads in the low register, usually in 1–5–10 position. The singer's initial line, which begins with the pitches G–A♭–B♭, recurs four times in varied forms **(example 11.2)**.

Settling Family Matters in the "Accursed, Poisonous, and Pestilent City" of Bombay

In May 1932 Shapurji Sorabji, the composer's father, travelled from his native Bombay to Germany. As he had done before, he was to spend six or seven weeks at the Sanatorium Groedel in Bad Nauheim, some forty kilometres from Frankfurt am Main, for a cure for heart problems.[98] His planned visit to his abandoned wife and son in London did not take place due to his death in Bad Nauheim on 7 July 1932 at the age of sixty-eight. This unforeseen event forced the forty-year-old son to sail twice to Bombay to claim a share of his father's estate; only on the second trip did his mother accompany him.

Sorabji must have left London in the days after his father's death, arriving in Bombay about two weeks later; he began the return journey on the Lloyd Triestino's M/S *Victoria* ("India Fast Service") on 9 February 1933, arriving some time before 26 February, on which day he reviewed a concert in London. The second voyage, again on the M/S *Victoria* ("Grand Express Italy-India"), began in Genoa on 29 May 1933; the return voyage took place between 11 and 23 January 1934.[99] These periods of absence from London, separated by only three months of return to normal life, add up to fourteen months that, as we shall see, were quite painful for the composer. Not much happened during the first stay. We only know that, on 11 November 1932 (four months after Shapurji Sorabji's death), a petition was filed for the probate of his will. The discussion of the legal issues had to wait until the second stay.

Two short recitals given by Sorabji enabled him to divert his attention from legal matters that, in all likelihood, must have been progressing very slowly. The Bombay radio station "was fortunate enough to have the services of this eminent Pianist, Composer and Critic, who gave a half hour recital on the Piano" on 19 October 1932. He had also agreed to give another one, on 7 December, that "we are sure will meet with the approval of all our Listeners, who will have the opportunity to listen to a

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[97]KSS to EC, 18 September 1931, 3–4.

[98]After the death of his father, the balneology pioneer Isidor Maximilian Groedel (1850–1921), the Sanatorium Groedel (Terrassenstrasse 2–4) was run by Dr. Franz Maximilian Groedel (1881–1951), an authority on cardiac radiology; see Horst Zoske, "Groedel, Franz", in *Neue Deutsche Biographie* 7 (1966), 109–10, https://www.deutsche-biographie.de/gnd131530712.html#ndbcontent, and W. Bruce Fye, "Profiles in Cardiology: Franz M. Groedel", *Clinical Cardiology* 23 (2000): 133–34, https://onlinelibrary.wiley.com/doi/pdf/10.1002/clc.4960230214 (includes a photograph). The year of closure could not be determined. Pictures of the sanatorium, especially on old postcards, are easy to find using Google Images. In October 1930 Leopold Godowsky, after a slight paralytic stroke, took a cure with Frieda and Dagmar (wife and daughter, respectively) and found the place "the best in Europe"; see Jeremy Nicholas, *Godowsky, the Pianists' Pianist: A Biography of Leopold Godowsky* (Hexham, Northumberland: Appian Publications & Recordings, 1989), 144. The sanatorium hosted notable visitors, including the composers Richard Strauss (1907), Hans Pfitzner (1943), and Arthur Honegger (1954); see "Berühmte Besucher in Bad Nauheim", https://www.bad-nauheim.de/de/lebenswert/stadtinfo-geschichte/beruehmte-besucher.

[99]Sorabji kept the printed passenger lists for all but the first of the four crossings.

musician of such merit".[100] One of these recitals prompted Edgar Bainton (1880–1956), the British-born (and later Australia-based) composer who had visited in India in late 1932, to express his great admiration, "though many of the local enthusiasts in the musical world did not share his appreciation". Erik Chisholm, who was in Bombay in 1945, must have mentioned his friend Sorabji to a journalist who wrote about "Keikhusroo Sorabji", the Parsi musician whom Bombay "would be only too glad to have an opportunity of hearing such a redoubtable artist". This in turn elicited a communication from H.J.W. Miller, organist of St Thomas's Cathedral in Bombay, who was surprised that the journalist had not heard of "such a famous individual". For one, "the home of the Parsis" should surely have "some knowledge of his achievements".[101] Apparently "Chisholm's last act" in Bombay was to suggest to the University that Sorabji be awarded an honorary doctorate; this could not be ascertained.[102]

Sorabji's absence from London meant that the readers of the *New Age* missed their music feature during the summer and autumn of 1932. Finally, on 17 November, Sorabji wrote: "And I your faithful scribbler, buried here in Bombay, deprived of the very breath of life as it is to a musician, curse my lot and alternately rage and despair at being shut away from all this [the concert season] for so many months." Five weeks later, he complained of "the starvation of the musician of music, with every fibre of his being clamouring for the sound of great music greatly played".[103] The only music available to him was recordings of the Austrian tenor Richard Tauber (1891–1948) played on the gramophone of his Occidental neighbours.

In his next article, a lengthy tirade written in Bombay but published immediately on his return, Sorabji discussed the lack of architectonic in Indian music, the straitjacket of the raga, its phrase structure without organic growth, and the "uncontrolled symbolism-mongering mania of these people". It suffered from "certain radical and inherent defects that prevent it from ever becoming an Art comparable in importance with that of Europe". Phrasing seemed to him to be "non-existent, the whole being jumbled together, so that the effect is that of someone reading without any attention at all to punctuation". Moreover, the Indian musician had "no power of getting any organic growth out of his material" because he proceeded "with a maddening Stravinsky-like repetition of a small melodic fragment with the slightest variations at each repetition".[104] Sorabji thus saw in Indian music the shortcomings he had identified in the works of a composer whom he had always criticized very harshly. He was not the only one in his time to make such hasty statements, and he did not bother to put in writing a balanced assessment that took into account the nature of the repertoire in question.

Sorabji's negative comments should be contrasted with what he had written in 1925. The Cornish music writer Ralph Dunstan (1857–1933) had invited him to join the editorial board of the fourth edition of his *Cyclopædic Dictionary of Music*; he would be one of the "distinguished musicians, critics,

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[100]"Mr. Kaikhasroo [*sic*] Shapurji Sorabji", *The Indian Radio Times*, November [?] 1932, 2118. These two recitals, the content of which could only be established by finding reviews, were described as "improvisations" in Roberge, "*Un tessuto d'esecuzioni*: A Register of Performances of Sorabji's Works", in *SCC*, 425–51; 434, which is not accurate based on the source cited here. The next entry in the list, which mentions as a doubtful event an improvisation on the Bombay radio in 1933, cannot be documented.

[101]Two unidentified newspaper clippings by the same author, written on consecutive days, in columns entitled "The Bombay Man's Diary", *Evening News of India*, [August or September 1945]. The first article begins with comments on Erik Chisholm, followed by a section entitled "A Parsi Musician!" In the second article, the section following the one on Sorabji is entitled "Film Control Request". The suggested date is based on Erik Chisholm's presence in India between August (?) and November as musical director in India for ENSA (Entertainments National Service Association); see John Purser, *ECSM*, 122–25.

[102]David Shepherd, "Erik Chisholm's New Piano Concerto", *Con Brio* (Edinburgh Festival), Number 1950, reproduced in the entry for Chisholm's Piano Concerto "Hindustani" (1948–49) in Michael Tuffin's *Catalogue raisonné* (see the note in chapter 10 on availability).

[103]Sorabji, "Music: Notes on the Coming Season", *NA* 51, no. 3 (17 November 1932): 33; "Music", *NA* 51, no. 8 (22 December 1932): 92.

[104]Sorabji, "Reflections upon Indian Music", *NA* 52, no. 19 (9 March 1933): 223–24.

and musical historians" whose services had been secured to make the book "complete and authoritative".[105] The composer's reaction to being engaged and described as the specialist on India is unknown, but a contribution to the article on "Hindoo Music" (new to this edition) filling almost a column and signed "K. Sorabji" (between quotation marks) was appended to a series of six short paragraphs and three musical examples most probably prepared by the editor. Sorabji began with some technical explanations of the ragas (taken from A. H. Fox-Strangways's *The Music of Hindustan*), emphasizing their complexity, elaborateness, "degree of fineness and subtlety", and "bewildering diversity and delicacy of effect". He then added a comment that would give him away even if the article were unsigned: "At its best [Indian music] breathes of quiet repose and extreme restraint, not as it is interpreted in the hands or throats of various charlatans who inflict themselves from time to time upon a good[-]natured and long-suffering London public."[106] The comments quoted in the previous paragraph show how Sorabji had (once again) radically changed his mind.

In December 1932 the conductor (and later lexicographer) Nicolas Slonimsky (1894–1995), who had seen a copy of *Opus clavicembalisticum* in New York, wrote to Sorabji through his publisher, asking for scores with a view to future performances. The composer's mother, in a rare example of her handwriting, replied on his behalf and passed the letter on to her son, who sent Slonimsky a note from Bombay. The latter assured the composer that his desire to possess and study his scores was not "an idle whim of a musical collector". Well aware that he would "incur your wrath for my importunity", he wanted to produce one of Sorabji's orchestral works, especially if it reflected a "Hindu spirit in a European mind". He was impressed by his courage in writing "impractical music", just the sort of music "by courageous and uncompromising composers" that he liked to bring out. Infuriated by the word "Hindu", Sorabji replied that he was a Parsi and should not be called an Indian composer, a description that Parsis, he said, indignantly rejected. Slonimsky, who had enjoyed his "uninhibited manner", asked if he would write a work for percussion instruments based on (what he described as) Parsi rhythms. Nothing seems to have come out from Sorabji's pen in this regard. In 1933 Slonimsky also asked for biographical information, adding that, in exchange for a copy of *Opus clavicembalisticum*, he would repay him "by spreading your gospel in America and countries of Europe".[107] He then wrote to his wife that Sorabji ("a stranger") was "much more violent [than Varèse] in his condemnation of every single idea I submitted to him", but that he did not feel hurt but rather "very much amused".[108] Two years later he published an article in the *Boston Evening Transcript* on "the most enigmatic composer now living", including a description of *Opus clavicembalisticum* and reproducing the "solicited biographical note" he had received.[109] As we have seen in chapter 4, he eventually undertook the research necessary to correct Sorabji's inaccurate year of birth.

Sorabji had bad memories of his first stay in Bombay. He recalled being asked to preside over a large table crowded with relatives and wondered why he should be expected, "for no other reasons than they happen to be blood relations", to take to his heart people most of whom he would prefer to

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[105]Sorabji's business card at the time introduced him as "Composer and Critic / Musical Critic of the NEW AGE / Contributor to the Musical Press / Member of Editorial Board Dunstan CYCLOPÆDIC DICTIONARY OF MUSIC".

[106]"Hindoo Music", in Ralph Dunstan, ed., *A Cyclopædic Dictionary of Music*, 4th ed. (London: J. Curwen, 1925), 244; repr., Da Capo Press Music Reprint Series, New York: Da Capo Press, 1973).

[107]Nicolas Slonimsky to KSS, 3 December 1932; 10 February 1933; 7 April 1933; KSS to Slonimsky, 23 March 1933, reproduced in Slonimsky, *Music since 1900*, 4th ed., 1971, 519–20 (entry for 1 December 1930).

[108]Letter, Nicolas Slonimsky to Dorothy Adlow, 6 July 1933, in Slonimsky, *Dear Dorothy: Letters from Nicolas Slonimsky to Dorothy Adlow*, ed. Electra Slonimsky Yourke, Eastman Studies in Music, vol. 95 (Rochester, N.Y.: University of Rochester and Boydell & Brewer, 2012), 95–98; 96.

[109]Slonimsky, "Ranging Round the World of Music: Persian Composer", *The Boston Evening Transcript*, 9 February 1935: pt. 3, 4–5; 5; repr. in *Writings on Music*, 4 vols. (New York: Routledge, 2004–2005), 1:152–54.

avoid like the plague. It seems that, in the late 1970s, someone claiming such a connection wanted to call on him. Unsurprisingly, he "promptly and uncompromisingly vetoed", saying that he only saw his closest friends, and then even all too rarely, and had no time for strangers, whoever they might be. He asked the would-be visitor to warn "any others of the Bombay crowd" that they ought not to "take me" now that he had become known, whereas they had shown no appreciation of his work during his stay in the 1930s, and that "my sort are emphatically NOT the sort to be picked up like a pretty pebble on the beach".[110]

In June 1933 Sorabji and his mother travelled to Bombay for a second time, that "accused city, natural home of all boredom, tedium and dullness, not to mention utter artistic and intellectual stagnation". They arrived at the beginning of June and, after staying for a while with their Indian cousins, moved into the Hotel Majestic, which was run and managed by Italians, with whom they felt at home.[111] Occasional visits to the cinema allowed Sorabji to escape the "dreary wastes of Bombay-boredom". As a result of the equipment used, the films were only caricatures of what had originally been intended. Nevertheless, he enjoyed *Don Quixote* (1933) by the Austrian director G. W. [Georg Wilhelm] Pabst (1885–1967), starring the Russian bass Fyodor Chaliapin (1873–1938).[112] A performance by Uday Shankar (1900–1977), the dancer who brought the classical dance of India to the Western world, again prompted him to comment negatively on the music. In his performance, he exemplified the "usual monotonously mechanical manipulation of a very circumscribed range of development devices of the most primitive and rudimentary kind such as European music outgrew centuries and centuries ago".[113] His criticism of the music prompted an open letter from two of Shankar's musicians to the *New English Weekly*. This led to another lengthy article on Indian music, in which Sorabji pointed out that his comments in no way represented his "invariable nor considered opinion upon *all* Indian music" he had heard. He insisted that there was "absolutely nothing whatsoever in Indian music that cannot be parallelled or has not its analogues in European music at some time or other, in some place or other".[114]

Some twelve years before his journey to India, Sorabji had experienced its music through the "lucid, masterly, and profoundly illuminating discourses on the subject" given by Ananda Coomaraswamy (1877–1947) and the second of his four wives, Alice Richardson (1889–1958), who used the Indian name of Ratan Devī for her career as a singer.[115] During his stay in Bombay, as "an escape […] from the insufferable tedium of the journey", he attended two lectures on Indian music by a Muslim lady whom he preferred to "cover with the decent cloak of anonymity". The "pretentious verbiage and the sort of high-sounding twaddle of the arty coteries of suburbdom" that he heard from this lady were in sharp contrast to the London lectures.[116] Another woman well versed in Indian music with whom Sorabji may have been in contact on the occasion of lecture-recitals is the Irish violinist, singer, and theosophist Maud MacCarthy (1882–1967), wife of the composer John Foulds (1880–1939). The name "Kaikhosan

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[110]KSS to ABP, undated (late 1970s or early 1980s).

[111]KSS to EC, 22 August 1933, 1, 2.

[112]Sorabji, "Music", *NEW* 4, no. 2 (26 October 1933): 40.

[113]Sorabji, "Music", *NEW* 4, no. 3 (2 November 1933): 65–66. Uday Shankar was the brother of the celebrated sitarist Ravi Shankar (1920–2012).

[114]Sorabji, "Correspondence", *NEW* 5, no. 5 (17 May 1934): 110–12; 110–11.

[115]In his suggestions for further reading in the article on "Hindoo Music" for Ralph Dunstan's dictionary discussed earlier in this chapter, Sorabji mentioned the books *Indian Music* (1917) by Coomaraswamy and *Thirty Indian Songs* [*recte Thirty Songs from the Panjab and Kashmīr*] (1913) by Devī.

[116]Sorabji, "Music", *NEW* 2, no. 6 (24 November 1932): 136–38.

[*sic*] Sorabji, Esq." is mentioned in a 1935 document found in her papers entitled "List of People Interested in Puppets".[117]

The memory of these lectures certainly lurks behind var. 53 of the "Interludium alterum" from *Opus clavicembalisticum*, which is to be played "Quasi tambura". This is a rare case in Sorabji's music, for his exotic inspiration came from Spain and Persia. He later wrote that, apart from this passage, he had never "made any deliberate nor conscious attempt to 'blend' occidental and oriental methods", thus forgetting that, in the mid-1930s, he had included a "Quasi rāg indiana" as var. 34 of his *Symphonic Variations for Piano*.[118] Later in life he still felt the need to return to the subject of Indian music by devoting a few pages to its perception by both Indian and Western critics.[119]

Mother and son soon discovered that the hearing of the case—either to obtain their share of Shapurji Sorabji's inheritance or the annulment of the bigamous marriage—was to be postponed until October; they had arrived a full three months early and would have to stay until November or they would miss their Italian boat. Bombay was "utterly repugnant and hateful to us, the life, the habits, the pace itself and everything". The heat, the mosquitoes, and the rain made everything painful; the baseboard of Sorabji's typewriter even became covered with fungi and mould twice in one week despite being stored in its case and then again in a tight cupboard. The case caused Sorabji "endless worries and anxieties" because of "the incredible stupidity of our English solicitor who has pretty well messed up our chances of a successful outcome from the beginning".[120] In early December 1933, "after endless delays, of the most nerve-racking kind, the whole filthy business" came to an end, not at all to the benefit of the Sorabjis, who received "a paltry sum of a few hundreds" as consolation. Shapurji Sorabji had excluded them from his will in favour of Visvonata Catcar and of his adopted son. Mother and son could have settled for about £4,000 (£302,100 in 2021), but they were "persuaded into declining it in the hope of getting better terms". The two Indian heirs received about £6,000 a year (£453,200 in 2021), that is, "enough to publish in one year very nearly everything I have ever written…"[121]

The absence of any supplementary income from inheritance meant that the Sorabjis would have only "enough to live on comfortably, *no more*… any prospect of my ever having any work published again recedes into the impossible as we could not afford it upon the income that we have from the Trust".[122] This would also mean withdrawing his financial support to an unidentified person (most likely a musician) who resented this change and at intervals sent "letters of scurrilous abuse coupled with vague threats". Sorabji ignored these threats, the last of which informed him that letters would be sent "to Delius, Newman, Becket Williams, and others unspecified telling the whole story".[123]

The trip to Bombay must have come as a shock to both Sorabji and his mother, who learned that Shapurji Sorabji had been living with another woman since 1905 and had married her in 1929. We may assume that they soon began to prepare a legal case in this matter. In fact, around 1936, Madeline filed a suit for the annulment of the bigamous marriage, which was declared null and void by the Supreme Court of Justice of Lisbon, Portugal, in July 1949 (see chapter 1). Apart from occasional comments

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[117]Maud MacCarthy is mentioned in Nalini Ghuman, "'Persian Composer-Pianist Baffles': Kaikhosru Sorabji", in *Resonances of the Raj: India in the English Musical Imagination, 1897–1947* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2014), 250n31. See also the booklet for the exhibition *Pioneering Spirit: Maud MacCarthy—Mysticism, Music and Modernity*, History of Art Research Portal, University of York, 7 February to 9 May 2014, https://hoaportal.york.ac.uk/hoaportal/pioneering-spirit.jsp.

[118]KSS to RS, 17 May 1960.

[119]Sorabji, "Indian Music and Indian and Western Musical Criticism", in *MCF*, 229–34.

[120]KSS to EC, 22 August 1933, 1–2.

[121]KSS to EC, 18 December 1933, 1–2.

[122]KSS to EC, 18 December 1933, 2.

[123]KSS to EC, 22 August 1933, 2.

about Parsis not being Indians, a rare mention of Sorabji's distant relatives from this point on in his correspondence is a reference to "my cousin" saying how unable he was to compete with the Japanese, who imported raw cotton from India and sold the manufactured goods back to them over a barrier of high import duties.[124]

This difficult period was nevertheless a creative one. In addition to the *Quintet II for Piano and String Quartet*, Sorabji composed the *Fantasia ispanica* and the short *Pasticcio capriccioso sopra l'op. 64, no 1 del Chopin*. The second work, as mentioned in the dedication to Alec Rowley, was written in "the accursed, poisonous and pestilent city of Bombay". He summed up his attitude to India in the mid-1950s in no uncertain terms. Everything in that country had been quite painful to the English-born and educated composer and writer on his first visit to the subcontinent.

> I seem to have undergone a good deal of change of ideas during the last few years as a result of a visit to India and finding out for myself the unutterable baseness, corruption and rascality of the average Hindu, and a vivid realization [of] what an utter catastrophe it was that the English ever abdicated their rule of that country which they were forced to by Wall St. and the American-Jewish financiers in the furtherance of what the Russians are perfectly right in calling "dollar-imperialism". [...] Anyone who has spent only a few months in India let alone the greater part of a lifetime knows that it is a physical martyrdom.[125]

Probably while he was stranded in Bombay or some time afterwards, Sorabji became a member of the India League, but resigned in 1944 at the latest. He wrote about this to a friend of Philip Heseltine's who wanted to see him play his published piano concerto under Sir Adrian Boult at a concert given in aid of the Bengal famine. He refused because he was sure that Sir Adrian cared little for him; after all, he had decided to ban his music from being performed in England. Sorabji did not want to be associated with a body using a "tone of ever increasingly abject sycophancy and toadying and lickspittling to the Kremlin"; after all, he and his mother had already contributed to the cause of the Bengal famine through the Parsi association of which he was a member.[126]

Sorabji's only contact with India after his return to London was a chapter entitled "The Validity of the Aristocratic Principle" in a *Festschrift* in honour of the Indo-American art historian Ananda Kentish Coomaraswamy (1877–1947), a book of forty essays with two of the composer's favourite authors, René Guénon (1886–1951) and Anthony M. Ludovici (1882–1971), among the contributors.[127] Sorabji may have been invited to contribute by Philip Mairet, the *New English Weekly*'s assistant editor, who had married one of Coomaraswamy's four wives (from 1903 to 1913), Ethel Mary Partridge (1872–1952), an influential weaver, and whose paper occasionally published open letters by Coomaraswamy.

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[124]KSS to RS, 7 November 1961, 1.

[125]KSS to CMG, 20 August 1955.

[126]P. J. Lamb to KSS, 26 April 1944; KSS to Lamb, 30 April 1944. Sorabji's lampoon of Sir Adrian may be quoted here: "If twere a 'bus instead of a band / Boult's conducting one *might* stand. / But hear him operate on music / Will surely make all of you sick." KSS to EC, 3 June 1930, 17 (section dated 14 June).

[127]Sorabji, "The Validity of the Aristocratic Principle", in *Art and Thought: Issued in Honour of Dr. Ananda K. Coomaraswamy on the Occasion of His 70th Birthday*, ed. K. Bharatha Iyer (London: Luzac, 1947), 214–17. Krishna Bharatha Iyer (1903–70) published several books on Indian art. The book's jacket changes the subtitle to reflect the honouree's death just before publication to "A Volume in Honour of the late [...]". It also adds the following description: "Forty authoritative and original contributions by the leading scholars, art-critics and thinkers of the East and West on the art and thought of the great traditional cultures of India, China, Tibet, Babylonia, Persia and Europe. The Hindu, Buddhist, Jain, Christian and Islamic civilizations in all their varied aspects." Luzac & Company, located at 46 Great Russell Street, London WC1 (opposite the British Museum), was a bookshop that operated from 1890 to 1986. The company, which sold and published books on the Middle and Far East, was founded in Holland in the early eighteenth century by Jean Luzac. See "About us" on the website of Jarndyce Antiquarian Booksellers (https://www.jarndyce.co.uk/about.php), which is located at this address.

Sorabji had also been familiar with his writings since at least 1925.[128] In the opening paragraph of his piece, he described him as "one of the most brilliant, profound and subtle of contemporary thinkers". He did not refrain from alluding to his own racial origins, for as a contributor he counted himself among "men of all nationalities and ways of thinking". He added that "a Spanish-Sicilian Parsi may not be considered amiss on this ground even if he should, as he probably will be, on others, particularly as he is of those who utterly reject, that loose, imprecise and largely meaningless word 'Indian,' as being in any manner of way applicable to him or them." In later life he made it clear that he had "HATED Bombay and formed no high idea of the politically minded Indians whom I met. They were as full of cant and humbug as you expect the politically minded everywhere to be. They tried to rope ME into their 'independence' stuff, doubtless to exploit the advertisement value of my name."[129] Sorabji sent a copy of this typescript to a friend, insisting that he read it rather than the published version, which was "full of shocking misprints".[130]

The Shapurji Sorabji Trust and Sorabji's Finances

We already know that the composer's father, Shapurji Sorabji, had returned to Bombay after his marriage to Madeline Matilda Worthy to look after his business, and that he had set up a trust fund to provide them with an income. The absent father probably did this at the suggestion of Madeline's friend Emily Edroff-Smith, who had argued for an allowance for the son.[131] Shapurji Sorabji therefore set up a trust fund in October 1914 to provide a life income for his wife and son and in November 1924 appointed the latter as trustee for the purposes of the previous deed.[132] On 5 May 1933 Madeline appointed her son and Bernard Bromage as joint trustees, in replacement of her deceased husband. Then, on 29 May 1941, she appointed herself as a trustee following Bromage's request (technically at least) to be removed from the trust. In fact, Bromage had somehow acted improperly in his capacity as trustee, leading to his exclusion from the composer's circle of friends (see chapter 12). Finally, on 20 November 1992, Alistair Hinton, as executor of Sorabji's will, returned the balance of the trust from which the composer and his mother had benefited during several decades to the legal heirs of the Shapurji Sorabji Trust. Sorabji was fully aware that the trust would revert to the Indian relatives "when I conk out if without issue as, of course, I shall".[133]

It has often been said that Sorabji was wealthy. He was never a rich man, but he never had—or cared—to be gainfully employed (his work as a music critic provided no financial remuneration). The trust fund from which he benefited gave him an annual allowance of £100 (£6,726 in 2021), to which were added a further £50 in 1930 and £20 from his aunt's investment (probably Blanche Winifred).[134] From this Sorabji sometimes helped friends: in the late 1920s he gave about £200 (£13,450 in 2021) "to help one or two people", which he considered "not bad for hate of the human race".[135]

Something similar happened at the latest in June 1930 with the "*accursed* affair of M.", which is discussed in several letters. It seems that a woman whom he called "M." wanted Sorabji to bear the costs of framing, packing, and shipping a number of unframed "representative drawings" for an exhibition. At one point, this unidentified person was "safely out of reach and can't plague, worry and

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[128]Sorabji, "Letters to the Editor: Musical Criticism", *NA* 36, no. 23 (2 April 1925): 275.
[129]KSS to KD, postmarked 20 December 1984 {Derus, S65, p. 340}.
[130]KSS to RS, 3 April 1961, 1.
[131]*RN* (23–26 October 1972), 9 {3/F.3}.
[132]"Declaration of Trust", made by Shapurji Sorabji, 1 Guildhall Chambers, Basinghall Street, London, in front of [W.] L. Wescott, 140 Strand, London, Solicitor, 16 October 1914; "Trust Deed and Deed of Appointment", 7 November 1924.
[133]KSS to FH, undated (received on 17 January 1959) {1/F.21}.
[134]KSS to EC, 23 November 1931; 3 May 1930, 9 (section dated 10 May); 27 December 1930.
[135]KSS to EC, 17 June 1930, 10 (section dated 28 June).

pester me any more" and would have a surprise in store in the form of a "categorical NO" if another request for help came.[136] Sorabji decided to put his foot down when it happened again.

> I have hardened and stiffened emotionally a great deal these last few months, I am glad to say, and tales that even a mere year ago would have made me rush to do something quite crazy and quixotic to help, now leave me utterly unmoved, and more than a little irritated and disgusted when I see them used as a mere pretext to try and induce me to make still further insane sacrifices! You will see that I have grown very callous and hard, if you like, but I think it is high time that happened, don't you?[137]

By the end of 1931 Sorabji's father was suffering heavy losses that would prevent him from paying for the publication of any new works.[138] The son reported to Erik Chisholm that his weekly allowance would be reduced to ten bob (shillings) a week (£36.14 in 2021) and the payment of his bills, which would preclude any trip to Glasgow. He had to conclude that "my generosity days are over for good" and no sudden influx of money would induce him to give "a single sou".[139]

Sorabji did not see himself as the "pampered son of a very wealthy father", as Chisholm once put it. The father, at the time of his death, appeared to have an annual net income of between £5,000 and £7,000 (£369,300 and £517,000 in 2021); his mother lived on less than one sixth of that, plus the "lordly allowance of £100 a year" (£7,385 in 2021).[140] Sorabji took steps to increase the value of the trust money and, by the mid-1950s, the advice he received enabled him to double the capital value of his investment.[141]

In 1958 Sorabji found himself in financial difficulties due to the expenses he had incurred in providing accommodation for his mother. He had to cancel a planned holiday due to some "unpleasant patches of 'running in the red'".[142] In 1959 he replied to Chisholm's comment about his "newly acquired wealth" that the very small income he received from his mother's passing "could not possibly run to any such schemes as you suggest". He had to sell several prized possessions to help pay the nursing home fees and owed several thousand pounds to the bank and the building society for his cottage.[143] When his own health deteriorated to the point that he could no longer stay in his home, it fell to Alistair Hinton to sell many of his possessions (especially his book collection, not to mention The Eye) to pay for the nursing home.

Throughout his life, Sorabji had enough money to live with his mother in the English capital and later to afford a house in Corfe Castle. Mother and son may not have been rich, but with good planning they had enough money for occasional trips to the continent. The composer-critic certainly received the recordings he reviewed for free, spent money on books and scores, and had his manuscripts bound by qualified professionals. There is no evidence that he ever spent money on useless objects, luxury clothing, and extravagant meals—although he did enjoy liqueurs and sweet wines and was fond of collecting various objects (see chapter 17).

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[136]KSS to EC, 18 September 1931, 2, 6; 12 August 1931, 2; 22 August 1931, 2; 24 January 1932, 15 (section dated 20 March).
[137]KSS to EC, June 1932 (no day given), 2.
[138]KSS to EC, 18 September 1931, 8–9.
[139]KSS to EC, 14 December 1931.
[140]KSS to EC, 11 May 1949, 1.
[141]KSS to FH, 31 May 1956 {1/F.18}.
[142]KSS to FH, 14 June 1958 {1/F.20}.
[143]KSS to EC, 18 February 1960, 2. The schemes to which Sorabji refers are not identified, but could be related to the recording or publication of some of his works.

12 / 1932–36 ■ A Composer "Who Incidentally, Merely, Plays the Piano"

Pianistic Abilities, Instruments, and Pianists

Unlike the great composer-pianists of the late nineteenth century whom he greatly admired, Sorabji did not devote a significant part of his career to public performance. He was a composer who played the piano without ever considering a career as a virtuoso. He often played excerpts from his works in private for friends and, in the early part of his career, occasionally offered the same privilege to a few others who were not known to have been part of his close circle. There is no documentary evidence that he ever played any music other but his own, even to friends, other than two testimonials. Clinton Gray-Fisk mentioned that his private performances "have sometimes included, by way of light relief, his own hysteria-inducing perversions of mellifluous morceaux such as 'The Maiden's Prayer' [...]", that is, *Modlitwa dziewicy*, the famous salon piece by Tekla Bądarzewska-Baranowska (1829 or 1834–61).[1] Alistair Hinton recalls that Sorabji played to him Scriabin's *Feuillet d'album*, op. 58, and excerpts from other late pieces to him when he was in his eighties.

Sorabji had begun to play the piano around 1900, that is, at the age of eight. Although he probably received advice from Emily Edroff-Smith, a piano teacher and friend of his mother, he had no formal piano teacher (or at least one known by name). He was therefore a largely self-taught pianist—and this is evident from the private recordings made in the 1960s. In 1916 he toyed with the idea of playing some of Scriabin's pieces in public but doubted his ability to convey his feelings to his listeners; he felt that he would play his pieces "as finely as anyone living" if he were not "so hampered technically and physically".[2] A rare comment by someone who heard him at the piano, albeit at a party in the 1920s, the composer C. W. [Charles Wilfred] Orr (1893–1976), is that he played like "a little mouse scurrying over the keys".[3]

Sorabji's first documented performance was of the *Sonata no. 1 for Piano*, given privately to Busoni in November 1919. The master's comment was that he himself "could not have played it better"; at least that is how Sorabji reported his assessment.[4] Christopher à Becket Williams, who had heard Sorabji play the work several times (obviously in private), but wrote to promote his friend's music, spoke of "a revelation in technical facility which few would even attempt to emulate".[5] The composer gave his first known public performance of this work at Mortimer Hall in November 1920 and then accompanied the soprano Marthe Martine in his *Trois poèmes pour chant et piano* in Paris in June 1921;

[1]Clinton Gray-Fisk, "Kaikhosru Shapurji Sorabji", *MT* 101, no. 1406 (April 1960): 230–32; 232.

[2]KSS to PH, 27 August 1916 {*LPH*, no. 27, p. 110}.

[3]Recollection told to and quoted by John Mitchell, "Peter Warlock and Kaikhosru Sorabji", *The Peter Warlock Society Newsletter*, no. 92 (Spring 2013): 1–15; 2.

[4]Sorabji, "Meeting with Busoni", undated, typescript (1 p.).

[5]Christopher à Becket Williams, "Kaikhosru Sorabji's First Piano Sonata", *The Musical Standard*, 26 March 1921: 104.

no critical comments on his playing are available for these performances. The reviews of his recitals in Vienna and London (13 January 1922, 13 May 1924) also discuss only the music.

Sorabji played four times in Glasgow during the 1930s at the concerts organized by Erik Chisholm. The first one, given on 1 April 1930, was part of a series of "Recitals of National Music"; the others, given on 1 December 1930, 29 April 1931, and 16 December 1936, were sponsored by Chisholm's Active Society for the Propagation of Contemporary Music. (There may even have been two ASPCM concerts: one, planned for 1 September 1930, was to feature Sorabji's music arranged for two pianos by Chisholm and Harold Thomson; another, planned for 15 March 1932, was to have been devoted to chamber works, with Sorabji among the performers.[6]) The second of these concerts, at which he premiered *Opus clavicembalisticum*, prompted one critic to complain that "his prevailing tone is not very beautiful, and his loud chords in the upper reaches of the instrument are, to me at least, extremely disagreeable".[7] On the other hand, for the *Glasgow Herald*, Sorabji played his music faster than he intended to, which may have been the result of his "marvellous technic". His playing was apparently more astonishing than in his previous Glasgow appearance, with the last pages "delivered with amazing power and abandon".[8] The third recital featured *Nocturne, "Jāmī"*, and the same critic commented that the composer "showed himself once more as a pianist with a remarkably subtle command of the keyboard".[9] However, after his last recital, devoted to the *Toccata seconda per pianoforte*, he seemed "unwilling, or was perhaps temperamentally unable, to control a tendency to be impatient with the quieter moods"; he seemed "seldom still" and roved wildly.[10] In addition to these performances, Sorabji played *Le jardin parfumé—Poem for Piano Solo* on the BBC on 22 April 1930 (see chapter 8). The broadcast elicited comments on the music (from friends) but none on the performance itself.

The music these critics heard was completely new and in a category of its own. Moreover, listeners must have been impressed simply to see a pianist emerge unscathed from the performance of such mammoth works. Sorabji tended to rush through his works rather than give polished performances. He described himself as "a composer—who *incidentally*, *merely*, plays the piano", and that "I can […] get over the ground quite effectively *and* effectually in my own works indeed, probably far better than anyone else could, but that is all".[11] Another example of his self-assessment is this: "I never pretended to be a pianist. As I'm never tired of saying, I could no more play a Beethoven Sonata or a Chopin Ballade than I could fly."[12] Part of Sorabji's lack of interest in preparing careful performances resulted from his placing composition above performance. The "fleeting, evanescent nature of performance counted for nothing as against the claims of creative work". He stopped any "sustained regular technical work" at the keyboard because his creative work was increasingly absorbing his time and energy. Playing the piano, like going to concerts, had come to "bore him unutterably".[13]

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[6]Patrick Shannon, "Correspondence", *The Scottish Musical Magazine* 11, no. 10 (August 1930): 186. The data on the 1932 concert is taken from an unidentified press cutting (dated 16 January 1932, provided by the press-cutting service of Romeike & Curtice) found in the composer's collection. The organist Harold Thomson (1906–80) taught at Glasgow University and later became vice-principal at the Royal Scottish Academy of Music.

[7]P. (Our Music Critic), "Parsi Composer: Sorabji's 'Largest Scale' Pianoforte Work", unidentified Glasgow newspaper clipping, early December 1930.

[8]Our Music Critic, "Sorabji in Glasgow: Active Society Recital—'Opus clavicembalisticum'", *The Glasgow Herald*, 2 December 1930, 6e.

[9]"Active Society—Final Concert of the Season: Sorabji and Walton", *The Glasgow Herald*, 30 April 1931, 12b.

[10]"Sorabji in Glasgow: Active Society Concert", *The Glasgow Herald*, 17 December 1936, 13.

[11]KSS to EC, 25 December 1929, 2; 8 April 1930, 4.

[12]KSS to ABP, 7 July 1981.

[13]KSS to FH, 13 March 1957 {1/F.19}; KSS to FH, 5 October 1953 {1/F.15}; KSS to CE, 3 February 1947.

Sorabji made some private recordings for Erik Chisholm in 1962 and many more for Frank Holliday in 1962, 1963, 1964, 1965, and 1968; he was then in his seventies. The latter, who was not a professional musician, was unable (or unwilling) to see the flaws in the playing of his friend, who could do no wrong. His essay "Splendour upon Splendour: On Hearing Sorabji Play" is a rather naive testimony of an admirer enjoying the affection of someone he considered a genius, and his comments are not on the piano playing but on the effect of the music on him.[14] Chisholm, on the other hand, was a seasoned professional who was not blind to the technical problems that marred his friend's performances. Confiding in Norman Gentieu, he explained in connection with the recording of the *Third Symphony for Piano Solo* that

> Sorabji doesn't practise the piano any more & in the 3rd Symphony made dozens of mistakes (he himself says 100s of mistakes). Moreover, he doesn't always (actually seldom) *bring out* the main theme of the texture & makes rhythmical inaccuracies. Nevertheless, he gives a general impression of the *sound* of his music[,] which no one else alive can do: it may sound confused, & meaningless—or does often sound this way—merely an unending stream of notes—: this impression must be corrected by referring to the score of the piece when it will at once become apparent that on the contrary his music has been better organized and thought out.[15]

In one of the most perceptive pieces of writing about Sorabji, Chisholm insisted to Holliday on the approximate and improvisatory nature of his friend's playing, even going so far as to refuse to hear any more of it unless it was carefully rehearsed. His final remark about John Ogdon is prophetic.

> Now, when I follow from the score "Gulistan" and the other pieces you have recorded, it is evident that what K.S. plays is only an approximation of what he has written: so that, far from his own performances being authentic […] they really amount to almost a travesty of his own music. He is extemporising half the time and in the fugal sections he replaces the carefully worked out, intellectually designed patterns with something much freer, etc. In his score he will mark certain passages to be played prominently, but fails to do so in performance, and allows decorative or subsidiary material to completely swamp the themes, so that, judging the music on *sound* alone, most of it is unintelligible.
>
> I know that extemporisation is a basic feature of his style, but it is a little disturbing to see the modicum of discrepancy between what he has written and what he plays. For this reason, therefore, I am not interested in having any more K.S. tapes, that is, unless you can persuade him to put in an awful lot of practising before a recording session. Do you think perhaps his reluctance to play any published works may be a certain awareness that a "check up" by an unsympathetic listener might be revealing?
>
> Of course, as you say, [Holliday added: "I didn't"] he is crazy not to let a pianist of John Ogdon's calibre play Op. Clav., for this might well have meant the beginning of a real appreciation of his art.[16]

Chisholm saw another problem with Sorabji's music: its careless writing. Sorabji always wrote music at a fast and steady place, never (or hardly ever) looking back, as the extremely rare emendations show; this explains the many problems faced by modern editors. Chisholm also noted how Sorabji's parts "do not always add up accurately".[17] Despite his perceptive comments on Sorabji's playing, he described him as a "fabulous pianist" whose performance of *Opus clavicembalisticum* was "equally astonishing judged purely as a display of pianistic virtuosity". Sorabji might have had "sensational success" as a concert pianist with the "staggering" performances that he gave in the 1930s.[18]

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[14]Frank Holliday, "Splendour upon Splendour: On Hearing Sorabji Play", repr. in *SCC*, 420–24.
[15]EC to NG, 23 February 1962 {20/F.33}.
[16]EC to FH, 28 August 1964 {4/F.13}.
[17]EC to FH, 5 February 1965 {4/F.13}.
[18]Chisholm, *The Composer Sorabji*, 3.

Alistair Hinton believes that Sorabji's recordings were "woefully under-practised" and regrets that Holliday was unable to convince his friend how much practice was needed for a project of this magnitude. In his opinion, we find the best playing in the selections from the *Études transcendantes*, because they "do sound as though K. had actually done some work, which much of the rest of the recordings don't".[19]

Michael Habermann, who worked on Sorabji's music in the early 1970s, asked him about the discrepancies between the music and his performances. The composer felt fully entitled to take liberties with his own works, and that such liberties were dictated "by the condition of my fingers at any particular time when I was recording", since the music as printed only embodied his intentions.[20]

Sorabji practised on a silent Virgil Clavier because it was "noiseless and so no wear and tear on one's *own* nerves as well as those of others".[21] The Virgil Clavier was a silent keyboard patented in 1892 by the American Almon Kincaid Virgil (1839 or 1842–1921). It looked much like a celesta and had folding legs, making it a portable instrument; however, the seven-octave model weighed more than ninety pounds. Among its proponents were Vladimir de Pachmann and Moritz Moszkowski.[22] By 1930 Sorabji's instrument was practically worn out, and he wanted "one of those splendid American 'Tek' [Tekniklavier] claviers—a new edition and enormously improved version of the ordinary Virgil clavier", also known as the Techniphone, the trade name under which the instrument was manufactured. He does not appear to have purchased another instrument at this time and probably discarded his silent keyboard after it had served its useful life. On two subsequent occasions, in 1950 and 1964, he considered buying another such instrument. In 1964 he came across one but had second thoughts about it, mainly because the "very very little use" he would put it to made the purchase unnecessary.[23] In the 1930s he seems to have used a device to strengthen his fingers.[24]

In 1916 Sorabji begged Philip Heseltine "to have nothing to do with anything but Steinways".[25] In 1921 he bought a Mason & Hamlin parlour grand piano.[26] This firm's instruments had an "astonishing beauty of tone and immense amplitude of sonority" and were "quite in a class by themselves".[27] Ten years later, regretting that he had missed the "bargain of a lifetime" for financial reasons, he made sure not to miss the next opportunity when, in the same dealer's showroom, he spotted an 1896 Steinway, a larger one that had previously served in a Glasgow cinema. It was to be his "on the easy" for a number of years, and the dealer would keep it for him as long as necessary. Sorabji would "go in whenever I am

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[19]AH to MAR, 15 May 2012. Hinton recalls that Sorabji could span a tenth, but not easily, and that intervals such as B–D♯ or E♭–G would have been "slightly problematic for him"; AH to MAR, 30 June 2020.

[20]KSS to Michael Habermann, 28 February 1972, reproduced in Habermann, "Sorabji's Piano Music", in *SCC*, 362.

[21]KSS to FH, 19 July 1964 {2/F.5}.

[22]See Dorothea Agnes Nahm, "The Virgil Clavier and Keyboard Pedagogy Method" (D.M.A. diss., Washington: The Catholic University of America, 1983), and Dorothea Agnes Nahm and Robert E. Sheldon, "The Virgil Practice Clavier", in *Encyclopedia of the Piano*, 2nd ed., ed. Robert Palmieri and Margaret W. Palmieri (New York and London: Routledge, 2003), 438–40 (includes a photograph). For a photograph of the Virgil Clavier in the collection of the Royal College of Music, see MIMO (Musical Instrument Museums Online) or MINIM-UK (Musical Instruments Interface for Museums and Collections), http://minim.ac.uk/index.php/explore/?filter=virgil.

[23]KSS to EC, 15 October 1930, 3 (section dated 19 October), 11 November 1930; KSS to CE, undated (1950?, from Lindisfarne); KSS to FH, 19 July 1964 {2/F.5}; KSS to FH, 19 July 1964 {2/F.5}532 .

[24]KSS to EC, June 1932, 7 (section dated 6 June).

[25]KSS to PH, 27 August 1916 {*LPH*, no. 27, p. 109}.

[26]Sorabji's piano (figured mahogany, Style BB-1, 6 feet 11 3/4 inches, no. 29882) carried a price of $2,050 (£532 at the time, or £25,100 in 2021); "Mason & Hamlin Cash Prices at Our Warerooms in Boston and New York" (advertisement dated 1 January 1922).

[27]Sorabji, "Towards a New Piano", *Musical News and Herald* 47, no. 1694 (13 September 1924): 216–17; 216; repr. with modifications) as "Towards a New Keyboard Instrument of the Piano Type", in *AM*, 206–12.

passing and run my fingers over the dear lovely thing".[28] The instrument was "another of the Steinways of the great old days." For Sorabji, "the present products of the house will not bear comparisons, side by side, with these glorious veterans"; in particular, he found the modern examples "almost impossible to play upon".[29]

Sorabji was sometimes instrumental in buying pianos for friends (and certainly advising them) and would visit showrooms to try them out for them. On one occasion he played an instrument from the great period, a Louis XVI marquetry rosewood case that he described as "a *superb* piece of cabinet work and craftsmanship, so much so that I, who definitely have an aversion to a piano in a decorated case, found myself delighted and attracted by what is really a *superlative* piece of craftsmanship". He was immensely saddened that the instrument was "bought for his home by a JAZZ BAND pianist".[30] He also owned an 1884 Chickering rosewood upright piano, bought in 1938.[31] There was another instrument at Clarence Gate Gardens: his mother's "very fine old" Brinsmead upright piano that, in 1942, he considered having housed by Frank Holliday for reasons of space.[32]

Among the pianos that Sorabji disliked were the Blüthner, the Bösendorfer (initially), and the Moór double keyboard piano. His main concern was that the first two, at seven feet, were "quite inadequate in a Hall".[33] The latter, the invention of the Hungarian composer and pianist Emanuel Moór (1863–1931), had a second keyboard that could be coupled to the first or played separately, sounding an octave higher and allowing, among other things, octave passages to be played as single notes. Although his initial reaction was positive, Sorabji later described the instrument as an atrocity that he would not come within a mile of.[34]

Sorabji's first experience with the Bösendorfer was probably at his Vienna recital in January 1922.[35] He wrote in the early 1930s that the Austrian manufacturer's extension had been carried out "not very successfully"[36] and, in planning his 1936 Glasgow recital, that "I quite definitely will not play on either a Bechstein or a Bösendorfer. It must be a Steinway, *and it must be a Concert grand*." In 1973, however, he praised the Bösendorfer in no uncertain terms.

> And by the way, just round the corner is the Wigmore hall and the London house of the marvellous Bösendorfer pianos with that fabulous Imperial Concert Grand with eight octaves, going down to the 32-foot C. It has to be heard, and have one's fingers running over it to be believed. I have with difficulty torn myself away from it when I've got at it.[37]

In fact, it was not until 1973, in his *Symphonia brevis for Piano*, that he began to use the piano's extra notes regularly. We can assume that the relevant indications, added in some earlier scores in a weaker hand and with thinner strokes, date from this period.

Sorabji left comments on four other instruments: the pianola, the Welte-Mignon, the tuning forks, and the Jankó keyboard. In 1915 he heard the best examples of player pianos under the guidance of Easthope Martin (1882–1925). He wrote to Philip Heseltine, who was planning a Pianola Society: "The

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[28]Sorabji's Steinway (mahogany finish, 7 feet 4 inches, no. 85082) sold for £90 (£6,506 in 2021).

[29]KSS to EC, 18 September 1931, 2, 7; Sorabji, "Views and Reviews: The Pianoforte", *NEW* 3, no. 14 (20 July 1933): 329–30; 329.

[30]KSS to EC, 6 May 1931, 25 (section dated 16 May).

[31]Chickering & Sons to KSS, 25 January 1938; the piano, which obviously was disposed of at some point, bore no. 69751. See also KSS to FH, 17 July 1950 {1/F.12}, where Sorabji specifies that this "wonderful" piano was an upright one.

[32]KSS to FH, 12 May 1942 {1/F.3}.

[33]KSS to EC, 12 January 1930.

[34]Sorabji, "Music", *NA* 44, no. 7 (13 December 1928): 80–81; 80; KSS to EC, 2 January 1930.

[35]KSS to RS, 20 April 1966, 1.

[36]Sorabji, "Towards a New Keyboard Instrument of the Piano Type", in *AM*, 206–12; 207; KSS to EC, 11 October 1936.

[37]KSS to NG, 2 April 1973 {18/F.49}; see also KSS to DG, 3 August 1972, and KSS to CE, 21 September 1978.

possibilities of the pianola are tremendous. They are as yet however possibilities only; and anyone who tries to conceal that is only committing a piece of self-deception." On the other hand, the Welte-Mignon was a marvel that went far beyond the pianola.[38] This device, invented in 1904, made it possible to record pianists' performances on rolls of paper and to play them back on a concert grand using a coupling device with padded mechanical fingers and feet, called a *Vorsetzer*.

Sorabji's attitude to the pianola soon changed. In July 1916 he considered asking the Orchestrelle Co. to prepare a realization of his *Concerto [no. 1] pour piano et grand orchestre* using a version for two pianos four hands.[39] Although he had "always shied hitherto at 2 pianos", he was "completely captivated by the wonderful work" of the Bartlett and Robertson piano duo, who played like "one mind and apparently one set of muscles and one set of nerves controlled from one central nervous system".[40] The two-piano medium remained alien to him and did not interest him any more than the string quartet (see chapter 22).[41]

In 1920 Sorabji he seemed determined to have the Aeolian Co. cut one of his concertos.[42] Indeed, various reviewers had suggested that the appropriate medium for his works was the player piano. For Sorabji, however, large works like his demanded "a highly individualized differentiation of tone and nuance" that the pianola would never be able to give.[43] Despite his astonishment at the improvements made by Frederick H. Evans (1853–1943), he had little hope that the manufacturers would implement them.[44] In 1929 a recital by Reginald Reynolds (1877–1959) prompted him to begin a work for the pianola, but he abandoned it because of "the conservatism and stupid bigotry of musicians towards any new medium of propagating or disseminating music".[45]

The ideal permanent instrument for concert halls, as Sorabji envisioned it, was a sound-producing medium consisting of "big tuning forks mounted on accurately tuned resonating chambers". This had been achieved by Auguste Victor Mustel (1815–90) under the name Typophone, and by Thomas Machell (1841–1915) under the name Dulcitone. Seeking information, Sorabji contacted Vincent d'Indy, who had used this forerunner of the celesta in *Le chant de la cloche*, op. 18 (1879–83), and the French composer kindly wrote a letter of explanation.[46] After hearing the "incredible beauty of tone, sonority, volume and sustaining power" of very large tuning forks made by Karl Rudolf Koenig (1832–1901) in the Science Museum in South Kensington, he imagined a "great tuning-fork concert grand" coupled with a Jankó keyboard. This keyboard invented by the Hungarian musician and engineer Paul von Jankó (1856–1919) consisted of six tiers of short, narrow keys making it possible to compensate for the unequal finger lengths. Sorabji, not surprisingly, attributed the failure of this invention to the "strength of vested interests, the combined apathy, stupidity and mental laziness of musicians".[47]

Sorabji's career as a music critic gave him many opportunities to hear the great pianists of his time; later, as a record reviewer, he was able to spend much time listening to their recordings. He always looked forward to recitals given by the masters whom he had met personally or to whom he had

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[38]KSS to PH, 2 March 1915 {*LPH*, no. 15, p. 92}.

[39]KSS to PH, 6 July 1916 {*LPH*, no. 26, p. 105}.

[40]KSS to EC, 6 May 1931, 34 (section dated 23 May). The English husband-and-wife duo was formed of Ethel Bartlett (1896–1978) and Rae Robertson (1893–1956).

[41]KSS to KD, 30 December 1977 {Derus, S17, p. 80}.

[42]KSS to PH, 21 August 1920 {*LPH*, no. 31, p. 122}. Derus, "Sorabji's Letters to Heseltine", in SCC, 236, suggests that this could be the *Concerto pour piano et grand orchestre [no. 4]* (1918; 100 pp.), adding that Sorabji did not remember this plan.

[43]Sorabji, "Towards a New Piano", *Musical News and Herald* 47, no. 1694 (13 September 1924): 216–17; 217.

[44]Sorabji, "Music", *NA* 38, no. 21 (25 March 1926): 250.

[45]Sorabji, "Music", *NA* 45, no. 26 (24 October 1929): 308–10; 310.

[46]Vincent d'Indy to KSS, 6 December 1923.

[47]Sorabji, "Towards a New Keyboard Instrument of the Piano Type", in *AM*, 206–12; 210–12.

dedicated works. These included Busoni and his disciple Egon Petri as well as Alfred Cortot and Aldo Solito De Solis. Petri, in particular, was a frequent visitor to London, and we find a number of reviews in which Sorabji showered him with praise. Despite his admiration for Leopold Godowsky as a composer and transcriber, he was lukewarm about his playing: his "subdued browns and greys" produced "a monotony that approaches too near dulness". Nevertheless, he called him "a deeply interesting and significant musician, and a very distinguished mind, for all that a glowing imagination, poetry, and high fantasy are not his".[48]

Among the great pianists whom Sorabji admired were Sergei Rachmaninoff (1873–1943), Vladimir Horowitz (1903–89), and Ignacy Paderewski (1860–1941). For him, with Busoni dead, Rachmaninoff was the greatest pianist. He wrote that "to a stupendous technique is added a musical intellect of magnificent power, and that quality of haughty imperious mastery that is the mark of only the very highest".[49] Sorabji's first experience of Horowitz in 1930 was rather negative; he saw "fabulous brilliance and virtuosity, but with not a great deal else".[50] Two years later he noted that the "largeness of treatment and breadth of conception" would come in due time, and that he was "the finest, most interesting of the younger pianists since Solito de [*recte* De] Solis". He had recently attended a recital by Artur Schnabel (1882–1951), who had caused his "receptive faculties to be bludgeoned" by "elephantine pedantries". Horowitz's playing thus seemed to him "the very antithesis of that archetype of laborious, uninspired, scholastic dullness".[51] In later life, however, he remarked to a friend that he had "always INTENSELY disliked that man's playing".[52] Writing of Paderewski's playing, he spoke of "an art stripped of all sentimental appeal, of all concessions to prettiness". This comment gave him the opportunity to fire an arrow at female performers, most of whom he disliked intensely. Calls for the music critic to be sacked would surely pile up on a modern editor's desk.

> After all, do we not […] have our fill to vomiting point of vamplike females whose spiritual home is Hollywood, smearing sex-appeal over Bach, and ladylike little gentlemen tickling the ears of Beethoven with fingers that one is perfectly certain *ought* to be slender and tapering *à la novelette*, or, at any rate *sound* so?[53]

Sorabji's assessment of Myra Hess (1890–1965) and Eileen Joyce (1912–91) balances his negative comments about many female performers. He described Hess as having "a fine phrase sense, a clean, well-defined and articulated sense of structure, shape, and balance, and command of light of shade". Nevertheless, her deferential attitude towards the music prevented its spirit from entering into her and, through her playing, into her listeners. Joyce—who had played some Busoni—possessed "a technique of compellingly sharp precision, and finely articulated clarity". He doubted the validity of her interpretations, though, but concluded that she was "a very fine pianist".[54]

Two other pianists are mentioned to round off this survey: Moriz Rosenthal (1862–1946) and Frederic Lamond (1868–1948). Although he would have preferred from Rosenthal "a profounder insight and a more concentrated seriousness of approach" in a late Beethoven sonata, Sorabji noted that the "grace, elegance, airy nonchalance, the miraculous ease and *désinvolture* of his playing were a ceaseless delight and joy". He praised him for his "incomparable brilliance and fascinating *entrain*, full of piquant effects". As for Lamond, his interpretations of Beethoven had acquired an "authentic

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[48]Sorabji, "Music", *NA* 43, no. 3 (17 May 1928): 32.
[49]Sorabji, "Music", *NA* 35, no. 26 (23 October 1924): 308–9; 308.
[50]Sorabji, "Music", *NA* 48, no. 1 (6 November 1930): 8–9; 9.
[51]Sorabji, "Music", *NEW* 1, no. 2 (28 April 1932): 46; see also "Music", *NA* 46, no. 13 (30 January 1930): 151.
[52]KSS to KD, 16 October 1978 {Derus, S24, p. 113}.
[53]Sorabji, "Music", *NA* 49, no. 25 (22 October 1931): 296–97; 296.
[54]Sorabji, "Music", *NA* 49, no. 25 (22 October 1931): 296–97; "Music", *NEW* 12, no. 25 (31 March 1938): 493–94; 494.

sanctity" because they were "wholly intent upon the music first, last and all the time, with no personal *affichage* nor flaunting of perverse 'readings'".[55]

Looking at the copies of his reprints of little-known Romantic piano music (see later in this chapter) that his American friend Donald Garvelmann had sent him, Sorabji raged once again

> at the supineness of those thrice damned "virtuosi", these perambulating bag-men of the concert platform who go on not only year after year, decade after decade, but GENERATION AFTER GENERATION churning out all the threadbare of the standard repertoire, including OF COURSE *miles and miles* of the SEWING MACHINE COMPOSER (sc. Wolfgang Amadeus) and that UNSPEAKABLE BORE the "Emperor" with that INFURIATING rondo with its goddam silly ta tata tata ta TA.[56]

Sorabji was positive about the harpsichord and its players. He liked the mutation devices that produced "an enchanting organ-like sonority that has no counterpart upon the piano".[57] In 1940, responding to a controversy about the relative merits of the harpsichord and the piano, he saw "no necessity whatsoever [...] to belittle and abuse the piano"; the highest form of music was "a masterpiece, whether that masterpiece be a string quartet, a symphony, a piano sonata or what you will".[58] Sorabji had often attended recitals by Violet Gordon Woodhouse (1872–1948) and Wanda Landowska (1879–1959). He described the former as "one of the supreme keyboard artists of any people or language". He considered the latter to be "a very admirable musician, a most accomplished harpsichordist", but objected to her combining the piano with the harpsichord, as her playing on the modern instrument "becomes lifeless and flaccid, almost entirely deprived of the qualities of crispness, spirit, and vivacity which are to be found in her harpsichord playing".[59]

Admiration for Organists

Sorabji, who seems to have studied the organ in his youth,[60] always had a strong interest in this instrument. He first used it, albeit only as part of a large ensemble, in his *Symphony [no. 1] for Piano, Large Orchestra, Chorus, and Organ* (1921–22); his first work for organ solo, the *Symphony [no. 1] for Organ*, was written shortly afterwards. He then discovered the Estey Organ Company's "very interesting chamber organ" at their London home. He particularly liked the "crisp, clean speech of the pipes" and the "power of the most rapid articulation with no loss of clarity or distinctness" that proved how untrue it was that the organ was "not suitable for the execution of rapidly moving music of complex texture".[61]

In 1929 Sorabji made "the long and perilous journey to the Northern Heights" (of London) twice in a fortnight to hear the 1862 organ of the International Exhibition that "Father" Henry Willis (1821–1901) had restored, renovated, and modernized at Alexandra Palace in 1875. He described it as "a marvel of flexibility, completeness of control, and magnificence of tone".[62] In 1934 he joined a special annual excursion to Liverpool Cathedral, where he examined the console of the largest cathedral organ in England. He concluded his report with a very positive assessment of organists, who seemed to him to be more cultured and capable than other musicians.

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[55]Sorabji, "Music", *NEW* 6, no. 26 (11 April 1935): 538; "Music", *NEW* 12, no. 19 (17 February 1938): 373.
[56]KSS to DG, 25 April 1972.
[57]Sorabji, "Music", *NA* 42, no. 20 (15 March 1928): 236–37; 237.
[58]Sorabji, "Music: Piano and Harpsichord", *NEW* 16, no. 24 (4 April 1940): 355–56; 355.
[59]Sorabji, "Music", *NA* 41, no. 6 (9 June 1927): 69–70; 69.
[60]KSS to CSB, 16 March 1969 [*recte* 1979].
[61]Sorabji, "Music", *NA* 42, no. 24 (12 April 1928): 281.
[62]Sorabji, "Music", *NA* 46, no. 8 (26 December 1929): 93–94.

> Moreover, organists are as a whole much better musicians than those who jeer and ridicule them, particularly the interpretentious [*sic*] conductor-gentry, have so much sounder musicianship, in the best sense of the word, that it is very unlikely, no matter how badly and unimaginatively the piece might be "registered" by an organist [...,] that a work will be quite so deformed and massacred by him as it would be by, let us say, an over-sexed violinist, an exhibitionist conductor of the type that Germany peculiarly specialises in [...] or the pedant-pomposity of a pianist like that gentleman who says that at his recitals the public have a right to be bored, and incidentally shows a hell-given capacity thereunto.[63]

The next annual excursion was to Salisbury Cathedral, where Sorabji heard "one of its builder's finest specimens, well-balanced, flexible, adequate, of fine quality, and perfectly fitted acoustically into the building". His love for the Liverpool instrument was such that he took advantage of the 1936 excursion to experience the organ at St. George's Hall, Liverpool.[64]

Sorabji enjoyed attending organ recitals and particularly enjoyed the music of Reger.[65] Iin addition to his friend E. Emlyn Davies, he singled out Fernando Germani (1906–98) as "the most astonishing organ virtuoso" he had ever heard. The Italian organist had played *Pageant* (1931), in which the American composer Leo Sowerby (1895–1968) had included "probably the most fabulous pedal part in existence, comparable only to some of Godowsky's arrangements of Chopin for left-hand alone".[66] Sorabji certainly did not need a model, for his earlier organ music already contained daunting pedal parts; indeed, he felt sure that he could improve on Sowerby's treacherous writing for the feet. Not all Italian organists impressed him. He recalled a trip to Rome, where he had not heard any playing that "could be for one moment *compared* even with the playing of the village organist at Corfe Castle". Moreover, choral services of the standard of those in London's Temple Church were "beyond the wildest conceptions of these people".[67]

The erudite Bach scholars Donald Francis Tovey (1875–1940) and Albert Schweitzer (1875–1965) lacked, in Sorabji's view, the "force and power of artistic personality to carry the dead weight of so much purely scholarly attainment". He disliked the latter's "inordinate use of reed resulting from his reliance on French taste" and his "apparent insensibility to the immense expressive resources of the modern organ". He also objected to his playing's "wooden inflexibility, its utter lack of distinction or fineness of phasing, its entire want of the finer graces, its lack of artistry, in fact".[68]

Second Symphony for Organ

Sorabji's first work for organ was the short (by Sorabjian standards) *Symphony [no. 1] for Organ*, written in 1924. Five years later he began a massive *Second Symphony for Organ* (1929–32; 350 pp.), followed in 1953 by a final (and somewhat shorter) one, the *Third Organ Symphony*. The manuscript bears a dedication "To E. Emlyn Davies", who had given the first performance of the middle movement of the first symphony in May 1928. The first complete hearing of the second symphony had to wait until 6 June 2010, when Kevin Bowyer performed what, at nine hours, is the longest work by Sorabji ever played.

On Christmas Day 1929, Sorabji wrote that "the first movement of the new Organ Symphony (on 16 themes) is finished and the 3-fold strain theme of the Variation movement is finished". He put it aside until the autumn of 1931, after he had completed the *Symphony no. 0 for Piano Solo*. In August,

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[63]Sorabji, "Music", *NEW* 6, no. 4 (8 November 1934): 89–90.
[64]Sorabji, "Music", *NEW* 7, no. 15 (25 July 1935): 292–93; 292; Sorabji, "Music", *NEW* 10, no. 4 (5 November 1936): 73.
[65]In this respect, see Sorabji, "The Organ Works of Reger", in *AM*, 220–26.
[66]Sorabji, "Music", *NEW* 8, no. 25 (2 April 1936): 499.
[67]KSS to EC, 8 March 1931, 1.
[68]Sorabji, "Music: Dr. Schweitzer", *NA* 51, no. 9 (30 June 1932): 105–6; 105.

probably in response to a question from Erik Chisholm, he had written: "When I take up writing for the Organ I shall return to the Second Organ Symphony and shan't waste energy and time over Chorale Preludes."[69] Work thus resumed on 18 September 1931 at the rate of one variation a day. Sorabji began the final movement in January 1932, expecting it to be "a *tremendous* thing when it's done—fully mature I feel—immensely varied, supple, rich yet unified, compact and closely woven for all its stupendous proportions". He was "working very quietly and leisurely these days—I let days go by without writing a note, just not worrying, knowing well that it will get itself written all in good *and* the right time." By mid-April the work was nearing completion, and "the strain of it is now becoming rather great"; it was completed on 2 May 1932.[70] More than fifty years later, a copy of Kevin Bowyer's then 396-page handwritten edition would rest on a music stand in front of Sorabji as he sat crippled in the nursing home.[71]

Like several of Sorabji's large-scale works, the *Second Symphony for Organ* is in three movements. It begins with an "Introduction" ([ED]pp. 1–48) featuring sixteen ideas; each statement is identified by a circled number in the score, and the entire collection has been heard at least once by the end of the fourth page. Referring to these "thematic strands" woven into the fabric of the work, Sorabji noted: "no one of course is in the least likely to notice this in performance, any more than the spectator who gazes at the mosaics of Monreale at the Cappella Palatina or La Martorana is expected to notice the size and shape of any particular *tessera* of which the mosaic is made up."[72] The theme of the middle movement, a "Thema cum [49] variationibus" (pp. 49–197), has a three-part structure. Each strain is separated from the previous one by a short pause, and the second and third strains are already variations of the first one **(example 12.1)**. Sorabji spoke of "variations of every degree of elaboration from the simplest to the most intricate". Var. 16 covers six staves for the manual (plus one for the pedal part); this is one more than at the end of *Opus clavicembalisticum*, the earliest example of the use of systems of more than four staves. Between var. 43 (the first one of the two so numbered) and var. 48, Sorabji adds circled figures referring to the ideas from the first movement that are worked into the texture. For example, var. 44 uses ideas nos. 1 to 5 and var. 48 uses ideas nos. 1 to 15. The end of var. 49 consists of a "Reminiscenza" of the theme, which is actually an exact restatement. The "Finale" (pp. 198–297) consists of a "Preludio" (pp. 198–210), an "Adagio" (pp. 211–19), a "Toccata" (pp. 220–33), and a "Fuga triplex" (pp. 234–97). The first two fugues are followed by a long stretto, and the last concludes with a very intricate "Coda-Stretta" (pp. 282–97).

Quintet II for Piano and String Quartet / Denis Saurat

Sorabji waited almost ten years before following the *Quintet no. 1 for Piano and Quartet of Stringed Instruments* (1919–20) with a second one. In fact, he was never particularly attracted to chamber music. He "abominate[d] the combination cello and piano or any string *single* instrument and piano. The sound of it makes me feel illegible word not polite to put it in writing." In response to a question from the German conductor Ludwig Wolfgang Simoni (1905–91), he characterized the sound of the string quartet as follows: "I loathe the violin and piano or cello and piano sonata[, I find] that the

[69]KSS to EC, 25 December 1929, 1; 12 August 1931, 1. Chisholm must have been referring to standard chorale preludes as found in the traditional organ repertoire. Sorabji did not write such pieces, but he did include extended chorale preludes in some of his large-scale piano works.

[70]KSS to EC, 18 September 1931, 3, 7; 24 January 1932, 2; 24 January 1932, 2 (section dated 31 January); 24 January 1932, 14 (section dated 4 March); 22 April 1932, 1.

[71]AH to MAR, 24 February 1998.

[72]*A*, 10–12.

combinations [sound] barbarous and that the string quartet is repulsive to me—like four eunuchs it usually sounds." He detested the string quartet, but "conjoined with a piano it can be made—at least by *me*—to produce a tolerable noise". Much later in life, in 1953, he described chamber music combinations as follows: "'po music' someone I once heard of referred to it as... I hastily concur..."[73] Yet, in 1979, he described Florent Schmitt's Piano Quintet, op. 51 (1902–8) as "one of the peaks of French music of this century" and "a passion of mine".[74] Sorabji was not alone in seeing difficulties with the medium. In 1934, obviously referring to the first quintet (the second was unpublished), the composer and conductor Constant Lambert wrote that the piano quintet "from Schumann to Sorabji" had always been "an unsatisfactory medium", with Arnold Bax probably being the only one to come close to finding a solution.[75] Although he does not discuss Sorabji further, Lambert's main point concerns climaxes "with material of a heroic-lyrical nature".

Sorabji may have already begun the *Quintet II for Piano and String Quartet* (1932–33; 432 pp.) in late 1929, for he wrote at the time that "the 2nd Quintet reposes for a while". The work appears again in October 1931 and in early March 1932, when he described it as the piece that he would tackle after completing the *Second Symphony for Organ*, finished on 2 May 1932.[76] Work began in earnest in August 1932, as indicated at the beginning of the manuscript. Sorabji completed the second movement in Bombay on 27 October 1932, the very end of the piano line on 24 June 1933, and the string parts on 12 July 1933, again in Bombay.

Sorabji dedicated his second quintet before its completion to the French writer on literature, philosophy, and religion, Denis Saurat (b. Toulouse, 21 March 1890; d. Nice, 7 June 1958).[77] Director of the Institut français in London from 1924 to 1945 and a vice-president of the PEN Club International from 1941 to 1947, he began an academic career in 1926 in French language and literature at King's College of the University of London, where he later became professor emeritus. Occultism was a subject close to Sorabji's heart, which probably contributed to their mutual admiration. A member of the Orage circle, he contributed to the *New Age* and the *New English Weekly*, among others. In 1950 he retired to Nice, where he became director of the Centre international d'études françaises.

It was through Francis George Scott that Sorabji met Saurat in the late 1920s. The latter was a lecturer in French at Glasgow University in 1918, and the two men struck a friendship after Scott attended one of his lectures.[78] Christopher Murray Grieve had studied with Scott at Langholm Academy, in Dumfriesshire, and this led to a friendship with Saurat, whom he described—along with Scott, Sorabji, and Orage—as "by far the most remarkable of all the men" he had known.[79] Saurat helped to establish the expression "Scottish Renaissance", a literary movement partly associated with Grieve (or rather MacDiarmid).

On one occasion, Sorabji had "a most enjoyable and amusing experience" when dining with Saurat at the Athenaeum Club, "*that* stately establishment, home of Bishops, Scholastic and ponderous persons (both corporally and mentally) of all kinds", where he spotted Sir Adrian Boult. Saurat, "the wittiest and most amusing of companions", and Sorabji "were in a condition of continuous gurgling,

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[73]KSS to EC, 25 December 1929, 2; 17 June 1930, 15 (section dated 30 June), quoting his explanation to Simoni; 18 September 1931, 5; 3 March 1953. Simon was known after 1943 as Louis Saguer.

[74]KSS to ABP, 21 April 1969 [*recte* 1979].

[75]Constant Lambert, "Gramophone Notes", *The New Statesman and Nation* 8, no. 177 (14 July 1934): 45–46.

[76]KSS to EC, 25 December 1929, 1; 18 September 1931, 5; 24 January 1932, 14 (section dated 7 March).

[77]On Saurat, see John Robert Colombo, *O Rare Denis Saurat* (Toronto: C & C [Colombo & Company], 2003). There is a Collège Denis Saurat in Trélon, a commune in northern France.

[78]Alan Bold, *MacDiarmid—Christopher Murray Grieve: A Critical Biography* (London: John Murray, 1988), 149–50.

[79]Hugh MacDiarmid, *Francis George Scott: An Essay on the Occasion of His Seventy-Fifth Birthday, 25th January 1955* (Edinburgh: M. Macdonald, 1955), 4.

mirth and mischief as one old reptilian fossil after another appeared in the dining room".[80] This is certainly the only reference to Sorabji dining in such genteel surroundings, unless his father took him to the Royal Societies Club, of which he was a member (see chapter 1).

Sorabji had the greatest respect for Saurat, as evidenced by the dedication of the *Quintet II*: "To my friend Professor Denis Saurat in profound and respectful admiration and homage. MCMXXXII". (In 1969 Sorabji added the inscription "For dear brother Mervyn for keeps. / K.S.S. / XII. V. MCMLXIX".) In 1930 he had described him as "one of the greatest living French critics" [...] a mind of astonishing depth and subtlety tempered with a delicious and subtly venomous irony at times, in the choicest French tradition".[81] He characterized his book *The Three Conventions: Metaphysical Dialogues* (1926) as "something in verbal concepts along the lines of my *Clavicembalisticum*".[82] Saurat's introductory remarks for a concert of Scott's songs in 1943 prompted him to speak of "a penetrating intelligence, a lucid clear-sightedness of the true inwardness of the work of the artist he was introducing".[83] In 1947 Sorabji dedicated his second book of essays, *Mi contra fa*, "To my honoured and revered friend Professor Denis Saurat".

The French writer's admiration for Sorabji was not based on scholarly grounds; being ignorant of music, his admiration was a "blind faith, though an absolute one", as he wrote to Frank Holliday when he added his name to the presentation letter intended to encourage Sorabji to record some of his works.[84] This prompted Saurat to write that "the mystery of the magnificent engraving of your great work will thus be transformed into an aural mystery". Drawing a comparison with Joan of Arc, who heard exactly what the spirits told her, he added that he could not understand Sorabji's music when he looked at it, because he could not understand it, but was enchanted when he heard it (one such occasion was John Tobin's partial reading of *Opus clavicembalisticum* in 1936).[85]

The *Quintet II for Piano and String Quartet* is an almost endless stream of music for all instruments together. In fact, the strings have only 185 bars of silence (including those with very brief phrase endings) out of 2,908 (a mere 6.4%), and full rests of more than a bar are exceptional. Clearly, the need to keep the strings in tune was of no concern for Sorabji. Their only extended period of rest (37 bars) occurs during a piano cadenza, and the piano has its first break (20 bars) on [ED]p. 137, immediately after this section for the strings. This work is certainly the only example of chamber music with a piano part written on (often fully textured) four-staff systems. Sorabji wrote that it was built "on the largest scale and the treatment of all the instruments concerned is on frankly virtuoso terms. The aim has been to get every ounce, every grain out of the five players concerned […]."[86]

The first movement begins with a "Preludio", which serves as an introduction to a "Fantasia" using twenty-six numbered melodic ideas. Sorabji described the latter section as "the composer's tapestry of motives with which by this time the reader is probably familiar".[87] Several of these ideas, which may also appear in another form such as inversion, are often heard simultaneously **(example 12.2)**. Later

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[80]KSS to EC, 24 January 1932, 10–11 (section dated 4 March). The Athenaeum Club was founded in 1824 as a private members' club for people with intellectual interests; it is located at 107 Pall Mall (corner of Waterloo Place).

[81]KSS to EC, 3 May 1930, 7 (section written on 9 May).

[82]KSS to EC, 17 June 1931, 6 (section dated 25 June).

[83]Sorabji, "The Songs of Francis George Scott", *Scottish Arts & Letters* 1 (1944): 22–23; 23; revised version in *MCF*, 217–23.

[84]Denis Saurat to FH, 12 December 1951 {7/F.13}.

[85]Denis Saurat to KSS, 30 June 1953; "Le mystère de la magnifique gravure de votre grande œuvre sera ainsi transformé en un mystère auditif"; "en regardant votre musique, je n'y comprends rien, mais en l'entendant je suis ravi". There is also a letter dated 20 April 1956, in which Saurat thanks Sorabji for sending a book on Zoroastrians.

[86]*A*, 13–15 (for all quotations).

[87]*A*, 14.

in the "Fantasia", Sorabji turns to his nocturne style for a long section (pp. 97–109). The music settles down into a thinner texture with crotchets as the main value, rather than semiquavers (pp. 124–26). This brief respite quickly becomes an animated crescendo leading to a "Coda-Finale" (a "concession to the so-called recapitulation"[88]) beginning with a "quasi cadenza" passage, actually a cadenza for the pianist (pp. 134–37). The "furioso" passage that follows is the passage for strings alone mentioned above. Sorabji begins with the four instruments and then drops one by one, only to resume with the full ensemble on p. 138.

The second movement begins with a "Prelude" in the style of a *perpetuum mobile* with some unison writing. This leads into a "Passacaglia" (p. 170) with 100 variations that, curiously, requires an active string accompaniment in semiquavers to the theme, stated by the piano in the lowest register of the instrument. The melodic activity is great throughout except in vars. 27–31 (pp. 189–91), where, according to the composer's indication, the increase in polyphonic activity should be rendered without an increase in sonority.

The third movement is a "leisurely and extended "Adagio", one of those tropical nocturnes to which the composer is occasionally prone". The prevailing mood is "one of a beauty perfumed, sultry, languorous", with the writings of Saʿdī and Sheikh al-Nafzāwī as "spiritual provenance". Sorabji writes "Sourdines" at the very beginning (p. 254), and gives no instructions at all for removing the mutes. The "Sordino" that appears later in the movement (p. 287) may be an error,[89] and it may well be that the entire nocturne should be played with mutes.

The "Finale" uses twenty-three numbered melodic ideas, all of which are stated during the "Introduction" (pp. 327–41). This is followed by an "Allegro" (pp. 342–92) and an "Intermezzo" (pp. 393–438) "harking back to the languorous and stifling airs of the Adagio". At bar 471 (p. 407), Sorabji inserts a fermata above the barline and asks in a note that the pause be long enough to allow two of the instruments to put on the mute; this is a very rare instance of a very brief pause, though one imposed by a specific practical matter.[90] A "Coda-Epilogo" (pp. 439–59), "a short, angrily impetuous, almost impracticably quick passing-in-review of the motives of the previous musical discourse", concludes with a "Quasi cadenza" section (pp. 452–54) followed by a few final pages letting the music subside "into tropical night... and its hothouse... with long trailing llañas [*recte* lianas] of melodic lines from the 5 instruments".[91]

Fantasia ispanica / Alec Rowley

Sorabji wrote his *Fantasia ispanica* (1933; 54 pp.) in the "accursed, poisonous and pestilent city of Bombay. Metropolis of dullness". He may have begun work on it during the composition of the *Quintet II for Piano and String Quartet*, but it is very likely that he did not turn to it until after 12 July, when he had completed the chamber work. By comparison, this medium-length piano piece must have seemed like a mere refreshment of strength and spirits after toil. He certainly wanted to cheer himself up by returning to the Spanish idiom that he had used more than once ten to fifteen years earlier. Compositional maturity now enabled him to produce something that was "ten million miles beyond the *Fantaisie Espagnole*".[92] In the 1950s he spoke of "another excursion into the Iberian Peninsula […]

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[88] *A*, 14.

[89] Alexander Abercrombie, in his edition, writes "con sord." at the beginning of p. 287 (bar 202) and, after three bars, removes the mutes as each instrument enters.

[90] The note reads: "il punto d'organo si fa abbastanza lungo per dare tempo al violino II ed al alto [*recte* alla viola] per mettere il sordino".

[91] *A*, 15.

[92] KSS to EC, 22 August 1933, 1.

with an exploration of freely treated Spanish rhythms, melodic idiosyncrasies and so on".[93] The piece has the same languorous feel, with sinuous lines starting from, and leading to, consonant sonorities; given its increased length and difficulty, it really is a *Fantaisie espagnole* "for grown-ups".

Fantasia ispanica is dedicated to Alec Rowley (b. London, 13 March 1892; d. London, 11 January 1958). A teacher, composer, and pianist, Rowley joined Trinity College of Music in 1920 and was elected a fellow of the Royal Academy of Music in 1934. It was he who first contacted Sorabji in late October or early November 1930, using "the redoubtable Tavern knight Philip Heseltine" as a key to unlock a closed door, for an opinion on his compositions. Sorabji replied that he would tell him what he thought if would agree "to wait a Hell of a time to which he consents readily!"[94] Rowley, to whom Sorabji had sent a copy of *Opus clavicembalisticum*, reviewed it enthusiastically in the *Musical Times* (see chapter 10). His works, among them two piano concertos and pieces for piano, including pedagogical ones, seem to have gone unnoticed by posterity. His *Fantasie and Fugal Toccata* for organ, published by J. Williams in 1936, is dedicated "To Kaikhosru Sorabji".[95]

Prompted by a comment on the complexity of works in an essay by Sorabji on "Modern Composers and the Organ", Rowley argued that publishers should give a chance to the composer. This could be done "by taking his big works occasionally as well as the small ones", for some needed large canvases to express themselves, while others could convey their ideas in a few pages.[96] He also sent an article to the *Chesterian* on Sorabji, who called its rejection "without a word" by the editor "another definite example of the hostility against myself and my work". Sorabji himself had published an article in this journal in 1919 and, at the time of Busoni's death, had sent them, at their request, something about him and his work. His drawing of "some unflattering contrasts (to *them*) between certain other modern idols, notably Stravinsky and his hangers-on" caused the article to be returned "with some remarks as to its 'unsuitability'". Needless to say, no further articles graced their pages, Sorabji having thanked the editor "for disabusing me of my delusion".[97]

Sorabji and Rowley may not have met for the first time until the end of April 1932. The elder composer wanted to arrange a meeting with "a very nice man quite unlike (thank God!) the usual musician". On 16 April 1933 Sorabji offered him a copy of *The Meaning of the Glorious Koran: An Explanatory Translation* (1930) by the English Islamic scholar Marmaduke Pickthall (1875–1936), with the inscription "To Mr. Alec Rowley: from his every very serving Kaikhosru Sorabji". In 1940 he described his Sonata for Piano (1939) as "a work of great charm of style, almost French elegance and polish and a masterly deftness of touch, with a piquant harmonic flavour devoid alike of conventional eccentricity or of what is not quite so bad, conventional propriety". However, it was "of no great weight".[98]

The *Fantasia ispanica*'s "Preludio-Introduzione", the first of five movements, contains two ideas that will recur in the "Coda-Finale". One is a melodic gesture consisting of a stepwise line with light chromatic inflections, moving freely over and below a C♯ that acts as a pivot, as in the *Fantaisie espagnole*. The other, a lively accented figure in semiquavers, recalls Ravel's *Rapsodie espagnole*. After

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[93] *A*, 5.

[94] KSS to EC, 15 October 1930, 8 (section dated 28 October). It is not known whether Rowley received a reply.

[95] The title of Rowley's work is given as it appears in the published score, that is, "Fantasie", not "Fantasy".

[96] Sorabji, "Modern Composers and the Organ", *The Rotunda* 3, no. 3 (September 1930): 37–41; Alec Rowley, "Give the Composer a Chance", *MO* 54, no. 643 (April 1931): 623.

[97] KSS to EC, 24 January 1932, 6–7 (section dated 7 February).

[98] KSS to EC, 22 April 1932, 1; Sorabji, "Music: New Music", *NEW* 16, no. 21 (14 March 1940): 311–12; 311. For brief notes on Sorabji and Rowley, see Beryl Kington, *Rowley Reconsidered: The Life and Music of Alec Rowley* (London: Thames Publishing, 1993), 98–99.

a return to the first gesture, now circling a semitone higher, a cadenza-like passage finally settles on an F pedal point that serves as a dominant leading to the second section.

The "Molto moderato", in three sections, begins with a short undulating chromatic motive in the left hand, which is freely repeated as an ostinato. The first section ([ED]pp. 5–8) presents it in turn on B♭, B, and F. The thematic material heard above consists of series of four-note chords played by the right hand, the top notes of which form a mostly stepwise melodic idea. The much freer middle section (pp. 9–14) settles on an F♯, which serves as a dominant to the last section (pp. 14–17), again over an ostinato figure (initially based on B), with a melodic line (woven into the texture) modelled on the thematic material of the opening. The initial ostinato figure on B♭ returns at the very end.

The brisk, playful, third movement recalls the "Modérément animé: alerte et gai" section of the *Fantaisie espagnole*. Its first and third sections (pp. 18–23, 26–31), both based on C♯, feature an accented melodic line as a middle voice **(example 12.3)**, while the somewhat simpler second section (pp. 23–26) places a robust melodic line over a D-based ostinato reminiscent of "Triana" from *Iberia* (1905–9) by Isaac Albéniz (1860–1909). After a brief recall of the second section's ostinato (now on C) and of the movement's opening in C♯, Sorabji brings back the work's opening melodic line in a new guise (p. 32).

The fourth movement, a very long "Quasi habanera", uses ten numbered melodic ideas. It begins with the familiar dotted rhythm as an ostinato on C♯ in various registers (p. 33) and soon explores other tonal regions as the music unfolds. A brief "Quasi cadenza" leads to the return of the opening habanera statement, again based on C♯ (p. 50), for the conclusion of the movement.

The fifth and shortest movement, a "Coda-Finale", begins with a melodic gesture reminiscent of the opening of the work, except that it is centred on C rather than C♯. This immediately leads into a "Vivace" section, which brings back the second thematic idea heard at the beginning of the opening movement. The final pages ("Brioso e molto animato") are mostly anchored on F, with C as dominant. In fact, the last system alternates the Fs and the Cs until the last chord of F (with added notes) is reached in the lower register.

Pasticcio capriccioso sopra l'op. 64, no 1 del Chopin / Donald Garvelmann

Close on the heels of the *Fantasia ispanica* (dated 30 July 1933) is the *Pasticcio capriccioso sopra l'op. 64, no 1 del Chopin* (1933; 8 pp.), which Sorabji probably wrote in less than two weeks. This "Pastiche *à la Godowsky*" was "dashed off as a birthday greeting to the composer's mother of whom the original is a great favourite".[99] It was completed in Bombay on 13 August 1933; since the date of completion and the dedicatee's birth date are the same, Sorabji must have worked at a fast pace to complete it in time. The dedication reads "alla carissima mamma mia per suo natale" ("alla mia carissima mamma per il suo compleanno" in correct Italian).

In early 1971 Sorabji inscribed his manuscript "For Donald Garvelmann". He mentioned several times in his correspondence with him that he would send a copy as soon as he was able to have it photostatted, which did not happen until 1971.[100] At or near the start of their correspondence, he had asked this American friend if he would like to have his name on this autograph or on that of his first arrangement of Chopin's waltz (1922)—immediately adding that he had already done so.[101] Donald M. Garvelmann (b. Stamford, Connecticut, 19 February 1927; d. New York, 3 August 2001) worked as a secretary in the New York law firm of Hays, Porter, Spanier & Curtis, and then in a New York public

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[99] *A*, 5.

[100] KSS to DG, 4 June 1968, 17 August 1970, 9 September 1970, 7 April 1971. Garvelmann received the "photo-facsimile", as Sorabji called, with a letter dated 10 June 1971 (whereabouts unknown); confirmed in DG to MAR, 13 February 1992.

[101] KSS to DG, 18 July 1967; 15 January 1971, 2; 7 April 1971.

school. A connoisseur of lesser-known Romantic composers of piano music, he published under his own imprint, Music Treasure Publications, extensively annotated reprints of long out-of-print solo pieces and concertos by composers such as Henselt, Litolff, and Thalberg that were most welcome at a time when copies were hard to find in libraries.[102] One of these editions was an anthology of thirteen transcriptions of Chopin's *Minute Waltz*,[103] the last of which was Sorabji's earlier effort (see chapter 8), which he greatly appreciated to see included. He also gave permission to reprint two of his early works that were out of print, but this never happened.[104]

In 1970 the American admirer produced a three-hour radio programme of some of the composer's private performances, which aroused great interest in his music in the United States at a time when no one was playing it. Also the dedicatee of the *Frammenti aforistici (Sutras) (104)*, Garvelmann later helped the pianist Michael Habermann to obtain permission to perform, broadcast, and record Sorabji's piano works; he also produced his first two Sorabji recordings, for which he also wrote the liner notes. He contributed the Sorabji article to the 1980 edition of the *New Grove Dictionary of Music and Musicians* and wrote a foreword to the Da Capo Press reprint of *Mi contra fa*.

Sorabji, for whom calling people by their surnames alone seemed rude and using their Christian names alone "impertinently familiar" unless necessary, offered "Brother Garvelmann" as "a compromise between a too chill remoteness and a possibly unwelcome familiarity".[105] He would use this form, or a variant, from 1972 onwards.

The *Pasticcio capriccioso sopra l'op. 64, no 1 del Chopin* is not a second version of the first of the three *Pastiches* written in 1922, but an entirely new piece based on the celebrated *Minute Waltz*. In the late 1960s, however, Sorabji became dissatisfied with the ending of the earlier piece and wrote a "Definitive close" consisting of the last five bars of the later piece. This ending obviously dates from the time when Garvelmann was preparing his edition of the first transcription.

The new transcription begins with a long cadenza, from which the motive of the middle section can be heard (bar 3). Later Sorabji writes a varied repetition of bars 21–36 of the original (bars 25–40 and 41–56 of the transcription) instead of using repeat marks as in the model. In the middle section, like other transcribers of this piece, Sorabji superimposes themes, here the basic motive of the work with the new theme. Finally, there are bars with elaborate voice leading, with the same hand playing not two but three parts (e.g., bars 7–11 and 71).

Although it is less chordal and more polyphonic than its predecessor, the *Pasticcio capriccioso sopra l'op. 64, no 1 del Chopin* also includes a magnificently amplified version of the trill on the dominant (A♭) leading back to the recapitulation. Here Sorabji writes a tremolo with one note in each hand, then two, three, and finally four notes **(example 12.4)**. The harmony is bolder than in the first transcription, with the bass line departing from Chopin twice as often.

Sorabji, who thought that Garvelmann might "have it for your possible next anthology", simply wrote about his new piece: "Quite good fun, I think, and a lot different from the first. Starts off in the key of E major with allusive flourishes. Rather more contrapuntal than no. I."[106]

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[102]Recordings of such rare concertos, by Michael Ponti and others, began to appear in the early 1970s on the inexpensive Vox and Candide labels, and are important landmarks in what is known as the "Romantic Revival".

[103]*Thirteen Transcriptions for Piano Solo of Chopin's Waltz in D Flat, Op. 64, No. 1 (The Minute Waltz)*, ed. Donald M. Garvelmann (Bronx, N.Y.: Music Treasure Publications, 1969).

[104]KSS to DG, 20 May 1980. The works in question were the *Two Piano Pieces* and the *Fantaisie espagnole*, but the agreement lapsed because the works had not been published by the end of 1981.

[105]KSS to DG, 23 August 1972.

[106]KSS to DG, 17 August 1970.

Toccata seconda per pianoforte

The *Toccata seconda per pianoforte* (1933–34; 111 pp.), a return to works of a considerable size, was begun before 22 August 1933 and completed on 21 March 1934. Sorabji called it "an admirable little work of 111 pages, one of the best things that I've done so far".[107] He wrote it for Norman Peterkin, already the dedicatee of *Quasi habanera* and the *Fantaisie espagnole* (see chapter 6). The dedication reads: "To my friend Norman Peterkin—and also to take out of his mouth the taste of the insipid baby-piece dedicated to him years ago."[108] In 1974 Sorabji added an inscription immortalizing his gift of the manuscript: "and handed over to him with much / love, Jan X. MCMLXXIV. / from his Corfe Drop".[109] Another (fragmentary) manuscript contains the following inscription: "Take a Seidlitz powder the morning after. Free Sample for Norman / N.B. No obligation to purchase." Curiously, it begins on the third page of the "Notturno" and ends a few pages before the "Coda-Stretta" of the fugue, so it is not a complete section, as logic would dictate.

Toccata seconda per pianoforte shares with the other three numbered toccatas a division into parts or movements. It consists of nine sections, whereas the first has five, the third ten, and the fourth seven. The composer described it as follows.

> I think the Toccata will surprise you, particularly the romantic *Aria* and the tropical night *Nocturne*. The fugue will roll you out flat. Technically a "simple" one, it includes huge episodes of a fugal nature upon the four countersubjects, and is as fine a fugue as any I've ever done, I think. The Stretto is an imposing affair too.[110]

The opening "Preludio-Toccata" ([ED]pp. 1–26) serves as a warm-up piece, so to speak, since it relies primarily on scalar, or at least linear, writing. Indeed, this is the only section for which the word "toccata" is appropriate, at least in the traditional sense. Next comes a "Preludio-Corale" (pp. 27–41) beginning with three phrases of stately polyphonic writing in crotchets (which later become crotchet triplets) and minims, each ending on a D major chord. The first five pages actually sound almost tonal. As usual with Sorabji in this type of piece, the music moves on to shorter note values, here semiquavers. The last two pages have a strong tonal feel again, thanks to the powerful C–G–G sonority repeated in the bass.

The "Scherzo" (pp. 42–55) features the kind of lightly textured, fragmented writing that Sorabji often favoured in his fast movements. The playful style explains the presence of three "jeering references" presented in quick succession (p. 45).[111] The first one is marked "Printemps qui commence, printemps qui finit".[112] It refers to Dalila's Spring Song in the opera *Samson et Dalila* (1877) by Camille Saint-Saëns (1835–1921), which begins with "Printemps qui commence, / Portant l'espérance / Aux cœurs amoureux" (act 1, scene 6). Sorabji wrote the words above the theme, which he modified rhythmically and marked "Impertinente". He probably did not remember the whole text and paraphrased it unconsciously. The second reference bears the label "Buy British"; it is a modified version of the incipit from *God Save the King*, the three initial notes (B–B–C) of which happen to spell the name of the British Broadcasting Corporation. This could also be a reference to the Buy British Campaign of 1931, an attempt by the government to solve the balance of payments crisis without resorting to tariff protection. The last reference is to "Dove sono i bei momenti", the opening words of

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[107]KSS to EC, 22 August 1933, 1; undated (before 17 July 1934).
[108]KSS to EC, undated (1934).
[109]Peterkin offered the manuscript of *Toccata seconda* to Frank Holliday, in whose collection at McMaster University it is now located.
[110]KSS to EC, 16 November 1936.
[111]KSS to EC, 20 September 1936.
[112]"Spring that begins, spring that ends".

the aria (act 3, no. 19) in which Countess Almaviva, in *Le nozze di Figaro* (1786) by Wolfgang Amadeus Mozart (1756–91), recalls the time when the Count was in love with her. Sorabji quotes the aria's incipit in octaves in the bass, starting on G, and modifies it slightly melodically and rhythmically (**example 12.5**).

The "Aria" (pp. 56–65) begins with a series of softly played chords in bitonal relationship forming an undulating movement reminiscent of the opening of the *Movement for Voice and Piano*. A melody in long note values soon emerges, with variants stated to the end, while the accompanying parts change to a more active movement in quavers. The undulating movement in chords returns at the very end.

The "Ostinato" (pp. 65–87) is actually a passacaglia with forty-nine variations on a fourteen-note theme. The long "Notturno" (pp. 88–105) is introduced by a slow and wide figuration in quavers stated three times in the left hand before being gradually modified. Its opening gesture, reminiscent of the beginning of *Le jardin parfumé—Poem for Piano Solo*, is repeated towards the end of the movement (p. 103). This serves as a foundation upon which Sorabji adds delicate figurations in demisemiquavers, either in single or double notes or in chords. The left-hand part becomes increasingly active and dies away in an ascending arpeggio built mostly with thirds. This section, in the first parts of the two upper systems on p. 99, offers a rather rare occurrence in Sorabji's music of a passage that is repeated a few seconds later rather closely in a loosely sequential manner.

The "Interludio–Moto perpetuo" (pp. 106–18) is a "Riflesso del Preludio-Toccata", which means that the style reverts to, or reflects, that of the opening movement. Regular and irregular scalar figurations again abound. The (so-called) "Cadenza–Punta d'organo" (pp. 119–25) rests, as usual, entirely on a pedal point in the bass, here E♭.[113] The decorative parts move first in quavers and gradually animate until a final outburst of full chords in both hands, struck first together, then in alternation (as in the so-called blind octaves).

The final movement is a "Fuga libera a cinque voci" (pp. 126–51) based on a single very long subject that covers the equivalent of 79 crotchets in 70 seconds. Sorabji cued the first entries of four instances each of what he called *comes* and C.S. [countersubjects]. The word *comes* normally denotes an answer, but Sorabji used it to identify his countersubjects in the first part of the fugue. The rest of the movement is divided into four sections by means of double bars, at the beginning of which the composer writes "C.S." followed by a number (from I to IV). The countersubjects formerly identified as *comes* now seem to become fugue subjects in their own right and are heard with the main theme. Until his label "Comes IV" (p. 146), Sorabji uses quavers as the main value, with the occasional semiquavers having only an ornamental function. Semiquavers really become part of the texture only in the remaining five pages. The fugue leads into a "Coda-Stretta" (pp. 152–64), with only a mere quaver of rest at the beginning. On the penultimate page Sorabji reaches the point where the final gesture begins on a B minor chord; he then shifts to a pedal point on F (thus at the tritone) and ends on a radiant B major chord.

Sorabji gave the *Toccata seconda per pianoforte* its first performance at what was to be his last public appearance as a pianist, on 16 December 1936 in Glasgow, under the auspices of Erik Chisholm's Active Society for the Propagation of Contemporary Music. The two-part concert began with four melodramas for declamation with piano by Schumann, Richard Strauss, Sibelius, and Grieg, performed by Chisholm, as pianist, and his collaborator Patrick Shannon, as reciter. It continued with Sorabji, who performed his toccata in two parts (nos. 1–5 and 6–9) separated by an interval.

[113]See the note on Sorabji's incorrect use of "punta d'organo" in the introduction.

The critics obviously had difficulty with the composer's restless style. It seems that Sorabji played in a heavy black robe, with two candles on the piano, and that most of the audience had left by eleven o'clock.[114] The *Scottish Daily Express* recognized a classical mould but noted that the music was poured "with no regard as to how it would sound" despite the "almost superhuman achievement" that the playing represented.[115] The critic of the *Glasgow Herald*, who had already reviewed Sorabji's previous appearances, noted that Chisholm read the composer's notes before each part of the performance; no such notes have survived, and Sorabji had insisted that he would "*absolutely veto* any blather or chatter about it beforehand".[116] The critic's expectations were disappointed, for he could not recognize "most of the numerous points of interest in thematic working and creation of moods that had been promised". He also complained of Sorabji's "tendency to be impatient with the quieter moods", resulting in a performance without sufficient contrasts. The "almost continual restlessness" of the fugue made it "difficult to keep in touch with Mr Sorabji's aims and outlook as a composer".[117] Finally, a certain "D.M.", writing for *Musical Opinion*, felt that "one could listen to many more performances without really understanding the unique complexity of Sorabji's mind and music".[118]

Bernard Bromage, the Occultist

One of Sorabji's closest friends in the 1930s was the writer and lecturer on mysticism, occultism, and related subjects Bernard William Bromage (b. Kidderminster, 27 April 1899; d. London, 12 September 1957).[119] Born of Anglo-Irish parentage, he obtained in 1924 a master's degree from the University of Birmingham with a thesis on the writer Henry James (1843–1916) and a medal for being "the best M.A. student of his year".[120] A "remarkable linguist" who had made "a special study of Sanskrit" and "travelled widely both in Europe and the East", he was described as "an acknowledged authority on Oriental mysticism". He is said to have written poetry, plays, and short stories, all of which remain undocumented, as do his reviews for various journals,[121] unlike five books, two of which have a clear

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[114]Ernest Boden to EC, 5 December 1963, quoted in John Purser, *ECSM*, 235n19.

[115]"Is This Kind of Music Worth While?", *The Scottish Daily Express*, 17 December 1936, 3.

[116]KSS to EC, 11 October 1936.

[117]"Sorabji in Glasgow: Active Society Concert", *The Glasgow Herald*, 17 December 1936, 13.

[118]D.M., "Music in Scotland", *MO* 60, no. 713 (February 1937): 426–27; 427.

[119]I would like to thank Paul Rapoport for help with the genealogical data on Bromage. The birth date comes from the 1939 Register, https://www.findmypast.co.uk/transcript?id=TNA/R39/0251/0251I/004/14; for the death date, see https://www.findmypast.co.uk/transcript?id=GBOR%2FGOVPROBATE%2FC%2F1957-1957%2F00024756. Bromage's father was Edgar Henry (1865–1925), a brewer's traveller, and his mother Julia Violetta Crowley (1861–1927). It is not known whether she had any connection with the famous occultist Aleister Crowley, whom her son met in 1935 (see below). He had an older brother, Edgar John (1889–1963), who became a chemist (pharmacist); see "Deaths", *The Chemist and Druggist* 180, no. 4361 (14 September 1963): 252.

[120]This account of Bromage owes much to a paragraph by the editor, Nell [Norman] Dagg (1897–1962), *The Modern Mystic and Monthly Science Review* 2, no. 10 (November 1938): 407. Bromage is also said to have studied at the University of Vienna, but this could not be documented. The title of his thesis is "Henry James, with Special Reference to His Longer Novels (M.A. thesis, University of Birmingham, 1924), 145, vi pp., https://birmingham-primo.hosted.exlibrisgroup.com/permalink/f/vmc2c6/44BIR_ALMA_DS21108862920004871. The catalogue entry cites the novelist's father, Henry James Sr. (1811–82), as the subject of the thesis, which is probably incorrect, as the thesis deals with the "longer novels".

[121]The source mentions reviews in the *Times Literary Supplement*, *The Sunday Times*, *Time and Tide*, and the *Criterion Magazine* as well as articles in *The Aryan Path*, *The Occult Review: A Magazine Devoted to the Investigation of Supernatural Phenomena and the Study of Psychological Problems*, and the *Journal of the College of Psychic Science* (in fact *Psychic Science: Quarterly Transactions of the British College of Psychic Science*). In addition to articles written for *The Modern Mystic and Monthly Science Review*, Bromage also published in *The Occult Observer: A Quarterly Journal of Occultism, Art and Philosophy*; *Rosicrucian Digest: The Official International Rosicrucian Magazine of the World-Wide Rosicrucian Order*; and *Tomorrow*.

connection with the occult.[122] Those on Tibetan yoga and the occult arts of ancient Egypt must have attracted a wide readership, for they appeared in second and third impressions and in paperback until 1979. His last one, most curiously, dates from 1969, twelve years after his death—and a few articles appeared between 1962 and 1965. The certainty of the year of his death (1957) suggests that the popularity of his writings prompted his publishers to posthumously publish material that had been submitted but remained on their shelves.[123]

Bromage was a member of the Fraternity of the Inner Light, a secret order founded in 1922 as a breakaway group from the main British occult society, the Order of the Golden Dawn, by Dion Fortune (real name, Violet Mary Firth, 1890–1946), with whom Sorabji had crossed swords in the pages of the *Occult Review*.[124] Around 1935 he met Aleister Crowley, the famous occultist whom the composer had sought out in Sicily in 1922 (see chapter 7) and about whom he later published a lengthy biographical article.[125] At the end of 1937 he gave a "course of ten lectures on the occult in literature" previously offered as a series of University Extension Lectures under the auspices of London University and the Board of Education. These lectures represented "a serious and highly documented attempt to trace through established literary classics certain aspects of observation and sensitiveness which are engaging the scrutiny of the most eminent scientists and psychologists of our day".[126] The fifth of six lectures sponsored by the *Modern Mystic & Monthly Science Review* at Conway Hall (Red Lion Square, Holborn), given on 17 February 1939, discussed "Yoga and Life".[127] During World War II Bromage visited ambassadors for the government and taught Russian, German, and French to army units, naval personnel, and London City Council students; he had "a taste of work for Military Intelligence".[128]

Sorabji met Bromage in the early 1920s, as indicated by the (later partly obliterated) dedication of the *Concerto for Piano and Orchestra [no.] III [no. 6]*. He would dedicate two more works to him in 1928 and 1935, respectively, the *Toccata [no. 1] for Piano* and the *Sonata V (Opus archimagicum)*, but removed all three dedications after a break in friendship in 1942. There is a possibility that the first manuscript of the *Trois poèmes du "Gulistān" de Saʿdī* (1926) was also dedicated to him, as evidenced by the blotted out inscription at the top of the title page.

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[122]Bromage's books are *Tibetan Yoga* (London: Aquarian Press, 1952); *The Occult Arts of Ancient Egypt* (London: Aquarian Press, 1953), with four photographs of the author between pp. 96 and 97 and 112 and 113; *Man of Terror: Dzherzhynski* (London: Peter Owen, 1956); *Molotov: The Story of an Era* (London: Peter Owen, 1956); and *In Tune with Your Destiny: The Occult Way to Peace* (London: Aquarian Press, 1969). His first two books were dedicated to his parents: *Tibetan Yoga* to his mother (whose name is given as Violetta Julia Crowley), and *The Occult Arts of Ancient Egypt* to his father, Edgar Henry Bromage.

[123]Bromage's death was well before 1964, when Sorabji referred to a Frank Eatwell, with whom he shared a flat at the time of his death; copy of KSS to FH, 19 July 1964 {2/F.5}. In his book *Tibetan Yoga* (1952), Bromage credits him as the source of some of the illustrations; he also thanks "my friend Mr. Frank Eatwell" for assistance in correcting the proofs and for some helpful suggestions (p. 239).

[124]See Sorabji, "Correspondence: The Psychology of Sex", *The Occult Review* 49, no. 3 (March 1929): 194–95; reply by Dion Fortune, "Correspondence: Science and Sex", ibid., no. 5 (May 1929): 337; reply by Sorabji, "Correspondence: The Psychology of Sex", ibid. 50, no. 2 (August 1929): 119–20. See also *FM*, nos. 111–12 (orig. nos. CXII–CXIII; pp. 22–32). On Fortune, see Bromage, "Dion Fortune", *Light: A Journal of Psychical, Occult, and Mystical Research* 80, no. 3442 (Spring 1960): 5–12.

[125]Bromage, "Aleister Crowley", *Light: A Journal of Psychical, Occult, and Mystical Research* 79 (1959): 149–61.

[126]Bromage, writing in a letter to *Time and Tide*, quoted in "Notes by the Way", *Psychic Science: Quarterly Transactions of the British College of Psychic Science* 16, no. 1 (April 1937): 65–70; 66–67.

[127]Correspondence and flyers, FH and Bernard Bromage {4/F.8}. The lectures were announced in the *Modern Mystic and Monthly Science Review* 1, no. 10 (November 1937): 5, 9, and held at the headquarters of the Fraternity of the Inner Light at Community House, 3 Queensborough Terrace, Bayswater, London W2; see *The Occult Review* 53, no. 1 (January 1931): viii, for an advertisement giving the address and a mission statement. Conway Hall is the present location of Peter Owen Publishers, under whose imprint two of Bromage's books appeared in 1956.

[128]Bromage, "Aleister Crowley", 151, and "Dion Fortune", as reprinted in *Psypioneer Journal* 12, no. 5 (September-October 2016): 167–76; 173. Bromage gives biographical information about himself in both articles.

At first Sorabji had such a positive opinion of Bromage that he recommended him to Erik Chisholm and Norman Peterkin and left a detailed assessment in which he expanded on his piano playing.

> There's a *very* fine mind, a fine clean genuine and straight-grained personality with heaps of character when you get to know him really well. He and I have hardly any secrets from one another. It is very curious about Bernard. He has the makings of a really good pianist except for a sort of psychic syncope and phrasing of which he is quite unconscious and a rather heavy-handed way which I think could be got over if he went to a really first-class man like George Woodhouse. He's got heaps of real musical intelligence and has a fine budding literary gift which I am constantly exhorting him to exercise and cultivate. His reading is enormous, very profound and scholarly but with never a trace of pedantry or pedagogism. Get him to talk about the Society Modish Art Snobs of London (of whom he knows a good deal) and you'll hug yourself with malicious glee at his scarifying descriptions. *And if you can possibly coax him to have a look at your hands, do so*. His powers in that direction are really marvellous, altho' a good deal of persuasion is required (and his interest aroused) to get him to do it. Tell him about our sittings—he'll be *enormously* excited and interested. He's got the greatest admiration and respect for me—as I for him—and he's in every way an exceptional human being whom it would be to anyone's honour to know. Norman has met him and thinks very highly of him.[129]

Bromage made the unsubstantiated and highly dubious claim that he had studied the piano with Busoni in Berlin, although he published an article on his mysticism in *Modern Mystic and Monthly Science Review*.[130] The music writer Arthur Hutchings (1906–92) recalled that he often took essays to Bromage, who worked as a tutor of English literature at St. Mark's College, in Chelsea, and often saw Sorabji in his room; he described Bromage as "perhaps the most accomplished amateur pianist I have known".[131] Sorabji did his best to tutor him in the music of Bach, Mozart, and Liszt-Busoni. Although he had "the making of a really good player", his tone was "consistently bad, in forte a nasty hard blunt banging noise without fulness, body or resonance, always rough, raw and ugly, and in piano an uncertain toneless inarticulateness".[132]

A former pupil of Bromage, the English socialist activist, writer, and artist Robert Barltrop (1922–2009), recalled that in 1934 his teacher was on the staff of Sir George Monoux Grammar School (Walthamstow, East London) for about a year and a half. He described him as "a sturdy, appetizing-looking man who wore good clothes; he wrote books on the occult, travelled a lot and had done many things. What he could not do was manage boys." He also spoke of a master towards whom the students had "inexcusable cruelty"; yet they liked him because he was "pleasant and interesting to listen to". Bromage often played the piano for the boys and gave recitals to raise money to buy a grand piano for the school.[133]

When doing "a vigorous *épluchement* from acquaintances and soi-disant friends" in 1930, Sorabji, who held Bromage in higher esteem than any of his friends at the time, alerted him to the "colossal

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[129]KSS to EC, 27 August 1930, 2–3. Sorabji had given inscribed copies of his *Sonata seconda* and *Prelude, Interlude, and Fugue* to George Woodhouse in 1924 and 1925, respectively.

[130]Bromage, "The Mysticism of Ferruccio Busoni", *The Modern Mystic and Monthly Science Review* 2, no. 8 (September 1938): 340–43. The purported link with Busoni comes from Bromage to FH, 12 February 1937 {1/F.19}.

[131]Arthur Hutchings, "Warlock and a Tite Street Party", in *Peter Warlock: A Centenary Celebration*, ed. David Cox and John Bishop (London: Thames Publishing, 1994), 53–57; 55.

[132]KSS to EC, 15 October 1930, 4 (section dated 20 October).

[133]Robert Barltrop, "Memories", https://www.oldmonovians.com/old-monovians/memories/robert-barltrop-s-memories.html?showall=1 (section "Teacher and Teaching at the Monoux"). The Sir George Monoux Grammar School, since 1968 the Sir George Monoux Sixth Form College, is situated on Chingford Road, about 3 km from Buxton Road, where Sorabji first resided. On 14 February 1935 Bromage performed Mozart's Sonata in A Major, K. 331, Beethoven's *Waldstein* Sonata, and a "Waltz on Themes from Gounod's *Faust*" by Liszt-Busoni, suggesting that he used the three-page "Nach Gounod" version of the cadenza at the end of the middle section found in the *Klavierübung* (book 2 of five-volume 1919 edition and book 5 of the ten-volume 1925 one). See L.C.B., "Monovian Extracts: Pianoforte Recital, School Hall, February 14th, 1935", http://www.oldmonovians.com/text2/pianoconcert1935.htm (link no longer active).

waste of time and energy" involved in "entertaining these swarms of nonentities". Always eager to achieve the exclusivity necessary to satisfy his idea of friendship, he persuaded him to refuse all invitations "from the gang" and to concentrate on one or two "great intimates" like himself; they had "no secrets from each other". He himself did the same, reducing the three or four people who visited him at fortnightly intervals to limit two once a week.[134] Sorabji and Bromage, who practised hand reading together (see chapter 7), also attended sittings (seances), as mentioned towards the quotation above; on such occasions he would concentrate all his thoughts on Erik Chisholm (see chapter 10), hoping that the latter would feel something. He also shared the interest in yoga of his "gifted friend", who was one of the few who "regard music as a Way, in the Yogic and transcendental sense".[135] Seeing each other so often, the two friends probably did not exchange many letters, unless the addressee threw them away, as he often did after reading them (see chapter 3). Only one letter from Bromage has survived, in which he wanted to "testify to the enormous impression your Organ Symphony made on me yesterday", with reference to the public hearing of its second movement given by E. Emlyn Davies.[136]

Sorabji was quite critical of Bromage's "mania for sight-seeing, of all manias the most unutterably stupid and tiresome", which he associated with a "weakness in the head". His friend, on the other hand, had "a profound, subtle and powerful mind, much too much so to be prudent on such externalities as *sight-seeing*!" This "morbid mania for tearing about seeing places, very strange in one so unusually mentally gifted and with a rich psychological life", which Bromage indulged first in his "toy car", then in "one of those noise and stench producing atrocities known as a motor bicycle", had led to him being involved in two accidents in 1931. Nevertheless, he was "an interesting lad" with "that fine, sensitive and very spiritual (indeed mystical in the best sense) mind that is his".[137]

Sorabji's mother asked Bromage to serve, with her son, as joint trustee of the Shapurji Sorabji Trust, this between May 1933 and May 1941, when she appointed herself in his place after he had asked (technically, at least) to be relieved following some irregularities (not specifically described) on his part. Sorabji realized that he could have been saved "some very good money" if he had broken his friendship much earlier. It took him "a long long time to find him out, probably because he sensed it was to his interest to keep the worst aspects of himself hidden from me as there was more to be got out of me than most other people and, MY GOD, did he get it!"[138] By the end of 1942 the two men had not seen each other for about a year, and further contact was unlikely; Sorabji could no longer trust him "even if he were to crawl on his knees for forgiveness".[139] Ten years later his dislike of Bromage was still very strong. The few mentions of him in his later correspondence show how much he had come to despise him. However, he could not deny the positive aspects of his years of friendship, namely, his meetings with two of his greatest friends, Frank Holliday and Harold Morland.[140]

Two incidents relating to Sorabji's love of fine books gnawed at him for years; they were certainly instrumental in breaking off the friendship with Bromage, whom he called "Brummagem Bromage", as he was originally from Birmingham (actually Kidderminster, located 27 km to the south-west).[141] The latter had overseen the publication of *Around Music* during the composer's trip to Bombay in 1932

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[134]KSS to EC, 3 June 1930, 10 (section written on 7 June); 22 August 1931, 4–5.
[135]Sorabji, "Music", *NEW* 10, no. 10 (17 December 1936): 195.
[136]Bernard Bromage to KSS, 18 May [1928].
[137]KSS to EC, 6 May 1931, 24 (section dated 16 May).
[138]KSS to CE, 16 November 1947; KSS to FH, 26 May 1967 {2/F.8}.
[139]KSS to FH, 6 December 1942 {1/F.4}.
[140]KSS to KD, 30 December 1977, 3 {Derus, S17, p. 81}; KSS to FH, 25 September 1948 {1/F.10}; 10 June, 19 July 1964 {2/F.5}.
[141]See chapter 22 for Sorabji's use of the name "Brummagem".

and prepared its very faulty index.[142] Although he had expressed his indebtedness to his friend in the book's "Præludium", Sorabji eventually voiced strong dissatisfaction in comments he wrote in Reginald Norman Best's and Alistair Hinton's personal copies. On another occasion, after several requests, Bromage finally returned two very valuable books in a "grubby and shabby" state, and this marked "very nearly the end of our friendship". One was an expensive leather-bound copy of the Paris edition of James Joyce's *Ulysses* ("that tediousest and dullest of books"); the other the "very pricey report" of the 1929 congress of the World League for Sexual Reform. This episode, among others, led Sorabji to believe that "much of the morality of your friends can be deduced from the behaviour regarding and towards one's books"; for him the only books to lend out should be those deemed "worthless or for which you don't care sufficiently even to use them in the 'smallest apartment of your house'".[143]

The care of fine books extended to scores. Sorabji later refused to let John Ogdon lend him what appeared to be the only copy of Ronald Stevenson's still unpublished *Prelude, Fugue & Fantasy on Busoni's "Faust"* (1959) because he would not "have known A MOMENT'S peace while it was under my roof".[144] When Alan Bush sent him his only copy of his *Variations, Nocturne and Finale on an English Sea-Song*, op. 60 (1962), for perusal, Sorabji could "know no peace nor rest while anything of that sort is lent to me, even quite an ordinary book let alone anything as valuable to its owner as THIS". He was obviously very careful when handling documents belonging to friends and packing them for return. Referring to the score mentioned above, Bush wrote that "the climax to an orgy of unwrapping was reached with the disclosure of the magnificent polythene bag in which the score was neatly lying. I shall certainly keep this fine container, in which from now on the score will be carefully kept."[145] No wonder Sorabji was outraged too see his prized possession damaged, especially when he had been defrauded in financial matters.

Sonata V (Opus archimagicum)

Sorabji's last work called "sonata", the *Sonata V (Opus archimagicum)* (1934–35; 336 pp.) dwarfs all its predecessors in size—in fact it is almost thirty pages longer than all of his previous sonatas put together. Because page numbers are omitted or used twice, the work ends on p. 343a, thus providing the kind of number that fascinated him throughout his life. As mentioned in the previous section, the work was originally dedicated to Bernard Bromage, "just to make you [Erik Chisholm] with jealousy",[146] but Sorabji rededicated it on 10 March 1943 to the American critic and music writer Clinton Gray-Fisk. The inscription reads "To Clinton Gray Fisk: his affectionate friend the author of this 'ere piece". It is in the "epistle dedicatory" that we learn of the circumstances surrounding the inscription.

> My dear Clinton: I trust you won't take it amiss my rededicating this work, to you, it having borne since it was begun in 1934 (up to now 1943) the name of one for whom I had for 20 years regarded as my greatest friend until he denied all further possibility of the trust and faith that is the very essential of friendship: but that I place your name on it in succession to that of one for whom for so long I had such regard, speaks, I think you will agree[,] amply for the estimation in which I hold you.

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[142]Bromage, review of *Around Music*, *NEW* 2, no. 14 (19 January 1933): 330–31.

[143]KSS to FH, 20 August 1973 {3/F.4}; KSS to CE, 16 November 1947. The third international congress of the World League for Sexual Reform, chaired by Magnus Hirschfeld, took place at Wigmore Hall, which raises the possibility that Sorabji was present.

[144]KSS to RS, 10 February 1961, 1.

[145]KSS to Alan Bush, 28 July 1965; Alan Bush to KSS, 30 July 1965.

[146]KSS to EC, undated (1934), 3.

Sorabji reported in August 1933 that "then there is also brewing in my mind the fifth Sonata... a gigantic work once again, also in movements it is to be... but nothing of that has as yet been written... it is in the incubation stage". About a year later, the work was actively in his mind, and he had a concrete scheme ready (to be modified and expanded later). He considered it to be "in all ways as the equal" of Opus clavicembalisticum, which it was to "outdistance [...] in length, but totally different in structure and form... nine movements, two parts, five in the first, four in the second, subtitled respectively, the Lesser Arcana and the Greater Arcana respectively".[147] The result of the composer's preoccupation with the "mystical and transcendental, even magical aspects of music" was completed on 29 May 1935. Sorabji was due to play "the great fifth sonata (Bernard's)" either in March 1937 or even Christmas time 1937, but this never happened.[148]

The subtitle *Opus archimagicum* and the titles of the first two parts of the work ("Arcana minora" and "Arcana majora") refer to the tarot, the set of seventy-eight playing cards used by fortune tellers. The four suits of fourteen cards make up the *arcana minora* (minor trumps), and the twenty-two symbolical extra cards relating to vices, virtues, and elemental forces make up the *arcana majora* (majora trumps). The title for the third part, "Archimagus", may refer to the title of by the High Priest of the Persian Magi, that is, the members of the Zoroastrian priestly caste of the Medes and Persians—or simply mean "great magician"; moreover, in the English equivalent of the word one can see a connection with the dedicatee's name, BroMAGE. The composer later wrote that "he expressly disclaims any programmatic intention: all he can say, all he *dare* say, is that the Tarot set certain musical ideas germinating in his mind but neither he nor anyone else can have the temerity to pretend that any part of Opus Archimagicum can be tacked onto the Tarot as 'expressing' it, whatever that may be supposed to mean".[149] We do not know if and to what extent Sorabji and Bromage discussed the tarot, but the latter would publish an introductory article on the subject in 1950.[150]

The *Sonata V (Opus archimagicum)* consists of ten movements grouped into three large sections. The opening theme of the fiery (*ardito*) first movement ([ED]pp. 1–62) contains a trace of the original dedicatee. Its eight notes spell out part of his name, albeit with some variations from standard practice, as three notes (E♭, D♯, G♭) are modified by means of accidentals. Unsurprisingly, due to the break in friendship, the letters above the noteheads have been obliterated **(example 12.6)**. The "Coda" (pp. 51–62) brings back two modified statements of the Bromage motto in long note values in the bass (pp. 58–59). The movement does not end in a powerful climax, but only with a trill (on B) in the lowest register.

The second movement (pp. 63–74), a subdued and anxious *perpetuum mobile*, is written entirely in demisemiquavers. Like the previous movement, it ends on a note associated with the dedicatee's name (B). The third movement is a (so-called) "Punta d'organo" (pp. 75–95) based on the same note B; this ostinato is sometimes played alone, sometimes doubled at the octave, and surrounded by delicate figurations.[151] The fiery and proud (*ardito e fiero*) final movement of *pars prima* (pp. 96–160) also ends on B, which serves as a tonal centre. Like the first movement, it ends with the "niente" indication. It seems to fall into four sections (pp. 96–106, 106–32, 132–57, 157–60).

The first of the two movements of *pars altera* (pp. 161–236) is linked to the previous one by means of the note B, here a series of octaves in three registers; this passage, and what follows it for a few pages, recurs on p. 219. A quick final section begins with free scale figurations on p. 231 but quickly

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[147]KSS to CMG, 14 June 1933, 1; KSS to EC, undated (before 17 July 1934).
[148]KSS to EC, 15 April 1938; 6 September 1936, 1; 22 August 1933, 1.
[149]*A*, 5–6.
[150]Bromage, "The Tarot", *The Occult Observer* 1, no. 5 (1950): 267–73.
[151]See the note on Sorabji's incorrect use of "punta d'organo" in the introduction.

turns into a cascade of full chords in both hands leading to a short but heavy conclusion, in which the B octaves are struck ***fff*** in the lowest register.

The substantial "Adagio" (pp. 237–301) that concludes the second part is in nocturne style, although some sections can hardly be said to sound "con dolcezza velenosa". This is especially true of the two extended peals of chords spread over seven staves ([MS]pp. 198–99, 224–27; [ED]pp. 253–54, 287–90 [rewritten on six]), up from the four staves otherwise used throughout the movement.

Pars tertia et ultima begins with a "Preludio" (pp. 302–22) that unfolds with mostly scalar semiquaver figurations in one or both hands. From this, a powerful motive consisting of four triads (three semibreves leading to a breve) emerges from time to time. Its initial statement consists of E♭ major in second inversion, F♯ major in first inversion, E minor in first inversion, and C♯ minor. The harmony changes with each repetition while the top note remains G–A–B–E, in other words a 3–4–5–1 melodic progression that is an obvious reordering of BromAGE. Between these chordal pillars, the texture is saturated by a constant interplay of statements of the B–A–C–H motive in shorter note values. After seven statements of G–A–B–E in the low register, we hear, beginning on pp. 309–10, B–A–C–H three times in long note values. G–A–B–E then returns three times in the high register until, on p. 314, nine statements of B–A–C–H support an increasingly active foreground texture, ending on p. 318 with a massive return of G–A–B–E in opposing registers. The quick interplay of motives returns briefly, leading on p. 320 to a final section with parallel scale figurations against a single chordal B–A–C–H in very long note values in the low register. Two final linked statements in simple octaves conclude this highly concentrated motivic feast: B–A–C–H in the low register, followed by G–A–B–E in the high register.

The "Preludio-corale sopra 'Dies irae'" (pp. 323–66) consists of three large sections (pp. 323–31, 331–44, 344–66) that correspond to the structure of the Gregorian melody, which must have been quite present in the composer's mind at the time. He had already used it in his *Variazioni e fuga triplice sopra "Dies irae" per pianoforte* and would return to it in the *Sequentia cyclica super "Dies irae" ex Missa pro defunctis*, completed in 1926 and 1949, respectively. As in the earlier work, he wrote the sequence in F Dorian, while for the later one he would prefer F♯. In 1932 he described it as "that stupendous theme that has ever haunted and fascinated so many of the great masters of music".[152] Sorabji uses, minus its repetitions, the entire melody, which is usually presented in very long note values like a cantus firmus, by setting in each of the large sections the three segments of tercets 1, 3, and 5, followed by the two segments of distichs 18, 19, and 20, and ending with the "Amen", making sixteen in all. Each of these sixteen phrases is numbered in the manuscript, but not in the published edition. The first group, marked "Sempre oscuro: sordo e con un qualsiasi sentimento di minaccia occulta",[153] presents the sequence in dotted semibreves against accompanying parts proceeding from crotchets to quaver tuplets. It is only from the second group that semiquavers and shorter values are used. Snatches of the chant appear here and there throughout the entire movement in shorter rhythmic values in one voice or another. Eleven phrases are freely extended at the end of the second and third groups, both of which also feature the B–A–C–H motive. Anticipated in phrase 14 of the second group and at its end, it begins the third one, marked "Adagio", and recurs later on, notably on pp. 345 and 351, where it is played in chords. The G–A–B–E motive of the previous movement appears in phrase 12 of the first group (p. 328) and links phrases 13 and 14 of the third one (pp. 340–41). A massive chordal climax, surrounded by scale figurations against a C pedal over five octaves, begins on p. 354. The final pages (pp. 364–66) set

[152]Sorabji, "Charles Henri Victorin Morhange (Alkan)", in *AM*, 213–19; 215.
[153]"Always dark: muffled and with a pervading feeling of occult threat".

the "Amen" among cascades of chords, leading into a series of statements of the B–A–C–H and G–A–B–E motives.

The "Cadenza" (pp. 366–72) that follows, mostly in quick semiquavers, begins with scales in *perpetuum mobile* manner. The first four notes, as a link with the previous movement, are B–A–C–H. Starting on the second page Sorabji adds a powerful A pedal, thus turning the cadenza into what he likes to call "punta d'organo" (the missing marking is added in the published edition). As is often the case, the last page is covered with long strings of chords in both hands.

Sonata V (Opus archimagicum) concludes with a triple fugue, the first of which (pp. 373–89) is based on a long subject opening with the G–A–B–E melodic progression. A "Stretto I" concludes the first fugue (pp. 386–89). The second fugue (pp. 390–99) uses a variant of the *Dies irae* with some faster rhythmic values. New countersubjects are introduced, and there is a "Coda-Stretta" (pp. 397–99). The third fugue, whose first semiquaver group is B–A–C–H, introduces a brisk contrasting subject, also in semiquavers. A final "Coda-Stretta" (pp. 416–32) uses both B–A–C–H and G–A–B–E as powerful pillars supporting a dense contrapuntal web. After a powerful peal of chords, the work ends "Largo e pesantissimo" with a last statement of the B–A–C–H motive. What is certainly one of Sorabji's most thematically unified works thus ends on the note B (actually a B minor chord) that has played an important role throughout.

13 / 1936 ▪ An Unfortunate Recital and the "Ban"

John Tobin's Cowdray Hall Recital

Sorabji's performance of *Opus clavicembalisticum* in Glasgow on 1 December 1930 was the last hearing of the huge work in its complete form until 11 June 1982, when Geoffrey Douglas Madge played it in Utrecht. However, a partial version had been given in London on 10 March 1936. The concert, organized by the Contemporary Music Centre of the British Music Society, took place at Cowdray Hall, Cavendish Square, within walking distance of Wigmore Hall.[1] Although the *Times* announced that Sorabji himself would play,[2] the pianist was John Tobin (b. Liverpool, 25 March 1891; d. Weston-super-Mare, 6 October 1980). Despite an interest in contemporary music (he conducted the British stage premiere of Stravinsky's *L'histoire du soldat*), this Liverpool conductor became best known as a Handel scholar, in which capacity he edited *Messiah* for the Hallische Händel-Ausgabe in 1965.[3] Sorabji had already heard him perform the two-piano version of Busoni's *Fantasia contrappuntistica* with Tilly Connelly at the Aeolian Hall on 2 February 1934. His review commented on the "excellent players", who had "a strong feeling for the terrific intellectual excitement and exaltation of this extraordinary music".[4]

The curiosity generated by the Glasgow performance certainly helped to attract critics to Tobin's recital. The first of several reviews—an unidentified clipping—praised both the composer and the performer, who played the work "splendidly" and "whose first-rate handling made the complicated texture seem exceedingly clear".[5] The musicologist Jack A. Westrup (1904–75) noted in the *Daily Telegraph* that the pianist pursued "his appointed course with dogged heroism and unfailing skill", although the audience "came and went" during the 90-minute recital, which he preceded with an "introductory discourse". He commented harshly on the music, referring to the "cruel, unutterable, insupportable tedium of this monument of dessication". For him there was no escape from the "wilderness of Mr Sorabji's imagination".[6]

The anonymous reviewer of the *Times* found little in the music, noting that it "just goes on. And on". The listener could leave at any time as the "flow of counterpoint went on", making it irrelevant where

[1]Cowdray Hall, then the home of the Cowdray Club (1922–74, originally called the Nation's Nurses and Professional Women's Club) was located at 1a Henrietta Place, Cavendish Square. The building, whose main entrance is at 20 Cavendish Square, houses the headquarters of the Royal College of Nursing. For more on the London Contemporary Music Centre, see Francis Routh, *Contemporary British Music: The Twenty-Five Years from 1945 to 1970* (London: Macdonald, 1972), electronic edition at http://www.musicweb-international.com/routh/bookindex.htm ("Introduction: British Music up to 1939").

[2]"Music This Week: Choral and Chamber Concerts", *The Times*, 9 March 1936, 10.

[3]"Obituary: Mr John Tobin: Quest for Authenticity in Performances of Handel", *The Times*, 9 October 1980, 16. For a portrait, see an advertisement in the *Music Teacher* 15, no. 3 (March 1936): 187. John Tobin was the brother of the music educationist J. Raymond Tobin (1886–1967).

[4]Sorabji, "Music", *NA* 54, no. 17 (22 February 1934): 267–68.

[5]"John Tobin—Contemporary Music Concert—Cowdray Hall" (unidentified clipping).

[6]J.A.W. [Jack A. Westrup], "London Concerts: Mr. Sorabji's 'Opus'", *Daily Telegraph*, [11 March 1936].

the cut was made.[7] Ernest Newman, who also found the evening interminable, had never attended such a difficult concert. For him, the music was more interesting on paper than in sound. Tobin, "a pianist with ideas", played a work that "manifestly reduced a considerable proportion of the audience to a state approaching mental and physical collapse". Like other reviewers of earlier performances of Sorabji's works, he complained of a lack of variety that led to audience fatigue. The composer, he concluded, probably recognized that it was "unwise to submit it to casual public judgment in performance".[8] Five days after the concert, Sorabji sent Newman a copy of the score, thanking him "for a notice of singular thought and sympathy". It is worth quoting his comments on the concert in full.

> I think it ought to be pointed out, injustice to the work and myself that through some inexplicable misunderstanding on the part of the performer—an excellent musician and competent pianist, from the little I know of him—the duration of the work was protracted to more than double its proper length which is about 40–45 minutes instead of the 90 during which your purgatory was made to last! The trouble seems to have arisen in the second Fugue, the *tempo principale* of which is marked by the way *Animato assai*.
>
> You are quite right regarding my feelings as to the venue and locale of this performance. I have made no secret of the fact that I have all along regarded a performance under such circumstances with extreme aversion and my consent was only given most grudgingly and reluctantly when I found that imposing my veto—I had a perfectly legal right to do—would have caused serious inconvenience and loss. This performance was arranged over my head entirely without my knowledge and consent, and I was only informed when everything was fixed and it was too late for me to take active steps to prevent it.[9]

Newman, who "welcome[d] the opportunity to study the work at first hand", explained how he felt after the concert.

> When I left the concert the other evening I had intended *not* to write about it—to treat the occasion as a private experience, not an official duty, for I felt that I could not say anything very intelligent about the work. It was impossible to keep more than a small proportion of the threads in my hand, as you can imagine: and though I was interested throughout, I couldn't persuade myself that I had seen the thing at all clearly. But the next day I read a notice—the only one I saw—that was at once so Boeotian & so malicious that I felt it necessary to tell the public that at any rate another point of view was conceivable. From all I hear, you have been very unfairly treated.

After completing the second volume of the four volumes of his Wagner biography, the critic would "settle down to a careful study of the Opus as a whole", adding that "[d]ifficult things have a peculiar attraction for me, & you have certainly set yourself here a very difficult task. The only sensible thing for an artist to do is to write what he feels like writing, & bother about what other people think about it." Finally, he wondered about the length of the performance and asked if it included the preliminary talk, "which took some time". He had "nowhere the feeling that the performance was being dragged at all".[10]

A certain "E.R." wrote in the *Musical Times* that those who had not been "drugged into inactivity by the Babel of sounds" had left long before the end—while others fell asleep. Only those who had brought their scores managed to reach the end, thanks to the "activity of the eye". Tobin played with "great skill and understanding", but with the music proceeding with a "pedestrian gait"—and this

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[7]"Contemporary Music Centre", *The Times*, 13 March 1936, 12.

[8]Ernest Newman, "This Week's Music: Opusculum Clavicembalisticum", *The Sunday Times*, 15 March 1936, 7.

[9]KSS to Ernest Newman, 15 March 1936. There is a shorter version of this letter, dated 30 March; Sorabji may have decided to write again as he had not received a reply. He sent the letter to the *Sunday Times*; the markings "Private" and "PRIVATE & CONFIDENTIAL" make it clear that it was not intended for publication as an open letter. See also KSS to CMG, 14 June 1936, 2.

[10]Ernest Newman to KSS, 1 April 1936 (marked "Private").

suggests a problem with the time it took him to reach the end.[11] Edwin Evans (1871–1945), of the *Daily Mail*, was not entirely convinced. He praised the pianist for his concentration, but quickly grew tired of the work's "permutations and combinations".[12] Michel-Dimitri Calvocoressi (1877–1944), the only foreign reviewer, reported a duration of one hour and twenty-eight minutes without a break. He noted the influence of Busoni's *Fantasia contrappuntistica* and found that some passages had a pleasant effect, especially in the fugues, but complained of many digressions and repetitions.[13]

The most extended text on Tobin's performance came from one of the composer's friends, Edward Clarke Ashworth (1903–79), who was to become the dedicatee of the *Symphonic Variations for Piano* (see chapter 14). He had heard the composer play the work, or more likely parts of it, obviously in private, and probably acted as "his master's voice". He described *Opus clavicembalisticum* as an "immense composition [that] is widely spoken of by authoritative opinion as one of the supreme works written for the piano". His timing of eighty minutes is in line with Calvocoressi's eighty-eight minutes. Tobin "seemed to have very little conception of how the work should sound, or any adequate grasp of it as a whole, otherwise he could hardly have inflicted upon the audience a performance at half the proper speed". Although the "Preludio-Corale" was "by far the best part of the performance" despite its "heavy and unimaginative in treatment", the pianist seems to have played the fugues too slowly, and the second one "much too flaccidly", giving "an impression of rambling tediousness". Such a performance was "more likely to confirm the prevalent and quite erroneous notion that Mr. Sorabji's works are incomprehensible, tedious, dry and cacophonous".[14] Tobin's tempo must indeed have been too slow considering that Geoffrey Douglas Madge and John Ogdon take about forty-eight and fifty-one minutes, respectively, on their recordings.

Ashworth's article received a favourable response from the readers of the *New English Weekly.* The first such reaction came from Alec Rowley, the dedicatee of the *Fantasia ispanica*, who endorsed the article and described *Opus clavicembalisticum* as "probably the greatest pianoforte work ever written". A certain N. Dudley Short, who described the composer's "almost pathological reluctance" to perform his works as an "aesthetic tragedy", asked him "to give us reasonable opportunity of hearing him play Opus C."[15] One "H.D.S.", who thought it "a pity that Mr. Sorabji should allow an unauthoritative performance of his work to be given while refusing to play it himself except before a few favoured persons", pleaded that he should "let the uninstructed public hear this work played as it should be". Two other readers, D. ffrench-Mullen and Cecil ffrench-Salkeld, would gladly subscribe to a "Sorabji Society" to enable the composer to record his work. They were supported by John D. Westermann of California, who suggested the inclusion of the score with the recordings.[16]

Touched by the kind interest of his readers, Sorabji argued against a society for the purpose of recording his work, since the copyright laws would mean a loss of control over future recordings: he could then neither stop performers nor "prevent some fantastic mutilation, re-arrangement or mauling

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[11]E.R., "London Concerts: Sorabji's Opus clavicembalisticum", *MT* 77, no. 1118 (April 1936): 359–60.

[12]Edwin Evans, "London Letter", *The Chesterian* 17, no. 127 (May–June 1936): 152–53; 153.

[13]M[ichel]-D[imitri] Calvocoressi, "Chroniques et notes: Grande-Bretagne", *La Revue musicale* 17, no. 165 (April 1936): 311–14; 313–14 (p. 313 only).

[14]Edward Clarke Ashworth, "Music: Opus clavicembalisticum (Kaikhosru Sorabji)", *NEW* 9, no. 3 (30 April 1936): 55.

[15]N. Dudley Short seems to have published booklets entitled *It's Like This: The Douglas–New Age Scheme* (London: Cecil Palmer, n.d.) and *The Money Trick: A Criticism of the Banking System in Allegorical Form* (London: Cecil Palmer, 1932).

[16]Alec Rowley, "Letters: Opus clavicembalisticum", *NEW* 9, no. 5 (14 May 1936): 100; N. Dudley Short, "Letters: Opus clavicembalisticum", ibid., no. 6 (21 May 1936): 120; H.D.S. and D. ffrench-Mullen and Cecil ffrench-Salkeld, "Letters: Opus clavicembalisticum", ibid., no. 8 (4 June 1936): 160; John D. Westermann, "Letters: Opus clavicembalisticum, et al.", ibid., no. 13 (9 July 1936): 259–60. The two readers can be identified as Douglas ffrench-Mullen (1893–1943), the brother of the Irish revolutionary and labour activist Madeleine ffrench-Mullen (1880–1944), and the Irish Indian-born artist Cecil ffrench Salkeld (1904–69).

of his work by anyone whomsoever". He concluded very sharply: "Having had my fill of vile travesties of my work, this is not a prospect that I find alluring, as your readers can well imagine; at present I feel it is rather more to the point to safeguard myself and my work against the musical equivalent of an indecent assault!"[17] His claim to have had his "fill of vile travesties" of his work is, however, quite an exaggeration, since all the performances of his works to date had been given, much to his satisfaction, by himself or his friends. He was clearly generalizing from Tobin's performance alone.

Sorabji recalled his "speechless horror" at discovering the "enormity" of what had happened. Apparently, he took "active steps"—the nature of which is unknown—to prevent the pianist from "ever laying frevelnder Hand auf my work again".[18] He published a disclaimer to protest against an allegation that he had paid for the performance, explaining that he had agreed "with the utmost reluctance" to what had been arranged over his head and without his knowledge. (The score carries the following warning: "N.B. Public performance prohibited unless by express consent of the composer.") He had not vetoed it in order "not to cause loss or inconvenience to those concerned".[19]

Sorabji claimed not to have been present at Tobin's performance. However, speaking to Alistair Hinton, Sorabji's friend Mervyn Vicars said that they did attend the concert but left early. When Erik Chisholm suggested an introductory talk before his forthcoming performance of the *Toccata seconda per pianoforte* in Glasgow, Sorabji flatly refused, having had enough "blather or chatter" at the Tobin concert;[20] this clearly suggests that he had indeed heard the pianist's talk. The audience included Sorabji's friends Clinton Gray-Fisk and Norman Peterkin and the reviewers mentioned above. Also present, as Felix Aprahamian (1914–2005) recalled, were the critics Frank Stewart Howes (1891–1974), A. H. Fox-Strangways (1859–1948), and William McNaught, and the composers Stanley Bate (1911–59), William Busch (1901–45), Alan Bush, Christian Darnton, Benjamin Frankel (1906–73), Alan Rawsthorne, Edmund Rubbra, Ralph Vaughan Williams, and Humphrey Searle, then aged twenty. Also present were the music patron (Sir) Robert Mayer (1879–1985), the pianists Arthur Alexander (1891–1975) and Frank Merrick (1886–1981), and the painter Walter Sickert (1860–1942).[21] Replying to Mrs. M. H. Hart, the secretary of the London Contemporary Music Centre, who had contacted him in 1937 about the score of *Opus clavicembalisticum* (in fact a set of the second proofs), Sorabji asked for its return. He preferred not to maintain "the remotest connection" with this association with which his contact had been "bitterly against my will and inclination".[22]

To conclude this account, it is necessary to mention an otherwise unknown friend of Sorabji's called (Frederick) George Bethell Datch (1893–1976). A tenor who once sang the wordless part in

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[17]Sorabji, "Letters: Opus clavicembalisticum", *NEW* 9, no. 23 (10 September 1936): 360.

[18]KSS to GR, 22 March 1936. Sorabji's borrowing from the German language means "to lay a sacrilegious hand on my work".

[19]Sorabji, "Letters to the Editor: A Disclaimer", *MT* 78, no. 1127 (January 1937); 60. See also KSS to CMG , 14 June 1936, where he comments negatively on the pianist's introductory remarks to his performance, for which there were no programme notes.

[20]KSS to EC, 11 October 1936.

[21]Felix Aprahamian, list of people in attendance at John Tobin's recital. Years of birth and death are given only when not mentioned elsewhere in the text. Aprahamian's published diaries do not mention the Tobin recital, as no entries have been found between 17 June 1935 and 18 June 1937 (apart from one for 26 May 1944). On the other hand, he did note the purchase of Sorabji's *Sonata seconda* and *Valse-Fantaisie* (13 April 1935, p. 184) and the ploughing of the latter (23 April 1935, p. 187); see *Diaries and Selected Writings on Music*, edited by Lewis and Susan Foreman (Woodbridge: The Boydell Press, 2015). The database *Vaughan William Letters*, http://www.vaughanwilliams.uk/, compiled by Hugh Cobb and the Vaughan Williams Charitable Trust, makes no reference to the concert. One would have expected Vaughan Williams to at least mention such an unusual concert that he intended to attend, or did attend, if he did.

[22]KSS to EC, 19 September 1937. Sorabji mentions "wrapped in a card-board poster-notice of one the Active Society Concerts [...] bearing in blue pencil IN YOUR HANDWRITING the name of the work therein contained (i.e. Op. Clav.) and the composer i.e. little ME!"

Delius's *Song of the High Hills* (1911), he later became an actor whose last job was the very small part of the Host of Southwark, Harry Bailly, in Pier Paolo Pasolini's 1972 film based on Geoffrey Chaucer's *Canterbury Tales*. He called Sorabji "Angelface" and signed his letters "Devilface", suggesting that the two men must have been in close, if not intimate, contact (probably since the 1920s); in any case, the composer gave him copies of his works.

The first of Datch's two letters, written in the hours after Tobin's concert, is found on an unsigned typewritten page that appears to be the end of a letter from Sorabji in which the composer says that "I shall not under any imaginable or unimaginable circumstances be seen at the Cowdray Hall on Tuesday". The wording clearly suggests that Datch was reporting to the composer who had stayed at home. After the performance (on an out-of-tune piano), which he described as a "scurrilous libel", he had a row with the secretary of the London Contemporary Music Centre, asking why the composer had not been invited to play his work. He was told that Tobin had played it to the composer and received his approval (which was apparently not true). The pianist's knowledge of the score seemed to be limited to the first few and last pages, with most of the rest sounding like he was reading; the result was twice as slow as the composer's private performance for him. In 1976 Datch went backstage to congratulate Yonty Solomon on his recital and recalled Tobin's performance, at which he had stood up to make a "protest speech".[23] He apparently died two days after the concert.[24]

Public Performances, Copyright, and the "Ban"

John Tobin's problematic partial reading of *Opus clavicembalisticum* undoubtedly reinforced Sorabji's complete aversion to the musical world and to the public performance of his works, especially by those who could not rise to their (or his) requirements. This led to the creation of a legend that this very performance led him to impose a "ban" on the performance of his works—which suggests an official, published pronouncement—that lasted until 7 December 1976, when Yonty Solomon gave the first of a series of authorized recitals at Wigmore Hall. Sorabji's friend Clinton Gray-Fisk was probably the first to refer to this "ban" when he wrote in 1960 that "for more than twenty years *the composer has categorically forbidden all public performance of his works!*"[25] Given the paucity of reliable articles on Sorabji for many years and the availability of Gray-Fisk's piece, critics and journalists simply carried this over into their articles.

Paul Rapoport, in 1992, was the first to discuss the matter in detail, with contextualized examples of relevant statements by the composer.[26] Sorabji did not want performances to be given without his express permission—and he said little in print, as opposed to "in typescript", that is, in letters. As we will see below, he wrote at the very end of 1943 that "several years ago I resolved never henceforth to perform or allow any performance of my work in England". Based on the letters he examined, Rapoport wrote that there was not enough evidence for one year and suggested that "some time between 1937 and 1944 would be correct". My own research suggests that this is still correct. However, to get the whole picture, we need to look at the events in chronological order.

Sorabji felt in his early years that a work of art should not go unheard. In connection with the 1913 controversy over the performance of Wagner's *Parsifal* outside Bayreuth, he remarked that no genius had the right to lock up "a work of supreme art, even his own" in a corner; great art, being universal,

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[23]KSS to George Bethell Datch, [10? March 1936]; Datch to KSS, after 10 March 1936, 7 December 1976.

[24]FH to Norman Peterkin, 20 April 1977 {6/F.12}.

[25]Clinton Gray-Fisk, "Kaikhosru Shapurji Sorabji", *MT* 101, no. 1406 (April 1960): 230–32; 230.

[26]Paul Rapoport, "Sorabji: A Continuation", in *SCC*, 75–78. See also Simon John Abrahams, "Le mauvais jardinier: A Reassessment of the Myths and Music of Kaikhosru Shapurji Sorabji" (Ph.D. diss., University of London, King's College, 2001), 143–58.

"should not be made the monopoly of a few".[27] However, he soon came to believe that he was writing (or would increasingly write) works outside the mainstream in scope and difficulty, and so he decided to reserve the performance rights for himself. His very first publication—the *Trois fêtes galantes de Verlaine*, published in 1921—contained a clear reservation of performance rights for all countries; his other published scores carry similar notices. As he wrote to Erik Chisholm in May 1930, he was not composing for the anonymous concertgoer or for posterity, but "for those few men, very few, like your own most dear self *who have ears to hear*, and *those only*". His future publications would carry a notice forbidding performance without his permission.[28]

A letter to the *New English Weekly* quoted above shows that Sorabji objected to recordings of his music because the copyright laws would cause him to lose control of his works. Copyright issues had been on his mind for some time, as he had entered like a raging bull into a controversy over the matter in late 1929. The Labour government was then trying to pass a new law that Sorabji described as a "blackguardly measure" limiting composers to a "maximum charge of two whole pennies as a performing fee for a work of theirs, no matter what its size or nature". He saw it as yet another example of creators being robbed "in the interests of the exploiters and middlemen, of those, that is to say, who buy the soft cushions that repose under the bottoms of our bureaucrat jacks-in-office to which (i.e. the said bottoms) forceful application of stinging-nettles and well-pickled osier rods is a *great* deal more indicated by the symptoms".[29]

Between 5 December 1929 and 30 January 1930, Sorabji devoted four articles and two letters to the infamous bill, thus reflecting in the pages of the *New Age* the debate that was raging elsewhere in the press. The "Tuppenny Bill", as it became known, died on the order paper in July 1930 after having gone into second reading. It had brought together the conflicting interests of two groups: the composers and members of the Performing Right Society (which Sorabji joined only much later in life), and the International Council of Music Users, a group composed mainly of orchestral players, who had introduced the bill to Parliament.[30] Rarely had Sorabji rarely fought so hard to express his dissent.

Far from objecting to the dissemination of his works, Sorabji, in the 1930s, wanted to see them in print and was only too happy for his father (until shortly before his death in 1932) to meet the costs of publication. The contract he signed with Oxford University Press in July 1938 for the handling of his published music shows how important it was to him to make his works available. Although he despised the musical establishment (Arnold Whittall described him and Constant Lambert as people who "took pride in acting as the goads of the establishment"[31]), he was interested in what the critics said about him. So in 1932 he signed up with the press clipping agency of Romeike & Curtice to receive copies of anything that mentioned his name.[32] He also agreed to perform his works himself, which he did ten times between 1920 and 1936. That people could do what they wanted with his works, especially if it ran counter to his own vision, was intolerable. Sorabji is somewhat reminiscent of the goldsmith in the opera *Cardillac* (1926) by Paul Hindemith (1895–1963), who murders the buyers of his works rather than part with them. He would only welcome performances given by friends, such as Harold Rutland and E. Emlyn Davies, in circumstances over which he had some control.

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[27]KSS to PH, 8 December 1913 {*LPH*, no. 3, p. 44}.

[28]KSS to EC, 3 May 1930, 5 (section dated 7 May).

[29]Sorabji, "Music", *NA* 46, no. 5 (5 December 1929): 56–57; 56.

[30]Sorabji's involvement in the copyright controversy is discussed in detail in Maria Rosaria Margiotta, "Sorabji: A History of the First Publishers and an Edition (Transcendental Study no. 99)" (thesis, Master of Philosophy, City University [London], 1999), 1:27–33.

[31]Arnold Whittall, "British Music in the Modern World", in *The Blackwell History of Music in Britain* (Oxford: Blackwell Publishers, 1988–95), vol. 6, *The Twentieth Century*, ed. Stephen Banfield (1995), 9–26; 17.

[32]KSS to EC, 24 January 1932, 1.

Sorabji was not immune to contradiction, at least in the early 1930s. When he decided to stop bothering about the many errors in the published score of *Opus clavicembalisticum*, he implied that he was somehow open to performances by others should someone "sufficiently enterprising and courageous" to risk approaching him with the appropriate qualifications. Only then would it be appropriate to point out where the errors lay. On the other hand, in a section of the same long letter written a few days later, he expressed his "utter and complete indifference to getting public performances of my work", especially since even being "a compositional equivalent to a 'best seller'" would return "[so] little hard cash that it is not worth the trouble". He did not want to be in the same company as those who were performed. He concluded with great assurance that "the people who matter admire *me*—and the people who don't admire the others. From all this it will be seen that we do not noticeably increase in humility."[33]

Another of Sorabji's concerns was that no one should see or hear his works in England, the country he loathed above all others. As early as 1916, he wrote that "under no circumstance" would he allow his *Concerto [no. 1] pour piano et grand orchestre* to be published in England.[34] He must have changed his mind, because his fifth such work was published in 1923. On the other hand, by 1930, he had decided never "to permit performances […] *anywhere* in these islands in its orchestral form—as indeed of *any* work of mine involving an orchestra. It is for me the only possible position to take up."[35] However, he remained open to an engagement with the BBC, as he had done a few months earlier, because of the fee he would receive (see chapter 8).

Sorabji clearly expressed his aversion to England as a performance venue. The manuscript of *Rosario d'arabeschi* (1956) tells us that public performances were to be absolutely forbidden, especially in England. Other works he intended for the sole ears of their dedicatees, such as *Un nido di scatole sopra il nome del grande e buon amico Harold Rutland*, which carries the warning that it should not to be shown to, performed to, or played by anyone other than its dedicatee. A few months after the Tobin performance, but some time before his last public performance in December 1936, Sorabji came to a radical conclusion.

> Performance of my works no longer interests me in the slightest degree. I know what I am, so do those few chosen others, my own people, nothing else matters [more than] the paring of my toe-nails! Modern music I now find the most tiresome and boring thing under the sun, even *Wozzeck* I could not stand a second time. The things that DO stand that test are of the furthest and longest between each other… my own work is about the only stuff that will stand the test.[36]

In the 1940s, in letters to various acquaintances, Sorabji made clear his opposition to any public hearing of his works. His decision not to allow performances if at all possible probably dates from this period, and not from the months following the unfortunate 1936 recital. In 1943 he wrote that "last year I came to a decision never under any imaginable circumstances to allow any work of mine to be performed before an English audience"; he reported his satisfaction at having already forbidden three proposed performances.[37]

Offers to play Sorabji's music were few. One came from Alan Bush, writing in 1940 on behalf of the Royal Academy of Music, where he taught composition. He regretted that the committee of the institution's New Music Society was "distressingly enough obliged to invite artists to perform without fee" for lack of a grant. Sorabji replied politely that "the prospect appeals to me not a bit" and that

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[33]KSS to EC, 24 January 1932, 1, 9 (section dated 21 February).
[34]KSS to PH, 23 February 1916 {*LPH*, no. 20, p. 100}.
[35]KSS to EC, 8 July 1930.
[36]KSS to EC, 6 September 1936, 1.
[37]KSS to CMG, 28 October 1943. For a similar statement, see KSS to Cecil Gray, 6 April 1944 {BL, Add. 57786}.

societies for new music were not the place for his kind of music.[38] In April 1944, as mentioned in chapter 11, he turned down an offer to play his published piano concerto at a concert conducted by Sir Adrian Boult in aid of the Bengal famine.[39] By August 1947 he had vetoed three further offers. English musical circles and music lovers hated him—or so he thought—and he hated them in return, caring only for the opinion of "some six living people".[40]

In February 1948 Sorabji received a letter from the composer Robert Simpson (1921–97), who had founded the Exploratory Concerts Society the previous year and was to work at the BBC from 1951 until 1980. Predictably, the composer declined the offer to have music heard, his attitude having "greatly extended and hardened". Nevertheless, he began a correspondence with Simpson in which he described several of his works and drew his attention to those he considered the best. On 5 April Simpson visited Sorabji, who not only showed him his works but later lent him his bound copy of the *Symphony [no. 1] for Organ* for almost a year. On 14 May 1949 he let Simpson use his study "quite privately for yourself" for a few hours "for burrowing in my MSS". Given the care he lavished on his manuscripts and books, it is surprising that he allowed his new friend to leave with some manuscript scores for six months. Simpson's desire to study the music was obviously linked with his intention of writing the entry on Sorabji for the German encyclopedia *Die Musik in Geschichte und Gegenwart*, a project that did not materialize. On the other hand, Sorabji, who was "enmeshed in business and family affairs", had no time, at least at the time, to study a manuscript that Simpson had sent him; its writing was "violently *antipatico*" to him and he preferred to return it. The younger composer, who was later to publish several books on music, introduced Sorabji to the music of Carl Nielsen, whose symphonies he was writing on at the time. The correspondence, of which Simpson's side has not survived, ceased in June 1951, except for a postcard dated 31 May 1955 in which Sorabji expressed his sharp reaction to his friend's handling of the music writer Donald Mitchell's comments on his String Quartet no. 3 (1953–54).[41]

Sorabji did make one exception regarding performances in early 1946, when the young medical student Cecil Ewing asked for permission to play the second of his early *Two Piano Pieces.* With a sense of chronology that contradicts other statements, he replied that "the veto I decided three years ago to place upon all public performance of my work must hold good in the case of your own projected performances".[42] As we shall see in chapter 7, persistence paid off, and the composer soon changed his mind, for a student performance of an easy piece was no threat; Tobin's performance of his most substantial printed work, on the other hand, was another matter. That critics publicly questioned the validity of his music based on an overly long reading was a severe blow to him. Anyone would reject out of hand a public performance of Liszt's Sonata in B Minor extended from thirty to sixty minutes or

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[38]Alan Bush to KSS, 14 August 1940; KSS to Alan Bush, undated (after 14 August 1988). See also KSS to Alan Bush, 25 August 1940, for an extended explanation of his "extreme dislike and aversion to playing".

[39]KSS to P. J. Lamb, 30 April 1944.

[40]KSS to Bernard Stevens, undated (after 9 August, probably in 1947) {BL, Add. 69025}.

[41]KSS to RWLS, 21 February 1948 (p. 2), 5 March 1948 (p. 3), 7 April 1948 (pp. 7–8; 7), 22 June 1948 (pp. 9–10; 10), 11 April 1949 (pp. 14–16; 16), 29 April 1949 (p. 17), 26 November 1949 (p. 20). In his edition of the correspondence, Jürgen Schaarwächter suggests that the work Simpson sent must have been his *Variations and Finale on a Theme of Haydn* (1948) for piano, a composer whom Sorabji disliked. On the postcard, see Donald Macauley, *The Power of Robert Simpson: A Biography* (N.p.: Xlibris Corporation, 2013), 73, and Lionel Pike, "Robert Simpson on Music: Writings and Lectures", in *Robert Simpson: Composer—Essays, Interviews, Recollections*, ed. Jürgen Schaarwächter, Studien und Materialien zur Musikwissenschaft, vol. 74 (Hildesheim, Zurich, and New York: Georg Olms Verlag, 2013), 417–42; 431.

[42]KSS to CE, 16 January 1946. Ewing, who was to become a professor of ophthalmology at the University of Saskatoon (Canada), later became a friend and correspondent of Sorabji. He praised him, along with Cecil Gray and Constant Lambert, as "eminent critics of integrity and vision"; "Correspondence: Bernard van Dieren", *The Gramophone* 33, no. 392 (January 1956): 339.

of a Chopin Etude or Prelude lasting four minutes instead of two. Sorabji had no choice but to withdraw from the world of music and limit his circle to those he trusted. He failed to realize that negative criticism is part of the game and that there are people who can be sympathetic to one's music, even if they are sometimes be hard to find. His various pronouncements about the alleged inability of people to share his view of the world (or that of his favourite composer Busoni) could hardly endear him to the community.

In 1957, in reply to a gentleman named Warnes, who wondered why his piano sonatas and concertos were not performed more often, Sorabji wrote: "Well, I suppose because *they* don't want to play them, and *I* want them to do so even less." To make it clear that he was actively discouraging performances, he added that he had "latterly gone to the length of categorically forbidding public performance".[43] This most probably refers to the (private) warning he had written in the manuscript of *Rosario d'arabeschi*. This may be the only printed reference to a ban, and it probably served as the basis for Gray-Fisk's remark quoted above.[44]

It may be appropriate to quote here most of Sorabji's *Personal Statement* of 14 October 1959, in which he explains why he neither sought nor encouraged performances of his works. The passage beginning with "Why do I write as I do?" (his "artistic Credo") recalls verses from the poem "The Laws of God, the Laws of Man" (1922) by A. E. Housman (1859–1936), whose name is nowhere to be found in Sorabji's writings: "And if my ways are not as theirs / Let them mind their own affairs. / Their deeds I judge and much condemn, / Yet when did I make laws for them?"

> I am not a "modern" composer in the inverted commas sense. I utterly and indignantly repudiate that epithet as being in any way applicable to me. I write very long, very elaborate works that are entirely alien and antipathetic to the fashionable tendencies prompted, publicised and plugged by the various "establishments" revolving around this or that modish composer.
>
> Why do I neither seek nor encourage performance of my works? Because they are neither intended for, nor suitable for it under present, or indeed any foreseeable conditions: no performance at all is vastly preferable to an obscene travesty. […] Why do I write as I do? Why did (and do) the artists-craftsmen of Iran, India, China. Byzantine-Arabic Sicily (in the first and last of which are my own ancestral roots) produce the sort of elaborate highly wrought work they did? That was their way. It is also mine. If you don't like it, because it isn't the present day done thing, that is just too bad, but not for *me,* who couldn't care less. In fact, to me your disapproval is an indirect compliment and much less of an insult than your applause, when I consider some of your idols.[45]

That Sorabji felt so much above the herd led him to elaborate on seeing artists gathered into the equivalent of a closed order. He certainly counted himself—and probably a few others of his choice—among those worthy of being called creative artists.

> I envisage the time [...] when all creative artists will remove themselves and their activities as far as possible from the common herd, like the great enclosed Orders of the Catholic Church, they will pursue their work apart and away from all contact with a world whose touch becomes increasingly foul and defiling, whose ideas go on becoming even baser and baser, whose taste ever and ever more corrupt and vitiated. Almost I would like to see all creative artists organized into quasi Monastic Orders under a rigid discipline (by common consent)[;] the very exceptional and outstanding artists will as always work in almost anchorite isolation, in [h]eremitical detachment. We are in for a Dark

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[43]Sorabji, "Letters to the Editor: Finis coronat opus", *MO* 80, no. 954 (March 1957): 333.

[44]Sorabji used the word "ban" at least once in his letter; see KSS to CE, 16 January 1946 (quoted in chapter 15 in connection with Joy McArden).

[45]Sorabji, "A Personal Statement" (dated 14 October 1959), first published as "Statement by Kaikhosru Shapurji Sorabji" in *Gambit: Edinburgh University Review*, Summer 1965: 4. This was written at the request of "a friend who has been asked to do a short study on me" (i.e., Clinton Gray-Fisk) for his *Musical Times* article of 1960; KSS to CMG, 18 December 1959 (with copy appended); see also KSS to RS, 25 November 1959.

Age as compared with which the so-called Dark Ages will be marvels of enlightened intelligence—a Dark Age of mechanization and Robotism *à outrance* until the final grand SMASH. The Artists will be then the only ones to keep the Lamp of Civilization alight as the Monasteries and the Church (at its best) did in the Middle Ages, through the welter and chaos to come.[46]

[46]KSS to EC, 24 January 1932, 9 (section dated 21 February).

Part 3 / The Recluse Composer-Critic

14 / 1937–39 ▪ Writing on Non-Musical Matters

Association with Oxford University Press

When Sorabji's name reappeared on the musical scene starting in late 1976 through Yonty Solomon's recitals, interested musicians learned that they could order his published works through Oxford University Press. In fact, the prestigious press never published his works, which had appeared under various imprints; it acted only as an agent. Sorabji came into contact with this prestigious publisher through his friend Norman Peterkin, who had worked for more than ten years as sales manager in the music department. He was instrumental in having Sorabji to sign an agreement on 15 July 1938 whereby the Press would become the selling agent of his all published music on 1 October. (Forty years later he would persuade him to become a member of the Performing Right Society, enabling him to collect royalties from the now more frequent performances of his works.) It was also agreed that Erik Chisholm would write a brochure about the works, paid for by Sorabji.[1]

Foreseeing "a very important change in the arrangements for the sale of my work", Sorabji had asked Chisholm in May 1938 to prepare a text on his music. This was to become part of the above-mentioned brochure, which the composer considered "of vital importance to the change".[2] This meant taking the representation of his works away from J. Curwen & Sons, which had published his last seven scores and handled the seven others originally published by other firms. It turned out that Chisholm had sent too much material and that only the first part had been used; Norman Peterkin and himself had "submitted your very excellent matter to severe pruning". Sorabji therefore suggested that the remaining part become an article for the *Musical Times*.[3] Nothing came out of this project.

Having thus acquired control of Sorabji's published works, Oxford University Press published a nine-page brochure stating that "these works are of very great interest to students and performers of contemporary music, and are the subject of much discussion among musicians generally".[4] Adorned with a stern photograph of the composer with his left hand on his chin on the cover, it contains an essay with section headings such as "Immensity of His Time-Scale", "His Keyboard Writing", and "His Instrumentation". Notes on most of the published works follow. Twenty years later Sorabji described the essay as "extremely good—the more times I re-read it over the years, the more I admire the perspicacity: an admirable, excellent piece of work".[5] At the same time, the Press issued a promotional booklet about the piano music published under its agency. A statement, probably written by Peterkin,

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[1]Copy of Memorandum of Agreement […] between Sir Humphrey Milford of the Oxford University Press […] and Kaikhosru Shapurji Sorabji, 15 July 1938. At least 150 copies were printed; KSS to DG, 6 October 1970.

[2]KSS to EC, 21 May 1938; 28 August 1938.

[3]KSS to EC, 10 August 1938; see also KSS to EC, 28 August 1938.

[4]*Kaikhosru Sorabji: An Essay by Erik Chisholm, with a Descriptive Catalogue of His Works* (London: Oxford University Press), undated 1938], 9 pp. The publication of the brochure was mentioned in the *Liverpool Daily Post* for 2 February 1939 ("Oxford [University] Press issues a short monograph on the works of the remarkable composer, Kaikhosru Sorabji, with a descriptive catalogue [of] his works, by Eric [*sic*] Chisholm").

[5]KSS to FH, 30 April 1958 {1/F.20}.

attributed the "outstanding characteristics" of Sorabji's music to his "uncommon birthright" and urged those "interested in the advanced music of our day" to examine it.[6]

Twenty years after the publication of his brochure, Chisholm submitted the idea of a book on Sorabji to Oxford University Press. The project was quickly rejected as it would never be "economically sound" (like this book, I might add).[7] Nevertheless, the Press continued to sell the scores on their shelves, no doubt wondering how many years they would gather dust. By 1951 there were 3,457 copies left, for an average of 247 per title, with 221 copies of *Opus clavicembalisticum*. In 1977, after Yonty Solomon had begun to play the music in public, the stock had fallen by almost 50 per cent to 1,849 copies with an average of 32, exactly the number remaining of the same work.[8] Sales increased as more newcomers to Sorabji's music sent in their orders. On 10 October 1988, five days before the composer's death, Alistair Hinton, acting on the composer's behalf and at his request, purchased the remaining copies—mostly of the songs, as the piano works, especially *Opus clavicembalisticum*, were quickly disappearing. Oxford University Press thus had no further interest in Sorabji's musical works under the terms of the 1938 contract.[9] Original copies of Sorabji's works, now collectors' items, occasionally appear in booksellers' catalogues at prices approaching four figures.

Fragment Written for Harold Rutland / Harold Rutland

Sorabji rarely—and, unfortunately, given the many notational and compositional problems—took the time to revise his works. The *Fragment Written for Harold Rutland* (1926, 1928, 1937; 2 pp.) is one of his few works to exist in more than one version.[10] After the early *Désir éperdu (Fragment)*, his new piece, with its two pages (in the final version), was to be Sorabji's shortest piano work before the 1960s, when he began to write pieces of Webern-like brevity.

The person mentioned in the title under consideration is the English pianist Harold Rutland (b. London, 21 August 1900, d. London, 23 June 1977),[11] who gave the first performance. Rutland studied music at the Guildhall School of Music and at the Royal College of Music, where his teachers included Adrian Boult and Arthur Bliss. From 1941 to 1956 he worked at the Music Division of the British Broadcasting Corporation, where he was responsible for music in their *Radio Times* periodical. He edited the *Musical Times* from 1957 to 1960, and it was in this capacity that he welcomed Clinton Gray-Fisk's introductory article on Sorabji in 1960, which included a reproduction of a page from the *Fragment*.[12] In 1957 he joined the Trinity College of Music as a lecturer and examiner; in 1960 he began touring the Commonwealth as an examiner for this institution, about which he wrote a brochure entitled *Trinity College of Music: The First Hundred Years* (1972). He was later president of the John Ireland Society and signed a small brochure on the composer.[13] He made his debut in 1926 at Wigmore Hall and published a number of songs and piano pieces, one of which, a *Toccata* published in 1929, is dedicated to Sorabji.

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[6] *Oxford Music for the Piano and Books of Interest to Pianists* (London: Oxford University Press, ca. 1938), 35.

[7] Oxford University Press to EC, 17 March 1958.

[8] Oxford University Press, stock counts, 21 December 1951, 14 July 1977.

[9] Oxford University Press to [AH], 20 October 1988.

[10] The different versions of *Fragment* will be referred to here as *Fr26*, *Fr28*, and *Fr37*.

[11] See Denis W. Stevens, "Harold (Fred) Rutland", *Grove's Dictionary of Music and Musicians*, 5th ed., ed. Eric Blom (New York: St Martin's Press, 1954), suppl. (1961), 386; and *MT* 118, no. 1614 (August 1977): 663 (obituary). For a pencil drawing by Juliet Pannett, see John Longmire, *John Ireland: Portrait of a Friend* (London: John Baker, 1969), between pp. 76 and 77, and *The John Ireland Companion*, ed. Lewis Foreman (Woodbridge, Suffolk: The Boydell Press, 2011), 162 (fig. 16); see also "Notes and Comments: Facing the Camera", *MT* 101, no. 1406 (April 1960): 233–34; 234.

[12] Clinton Gray-Fisk, "Kaikhosru Shapurji Sorabji", *MT* 101, no. 1406 (April 1960): 230–32.

[13] *John Ireland: A Biographical Sketch, with Analytical Notes on Two of His Piano Pieces, "The Island Spell" and "Ragamuffin"* ([London]: Galliard, 1965), 7 pp.

On 11 April 1924 Sorabji offered Rutland, "with the commiseration of the author", a copy of his recently published concerto. The latter, who had met Sorabji at least as early as 1922, later described him as "one of the few undoubted geniuses I have known".[14] Over the years Sorabji gave him other inscribed copies (all located in the Trinity College of Music), including one of *Opus clavicembalisticum* with various corrections in his own hand. In addition to the *Fragment*, Sorabji dedicated two piano works to him: *Un nido di scatole sopra il nome del grande e buon amico Harold Rutland* and the *Fourth Symphony for Piano Alone*. The second dedication emphasizes his friend's independence of mind and "admirable freedom from spiritual and moral besotment [*recte* besottedness] by contemporary fashions of musical haberdashery".

On 3 December 1976, four days before Yonty Solomon's first authorized public recital, Rutland was heard talking to the broadcaster, critic, and writer John Amis (1922–2013) about "the enigma of Sorabji" on the British Broadcasting Corporation's "Music Now" programme on Radio 3. It was to him that Sorabji turned to express his affection for Rutland shortly after his death in June 1977, using words similar to those in the dedication of the *Fourth Symphony*, that is, praising his independence of mind and his integrity uncorrupted by the world around him.[15]

The manuscript of *Fr26* contains fingerings, most probably added by Rutland in preparation for his performance. That of *Fr28* is marked "Final Form" and bears the most complete dedication: "Harold's copy. Bless his heart and fingers." The score of *Fr37* is marked "final definitive version". *Fr26* and *Fr37* both contain sixteen bars, while *Fr28* is two bars longer. Sorabji must therefore have decided that *Fr28* was too long for a "fragment" when he revised it in 1937, because he eliminated almost everything he had added in 1928. Another change was the increase in the refinement of the dynamic and interpretative directions from one version to another; furthermore, the markings of *Fr26* are mostly in French whereas those of *Fr28* and *Fr37* are in Italian. Sorabji did not necessarily carry directions from one version to another: some disappeared and reappeared in another formulation or were added in one version or another.

The word "fragment" aptly conveys the nature of the piece, which consists more of a series of gestures than a coherent whole built around a specific idea. This is all the more evident because, despite the presence of several easily named chords, the piece uses an atonal language. It consists of a free alternation of superimpositions of melodic strands, chordal climaxes, runs, glissandos, and recitative-like passages; the gestures are usually preceded by sudden breaks. The final gesture of the last two versions, with its superimposition of arpeggios in E♭ major and B minor, is strongly reminiscent of the passage that frames the tarantella in the second of Busoni's *Elegies* (1907), entitled "All'Italia! in modo napolitano" (**example 14.1**); a similar (but more ambitious) figuration is found in the "Introito" from the fourth movement of the *Second Symphony for Piano*.[16]

Harold Rutland gave the first performance of *Fr26* at Aeolian Hall on 12 October 1927. Given its short duration, he repeated it immediately. Sorabji, who was present, devoted most of his review to Rutland's music, which he found "so much superior in quality to the vast bulk of modern English compositions for the piano" and to his "admirable, clean, clear-headed playing" thereof. Of his own

[14]Harold Rutland, "Notes and Comments", *MT* 98, no. 1367 (January 1957): 21–22; see also Rutland to KSS, 24 January 1954, of which an expanded version of this appears in Rutland to FH, 3 December 1976 {7/F.11}.

[15]KSS to John Amis, 5 August 1977; see also KSS to Amis, 2 September 1977 {BL, Add. 71178}.

[16]The link between the Busoni excerpt and the *Second Symphony for Piano* was highlighted by Simon John Abrahams, "Le mauvais jardinier: A Reassessment of the Myths and Music of Kaikhosru Shapurji Sorabji" (Ph.D. diss., University of London, King's College, 2002), 208.

work, he added simply: "Very excellent and satisfying was the playing of the present writer's own 'Fragment'."[17]

According to Eric Blom, the work was "received with a mixture of derision, indignation, and bewilderment that was perfectly understandable and probably flattering to the composer". He called Sorabji "simply a seeker after an idiom of his own" but one "passionately sincere in his quest"; even those who disliked his music should "come at least to respect its fearless attitude".[18] *Musical Opinion* published a short (unsigned) notice suggesting that Rutland "get rid of that unpleasant creator of inhibitions which can best be described as gentility".[19] A certain "B.M." reviewed the concert for the *Musical Times* without even mentioning Sorabji's work.[20]

Symphonic Variations for Piano [and Orchestra] / Edward Clarke Ashworth

Sorabji devoted the late 1930s to large-scale works, the most massive being the *Symphonic Variations for Piano* (1935–37; 484 pp.). There are two versions, both of which are discussed here. After composing a set of eighty-one variations for piano solo, grouped equally in three volumes and based "on an original theme based on a motive *E–C–A* (the initials of the dedicatee)", Sorabji immediately began work on a version for piano and orchestra, although he did not go beyond the first four variations. He later wrote that the variations "as originally planned were to be insofar as the piano part is concerned [...,] SELF CONTAINED AND SELF SUFFICIENT, although there was always in the back of what I am pleased to call my mind a piano and orchestra form thereof".[21] It was not until the 1950s that he wrote down the *Symphonic Variations for Piano and Orchestra*; the task must have been too daunting, for he orchestrated only the first volume.

Both scores lack a dedication page, but the composer once said that he had dedicated them "to the very great friend and comrade to whom I owe so much—spiritually speaking—who wrote that admirable notice of the (atrocious) performance of O.C. in the New English Weekly".[22] Edward Clarke Ashworth (b. Richmond, Surrey, 20 May 1903; d. London, 10 January 1979), the son of the architect William Clarke Ashworth (1866–1940 at the latest) and Grace Maud Ashworth (*née* Cullen), worked for some time as a telegraphic operator for the Standard Cable and Wireless Company.[23] From 1923 to 1927 he travelled to various parts of the world, including Madeira, Saint Vincent, Cape Verde, and Brazil. He was also a music copyist, producing "work of a highly skilled nature" from his own home. Sorabji asked Erik Chisholm "to put all possible work in the way of old pal Edward Clarke Ashworth in the way of copying"; it indeed seems that Chisholm did not employ him.[24]

In early 1940, after the death of Ashworth's father, which left the son and his mother under considerable financial strain, Sorabji did the utmost out of "every instinct of loyalty and friendship"; he did his best to "help straighten out the tangle left as a result of a long period of misfortunes and losses". He asked Frank Holliday and George Richards to provide help to one whom he ranked "among the first three [copyists] in the country" and warmly recommended him to Alan Bush. He went on to describe him as "a remarkable fellow, takes a hell of a lot of knowing, a first-rate mind, a delicate and

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[17]Sorabji, "Music: Harold Rutland (Aeolian, October 12)", *NA* 41, no. 26 (27 October 1927): 309–10; 310.

[18]E[ric] B[lom], "London Recitals", *The Manchester Guardian*, 13 October 1927, 6.

[19]"The Concert Season", *MO* 51, no. 602 (1 November 1927): 156–57; 156.

[20]B.M., "London Concerts: Pianists of the Month", *MT* 48, no. 1017 (1 November 1927): 1032–33; 1033.

[21]KSS to KD, 27 May 1979 {Derus, S30, p. 136}; *A*, 6.

[22]KSS to CMG, 14 June 1936; see also KSS to PR, 10 January 1985 (original and transcription in Paul Rapoport, "Sorabji: A Continuation", in *SCC*, 85–86). The name also appears as Edward Ashworth in KSS to EC, 15 August 1939.

[23]Biographical information on Edward Clarke Ashworth comes from Reg. L. Goodman to AH, 21 December 1991. William Clarke Ashworth was an associate of the Royal Institute of British Architects.

[24]KSS to EC, 19 September 1937; KSS to EC, 15 August 1939.

accomplished water-colour artist and expert draughtsman, with excellent office, and clerical experience, fully trained in Morse telegraphy". Holliday, who wrote a letter of recommendation for him to be exempted from the army, hired his mother for household duties.[25] Ashworth, an amateur pianist, was apparently knowledgeable in matters of piano music. He was also a supporter of the Social Credit system, which explains his review in the *New English Weekly*. In 1937 the "landscape artist and aquarellist of no mean powers" had joined him in Corfe Castle, taking advantage of the fine weather for his work, which led the composer to decline an invitation from Richards for an outing.[26] Sorabji still saw him about once a week in 1942.[27]

Sorabji may have found the inspiration for his title in the *Symphonic Variations* for piano and orchestra (1918) by Arnold Bax (1883–1953), "without any doubt the finest work for piano and orchestra ever written by an Englishman".[28] He may well have known other works of the same title by Antonín Dvořák, César Franck (this one for piano and orchestra), and Hubert Parry, but he was certainly unaware that the Polish composer Witold Lutosławski was writing a set of his own at the same time (1936–38). He began work in 1935 and by 6 September 1936 had reached the end of the second volume (var. 54). He completed the score on 30 August 1937 at the Bankes Arms Hotel in Corfe Castle, where he was spending his summer holiday. Three weeks later he announced to Chisholm that he had to start "the business of copying into score preliminary to writing orchestral part!!!!!!"[29]

The *Symphonic Variations for Piano* begin with a statement of a tripartite theme marked "Quasi adagio e legatissimo sempre", the sections of which are identified throughout by the letters *A, B,* and *C*. Each one consists of a series of chords in long note values in both hands with two inner parts in crotchets. The number of beats per bar ranges from nine to twenty-seven, which means that variations using small note values take up several pages. The notes corresponding to the dedicatee's initials (E–C–A) signal the beginning of each section in different registers: in the faster parts in the first two sections, and in the upper part of the chordal line in the last one **(example 14.2)**.

A striking variation is no. 26, a powerful "Maestoso" section written in crotchet chords throughout. At one point, it begins to fill six, then seven staves (the latter reduced to six on [ED]pp. 159–60). This powerful statement gives way to the last—and, at twenty-eight pages, the longest—variation of the first volume, which is entitled "The Garden of Iram", a reference to the lost city with "lofty pillars" mentioned in the Koran (sura 89:7; Al-Fajr) that was destroyed after King Shaddad had ignored the warnings of the prophet Hud. The city's name appears in a passage of the famous *Rubaiyat* attributed to the Persian poet Omar Khayyām (1048–1131) in the well-known translation by the English poet and writer Edward FitzGerald (1809–83), the fifth and sixth stanzas of which are quoted here for the sake of continuity.

V

Iram indeed is gone with all his Rose,
And Jamshyd's Sev'n-ring'd Cup where no one knows;
But still a Ruby kindles in the Vine,
And many a Garden by the Water blows,

[25]KSS to FH, 5 February 1940 {1/F.2}; KSS to GR, 2 March 1940; KSS to Alan Bush, 10 February 1940; KSS to FH, 7 February 1940 {1/F.2}; KSS to FH, 22 May 1941 {1/F.2}, 6 December 1941 {1/F.3}.
[26]KSS to GR, 9 August 1937.
[27]KSS to FH, 8 November 1942 {1/F.4}.
[28]Sorabji, "The Modern Piano Concerto", in *AM*, 66–77; 70.
[29]KSS to EC, 6 September 1936, 1; KSS to EC, 19 September 1937.

VI
And David's lips are lockt; but in divine
High-piping Pehlevi, with "Wine! Wine! Wine!
Red Wine!"—the Nightingale cries to the Rose
That sallow cheek of hers t' incarnadine.[30]

"The Garden of Iram" is a superb example of Sorabji's lush writing in nocturne style and is perhaps be one of the most sublime moments in his entire output. His description of the passage is indeed quite picturesque.

> These ["The Garden of Iram" from the *Symphonic Variations*, "Anāhata cakra" from the *Tāntrik Symphony*]… they can just, only just be played by human fingers… no noise, but a dense humid forest of twining lianas, undergrowth, and a green twilight overhead shutting all in a green hot miasma steamy with heavy perfumes that drown the mind and engulf the soul… not at all healthy, not at *all* in tune with the dead vicar's cricket club.[31]

Var. 34, entitled "Quasi rāg indiana", is certainly one of the most Oriental-sounding pieces Sorabji ever wrote. This single-voice section contains an ostinato consisting of an ascending and descending line that repeats the melodic fourth F♯–B over four octaves. Above this drone hovers a very long, mellifluous, sinuous chromatic single-note melody, with hardly a pause, in a very free rhythm. It is easy to see a connection with the tambura-like, hypnotic var. 53 of the "Passacaglia" from *Opus clavicembalisticum*.

Var. 50, built throughout on an A pedal point, has the indication "Orch." at the beginning. Sorabji may have thought of including it into the orchestral version or of entrusting it to the orchestra alone; the indication also appears at the beginning of vars. 52, 55, 60, 70, and 80. None of these made it into the second version, which uses only the sections from the first volume.

Var. 54 is a passacaglia of one hundred variations based on a theme consisting of seventeen crotchets; it begins with a transposition of the dedicatee's initials. Since the entire passacaglia fits into the short space of twenty-seven pages, each variation is short. One might think of it as a "detachable" piece.

Var. 56 is in the style of the finale of Chopin's Sonata no. 2 in B-flat Minor, op. 35 (1839), that is, a *perpetuum mobile* beginning in the low register. Sorabji very soon adds an accented melody in long note values. The movement becomes more difficult as the composer turns some single notes into octaves, thirds, or triads. Like the model, it ends with two powerful chords, here C major followed by a superimposition of B and B♭ (both major). Sorabji called this variation "an elaborate pastiche" of "a favourite work of the dedicatee".[32]

Var. 66, an "Aria", is a slow ten-page piece consisting of an intricate superimposition of melodic lines with many complex, irrational rhythms. Like "The Garden of Iram", the "Notturno" that makes up var. 74 offers some of the most visually striking examples of Sorabji's writing.

After a "Cadenza" (var. 79), Sorabji offers a five-voice triple fugue (var. 80) based, as usual, on very long subjects. As in the "Passacaglia", the initial subject begins with the dedicatee's initials. The second fugue ends with a "Stretto" that begins on four staves but quickly grows to six ([MS]pp. 441–46; reduced to four in [ED]pp. 623–29), the longest such passage in Sorabji's entire output. The concluding "Epilogue"

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[30]The text is taken from the online version at http://classics.mit.edu/Khayyam/rubaiyat.html. The title "The Garden of Irān", used in Paul Rapoport, "'Could you just send me a list of his works?'", in *SCC*, 144, is thus a misreading of the word written by Sorabji in his manuscript, which clearly ends with an *m*. It was Alberto Vignani, in his edition of the version for piano and orchestra, published in 2014, who made it possible to see the confusion.

[31]KSS to FH, 6 February 1940 {1/F.2}.

[32]*A*, 6.

(var. 81) provides another example of Sorabji surpassing himself in laying out music in nocturne style that offers a strikingly intricate notational picture.

Sorabji later explained that he had designed his *Symphonic Variations* "either as solo works or to have an orchestral part as well". He had put them aside after writing an orchestral introito of "some 100 odd pages" (see below) and orchestrating the first four variations. Feeling that his interest had "strongly revived", he had "started going on therewith".[33] He was "now engaged on the heartbreaking job of copying the piano part of some four hundred odd pp. into the middle of the full score it is to occupy".[34] This clearly indicates his original intention to orchestrate the entire work. In the end, he limited himself to its first volume, adding "a detailed and very elaborate orchestral part […] with some few of them in between whiles transmuted into *entirely* orchestral terms".[35]

The *Symphonic Variations for Piano and Orchestra* (1935–37, 1953–56; 540 pp.), which are laid out on a gigantic scale, require sextuple woodwinds plus eight horns, five trumpets, four trombones, and two tubas. The alto flute, the bass oboe, and the contrabass sarrusophone are also required, to name only the least common instruments. Sorabji finished the main score in Corfe Castle on 1 June 1955, and he praised the Lord ("Laus Deo!") on completion of the small score (for additional percussion instruments that do not fit in the former), also in Corfe Castle, on 23 September 1956. He spoke highly of his new work, writing that Busoni's great piano concerto was "in the class of which only my own Symphonic Variations can be put"; he added that "modesty is the fig leaf of mediocrity, it has been said".[36]

Sorabji was quite liberal in reporting the length of the "Introitus": it does not contain one hundred pages but "only" sixty-six. This section, for orchestra only, begins with a statement of the dedicatee's name. At first Sorabji must have thought of composing a piano part for the "Introitus"; he stopped setting aside a blank three-staff system on each page when reaching p. 36.

The statement of the theme follows the massive sound of the "Introitus" after a long fermata; it is played by the piano alone, with a few very unobtrusive beats of transition given to the strings between its sections. A statement of the *Dies irae*, limited to six notes, can be heard in var. 17, played by the horns and the viola.[37] The piano is present in all the variations, exactly as in the solo version, but for two exceptions: var. 19, a slow piece consisting solely of an undulating movement of chords proceeding in crotchets; and var. 26 (the penultimate one), which in the solo version is the monumental piece spread on up to seven staves. An important difference between the two versions is the addition in the later one of one to five bars of purely orchestral music before the beginning of sixteen of the variations.[38] Furthermore, vars. 22 and 23 omit several systems of the original piano part, and a bar is added at the very end of what Sorabji curiously did not label "The Garden of Iram" for a decrescendo "a niente" in the seventeen string parts.

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[33]KSS to NG, 7 April 1953 {17/F.13}.

[34]KSS to EC, 4 April 1953; see also KSS to FH, 18 April 1953 {1/F.15}.

[35]KSS to NG, 16 July 1958 {17/F.61}.

[36]KSS to RS, 15 January 1963. See also KSS to FH, 18 June 1965, and KSS to CMG, 11 November 1960, for a fuller version of the fig leaf as a "favourite tag of mine".

[37]I am indebted to Alberto Vignani for this discovery.

[38]Addition of one bar (or a few beats): vars. 1, 4, 7–11, 13; two bars: vars. 12, 17, 23; three bars: vars. 14, 22, 24; four bars: var. 27; five bars: var. 26.

Tāntrik Symphony for Piano Alone

Sorabji's output includes several examples of symphonies for solo instruments, namely, the piano and, to a lesser extent, the organ. The *Tāntrik Symphony for Piano Alone* (1938–39; 284 pp.) is the first of this group of large-scale piano multi-movement works, notwithstanding the work editorially renamed *Symphony no. 0 for Piano Solo* (1930–31; 333 pp.). He seems to have been thinking about the new work as early as January 1932, when he mentioned to Erik Chisholm that he would proceed "then to Pudden-dirty-faced-own Symphony dam[n] and blast and bugger the little sod".[39] In June he was to "get on to the second Piano Quintet, and THEN? THEN? THEN, on to YOUR symphony" after writing *The Line*, a piece that was never begun or is not extant.[40] Once again, he was writing another piano symphony for his close friend, to whom he would, again, dedicate it: "To dear Erik: / (Erik Chisholm) / True loyal and faithful Friend: / With Lots of Love / From K."[41] We must assume that, at some point, he lent his autograph to the dedicatee, who returned it after having writing an undated and unpublished analysis of it.[42]

We do not know when Sorabji began work in earnest, or why he filled some 1,875 pages of music before finally resurrecting a project conceived six years earlier. The first movement was completed at Robin Hood's Bay, North Yorkshire, on 6 July 1938; the second one "well under way" a month later, and the whole work completed on 4 December 1939.[43] Sorabji wrote at the end of the manuscript "In the 3rd Month of the War of Financiers' Infamy", a comment he blotted out some time after 1953, as can be seen on the microfilm made in that year.

Sorabji introduced his manuscript with two texts. The first one is from *Alone* (1921) by the novelist Norman Douglas (1868–1952), whom he greatly admired.[44] He quoted an excerpt from this author's account of his travels in Italy beginning with "Consider well your neighbour, what an imbecile he is" (see chapter 16).[45] Sorabji always liked to emphasize how much he despised others, either through his own words or those of someone with whom he happened to agree. The second text is an "Envoi: or Epistle Denunciatory" in which he expresses his feelings towards those who seek a connection between music and title.

> A crore of pestilences upon all literal fools who will go rushing off to the Libraries mugging up Tantra and getting the Hell of a kick out of the dirt, the vice and all the fleshly uncleannesses that the pure ones can safely be relied on to find where and whenever they look for them, and having discovered what they will think they ought to look for (and enjoy finding above all else), will thenceforth run them to earth in my Symphony. Well: "à chacun son infini;"[46] I wish them joy and no end of outsize kicks—at least as many and big as they would get if they were to look a little nearer home, into the maggoty middens of those wholly unchemical manure-heaps their minds.

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[39]KSS to EC, 24 January 1932, 14 (section dated 7 March).

[40]KSS to EC, June 1932 (no day given), 7 (section dated 6 June).

[41]Several years later he talked of "The TANTRIK SYMPHONY… YOUR symphony you know!"; KSS to EC, 13 April 1953.

[42]The text of Chisholm's analysis (three manuscript documents) is in his papers at the University of Cape Town (BC 129, 29.236.12).

[43]The reference to Robin Hood's Bay comes from the end of the first movement; for the reference to the second movement, see KSS to EC, 10 August 1938. The date of completion is, as usual, on the last page of the manuscript.

[44]Norman Douglas was born in Austria of a Scottish family. He was educated in Scotland and England and worked for a number of years in the British diplomatic service before moving to Italy, where he spent many years and where he also died.

[45]Norman Douglas, *Alone* (London: Chapman and Hall, 1921), 136–37.

[46]The expression "à chacun son infini" is part of a tirade by Sara in the fourth part of the drama *Axël* (1890) by Auguste Villiers-de-l'Isle-Adam (1838–89): "Ces cœurs voilés ont l'innocence des gouffres, je le sais! 'Je reflète la Lumière!' Tout reflète la lumière: ils ont donc un vrai tel qu'un autre mais… à chacun son infini! Va, laisse à leurs propres âmes le soin de se punir! Moi, je ne daigne punir les gouffres qu'avec mes ailes."

Sorabji considered his new work "by far and away the most developed and mature", much better than *Opus clavicembalisticum*.[47] In the early 1950s he wrote that, together with the *Études transcendantes* and the *Sequentia cyclica super "Dies irae" ex Missa pro defunctis*, it belonged to a small group of works containing "a mine of representative quotable passages", and that he regarded it as "completely representative of my fulled [*recte* fully] matured and developed piano style".[48] We can understand from his comments that the word "symphony" was derived from the four-movement "Symphony" of the *Douze études dans les tons mineurs*, op. 39 (1857), by "that extraordinary genius", Charles-Valentin Alkan. He added: "again there is no deliberate or conscious programmatic intention. How far, or not, the various psychic implications of the various centres, the names whereof are used as titles to the seven movements, its composer does not pretend to know. Still less does he care!"[49]

The word "tāntrik" used in the title of the symphony is an adjective derived from "tantra", which refers to the Hindu or Buddhist religious literature written in Sanskrit and concerned with mysticism and magic. Today, tantra usually refers to a form of heightened sexuality. Indeed, an important aspect of the Hindu esoteric physiology concerns the chakras, that is, energy centres. Sorabji chose seven of the thirty or so chakras as titles for the movements of his work, using the transliterations found in the book *Tantra of the Great Liberation* by Arthur Avalon (1865–1936; pseud. of Sir John George Woodroffe), an English administrator in India and scholar of tantra.[50] "Mūlādhāra" is the sacral plexus, located in the region of the perineum, and is the seat of various pleasurable and aesthetic sensations. "Svādhiṣṭhāna" corresponds to the prostate plexus; it is located at the root of the penis and is associated with the arousal of sexual feelings. "Maṇipūra" is the solar plexus, located near the navel; it controls sleep and thirst as well as various emotions such as jealousy and shame. "Anāhata Cakra" corresponds to the cardiac plexus; it also governs such feelings as anxiety, doubt, remorse, etc. "Viśuddha", located behind the throat and corresponds to the laryngeal or pharyngeal plexus, controls the organs of articulation. "Ājñā", found between the eyebrows, is linked to concentration and conscious trance. Finally, "Sahasrāra [Padma]" lies outside the body and is the halo or emanation of the cerebral cortex; "padma" (or lotus) is a synonym for chakra.[51]

Sorabji originally intended to divide the *Tāntrik Symphony for Piano Alone* into *partes*, as he had done in the past. The score bears the following crossed-out indications: "Finis Partis Primae" at the end of the third movement, and "Incipit altera pars" and the beginning of the fourth one. The first three movements, which were initially conceived as a large unit, share similarities in thematic treatment. Each of them begins with a section ending with a thin double bar in which several numbered ideas are identified, with a new set in each movement: fifty-five (plus five) in the first, twenty-seven (plus nine) in the second, and twenty-five (plus twenty-two) in the third. As noted by Jakub Eisenbruk, several of these numbers have numerological features: palindrome, repdigit, 3 squared and cubed, 5 squared.[52] Each of these movements identifies further motives by adding letters from *a* to *d* to the numbers already used; in no other work are so many identified. Sorabji then engages in a free juxtaposition and superimposition of these thematic ideas throughout these movements. There is a "Coda-epilogo" at

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[47]KSS to Egon Petri, 17 December 1939.

[48]KSS to EC, 13 April 1953; KSS to NG, 6 December 1952 {17/F.3}, 23 December 1952 {17/F.5}.

[49]*A*, 6–7.

[50]*Tantra of the Great Liberation (Mahānirvāna Tantra)*, translated from the Sanskrit, with introduction and commentary, by Arthur Avalon (London: Luzac, 1913; repr., New York: Dover Publications, 1972). The orthography used here is that given by Rapoport, "'Could you just send me a list of his works?'", in *SCC*, 146.

[51]For information on the locations and roles of the chakras, see Benjamin Walker, "Chakra", in *Hindu World: An Encyclopedic Survey of Hinduism*, 2 vols. (London: George Allen & Unwin, 1968), 2:217–20.

[52]Jakub Eisenbruk to MAR, 3 June 2020.

the end of the first movement ([MS]pp. 48–64) and a "Coda" at the end of the third one (pp. 143–51). Sorabji was to use the first thematic idea, in semiquavers, at the beginning of the "Preludio quasi toccata" (p. 49) of the *Symphonia brevis for Piano*, a work that also quotes the opening motive from the *Sonata IV for Piano*.

The fourth movement is cast in Sorabji's lush nocturne style, and the fifth one ("Aria") consists of an intricate web of polyrhythms in a slow tempo. The sixth movement brings a return to a fast tempo and virtuosic style and serves as an introduction to the final fugue, which is divided into five sections on as many subjects (pp. 206–20, 221–28, 228–37, 238–53, 253–72). The work ends with a "Coda-Stretta" (pp. 273–84) the last three pages of which, spread on six staves, are meant to produce the effect of a full organ. Sorabji, in August 1939, called this fugue "easily my most powerful creation in this genre" **(example 14.3)**.[53] The endings of the fugues deserve a few observations. The first four fugues and the "Coda-Stretta" (for the fifth fugue leads directly into it) end with a ***ff*** climax. Only the fourth fugue lacks a final fermata, giving the pianist a few seconds' respite, although the last one is hinted at with *lasciar vibrare* ties. The first fugue and the whole work conclude with full chords in E♭ major and B major, respectively. The second and third fugues rather use consonant sonorities in both hands, although in bitonal relationship of major chords (A and F♯, and C and C♯); only the fourth fugue has an ending that departs from a clear harmonic framework.

As noted above, Sorabji was not keen on making links between his music and titles, which does not prevent others from trying to do so. The fourth movement, written in nocturne style, should normally have to be associated with pleasurable emotions and sensuality; yet its title refers to a chakra that governs anxiety, doubt, remorse, etc. The fugue, on the other hand, conforms to expectations by referring to a chakra associated with the cerebral cortex. It may therefore be safer to see the work simply as a reflection of Sorabji's interest in Eastern practices such as (tāntrik) yoga. In the years leading to the composition of this work, he was engaged in practices aimed at "the arousing into activity of the inner faculties" and was reaping a benefit in the form of a life with an ordered pattern and design (see chapter 7).[54]

The Well-Read Composer on Social Issues

Reading on a wide variety of subjects occupied much of Sorabji's time when he was not composing or reviewing. Shortly before World War II, however, he found it "necessary, both from inclination as well as time, to read ever less and less and exercise an ever more ferocious Nazi-like exclusiveness in what I *do* read".[55] The numerous references we find in his writings to fields other than music show the breadth of his interests; literature proper, however, seems to have occupied a smaller place in his life than the humanities in general. Topics related to current events would certainly have angered him more than literature and opened the way to vituperation. His correspondence with Erik Chisholm contains more or less detailed discussions of some twenty works of fiction, but frequent references to many authors of all periods. He proudly reported that he "didn't do so badly at between 7 and 8. I was reading Balzac, Flaubert and Guy de Maupassant—I've not yet found anybody who could beat that!"[56]

Sorabji was probably not an avid reader of contemporary fiction, as the genre may not have engaged his mind in the same way as essays that either comforted or inflamed him. One rare recorded comment concerns *The Shoes of the Fisherman* (1963) by Morris L. West (1916–99), which he found

[53]KSS to EC, 15 August 1939.
[54]KSS to EC, 6 September 1936.
[55]KSS to CMG, 29 May 1938.
[56]KSS to EC, 17 June 1930, 14 (section dated 30 June).

"a wonderful and *most moving* book".[57] Another author he liked was Aldous Huxley (1894–1963), by whom he mentioned six books in all, including *Brave New World* (1931).

Sorabji was "totally without instinct for or like of English poetry (with the one exception of Pope), [...] but of what I call *de ma façon* 'poetic' poetry I have no feeling for at all, in fact I HATE it."[58] On the other hand, French poetry had a considerable appeal, as evidenced by the thirty-one texts he set to music, the lion's share of which were by Baudelaire and Verlaine. Indeed, he was very fond of French culture and used its language for many titles as well as for several inscriptions and interpretative directions. He was also fascinated by Persian poetry him, as shown by such works as the *Symphony [no. 2], "Jāmī", for Large Orchestra, Wordless Chorus, and Baritone Solo,* and the many discussions of books on various aspects of this civilization in his essays and letters.

Detailed descriptions of plays show that Sorabji enjoyed plays, especially in the early 1930s; he had been "doing quite a little theatre-going recently", although it is not known whether he went alone or with his mother or a friend. He attended, among other plays, *The Barretts of Wimpole Street* by Rudolf Wilhelm Besier (1878–1942), "a grossly overrated play but wonderfully done". Unfortunately, the audience laughed "in that blankly imbecile idiotic fashion as only a London audience can laugh when there is absolutely nothing to laugh at but as often as not quite a moving and poignant situation". Fortunately, the leading actor was Cedric Hardwick (1893–1964), "easily the greatest actor on the English stage today". In *To See Ourselves* by E. M. Delafield (1890–1943), he was impressed by the acting of Elizabeth Pollock (1898–1970), Marie Lohr (1890–1975), Gladys Cooper (1888–1971), and Sybil Thorndike (1882–1976), whose "hooting boom" caused him to be "in *convulsions*".[59] Among the plays he attended was *La dame aux camélias* by Alexandre Dumas (1824–95), in which the Russian-born French actress Ludmilla Pitoëff (1895–1951) offered him "the greatest acting (of an actress) I have seen since the immortal and unforgettable and utterly legendary *DUSE*." He enthused at length about these two actresses, with whom "such transcendental spiritual quality descends onto the stage as did when Busoni played".[60] Returning from an unidentified play with Japanese actors, he commented on "the rarest and most exquisite artistic sensation I have had in the theatre for many a day—in fact I have no hesitation in saying that, taken as a whole, it is the greatest and most wonderful acting have ever seen, in its mixture of intense and vivid realism and the highest degree of subtlety it is unique."[61]

Sorabji's comments on Shakespeare, on the other hand, show that he was far from being one of his devotees.

> God, that man Shakespeare! Fustian rant and bombast, character drawing nil, consistency nil, plots imbecile. Well, the English deserve him; they never got a Dante nor a Goethe because they *didn't* deserve them, nor did they deserve Blake whom now they beslobber with the drooling praise of their "intellectual" circles.[62]

After seeing a German production, Sorabji described *Hamlet* as a "quite phenomenally stupid and tiresome play (even for Shakespeare) […] *What* balderdash!" He also referred to "the preposterous 'Old Vic' crowd capering about in *Hamlet* […] and to the charlatanism and humbug of one of the biggest swindles in these islands". He went on: "My God, the flatulent falsities of 'Hamlet'! One feels the play ought to be rewritten by Freud; it could hardly even then be more utterly unimaginative or impossible.

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[57]KSS to FH, 18 February 1964 {2/F.5}.

[58]KSS to CMG, 10 August 1955. Sorabji's "de ma façon" should probably read "à ma façon".

[59]KSS to EC, 22 January 1931, 8–9 (section dated 30 January).

[60]*FM*, item no. 249 (orig. no. CCCLI; p. 69); KSS to EC, 3 June 1930, 16 (section dated 13 June), 17 June 1930, 1. Duse is the Italian actress Eleonora Duse (1858–1924).

[61]KSS to EC, 17 June 1930, 15–16 (section dated 1 July).

[62]KSS to EC, 3 June 1930, 5 (section dated 4 June).

Oh! Those preposterous mouthings of 'Hamlet', those appalling blatherings [...]." Of another of the Bard's most famous plays, he wrote that "the person called Shakespeare […] messed [Luigi] da Porto's lovely story of *Romeo and Juliet* about in his preposterous and idiotic play".[63]

Sorabji does not seem to have been to the movies very often. He once mentioned the melodrama *Maria Marten; or, The Murder in the Red Barn* (1935) by Milton Rosmer (1881–1971), but he may simply have read about it.[64] He did, however, comment at some length on *Revolt in the Reformatory* (1929) by Georg Asagaroff (1892–1957), describing the controversial silent film (banned four times before its release) as a "sociological pamphlet" showing "a terrible and even harrowing picture of the horrors and brutality of reformatory life in Germany". He described the clergyman principal as "a choice specimen of his kind", adding that he knew "two at least who might have sat for the portrait [...] —obscurant, hypocrite and priggish bigot—bred in such profusion by the Church of England".[65]

When preparing his move to Corfe Castle in 1950, Sorabji filled "a dozen of those enormous Victorian plate-chests" with books and music, and he probably gave many of them away to friends at the time.[66] His entire collection of books, which in later life numbered some 3,000 titles, as well as his personal belongings, had to be auctioned by Sotheby's Bournemouth office in November 1986 to raise money for his nursing home care. The need to clear his house, The Eye, quickly in view of its sale in February 1987, had made it impossible to prepare a catalogue, or even a list, of the library. This collection probably represented only a fraction of what Sorabji had bought or received over the years, as he often gave books or lent some "to one of those criminals who borrow books without the smallest intention of returning them". This had made him wiser, and he had learned to refuse "adamantly to lend".[67] His correspondence and essays specifically mention some 240 titles to which he devoted either passing references or more or less detailed comments. We cannot always know whether he actually read them, or just knew of their existence or had read reviews, but he was clearly a voracious reader. He certainly read the books and essays of his friends and dedicatees as well as many works by the poets and writers who inspired some of his musical works. He obviously devoured the essays by Busoni, van Dieren, and Gray, as well as the novels, short stories, or poems of Norman Douglas, M. R. James, Hugh MacDiarmid, Harold Morland, and Sacheverell Sitwell. In the field of non-fiction, he counted Havelock Ellis, Alfred Richard Orage, and Denis Saurat among his acquaintances, and referred to each of them more than once.

Not one to mince words when describing intellectuals, Sorabji once wrote: "God *how* I loathe and execrate 'artistic' and 'intellectual' people—especially when they open the hole in their faces and let out that hollow lugubrious bragging they call 'intelligent conversation'!!!"[68] Yet he spent hours reading essays and books on subjects related to occultism, the paranormal, philosophy, science, sexuality, social science, politics, racial issues, etc.—and commenting on them (sometimes at length) in letters and essays. One wonders whether his correspondents shared the same passion for the subjects he discussed.

Sorabji's active interest in matters relating to (homo)sexuality (witness his membership in the British Society for the Study of Sex Psychology) led him to several readings. These included *Die Homosexualität des Mannes und des Weibes* (1914) by Magnus Hirschfeld (1868–1935), the *Introductory Lectures on Psycho-Analysis* (1922) by Sigmund Freud (1856–1939), and the *Essays of Love*

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[63]KSS to EC, 3 June 1930, 7 (section dated 4 June); KSS to EC, August 1930, 12 (section dated 23 August).
[64]*FM*, item no. 299 (orig. no. CDXI; p. 82).
[65]*FM*, item no. 249 (orig. no. CCCLI; p. 69); KSS to EC, 3 June 1930, 16 (section dated 13 June).
[66]KSS to FH, 25 December 1950 {1/F.12}; KSS to RS, 23 November 1965, 2.
[67]KSS to DG, 23 July 1967, 1.
[68]KSS to CMG, 7 March 1931.

and Virtue (1922) by Havelock Ellis (1858–1939). In the field of science, he knew, among others, *The Truth about Vaccination: The Nature and Origin of Vaccine Lymph, and the Teachings of the New Bacteriology* (1914) by Henry Valentine Knaggs (1859–1954), the English practitioner of natural healing cure methods (now called naturopathy), and the *Essays in Popular Science* (1926) by the biologist Julian Sorrell Huxley (1887–1975). He was also familiar with books by Oswald Spengler (1880–1936), the German philosopher of history who wrote *Der Untergang des Abendlandes* (1918–22), and the Nietzschean philosopher and conservative social critic Anthony Mario Ludovici (1882–1971), the author of *Man: An Indictment* (1927), one of four books by him discussed in the sources surveyed. Another title is *Corydon: quatre dialogues socratiques* (1924), by the French novelist, critic, and essayist André Gide (1869–1951). In the field of politics, Sorabji was much offended by the behaviour of the English in India and had great admiration for two writers known for their criticism of British policy in India, Henry Mayers Hyndman (1842–1921) and Reginald Arthur Reynolds (1905–58), authors of *The Awakening of Asia* (1919) and *The White Sahibs of India* (1937), respectively.

The presence of titles in German and French in the above paragraph raises the question of whether, and how easily, Sorabji could read complete books in the original languages. As we shall see, he had studied German with a tutor and was able to write decent French (see chapter 16). We must therefore assume that he was able to go beyond skimming the books.

Obviously, many of the writers mentioned by Sorabji have lost whatever significance they may once have had. Among them are a striking number of non-fiction writers (of various political or ideological persuasions) who caught his attention in his forties and early fifties and prompted him to write on various subjects. The next section gives an idea of his thinking, without any attempt to evaluate or validate his claims or the facts reported.

In late 1950 or 1951 Sorabji wrote ten paragraphs under the title of *Some Sacro-Sanct Modern Superstitions (with Comments)*, expressing various ideas about the working classes. He rejected workers' claims that he could not understand their view of work, insisting that the task of writing down a few pages of orchestral score in a day drained him so much that he could not sleep "for nights on end", whereas workers simply went "gleefully boozing or whoring or both". He rejected the claim that all should be equal in society and objected to the popularization of the arts, which was tantamount to casting pearls before swine. For him, the proletariat "produces offspring, that is to say, by implication little else".[69] If further proof of his dislike of proletarians were needed, the following attack, prompted by a letter from an American friend, will make things clear.

> I can QUITE understand the nerve-rack you must have had over it. It seems that the alleged "workers" YOUR side of the water are spiritual brothers to OUR lot here, the story of whose delinquencies, deficiencies, slovenliness, would fill endless vast volumes, to say nothing of their arrogant, low-class, base-born impudence and effrontery. From all of which you will deduce that I am NO lover of proletarians. All the class claptrap, 'welfare state, equality of opportunity, fair shares, social justice' and all the rest of the too too typical leftish jargon-gibberish makes me VOMIT.[70]

During World War II Sorabji contributed a text on "Freedom and Democracy" to a magazine called *Parliament Christian*, in which he argued that the "doped, besotted and indoctrinated public" accepted such catchwords unquestioningly. For him, freedom was a "meaningless abstraction", and democracy an "even more potent spell-binder" that involved "almost a contradiction in itself", since a population

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[69]The ten statements found in *Some Sacro-Sanct Modern Superstitions (with Comments)*, of which nos. 2, 4, 6, and 10 are summarized here, are reproduced in full in Rapoport, "Sorabji's Other Writings", in *SCC*, 327–30.

[70]KSS to DG, 15 November 1969, 1.

could not govern itself. The only possibility for him was the referendum system practised in Switzerland and advocated in Britain by "our admirable P.C.L.P.", that is, the People's Common Law Parliament, which produced the magazine in which his views were published. "Freedom and democracy" for him consisted simply of "war memorials for you and war loans and costs-plus (very much plus) for the High Financier and his tame rabbits the Big Interests".[71]

In a series of ten statements related to his *Modern Superstitions*, entitled *The Disbelief of an Anti-Democrat*, we see that Sorabji utterly disbelieved in "Freedom and Democracy" in inverted commas. The "greatest good of the greatest number" meant nothing to him, no more than the right to speak one's mind, because one first needs a mind, the ability to use it, and the right to use to it. This led him to believe in the rightness of caste as opposed to class divisions, by which he meant "birth and breeding tradition".[72] Sorabji, who had a very dim view of "democracy", wrote: "Of all the filthy, corrupt cesspools, the swindle and confidence-trick called 'democracy' is about the worst. The bringing to power, as in the new 'democracies' in Africa, of convicted swindlers and bank crooks is just the logical end of the filthy thing."[73] He used similar words when he wrote that "the whole business of finance and banking is a colossal fraud, swindle and confidence trick designed to keep those who run the whole filthy system in complete control, along with the Communists with whom they are UP TO THE NECK".[74]

Sorabji's thinking on politics seems to have been strongly influenced by the aforementioned Anthony Mario Ludovici, who defended aristocracy and anti-egalitarianism, and the philosopher René Guénon (1886–1951), "two of the most important thinkers of our time". He described the former's *False Assumptions of "Democracy"* (1921) as "the most shattering riddling of that poisonous superstition that it is possible to find". And he described the latter's essay *The Reign of Quantity and the Signs of Times* (1945; English translation, 1953) as "a root and branch riddling of everything that our fatuous age most prides itself on its 'progress'".[75] The names of these authors appear frequently in his letters and writings.

Sorabji, especially in the post-war period, subscribed to the political and economic journals of various hues in which letters (mostly, and up to four) or articles from his pen appeared. These publications, generally to the right of the spectrum, are listed here in the chronological order of their activity, and their titles and (especially) subtitles give an idea of their ideological stance. It is difficult to determine the extent to which Sorabji adhered to their teachings based on twenty-six letters and six short articles, but he was obviously interested in what they had to say on current issues and wanted to respond to certain points raised in articles he had read.

The Distributist (League for the Restoration of Liberty by the Distribution of Property) (1932–?)
The Social Creditor for Political and Economic Realism (1938–?)
Tomorrow (Absorbed "Sovereignty"): A Journal for the World Citizen of the New Age (1939–49)
The Word: Organ of the United Socialist Movement (1939–50)
Peoples Post (Incorporating "The Bedford Newsletter"): Organ of the British People's Party (1939–40, 1945–54)
Parliament Christian (Incorporating "Posterity"): The Organ of the People's Common Law Parliament to amend the deficiencies in present parliamentary and electoral procedure, to ensure that the Will of

[71]Sorabji, "Freedom and Democracy: Some Disillusioning Reflections", *Parliament Christian* 3, no. 10 (March 1944): 93–94.
[72]Sorabji, *The Disbelief of an Anti-Democrat* (undated), nos. 1, 3, 4, 9, 10.
[73]KSS to RS, 10 February 1961, 1.
[74]KSS to KD, 27 July 1984 {Derus, S59, p. 312}.
[75]KSS to RS, 6 July 1966, 1; see also KSS to RS, 3 April 1961.

the people shall prevail, to give security to all and remove the economic and other causes of War, to establish a true Christian social order) (1940–48)
Housewives Today, Supporting the Policy of the British Housewives' League (1947?–?)
Union (Incorporating "Action"): Organ of the Union Movement (1948–57)
The Royalist: A Magazine of Royalism, Its Destiny, Mission, Purpose and Use (1951?–?)
Encounter: Literature, Arts, Politics (1953–91)
Candour: The British Views-Letter (To serve as a link between Britons all over the world in protest against the surrender of their heritage) (1953–)
Royalist Viewpoint (1968–73)

In addition to the titles mentioned above, the *New Age* and the *New English Weekly*, both of which promoted the economic philosophy of Social Credit, gave Sorabji a platform to express his views on political and economic matters. In *Around Music*, which carries a foreword by Alfred Richard Orage, he discussed the operatic situation in London and Rome and referred to an Italian article written "not having the advantage of having access to the epoch-making financial discoveries and teachings of Major C. H. Douglas".[76] He had some pamphlets to give away to his friends.[77]

Sorabji's voting preferences are unknown, in the unlikely event that he ever voted, given his opinion of the main British political factions, which will be apparent from the discussion below. He rarely expressed his opinion of specific British politicians, although Churchill's leadership struck him "as one of the direst catastrophes this country has ever suffered. Whether or not it deserves that for its own stupidity and foolishness, one hardly ventures to say."[78] He sent to a friend "for your horrified reading" a copy of Bernard Smith's pamphlet *Poland: A Study in Treachery*, which he described as "an account of the (unmitigated) villainy of those three war criminals... Churchill, Roosevelt and worst of the three Stalin [...]".[79]

It was in the context of his beloved Italy that Sorabji provided some insights into his thinking on economic and political matters. In the first of a series of letters to the *New English Weekly* on fascism, which led to an exchange lasting more than a year, he described himself as "a staunch Monetary Reformer *and* Social Creditor". Returning from a two-month trip to Italy in early 1937, Sorabji felt compelled to speak out in response to "the silly malice and blind prejudice against Fascism, to say nothing of the deliberate and unscrupulous misrepresentation of its aims and objects that are the order of the day in so many organs devoted to the advocacy of Social Credit". He had seen that most people, whatever their social class, were well fed and properly nourished, whereas most British citizens showed signs of malnutrition.[80] The assumption that "'regimentation and suppression' are peculiar to Fascism" seemed to him "grotesquely naive". Sorabji had yet to discover in Italy anything comparable in petty oppression to what was happening in his own country, adding that "the only legitimate accusation that any English-speaking person can make against Fascism [...] was its militaristic tinge".[81]

One could mention here the British Union of Fascists (1932–40), led by Sir Oswald Mosley (1896–1980). There is no evidence that Sorabji took any interest in their activities or supported them in the pre-war years. However, three of the magazines listed above had links with Mosley's party or its

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[76]Sorabji, "The Operatic Situation", in *AM*, 232–42; 240.
[77]KSS to EC, 5 April 1930, 1.
[78]KSS to RS, 3 April 1961, 2. The booklet's full title is *Poland: A Study in Treachery—The Story of How Churchill and Roosevelt Surrendered Their Ally to Stalin, Based on the Letters, Memoirs and Speeches of Those Who Took Part* (Worthing, West Sussex: Flint House, 1984), 30 pp.
[79]KSS to KD, 26 May 1984 {Derus, S58, p. 307}.
[80]Sorabji, "Correspondence", *NEW* 10, no. 19 (18 February 1937): 380; see also KSS to CMG, 29 May 1938.
[81]Sorabji, "Correspondence: Food and Fascism", *NEW* 10, no. 22 (11 March 1937): 440.

successor, which promoted European nationalism (the Union Movement, 1948–73), and Sorabji published thirteen open letters and five articles in their pages after the war: *The European*, *The Peoples Post*, and *Union*.[82] In 1954 he submitted a long "thesis on homosexuality" to the first of these journals, which shows that his contributions did not necessarily or specifically have to do with points of political doctrine. The letter of rejection he received made it clear that they shared his views on the subject but that it was wiser, in view of current prejudices, not to dwell on such controversial issues. Should the party come to power, however, it would prefer scientific advice to prejudiced public opinion. Two years later the magazine agreed to publish an extended letter from him on the same subject.[83]

A fourth magazine, *Candour*, was edited by the journalist A. K. (Arthur Kenneth) Chesterton (1899–1973), who had been associated with Mosley's party until 1938. Sorabji published three, if not four, letters in its pages in the mid-1950s. In early 1959 he wrote to Chesterton to encourage him to take up the "Suez matter" in the pages of his journal.[84] Two years earlier he had sent a contribution to the legal costs of the League of Empire Loyalists (1954–67), founded by Chesterton, as a "gesture of sympathy for the odious treatment you have suffered".[85]

In connection with Sorabji's "ferocious Nazi-like exclusiveness" in his choice of readings mentioned at the beginning of this section, it may be noted here that Hitler's name appears twice in the *Fruits of Misanthropy* as part of the composer's harsh criticism of England. Referring to empire-building as "a very ugly, very revolting thing not even your Englishman sees when it takes place as near home as Czechoslovakia or even Poland", he wrote that it is called "aggression" when Hitler does it. England was "keen on fighting Kaiserism, Prussian Militarism, Hitlerism or what not" because she disliked "seeing her own patent rights in these articles infringed".[86] In 1957 he published an open letter in *Union*, the journal of Mosley's later party mentioned above, with two footnotes to an unidentified article.[87] One of these referred (mistakenly) to Winston Churchill's book *Great Contemporaries* and paraphrased his oft-quoted comments on Hitler, which have always been considered problematic as suggesting approval. Sorabji's wording was that if England found itself in the same dire situation as Germany at the end of the First World War "there would be a Hitler to lead her back to her rightful place among the nations".[88] There is no other record of Sorabji's views on the German dictator and the political regime of his country after 1933.

Sorabji's first known comment on Communism was prompted by his reading of *Rachmaninoff's Recollections* (1934) by Oskar von Riesemann (1880–1934). The composer's treatment at the hands

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[82] *The European* (1953–59) was edited by Mosley's wife, Diana (*née* Mitford; 1910–2003).

[83] A[lexander] Raven Thomson to KSS, 26 January 1954. The letter was published as "Letters: Homosexuality", *The European*, no. 36 (February 1956): 61; there Sorabji recalled "a correspondence I had twenty or more years earlier with that most able and lamented man the late Raven Thomson". The correspondence mentioned by Sorabji has not survived, and it is not possible to say whether his 1954 submission and the letter published in 1956 are similar or different, as the former was not found among his papers. The Scottish philosopher and politician Raven Thomson (1899–1955), a lifelong follower of Mosley, was the general secretary of the Union Movement and edited its journal, *Union*.

[84] KSS to A. K. Chesterton, 17 January 1959. The "Suez matter" refers to the 1956 Suez Crisis, also known as the Second Arab-Israeli War, in which the Western powers sought to regain control of the Suez Canal after its nationalization by Egypt.

[85] KSS to Leslie M. C. Green, 4 November 1957; Leslie Green to KSS, 4 November 1957.

[86] *FM*, items nos. 318 and 322 (orig. nos. CDXVIII and CDXXII).

[87] Sorabji, "Hitler and the War", *Union*, no. 452 (11 May 1957): 4. It was not possible to identify the "admirable article" that prompted Sorabji to send in comments, except that its author was George Sutton, the director of research of Sanctuary Press who served as private secretary to Oswald Mosley.

[88] Churchill's comments are not taken from his essay "Hitler and His Choice", in *Great Contemporaries* (Long Acre, London: Odhams Press, 1937), 203–10, as suggested by Sorabji, but from "Friendship with Germany", *Evening Standard*, 17 September 1937. The actual quotation reads: "One may dislike Hitler's system and yet admire his patriotic achievement. If our country were defeated, I hope we should find a champion as indomitable to restore our courage and lead us back to our place among the nations."

of the authorities of the "Universal Servile State of Robotry" seemed to him to be a "complete refutation of the long-loved superstition that an artist is likely to fare any better under 'the dictatorship of the proletariat' than under the present dictatorship of the International Bankers and their toadies, lickspittles and hangers-on".[89] A few years later, Sorabji reviewed the Symphony no. 1 (1939–40) by Alan Bush (1900–1995), who had joined the Communist party in 1935. He described the composer as "undoubtedly the outstanding figure among the younger men" and a "powerful and individual" musical thinker. However, he could not resist "pointing to a comparison between the work of Alan Bush the English communist" and "those works that have been presented to us as the fine flower of the music of Stalin's Russia", imbued with "the clap-trap and poppy-cock of old tyrannies tricked out in new disguises".[90] Although he was pleased to read that Sorabji had commented on his music "in so friendly a manner", Bush was "dismayed at some of the opinions" that followed, prompting him to write an open letter. Sorabji replied that an "English communist" like himself could write very fine music and that several Russian Communists wrote very bad music. For him, the "supreme problem" was not a political but a financial one. He found that

> the malignant venom with which the whole lot of them line up together against any financial teaching or theory that has as its object the complete financial emancipation, security and independence of the mass of the people is an illuminating if sinister object lesson to those of us who profoundly suspect and distrust the whole lot of them.[91]

In the early 1940s Sorabji wrote about communism and India. He deplored the fact that the younger Indian nationalists were expressing an "undiscriminating and uncritical admiration for Soviet Russia and all its doings". He was also saddened to see the statesman Jawaharlal Nehru (1889–1964) hail "as brilliant and remarkable achievements things that are literally insignificant compared with what such genuinely democratic and progressively enlightened countries [the Nordic countries] have achieved in the way of social amelioration".[92]

The many human tragedies resulting from political decisions and nationalism revolted Sorabji. The "cruder and vulgarer forms of nationalistic patriotism so prevalent in Europe" aroused "nothing but my loathing and contempt". The Spanish Revolution was "about to follow the time dishonoured course of all such unsavoury movements with the usual concomitants of murder, maltreatment and plundering of helpless and inoffensive people". The Mexican Revolution was "engineered by Yankee high finance", and "the precious Yankee press was conducting a foul campaign against the Mexican Catholics as a puritan-prurient-protestant set always does against a people whom it has tried to bully, coerce, threaten and torture into abandoning its ancient faith". It was no wonder, then, to see "a deep loathing and hatred of England in all real Irish hearts". Much as he found all "attempts to make great cultures and ancient races deny themselves", he found "utterly damnable", they would not make him "abandon my proud isolation and descend from my 'tour d'ivoire' [...] to identify myself with any Indian nationalistic activity". However, there were "certain fundamental aspects of the matter to which I neither do nor wish to close my eyes".[93]

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[89]Sorabji, "Revolution and Art", *NA* 54, no. 26 (26 April 1934): 308–9; 308. For the expansion of the abbreviation "USSR", see KSS to CMG, 28 October 1943, 2.

[90]Sorabji, "Music: A Symphony by Alan Bush", *NEW* 18, no. 17 (13 February 1941): 197–98; 197.

[91]Alan Bush to KSS, 21 February 1941; Sorabji, "Correspondence: Art and Politics", *NEW* 18, no. 20 (6 March 1941): 236. The open letter from Bush (with whom the correspondence covers the years 1940 to 1988) could not be found.

[92]Sorabji, "Jarwharlal [*recte* Jawaharlal] Nehru and Soviet Russia", *The Word*, undated clipping, ca. 1942, 64; see also "Communism and India", *The Word*, undated clipping, ca. 1942, 39.

[93]KSS to EC, 6 May 1931, 17 (section dated [12?] May).

Sorabji's open letters served as an apt vehicle for his views on moral issues, some of which resulted from his membership in the British Society for the Study of Sex Psychology. In 1929 he described the Marquis de Sade (1740–1814) as "a very remarkable man" and "the victim of the most fantastically slanderous legend" and referred to various writings showing an interest in the French libertine.[94] Later that year, in response to an article on "progressive birth control", he referred to "a large number of distinguished medical men and social workers" who had "come out with a strong plea for legalised abortion". He praised the *New Age* for its courage and fair-mindedness in allowing the publication and discussion of such views; he then turned to the arguments in favour of abortion, arguing that the strong aversion to it was "largely due to the backwash of theological prejudice".[95] At the same time, he wrote in his *Fruits of Misanthropy* that our civilization had "achieved one immense and tremendous thing: the liberation of women from the dread and terror of unwanted childbirth, a sexual emancipation unprecedented in the history of the world, which one can easily understand". This was "not overpleasing to certain mean-minded males jealous for their agelong immemorial convention-fostered immunity-privilege which is theirs alone no longer"; he rejoiced that the Catholic Church, despite the "regret and admiration" he had for her, could not stem this tide.[96] Notwithstanding the foregoing, the reader will recall that by the mid-1950s Sorabji was expressing strong views against feminism (see chapter 9).[97]

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[94]Sorabji, "Letters to the Editor: Sadism", *NA* 45, no. 20 (12 September 1929): 239.

[95]Sorabji, "Notes of the Week", *NA* 46, no. 4 (28 November 1929): 37; "Letters to the Editor: Legalised Abortion", *NA* 46, no. 6 (5 December 1929): 58–59.

[96]*FM*, no. 130 (orig. no. CCXXXII; p. 37). See chapter 19 for Sorabji's attitude to religion in connection with his composition of *Messa grande sinfonica*.

[97]See, for example, KSS to NG, 1 April 1956 {17/F.48}.

15 / 1940–41 ■ Friendships, Broken and Unbroken

Frank Holliday, the Devoted Champion

The friends who helped the misanthrope Sorabji to make life on earth more tolerable fall into two categories: those with whom a lasting friendship existed until the death of one of them, and those with whom links were irretrievably severed at some point. Reducing the list to those with whom there was frequent contact, in alphabetical order, the first group comprises Erik Chisholm, Philip Heseltine, Alistair Hinton, and Norman Peterkin. The other group includes Bernard Bromage, with whom relationships were broken in 1942, partly because of his misbehaviour as joint trustee of the Shapurji Sorabji Trust, and Henry Welsh and Frank Holliday. Ironically, Sorabji had met Holliday at Bromage's London flat in 1937.[1] Holliday remarked in 1944 that although Bromage had "precious little to his credit as far as I am concerned", he had to admit that it would have been a "very very bad loss" for him if they had not met through his instrumentality.

Like several of Sorabji's friends, Frank Holliday (b. Belvedere, Kent, 6 October 1912; d. Hailsham, East Sussex, 19 November 1997) was not a musician. He described himself as a person "of little cultural background and no musical knowledge whatsoever, but as one loving music as almost a necessity".[2] He had studied physics and mathematics (with a special interest in acoustics) and had obtained a university degree in science. He became an associate of the Royal Aeronautical Society in 1937 and was promoted to associate fellow two years later, resigning his membership in 1948. After joining the Society, he worked for Vickers (Aviation) Ltd. (Weybridge, Surrey). He was responsible for training and in the 1940s published papers on the selection of apprentices for the engineering industry in the journal *Occupational Psychology*, published by the National Institute of Industrial Psychology.[3] Dr. Charles Samuel Myers (1873–1946), the founder of occupational psychology in the United Kingdom, described his research, when half-finished, as the best he had ever seen.[4] Sorabji himself congratulated him, saying that he had "no proper realization of the extent and depth" of his knowledge until he saw his "magnificent articles".[5] Holliday went on to work as a teacher of mathematics, physics, and statistics. In the early 1950s he tried his hand at short stories and even wrote a novel entitled *The*

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[1]An important source of information on Holliday's friendship with Sorabji is his essay "A Few Recollections and Ruminations", in *SCC*, 88–91.

[2]Holliday, "Splendour upon Splendour: On Hearing Sorabji Play", in *SCC*, 423.

[3]The titles of Frank Holliday's articles are: "An Investigation into the Selection of Apprentices for the Engineering Industry", *Occupational Psychology* 14, no. 2 (April 1940): 69–81; "A Further Investigation into the Selection of Apprentices for the Engineering Industry", ibid. 15, no. 4 (October 1941): 173–84; "A Survey of an Investigation into the Selection of Apprentices for the Engineering Industry", ibid. 16, no. 1 (January 1942): 1–19; "The Relation between Psychological Test Scores & Subsequent Proficiency of Apprentices in the Engineering Industry", ibid. 17, no. 3 (July 1943): 168–85; "The Relation between Self-Assessment and Test Indications of Practical Ability", ibid. 23, no. 2 (April 1949): 65–73.

[4]FH to KSS, 23 May 1977 {3/F.8}.

[5]KSS to FH, undated (1951) {1/F.13}.

Uncaught Thing, which the publisher Jonathan Cape refused to publish, although not without saying —whatever that means—that they would be prepared to consider his later work.[6] Sorabji, who wrote more than a full typewritten page in praise of his friend's literary efforts, found it difficult to remain objective "when confronted with a remarkably vivid and intense *autoritratto* […] of someone of whom one is very fond". The penultimate chapter, a "poignant study of a hypersensitive racked and broken on the wheel of his own temperament", was "as harrowing a thing as I have read for many a long day".[7]

As mentioned above, Sorabji's relationships with Holliday began in 1937. The latter was "completely and utterly overwhelmed by the beauty of his music" when the composer took him to his studio in Bloomsbury.[8] The two men met frequently over the years, visiting exhibitions, going to shows, and dining together in restaurants. Holliday seems to have called at Clarence Gate Gardens occasionally, and the two continued to see each other after Sorabji moved to Corfe Castle in late 1950, where Holliday would come once or twice a year for two or three days at a time.[9] As late as the mid-1970s, Sorabji would sometimes travel to East Sussex (about six hours away by train) to spend time with his friend.[10] Sorabji would play for him for an hour or two in the morning; then Holliday would take him in his car for excursions to neighbouring villages for shopping, especially to Swanage, and to Wareham, for a lunch at the Red Lion Hotel. After further sessions at the piano, Holliday would return to a room booked for him by Sorabji at Pa Matthews's or Auntie Savage's or at his own home, when his companion, Reginald Norman Best, was away. Holliday took his visits to Sorabji very seriously. Obviously convinced that he was close to a towering personality who would eventually become the object of scholarly endeavour, he felt it was his duty to posterity to chronicle as much as he could. This explains why he kept several pages of rough notes on his visits; these often barely legible jottings contain biographical information reflecting how Sorabji wanted his entourage to remember him.

Holliday is the dedicatee not only of *"Gulistān"—Nocturne for Piano*, completed in August 1940, but also of two other works. One is the *Second Symphony for Piano*, in which the composer expressed his "deep affection, gratitude and heartfelt admiration for his wonderful qualities of heart and mind". In the early 1970s he said how important it was to him that this dedication be quoted in every broadcast talk about him.[11] The other is the *Toccata quarta*, another work in which the friend's name is incorporated into the musical texture. Sorabji would remove all three dedications in 1979 for reasons to be explained below; he transferred those of the first two works to the poet Harold Morland and that of the third one to the musicologist Paul Rapoport. Fifteen years earlier, on 22 May 1964, Sorabji had transferred to Holliday the dedication of the *Toccata [no. 1] for Piano*, a work previously inscribed to Bernard Bromage (but not subsequently taken back from Holliday).

The dedication of the *Second Symphony for Piano*, made in 1954, enabled Sorabji to thank Holliday for the trouble he had taken to set up the "K. S. Sorabji Fund" to raise money to enable him to record some of his works. In December 1950 Erik Chisholm had expressed to Sorabji his wish that he make some private recordings at His Master's Voice, but had received no response.[12] A year later Holliday began writing a series of confidential letters to friends and admirers proposing a private gesture that would

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[6]FH to KSS, 12 December 1953 {1/F.15}; *RN* (November 1956) {1/F.18}.

[7]KSS to FH, 26 November 1955 {1/F.17}.

[8]KSS to FH, 5 February 1940 {1/F.2}.

[9]Holliday lived at 32 Oakley Crescent, London SW3, at the time of his meeting with Sorabji in 1937. He later resided in Weybridge (Surrey), now part of the Greater London Urban Area; then in Filleigh, near Barnstaple (North Devon); and finally in Herstmonceux, near Hailsham (East Sussex).

[10]For an example of such a visit, see KSS to FH, 2 April 1975 {3/F.6}.

[11]KSS to DG, 22 August 1971 {4/F.27}.

[12]EC to KSS, 19 December 1950.

probably lead the composer to record some of his works. Clinton Gray-Fisk had already approached Walter Legge (1906–79) of His Master's Voice during World War II, putting to him the idea of a Sorabji Society. The time was not right, in the opinion of the well-known producer, but now he thought he might be interested in releasing recordings on the line of those issued by similar societies. Nothing came out of this idea.[13] Approaches were also made for financial support, but without success, to the Mysore Foundation, in other words to Jayachamarajendra Wadiyar, the 25th Maharaja of Mysore (1919–74), who had financed a series of recordings by Nicolas Medtner in 1946.[14] Holliday also contacted Sorabji's two other Scottish friends, Francis George Scott and Christopher Murray Grieve. He wrote to the latter in September 1952 that, as he had not heard from either of them, he had left the scheme "in abeyance" and was "to write to those who said they were interested telling them that I proposed to drop the matter". Both eventually contributed and Holliday pursued his aim, but neither of the Scottish friends signed the letter; they probably wanted their contribution to remain anonymous.[15]

On learning of Holliday's "grand scheme", Sorabji said that he knew nothing of it, and that it was done "certainly with no consent or agreement from ME". He had come to the same conclusion as Busoni, for whom "playing the piano was a sheer waste of time"; any time not spent at his writing table "engaged in composition" was unacceptable. Although, at the urging of some friends, he had made "tentative enquiries about the possible cost of recording", he considered it "VIOLENTLY improbable that I should ever do any such thing".[16]

Holliday closed the Sorabji Fund's bank account on 3 March 1953; its value had reached 121 guineas (or £127.05; £3,774 in 2021).[17] He had someone at the Royal College of Art calligraph a presentation letter written by Clinton Gray-Fisk, then sent it to one of the signatories, who would sign the letter and forward it to the next name on the list.[18] On 15 May he sent the cheque and the final copy of letter to Sorabji. The handwritten signatures of the twenty-three admirers—friends, composers, musicians, writers, scholars—followed by their calligraphed names, appear at the bottom of the large letter, arranged in two columns. These signatories are: York Bowen, Dion Byngham, Erik Chisholm, H. J. Cooper, E. Edroff-Smith, Clinton Gray-Fisk, Norman P. Gentieu, Frank Holliday, Paul Howard, John Ireland, Philip Mairet, Harold Morland, Norman Peterkin, Egon Petri, Roger Quilter, Alec Rowley, Harold Rutland, Denis Saurat, Osbert Sitwell, George Richards, Bernard Stevens, Mervyn Vicars, and Frida Kindler-van Dieren. They collectively declared that they had "have long admired your achievements in the realms of composition & scholarship" and would "greatly appreciate the opportunity of hearing authentic performances of it". The enclosed gift would hopefully enable him to record those of his works that he considered best suited to gramophone reproduction, with his complete control over the records.[19]

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[13]Clinton Gray-Fisk to FH, 29 April 1952 {5/F.4}.

[14]KSS to EC, 13 July 1954.

[15]FH to CMG, 14 September 1952. Grieve contributed £10 (£297 in 2021), and it seems that Scott, like Erik Chisholm, gave the same amount; see CMG to FH, in Hugh MacDiarmid, *New Selected Letters*, ed. Dorian Grieve, Owen Dudley Edwards, and Alan Riach (Manchester: Carcanet Press, 2001), 293 (1950s, no. 26).

[16]EC to KSS, 4 September 1952; KSS to EC, 4 November 1952, 1, and 3 March 1953. On playing the piano as an "utter waste of time", see also KSS to EC, 27 April 1953.

[17]Paul Rapoport, in Alistair Hinton, "Kaikhosru Shapurji Sorabji: An Introduction", in *SCC*, 27n16; Frank Holliday to the signatories of the presentation letter, 19 May 1953 {8/F.6}.

[18]FH to Royal College of Art, 1952–53 {7/F.10}; Dion Byngham to FH, 8 April 1953 {4/F.9}. See also a three-page document dated 15 May 1953 {1/F.15}, in which Holliday gives some details of the presentation letter.

[19]The text is reproduced (with some variants) in Hinton, "Kaikhosru Shapurji Sorabji: An Introduction", in *SCC*, 27.

Sorabji, who received the presentation letter "with delight and astonishment", had "never dreamed such a thing was being plotted"; he was most pleased to see on it "the names of those very few about whose opinion I care tuppence".[20] Not only did he express his pleasure in personal letters to the signatories, but he published a notice of appreciation in the *Times* and the *Daily Telegraph*.[21]

> Mr. K.S.S. wishes to assure the very generous kind and distinguished signatories and contributors to the recent presentation to himself of his vast appreciation, gratification and pleasure. He will write to every one as soon as possible.[22]

As mentioned above, Scott and Grieve did not sign. Also missing is Reginald Norman Best, the composer's companion, who preferred that his name be omitted altogether for fear of getting into hot water if Sorabji, stressed and strained by his mother's move back to London, heard of any involvement on his part.[23] A simpler version of the letter was printed on heavy paper in large index card format (5 × 8 in.) for private distribution.

Always modest and self-effacing, Holliday wanted his part in this gesture of offering money to the composer to remain not only unrecognized, but unrecognizable. Despite his great care, his friend had been told "of something afoot 'from N. Devon'". Holliday felt that his efforts had been merely "those of a clerk", his role being "to hold in check and co-ordinate the flood of enthusiasm which greeted the suggestion that some of your friends should try to persuade you to record".[24]

In early April 1953 Erik Chisholm tried to persuade Sorabji of the appropriateness of recording a series of examples, such as characteristic themes, variations, or part of a fugue. He wanted to use them as "educational propaganda" during a tour of the United States. The composer then began to see things in a more positive light, provided (initially) that it would be at no cost to him, this being borne by the University of Cape Town, where Chisholm had been employed since 1946.[25] Sorabji therefore agreed to sit at the piano in the same month to record his works for Holliday, but each playing of the *Concerto da suonare da me solo e senza orchestra, per divertirmi* revealed "fresh technical problems and intricacies". He soon began to realize that the whole project "may ultimately have to be chucked and the money returned to the subscribers". In October "every dictate of artistic integrity and conscience" compelled him to do so to avoid having personal humiliation cast in a "damnably permanent form". Moreover, he would no longer have control over the discs, especially as there were "large numbers of people whom under no circumstances do I ever wish to hear any of my work if and while I can prevent their doing so". Holliday did his best to persuade his friend that it would be a regrettable loss if he refused to record, but was prepared to respect his position. Despite the wording of the presentation letter, he reminded the composer that the cheque was a gift and was not intended to pay for the recording.[26]

Some seven years later, in August 1960, Holliday asked if Sorabji would cooperate if he arranged for the loan and/or operation of a good tape recorder, for which he would pay all expenses up to £250 (£6,124 in 2021).[27] Sorabji reminded his friend that the Grundig tape recorder given to him by Norman

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[20]KSS to EC, 25 May 1953; see also KSS to NG, 18 May 1953 {17/F.16}.
[21]KSS to FH, 21 May 1953 {1/F.15}. The notice could not be found in the *Times*.
[22]The text is as found in KSS to FH, 21 May 1953 {1/F.15}.
[23]Reginald Norman Best to FH, October 1952 {4/F.4}.
[24]FH to KSS, 15 May 1953 {1/F.15}.
[25]EC to KSS, 2 April 1953; KSS to EC, 3 April 1953.
[26]FH to KSS, 20 April 1953 {1/F.15}; KSS to FH, 6 July 1953 {1/F.15}; 21 August 1953 {1/F.15}; 5 October 1953 {1/F.15}; FH to KSS, 7 October 1953 {1/F.15}.
[27]FH to KSS, 17 August 1960 {2/F.1}.

Gentieu in 1954 (see chapter 17) had been discarded because "by the time one has fiddled with the blasted thing all desire or impulse to sit down at the piano has evaporated". With Gentieu's consent, he had disposed of the machine, though not without leaving open the possibility that, if "on one of your visits you could arrange for me to hire one pro tem[pore] [for the time being] and you work it when you are here and take it away with you *that* sounds a bright idea".[28] By October 1961, thanks to a small inheritance, Holliday had purchased a Ferrograph machine, Britain's first domestically manufactured tape recorder; as he noted, it weighed sixty-five pounds.[29] Sorabji issued an ultimatum: he would have to pay half the cost, and Holliday would house and manipulate the machine. Furthermore, when he received his share of Clinton Gray-Fisk's legacy, his share of the payment would be spread.[30] However, the machine itself was a source of great annoyance to Sorabji. He wrote of "that fucking tape recorder whose VERY NAME I HATE AND DETEST has been a source of torment and worry to ME [...] by reason of the fearful expense you have been put to over the goddamberluddy [*sic*] thing. CURSES on the criminal imbecile who ever INVENTED the blasted thing!"[31]

Holliday's recording project came to fruition in May 1962, a few months after Erik Chisholm had made the recordings he wanted to use as part of his American tour. In June 1964 Sorabji threatened to refuse to play "another goddam note" unless Holliday cashed the series of regular cheques he was beginning to send. By March 1965 he was "sick to death" with the sound of the works he was practising; "drumming away for hours and hours day after day on the same works" did not interest him. Although Sorabji made no recordings after April 1968, it is clear that Holliday tried his luck more than once, as the composer threatened to withdraw if he refused his financial support. Finally, in August 1975, Sorabji provided Holliday with timings and suggestions for splits in the *Symphonia brevis for Piano*. He therefore seemed ready to record again, although no session took place.[32]

Holliday held six recording sessions, all at Corfe Castle, with the composer playing on his Steinway piano.[33] Taking great care with technical details such as microphone placement, he recorded Sorabji reading texts that were dear to him. One was an excerpt from his essay *Some Sacro-Sanct Modern Superstitions*; the other was a passage on the Sicilian temperament from the book *Sicily: The Garden of the Mediterranean* by the writer and lexicographer Francis Michael Guercio (1899–1987). The latter always filled him "with acute embarrassment as it's such a deadly accurate diagnosis of your not particularly humble servant".[34] Holliday also immortalized his friend's playing of short and medium-size pieces as well as of two large-scale works. The total duration of the recordings, excluding the

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[28]KSS to FH, 23 August 1960, 8 November 1960 {2/F.1}. For Gentieu's gift, see chapter 17.

[29]FH to PR, 2 August 1976 {7/F.5}; FH to EC, 31 March 1965.

[30]KSS to FH, 4 October 1961 {2/F.2}. As seen in chapter 9, Gray-Fisk, who died in 1961, had left Sorabji the sum of £1,000 (£23,680 in 2021).

[31]KSS to FH, 24 June 1964 {2/F.5}.

[32]KSS to FH, 24 June 1964 {2/F.5}, 5 March 1965 {2/F.6}, 27 March 1967 {2/F.8}, 21 November 1969 {2/F.10}, 21 May 1973 {3/F.4}; FH to KSS, 22 May 1975 {3/F.6}; KSS to FH, 10 June 1975, 12 August 1975 {3/F.6}.

[33]Holliday held his sessions on 5 and 6 May 1962, 5 October 1962, 9 and 10 September 1963, 25 and 26 September 1964, 26 March 1965, and 18 April 1968.

[34]Francis M[ichael] Guercio, *Sicily, the Garden of the Mediterranean: The Country and Its People* (London: Faber and Faber, 1938; 2nd ed., 1954; new and revised ed., 1968). For the year of birth, see the 1901 England, Wales & Scotland Census, https://www.findmypast.co.uk/transcript?id=GBC%2F1901%2F0020890622; for the death, see the England & Wales Government Probate Death Index, https://www.findmypast.co.uk/transcript?id=GBOR%2FGOVPROBATE%2FC%2F1988-1988%2F00082775. Sorabji read from the "Conclusion" (pagination from the 1968 ed.): 293–94 ("The greatness of Sicily" to "rather than to the individual"), 294–95 ("'A common expression'" to "to the utter detriment of self as well as of others"). For his attitude to Guercio's description, see KSS to CMG, 20 August 1955, 3.

readings, is 11 hours and 15 minutes.[35] Sorabji was grateful to his friend for all he had done for him, as "he has had all too much to cope with not only in so far as concerned my music, which has caused him so much bother, toil and travail in recording that I am full of shame to even THINK of it. And this apart from his own very very busy and overoccupied life. My obligations to him are *INCALCULABLE*!"[36]

Sorabji agreed with Holliday that the discs cut in July 1965 by two London firms (Sound News Production and Rapid Recordings Service) were "vastly inferior in every way" to the tapes, completely flattening out all his dynamic nuances and producing "this colourless lukewarm impression" of his playing.[37] Although Holliday preferred to limit circulation as much as possible, distribution to amateurs by private dubbing must have begun some four years later, when Donald Garvelmann included some fifty-five minutes of them as part of a radio programme first broadcast on WBAI on 8 December 1969. The programme also featured Holliday reading Chisholm's essay, "The Composer Sorabji". Its author had described it as "rather on the frivolous side, but this is intentional, the idea being to keep the listener listening to the end of the programme and not to put him off too easily at the beginning of the broadcast, nor to fling heavy authoritative names at his head, daring him not to look, listen and worship K.S.S.'s music".[38] On 13 December 1970, a year after the broadcast of the original programme, WNCN aired a three-hour version with more spoken material by Garvelmann. Sorabji had been "pleased to agree to this one broadcast", which did not imply the granting of further rights; he was also adamant of the BBC's not "getting hold of these tapes or copies or duplicates thereof".[39] Nevertheless, four repeat broadcasts (1971, 1972, 1973, and 1975) generated considerable interest in the United States and paved the way for a better understanding of Sorabji's music. He was delighted to hear a tape of the broadcast and commented: "Especially, apart from the excellence of what you said AND THE WAY YOU SAID IT, I was—being very susceptible to such things!—most attracted to your very delightful voice and delivery."[40]

In 1970 Sorabji referred to the "VAST trouble and labour my very very dear friend Frank Holliday had over those tapes"; their airing was "something to be proud of and I'M vastly gratified on HIS account". He felt "hot and cold allover when I think of the ASTRONOMICAL labour this dear man has gone to on my behalf, AND often in spite of my protests, feeling guilty and conscience-stricken that he should be put to such labours".[41]

In the late 1950s, long before he made the tapes, Holliday decided to put his impressions into writing in the form of a text entitled "Splendour upon Splendour: On Hearing Sorabji Play". It was published privately for selective distribution in 1960, most probably by Holliday; the booklet included

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[35]The short and medium-size pieces are *Le jardin parfumé—Poem for Piano Solo*, *Nocturne, "Jāmī"*, *Concerto da suonare da me solo e senza orchestra, per divertirmi Passeggiata veneziana sopra la Barcarola di Offenbach*, two different recordings of *"Gulistān"—Nocturne for Piano*, twelve selections from the one hundred *Études transcendantes*. The large-scale works are the *Second Symphony for Piano* and the *Fourth Symphony for Piano Alone*, including a second version of the Chorale Prelude from the second movement of this work. For a list showing the titles under the dates of the respective sessions (as well as those of the sessions held by Chisholm), see Rapoport, "The Recordings of Sorabji's Music", in *SCC*, 480–82.

[36]KSS to KD, 10 January 1977 {Derus S04, p. 23}.

[37]FH to Rapid Recording Services date not recorded {7/F.3}; KSS to FH, 24 June 1970 {3/F.1}. Tape copies of Holliday's recordings are available in SA and KSSC {15/F.8–23}.

[38]The essay referred to here is *The Composer Sorabji: A Talk by Dr. Erik Chisholm with Musical Excerpts, Introduced by Frank Holliday*, privately printed; undated (1965 at the earliest). The quotation comes from EC to FH, 25 March 1965, with similar comments on 2 April 1965.

[39]KSS to DG, 11 September 1970; 24 June 1971.

[40]KSS to DB, 23 November 1971.

[41]KSS to DG, 1 March 1970.

a reprint of the recent introductory article on Sorabji by Clinton Gray-Fisk in the *Musical Times*.[42] Sorabji described his friend's essay as "a magnificent, a most brilliant piece of critical insight; no better thing has *ever* been written or said by *anyone* about my work *nor has anyone else ever shown such astounding understanding* of its *inwardness*".[43] In 1961 Holliday tried unsuccessfully to have his piece published in leading British music journals. Later, in 1974, he approached—again without success—two American publishers with a project for a collective book on Sorabji that he would edit himself.[44]

On 18 September 1957 Sorabji asked Holliday and another friend and dedicatee, the composer and conductor Mervyn Vicars, to act as his literary and musical executors, respectively. He later changed his mind about Vicars and intended to leave both aspects of his legacy to Holliday alone. He was to give him "strict instructions to prevent his work [from] being performed by incompetent performers", and would haunt him if he did not follow them strictly.[45] Sorabji initially intended to leave his manuscripts either to the Library of Congress or to Norman Gentieu, which possibilities he decided to "wash out" as "too uncertain". He then decided to give to Holliday all his manuscripts with all his copyrights in his published works as well as the "small emoluments that may accrue therefrom" (this was to change later on). He added: "If you don't know what on earth to do with the MSS, wipe your bottom on them, in due season, that is." On 8 May 1969, after signing his will, Sorabji gave him "utter & complete control of all my works".[46]

From February 1972, a young Scottish music student in his early twenties, Alistair Hinton, was to become one of Sorabji's closest friends (see chapter 21). Suffice it to say here that Sorabji began to rely more and more on his advice on various matters, including legal ones, rather than on Holliday, as he had done previously. Now that a young man was expressing a desire to experience Sorabji's music (as he had some thirty-five years earlier), Holliday saw the composer somehow turning against him, who was no longer the chosen one. He began to toy with the idea that Sorabji thought he was jealous of Hinton. Sorabji, who must have sensed some uneasiness on the part of his older friend, reassured him: "You see, I love you *very very much…* and if you don't know that already… well it's time I told you right out, but *of course* you know it already, don't you, *blast* you????"[47]

Tensions between the two friends began to build up in 1974 over Sorabji's intention to leave his musical manuscripts to Hinton rather than to Holliday, and again in 1977 after the latter, despite the young man's suggestion, was not invited to contribute to the television interview aired on London Weekend Television on 11 June (see chapter 22). As a friend for whom Sorabji had played for several hours on each of his visits for twenty years, he could not swallow being passed over. He was also very upset that Sorabji had given Hinton permission to broadcast his tapes (which had already been heard in the United States). This led him to send to Sorabji a series of rough notes, running to nine pages, discussing his attitude towards members of his entourage, especially himself. He had never been "so

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[42] *Kaikhosru Shapurji Sorabji / By Clinton Gray-Fisk / and / Splendour upon Splendour: On hearing Kaikhosru Shapurji Sorabji play / by Frank Holliday*, [8] pp., privately printed, undated (1960). The text is reprinted in *SCC*, 420–24.

[43] KSS to FH, 30 August 1960 {2/F.1}.

[44] FH to *Music & Letters* {5/F.19}, *Music and Musicians* {5/F.20}, and *MT* {5/F.22}; FH to W. W. Norton, 8 September 1974, and Samuel Mitnick, Da Capo Press, 5 December 1974. See also Claire Brook (W. W. Norton) to FH, 27 September 1974 {5/F.27}.

[45] *RN* (September 1957), 1 {1/F.19}; *RN* (September 1960), 3 {2/F.1}.

[46] KSS to FH, 10 April 1969, 11 April 1969 {2/F.10}, 8 May 1969 {8/F.10}.

[47] KSS to FH, 20 February 1973 {3/F.4}.

grieved in my life" and, "throughout months of sleepless nights", had wanted "to turn his face to the wall".[48]

A year later Holliday referred to his long letter of 23 May 1977 to Sorabji, complaining that his state of agitation and insomnia had not elicited a word of understanding. He gave examples of his "extraordinary and appalling" attitude. Sorabji had ignored his request for copies of most of his articles, which Kenneth Derus and Paul Rapoport had microfilmed, and rubbed salt in his wounds by telling him that he had given these copies to Hinton. He also wondered why he had sent him, for perusal, letters from Derus and Rapoport mentioning their contacts with Hinton. Another problem concerned the manuscript of the *Toccata seconda per pianoforte*, which Sorabji had given to Peterkin in 1974, who in turn had given it to Holliday in 1976, only to request it back in 1977. Holliday agreed to send the score on condition that Sorabji returned it within a couple of months. In May 1978 Sorabji asked Holliday to give his companion Reginald Norman Best the score he had sent him "*quite improperly* and without my consent". Holliday felt he was being treated like a "mentally-defective lackey" and refused to let Sorabji recover what was now his rightful property. He wondered if he was "adopting a gratuitously offensive approach as a way of life? And to *me* of all people?"[49]

Two months later, despite the tensions resulting from Sorabji's unfairness, Holliday assured him how much he believed in the importance of his contribution.

> Be sure of one thing, my dear old friend: I bear you great affection AND I have the cause of your great, marvellous and beautiful works at heart. Whatever you do—or don't do—, or whatever happens, I shall be concerned with that. Music IS a holy art and you have contributed more—far more—than your share. Your time will come—I have said that before—but it IS coming. I only hope you live to see it. Notice the change in the reviews: and you will see greater changes in those soon.
>
> Well, I have been greatly hurt by what you have done—or allowed to be done over the last couple of years or so—BUT: I will not fail to do my part for the history of music and beauty: the time is not far off when it will be recognised that your music is a major part of the stream of European music.[50]

In October 1978 Sorabji accused Holliday of having "kept up a campaign of wicked lying wanton accusations" against him for the best part of two years and made various childish accusations about Holliday's failure to recognize his sympathy for his insomnia problems. In a codicil to his will, which included a clause leaving him a four-figure legacy, Sorabji had written "in memory of my very great obligations to you in the past when you could still be considered a friend". There was also a confirmation that the rights and royalties in his published works would be his. Holliday would no longer be his literary trustee since his attitude to the *Toccata seconda per pianoforte* had warned him "not to allow any of my MSS to come into your care at my death". The change of trustee also applied to his private papers and correspondence, for which Sorabji had given instructions to Best (now his sole executor) to the effect that Holliday was "never to be allowed access to them". Sorabji concluded as follows: "After what I have suffered at your hands I could not *bear* to be in the same room with you and the less I see or hear of you the better. But what am I saying? Of course it is only *you* who are hurt, never those whom *you* have hurt."[51]

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[48]FH to KSS, 23 May 1977 {3/F.8}, 10 May 1978 {3/F.9}. With this reference to Isaiah 38:2, Holliday meant that he felt like Hezekiah, who was sick to the point of death and was told by the prophet Isaiah to put his house in order because he was going to die.

[49]KSS to FH, 10 May 1978 {3/F.9}.

[50]FH to KSS, 21 July 1978 {3/F.9}.

[51]KSS to FH, 25 October 1978 {3/F.9}.

Holliday, in reply, pointed out that his question about Sorabji's intentions towards him was really about his intentions towards Hinton, who had replaced him as sole executor after Sorabji's change of mind. A word from him would have cleared things up quickly and avoided problems.[52] On 11 November 1978, after raising the issue of the *Toccata seconda per pianoforte* again, Sorabji described Holliday's assertion "as outrageous as it is intolerable and thoroughly typical of your behaviour [during] the last two years". He concluded: "I advise you not to waste time and postage on any further letters to me. They will be destroyed unread."[53]

Sorabji and Holliday were in constant contact for nearly forty years: 923 items of correspondence from Sorabji, and 166 to him. From then on there would be none; for the composer, "all communication between myself and that gentleman is at an end for good and all".[54] In early 1979, Holliday told Hinton not to contact him in the future, thus severing all ties with his former friend. It was not until late 1982 that Sorabji phoned Holliday and offered a bottle of liqueur on his birthday "as an act of reconciliation". He also seems to have sent him a letter "as if taking up where we left off", but this was not enough to mend the rift. Sorabji called the break "so lamentably sad after a very close friendship of over forty years" but "an irreversible change".[55] One source of concern for Holliday was Sorabji's homosexuality—or, more precisely, the possible accusation that he shared, or had shared, his former friend's preferences. He had known this fact for several years, at least when, if not before, Sorabji showed him his "essay on Homosexuality", of which he said: "as usual, highly intelligent, brilliant, lucid, informative (revealing and telling also)".[56] Holliday's papers contain a brief statement: "I am *NOT* homosexual, I have *NEVER* been homosexual; I have not the slightest tendency that way; I have *NEVER* had the slightest tendency that way."[57]

As mentioned above, Sorabji removed Holliday's name from the manuscripts of three works dedicated to him (although he forgot the dedication of the *Toccata [no. 1] for Piano*, already transferred from Bromage in 1964); he also discarded the 160 or so letters he had received from his former friend. Fortunately, Holliday did not do the same to assuage his anger, otherwise much of what is reported in this book would have remained unknown. He not only archived all the letters he had received, but also kept the carbon copies of his own letters.

Access to his collection of Sorabjiana was very much present in Holliday's mind at the time. He had been living "not far from poverty level for some years" and needed to secure an income for his wife, Brenda (who was to die towards the end of 1987).[58] He saw his collection as "ideal—in fact, vital—for anyone writing a serious, definitive biography" of Sorabji (a statement of which I, for one, more than approve) and asked Rapoport if there was "any chance of your University making an offer for the Sorabjiana".[59] The William Ready Division of Archives and Research Collections at McMaster University (Hamilton, Ontario) therefore made the valuable purchase in 1988. Returning from the first of my three research trips to Hamilton, and a few months before the publication of Rapoport's *Sorabji: A Critical*

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[52]FH to KSS, 28 October 1978 {3/F.9}.

[53]KSS to FH, 11 November 1978 {3/F.9}.

[54]KSS to KD, 27 May 1979 {Derus, S30, p. 136}.

[55]FH to PR, 25 October 1982, 18 May 1984 {4/F.7}.

[56]*RN*, August 1955, 2 {1/F.17}. The essay mentioned by Holiday is "Christianity and Homosexuality", *Catholic Herald*, 26 January 1954.

[57]"Statement by Frank Holliday", dated 11 February 1987 {8/F.10}.

[58]Brenda A(nnette) Brereton married Frank Holliday in 1942; https://www.findmypast.co.uk/transcript?id=BMD%2FM%2F1942%2F1%2FAZ%2F000139%2F022. She is certainly identical to Brenda A. Holliday (Brisslow), born on 23 March 1910, and living at The Heath, Weybridge, Surrey; https://www.findmypast.co.uk/transcript?id=TNA/R39/1925/1925I/002/33. The couple lived in this city in 1946, according to Conveyance KX 54/5 (National Archives); https://discovery.nationalarchives.gov.uk/details/r/67ab5eee-c628-419b-8700-14e0bee52a79.

[59]FH to PR, 21 May 1987 {7/F.7}; DG to FH, 6 December 1987 {4/F.27}.

Celebration, I wrote to Holliday on 3 April 1992; he replied immediately, answering my various questions about some members of Sorabji's entourage. That was our only contact. Rapoport invited Holliday to contribute to his book, which he dedicated to him, jointly with Norman Gentieu and Nicolas Slonimsky. His essay ends, despite all the bitterness that had developed between him and Sorabji, with the words "*Requiescat in pace*—my wonderful and greatly loved old friend".[60] Frank Holliday's part in preserving Sorabji's legacy truly deserved a dedication.

Transcription in the Light of Harpsichord Technique for the Modern Piano of the Chromatic Fantasia of J. S. Bach, Followed by a Fugue

Sorabji's interest in transcription reached a peak in the early 1940s, during which time he turned his attention to Bach (two works), Ravel, and Richard Strauss. The first of these four works, the *Transcription in the Light of Harpsichord Technique for the Modern Piano of the Chromatic Fantasia of J. S. Bach, Followed by a Fugue* (1940; 15 pp.), was completed on 26 March 1940. It is dedicated to Emily Edroff-Smith, the family friend to whom he had already dedicated his *Symphony [no. 1] for Organ* (see chapter 8). The dedication reads: "To dear Aunty Edroff: / (Mrs. Emily Edroff-Smith) / whose magnificent enthusiasm for the Best and lifelong devotion to the highest / in Music and whose unsparing scorn and instant detection / of pretentious incompetence and pompous humbug are / a never ending joy to those who know her and love her. / K.S.S."

Sorabji's transcription is based on two different works: (1) the "Fantasia" from the Chromatic Fantasia and Fugue in D Minor, BWV 903 (ca. 1720, rev. ca. 1730), and (2) the Fugue in D Minor, BWV 948 (year unknown). He found his models in Busoni's edition of Bach's keyboard works, as he admits in the long "Prefatory Note". Quite interestingly, Sorabji's personal copy of the "Fantasia" contains the core of the arrangement, which he once called his "derangement".[61] Added in ink are most of the doublings, chord respacings, and octave transpositions that found their way into the transcription; he therefore began by sketching his transcription.

Wanda Landowska's recording of Bach's piece on the harpsichord had so much impressed Sorabji that he came to dislike the piano renditions, which he called caricatures and perversions. He approved of her adoption of "many—if not all—of Busoni's emendations in her treatment of the massive harmonies of the Fantasia" (which may be doubted).[62] Reviewing a recital by Egon Petri, he felt (like Busoni) "badly let down by the very shoddy and inferior fugue with its halting subject and its extraordinarily uninteresting treatment". The right fugal counterpart was "a detached clavier fugue in D minor with a remarkable *interludio fantasiato* extraordinarily in consonance with the character of the Chromatic Fantasia". Its theme seemed to him rhythmically "vital and alive, fruitful of the interesting development which it receives".[63]

Sorabji also disagreed with those who were "preserving a punctilious puritanism of approach when playing [...] the present work upon the piano without any substitution in pianistic terms" and who confined themselves "to the bare written notes". His edition is therefore an attempt to show to the "pretentious ignoramuses" who have never heard someone like Landowska how it should be performed on the piano. Sorabji therefore always preferred a lush transcription to a lightly textured original. No wonder he described Bach's sonatas for solo violin and suites for cello as "nightmares, grinning, dry, rattling skeletons of compositions, bloodless, fleshless, staring anatomies", in contrast

[60]Holliday, "A Few Recollections and Ruminations", in *SCC*, 91.
[61]KSS to DG, 14 June 1977, 2.
[62]Sorabji, "Music: New Records", *NEW* 9, no. 6 (21 May 1936): 117.
[63]Sorabji, "Music: Egon Petri; (Wigmore, March 4th)", *NEW* 14, no. 23 (16 March 1939): 351–52; 352.

to Godowsky's transcriptions of them, those "magnificent and indeed tremendous musical organisms having the sweep and grandeur, the profundity, solemnity and richness" of the greatest of Bach.[64]

Busoni's own division into four sections is clearly visible in Sorabji's transcription. It begins with a "Toccata" (bars 1–33) consisting of scale figurations followed by sweeping arpeggios **(example 15.1)**. This is followed by a "Choral" (bars 34–49) in two sections, also consisting of sweeping arpeggios and scales linking powerful pillar-like chords. A "Recitativo" (bars 50–76) consists of highly ornamented single lines (doubled, often in both hands, in the transcription) broken by powerful chordal interjections. Finally, a "Coda" (bars 76–84) featuring diminished seventh chords ends on a powerful D major chord preceded by a trill in three octaves. Sorabji transcribed the fugue in a Busonian manner, with an extended free cadenza near the end (bars 67–79), descending through the circle of fifths.

Bach's Chromatic Fantasia, which Sorabji may have had in mind when writing the opening "Preludio-Toccata" of his *Toccata seconda per pianoforte*, was to be the inspiration some years later for the massive penultimate of the *Études transcendantes*, marked "Quasi fantasia (nello stile della Fantasia cromatica di Giovanni Sebastiano)". Like its model, it consists of a toccata-like section with scale figurations, sweeping arpeggios linking powerful chords, and passagework with many doublings.

"Quaere reliqua hujus materiei inter secretiora"; St. Bertrand de Comminges: "He was laughing in the tower" / Edward Nason

Two of Sorabji's programmatic works from the early 1940s, *"Quaere reliqua hujus materiei inter secretiora"* (1940; 16 pp.) and *St. Bertrand de Comminges: "He was laughing in the tower"* (1941; 16 pp.), were inspired by his reading of the ghost stories of M. R. James. The two pieces are discussed in a single section, as they refer to the same author and share much of the same style and atmosphere—Sorabji called them his "spooky pieces".[65] Sorabji once expressed a fear of ghosts and asked his friend Frank Holliday to come and stay with him during an absence of his companion, Reginald Norman Best (see chapter 7). Although he did not mention this fear until the mid-1950s, he may have experienced it earlier and wanted to exorcize it by using ghost stories as the basis for two of his works.[66] He had already been attracted to this style, which he heard not only in the music of Busoni but also in Alkan's "Le festin d'Ésope", the last of the *Douze études dans les tons mineurs*, op. 39, a work "all informed with that […] delightful, eerie, bizarre, and somewhat eldritch quality". He liked the French composer's "preoccupation with the sinister, the macabre, the uncanny".[67]

Montague Rhodes James (1862–1936) was an English antiquarian, editor, translator, and writer of stories of the supernatural. A scholar of apocryphal biblical literature and medieval illuminated manuscripts, he is said to have "surpassed most writers of ghost stories in the eeriness of his atmosphere, the individual and peculiarly creepy quality of his plots, and the vindictiveness and malignancy of his ghosts".[68] For Sorabji, the mental world of the "incomparable Dr. Montague Rhodes James in his unmatched ghost stories" was far removed from that of the popular novelist.[69] His two piano pieces are based on upon *Count Magnus* and *Canon Alberic's Scrap-book*, both published in 1904

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[64]Sorabji, "Leopold Godowsky as Creative Transcriber", in *MCF*, 62–70; 65.
[65]KSS to FH, 18 May 1963 {2/F.4}.
[66]KSS to FH, undated (mid-September 1956) {1/F.18}.
[67]Sorabji, "Charles Henri Victorin Morhange (Alkan)", in *AM*, 213–19; 218–19.
[68]"James, Montague Rhodes", in *Twentieth Century Authors: A Biographical Dictionary of Modern Literature*, ed. Stanley J. Kunitz and Howard Haycraft (New York: The H. W. Wilson Company, 1942), 715–16; 715.
[69]Sorabji, "Music", *NEW* 15, no. 6 (25 May 1939): 95–96; 96.

in a collection entitled *Ghost Stories of an Antiquary* (although the latter had already appeared independently in 1894).[70]

Count Magnus begins with the narrator saying that he had inherited a small house that had remained empty since 1863 and in which he found various papers written by a certain Mr. Wraxall. This intelligent and cultured man had travelled to Sweden to examine a collection of family papers in a manor house in Vestergothland called Råbäck, built shortly after 1600 by a scion of the De la Gardie family. Wraxall came across a sixteenth-century alchemical book containing a few lines written by Count Magnus de la Gardie himself and headed "Liber nigrae peregrinationis" (Book of the black pilgrimage).[71] The text broke off after one sentence followed by a line in Latin: *"Quaere reliqua hujus materiei inter secretiora"* (Seek the rest of this matter among the more private things). Wraxall then visited the De la Gardie tombhouse twice, once with the parish's deacon and then alone. Having to return to England earlier than expected, he visited the mausoleum again but left in fright when a padlock on De la Gardie's sarcophagus fell on the pavement, causing the lid to shift upwards. On his return to England, Wraxall drove across the country to the village of Belchamp St. Paul [located in Essex] to get out of the reach of some people he believed to be his pursuers, and was found dead on the next morning but one.

Canon Alberic's Scrap-book takes place in Saint-Bertrand-de-Comminges, a village located in the Haute-Garonne *département*, near Toulouse, whose cathedral contains the tomb of St. Bertrand, Bishop of Comminges (d. 1123). In the spring of 1883, an Englishman called Dennistoun, accompanied by a strange-looking sacristan, visited the village church to take photographs. The narrator mentions that Dennistoun said to him: "Once I could have sworn I heard a thin metallic voice laughing high up in the tower." Dennistoun then accompanied the sacristan to his house, where he heard the man say to his daughter "He was laughing in the church", words that the daughter answered with a look of terror. He then bought from the sacristan an old book once in the possession of Albéric de Mauléon, canon of Comminges from 1680 to 1701. The book, which he intended to take to the Wentworth Collection at Cambridge, contained a sepia drawing by the canon entitled "Contradictio Salomonis cum demonio nocturno" (The dispute of Solomon with a demon of the night). On his return to the inn, Dennistoun looked at his treasure and fainted when he saw suddenly a horrifying creature appearing in his room. He then took a photograph of the canon's drawing and destroyed it.

The manuscript of *"Quaere reliqua hujus materiei inter secretiora"* was completed on 30 May 1940, whereas that of *St. Bertrand de Comminges: "He was laughing in the tower"* bears a completion date of 26 August 1941. Both pieces are dedicated to Edward Joseph Nason (b. Willesden, Middlesex, 12 December 1907; d. Boar's Head, Crowborough, Sussex, 7 June 1976), who was working as a cashier at the Abbey Road Building Society on Baker Street (near the composer's Clarence Gate Gardens flat) when he and Sorabji met. The inscriptions read "For E. with love" and "To Ted: / (Edward Nason)", respectively.[72] In the mid-1930s Sorabji paid to send Nason to a German ophthalmologist to have excessive blood drained from his eyeball, thus avoiding the removal of the eye (although the patient lost the use of it). Until he moved to Corfe Castle, Sorabji often met Nason and his friend Henry Edward Lightly (nicknamed Ivan; 1909–2001), who worked as a draughtsman in a metre-manufacturing firm

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[70]M. R. James, "Canon Alberic's Scrap-book", "Count Magnus", in *Ghost Stories of an Antiquary* (London: Edward Arnold, 1904; repr., New York: Dover Publications, 1971), 9–23, 89–105.

[71]James is referring to Count Magnus Gabriel De la Gardie (1622–86), the Swedish statesman and military man.

[72]The dedication to Nason, which supersedes Rapoport's suggestion that it could be Edward Clarke Ashworth, is based on a sheet accompanying KSS to AH, 26 August 1979; see also AH to MAR, 9 July 1998.

where Nason also once worked. Nason and Lightly, a friend of Sorabji's companion at Corfe Castle, Reginald Norman Best, lived together not far from Clarence Gate Gardens.[73]

These two "ghost pieces" easily dispel the notion that Sorabji's music is unplayable. Although they demand concert-level virtuosity, they do not require the stamina needed to tackle his larger works. They are also of moderate length, lasting less than twenty-three minutes. They rely heavily on short, exclamatory phrases, with many trills, scalar gestures, and chordal passages. Passages of thinned-out texture are also common. These pieces are to his more massive works what Liszt's late piano pieces are to his richly textured works; they also share their sombre, dark emotions.

The first page of *"Quaere reliqua hujus materiei inter secretiora"* states five recurring motives or ideas: (1) a quick, accented, mordent-like chordal figure; (2) a fragment of the *Dies irae*, at the words "in favilla"; (3) a mostly disjointed staccato line in both hands in quaver triplets; (4) a series of descending three-note fourth chords in each hand (tritone plus fourth) that can be associated with the bells of the parish church or with the idea of death **(example 15.2)**; and (5) an ascending melodic line consisting of a notated rhythmic accelerando, taken up canonically in the other hand. Towards the end the composer writes "[Missa Est: exeunt.]" above an A♭ repeated thirteen times in the style of a psalm tone, sounded with an occasional A♮. The penultimate gesture consists of two softly played consonant chords (at least in this context) forming a cadential movement (G–C), with the word "[A… men]" above them. The piece ends immediately afterwards with a trill on an F♯ minor chord to restore the ghostly atmosphere.

The opening of *St. Bertrand de Comminges: "He was laughing in the tower"*, "a piece of bizarrerie",[74] also suggests a religious setting: it consists of a series of nine consonant chords played plainsong-like and "legatissimo quasi organo lontano", which immediately gives way to the kind of gestures that dominate most of the piece **(example 15.3)**. This motive recurs later in faster motion ($^{\text{ED/Powell}}$p. 5/1/1) and later, again with a similar indication ("Quasi Organo"), in a long passage of two-voice counterpoint that serves as a middle slow section (p. 10/1). As in *"Quaere reliqua hujus materiei inter secretiora"*, Sorabji twice quotes the familiar opening segment of the *Dies irae* (pp. 3/2/2, 14/1/1). The work ends with a return to the opening theme as a melodic line doubled two octaves apart in the low register.

St. Bertrand de Comminges is the only work by Sorabji for which an arrangement (by someone else) exists. In March 1956 Sorabji, in reply to Erik Chisholm, referred to "those two-hand arrangements you are wasting your time doing of stuff of mine" and warned that all the works mentioned by his friend, except *St. Bertrand*, were "immature and poor".[75] This arrangement, for two pianos contrary to what Sorabji thought, is the only one Chisholm seems to have made.[76]

Harold Morland, the Inspired Poet

After breaking off a friendship of more than forty years with Frank Holliday in 1979, Sorabji transferred two of his dedications to another friend who had already been the dedicatee of three works from the 1960s. Harold Morland (b. Clayton-le-Moors, Lancashire, 2 July 1908; St. Annes-on-Sea,

[73]Henry Lightly, biographical account prepared for, and received on 2 December 1991 by, Alistair Hinton. There are a few letters (1972, 1987) between Sorabji and Lightly; see also KSS to FH, 1 May 1978 {3/F.9}.

[74]*A*, 8.

[75]KSS to EC, 4 March 1956. Sorabji does not identify the work, and Chisholm's original letter seems not to have been preserved.

[76]See the catalogue of works for details.

Lancashire, 6 February 1999) was an English scholar, teacher, poet, and translator of poetry.[77] After receiving his early education in Accrington (Lancashire), he began in 1926 to study English literature and Latin at the Church of England Teacher Training College of St. Mark and St. John in Chelsea (a borough in the County of London). It was there, in February 1927, that he became friends with Sorabji through the writer on mysticism and the occult Bernard Bromage, who was working as a tutor there.[78] Morland, who had taken some work to Bromage, noticed a "funny little man" sitting in the corner. On hearing that the tutor disagreed with the arguments he had put forward, Sorabji introduced himself and told him "not to be so silly as 'the boy is right'". In 1930 he described Morland as Bromage's "remarkable pupil, an amazing lad who has forgotten [?] spiritually and mentally more than any hundred intelligent people will ever know […,] has delved deep into the secret rituals of Ancient Egypt which he regularly practises—sleeps only 2 hours of a night and spends the rest wandering about the College or in profound meditation, and has a face like a young Egyptian priest […] A rare and singular personality." He liked his "refreshing and original" attitude towards sex, which he regarded "with a contemptuous indifference as a childish amusement only fit for the underdeveloped".[79] Like Sorabji, he would later use very harsh words to describe him.[80]

After graduating, Morland taught in Croydon (South London) and then in Richmond (formerly in Surrey); during which time he wrote a number of plays for boys. During World War II he taught English in Wolverton, near Milton Keynes (Buckinghamshire), and developed a talent for translation. This was expressed, among other things, in his translations of Arabic poetry and later, of the poetry of the Argentinian writer Jorge Luis Borges (1899–1986).[81] In 1946 he became head of the English departement at the Teacher Training College at Newland Park (near Chalfont St. Giles, Buckinghamshire) and in 1953 was appointed deputy principal. Health problems caused by overwork forced him into early retirement in 1963. He returned to Accrington, where he wrote poetry in the Lancashire dialect under the name of John Sparth.[82] In the late 1960s he turned his interest to the Japanese form of the haiku; his three-volume collection *The Matter of Britain* (1984–90), which recounts the Arthurian legends in haiku verse-form, is considered his greatest work.

In September 1980 Morland began a lifelong friendship with Robert William Procter (1945–2005), an aerospace engineer who had discovered his poetry. High blood pressure problems made life in the Lake District (where he had moved in 1969) impossible and, in 1984, he moved to St. Annes-on-Sea to live in Procter's home, from where the latter set up the private Cudworth Press in 1990 to take care of the publication of Morland's works.

Sorabji's earliest (and only known) public mention of Morland is found in a 1935 review of a BBC concert, in which he quotes a letter from his friend, who had wittily described a symphony by Yuri Shaporin (1887–1966) as "an Intourist Invitation to view the remains of Tchaikovsky and other bourgeois composers".[83] Two years earlier Morland had dedicated "To Kaikhosru Sorabji" his first

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[77]Details of Harold Morland are taken from a four-page obituary written by Robert William Procter, parts of which were published as "Harold Morland", *The Westmoreland Gazette*, 12 March 1999, 13, see also "Poet Admired by Gandhi Dies at 91 [*recte* 90]", in *Accrington Observer*, 5 March 1999, 6. Further details are from Procter to MAR, 30, 31 May 1999, 10 February 2001. See also Kathleen Raine, "In Memoriam Harold Morland", *Temenos Academy Review*, no. 2 (1999): 68–75.

[78]Harold Morland to KSS, undated (on a Tuesday, ca. 1987), from a diary entry.

[79]KSS to EC, 3 June 1930, 11 (section dated 7 June).

[80]Harold Morland to KSS, undated (on a Tuesday, ca. 1987).

[81]Morland, *Four Plays for Boys* (London: T. Nelson and Sons, 1936); *Six Plays for Boys* (London: Thomas Nelson and Sons, 1938); *Arabic-Andalusian Casidas* (London: Phoenix Press, 1949); Jorge Luis Borges, *Dream Tigers*, trans. Mildred Boyer and Harold Morland (London: Souvenir Press, 1964, 1973).

[82]An example is Morland, *Both Blood and Sheen: Poems in the Lancashire Dialect* (Accrington: Wardleworths Bookshop, 1968).

[83]Sorabji, "Music", *NEW* 6, no. 19 (21 February 1935): 398.

publication, a book of poems entitled *Arabesque*. In the presentation copy, the printed dedication continues, in hand, with the words "as the slightest expression of infinite gratitude & admiration".[84] The gratitude refers to the free concert tickets that Sorabji had given to him when he was a student; coming from a poor farming family, Morland was forever grateful that his friend had enabled him to attend musical performances.[85] Many years later, probably in the late 1970s or early 1980s, Morland dedicated a poem to him entitled *Exclamavi* with the following words: "hoc donum minimum poetæ spiritus / ad ingenium / K.S.S. / dedicatum / H.M."[86]

The two friends must have met regularly until the time of World War II, when Morland moved from the London area to Wolverton. Contacts probably resumed when Sorabji inscribed a copy of *Mi contra fa* to Morland on 7 February 1964, prompting the latter to send the composer an inscribed copy of his *Letters to a Young Poet*. In fact, it was in the 1960s that Sorabji expressed his admiration for Morland by dedicating two short works to him. The inscription in his *Frammenti aforistici (20)* refers to their "friendship of more than thirty years", while the *Frammento cantato*, which uses a text by Morland, simply mentions "Per l'Amico H.M." In May 1967 Sorabji enjoyed a three-day visit from Morland, whom he had not seen for twenty years.[87]

In early January 1975 at the latest, Morland paid to Sorabji the first of several written homages. This text—reproduced in full as the epigraph of this book—is a section from a long poem once intended as the preface to *The Tree of Life*, an unfinished work in free/blank verse, at least as originally planned.[88] On a copy of the poem he made for Frank Holliday, Sorabji wrote by hand: "H.M. a very gifted and brilliant person whose work has won admiration among others from no less than Dame Edith Sitwell."[89] The poem, most probably prompted by Sorabji's gift of a copy of Saʿdī's *Gulistān*,[90] refers to the Sicilian town of Cefalù that the composer had visited; to a Persian manuscript as a reference to his origins; and (again) to Saʿdī, who inspired some of his most beautiful music.

On 11 June 1977, after watching the London Weekend Television interview with the composer, Morland wrote a "Midnight Letter", which was published as a poetic letter included in *Letters to Martin*. Both Sorabji and Hinton "were incredibly moved by my impromptu lines",[91] which end as follows:

> For in that clear complexity of fire
> Is a burning belief and worship
> Where the kneeling spirit of Man
> Sings in faith a pure MAGNIFICAT.[92]

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[84]Morland, *Arabesque* (Oxford: Printed at the Shakespeare Head Press, Saint Aldates, and sold by Basil Blackwell, 1933), 30 pp.

[85]KSS to FH, 26 May 1976 {2/F.8}.

[86]"This small token of the poet's spirit is dedicated to the genius K.S.S."

[87]KSS to FH, 26 May 1967 {2/F.8}.

[88]The quotations from Morland's texts are reproduced here with the kind permission of his literary executor, the late Robert William Procter.

[89]Transcription received by Frank Holliday on 17 January 1975 {3/F.6}.

[90]Morland, diary entry for 17 December 1974.

[91]Morland, diary entry for 21 June 1977, after receiving a letter from Sorabji.

[92]Morland, "Letter Sixteen" (dated 17 July 1977), in *Letters to Martin* (privately printed, 1978), 52–55; 52–53 (lines 50–79). The first nine lines do not appear in the typescript that Morland sent to Sorabji. The shorter version is also found in Morland's diaries, 12 June 1977, with the title "A Letter after Hearing a Too-Brief Programme of My Friend K.S.S.'s Music Saturday 11 June".

Morland also wrote two poetic letters inscribed "To Kaikhosru Shapurji Sorabji" and published as part of *Leaves and Letters* and *Letters Roudabout*, both prompted by the composer's sending of books on Persia. The former provides another superb description of his music:

> Fugues like vortices
> Like life;
> Sometimes with the round simplicity
> Of a drifting flower on the stream,
> One whorl on another.
> And this, my dear Kaikhosru, was your music.[93]

In early March 1980, listening to a tape recording of Yonty Solomon's performance of *"Gulistān"—Nocturne for Piano*, broadcast on the BBC in June 1979, prompted Morland to write a tribute to the beauty of the work whose title translates as "The Rose Garden". Its opening line reads: "This is no garden. But a spirit's Paradise."[94]

Sorabji's death in 1988 prompted Morland to write an obituary poem, published as part of *The Moving Finger*, in memory of his departed friend. He had heard him in his private room "making the air not this I breathe / but patterned with a worship..."[95] Such an image would certainly have pleased Sorabji, for whom works should be "*celebrated* like a religious ritual".[96] There are also two haiku (1980, 1990), published as part of *Straws in the Wind*, the latter describing the composer-pianist's playing, most probably a passage from one of his more expansive pieces:

> Sorabji playing
> his own music was often
> an angry tiger
> ensnared in cobwebs.[97]

The memory of Sorabji remained with Morland, who wrote two further items in 1992 and 1996. The first one, a short poem entitled "Hearing Sorabji", published as part of *Before the Fire of Life*, again links Sorabji's music to a form of worship, saying how it "kneels / at the feet of divine silence".[98] The second one, found in *Figures of Speech*, shows the poet finding inspiration in his recollection of Sorabji playing his *"Gulistān"—Nocturne for Piano*, obviously several years earlier. The music then spoke

> phrases like the utterance, not a mind
> a human mind, but a spirit that breathes from the earth
> delicate lilies, roses with a flare
> of the captivating scent that is the breath of music.[99]

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[93]Morland, "Letter Five", from *Leaves and Letters* (privately printed, 1978), 47–50; 49–50 (lines 80–82, 126–45); "Letter Seven", from *Letters Roundabout* (privately printed, 1978), 53–57; 53 (lines 1–10).

[94]Morland, "On Hearing the 'Gulistan' of Kaikhosru Shapurji Sorabji" (28 lines; signed copy sent to the composer).

[95]Morland, "In memoriam K.S.S.", in *The Moving Finger* (St. Annes-on-Sea: The Cudworth Press, 1991), 26 (14 lines); see the end of chapter 23 for the complete text.

[96]Sorabji, "'Performance' *versus* 'Celebration'", in *AM*, 198–200; 199.

[97]Morland, *Straws in the Wind* (unpublished, dated April 1980), 16 (item no. 72; 3 lines); excerpt from *A Scatter of Seed* (St. Annes-on-Sea: The Cudworth Press, 1991), 14 (4 lines).

[98]Morland, "Hearing Sorabji", in *Before the Fire of Life* (St. Annes-on-Sea: The Cudworth Press, 1992), 14 (14 lines).

[99]Morland, "*Gulistan*, by Kaikhosru Sorabji", in *Figures of Speech* (St. Annes-on-Sea: The Cudworth Press, 1996), 94 (21 lines).

It is most obviously in response to such wonderful tributes that Sorabji had decided to transfer to Morland, "a wonderful poet in his own right",[100] the dedications of *"Gulistān"—Nocturne for Piano* and the *Second Symphony for Piano*, in the latter of which he calls him a "poet of power and beauty and translator of genius".[101] As the epigraph to this book shows, the verses of the friend who had been so kind to him illustrate how brilliantly a poet can convey the essence of an artist's personality and work in just a few lines—much more powerfully than a musicologist can in hundreds of dense and heavily footnoted pages.

"Gulistān"—Nocturne for Piano

In terms of sonic (and visual) beauty and opulence, the most compelling work in Sorabji's entire output for the piano is certainly *"Gulistān"—Nocturne for Piano* (1940; 28 pp.). This highly evocative piece of some thirty minutes originally bore a rather simple dedication that appears in the microfilm copy made in the early 1950s: "To Frank Holliday / greetings:" As mentioned above, Sorabji transferred this dedication, along with that of the *Second Symphony for Piano*, to Harold Morland in 1979. The inscription now reads: "To my very dear great and / old friend Harold (Morland) / wonderful poet, translator of [genius] / and a man *sui generis* if / ever there was: with much / love from Kaikhosru Shapurji Sorabji."

Sorabji first mentioned his new work to its original dedicatee in a letter dated 6 June 1940, some two months before its completion on 13 August. He had just begun a piano work that would be "languorous & passionate and exotic enough to satisfy *all demands!!!*" A few weeks after completing the piece, he characterized its atmosphere, saying (using one of his stock expressions) "I have put some of my very best work with 'Gulistan' (The Rose Garden, the name means) though I sez it wot didnt oughter. The air is hot and heavy and languorous and sultry with perfume of rose, lily, champak… and so on, and so on still more so!…" In the early months of 1941, after refraining from working at it on his Virgil dummy piano owing to its fiendish difficulties, he wrote that

> […] all those twining, twisting *llanas* [*recte* lianas] of decoration must worm their way like perfumed serpents into your mind and heart—initiating you into the incomparable secrets of Saadi's Rose Garden where the embalmed air is sick and faint with its own perfume, where the soul sinks into an ecstatic languor and the clash of hyperborean barbarians fighting like the savages they are—for bits of muck and mess called "freedom, liberty, and honour" is utterly effaced and lost… But I ramble on crazily…[102]

"Gulistān"—Nocturne for Piano is indeed such a difficult piece that Sorabji, who never developed the polished technical skills of a concert pianist, could only give an idea of what it would sound like. He allowed Holliday to immortalize "the sketchiest of sketchy impressions of it" on private recordings made on 5 May 1962 and 26 March 1965. The latter performance was the one first heard in the early 1970s as part of Donald Garvelmann's radio broadcast. Anyone who has listened to it with the score in hand will know how much more of an improvisation based on the manuscript it is than a faithful rendering. Asked to compile a list of a single recording for each decade of the twentieth century, Charles Hopkins (1952–2007), who recorded the work in 1995, chose Sorabji's performance as the recording for the 1960s, referring to the "intoxicating and voluptuous beauty" of his sound.[103] The

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[100]KSS to ABP, 16 October 1979.

[101]Morland also inscribed "for Kaikhosru Shapurji Sorabji" a translation of Petrarch's seventh sonnet, *La gola e 'l sonno e l'oziose piume*. On 30 July 1980 he made a cassette recording of readings of some of his Sorabji-related texts (The Harold Morland Poetry Audio Archive, tape no. HM10).

[102]KSS to FH, 6 June 1940 {1/F.2}; 1 September 1940 {1/F.2}; 14 February 1941 {1/F.3}.

[103]Charles Hopkins, in "Critics' Choice", *International Piano Quarterly*, no. 10 (Winter 2000): 40–53; 43.

splendour of the piece is probably unmatched in the entire repertoire of piano music and fully justifies Harold Morland's description of it as "a spirit's Paradise".

Sorabji drew his inspiration from *Gulistān* (The Rose Garden, 1258), an important work by one of the greatest Persian poets, Abū Abdiʾllah Mušarrifuʾd-Dīn Ibn Muṣliḥud-Dīn, known as Saʿdī (ca. 1213–91). In fact, it was the second time that he found his inspiration in the *Gulistān*, which he knew in the French translation by Franz Toussaint (1879–1955).[104] In 1926 he had set for male voice three of the poems taken from a work consisting of sixty-one stories followed by fifty-three aphorisms and a farewell to the reader. When transferring to Harold Morland the dedication of the piano piece in 1979, he wrote down the text of "La fidélité" into the manuscript.

Another quotation, this one written at the time of the composition, is from chapter 10 of *South Wind*, the best-known work by Norman Douglas (1868–1952), the novelist from whose *Alone* (1921) Sorabji would use a passage as the "Entête" of *Mi contra fa* in 1947 (see chapter 16). *South Wind* examines the effect of Italy on a bishop, Mr. Heard, who gradually becomes less formal as the environment and the hedonist Keith (modelled on Douglas) affect him. The excerpt comes from a passage in which Count Caloveglia, in conversation with Heard near the pink ramparts of the Old Town of Nepenthe, an idealization of Capri, breaks into "a kind of Delphic rhapsody". The two concluding sentences recall a passage from Sorabji's so-called *Personal Statement* quoted at the end of chapter 13: "Why do I write as I do? […] That was their way. It is also mine".

> What, sir, would you call the phenomenon of to-day? What is the outstanding feature of modern life? The bankruptcy, the proven fatuity, of everything that is bound up under the name of Western civilization. Men are perceiving, I think, the baseness of mercantile and military ideals, the loftiness of those older ones. They will band together, the elect of every nation, in god-favoured regions round the Inland Sea, there to lead serener lives. To those who have hitherto preached indecorous maxims of conduct they will say: "What is all this ferocious nonsense about strenuousness? An un-becoming fluster. And who are you, to dictate how we shall order our day? Go! Shiver and struggle in your hyperborean dens. Trample about those misty rain-sodden fields, and hack each other's eyes out with antediluvian bayonets. Or career up and down the ocean, in your absurd ships, to pick the pockets of men better than yourselves. That is your mode of self-expression. It is not ours.[105]

In composer's own words, *"Gulistān"—Nocturne for Piano* is an "essay in the hothouse-languorous genre […,] a return, only a lot more so, to the stifling, heavily scented atmosphere of the ' Jami' nocturne: A thoroughly poisonous, unhealthy, corrupt fleur-du-mal of a piece and naturally, therefore, a great favourite of the composer's!"[106] The initial marking complements the composer's description adequately: "Languido e dolcissimo. Il tutto in un ambiente di calore tropicale e profumato, piuttosto nostalgico".[107] The piece begins with a sinuous and chromatic melodic contour that recurs at various points and in various guises; it easily recalls the opening flute line of "La flûte enchantée" from *Shéhérazade* (1903) by Maurice Ravel (1875–1937) **(example 15.4)**. Harmonically, most of the thematic statements are based on chords with F, F♯, A, or C as the bass note. The music consists almost throughout of a superimposition of delicate, highly ornate strands: a unique example of sensuality —and complexity—in music. The piece is quite active throughout, although it is always meant to be played very softly. The only contrast to this maze of decorative filigree work is a passage of slow three-

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[104]Saâdi, *Le jardin des roses*, trans. from the Persian by Franz Toussaint, preface by the Comtesse de Noailles (Paris: A. Favard, 1912; Librairie Stock [Delamain, Boutelleau et Cie], 1923), 50–51.

[105]Norman Douglas, *South Wind* (London: Martin Secker, 1917; New York: The Modern Library, 1925), 104–5 (page numbers from the 1925 edition, which includes a prefatory notice by the author) {reproduced with the permission of the Society of Authors as the literary representative of the Estate of Norman Douglas}.

[106]*A*, 8–9.

[107]"Languid and very softly. Throughout in a rather nostalgic atmosphere of tropical and perfumed warmth."

part counterpoint ([ED/Powell]p. 23). The main texture then resumes for a few pages, and the piece, after a last statement of the main gesture based on the same ninth chord on F heard at the very beginning (which may be a reference to the original dedicatee), ends on a low A.

Trois poèmes / H. James Cooper, Joy McArden

In the summer of 1941, a fortnight before the completion of *St. Bertrand de Comminges: "He was laughing in the tower"*, Sorabji wrote three songs known under the editorial title of *Trois poèmes* (1941; 13 pp.). The first and last songs are settings of poems by Paul Verlaine (1844–96). The first poem, "Le faune", is taken from the *Fêtes galantes* (1869). It depicts an old terracotta faun playing on the lawn, an augur of a negative sequence to serene moments. The third one, "La dernière fête galante", is a parodic poem bidding farewell to standard lovemaking; it ends with hearts calling for embarkation for Sodom and Gomorrah. The second song is a setting of the sonnet "Les chats", from *Les fleurs du mal* (1857) by Charles Baudelaire (1821–67). The poem describes cats as sedentary animals who seek silence and yet, like sphinxes, assume a noble posture. Like the French poet, Sorabji had a fondness for cats, although he does not appear to have owned any. Men had "fondness for those gross and foolish animals, the horse and the dog", and he himself felt "uneasy in the presence of a creature of subtle and rare intelligence like the cat".[108]

Sorabji once recalled a story about his mathematics tutor, Mr. Edwards, who had rescued a kitten tormented by "two vile little gamins" and a priest who said that animals had no souls and that children needed to have fun. He commented as follows: "This is only equalled by the attitude of the Church of England towards the barbaric atrocities of hare coursing, fox- and tame-stag hunting, so much beloved of the English sportsman."[109]

In all likelihood, Sorabji wrote his *Trois poèmes* in a hurry. The first one is dated 8 and 9 August 1941, suggesting that its composition took only those two days. He then waited until October to write the other two, which are dated 6 and 10 October, respectively. The songs are dedicated "à mes amis Jim Cooper et Joy McArden Cooper". According to Sorabji, who wrote an obituary, the Dutch soprano Joy McArden (b. Diemerburg, near Amsterdam, 16 January 1893; d. Birmingham, 17 April 1952)[110] studied with Blanche Marchesi, the dedicatee of his song *L'irrémédiable*, whom he heard "many and many a time sing Mme. McArden's praises in superlative terms".[111] She made her debut in 1920 and was very interested in contemporary music. She sang to great acclaim at the Opéra-Comique in Paris and at Sadler's Wells.

McArden married three times.[112] After a certain Johannes Josephys Aron Jacometti (by proxy, from 1914 to 1916), she married in 1922 the leading French writer on vegetarianism Jacques-Colin Demarquette (1888–1969; also known as Jacques de Marquette), with whom she seems to have collaborated in the Trait d'Union, a naturist and vegetarian society he had founded in 1911.[113] Her third

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[108] *FM*, no. 253 (orig. no. CCCLV, p. 71); see also no. 269 (orig. no. CCCLXXI, p. 75).

[109] KSS to PH, March. Early [1914] (section dated 20 March) {*LPH*, no. 8, p. 67}.

[110] See "McArden, Joy", in K. J. Kutsch and Leo Riemens, *Großes Sängerlexikon*, 3rd ed. (Bern and Munich: Francke Verlag, 1997), 3:2292. This singer, whose real name was Johanna Maria Goverdina IJzenman, adopted her stage name at the suggestion of Nina Grieg, the composer's widow, whose protégée she had become. She had studied with Emma Calvé, Roberto Tamanti, and Sarah Jane Layton-Walker (known as Mme Charles Cahier).

[111] Sorabji, "Joy McArden: An Appreciation", *MO* 75, no. 898 (July 1952): 615.

[112] McArden's three husbands are mentioned in the Dutch Wikipedia article.

[113] "Ein Gruß aus Frankreich", *Mitteilungen des Bundes für radikale Ethik*, no. 7 (June 1923): 11; "La cote naturiste et J.-C. Demarquette", in *Éléments d'histoire du végétarisme en France* (Association Végétarienne de France, cahier n° 2), undated (1998), 9–11.

husband, H. James Cooper (1902–57),[114] was from the Birmingham area, where McArden was appointed to the Birmingham School of Music (now the Royal Birmingham Conservatory) in 1947. She was a visiting specialist in German, French, and Scandinavian art song and opera, and taught there until her death in 1952. There is a record of Cooper, who had been a student at the institution, acting as accompanist at an opera recital given his wife's first-year pupils on 16 November 1948.[115] Sorabji, who gives to understand that he knew him before their marriage in 1938, spoke of an "old friend" in the singer's obituary; elsewhere he referred to him as "mon vieux [*recte* vieil] et grand ami [...] mari de cette chère et grande artiste".[116]

The set of songs might have received a first performance at the time of its composition had Sorabji not preferred to stick to his position of objecting to any public hearing of his works when the singer of "literally European reputation" proposed a performance. He could not "with propriety relax the ban in any degree that would not very properly be taken as an affront" by her.[117] A planned broadcast of his songs by the couple later had to be cancelled due to McArden's death.[118] Nevertheless, she sang them privately for the composer, for whom "not only did she read straight off at sight the voice parts of three extremely difficult tricky settings [...], but to my almost speechless admiration and amazement, after doing this, she walked about her flat singing snatches thereof perfectly from memory".

Sorabji described McArden as "a truly prodigious artist: to a magnificent opulent dramatic soprano she added a consummate vocal technique, a sense of style, a vividness of interpretative insight that marked her as one of the very few in any generation". He had already written glowing reviews of four of her appearances on the opera stage (as Octavian in *Der Rosenkavalier*) and in recital between 1939 and 1944, but none of them suggests a personal acquaintance at the time.[119] Her artistry must have been such that Sorabji, now retired from public life, once considered leaving his home to go to the concert.

Both the vocal and the piano parts of the *Trois poèmes* are not easy compared to songs from the standard repertoire, but should present no problems for performers accustomed to twentieth-century music. The vocal writing includes several leaps and changes of register, and the overall style has a playfulness that appropriately reflects the light-hearted tone of the first and last poems—especially the last one, with its very tonal opening **(example 15.5)**. This set is clearly the best of Sorabji's entire vocal output. It does not suffer from the problems that plagued his earlier songs, namely, the excessive use of repeated notes and the stress applied to the wrong syllables; moreover, the rather virtuosic piano part is varied and expansive. The character indication of the third song includes a pun on Cooper's name: "Avec afféterie. Quasi 'Cooperin'".[120]

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[114]Cooper's first name is given as "Harold James" Cooper, born 1902 (fourth quarter, October–December) in West Bromwich, Staffordshire (near Birmingham), https://www.findmypast.co.uk/transcript?id=BMD%2FB%2F1902%2F4%2FAZ%2F000126%2F324, and as "Harold J." with the same year of birth and 1957 (fourth quarter, October–December) for the death, https://www.findmypast.co.uk/transcript?id=BMD%2FD%2F1957%2F4%2FAZ%2F000240%2F051. The 1939 Register, https://www.findmypast.co.uk/transcript?id=TNA/R39/5341/5341J/020/06, has a household record for "Harold J.", born on 29 September 1902 and working as a glass costs clerk, married to "Joy Cooper", born on 16 January *1903* (same day and month as given by the reference works, but nine years later), working as a singer. The year of marriage could not be established.

[115]John Smith (Archivist, Royal Birmingham Conservatoire), "Joy McArden (1893–1952), Singer and BSM Member of Staff (1947/52)", unpublished notes, 1 April 2021; and idem, "James Cooper, BSM Alumnus and Singer", unpublished notes, 25 March 2015.

[116]KSS to Anna Medtner, 26 May 1953 {Library of Congress, Nikolay Karlovich Medtner Papers, box-folder 5/22}.

[117]KSS to CE, 16 January 1946.

[118]AH to MAR, 7 April 2000, who doubts that this story is actually true.

[119]Sorabji, "Music", *NEW* 15, no. 6 (25 May 1939): 95–96; 19, no. 9 (19 June 1941): 94–95 (most especially); 23, no. 15 (29 July 1943): 131; 25, nos. 17–20 (31 August 1944): 154–55.

[120]"With preciosity. Almost as if playing 'Cooperin'".

16 / 1941–50 ■ Casting a Defiant Look at the World

The Eternal Misanthrope: The *Fruits of Misanthropy* and *Mi contra fa*

Sorabji's first book of essays, *Around Music*, dates from 1932 (see chapter 11). A second one, *Mi contra fa: The Immoralisings of a Machiavellian Musician*, followed in 1947. The author's description of himself as a "Machiavellian" musician (or writer)—but not his attitude—may have been something new to his readers, but the term had been present in his mind for some time. Even before his first book, in 1930, he had embarked on rewriting the "animadversions of a Machiavellian" that he had begun in 1925; he was to add to them as "a pleasant little diversion between whiles". He was still adding to his manuscript in 1940 and, in early November 1965, made a few additions before sending it to Frank Holliday "as a sort of sour Christmas gift". In 1973 Sorabji curiously had no idea of its whereabouts and thought he had either lost, mislaid, or even destroyed it "in one of my periodic bouts thereof".[1]

This unpublished document, entitled *The Fruits of Misanthropy, being The Animadversions of a Machiavellian*, which is beautifully written on deckle-edged landscape paper bound between wooden boards with tooled half leather, consists of 333 numbered statements (followed by a short postscript) ranging from single sentences to full-length essays.[2] Sorabji was writing this "volume of detached observations" representing a "precious *salmigondis* of topics"[3] for himself alone, although he once toyed with the idea of having it published privately, if he could afford it, "for private circulation among a few intimates".[4] He used this collection as an outlet to lash out at people, ideas, and institutions with which he happened to disagree. Animadversion was on his mind around 1930: he had used the word in the title of a 1929 essay and in two chapters of *Around Music*, published in 1932.[5] It also proved apt when referring to his negative comments on various topical issues in letters to his friends.[6]

Among the subjects that Sorabji frequently addressed in his *Fruits of Misanthropy* are (in alphabetical order): art, Christianity, England, (homo)sexuality, and India; rather absent is music, a

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[1]KSS to EC 17 September 1930, 8 (section dated 7 October); see also 15 October 1930, 1; FH to KSS, 16 November 1965 {2/F.6}; FH to DG, 26 January 1977 {4/F.27}; KSS to FH, 1 July 1973 {3/F.4}.

[2]The numbering of the items is very problematic, with the last one identified as no. 433 when there are in fact 333. Some have a lower number than the actual one, and several others have a number that exceeds the correct one by 100; furthermore, some numbers are repeated. Excerpts from this manuscript, which is part of KSSC and of which my critical edition is in preparation, appear in various places throughout this book; for other excerpts, see Rapoport, "Sorabji's Other Writings", in *SCC*, 325–27.

[3]KSS to EC, 8 April 1930, 7.

[4]KSS to EC, 22 August 1931, 2.

[5]See "Some Animadversions on Singing in General and Operatic in Particular", *MILO* [Magazine of the Imperial League of Opera] 1, no. 1 (October 1929): 19–22; see also the chapters "Animadversions on Singing in General, with Remarks on the Misuse of the Term 'Coloratura'" and "Fashions in Piano 'Methods' with Animadversions on 'the Beautiful Tone' Fetish" in *AM*.

[6]In KSS to DG, 29 April 1978, he wrote that he was "too much in a hurry to make certain animadversion[s] on the cutting you so kindly sent".

subject to which he has devoting many pages in other contexts. The work is full of references to people from the past (including from other cultures) and from Sorabji's present, some of whom are no longer part of our common knowledge. Almost every item resonates with disappointment, disapprobation, discontent, dislike, disrespect, dissent, etc. His friend Erik Chisholm wrote: "There are no half measures with this extraordinary man: his point of view is always that of an extremist. Things are either divine or satanic—and anyone who thinks differently is a fool or a rogue or both."[7] Three of these are quoted here for the fascinating insight they give into Sorabji's frame of mind as he wrote down his statements.[8] The first paragraph makes it clear that he saw himself as intellectually superior to virtually everyone. The second item shows that nothing would prevent him from expressing his opinion, however negative, about those whose presence or existence imposed upon him. The last statement conveys his very low opinion of humans ("sub-animal organisms"), with whom contact became increasingly unbearable as he advanced in age.

> 156. Being reproached upon a time for my habits of exclusiveness and my predilection for my own company, I replied "Well here are two reasons for that—equally good—the first is that my mental activities begin so far beyond the point at which most people's leave off, my language of thought is so different from theirs that there exists no common ground between us. The second reason is that my own failings are so great that they are as much as I can put up with in comfort—those of other people superadded I find a burden quite intolerable. You can take your choice of the two reasons provided you allow me mine."

> 220. Why one should be regarded as a cynical misanthrope for telling human rubbish that they are that and not the Lord's anointed I cannot for the life of me see. If an apple is unduly worm-eaten and rotten, one is perfectly justified in saying so, more especially if one is expected to eat it. It seems to me all the more important not to allow yourself [*recte* oneself] to be hoodwinked as to the quality or lack of it of the human material with whom one is thrown into contact. I for instance have no desire to be told that I am as lovely as Antinoos, as chaste as Lucretia, as truthful as George Washington because I am not as lovely as Antinoos. I am not, never have been and please God never will be either as chaste as Lucretia or as truthful as that revolting perambulating mass of priggery, George Washington. But I don't in the least mind not being all those things or mind being told I'm not, but then I have a thoroughly realistic and completely unsentimental mind regarding myself—and if I decline to put on rose-coloured spectacles to contemplate myself—being, thank you, mightily well pleased and content with myself, I can assure you I certainly do not intend to put on rose-coloured spectacles to regard *you*. I should like you equally ill either way!

> 239. As I get older I find that I want more delightful, beautiful and charming objects round me but ever less and less people. Talk about the infinite variety of human beings is mere sentimentality, for human beings are excessively rare, far too rare for "infinite" variety, for I refuse to concede the name of human beings to those sub-animal organisms perambulating on two legs about the soundness of whose heart—wisely they refrain, even they, from any comment as to the condition of their heads—our gallant journalists are so fond of referring and the others of having their dose, when they talk of the great heart of the people. That always gives me a vision of some cosmic butcher shop on the marble slab of which, along with other intestinous offals, a vast browny, purply, splotched object of revolting appearance and almost measureless extent should be displayed with an electric sign playing above it across the firmament: "prime peoples' hearts are good and cheap today."

Between the 1950s and the early 1970s, Sorabji also wrote three much shorter manuscripts containing similar harsh commentaries. The first one, consisting of ten items grouped under the heading *Some Sacro-Sanct Modern Superstitions (with Comments)*, is one of the two examples of the composer giving a formal reading (other examples of his voice are the 1977 London Weekend

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[7] Erik Chisholm, in *The Composer Sorabji: A Talk by Dr. Erik Chisholm with Musical Excerpts, Introduced by Frank Holliday*, privately printed; undated (1965 at the earliest), 6.

[8] *FM*, nos. 156, 220, 239 (orig. nos. CCLVIII, CCCXXII, CCCXLI; pp. 42–43, 58–59, 64).

Television programme and the 1979 BBC interview on Medtner).[9] The delivery is reminiscent of much of his music: an unleashed torrent—even counterpoint—of words following one another with barely a pause, often resulting in words colliding or being chewed up.

The idea for a second book of essays—which was to become *Mi contra fa*—dates back to at least April 1944, when the composer-writer abandoned the idea of a second edition of *Around Music* and began planning a book to be entitled *The Immoralisings of a Machiavellian Musician*, which became the subtitle of the new book.[10] His reading of *The Machiavellians: Defenders of Freedom* (1943) by the American philosopher and political theorist James Burnham (1905–87) may have suggested to him the provocative word; he described the book as a "summary of the analysis of the political urge in political parties, groups and ideologies".[11]

Sorabji expected to finish typing the four hundred pages of his manuscript—an "unholy task"—by Christmas 1944.[12] But there was a long delay before the publication process began, for he did not read two sets of proofs until March 1947; one obstacle was the sudden death of his old friend Leslie B. Cavender (1910–47), "a moving spirit of the Porcupine Press",[13] which seems to have been a very small publishing house. The book, published in January 1948 (with a copyright date of 1947),[14] is dedicated "To my honoured and revered friend Professor Denis Saurat". Saurat, as seen in chapter 12, was a French writer on literature, philosophy, and religion to whom Sorabji had dedicated his *Quintet II for Piano and String Quartet* some fifteen years earlier.

The table of contents is followed by an "Entête" which, as Sorabji had already done in his *Tāntrik Symphony for Piano Alone*, quotes a passage from *Alone* (1921) by the novelist Norman Douglas (1868–1952), with whom he exchanged a few letters and books between 1943 and 1951. The passage reinforces the pugnacious title of his own book and sets the tone for his series of polemical essays. He clearly approved of the Scottish novelist's view that one should not pay attention to what one's neighbour thinks.

> Consider well your neighbour, what an imbecile he is. Then ask yourself whether it be worth while paying any attention to what he thinks of you. [Life is too short, and death the end of all things. Life must be lived, not endured.] Were the day twice as long as it is, a man might find it diverting to probe down into that unsatisfactory fellow-creature and try to reach some common root of feeling other than those physiological needs which we share with every beast of earth. Diverting; hardly profitable. It would be like looking for a flea in a haystack, or a joke in the Bible. They can perhaps be found; at the expense of how much trouble!
>
> Therefore the sage will go his way, prepared to find himself growing ever more out of sympathy with vulgar trends of opinion, for such is the inevitable development of thoughtful and self-respecting minds. He scorns to make proselytes among his fellows: they are not worth it. He has better things to do. While others nurse their griefs, he nurses his joy. He endeavours to find himself at no matter what cost, and to be true to that self when found—a worthy and ample occupation for a life-time. The happiness-of-the-greatest-number, of those who pasture on delusions: what dreamer is responsible for this eunuchry? Mill, was it? Bentham, more likely. As if the greatest number were not

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[9]The recording of the "Sacro-Sanct Modern Superstitions" (1962) is available in KSSC {box 10, tape #7}; for the text, see Rapoport, "Sorabji's Other Writings", in *SCC*, 327–30. The two other manuscripts ("Twelve More Fruits of Misanthropy" and "The Disbelief of an Anti-Democrat") are in SA and KSSC {3/F.3}, respectively. For items nos. 3 and 10 of the latter manuscript, see *SCC*, 330n28.

[10]KSS to FH, 9 April 1944 {1/F.6}.

[11]KSS to FH, 1 May 1944 {1/F.6}.

[12]KSS to FH, 10 December 1944 {1/F.6}.

[13]KSS to FH, 1 March 1947 {1/F.9}. For Cavender's years of birth and death, see https://www.findmypast.co.uk/transcript?id=BMD%2FD%2F1947%2F1%2FAZ%2F000214%2F059.

[14]*Mi contra fa* is listed in *The English Catalogue of Books* (London: The Publishers Circular), vol. 16, *January 1948 to December 1951*, 728.

> necessarily the least-intelligent! As if their happiness were not necessarily incompatible with that of the sage! Why foster it? He is a poor philosopher, who cuts his own throat. Away with their ghosts; de-spiritualize yourself; what you cannot find on earth is not worth seeking.[15]

On receiving a copy of *Around Music* sent to him by its author in 1943, Douglas expected "some really suggestive and stimulating reading", which turned out to be "admirable". He reciprocated by offering a copy of a new edition (1925) of *South Wind* (1917), from which Sorabji had already quoted at the beginning of his *"Gulistān"—Nocturne for Piano*. The book bears an inscription expressing his "good wishes and many thanks for the pleasure his *Around Music* has given me". In giving Sorabji permission to quote anything from his writings, Douglas wrote that he was "vastly interested, too, to read your 'Immoralisings', which promise well".[16]

The first chapter of *Mi contra fa* is entitled "Introito". After commenting on the word "Machiavellian", Sorabji sets out his agenda and warns his readers of what it might entail. It means being "coarse, vulgar, crude, venomous, spiteful and a number of other things that no one who tries to get round a critics' circle ought to be".[17] Four of the thirty chapters are very short, ranging from one to four pages; twenty-one are of a moderate length (five to ten pages); and five are larger pieces of ten to twenty-four pages. Nine essays are devoted specifically to (groups of) composers or artists about whom Sorabji wrote with great enthusiasm: Leopold Godowsky, Ernest Chausson, Blanche Marchesi, Bernard van Dieren, the "great French song writers", Sergei Rachmaninoff, Karol Szymanowski, Francis George Scott, and York Bowen. Thus, in addition to composers who influenced him in one way or another, we find dedicatees of works (Marchesi, Scott, and Bowen) and a friend (van Dieren). It is not easy to classify the subjects of the remaining chapters. Their titles are enough to convey the author's strongly negative attitude, his opposition to the musical establishment, the alleged lack of intelligence of virtually all musicians except himself and his favourite artists, etc. Some of the titles are quite picturesque: "Music and Muddleheadedness", "The Amateurs, or Thick Skins and Thicker Heads", and "Modern Popular Music as Part of a Plan of Progressive Besotment".

Mi contra fa, which Sorabji considered much better than *Around Music*, had allowed him to "say what I wanted to about people and things I wanted to", but had "derisory sales".[18] The reviews were positive, but expressed concern about his vitriolic attacks and convoluted literary style. Eric Blom (1899–1959) referred to the "recent stimulatingly controversial book" written by someone who was "as good a hater of this country as anyone who has ever managed to live in it all his life". A certain "C.H.S." managed to "find buried in his unfailing invectives nuggets of truth and veins of compelling alloy", but complained about the author's penchant for "words of four syllables and facetious circumlocutions" and for his use of "long and awkwardly inserted parentheses". William McNaught (1883–1953) noted the "core of good solid stuff, instructive and stimulating, built upon knowledge and scholarship, informed with culture and sensitive understanding", but deplored that this core had to

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[15]Norman Douglas, *Alone* (London: Chapman and Hall, 1921), 104–5 {quoted with the permission of the Society of Authors as the literary representative of Norman Douglas}. Of the bracketed sentence, which Sorabji omitted, Rapoport, "'Could you just send me a list of his works?'", in *SCC*, 188, noted that the passage did not fit his religious views.

[16]Norman Douglas to KSS, 27 March 1943, 13 October 1944, 16 October 1944 {quoted with the permission of the Society of Authors as the literary representative of the Estate of Norman Douglas}. Sorabji is not mentioned in Mark Holloway, *Norman Douglas: A Biography* (London: Secker & Warburg, 1976). As Douglas lived in London from 1942 to 1946, the two may have met.

[17]Sorabji, "Introito", in *MCF*, 13–16; 15–16.

[18]KSS to NG, 29 January 1948 {16/F.60}; KSS to CMG, 3 January 1954.

be searched beneath so much "decorative matter". For Sorabji, McNaught's text was the "one intelligent review" he had read, the others being "beneath contempt, conventional, dull and silly".[19]

Richard Capell (1885–1954), after noting that Sorabji's writings were never boring, approved of his "lauding of bygone days"; this, though one-sided, was "salutary to a musical world given to self-flattery". He very aptly suggested that the "fury of his writing" might cover the "inner sadness" of someone forced to live among people he disliked. Sorabji's friend Clinton Gray-Fisk called the book "as pungent, provocative and diverting as ever" and "a most welcome and wholesome contrast and corrective to the spate of anæmic ambiguities that so frequently pass muster as informed musical criticism". Ralph Hill (1900–1950) approved of Sorabji's "vigorous and vitriolic" style of criticism, which had become "rare in these days when genteel smugness saturates our journalism and public speaking". For Wilfrid Mellers (1914–2008), Cecil Gray's "most aggressive pronouncement" seemed mild when compared to these essays, although he found the author sincere in his opinions despite his "wild generalizations".[20]

The anonymous reviewer for the *Times Literary Supplement* rightly noted one of Sorabji's recurring weaknesses: he praised the "seemingly conceited and incompetent amateur musicians" he counted among his acquaintances and showered those who did not like his favourite composers as much as he did with "violent diatribes".[21] This review prompted Sorabji to comment that the paper was very angry with him, "so cross that it can't even speak the truth alleging that everything and everybody English is abused and found fault with by me".[22] For William Robert Anderson (1891–1979), one of the *Gramophone*'s contributing editors, Sorabji's "antipathies irritate him, and unfortunately he passes on the annoyance to us"; he would not "engage symphony by such violent and at times, I'm sorry to say, rather juvenile vituperation". Despite some "good musical thoughts", there was "too much about the author's fads, furies and political dislikes" in this "Me contra Mundum"[23].

In 1973 Sorabji himself considered having his two books reprinted. Nothing happened until 1979, when Hyperion Press (Westport, Conn.) reissued *Around Music*, originally published by the Unicorn Press, but without his consent or even knowledge; the book comes with a light brown binding (more or less the same as the original) and lacks p. 86. His second book, *Mi contra fa*, originally published by the Porcupine Press, was reissued in 1986 by Da Capo Press (New York), with an introduction by his American admirer Donald Garvelmann, who had lent his copy. He was as pleased with "a first-class job, with a lovely blue cloth binding" as Sorabji was to receive his copy.[24] Although copyright protection had expired in the United States, the executive editor felt that creative work should be rewarded and offered Sorabji an honorarium of $100 ($257 in 2019).[25]

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[19]Eric Blom, "World of Music: Never, Never Slaves", *The Birmingham Post* (undated, 1948); C.H.S., "Book Reviews", *Music Survey* (undated, 1948?); W[illiam] McN[aught], *MT* 89, no. 1261 (March 1948): 76–77. For Sorabji's comments on the reviews, see KSS to RWLS, 22 June 1948 (pp. 9–10; 10).

[20]Richard Capell, "World of Music: Mr. Sorabji's Jeremiad" (unidentified source, probably *Daily Telegraph*); C[linton] G[ray]-F[isk], "New Books: Sorabji ad infinitum!", *MO* 71, no. 848 (May 1948): 306–7; Ralph Hill, "The Lays of Scott, Minstrel", *The Daily Mail* (Scotland) (undated, 1948); W[ilfrid] H[oward] M[ellers], *Music & Letters* 29, no. 2 (April 1948): 204–5.

[21]"Music and Society", *The Times Literary Supplement* 47, no. 2404 (28 February 1948): 118. Other reviews are: Editor, "Book Reviews", *Tomorrow* (March 1948): 237; Pepys Junior, "Talk of Many Things: Machiavellian Musician", *The Royalist: Journal of the Royal Stuart Society* (Winter 1961–62): 83 (a journal to which Sorabji subscribed and in which at least three of his open letters appeared in the late 1950s).

[22]KSS to FH, 5 March 1948 {1/F.10}.

[23]W.R.A. [William Robert Anderson], "Book Reviews", *The Gramophone* 25, no. 298 (March 1948): 161–62; 162.

[24]DG to KSS, 14 July 1987 (with Sorabji's comments on it).

[25]Bea Friedland (Da Capo Press) to KSS, 13 September 1983. The American publisher Hyperion Press, which specialized in reprints, seems to have been active from 1973 to 1999 and should not be confused with Hyperion Books. The American publisher Da Capo Press was founded in 1969 in New York as a publisher of books on music. Both books have been out of print

Foreign Countries and Languages

After settling in Corfe Castle in 1951, Sorabji rarely left the Dorset village except for a few short holidays between 1955 and 1957 in Robin Hood's Bay, Yorkshire, a "lovely spot" he had visited "for years at a stretch" during his youth.[26] He kept returning to the same hotel, where "being Yorkshire people there is a quite un-English respect and deference paid to a creative musician, which is VERY nice and VERY right and proper".[27] Apart from two trips to Bombay after the death of his father (July 1932–February 1933, June 1933–January 1934), he never left Europe, where his travels were restricted. As a result, Sorabji never visited the United States, nor did he ever want to, although in his later years he was interested in acquiring a pictorial book on the Metropolitan Opera after hearing a talk about it on the radio.[28] Indeed, in 1930, the "beastliness and vulgarity" of an American tour under "an American booster", as suggested by Erik Chisholm, aroused in him "unspeakable repugnance". He added: "Not only do I not want mob-admiration but the thought of it sickens me with disgust and horror!" Another "weighty reason against America" was that the *Musical Courier*, in printing an open letter he had sent in 1924, had twisted his "perfectly clear and unequivocal words into meanings they do not bear". He feared that "they would intrigue against me and make it impossible for me".[29]

Despite his deep dislike of the United States, Sorabji was to realize later in life that some Americans believed in his music and were taking steps to promote its recognition. Norman Gentieu generously paid for the microfilming of his manuscripts in the early 1950s. Between 1969 and the early 1980s, Donald Garvelmann published a short piano piece, prepared a radio programme, and served as producer for recordings. Michael Habermann premiered several works in the 1970s and wrote his dissertation on the piano music in 1985. Kenneth Derus gave a lecture in London in 1977 and organized a major performance in Chicago in 1983. They all eventually received dedications.

Sorabji' travelled with his mother, his inseparable companion. They probably made short occasional trips, such as a weekend to Wells (Somerset), about 210 km from London. He immensely enjoyed visiting the nearby Benedictine monastery of Downside Abbey, "the most lovely and perfect specimen of Modern Gothic architecture that I have ever seen". He also met Dom Thomas Symons (1887–1975), a professor of music and friend of Christopher à Becket Williams; the "charming little man, an excellent musician in a mild unsensational way" was "*all over* me", which he found "quite embarrassing".[30] On the other hand, Madeline sometimes went on holiday to Italy alone, or at least not with her son, who obviously hoped that Chisholm would come and join him in London, where he felt "*desperately* miserable".[31]

The only documented trips that Sorabji made alone were those to Glasgow for performances organized by his friend Erik Chisholm (twice in 1930 and once each in 1931 and 1936), to whom he also made several short visits. His first known trips outside Britain were to Paris at Easter of 1914 and in 1921, when he gave the first performance of his *Trois poèmes pour chant et piano*. He probably made his remaining visits to Paris on his way to and from Italy, a favourite holiday destination. In 1931 he wrote rather negatively of the French capital, saying "I *do hate* Paris!… the row!!! London is quietness itself in comparison! One cannot think properly here… too hectic by half too feverish. I shall be glad to get out of it." His stopover on the way back to London "after a *miserable* week in that filthy bloody hole

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for several years.

[26]KSS to FH, 9 July 1955 {1/F.17}; 25 July 1956 {1/F.18}. See also KSS to PH, 8 September [1914] {*LPH*, no. 11, pp. 85–86}.

[27]KSS to FH, undated (received on 23 July 1957) {1/F.19}.

[28]KSS to KD, 28 December 1977 {Derus S16, p. 73}, and 20 January 1978 {Derus S19, p. 86}.

[29]KSS to EC, 5 April 1930, 1–2; KSS to EC, 8 April 1930, 5. See also "Sorabji's Answer", *Musical Courier* 89, no. 25 (18 December 1924): 30. Sorabji refers to the 16 October issue, in which nothing related to the matter could be found.

[30]KSS to EC, 17 September 1930, 6 (section dated 4 October).

[31]KSS to EC, 13 November 1930.

of a Paris" was "absolutely the most depressing Easter I ever remembered spending", especially since "the streets were crawling with the worst type of British and Yank tripper—perfectly poisonous!"[32]

Despite his dislike of Paris, Sorabji loved French civilization and music very much. He had the highest respect for Debussy and Ravel and wrote essays in *Mi contra fa* on Ernest Chausson and the great French song writers. Several of his songs are settings of French texts or of French translations. About a quarter of his titles are in French, and his manuscripts contain several explanatory comments, tempo indications, and interpretative directions written in this language.

Sorabji wrote very decent French, as can be seen in two letters to Philip Heseltine. We also find sentences and even paragraphs in French, Italian, and German in his correspondence with Erik Chisholm, which enabled him to express his outpourings of love more freely.[33] He once wrote to Frank Holliday: "tu me permets de te tutoyer… French expresses such a sentiment so beautifully doesn't it? Wonderful language of a wonderful people!"[34] He found it a pity that English did not lend itself "to the delightful intimate 'tutoyer' of the Latin languages and even German".[35] He longed "to become a linguist", but confessed to having "unfortunately no ear and no special ability in mastering languages".[36] Anyone who has had to edit his prose, his titles, and the interpretative directions of his manuscripts will readily confirm these deficiencies. His use of foreign languages, though basically correct, is seldom free from inconsistencies and errors; many of his titles in languages other than English are so idiosyncratic that editing is necessary to prevent incorrect forms from being reproduced in the literature.

Sorabji saw French patriotism and nationalism as "narrow, insular, self-sufficient and bigoted", but concluded that this was no more objectionable "than the English varieties of these rather unamiable weaknesses". He rejoiced in the "extraordinarily high general level of intelligence" of the people, which expressed itself in the wide availability of books on street after street, something that had no real counterpart in England. For him all this "incontestably indicate[d] a far higher and keener intellectual life than anything known in England".[37]

We know of only two trips made by Sorabji to German-speaking countries, apart from the story that he travelled alone to Essen at the age of thirteen to attend the first performance of Mahler's Symphony no. 6 on 26 May 1906, which he neither confirmed nor denied.[38] He first travelled to Vienna in early January 1922 to perform his first two numbered sonatas in the Kammersaal of the Musikverein. This visit gave him the opportunity to meet the composer and musicologist Egon Wellesz and the music publishers Emil Hertzka and Alfred Kalmus—although he may not have seen Schoenberg and Berg despite his desire to do so. He found the Austrian capital a "depressing, drab and a ridiculously pretentious gimcrack city" where "this bloody Mahler orgy" was such that one "cannot turn without seeing some bleeding Sonderheft [special issue of a periodical] devoted to the man".[39] Only one trip to

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[32]KSS to EC, 23 February 1931, 1; KSS to EC, 12 April 1931.

[33]KSS to PH, 17, 23 March 1916 {*LPH*, nos. 21 and 22, pp. 101–2}; KSS to EC, 8 April 1930, 8 (section dated 11 April) (Italian); 27 May 1930, 5 (section dated 29 May) (poem in French); 3 June 1930, 6 (section dated 4 June) (Italian); 17 June 1930, 2 (German), 3 (Italian); August 1930, 8 (section dated 21 August) (French); 15 October 1930, 2 (section dated 17 October) (French); 6 May 1931, 23 (French).

[34]KSS to FH, 25 June 1941 {1/F.3}.

[35]KSS to EC, 8 April 1930, 4.

[36]Sorabji, "Sentimentality and Contemporaneity: with Especial Reference to Music", in *MCF*, 53–61; 54.

[37]*FM*, item no. 276 (orig. no. CCCLXXVIII; p. 76).

[38]This is mentioned in Alistair Hinton, "Kaikhosru Sorabji and Erik Chisholm", *Jagger Journal* (University of Cape Town Libraries), no. 10 (1989–90): 20–35; 21. Asked by Hinton about this trip, Sorabji replied "Good story, isn't it?"; AH to MAR, 16 November 2007.

[39]KSS to PH, 2 January 1922 {*LPH*, no. 33, pp. 131–32}.

Berlin is documented, at Easter 1939, although mother and son may have made other visits to spend time with Madeline's youngest sister, Blanche Winifred, who passed away in 1944.[40] Sorabji had studied German (see chapter 2), but admitted that his knowledge of the language was not extensive. Nevertheless, he praised himself to Heseltine.

> You will perhaps say that it is because my knowledge of German is not good enough to enable me to tell what they sing? This is not the case—my knowledge of German is not extensive I admit—for when I hear the *Russians* at Drury Lane I can hear every syllable although also highly ignorant of that wonderful language.[41]

A single letter, to Erik Chisholm, contains a paragraph in German, obviously to make it easier for him to express his (unrequited) love for his friend (see chapter 10).[42]

Like many inhabitants of the British Isles, Sorabji was only too happy to trade the damp and grey climate for the warmth of the Italian sun. We can see his preoccupation in the comments (very often in Italian) written in thirteen of his manuscripts about the prevailing weather at the time of completion. He once wondered, "what WOULD the English talk about, if they hadn't got their weather? And what on earth COULD one talk to them about, if, as the witty and malicious Frenchman said, they really had a climate, instead of just weather?"[43] His earliest such comments are found in the *Concerto for Piano and Orchestra [no. 5]*, completed "sous un ciel gris", and in the *Sonata III for Piano*, finished under "tempo fino: ventoso freddo e pluvioso [*recte* piovoso], cioé [*recte* cioè] giorno da primavera inglese".[44] The editorial corrections show Sorabji's Italian to be much more faulty than he must have thought. The greatest concentration of references to weather (seven) is to be found in scores dating from the period 1948–61, that is, mostly after he had moved from London. An additional incentive for going to Italy was certainly the fascination that this country held for homosexuals (see chapter 9).

Sorabji visited Italy at least eight times: three times up to and including 1922, then in 1927, 1929, 1931, 1937, and 1938.[45] The war obviously curtailed any other plans for holidays in this or any other country. Therefore, at least from 1930 onwards, he went to Corfe Castle for several weeks each summer or so. He was soon "more than ever determined to have a studio at Corfe when I am able to afford it. The place has an endless fascination and charm for me that other places far more beautiful have not."[46] Starting in 1947 he spent much time in the village, settling there permanently four years later. Sorabji did not attempt to explore Italy, confining himself to Rome and Palermo, the latter a city of "agonising heartbreaking beauty" that provided him with the setting for a short story about homosexual love.[47] The regularity of his articles and reviews published in the *New Age* and the *New English Weekly*, however, suggests that his "annual Sicilian winterings" are examples of literary licence.[48] Apart from the years listed above, there was simply not enough time to travel between the publication dates, and the subjects discussed suggest that the author was in London.

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[40]KSS to EC, 15 April 1939; see also Sorabji, "Music", *NA* 15, no. 10 (22 June 1939): 158; KSS to FH, 7 July 1944 {1/F.6}.
[41]KSS to PH, 2 March 1915 {*LPH*, no. 15, p. 94}.
[42]KSS to EC, 17 June 1930, 2.
[43]KSS to EC, June 1932, 5 (section dated 6 June).
[44]"under grey weather"; "fine weather: windy, cold and rainy, i.e., an English spring day".
[45]KSS to PH, 12 April 1922 {*LPH*, no. 34, p. 134} ("This is my third visit to Italy"); "Music", *NA* 40, no. 11 (3 January 1927): 129; completion of *Sonata IV for Piano* in Rome on 22 March 1929; "Music", *NA* 48, no. 25 (23 April 1931): 294; "Correspondence: Impression after Italy", *NEW* 10, no. 19 (18 February 1937): 380; "Music", *NEW* 13, no. 4 (5 May 1938): 73–74; "Music", *NEW* 13, no. 8 (2 June 1938): 154.
[46]KSS to EC, 18 September 1931, 3.
[47]*GS*, 36.
[48]*GS*, 46, 1.

Sorabji was naturally attracted to Sicily because it served his need to emphasize his mother's supposed "Spanish-Sicilian" origins; he may also have imagined himself following in the footsteps of one of his favourite composers, Karol Szymanowski. He liked to think of himself as a southerner, "one the intensity of whose feelings, when they are strongly roused or moved, makes silence impossible—they burst all bonds of conventionality". It must have come in handy to be able to attribute his boiling temper to the supposed Sicilian heritage on the distaff side must have been quite convenient. He was fond of adding his own "invented tag" to his letters: "In ogni cuore veramente siciliano arde il fuoco eterno dell'Etna."[49] He even ascribed part of this heritage to his father: "I'm a half Sicilian you know, and more than that temperamentally and psychologically. Much more my beloved Mother's son than my father's, though HE was very like a Sicilian in temperament AND temper... and even looked like one."[50] When Frank Holliday wanted to record his voice, he chose a passage from a travel book on Sicily by Francis M. Guercio (see chapter 15). In 1973 he wrote three short paragraphs expanding on the "Sicilian temperament" of the excerpt, quoting a sentence from Guercio that aptly illustrates his extremes of temperament—a warm and affectionate person with trusted friends on the one hand, and a harsh and contemptuous one with all (or most) others.[51]

As was once common for people who did not have to work for a living, Sorabji sometimes left home for long periods at a time. His 1937 trip, for example, lasted almost two months. As well as composing, but he played the piano; his mother hired an instrument for him on at least one occasion.[52] His harsh reviews sent from Rome show that he did not go to Italy because of the quality of its musical life. A performance of Strauss's *Rosenkavalier* he attended was "an almost unrecognisable travesty" conducted by someone who had "succeeded in utterly transmogrifying and denaturing the work". Visits to churches convinced him that "the standard of church music in England and its performance begins where that of the Italian leaves off". He was also "horrified by the incredible badness of the organ playing, the unbelievable trashiness and trumpery of the strains that are allowed to disgrace and desecrate the most sublime and solemn moment of the ritual of the Mass, the Elevation of the Host".[53] The "Festival Musicale Busoni" (Empoli, 1958) was not enough to induce him to return to Italy (see chapter 6). To have to return to "THIS country, THIS land of mental and climatic miasmas, would be SO AWFUL that I could not STAND it without going stark staring raving mad, even though MY part of Italy is not really Italy at all BUT SOMETHING FAR SUPERIOR sc. SICILY".[54]

Italy's failure to give Sorabji the aesthetic pleasure he longed for did not prevent him from loving its language, which he used for a quarter of his titles and set twice. His discovery of the rite of the Roman Catholic Mass inspired his largest work, the *Messa grande sinfonica*. He always liked to slip into Italian when he wanted "to be *particularly* nice and charming", as he could spread himself "in intimate and affectionate language without seeming and sounding maudlin or sloppy".[55]

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[49]KSS to EC, 3 April 1930, 1; KSS to FH, 12 October 1955 {1/F.17} ("In any truly Sicilian heart burns the Etna's eternal fire"). See also KSS to CMG, 20 August 1955.

[50]KSS to KD, 21 August 1977 {Derus S09, p. 41}.

[51]Sorabji, "Footnote to One Sicilian Temperament!" (1973); "The Sicilian Temperament (A Comment to an Excerpt from Guercio's *Sicily, the Garden of the Mediterranean*)" (1973); "Personal and Private Footnote (for the eyes of one or two intimate friends only) to Francis Guercio: The Sicilian Temperament" (undated, ca. 1973).

[52]KSS to EC, 16 February 1931.

[53]Sorabji, "Music", *NA* 48, no. 25 (23 April 1931): 294.

[54]KSS to RS, 26 September 1958.

[55]KSS to FH, 17 December 1953 {1/F.15}.

Vituperating against England and Its Institutions

Many of Sorabji's essays, reviews, and letters have a recurring theme: his negative attitude towards the country of his birth and residence, its people, and its institutions. He deeply disliked having to live among the British in the "International Human Rubbish dump alias London".[56] His move to Corfe Castle in the 1950s was his way of easing his burden by leaving "the spiritual and moral stench of 'town'" and the "metropolis of tarts whores trollops catamites ponces and bawds of every sex and none".[57] He seems to have been possessed by a visceral need to rail against almost everything English at every opportunity, too often shooting in all directions in convoluted sentences. Coarse words, of course, were often helpful in such a context. On hearing that Ronald Stevenson had been unable to find a publisher for his "Sorabji Symposium" (see chapter 19), he wrote of his attitude to the Establishment.

> I have always shown towards them and their doings THE most contemptuous indifference as to what they may think of me, have gone out of my way to flout them and indeed make a parade as you might say of my scornful disregard of what they think. Worst of all, I don't have to kiss anyone's backside to exist... they really HATE that.[58]

Sorabji's readers must have become accustomed to his frequent disparaging remarks; they probably even looked forward to reading—just for the fun of it—what had moved the crackpot once again to pour molten lead on whomever or whatever had outraged him. It would take an entire chapter to document and categorize all the objects of Sorabji's contempt. It would be necessary to quote a considerable part of his literary output and his correspondence, the latter of which he was sometimes honest enough to call "protracted screeds".[59] Sadly, given his deep dislike of England, the project he and his mother entertained of moving to France or Italy during the war never materialized.[60]

A major reason for Sorabji's negative attitude towards England was the treatment he received because of his racial origin. His first open letter to the *New Age*, in 1915, dealt with "Foreigners in England". He approved of a reader for whom the English nation was "persistently nasty to all foreigners", showing a "carefully-studied and calculated hatefulness". He himself had had "unique opportunities for observing the conduct of the English towards my fellow-countrymen [the Indians]"; though time had hardened him, he often felt that this made life impossible for cultured people. Another reader took umbrage at Sorabji's reference to the "hatefulness" of the English, to which the composer replied: "my own experiences—particularly bitter at times—justify this assertion of mine completely". He concluded that "nothing would please me better than to be able to leave this country, but my residence here is enforced by circumstances".[61]

In 1940 Sorabji commiserated with the composer Alan Bush, who had received negative reviews from the "cloacal lickspittles and toadies of Fleet Ditch".

> You would seem to possess almost as many pre-requisites for being a persona ingratissima as myself; I thought I bore off the palm, in this respect, first my Eastern descent, coupled with the fact that on the Continent and in America very complimentary things have been said about my work... members of subject races mustn't be allowed to get above themselves, you know, "white"... (i.e. dirty pink), prestige must be upheld at all costs... to someone else [...].[62]

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[56]KSS to ABP, 3 September 1979; see also KSS to KD, 6 September 1977 {Derus S10, p. 44}.
[57]KSS to Mervyn Vicars, undated (1952?).
[58]KSS to CMG, 1 July 1965. In the context of this letter, the BBC seems to have been the object of Sorabji's scorn.
[59]KSS to DG, 3 August 1972.
[60]KSS to PH, 23 February 1916 {*LPH*, no. 20, p. 100}.
[61]Sorabji, "Letters to the Editor: Foreigners in England", *NA* 16, no. 24 (15 April 1915): 653; "Letters to the Editor", *NA* 16, no. 29 (29 April 1915): 707; "Letters to the Editor: Foreigners in England", *NA* 17, no.3 (20 May 1915): 69.
[62]KSS to Alan Bush, 10 February 1940.

Referring to apartheid, Sorabji pointed out that "all these ferocious prohibitions only provoke the very thing they are (ostensibly) designed to prevent. The races have been kept apart for millennia without any Apartheid nonsense." He went on to recall two incidents, the first of which happened when he was just "a smallish lad" on holiday with his parents in Whitby.

> I was on one occasion pursued by a howling crowd of louts and larrikins double my size and age stoning me with brickbats and all. My head was cut open and I should have been more than half-killed, if a kindly person had not hauled me into her shop and harangued the mob of hooligans who were pursuing me, howling after their kind "GERMAN SPY"! The German WOULD have employed a little creature of some twelve years of age [therefore passing himself off as being born in 1902!] of a most conspicuously exotic nationality as a spy, wouldn't they? [...] Thereafter, I could not stir out without some public offence or insult being hurled at me by the practitioners of "fair play". [...] BRITISH FAIR PLAY IS LIKE FRENCH POLITENESS. THERE IS NOTHING OF WHICH WE HEAR MORE AND NOTHING OF WHICH WE SEE LESS. Well, unjust as that may be, it certainly applied to ME as a child and boy in this country.[63]

The second incident took place after the end of World War I. Sorabji and his mother were seated on the Underground opposite a "gaitered dignitary" of the Church of England and an elderly lady, when the clergyman turned to the woman and referred to Sorabji as a "black boy". Madeline replied that her son was not a "black boy"; she would be happy if he were one, or even a baboon, rather than "belong to anything or anybody that produces people like you".

One thing is clear from the "Foreigners in England" controversy, especially from the first letter: Sorabji then believed that the Parsis were Indians and therefore identified with the latter group, which he saw as so "immeasurably above" the English that they (the Indians, and therefore himself) should be treated as "outcasts". For him, the "level or pinnacle of civilization" reached by the English led to the murder of innocent citizens and to the outrage of young girls.[64]

Sorabji's *Fruits of Misanthropy* enabled him to vent his anger at England and its inhabitants. The context of a document intended for his own use obviously protected him from any accusation of libel. The two excerpts reproduced below show the intensity of his attacks on the English claim to cleanliness and on the British Empire as a tribute to gangsterism.

> 159. A quaint delusion from which Englishmen suffer is their idea of their absolute paramountcy over the rest of the world in personal cleanliness. But it needs very little acquaintance with the habits and customs of more civilized and especially older peoples to discover how impertinent, and how English, this claim actually is. […] A Japanese gentleman of high rank once said that the smell of a London Ballroom filled with what's called the *élite* of London Society was almost unendurable to him, and reminded him of nothing so much as the smell of the Elephant House at the Zoo!
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> 305. What does that monument—the largest the World has ever known—to successful gangsterism, the British Empire, mean to the eleven-odd millions in England who have less than six shillings a week to spend on food, what does it mean to South Wales, Durham, Lancashire, rotting in hopeless privation and penury? […] But the British Empire means a lot to the financiers and Bankers in the City: it means concessions, markets, more unhappy "nations" to exploit and develop, i.e. plunder and rob. […][65]

Among the English institutions that aroused Sorabji's ire was the British Broadcasting Corporation, for whose initials his mother had an "extremely amusing, if improper explanation" (Bloody Bunk

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[63]Both incidents are described in KSS to CMG, 20 August 1955, 2 (source used here for the first), and KSS to EC, 3 November 1954, 1. For the second, see KSS to FH, 6 September 1958 {1/F.20}. Sorabji also referred to it in "Music", *NA* 46, no. 20 (20 March 1930): 237. A complete quotation appears in Paul Rapoport, "Sorabji: A Continuation", in *SCC*, 68–69.

[64]KSS to PH, 8 September 1914 {*LPH*, no. 11, p. 84}.

[65]*FM*, item nos. 159, 305 (orig. nos. CCLXI, CDXXXVI; pp. 43–44, 84).

Corporation).[66] He himself called it an "utterly pestilential and poisonous institution", and one with "an infallible instinct for the third rate".[67] He castigated it for "flattering the greatest ignorance of the greatest number with a list of barbarous mispronunciations, outraging alike euphony, good taste, and the canons of correct speech", and noted that its "manifold ignorances" at times reached "to the nadir of the sublime".[68] Nevertheless, "the quantity of good music broadcast by the B.B.C. is quite as great as the average music lover can assimilate with safety—and occasionally more".[69]

In April 1930, before he began to object to the dissemination of his work unless he could have control over the process, Sorabji gave the first performance of *Le jardin parfumé—Poem for Piano Solo* on the BBC (see chapter 8). He would later turn down its requests for performances, for example in 1944 and probably also later. He once described it as an "institution I detest and execrate and whose efforts often repeated to rope me in for one excuse or pretext or another I consistently and always reject, in SPITE of my always unfailing NO to them".[70] Writing on musical taste in England, he examined the "reckless claims" made on behalf of the BBC and alleged that the facts pointed against them being responsible for any "'growth' of taste and appetite for music". For him, the BBC never broadcast enough music by people he admired, such as the singer Blanche Marchesi; he was not surprised that it would "only once or twice" condescend to be aware of such a person.[71]

Curiously, much of Sorabji's work as a critic (though not his livelihood, as he was not paid) depended on the existence of the BBC as a producer of concerts and broadcasts, especially from 1928 onwards. Having reduced his attendance at public concerts to a minimum, broadcasts and recordings were the means by which he could have a contact with music other than his own. He would therefore have to endure the voices of their announcers, for which he liked the words of Douglas Reed (1895–1976) in *A Prophet at Home* (1941): "those filleted voices, as of castrated curates".[72] Many of his reviews contain negative comments about the BBC's handling of programming decisions and its treatment of artists. In 1932 he criticized them for unilaterally changing a programme devised by Sir Thomas Beecham and wondered how long it would be before they realized "their colossal blunder in estranging and antagonising the great musical genius without whom such a concern as theirs for all its admirable qualities is a body without either a soul or much of a brain".[73] Sorabji probably managed to forget—one hopes—the institution and concentrate on the music itself for the duration of the performances.

Sorabji recalled in detail to a friend how, in 1960 or so, he was asked by someone he knew slightly at the BBC to receive him and a colleague "with a view to putting to me a certain proposal". As he was about to leave for London, he agreed to meet them there, insisting that this did not imply acceptance. The offer was to "talk with complete frankness on the Third Programme in my usual ferociously denunciatory terms of the fashionable musical tricks that are the prescribed wear of the 'advanced' (???!!!) musical ESTABLISHMENT sc. the toadies and lickspittles of the Egregious Igor, the tone-rowers and the rest of that sort of canaille". He also refused to discuss a project to do some work of his, fearing

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[66]KSS to EC, 20 September 1930, 2; see also KSS to Cecil Gray, 6 April 1944 {BL, MSS Add. 57786}. Sorabji also used "British Bumkissers Corporation" and "Bloody Buggers Club" as well as "Blithering Bosh Corporation" and "Blithering Bunk Corporation"; KSS to FH, undated (received on 12 March 1957), 26 May 1957 {1/F.19}; KSS to Alan Bush, 10 February 1940, 30 January 1956. It would not be surprising to find references to "Bum Boys' Club" as well.

[67]KSS to Cecil Gray, 15 April 1944 {BL, MSS Add. 57786}; Sorabji, "The Songs of Francis George Scott", in *MCF*, 217–23; 219.

[68]Sorabji, "Music", *NA* 45, no. 23 (3 October 1929): 273–74; 273; "Music", *NEW* 26, no. 15 (25 January 1945): 111.

[69]Sorabji, "Music", *NA* 50, no. 11 (14 January 1932): 130.

[70]KSS to FH, 1 May 1944 {1/F.6}; KSS to NG, 22 March 1967 {18/F.23}.

[71]Sorabji, "The Decline of Music and Musical Taste in England (With some Reflections upon the Future of Music)", in *MCF*, 89–106; 93–94; "Blanche Marchesi", in *MCF*, 133–40; 138.

[72]KSS to RS, 11 August 1966; KSS to CMG, 20 September 1977.

[73]Sorabji, "Music", *NA* 50, no. 14 (4 February 1932): 164–65; 165.

comments such as "Oh, here's old S. AT LAST trying to creep into the B.B.C.", even when his interlocutors argued that swarms of people were besieging them for being broadcast. The conversation ended when the composer asked if the broadcaster was "trying to patronise me", which made them realize that "the quest was hopeless".[74]

In 1976, when the American enthusiast Kenneth Derus investigated the possibility of serving as producer for a recording of *Opus clavicembalisticum*, Sorabji agreed on condition that no one connected with the BBC would have access to the tape.[75] A few years later, on 27 June 1979, he agreed to participate with Alistair Hinton and Ronald Stevenson in a filmed interview on BBC Scotland to commemorate the centenary of Francis George Scott's birth. It is not clear whether the programme was ever actually broadcast, and the footage may have been discarded. Sorabji also participated with the same friends on 6 December in a centenary interview for the BBC's Radio 3 (recorded on 30 December 1979 and broadcast on 2 January 1980) about another of his favourite composers, Nicolas Medtner.[76] Nevertheless, he dreaded the date,

> with all that gang descending on me. If it were only Alistair and Ronald, two very dear and good friends, it would be all right, BUT the B.B.C. bunch will number at least FOUR, including a female, which I, [as a] born celibate, don't [obviously?] much relish. And WHY should one be expected to feel flattered when one is too that such and such an one as CRAZY to meet one. Christ Almighty[,] doesn't it occur to them to ask YOU if you want to meet THEM?[77]

The English music schools were another target of Sorabji's sharp pen. He complained that "no barrier is set up, no attempt at a sifting made". Anyone who could pay the fees was "presented with an algebraic-like abracadabra-like formula to stick on to the tail of his or her name, which enables them to catch other feeble-minded dupes as pupils […] and pass on the apostolic succession of charlatan incompetence and twentieth-rate performance". Entrance examinations, he said, were "the merest farce", while other examinations and degrees were "ingenuously contrived to show the possession of everything but talent". He described performers as "unbaked incompetents thrust into offensive notice", and the London orchestras as bodies offering "merely public rehearsals without the interest of a rehearsal in place of performances".[78] Referring to the St. Marylebone Parish Church, which he found "so conveniently and appropriately situated near one of our licensed slaughter-houses [*sic*] of music" [Royal Academy of Music], he suggested that a funeral or memorial service could be arranged for the "music done to death" at that school.[79] Yet he spent decades attending concerts and listening to broadcasts largely produced by this system.

Despite his very negative attitude towards his country of residence, Sorabji viewed the monarchy in a favourable light—though this is perhaps not so surprising for one who thought highly of himself as a composer and was fully aware that he was largely a mountaintop. A "convinced Royalist and believer in aristocracy", he considered the caste system to be "one great Hindu contribution to civilisation and politics".[80] Concluding a diatribe against labourers, he wrote as follows.

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[74]KSS to RS, 3 April 1961, 1–2.

[75]KSS to KD, 31 July 1976 {Derus, S03, p. 17}.

[76]*Music Weekly: K.S. Sorabji talks to Ronald Stevenson, Michael Oliver and Alistair Hinton about his memories of Nicholas Medtner*. A recording of this programme is in the collection of the National Sound Archive under no. M8266BW.

[77]KSS to ABP, 3 December 1979.

[78]Sorabji, "Music", *NA* 36, no. 19 (5 March 1925): 224–25.

[79]Sorabji, "Music in Italy To-day: Reflections from Rome', *MT* 78, no. 1132 (June 1937): 501–2; see also idem, "Correspondence: Music-Teaching Institutions", *NEW* 12, no. 2 (21 October 1937): 39–40.

[80]KSS to RS, 10 February 1961, 1.

> The ONLY society worth anything AT ALL is a hierarchical one based on CASTE. NOT class which is a matter of bank account and therefore NOTHING, but on BIRTH and BREEDING, AND, not having either of these, the proletcult specialists denigrate, like the tailless fox. From all of which you will deduce that I favour an aristocratic society, a REALLY aristocratic one, not one in which BIG BUSINESS, BRIGANDS, HIGH FINANCIAL FREEBOOTERS sit in the seats of the mighty, whereas they, in a properly ordered state of society, MIGHT be allowed as a very special and great honour to wipe the seats in public lavatories for their betters to sit down upon. And indeed when ancient India WAS ancient India before [being] intainted [*sic*] by democratic filth, this WAS done.[81]

In 1957 Sorabji wanted to join the Royal Stuart Society, a body founded in 1926 to commemorate the royal house of Stuart. He sent to Count Nikolai Tolstoy-Miloslavsky, the current chancellor of the International Monarchist League, a copy of a recent article of his on "that much slandered monarch Ludwig II of Bavaria"[82] along with his subscription money, and asked how he could become an associate member. He was delighted that the Count had agreed to propose him as a member "of your splendid Society".[83] Count Tolstoy remembers Sorabji as someone whose views were "uncompromisingly but intelligently monarchist and traditionalist".[84]

Sorabji's membership in the Royal Stuart Society explains why he read and contributed letters to its journal, *The Royalist: A Magazine of Royalism, Its Destiny, Mission, Purpose and Use*, and to *Royalist Viewpoint*. In one such letter he denounced the propaganda of the "Red Fascists" who had accused the Royal Family of agreeing to the cost of building a Royal Train; rather, he described the family as a model of "good taste and feeling" who had often asked that no extraordinary preparations or expenses be incurred for certain functions.[85] In addition to these published letters, he seems to have sent many letters to the Society—two or three a month (!)—expressing conservative views on current political controversies.[86]

By the mid-1950s Sorabji realized that he had been blinded by anger and had developed a "furious animosity" towards the English; those to whom he was "under the biggest of personal and emotional obligations" were in fact English, "but Englishmen quand même". Yet he added that "you Scots" (Chisholm, Grieve, Scott) had given him, population for population, a greater share than England.[87] He felt that he must really love the country to agree to pay two or three times what it would cost elsewhere, to be robbed of half his income, and to suffer the worst climate, the foulest cooking, and the worst manners in Europe—all of which entitled him to speak his mind occasionally in return for the privilege.[88]

Études transcendantes (100) / Henry Welsh

In addition to various medium-size works of no more than forty pages, Sorabji devoted four years to a series of one hundred *Études transcendantes* (1940–44; 456 pp.). This was a gigantic homage not only to Franz Liszt but also to Sergey Lyapunov (1859–1924), who also wrote a set of twelve *Études*

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[81]KSS to DG, 15 November 1969, 1.

[82]Sorabji, "King Ludwig's Palaces", *The European*, no. 44 (October 1956): 126–27.

[83]KSS to Count Nikolai Tolstoy, 2, 7 February 1957 {collection of Count Nikolai Tolstoy}. In the Summer 1957 issue of the *Royalist* (p. 188), "K. S. Sorabji, Esq., Corfe Castle, Dorset" is mentioned as one of sixteen new members in a list entitled "Election to Membership". Sorabji had been elected to membership at the meeting of 25 March 1957.

[84]Count Nikolai Tolstoy to MAR, 26 August 1999.

[85]KSS to Editor, undated (clipping from the *Royalist*, November 1951?).

[86]Recollections of John Yeowell, a Vice-President of the Royal Stuart Society, quoted in David Beattie, The Royal Stuart Society, to MAR, 29 October 1999.

[87]KSS to CMG, 20 August 1955.

[88]KSS to Cecil Gray, 15 April 1954 {BL, MSS Add. 57786}.

d'exécution transcendante, op. 11 (1897–1905).[89] The main difference is that he did not limit himself to twelve pieces or, obviously, to the cycle of major and minor keys.

Sorabji was to compose many of his studies under wartime conditions, a conflict he believed would not take place. He was relying on what some psychics were saying, as he explained a week or so after the United Kingdom had declared war on Germany on 3 September 1939.

> Yes, old dear, I must have seemed to have let all my friends down very badly indeed over my prophesy that there would be no War; well, far more gifted psychics than myself have declared it again and again, inspired by their "controls" who have never been wrong before upon any major issue; I would however say this: let us see what pans out; they may prove not to have been so shockingly wrong after all! And I do not believe even now that anything very big or bad will come, and that all will very soon be over.[90]

He hoped that the British would drop the "revolting pretence" that they had joined because they feared that Germany, after victory, would turn against them "with all the resources of Europe behind them".[91] The war would not last long; he was "convinced that the speed with which it will come to an end will take every one by complete surprise, and will doubtless bitterly disappoint many people!"[92]

German Luftwaffe bombing began in September 1940 and ended with the great raid of 10 May, only to resume in June 1944 with V1 flying bombs and V2 rockets forcing Londoners to spend nights in air raid shelters and underground stations. Sorabji, who was not required to perform non-combatant duties (see chapter 2), and his mother were, so he says, the only people left at Clarence Gate Gardens, most of the other blocks being empty; he wrote music during the night and early morning, sitting in the passage of his flat during the raids.[93] Siddons Lane, where the rear entrance to Sorabji's building is located, was indeed hit by a high explosive bomb.[94]

The entire set of etudes, which Sorabji completed on 7 February 1944, is dedicated "To my old friend Henry Welsh: / to celebrate the renewal of a very old friendship / that lapsed through no fault of his, but of mine. / I trust that he will accept this as a sort of amends; very belated I fear!" We know very little about this Henry Welsh, not even the years of his birth and death. They may have met or corresponded, but at some point the composer stopped writing, as the wording of the dedication suggests. He had known this gentleman since at least 1936, when he alluded to him in comments denouncing "another flagrant manifestation in English musical life", namely, favouritism. Trained as a clarinettist in Vienna, Welsh had stood in for the first player in the Vienna Philharmonic Orchestra. On his return to England, he found every door closed to him because he was "not a product of one of the official factories of musicians in this country". Sorabji thus saw a "clever musician and brilliant player" prevented from making "any sort of headway against vested interest and nepotistically protected privilege" and forced to become a commercial traveller and then a restaurant manager.[95] In 1931 Welsh published an article on orchestral reform, in which he expounded his views on the

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[89]The American composer David Rakowski wrote between 1988 and 2010 a set of one hundred piano etudes, divided into ten books. For a detailed study, see I-Chen Yeh, "The Piano Etudes of David Rakowski" (D.M.A. diss., Graduate College of Bowling Green State University, 2010), http://rave.ohiolink.edu/etdc/view?acc_num=bgsu1288402170.

[90]KSS to EC, 11 September 1939, 1.

[91]*FM*, item no. 274 (orig. no. CCCLXXVI; p. 76).

[92]KSS to EC, 1 October 1939, 2.

[93]KSS to FH, 10 August 1971 {3/F.2}; see also KSS to FH, 19 May 1941 {1/F.2}.

[94]A map showing the location can be found at "High Explosive Bomb at Siddons Lane", *Bomb Sight: Mapping the WW2 Bomb Census*, http://bombsight.org/bombs/13313/. This information was found by Sean Vaughn Owen.

[95]Sorabji, "Music", *NEW* 9, no. 15 (23 July 1936): 293–94; later incorporated into "The Decline of Music and Musical Taste in England (With Some Reflections upon the Future of Music)", in *MCF*, 89–106; 102–3. See also Henry Welsh, "Orchestral Reform", *Music & Letters* 12, no. 1 (January 1931): 21–29.

"fundamental reasons for our orchestral inferiorities" (especially with regard to the Vienna Philharmonic Orchestra); most, if not all, mentions of his name on the web are in connection with this article.

Welsh's name appears in print, in an exchange of letters in the *Musical Times*, in connection with a "British Ministry of Fine Arts" promised by Oswald Mosley's British Union of Fascists should they come to power.[96] He moved to South Africa with his wife and family to start a new life, which was impossible for people "with only their own abilities and no backstairs influence to help them". Sorabji turned to his friend Erik Chisholm and asked if he could help him find a job. Welsh probably contacted Chisholm soon after, but something must have happened, because almost a year later he had "emerge[d] discreditably from the Welsh-Chisholm business" and was in disgrace with Sorabji, who told him so "in no uncertain terms".[97] Unlike other friends who suffered the same fate (Bromage and Holliday), he kept his dedication. This obscure acquaintance of Sorabji may have published some music, for example a song entitled *Mother* (1918).[98]

Eighty-eight of the one hundred *Études transcendantes* are less than five pages in length (most often three); ten studies (nos. 26, 33, 44, 59, 63, 69, 71, 75, 84, and 99) are longer, ranging between six and twenty-one pages. The grouping into four volumes does not follow an overall form or plan, but rather divides the work into more or less equal stacks of sheets with a view to their binding. Thirty studies have neither a tempo marking nor an interpretative direction, but most of the others have the kind of detailed and evocative Italian markings that Sorabji was so fond of. Three studies related to composers who are to some extent pastiched: Scriabin, Johann Strauss, and Johann Sebastian Bach (nos. 4, 63, 99).

The work includes a number of studies based on specific intervals. There are studies based on seconds (no. 6), thirds (nos. 8, 48, 80), fourths (nos. 16, 83), fifths (nos. 18, 26, 31), sixths (nos. 21, 48, 80), sevenths (nos. 24, 27, 30), octaves (nos. 2, 33, 56, 64), ninths (nos. 31, 38), and tenths (no. 57). Many pieces feature some kind of complex melodic movement (nos. 46, 48, 49, 77, 78, 82, 85, 87, 91), while others are devoted to irrational rhythms, such as five against three (nos. 4, 23, 34, 41, 52, 54, 59). Some explore a style that suggests the embroidery of Oriental music (nos. 20, 43, 66, 69). An important pianistic device is the use of a chordal texture throughout a given study, which is found in ten pieces (nos. 5, 9, 17, 25, 32, 40, 45, 65, 79, 81, 98), the last of which serves as a grand climax before the penultimate one, an expansion of Bach's Chromatic Fantasia. As usual, there are sections in nocturne style (nos. 13, 44, 59, 67, 69, 71, 81). Furthermore, nos. 72–76 stand out for their use of contrapuntal techniques; these are followed, after a short pause, by pieces built around continuous melodic lines surrounded by counterpoint (nos. 79–80).

About two dozen etudes have titles referring to a compositional feature ("Mano sinistra sempre sola", "Riflessioni", "Rythmes brisés", "Canonica", "Studio gammatico", etc.). The left-hand study (no. 36) is the only example in Sorabji's music of a piece entirely devoted to one hand. As Leopold Godowsky (1870–1938) had done in his Prelude and Fugue on B–A–C–H (1929), there is a three-part

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[96]See Henry Welsh, "A British Ministry of Fine Arts", *MT* 75, no. 1096 (June 1934): 538–39, written in reply to "Feste", "Looking Ahead—III", *MT* 75, no. 1093 (March 1934): 211–13. Welsh's letter elicited separate replies by Henry B. Raynor and Robert Stevens, "Fascism and the Ministry of Fine Arts", ibid., no. 1098 (August 1934): 738.

[97]KSS to EC, 19 June 1948; 10 May 1949, 1.

[98]A copy of the score of Welsh's song (5 pp.), published in London by Escott, is available at the British Library under pressmark H.3991.ww.(38).

fughetta near the end that, in the words of Alistair Hinton, "sets up an elegant false expectation of the fugue from the Brahms-Handel Variations" in its four opening notes **(example 16.1)**.[99]

In addition to the Bach-related piece, two etudes are remarkable for their length and scope. One is a passacaglia with one hundred variations (no. 75; 24 pp.), lasting nearly thirty minutes. The other is a group of five independent fugues, each of which develops a single subject, and proceeds from two to six voices, with a climax spread over five and six staves (no. 100; 21 pp.). The subject of the first fugue ([ED]pp. 783–88) uses values from the quaver to the dotted crotchet, alternating between short and large intervals. Semiquavers are then introduced, leading to a close stretto in octaves and a conclusion in chords. The subject of the second fugue (pp. 789–94) consists of nine groups of semiquavers separated by short pauses. For the third fugue (pp. 795–802), Sorabji writes a subject that alternates short and wide intervals, in single and double dotted rhythms, and adds a countersubject in quaver triplets; the closing section turns to chordal writing. The subject of the fourth fugue (pp. 803–16) is one of those rhythmically varied lines mixing dotted values and groups of demisemiquavers that Sorabji often writes; it creates the most crowded picture of the five sections. The fifth fugue (pp. 817–34) uses a slow subject, but with some shortening or lengthening of values in minims throughout. Quavers are the only shorter values to be added, and this very progressively. At around nineteen minutes, it is the longest fugue. The concluding "Stretto maestrale", only about seven minutes shorter, works out all the previous themes. It then launches into a "quasi cadenza con punta d'organo" on B♭ (pp. 849–51) before a last section of contrapuntal stacking that leads to a "largo e maestoso" ending. The whole work ends on a clear F♯ minor chord, like the first fugue and, to a lesser extent, the second, which ends on a low F♯ octave with other sonorities above. Sorabji thus concludes his massive series of etudes by returning to the tonal centre of the very first etude.

Rapsodie espagnole de Maurice Ravel—Transcription de concert pour piano

On 2 February 1923, at a time when Spanish *couleur locale* was very much on his mind, Sorabji completed a *transcription de concert* of the orchestral suite *Rapsodie espagnole* (1907–8) by Maurice Ravel (1875–1937). For some unknown reason, this sixteen-page manuscript came into the possession of the French composer and only surfaced on 26 June 2000, when his heirs had it auctioned; it is now the property of the Pierpont Morgan Library (New York). Curiously, Sorabji never mentioned this transcription, the manuscript of which he must have parted with no later than 1937, when Ravel died, and in fact probably several years earlier. There is no evidence that he knew Ravel, and we know of no correspondence between them. It seems that the French composer was not present when Sorabji played in Paris in 1921,[100] but he may have met him on the same trip.

On the last page of the manuscript, Sorabji wrote down the initials of twelve people in pencil and, in ink, the otherwise unknown name "Benjamin Belloir". With the exception of "B.B.", who could be Bernard Bromage, none of these initials correspond to people in the composer's entourage.[101] The presence of several faint vertical lines in pencil, indicating the page breaks of an eventual engraved edition, suggests that Sorabji had a copyist or engraver do some preliminary work for a publication. Obviously, such a project never materialized, but the set of initials may be those of friends to whom he intended to send copies.

Some time in 1944 Sorabji wrote a "Tango habanera" as no. 84 of his *Études transcendantes*. This probably brought back such good memories of Ravel's piece that he decided to transcribe it a second

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[99]ahinton [Alistair Hinton], reply in a thread entitled "the music of K.S. Sorabji", *Piano Street* (Piano Forum), 26 July 2009, https://www.pianostreet.com/smf/index.php?topic=33831.msg403056#msg403056.

[100]*OB*, 303.

[101]The initials read as follows: N.W., T.J., L.C., H.H., J.B., P.R., F.T., B.B., E.C.S., G.O., R.W., F.Borr.

time. He may have been somewhat dissatisfied with his earlier attempt, or simply wanted to recreate a manuscript of which he had not kept a copy. The *Rapsodie espagnole de Maurice Ravel—Transcription de concert pour piano* (1945; 26 pp.) was completed on 30 May 1945 and bears no dedication. Sorabji did not comment much on the work, noting only "the elastic Spanish lilt in the rhythms with which the work abounds".[102]

Probably after transcribing Ravel's piece, Sorabji bought the 1945 Jobert reprint of the piano version of Debussy's *Prélude à "L'après-midi d'un faune"* by Leonard Borwick (1868–1925), which he had known since its publication in 1914. He had described it at the time as "exquisite—so purely pianistic and a perfect delight to play but outrageously difficult as all the beautiful things are".[103] The various changes and added lines in his copy suggest that he had at least toyed with the idea of producing his own transcription of another well-known French work.

Sorabji's concert transcription bears much the same relationship to its model as works of the same type by Leopold Godowsky, Moriz Rosenthal, Ignaz Friedman, and György Cziffra bear to the Strauss waltzes they paraphrase, in other words, highly virtuosic elaborations. The use of rehearsal numbers in both manuscripts suggests that he used the orchestral score as a basis (there are no such numbers in the two-piano score). A comparison of Ravel's two-piano version with Sorabji's two-hand transcriptions shows that the latter's versions are—if it were necessary to say so—much more complex and fully textured. His second version is more difficult, and probably more pianistic, than his first, though not as much. The latter makes more intensive use of double notes where the former relies on scalar gestures.

More specifically, and irrespective of the version, the two cadenzas near the end of the initial section ("Prélude à la nuit") are considerably expanded (bars 44, 53). Much of the ensuing "Malagueña" is transformed into cascades of chords in both hands. The "Habanera" is by far the easiest movement despite the addition of runs linking individual notes of the melodic movement. Sorabji omitted one bar in his first transcription (bar 18) and five in his second one (bars 18, 37–39, 54); this does not affect the structure of the piece in any way. The concluding "Feria" is a much more complex affair that becomes quite daunting as soon as the thematic material enters, with almost every note doubled and dyads transformed into chords. The end of the slow middle section is very ornate; it seems to have been a source of problems in the second version, with Sorabji crossing out more than one system. The excruciatingly difficult final pages suggest the frenetic pace and excitement of the orchestral work; to achieve the same result with only two hands, with probably as many notes as the orchestral score contains, is quite a challenge **(example 16.2)**. Major differences between the two settings are to be found in bars 70, 110, 152, and 175, as well as in the final gesture. The first version has two sets of two-hand ascending and descending glissandos on the black and white keys, whereas the last version calls for an ascending and descending series of chord tremolos followed by an ascending double glissando.

Transcription of the Prelude in E-flat by Bach

On 20 September 1945 Sorabji completed a *Transcription of the Prelude in E-flat by Bach* (1945; 4 pp.), inscribing it at the end "For dear R. with much love". A fuller dedication appears on the title page: "per l'amico carissimo R. che si dimostra sempre molto commosso quando è suonato questo piccolo

[102]Sorabji, "Music", *NA* 55, no. 5 (31 May 1934): 59.
[103]KSS to PH, March. Early [1914] {*LPH*, no. 8, p. 69}.

pezzo—[il] suo tanto devotissimo K.S.S."[104] "R." is Reginald Norman Best, with whom he lived in Corfe Castle for the last thirty-five or so years of his life (see chapter 17).

Sorabji's transcription is based on the initial Prelude of a variant of the French Suite no. 4, BWV 815 (1722–25). By 1927 he knew the recording of this "wonderful detached Prelude" by Violet Gordon Woodhouse (1872–1948) and, in the months preceding his transcription, he had heard "that greatest of harpsichordists and clavichordists" in a private recital.[105] The piece (actually a toccata), catalogued as BWV 815a, is still considered to be of dubious authenticity. It begins with a section consisting entirely of chords written in semibreves with the instruction *arpeggio* (bars 1–18). Unlike the Baroque musician who would have used the simple forms of arpeggios of the time, Sorabji uses a complex mixture of scales and arpeggios often with a different number of notes in each hand. This is what he had done, on an even larger scale, in his transcription of the Chromatic Fantasia.

This improvisatory introduction, which moves from the tonic to the dominant, leads to the main section (bars 19–33) that in the original mostly calls for two or three voices. Sorabji transforms these strands into double notes and full chords, thereby giving the model an entirely new dimension. In the original, because of the sparse texture, the harmony is only hinted at in many passages; in the transcription, however, the full potentialities are realized, in much the same way as in Busoni's rendition of Bach's *Chaconne* and in Godowsky's intricate versions of some of the same composer's sonatas for violin and suites for cello. Like Godowsky, Sorabji created from the "sparse hints" of the original a "re-composition of imposing magnificence, of a hieratic grandeur and large splendour of style".[106] He achieved this by using the techniques of doublings exemplified by Busoni in his own transcriptions **(example 16.3)**. After the music has reached the dominant, a short coda in improvisatory style (bars 34–37) with scales and arpeggios follows. The final tonic chord is then worked out in a sweeping flourish.

Concerto da suonare da me solo e senza orchestra, per divertirmi

After composing eight concertos for piano and orchestra between 1915 and 1928, and the *Symphonic Variations for Piano* in 1937, Sorabji decided in 1946 to write a concerto for solo piano meant to be played without an orchestra, "for his own diversion". One precedent was Schumann's *Concert sans orchestre*, op. 14 (1835–36). Another was the three-movement "Concerto" (nos. 8–10) from Alkan's *Douze études dans les tons mineurs*, op. 39 (1857). Sorabji called it "one of the most remarkable and original piano concertos in existence, worthy of a place beside the Busoni and Reger works".[107]

The *Concerto da suonare da me solo e senza orchestra, per divertirmi* (1946; 70 pp.), completed on 20 July 1946, was written "as a *délassement*: it is a small work of lighthearted character written purely for the Composer's own amusement and as a sort of 'curtain-raiser' to his major and more portentous works". Sorabji felt that the "non-existent orchestral part is *implied,* but only in such a way as to show that its presence is as unnecessary as it is undesired". In 1953 he decided to get the "bloody difficult" work into his "incompetent composer's fingers", calling it a "light-hearted piece, a sort of solo part of a concerto to which there isn't and never will be any orchestral part". He also often rightly referred to it as one of his most representative works.[108] The new work was the last of four dedicated to Norman Peterkin (see chapter 6). The larger handwriting and the use of a nickname referring to his place of

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[104]"For the dearest friend R., who shows himself so moved when this little piece is played".

[105]Sorabji, "Music", *NA* 40, no. 23 (7 April 1927): 273–74; 274; "Music", *NEW* 27, no. 15 (26 July 1945): 134–35.

[106]Sorabji, "Leopold Godowsky as Creative Transcriber", in *MCF*, 62–70; 65–66.

[107]Sorabji, "Charles Henri Victorin Morhange (Alkan) [*sic*]", in *AM*, 213–19; 218.

[108]*A*, 7–8; KSS to NG, 21 September 1953 {not listed in KSSC; the date may have been notated incorrectly}; KSS to EC, 13 April 1953; KSS to NG, 6 and 23 December 1952 (1953?) {17/F.3, 5}.

residence from 1951 (Corfe Castle) suggest a date much later than the time of composition. The inscription reads: "To dear Norman: (Norman Peterkin) / with love from his old / (and vastly obleeged friend) / Corfe Drop / alias Kaikhosru Shapurji Sorabji".

This solo concerto lasts approximately sixty-six minutes and consists of three movements. The first and last movements are marked "Brioso" and "Scherzo diabolico", respectively, while the second has no indication. In twenty-two places in the first movement (and only in this one) there are pauses corresponding to the passages given to the imaginary orchestra, and the composer has inserted humorous descriptions or exclamations, such as "Incomincia l'Orchestra arrogante e pomposa: / 4 o 5 battute", "Orch. Che bella cosa!", and "L'Orchestra: Corraggio! Bravo!"[109] He must have run out of inspiration or rightly realized that his humour would soon wear thin.

The first movement is full of sweeping gestures reminiscent of Richard Strauss's *Don Juan* or *Ein Heldenleben*. This music must have been present in Sorabji's mind as he wrote the *Concerto*; indeed, his next work was to be a concert transcription of the final scene of *Salome*. Another related work is his own *Sonata no. 1 for Piano*. Its first climactic section is recalled not only pianistically but also harmonically in bars 13–16 of the second movement; the passage in descending octaves near the end of the *Concerto* parallels the long passage in ascending octaves before the final climax in the early work (bars 123–24). The opening gesture already suggests Strauss, and its four recurrences are obvious: bars 69 and 96 of the first movement (right after the end of a long passage marked "In modo di Cadenza") and bars 75 and 128 of the third movement. The second movement, although in Sorabji's familiar nocturne style, contains the powerful chordal climax referred to above and a long pedal point —not marked as such—on B♭ (bars 38–46). The "Scherzo diabolico" is, as its name implies, a wild cavalcade, with several passages of long runs of chords **(example 16.4)**.

Schlussszene aus "Salome" von Richard Strauss—Konzertmäßige Übertragung für Klavier zu zwei Händen

On 14 March 1947 Sorabji completed what was to be his last transcription. The *Schlussszene aus "Salome" von Richard Strauss—Konzertmäßige Übertragung für Klavier zu zwei Händen* (1947; 25 pp.) is a massive amplification of the famous "Apostrophe to the Head" at the end of the opera *Salome*, op. 54 (1903–5). In this passage ("Ah! Du wolltest mich nicht deinen Mund küssen lassen, Jochanaan!", rehearsal numbers [1]314–62[7]), the ecstatic princess Salome seizes the plate on which the severed head of John the Baptist rests and sings of her frustrated passion, saying that, while he was alive, he would not let her kiss his mouth, but now she will kiss it. This "Liebestod", and with it the opera, ends when a horrified Herod summons his soldiers to crush Salome between their shields. Sorabji loved the opera, which he described in 1933 as "one of the most profoundly original conceptions in modern music"; he was particularly impressed by the "baleful and menacing closing scene". In 1937 he described it as "amazing music, seething and boiling like molten lava, of an exotic spirit unique in modern European art, of a burgeoning richness of invention unique in its composer's output".[110]

This transcription is an excellent example of how the difficulty and complexity of a piece of music such as this one, which is teeming with elaborate chromatic figurations, can be exponentiated when viewed through the Sorabjian lens **(example 16.5)**. To gauge its difficulty, one can compare it with the already far from easy piano reduction by Otto Singer (1833–94), in just the same way as one can refer to the two-piano version in the case of his transcription of Ravel's *Rapsodie espagnole*. The

[109] "The orchestra begins arrogantly and pompously: 4 or 5 bars"; "Orch. What a nice thing!"; "The orchestra: Courage! Bravo!"

[110] Sorabji, "Music", *NA* 52, no. 24 (13 April 1933): 288–89; 288; "Music", *NEW* 12, no. 10 (16 December 1937): 194–95; 195.

transcription follows the original bar for bar, except that the long B♯–A measured trill in the upper register concluding the brief conversation between Herodes and Herodias (rehearsal number [3]355 in the original score) is shortened by one bar.

Sequentia cyclica super "Dies irae" ex Missa pro defunctis / Egon Petri

With the exception of no. 75 from the *Études transcendantes*, Sorabji had not written any variations since the *Symphonic Variations for Piano*, completed in 1937, when he began his *Sequentia cyclica super "Dies irae" ex Missa pro defunctis* (1948–49; 335 pp.). This work is another, and even larger, set of variations on the medieval sequence for the Mass of the Dead, the first one being the *Variazioni e fuga triplice sopra "Dies irae" per pianoforte* of 1926. By 1930 Sorabji disliked his early work and toyed with the idea of destroying it (which he fortunately refrained from doing) and of writing "an entirely new work thereon".[111] Some eighteen years passed before he found the opportunity to undertake this task.

Sorabji dedicated the new set to another musician for whom his admiration knew no bounds: the pianist Egon Petri (b. Hanover, 23 March 1881; d. Berkeley, California, 27 May 1962). A German pianist of Dutch descent, Petri became Busoni's most important disciple as well as the principal interpreter of his works. Later noted for his performances of Bach, Liszt, and Alkan, he played under and with Busoni on several occasions, edited ten of the twenty-five volumes of his mentor's edition of Bach's keyboard works, and prepared the piano scores of such major works as the Piano Concerto and the operas *Die Brautwahl* and *Doktor Faust*. After holding various teaching positions in Europe, he moved from Zakopane, in Poland, to the United States in 1939, where he taught at Cornell University (Ithaca, N.Y.) and Mills College (Oakland, Calif.). Among his students at his masterclass in Basel in 1957 was John Ogdon, who was to become a major exponent of the music of both Busoni and Sorabji.

Sorabji apparently first met Petri as a member of the audience at one of his London recitals. He commented in February 1925 that he had "something of his immortal Master's artistic attitude and his command of piano tone colour". Despite showing a "complete aversion for what may be called the fripperies of piano playing", he had a "tendency to violent sonority". Sorabji, like many others, saw him as "the only one who can in any sense be called the heir of the Busoni tradition".[112] He mentioned his name in forty-five other articles or reviews, though often only in passing. Nevertheless, he always wrote admiringly of this pianist who, like Busoni, could do no wrong. Reviewing two concerts within days of each other, he placed the first one "with those very, very few supreme musical experiences that are to be had in a lifetime". He went on to praise the artist's "insight and understanding of the innermost nature of the music, of a diversity of tone colour, of a magnificence of style and greatness of spirit such as no living pianist can give us".[113]

In 1932 Sorabji sent Petri a copy of *Opus clavicembalisticum* along with an appreciation of his playing that gave him "renewed courage", especially coming from one of "'those few' who really know what music is". The latter suggested a meeting at which Sorabji could play from the work to help him find his way through its "optical complications".[114] We must conclude that this did not happen, as Petri wrote in September 1934 that he had always hoped for a personal meeting. The pianist suggested during his next stay in London between October and Christmas, and this first meeting may have taken place thanks to Clinton Gray-Fisk at a restaurant called "Chez Prada".[115] A few years earlier, however,

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[111]KSS to EC, 3 June 1930, 7 (section dated 5 June).

[112]Sorabji, "Music", *NA* 36, no. 18 (25 February 1925): 211.

[113]Sorabji, "Music: The Busoni Concerto—B.B.C., Feb. 21; Egon Petri Recital—Grotrian, Feb. 24", *NEW* 4, no. 21 (8 March 1934): 495–96; 496.

[114]Egon Petri to KSS, 6 May 1932; 16 February 1949.

[115]Egon Petri to KSS, 19 September 1934; KSS to Egon Petri, 5 September 1955.

Petri had been "clamouring to meet me but I systematically put off writing to him till I know he is safely out of the country […] and am hoping and praying that he will neither write nor try and root me out…"[116] Was Sorabji so overwhelmed by the prospect of standing face-to-face with someone who had been so close to Busoni, whom he admired as a god, that he preferred to postpone the encounter? However, the surviving correspondence suggests the possibility of more or more meetings, for Petri had taken a maisonette in Horbury Crescent in Notting Hill for three years in 1937.[117] Sorabji fondly recalled a lunch at a restaurant called "Chez Victor" at the junction of Rupert Street and Shaftesbury Avenue, a "famous occasion" that had also enabled him to meet the pianist's wife, Mitta (*née* Schön; ca. 1883–1957).[118]

As he wrote to Petri in January 1948, Sorabji's current work, the *Sequentia cyclica super "Dies irae"*, would be among his most mature works. With his permission, he would dedicate it to him as a "form of polite blackmail towards a public performance".[119] Petri, who had already apologized for procrastinating when it came to answering letters, agreed only a year later. He was embarrassed by Sorabji's "flattering epithets", but delighted that "a man of your culture, intelligence, and accomplishments hold me in such esteem and remember me with such appreciation and warmth". He added that "nothing could give me more pleasure and confer a greater honor upon me" than this dedication.[120] Sorabji's letter was accompanied by a copy of *Mi contra fa* with a "touching dedication", which Petri was able to place alongside his copy of *Around Music*.

The dedication of the *Sequentia cyclica super "Dies irae" ex Missa pro defunctis* reads: "To / Egon Petri:– / the greatest and most powerful intelligence / the most transcendental Master among / living Pianists. / in deepest admiration and regard. / K.S.S." The reader will recall that Sorabji, in dedicating his previous work on the medieval sequence to the memory of Busoni, had called him the "superhuman and transcendental genius, the divine master Busoni". Although he wrote in his manuscript that "the enormity of Sequentia Cyclica is such as to place it mercifully high out of danger of the mob of gentlemen (and perfect pansies) who play with ease (as it were a nasal catarrh)", Sorabji would certainly have been delighted to hear Petri play it. That the latter would have even considered spending the time necessary to learn it is highly unlikely, if not impossible. The most "modern" solo works he ever played were Scriabin's Sonata no. 4, op. 30 (1903), Prokofiev's Sonata no. 3, op. 28 (1917), and Stravinsky's *Three Movements from "Petrushka"* (1923; using music from 1911); and his most adventurous foray into chamber music was his participation in a performance of Schoenberg's *Pierrot lunaire* in Berlin, in 1912.[121]

A few years later Petri was pleased to add his name to the presentation letter circulated by Frank Holliday. He hoped that Sorabji would agree to record at least some of his compositions, which he had never heard performed, to give his admirers this pleasure.[122] Another link between Petri and Sorabji is the former's recommendation of his pupil, the Australian pianist Gordon Watson (1921–99), who taught at the Sydney Conservatorium of Music from 1964 onwards. Watson and Sorabji dined together in 1955.[123] Their correspondence, which began in 1932, ceased in 1957.

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[116]KSS to EC, 6 May 1931, 32 (section dated 22 May).
[117]Egon Petri to KSS, 30 March 1937.
[118]KSS to Egon Petri, 5 September 1955, 16 February 1957.
[119]KSS to Egon Petri, 25 January 1948.
[120]KSS to Egon Petri, 25 January 1948; Egon Petri to KSS, 18 September 1934, 16 February 1949.
[121]The most comprehensive source of information on Petri is Alfred Kanwischer, *Egon Petri, Musician to the World: Interviews and Commentary* (Göttingen: Cuvillier Verlag, 2019), which includes a list of repertoire in the appendix (pp. 123–51).
[122]Egon Petri to Frank Holliday, 27 October 1952 {7/F.1}; Egon Petri to KSS, 9 November 1953.
[123]Egon Petri to KSS, 25 November 1948, 9 November 1953; Watson to Sorabji, 4 March 1955 {Paul Sacher Stiftung}.

It is not known when Sorabji began work on the *Sequentia cyclica*. In the letter of January 1948 to Petri quoted above, he wrote:

> By the way, at the moment and for some years past, I have been at work upon a SEQUENTIA CYCLICA upon DIES IRAE, THE ENTIRE MOTIVE for piano alone. It is a set of 27 movements[,] some very short, some of great length, hardly to be called variations in the ordinary sense.

He had therefore most likely begun composition some time before early 1948, although the exact meaning of "some years past" is anyone's guess. He may simply have been referring to a structure brewing in his mind; the process, if not the composition, may have begun as early February 1944, when he completed his set of *Études transcendantes (100)*. The three transcriptions of works by Ravel, Bach, and Richard Strauss written between 1945 and 1947 certainly did not take him much time given his compositional abilities, and the 70-page *Concerto da suonare da me solo e senza orchestra, per divertirmi* was a medium-length work for him. He may well have been working on the variations at the same time.

A letter of May 1949 to Erik Chisholm confirms its date of completion (27 April) and attests to Sorabji's desire to take a break from composition. Although he began thinking about his next surviving work, a *Third Organ Symphony*, in September 1949, he did not begin composition until February 1951 (see chapter 17). He wrote that

> since finishing the Jami Symphony I have completed the Sequentia Cyclica on *Dies Irae*, a series of 27 movements on D.I. terminating in a 5tuple fugue with the most intricate Stretto Maestrale that I have ever written! This was finished a week or two ago during a sharp attack of *malaria* (my 3rd). I have no plans at all for the moment: [I] mean to lie fallow for quite a long time except perhaps for a little work at the *percussion* score of the Symphony.[124]

In 1953 Sorabji regarded the work as "the climax and crown of his work for the piano and, in all probability, the last he will write". (In fact, he would go on to write seven more works with a page count in the three digits.) He was well aware that "performers with the sheer grit, determination and staying power ever to attempt his very forbidding scores" would be such "raræ aves [rare birds] that they may be relied on to deduce, from internal evidence, what sort of treatment the *music* calls for". The notes to be mastered were for him "a pretty effective barrier to the typical artistic incompetence and nincompoopery of the many-too-many of the virtuoso tribe".[125] His last known comment, in 1960, shows how proud he was of his work. It is strange, however, that he happened to comment on it after having completed hundreds of pages of music since 1949.

> Tesoro mio I have written a work upon a plain-chant motive… on the complete Dies iræ sequence. It is one of my biggest most mature and important works half as long again as Opus clav!!!! It is called Sequentia Cyclica […] When I last played it to Erik some years ago he asserted that it had rolled him flat… it did ME playing it!!!! These is *every sort* of character in it, from the most majestic choral prelude treatment of the theme to an elaborate waltz, a Habanera movement, a funeral march, and *within* it a Passacaglia with 100 sub variations; it is quite STUPENDOUS tho I sez it… AND I do.[126]

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[124]KSS to EC, 10 May 1949, 2. Sorabji had completed the main score of *Symphony [no. 2], "Jāmī", for Large Orchestra, Wordless Chorus, and Baritone Solo* on 24 November 1947, although he reached the end of the small score only on 6 February 1951. For Sorabji's health problems, see chapter 20.

[125]*A*, 9–10.

[126]KSS to FH, 25 April 1960 {2/F.1}.

Like the two previous works using the medieval sequence on a grand scale, the *Variazioni e fuga triplice sopra "Dies irae" per pianoforte* and the *Sonata V (Opus archimagicum)*, completed in 1926 and 1935, respectively, the present work sets not only the opening phrase of the sequence, but the whole of it, though without its repetitions.[127] The structure of the work completed on 27 April 1949 is the same as that of the sonata, with one minor difference: the two penultimate bars of the former are now joined into one. Thus, the first nine of the fifteen bars (instead of sixteen) correspond to tercets 1, 3, and 5 of the chant. Sorabji then jumps to stanza 18, where the poem changes from three to two verses, and the music begins, for the first and only time, with an ascending fifth ("Lacrimosa dies illa"), reaching the fifth degree halfway through. From then on we hear the rest of the sequence including the final "Amen" (stanzas 19–20).

This long statement of the theme (four minutes) is in F♯ Dorian, unlike the previous two works, which prefer F, and each sonority has tenuto marks. The left hand plays sixths throughout, and the right hand does the same or, in four bars, fifths. The music therefore alternates between chords in first and second inversion; only the former case is seen in the excerpt reproduced **(example 16.6)**. The C♯–F♯–C♯ sonority (i.e., with the fourth in the bass) is played "quasi campana grande" at the end of each bar as a pedal point in the low register. The theme should be played "in the medieval style called 'organum'", ***pppp*** throughout. The section ends, cadence-like, with two chords (C major and F♯ minor) in root position, the only such instances.

The variations are highly developed, taking on average eleven pages. Var. 4 ([ED]pp. 24–65), marked "Tranquillo e piano", lasts almost sixty-five minutes. Vars. 8 ("Tempo di valzer con molta fantasia, disinvoltura e eleganza"), 13, 14, and 18 set the entire theme more than once: in fact, seven, four, four, and two times. Var. 14 (pp. 164–80), a (so-called) "Punta d'organo" written largely in nocturne style, is particularly striking.[128] Throughout this extended section, we hear the note B sounded like a tolling bell, as in "Le gibet" from Ravel's *Gaspard de la nuit* (1908). After an unaccompanied opening statement, the section is divided into (1) three subsections made up of fifteen numbered phrases, all but a few of which consist of a single long bar each, and (2) a final, fourth subsection that stops at the end of the twelfth phrase. Here the bass becomes a B♭, on which note the entire pedal point ends. Curiously, Sorabji first reverted to B♮ for the last octave, but crossed out the natural signs and added the flats, thus retaining the radical change.[129] Vars. 15, 16, and 19 are called "Ispanica", "Marcia funebre", and "Quasi Debussy", respectively. As he often does in his large-scale works, Sorabji includes a passacaglia (var. 22), not surprisingly with one hundred variations. The three-bar theme consists of the *Dies irae* as one is accustomed to hearing it, but with ten of its twenty-five notes having a duration longer than the basic crotchet. There is a clear division into two equal halves with a "grandioso" climax in var. 49. Curiously, it is in var. 51, rather than the previous one, that Sorabji moves the theme to the upper voice, with a simple counterpoint in crotchets below. From this point on, it is often heard clearly at the top of a rather delicate texture. Var. 26 (pp. 310–21), from its last three pages, calls for a chordal texture to create a majestic build-up to the final fugue; it is interrupted by a "Quasi Cadenza-fantasiata". The presentation in G♯ minor (or more precisely Dorian mode on G♯) of the most recognizable segment of the medieval sequence results in a rather clear tonal/modal pull throughout much of the

[127]For comments on the work, see Andrew Mead, "*Gradus ad* Sorabji", *Perspectives of New Music* 54, no. 2 (Summer 2016): 181–218; 213–16. More recently, Jonathan Powell's essay "Sorabji's *Sequentia cyclica*: An Introduction", which are his extensive notes (34 pp.) to his recording on Piano Classics PCL 10296 (2020), provides a very detailed road map. See also additional explanations in a footnote to the description of the former set's theme (chap. 9).

[128]See the note on Sorabji's incorrect use of "punta d'organo" in the introduction.

[129]Powell, "Sorabji's *Sequentia cyclica*: An Introduction", 26, suggests that this may be explained by Sorabji proceeding chromatically to a variation in A major, a procedure also used between two pairs of variations (nos. 15 and 16, and 19 and 20).

passacaglia. The final variation, ***pppp*** throughout, states the theme very clearly in the bass and adds a brief recall of its seven initial notes, marked "pochino marcato") in the upper part. Surprisingly (or not so, given what he did at the end of *Opus clavicembalisticum*), Sorabji interlocks the G♯ low octave with a B–D♯–G♮ chord in the right hand, therefore denying the listener an ending on a consonant chord.

A six-voice fugue on five subjects concludes the massive work. Apart from a clear reference to first four pitches of the chant in the first two slurred groups of the first theme, all of these, as well as some countersubjects, can be related, as shown by Jonathan Powell, to segments of various phrases from the *Dies irae*.[130] The treatment is, of course, much more chromatic, in keeping with most of Sorabji's fugue themes. The fifth theme, in particular, bears the closest resemblance to the Gregorian chant with its long values and narrow range, and the third and final of its segments is a chromatic reinterpretation of the sequence's "Amen".

The contrapuntal structure includes a section marked "Le Strette: delle quinta parte della fuga" (pp. 359–60), immediately followed by a "Stretto maestrale" (pp. 361–73) spread over six staves (this in the manuscript, but on four in the engraved edition).[131] This is followed by a volcanic "Coda" (pp. 373–77). The ending on a C minor chord creates a large-scale tritone relationship with the F♯ minor opening, thus concluding with a reference to the medieval notion of "diabolus in musica". Furthermore, the E♭, prominently heard in the top part as the third degree of the scale, which is first note of the sequence, suggests that the work could continue with further variations.

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[130]Powell, "Sorabji's *Sequentia cyclica*: An Introduction", [32].

[131]A "stretto maestrale", a section in which the full form of the (or each) subject is heard in all voices, is sometimes called "stretto magistrale". Both forms are found in Nicola Sala's *Regole del contrappunto pratico*, 3 vols. (Naples, 1794), as mentioned in F. A. Gore Ouseley, *A Treatise on Counterpoint, Canon and Fugue*, 2nd ed. (Oxford: At the Clarendon Press, 1880), 169. In (modern) Italian, the adjective "maestrale" refers to the north-west direction or to a wind in that direction; as a substantive it refers to the wind thus called.

17 / 1951–53 ▪ Finding Refuge in Dorset

Escape from London and Life at The Eye

Sorabji's occasional trips to Italy, esspecially Sicily (where he fantasized about having his maternal roots and where he once thought of settling[1]), were a way of physically escaping, at least for a few weeks at a time, from the country he so much loved to hate. But the real object of his disdain remained London, and his resignation from the *New English Weekly* in 1945 must have paved the way for him to find refuge in a place more suited to his asocial temperament. He had "outgrown the 'attractions' of megalopolitan life", which now disgusted him as much as public concerts, which he regarded as brainwashing through ears and intestines.[2] Another argument for moving was the cost of living in London, which made it impossible "for gentle folk of moderate means—given over as it is to 'cavaliers [*recte* chevaliers] d'industrie' and the scum of every ghetto in Europe". For him, the city was also "no place any longer for people of breeding, taste and standards of manners and behaviour".[3] Thirty years later his opinion had not changed when he commiserated with a friend "on having to visit the International Human Rubbish dump alias London".[4] Indeed, he often referred to the city using pejorative terms, such as Spivopolis or Harlotopolis.[5]

As well as visiting Italy, Sorabji managed to reduce the burden of living in London by escaping to Corfe Castle. He would not go "anywhere else for a prolonged holiday" and always found it difficult to return home.[6] (In fact, there is little more than one recorded holiday away from Corfe Castle, namely, to Yorkshire, in 1956.[7]) He later recalled that he had been "hanging about here year after year on holidays since 1928", prompting one of the village "faggots" to tell him "Oh, Mr. Sorabji, you are quite one of us now, aren't you?" However, he did not like this well-meaning remark and thought it was "her idea of a compliment"; he did not "want to be integrated with anybody or anything but myself".[8]

Sorabji therefore spent several weeks, if not a couple of months, in Corfe Castle, staying either in a private pension or at the Bankes Arms Hotel, owned by "Mrs. Parsons and Jack". Set in a Grade 2 listed sixteenth-century manor house, the hotel offered very good food and "plenty of hot bathing

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[1]KSS to EC, 10 May 1949, 2–3. A typewritten description of a house, entitled "Villa La Falconara, Taormina, Sicily", was found in the composer's papers. The villa, which dates from the early 1910s and was offered for £20,000 (£751,700 in 2021), was built for Alec Nelson Hood, fifth Duke of Bronte (and a descendant of Admiral Nelson); it is now part of the Giardini storici della Sicilia orientale.

[2]KSS to Egon Petri, 25 January 1948.

[3]KSS to NG, 8 October 1949 {16/F.65}.

[4]KSS to ABP, 3 September 1979.

[5]KSS to FH, 1 December 1954 {1/F.16}; "1964–Some Fool's Day" {2/F.5}. "Spivopolis" is obviously derived from "spiv", which describes "one engaging in petty blackmarket dealings"; "Harlotopolis" obviously needs no explanation.

[6]KSS to EC, 6 September 1936, 1.

[7]*RN* (10–12 September 1956), 2 {1/F.18}.

[8]The word "faggot" has been used for centuries in British English to describe a woman "considered to be troublesome, useless, or slatternly" (*Oxford English Dictionary*). The passage containing "hanging around here" comes from KSS to DG, 3 September 1968, but the first reference to Corfe Castle in the correspondence with Erik Chisholm is dated 3 April 1930.

water".[9] Sorabji once recalled how he loved Mou-Mou, their "ancient she-cat, she of the endless capacity for milk", who once "forgot herself in the dining-room, and emptied her bowels in a corner by the table of two very sober females who looked like elementary schoolmistresses". This "wonderful occasion" kept him laughing for most of the afternoon.[10] For a time, at least, Sorabji had his piano brought to him by train, and the villagers could hear him playing through the windows.[11] The manuscripts of *Symphonic Variations for Piano* and *Symphony [no. 2], "Jāmī", for Large Orchestra, Wordless Chorus, and Baritone Solo* conclude with an inscription referring to this ten-room hotel, originally founded in 1549, which still exists in the centre of the village, on East Street. He described it as "just a simple Dorset country Inn with no elaborate pretensions (else *I* could not afford to be here!)" and as "very comfortable, rather delightfully quaint".[12] Furthermore, the staff were also "always very obsequious and attentive".[13]

After a nine-week stay in Corfe Castle in 1946, Sorabji was "consumed by a desire to be there permanently"; he had "never hated London so much as on returning to it this year—full of anger and resentment at having to do so even temporarily".[14] Mother and son had decided "that London was becoming impossibly dear, and simply not worth living in, so after much trouble and turmoil and ENDLESS work for me and nerve-racking botherations in every direction we are at last well out of that pestilential hole, which I don't care if I never set eyes on again. I have come to hate it so much."[15] Sorabji had realized that the time had come to take his mother away from London to relieve her of the burden of housekeeping. He considered letting his furnished flat at a reasonably profitable rent, which would allow them to live free of charge for six months while they looked for accommodation in the south. (It is not known when they were released from their lease.) His friend Reginald Norman Best (Reggie) was already living in Corfe Castle and was keeping his eyes open for suitable accommodation for them. At first, Sorabji thought of having a room or two for himself and Reggie in someone else's house, which he would rent on a long lease; buying was at that time "utterly impracticable politics".[16] In June 1947, after some time in Boscombe (now a suburb of Bournemouth), Sorabji began staying at Ellern Cote, on East Street, in Corfe Castle; his intention then was to buy a house with Best, with whom he was now staying.[17] Around July 1950 he moved into a small house called Lindisfarne, at 124 High Street, in the nearby town of Swanage; he was given the furnished house for as long as he wanted at a derisory rent.[18]

A major obstacle to buying a house in Corfe Castle was the price: everything cost £4,000 or more compared with £400 sixteen years earlier (worth £154,700 and £9,540 in 2021, respectively).[19] Finally, by Christmas 1950 Sorabji had settled down for good in a rented house called Rowbarrow.[20] This *L*-shaped one-floor house, whose name is engraved on a stone to the left of the entrance gate, stands on Townsend, a small street to the south of the village, east of East Street. The Purbeck stone house

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[9]KSS to EC, 18 September 1931, 3; 5 April 1930, 1. A Jack Parsons Prize for Local Studies Research was established in Corfe Castle in 2002 for the best undergraduate project.

[10]KSS to EC, June 1932, 7 (section dated 6 June). On Mou-Mou, see also KSS to EC, August 1930, 11 (section dated 23 August).

[11]*OB*, 54, 96.

[12]KSS to EC, August 1930, 5.

[13]KSS to FH, undated (after 26 August 1956) {1/F.19}.

[14]KSS to FH, September 1946 (no day given) {1/F.8}.

[15]KSS to EC, 3 February 1952, 1.

[16]KSS to FH, 1947 (no day and month given) {1/F.8}.

[17]KSS to NG, 28 July 1949 {16/F.64}; KSS to FH, 27 June 1949 {1/F.11}.

[18]KSS to FH, 17 July 1950 {1/F.12}.

[19]KSS to FH, undated, September or October 1948 {1/F.10}.

[20]KSS to FH, 25 December 1950 {1/F.12}; KSS to NG, 3 August 1971 {18/F.43}.

contained "a very pleasant large room 25 feet by 15, large enough to take my big Mason & Hamlin [...,] all my thousand or two books, my music, my MSS et al." His mother, with whom he had lived since birth, moved to a small house at 128 High Street, Swanage, where she could look after herself rather than paying out "considerable sums to domestic workers who did not work". Despite the hair-raising cost of the move, Sorabji expected to see the benefits of reducing their metropolitan costs within a year. In any case, he was "surrounded by open country here, fields round two thirds of the house, hills in the background and common in the near foreground, up a private lane closed by a gate: quite the perfection of privacy".[21]

Corfe Castle, which Sorabji called his "blessedly quiet country retreat",[22] is located on the Isle of Purbeck, in the south of England, off the Channel Islands. It is about halfway between Wareham and Swanage on the A351, just below the junction with the B3351, and about 15 kilometres from Bournemouth. Its population was around 1,300 souls throughout most of the twentieth century. The village takes its name from a medieval castle, perched on top of a high hill, where the young King Edward (962–78; later known as Saint Edward the Martyr) was murdered on the orders of his stepmother Elfrida. The castle, one of the most impregnable buildings of its kind in the kingdom, was an ideal place to hide treasures, regalia, and political prisoners. Several additions were made to its architecture until it fell in February 1646 after a three-year siege. Parliament then ordered its destruction, a process that could not be completed due to its great strength, hence the ruins that are now a tourist attraction. The village was largely built in the eighteenth century, and its buildings make an extensive use of the local grey limestone.[23]

Sorabji complained in the late 1940s that the village he had known for years as a "complete and perfect work of art" had suffered "tasteless vandalism". The village sign, in particular, would have been hard to surpass for "tasteless stupidity" and "utter artistic incoherence".[24] A few years later he suggested that the opportunity presented by the temporary dismantling of the sign (for cleaning) would allow a local craftsman to create "something really distinctive, indigenous and environmentally appropriate". The "crying need of Corfe", however, was a public lavatory, a convenience apparently lacking in this much-frequented village.[25]

By 1954 Rowbarrow had become "far too cramped and small here for us". Sorabji wanted a larger study to house his two pianos and his records, which he had to leave in storage. He and Best began looking for a plot and had preliminary plans drawn up "for a very nice one-storey cottage with a music room half again as big as the present one and other rooms corresponding". Sorabji's description is as follows. Leaving London was not enough to prevent him from viewing his new fellow citizens with his usual misanthropic suspicion.

> It will be high up on the hill side behind this place, which it will tower above. It's going to be called *THE EYE*; at the Gate I'm going to have an engraved *EYE OF OSIRIS*, with a hint of "overlooking" in it as a warning to the Corfe Castle canaille. It will be [...] unbuilt on and unbuildonable on four sides with a cul-de-sac leading up to it...[26]

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[21]KSS to NG, 18 March 1951 {16/F.68}; see also KSS to FH, 25 December 1950 {1/F}.

[22]Donald Garvelmann, "The Great Sorabji Mystique", in *The Composer Sorabji (Postscript)*, privately published, undated [1970].

[23]On the history of Corfe Castle, see John Cowper Powys, *Corfe Castle* (London: Secker & Warburg, 1962), and Emmeline Hardy, *The Story of Corfe Castle: Collected from Ancient Chronicles and Records* (London: Regency Press, 1983). See also the report of Dorset Council's *Dorset Historic Towns Project*, sections 5.3 and 5.4 (Historical Development: Nineteenth Century and Twentieth Century), https://www.dorsetcouncil.gov.uk/w/corfe-castle-historic-towns-survey. For a photo of 1934 showing Sorabji standing close to the ruins, see *SCC*, 74.

[24]Sorabji, "Letters to the Editor: Concern for Corfe Castle", *The Swanage Times*, undated clipping, ca. 1947.

[25]Sorabji, "To the Editor: Corfe's Crying Need", *The Swanage Times*, undated clipping, early 1950s.

[26]KSS to EC, 13 July 1954, 2.

The construction of The Eye took time, and the move may not have taken place until the summer of 1956.[27] Frank Holliday wrote down a brief description of the house after a first visit in September of that year.

> It is built in the local stone, architect designed, and a good job the architect has made of it. There is a large music or drawing room, holding the Steinweg [*recte* Steinway] and the Mason & Hamlin pianos, two bed sitters, one for K and one for Reggie Best, a kitchen all electrified, plenty of cupboard space, etc. The passages were papered in imitation wood—and a first-rate job has been made of it. The ceilings are yellow—and very attractive they look. The music room is papered with a green, flower linen paper that takes the exquisite woodwork of K's proud possessions—his black picture frames, mahogany sideboards, etc.—extremely well. The taste is EXQUISITE. In the kitchen, there is a modern Venetian blind—in a pale, lemon-coloured plastic. There are plastic—terylene???—lace curtains.[28]

The Eye, on Higher Filbank, one street south and west of Townsend, is a two-floor *L*-shape rough grey stone house built by a Swanage builder, Harry Parsons.[29] It takes its name from a curve in the roof to the left of front, suggesting an eye. The Eye of Osiris is actually the Eye of Horus, the sky god depicted as a falcon-headed man who lost an eye in a battle for the throne. This Eye was also engraved on a metal plate attached to the stonework of the front porch, modelled on a glazed composition pectoral dating from after 1250 BCE depicting Anubis and the Winged Eye of Horus.[30] Sorabji sometimes jokingly referred to "Il Malocchio" (the evil eye, that is, a gaze believed to cause material harm) as the place of origin of his letters. Another name was "The Overlookery", an expression whose root ("overlook") means "to bewitch with the evil eye".[31]

As well as a stone owl at the start of the ramp leading to the main entrance, there are seven inscriptions on metal plates, some or all of which were installed by 1957. All but one are warnings or directives to callers, reminiscent of the "Trespassers will be prosecuted, dogs shot, cats whipped" that the eccentric Lord Berners posted at his house.[32] The most unusual—and one whose meaning must have eluded many passers-by—appeared on the right gatepost. It is taken from *La reine de Saba* in the French translation by Joseph-Charles Mardrus (1868–1949), in which the author expresses his indifference to those who have little reasoning or discernment and who have no right to live.[33] On the other hand, many must have smiled when they read the second part of the warning reading "No flag day or charity touting, no hawkers, pedlars or canvassers, political or other. Genuine Catholic, Roman sisters, welcome." These "minatory notices […] warning against unarranged calls and visits, and lectioneering and trading and charity touts of all descriptions"[34] come as no surprise from someone who wrote: "I want no 'ivory tower', but a Tower of Granite with plentiful supplies of boiling oil and molten lead handy to tip over the battlements on to the heads of unwanted and uninvited intruders on my privacy and seclusion."[35] It would be hard to find a better illustration of the traditional saying "An Englishman's home is his castle". (The name Corfe Castle prompted the otherwise meticulous

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[27]For Sorabji's move to The Eye in 1956, see KSS to NG, 3 August 1971 {18/F.43}.

[28]*RN* (10–12 September 1956), 1 {1/F.18}. For another description, see KSS to DG, 3 September 1968.

[29]The builder's name comes from *OB*, 74, in an interview with Andrew Wilson, who lived in The Eye in the early 2000s.

[30]This pectoral is part of the collection of the British Museum (B 327, no. EA7853, https://www.britishmuseum.org/collection/object/Y_EA7853). A postcard showing the artefact was found in the composer's papers.

[31]See, for example, KSS to ABP, 14 June 1984; KSS to ABP, 21 November 1979.

[32]See Mark Amory, *Lord Berners, the Last Eccentric* (London: Chatto & Windus, 1998), 137–38.

[33]For photographs of the plates then affixed to the left and right gateposts (now in SA), see *SCC*, 31; a translation of the Mardrus quotation is on p. 32. For photographs of the house, see *SCC*, 35, 57. The word "lectioneering" is Sorabji's coinage meaning "recitation of portions of Scripture". He transcribed the texts of the notices in KSS to EC, 13 July 1954, 1.

[34]KSS to Egon Petri, 16 February 1957.

[35]Sorabji, "'Il gran rifiuto'", in *MCF*, 141–48; 145 (in the section "Reasons for living in a Granite Tower").

lexicographer Nicolas Slonimsky to write that Sorabji "took refuge far from the madding crowd in a *castle* [italics added] he owned in England".[36]) Sorabji often asked his groundskeeper, Vic Bennett (who would buy The Eye at the composer's death), to fit his doors with various unusual locks that were new to the market.[37] Another way in which Sorabji protected his privacy was by planting more than 250 trees on all sides of the house.[38]

As mentioned above, Sorabji no longer lived with his elderly mother. Her health had probably deteriorated to such an extent that it had become difficult for him to live with her. Sorabji may also have found it more practical to share a house with Best, who was seventeen years his junior, because he (Best) would be able to look after him. Madeline did not stay long in Swanage; she hated the place and moved back to London in November 1952, technically for good, and against everyone's advice. Then, around July 1954, Sorabji brought her back nearer to him, namely, to Bournemouth, after she had suffered a serious accident in April, "necessitating two weeks in hospital with me tearing half over London every day for a fortnight or more".[39]

After sharing a flat with a woman for more than fifty years, Sorabji therefore spent the rest of his life with a man, Reginald Norman Best (b. Cardiff, Wales, 25 September 1909; d. Winfrith Newburgh, Dorset, 29 February 1988).[40] Best's mother, apparently a friend of Madeline's, had asked her to look after her son. Speaking of his "very very dear and greatly loved friends", Sorabji referred to Best as "ONE ABOVE ALL my godson who shares my home with me and is the dearest, kindest and most loveable creature on the world. I call him my godson, but he isn't really. He was my adored Mother's godson and when she died she entrusted me to his care and told him to look after me which he does MARVELLOUSLY the dear soul!"[41] He also referred to him as "my old school friend", but we know nothing of the nature and frequency of their previous contacts.[42] Certainly he held him in high esteem, as evidenced by the dedications not only of *Nocturne, "Jāmī"* and of the *Transcription of the Prelude in E-flat by Bach*, but also of his largest work, the *Messa grande sinfonica* (completed in 1928, 1945, and 1961, respectively). He described him as "one of the two people on earth most precious to me"[43] (the other being most probably Alistair Hinton). In private life, he called him "Mizzi", a nickname resulting from Reggie's habit to get miserable, which Sorabji had derived from his nickname for him, "Tizz Wozz", a reference to his "liability to get worked up into a state about things".[44]

Best seems to have worked at some point as a reader for a publisher, probably in London; he may also have been either a librarian or a bookseller somewhere in South Wales, where he lived before

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[36]"Sorabji, Kaikhosru Shapurji (actually, Leon Dudley)", in *Baker's Biographical Dictionary of Musicians*, 8th ed., rev. Nicolas Slonimsky (New York: Schirmer Books, 1991), 1747.

[37]*OB*, 58, 59, 64.

[38]Alistair Hinton, "Kaikhosru Shapurji Sorabji: An Introduction", in *SCC*, 32.

[39]KSS to EC, 4 November 1952, 2; 29 December 1953, 13 July 1954, 1–2.

[40]Best was the son of George Best (b. Kivon, Old Gloucestershire, 15 June 1871), a railway engine shunter, and Ellen Wright (b. Sparkbrook, Birmingham, 23 October 1873), still living in June 1957; KSS to FH, 12 June 1957 {1/F.19}. For the birth date, see the 1939 Register, https://www.findmypast.co.uk/transcript?id=TNA/R39/7247/7247A/018/26. Best is erroneously recorded as "Reginald Morgan Best" in the 1911 Census for England & Wales, https://www.findmypast.co.uk/transcript?id=GBC%2F1911%2FRG14%2F32123%2F0555%2F5, living at 20 Lady Margaret Terrace, Cardiff. He was the youngest of three children, the others being Arthur George (b. 1903) and Berthrina (b. 1907; listed as "son" although the name is certainly a feminine one), both born in Cardiff.

[41]KSS to KD, 23 October 1980 {Derus, S36, p. 171}; see also 20 January 1978, 2 {Derus, S19, p. 87}. In an otherwise undated letter of 1952 to Mervyn Vicars, Sorabji also described Best as his mother's "godson".

[42]KSS to EC, 3 February 1951, 2; 4 November 1952, 2.

[43]KSS to KD, 30 December 1977, 2 {Derus, S17, p. 80}.

[44]KSS to FH, 10 August 1961 {3/F.1}, 4 June 1971 {3/F.2}. The *Oxford English Dictionary* defines "tizz wozz" (under its main form "tiswas") as "a state of nervous agitation or confusion".

coming to Corfe Castle.[45] He may still have been working when he came to live with Sorabji, as he would have been in his early forties by then. An income would have been most welcome to Best, who had put his entire life savings into helping the composer buy his cottage; in fact, he shared the cost of living. No force of nature, Best suffered from a number of congenital deficiencies, and his frail health often made him a "partial invalid". He ate very little and, although he was tall (how much is not known), he weighed only six stone five pounds (eighty-nine pounds).[46] Around 1970 he began taking electroconvulsive therapy for depression, and his problems sometimes forced him to leave home for a few weeks at a time to go to hospitals in Bournemouth or Dorchester. On these occasions, he had to fight hard with himself not to leave Sorabji, and eventually resigned himself to the treatments.[47] His sleeping pills, though the weakest available, made him "confused and dopey" and "very depressed at times".[48] Sorabji therefore made arrangements to ensure "that he's all right, even with full death duty robbery" by transferring to him one third of his Messina shares, but not going so far as to give him The Eye.[49]

A shy man who preferred to stay in the background, Best feared that Sorabji's visitors might not be interested in him. The locals described him variously as Sorabji's manservant, godson, cousin, friend, or homosexual partner. He wore a black overcoat in winter and a long mackintosh in summer. Like a consort, he always walked a few steps behind his friend, who shuffled along, using a walking stick with a silver top. As mentioned above, Sorabji spoke of his godson to many villagers.[50] Despite being such an intimate friend, Best refused to sign Frank Holliday's presentation letter of 1953, fearing Sorabji's disapproval of any involvement on his part in the matter, especially as he was under stress.[51]

Sorabji's friend Harold Morland, several years after the composer had parted with Holliday, mentioned that Best had been "so nastily abused" by "that other fellow", who "no longer belongs in the land of the living. Even your spit on him is too valuable a gift." Much as he recognized what Holliday had done for his friend, Morland reckoned that "his jealousy made him evil in intention. Nor do I much admire his creeping after Reggie. Also a bit slimy."[52]

One source of anxiety for Best was cooking, a responsibility he seems to have handled wonderfully, while Sorabji did "most of the shopping and keeping the place clean and in order".[53] Best needed frequent meals, while Sorabji, who skipped breakfast, insisted on a substantial lunch.[54] The two friends may have dined out occasionally, particularly at the nearby Bankes Arms Hotel or at the Red Lion Hotel in Wareham. Sorabji took care of the daily chores of cleaning the house because he could not tolerate the presence of a *Putzfrau*. The reader will recall from chapter 9 an angry description that reinforces any description of him as a misanthrope—or rather a misogynist—who could barely control his epistolary outbursts and was somehow out of touch with the rest of the world. He had used expressions such as "dirty smelly messy old bitches" and "filthy carcases" to refer to cleaning ladies.[55]

Sorabji's aversion to cleaning ladies might have had something to do with the care he took of his possessions, especially his manuscripts, which he entrusted to highly skilled professionals at

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[45]*OB*, 50; AH to MAR, 7 April 2000.
[46]KSS to NG, 15 January 1960 {17/F.67}; KSS to FH, 1 January 1949 {1/F.11}, 22 December 1964 {2/F.5}.
[47]KSS to FH, 18 April 1971 {3/F.1}; Reginald Norman Best to FH, April 1978 (no day given) {4/F.4}.
[48]KSS to Harold Morland, 26 June 1982, 1.
[49]KSS to FH, 22 April 1970 and postscript thereto {2/F.1}.
[50]*OB*, 46, 49, 92, 128.
[51]Reginald Norman Best to FH, October 1952 {4/F.4}.
[52]Harold Morland to KSS, 19 March 1981, 2; 28 March 1981, 1.
[53]KSS to EC, 3 March 1953, 1. Sorabji and Best also went together to Swanage and Wareham, once a week, according to a later source; KSS to ABP, 9 July 1979.
[54]Reginald Norman Best to FH, 18 May 1978 {4/F.4}. See also KSS to FH, 12 July 1953 {1/F.15}.
[55]KSS to EC, 3 March 1953, 1.

Zaehnsdorf for binding. He preferred to pack his collection of some five thousand books and scores himself when he was preparing to move, "as no ordinary louts can be trusted with fine books, to say nothing of treasured personal objects, the result of some fifty years of rooting in junk shops and picking up pleasant-and-to-me-delightful-objects".[56] Indeed, Sorabji enjoyed collecting objects when he could find them at bargain prices. In 1930 he had embellished his small room with "a handsome old mercury column barometer and a couple of Japanese swords picked up dirt cheap in a shop nearby".[57] He loved "showing off my treasures to people with feeling for them and who show YOU by the way you handle them that you have the real FEELING for such thing".[58] Among the objects auctioned when he left The Eye for the nursing home were a number of barometers, one of which (a nineteenth-century William and Samuel Jones), together with an ornate pen and inkstand, sold for considerably more than their reserves. He had a "consuming passion" for boxes, which he kept in cabinets "shut away from profane and foolish gaze to be brought out in the rare presence of another claustrophiliac";[59] this interest is reflected in *Un nido di scatole sopra il nome del grande e buon amico Harold Rutland*, written in 1954. He described how he liked to handle them as follows.

> Besides I've got far too many toys to play with as it is... my two rosaries in sweet little rosewood boxes which I fiddle with and have got oh so lovely and shiny with handling... the boxes I mean... I'm very childish in some (possibly if truthfully were said) many ways... you know. I like to play with my treasures occasionally and paw them about, turning them this way and that, and occasionally giving em a rub up when the metallic ones get tarnished and or grubby... which reminds me that they all want doing badly, BLAST 'em! WHAT nuisance nice things are... to KEEP em nice![60]

Sorabji's house sometimes became so cluttered that he had to dispose of various objects.[61] Especially as he grew older, he had to be kind to those who helped him. Gifts were a a way of repaying them for services such as cleaning clothes, delivering mail, and bringing "meals on wheels".[62]

Life at The Eye was a secluded and reclusive one. Telephone communication to his private phone number must have been rare and limited to his friends.[63] It is curious for someone who valued his privacy so highly to include his number on a visiting card printed in the mid-1950s, on which his name appears as "Kaikhosru Shapurji Sorabji of *Oxford Companion to Music* [followed by five other titles]"; surely he only gave it to carefully selected friends and acquaintances. In 1969 he wrote that he never entertained more than one friend at a time; his mania for privacy increased with age.[64] He mostly saw old friends like Norman Peterkin and Frank Holliday, who visited him once or twice a year or so. Among other visitors was probably George Richards, the dedicatee of the *Third Symphony for Piano Solo*, who lived in nearby Poole. In the last decade of his life, he could not tolerate visitors for more than three hours; he would become "exhausted and tired and find myself stealing sly glances at the clock, wonder[ing] when the allotted time is going to expire".[65] Living in the quaint Dorset village did not

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[56]KSS to NG, 3 August 1971 {18/F.43}.
[57]KSS to EC, 15 October 1930, 8 (section dated 28 October).
[58]KSS to ABP, 19 November 1979; see also KSS to ABP, 16 October 1979.
[59]KSS to RWLS, 29 June 1948 (pp. 11–12; 12).
[60]KSS to FH, 15 November 1957 {1/F.19}.
[61]AH to MAR, 28 August 2007.
[62]*OB*, 103, 132.
[63]Sorabji's London telephone number was Paddington 8089; KSS to EC, 26 July 1930. After moving from the capital, he used Corfe Castle 364; ibid., 4 May 1953, 13 May 1953. It was later changed to (09295) 364, then (0929) 480364; KSS to ABP, 21 April 1969.
[64]KSS to ABP, 21 April 1969 [*recte* 1979].
[65]KSS to Harold Morland, undated (after April 1980).

make Sorabji "a herbaceous bore or a gardening lunatic... there are too many of them to spare all around... Anyway, I've no time for that sort of thing, even if I wanted to do it... and I DON'T."[66]

On one occasion, Sorabji had "the pleasure of entertaining to tea" the composer Alan Bush (1900–1995) and his wife. Although they had exchanged occasional letters since 1940, they had not seen each other for some thirty years. Their first meeting seems to have taken place at the earliest on 31 August 1933 in Bombay, where Bush, visiting in his capacity as an examiner for the Associated Board of the Royal Schools of Music, had called on Sorabji, who was there to settle matters relating to his father's estate.[67] On a few occasions he sent Sorabji some of his scores for perusal. One was the full score of the Piano Concerto (1935–37, publ. 1956), which he offered in 1965 "as a tribute to your own creative achievements and to your writings". Sorabji was able to "verify and intensify my impression of all those years ago of a splendid work, incomparably the best work for piano and orchestra written by any British composer". Following this assessment, he hoped that Bush would be able to visit him during his stay in Charmouth, some 70 kilometres from Corfe Castle. In August, he even invited the Bushes "to come over and drink a dish of tea", including his private telephone number and even a hand-drawn map. A few days later he wrote that "if your visits to ME gave *you* a small modicum of the pleasure it gave ME, then I, in the Brahmanic phrase, 'acquire merit'".[68] No doubt Sorabji could be most welcoming when he appreciated a friend. Given that he considered Bush to be "one of the few musicians for whose opinion it is possible to have any respect at all",[69] one wonders why he did not dedicate a work to him.

Sorabji was also very close to the conductor and composer Mervyn Vicars and his wife, Denise, whose names appear among his dedicatees (see later in this chapter). The latter spent a great deal of time caring for Sorabji and Best, especially in their final years. This "angel of kindness" a "real CORDON BLEU", brought them home-cooked meals as early as 1970.[70] From 1987 she wrote letters for Sorabji, who was crippled by arthritis. The old composer also struck up friendships with younger men: around 1977 with Clive Spencer-Bentley, who was in his final year of grammar school; and around 1979 with Anthony Burton-Page (1954–2018), a Latin teacher in nearby Church Knowle. He dedicated short pieces to both of them.

Another acquaintance was Walter E. Ottaway (1874–1951), who worked for forty-five years as a saddler in an eighteenth-century house on East Street. Sorabji wrote a one-page text after his friend's death entitled "W. E. Ottaway of Corfe Castle (A tribute by an old friend)", in which he spoke of "a skilled and accomplished craftsman in leather" whose shelves were filled with books on subjects as diverse as astrophysics, biology, and the natural sciences. His intellectual interests led him to "not suffer fools patiently" and to be "devastating with pompous and pretentious windbags". He ran a small publishing house with his son in the early 1930s. Evidently Sorabji had found a like-minded friend in the local saddler.

Other acquaintances who, because of distance, were only able to pay a few visits (and often just one) were Michael Habermann, Geoffrey Douglas Madge, and Yonty Solomon, the pianists to whom he gave permission to play his music. Others were Kenneth Derus, Donald Garvelmann, Norman Gentieu, and Paul Rapoport, his North American admirers who played an important role in spreading knowledge of his music. An important visitor from 1972 onwards was Alistair Hinton, who was soon to become his closest friend and adviser (see chapter 21).

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[66]KSS to EC, 4 November 1952, 2.
[67]For the date of Bush's arrival in India, see Rachel O'Higgins to MAR, 6 June 2011.
[68]KSS to Alan Bush, 23 April 1981; Alan Bush to KSS, 26 July 1954; KSS to Alan Bush, 1 August 1965, 29 August 1965.
[69]KSS to RS, 11 September 1965, 2; KSS to RS, undated (1965 at the earliest), 1; see also *OB*, 289–90.
[70]KSS to FH, 1970 (undated Saturday), 24 June 1970 {3/F.1}.

The few visitors to Sorabji's house—friends or service providers—must have been struck by the minatory notices mentioned above, the many bookcases, the dark atmosphere created by the drawn curtains, and the smell of incense. They were met at the door by Reggie (thus reinforcing his perception as a manservant) and saw "Sir Abji", as some villagers called the composer, dressed (at least in the earlier years) in long flowing robes, silk handkerchiefs, red velvet suits, gold buttons, and pillbox hats. As he grew older, however, he wore a floppy cardigan, baggy old trousers, and slippers.[71]

About once every four months, Sorabji took the train for London, where he went to see his dentist —at least there was something (or someone) good enough for him in the capital—and to attend to other personal and business matters, such as the microfilming of his manuscripts.[72] He stayed at Beckwell House, a pension owned by a Mr. and Mrs. Gallagher. The five-floor red brick and grey stone house located at 11 Welbeck Street, a few steps north of Wigmore Street, to the left side of the concert hall, was "a charming house right in the centre, beautifully run and not exorbitant for these days".[73] Sorabji wanted to be within walking distance of all his "special haunts" and in the heart of the neighbourhood where he had spent the most of his life. Despite repeated offers, he refused to stay elsewhere because his pension offered him a refuge from the "appalling noise and rush of London", which kept him from going out at night and allowed him to work in peace.[74] Staying a few steps away from the concert hall enabled him "ostentatiously to PASS BY the fucking place when any of these do's is on"; he did not forget to add "How DID I ever STAND going to all the concerts I used to in years HAPPILY FOR EVER GONE BY?"[75] He counted the days and hours until it was time to travel back home, and his last visit to the "international human refuse dump with canaille from all four quarters of the world" was probably in 1972.[76]

Sorabji preferred safe means of transport and "nothing on this earth would induce me to travel by road when I can travel by rail, except for a short distance by a taxi or a bus".[77] In the 1960s he regularly employed a local man, Ronald Stuart Venning (1928–2011), to take him to Wareham Station with his clobber or traps, as he liked to say, to meet him on his return from London's Waterloo Station, or to take him to Wareham for shopping or lunch with a friend such as Norman Peterkin.[78] He would also request transport for Reggie, presumably when he needed to go for medical treatment.[79] However unlikely it is for Sorabji to go to an outside public event attended by all sorts of strangers, he does seem to have been taken with someone to "fêtes" in Church Knowle and Encombe and at Newton Manor in Swanage.[80] It is difficult to imagine him taking part in a competition, but his presence on such grounds may have been the result of a courtesy to his visitors. He once received an unnamed friend from Canada, where he is not known to have had any acquaintances before the musicologist Paul Rapoport

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[71] *OB*, 91, 113; 102, 104, 106, 115, 217; 146. For a photograph of Sorabji wearing his tunic with gold buttons, see *SCC*, 140.

[72] KSS to NG, 5 June 1985 {19/F.47}; KSS to KD, 6 September 1977, 1 {Derus, S10, p. 1}. On Crabb, see also KSS to KD, 29 September 1977 {Derus S13, p. 55} and 15 October 1977 {Derus S14, p. 61}. There is an entry for a Reginald H. Y. Crabb (b. 18 June 1911) in Wareham in the 1939 Register, https://www.findmypast.co.uk/transcript/preview?id=TNA/R39/6936/6936A/026/10.

[73] KSS to EC, 27 January 1962, 1–2; KSS to NG, 9 March 1973 {18/F.48}.

[74] KSS to FH, 9 July 1960 {2/F.1}; 1 May 1978 {3/F.9}; 30 March 1978 {2/F.4}.

[75] KSS to FH, 28 August 1963 {2/F.3}.

[76] KSS to EC, 4 November 1952, 2; KSS to NG, 25 February 1985 {19/F.43}.

[77] KSS to RS, 7 March 1960.

[78] Sorabji's contacts with Ron Venning are documented in a series of twenty-nine cards (with mostly identical if differently worded content) sent between 1963 and 1970 and twenty undated ones. On Norman Peterkin, see KSS to RV, 20 September 1966 and 3 October 1966.

[79] KSS to RV, 22 May 1969.

[80] KSS to RV, 1 August 1967, undated (Sunday), 27 July 1966. In ibid., undated, Sorabji writes "as we want to be at the opening of the two fêtes".

in the 1970s.[81] When a friend came to see him, Sorabji would ask his chauffeur to meet him (or her, for this happened) up at the station and pay for the journey; an example of a female visitor is Gola Martin-Smith (1899–1989), a piano teacher in Wareham.[82] He also arranged to be taken to Wareham to meet "two ladies", whose identity will most likely remain unknown, whereupon they would be "run up" to the Red Lion Hotel.[83] In later years he hired Reginald Crabb, a "middle-aged man clean shaven" who was "much in request and being a small private man has to be given ample notice to make sure of him".

Life at The Eye came to an end when Reggie was admitted to Poole General Hospital on 18 August 1986 after a fall. He was then transferred to Christmas Close Hospital in Wareham on 14 October. Alistair Hinton, who had taken over Sorabji's finances, sold The Eye in February 1987. Best and Sorabji (now confined to a wheelchair) moved into a two-room suite in a private nursing home called Marley House, in Winfrith Newburgh, near Dorchester, on 20 March. Best's passing on 29 February 1988 obviously affected Sorabji, who followed him on 15 October. Their ashes were buried in "God's Acre", the local cemetery, where square slabs in the ground mark their presence (see chapter 23).

Symphony [no. 2], "Jāmī", for Large Orchestra, Wordless Chorus, and Baritone Solo / Mervyn Vicars

Sorabji spent much of the 1940s on what was to become his second largest work, the *Symphony [no. 2], "Jāmī", for Large Orchestra, Wordless Chorus, and Baritone Solo* (1942–51; 826 pp.). The first part was completed in Corfe Castle on 25 August 1943, the second at the Bankes Arms Hotel on 7 September 1944, and the third and fourth ones at Clarence Gate Gardens on 20 June and 24 November 1947, respectively. The small score containing the percussion instruments that do not fit into the other one was completed much later, on 6 February 1951 at Corfe Castle. No wonder Sorabji felt compelled to write "Deo gratias et laudes †" and "Amîn †" at the end of the scores.

Writing such a gargantuan piece of music—the three bound volumes, with the supplementary score, weighing a total of 18.5 kg—was an arduous task that left Sorabji "nervy, nerveless and generally overwrought with some terrible attacks of sleeplessness to add sauce to the occasion!"[84] He described its style to Frank Holliday as "*your* 'Gulistan' raised to nth power and translated into orchestral-choral terms with orchestration of extreme elaborateness and intricacy, with subdivided strings and every subtlety that a perverse and subtle Oriental like myself can imagine".[85] He called it his "most extended essay in that continuous, self-consistent, self-cohesive texture relying upon its own inner consistency and cohesiveness without relation to thematic or other matter that have [been] adumbrated in earlier and much shorter works".[86]

As he had done for *Nocturne, "Jāmī"*, Sorabji drew his inspiration from the work of the Persian poet Mawlānā Nūruʾd-Dīn ʿAbduʾr-Raḥmān Ǧāmī (1414–92). The text entrusted to the baritone in the fourth part, entitled "Cantico" (as in the last movement of Busoni's Piano Concerto, with a chorus of male voices), is the eleventh section from his *Yūsuf u Zuleykhā*, in the English translation by the English

[81] KSS to RV, 3 July 1965. Sorabji had a previous visitor, in London, by the Canadian organist George Mackenzie Brewer, who died in 1947 (see chapter 18).

[82] KSS to RV, 25 August 1965 (with another visit documented in an undated card); on Gola Martin-Smith's relationships with Sorabji, see *OB*, 209–28. Another female friend with whom Sorabji had lunch at the Red Lion was the wife of Rex Brittain (see chapter 8); see KSS to RV, 25 January 1967.

[83] KSS to RV, undated (Sunday).

[84] KSS to Bernard Stevens, undated [after 9 August, probably in 1947] {BL, Add. 69025}.

[85] KSS to FH, 8 November 1942 {1/F.4}.

[86] *A*, 18.

orientalist and translator of Persian poetry, Edward Granville Browne (1862–1926).[87] One had to go to Ǧamī's lines in Browne's "incomparable and inspired translation" to equal Goethe's celebrated lines from *Faust*, "Alles Vergängliche ist nur ein Gleichnis", which Sorabji called the "highest pinnacle probably ever reached in Western poetry".[88] At the beginning of the score, he reproduced the epilogue from the end of the traditional Arabic tale of the Queen of Sheba who visited Solomon and, impressed by his riches, returned home, leaving him sumptuous presents (1 Kings 10). The text, quoted in the French translation by the doctor and orientalist Joseph-Charles Mardrus (1868–1949), is in two parts, the second of which is the French minatory notice hung on the right gatepost at The Eye.[89]

The main score of the symphony has parts for two piccolos, four flutes plus bass flute, four oboes plus English horn, eight clarinets, four bassoons, contrabassoon, contrabass sarrusophone; eight horns, six trumpets, four trombones, two contrabass tubas; four harps, various percussion instruments; eight-part chorus; and strings (24, 24, 16, 16, 12). The small score includes parts for four timpani and various other percussion instruments as well as for piano and organ. The percussion section comprises "the parts for the two tympani players; an elaborate part with lots of figures of *three, four or more notes*, passages in chords, three and four part rolls (no, not sausage rolls nor French ones… not even French *letters*… duckie!)."[90]

Despite the composer's assertion in his notes of the importance of the keyboard parts, the piano and organ play only occasionally and for very short periods at a time; they are part of the orchestral texture and rarely stand out as soloists. The piano is "treated with very great orchestral treatment… not very elaborate but purely as an adjunct, though there will be found a typical passage here and there, likewise the organ part too, which here and there is quite full and elaborate".[91] The chorus usually sings in a very active contrapuntal style, with each part often divided into two, and sometimes even three or four on the same staff ([MS]p. 43); it is wordless throughout and treated just as another instrument. Sorabji wrote in his notes that it is "silent during practically the whole of the 2nd movement"; in fact, its contribution is limited to just four bars (pp. 334–35).[92] A most impressive passage occurs in the third movement, where the vocal parts are notated on sixteen and even thirty-two individual staves (pp. 642–49).

The first and third movements are probably meant to be played rather moderately, the second rather fast, and the last (with the baritone solo) not too fast. The first and third movements take up 32% and 43% of the total number of pages, respectively, while the second and fourth movements each take up 12%. The "Cantico" follows the third movement without a pause, although there is no indication to this effect in the score. It begins (and ends) on a C♯ pedal point that extends the one occurring at the very end of the previous movement; the two movements are further linked by means of a harp glissando that makes it impossible to insert a break—a typical Sorabjian procedure. Curiously, Sorabji did not follow the fourfold structure of the Persian poem (lines 1–47, 48–61, 62–71,

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[87]The text begins with "In solitude, where Being signless dwelt, / And all the Universe still dormant lay / Concealed in selflessness, […]." It is taken from Edward Granville Browne, *A Year amongst the Persians: Impressions as to the Life, Character, & Thought of the People of Persia Received during Twelve Months' Residence in That Country in the Years 1887–1888* (London: Adam and Charles Black, 1893), 125–27 (2nd ed., 1926, repr. 1927, not seen; 3rd ed., 1950, repr. 1959, 137–39). For a transcription, see Paul Rapoport, "Appendix 1: The Texts of Sorabji's Vocal Music", in *SCC*, 477–79.

[88]Sorabji, "Metapsychic Motivation in Music", in *MCF*, 193–216; 211.

[89]*La reine de Saba*, selon le texte et la traduction du Dr. J. C. [Joseph-Charles] Mardrus (Paris: Librairie Charpentier et Fasquelle, 1918), 163–64. For a transcription, see Rapoport, "'Could you just send me a list of his works?'", in *SCC*, 190–91.

[90]KSS to EC, 3 February 1951, 1.

[91]KSS to EC, 3 February 1951, 1.

[92]Rapoport, "'Could you just send me a list of his works?'", in *SCC*, 155, erroneously writes that the chorus is silent in the second movement.

72–86), but divided it into three parts. He first set lines 1–42, repeating line 42 and omitting lines 43–47, which were missing from his source (pp. 724–44); then lines 48–83 (pp. 759–78); and finally lines 83–86 (pp. 814–15). He also omitted three words from line 53. The vocal part matches those of his other mature vocal works, that is, a free chromatic, long drawn-out line, with several leaps. There are two long orchestral interludes between the vocal sections (pp. 745–58, 779–813) and a short postlude (pp. 816–26) after the last lines.

Sorabji inserted two quotations. In the first movement (p. 74), he gives to the first violins "the incomparably lovely 'Chant de Roxane'" from *Król Roger* (1926) by Karol Szymanowski (1882–1937). He once described this excerpt from the Polish composer's opera as an outstanding example of his "prodigious evocative power, the extraordinarily potent way in which he can 'suggest' his hearer into a keenly and vividly receptive condition".[93] In the third movement (p. 456), the trumpet plays a line given to the bassoon and first horn in the Symphony, op. 20 (1889–90) by Ernest Chausson (1855–99).[94] A few years earlier, Sorabji had called it "the precipitation of all the Master's great qualities in one incontestible masterpiece, one of the supreme Symphonies of modern times, one of the greatest glories of French music".[95]

In his notes referred to above, Sorabji writes of a "high violin motive with which the work opens and which recurs from time to time". This four-bar motive, entrusted to a solo violin and beginning in the second bar of the work, is strongly reminiscent of the opening of Szymanowski's Symphony no. 3, op. 27 ("Pieśń o nocy" [Song of the Night], 1914–16), which features a similar sensuous melody played by the first violins over a C pedal **(example 17.1)**. As usual, one should not look for exact restatements but for loose correspondences, most of which are confined to the first movement (e.g., pp. 10, 36, 44, 73, 107, 129, 139, 209, 236); the movement itself ends on p. 264 with a rather clear statement. Sorabji concludes what was then his largest work with a short postlude ending with an exact restatement of the initial motive theme over a C♯ pedal, which dies out very quietly.

The score of the *"Jāmī"* Symphony bears the dedication "To my old Friend (not in age) / Mervyn Vicars. / Greetings. / K.S.S." Mervyn Vicars (b. London, 14 December 1905; d. Swanage, Dorset, 28 October 1991) was an English composer and cellist whose father, Harold, was a conductor with the Carl Rosa Company.[96] After studying music at the Leipzig Conservatory, he conducted operettas at the Théâtre des Variétés in Marseille in 1931; between 1932 and 1938 he was active as a conductor for societies such as the Sale and District Choral Union and the Newport Dramatic and Operatic Society. He also worked as an arranger of light and commercial radio music. In 1952 Vicars founded the New Orpheus Concert Group, based in Guildford, Surrey, with the aim of performing the music of English composers; the group, which disbanded in 1954, comprised the New Orpheus Chamber Orchestra and the New Orpheus Singers. He also wrote some reviews for the *Musical Times*.[97]

Sorabji and Vicars met on a London bus in 1933. The older composer had noticed that Vicars was reading the well-known book *Orchestration* by Cecil Forsyth (1870–1941), at the time the most comprehensive treatment of the subject, and struck up a conversation to discuss it.[98] Vicars's meeting

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[93]Sorabji, "Karol Szymanovsky [*sic*]", in *MCF*, 178–87; 185–86.

[94]The passage, which reads F♯–C♯–D♯–A♯–C♯, is on p. 7 of Chausson's score.

[95]Sorabji, "A Note on Ernest Chausson", in *MCF*, 119–24; 121–22.

[96]*RN* (September 1960), 1 {2/F.1}. Information on Vicars also come from "Mervyn Vicars: A Musical Biography", http://www.mervynvicars.com/, and *OB*, 229–36 ("The Vicars Family").

[97]See for example Mervyn Vicars, "Broadcast Music", *MT* 98, no. 1376 (October 1957): 553–54, which *Opus clavicembalisticum*.

[98]Denise Vicars to NG, 30 April 1989 {19/F.57}. Sorabji described Forsyth's book (1914; 2nd ed., 1935) as "simply a mine of omissions" (unlike Egon Wellesz's *Neue Instrumentation*); "Music", *NEW* 17, no. 1 (25 April 1940): 11.

with Sorabji may explain his presence at Cowdray Hall on 10 March 1936, when John Tobin played the first part of *Opus clavicembalisticum* (see chapter 13). Contacts between the two musicians certainly increased after Sorabji's move to Corfe Castle, as Vicars and his family eventually settled in nearby Swanage. As mentioned above, his wife, Denise (*née* Allen; 1918–2013), made life easier for Sorabji and Reginald Norman Best when they lived at The Eye, and later at the nursing home.

Sorabji had decided to write his *"Jāmī"* Symphony for Vicars when he began work on it in 1942, although he also toyed with the idea of dedicating it to Frank Holliday.[99] Not only did he stick to his original intention, but he later dedicated jointly his *Concertino non grosso for String Sextet with Piano obbligato quasi continuo* to the Vicars family. Vicars placed Sorabji "alongside the great Richard Wagner who, to my mind, had one of the finest brains since Da Vinci" and suggested that, with his friend's permission, he would propose a talk on him to the BBC.[100] For Vicars, nothing like *Opus clavicembalisticum* would ever be written again; there was "very little extant music" to compare with it.[101]

Vicars dedicated three works to Sorabji: *Purbeck Hills: Pastoral for String Quartet* (1953), the Symphony no. 1 (1958–60), and the *Introduction, Variations and Fugue on a Theme of Sorabji for Pianoforte and Orchestra* (1973), the first section of which uses the chorale theme near the beginning of *Opus clavicembalisticum*. The inscription reads: "To my life[-]long friend / Kaikhosru Shapurji Sorabji / with affection—profound respect and admiration—for a very great musician". The dedicatee declared himself "enormously flattered and gratified to have provided the point de depart [*recte* départ] for this splendid and masterly score, and its gorgeous piano part". He described the work as a "very brilliant and powerful conception", showing "splendidly idiomatic [piano] writing with an admirable feeling for the instrument".[102] His high regard for Vicars is evident in his comments to Frank Holliday: "a very good musician indeed, comes of a family thereof, not that that normally means much, but in his case it does. Like ourselves he has no use at all for the 'contempry' (misspelling deliberate) trash and sees through it and right out [to the] side."[103]

Le agonie

Very little can be given about *Le agonie* (1951), a work that Sorabji mentioned only once: "And as a little comic relief have started a short piano work called *Le Agonie* (Italian for the Agonies…) three movements, *dell'cuore* [*recte* del], *della mente, and dello spirito*, a kind of stout excruciated emotionalism I have never yet touched… So voilà… If I obstine myself at doing these things… and *Gott hilfe mich, ich kann nicht anders*."[104] Paul Rapoport has suggested that the piece—written "from the heart, from the mind, and from the soul"—was probably abandoned or incorporated into another.[105]

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[99]KSS to FH, 8 November 1942 {1/F.4}.

[100]Mervyn Vicars to KSS, 30 November 1976 {7/F.23}; see also Vicars to KSS, undated (mid-1987), in which he counted himself "highly honoured to have been admitted to the rare circle of friends of such a truly great musician". The interview for the programme "Music Now" was broadcast on 28 November 1976.

[101]Mervyn Vicars to KSS, 1 May 1985.

[102]"Comment by Kaikhosru Shapurji Sorabji—Variations and Fugue on a theme by Kaikhosru Shapurji Sorabji by Mervyn Vicars", typescript, undated (in or after 1973), 3 pp. (with annotations and corrections by Alistair Hinton, dated 13 March 1992). Sorabji also left critical comments for three other works by Vicars; *OB*, 236. Vicars wrote a six-page essay on *Opus clavicembalisticum* (ca. 1982), reproduced in *OB*, 230–31.

[103]KSS to FH, 25 May 1962 {2/F.3}.

[104]KSS to FH, 17 March 1951 {1/F.13}. Sorabji misquotes Martin Luther's closing words to the Diet of Worms in 1521; the actual words (of this now controversial version) are "Hier stehe ich, ich kann nicht anders, Gott helfe mir, Amen" (Here I stand, I can do no other, God help me, Amen).

[105]Rapoport, "'Could you just send me a list of his works?'", in *SCC*, 156.

Obviously, after completing such a massive work as the *"Jāmī"* Symphony, the composer was entitled to some form of respite and may have felt, at least momentarily, out of inspiration.

Norman Gentieu, the Munificent American Friend

Sorabji's most devoted friends were not necessarily those with whom he was in frequent contact. An example is Norman Pierre Gentieu (b. Penns Grove, New Jersey, 1 November 1914; d. Sullivan's Island, South Carolina, 12 October 2009), an American technical writer and editor who lived in Philadelphia.[106] After studying at the University of North Carolina, Gentieu received a Bachelor of Arts degree from Temple University in Philadelphia. He also studied music privately at the University of Pennsylvania and with the German-born composer Stefan Wolpe (1902–72) at the Settlement Music School in Philadelphia, where the latter was active between 1939 and 1942. He had begun composing on and off in the 1930s, but purely for his own satisfaction.

Gentieu wrote articles and data brochures for various chemical and metallurgical companies, including the Foote Mineral Company (East Whiteland Township, Pennsylvania). In 1961 he co-authored a book on Colonel George Washington Rains (1817–98), president of the Washington Iron Works (Newburgh, Virginia), which supplied gunpowder to the Confederacy.[107] After his retirement, he became an active writer on jazz. He edited a study of the cornetist Bix Beiderbecke (1903–31),[108] about whom he also published articles in the *IAJRC Journal* [International Association of Jazz Collectors]. Besides further articles for the *Annual Review of Jazz Studies*, he contributed entries on the pianists Joe Sullivan (1906–71) and Ralph Sutton (1922–2001) to the *New Grove Dictionary of Jazz*.

Gentieu's discovery of Sorabji's *Around Music*, in a New York bookshop in 1940, left him "dazzled […] by both the trenchant style and the rich content" of its essays. Learning that food was in short supply in post-war England, he wrote to the author in 1946, beginning a correspondence that lasted into the 1980s; their epistolary relationship consists of 232 letters from Sorabji and 14 to him. Gentieu at first wanted to express his admiration for Sorabji and ask if he could help him out in these difficult times.[109] The latter, delighted by his American admirer's "superlative admiration for my work and writings", was "deeply touched by the impulse so kind, considerate, thoughtful and generous that prompts your charming offer". Out of courtesy, he asked his benefactor "*how* am I going to *stop* you [from] showering these kindnesses on me". He had a particular need for salad dressing and boiled ham, and the parcels arrived "at ever increasingly short[er] intervals", containing "butter... eggs... every kind of first-class tinned fruits" as well as expensive Irish and Wiltshire hams.[110] All this raises questions about the freshness of items that could not be canned or preserved, which Sorabji does not mention, unless Gentieu was able to order from a local merchant who would deliver the goods directly to his friend's home.

Gentieu's interest in music expressed itself in his activity from 1956 to 1964 as a bell-ringer at St. Luke's Episcopal Church, in Germantown (in Upper Northwest Philadelphia). This led to the composition by Sorabji of his very short *Suggested Bell-Chorale for St. Luke's Carillon*. Some eighteen years later Gentieu commissioned from his friend *Il tessuto d'arabeschi* for the Philadelphia branch of

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[106] All the biographical data on Gentieu come from three documents: NG to MAR, 3 May 1992, 8 June 1999; biographical note prepared by Gentieu and filed with an accession form for four of Sorabji's musical manuscripts given by Gentieu to the George Arents Research Library (Syracuse, New York). See a photograph of his tombstone at https://www.findagrave.com/memorial/136928768/norman-pierre-gentieu.

[107] Joseph B. Milgram and Norman P. Gentieu, *George Washington Rains: Gunpowdermaker of the Confederacy* (Philadelphia: J. B. Milgram [some sources give Foote Mineral Company], 1961).

[108] Philip R. Evans and Linda Evans, *Bix: The Leon Bix Beiderbecke Story* (Davenport, Iowa: Midland Press, 1998).

[109] Alistair Hinton, "Kaikhosru Shapurji Sorabji: An Introduction", in *SCC*, 27; see also NG to KSS, 5 November 1977.

[110] KSS to NG, 10 March 1946 {16/F.56}; 28 November 1949 {16/F.67}; KSS to EC, 3 March 1953, 1, and 4 May 1953.

the Delius Society, of which he was a founding member. Probably in 1984, on 13 October, he gave a lecture entitled "The Art of Nikolay Medtner: An Appreciation by Kaikhosru Sorabji" at a festival of Slavic music and art hosted by the Russian Area Studies Program and the Medtner Society U.S.A. at the University of Louisville, Kentucky. The talk consisted of a collage of information from Sorabji's two books of essays.

The main example of Gentieu's devotion to the Sorabji cause is his contribution to the microfilming of several works, a project motivated by his fear that something might happen to the precious manuscripts. He initiated the project in October 1952 at the latest through a mock one-man foundation called the Society of Connoisseurs (1518 Walnut Street, Suite 908, Philadelphia 2), a subterfuge meant to convince his friend to accept his generosity. Sorabji obviously could not be fooled for long and risked "a suspicion that You are the Guiding Spirit [of the Society] and a good deal more". Sorabji understood that "a group of people like-minded with himself [Gentieu] had formed a group of what the French call 'amateurs', which has none of the stigma attaching to it that the word has in English, you know". For him, the project was "a most MARVELLOUS thing" because his manuscripts would be "fixed in permanent form". He rejoiced in that it would make him "even MORE *persona ingratissima* than I am already with the musical scum here".[111]

By August 1954 Gentieu had dissolved the Society and had new stationery printed for its replacement, the Criterion Club, "a rather innocuous, refined sounding name", modelled on a publication formerly edited by T. S. Eliot (*The Criterion Magazine*).[112] He asked Baldwin S. Bredell (1872–1956), a former master counterfeiter who had become an acclaimed engraver, to design a red and black letterhead showing Thoth and Isis (probably a reference to the Egyptian origin of the name of Sorabji's house, The Eye); his name was listed as secretary and that of a certain Myron R. Pleshy as archivist (another invented person).[113] Sorabji replied with disbelief to Gentieu's first approach on this matter, struck as he was by the expense involved.[114]

An employee of Kodak-Recordak microfilmed the unpublished piano works at Sorabji's home over two days from 12 January 1953, with Sorabji's tongue "hanging out in expectation". As the portable apparatus could not cope satisfactorily with the larger scores, Sorabji had to take them to London, sometimes attending during the sessions.[115] The score of the *Second Symphony for Piano* was the latest one to be reproduced in what would be the first part of the project. In 1957 Gentieu came forward with renewed offers to microfilm "whatever fresh work has so to be didded". This seems to have continued until 1967, when Sorabji brought the *Toccata quarta* to London.[116]

On or before 30 January 1953, at the request of the Society of Connoisseurs, Sorabji completed what he thought would be "a booklet with introductory notes by my most unhumble self on my various masterpieces. Fancy THIS happening to ME!" So he solemnly posted his text in an envelope with two red wax seals.[117] No such booklet was published, but several passages are quoted in this book for

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[111]KSS to EC, 3 March 1953, 1, 2.

[112]KSS to NG, 22 April 1953 {17/F.14}; 14 August 1954 {21/F.9}.

[113]Rapoport, "Sorabji's Other Writings", in *SCC*, 311; see also notes by Rapoport in conversation with Norman Gentieu, 6 October 1979 {personal collection of Paul Rapoport}, and NG to MAR, 18 July 1999. For an example of the letterhead, see NG to FH, October or November 1952 {5/F.1}; for a reproduction, see Robert Rimm, *The Composer-Pianists: Hamelin and the Eight* (Portland, Oreg.: Amadeus Press, 2002), 44.

[114]KSS to NG, 1 October 1952 {16/F.79}.

[115]KSS to NG, 3, 6, 9, 14, 30 January 1953 {17/F.6–10}; P. J. Sibley, "Recordak" Division, Kodak Limited, to NG, 4 February 1953 {20/F.66}.

[116]KSS to NG, 5 March 1955 {17/F.36}; KSS to FH, undated (received on 24 April 1957) {1/F.19}; KSS to NG, 28 July 1967 {18/F.27}.

[117]KSS to EC, 3 March 1953 and 4 May 1953; KSS to NG, 30 January 1953 {17/F.10}.

valuable first-hand information on many of his works. To these eighteen handwritten pages that he called "Animadversions", Sorabji added in May four single-spaced, densely packed, typewritten pages (referred to in the footnotes of this book as *A* and *FFN*).

Copies of the entire set of microfilms, amounting to thirteen reels, have been acquired by (or placed in) four institutions: Northwestern University (Evanston, Illinois), the Free Library of Philadelphia, Mills College (Oakland, California), and the University of Cape Town. Another set of fourteen reels, with the pieces in a different order, went to the International Piano Archives, then located in New York but now associated with the University of Maryland at College Park. Erik Chisholm was amazed at how much detail could be studied when he read the films in the university library.[118] In the first half of 1978, "someone came from Canada on purpose to microfilm all my unpublished works"; this was Paul Rapoport who, with Alistair Hinton ("an adorable and devoted young friend"), microfilmed the remaining works then known to exist, resulting in a set of four reels containing some 4,200 pages of music.[119] Sorabji praised the former's "admirable efforts and the latter's "major and vitally important part in the business".[120]

Most of Sorabji's music was therefore available outside his home to the few people who were prepared to seek it out. Although he was happy "to have the certainty of his works being put into permanent form in more than one copy than the fragile original", he wanted to make sure that "no loan of any work of mine for public performance shall be made without prior application to me for my consent". One thing was certain: no set of films was to go "to any accursed bloody damned place in England".[121]

Another example of Gentieu's generosity in preserving Sorabji's legacy was his purchase of a tape recorder to record his music.[122] In 1954 he wrote to Frida Kindler (1879–1964), a former Busoni pupil and widow of Sorabji's friend Bernard van Dieren, offering to microfilm her husband's works.[123] She passed the letter on to her son, Bernard van Dieren Jr. (1910–74), who lived in Philadelphia. At the time van Dieren's personal funds could not be taken out of England. Gentieu therefore asked an unidentified friend in London to buy a Grundig "Recorder" 700-L two-speed tape recorder and have it sent to Sorabji at Corfe Castle; he then reimbursed van Dieren Jr. the £85 (worth £2,476 in 2021) he had paid for it. Chisholm soon wondered whether Sorabji would start using the machine, as there was "certainly a most important section of the world waiting for results".[124] By the end of March 1956, the composer took delivery of the "infernal machine" that van Dieren had to remove to the "jungle life of Corfe".[125] He did not use it; in fact, after having spent time in 1953 practising for the recording his *Concerto da suonare da me solo e senza orchestra, per divertirmi* for Frank Holliday, he abandoned the project rather than commit himself permanently to imperfect performances, describing this attempt to give him a machine as a "catastrophic failure". He "just couldn't work the blasted thing and the pre-fiddling with

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[118]KSS to EC, 2 July 1954.

[119]KSS to CMG, 16 June 1978. [Kenneth Derus], "Contents of Microfilms of the Manuscripts of Kaikhosru Shapurji Sorabji" (3 pp.), "Microfilm Copies of Sorabji Manuscripts at Northwestern University" (3 pp.); these lists were sent to Frank Holliday on 5 and 6 March 1975 and 12 April 1975 {4/F.21};"Kaikhosru Shapurji Sorabji, Selected Music Compositions", 4 reels, University of Chicago, Joseph Regenstein Library (1978), no. N4156.

[120]KSS to KD, 25 May 1978 {Derus S20, p. 92}; KSS to CMG, 16 June 1978.

[121]KSS to NG, 15 December 1952 {17/F.4}, 18 August 1953 {17/F.19}; KSS to EC, 3 November 1944 [*recte* 1954], 1.

[122]Aside from the already mentioned letter (NG to MAR, 3 May 1992), data for this section comes from Rapoport, "Sorabji's Other Writings", in *SCC*, 312, and NG to AH, 5 November 1977.

[123]EC to KSS, 2 October 1954, 2. Gentieu also did some work toward microfilming of the production of Erik Chisholm; it is not known to what extent these projects were carried out.

[124]EC to KSS, 2 October 1954, 2.

[125]KSS to NG, 1 April 1956 {17/F.48}.

it just infuriated me, so, with their consent, I got rid of it".[126] Nevertheless, he agreed to let Chisholm record some of his playing as well as an extemporization and two readings in February 1962. Over the next six years, Frank Holliday would record Sorabji's playing using the Ferrograph machine he had purchased for the project.

Sorabji welcomed Gentieu's generosity. He did not ask him to stop for fear of being "ungracious and ungrateful-sounding", but all the gifts placed him "under an obligation the very thought of which fills me with shamefastness!"[127] He amply rewarded him for his trouble with the dedication of his (still undedicated) *Concerto pour piano et grand orchestre [no. 4]* and the rededication of the *Concerto per pianoforte e piccola orchestra, "Simorg-Anka" [no. 7]*, originally inscribed to Havelock Ellis.[128] Two months later he put the finishing touches to his *Third Organ Symphony* by writing a long dedication emphasizing his friend's generosity. In 1961 he sent him the manuscript of the *Suggested Bell-Chorale for St. Luke's Carillon* and in 1981 that of *Opus secretum atque necromanticum*, both dedicated to him. In 1982 the devoted friend gave all four manuscripts to the George Arents Research Library at Syracuse University (Syracuse, New York), along with manuscripts by the American composer Eastwood Lane (1879–1951), where they would be safer than in his home.[129]

Gentieu may have received many other Sorabji manuscripts. When revising his will in 1963, the composer "so arranged things that all my MSS are to go to the Society of Connoisseurs or failing them, or if for any reason they cannot or do not want to accept them, then to the Library of Congress". Later on it occurred to him to "wash this out", and he decided to ask Frank Holliday for advice. Above all, he did not "*at all* relish the prospect of those fucking English musicians getting their dirty paws on them".[130] He finally changed his mind some time after Alistair Hinton had entered into his reclusive world.

Third Organ Symphony

Sorabji's last work for the organ, the *Third Organ Symphony* (1949–53; 305 pp.), was begun seventeen years after the second one, and is only slightly shorter. In 1951 he considered dedicating it to the memory of Max Reger,[131] but changed his mind in 1953 because of Norman Gentieu's generous offer to microfilm his manuscripts. He compared him in his dedication to the caliph Hārūn al-Rashīd (to use the proper transliteration) in the *Arabian Nights* by the English orientalist and explorer, Sir Richard Francis Burton (1821–90): "To my friend Norman P. Gentieu Esq.: / of Philadelphia / who combines the generosity of Haroùn er [*sic*] Raschid / with a kindness, thoughtfulness and bonté that are / quite foreign to the Caliph, and that are as rare / in this our age as Haroùn is remote from it."[132] Indeed, the Caliph of Baghdad, a historical figure who lived from 766 to 809, was a protector of the arts and a generous patron of artists and scholars.

In early 1934 Sorabji began "meditating a third organ Symphony, after realising how immeasurably inferior even the finest modern orchestra is to an instrument like the new Royal Albert Hall organ under the hands of such a master as [George Dorrington] Cunningham (1878–1948), and how stale and

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[126]KSS to FH, 21 August 1953 {1/F.15}; 8 November 1960 {2/F.1}.
[127]KSS to NG, 7 April 1954 {17/F.13}.
[128]Sorabji sent the two manuscripts to Gentieu; KSS to NG, 9 January 1953 {17/F.8}.
[129]NG to MAR, 18 July 1999.
[130]KSS to NG, 18 November 1963 {18/F.8}; KSS to FH, 2, 10 April 1969 {2/F.10}.
[131]KSS to EC, 3 February 1951, 2.
[132]Sorabji used "Haroùn er Raschid", which comes from a French transcription of the caliph's name that sometimes appear as "Hâroun ar-Rachîd" or "Haroun al-Rachid".

feeble it makes such sound".[133] Yet it was not until early September 1949 that this work began "germinating" in his mind. One might wonder whether he actually did much at that time, for he wrote to Chisholm in February 1951 that he had begun the work.[134] He completed it some four years later, on 14 March 1953. He was proud of the "fiendishly complex STRETTO MAESTRALE, a fabric of SIX SUBJECTS in every sort of guise… straight… upside down… backwards… backwards–upside down", adding "It's rather a nerve-rack but I think it's a really major work". He was very pleased with what he considered to be his finest work for the instrument,[135] but wrote the following warning.

> This work is not written with that sham antique, the so-called "baroque" Organ in mind, from which it is in polar antithesis in both spirit and intention. It looks towards an instrument of the tonal splendour, grandeur and magnificence of the superb instruments in Liverpool Cathedral or the Royal Albert Hall, for its adequate expression.[136]

The *Third Organ Symphony* is in three parts containing three, three, and four sections, respectively.[137] The first part begins with a short "Introito" ([ED]pp. 1–7) in which Sorabji states forty-nine thematic elements or gestures, all of which are numbered. These motives recur, with their numbers, in the ensuing "Fantasia" (pp. 8–53) and "Coda-Ripieno" (pp. 53–67).

The second part begins with a "Grave" section (pp. 68–83), which ends with a "Cadenza" (p. 81) for the pedal part, giving way to a "Corale-Fantasia" (pp. 81–115). This section works more or less like a passacaglia. It begins with a rather tonal theme accompanied by two lower parts in strictly homophonic style; the melodic line is then repeated in different registers with varying contrapuntal parts. In the pedal part we find a quotation (identified by means of the text incipit) of the entire first verse of the *Dies irae* (p. 87) and a "Canone all'inverso" (p. 107). Never at ease with English music-making, Sorabji appended the following note to a four-voice scalar passage asking the performer to refrain from using the clumsy legato typical of the Anglican church organist: "NB. Non si deve usare qui il legato maladetto d'organista di chiesa anglicana" (p. 112). At the end of the "Corale-Fantasia" the theme is restated in its original form, followed by a "Ripieno. Grave (come al principio)" (pp. 115–19).

The third part begins with a "Toccata" (pp. 120–37) containing one of the most visually stunning passages in all of Sorabji's music: a page written on an eleven-staff system, that is, five two-staff systems for the various keyboards plus a single-staff system for the pedal (p. 129). The very end of the "Toccata" returns to a slow tempo for a chordal statement of the *Dies irae*. There is an extended (so-called) "Punta d'organo" (pp. 137–48) in which an A is sounded in various registers so that it is heard without interruption.[138] This is followed by a passacaglia (pp. 148–220) on a very long sinuous theme described by Kevin Bowyer, who gives its duration as "about 80 seconds", as "surely one of the longest passacaglia themes ever" (p. xiv of his edition).

After a "Cadenza fantasiata" (pp. 220–30) serving as an interlude, Sorabji ends with a massive "Fuga sextuplex" (pp. 231–309). The subject of the first fugue (pp. 231–34), written for the manuals only, is one of the shortest he ever wrote. With its twelve pitches arranged in ever-smaller intervals

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[133]KSS to EC, undated (before 10 July 1934). Sorabji wrote of Cunningham that "the really skilful control of an enormous instrument" was "an artistic and intellectual feat of a supreme order the equal of which it is difficult to find anywhere, if at all among the exponents of any other instrument"; "Music: Royal Albert Hall. Organ Recital by Mr. G. D. Cunningham, March 11", *NA* 4, no. 25 (5 April 1934): 590–91; 590.

[134]KSS to FH, 6 September 1949 {1/F.11}; KSS to EC, 3 February 1951.

[135]KSS to NG, 8 February 1953 {17/F.11}, 3 January 1953 {17/F.6}.

[136]This text appears on a separate page added to the score when it was microfilmed in the 1950s. It is not included in the Sorabji Archive's master copy.

[137]The page numbers in the following paragraphs are those written by Alistair Hinton in the Sorabji Archive's copy, which differ from those given by Rapoport, "'Could you just send me a list of his works?'", in *SCC*, 156.

[138]See the note on Sorabji's incorrect use of "punta d'organo" in the introduction.

from the major seventh down to the minor second, beginning on C and ending on F♯, it could be described as Sorabji's answer to Bach's so-called Wedge fugue (BWV 548, in E minor). After a brief "Cadenzetta" (p. 234), the second fugue (pp. 234–44) uses a subject dominated by dotted rhythms. The third fugue (pp. 244–50), for six voices, is a slow section written mostly in minims and crotchets. The fourth fugue (pp. 250–57), for three voices, returns to a fast tempo and an active pedal part. Like the first fugue, the fifth one (pp. 257–60) provides a welcome break for the feet; it takes the form of a short *perpetuum mobile*. The sixth fugue (pp. 260–300), for seven voices, contains a "Stretto Maestrale" (pp. 268–92), with the manuals written on two three-staff systems **(example 17.2)**. The fantasia-like style of a section marked "Ricordo" (recollection), in which two passages are directed to be played "Briosissimo" (pp. 292–300) brings relief to the strict contrapuntal writing. Just before the "Coda" (pp. 300–309), Sorabji recalls the first of the two bars that make up the theme of the "Corale-Fantasia". Writing spread on six-staff systems for the manuals returns for the powerful final pages.

In December 1953 Sorabji noted that the *Third Organ Symphony* made use of "all the most intricate 'scholastic' devices". He described the stretto as a "close woven and meshed net of sound", including "canonical dodges *in double diminution and in reverse*, pedal points going on for a little but for ever"—the whole making an "essay in the most 'abstract and absolute' of music".[139] Compared with his previous organ symphony, it showed "no progress towards that simplification that the cliché and platitude mongers, flat in the face of all the evidence to the contrary, are never tired of prattling of as one of the sure sign manuals of an artist's development".[140]

[139]KSS to FH, 16 December 1953 {1/F.15}.
[140]*A*, 12–13.

18 / 1954–59 ■ Feelings, Positive and Negative

Caring for "Mumsie" during Her Final Years

The child Sorabji grew up with little or no father figure, as Shapurji Sorabji, probably not many years after the birth of his only son, returned to Bombay to attend to his business and only occasionally visited his English family. Sorabji was educated by his mother and, later, by tutors; the two also travelled and attended concerts together. Over a period of fourteen years, he dedicated five works to the person he called "Mumsie" in two inscriptions (and certainly in real life as well). All but one third of these works are short: *Chaleur—Poème*; *Trois fêtes galantes de Verlaine*; *Symphony [no. 1] for Piano, Large Orchestra, Chorus, and Organ*; *Movement for Voice and Piano*; and *Pasticcio capriccioso sopra l'op. 64, no 1 del Chopin*.

Sorabji was always very close to his mother, with whom he spent nearly two-thirds of his life in various London flats, but mostly at Clarence Gate Gardens. In the early 1950s they went their separate ways: he settled in Corfe Castle with Reginald Norman Best, and she moved to the nearby town of Swanage. In 1914 he had written that they were "always together, quite inseparable in fact"; he could not be away from her for long periods. This explains, at least in part, why he did not go to a public school or university.[1] He seems to have depended largely on her approval; to Philip Heseltine he once told, when he was in his early twenties, that he was "up writing this in my gown when I ought to be in bed fast asleep as my mother thinks I am!!!"[2] His behaviour was unchanged in 1930, at the age of thirty-eight, when he wrote: "I always say that apart from my mother there is no living soul on this earth with whom I would live."[3] He formed a "self-contained entity" with her that made the intrusion of another person very uncongenial.[4] Another reason for the close bond must have been the sympathy resulting from their abandonment by Shapurji Sorabji. The long process leading up to the court's decision in 1949 to annul his bigamous marriage must have been a source of anxiety for both mother and son.

After a few years in Swanage, Madeline found herself without a home, having "thrown away" the one she had. Her move back to London, on 17 November 1953, was a huge workload for her son, who was glad that she was returning thither "for the sake of all concerned". He visited the capital to spend Christmas with her, as she had been through a "saddish time", having lost some of her oldest friends. Now a person "advanced in years who is a constant source of worry and anxiety", she depended on him for everything, which was "the dire result of my having to live at home LONG LONG AFTER IT WAS EITHER WISE OR GOOD FOR ME OR HER".[5] His troubles were not over, as Madeline was to move six times in two years, with the responsibility of finding suitable accommodation falling on his shoulders. In April 1954 she had an accident and was hospitalized; two years later she had a minor stroke, although it was "not so alarming as it sounds as she has had at least *eight* during her life from the time

[1]KSS to PH, 3 February 1914 {*LPH*, no. 5, pp. 52, 54}.
[2]KSS to PH, 8 December 1913 {*LPH*, no. 3, p. 45}.
[3]KSS to EC, 8 April 1930, 3.
[4]KSS to FH, 10 July 1944 {1/F.6}.
[5]KSS to FH, 21 August 1953, 28 September 1953, undated (after 16 December 1953), 12 July 1953 {1/F.15}.

of the first when she was fourteen!" Nevertheless, her state of health required the employment of a couple of nurses day and night.[6]

On 29 May 1958 Sorabji brought his mother back to Bournemouth (from London, it seems, for the second time), convinced that he had made the right decision. For a few weeks in October, he was "encluttered" with relatives from the continent who had to be brought in to see his invalid mother. The normally "energetic and active" woman found herself "deprived of everything that made life worth living for her"; even switching on the radio had become too difficult. The son took her to a convent, but the nuns did not want to keep her because she was too much trouble and caused "occasional disturbances with tantrums". She was "full of complaints and grumbles and downright *lies* about the Sisters... she seems to be suffering from a little paranoia persecutoria... having been that way inclined all her life... full of fantastically malicious imaginings about what other people are doing to her or something"; he therefore had to give her a "very stern talking". As suggested in chapter 1, we may wonder whether this state of mind could be part of the explanation for the alleged "Spanish-Sicilian" background. Madeline eventually settled at the Hollingbourne Nursing Home, where "the Matron (a Catholic of the BEST type) and the nurses and staff were kindness itself". The search for this residence was the result of an inspection of no fewer than twenty-five such places, "most of them horrors".[7] Incidentally, Maurice Ravel, like Sorabji, was very close to his mother and lived with her (and his younger brother) until her death in 1917.[8] He was then nearly forty-two years old, and a bachelor, as he would remain.

Madeline began to fail rapidly ten days after the move and died peacefully on 5 May 1959 at the age of ninety-two. Her son refrained from publishing an obituary notice so as not to be "pestered answering letters of condolence", as he had "far too much else to do". Since she had always disliked the "vulgar and ostentatious public parade of 'mourning'", there were no flowers. Sorabji had a Requiem Mass sung on 8 May in Bournemouth, with himself alone in attendance. The headstone was to be "of the most reserved [kind]", with a quotation of the "lovely initial phrase of the LUX AETERNA from the Verdi Requiem which she used to sing so beautifully".[9] Sorabji confided to Holliday that "apart from the curious feeling of void since she has gone, I feel a great relief and peace even… I saw our family fantom, herald of death or calamity several times before her death as we all do always…"[10] After her death Sorabji always told his mother what he had done during the day when he went in bed at night; he also went to her grave "fairly frequently" and always wept.[11]

Un nido di scatole sopra il nome del grande e buon amico Harold Rutland

Sorabji, who had been very pleased with the performance given by his friend Harold Rutland (1900–1977) in 1928 of the first version of his *Fragment Written for Harold Rutland*, decided to write one "on the name of the great and good friend". Entitled *Un nido di scatole sopra il nome del grande e buon amico*

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[6]KSS to NG, 5 May 1954 {17/F.27}; KSS to FH, 20 May 1956 {1/F.18}; 26 May 1956 {1/F.18}.

[7]KSS to FH, 8 June 1958 {1/F.20}; KSS to NG, 20 October 1958 {17/F.62}; KSS to FH, 22 October 1958 {1/F.20}, 1 April 1959 {1/F.21}, undated (received on 17 January 1959) {1/F.21}, 9 May 1959 {1/F.21}.

[8]See Roger Nichols, *Ravel* (New Haven and London: Yale University Press, 2011), 8, 105.

[9]The inscription, as copied during a trip to Bournemouth in the summer of 1997, reads: "SACRED / TO THE MEMORY / OF / MADELEINE MARGUERITE / MATHILDE SHAPURJI / SORABJI / † V. V. MCMLIX. AD / [quotation of bars 2–4 of the vocal part of the "Lux aeterna" from Verdi's Requiem, with underlaid text "Lux aeterna Luceat eis Domine"]". The transcription in SA, made by the cemetery's staff, is not accurate.

[10]KSS to FH, 9 May 1959, 1 {1/F.21}. In KSS to KD, 30 December 1980 {Derus, S38, p. 189}, Sorabji wrote: "[...] we used to have a family fantom cat which presaged some unhappy event but haven't seen it for many years now. The last time was just before we got the news of my father's death in Germany between the Wars."

[11]*RN*, April/May 1973", 2 {3/F.4}. See KSS to KD, 23 October 1980 {Derus, S36, p. 171}, for a similar statement.

Harold Rutland (1954; 26 pp.), it was completed on 15 January 1954. The manuscript contains an "absolute prohibition" in heavy letters and fully underlined. Sorabji was adamant that the work should not be shown or played, either by a live performer or (presumably) by means of a recording, to anyone other than the person for whom it was written.

> *PROIBIZIONE / ASSOLUTA / Non si deve fare nè vedere / nè suonare nè udire da nulla / altro che lui* [*recte* né vedere né suonare né udire a nessun altro che a colui] *per cui è stato / scritto questo pezzino*.

The fanciful title of the piece seems to have sprung entirely from Sorabji's imagination. In writing his "nest of boxes", he probably had in mind Chinese boxes, those sets of nested decorated boxes (often lacquered), each of which fits snugly inside the next larger one. Most of the internal titles convey the composer's sense of humour.[12]

The piece begins with "the large box that contains the boxes"; it opens with a "didattico" statement of the dedicatee's name used as an introduction to the work: B (= H), A, D (= R)[ol]D [Rutl]A[n]D **(example 18.1)**. The contour of the opening three-note gesture recurs in all the pieces, usually at the very beginning. The first of the sixteen boxes is a toccata-like piece in semiquavers, while the second one uses statements of the head of the theme, beginning against runs in the low register. The third box is a lyrical piece with a middle section "to be played in an atmosphere of poisoned and perfumed perversity". The fourth box ("Piccolo preludio corale tascabile") is a "small portable chorale prelude" based on an extension of the head motive, first using quavers, then semiquavers, ending with a short chordal passage in triads. The fifth box takes on the form of a virtuosic piece ending with an "explosive" run in chords. The sixth box, to be played "with graceful impertinence", is in the style of the *Valse-fantaisie for Piano* and is therefore in triple time throughout. The seventh box ("Omnium ecclesiarum urbis et orbis Mater et Caput") refers to "The mother and head of all the churches of the city and of the world", that is, the Church of St. John in Lateran in Rome, which Sorabji had visited in 1937.[13] It presents four chorale-like statements consisting of series of ten triads in both hands, separated by episodes. The eighth box ("Arabeschi gammatici") is a cadenza-like piece with scales in both hands, beginning and ending on full chords, while the ninth box is a passacaglia (though not described as such by Sorabji) consisting of twenty-eight statements of the dedicatee's name with increasingly virtuosic parts added. This box is the only box in which the theme is presented without modification and with such emphasis.

After a tenth box in nocturne style comes an eleventh one entitled "L'algolagniaco". This word, meaning sexual gratification derived from inflicting or experiencing pain, seems to have been preferred to "sadism" and "masochism" by the sex psychologist Havelock Ellis, whom Sorabji had consulted about sexual identity problems in the early 1920s (see chapter 8). There is nothing in his writings to suggest that he enjoyed such practices, and he left no indication of his use of the word in, of all places, a piano work. Could the series of quickly repeated chords in the left hand be a musical representation of whiplash?

While the twelfth box is a study in octaves spread between the hands in widely spaced registers, the thirteenth one ("Con raffinamento affettato, quasi di piccola borghese che vorebbe darsi dell arie d'essere gran dama") is a waltz to be played "with an affected refinement, almost like a petit-bourgeois woman trying to put on the look of a great lady". The fourteenth box ("Ein kleines Heldentenorleben") is a (Richard) Strauss–like piece with interpretative directions in German; it ends, quite unusually for

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[12]PR (recalling a conversation with Sorabji) to MAR, 14 February 2000. Sorabji liked to buy all sorts of decorative objects in shops (see chapter 17).

[13]Sorabji, "Music in Italy To-Day: Reflections from Rome", *MT* 78, no. 1132 (June 1937): 501–2.

Sorabji, with a V–I cadence on a D major chord. After a fifteenth box consisting of a toccata-like study in double notes in violin style ("Toccatissima. Si guarda un tocco sempre non legato, cioè spiccato dei violonisti"), Sorabji ends with a sixteenth box, a short "flexible" piece ("Con grande flessibilità") leading to a passage in triads, with F♯ minor as the final chord. Jonathan Powell, in his notes for the programme booklet for his performance of the piece, has suggested that the title "A rivederci" is a pun on the dedicatee: (H)arry (= Harold).

Second Symphony for Piano

After taking a break from the immense *Third Organ Symphony* to write the lighthearted *Un nido di scatole sopra il nome del grande e buon amico Harold Rutland*, Sorabji returned to composing a serious, long, and demanding work. The *Second Symphony for Piano* (1954; 248 pp.) exemplifies "the fact that a real live musical organism conditions its own form (more or less) as it grows". There is no record of exactly when he began work on it, but the first movement was completed on 20 June 1954. In mid-July, halfway through the work, he described its "Aria fiorita" as "me in my venomous-sweet mood but more than ever so… throughout on four staves a luxuriant languid liana-mass [*recte* liana] of long indolent trailing melodies wound around elaborate trellis work such as only little me can do".[14]

Sorabji described the work that he completed on 25 October 1954 as "a fully mature and powerful work I think… and am very pleased with it". It was "dominated by a kind of motto, F.H., the initials of the dedicatee… [Frank Holliday] that valorous and very good friend who organised that world presentation to me last year".[15] The composition of the stretto, with its intricacy and its tightly woven fabric, had "proved a great mental strain", and Sorabji had to remain fallow before proceeding with the orchestration of his *Symphonic Variations for Piano and Orchestra* and beginning what would become his *magnum opus*, the *Messa grande sinfonica*. He was urged to write it by "the constant thought of the wonderful loving-kindness and encouragement I have received from the dedicatee".[16]

The dedication to Holliday reads: "With deep affection, gratitude and heartfelt admiration for his wonderful qualities of heart and mind: to my very dear friend, Frank Holliday". Sorabji wanted it to be read in full at any introductory talk on the work; this was "vitally important" as "my spiritual and moral obligations to him are VAST, and I want as many as possible to KNOW this".[17] He also inscribed the dedicatee's name into the music by means of the musical letters of his name (F–H, corresponding to F and B), which form the "dominating motive of the whole work".[18] As seen in chapter 15, Sorabji's friendship with this admirer ended in the late 1970s, leading to the removal of the dedication on 26 December 1978 (as indicated on the verso of the flyleaf), though not of the *soggetto cavato*, which would have been much more complex. On 11 January 1979 he rededicated the work to the poet Harold Morland, the recipient of five (re)dedications.

The *Second Symphony for Piano* is in three parts containing five large movements, two of which are divided down into sections. Sorabji begins the *parte prima* with an "Intrecciata [*recte* Intrecciatura] politematica", that is, a polythematic interlacing (or web, to use his translation). In the first nine pages, he labels sixty-nine thematic ideas (numbered 1 to 64 plus 32a, 35a, 36a, 43a, and 62a) and identifies

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[14]KSS to NG, 27 August 1954 {17/F.31}; KSS to EC, 13 July 1954, 1.

[15]KSS to EC, 3 November 1944 [*recte* 1954], 1. Sorabji is referring to the 1953 presentation letter.

[16]KSS to NG, 3 November 1954 {17/F.32}; 19 December 1954 {17/F.33, 34}.

[17]KSS to FH, 10 August 1971 {3/F.2}; KSS to DG, 22 August 1981, in which the wording to be used is (in full caps) "To my very dear friend Frank Holliday in deep affection and gratitude for his rare and lovely qualities of heart and mind".

[18]Card featuring a copy of the title page of the *Second Symphony* and the dedication {8/F.5}. See also KSS to FH, 10 August 1971 {3/F.2}.

their recurrences up to [MS]p. 96. In addition to his own thematic ideas, on p. 51 he quotes a recurring motive from the first movement of Mahler's *Das Lied von der Erde* (1908–9), which he describes as having "an acrid astringent quality, hard-bitten and hard-biting".[19] He used the passage played by the orchestra at the word "[Das Lied vom Kummer auflachend in die Seele euch] klingen" (bars 45–50), but the notational inaccuracies suggest that he may not have had the score to hand. The last four pages are a good example of the kind of fragmented writing, where one type of figuration follows another in quick succession, sometimes favoured by Sorabji in his fast movements (pp. 93–96); it is appropriately marked "Frammentato".

The *Parte seconda* consists of the second and third movements. The second movement, which begins and ends with a long A pedal, is an extended "Aria fiorita" in nocturne style sharing many similarities with *"Gulistān"—Nocturne for Piano*. However, it contains two chordal climaxes (pp. 115, 121–23). The third movement, in three sections, begins with a "Moto perpetuo" (pp. 133–49) played *sotto voce*, with groups of quavers (usually five) surrounded by lines of single notes, octaves, or chords. This introductory section, to be performed "in an atmosphere of occult threat", contains two statements of the *soggetto cavato* right at the beginning **(example 18.2)**. After a more varied "Interludio" (pp. 149–58) with various forms of the musical letters, the perpetual motion returns in much abbreviated form as a swift "Coda" (pp. 158–59; marked "Ripresa" in the title at the beginning of the movement).

The *Parte terza* comprises the fourth and fifth movements. The fourth one, in five sections, begins with a brief "Fanfare" (p. 160). Its three motives recur in the "Introito" (pp. 161–66) that leads to a "Toccata" (pp. 166–74), a "busy moving thing", as Sorabji said.[20] Instead of using a pedal point based on a note, either stated singly or doubled at the octave, Sorabji writes a (so-called) "Punta d'organo costanziata" based on a D♯ minor chord in first inversion that the listener will associate immediately with the opening of *Opus clavicembalisticum*.[21] The fourth movement ends with a fugue on five subjects, beginning with two voices and ending with six (pp. 182–86, 186–90, 190–94, 194–201). The second fugue uses a subject modelled on the "Moto perpetuo", and the third one begins with the F–H motive. Before the fifth fugue (pp. 204–11), Sorabji inserts an "Interludio: Quasi fanfare" (pp. 201–3) reminiscent of the work's opening; it ends with a recurrence of the D♯ minor ostinato chords of the (so-called) "Punta d'organo". The work ends with "La Stretta maestrale" (pp. 211–24), written almost entirely on six-staff systems and climaxing "con somma grandezza" (with utmost grandeur).[22]

The fifth and final movement is an "Adagio-Finale" (pp. 225–48) described by Sorabji as a "broad stately" piece.[23] Beginning with a "Liturgico" choral-like theme, it blends a nocturne style with more expansive, powerful writing. There are also references to the "Fanfare" heard at the beginning of the *parte terza* and to the opening of the "Aria fiorita", but with the pedal point alternating the notes F and B (= H) (pp. 240–41). The final "catastrophic" climax gives way to a closing "meditativo" section over a B pedal point, eventually followed by an F and a final B, thus bringing back the original dedicatee's initials at the very end.

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[19]KSS to FH, 25 April 1954 {1/F.16}.
[20]KSS to FH, 14 August [1971] {3/F.2}.
[21]See the note on Sorabji's incorrect use of "punta d'organo" and "costanziata" in the introduction.
[22]Sorabji should have used the masculine, thus "Il Stretto maestrale".
[23]KSS to FH, 25 April 1954 {1/F.16}.

Toccata terza

Until September 2019, when its manuscript unexpectedly surfaced in a private collection, Sorabji's *Toccata terza* (1955; 91 pp.) was known only from a few references. Around 1978 he suggested "ca. 1937–38" to Paul Rapoport, which was the basis for the date given in *Sorabji: A Critical Celebration*. This seemed to make sense since Eric Blom, in the first edition of his *Everyman's Dictionary of Music* (1946), had mentioned *three* toccatas in addition to the one found in the *Two Piano Pieces* of 1921.[24] However, Terence White Gervais, in the (very incomplete) list of works prepared for the fifth edition of *Grove's Dictionary*, listed only *two*. Blom had probably made an error that Sorabji never bothered to report, as the information remained unchanged in the later editions. In any case, there was the possibility of a toccata standing between the *Toccata seconda per pianoforte* (completed in 1934) and the 1946 dictionary entry. Furthermore, the *Toccata quarta* dates from 1964–67, which means that the *Toccata terza* was certainly written (much) before 1964. However, in or after 1958, Sorabji wrote "1955. Toccata Terza for piano" as the first of six works written between 1955 and 1958 in a list probably prepared for the supplementary volume of *Grove's* (1961).[25] Despite the existence of a list suggesting a later composition date, his statement seemed to be the better alternative in the early 1990s until further evidence could be found.

The above reference to the author of *Everyman's Dictionary of Music* provides an opportunity for an aside about Eric Blom (1888–1959), who was working as a librarian when Sorabji met him in 1915. As a young man, he had worked for the firm of J. and W. Chester, which distributed the scores published by F. and B. Goodwin, under whose imprint some of Sorabji's early scores appeared, and he may well have opened the door of this publisher to his friend. The composer described him as "an awfully nice fellow with a quite cultured musicianly taste".[26] He gave him a copy of his published concerto, inscribing it "To Eric Blom with the perpetrator's best wishes (12.8.24)".[27] The latter also reviewed *Mi contra fa* for the *Birmingham Post* in 1947 or 1948. As the editor of the fifth edition (1954) of the above-mentioned *Grove's Dictionary of Music and Musicians*, he obviously welcomed an entry on his friend.

Since the manuscript of the *Toccata terza* has finally turned up, we can put to rest Sorabji's outburst that it had been "destroyed, soaked and ruined owing to the criminal stupidity and neglect of people into whose hands his music came after his death [1961], i.e. my dear late friend Clinton Gray-Fisk for whom it was written and [to whom it was] dedicated". The third toccata was apparently among Gray-Fisk's music and books, which were left in "a flimsy outhouse" and ruined by the snow.[28] This introduction, however long it may seem, at least illustrates the kind of questions that have vexed those seeking to clarify the chronology and the whereabouts of Sorabji's works for years.

Like the *Toccatinetta sopra C.G.F.* (1929; 8 pp.), which was the first of three dedications to Clinton Gray-Fisk (1904–61), the American critic and music writer living in England (see chapter 9), the ten-movement *Toccata terza* uses his musical letters.[29] Unlike the earlier presentation in ascending octaves

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[24]Eric Blom, comp., "Sorabji, Kaikhosru Shapurji", in *Everyman's Dictionary of Music* (London: J. M. Dent, 1946), 578; see also the 1962 and 1971 editions on pp. 563 and 651–53, respectively.

[25]"KAIKHOSRU SHAPURJI SORABJI (supplementary list)", 1 p., undated (in or after 1958).

[26]KSS to PH, 3 May 1915 {*LPH*, no. 17, p. 96}.

[27]This copy is in the collection of the Westminster Music Library.

[28]KSS to PR, 30 December 1974, reproduced in Rapoport, "'Could you just send me a list of his works?'", in *SCC*, 101. See also KSS to FH, 2 April 1975 {3/F.6}, reproduced in ibid., 101n11.

[29]For a detailed examination of the work's critical edition and an analysis, see Abel Sánchez-Aguilera Peño, "*Toccata terza* (1955) de Kaikhosru Shapurji Sorabji: Edición crítica del manuscrito. Análisis, comentario estilístico y pianístico de la obra" (Máster en Enseñanzas Artísticas en Nuevas tecnologías de la música actual: creación e interpretación, Real Conservatorio

emerging out of a figuration in quick note values, Sorabji uses full chords, leading to a D♭ major chord. He then repeats the theme in descending form in octaves in the left hand with an accompaniment of (mostly) septuplets in which the musical letters are embedded in the right hand. This figuration played against a forceful descending line suggests the well-known opening of *Opus clavicembalisticum* (**example 18.3**). This "Movimento vivo" ([ED]pp. 1–17) is followed by an "Adagio" (pp. 18–21) opening with a statement of the C–G–F motive in minims paraphrased by passing notes. It begins "Adagissimo" and, after seven bars, grows "Di più in più grandioso e pontificato [*recte* pontificale]".[30] The movement, which began on two staves, is now spread on four staves that become five and six at the "Gigantesco". The "Passacaglia" (pp. 22–69; see the example), the work's longest movement, starts "Quasi largo"; its theme is another paraphrase of the previous movement's theme, now with two crotchets breaking the regular movement of the minims; furthermore, the dedicatee's letters appear not only at the beginning but also near the end. As is often the case in Sorabji's works of this type, the numbering of the variations has gaps and repetitions, but leaves us with the expected one hundred varied statements. Vars. 41 and 76 (the first one so numbered) are marked "Rapace" (i.e., rapacious), which could also read "rapacemente" or "con rapacità"; the same indication, which appears nowhere else in Sorabji's (or probably anyone's) music also appears on p. 86. Var. 46 should also be highlighted, if only because of its indication "In modo di *valse viennoise*. Con grazia".

The "Cadenza fiorita" (pp. 70–74), which features quick figurations throughout, uses a harmonic presentation of the musical letters with a 1–4–5 configuration running through the first six very long bars. The two-part "Quasi fugato" (pp. 75–79, 80–82) is based on another variation of the theme of the previous two movements in that the appearance of the F is delayed by two notes. Beginning with crotchets and minims only, it adds countersubjects in quavers and, later on, semiquavers. The second part uses a chromatically altered variant of the theme, with dotted rhythms adding variety. A powerful statement of the initial motive is used as a transition (bar 97) leading to a massive coda marked "Maestosamente pesante". The "Corrente" (pp. 83–89), marked "Senza nuances alcuna. Scorrevole, fuggitivo",[31] is a *perpetuum mobile* in strings of quavers beamed mostly in long groups. The first four notes in the right hand use the very same notes as found at the beginning of the previous movement. The "Fantasia" (pp. 90–107), marked "Moderatamente quasi adagietto. Libero, senza rigidità alcuna",[32] again begins with the dedicatee's musical letters; it is mostly written in Sorabji's well-known nocturne style. Then comes an "Interludio" (pp. 108–15), marked "Vivo", consisting of quick semiquaver runs. Its opening is reminiscent of the beginning of the work, except that the F is now an F♯. The "Capriccio" (pp. 116–23), as indicated by the "Frammentato, ritmo rotto" marking,[33] is written in the fragmented style sometimes found in Sorabji's music, anticipating a type of piano writing common in the 1950s and 1960s. The final bar is a varied statement of the opening of the work, now in soft chords forming a "Nexus", a term Sorabji would use again in the *Toccata quarta* (see chapter 20) and the *Symphonia brevis* (see chapter 21). It is the only movement in which the motive appears at the end rather than the beginning, with the final sonority being D♭ major (see example).

The final movement is an "Epilogo" (pp. 124–27), marked "Moderatamente andando, legato". It begins with the dedicatee's motive in octaves in the bass, in minims, with an added F♯ at the end. In this form, it matches the opening of the theme of the "Fughettina" that concludes the earlier *Toccatinetta sopra C.G.F.* Following his usual practice in multimovement works, Sorabji ends the

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Superior de Música de Madrid, 2022).

[30]"Increasingly grandiose and pontifical". Sorabji's *pontificato* is a noun meaning "pontificate" in English.

[31]"Without any nuances. Sliding, fugitive".

[32]"Moderately, almost adagio. Free, without any rigidity".

[33]"Fragmented, broken rhythm".

Toccata terza with a surprisingly brief "Coda Stretta". The writing is now "Maestosamente grandioso", leading to an "Adagissimo" bar consisting of two full D♯ minor chords played ***sfffz*** in the low register framing an ascending sequence of three similarly played chords in the high register reaching a D♯ minor chord (see example). Many listeners are likely to expect not only a final varied statement of the opening motive, probably ending on a D♭ major chord (with or without added notes) as in the opening statement. Sorabji provided one at the end of the penultimate movement; here he preferred to confound expectations by being "der Geist, der stets verneint", as in *Opus clavicembalisticum* (see chapter 10).

Passeggiata veneziana sopra la Barcarola di Offenbach / York Bowen

In July 1955 Sorabji decided to idle "by dashing off a frivolous little work for another friend who has been pestering me for years to write something especially dedicated to him, which at last I'm doing".[34] This new work, entitled *Passeggiata veneziana sopra la Barcarola di Offenbach* (1955–56; 24 pp.), was completed sometime between 20 April and 20 May 1956.[35] It is dedicated "To Mr. York Bowen / a trifling tribute of respect / and admiration". Sorabji was thereby returning a compliment, for the latter had dedicated "To Kaikhosru Shapurji Sorabji, 1950" his very finely crafted *Twenty-Four Preludes in All Major and Minor Keys*, op. 102.

Although there is no known correspondence between Sorabji and York Bowen (b. London, 22 February 1884; d. London, 23 November 1961). The remarkably gifted English pianist and composer (mainly) of music for his instrument is mentioned several times in Sorabji's writings. After hearing heard him in the *Sinfonia concertante* (1926–27) for orchestra and piano by William Walton (1902–88), he praised the "finely polished and well-limned performance of the important and elaborate obbligato".[36] In 1939 this "quite inexcusably neglected" British composer played for Sorabji seven preludes from the set he would later dedicate to him. This prompted the comment that "in these the afternoon was raised to the level of music that could be seriously considered, pieces rich and vivid in colouring, magnificently written for the piano, showing a fine musical individuality, not hagridden by any of the fashionable monomanias of contemporary composition".[37] The entire set seems to have been completed in 1944, when Sorabji attended a private performance given in a large hall, with himself and a friend as the only listeners. He described it as "not only the finest English piano music written in our time but the finest writing pianistically considered".[38]

The title page of the *Passeggiata veneziana* bears two inscriptions in addition to the dedication. One is the phrase "Consider well your neighbour, what an imbecile he is", taken from the "Rome" chapter in the travel recollections by Norman Douglas, published in 1921 under the title *Alone*; the reader will recall that Sorabji had quoted the passage more fully for the "Entête" of *Mi contra fa* (see chapter 16). Another is a strongly worded performance prohibition: "Public performance [word crossed-out but appearing to be "unconditionally" and replaced later with "except by special permission"] prohibited: / and playing within the hearing of earnest high-minded / solemn dolts strongly deprecated!"

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[34]KSS to FH, 9 July 1955 {1/F.17}.

[35]The manuscript of *Passeggiata veneziana* gives only a completion date of 1956, with no further details. The range of dates is according to Paul Rapoport, "'Could you just send me a list of his works?'", in *SCC*, 158, and is based on letters to Frank Holliday.

[36]Sorabji, "Music: Royal Philharmonic: January 5", *NA* 42, no. 13 (26 January 1928): 149.

[37]Sorabji, "Music: York Bowen. 4th Piano Concerto. (Regional, March 19th)", *NEW* 10, no. 26 (8 April 1936): 514; "Music: R.A.M. New Music Society (Oct. 12th)", *NEW* 16, no. 2 (26 October 1939): 29.

[38]Sorabji, "Music: The Twenty-Four Preludes for Piano … York Bowen", *NEW* 25, no. 14 (20 July 1944): 123; revised version in "A Note on York Bowen", in *MCF*, 235–39; 238. See also Monica Watson, *York Bowen: A Centenary Tribute* (London: Thames Publishing, 1984), 61.

The *Passeggiata veneziana* uses the barcarole ("Belle nuit, ô nuit d'amour") found in the duo between the courtesan Giulietta and Niklausse, Hoffmann's companion, in act 4 (no. 17: "Barcarolle, récit et couplets bachiques") of *Les contes d'Hoffmann* (1881) by Jacques Offenbach (1819–80). In this famous excerpt, the two characters sing an invocation to the night and to love from behind the curtains in Giulietta's palace on the Grand Canal in Venice, where a party is in progress and the gondoliers drive their boats below. The "passeggiata" referred to in the title is the traditional early evening stroll taken by Italians, with the ladies walking slowly arm in arm and the men gazing at them, all wanting to see and be seen.[39] In 1944, after a broadcast performance of Offenbach's work, Sorabji had written the following about this "enchanting masterpiece".

> What grace, elegance, polish, *finesse* is here, and on occasion when it is called for, what surprising depth and poignancy of expression! The much mauled and mangled Barcarolle is […] a touch of sheer perfection, especially as it is heard in the opera, opening and closing an act with an architectonic point and significance that is of course lost, when, in some miserably attenuated version, it is played as a tea-house accompaniment or [as] a cloak of romance for sea-side erotics.[40]

The first of the work's five sections is a "Barcarola" ([ED]pp. 1–9). Its introduction, written in a mellifluous nocturne style with a veiled allusion to the opening motive of the Offenbach song, gives way after two pages to a statement of the famous theme with a suggestion of D♭ major (rather than the D major of the model). Sorabji states the theme a first time with each note of the melody appearing as the top note of a chord (p. 3/1/1) **(example 18.4)**. He then repeats it in single notes in the middle register with filigree decoration above (p. 4/3/3), replacing Offenbach's extension on the syllable "Ah!" with a free extension. He writes another variation with the theme first stated in chords, omitting a bar of the original along the way (p. 6/1/1). The last statement, with the theme in the middle part (p. 8/1/1), is not only quite free, but shortened. Towards the end, the composer includes a reference to Chopin's *Minute Waltz* (the motive heard in bars 21–22, beginning with the neighbouring motion F–G♭–F in the right hand, here beginning on G♭). Throughout the movement one hears the original melody "monkeyed about, turned inside out, diverted, perverted, seduced, raped, garotted, broken on the wheel and all by yours ever..."[41]

The second section, a virtuosic "Tarantella" (pp. 10–15), lets short fragments or reminiscences of the Offenbach melody fly by. Although the texture is rather light for Sorabji, being mostly two-voiced, most pianists will find the piece a daunting toccata. The stylized dance, to be played "Vivo" throughout, ends "Briosissimo" on a powerful C♯ major sonority.

The third section, a voluptuous "Notturnino", is full of filigree figurations of the utmost delicacy and rhythmic intricacy (pp. 16–21). There are again vague echoes of the Offenbach motive, most clearly at the return of the opening accompaniment gesture in quavers (p. 20). The movement also contains two long, highly sinuous melodic lines that, with their alternation between groups of very short values and long resting notes, suggest an Oriental atmosphere (pp. 19, 21). A short *Luftpause* leads into a "Cadenzetta" (p. 22), played "Briosissimo"; it is based on an A pedal point throughout except at the end, where it becomes A♭ to serve as a dominant to the tonic sonority of the final section. This two-page "Ripresa" (pp. 23–24) is a graceful and elegant statement of the barcarole; it builds to a climax that quickly gives way to a ***pppp*** ending on D♭.

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[39]Sorabji may also have read the description by Francis M. Guercio, *Sicily, the Garden of the Mediterranean: The Country and Its People* (London: Faber and Faber, 1938 [2nd ed., 1954]), 217, which refers to *fidanzati* "decorously promenading arm in arm or sitting side by side in an open carriage", with their escorts never far away.

[40]Sorabji, "Music", *NEW* 25, no. 25 (5 October 1944): 199.

[41]KSS to FH, 27 January 1958 {1/F.20}.

Rosario d'arabeschi / Sacheverell Sitwell

After the arduous task of orchestrating the *Symphonic Variations for Piano and Orchestra* (see chapter 14), Sorabji took a welcome break by turning his attention to a medium-size work. *Rosario d'arabeschi* (1956; 45 pp.), probably begun in October 1956, was completed on 26 November. Like the manuscript of the *Passeggiata veneziana sopra la Barcarola di Offenbach*, it shows how the composer was then opposed to performances, especially in England: "N.B. Esecuzione pubblica assolutamente PROIBITO sopratutto [*recte* PROIBITA soprattutto] in Inghilterra".[42]

Rosario d'arabeschi is dedicated to Sir Sacheverell Sitwell, 6th Baronet Sitwell (b. Scarborough, Yorkshire, 15 November 1897; d. Towcester, Northamptonshire, 30 September 1988), the youngest member of the trio of trend-setting writers during the 1920s: Dame Edith (1887–1964), and Osbert, 5th Baronet Sitwell (1892–1969).[43] The dedication reads "Per [il] mio caro ed illustre amico / Sacheverell Sitwell".[44] The author of several collections of poetry and books on art, travel, and flowers, he also published books on Bach, Mozart, Liszt, Offenbach, and Domenico Scarlatti. In his enthusiastic review of the well-known *Liszt* (1934), the first full-length biography of the composer in English, Sorabji called the author a "real and true *amateur* in the French and non-derogatory sense of the word", and his judgments "extraordinarily penetrating, perceptive, intelligent and sound".[45] Sitwell visited the composer at Clarence Gate Gardens. He enjoyed his "most vital, amusing and energizing influence in all he said or wrote" and his being a "dangerous duellist" in controversy. The two men discussed music, and Sorabji's love for Liszt prompted Sitwell to write his book on the composer. Sorabji played for him a few times, and Sitwell took him to a concert given by his friend the harpsichordist Violet Gordon Woodhouse (1872–1948), in 1946 or 1947. Sitwell sympathized with Sorabji "over the aristocratic seclusion into which he has withdrawn and which I find both enviable and dignified".[46]

We do not know how, in what context, and through whom the two met, although it may have been in connection with their friendship with Bernard van Dieren.[47] The earliest documented contact dates back from early November 1921, when Sorabji had William Walton and Sitwell at his home and "dosed them" with the *Sonata seconda for Piano*,[48] the first performance of which he was about to give. The first of Sitwell's few surviving letters to Sorabji, dated 30 November 1921, shows that the great admiration the poet and writer already had for him; he enjoyed "the spectacle of your energy" and found that "the huge works you accomplish is most cheerful and encouraging".[49] In November 1925 the latter had tea with Walton, Constant Lambert, and Philip Heseltine at Sitwell's home in Chelsea.[50] There are no documented contacts between this date and 1954, when the writer announced that he would be sending the new edition of his Liszt book.[51] Sometime in 1954 Sorabji must have mentioned the possibility of writing a work for Sitwell, who replied that he would be delighted to have something

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[42]"N.B. Public performance absolutely forbidden, especially in England". The "soprat[t]utto" replaces a crossed-out word looking like "dappertutto" (everywhere).

[43]Extracts from the correspondence of Sacheverell, Osbert, and Edith Sitwell with Sorabji are reproduced by permission of Peters Fraser & Dunlop on behalf of the Sitwell Estates. For more extensive quotations from these letters, see Jonathan Powell's notes for the booklet of the Altarus AIR-CD-9083 recording.

[44]"For my dear and illustrious friend Sacheverell Sitwell".

[45]Sorabji, "Music", *NA* 55, no. 6 (7 June 1934): 67.

[46]Sacheverell Sitwell, "Kaikhosru Sorabji", in programme booklet for a recital by Yonty Solomon, Wigmore Hall, 7 December 1976 (Park Lane Group), 7.

[47]Sitwell, "Mr. B. van Dieren: Composer and Critic", *The Times*, 25 April 1936 (obituary), 14; see also references to van Dieren in *The Hunters and the Hunted* (London: Macmillan, 1947), 126–29.

[48]KSS to PH, 8 November 1921 {*LPH*, no. 32, p. 128}.

[49]Sacheverell Sitwell to KSS, 30 November 1921, 1.

[50]Sarah H. Bradford, *Sacheverell Sitwell: Splendours and Miseries* (London: Sinclair-Stevenson, 1993), 156.

[51]Sacheverell Sitwell to KSS, 11 November 1954.

dedicated to him, adding "so mind you keep your promise".[52] The gift of his *Selected Works of Sacheverell Sitwell* (1955) on 21 November, with an inscription to his "dear friend Kaikhosru", may have been a further reminder. Sorabji probably sent him the dedication of the work in late 1955; the recipient praised the composer's "marvellous energy" and wished to see a catalogue of his music one day.[53] At the end of October 1956, shortly before the completion of *Rosario d'arabeschi*, Sitwell congratulated his friend on his ability for titles and asked how he had come up with the title for the work that was to be dedicated to him.[54] Because of his attraction to the south of Italy, Sitwell was delighted that it included a tarantella; he added that "the name Sacheverell rather suggests the sound", a reference to the *soggetto cavato* of that section.[55]

As well as contributing recollections to the programme booklet of Yonty Solomon's first Sorabji recital, Sitwell participated—along with the music critic Felix Aprahamian, the theatre and opera producer Peter Hall, Alistair Hinton, and Solomon—in a recorded interview (broadcast on 11 June 1977) for London Weekend Television's *Aquarius* programme. A year later he signed the second presentation letter to honour Sorabji. Curiously, he is missing from the first such letter, prepared in 1953, which his brother Osbert signed. The latter probably made Sorabji's acquaintance through "so remarkable a friend" as Bernard van Dieren, whom he had met at the home of the sculptor Jacob Epstein.[56] Only two letters by Osbert have been located: one refers to a letter from the composer, in which he gives an interesting account of his trip to Bombay, and the other thanks him for a magazine article and a pamphlet on Francis George Scott.[57] Edith, the other member of the Sitwell trio, is represented in the correspondence only by a letter from 1923; she had been "looking forward with so much pleasure to sending you" a book containing poems from the well-known series entitled *Façade*.[58] Her gift to Sorabji of one of a series of 150 copies privately printed for the author suggests that they were on very good terms.

Probably between the composition of Sorabji's piece and 1959, Sitwell wrote two poems grouped together under the title *Rosario d'arabeschi*. Entitled "Belle Isis: Ballad of a Rose (that opens like a dancer's tutu)" and "O Rose with Two Hearts", they were first published as part of an anthology of twentieth-century poetry. They became the opening numbers of a collection of fifty poems published in 1972 under the title *Rosario d'arabeschi: Poems and Rose Portraits*. With the composer's permission, Sitwell used "the beautiful title of his invention" for his poems.[59] According to Yonty Solomon's (uncredited) programme notes for his recital on 6 June 1979, the work was inspired by "a painting of Caravaggio called Rosario" hidden somewhere in the Vatican and apparently described by Sitwell in

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[52]Sacheverell Sitwell to KSS, 3 February 1955.

[53]Sacheverell Sitwell to KSS, 3 December 1955.

[54]Sacheverell Sitwell to KSS, 29 October 1956.

[55]Sacheverell Sitwell to KSS, 8 December 1956.

[56]Osbert Sitwell, *Noble Essences; or, Courteous Revelations, Being a Book of Characters and the Fifth and Last Volume of "Left Hand, Right Hand!": An Autobiography* (London: Macmillan, 1950), 24.

[57]Osbert Sitwell to KSS, undated (after February 1932 or January 1934), 30 September 1955. Sacheverell found it "nice of you to get in touch with Osbert again"; Sacheverell Sitwell to KSS, 19 November 1955.

[58]Edith Sitwell to KSS, 3 May 1923. The book in question is the second edition of *Façade* (Kensington: The Favil Press, 1922), which begins with a section entitled "Winter". Sorabji is not mentioned in *Taken Care Of: The Autobiography of Edith Sitwell* (London: Hutchinson, 1965).

[59]The two poems were published as part of *Poems of Our Time, 1900–1960*, ed. Richard Church and Mildred Bozman, modern supplement chosen by Dame Edith Sitwell, Everyman's Library, no. 981 (London: J. M. Dent & Sons; New York: E. P. Dutton, 1959), 322–25. The complete collection was published under the title *Rosario d'arabeschi: Poems and Rose Portraits* (Brackley, Northamptonshire: Smart [Printers], 1972). The poems appear to have been completed in 1959, as they were announced as unpublished in *Journey to the Ends of Time* (London: Cassell, 1959). For Sorabji's permission to use the title, see KSS to Sacheverell Sitwell, 24 November 1971.

1956 in the hope that Sorabji would one day see it. It would be "a frieze of graceful human forms draped like the intertwining and cascading branches of trailing roses".[60] This may in fact be a reference to the *Madonna del rosario* (1607) in the Kunsthistorisches Museum (Vienna), which comes close to the description.

The first of *Rosario d'arabeschi*'s five sections is an "Introito" ([ED]pp. 1–11), a rather solemn title in this context, as Sorabji tended to use it in large-scale creations. It contains two important themes that will reappear later. One, a gruppetto-like figure first stated at the very beginning, will become the "ostinato primo" of the second movement. The other, a *soggetto cavato* based on the dedicatee's name (S = E♭, A, C, H = B, E[v], E[rell]), is briefly introduced by itself (p. 6/1). A set of three further statements is heard later (p. 8/1/1): the theme is presented with its diminution, in slow octaves, and the third statement is transposed at the fourth.

The second movement, an "Ostinato doppio" (pp. 11–27), is based on the two themes heard earlier. The "ostinato primo" is played unadorned by the right hand as a melodic line consisting of thirteen pitches, mostly in quavers. The "ostinato 2" ["ostinato secondo"] is played by the left hand against a second statement of the previous theme, and again by the right hand over a descending scale in sixths; in the latter case Sorabji calls for a "conceptual" E to complete the statement **(example 18.5)**. The first ostinato is varied, then the second one, and so on to the end, with a final statement, no. 64 in the partial numbering. In fact, the movement ends with a statement not of the second ostinato but of the first one, making *sixty-three* variations; for Sorabji, section or page numbering according to numbers with properties was always more important than the actual structure.

The (so-called) "Punta d'organo" (pp. 27–33) is based on an E♭ pedal point standing for the dedicatee's initial (S = Es = E♭).[61] It begins in nocturne style but soon calls for a *saltando* style (p. 31) that develops into a passage to be played "with the most raging and furious bravura". A short "Cadenza" (pp. 33–36), built largely of scales and arpeggios, leads to a "Tarantella" (pp. 36–41) on a theme extracted from the dedicatee's name. We hear a recognizable motive four times on the first page; thereafter its presence can only be guessed at, apart from three short sequential statements (p. 39/4). The final section, entitled "Coda-Ripresa" (pp. 41–44), begins with a restatement of the initial gruppetto-like figure related to the "ostinato primo". The work ends with two statements of Sitwell's name before a final scalar gesture.

Opus clavisymphonicum—Concerto for Piano and Large Orchestra / John Ireland

On 12 March 1957, after a couple of years of work on what would become his largest composition, the *Messa grande sinfonica*, Sorabji needed "a relief from such huge and holy matters". He embarked on *Opus clavisymphonicum—Concerto for Piano and Large Orchestra* (1957–59; 333 pp.), a "VERY elaborate, intricate… Soculo-Byzantine-Iranian mosaic with opus reticulatum ed Alexandrinum thereunto added".[62] Following his standard procedure, he wrote the piano line first on the forty-staff pages that would later receive the instrumental parts; this was completed on 28 April 1957, as the date on this particular line indicates. He also prepared a very carefully written separate piano part (103 pp.) with more detailed and frequent tempo indications and expressive directions. Curiously, in this piano part (p. 21) he added the indication "V.S." (*volti subito*) to indicate that the page should be turned

[60] [Yonty Solomon], programme notes to his recital, Wigmore Hall, 6 June 1979 (Basil Douglas Ltd.), [4].
[61] See the note on Sorabji's incorrect use of "punta d'organo" in the introduction.
[62] KSS to FH, received 12 March 1957 {1/F.19}. See the introduction, where the case of *Opus clavisymphonicum* is discussed at length to show the difficulty of determining how much time Sorabji needed to write a work.

quickly. The presence of silent bars in various places ([MS]pp. 1, 40, 46, 51, 75, 81, 95) suggests that Sorabji prepared it after writing the piano line of the full score. It is curious that he should have spent so much time on a score that was likely to remain on a shelf. After all, he had retired from public life some twenty years earlier and decided not to seek performances; yet the piano part gives evidence of someone with a performance in mind. He also wrote a note in the separate part about the role of the orchestra in relation to the piano, the reasons for writing this part first, and what he expected from a performance.

> *Note:* This work revolves around the Piano as the Solar System round the Sun.[63] The widest latitude *within the framework of the sense of the music* is allowed to the Soloist for whose conception the Conductor is to be guided in his direction of the Orchestral part of the work. Power, massive breadth, combined with subtle variety of tone production and tone colour are called for in the performance of the Solo part.

Sorabji completed the full score on 13 November 1957 after "a year and a half's sustained and unremitting work on it"; this seems to have been considerably less, as he began composition in March, as mentioned above. He felt "in that condition of spiritual 'dryness' of which Fénelon speaks so wonderfully in the Lettres spirituelles", although he did not suffer from "the usual bout of insomnia I normally get after completing a really big work. The funny thing about this creative business is that you MISS your big work when it's done. I mean you miss the regular work at it." As with other large-scale works with orchestra, he was unable to fit the percussion instruments into the full score. He therefore had to prepare the small score (98 pp.), which he probably completed by the end of August 1959.[64] On receiving his bound copy of the solo piano part from Zaehnsdorf, he declared himself to be "interested and surprised at certain changes in the harmonic flavour which is certainly sharper and more astringent it seems to me... I am very pleased with it, but it's not going to be a personal favourite of mine like, for example, *your* Symphony or the Passeggiata Veneziana".[65]

Opus clavisymphonicum is dedicated to the English composer John Ireland (b. Bowdon, Cheshire, 13 August 1879; d. Rock Mill, Washington, Sussex, 12 June 1962). The inscription in the main score reads: "To Dr. John Ireland: / Great Musician: dear and great Friend"; and the one in the piano part: "To my dear friend Dr. John Ireland: / in admiration and respect and affection. / K.S.S. / MCMLVII". We know little about Sorabji's relationships with Ireland, whom he first mentioned in print in an open letter of 1917. He had written that "these three men [Bax, Scott, Ireland] are the only specifically *modern* British composers who are really writers for the piano of the first order".[66] Four years later he seemed less sympathetic to his piano music: "Except for his three *Decorations* [...,] he does not seem to take kindly to the piano as a medium of expression by itself."[67]

Sorabji may have met Ireland through Sir Hugh Percy Allen (1889–1946), then director of the Royal College of Music, where Ireland was professor of composition;[68] they had obviously met by May 1923, when Sorabji dedicated *Opusculum for Orchestra* to him. They also met again on 13 May 1924, when Sorabji gave the first British performance of the *Sonata seconda for Piano* at the British Music Society's

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[63]Sorabji wrote "around", then "round", probably deliberately.

[64]KSS to FH, 15 November 1957 {1/F.19}.

[65]KSS to FH, 27 January 1958 {1/F.20}. The work referred to as "*your* Symphony" is the *Second Symphony for Piano*, which is dedicated to Holliday.

[66]Sorabji, "Our Letter-Box: French Music", *The Musical Standard* 10, no. 251 (20 October 1917): 264.

[67]Sorabji, "Modern Piano Technique", *The Sackbut* 1, no. 3 (July 1920): 116–23; 120. The set entitled *Decorations* dates from 1912–13.

[68]AH to MAR, 10 November 1993.

Contemporary Music Centre. Ireland had already played through for him his Sonata for Cello and Piano (1923), which was also on the programme. Sorabji praised the "inner coherence" of "one of the very finest pieces of modern chamber music". Two years later, after a concert devoted entirely to works by Ireland, he spoke of "music of sincere and sterling merit that does not rely on external or factitious trickery for its effect".[69]

The few references to Ireland in *Around Music* and *Mi contra fa* show a mixed assessment of his music. In a discussion of the modern piano sonata, Sorabji described Ireland's, written in 1920, as "a deeply-felt, concentrated, sincere work, full of serious thought" that "towers like a giant above every other modern British piano sonata". On the other hand, he noted "a certain cramped quality in the writing as of things not properly and freely coming into expression". He was less kind in his discussion of the Concerto in E-flat Major (1930), which "tends to peter out in vain repetition of passage work, and no fructification or burgeoning of ideas seems to take place as it progresses". Although he still had his reservations in the 1940s, Sorabji could speak of "one or two men of marked and powerful individuality, such as Ireland and Goossens".[70] Ireland was one of the signatories of the 1953 presentation letter.[71]

Like most of Sorabji's concertante works, *Opus clavisymphonicum* is scored for a massive orchestra with woodwinds in groups of six (plus bass oboe and contrabass sarrusophone) and a brass section calling for eight horns, six trumpets, four trombones, and two tubas. With reference to the percussion instruments, which he called "the 'kitchen'", he described how he used them.

> Of course they don't hap[pen] on EVERY PAGE by lots of long chalks but I'm noted for my subtle use of percussion though me sez it… delicate little touches on a suspended cymbal with baguette d'éponge… a tiny tap with either a side drum stick or a triangle beater if you want a metallic edge to touch off a string tremolo or something… of course it's all spice and Cayenne pepper and has to be used with a Haute Cuisine discretion![72]

The work is divided into two parts, the second of which is divided into three large sections. The first part (full score: ^{MS}pp. 1–144; piano part: ^{MS}pp. 1–46) is simply marked "Vivo". As usual, the piano is active throughout, with hardly a break; it enters after a few orchestral bars with an extended "brioso" peal of chords over a C♯ pedal point. A corresponding passage returns near the end of the movement, this time mostly over an E♭ pedal point (pp. 127–30; 40–41). Between these two passages is a section in nocturne style announced by the typical Sorabjian instruction "Il tutto in un ambiente di dolcezza, calore e morbidezza profumata e voluttuosa" (pp. 106–23; 34–40).[73] The movement ends *quasi niente* with a unifying return to the C♯ (major) sonority of the beginning.

The second part begins with a "Toccata" (pp. 145–244; 46–75). The piano enters with a cadenza-like section after forty-two bars of orchestral introduction in *perpetuum mobile* style—a rare occurrence of a substantial break for the soloist. Sorabji incorporates a puzzling reference in the right-hand part by writing the note names D–E–F–A–C–E–G–A above said notes, which are the last notes of

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[69]Sorabji, "Music", *NA* 35, no. 7 (12 June 1924): 79–81; 80; "Music", *NA* 39, no. 7 (17 June 1926): 75.

[70]Sorabji, "The Modern Piano Sonata", in *AM*, 52–65; 64; "The Modern Piano Concerto", in *AM*, 66–77; 75; "Organic and Inorganic Form", in *MCF*, 47–52; 49.

[71]For Felix Aprahamian's recollections of copies of some of Sorabji's scores inscribed to Ireland that found their way to Foyles (the well-known London bookshop) in the early 1940s, see Lewis Foreman, "Interviews with Friends and Contemporaries of John Ireland: Felix Aprahamian, Alan Bush, Charles Markes, Angus Morrison and Rev. Kenneth Thompson", in *The John Ireland Companion*, ed. Lewis Foreman (Woodbridge, Suffolk: The Boydell Press, 2011), 64–78; 66.

[72]KSS to FH, 15 November 1957 {1/F.19}.

[73]"All to be played in a perfumed and voluptuous atmosphere of softness, warmth, and delicacy".

eight groups of four semiquavers (pp. 165–66; 50) **(example 18.6)**; could this be a reference to a passage in Ireland's music? After a while he inserts a cadenza for the soloist (pp. 206–12; 63–65), in which only the strings play an E♭–E♮ pedal point in tremolos; the piano part consists of a very quick movement of alternating notes (then octaves, sixths, and sixth chords) an octave apart. Other instruments join in gradually as the passage nears the end.

This is followed by a "Cadenza fugata" (pp. 244–73; 75–81) on a free subject, with no connection to the musical letters of the dedicatee's name. After several pages of intricate contrapuntal writing in which the orchestral instruments gradually join in, the soloist bursts into a chordal cadenza, again over a C♯ pedal point, recalling the opening of the first part. A coda of twenty-seven bars in *perpetuum mobile* concludes this toccata.

The final "Adagio-Epilogo" (pp. 273–333; 82–103) contains some passages worth noting. One pits a theme in long note values in the bass against a series of chords in quavers in the right hand; the number of As and Ds in the bass suggests a connection with the name "I*rela*n*d*" (pp. 298–99; 91). Another is a series of eleven statements of a one-bar ostinato, played with increasing intensity and fullness of texture as a final crescendo (pp. 328–31; 100–102); this ostinato is in fact in a return of a melodic line heard a few times since the beginning of the work (pp. 72, 100, 325; 23/2, 32/3, 99/3). A final one is a section on a C♯ pedal (pp. 310–13; 95–96); this pedal recurs at the very end of the work, played with the low notes of the Bösendorfer keyboard, over which, mysteriously and solemnly, a series of triads are heard. Like the first movement, this one ends very softly on a C♯ major sonority, which is most important in this work.

Intensity of Friendship in a Tower of Granite

Like Alkan, one of his favourite composers, Sorabji became a misanthrope: he lived essentially as a recluse, even before moving from London in the early 1950s. He had the "disposition of a solitary" and never ceased to thank God for being an only child; he felt a "*very real* and intense shyness" and believed that "mixing with crowd scatters and diffuses the concentrated and directed trains of one's thought".[74] As a young adult, he had no desire for young companionship; to have brothers or sisters would have made him "expire with rage or to be utterly consumed with jealousy".[75] He had no known friend until he began his correspondence with Philip Heseltine in late 1913. Throughout his adult life he could never tolerate the presence of more than a few people at a time (usually only trusted friends). In 1931 he turned down an invitation from the French scholar Denis Saurat, to whom he was to dedicate his *Quintet II for Piano and String Quartet*, to meet Alfred Richard Orage, Christopher Murray Grieve, and two others. He felt unable to stand such a crowd and saw "no reason whatever for making myself miserable to amuse other people". Saurat tried his hand again a few months later, and Sorabji agreed to the invitation only on his friend's sworn promise that only he and Grieve would be present.[76]

Sorabji recalled staying at the Bankes Arms Hotel during a summer holiday in 1930, when there was a large influx of newcomers. He overheard people commenting that he was strange and "never comes into the public sitting rooms when there is anyone there or talks much to anybody; he's very reserved and standoffish, isn't he?"

> Good! That's what one *wants* them to realize, that they are *not wanted*, and not only *not wanted* but positively objected to. My little habit of marching out of the public rooms when anyone else in is so pointed and marked that it is calculated (I trust!) to get even through an English hide or carapace! You know I *can't* talk to these people, Erik! They

[74]KSS to EC, 18 April 1930, 13 (section dated 25 April).
[75]KSS to PH, 6 January 1914 {*LPH*, no. 4, p. 46}.
[76]KSS to EC, 18 September 1931, 9; KSS to EC, 24 January 1932, 9 (section dated 22 February).

> and I speak different languages, think entirely different things; in contact with them I really feel a member of a different species altogether, and literally like a fish out of water. Spiritually one gasps for breath in the close stuffy atmosphere wherein such people live more and have their being. No, decidedly I am not a mixer and as I get older I get more and more like my mother in that respect; she is *much* worse than even I am.[77]

In 1944 Sorabji's dislike of "gatherings of more than one person" was still very present and he would not tolerate this either in his house or elsewhere; this mania for privacy increased with age.[78] He also detested "this cheap contemporary tasteless familiarity and impertinence that calls you by your Christian name five minutes after meeting you" or being addressed "as Sorabji tout court without the polite prefix".[79] In later years he recalled how, "a few years since at a public fête" (which is somewhat surprising for such a misanthrope), he dealt with the matter by elaborating on the familiar and affectionate names he liked.

> [Someone] addressed me as "Hullow Sorabji, fancy seeing YI here!" My reply: "I don't know you, Sir, and I don't wish to, BUT I expect to be addressed by those who are NOT my friends by the usual polite prefix or, if they don't know my name, as "SIR", as is the custom in every country with the age-old tradition of Catholic civilization, in Europe that is. He was very taken aback, but evidently it DID get home, for he said, "Oh, I beg your pardon, Sir." Now the trouble with the Anglo-Saxons is that they think it obsequious to address anybody as SIR, whereas everywhere else, even among the Protestant Heresy–infected places such as the Teutonic lands and such, you say "Mein Herr". My friends, my REAL friends, are free to call me what they like, but I like them to call me, if my long forename is too much of a mouthful, just K, as my dear Erik Chisholm always did, and my intimates do. One friend used to call me KOKO, which was rather nice, and another, the wife of a very dear friend, KAH, which I also quite fancied![80]

One reason why Sorabji was alone in his granite tower was his lack of interest in meeting people. When asked if he had tried to meet Alfredo Casella during a trip to Italy, he replied:

> No, my dear, I did *not* see Casella nor did I make any attempt to do so. I have long since resolved *never* again under *any* circumstances to seek the notice of or force myself on the attention of any musicians whatsoever. The sort of people who do *that* sort of thing are not the sort of people for *me* to imitate nor for one to associate with—and what they get from it is *less than nothing* when they do it. In any case it is humiliating and undignified. Morever I dislike musicians intensely as you know, and if it were a choice between an insurance agent and a musician, I think I should prefer the insurance agent![81]

However strong his desire for privacy may have been, Sorabji certainly felt much loneliness, and he was to compensate throughout his life with an intensity of friendship for a few chosen people. He was "not given easily to making friends, being an exclusive creature, but when I do, I like them for *keeps*". Nothing in the world would make him "sacrifice one single hair of the heads" of those dear to him.[82]

Most of Sorabji's friends were English or else Scottish, such as Erik Chisholm, Christopher Murray Grieve, Francis George Scott, and Ronald Stevenson; most were also of his own age. Apart from Norman

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[77]KSS to EC, August 1930, 14–15 (section dated 24 August).

[78]KSS to P. J. Lamb, 30 April 1944; KSS to ABP, 21 April 1969.

[79]KSS to CE, 15 January 1960.

[80]KSS to NG, 15 December 1980 {19/F.19}, 1. The signature block of the letter reads: "Kaikhosru, ossia (1) K., ossia (2) KA (pronounced KAH), ossia (3) Koko. A piacere!!" There is no clue as to who called him "Kah" or "Koko". In his short story "Gianandrea and Stephen", Sorabji referred to himself as "Kaiko" (see chapter 1), clearly the most intimate form, and Mera Sett, in 1922, dedicated a chapter of his book *Sculptured Melodies* to "Kaikoo Sorabji" (see chapter 23). On his attitude to polite forms of address, see also KSS to KD, 26 September 1977 {Derus S12, p. 52} and 29 September 1977 {Derus S13, p. 55}.

[81]KSS to EC, undated (5 April 1931?), 5.

[82]KSS to FH, 12 October 1940 {1/F2.}, 12 December 1951 {1/F.13}.

Gentieu, with whom he had corresponded since the mid-1940s, he did not make friends in North America until around 1970. Apart from these people (Donald Garvelmann, Kenneth Derus, and Michael Habermann in the United States, and Paul Rapoport in Canada, although he was studying in the United States at the time), it was only during the last fifteen years of his life that he extended his friendship to members of a younger generation, Alistair Hinton being the first to enjoy his trust and affection. From this time onwards, Sorabji befriended young people in their twenties such as Anthony Burton-Page and Clive Spencer-Bentley, to both of whom he dedicated short works. Other members of the younger generation who were able to approach him were Yonty Solomon and Geoffrey Douglas Madge, who received permission to record his music.

Sorabji seems to have been warm and welcoming, provided he knew in advance what to expect and had agreed to a visit. When planning a short stay at the Beckwell House pension in London, he asked Ronald Stevenson to let him know where he could be reached, warning: "No chance calls please!"[83] As mentioned in chapter 17, he had affixed to his gateposts and on the wall to the left of his front porch various "minatory and prohibiting notices" against such callers.

Several of Sorabji's close acquaintances were active in the field of music, although being a musician was the last reason for which he would entertain a relationship. Twenty of the fifty-four people who received a dedication of a musical work are not known to have practised music. Sorabji made friends with people "because I *like them as persons* and for no other reason on this earth..." He often used the Italian word *simpatico* to describe the personality of a friend. For him it meant much more than "sympathetic": "a person may be 'sympathetic' to you whose guts you may hate, as much as he really hates yours!"[84]

One may wonder how Sorabji behaved towards strangers in the street or in shops, restaurants, and concert halls. Unfortunately, no surviving document allows us to document this aspect of his personality. We are therefore left with his attitude as he expressed it in writing. His close friends, however, held him in high esteem. Clinton Gray-Fisk, writing in 1960, recalled how he was "very different from the aloof composer, caustic critic and author of innumerable letters castigating and correcting all and sundry"; he referred to his loyalty, generosity, and encyclopedic yet witty erudition.[85] Above all qualities, Sorabji praised warmth and, when he found it in a friend, he cherished him intensely.[86] The word "him" is most appropriate here because Sorabji had few female friends apart from Emily Edroff-Smith, a friend of his mother's, and Denise Vicars, who did much to make his life easier in his old age. As we saw in chapter 9, he was not particularly fond of women. He once reacted to receiving a piece of cake from a friend's wedding ceremony by saying, "so the guillotine falls and puts an end to another friendship in the usual manner", although he did not go so far as to refuse to eat the cake.[87] However, Sorabji's best friends—Peterkin, Chisholm, Holliday, Hinton—were all married; so he was able to "tolerate" the marital status of his friends. On the other hand, he despised sentimentality, which for him meant "to vamp up emotions one does not feel". His emotions were "too deep, real, if anything", and he did not mind this reality, even at the cost of being called "an *exalté*, a transcendentalistic idealist".[88]

Writing to Christopher Murray Grieve in 1954, he said that the "simpatia" of those people "who are mine and to whom I belong" was "vital to one of my temperament", adding how grateful he was to "le

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[83]KSS to RS, 22 January 1961.
[84]KSS to CE, 3 September 1970, 23 July 1971.
[85]Clinton Gray-Fisk, "Kaikhosru Shapurji Sorabji", *MT* 101, no. 1406 (April 1960): 230–32; 232.
[86]KSS to CE, 27 September 1951.
[87]KSS to EC, 3 June 1930, 10 (section dated 7 June).
[88]KSS to EC, 8 April 1930, 6 (section dated 10 April).

bon Dieu for you all I say to myself ever ever again... AND I MEAN IT WITH ALL MY MIGHT."[89] In 1976 he insisted that "the affection and love of my friends is [a] *vital need* to me and I can't do without it". However, he was not an easy person to deal with and often referred to his fictional Sicilian background in this context: "As dear Mumsie used to say 'We Sicilians never forget those who are good and nice to us' and, with lightning darting glances, 'We never forget those who aren't'." This was his explanation for his being "a highly charged emotional lot" for whom the affection of friends was a spiritual necessity.[90]

The "misunderstanding of the herd" meant nothing to Sorabji, who needed only the "understanding sympathy and regard of the *few*". Among his intimate friends, "the most intellectually distinguished admire and appreciate ME".[91] He therefore enjoyed their devotion to his music: Chisholm inviting him to play his own works in Glasgow, Holliday making home recordings of his playing, and Hinton rekindling his interest in composition. Having softened his attitude to performance, he enjoyed listening to the playing of a few select people he had come to trust, artists who were convinced of the validity of the vast amount of music he had produced in isolation. He enjoyed hearing how much they admired him, and once referred to a supposed characteristic of Leo people (like himself, whose original given name was Leon) who "mop up flattery like a cat cream, and that you can lay it on with a bull-dozer so to speak". In 1953, when Holliday offered him a presentation letter "letting me [know] what a marvellous person I was", he commented: "I was fully aware of it already... but it was nice of them to point it out to me again!..."[92] After reading "gorgeous references" to himself in his friend Christopher Murray Grieve's book *Lucky Poet* (1943), he resorted, as he so often did, to juxtaposing praise for himself with disparaging comments about others.

> THIS is the praise that is of priceless worth to me, praise of those like yourself, of the Brahmin caste... as for the baseborn Shudras, I shun their approval with horror and disgust and should consider myself polluted and defiled if they had ONE GOOD WORD TO SAY OF ME.[93]

Chance callers, as mentioned above, did not have a good time with Sorabji. Writing to him in advance did not necessarily mean success, although sometimes it did. One of the few people who managed to enter his "tower of granite",[94] if only for a few hours, was the Canadian organist and pianist George Mackenzie Brewer (1889–1947). After reading one of Sorabji's open letters, he wrote to the composer that he had bought some of his scores and wanted to meet him during his forthcoming trip to London. Sorabji surprisingly welcomed Brewer, who spent three hours with him at his flat on 10 July 1923, where he was able to examine his manuscripts as well as the proofs of the *Sonata seconda* and experience his piano playing. He devoted seven pages (of twenty-six lines) of his travel diary to this meeting, giving detailed notes on the composer's supposed origins, his being able to devote himself entirely to composition without the need for employment and without having to undergo the "sordid musical training" to which English students were subjected, his meeting with Busoni, his approach to Sir Henry Wood for performances of music with orchestra (see chapter 7), his study of musical composition, and his pianos. He concluded that Sorabji was "composing stuff that is as far in advance

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[89]KSS to CMG, 3 January 1954.
[90]KSS to FH, 24 March 1976 {3/F.6}, 20 August 1973 {3/F.4}; KSS to CE, 27 September 1961.
[91]KSS to EC, 8 April 1930, 2.
[92]KSS to CE, 31 March 1953, 23 January 1954.
[93]KSS to CMG, 28 October 1943.
[94]Sorabji, "'Il gran rifiuto'", in *MCF*, 141–48; 145 (in the section "Reasons for living in a Granite Tower").

of his time as Scriabin's was" and sided with Busoni, encouraging him rather than regarding him as a "faddist".[95]

The few people who were allowed into Sorabji's closed circle were apparently charmed by his warmth and affectionate nature. However, the many harsh comments in his correspondence and open letters, the minatory notices outside his house, the disparaging remarks about those who did not share his views, all point to a character with whom it must have been difficult to live unless, for some reason, one happened to find favour with him. Musicians were a favourite target, and his attitude towards (most of) them can be adequately expressed by the following assessment.

> I had rather talk to a tram-conductor or a postman than most musicians! From all of which misanthropic sourness you will deduce the onset of vinegary middle-age... may be... I have never been more serene... nor more contemptuous of my fellow-creatures... the grotesque obscenity of their patriotistic war-mongering and flag-wagging and democracy-mongering is equalled only by their crass besotment [*recte* besottedness] by every bit of feeble propaganda addressed to the greatest stupidity of the greatest number, which means, of course, that the more imbecile, the more utterly extravagant and irrational it is the more successful it will be as dope for the dupes.[96]

[95]George Mackenzie Brewer, travel diary, summer 1923 (manuscript), 37–43. See also Brewer to KSS, 14 May, 4 June, 8 June, 7 December 1923, and 16 July 1924 {LAC}; Sorabji's letters to Brewer have not been preserved. See Lorne Huston and Marie-Thérèse Lefebvre, "Rencontre avec le compositeur Kaikhosru Shapurji Sorabji", in *George M. Brewer et le milieu culturel anglophone montréalais, 1900–1950* (Québec: Les éditions du Septentrion, 2020), 112–18.

[96]KSS to CMG, 9 November 1941.

19 / 1960–61 ■ Completing the *magnum opus*

Christopher Murray Grieve (Hugh MacDiarmid) and the "Sorabji Symposium"

Sorabji had three great Scottish friends of his generation: the composer Francis George Scott, to whom he dedicated the *Sonata IV for Piano*; Erik Chisholm, the composer to whom he sent so many long letters; and the poet and essayist Christopher Murray Grieve (b. Langholm, Dumfriesshire, 11 August 1892; d. Edinburgh, 9 September 1978). Best known for his book-length poem *A Drunk Man Looks at the Thistle* (1926), Grieve wrote under the pseudonym of Hugh MacDiarmid in both English and "synthetic Scots".

Sorabji met Grieve around 1921 in Chingford (where he himself was born) at the home of the playwright and poet George Reston Malloch (1875–1953), whose wife was a relative of a friend of Francis George Scott, whom he also met for the first time on that occasion. Grieve had been a pupil of the latter, who had once taught English and primary subjects in Langholm (indeed, several of his poems were later set to music by his former teacher). Thirty-five years or so later, he had to give Sorabji "pride of place", and thinking of him or seeing him brought back the thrill of that first meeting.[1] The composer's writings often served as a starting point for discussions between Grieve and Scott.[2] The former, whom Sorabji described as a "very able colleague",[3] had been a regular reader of the *New Age* since 1908, to which he later became a major contributor. He had a great admiration for its founder, Alfred Richard Orage, and for a member of his circle, the French writer on literature Denis Saurat, who was to become a dedicatee of Sorabji.[4] Grieve later described Saurat, Sorabji, Scott, and Orage as "by far the most remarkable of all the men" he had known. He ranked the first three among "the finest minds Great Britain has had in my lifetime", placing them above any others except T. S. Eliot.[5]

The first meeting between Sorabji and Grieve led to further contacts. In May 1926 the latter thanked the composer for sending him a copy of the *Symphony [no. 1] for Organ* with the inscription "to my two selves".[6] In late June 1930 Sorabji, obviously in a misanthropic mood, dedicated his *Opus clavicembalisticum* to both Grieve and MacDiarmid, "likewise to the everlasting glory of those Few MEN Blessed and sanctified in the Curses and Execrations of those MANY—Whose Praise is Eternal Damnation". Grieve later much approved of this phrase, given that he had more enemies than friends

[1]Hugh MacDiarmid, "Kaikhosru Shapurji Sorabji", in *The Company I've Kept* (London: Hutchinson, 1966; Berkeley and Los Angeles: University of California Press, 1967), 38–70, 38.

[2]CMG to KSS, 25 May 1926, 2.

[3]Sorabji, "Music", *NA* 36, no. 19 (5 March 1925): 224–25; 224.

[4]See MacDiarmid, *The Company I've Kept*, 271–74 (in a chapter entitled "Strange Bedfellows"), for his recollections of the members of Orage's circle and the newspapers he founded.

[5]MacDiarmid, *Francis George Scott: An Essay on the Occasion of His Seventy-Fifth Birthday, 25th January 1955* (Edinburgh: M. Macdonald, 1955), 4, 6.

[6]CMG to KSS, 25 May 1926, 1.

in Scotland.[7] In January 1932 he thanked the composer for sending him a dedication and presentation copy of his piano work by dedicating to him a twelve-line poem about remembering the Great Flood entitled *Cheville*.[8] Grieve was certainly responsible for Sorabji being able to publish *Around Music* with the Unicorn Press (see chapter 11). On 6 June 1952 Sorabji was expected to attend a recital of songs by Francis George Scott given at the Institute of Contemporary Arts, where Grieve, who was to make introductory remarks, was looking forward to seeing him.[9]

Grieve praised Sorabji as "a composer of amazing gifts" and as "one of the most authoritative of living judges of singers and songs".[10] Returning the compliment, Sorabji described him as "another outstanding example of that immense temperamental drive and gusto that is to-day so much more prevalent across the frontier between England and Scotland". He also referred to the "prodigious audacity and technical virtuosity" of his versification, which made any convincing setting of his lines "an achievement almost as great as that of the lines themselves".[11] In 1955 Sorabji sent Grieve some words of appreciation for his recent poem *In memoriam James Joyce*; the writer replied by sending a copy of his centenary essay on Scott, in which Sorabji would see how important he was in his mind.[12] On 1 December 1959 Grieve attended a partial private performance of *Opus clavicembalisticum* by John Ogdon at the West Linton home of the Scottish composer Ronald Stevenson.[13]

Stevenson, Ogdon, and Grieve met again at Stevenson's house sometime in 1961 to record a discussion of Sorabji intended to form the last part of a *Festschrift* in his honour.[14] A stenographer's transcription of this conversation was published in an abridged version under the title "Sorabji Symposium" in *Gambit: Edinburgh University Review* in 1965.[15] The biographical note that introduced the published symposium prompted Sorabji to lash out at the editor, telling him how he resented "the kind of vulgar impertinent pryings, nosings and snortings into matters which we regard as nobody's business but ours".[16]

Grieve reproduced the transcript of the conversation in his autobiographical *The Company I've Kept*, appending the text of an essay of his on Sorabji "as a critic and great musicologist".[17] In the early 1960s Stevenson had prepared a draft typescript entitled *Sorabji, Composer and Critic: A Study in Solitude*, containing MacDiarmid's essay, a contribution by himself and one by Ogdon, and the recorded

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[7]MacDiarmid, *Lucky Poet: A Self-Study in Literature and Political Ideas; being the Autobiography of Hugh MacDiarmid (Christopher Murray Grieve)* (London: Methuen, 1943), 43.

[8]CMG to KSS, 5 January 1932, 1, reproduced in full in *The Letters of Hugh MacDiarmid*, ed. Alan Bold (London: Hamilton; Athens: The University of Georgia Press, 1984), 839–40; *Collected Poems of Hugh MacDiarmid*, rev. ed. by John C. Weston (New York: The Macmillan Company; London: Collier-Macmillan, 1967), 276 (no. 7 out of 11 in "Scots Unbound and Other Poems"); see also *Scots Unbound and Other Poems* (Stirling: Eneas Mackay, 1932), 29. The poem was also published separately in *The Plain-Dealer: A Magazine Devoted to Literature, Book-Collecting, Bibliography and Arts* (London) 1, no. 1 (1933).

[9]CMG to Francis George Scott, in Hugh MacDiarmid, *New Selected Letters*, ed. Dorian Grieve, Owen Dudley Edwards, and Alan Riach (Manchester: Carcanet Press, 2001), 294–95; 294 (1950s, no. 28).

[10]MacDiarmid, *Lucky Poet*, 102.

[11]Sorabji, "The Songs of Francis George Scott", in *MCF*, 217–23; 217, 221.

[12]CMG to KSS, 19 August 1955, 1. Sorabji is mentioned or discussed in MacDiarmid, *Francis George Scott*, 4, 5, 6, 26–30.

[13]John Ogdon to KSS, 20 May 1961 {2/F.2}. Six photographs taken by the German-born Edinburgh painter Helmut Petzsch (1920–2008) are reproduced in the booklet (pp. 12–15) accompanying Ogdon's Altarus recording.

[14]Ronald Stevenson, "O I Hae Silence Left: Memories of Valda Grieve", *Chapman: Scotland's Quality Literary Magazine* 58 (Autumn 1989): 1–4; 1.

[15]"Sorabji Symposium", *Gambit: Edinburgh University Review*, Summer 1965: 4–12. Sorabji reacted by writing an unpublished essay entitled "Some Comments upon Remarks of Messrs. Stevenson and Ogdon in 'Gambit' (Summer no. 1965)", appended to KSS to RS, 29 November 1965.

[16]KSS to the Editor, *Gambit*, 18 June 1965 {2/F.6}. This letter is referred to in KSS to CMG, 18 June 1965, 1.

[17]MacDiarmid, "Kaikhosru Shapurji Sorabji", in *The Company I've Kept*, 38–70. The symposium appears on pp. 38–56, and the essay on pp. 56–70.

discussion, plus an index.[18] Sorabji read and annotated Stevenson's essay, which included an analysis of *Opus clavicembalisticum*. He wrote to the author, asking for a few copies of his essay "Tower of Silence" (part of his contribution to the book mentioned above), as many people were interested in reading it.[19] Although he appreciated the time and effort Stevenson had put into his essay, he was very concerned that he might not be aware of his later, and more important, unpublished music.[20] Returning to the subject a few years later, Sorabji praised the analysis of *Opus clavicembalisticum* and the historical introduction.[21] Grieve's last contact with Sorabji was in June 1977, after the London Weekend Television interview (see chapter 22). After the poet's death, he sent a condolence card to his second wife, Valda (1906–89, née Trevlyn).[22]

Third Symphony for Piano Solo / George Richards

Probably some time after August 1959, when he completed *Opus clavisymphonicum—Concerto for Piano and Large Orchestra*, Sorabji began work on a *Third Symphony for Piano Solo* (1959–60; 144 pp.), the second shortest such work in his entire output. When he completed it on 22 February 1960, he wrote of it as "one enormous continuous movement incorporating an 81-fold passacaglia, and a couple of very free fugati… based on several score motives. A good work though I don't think I am going to like it awful much—though I'm very well *satisfied* with it as a work."[23] To Frank Holliday he said, adding some so-called coarse language: "I'm not sure that I like it… but I *thought* it like that, and like that it's going to stay… it's fucking good though I sez it but not exactly ingratiating except in the occasional hothouse sultry bits so typical of me in certain moods."[24] In reply to Ronald Stevenson, to whom he had lent the autograph and who had said "very nice things about it", he wrote that he had "always rather disliked it".[25]

The dedication reads: "All'amico egregio: / George Richards / 'sempre con fé sincera'", the quoted phrase being from the aria "Vissi d'arte" in act 2 of *Tosca* (1900) by Giacomo Puccini (1858–1924).[26] Edward George Richards (b. Christchurch, Hampshire, 5 November 1895; d. Poole, Dorset, July–September 1974), of whom very little is known, married the architect Elisabeth Whitworth Scott (1898–1972) in 1936, best known as the designer of the Shakespeare Memorial Theatre in Stratford (1928–32).[27] Scott was a great-niece of Sir George Gilbert Scott (1811–78), who designed the Albert

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[18]MacDiarmid's text is entitled "Sorabji, the Critic and the Man: Alone on a Mountain Top" (pp. 1–16); Stevenson's essay "Sorabji, the Musician and the Music" (pp. 17–94), and Ogdon's "Kaikhosru Sorabji and Hermann Melville" (pp. 95–101). These are followed by "Dialogue towards a Conclusion (*quasi finale*) (transcript of a tape-recording)" (pp. 102–26) and the index (pp. 127–35). Stevenson gave the typescript to the National Library of Scotland (Acc. 10568); there is also a copy in SA. Grieve praised Ogdon's essay and wondered how his could "stand alongside it"; CMG to RS, 15 August 1961, in MacDiarmid, *New Selected Letters*, 365–66 (1960s, no. 14). He gave an enthusiastic account of the "spontaneous" recording to the artist Barbara Niven (1896–1972); CMG to Niven, 6 July 1962, in ibid., 374–75; 374 (1960s, no. 25); see also CMG to KSS, 27 June 1965, in ibid., 408–9; 408 (1960s, no. 70).

[19]KSS to RS, 11 June 1961.

[20]KSS to FH, 10 August 1961 {2/F.2}.

[21]KSS to FH, 20 September 1965 {2/F.6}; see also KSS to FH, 16 January 1968 {2/F.9}.

[22]KSS to Mrs. Christopher Murray Grieve, 11 September 1978 {National Library of Scotland, M-Z & unidentified, fol. 89 (of 156)}.

[23]KSS to EC, 18 February 1960, 1.

[24]KSS to FH, 9 July 1960 {2/F.1}.

[25]KSS to RS, 1 May 1980, 2.

[26]"To the distinguished friend: George Richards, 'ever in pure faith'". Sorabji used the words from Puccini's operas in several letters to friends.

[27]For Richards's place and year of birth, see https://www.findmypast.co.uk/transcript?id=BMD%2FB%2F1895%2F4%2FAZ%2F000462%2F270; for his birth date and death place and year, see https://www.findmypast.co.uk/transcript?id=BMD%2FD%2F1974%2F3%2FAZ%2F000876%2F042.

Memorial and the St. Pancras Station, and a second cousin of Sir Giles Gilbert Scott (1880–1960), whose name is associated with the design of Liverpool Cathedral. In 1925 Richards's sister Ursula Ella (1902–51) married Maitland Scott (1887–1942), the brother of the Newbury surgeon Thomas Gilbert Scott (1903–79), whose memoirs mention him briefly. Richards and Scott were evacuated at the start of World War II to Bournemouth and eventually divorced, probably after the 1960s. Scott, still working as an architect, was involved with the design of the Boscombe Pier at that time.[28] Richards seems never to have worked, although he spent much of his time writing open letters to newspapers.[29] He was "a character and a half, if ever there was one".[30]

Fourteen letters from Sorabji to Richards, written between 1934 and 1941, have survived. The first one shows the composer making the first move, belatedly thanking his correspondent for an appreciative note on his review of a concert conducted by Sir Thomas Beecham and asking if he might join him and "have discourse for a space". They probably met for lunch in Corfe Castle shortly afterwards; Sorabji was "full of curiosity to know what are the 'topics on which you would have liked to sound me'".[31] Although Richards was then living (or holidaying) in nearby Parkstone, further contacts must have taken place in London, where Richards lived at 3 St. George's Terrace, a thirty-minute walk through Regent's Park from Sorabji's flat.[32]

An open letter written by Richards to the *New English Weekly* in 1937 shows him to be very appreciative of its "distinguished and indispensable musical critic".[33] Furthermore, a letter from 1940 tells us that Sorabji had sought "the invaluable help of your Lady Wife" in advising the widow of his friend Edward Clarke Ashworth, whose father was an architect, on the financial help that professional associations might offer.[34] Richards's name appears in 1953 as one of the signatories of the first presentation letter and then in 1960 as the dedicatee of the *Third Symphony for Piano Solo*. The two men must have met occasionally in the 1950s, as Richards was then living in Poole (at 12a Mount Pleasant Road, in a house called Blenheim), a twenty-minute drive from Corfe Castle.[35]

The opening section ([ED]bars 1–48) of the one-movement *Third Symphony for Piano Solo*, as is often the case in Sorabji's large-scale works, states various numbered motives: here, fifty-four plus thirteen additional ones (18a, 25a, etc.). These thematic ideas recur in various guises over the following pages, with each statement duly identified. The very first idea, a peal of ***ff*** chords in a G major context, has a top part with a D as the highest note, played five times with an accent; the G would stand for George,

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[28]See Sarah Collins Howard, "Elisabeth Whitworth Scott (1892–1972): The Architect of the Shakespeare Memorial Theatre" (Master of Philosophy, University of Bath, Department of Architecture and Civil Engineering, 2009), 81–82, 191, 200, https://purehost.bath.ac.uk/ws/portalfiles/portal/187945859/UnivBath_MPhil_2009_S_Howard.pdf; and Julia Gatley, "Alison Shepherd (née Sleigh), ARIBA: 'Success of New Zealand Lady Student' Revisited", *Fabrications: The Journal of the Society of Architectural Historians, Australia and New Zealand* 17, no. 1 (2007): 20–45; 36, 44n72. See also Thomas Gilbert Scott, *A New Forest Childhood, 1903–1916*, ed. Caroline Taylor ([Ilminster]: Cudworth Press, 2007; original edition, 2003), Kindle edition (without pictures, family tree, and map) based on the second printing (2007); the editor's father was Sir George Gilbert Scott's first cousin.

[29]For a few notes on Richards as part of an article on Scott, see Gillian Darley, "A Stage of Her Own", *The Guardian*, 29 January 2011, http://www.guardian.co.uk/artanddesign/2011/jan/29/elisabeth-scott-royal-shakespeare-theatre. The following letters by Richards are listed in the digital archive of the *Times*: "Warmer Trains", 3 February 1954; "Then and Now", 28 May 1956; "Cultural Exchanges with Russia", 21 January 1957; "Third Programme", 25 April 1957; "Always the Same", 15 October 1959. See also "Films of 1944", *Time and Tide*, January 1945, and the following letters to the *Spectator*: "Social Lepers or Sick Men", 20 November 1953; untitled, 5 December 1958; "Tailpiece", 13 July 1974.

[30]*RN* (23–26 May 1969), 1 {2/F. 10}.

[31]KSS to GR, 21 July 1934 and 1 August 1934. The review is "Music", *NA* 54, no. 17 (22 February 1934): 200–201.

[32]KSS to GR, 10 November 1936.

[33]George Richards, "Correspondence: Our Musical Critic", *NEW* 10, no. 16 (28 January 1937): 320.

[34]KSS to GR, 2 March 1940.

[35]GR to FH, 12 November 1952 {7/F.8}. Richards had visited Sorabji in August 1952 and intended to pay further visits.

and D (i.e., *ré*) for Richards. This long development is followed by a six-voice fugue on a dotted subject (bars 323–469), with the relentless energy that characterizes Sorabji's works of this kind in rapid tempo **(example 19.1)**. It is interrupted by a contrasting interlude (bars 470–564) not marked as such, which calls for different styles: virtuosic free writing (bars 470–79, 491–512, 530–64), sensuous nocturne style (bars 480–90), and fragmented and capricious writing (bars 513–29). Sorabji then continues with a second fugue on a new subject (bars 565–666). This develops into a chordal climax followed by a very brief interlude on a C♯ pedal leading into a "Passacaglia finale" (bars 667–837), a label written in a later hand. The passacaglia, built on a very simple two-bar theme in semibreves, contains not the eighty-one variations intended by the composer, but eighty-two (there are two variations numbered 39). It is a much less ambitious work than other large-scale compositions, and much less demanding in terms of virtuosity and stamina, inasmuch as a work of 144 pages can be described as not demanding. Contrary to his usual practice, Sorabji did not label the fugue and the passacaglia, and there is barely a pause before each of these substantial sections begins.

Suggested Bell-Chorale for St. Luke's Carillon

Obviously as a very brief respite from the composition of the *Messa grande sinfonica*, his major project in the late 1950s, Sorabji wrote the *Suggested Bell-Chorale for St. Luke's Carillon* (1961; 1 p.). The piece was a result of his friendship with Norman Gentieu, who had generously paid for the microfilming of his manuscripts (see chapter 17). Sorabji became interested in his friend's work as a bell-ringer at St. Luke's Episcopal Church in the Philadelphia district of Germantown, and decided to "try and write something suitable for it which you may or may not care to use, as you see fit".[36] Thus, on 7 January 1961, he completed a short piece bearing the dedication "for my dear friend Norman Gentieu: Esq." The dedicatee's first and only attempt at playing his friend's utilitarian piece was on 5 November 1961. He recalled: "Since it was Guy Fawkes Day I for some irrational reason cast caution to the winds and in a sustained effort that left me badly winded got through the music without too many gaffes. At least, my audience didn't know how far short of perfection I had fallen."[37]

The Germantown instrument on which Gentieu played consists of a set of thirteen bells in E♭, including a D♭, which makes it possible to play in both E♭ and A♭ major.[38] Sorabji's piece uses the pitches making up the E♭ major scale and calls for both the natural and the flat versions of the D. The music, which bears the appropriate signature of E♭ major, is built like a chorale consisting of nine phrases of nine to thirteen notes, the last of which has a fermata. Only in the sixth phrase does the composer use the two forms of D. This series of phrases is followed by a bar (marked "for cadence if possible") consisting of three chords: a six-four dominant chord (F–B♭–D), the sonority G–A♭–C, and a four-note E♭ major triad **(example 19.2)**. Sorabji provides an ossia in which the second chord is A♭–D♭–F. He also adds an ossia in parentheses; it uses the notes of the main version of the cadence played in succession, with fermatas on each note of the final tonic sonority. A note reads: "Best of all if you can play all together."

Fantasiettina sul nome illustre dell'egregio poeta Christopher Grieve ossia Hugh M'Diarmid

Another short work written as a break during the composition of the *Messa grande sinfonica* was the *Fantasiettina sul nome illustre dell'egregio poeta Christopher Grieve ossia Hugh M'Diarmid* (1961; 10

[36]KSS to NG, 25 (24?) December 1960 {17/F.76}.
[37]NG to MAR, 18 July 1999.
[38]NG to MAR, 8 June 1999.

pp.). Sorabji lent the manuscript shortly after its completion on 10 April 1961 to the Scottish composer and pianist Ronald Stevenson, who had intended to perform it at a concert in honour of Grieve's seventieth birthday (on 11 August 1962); the event did not take place because Sorabji's permission for the performance had not arrived before the concert.[39] His performance finally took place on 23 August 1981 after permission was sought through Alistair Hinton and granted "but of course di tutto cuore".[40] The score was lost some time after it was returned to the composer; fortunately, Stevenson had made a fair copy of it in the preceding days. In 1979 Sorabji saw the copy and wrote a permission note in Stevenson's first pencil sketch in view of the microfilming of the piece; it was "completely and wholly approved and duly endorsed by me". In 1981 Stevenson prepared a performing edition (with note values doubled for legibility purposes and key signatures added), published in 1987 by Bardic Edition.

Instead of the usual dedication, Sorabji chose to incorporate the dedicatee's names in the title by first using his pseudonym (Hugh MacDiarmid), then his real name (Christopher [Murray] Grieve). The use of a *soggetto cavato* derived from the letters of the real name reinforces the link between the music and the dedicatee. Stevenson made the derivation clear on the page preceding the first page of music in his edition by means of a *soggetto musicale in rubrica*. The diamond-shaped notes, arranged on a single staff in the tenor clef, spell out C H[r] $^{(m)}$I $^{(e)}$S T$^{(i)}$[oph] E R / G R[i] E[v] E, where the lowercase or superscript letters in brackets either indicate the notes (mi = E, es = E♭, ti = B) or complete the dedicatee's name. This corresponds to C–B–E–E♭–B♭–E–D / G–D–E–E, a motive represented throughout the piece mostly by its opening four-note gesture. Sorabji had already used a similar procedure twice at the end of the "Fantasia" of *Opus clavicembalisticum* (dedicated to the Scottish poet), where four chords state the two sets of initials of the dedicatee: C–G–H (= B)–[M]–D (^{ED}pp. 38, 39) (**example 19.3**).

The three-section piece begins with a fast, impetuous section (^{ED}pp. 8–9) followed by a slow episode in nocturne style (pp. 10–13). This section changes towards the end into a "Più vivo" ending on a sharp chord played ***sffz*** and followed by a "pausa drammatica". It ends with a very short quick section based on the main motive, played in full chords in both hands, with the direction "***ff*** quasi una eruzione volcanica (siciliana)" (p. 13).

Fascination with the Catholic Ritual

One has to go back to the time when Sorabji was given the name by which he has always been known, around 1914, for his first recorded statement on religious matters. At that time, he called Christianity "a gigantic fraud, and an unspeakable hypocrisy". For him, the churches had clearly failed in several ways, notably by not encouraging the development of science and by not opposing war; they had "connived at it and *supported* it". He called himself "nearly a Buddhist"; Buddhism was for him "one of the most sublime of teachings. It is so pure, so lofty and noble, so sublime and *satisfying*, while the esoteric side is one of unimaginable grandeur and splendour." He liked its preaching of the equality of the sexes and its opposition to sexual subordination and slavery "as practised and declared by the Christian Churches".[41]

Sorabji had strong negative feelings about the Anglican Church; being the Church of England was certainly enough to outrage him. He objected to "the blatant nepotism, the odious social snobbery of the Anglican Church, the highest officers of which are the close preserve of men of certain social

[39] Alistair Hinton, "Kaikhosru Shapurji Sorabji: An Introduction", in *SCC*, 26.
[40] KSS to RS, Maundy Thursday 1981 (16 April).
[41] KSS to PH, 6 January 1914 {*LPH*, no. 4, p. 48}.

status". He once castigated the sexual mores of the clergy, recalling a dinner with a friend. He had seen "several females serving as waitresses in the dining room… but perhaps they were only choirboys in disguise, in which case their presence would have been both seemly and appropriate if half what one hears of Anglican clerics is as true as it ought not to be".[42]

Sorabji's attitude to Roman Catholicism eventually became very positive. In 1925 he saw the celebration of the High Mass as "one of the greatest and perhaps the greatest spiritual experience left to the modern world".[43] His trips to Italy in the early 1930s must have increased his sympathetic response to the Church and its rituals. He described the Holy Week as "a spiritual and artistic experience that is unforgettable—the supreme and crowning climax of the liturgical year, arriving with a perfection of artistry, a grandeur and moving beauty of rich symbolism [that] must be experienced to be believed".[44] On the other hand, he had no interest in what traditionally followed the celebration. He wrote to a friend, "I LOATHE Christmas and DETEST turkey in ANY form."[45] What impressed him was that the Catholic Church "offers you a gorgeous, fascinating, intricate Ritual and Ceremonial […] She offers you participation in a Rite [the Mass] that is the very summit of expression [and] dramatic Art."[46] Listening to the Midnight Mass broadcast from St. Peter on Christmas Day 1950 brought him many emotions.

> Knowing it as I do, I was almost bodily *there*, AND if ever human voice was, not only instinct with physical but SPIRITUAL beauty, lovely tender accents of deepest loving kindness, it is the voice of the reigning Pontiff. The Italian announcer's description of him kneeling in silent prayer at the conclusion of the Mass, his face transfigured, was something to give you a clutch at the heart. The Announcer was as deeply moved as his beautiful description—quiet, reserved, unrhetorical—showed him to be... and the silence in that immense building packed to suffocation with pilgrims of every nation in the world, [...] as His Holiness knelt in prayer, communicated itself to one almost tangibly... I couldn't sleep for hours thinking of the ineffable beauty of it... remembering that utterly overwhelming moment in St. Peter's when the Elevation takes places at the reigning Holy Father's hands... There is just nothing for it but to go down on your knees as the great gush of love, awe and reverence pours over you and the gigantic congregation.[47]

Sorabji was deeply moved by the "heroic sanctity" exemplified in the lives of various saints such as Saint Teresa of Ávila (1515–82) and popes such as Benedict XIV (1675–1758).[48] Along with Saint Teresa, he admired "seers and mystics" such as Saint Thomas Aquinas (1225 or 1226–74) and Saint John of the Cross (1542–91); he himself saw "a double dose of mysticism in my Spanish-Parsî origin, and what is India but the very cradle-ground and fount of all religious mysticism".[49]

Sorabji was already been strongly attracted to the sequence for the Mass of the Dead, the *Dies irae*, on which he based two large-scale works. It was not until late 1950s that he turned to the greatest Catholic ritual, the Mass, for his largest composition, the *Messa grande sinfonica*. He also wrote two short works with a (tenuous) relationship to the Church: the *Suggested Bell-Chorale for St. Luke's Carillon* and the *Benedizione di San Francesco d'Assisi* for baritone and organ. The *Black Mass* that he had begun in 1922 because of a strong interest in the occult was—obviously—a very different matter.

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[42] *FM*, items nos. 194, 294 (original nos. CCXCVII, CDVI; pp. 51, 81).
[43] Sorabji, "Some Ideas on the Concert Problem", *MT* 66, no. 987 (1 May 1925): 414–16; 416.
[44] KSS to EC, 18 April 1930, 1–2 (section dated Holy Saturday [19 April]).
[45] KSS to ABP, 27 December 1979.
[46] *FM*, item no. 240 (orig. no. CCCXLII; p. 65).
[47] KSS to FH, Xmas Day [25 December] 1950 {1/F.12}.
[48] KSS to CMG, 18 June 1965.
[49] KSS to EC, 18 April 1930, 1.

In 1947, as part of "varied reflections upon music and morals", Sorabji professed his admiration for the Catholic Church, for which "my own reverence, admiration and respect is unbounded, holding as I do that most, and perhaps all, that is of any value in European civilisation is Her work".[50] This contrasts sharply with his early views on "sexual subordination and slavery", quoted above. In 1960 he took a similar view of the Church's role in the development of civilization.

> Here I am not a Catholic and with no either immediate nor remote intentions of ever becoming one yet with a keen appreciation of the Church and its place and importance in European civilisation which one can honestly say would hardly exist without it…[51]

Despite his statement about not being a Catholic, Sorabji prayed "every night on his knees before the Crucifix". He would even get out of bed when he realized he had forgotten his prayers. He also made offerings to the Church on his mother's birthday, on the anniversary of her death, and on the main religious feasts; and when a new pope was elected, he liked to hang the papal flag from his window.[52] Asked if he believed in God, he wrote:

> And I am always acutely embarrassed, and even a little shocked, when certain good people ask me if I believe in God... My reply is, if you mean do I believe in a handsome old gentleman with a long white beard sitting on Dunlopillo clouds, decidedly I don't... but if you asked me if I believed in "L'AMOR CHE MUOVE IL SOLE E LE ALTRE STELLE", then most emphatically I do... and, if that AMOR shows itself or is only comprehensible to some people as that same handsome old gentleman sitting on Dunlopillo clouds, who am I or anyone else to quarrel with, or infinitely and most vilely worse, ridicule them?[53]

Such a fascination with the Catholic ritual is not so surprising considering Sorabji's homosexuality. There is a tradition of deep interest (leading to a conversion, usually late in life) on the part of several writers, often of the so-called decadent variety, notably Paul Verlaine, Joris-Karl Huysmans, and Arthur Rimbaud. In the English-speaking world, Oscar Wilde, Frederick Rolfe (Baron Corvo), Lord Alfred Douglas, Radclyffe Hall, and Evelyn Waugh, among others, come to mind. Here, homosexuality is more or less a constant. In the 1920s Anglo and Roman Catholicism seem to have been a clear "magnet for homosexuals".[54]

In the early 1940s Sorabji began subscribing to the *Catholic Herald* (founded in 1894), one of the many non-musical sheets he read and in which he commented on various moral, religious, social, and political issues—and sometimes on general musical matters. What is probably the first of some forty letter open letters published in its pages between 1943 and 1964 begins with: "Although neither a Catholic nor a Christian I find a regular reading of the admirable Catholic journals and periodicals indispensable as an antidote to the niagaras of propaganda, dope and downright lies that deluge from the 'regular' newssheets."[55] In 1957 Sorabji sent a letter about Roger Casement (1864–1916), the diplomat and Irish nationalist who was convicted of high treason and executed after the Easter Rising and saw the British government circulate excerpts from his *Black Diaries* (of disputed authorship),

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[50]Sorabji, "Music and Muddleheadedness", in *MCF*, 18–40; 31.

[51]KSS to NG, 11 November 1960 {17/F.75}.

[52]*RN* (September 1960), 1 {2/F.1}; *RN* (September 1961), 5 {2/F.2}; *OB*, 91.

[53]KSS to CMG, 18 June 1965. "L'amor che move il sole e le altre stelle" (the love that moves the sun and the other stars) is the last verse in "Paradiso" (canto XXXIII) from Dante's *Divina Commedia*; see also KSS to EC, 4 March 1956 (quoted later in this chapter). "Dunlopillo" is the trade name of a latex foam mattress invented in 1929 by Dunlop Rubber.

[54]See Ellis Hanson, *Decadence and Catholicism* (Cambridge, Mass.: Harvard University Press, 1997), esp. 12–14, 24–25, 366–68.

[55]Sorabji, "Machine Guns on Cathedral", *Catholic Herald*, 21 May 1943, 2. The other Catholic journals referred to by Sorabji are probably the *Catholic Times* and the *Westminster Cathedral Chronicle*.

detailing homosexual activities. The editor found it difficult to deal with the subject "in a paper like ours", especially if it was to become a correspondence on the subject, and returned the letter.[56] Sorabji sent an even longer letter on the subject to *Duckett's Register*, which, like so many of Sorabji's open letters, may have remained unpublished.[57]

Sorabji's references to Jews reflect the strongly derogatory attitude he sometimes used to vent his anger. We tend to find them in his letters to friends and private essays rather than in his published writings. In a letter of 1914, within the same paragraph, he tossed the English and their favouring superficial or bombastic music, Voltaire, and the Jews. He called the latter "a sorely persecuted and oppressed race, downtrodden and maltreated by the followers of the religion of Love!!!!"[58] It is difficult to know exactly whom Sorabji is blaming, apart from the British: Voltaire (whose attacks on Jews in his writings have often been used by anti-Semites to support their views), the Jews, or the Christians. Some items of his *Fruits of Misanthropy* refer to Jews in derogatory terms. Three of these will be quoted here.[59]

> 113. A sight to line the stomachs of the angels is a Whitechapel Jew in "plus fours": it is only surpassed by an Englishwoman of the reformed classes in a Spanish shawl.
>
> 148. It is customary to refer in terms of disparagement à propos Jews, to this people as Orientals… but I am afraid that [that] complimentary description is most flattering as applied to most of them, for they have now been so thoroughly inoculated with European vulgarity that they have become more European than the Europeans and have lost all normal right to take the name of their Eastern origin thus in vain.
>
> 308. It is significant and instructive that the Arabs, the nearest ethnological relatives of the Jews (and who may therefore be supposed to know them fairly well) hold those whom the Lord chose for some reason best known to himself, in the utmost execration and detestation.

By the time of World War II, Sorabji had developed an even more negative opinion of the Jews, especially regarding finance. He then preferred to remain at Clarence Gate Gardens rather than seek the safety of Corfe Castle, as he could not "keep two establishments going"; his landlords, especially of "the Hebrew variety such as ours", would not release tenants. His letter continues with very harsh comments. He saw "Jewish High Finance" at the back of war for having financed Hitler. He was convinced "that in those people alone is the supreme enemy of mankind, not only of Europe but all the world". Although for leftists it was "British Imperialism" that had ruined India and starved her to death, he accused "Jewish finance with all the pestilent and poisonous ideology associated with it".[60]

Increasingly tired of life in London, Sorabji described his place of residence as "175 The Gentile Ghetto... for here we are surrounded by the most pestilent vulgar and obnoxious sort of the most vulgar obnoxious kind of human... Yiddish 'Refugees'". A variant reads "Clarence Ghetto Gardens, Jewrusalem Park, N.W. 1, Lon-Yid-don". He also used "The Great Wen", the expression coined by the pamphleteer William Cobbett (1763–1835) in his *Rural Rides* (1830). So Sorabji left London in the early 1950s,

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[56]Count Michael de la Bédoyère to KSS, 22 May 1957 {1/F.19}, and KSS to FH, appended to the editor's letter.

[57]KSS to the editor of *Duckett's Register: News and Views of Catholic Books*, 14 June 1957 {1/F.19}.

[58]KSS to PH, 3 February 1914 {*LPH*, no. 5, p. 54}.

[59]*FM*, items nos. 113, 148, 308 (orig. nos. CXIV, CCL, CDXXXIX; pp. 33, 41, 85); see also items nos. 147, 307 (orig. nos. CCXLIX, CDXXXVIII; pp. 41, 85). Whitechapel, mentioned in the first quoted item, is a part of London E1 inhabited by the poorest classes; a large number of Jewish immigrants settled there between 1880 and 1914.

[60]KSS to EC, 11 September 1939; see also KSS to EC, 1 October 1939, where he explains further what he meant by "Jewish finance having ruined India".

partly because his "taste for low class Yiddish Ghettos *decreases*… and the proximity […] of the *Badly Chosen Race* is *not* my idea of a harmonious milieu. So voilà!" He continued to use the Jews occasionally as scapegoats to express some displeasure; he spoke of the "gushing Jew woman" to refer to his mother's landlady, and of an "old Jew cow" for a person to whom he had to pay nursing fees.[61] As a member of a minority himself (being of mixed origin and a homosexual) and constantly feeling rejected by British society, he should have felt sympathy for the Jews—but this was not how he saw things. Obviously he made these contemptuous remarks in private correspondence meant for the eyes of his friends (whose reactions are not known), and we do not have no idea how he actually behaved when in contact with Jews.

Despite all the foregoing, Sorabji indirectly included Jews among those who possessed musical intelligence as performers, relishing the opportunity to contrast them with the English. He reported a conversation with a pianist who said that, "whenever he has a pupil (extremely rare occurrence) showing marked and essential musical intelligence, they are always one of three things, either Jews, Irish, or Scotch. The English ones he declared are almost uniformly moronic if not actually cretinous, that I *readily* believe!"[62]

A search for references to the Arab world in Sorabji's writings does not yield much, and nothing (or so it seems) about Islam. In one rare instance, he was outraged by an open letter in the *Spectator* by a "crass ignoramus" who was "attacking the *victims* of the most damnable and dastardly piece of international brigandry of modern times, namely the Khazar-Zionist predatory invasion of their country". He also referred to the standards of the "stupendous Khalifate empire" and to the "glories of Moorish-Arabic art that are one of Spain's greatest glory to this day".[63] Although Sorabji's main sources of inspiration were Persian poetry, he drew on the manual of Arabian erotology by the sixteenth-century writer Sheikh al-Nafzāwī for *Le jardin parfumé—Poem for Piano Solo*. He once referred to the writer Borge Jensen, whom he described as "my friend". This author had exposed in his book *The "World-Food-Shortage": A Communist-Zionist Plot* (1947) "one of the greatest crimes in history, sc. Zionist predatory aggression against the Palestinian Arabs, and how that makes nonsense of their PROFESSED war aims".[64]

Messa grande sinfonica

Sorabji's largest orchestral work, if not in music history (at least in terms of page count), is undoubtedly the *Messa grande sinfonica* (1955–61; 1,001 pp.). The only possible exception could be the manuscript of *Le livre de la vie* (begun in 1916) by the Russian composer Nikolay Obukhov (1892–1954), one of whose versions runs to 2,000 pages. The three bound volumes for Sorabji's work (37 × 50.3 × 14.5 cm) weigh a total of 18.1 kg, or nearly 40 pounds. In November 1952 he had already begun planning a setting of the Mass, with the Kyrie "already germinating in my mind", but six months later he had not begun, having returned to his *Symphonic Variations for Piano* of 1937 to copy the piano part into the full score.[65] The work was "going to be very dramatic and intense, not at all 'churchy'. […] After all it's called a *Symphonic High Mass* you know, going far far beyond merely liturgical confines musically

[61]KSS to RWLS, 24 June 1948 (pp. 10–11; 10); KSS to FH, undated [1947] {1/F.8}; KSS to CE, undated (1950s); KSS to FH, 26 May 1956, 26 November [1956] {1/F.18}.

[62]KSS to EC, 3 May 1930, 10 (section dated 10 May).

[63]KSS to CMG, 19 December 1956.

[64]KSS to RS, 3 April 1961, 2. Sorabji's friendship with this author whose book was published in Aberfeldy (Scotland) is otherwise not documented.

[65]KSS to EC, 4 November 1952, 1; 4 May 1953.

speaking."[66] A letter to Erik Chisholm gives us a more detailed account of the work, with quotations from Dante and the Persian poet Ǧāmī.

> I am working on a *Messa Sinfonica Alta* for eight solo voices, two five part choruses, very large orchestra and organ. Have completed the vocal portions of the KYRIE (will run to about 150 pp of full score, with a great fugue). The GLORIA is to be a huge passacaglia, the Sanctus a series of variations on a ground bass, the Credo a series of canonic fugati over pedal points. The Agnus Dei an extended double quartet for the solo singers, the whole concluding with an immense fugal AMEN, a series of simultaneous independent fugues winding up in a monstrous stretto in which the whole bloody shoot combines (the simultaneous fugues being superimposed, each department of the orchestra being busy with its own fugue, its own tone colour, fugal layers, as you might say).
>
> This work is my devoutly humble tribute to "L'AMOR CHE MOVE IL SOLE E LE ALTRE STELLE", to the Ultimate Ineffable Reality outside Time and beyond Space Whom to attempt to name is almost blasphemy... or in Edward Brown[e]'s marvellous words, translating Jami, "Silence, for this tale is endless, and no eloquence hath power to speak of Him. 'Tis best for us to love, And suffer silently, being as naught."[67]

Holliday, who had been attracted to the Roman Rite since about 1937 and became a Roman Catholic in 1956,[68] tried to encourage Sorabji to undertake the composition of a religious work. In September 1955 he wrote of his "absolute conviction that a *Symphonic Mass* is right up your street".[69] Although Sorabji's German tutor, Ludmille Osterreid, had told her pupil as early as 1920 that he should write a Mass (see chapter 2), it was Holliday who, thirty-five years later, offered arguments strong enough to persuade him to tackle the "sublime ritual of the Mass".[70] On 13 November 1955 the composer was already well into the Kyrie, looking forward to reaching the end of a work laid out on the "largest and most ample scale", noting that "the feel of a great mass of performers under your hands is an enormous thrill". However, this "continuous stream of melodic writing of the utmost freedom" would keep him busy for several years—in fact until 25 July 1961.[71] The dedication to Reginald Norman Best, with whom he spent his later years, reads: "Amico Optimo Carissimo et dilectissimo [*recte* All'amico ottimo, carissimo e dilettissimo] R.N.B."[72]

As is often the case, Sorabji's title is not free from error. Probably by analogy with *High Mass* or *Hohe Messe*, he used *Messa alta sinfonica* instead of *Messa solenne sinfonica* (or *[in] grande* or *in terzo*), which are the correct ways of referring to the High Mass, that is, one celebrated by the priest with deacon and subdeacon. Given the Latin text, Sorabji should have modelled his title on Beethoven's *Missa solemnis*; his intention to use Italian is respected here by calling it *Messa grande sinfonica*.

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[66]KSS to FH, 12 November 1958 {1/F.20}.

[67]KSS to EC, 4 March 1956. For another description, see KSS to FH, 13 November 1955 {1/F.17}. On "L'amor che move il sole e le altre stelle", see the note citing KSS to CMG, 18 June 1965, earlier in this chapter. No source could be found for "Ultimate Ineffable Reality outside Time and beyond Space Whom to attempt to name is almost blasphemy"; it could be original. "Silence! for this tale / is endless, and no eloquence hath power / to speak of Him. 'Tis best for us to love, / And suffer silently, being as naught" comes from Ǧāmī's *Yūsuf u Zuleykhā*, as translated in Edward Granville Browne, *A Year amongst the Persians: Impressions as to the Life, Character, & Thought of the People of Persia Received during Twelve Months' Residence in That Country in the Years 1887–1888* (London: Adam and Charles Black, 1893), 139 (3rd ed., 1950). It is not part of the passage entrusted to the baritone in the fourth movement of *Symphony [no. 2], "Jāmī", for Large Orchestra, Wordless Chorus, and Baritone Solo*.

[68]Frank Holliday, "Splendour upon Splendour: On Hearing Sorabji Play", in *SCC*, 421–24; 423 (and Paul Rapoport's note 5 to Holliday's text).

[69]FH to KSS, 9 September 1955 {1/F.17}.

[70]Sorabji, "Music", *NA* 44, no. 20 (14 March 1929): 237–38; 237.

[71]KSS to FH, 13 November 1955, 23 November 1955 {1/F.17}. There is no clear evidence of when Sorabji began work on his Mass other than before November 1955 and a reference to it being "finished in 1961 after *seven* [emphasis added] years on it", which would move the date to 1954; KSS to DG, 2 April 1975.

[72]"To the excellent, very dear, and beloved friend Reginald Norman Best". Sorabji used for this dedication a curious cross between Italian and Latin.

The *Messa grande sinfonica*, which Sorabji once called his "Maximum Opus",[73] is scored for an immense orchestra comprising woodwinds in groups of six (including alto flute, bass oboe, contrabass sarrusophone); eight horns, six trumpets, four trombones, and four tubas; bells, two harps, and organ. It also calls for eight vocal soloists (two each of SATB) and two choirs (SSATB). Sorabji once suggested choirs of five hundred voices each, that is, one hundred per part; he also spoke of an orchestra of 180 to 200 players, with the string parts in the proportions 32 32 24 24 24. He took obvious pleasure in writing for such large forces: "Of course *everybody* will be busting themselves, the Organ *all out*... And if the roof falls in on top of the whole bloody lot... well all the better..."[74] Among his large works for orchestra, it is the only one without percussion, not even a set of timpani. The passacaglia of the Agnus Dei sets apart a staff for tuned gongs on forty-two pages, but the instrument plays only two notes, which are not particularly prominent ([MS/ED]p. 885).[75]

The structure of the work is the Mass Ordinary with a concluding Amen and, between the Sanctus and the Agnus Dei, a Pater noster (a prayer usually spoken after the Canon). Sorabji numbered the movements I to VII, with the Credo being III and the Offertorium IIIa.[76] The numbers of pages of the respective movements, based on 1,001 pages, give a rounded representation of the proportions: 140, 211, 198, 51, 120, 110, 106, 65. In other words, the work consists of six long movements (nos. 1–3, 5–7) and two short movements (nos. 4, 8).

The length of the Mass is due mainly to the multiple settings of the prayers. Five texts—Gloria, Credo, Sanctus, Pater noster, Agnus Dei—receive eleven, six, five, fifteen, and three settings, respectively. There are five sections containing, or consisting of, substantial organ parts; nineteen orchestral sections or interludes (excluding the Offertorium, which omits the voices entirely), two passacaglias (one in the Gloria and one in the Agnus Dei), and two sets of fugues (four in the Kyrie and two in the Offertorium).

The Kyrie (pp. 1–140) does not consist of three separate large sections devoted to two statements of the "Kyrie eleison" framing the "Christe eleison"; rather, the two invocations are used freely, right from the beginning, and very often together. Nevertheless, it is possible to identify three large units comprising sections 1–6 (pp. 1–66), 7–10 (pp. 66–110; a series of four fugues), and 11–12 (pp. 110–40; a stretto for the subjects of the first two fugues followed by a coda from p. 128). One could see these major divisions as corresponding to the traditional sections. Just as the piano parts of Sorabji's concertos can stand alone without the surrounding orchestral accompaniment, so the fugues involve only the voices, with the instrumental parts providing additional contrapuntal interest. In other words, the symphonic music does not double the vocal parts. The second section begins and ends with an organ solo.

The structure of the Gloria (pp. 141–351) differs from the model of traditional Mass settings: Sorabji sets the full text (or most of it) eleven times (pp. 141–66, 172–86, 202–19, 220–49, 250–70, 271–81, 282–95, 296–305, 309–18, 327–40, 342–51).[77] The movement consists of a passacaglia in two parts (pp. 141–219; 305–51) separated by an Interlude (pp. 220–305). Sorabji originally intended to write 144 variations but eventually settled on fewer;[78] there are 32 variations in the first part, and 16 in the second one. The theme consists of three sections: a homophonic statement in triads, given to the

[73]KSS to CMG, 16 December 1966, 4.

[74]KSS to FH, 25 May 1958 {1/F.20}; 19 January 1956 {1/F.18}.

[75]There is full correspondence from beginning to end between the manuscript and the edition by François Fabre (published in November 2017).

[76]Sorabji originally planned to include a setting of the Ave Maria, but eventually dropped the idea; KSS to EC, 4 November 1952, 1.

[77]The few pages located between the ranges given here (e.g., pp. 167–71) are passages for the orchestra alone.

[78]KSS to FH, 27 January 1958 {1/F.20}.

choir singing ***ff*** and mostly in minims; a varied reprise played by the brass; a series of triads played by the organ, beginning ***ff*** and ending ***pp***. The Interlude, not identified as such in the score but marked "Dolce e pianissimo", can be divided into five sections, the last of which (pp. 296–305) is for orchestra alone. The passacaglia resumes with a powerful homophonic statement of the theme. The Gloria ends *largo* and ***fff*** but not with a concluding gesture; it simply breaks off. Sorabji was proud of his achievement: "Have them yelling their guts out with one choir going its way steadily through the text of the Gloria together with the other shouting GLORIA from time to time antiphonally against and mit [i.e., with] the other... THAT takes some managing".[79] The movement increased "in intricacy and complexity with every page almost". Having completed this section, he felt the need for some rest before beginning the Credo, being "a little bored with so much 'holiness'".[80]

The Credo (pp. 352–549) follows the model of the Gloria in setting the full text several times, in this case six (pp. 352–75, 375–405, 406–75, 476–509, 509–28, 529–49). There are three orchestral interludes (pp. 395–99, 411–40, 448–50, 499–509), with an important organ part in the first two. At the beginning of the movement, the choir sings a few bars on the syllable "Ah", after which the tenor soloist intones the opening words. The overall texture of the music is much lighter in this movement, and the soloists stand out more than they do in the Gloria.

The Offertorium (pp. 550–600), a rather short and purely orchestral interlude, calls for five string sections, each divided into four parts. The movement consists of five sections, the first of which (pp. 550–77) contains an important organ part, while the second (pp. 578–79) is a short organ solo. This is followed by a fugue on one subject involving ten string parts successively, from highest to lowest (pp. 580–92), then a freer fugue for strings and woodwinds using the main form of the theme and its inversion (pp. 592–97). The movement ends with a final crescendo featuring the brass instruments (pp. 597–600).

The Sanctus (pp. 601–720), like the Gloria and the Credo, consists of many settings of the text: four of the full text (pp. 601–8, 608–20, 625–50, 677–707) plus an abridged one, limited to "Sanctus Dominus Deus Sabaoth" (pp. 717–20). There are three orchestral interludes (pp. 620–24, 650–66, 707–16) and an extended cadenza for the organ, in quavers throughout (pp. 666–77).

The Pater noster (pp. 721–830) consists of fifteen settings of the Lord's Prayer, the last two of which are entrusted to the choir. Sorabji assigns the first eight settings to each of the soloists, starting with the low voices and going upwards (pp. 721–26, 726–31, 731–35, 736–40, 740–43, 744–49, 749–53, 756–60). Settings 9 through 13 feature the soloists, first antiphonally, then homophonically (pp. 771–81, 781–85, 788–94, 794–99, 800–807). There are two orchestral interludes (pp. 786–88, 808–16), the second of which boasts an important organ part.

The Agnus Dei (pp. 831–936) is divided into six sections: an orchestral introduction and two interludes (pp. 831–41, 845–50, 873–914), and three settings of the text (pp. 841–45, 850–73, 914–36). The orchestral interlude after the second setting is a passacaglia with forty-nine variations on a four-bar phrase played by one or more instruments in the lower register. The "Quasi Stretto" at the end of the second setting uses a descending stepwise four-note motive and its inversion. Sorabji is rather free in his setting of the text; the first and third settings omit the invocation "dona nobis pacem", but the second does includes it. The final setting, which ends the movement, has the choir (but not the soloists) singing *à bouche fermée*.

The Amen (pp. 937–1001) begins with a recapitulation of the first three bars of the Kyrie ("Come al principio del Kyrie"). Sorabji found the Amen "a most *wonderful* text to work upon, seems to contain

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[79]KSS to FH, 27 January 1958 {1/F.20}.
[80]KSS to FH, 13 February 1958 {1/F.20}; KSS to FH, 13 August 1958 {1/F.20}.

some inner potency of its own of which the translation […] completely lacks. Latin has the *hieratic* quality of the words and sense, and a majesty that no modern language can hope to approach, I think."[81] On a more humorous note, he wrote: "Of course EVERYBODY will be busting themselves: the Organ ALL OUT... And if the roof falls in on top of the whole bloody lot, well all the better...!"[82] This final movement is divided into six sections (pp. 937–46, 947–58, 958–73, 974–76, 976–85, 986–1001), the first and fourth of which are for orchestra alone. Sorabji's mighty creation of some five hours ends, if musicians and conductor have not already given their last breath, with a final crescendo on a long B pedal point ending *con somma forza* on a radiant B major chord (a reference to the dedicatee, Best, and also even to Bach's Mass in B Minor). The listener, in the unlikely event of a performance on some highly festive occasion, will certainly appreciate that the composer concluded the final climax of his *magnum opus* on a (more or less, since it contains three added notes) consonant chord **(example 19.4)**.[83]

[81]KSS to NG, 6 April 1958 {17/F.58}.

[82]KSS to FH, undated (19 January 1956?) {1/F.18}.

[83]In fact Sorabji used the expression *magnum opus* in 1953 to describe *Symphony [no. 2], "Jāmī", for Large Orchestra, Wordless Chorus, and Baritone Solo* (1942–51; 826 pp.); he could not know at the time that he would later complete an even larger work, which is his actual *magnum opus*; *A*, 17–18.

20 / 1962–72 ■ The World-Weary Composer

Obsession with Food and Health Matters

The baby Sorabji seems to have been in a delicate state of health, unable to drink milk because he was born with "acute infantile dyspepsia". Instead he drank "blood of raw meat", which gave him a lifelong desire for "carnivorous food".[1] His letters to his closest friends are full of advice on proper diet—and sometimes much more—in the form of very detailed considerations and exhortations, sometimes running to seventy-five lines of typewritten transcription.[2] Erik Chisholm, a vegetarian, looked anaemic and certainly did not "derive sufficient elements from your food to keep you well—nervous and highly strung people like ourselves scarcely ever do—that's why we require to be fed with such care, taking plenty of vitaminous foods such as salad, all sorts with plenty of good olive oil". He went on to advise him to avoid products containing manufactured sugar, to prefer cream to milk in his tea (preferably Chinese), and to take care of "internal cleanliness".[3] He also sent him a second supply of a hair lotion along with advice on how to use it and a warning to avoid prepared shampoo powders containing chemicals that would be "ruinous to a hair, especially to yours with a marked tendency for dryness".[4] After advising Frank Holliday to see a good naturopath, he added: "Do you suppose I should have kept my health as I have, coming from a drunken, raddled, diabetic, dyspeptic lot as I have, if I hadn't got sensible in food-matters?"[5] Clearly, Sorabji cared deeply for his friends.

Food and health matters were a constant preoccupation for Sorabji throughout his life. As he grew older, the various ailments resulting from aging and their possible cures turned almost into an obsession. One of the ways in which he expressed his concern for such matters was through regular periods of fasting, which he began in the early 1920s, such as his "Solstitial Fast which started last night Sunday at 6 and ends next Sunday at 6 P.M." He would break it "at the Canonical Hour of Vespers", saying, "It's been an ordeal but I've done it".[6] He admired the "ascetic strictness in food and drink" of the ancient Hindu actors, who regarded their art "as *a religion* and *religiously*". His "persistent holding aloof from artistic life" as well as his weekly one-day and his annual one-week fasts were ways of achieving similar results. He had no food at all apart from an occasional drop of orange juice in hot water. His Fridays had no composition on the agenda, being devoted to shopping and to his one-day fasts. He stopped fasting at the beginning of World War II, but resumed the practice weekly in 1958.[7]

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[1]KSS to NG, 9 January 1981 {19/F.20}.

[2]KSS to EC, 6 May 1931, 3–4.

[3]KSS to EC, 27 May 1930, 2 (section dated 28 May).

[4]KSS to EC, 17 June 1930, 16 (section dated 2 July). See also ibid., 9 December 1930, 5 (section dated 12 December), for a full paragraph based on advice received from "Miss [Mary] Leeds (the hair and head treatment woman)". The first name is mentioned in KSS to EC, 6 May 1931, 29 (section dated 19 May).

[5]KSS to EC, 21 May 1938; see also 6 May 1931, 3–4 (section dated 7 May).

[6]KSS to PH, 19 and 24 June 1922 {*LPH*, nos. 36 and 37, pp. 136 and 137}.

[7]KSS to EC, 18 April 1930, 27 January 1931; see also ibid., 22 January 1931, 2, for a description of the sensations produced by fasting and the dangers associated with the practice, and ibid., 5 (section dated 28 January), where he writes "7 full days of my fast gone—nine more till I finish". His reference to a sixteen-day fast in his letter of 27 January 1931 should be checked

Sorabji preferred to eat one meal a day, preferably of English food, and tended to have two helpings of whatever he was served (i.e., two steaks, two puddings). He also enjoyed Earl Grey tea, sweet wines (especially Sicilian ones), chocolate liqueurs, and "that admirable Scotch liqueur (albeit of originally French origin) 'Drambuie'", which he did not know when he had "tasted anything I like so much". By the 1930s, however, the somewhat financially straightened circumstances in which he found himself led him to forswear this drink until he could afford a large bottle and fall back on Maraschino.[8] Among the drinks he liked best was Yellow Chartreuse, of which he offered to ask the local dram shop to send a bottle to Holliday to "buck him up".[9] He liked the "lovely LINDT Kirsch things which I have already hogged" and warned the friend who had offered them that "like Dr. Johnson, I can abstain but I can't be moderate".[10] He was not one to go to the pub and summed up his attitude as follows: "I can't *stand* the smell of a public bar and beer—it is [an] *aesthetic* not a *moral* objection! I always say that the British Public House pallyness and Beery Bonhomie are *violently antipathetic* to me! *Mass Merry Making* sends *my* spirits into deepest depression!!! *High* Spirits give *me low* spirits!!!" Among the reasons that had led him to distance himself from Philip Heseltine were "beer and boozing".[11]

Sorabji was fond of honey, of which he asked his friend him to send a supply, but no more than three dozen jars at a time.[12] His American admirer Norman Gentieu, aware that some foodstuffs were hard to come by in post-war England, regularly (and graciously) sent ham, and Sorabji had to ask him to limit the quantities, as his companion Reginald Norman Best and he could not eat it all.[13]

Apart from the practice of yoga, Sorabji does not appear to have exercised in any way. As a young man, he suffered from periodic attacks of neuralgia in his hand and face.[14] A consequence of his two extended trips to Bombay in the early 1930s may have been recurrent bouts of malaria. In 1949 he reported completing his *Sequentia cyclica super "Dies irae" ex Missa pro defunctis* during a third attack of malaria.[15] As a child, he had broken his leg "very badly", which had left him on his back for eighteen months; this made him "nervous on my pins in slithery weather". The regular physiotherapy he received beginning in 1943 from a Mrs. Watson helped him walk with slight pain instead of the "torment of the damned". This lady also looked after a finger trouble that had been bothering him for years. In 1976 sciatica left him unable to walk or stand for more than a few minutes without sitting and forced him to walk with two canes.[16] The following year, similar problems plagued him for months to the point where he was housebound; treatments by a masseur and an osteopath led to a recovery, but he had to learn how to walk outside again.[17] He was feeling much better "thanks NOT to the attentions of orthodox doctors with their blasted suppressive drugs but a young osteopath [...]".[18] Another source of pain was dental problems, which required several trips to London for several days at a time. In 1963

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against the manuscript in case the number was misread.

[8] *OB*, 128, 143; KSS to EC, 18 April 1930, 9 (section dated 23 April); KSS to ABP, 5 October 1980; KSS to EC, June 1932, 7 (section dated 6 March). On Sicilian wines, see KSS to RS, 23 November 1965, 2.

[9] KSS to FH, 4 March 1961 {2/F.2}, 2 December 1974 {3/F.5}.

[10] KSS to ABP, 5 October 1980. Dr. Johnson's actual words seem to have been "Abstinence is as easy to me, as temperance would be difficult".

[11] KSS to KD, 5 September 1983 {Derus, S52, p. 277}. The words "my", "High", and "low" are double underlined.

[12] KSS to FH, undated (July or August 1956) {1/F.18}.

[13] KSS to NG, 15 January 1960 {17/F.67}.

[14] KSS to PH, 11 January 1915 {*LPH*, no. 13, p. 88}. Since Sorabji writes "hand" in the singular, we must assume that he did not suffer from neuralgia in both hands.

[15] KSS to EC, 10 May 1949.

[16] KSS to FH, 16 February 1963 {2/F.4}; 14 March 1943 {1/F.5}; 15 February 1964 {2/F.5}; 5 August 1976 {3/F.7}; PR to FH, 18 October 1976 {7/F.3}.

[17] KSS to DG, 20 March 1977.

[18] KSS to KD, 15 July 1977 {Derus S05, p. 29}.

he spent two and a half weeks having splints made and fitted to hold teeth in place and to prevent them from loosening. On one occasion he had to go to the dentist for eighteen fillings and three extractions.[19]

Working in a very concentrated way on huge works over several months was a source of much stress. In 1930, when he was completing *Opus clavicembalisticum*, Sorabji sometimes doubled his dose of sleeping pills, which left him feeling "rather drugged and stupid". Preparing for the first performance of this huge work must have been exhausting, and he had to undergo treatment twice a week for headaches, with massages, osteopathy, and vibration to the back of the head and neck.[20] Twenty years later, the composition of the *Symphony [no. 2], "Jāmī", for Large Orchestra, Wordless Chorus, and Baritone Solo* left him "nervy, nerveless and generally overwrought with some terrible attacks of sleeplessness to add sauce to the occasion!"[21] In November 1953 he escaped "a nasty illness by a hairbreadth" due to prolonged overwork, anxiety, and worry over various personal and family matters; his doctor therefore ordered him to take things very quietly and slowly for many months. The cause of these problems may have been his mother's many moves in the early 1950s (chapter 18). He was incapable of prolonged effort without great exhaustion and had to abandon all practice and preparation for the private recordings planned by Erik Chisholm; he mentioned having had "what was almost a breakdown from the result of years of overwork and worry".[22] After completing the *Fourth Symphony for Piano Alone* in 1964 he felt "empty, stale, all loose ends inside me, inclined to weep at no provocation and for no reason at all. I am getting a lot of petting and fuss made over me which is what at the moment I want… as much of it as I can get…"[23]

As suggested above, Sorabji had an acute distrust of doctors. In 1931 his mother had been given a powerful mixture of drugs by a "bloody old fool" whose patient she had been for nearly sixteen years, which had almost poisoned her. He "promptly seized them and flung them away" and was to "let the old swine have the length of my tongue when I get at him".[24] In 1961 he referred to his "violent distrust and suspicion of orthodox doctors and what I know of them and their corrupt and nefarious ways". He much preferred his physiotherapist, although he "intensely dislike[d] being mauled about" by a woman. He probably also consulted a healer, the wife of an (unidentified) old friend; spiritual healing he described as a "deeply mysterious business".[25]

Sorabji's correspondence with Frank Holliday, which often looks like a transcription of what the composer might have said in ordinary, informal, conversation with his friend, is filled—especially from the early 1960s onwards—with paragraphs of commentary on their respective states of health, various ailments, and minor bodily discomforts. He was always asking for such details and recommending possible cures, techniques, and lifestyle changes. He was once "overjoyed" to see "the *excellent* result of your *pee test*".[26] A woman from the Society of Herbalists told him in the early 1930s that he did not digest nor assimilate food properly; this led him to take various herbal remedies. Here we have another example of "a very clever and gifted woman" who could be of service.[27] In the 1960s a specialist in biochemical mineral nutrients in Wales jokingly mentioned that he had threatened to take on extra staff to deal with him alone because of his almost daily letters for a couple of weeks.[28] Sorabji's interest in alternative medicine led him to experiment with all sorts of over-the-counter products such as

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[19]KSS to FH, 30 October 1963 {2/F.4}.
[20]KSS to EC, 3 June 1930, 18 (section dated 16 June); 17 September 1930, 3 (section dated 20 September).
[21]KSS to Bernard Stevens, undated (after 9 August, probably in 1947) {BL, Add. MSS 69025}.
[22]KSS to NG, 8 November 1953 {17/F.20}; KSS to EC, 29 December 1953.
[23]KSS to FH, 15 February 1964 {2/F.5}.
[24]KSS to EC, 6 May 1931, 27 (section dated 17 May).
[25]KSS to FH, 28 November [1961] {2/F.2}; 6 October 1957 {1/F.19}.
[26]KSS to FH, undated (before March 1967) {2/F.9}.
[27]KSS to EC, 6 May 1931, 32 (section dated 23 May); 27 May 1930, 1.
[28]E. R. Owen to FH, 19 June 1964 {5/F.28}. See also KSS to RS, 7 November 1961, in which he recommends him heartily.

Lloyd's Adrenaline Cream, Minard's Rub ("a Canadian preparation and very good indeed" that he used on his friend Reggie and himself), Radian bath salts, and the Sabona copper bracelet recommended by a biochemist.[29] His interest in food and health matters is also evident in his open letters to magazines such as *Health and Life and B.B.A. Monthly*. In a letter to the *Swanage Times* in which we learn that he was a non-smoker who suffered from the "selfish inconsiderate bad-manners of smokers", he drew a link between cigarette smoking as a carcinogen and the addition of deadly chemicals added to food without people's knowledge or consent.[30]

Turning Away from Composition

After completing his huge *Messa grande sinfonica*, Sorabji had "neither the inclination nor desire to write a NOTE…" and wanted to "forget ALL ABOUT music for quite a while, especially my own".[31] His main preoccupation between the summer of 1961 and the beginning of 1962 was the need to brush up on his piano playing in view of the recording sessions with Erik Chisholm (in February 1962) and Frank Holliday (in May and October 1962).[32] The period after the composition of the liturgical work can be roughly divided into two parts: from the beginning of 1962 until December 1968, and from then until the beginning of 1973. After taking a few months' break from massive creations, Sorabji resumed composition with two series of "aphoristic fragments" on which he probably worked until 1964. The attraction of large-scale works, which he had always felt, soon led to another substantial work, the *Fourth Symphony for Piano Alone*, which lasts almost five hours. After that he laid "fallow hoping that I would never be urged to write another note, but a good deal to my disgust the urge came upon me for another piano work."[33] This piece, the *Toccata quarta*, is rather short considering the three years he spent on it. This may explain why he went on to write a tiny *Frammento cantato* and a rather short *Concertino non grosso for String Sextet with Piano obbligato quasi continuo*.

Despite the gigantic size of many of his works, Sorabji had nothing against writing miniature pieces. Apart from his songs and his early one-page *Désir éperdu (Fragment)*, he had written before the 1960s three works whose titles convey the idea of brevity: the *Fragment: Prelude and Fugue on FxAxx DAxEx*, the *Toccatinetta sopra C.G.F.*, and the *Fragment Written for Harold Rutland*; and in 1961 he wrote the *Suggested Bell-Chorale for St. Luke's Carillon*, whose short duration results from its utilitarian nature. Between 1962 and 1984 he produced six very short pieces (ranging between one and three pages) and four works of between two and 104 short fragments, as well as a sketch limited to a title page.[34] In August 1962 he wrote to Frank Holliday, who had asked him not to "bother to acknowledge this as I expect you are in a frenzy of composition".

> No Sir! I am *not* in a "frenzy of composition" nor have I the slightest intention of being in one or letting myself be slave driven either by it or anything or anybody else *ever again*… Have had enough of that sort of thing. All I have written since June is a matter of less than two dozen pages and it's quite on the cards that not more than that will be in existence by this time next year! In fact I'm not at all sure that composition isn't going to bore me to tears in future!… I may even reach the stage of regarding it as a waste of time and energy![35]

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[29]KSS to FH, 13 March 1961 {2/F.2}; 16 January 1967 {2/F.9}; undated (1968) {2/F.9}; undated (1969) {2/F.10}; 21 June 1971 {3/F.3}. Sorabji's postman recalled that he received tablets and "lived on a lot of vitamins"; *OB*, 138.

[30]Sorabji, "The Editor's Postbag: One Man's Meat", *Swanage Times*, before July 1957.

[31]KSS to EC, 27 January 1962; KSS to RS, 7 November 1961, 2.

[32]KSS to FH, 28 July 1961 {2/F.2}.

[33]KSS to CMG, 16 December 1966.

[34]The sketch, dated 29 March 1973, is entitled *Frammento aforistico e forse la radice d'uno* [*recte d'un*] *lavoro molto più grande*. The "much larger work" referred to is the *Symphonia brevis for Piano* according to a note added by Alistair Hinton.

[35]KSS to FH, 12 August 1962 (at the earliest; written in full caps throughout at the bottom of Holliday's letter dated 12 August 1962) {2/F.3}.

In 1965 Sorabji refused to have his head "bothered with composition", as he had done "quite enough for one life…" His aversion extended to piano practice: "I am not composing nor am I practising nor have I the smallest inclination of doing either. Both things bore me to extinction." He resorted to strong words to describe composition: "You ask about composition… Damn composition. Blast composition. Fuck composition. Bugger composition… am sick of it." In 1970 he wrote: "Since this [completing the *Concertino non grosso for String Sextet with Piano obbligato quasi continuo*] I have stopped and have determined, if I can help it, not to write another bloody note! Nor shall I write another book! I'm tired of composition… don't you think I've done enough for one incarnation? *I* do!!"[36]

So Sorabji cut himself off from composition from the very end of 1968 onwards. He remained completely silent until Alistair Hinton, whom he befriended in August 1972, managed to "set me going again when I thought I'd shut up shop as you might say!" (see chapter 21).[37] The surviving documents are silent on how the composer spent his time during these years. Even his production of open letters waned. He probably spent much of his time listening to broadcasts and recordings and to reading books on all sorts of subjects.

Fourth Symphony for Piano Alone

After a six-month break to prepare for his recording sessions with Erik Chisholm and Frank Holliday, Sorabji resumed his creative activities with series of aphoristic fragments and, more importantly, returned to the composition of large-scale works with the *Fourth Symphony for Piano Alone* (1962–64; 240 pp.). This large work, begun on 7 November 1962, was to occupy him until 5 February 1964. He had reached such a state of moral and physical exhaustion that he wanted to stop thinking about music, especially his own, for quite a long time. Although he did not intend to play it, he tried the last page of his recent work, "which is very impressive though I sez it…" Apart from this comment, Sorabji wrote little about this symphony, except to say that he considered it to be one of his best works.[38]

The *Fourth Symphony for Piano Alone* is dedicated "To Harold Rutland whose independence of mind / admirable freedom from spiritual and moral besotment [*recte* besottedness] / by contemporary fashions of musical haberdashery / deserves all the affection and respect of his friends among / whom I rejoice to subscribe myself." Some time after writing this dedication Sorabji replaced it with a slightly one: "To my friend Harold Rutland, whose / independence of mind and freedom from monomaniacal / obsessions by current fashions of musical / haberdashery deserves all the respect and / admiration of his friends, of whom I rejoice / to be one." A loose page (now in the Trinity College of Music) contains, in addition to a small orthographical variant of the dedication, a line of musical notation explaining the *soggetto cavato* used as the second fugue subject. The letters in parentheses form the essential of the dedicatee's name (here the slash represents a barline): B (= H)–B♭–A (= A)–G–D (= Ré)–D (= D) / D (= Ré)–E–C (= ut)–B–A (= A)–F♯–D (= D)–E♭. The *Fourth Symphony for Piano Alone* is the third and last work to be dedicated to Rutland, the others being the *Fragment Written for Harold Rutland* and *Un nido di scatole sopra il nome del grande e buon amico Harold Rutland*.

Sorabji's work consists of three numbered movements, the second of which is divided into four sections. The first movement (^{MS}pp. 1–72) is marked "Moderatamente allegro" but contains many tempo and character indications. The first motive, which begins with the cell C–D–F–D–G–A–B♭, recurs elsewhere in the movement; it also forms the basis of an important motive in the second movement.

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[36]KSS to CE, 15 June 1965; KSS to FH, 1 February 1966 {2/F.7}; 14 October 1968 {2/F.9}; KSS to CE, 3 September 1970.
[37]KSS to KD, 19 August 1978 {Derus S21, p. 99}.
[38]KSS to FH, 15 February 1964 {2/F.5}; KSS to NG, 18 October 1964 {18/F.12}.

There is also a short fugue (pp. 51–53) and, a few pages later, an E♭ pedal point that changes to D♭ (pp. 59–62), as well as a *perpetuum mobile*–like section (pp. 67–70).

Sorabji described the second movement (pp. 73–212) as "extensively founded upon motives of a plainsong character".[39] Its opening "Preludio corale" (pp. 73–96) states three such motives, all more or less stepwise lines using mostly minims. The first one, beginning with a transposition of the first notes of the work's initial motive (F–G–B♭), is set in organum-like parallel fourths. The three themes recur later in simple statements in two-part counterpoint (pp. 89–90).

The second section, an "Interludio. Perpetuum mobile" (pp. 96–105), begins as a single, very wavy line, but soon becomes much more varied as it assumes a toccata-like character. The third section, a very moderate "Ostinato" (pp. 106–20), is based on a melodic bass line in which each pitch is followed, crab-like, by its upward or downward octave transposition. After a simple opening statement, Sorabji writes fifteen sections, each consisting of three statements of the ostinato. The mostly stepwise counterpoints set against the initial statements of the bass recur very clearly in many of the remaining variations, always with added material. The "Ostinato" is not based on a single line, but on a complex of lines. The final statement, marked "Adagio molto e legatissimo", leads to a rapid final section that recalls the perpetual motion heard earlier; there is an implied C♯ (D♭) pedal point throughout.

The fourth (and longest) section, entitled "Variazioni" (pp. 121–212), uses the plainsong theme stated over a slow chromatic line in the bass (cf. a related statement on pp. 89–90). We find forty-nine variations, three of which (vars. 8, 18, and 48) are extended pieces in nocturne style. Var. 16 is a dark pedal point section on E♭ after which the music becomes active and complex again. The final variation, entitled "Quasi Cadenza Toccata – Fuga" (pp. 194–95), ends with a peal of chords over a C♯ pedal point. The first of three fugues (pp. 196–201), based on a paraphrase of the work's opening motive, is rather short. The second fugue, for five voices (pp. 201–6), uses the *soggetto cavato* stated on the dedication page but transposed down a major ninth and extended by one bar **(example 20.1)**. The last fugue, for three voices (pp. 206–212), returns to the energetic style of the opening fugue; it ends with a stretto (pp. 209–12) in which all the fugue themes are included.

The third movement, a "Finale" (pp. 212–40), is a nocturne mostly using quavers as the fastest note value. From p. 222, Sorabji brings back previously heard material: the opening theme of the work (pp. 222, 237) and, from the second movement, the first two plainsong-like themes (p. 223) and the ostinato (p. 224). Towards the end, we hear a final statement of the first plainsong-like theme set in powerful chords (p. 229) and, as a long series of ascending full chords, a final statement of the work's opening motive (p. 237). Curiously, Sorabji refrains from his typical extended and massive, virtuosic coda.

Frammenti aforistici (20), Frammenti aforistici (Sutras) (104)

Probably on and off while working on the *Fourth Symphony for Piano Alone*, Sorabji produced two series of short fragments: the *Frammenti aforistici (20)* (1964; 9 pp.) and the *Frammenti aforistici (Sutras) (104)* (1962–64; 37 pp.), hereafter referred to as the "smaller set" and the "larger set". The smaller set, written during the composition of the larger one, was completed on 29 February 1964, some three weeks after the *Fourth Symphony*. It is reasonable to assume that he began work on it on or about 5 February 1964, immediately after the extended symphony. The larger set bears no completion date, but only a year at the beginning ("MCMLXII et seq."). By the end of July 1962, however, Sorabji had already completed a good third of them when he described the principle behind their composition to Frank Holliday.

[39] KSS to FH, 16 February 1963 {2/F.4}.

> Have also—FUCK it—started composing again, but a startling change from anything else I have ever done. A series of tiny little fragments… *Frammenti aforistici* or *Sutras* only a line or so long, consisting of no more than the mere enunciation of a single pithy musical idea. They sound very good short as they are, some forty odd of them to date and they only so far fill some dozen pages so that it will give you a notion of their laconic brevity… but they're ME alright, I know that![40]

Both sets of *Frammenti aforistici* were written for the poet Harold Morland, the retrospective dedicatee of *"Gulistān"—Nocturne for Piano* and of the *Second Symphony for Piano*, and later of the *Frammento cantato* (see chapter 15). The larger set is inscribed "To my old friend, not, that is, in years of *age* but of *friendship*, / Harold Morland"; and the smaller one "To Harold Morland: to celebrate a friendship / of more than thirty years". Sorabji wrote the longer dedication on a separate sheet that had come loose from the manuscript. He therefore considered the larger set of *Frammenti* to be without dedicatee and wrote on the title page "To Donald Garvelmann: bless the dear Man! / Christmas 1972". This is why Paul Rapoport suggested that the larger set was probably not completed until 1972; it also explains why four titles in his catalogue separate the two sets of works. The composer sent the manuscript to Garvelmann, writing "It occurs to me that the enclosed may interest and/or amuse you. It or they are yours to do what you will with [them], even PLAY them if you like!"[41]

The numbering of the smaller set and its relationship to the larger one is rather puzzling. On the verso of the title page of the former, Sorabji wrote:

> These *Fuori Serie* Frammenti are separate from the main body of the work having been written specially for the Dedicatee for whose ears ALONE they are meant: which means that he will only hear them if at all, when the composer plays them to him!! The motive [musical notation, with implied F clef: B–E] is H.M. (H = B natural M = MI or E). There are so far 98 (ninety-eight) others, all of course bear the same dedication as these. K.S.S.

The fragments of the smaller set, twenty in number, are all identified by the number 69—a choice for which there is no explanation (unless one wants to think of the usual sexual meaning)—followed by a letter from *a* to *u*, skipping *i*. Those of the larger set are numbered from 1 to 103, with an unnumbered 72*a*, making a total of 104. Did Sorabji at some point stop writing in the longer manuscript and turn to the fragments of the smaller set? Did he abandon the idea of having some fragments outside the series and simply resumed the numbering where he had left off? Did he make a mistake in counting the fragments? In fact, his note originally referred to eighty-eight more fragments, but he corrected the number to ninety-eight.

Sorabji described the larger set as consisting of *sutras*, a word he would use again for his last work, the *Due sutras sul nome dell'amico Alexis*. A sutra is a precept summarizing Vedic teaching or a collection of such precepts. As philosophical thought developed in India over the centuries, several treatises consisting of short aphorisms, or clues, called *sutras*, were written to achieve some systematization of the various schools of thought. They served as aids to memory in discussions between disciples and gurus. Because many elements were taken for granted, the thoughts could be condensed into very few words, so much so in fact that much of this literature is now unintelligible.[42] Sorabji therefore used the term to describe very short statements, usually requiring one, sometimes two, and in only four cases three systems (no. 60 of the larger set, and nos. *l, r,* and *u* of the smaller one). Forty-two of the fragments have no tempo or character indication, and the proportions of pieces

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[40]KSS to FH, 25 July 1962 {2/F.3}.

[41]KSS to DG, 14 October 1972.

[42]See Swami Vireswarananda, "Introduction", in *Brahma-Sutras, with Text, Word-for-Word Translation, English Rendering, Comments and Index*, 4th ed. (Calcutta: Advaita Ashrama, 1970 [orig. ed., 1936]), iii–iv.

in slow, moderate, and fast tempos are 22%, 32%, and 46%, respectively. The whole series is a compendium of gestures, styles, techniques, and devices typical of Sorabji. One such device is the use of highly florid, capricious, melodic lines, alternating very short values with long ones, over a slow moving arpeggiated bass line **(example 20.2)**.

The only specific reference found in the two scores is a remark at the beginning of no. *r* of the smaller set about the theme being derived from the dedicatee's name: "Questa tema e stata evoluta dal nome della dedicazione" [*recte* Questo tema è derivato dal nome del dedicatario"] **(example 20.3)**. Five other fragments (nos. *d, p, q, s, t*) contain in their opening gesture a reference to Morland with the motive B–E, either melodically or harmonically. A few fragments are characteristic of sections commonly found in Sorabji's larger works: a (short) fugue (no. *l*), a double pedal point (no. *p*), and a nocturne (no. *r*).

Toccata quarta

On 23 May 1964 Sorabji began work on the *Toccata quarta* (1964–67; 149 pp.), his last such piece, and a somewhat considerably longer one than the *Toccata terza* (1955; 91 pp.). The work is a "Tema fiorito sul nome del / carissimo amico F. H."[43] After severing all links with Frank Holliday in 1979 (see chapter 15), Sorabji crossed out all the blocks of text in which his name appeared and wrote "Original dedication removed" on the two title pages; he also obliterated the said marking. The work now bears the inscription "To Paul Rapoport: greetings and thanks. XXVIII.IV.MCML[X]XIX". Rapoport had by this time not only published articles on Sorabji but also a book entitled *Opus est—Six Composers from Northern Europe*, which included a chapter on *Opus clavicembalisticum*.

Toccata quarta is the first work to contain a reference to the occult (in the fifth movement; see below) after the composition of the *Messa grande sinfonica*, completed in 1967. Sorabji would draw inspiration from the occult on two other occasions. The first instance was "*Il gallo d'oro" da Rimsky-Korsakov: Variazioni frivole con una fuga anarchica, eretica e perversa*, completed in 1979, which led him to speak of the "necromantic suspense" that brooded over certain scenes (see chapter 22). Then, *Opus secretum atque necromanticum*, completed two years later, "inspired by my perennial interest and leanings thereunto" (see chapter 23). As Jakub Eisenbruk rightly pointed out, these works were written *after* Sorabji's friendship with Frank Holliday had ended.[44] Could Sorabji have taken revenge on his estranged friend?

Sorabji seems to have begun by composing several short pieces on his friend's name, and to have put them all away for a while; he then probably intended to write only a series of fragments on them. He wrote to Holliday: "You have set my precious PARSI mind working again blast you… and have taken up work on the Fourth Toccata incorporating as preluding matter the tiny short pieces hitherto written on your name and started in 1964." A month later he expressed his satisfaction with his new work a month later: "Takes, I imagine, a good hour and a half to two hours to play, and, altho I sez it a bloody good work. […] Harold Morland to whom I played GULISTAN was quite bowled over by it… tears running down his cheeks when I'd finished! THAT'S some tribute from a really intelligent hearer."[45]

The theme of the *Toccata quarta*, stated at the beginning as a simple passage for two voices, is presented in long note values over a counterpoint in crotchets: F–D–A–E–C–B–A–A–D–A; from this we can derive F R(é) A N K / H (= B) O L L I D A Y **(example 20.4)**. The first of the seven movements (^{MS}pp. 1–11) consists of twenty-four short variations on the *soggetto cavato*. This ends with a short

[43]"Ornamented theme on the name of a dearest friend F.H."
[44]Jakub Eisenbruk to MAR, 3 June 2020.
[45]KSS to FH, 21 April 1966 {2/F.7}; 26 May 1967 {2/F.8}.

section entitled "Nexus" (pp. 11–13), usually defined as a related group or series, or as a bond. Sorabji probably intended this section, which begins with an emphatic descending line stating the pitches D–B–F♯, as a transition. He may also have wanted to make a link with the eighteenth-century meaning of the word as found in musical treatises and dictionaries, namely, a series of falling thirds (here taken quite liberally). He had used the word at the beginning of the "Preludio corale" of *Opus clavicembalisticum* to designate the initial thematic idea, a motive consisting of two falling fourths followed mostly by thirds; we also find it as a section title in the second movement of the *Symphonia brevis for Piano*.

The second movement (pp. 14–25) is a "Quasi corale" containing many statements of a variant of the initial theme. Usually the link is in the opening notes, which feature the arpeggiation of the notes of the triad (not necessarily in the same order) or a resemblance to the outline of the theme.

The third movement (pp. 26–50), an "Intermezzo primo", begins with a "Moto perpetuo" (pp. 26–34) that is actually more a toccata. It continues with a (so-called) "Punta d'organo" on the note B (pp. 34–41)[46] and ends with an "Aria" in nocturne style (pp. 42–50), whose melodic shape recalls the opening theme of the work.

The fourth movement is a passacaglia (pp. 50–97) on a theme in two phrases, each consisting of a series of minims (four and seven, respectively) followed by a breve, all underpinned by a counterpoint mostly in crotchets. The opening phrase states the first three letters of the dedicatee's name, here with sharps, and now matching the notes of the D♯ minor triad. Var. 53 anticipates in its upper part the quotation of the *Dies irae* in the next movement. There are 102 variations (rather than 100) because vars. 88 and 89 occur twice.

The fifth movement, an "Intermezzo secondo" (pp. 97–103) marked "Minaccioso" (i.e., threatening), bears the inscription "Of a neophyte and how the Black Art was revealed to him [*recte* unto Him by the Fiend Asomuel]". These words form the caption of an illustration in pen and ink by Aubrey Beardsley (1872–98) for *Le morte d'Arthur* (1485) by Sir Thomas Mallory (ca. 1415–71).[47] The Asomuel featured in the original caption means insomnia, and is a word coined by Beardsley, who probably wanted to show himself as a neophyte being taught the black art (i.e., the art of black and white drawing).[48] The drawing shows a figure dressed with a cape and overlooked from behind by a naked figure and from above his shoulder by a head; in the centre, three tall candles cut across the hair of the second figure. The rather fragmented style of the "Intermezzo" is reminiscent of the two pieces based on ghost stories by M. R. James from the 1940s (see chapter 15); indeed, the first system of the movement contains the *Dies irae* melody quoted in these works. The bell motive (a series of three chords in fourths) found in the earliest one, *"Quaere reliqua hujus materiei inter secretiora"*, is heard immediately after the Gregorian melody (marked "Quasi campane"); it is recalled on pp. 102 and 103. The final right-hand notes of the movement (F♯, D♯) bring back the beginning of the theme of the passacaglia.

The sixth movement, a swift "Cadenza-Toccata" (pp. 103–12) in semiquavers, with a brief quotation of the dedicatee's letters (F–H) on p. 109, marked as such in the score, serves as a virtuosic piece leading into the seventh movement, a "Preludio adagio e fuga" (pp. 112–17, 118–49) that relies mainly on soft chords in both hands. The first fugue of the "Fuga quintuplex" calls for two voices, and

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[46]See the note on Sorabji's incorrect use of "punta d'organo" in the introduction.

[47]James Mew, "The Black Art", *The Pall Mall Magazine* 1, no. 1 (May 1893): 51–64; 1, no. 2 (June 1893): 174–83; 1/6 (October 1893): 820–32; available at https://archive.org/details/sim_pall-mall-magazine_1893-05_1_1/. See also Claire Nielson, *The Spirit of Aubrey Beardsley: A Celebration of His Art and Style* (New York: Gramercy Books, 1998), 47 (illustration), 48 (caption). Sorabji had already mentioned the drawing in his article "Oriental Influences in Contemporary Music", *The Chesterian*, n.s., no. 3 (December 1919): 83–85; 83.

[48]Brian Reade, *Beardsley* (London: Studio Vista, 1967), note to fig. 18.

each subsequent fugue adds a voice. Thus, the fifth one, whose subject is a variant of the theme of the passacaglia, is written for six voices (pp. 118–20, 120–24, 124–28, 132–38, 138–44). Between the third and fourth fugues there is an "Intermezzo" in toccata style (pp. 128–31). The subjects of the third, fourth, and fifth fugues begin with the notes of the dedicatee's name (F–D–A) in various forms; the one used for the last theme had been anticipated on the last page of the "Intermezzo secondo". The concluding pages (pp. 144–49) form a very free stretto (perhaps for this reason not identified as such) whose texture rapidly grows from four to five and finally to six staves.

Frammento cantato

As we have seen, Sorabji wrote several fragments for the piano in the 1960s. With his *Frammento cantato* (1967; 1 p.) he also produced a tiny work for the voice, consisting of only three systems with very few notes on them. The piece is written "per l'Amico H.M." (i.e., Harold Morland), and is the last work Sorabji wrote for his good friend, to whom he gave the autograph. Morland in turn gave it for Christmas 1980 to his friend Alexis (Robert William Procter; see chapter 23), above whose bed it hung "elegantly framed".[49]

The text is from a book by Morland entitled *My Seeking Spirit, Being Free Variations on Poems by Kalidasa, c. 500 A.D.* In October 1966 the poet had sent an inscribed copy to his friend, who was "much taken by it".[50] On 10 June 1967 Sorabji set to music one of its texts, consisting of only three lines. The poet has used French and English versions and was proud to have been praised by two Indian "learned men".[51] In a prefatory note, he spoke of "variations on an Indian theme" that should be regarded as snapshots; his versions are variations on Kālidāsa's theme of the wholeness of life.

The *Frammento cantato* is written for a baritone or a *basso cantante*. Marked "Lento; senza misura, tempo libero", it consists of an aphoristic statement by the piano, followed by the first line of text over a held chord. The remaining two verses follow after a short passage for the piano, again over held chords. The vocal part consists of only fifteen notes. A short coda ends one of Sorabji's shortest musical utterances **(example 20.5)**.

Concertino non grosso for String Sextet with Piano obbligato quasi continuo

Sorabji's last work before his self-imposed compositional retirement in 1968 was the *Concertino non grosso for String Sextet with Piano obbligato quasi continuo* (1968; 48 pp.). Completed on 9 December 1968, it is of modest dimensions when compared with his previous essay in this genre, the *Quintet II for Piano and String Quartet* (432 pp.). It was written "for Mervyn: Denise: Adrian and Kevin / with love". Mervyn is the English composer and cellist to whom Sorabji had dedicated the *Symphony [no. 2], "Jāmī", for Large Orchestra, Wordless Chorus, and Baritone Solo* in 1951 (see chapter 17). The dedication of the new work adds the names of his wife, Denise (*née* Allen; 1918–2013), and of their two children, all residents of Swanage, located about 10 km from Corfe Castle. Sorabji never liked children and had this to say about the younger members of the family: "Very charming and clever boys they are too, with delightful manners… but well on into their teens. They must be a real headache for expense. They are

[49]Harold Morland to KSS, 19 March 1981, 2.

[50]Harold Morland to AH, 26 December [1992], 1.

[51]Morland, *My Seeking Spirit, Being Free Variations on Poems by Kalidasa, c. 500 A.D.* (privately printed, 1966), 38 (out of 69 pp.), no. 8. Kālidāsa is the fourth-century Classical Sanskrit writer who, in his Abhijñanasakuntalam (The Recognition of Sakuntala), dramatized the story of Śakuntalā, who is featured in operas by (among others) Ernest Reyer, Karl Goldmark, Felix Weingartner, and Franco Alfano.

all coming to see me on Sunday evening. […] I have no conversation with young things… but fortunately Mervyn and I do all the talking, about music mostly."[52]

Sorabji seems to have begun work by writing down musical motives associated with the dedicatees. A separate sheet inscribed "For Mervyn" contains a reference to Ted Ray (1905–77; real name: Charles Olden), an English theatre and BBC entertainer known for the radio series "Ray's a Laugh": "As Ted Ray would say: 'How about that?????!!!!'"[53] There is also a short line of music, identified as "Mervyn's contrapuntal answer", which is used as a fugue subject (with a slight modification at the end) **(example 20.6)**.

The *Concertino non grosso* obviously takes its name from the Baroque concerto grosso, which opposes a small group of soloists (the concertino) and the orchestra (the tutti or ripieno). The short piece is aptly called a concertino and, since there is no orchestra, it becomes *non grosso*. Sorabji first thought of it as an octet but changed it to a septet. The septet is not really one, however, because the four violins and the viola are accompanied by only one cello, not two as some of the marginal notes indicate. The work is therefore a sextet, hence the change in title from the manuscript, but it is quite different from the standard scoring of two each of violin, viola, and cello.

Sorabji adhered to the traditional three-movement form associated with the Baroque concerto: an opening "Vivace assai" (82 bars), followed by a shorter "Adagio" (33 bars) and a concluding "Finale" (130 bars). Much of the piano writing in the first movement is in toccata style. The slow movement consists of a rhythmically uniform but transparent contrapuntal web over the piano part. There is a clear break in the middle (end of bar 23), where the composer inserts a long pause. The final movement initially returns to the toccata style of the opening, giving way to a short fugue on "Mervyn's contrapuntal answer", first stated by the piano. It consists of two sections, the second of which (from bar 54) presents the theme in inversion. After a pause, the fugue resumes with a slower section (bars 76–85) that recalls the style of the middle movement. Sorabji then inserts a short stretto on the fugue theme (bars 85–89) before returning to the toccata style. He briefly interrupts the active web of parts in bar 106 for a brief recall of the slow movement.

The writing is very active throughout, especially given the importance of the toccata style. The string ensemble forms a dense contrapuntal web of varied lines. Although one or more parts are sometimes doubled at the unison or the octave by another instrument (e.g., I, 68–70 and III, 6–7), the doubling often involves only the rhythm, which means that each part plays a different melodic line (e.g., I, 27 and III, 32–33). Bars with three or four very different lines involving superimposition of irrational rhythms (quaver triplets against groups of four or five semiquavers) are also very frequent; and the string parts use tremolos extensively, which contributes to a high level of surface activity.

The motives cued to the names of the dedicatees are first stated in the initial pages of the opening movement. Apart from three reminiscences of the first segment of Mervyn's motive in the second movement, they are heard only in the outer movements. The lion's share of the motives are those of the spouses, while those of the sons are used much less frequently. The motives are almost always entrusted to the strings, with only a few entries given to the piano. "Mervyn's contrapuntal answer" is stated four times in the opening movement before being fully used in the fugue.

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[52]KSS to FH, 20 December 1969 {2/F.10}.

[53]For another use of Ted Ray's expression, see KSS to EC, 18 February 1960, 1.

Likes and Dislikes in Music

If Sorabji's personal and open letters give us with many insights into his view of the world around him, his essays published in *Around Music* and *Mi contra fa* contain many comments on his likes and dislikes in music, and his hundreds of concert and record reviews for the *New Age* and the *New English Weekly* even more so. It is now time to explore this important aspect of the composer-critic's artistic personality by discussing his attitudes towards the most important composers, grouped chronologically.[54] The names of the composers discussed are printed in bold type to make them easier to find. The chapter ends with a table showing the type of assessment (positive, negative, lukewarm or change of attitude) for the composers mentioned in the following pages. In order not to prolong the the presentation, this survey will not pit Sorabji's opinions against those of other contemporary British critics or modern scholars. What is important here is to show the critic's highly opinionated attitude towards the music he heard, whether he was right or not, and whether he took care to support his statements with arguments. His ideas were (and still are) often at odds with the received wisdom; occasionally his thinking underwent startling changes. Writing to his new friend Heseltine in 1913, he emphasized a capriciousness that sometimes applied to him.

> But after all why should we conceal our convictions and the likes and dislikes over which we *personally* have no control? It is all a matter of temperament. There are chords in our nature which vibrate in sympathy with the Ultra-modern spirit, just the same as in others there are chords which only vibrate in sympathy with the "Classic" or "Academic" spirit. And do but glance at the extraordinary capriciousness, and seemingly incomprehensible nature of the likes and dislikes or, should I say more properly, sympathies and antipathies of some of the Great composers.[55]

Renaissance polyphony: Sorabji's attitude to pre-Baroque music is documented in connection with a visit he made in 1931 to a connoisseur of early English church music who showed him the celebrated 40-part motet *Spem in alium* by **Thomas Tallis** (ca. 1505–85) and the 19-part motet *O bone Jesu* by **Robert Carver** (ca. 1485–1570). The unidentified gentleman "always felt my spiritual affinity with the Netherlands and such early contrapuntal masters very strongly when hearing any of my work". Sorabji then went on to say that he had once "glanced (but only glanced)" at some Masses of **John Taverner** (ca. 1490–1545) in the British Museum; he had "felt a thrill and excitement at the sheer look of the pages that told me here was something to which in some senses I was kin".[56] On the other hand, he must have shuddered when he listened to the vocal music of the period, for "two of THE most dreadful noises made are that of the String Quartet and that horror the male alto or counter-tenor".[57]

Late Baroque composers: Like most listeners before the 1970s, the earliest Baroque works Sorabji was regularly exposed to were by Johann Sebastian Bach and George Frideric Handel. He held **Bach**'s music in high regard, as evidenced by the two transcriptions he made in the 1940s and the penultimate of the *Études transcendantes*, an original work written in the style of the Chromatic Fantasia and Fugue in D Minor. In particular, he praised the Mass in B Minor as a great masterpiece whose performance "more nearly approaches the celebration of a Ritual".[58]

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[54]On Sorabji's reception of modern music, with particular emphasis on British composers such as Delius, Elgar, Bax, and Holst, see Nazlin Bhimani, "Sorabji's Music Criticism", in *SCC*, 256–84.

[55]KSS to PH, 30 October 1913 {*LPH*, no. 2, p. 39}.

[56]KSS to EC, 22 January 1931, 5 (section dated 30 January). See also another comment on the music of this period in the section on folk music at the end of this chapter.

[57]KSS to DG, 15 November 1969, 1.

[58]Sorabji, "Music", *NA* 36, no. 6 (6 December 1924): 66–67; 66.

Handel's music did not count for much for Sorabji, at least at first. Always "frightened away by the oratorio traditions which clung about it", he confessed in 1928 having attended *Messiah* for the first time. After a second performance given three months later, he rejoiced that the "cobweb habits of performance" had been swept away "to the greater glory of this great work".[59] Some twenty years later, however, he wondered whether the immense popularity of Handel's music among English choral societies might not have something to do with the biblical provenance of many of his texts, which surrounded performances with "a kind of churchgoing flavour" and a "comfortably conscious rectitude".[60]

Classical composers: In a passage from his first letter to Philip Heseltine, already quoted in chapter 3, Sorabji, then aged twenty-one, wrote that, despite his efforts, Beethoven and Haydn did not appeal to him "one scrap"; he found much of the former's music "absolutely repellant". Speaking of Bach, Mozart, Schumann, Chopin, and Schubert, he could "thoroughly appreciate and enjoy their beautiful works".[61] He would soon come to dislike some of these composers. Although his later writings show some differences, he was never much partial to the music of the Viennese Classical composers.

If Sorabji later enjoyed performances of **Haydn**'s late symphonies, the other two Viennese composers did not fare so well.[62] In 1937 he explained his "temperamental antipathy" to **Mozart**'s music, which grew with time: "It is simply that for me, the actual content of Mozart's music has little if any appeal. I feel that I am contemplating exquisitely beautiful workmanship in a medium that I do not like, or perhaps I should say, upon material that I do not like."[63] His "pathological antipathy" to Mozart led him to describe one of his divertimentos as "one of the most infuriating manifestations of this composer's work that I know. How it rattles on! Click-clack, tick-tack!"[64] He could tolerate composers he disliked when they were brought to him by his favourite performers, such as Sir Thomas Beecham, or Egon Petri, who shunned "that miserable tradition of playing Mozart as though both composer and performer were afflicted with infantilism or arrested mental development".[65] Even the *Requiem* contained "too many of those genteel and petty trivialities". He preferred the "blossom of the Mozartian triviality" when it had "fructified later in the delightful impertinences of Rossini" and confessed to "finding his incorrigible jauntiness one of the few joys in our dreary musical world".[66] Mozart appears only once in Sorabji's music, namely, in a "jeering reference" to *Le nozze di Figaro* in the *Toccata seconda per pianoforte*.

Sorabji never discussed **Beethoven**'s music at length. He admired his large-scale works such as the *Hammerklavier*, an "indivisible and overwhelming whole" that only the greatest musical minds could grasp.[67] He disliked the more popular works, such as the Fifth Symphony, and it took Beecham, in 1935, to prevent him from walking out before the work was played for the first time in many years.[68] Other examples are the well-known sonatas: the *Waldstein*, "one of the worst of the 'standard' sonatas"; and *Les adieux*, "that tiresome and boring piece of programme music, such a feeble, trite and second-

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[59]Sorabji, "Music", *NA* 42, no. 11 (12 January 1928): 128; "Music", *NA* 43, no. 5 (31 May 1928): 53.
[60]Sorabji, "Cant and the Classics", in *MCF*, 114–18; 116.
[61]KSS to PH, 3 October 1913 {*LPH*, no. 1, p. 37}.
[62]Sorabji, "Music", *NEW* 12, no. 7 (25 November 1937): 132–33; 132; "Music", *NEW* 9, nos. 17–21 (3 September 1936): 334–35; 335.
[63]Sorabji, "Music", *NEW* 5, no. 4 (10 May 1934): 90–91; 90.
[64]Sorabji, "Music", *NEW* 6, no. 11 (27 December 1934): 237.
[65]Sorabji, "Music", *NA* 39, no. 5 (3 June 1926): 50.
[66]Sorabji, "Music", *NA* 38, no. 21 (25 March 1926): 250.
[67]Sorabji, "Music", *NEW* 8, no. 4 (7 November 1935): 75–76.
[68]Sorabji, "Music", *NEW* 6, no. 20 (28 February 1935): 418.

hand effort".[69] Sorabji preferred the late works, with the "epigrammatic, closely-packed quality" and its "abrupt transitions and no softening-down of asperities of expression to suit conventional conceptions of formal symmetry".[70]

Romantic composers: Of the early Romantic composers, **Schubert** and **Schumann** were of little interest to Sorabji. He disliked the "stock-in-trade and clap-trap of Germanic musical sentimentality" and the "inspissated amorous sentiment of that glucose and tacky texture" to which these composers had accustomed their listeners.[71] For him, "the click-clack symmetry, the rhythmic and melodic poverty (yes, even that!) of much of Schubert, **Brahms** or Schumann is unendurable except in the smallest doses".[72] Only when transfigured in Godowsky's transcriptions could he, "the very reverse of a Schubert enthusiast", find him tolerable.[73] He did, however, add Schumann's *Faust* to his list of neglected works.[74] **Mendelssohn**, on the other hand, found favour with Sorabji. His Violin Concerto was a "mellifluous honeyed-voiced work", and the Fourth Symphony showed "no signs of wear in the ordinary musical sense".[75]

Berlioz, on the other hand, was a composer of "such originality, with a conception of melody so personal and unique, that he stands in a category by himself".[76] Sorabji liked the *Grande messe des morts*, "a granite rock-hewn temple" and "one of the most amazingly powerful and original conceptions in all music".[77] He made similar comments about *Les Troyens*, every bar of which is "stamped with an individuality of thought, a force, beauty and strength of expression surpassed nowhere in all music".[78]

Sorabji's reception of **Chopin** was strongly influenced by the performances he heard. Someone like Egon Petri could take the composer "out of the overheated drawing-room and pansy-parlour where he so often languishes" and offer "powerful pieces of music, virile, austere yet at the same time delicate and tender upon occasion".[79] Although he described the waltzes as "some of the feeblest of these feeble products of Chopin's genius", Sorabji transcribed the *Minute Waltz* twice; only Godowsky—and himself—could transform these pieces.[80]

Liszt, an exponent of large-scale virtuosic piano music, could only rank high in Sorabji's pantheon. The Sonata in B Minor he hailed as "a great masterpiece, no matter how mauled, how vulgarized, how coarsened, defiled, cheapened and degraded by the common sort of 'concert pianist'".[81] He regretted that the great transcriptions were condemned because they had given rise "to a vast flood of bad imitation".[82] Among Liszt's other works he praised the *Faust* Symphony as "one of the world's masterpieces", whose three movements were "brilliant pieces of psychological insight and characterisation".[83]

Sorabji was also a great admirer of **Wagner**. In 1924 he wrote of the *Ring* that, "after having been stuffed for years with the feeble productions of French and Russian micro-organisms masquerading

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[69]Sorabji, "Music", *NEW* 21, nos. 16–18 (20 August 1942): 146; "Music", *NA* 48, no. 16 (19 February 1931): 188.
[70]Sorabji, "Music", *NEW* 9, nos. 17–21 (3 September 1936): 334–35.
[71]Sorabji, "The Songs of Francis George Scott", in *MCF*, 217–23; 221, 220.
[72]Sorabji, "The Great French Song Writers", in *MCF*, 158–67; 159.
[73]Sorabji, "Leopold Godowsky as Creative Transcriber", in *MCF*, 62–70; 68.
[74]Sorabji, "On Neglected Works", in *AM*, 99–106; 100.
[75]Sorabji, "Music", *NEW* 8, no. 14 (16 January 1936): 275; "Music", *NEW* 10, no. 21 (4 March 1937): 414–15; 414.
[76]Sorabji, "The Great French Song Writers", in *MCF*, 158–67; 160.
[77]Sorabji, "Music", *NA* 40, no. 15 (10 February 1927): 177.
[78]Sorabji, "Music", *NEW* 7, no. 19 (19 September 1935): 374.
[79]Sorabji, "Music", *NEW* 10, no. 5 (12 November 1936): 95–96; 96.
[80]Sorabji, "Leopold Godowsky as Creative Transcriber", in *MCF*, 62–70; 69.
[81]Sorabji, "The Modern Piano Sonata", in *AM*, 52–65; 53.
[82]Sorabji, "The Opera Fantasies of Liszt", in *AM*, 194–97; 196.
[83]Sorabji, "Music", *NEW* 5, no. 25 (4 October 1934): 493–94; 493.

as composers one realises again with greater potency than ever the superhuman character of the mind and creative genius that produced this Titanic work".[84] He praised *Tristan und Isolde* for its "luminous fabric of incomparable sound" but, despite "some very impressive things", saw in *Parsifal* "that old blackguard Wagner's time-serving unscrupulousness in dishing up this pseudo-mystical mummery, stinking of incense like an eighteen-ninety whore's parlour, and full of talk of 'purity,' 'chastity,' and the like".[85]

The music of **Brahms** did not impress Sorabji at all. He found it most strange "that the creator of this very remarkably vivid and highly coloured work [the *Paganini* Variations] should also have produced such portentous suet-pudding stodginess as the Second Piano Concerto".[86] In 1930, after hearing Arturo Toscanini conduct the Second Symphony, "a work I have always disliked intensely and endeavoured to avoid hearing", he found it to be a revelation, with its "lovely golden clarity, this glowing beauty of melodic line, this rich and full but sober and impressive colour, this marvellously proportioned and beautifully balanced shape".[87] Sorabji could sometimes change his mind completely, as other examples will show later.

Sorabji liked to pit **Bruckner** against Brahms. He knew of "no works of Brahms as fine and distinguished let alone finer than these of Bruckner [*Psalm 150*, *Te Deum*]". There was no trace in his music of "that coarseness of fibre both spiritually and intellectually" that he found in Brahms nor of "that mental and spiritual *air de province*".[88] He agreed with Hugo Wolf's dictum that "a single cymbal clash by Bruckner is worth all the symphonies of Brahms with the Serenades thrown in".[89]

Among **Tchaikovsky**'s works Sorabji would have been happy to dispense with the "everlasting performances" of the Piano Concerto in B-flat Minor, but saw in the Fifth Symphony "a splendid work, original, [...] and possessing enough interior vitality to outlast all the music heard at the International Festivals of Modern Music for years past".[90]

Late Romantic composers: Sorabji could not fail to be impressed by the gigantic symphonic creations of **Mahler**. His writings include several glowing reviews of performances of his works as well as detailed notes on all the symphonies. Although he saw the Austrian composer at his greatest in the Sixth Symphony, it was the Eighth Symphony that prompted his most enthusiastic comments. It was a "conception of immense power, sublimity and grandeur" ranking with Delius's *Mass of Life* and Reger's *Psalm 100* as one of the three greatest modern choral works.[91] In 1954 he said: "I'm a fanatical Mahlerite, Regerite, Alkanite, Busoni-ite and have been for twenty years before it became the fashion."[92] In fact, he was not such an admirer of Mahler in his early years. In 1914 he wrote that, although the Eighth Symphony would be "worth doing", the Seventh and *Das Lied von der Erde*, as a whole, were "very weak". In 1922 he reported from Vienna: "But worst of all is this bloody Mahler orgy. I cannot turn without seeing some bleeding Sonderheft [special issue of a periodical] devoted to the

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[84]Sorabji, "Music", *NA* 35, no. 5 (29 May 1924): 54–56; 54.

[85]Sorabji, "Music", *NA* 44, no. 22 (28 March 1929): 260; "Music", *NEW* 9, no. 2 (23 April 1936): 34.

[86]Sorabji, "Music", *NA* 36, no. 23 (2 April 1925): 272–73; 272. Curiously, he later wrote: "this huge and very grand work"; "Music", *NA* 46, no. 4 (28 November 1929): 44–45; 44.

[87]Sorabji, "Music", *NA* 47, no. 8 (19 June 1930): 92–93; 92.

[88]Sorabji, "Music", *NA* 50, no. 14 (4 February 1932): 164–65.

[89]Sorabji, "Music", *NEW* 10, no. 8 (3 December 1936): 153–54; 153.

[90]Sorabji, "To the Editor", *The Musical Standard* 3, no. 63 (14 March 1914); 261; "Music", *NEW* 8, no. 3 (31 October 1935): 55.

[91]Sorabji, "Notes on the Symphonies of Mahler", in *AM*, 178–93; 190.

[92]Sorabji, "Letters to the Editor: A Disclaimer", *MT* 95, no. 1332 (February 1954): 90.

man [...]".[93] Eight years later he considered himself "one of the few people here entitled with authority on Mahler's symphonies, for I have known and studied them for many years".[94]

Sorabji's attitude to **Richard Strauss** changed over time. He regarded *Ein Heldenleben* as the pinnacle of the composer's purely orchestral works,[95] and his admiration for *Salome* and *Elektra* was great. He wrote of the former's "overheated tropical atmosphere and strained tensity that are maintained in this astonishing work";[96] no wonder he later transcribed its closing scene. As for the latter, he spoke of "the perverse power with which this terrific poem of hate is carried through its tremendous course to its marvellous climax".[97] In 1926, however, he had strong comments to make when comparing Strauss with Mahler: "Strauss at his greatest […] betrays himself again and again for the arriviste and vulgarian that he is essentially and at bottom."[98] He initially despised *Der Rosenkavalier* as "an almost unrelieved tissue of cliche, commonplace banality, and vulgarity".[99] Five years later he praised its "very marvellous technical achievement" but accused the composer of using a material "unworthy of his skill".[100] Listening to a recording of *Arabella* in 1934, he remarked that he seemed to have experienced "a resurrection of his creative powers".[101]

Italian opera composers: Sorabji's love of singing often led him to attend performances of Italian opera. He particularly liked **Bellini**'s *Norma*, which could be made to sound "rich in emotion and drama" by people who could sing it.[102] His opinion of **Verdi**, however, covered both extremes. He complained of "the desolating trash and trumpery" of much of *La traviata*.[103] He initially called *Otello* "an extremely uneven, incoherent, and irritatingly unsatisfactory work", inferior even to *La traviata* or *Il trovatore*.[104] Some ten years later, in the tranquillity of his home, he found the *Requiem* to be an "authentic work of genius" that forced him to recant "certain […] exceedingly ill-considered and mistaken observations". As in *Falstaff*, he saw the qualities of melodic writing and thinking "raised to the very highest pitch, so much so that there is hardly any other operatic composer who, in comparison, does not seem to be his inferior in this respect".[105] Sorabji, who was sensitive to the Catholic expression of faith, called this setting of the Funeral Mass a "very great, very powerful and immensely original work, one of the very greatest things of its kind in all music".[106]

Among the works associated with verismo, Sorabji praised **Puccini**'s *Tosca*, which, "although it runs over with commonplace, with banality, and all the crude garish tastelessness of Italian neo-romanticism, […] does what it sets out to do with such accomplishment, such completeness, such skill, that it is impossible to deny that in its kind it is a masterpiece".[107] He hailed *Turandot* as "this great

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[93]KSS to PH, March. Early [1914] {*LPH*, no. 5, p. 55}; 2 January 1922 {*LPH*, no. 33, p. 132}.

[94]Sorabji, "Mahler's Eighth Symphony", *Monthly Musical Record* 60, no. 714 (2 June 1930): 169–70; 169. For some background on this article commissioned by a publication he called "a rotten little rag", see KSS to EC, 3 May 1930, 1–2.

[95]Sorabji, "Music", *NA* 36, no. 6 (4 December 1924): 66–67; 67.

[96]Sorabji, "Oriental Atmosphere", in *AM*, 147–51; 150.

[97]Sorabji, "Music", *NA* 37, no. 6 (11 June 1925): 68.

[98]Sorabji, "Music", *NA* 38, no. 14 (4 February 1926): 166–67; 166.

[99]Sorabji, "Music", *NA* 35, no. 7 (12 June 1924): 79–81; 80.

[100]Sorabji, "Music", *NA* 45, no. 3 (16 May 1929): 30.

[101]Sorabji, "Music", *NA* 54, no. 23 (5 April 1934): 272.

[102]Sorabji, "Music", *NA* 45, no. 7 (27 June 1929): 104–5; 104.

[103]Sorabji, "Music", *NA* 44, no. 15 (7 February 1929): 178.

[104]Sorabji, "Music", *NA* 39, no. 12 (22 July 1926): 134.

[105]Sorabji, "Music", *NEW* 11, no. 4 (6 May 1937): 74–75; 74.

[106]Sorabji, "Music", *NEW* 22, no. 4 (12 November 1942): 34.

[107]Sorabji, "The Opera", *NA* 37, no. 10 (9 July 1925): 115–16; 115.

masterpiece of Italian opera".[108] On the other hand, he endured "the appalling drivel of [**Mascagni**'s] 'Cavalleria' for the sake of listening to certain singers".[109]

Modern French composers: Among the French modern composers, Sorabji particularly admired Claude Debussy and Maurice Ravel as well as the French song writers. His attitude to earlier composers, on the other hand, could be very negative. He wrote of **César Franck**'s *Prélude, aria et final* that he could not "endure the reek of stale, cheap incense that clings about it, and that morbid and unhealthy manifestation of quasi-pseudo Catholic mysticism of the misty variety"—until he heard it played by Egon Petri in 1936.[110] The Fourth Piano Concerto by **Camille Saint-Saëns**—an "impossible clap-trap" and "fifth-rate stuff"—was similarly transformed by "the alchemy of a great interpreter's art" (Alfred Cortot).[111] Hearing an excerpt from *Samson et Dalila*, a work to which he would soon make a "jeering reference" in his *Toccata seconda per pianoforte,* caused him to lash out at the French composer. He called him "that astonishing charlatan, Saint-Saëns—a most sinister and portentous phenomenon […] of a composer who succeeded in composing for sixty or more years totally devoid of musical imagination".[112]

Vincent d'Indy, on the other hand, was a composer whom Sorabji compared in many ways to his beloved Busoni. He saw them as "two of the most profoundly original and aloof artists […] of our time". The *Symphonie sur un chant montagnard français* was for him "a musico-intellectual treat of the highest order" characterized by "such a lofty, exalted purity of style, such intense artistic integrity, such rich mastery, such distinction of matter as well as of manner, such perfection of proportion, balance and design".[113]

Sorabji was very positive about **Debussy**, whose *Pelléas et Mélisande* had "a curiously hypnotic insinuating quality which counteracts any tendency to monotony" and showed a perfect "mood-correspondence of drama and music". He called the opera a "moving achievement" and "an entirely original and utterly unique masterwork".[114] In the field of orchestral music, *La mer* was "unquestionably one of the very major masterpieces of the music of modern times" and "a work at once most highly-coloured and subtle, powerful yet delicate in its drawing".[115]

Gabriel Fauré is a composer towards whom Sorabji's attitude changed radically. In 1928 he could not see in his songs "anything essentially different from or better than the French drawing-room ballad, with its stale perfume, stuffy atmosphere and artificial sentiment".[116] Some twenty years later, he wrote an essay on those masters of the *mélodie* he liked (**Berlioz**, **Henri Duparc**, **Chausson**, **Fauré**, and **Maurice Delage**). This enabled him to "repudiate and disavow some exceedingly ill-judged, foolish and unjust remarks" made on the basis of insufficient knowledge of the French master's work; he now saw "finesse, delicacy, allusive subtlety and distinction" in his songs. He also placed Debussy "in the rank of the very greatest song-writers" and considered Ravel "a supreme master". Referring to the

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[108]Sorabji, "Music", *NEW* 11, no. 6 (20 May 1937): 114–15; 114.
[109]Sorabji, "Music", *NA* 43, no. 12 (19 July 1928): 140.
[110]Sorabji, "Music", *NEW* 10, no. 5 (12 November 1936): 95–96; 96.
[111]Sorabji, "Music", *NA* 48, no. 4 (28 May 1931): 41.
[112]Sorabji, "Music", *NA* 49, no. 23 (8 October 1931): 272–73; 272.
[113]Sorabji, "Music", *NEW* 6, no. 16 (31 January 1935): 339–40.
[114]Sorabji, "Music", *NA* 47, no. 11 (10 July 1930): 130–31.
[115]Sorabji, "Music", *NEW* 17, no. 14 (25 July 1940): 168.
[116]Sorabji, "Music", *NA* 42, no. 15 (9 February 1928): 175.

Trois poèmes de Stéphane Mallarmé, he marvelled at the "wonderful way in which the most angular and 'awkward' of intervals are wrought into a supreme draughtsman's line".[117]

Ravel was one of Sorabji's favourite composers in his early years. After attending a performance of *Daphnis et Chloé* in 1928, he wrote that, nowhere else but in this work, "one of the most consummate masterpieces of modern music", could one find "his qualities of nervous delicacy, fantastic imaginativeness, fineness of style, and certainty of touch in the most daring of situations".[118] A few years later, a performance of the Concerto in G prompted him to argue that the work was "merely the furthest point yet reached in that long-protracted process of des{s}iccation that has been going on in Ravel's work ever since the Trio". He saw in his work "sterility and emptiness pitifully disguised under a handful of threadbare tricks borrowed from the dance-music (?) mongers". Finally, the piano writing seemd to him "of the school of Clementi at his worst".[119] He obviously retained his admiration for the early works, for he transcribed the *Rapsodie espagnole* for a second time in the 1940s.

Great composer-pianists: Sorabji's pantheon consisted of a handful of composer-pianists mostly active at the turn of the century and known for works that place high demands on a pianist's physical and intellectual resources—just what is needed to give meaningful renditions of his own works. His comments on Alkan, Busoni, Godowsky, Medtner, Rachmaninoff, Reger, Scriabin, and Szymanowski are replete with allusions to their striking originality of thought, lofty aims, unique technical ingenuity, and so on. Indeed, many readers must have been bothered by the amount of space Sorabji took to proselytize for his pet composers. Yet he was one of the few writers in England to have such a detailed knowledge of their music and to champion their works at a time when they were little known. His efforts have finally paid off, as the current interest in their music shows. Among the actors in this renaissance are Egon Petri for Alkan and Busoni, John Ogdon for Alkan and Busoni (and Sorabji himself), and Marc-André Hamelin for almost all the composers mentioned above as Sorabji's favourites, and for Sorabji himself. Anyone who is interested in Sorabji—whether as a performer, scholar, or listener—is usually drawn to the music of all these composers who form a close-knit network of interconnected figures in the history of piano music.[120]

In an essay on **Charles-Valentin Alkan**, Sorabji lamented the ignorance of his music among "those whom, one would imagine, its fascinating and novel technical problems would have interested, the pianists". He saw this because they were, in his opinion, "the most timid and unenterprising of human beings". The last number of the *Douze études dans les tons mineurs*, op. 39, "Le festin d'Ésope", he called "worthy of a place" alongside the great sets of variations by Beethoven, Brahms, and Reger.[121] In 1938 he described the broadcast of the first of four Alkan recitals by Egon Petri as a major event that enabled the public to hear "one of the most original, fascinating and powerful minds that has ever expressed itself by means of musical sound".[122]

References to **Ferruccio Busoni** in Sorabji's writings are uniquitous; the name is mentioned at least once in more than 125 of his published letters and reviews. Although the Italian composer barely featured in his discussions of modern music with Philip Heseltine, he soon became the yardstick by

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[117]Sorabji, "The Great French Song Writers", in *MCF*, 158–67; 162, 166. In *Around Music* (p. 144), he had written: "As for German 'heaviness', anything in German as heavily boring as Saint-Saëns' monstrous Symphony for orchestra, organ and piano duet, or the chamber works of Gabriel Fauré, it would be difficult to imagine."

[118]Sorabji, "Music", *NA* 42, no. 13 (26 January 1928): 149.

[119]Sorabji, "Music", *NA* 50, no. 20 (17 March 1932): 236–37.

[120]See Marc-André Roberge, "The Busoni Network and the Art of Creative Transcription", *Canadian University Music Review*, no. 11/1 (1991): 68–88.

[121]Sorabji, "Charles Henri Victorin Morhange (Alkan)", in *AM*, 213–19; 213, 217, 218.

[122]Sorabji, "Music", *NEW* 12, no. 16 (27 January 1938): 313–14; 313.

which almost every composer could (or had to) be measured. Later he could easily lose control when expressing his devotion to "one of the most solitary, most slandered, most misunderstood figures in perhaps any music of any time", "this grand and legendary figure, the fabulous pianist, the stupendous musical mind and intellect, in some ways unique in the history of music".[123] He often referred to his great works, such as the Piano Concerto and the *Fantasia contrappuntistica*, and he called the opera *Doktor Faust* "the most remarkable, the most essentially and profoundly original opera of modern times".[124] Sorabji's deification of a figure like Busoni must have made him look like a crackpot to many of his readers. If there was one composer for whom he never tired of praising, it was Busoni.[125]

Sorabji was naturally attracted to the music of **Leopold Godowsky**. In fact, his own piano music is an extension of his most complex polyphonic, polyrhythmic, and polydynamic writing. Unfortunately, it lacks the perfect fusion of musical content and mechanics that is the hallmark of the great pianist's music. His own works would be much less daunting if he had taken the trouble to write music that fits the hand as perfectly as Godowsky's, in other words, if he had used a more "ergonomic" style of writing. Above all, Sorabji admired Godowsky as a "creative transcriber and arranger"; he saw him as occupying "quite a unique place, the scope and range of his work in this respect sometimes surpassing even that of Busoni himself"—should this be possible! Not a bar of his transcription of Isaac Albéniz's *Triana* had "not undergone some subtle modification, harmonic or decorative, all kinds of fine little points have been added, pianistic expansions and amplifications, all with a consummate mastery".[126]

Nicolas Medtner was another composer-pianist whose praises Sorabji, especially in later writings, could sing without being prompted. (As mentioned in chapter 16, he took part in a BBC interview about him in 1979.) He first mentioned him for the first time in 1920, with some restrained enthusiasm, in connection with his Sonata for Piano in E Minor, op. 25, no. 2 ("Night Wind"). Its piano writing was "sufficiently individual to arouse and hold the attention, while the independence of the thought, its freedom from any of the current cant of the day, and the somewhat ponderous and rugged but decided personality expressed through the music are unusual."[127] In 1932 he called it "the greatest piano work that has come from contemporary Russia", one for which "the passage of years has only served to intensify one's admiration and respect".[128]

Reviewing a 1928 recital of Medtner's songs, which he considered "among the greatest of their kind", he noted that the settings of German poets "were not nearly so satisfying" as those of Russian writers.[129] In his extended essay of 1932, he described the composer as "by far the most interesting and striking personality in modern Russian music […] if only for his absolute independence and aloofness from the Stravinsky group and its satellites on the one hand".[130] On the other hand, he saw a "contracted, constricted quality" occasionally creeping up into his music, acting as a "rather too strongly inhibitory influence against which the musical thought [had] to struggle too hard to gain expression".[131]

Sorabji's reviews do not tell us whether he went backstage to congratulate Medtner after his performances of his Second and Third Concertos, in 1936 and 1944, respectively. He later recalled

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[123]Sorabji, "Music", *NEW* 8, no. 16 (30 January 1936): 314–15; 314.
[124]Sorabji, "Music", *NEW* 6, no. 16 (31 January 1935): 339–40; 339.
[125]See Marc-André Roberge, "Producing Evidence for the Beatification of a Composer: Sorabji's Deification of Busoni", *The Music Review* 54, no. 2 (May 1993): 123–36 [published in May 1996].
[126]Sorabji, "Music", *NEW* 20, no. 20 (5 March 1942): 178.
[127]Sorabji, "Modern Piano Technique", *The Sackbut* 1, no. 3 (July 1920): 116–23; 118.
[128]Sorabji, "The Modern Piano Sonata", in *AM*, 52–65; 60, 61.
[129]Sorabji, "Music", *The New Age* 42, no. 20 (15 March 1928): 236–37; 236.
[130]Sorabji, "Medtner", in *AM*, 132–37; 132.
[131]Sorabji, "Medtner", in *AM*, 132–37; 137.

seeing him in a tea shop with other patrons while having lunch with Egon Petri. Although the latter urged him to go and introduce himself, Sorabji felt it would have been "unwarrantably intrusive" and declined.[132] In any case, Medtner's 1944 concert had been enticing enough to draw him to the concert hall after his retirement from public life. It had given him "a most remarkable object-lesson of the way in which it is possible to convey, musically, the most intensely personal and individual thinking without any recourse to the fashionable tricks of 'linear' [writing]" or to the "fiddling about with one or two harmonies or 'funny chords'".[133]

In 1946 Sorabji wrote to Medtner (in French), asking him to forgive his enthusiasm. He had heard from his friends Joy McArden and H. James Cooper of the Russian composer's kind words of appreciation for the review he had written of his 1944 concert. In 1953 he wrote (again in French) to the composer's wife, Anna (1877–1965), who had asked the couple for Sorabji's address, referring to the "catastrophic loss of the incomparable genius". A few days later, he wrote again, eagerly agreeing to her request for a commemorative article. As if to prove his devotion, he mentioned that, as a boy of ten [the text suggests a reference to 1913, making him twenty-one], he had been the first in England to own and study a copy of her husband's "Night Wind" sonata.[134] The article referred to above is, of course, the substantial chapter on Medtner's "greatness" published in 1955 in an anthology edited by Richard Holt, who described its author as a "vigorous, witty and acute critic" who "does not suffer fools gladly!"[135]

As well as praising the "utter understanding, beauty and sympathy of the great Italian masters" with which he wrote for the voice, Sorabji hailed Medtner's three piano concertos as the "crown and climax" of his production. He also denounced the "utter failure of the mass of English 'critical' opinion for failing to understand or appreciate the music of one who had "committed the unforgivable sin of expressing himself forcibly and powerfully against many of the fashionable musical tricks of the time". Five years after its publication, the British author Rebecca West (1892–1983) referred to Sorabji's "turbulent essay" on Medtner as an example of how "musicians often make good hard-headed authors".[136]

Another Russian composer-pianist whom Sorabji spoke of in glowing terms was **Sergei Rachmaninoff**. He described him as "one of the most individual and outstandingly impressive figures of the time, far aloof, as a creative artist, from the fads, fashions and follies of contemporary music festivals". He described the Third Concerto as "one of the two greatest concertos of this or any other

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[132]AH to MAR, 10 April 2021, developing on the event mentioned in the BBC interview of 1979.

[133]Sorabji, "Music", *NEW* 9, no. 26 (8 October 1936): 435–36; "Music", *NEW* 24, no. 20 (2 March 1944): 166–67.

[134]KSS to Nicolas Medtner, 6 January 1946; KSS to Anna Medtner, 26, 30 May 1953 {Library of Congress, Nikolay Karlovich Medtner Papers, box-folder 5/22}. The other side of the correspondence has not been preserved.

[135]Sorabji, "The Greatness of Nicolas Medtner", in *Nicolas Medtner (1879 [n.s. 1880]–1951): A Tribute to His Art and Personality*, ed. Richard Holt (London: Dennis Dobson, 1955), 122–32 (sometimes cited as *Nicolas Medtner: A Memorial Volume*, the title appearing on the spine of the book); see also the editor's "Notes on Contributors", 11. Richard Holt was an English music writer who came into contact with Medtner in the mid-1940s in connection with his liner notes for the recordings financed by the Maharaja of Mysore (see chapter 15) and published by His Master's Voice. He is described in his 24-page booklet entitled *Medtner and His Music: A Tribute to a Great Russian Composer*, ed. Fred Smith (London: Rimington, Van Wyck, 1948), as having "an intimate appreciation of Medtner" and sharing with him "a firm friendship". See also Holt's "Nicolas Medtner (1880–1951)", *The Gramophone*, December 1951: 149–50. His own contribution to his book is entitled "Thoughts on the Piano Concertos" (pp. 194–200). There is no known correspondence between Sorabji and Holt, although the composer read his "admirable article on Rachmaninov's work" in *The Gramophone* 6, no. 69 (January 1929): 352–54; see his letter in "Correspondence: Singing", ibid. 6, no. 70 (February 1929): 422. A few years later, Holt quoted an excerpt from *Around Music* in "Pot-pourri", *The Gramophone* 11, no. 122 (July 1933): 56.

[136]Rebecca West, "Pleasure in Reading: Round Trip", *The Times*, 8 June 1961, 17. The author was referring only to Sorabji's contribution, not to Medtner or Holt.

time" (the other, of course, being Busoni's).[137] In 1947 he sharply denounced the "present-day English dislike of manifestations of excellence in more than one field of activity" that had led to Rachmaninoff being dismissed as a *persona ingratissima* for his combination of gifts and qualities as a creator and performer.[138] He always admired composers and artists who remained true to their ideals, especially when this meant not following the crowd; he himself never stopped going his own way, no matter how much fashion dictated otherwise.

Another greatly misunderstood master was **Max Reger**, whose merit had been "to recover the thread of the grand, that is the Bach, tradition, and to expand and develop it in all directions in a manner beyond conception". The standard argument that his music contained too many notes was of no value to him, because no one can tell a composer what tools to use.[139] The German composer's reliance on the variation forms and the fugue was obviously a major influence on Sorabji, who described the *Variations and Fugue on a Theme by J. S. Bach*, op. 81, as "one of the most conspicuous in all music" for its "cumulative grandeur and stately massiveness".[140]

Alexander Scriabin was an important influence on the early Sorabji. He later recalled the stimulus given to his harmonic sense by the so-called mystic chord (C–F♯–B♭–E–A–D) and "remote derivatives of the dominant thirteenth, eleventh, and ninth"; but he opined that Scriabin had not put his "immensely fascinating" researches to "any powerfully and convincingly expressive use".[141] As a young composer, he described the Russian composer's idiom as far more "intensely personal" than Schoenberg's; it possessed "a radiant ecstatic quality that *no other*, past or present, has".[142] In 1932, however, he criticized the musical substance of the piano sonatas as "of extreme exiguity" and their creative invention as "cramped, limited and poverty-stricken"; he objected to the composer's researches "into his own chosen and very confined area of harmonic exploration".[143] He could no longer tolerate "the inflated, over-sexed, flapper-yearnings" of *Prométhée, le poème du feu*.[144] In 1972 he realized how he had saturated himself with his music in his youth and "experienced a reaction which made me say some foolish and unjust things"; he now saw him as "a very great master".[145]

Karol Szymanowski is another composer for whom Sorabji had great admiration. In 1932 he described the Third Symphony as "an evocation of the East, the potency, the intense imaginative power, the radiant beauty of which is unsurpassed".[146] An exception was the *Symphonie concertante*, whose composer had "shrivelled into one of those wretched post-war 'pasticheurs'".[147] On the other hand, the opera *Król Roger* inspired him to write with all the passion and enthusiasm he could muster. He spoke of "a mysterious indescribable and musical quintessentiation of everything utterly inexpressible" and of "a marvel of white-hot imagination".[148]

British composers: Sorabji's appreciation of the music of his countrymen could range from the most enthusiastic down to the most devastating. The British composer whom he most consistently praised

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[137]Sorabji, "Music", *NEW* 23, no. 1 (22 April 1943): 7.
[138]Sorabji, "Rachmaninoff and Rabies", in *MCF*, 170–77; 170, 172.
[139]Sorabji, "The Organ Works of Reger", in *AM*, 220–26; 221.
[140]Sorabji, "The Modern Piano Sonata", in *AM*, 52–64; 64–65.
[141]Sorabji, "Music", *NA* 55, no. 12 (19 July 1934): 141–42; 141.
[142]Sorabji, "Our Letter-Box: Scriabin", *The Musical Standard* 3, no. 58 (7 February 1914): 141.
[143]Sorabji, "The Modern Piano Sonata", in *AM*, 220–26; 62–63.
[144]Sorabji, "Music", *NA* 55, no. 12 (19 July 1934): 141–42; 141.
[145]KSS to FH, 15 February 1972 {3/F.3}.
[146]Sorabji, "Music: : A Few Remarks on Szymanowsky [*sic*]", *The New English Weekly* 2, no. 11 (29 December 1932): 255–57; 256.
[147]Sorabji, "Music", *NA* 55, no. 2 (10 May 1934): 21.
[148]Sorabji, "Karol Szymanowsky [*sic*]", in *MCF*, 178–87; 187, 186.

was **Frederick Delius**. His *Paris* was "one of the orchestral masterpieces of our time, at once vivid and subtle, highly-coloured and yet sensitive", and the *Song of the High Hills* "the greatest musical Nature-elegiac ever written".[149] The gigantic *Mass of Life*, of course, elicited laudatory comments: Sorabji could think of "no greater nor more truly lofty and sublime work since the B minor Mass".[150] As he often did when praising works to his liking, he contrasted it with those by composers he despised. He felt "teeming, abundant, and overflowing 'life,' exultant and vivid enough to galvanise into response even the machine-monotony-stunned disciples of the *Zeit-Geist*, as represented, naturally, by Stravinsky, Hindemith and Co."[151] Nevertheless, he found it incredible that Delius could produce something as bad as his Second Sonata for violin and piano of 1923, "a maundering, maudlin, meandering, melody for violin".[152] Writing in 1939 of *On Hearing the First Cuckoo in Spring*, he deplored the "whining lushness of the music, its lack of spiritual and moral back-bone so to speak" and its "rhythmic poverty and monotony".[153]

Edward Elgar elicited warm praise from Sorabji, who described his Violin Concerto as "one of the finest things in contemporary music, and surely the finest British work".[154] The Second Symphony was "one of the most remarkable works of its kind that exist", and he enjoyed its "great, generous flood of music, ripe, full and mellow". Having not heard the work for seventeen years, he found it imbued with a technical brilliance that contrasted with "the prevailing amateurishness and incompetence".[155]

Sorabji initially had a very dim view of the music of **Arnold Bax**. He saw in his two quintets (oboe, piano) of 1922 only "tepid viscous glucosity, completely lacking in firmness of outline and line drawing", and called his first two piano sonatas "indifferent works, both musically and pianistically".[156] A few years later, however, he rejoiced in that his "usual sprawling, invertebrate productions" had given way in the *Three Pieces* for orchestra to "a pregnancy of thought, a cogency of utterance", with "themes of a much greater decisiveness and directness than ever before".[157] He liked the *Symphonic Variations* for piano and orchestra (in its unabridged version), which remained "the only possible work for piano and orchestra by any modern Briton".[158] A hearing of the Sixth Symphony, in 1935, led him to praise the "richness of imagination and technical resource" of one who had "no need of the sterile puerilities or perversions required by a Stravinsky or a Schoenberg simply to carry off impotence".[159]

Ralph Vaughan Williams is another composer who experienced Sorabji's diametrically opposed assessments. He found the *Fantasia on a Theme by Thomas Tallis* "admirable" and hailed *Flos campi* as a "very moving and deeply felt work".[160] However, he wrote of the "almost unbelievable piano concerto" that "in crudity of writing, in infelicity of pianistic treatment, and worse than all, in musical nullity, sterility and pretentious emptiness, I have rarely come across the equal of this portentous production".[161] On the other hand, he called *A Sea Symphony* "the most appealing [and not "appalling", unless there is a misprint in the source] work of this composer that I have heard".[162]

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[149]Sorabji, "Music", *NA* 36, no. 21 (19 March 1925): 246.
[150]Sorabji, "Music", *NA* 36, no. 26 (23 April 1925): 308.
[151]Sorabji, "Music", *NA* 46, no. 2 (14 November 1929): 20–21; 20.
[152]Sorabji, "Music", *NA* 36, no. 23 (2 April 1925): 272–73; 273.
[153]Sorabji, "Music", *NEW* 14, no. 17 (2 February 1939): 255.
[154]Sorabji, "Music", *NA* 39, no. 21 (23 September 1926): 242.
[155]Sorabji, "Music", *NA* 46, no. 14 (6 February 1930): 164.
[156]Sorabji, "Music", *NA* 42, no. 2 (10 November 1927): 22; "The Modern Piano Sonata", in *AM*, 52–65; 63–64.
[157]Sorabji, "Music: Queen's Hall", *NA* 45, no. 25 (17 October 1929): 296–97; 296.
[158]Sorabji, "Music", *NA* 35, no. 26 (23 October 1924): 308–9; 308.
[159]Sorabji, "Music", *NEW* 8, no. 9 (12 December 1935): 174.
[160]Sorabji, "Music", *NA* 42, no. 10 (5 January 1928): 117; "Music", *NA* 46, no. 17 (27 February 1930): 201–2; 201.
[161]Sorabji, "Music", *NEW* 9, nos. 17–21 (3 September 1936): 334–35.
[162]Sorabji, "Music", *NEW* 12, no. 19 (17 February 1938): 373.

Other composers who were the subject of Sorabji's negative comments were Gustav Holst, Rutland Boughton, and Benjamin Britten. He saw in **Holst**'s *Choral Symphony* "the same clumsiness and gaucherie, the same lack of certainty, of inevitability, the unfailing hallmark" as in his other works praised by the critics[163]—to quote a rather inoffensive passage. After Holst's death, he found him "lamentably lacking both in intellectual sweep, spaciousness of style, and any real magisterial authority of that unmistakable kind that marks the Master".[164] After denouncing his opera *At the Boar's Head* as a "crazy, clumsy, jejune patchwork of meaningless fragments", Sorabji mentioned the "equally egregious **Rutland Boughton**", whose once oft-performed opera *The Immortal Hour* seemed to him "a manifestation of the so prevalent and admired infantilism which trades under the name of simplicity".[165]

Sorabji never enjoyed the music of **Benjamin Britten**, whose *Seven Sonnets of Michelangelo* for tenor and piano he much disliked (see chapter 3). In 1934 he described the *Choral Variations* as "of quite a phenomenal dreariness and dulness, tricked out with all the *quincaillerie* of mock-archaism, like the Gothic Revival".[166] The *Sinfonietta* fared no better, being "fully up to the standard of inconsequent incoherence and triviality set by Paul Hindemith".[167] Reviewing the score of the Piano Concerto in 1940, he called it "an anthology of contemporary clichés" and saw only "essential commonplace and inherently conventional ideas masked by a labouriously contorted utterance".[168] A broadcast of *Peter Grimes* one month after its premiere led him to call the work "extremely good 'theatre', extremely effective and skilful in treatment, but profoundly original and individual it just is not". He imagined, however, that with fine singers it could be "in real life, intensely effective".[169] Alistair Hinton recalls that Sorabji wept openly when he heard of Britten's death in 1976, and spoke warmly of his playing and his conducting.[170]

There is no need here to discuss Sorabji's reception of other British composers such as John Ireland, Francis George Scott, and York Bowen, to whom he dedicated works, since the relevant (usually positive) material has been presented elsewhere.

Canonical figures of modern music: As a young adult, Sorabji felt that "it is among the ultra-moderns that I am in my musical element".[171] He therefore greatly admired the early **Arnold Schoenberg**, whose *Verklärte Nacht* was a "superb piece of music" characterized by a "transcendentalised emotion".[172] The *Gurrelieder* conducted by the composer was "a miracle, a polychromatic marvel of every conceivable tint, a glowing fabric of incomparable richness and imaginative beauty".[173] Sorabji's attitude was to change in the late 1920s, when the vocal lines of *Das Buch der hängenden Gärten* seemed to him "but a denial, a negation of the human voice, springing from that perverse anti-vocal obsession of the latter-day Schoenberg, although the strangely impressive power of many of them is not to be denied".[174] Ten years later he was still railing against Schoenberg's treatment of the voice and his use of *Sprechgesang;* the vocal writing of his later works suffered "from his perverse mania for

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[163]Sorabji, "Music", *NA* 38, no. 3 (19 November 1925): 31–32; 32.
[164]Sorabji, "Music", *NEW* 5, no. 9 (14 June 1934): 208–9.
[165]Sorabji, "Music", *NA* 37, no. 2 (14 May 1925): 18; "Music", *NA* 43, no. 22 (27 September 1928): 260–61; 260.
[166]Sorabji, "Music", *NA* 54, no. 20 (15 March 1934): 234.
[167]Sorabji, "Music", *NEW* 11, no. 14 (15 July 1937): 275–76; 275.
[168]Sorabji, "Music", *NEW* 17, no. 18 (22 August 1940): 206.
[169]Sorabji, "Music", *NEW* 27, no. 15 (26 July 1945): 134–35; 135.
[170]AH to MAR, handwritten comment in a copy of a draft of *Opus sorabjianum* (30 June 2010), 344.
[171]KSS to PH, 3 October 1913 {*LPH*, no. 1, p. 37}.
[172]Sorabji, "Music", *NA* 40, no. 17 (24 February 1927): 197.
[173]Sorabji, "Music", *NA* 42, no. 15 (9 February 1928): 175.
[174]Sorabji, "Music", *NA* 46, no. 3 (21 November 1929): 32–33; 32.

making every instrument sound as much unlike its natural unperverted self as it can be made to do".[175] In 1931 Sorabji described the Austrian composer as "less nowadays a musician than a pedant of great ingenuity and skill" and saw his early works such as *Verklärte Nacht* as "the production of a dutiful disciple and epigenus" [*recte* epigone] of Mahler. The *Variations for Orchestra* struck him "as an attempt to retreat from the desiccated crabbed style of some of the more recent works into something with more lyrical flexibility". However, he was surprised by "the singular colourlessness, lifelessness, and lack of any real character in the music".[176]

In a discussion about Schoenberg "working to evolve a 'modern' form apt for the music of today", Sorabji wrote that he had "no interest in either Schönberg or his form, and anyway as my thought is so remote from his, I do not see that Schönberg's formalistic experiments have any logic as pertinence at all as far as I am concerned; and it is not the form which I use which matters, but the *use to which I put it*." Of course, some of his favourite composers (such as Busoni, van Dieren, and Sibelius) were able to express "the absolutely distinctive and personal quality of their ideas" without recourse to "any tortured *system* 'zwölfton' or what not, using freely the whole range of harmonic expression as it suits their purpose, neither excluding nor including this or that because it does not fit into a preconceived and mechanical scheme but using whatever they feel demanded by the expressive, musical exigencies of their ideas as these unfold themselves [...]."[177] He once remarked that "the two ARCH FRAUDS of modern times, psychoanalysis and the serial stuff, both emanated from Vienna", adding "gigantic pieces of quackery both of them, JUST the sort of things to take in this silliest of all times".[178]

Sorabji's lack of interest for the "twelve-note nonsense of Schönberg" also extended to "his apes".[179] He did not approve of the works of **Anton Webern**; they were cast "in the tightest and closest shapes of traditional musical logic, but the end is *musically* nonsense".[180] His attitude to **Alban Berg**, on the other hand, was much more positive and, in 1932, he saw in the Sonata for Piano in B Minor "a noteworthy achievement, a worthy forerunner of the prodigious *Wozzeck*, one of the most remarkable operas of modern times".[181] He considered him "a very impressive figure" and "a far greater artist than Schönberg", with "a more vivid and fiery imagination".[182] However, his opinion was soon to change, and in 1934 he saw "nothing in Berg's work that for a moment justifies ranking him with the essentially original musical thinkers of our time, such as Busoni, van Dieren or Sibelius". Much of the opera seemed to him as "the commonplace of music dressed up in a contemporary technique, a technique of stupendous brilliance, subtlety and mastery, yet an outward clothing merely".[183] His opinion in later years was no more favourable, and he described it as "phoney and fraudulent... all that elaborate apparatus to illustrate a piece of crude gutter Grand Guignol".[184]

Since Sorabji mostly disliked Schoenberg and his disciples, his reaction to the music of the practitioners of **integral serialism** was very negative. In 1957 he wrote: "It appears that 'serial music' is all the fashion nowadays... Zwölfton Machmusik... crossword puzzles in 'musical' (???????!!!!!) terms... I prefer, if I had a preference, which I haven't... crosswords just as crosswords and without 'music',

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[175]Sorabji, "Music", *NEW* 14, no. 15 (19 January 1939): 222–23; 222.
[176]Sorabji, "Music", *NA* 50, no. 4 (26 November 1931): 40–41; 40.
[177]KSS to EC, 24 January 1932, 10 (section dated 4 March).
[178]KSS to DG, 1 March 1970.
[179]Sorabji, "Letters to the Editor: 'Miracle of the Gorbals'", *MO* 70, no. 839 (August 1947): 378. The subtitle is a reference to a ballet (1944) by Arthur Bliss.
[180]Sorabji, "Broadcast Music", *MT* 99, no. 1383 (May 1958): 258.
[181]Sorabji, "The Modern Piano Sonata", in *AM*, 52–65; 57.
[182]KSS to EC, 5 April 1931, 1.
[183]Sorabji, "Music", *NEW* 4, no. 24 (29 March 1934): 567–68; 567. For comparisons between Busoni and Berg, see Sorabji, "Music", *NEW* 6, no. 16 (31 January 1935): 339–40; "Music: Busoni's *Doktor Faust*", *NEW* 10, no. 25 (1 April 1937): 494–95.
[184]KSS to DG, 19 April 1969.

which isn't..."[185] Two years later he thought it was "nothing but jigsaw in terms of notes instead of words. They are always prattling of the intense LOGIC of it all."[186] And in 1965 he spoke of himself as not being a "persona grata (Deo maxima gratias et laudes) in quarters where Boulez rampages in china shops and tone-rows and serials are the dernier cri… or rather the last gasp… the ultimate refuge of musical impotence".[187] He was always delighted to hear new music that was "NOT the fashionable dodecaphonic drivel, tone row twaddle of serial stupidity".[188]

The music of **Béla Bartók** usually left a sour taste in Sorabji's mouth. He had "respect and admiration of the incorruptible and lofty ideals" expressed in a music of "blunt utterance", but he doubted the compatibility of the Hungarian composer's bluntness, "tending often to uncouthness", with musical expression. He saw in him "a really primitive musical nature expressing itself". More specifically, he found him insensitive "to the quality of sounds in themselves, a crudity of inner bearing that shows itself in the sharp, blunt ugliness of many of Bartók's chord-spacings and groupings".[189] Nevertheless, Sorabji respected the integrity and sincerity of "the abstract thinker pursuing certain lines of thought in sound".[190] In the 1940s he expressed some admiration for the Fourth String Quartet, which had "a strangely convincing power about its sour, vinegary countenance", and found his handling of the medium "much more sympathetic than his treatment of the piano, which is a sore trial".[191]

The twentieth-century composer Sorabji loathed above all others was the "Igrigious **Stravinsky**", a composer who sat "at the piano fuddling to find 'funny' chords and hooting with delight when […] he strikes upon something that sounds wild and woolly enough to find a place in the latest mistress-piece of 'absolute music'!"[192] The number of diatribes against the Russian composer in his writings makes it difficult to make a choice. After the London premiere of the Sonata for Piano, he let himself go.

> If badness were a criterion, one could prophesy boldly its *dernière*, too. A work so tedious, so dull, so utterly without essential logic, coherence, or significance, and, finally, so pretentiously ridiculous, it is not often, even in these days of atrociously bad music-making, one's fate to hear. One listened vainly for the indication of any conscious or unconscious certainty of aim or direction, and the only thing one can compare the thing to is a feeble attempt to imitate Clementi, while making use of the "current cant" […] of contemporary music. […] [Unlike Busoni's harmonic twists], Stravinsky's, on the other hand, approximate to the fumbling of a child pianist somewhere in the vicinity of the right notes; just lack of competence. Of taste or style he has absolutely none. His harmonic sense is cramped and limited to a degree almost incredible, and the rhythmic variety and vitality of which we hear so much spoken and actually hear so little, is as conspicuously lacking as it always is.[193]

Les noces showed its composer "fettered fast and immovable to his own monomanias of melodic and rhythmic *ostinati*"; it also represented the "æsthetic of the *ostinato* obsession, and of the dance of St. Vitus". Sorabji went on to denounce "the childish crudity[, …] the utter lack of any architectonic capacity beyond the usual Russian repetition, the poverty of the whole" that rapidly become "infuriating, and, after that, paralysing in boredom".[194]

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[185]KSS to Egon Petri, 16 February 1957.
[186]KSS to CMG, 18 December 1959.
[187]KSS to RS, undated (1965). For an earlier negative statement about Boulez, see KSS to RS, 17 May 1959.
[188]KSS to Alan Bush, 10 July 1965.
[189]Sorabji, "Music", *NA* 46, no. 12 (23 January 1930): 137.
[190]Sorabji, "A Note on Ernest Chausson", in *MCF*, 119–24; 120.
[191]Sorabji, "Music", *NEW* 19, no. 8 (12 June 1941): 80.
[192]Sorabji, "Music", *NEW* 9, no. 24 (24 September 1936): 393–94.
[193]Sorabji, "Music", *NA* 38, no. 16 (18 February 1926): 190.
[194]Sorabji, "Music", *NEW* 6, no. 1 (18 October 1934): 13–14; 13.

Like Stravinsky, **Paul Hindemith** was more than once the object of Sorabji's critical wrath. Reviewing an unidentified chamber work in 1928, he wrote one of his characteristically scathing diatribes.

> Of the farrago that followed, by Mr. Paul Hindemith, it would be difficult, one hopes, to find anything more abjectly cretinous. Drivelling, commonplace, gibbered by an idiot, is the impression left by it—a not-too intelligent ape imitating "modern" music, or it might have been a parody of the way they do it, except that it was most depressingly unamusing.[195]

Later hearings of music by Hindemith—whose name he was fond of turning into "Hin damit!" (Away with this!)[196]—did not alter his attitude. In 1932 he made the amusing remark: "From this arachnean delicacy of music poetry and interpretation [of Ravel's *Shéhérazade*] to the empty bombastic vulgarities of Paul Hindemith's *Konzertmusik* for brass and strings [op. 50] was like partaking of a *soufflé* from the inspired hands of Monsieur Boulestin and following with something from the table of a Bloomsbury lodging house."[197]

Dmitri Shostakovich was another composer of neoclassical tendencies whose music Sorabji could not digest. He saw in *The Age of Gold* "all the conventional rhythmic bangings, the identical turns of melodic cliché that have wearied our nerves and patience in all, any and every *echt* Russian from Rimsky-Korsakov onwards and downwards".[198] One of his problems with the composer was his "slavish servile prostration" to the political authorities. He expressed his anger at the "utter, humourless, typical petit-bourgeois psychology" of one whom he called the "pretentious dunderhead, this ideology-besotted prig" who wrote "flat and tedious, pedantic productions".[199] The Russian composer's Fifth Symphony struck him as "a dry, drab production, scrappy and disjected", with a "banal and commonplace" finale.[200] In 1958 he wrote that "with the vast acreage of boredom of his 24 Preludes and Fugues for piano, he remains for me that encyclopedia of clichés I have always thought him".[201] His attitude began to change in the late 1960s, when he found the First Symphony to be "the first by this composer that I have so far listened to with anything but irritation and boredom".[202] In later years he expressed some admiration for the First Violin Concerto and Symphonies nos. 4 and 10.[203] He also seems to have enjoyed Symphonies nos. 6 and 13.[204]

Listening to **Olivier Messiaen**'s *Trois petites liturgies de la présence divine* (1944) in 1965 prompted Sorabji to make the following comment: "now and then one caught a *faint* resemblance to music, which was soon lost in the grotesque twitterings, the Ersatz-Czerny exercises from the piano".[205] Although the work had been in existence for more than twenty years, Sorabji had probably never heard it before, and it is a very rare composition in an entirely modern idiom for which he left written comments. He was outraged to be called "a bridge to Messiaen" in a review of the first recording of

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[195]Sorabji, "Music", *NA* 43, no. 26 (25 October 1928): 309.
[196]KSS to EC, 18 September 1931, 4.
[197]Sorabji, "Music", *NA* 50, no. 18 (3 March 1932): 214. Xavier Marcel Boulestin (1873–1943) owned a celebrated restaurant in London and recorded the BBC's first television cookery programme in 1937.
[198]Sorabji, "Music", *NEW* 5, no. 25 (4 October 1934): 493–94; 493.
[199]Sorabji, "Music", *NEW* 23, nos. 16–19 (26 July 1943): 142–43; 142. Sorabji reprinted this passage as part of his essay "'La Trahison des Clercs': Music and War-Mongering", in *MCF*, 80–88; 86–88.
[200]Sorabji, "Music", *NEW* 22, no. 2 (29 October 1942): 14–15; 14.
[201]Sorabji, "Broadcast Music", *MT* 99, no. 1383 (May 1958): 258.
[202]KSS to RS, 21 April 1967.
[203]Paul Rapoport, quoting Alistair Hinton's reminiscences of Sorabji, in Bhimani, "Sorabji's Music Criticism", in *SCC*, 270n40.
[204]AH to MAR, handwritten comment in a copy of a draft of *Opus sorabjianum* (30 June 2010), 346.
[205]KSS to Alan Bush, 1 August 1965.

Opus clavicembalisticum: "WHO the HELL WANTS to be a "Bridge" to anybody but himself and his listeners?"[206]

One composer for whom Sorabji expressed admiration on several occasions was **Jean Sibelius**. On receiving the set of recordings of the Second Symphony, he wrote of a "very wonderful original and amazingly individual work, in fact this and his other Symphonies and the superb violin concerto I do not hesitate to again say the most profoundly original music ever written".[207] He also loved the Fifth Symphony, "with its astonishing originality, its tense, close-knit texture, its irresistible, inevitable organism of growth". For him, his symphonies were "the supreme modern examples of the form".[208]

Sorabji's appreciation of the composers of his time was thus, unsurprisingly, sharply negative. In 1932 he summarized his attitude as follows: "Sooner or later one is brought up against the blank wall of the fact that such is the nullity and worthlessness of the vast bulk of contemporary work that even by roping in down to the 9th or 10th rate there is literally *not enough* to go round more than 2 or 3 series of concerts."[209]

Avant-garde, non-Western, and popular music: Sorabji did not welcome the explorations of new territories such as twelve-note music or ***musique concrète***. His acquaintance with the latter style —probably a very limited one, since no practitioner of this type of music is even mentioned—led him to write that it was "funny,—and all the funnier since it does not mean to be; at least not to judge from the pompous, pretentious, inflated flapdoodle that accompanies it".[210] A few years later, he confessed again to finding such music "deliriously and gorgeously funny", although he could not "have much of it". His attitude to **electronic music**, on the other hand, was less flexible: he had found it "impossible to take seriously the four drab, dreary pieces of electronic 'music'" that were broadcast, but conceded that they were excellent as background noises to a film or radio.[211] In 1960 he wrote: "Well, Christ Almighty, when you hear most of the goddam orful tripe, tosh, and bilge of 'modern' modern music [the repetition may be intentional], it is high time someone like *me* did come along!"[212] He summed up his attitude to much of the music of his later years by saying "I view with complete disgust the lucubrations of the so-called AVANT GARDE. If they were funny one wouldn't mind as it's always nice to laugh especially if you aren't meant to." He went on to quote Lord Markby speaking to Mabel Chiltern in Oscar Wilde's *An Ideal Husband* (1895): "Nothing is so dangerous as being too modern. One is apt to grow old-fashioned quite suddenly."[213] Obviously, the modern trends were useful for the opportunities they offered to get ridiculed.

Popular music also drew sharp comments from Sorabji's pen, especially when produced by the "purveyors of the trash played by […] dance-bands". He had this to say about swing and blues in 1942.

> There is something called "swing" music, most appropriately named since it is produced by *pendards*, who most certainly *should* swing for propagating such pestilent rubbish; there is "rhythmic" music, so-called doubtless because it is entirely lacking in anything partaking of the nature of a genuine vital rhythm. […]
>
> As for that form of popular music that is called "blues," the happiness of the epithet is plain when the profound depression that the spectacle of people listening to it, with every indication of enjoyment, causes in anyone with a

[206]KSS to KD, 26 May 1984 {Derus, S58, p. 303}.
[207]KSS to EC, 17 September 1930, 8 (section dated 7 October).
[208]Sorabji, "Music", *NA* 49, no. 9 (2 July 1931): 104.
[209]KSS to EC, 22 April 1932, 2.
[210]Sorabji, "Letters to the Editor: Musique concrète", *MO* 78, no. 927 (December 1954): 143.
[211]Sorabji, "Broadcast Music", *MT* 98, no. 1378 (December 1957): 668–69; 669.
[212]KSS to EC, 18 February 1960, 2.
[213]KSS to KD, 26 January 1983 {Derus, S49, p. 244}.

> vestige of discrimination and wholesome taste is taken into consideration, though this is doubtless not the real reason for the choice of the name.[214]

Sorabji later referred to the "slithering coprophiliac and deliquescent putrescence that is modern popular music (dance and other)". However, a talk on the radio by a lecturer in **African music** caused him to object to those who had reduced the above "to the point of nearly physical *vomissage*" and "been wont to denounce this as of negroid origin, thus suggesting that the peoples of Africa have been responsible for this corruption and perversion". He saw in this music "a finesse, virtuosity, variety and subtlety of rhythm as well as a melodic boldness and cleanness of outline […] that is at the very opposite pole to the filth with which it is so often and so wrongfully coupled".[215] His opinion on the "'pop' filth", in which he saw only "rot and disintegration", was not to change in the 1960s.[216]

Folk music: Several of Sorabji's works refer, in some cases extensively, to the idiom of Spanish folk music. However, this music only had value for him when it was creatively transformed, and he made this clear with references to composers of the past.

> I personally execrate all folk music without exception *including* those of Spain and India but that *has nothing whatsoever to do with the quality of the work which is made out of them in the course of the activities of the creative artist*. And what on earth does the cretinous moron mean when he squitters that he would like to hear more of your "essential self" in your music? Does he hear less of Bach's "essential self" in the Chorale Preludes, of the great Flemish Masters in the colossal contrapuntal structures they reared on *L'homme armé*: huge *Masses* on a little popular song so transfigured and glorified [...] because the thematic material is initially someone else's.[217]

Jazz: Sorabji's reaction to jazz, which he discovered in 1928 thanks to an unidentified friend who played to him some records, was scathing. There was no need to dwell on the "rhythmic 'neologisms' and innovations" after they had been "exposed for the feeblest of conventional commonplaces of music of all times that they are"; we may see here an attitude derived from his assessment of Stravinsky's rhythmic "monomania". The whole genre was "pervaded by a drooling, bibulous snivelling which makes it unspeakably repulsive and disgusting to all those not besotted by it or those who flatter it from interested motives".[218] A few years later, listening to a recording of **Gershwin**'s *Rhapsody in Blue* brought very sharp comments. He saw in the famous piece

> the *locus classicus* of the humbug and bosh whereby the uncooked among music-lovers […] can be bamboozled. […] The dodges that are doubtless such "discoveries" to Mr. Gershwin and his semi-imbecile fans have been the smallest chit-chats of music for centuries; as for the "astonishing" rhythmic innovations in the way of syncopation, it can hardly be hoped or expected that a jazz-monger should know that the syncopation at which he doubtless goggles in openmouthed dodderation is primitive, crude and childish beside that of any Ambrosian chant from the Graduale known to the most ignorant parish-priest in Cork or Calabria.[219]

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[214]Sorabji, "Music", *NEW* 21, no. 10 (25 June 1942): 86–87; revised as "Modern Popular Music as Part of a Plan of Progressive Besotment", in *MCF*, 128–32. A "pendard" is one who deserves to be hung to death.

[215]Sorabji, "Letters to the Editor: African Music", *MO* 76, no. 908 (May 1953): 461. The programme to which he refers was "African Rhythm: Drumming and Dancing" by the Rev. A. M. Jones (School of African and Oriental Studies, University of London), broadcast on 22 March 1953 on the BBC's Third Programme; see the Genome database, https://genome.ch.bbc.co.uk/226f74cd0aa7451d8db27fd6c8257fbe.

[216]KSS to RS, (received on) 3 March 1968.

[217]KSS to EC, 3 May 1930, 6 (section dated 7 May).

[218]Sorabji, "Music", *NA* 43, no. 15 (9 August 1928): 177.

[219]Sorabji, "Music", *NEW* 8, no. 19 (20 February 1936): 375–76; 375. The word "dodderation" is Sorabji's coinage for a trembling or shaking.

Having read the above, it may come as a surprise that Sorabji once described **Cole Porter** as "resembling at times a kind of lesser Poulenc"; and, on another occasion, he said that "Cole Porter understood song writing—Schubert didn't".[220]

As a conclusion to this extended survey of Sorabji's reception of the luminaries of European music, it may be useful to summarize his likes and dislikes by grouping the names discussed in tabular form. This will be done in the order in which the composers have been presented, in categories, and will indicate whether Sorabji's assessment was positive or negative, or whether it was lukewarm or changed at some point, usually from positive to negative. (An occasional move in the opposite direction on a particular work is not a sufficient indication of a change in attitude.) The comments quoted above show that the composers who attracted him most were those, such as Bach, Wagner, Bruckner, Mahler, and Reger, who could create extended and elaborate polyphonic structures. Sorabji had an unusual devotion to a group of what some might call "second-tier" composer-pianists who made significant contributions to the development of piano music, such as Alkan and Busoni. One of his great contributions to the reception of these composers will remain his untiring advocacy of their merits at a time and place when they most needed a passionate champion.

On the other hand, Sorabji often expressed rather strong reservations about the music of the canonical composers, such as Beethoven, Chopin, Brahms, and the great Italian opera composers. He could sing the praises of some modern British personalities without end, especially when he knew them, or he could tear their music to shreds with very harsh and thoughtless comments that would nowadays lay him open to ridicule. Although he followed the development of modern music with an acute eye (and ear), he could never tolerate the "dry" and percussive music of people such as Stravinsky and Hindemith; his biting comments also often brought him to the edge of libel. He condemned any music using rhythm in a repetitive way or imposing a system, such as the dodecaphonic technique. This is why he turned against Schoenberg and Berg after they had moved away from a late romantic style. The more recent developments in music, as well as pop music and jazz, either left him unmoved or revolted him by their "primitive" use of rhythm. Sorabji was always opposed to fashion, and would have none of it, whether in his own music or in that of others.

Sorabji's reception of other composers' music

Period or Group of Composers	*Positive Assessment*	*Negative Assessment*	*Lukewarm Assessment or Change of Attitude•*
Renaissance polyphony	Robert Carver, Thomas Tallis, John Taverner		
Late Baroque composers	Bach	Handel	
Classical composers	Haydn	Mozart	Beethoven
Romantic composers	Mendelssohn, Berlioz, Liszt, Wagner	Schubert, Schumann	Chopin, Brahms, Tchaikovsky

[220] AH to MAR, handwritten comment in a copy of a draft of *Opus sorabjianum* (30 June 2010), 347.

Period or Group of Composers	*Positive Assessment*	*Negative Assessment*	*Lukewarm Assessment or Change of Attitude•*
Late Romantic composers	Bruckner, Mahler		Richard Strauss•
Italian opera composers	Bellini		Verdi•, Puccini
Modern French composers	Debussy, d'Indy, song writers (e.g., Duparc)	Franck, Saint-Saëns	Fauré•, Ravel•
Great composer-pianists	Alkan, Busoni, Godowsky, Medtner, Rachmaninoff, Reger, Szymanowski		Scriabin•
British composers	Delius, Elgar, (Francis George) Scott, Bowen	Holst, Boughton, Britten	Bax, Ireland, Vaughan Williams
Canonical figures of modern music	Sibelius	Webern, Stravinsky, Hindemith	Schoenberg•, Berg•, Bartók, Shostakovich•, Messiaen
Avant-garde, non-Western, and popular music, folk music	African music	Dodecaphonic music, electronic music, avant-garde, jazz (Gershwin), popular and dance music, folk music	*Musique concrète*

Part 4 / Towards Rediscovery

21 / 1973–75 ▪ The Flame Rekindled

Alistair Hinton, the Trusted Friend

If the meeting with Erik Chisholm in 1930 was the most important stimulus for Sorabji in the first half of his life, that with the young Alistair Hinton was to be even more significant for posterity in the second half. Thanks to his perseverance, Sorabji decided in late 1972 and early 1973 to end the period of silence he had entered in 1968.

> Yes, I have indeed started composing again after a few years' lapse, having been impelled thereunto by a remarkable meeting with a young musician with—it seems—an almost fanatical admiration for my work AND myself which, as you might say, set me off. Normally I hate the today young person of ANY sex… but this young man is the very ANTITHESIS in tastes, ideas, outlook from the average ignare pecus.[1]

Alistair Hinton's musical career was ignited when he heard Chopin's Ballade no. 4 in F Minor at the age of eleven, which led him to write Piano Sonata no. 1 (1962).[2] His early music attracted the attention of Benjamin Britten who helped him enter the Royal College of Music in London, where he studied piano with Stephen Savage, and composition with Humphrey Searle (1915–82), a former pupil of John Ireland, one of Sorabji's friends. In 1969, during a visit to the Central Music Library (now the Westminster Music Library), Hinton came across *Opus clavicembalisticum* and immediately devoted his attention to exploring the unusual score. He discussed his discovery with Searle, who had attended John Tobin's problematic reading of the work's *pars prima* in 1936 (see chapter 13), and then devoured his teacher's copy of *Mi contra fa*. Hinton's piano teacher, Savage, who was familiar with some of Sorabji's published pieces, suggested that he try to explain to the composer the impact his scores had had on him and to raise the possibility of reconsidering his attitude to the performance of his works.

In February 1972 Hinton, then living in Weston-super-Mare (Somerset), plucked up the courage and wrote to the awe-inspiring composer, who replied by telephone several weeks later, inviting the young enthusiast to visit him at any time by appointment. Sorabji had found him "most perceptive and intelligent".[3] A letter followed on 29 March, in which the composer was pleased that Hinton was a Scot and had the same (or almost the same) name as the organist Al*a*stair Chisholm, a Scottish acquaintance, though not related to Erik. He had "no time for more at this moment" for composition but enclosed various documents about himself and his music. In his reply to Hinton's second letter, Sorabji explained his dislike of composition.

> I have finished with composition for good and all, and when you see the bulk of my MSS. you will understand why I have finished with music … it *bores* me and musicians even more … AND remember I've been at it since I was fifteen

[1]KSS to NG, 1 March 1974 {18/F.52}. Sorabji meant "vulgum pecus", which describes an ignorant person.

[2]Much of the following is based on Alistair Hinton, "Kaikhosru Shapurji Sorabji: An Introduction", in *SCC*, 17–57, as well as on introductory notes in concert programmes of Sorabji's works.

[3]KSS to FH, 31 August 1972 {3/F.3}.

> and have been writing the blasted stuff for sixty off years. Don't you think I deserve a rest? I want to enjoy myself now and twiddle my thumbs […]
>
> I HAVE felt stirrings of fresh ideas since [1967, when he completed *Toccata quarta*] and have even noted them down but very quickly said to myself NO, NO MORE OF THIS, and tore them up! WHAT a relief! To HELL with composition … MINE at any rate.[4]

Hinton paid his first visit to Sorabji on 21 August 1972. The composer described him as "a very pleasant visitor" who had hired a car "especially to come and see me, having professed unbounded admiration for self and works, AND as he sounded [much] perceptive and intelligent I asked him if and when he was likely to be this way, he'd come and see me".[5] Although he was expecting someone in his forties rather than a young man in his early twenties, he was delighted to receive him. Showing his guest his collection of scores, he pointed out the absence of "accepted great masters" and the presence of composers such as Busoni, Szymanowski, and Rachmaninoff. Sorabji was impressed by Hinton, "a very exceptional person, quite outside the contemp[o]r[ar]y type of young man, has no use *at all* for any of the *avant-garde* stuff although having been at the Royal College of Music". The two quickly became great friends; the older composer had "the highest opinion of him *as a person*… much more important than merely as a 'musician'".[6]

At Sorabji's suggestion, Hinton went to see Norman Peterkin on 14 February 1973. Sorabji's old friend played to him some discs made from Frank Holliday's tapes. Peterkin feared that the composer would not let himself be persuaded to return to his art. Hinton, however, persisted on each of his visits and in late February received the manuscript of the *Benedizione di San Francesco d'Assisi*, which Sorabji had just completed. The piece was inscribed with the dedication "For my friend Alistair. (Alistair Hinton)". A few weeks later Sorabji sent him sketches for his *Symphonia brevis for Piano*. After this "warm up", Sorabji had no problem resuming his activity as a composer of large-scale works.

Hinton quickly became Sorabji's closest friend, and the composer increasingly turned to him, even exclusively, for advice on all matters, including legal (see chapter 15, in connection with the break in friendship between Sorabji and Holliday). Holliday and Peterkin soon saw Sorabji's increasing reliance on a newcomer to the circle as an intrusion into their personal sphere. Having been intimate friends for decades, they were embittered by the idea of seeing themselves and their advice sidelined in favour of such a young man.

Holliday suffered a severe blow when, in February 1975, Sorabji decided to bequeath to Hinton his Steinway grand piano—something he had said as early as April 1973—and the manuscript of the *Symphonia brevis for Piano*.[7] In January 1979 Sorabji wrote a new will in which he also bequeathed to the young man three other musical manuscripts and any manuscript bearing his name or not otherwise disposed of by his will. Holliday was to receive £1,000 in addition to the copyright and the income from the works handled by Oxford University Press, "but not the manuscripts thereto".[8] Hinton was therefore to become the owner of all the documents rlated to Sorabji still in the composer's possession. In several manuscripts, the composer wrote instructions such as "To be given to Alistair Hinton at my death". Furthermore, before writing his last will, he had shown his appreciation of Hinton by dedicating to him five works written between 1973 and 1977: *Benedizione di San Francesco d'Assisi*, *Symphonia brevis for Piano*, *Opusculum clavisymphonicum vel claviorchestrale*, *Sixth Symphony for Piano (Symphonia claviensis)*, and *Frammenti aforistici (4)*. He also retrospectively dedicated to him the *Sonata III for*

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[4]KSS to AH, 11 April 1972; reproduced in Hinton, "Kaikhosru Shapurji Sorabji: An Introduction", in *SCC*, 29–30.
[5]KSS to FH, 31 August 1972 {3/F.3}.
[6]KSS to FH, 20 February 1973 {3/F.4}; KSS to FH, 4 September 1973 {3/F.4}. See also KSS to FH, 12 November 1974 {3/F.5}.
[7]*RN*, April/May 1973", 1–2 {3/F.4}, "Second Codicil to the Will of K. S. Sorabji, Esq.", dated 19 February 1975.
[8]Sorabji, will, signed on 9 January 1979 (3 pp.).

Piano and the *Symphony no. 0 for Piano Solo*, and verbally dedicated the *Symphonic Nocturne for Piano Alone*. It was not until 1979 that he again offered dedications to other people, namely, to pianists to whom he had given permission to play his works in public and to young musicians interested in his works.

During a visit in November 1975, Hinton asked whether Sorabji, again an active composer, would now allow public performances. Sorabji replied that he had refused all such requests. Hinton raised the matter in February 1976 at the end of a piano recital by Yonty Solomon, who had discovered Sorabji through Erik Chisholm, his teacher at the University of Cape Town. Solomon had been working on *Opus clavicembalisticum* for some time, and his request to give public performances had been refused by Sorabji, to whom it had been passed. Recalling his conversation with Solomon to Sorabji, Hinton succeeding in obtaining from him a complete reversal of attitude, leading to Solomon's historic Wigmore Hall recital on 7 December 1976 (see chapter 22).

Hinton, whom Sorabji would describe in 1979 as "my especially dear friend—my sole trustee, literary executor and ultimate complete trustee of all my works",[9] soon began to think about the preservation and dissemination of Sorabji's output. In mid-May 1978 he and Paul Rapoport spent several days preparing four reels of microfilm containing a substantial part of Sorabji's musical manuscripts. In July 1979 Hinton began work on an edition of the *Trois poèmes* for Jane Manning (1938–2021), the soprano renowned for her performances of new music, who, unlike the two early published sets, never sang them.

On 1 October 1986, Sorabji, who had begun visiting the hospital, handed over full responsibility for his personal affairs to Hinton. In late December, Hinton, together with Sorabji's solicitor, took over from the composer as trustee of the Shapurji Sorabji Trust.[10] Sorabji left The Eye permanently on 21 October and moved to Christmas Close Hospital in Wareham, where his friend Reginald Norman Best had been admitted a week earlier; both friends remained there until March 1987, when suitable nursing home accommodation was found in Winfrith Newburgh, near Dorchester. Hinton and his wife, Terry, with the help of Denise Vicars, who had been close to Sorabji for several years, cleared the house between 15 and 22 November. Hinton had to hand over Sorabji's collection of approximately 3,000 books and personal belongings to Sotheby's, through their Bournemouth office, to raise money for the composer's care. He sold The Eye in February 1987.

In September 1988, with Sorabji no longer opposed to the dissemination of his works, Hinton set up the Sorabji Music Archive (renamed the Sorabji Archive in January 1993), a major research resource for performers and scholars, providing paper copies or PDF files of all of Sorabji's musical and literary manuscripts and editions. Hinton, who has run the Archive almost single-handedly, has encouraged performers and scholars to prepare editions of Sorabji's unpublished works and has assisted in the preparation of several recordings of Sorabji's music produced by Chris Rice, owner of the enterprising Altarus Records label.

Running a private archive dedicated to a relatively little-known composer is, of course, almost impossible without subsidy. This situation forced Hinton in December 1992 to put the manuscripts of the *Third Symphony for Piano Solo* and the *Second Symphony for Organ* up for auction through Sotheby's to cover the running costs of the Archive; only the former found a buyer.[11] In July 1994 he resigned himself to finding a buyer for his entire collection of music manuscripts. The Paul Sacher

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[9]KSS to NG, 22 November 1979 {19/F.10}.

[10]"Deed of Appointment of New Trustees", 18 December 1986. On 20 November 1992 the Shapurji Sorabji Trust and its funds were handed over to Shapurji Sorabji Engineer as heir to Sorabji's father.

[11]Sotheby's (London), *Continental Printed Books, Manuscripts and Music, Comprising Printed Books, Autograph Letters and Manuscripts…; Thursday 3rd December 1992 … and Friday 4th December 1992…*, 307 (items nos. 623–24).

Stiftung (Basel) made a suitable offer and became the owner of Hinton's manuscripts in December 1994. These treasures joined the manuscript of the *Introduction, Passacaglia, Cadenza, and Fugue* (then known only as *Passacaglia*), which it had already acquired in May 1989.[12] Before the transfer, Hinton completed the preparation of master copies for the six oversize musical manuscripts. He was assisted in this by George A. Ross (1929–98), a Canadian-born American music teacher, and by the pianist Charles Hopkins (1952–2007), who would later record *"Gulistān"—Nocturne for Piano*. The bindings (like those of the other bound manuscripts) had to be disassembled by a professional bookbinder and reassembled after copying on an A2 flatbed copier. Hinton then made reductions on A3 paper, enabling interested parties to buy "miniature scores".

Hinton has always been a tireless defender of Sorabji and an indefatigable worker in spreading knowledge of his music. A composer of remarkable ability, he has written works showing the strong influence of the very composers who were important to Sorabji, such as Alkan, Busoni, Godowsky, Medtner, and Reger, all of whom wrote major works for the piano. Another influence is the Scottish composer Ronald Stevenson, whose music contains many examples of homage in the form of references to other composers. Last but not least, there is the influence of Sorabji, which can be seen in the layout of several works, the use of quotations, the pianistic language, the use of systems with more than two staves and of the Bösendorfer's extended keyboard, the detailed dedications, the dating style, the extended durations, etc.

Hinton's earliest work with a reference to Sorabji is a *Morceau d'anniversaire pour Kaikhosru Sorabji* (1974; 3 pp.), signed at the end "ton frère Alistair". This short piece quotes the composer's name as a *soggetto cavato* and uses motives from three works. The much larger *Variations and Fugue on a Theme by Grieg*, op. 16 (1970–78; 67 pp.), also for piano, were instrumental in prompting Sorabji to write his short *Variazione maliziosa e perversa sopra "La morte d'Åse" da Grieg*. In 1974 Sorabji saw the piece, which Hinton had put aside after writing a few variations, and asked him to complete it and dedicate it to him. As an encouragement, he wrote his own small piece on the same theme and, in 1978, on receiving a copy of the finished work, wrote three pages of complimentary "Random Comments".[13]

Hinton also wrote *Pansophiae for John Ogdon*, op. 22 (1990; 44 pp.), an organ work structured along Sorabjian lines with sections labelled "Intrada", "Toccata", "Intermezzo", "Passacaglia", "Quasi-fuga", and "Coda-epilogo". Its "Toccata" conflates studies nos. 87 and 99 from Sorabji's *Études transcendantes*, on which Ogdon had begun to work shortly before his death in 1989, and its "Intermezzo" quotes the theme of the "Passacaglia" from *Opus clavicembalisticum*. The later *Sequentia claviensis*, op. 28 (1993–94; 177 pp.), whose formal structure is also reminiscent of Sorabji's large-scale works, not only contains quotations from several of his favourite composers, but also quotes (again) the theme of the "Passacaglia" from *Opus clavicembalisticum*. Another work that Hinton dedicated to Sorabji is the *Vocalise-Reminiscenza*, op. 29 (1994; 12 pp.); this complex transcription on four staves of the Rachmaninoff piece became "almost an obsession in the last few months of his life", as we can read in the dedication in his memory. According to a note in the score, Sorabji thought of composing something based on this song in 1988; his state of health obviously prevented him from realizing his project.

In a work of Sorabjian proportions, a five-movement String Quintet, op. 13, for two violins, viola, cello, and double bass with soprano (1969–77; 269 pp.), Hinton refers to various excerpts from Sorabji's writings and from quotations that he himself used. Finally, the fourth movement of his Quintet for Piano, 2 Violins, Viola & Cello (1980–2010) contains the marking "(quasi reminiscenza da 'CPSDMS'

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[12]Sotheby's (London), *Music, Continental Manuscripts and Printed Books, Science and Medicine…; London, Thursday 18th and Friday 19th May 1989*, 254–55 (items nos. 506–7).

[13][Chris Rice], notes to Donna Amato's Altarus AIR-CD-9021 recording (1993) of Sorabji's *Variazione maliziosa e perversa* and Hinton's *Variations and Fugue on a Theme by Grieg*.

di Sorabji)", a reference to the *Concerto da suonare da me solo e senza orchestra, per divertirmi* (Hinton uses the form "per" rather than "da" for the second word, as did the original composer).

Alistair Hinton's close contact with Sorabji in his later years brings to mind the names of two other young people who played important roles in the lives of older composers. One is Eric Fenby (1903–97), who served as amanuensis to the blind and syphilitic Frederick Delius from 1928 to 1934, helping him to compose his works. The other is Robert Craft (1923–2015), the American conductor associated with Igor Stravinsky through his numerous books and recordings and his role as a confidant. An example in fiction is the film *The Silent Touch* (Dotknięcie ręki, 1992) by the Polish film director Krzysztof Zanussi, which tells of Stefan, a young Polish musicologist, who approaches the reclusive and irascible Danish composer Henry Kesdi, who has not written a note since the death of his wife in a concentration camp. The young man, who had dreamed of hearing some notes he thought were related to Kesdi, was instrumental in persuading him to resume composing. The "silent touch" of the title refers to the healing powers of Stefan's hands, which convince the composer to take him in as a guest in his home.

Benedizione di San Francesco d'Assisi

The first work from Sorabji's pen after his period of more than four years of silence was a setting for baritone and organ of a short blessing by San Francesco d'Assisi (1181 or 1182–1226). Two years before his death, having received the stigmata of Christ after fasting in honour of the Virgin and St. Michael, St. Francis wrote a *lauda* of thanksgiving for the miraculous grace and a personal blessing to Brother Leo, who lived with him on the mountain. Both documents, which still exist, are venerated in the sacristy of the Sacro Convento in Assisi. The blessing, applicable in any situation of temptation or danger, is taken from Numbers 6:24–26. In the Middle Ages it achieved a popularity bordering on superstition.[14]

Sorabji (allegedly) received the text of St. Francis's blessing of Brother Leo around 1922 from a "charming little Franciscan monk at St. Francesco da Fiesole near Florence". His copy is printed on cloth and includes a naive drawing of the saint giving his blessing to his friend. Sorabji was very taken with the Italian translation of his source; to him, the words "bless you" sounded ridiculous in English, but "how just unutterably lovely that sounds in Italian doesn't it?"[15] He liked to quote it in letters to friends.[16] Sorabji completed his *Benedizione di San Francesco d'Assisi* (1973; 2 pp.) on 20 February 1973 and dedicated it "For my friend Alistair. (Alistair Hinton.)". What appears to be a preliminary copy bears, in a somewhat hasty autography, the inscription "For Paul Rapoport Esq. Greetings and Compliments from Kaikhosru Shapurji Sorabji. XIX. V. MCMLXXVIII". This inscription was obviously a way of thanking the Canadian musicologist for microfilming his manuscripts (with Alistair Hinton) in March 1978.

The final manuscript contains the following instruction to the performers: "NB. This short piece is to be conceived as *one paragraph*. The phrase-marks overlap from one bar to the next *with no breaks between them either implicit or explicit*. K.S.S." The vocal line, which has a range of a major ninth, is supported by a polyphonic web to be played "legatissimo sempre". The manual part of the organ

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[14] S. J. P. Van Dijk, "Saint Francis' Blessing of Brother Leo", *Archivum franciscanum historicum* 47 (1954): 199–201. See also "La 'cartulata' data a frate Leone; Le lodi di Di e la Benedizione al compagno prediletto", in *Gli scritti di San Francesco d'Assisi e "I fioretti"*, ed. Augusto Vicinelli ([Milan]: Arnoldo Mondadori Editore, 1955), 206–10; and "Bénédiction", in *Saint François d'Assise: documents, écrits et premières biographies*, ed. Théophile Desbonnets and Damien Vorreux (Paris: Éditions franciscaines, 1968), 173.

[15] KSS to NG, 11 January 1954 {17/F.24}; KSS to FH, 17 December 1953 {1/F.15}. The words "bless you" read "ti benedica" in Italian. See also KSS to DG, 14 June 1977, where Sorabji also gives the date of 1922.

[16] See for example KSS to CMG, 3 January 1954 and 5 August 1972, and KSS to DG, 10 April 1975 and 14 June 1977.

accompaniment requires on three staves throughout, and there are no rhythmic difficulties other than a few examples of three against four or five. The pedal part begins on a low C♯, and the piece ends on a C♯ minor chord with an F♯ minor chord with an added fourth. The repetition of "Il Signore ti benedica" at the end is not part of the original benediction but appears in the source used by the composer **(example 21.1)**.

Symphonia brevis for Piano

The short *Benedizione di San Francesco d'Assisi* obviously restored Sorabji full confidence in his compositional abilities, for some time before June 1973 (probably March) he began work on the *Symphonia brevis for Piano* (1973; 120 pp.). Although the composition of the forty-page first movement took all his nervous energy and left him "absolutely drained", he felt that it broke new ground for him and was his most mature work, one in which he did things he had never done before.[17] Completed eight months later, on 17 November 1973, its dedication reads simply "for A." (Alistair Hinton).

This "brief symphony" (124 minutes) is in two movements, the second of which accounts for two-thirds of the total length. The first movement ([ED]pp. 1–38) is marked "Andante". According to the title page, the indication is "Movimento libero" and the division is "Preludio—Intreccio—Stretto"; no such titles appear in the score nor are such divisions clearly discernible.[18] The title on the manuscript is "Symphonia Brevis (A.H.)", and accordingly the initials of Alistair Hinton's name—A–B (= H)—are the first two notes in the upper part.

The second movement consists of eight sections, the first of which is an "Adagio" (pp. 39–46); its note-against-note (or, more accurately, chord-against-chord) style recalls the *Movement for Voice and Piano*. This is followed by a "Preludio quasi toccata" (pp. 47–54) beginning with the initial gesture of the *Sonata IV for Piano* and the semiquaver motive at the beginning of the *Tāntrik Symphony for Piano Alone*. The third section is an "Aria fiorita" (pp. 55–62) written in nocturne style; its opening motive is a development of the A–H cell. The fourth section, an "Interludio" (pp. 63–68), begins in toccata style; it changes on p. 67 to a "Legatissimo" that soon becomes "Come al principio" and again "Legatissimo". The "Notturno" proper (pp. 69–91) is the longest section of this movement; it contains a volcanic climax on p. 83, after which the nocturne style returns until the end. A short and quick "Nexus" (pp. 92–94), beginning with Hinton's initials, serves as a link (which is the meaning of the word) in toccata style leading to the "Quasi fuga" (pp. 94–102). This short fugue uses two subjects, one slow and one fast, both beginning with the dedicatee's initials.

The low C♯ of the Bösendorfer Imperial on which the fugue ends serves as the pedal point for the slow (so-called) "Coda epilogo. Punta d'organo" (pp. 103–13).[19] It is heard throughout in various registers, but more prominently when played like a tolling bell (bars 1–13, 24–26, 41, 43–44). The work ends with the dedicatee's name played in high octaves after a series of chords marked "Dolce ed estatico". This tolling bell comes from the last pages of the *Symphony no. 0 for Piano Solo* (bars 787–89 and 812). The last bar of *Symphonia brevis* is taken from the end of the earlier work, except for one small detail. Sorabji, in offering *Symphony no. 0* to Hinton as a birthday present in 1975, added his musical notes at the end of the cadence to match the later work **(example 21.2)**.

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[17]KSS to FH, 10 June 1975 {3/F.6}.

[18]The following suggestions are offered: the "Intreccio", which refers to a section with an interlacing of voices, might begin on p. 7 at the indication "Sonorità calorosa e soffocata, piena e dolcissima" (Warm and muffled sonority, full and soft); the beginning of the "Stretto" could be located on p. 22 at the indication "Di nuovo vivo" (Once again fast).

[19]See the note on Sorabji's incorrect use of "punta d'organo" in the introduction.

Variazione maliziosa e perversa sopra "La morte d'Åse" da Grieg

As a diversion from the task of committing to paper *Opusculum clavisymphonicum vel claviorchestrale*, the largest of the works written in his later years, Sorabji composed the *Variazione maliziosa e perversa sopra "La morte d'Åse" da Grieg* (1974; 2 pp.). At the time Alistair Hinton was working on his large-scale *Variations and Fugue on a Theme by Grieg* (1970–78) and Sorabji decided, "as a sort of joke", to write a work of his own, this one being "just dashed off per divertirsi [*recte* divertirmi], that's all".[20] It has no specific date of beginning or completion, nor a dedication; it is one of the few mature works by Sorabji without one. According to Hinton, he wrote it in April 1974. As seen above in the discussion of his music, the new piece, which lasts only forty-two seconds, was a way of encouraging his friend to resume composition.

The piece is based on the ascending F♯–B–C♯ motive at the beginning of the noble music by the Norwegian composer Edvard Grieg (1843–1907) for Åse's death in act 3 ("Åses Død", no. 12) of his incidental music (op. 23, 1874–75) to the dramatic poem *Peer Gynt* (1867) by Henrik Ibsen (1828–1906). Åse, the widow of a peasant and the mother of Peer Gynt, a character drawn from a Norwegian folk tale, is about to die, but is happy that her son has transformed the moments leading up to her death into a ride on horseback, carrying her to Paradise where he personally entrusts her to St. Peter. The "Andante doloroso" in B minor, scored for strings only (all muted except for the basses), is intended to be played first as a prelude to act 3 and then in scene 4. Sorabji's writings do not tell us what he thought of the incidental music; we can only infer from passing references that he would have preferred pianists to play more often concertos that he liked rather than well-known ones like Grieg's.

Sorabji's piece consists of two sections separated by a breathing pause. The first one begins with a *furioso* run in demisemiquavers based on bars 1–2 of Grieg's motive (with C rather than C♯), followed by a chordal gesture in both hands that parallels bars 3–4 of the model (the latter can also be seen in the right-hand part of bar 5). This initial section ends with a series of chromatic variants of the initial motive over a type of tremolo often found in his music and an E pedal point. The performer is instructed to play this passage "cachinnante" (laughing loudly or immoderately).[21] In a note at the bottom of the page, Sorabji refers to "'He was laughing in the Tower' di *St. Bertrand de Comminges*, M. R. James". No motive in this 1941 piece inspired by James's ghost story corresponds to the passage from the *Variazione*; the composer must therefore simply have been thinking of various gestures in the piece suggesting laughter **(example 21.3)**. The dynamics change to ***p*** *subito* for a voluptuous section whose expressive melodic line soon gives way to a climactic gesture in chords and octaves. The piece ends sharply with chords played in the extreme registers of the keyboard.

Opusculum clavisymphonicum vel claviorchestrale

On 26 December 1973 Sorabji began what was to be his last orchestral or concertante work, *Opusculum clavisymphonicum vel claviorchestrale* (1973–75; 334 pp.). Completed on 24 September 1975, it bears a dedication to his close friend Alistair Hinton ("per l'amico diletto A.H."); another dedication page reads as follows: "For my very dear A. with much love". Sorabji considered this work and the *Symphonia brevis for Piano* to be among his best ones and found it "utterly unadvisable" to send them for microfilming "with risks of damage and loss from murderous lunatics of various sorts".[22]

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[20] KSS to KD, 10 August 1978 {Derus, S21, p. 99}.

[21] The verb "cachinnate" is attested in the *Oxford English Dictionary* as far as 1824; the Italian word "cachinnante" exists, but seems to be rather rare. Sorabji had used it with reference to photographs of himself sent to him by Erik Chisholm had sent him; KSS to EC, 17 June 1930, 6 ("N.B. Outsize in joke. Cacchinations from the pit)".

[22] KSS to NG, 29 September 1975 {18/F.63}.

Opusculum clavisymphonicum vel claviorchestrale is written for piano with a small orchestra composed of one each of flute, oboe, clarinet, and bassoon with harp, percussion (glockenspiel, xylophone, celesta, gong), and the string section; no brass instruments or timpani are required. Sorabji had in mind four first and four second violins, four violas, two cellos, and two five-string double basses.[23] The work is in two movements, the first of which ([MS]pp. 1–96) begins very abruptly with four bars given to the orchestra, after which the piano enters. The movement is not divided into sections with titles but only by means of changes in tempo and character. A major contrast occurs on p. 72, where the music turns to nocturne style until the end. The ***ff*** ending is followed by four notes played "Adagio molto" by the gong as an anticipation of the first notes of the top part of the theme of the next movement.

The second movement (pp. 97–334) takes up almost three quarters of the pages. It is cast in the form of "Variazioni sopra il Credo in qualsiasi modo del Gretchaninoff".[24] The theme is taken from the Credo, the eighth (and most famous) section of the *Liturgy no. 2 of St. John Chrysostom*, op. 29 (1902) by Alexander Gretchaninov (1864–1956), who wrote four such works. The only mention of the composer in Sorabji's published writings is found in a review of a concert of Russian vocal music he heard on the Bombay radio in 1932: "the one first-class song Gretchaninoff wrote—and a little masterpiece in its way—the one time much contralto-mauled 'Triste est la steppe' [op. 5, no. 1] was beautifully done, with a sombre grandeur and dignity that were inexpressibly moving". He later described the Credo as a "most wonderful impressive and moving thing".[25]

Gretchaninov's Credo, scored for alto solo and mixed choir with organ ad libitum, consists of forty-nine bars in 2/1 and 3/1 time signatures, harmonized in E major. The soloist sings the liturgical text mostly on E, with occasional inflections on F♯, D♯, and C♯.[26] Sorabji's setting of the theme, played slowly by the piano alone, consists of a series of chords in crotchets, minims, and dotted minims underpinned by a walking bass in octaves, beginning and ending on C♯. The top line of the chords paraphrases the soloist's part of the model. Its first thirteen notes, with slight modifications, generate a ten-note ostinato used later in the movement **(example 21.4)**.

The second movement is a theme with thirty-nine variations, of which one (var. 21) consists of twenty-seven shorter variations. All but two of the sections of the main set are between one and ten pages long: sixteen for var. 20 (which ends the first part), and twenty-two for var. 39 (the last). The orchestra enters in the middle of var. 2 but is silent in the slow var. 11 and in the first parts of vars. 27 and 36; the latter is marked "In luogo della cadenza (in [u]guale modo!!)".[27] Var. 21 (pp. 204–30) consists of twenty-seven variations on a ten-crotchet ostinato derived from the theme. They are

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[23]KSS to DG, 2 April 1975.

[24]"Variations on the Credo in any mode by Gretchaninoff". Why Sorabji used the word "qualsiasi" in the title of the movement is not clear; it is not used in Gretchaninov's score and does not seem to refer to any known theoretical concept.

[25]Sorabji, "Music", *NEW* 2, no. 19 (15 December 1932): 207–8; 207; KSS to CSB, 29 April 1981, 2.

[26]The full score, originally published by Jurgenson in Moscow in 1902, is available in a new edition by Vladimir Morosan under catalogue number Gr-DL2 (San Diego, Calif.: Musica Russica, 2007), 110 pp. Two separate editions of the Credo were published during the composer's lifetime: (1) *Credo pour alto et chœur mixte (Op. 29, n° 8)* (Paris: Édition A. Gutheil, 1934), 8 pp. (with text in Latin); (2) *Credo (The Nicean Creed) / For Chorus of Mixed Voices / and Alto Solo / From the Russian Liturgy* (Boston: The Boston Music Co., 1913), 8 pp. (as part of a collection entitled "Sacred Choral Music by Russian Composers", no. 1068). A rare recording, by the Paris Metropolitan Russian Church Choir conducted by Nicolai Afonsky, is on vol. 4 (1829–1937) of the 11-disc set EMI Classics Centenary Edition 1897–1997. A modern recording, by the Holst Singers conducted by Stephen Layton, was released in 1997 under the title *Ikon, vol. 1 (Sacred Choral Music from Eastern Europe)* on Hyperion CDA66928. For a detailed study of the work, see Philip Reuel Camp, "A Historical and Contextual Examination of Alexandre Gretchaninoff's *Second Liturgy of St. John Chrysostom*, opus 29" (Ph.D. diss., Texas Tech University, 2002); for the Credo, see pp. 155–57.

[27]"In place of the cadenza (in an even manner!!)".

therefore very short, in several cases less than a page; the composer very often dispensed with barlines for the piano, while the surrounding parts are divided into two or three bars so as to show the one-bar structure of the theme. Var. 18 of this subset breaks the regularity of strict variations with a tonal centre of C♯, as it presents two statements on G in inversion. The final variation, played "Adagissimo", is set for piano alone (but for a single gong note); it serves as a transition leading to the final portion of the movement, which resumes abruptly "Vivacissimo assai". As in his earlier concertante works, Sorabji has both the soloist and the orchestra playing constantly, with little respite. In the final bars, marked "Adagio", he writes four statements of the musical letters of the dedicatee's name in slow octaves in the low register; they are also heard, but less prominently, at the very beginning of the work. The final sonority is a B major chord with an added C♯ in the low register; with the chords played ***ppp*** in the high register, eleven of the twelve pitches are present.

Epistolary Activities, Handwriting, and Typewriting

Like many educated people of his time, Sorabji spent a great deal of energy writing letters to deal with business matters and to keep in touch with friends. In 1932 he decided not to bother any longer himself with answering and writing letters during the week unless there was something "really and violently urgent", and postponed this to all of his Sundays, from about ten in the morning until about six in the evening. His correspondence averaged thirty to forty letters a week in the mid-1940s.[28] Many afternoons must have been devoted to the "whole pile of letters to write and take to the District Office to catch the 6 p.m. outward mail".[29] In the 1950s his letters, which he often ended with his friend Reggie's formula "And that's all for this nonce", were costing him something like "ten to fifteen bob a week" in stamps.[30] Curiously, he had "a morbid passion for answering letters quickly, enduring fidgets and nervous 'tics'" until he did, but hoping "with grotesque unreason" that his correspondents would not reply for quite a while to give him some breathing space.[31] He also received a huge number of letters, but apparently had "my usual mania for tearing up letters as soon as read, and sometimes even before".[32]

Sorabji corresponded regularly with friends he could not see regularly because they lived elsewhere in the United Kingdom, such as Erik Chisholm and Frank Holliday, or in North America, such as Norman Gentieu, Donald Garvelmann, Kenneth Derus, and Paul Rapoport. Sadly, he destroyed several of these collections for reasons that remain unclear. He often forwarded some of the letters he had received to his friends, especially Holliday, sometimes with annotations, to let them enjoy his reactions to passages of which he had disapproved. He also often enclosed clippings of his published letters or carbon copies of his originals, whether they had appeared in print or not, often with the mention "no need to return". A voracious reader of magazines, he would always find something to share with a friend, and was fond of clipping a page or two from one of these publications into a letter, whether the subject was the benefits of a medical treatment or some social or political matter that had outraged him. This sometimes led him to use scatological language as well as the most dreaded word in the English language. Several letters go on for several single-spaced pages and often contain extended developments on social and political matters. There are examples of sentences containing

[28]KSS to EC, 24 January 1932, 2; KSS to CE, 10 December 1945.

[29]KSS to EC, 16 February 1931.

[30]KSS to FH, 12 November 1974 {3/F.5}; KSS to EC, 3 March 1953, 1. Sorabji used the expression in several of his letters to Kenneth Derus, for example on 10 May 1981 {Derus, D40, p. 202}; in KSS to DG, 23 July 1960 and 27 September 1968, he wrote "as my godson says". Fifteen bob (i.e., shillings; the word is always used in the singular) would be worth £20.93 in 2021.

[31]KSS to CE, 16 November 1947.

[32]KSS to CMG, 11 March 1955.

almost a hundred words. Commas are very often missing, which tends to obscure the meaning, not to mention the innumerable typos. Misquotations abound, as do simple allusions and incomplete references that make it difficult to know exactly what is meant, especially for someone who was not alive at the time of the events being reported.

Sorabji's handwriting, before he began to suffer from rheumatism, is tiny and concentrated as well as sharp and incisive. But even when he was in full command of his hand, reading his manuscripts can be a daunting task; some words still elude me after thirty years of close contact. Words with two or three letters showing the same graphic pattern (e.g., us, we, him, but), especially those without ascenders or descenders, are particularly problematic. It is rarely easy (and sometimes almost impossible) to decide between various pairs (been/love, books/looks, live/true, wants/works, discussions/dimensions). Ligatures are often a source of confusion, as it can be very difficult to decide whether a two-letter ligature is a word or the first syllable of a longer word. No one will ever accuse Sorabji of overusing the comma, and the frequent absence of this punctuation mark often clouds the meaning of the flood of words. No wonder Chisholm had his secretary transcribe his entire collection of letters (and I would have had to do it myself had this version not been available). The preparation (and publication) of annotated editions of Sorabji's letters would provide very instructive material, as in the case of any great creative figure, and should be the next step in Sorabjian research. The only large-scale edition of correspondence published to date is that of his letters to Philip Heseltine (see chapter 3).

The difficulties outlined above, when compounded, can make reading Sorabji's letters a nightmare, made even worse in the case of those written after his hands were crippled by rheumatism. In 1951 he asked Frank Holliday, who—of all people—had read hundreds of his letters since 1939: "Can you decipher this scrawl? When I'm in a hurry (like this) to catch the post my handwriting looks like as if a resentful spider had promenaded across the page!!" He attributed the deterioration of his handwriting to decades of "spoiling acres and acres of music paper".[33]

Although he usually wrote his letters on standard letterhead or on typewriter paper, Sorabji also used small, thick stock cards containing just a few handwritten words or sentences in a large script, or else a long single-spaced typed paragraph. In handwritten letters, in addition to capital letters, he often used single, double, and even triple underlining to emphasize a point. When using the typewriter, he often switched from black to red, usually returning to the standard colour a few, or several, words too late. This also happened with the "blasted shift key", which he often forgot to cancel,[34] explaining the many lines and sometimes paragraphs unnecessarily typed in all caps. Sorabji's use of ellipsis dots was also very free—from two to as many as eight. He must have written at top speed, never coming back to correct, just as he did when composing his music. A peculiarity of his letters, as of his manuscripts, is their dating in roman numerals (e.g., IV.X.MCMLXVIII); he called this a "harmless little affectation of mine".[35]

In 1930 Sorabji, who had been writing all his letters by hand, recommended to Erik Chisholm —whose handwriting is not exactly easy to decipher—the purchase of a typewriter; he found it "absurd to waste hours and hours […] over labourious[ly] handwritten letters". He thought of acquiring

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[33]KSS to KD, 23 October 1980 {Derus, S36, p. 171}. See also KSS to FH, 5 September 1951 {1/F.13}, and 18 November 1965 {2/F.6}, as well as KSS to EC, 17 June 1930, 2. For two examples of Sorabji's handwriting, one from 1920, the other from 1985, see *SCC*, 237, 85.

[34]KSS to CMG, 20 August 1955, 1.

[35]KSS to NG, 16 July 1958 {17/F.61}; see also KSS to DG, 20 March 1967 (where he adds "Looks so imposing!") and 22 August 1971 (where he adds "it looks so pretty in Roman numerals").

one for himself, but did not know where to park it; he felt, however, that the most important letters should be written by hand.[36] This change in writing method may have been suggested to him by the editor of the *Musical Times*, who had added a postscript to one of his open letters, suggesting that if he sent his letters in typescript "instead of in barely decipherable handwriting", he would promise "a freedom from misprints".[37] Two years later, feeling the need to spare his hands "the strain of the very large amount of writing", Sorabji asked Bernard Bromage to lend him "one of those inventions of the Devil in modern times, a typewriter". He apologized for the "occasional fantastic spellings that you will notice, vowels left out, strange intrusive and inconsequent letters straying into words with which they have obviously no earthly connection", which he attributed "to inexperience, and an occasional rash to attempt to increase my speed beyond caution and propriety".[38] In the 1970s his typewriting—one should probably say "tripewhyting" (if not something even worse, like "tropqhiting")—became increasingly erratic, as the following excerpt from 1980, reproduced *verbatim*, shows. Sorabji often felt the need to apologize for his "increasingly vile typing", adding that "I get more and more impatient with this instrument as I get older and more crotchety".[39] This should illustrate the problems faced by the researcher studying the later years.

> Aond now to conclde ..an apology for my ,ore than usually vil;e typing..I have a lot of rheumattis in my gingers..after s xty odd years of scirrlibn… not to be wondered a t is it?½ Sl fprgive forgive forgive my dear and very very good friend.,..and leg me wish you all pssible goood all possible peace lf mind and rrasonably good health in thi age of denatures poisoned and corrupted ooof.[40]

Simon Abrahams, who has made an extensive study of Sorabji's lack of care in writing and proofreading his scores, has noted that not only did he have just an "apparently slapdash approach to writing", but he was "willing to send letters and articles to people in this state—an attitude that many people would consider discourteous".[41] One wonders whether his friends resented receiving such letters; their admiration probably led them to accept this as an idiosyncrasy against which nothing could be done.

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[36]KSS to EC, August 1930, 7 (section dated 21 August).

[37]Editorial postscript to Sorabji, "Letters to the Editor: The Mason and Hamlin Pianoforte", *MT* 71, no. 1050 (1 August 1930): 739.

[38]KSS to EC, June 1932 (no day given), 3.

[39]KSS to KD, 15 July 1977 {Derus S05, p. 29}, and 11 October 1982 {Derus, S47, p. 237}, among others.

[40]KSS to NG, 23 October 1980 {19/F.17}. For another example (dating from 1974, and much easier to decipher) of Sorabji's use of the typewriter, in which he refers to his "inept typist figners [*sic*]", see Paul Rapoport, "Sorabji: A Continuation", in *SCC*, 60.

[41]See Simon John Abrahams, "Le mauvais jardinier: A Reassessment of the Myths and Music of Kaikhosru Shapurji Sorabji" (Ph.D. diss., University of London, King's College, 2002), 243 (in a section entitled "Links to Sorabji's Prose and Speech", 241–45).

22 / 1976–79 ■ Lifting the "Ban"

Unofficial and Official Performances

The history of the performance and recording of Sorabji's music is an essential theme in a study such as this one. It traces the gradual discovery of a vast body of works that has long remained a tightly closed book due to the composer's unusual views on public hearings of his works and their considerable difficulty. In addition, it makes it possible to acknowledge the work of the pioneers. We can divide this history into five periods, with a ten-year gap between the first and the second: 1920–36, 1946–75, 1976–91, 1992–2000, and from 2001 to the present day. In the following account, some performances may be discussed in the next chronological category where this seems more appropriate; likewise, information on a particular performer whose activity spans more than one period may be collected in one place. Not every performance or performer can be mentioned here, nor is this the place to comment critically on the performances themselves, for which the reader should turn to the reviews.

At first, Sorabji himself was his only performer, giving occasional first hearings of some of his works in London (including a radio broadcast), Vienna, and Glasgow. To these must be added a Paris concert at which he accompanied Marthe Martine in a performance of his *Trois poèmes pour chant et piano* (see chapter 4), and two recitals (one of which, as far as we know, was short) on the Bombay radio in 1932 (see chapter 11). Two other performances took place, given by friends and with his blessing: one of the first version of the short *Fragment Written for Harold Rutland*, played by the dedicatee in 1927 (see chapter 14), the other of the second movement of the *Symphony [no. 1] for Organ*, played by E. Emlyn Davies in 1928 (see chapter 8). A private reading of *Opus clavicembalisticum* by Maurice B. Katz (1895?–1960), an American pianist and accompanist who taught at the Granoff School of Music (Philadelphia) for thirty-five years. He is said to have been "an absolute genius in playing the piano" and a great sight-reader; his reading, the only performance of Sorabji's piano music outside the United Kingdom until John Gates's recitals in 1966 (see below), appears to have taken place in Philadelphia between 1934 and 1938.[1]

In March 1936 John Tobin gave the problematic reading of *pars prima* from *Opus clavicembalisticum* that led Sorabji to conclude that no performance at all was preferable to the risk of a vile travesty (see chapter 13). More than fifteen years later, the mere suggestion by the London Contemporary Music Centre, which had sponsored the recital, of including his music in their concerts caused him to "hate, loathe and execrate everything and everybody associated with these two bodies" [the second being the Society for the Promotion of New Music]. Any approach would have meant a "falsification and a retreat from the whole of my position and attitude when years ago I resolved to have nothing ever to do henceforth with any musical organisation in this country".[2]

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[1]Arthur Cohn (Director of Serious Music, Carl Fischer) to MAR, 28 May, 11 June 1985. For an obituary, see *The Philadelphia Inquirer*, 24 October 1960.

[2]KSS to FH, 18 May 1953 {1/F.15}.

Despite Sorabji's opposition to public performances, semi-public or private concerts did take place between 1946 and 1975 or, more precisely, on 7 December 1976, when Yonty Solomon gave the first authorized concert. One was Cecil Ewing's performance of "In the Hothouse" from the *Two Piano Pieces*, given in May 1946 with the composer's consent—the only time he gave it before the mid-1970s; another was Norman Gentieu's 1961 performance of the *Suggested Bell-Chorale for St. Luke's Carillon* dedicated to him. On 1 December 1959, on the same day as Sorabji's own performance in 1930, John Ogdon gave a partial private reading of *Opus clavicembalisticum* at Ronald Stevenson's home in West Linton, in the presence of the dedicatee, Christopher Murray Grieve.[3] In the early 1960s David Branson (1909–97) performed excerpts from *Le jardin parfumé—Poem for Piano Solo* and from the published sonatas as part of two lecture-recitals given in England.

John Gates (1913–92), a resident of Indianapolis, Indiana, played the *Fantaisie espagnole* at Carnegie Hall on 20 October 1966.[4] Gates was teaching at Butler University (Indianapolis) when his colleague Frank Cooper, the well-known expert in matters of piano music who is now Research Professor Emeritus at the Frost School of Music, University of Miami, gave him Sorabji's score and urged him to play it in public. This debut recital, for which Gates had prepared himself by playing in a small concert hall attached to the home of a local piano teacher in Greenfield, Indiana, and at the Indianapolis Museum of Art, took place without Sorabji's permission, though not without his knowledge. The composer learned of the event through a mutual friend and made no objection, probably not feeling threatened by a hearing in a distant land of what had become a mere *péché de jeunesse*.[5]

Donald M. Garvelmann's discovery of Sorabji's music at Gates's recital led him to suggest to Frank Holliday that the composer should allow an American broadcast of the tapes he had made of his playing. This led to a fifty-five minute programme broadcast in 1969 and to an extended three-hour version aired in 1970 (see chapter 15). Sorabji's decision to allow these broadcasts soon suggested to the BBC producer John Amis (1922–2013) that the musical climate had changed. Nevertheless, Sorabji refused his request for a tape of *"Gulistān"—Nocturne for Piano*, his opposition being "absolute and final".[6] England remained a *terra ingratissima*. Nevertheless, in July 1972 Garvelmann also obtained the composer's permission for the Austrian pianist Hans Kann (1927–2005) to record for Musical Heritage Society the *Pastiche on the "Minute Waltz" by Chopin* that he had published. Sorabji, for whom the piece was just a "bit of fun" and hardly representative, agreed, but the recording was never made.[7]

Two other performances took place in the United States. One is the first hearing of the *Pastiche on the "Minute Waltz" by Chopin*, given by the American pianist Neely Bruce, then a member of the School of Music at the University of Illinois at Urbana, given on 21 March 1973 at a concert featuring selections from the anthology of transcriptions of Chopin's piece published by Garvelmann in 1969. The other is the playing of a taped computer realization of excerpts from *Opus clavicembalisticum* for which Paul Rapoport had punched by himself 16,000 cards to feed into an IBM 360/75 computer. This

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[3]Geoffrey Douglas Madge, who was to give the second official full performance in 1982, apparently did the same thing in late 1960 at his home in Adelaide for "a small group of 'initiated people'". See Geoffrey Douglas Madge, "Performing *Opus clavicembalisticum*", in *SCC*, 391.

[4]Information on John Gates and his concert is taken from the programme leaflet of his Carnegie Hall recital; see also Frank Cooper to MAR, 7 March 1986 and 1 April 1999.

[5]John Gates to MAR, 18 July 1989, 1 May 1985; see also KSS to FH, 3 August 1967 {2/F.8}. For a review of the concert, see Harold C. Schonberg, "Music: Pianistic Exotica", *The New York Times*, 21 October 1966, 36.

[6]John Amis (British Broadcasting Corporation) to KSS, 10 November 1972; KSS to Amis, 15 November 1972 {BL, Add. 71178}.

[7]KSS to FH, 3 August 1972 {3/F.3}; see also Paul Rapoport, note to Alistair Hinton, "Kaikhosru Shapurji Sorabji: An Introduction", in *SCC*, 41n38.

realization, presented during a public lecture given at the University of Illinois in the spring of 1975, enabled a small audience to experience an accurate rendition of parts of a work that had not been heard by more than a few privileged listeners at a time since 1930.[8]

In March 1973 a young American pianist named Michael Habermann began giving semi-public concerts—twenty in all, including two broadcasts, over a period of three years—in various cities on Long Island, featuring various short and medium-size works by Sorabji. Habermann had discovered the *Fantaisie espagnole* in a Mexico City bookstore.[9] Donald Garvelmann sent Sorabji a tape of Habermann's playing and obtained his consent on the condition that no performance be given in England, this restriction resulting from his agreement of 24 March 1976 to performances by Yonty Solomon. By this time Sorabji had already given Habermann tentative approval, subject to Garvelmann considering him ready for public performances.[10] On 28 July 1976, four months after giving his official blessing to Solomon, Sorabji allowed Habermann to perform his works in the United States.[11] On 22 May 1977 Habermann gave a recital at Carnegie Recital Hall comprising "In the Hothouse" from the *Two Piano Pieces*, the *Fantaisie espagnole*, the last section of the *Prelude, Interlude, and Fugue for Piano*, and the *Pastiche on the Habanera from "Carmen" by Bizet*. Although he was the first pianist to receive Sorabji's full permission, at least provisionally, Habermann was not the first one to give official performances, as Solomon gave his first recital in December 1976.

Between 1977 and 1987 Habermann included music by Sorabji in some thirty recitals, including the premieres of seven works. Between 1987 and 1998, when he gave the premieres of two further works, he rarely played Sorabji in public. His 1980 recording for Musical Heritage Society, the first commercial release of any of Sorabji's music, enabled interested people to experience music they had previously only sight-read to the best of their abilities. Four more discs followed in 1982, 1987, 1995, and 2003, the first two produced by Donald Garvelmann.

Sorabji, who had heard people "sing your praises a piena voce" after listening to his playing of the first two sections from *Opus clavicembalisticum*, confirmed to Habermann in 1979 that there was "no obstacle now […] to prevent your playing any work of mine".[12] A few years earlier, he had been impressed that Habermann had "memorised my stuff", adding "I could *never* have done it, nor would I ever *attempt* it".[13] In the same year he expressed his admiration with the dedication of *"Il gallo d'oro" da Rimsky-Korsakov: Variazioni frivole con una fuga anarchica, eretica e perversa*. An extensive essay on Sorabji's piano music, a reworking of his D.M.A. dissertation in piano performance (1985) at the Peabody Institute of the Johns Hopkins University, forms a substantial chapter of Rapoport's *Sorabji: A Critical Celebration*.

Another important name in the early history of official performances is Yonty Solomon (b. Cape Town, South Africa, 6 May 1937; d. London, 27 September 2008), who was briefly mentioned above. A graduate in music and psychology from the University of Cape Town, Solomon lived in London from 1963. He taught the piano for several years at the Royal College of Music, where he became a Fellow

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[8]Rapoport, "Sorabji and the Computer", *Tempo*, no. 177 (June 1976): 23–26; 26.

[9]Michael Habermann, "Kaikhosru Shapurji Sorabji", *The Piano Quarterly* 31, no. 122 (Summer 1983): 36–37; 37. Habermann studied with Fernando Laires (1925–2016), Hilde Somer (1930–79), and Carlos Vásquez.

[10]DG to PR, 27 April 1977, quoted in Hinton, "Kaikhosru Shapurji Sorabji: An Introduction", in *SCC*, 39n35.

[11]KSS to DG, 28 July 1976, quoted in Hinton, "Kaikhosru Shapurji Sorabji: An Introduction", in *SCC*, 41n38.

[12]KSS to Michael Habermann, 10 June 1979, reproduced in the booklet for the Élan CD 82264 recording of works by Sorabji played by Habermann, 10. See also KSS to DG, 28 January 1980, for the composer's permission to Michael Habermann to record his musical works.

[13]KSS to DG, 3 September 1976; see also ibid., 15 April 1977.

in 1996.[14] On 23 October 1974 Alan Frank (1910–94), head of the music department at Oxford University Press, informed Sorabji that Solomon was *planning* performances of *Opus clavicembalisticum*, including one at Queen Elizabeth Hall in mid-1975. The composer took this as an *announcement* that someone would be playing his music and declared that his veto remained "absolute and final". A further plea from Frank, arguing that Solomon had been Erik Chisholm's favourite pupil in Cape Town, was not enough to persuade the composer, who objected to performances in England; the broadcasts of his own performances in America had been made at the "urgent insistence of American friends" to whom he was in great obligation.[15]

Alistair Hinton, aware of Solomon's interest in Sorabji's music, went to see him after his recital of 27 February 1976.[16] Shortly afterwards Hinton expressed to Sorabji his conviction that Solomon was suitably equipped to perform his difficult music. If Solomon was such a fine a pianist, and one Erik Chisholm thought so highly of, Sorabji would agree to performances if he wanted to do so. After listening to a broadcast featuring Albéniz's *Iberia* a few months later, he commented that he had heard an extraordinary musician whose sound reminded him of Busoni; this was obviously more than an excellent recommendation.

On 7 December 1976 Yonty Solomon played the *Fantaisie espagnole*, the *Two Piano Pieces*, and *Le jardin parfumé—Poem for Piano Solo* at Wigmore Hall. Four days before the well-covered concert Sorabji's friend Harold Rutland reminisced on the BBC's programme "Music Now". On the day of the concert, Solomon played an excerpt from *Le jardin parfumé* on the BBC's Radio 4 "PM" news programme. Sorabji, who did not want to make an exhibition of himself, refused to attend the recital.[17] As he wrote to his American friend Norman Gentieu, "NO ONE ELSE is going to be allowed to play my work THIS side except him. I have no intention of letting the keyboard pounding rag tag and bobtail let loose on my work after all these years!"[18] Obviously it took Sorabji some time to become used to the idea of public performances of his music. Although he listened to recordings afterwards, he did not attend Solomon's later recitals as well. He explained his reasons as follows.

> I shan't be there as nothing nowadays will induce me to go to London and/or enter any concert hall. [...] In these days I simply cannot face London and/or concert halls even at the entreaties of my best friends, bless their kind hearts! As for getting up and bowing and so aping to a gapping crowd, the idea gives me the sheer HORRORS... Those who know me know and appreciate me—or not—as the case may be, for what I am SUCH as I am, and for the rest... to put it bluntly and coarsely, *JE M'EN FOUTE*.[19]

However, he was outraged when pirate tapes began to circulate after "somebody *without any authorisation or permission from ME or it seems from Yonty himself* had the temerity to do this highly improper action which is a breach of the specific rights of THREE people: ME, Yonty and the Hall itself!"[20] Surprisingly for someone who had reviewed so many discs during his years as a critic, Sorabji in later years had "no record playing facilities, can't be bothered with them, so I'm waiting for a very

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[14]Solomon had studied with Dame Myra Hess, Guido Agosti (a pupil of Busoni), and Charles Rosen.

[15]Alan Frank to KSS, 23 October 1974; KSS to Frank, 24 October 1974 {SA}; Frank to KSS, 28 October 1974; KSS to Frank, 30 October 1974 {5/F.30}.

[16]For the circumstances leading up to Solomon's first Sorabji recital, see Hinton, "Kaikhosru Shapurji Sorabji: An Introduction", in *SCC*, 38–40, and idem, "Kaikhosru Sorabji and Erik Chisholm", *Jagger Journal* (University of Cape Town Libraries), no. 10 (1989/90): 20–35; 28–31.

[17]Hinton, "Kaikhosru Shapurji Sorabji: An Introduction", in *SCC*, 40.

[18]KSS to NG, 18 January 1977 {18/F.67}.

[19]KSS to KD, 25 May 1978 {Derus S20, p. 92}. The correct form of the concluding sentence is "Je m'en fous" (present indicative), "[que] je m'en foute" is the subjunctive present.

[20]KSS to KD, 21 October 1978 {Derus, S25, p. 116}.

good kind young friend who lives locally who is making a cassette thereof so that I can hear it ultimately on this cassette thing".[21]

Solomon then turned his attention to *Opus clavicembalisticum*. Kenneth Derus, one of Sorabji's American admirers, had planned to record the work in view of limited distribution to libraries and archives. The recording session, which was to have taken place in the United States in June 1977, was cancelled, as was the performance scheduled for 22 November.[22] Solomon turned to shorter works and between 1977 and 1979 gave first performances of five works and of three of the *Études transcendantes*. He occasionally included Sorabji in his recitals until 1990 and recorded *Le jardin parfumé* for Altarus in 1992. Among the works he performed were the two published sets of early songs, recorded for the BBC with the English soprano Jane Manning.[23] At Hinton's request, Sorabji had agreed to a performance, but only with Solomon as the pianist.[24] The largest work he played was the *Sonata III for Piano*, which was retrospectively dedicated to him a few days before its premiere on 16 June 1977.[25] He was "one of the very few people who can make the piano SING" and had "the root of the matter in him, a lovely pianist, my ideal of a pianist, and has *complete* sympathy [and] insight with my way of musical thinking. Deo maxime gratias et laudes for him."[26]

As performances became more frequent and began to generate (admittedly minuscule) royalties, it became logical for Sorabji to join the Performing Right Society. On the other hand, as he was not a member of the Mechanical Copyright Protection Society, he was unable to collect royalties from the recordings that began to appear in 1980. Shortly before his death, Alistair Hinton persuaded him to join, which he did on 19 September 1988, making him the oldest composer on the list.[27]

In addition to Michael Habermann's concerts (mostly), there were three performances in the early 1980s, culminating in the first complete modern hearing of *Opus clavicembalisticum* in 1982. The premiere of the *Cinque sonetti di Michelagniolo Buonarroti*, given in Toronto on 2 February 1980, was the first ever hearing of an orchestral work, to which Sorabji agreed at the request of Paul Rapoport, who "played such an important party. Bless the dear man!"[28] Then, on 23 August 1981, in Edinburgh, the composer Ronald Stevenson gave the first performance of the *Fantasiettina sul nome illustre dell'egregio poeta Christopher Grieve ossia Hugh M'Diarmid*. Finally, on 2 May 1982, the Philadelphia branch of the Delius Society gave the first performance of *Il tessuto d'arabeschi*, a chamber work commissioned through Norman Gentieu.

Sorabji's voice was able to reach a wider audience when, in late January 1977, he agreed to do a television programme about him on condition that he was not seen, which meant that stills had to be

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[21]KSS to KD, 10 May 1981 {Derus, S40, p. 202}. The "young friend" is Anthony Burton-Page, who lived in Church Knowle, three kilometres from Corfe Castle.

[22]KD to KSS, 1 January 1977 {Derus, D009, p. 21; see also 4/F.21}, 30 August 1977 {Derus, D016, p. 43}; and KSS to KD, 20 September 1977 {Derus S11, p. 49}, and 26 September 1977 {Derus S12, p. 52}; see also FH to KD, 17 March 1977 {4/F.21}.

[23]After the broadcast on 3 June 1979, to which he had "listened with delight", Sorabji wrote to Manning, saying that "[n]ot since the incomparable Maggie Teyte has there been in my hearing any singer who has the same insight and flair for the delicately perverse *sous entendus* of Verlaine of the *Fêtes Galantes*."

[24]Hinton, "Kaikhosru Shapurji Sorabji: An Introduction", in *SCC*, 42.

[25]KSS to Yonty Solomon, 11 June 1977; see also letter dated 28 September 1977. A copy from the collection of Felix Harold White (1884–1945) in the Westminster Music Library has the inscription (apparently in Sorabji's hand) at the top of the first page of music: "Dedicated to Yonty Solomon (retrospectively)".

[26]KSS to KD, 3 September 1984 {Derus, S60, p. 318}; KSS to FH, 10 November 1977 {3/F.8}.

[27]AH, introductory lecture to concert of 22 February 2003 given as part of the "Rondom Kaikhosru Sorabji" concert series (Utrecht, Vredenburg), 4.

[28]KSS to KD, 15 March 1980 {Derus, S35, p. 155}.

used.[29] Alistair Hinton tried to persuade Sorabji, who had no idea of how awkward his request might prove, to reconsider his objection; he preferred not to insist, lest Sorabji decide not to be interviewed.[30] On 1 March a team from London Weekend Television went to The Eye to tape him. Another part of the programme, featuring the music critic and writer Felix Aprahamian (1914–2005), the theatre and opera producer Peter Hall (1930–2017), and Sorabji's old friend Sacheverell Sitwell as well as Hinton and Yonty Solomon, was recorded in London on 28 May. The *Aquarius* programme (which later became *The South Bank Show*) was broadcast on 11 June, with the episode title listed as "The Sorabji Legend". Asked by the host, Russell Harty (1934–88), what he would think of taking a motor car to London to attend a performance of his *Messa grande sinfonica* at the Royal Albert Hall, Sorabji replied: "I wouldn't cross the road—honestly. I am not going to make an exhibition of myself." In the end, the cameras managed to catch "the briefest valedictory glimpse of him in conversation", probably about forty seconds.[31] The producer Derek Bailey had arranged for a cameraman to accompany the crew, instructing him to stay out of sight while they knocked on the door but later to be ready to "catch a brief glimpse" of Sorabji saying goodbye to the host. The composer did not tell them to stop, but rather seemed "to be intrigued and lingered slightly to help the cameraman get his shot".[32] He received a payment of £400 (£2,541 in 2020) for his participation in a programme that, not having a television, he never watched, unlike his friend Christopher Murray Grieve, who did so "with great delight".[33] In 1979 and 1980 he also took part in interviews about Francis George Scott and Nicolas Medtner (see chapter 16).

The next major event in the rediscovery of Sorabji's works was the first complete public hearing of *Opus clavicembalisticum* since his own performance in 1930. This historic concert was given on 11 June 1982 by the Australian pianist Geoffrey Douglas Madge. A professor of piano at the Conservatory of Music and Dance in The Hague, Madge has developed a reputation for his performances of contemporary works and for his interest in large-scale, difficult works, such as those by Alkan, Busoni, Godowsky, Reger, and Medtner. He entered the field of Sorabji performance through Jane Manning, to whom he had expressed his interest in the composer in 1980. Manning, who had performed songs by Sorabji a few months earlier, put him in touch with Alistair Hinton, with whom he went to The Eye on 2 April. Madge played to Sorabji the first two sections of *Opus clavicembalisticum*, to which the composer responded very positively, encouraging him to play the whole work. In the following days he confirmed the pianist's "complete understanding of the Chorale Prelude of my O.C." and granted him his *nihil obstat*. He also prepared a letter authorizing him to obtain a copy of the manuscript from the University of Cape Town for his personal use.[34]

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[29]Derek Bailey to KSS, 31 January 1977; KSS to Bailey, 2 February 1977.

[30]Alistair Hinton, reply to post "Films and recordings of Sorabji himself", Yahoo! discussion group on Sorabji, 5 July 2004, https://launch.groups.yahoo.com/group/sorabjigroup/message/761 (link no longer active).

[31]Michael Church, "Aquarius: London Weekend", *The Times*, 13 June 1977, 13; Jim Penn, reply to post "Films and recordings of Sorabji himself", Yahoo! discussion group on Sorabji, 2 July 2004, https://launch.groups.yahoo.com/group/sorabjigroup/message/752 (link no longer active). See also "Weekend Broadcasting: Preview by Kenneth Eastaugh—The Sorabji Legend (ITV 10.30 pm)", *The Times*, 11 June 1977, 8. The programme was rebroadcast as a memorial tribute; see Hinton, "Kaikhosru Sorabji and Erik Chisholm", 33. A photograph of Sorabji and Harty in front of The Eye was published in "Weekend TV", *Harrow Observer*, 10 June 1977, 8, to illustrate the programme's return for a season of six, beginning with the Sorabji one. The programme has its page on IMDb (Internet Movie Database) at https://www.imdb.com/title/tt14022862/.

[32]Derek Bailey to MAR, 7 March 2011.

[33]Grieve also agreed with his decision to no longer object to performances of his works, although he had approved of his action at the time; see CMG to KSS, 12 June 1977, in Hugh MacDiarmid, *New Selected Letters*, ed. Dorian Grieve, Owen Dudley Edwards, and Alan Riach (Manchester: Carcanet Press, 2001), 518 (1970s, no. 88).

[34]KSS to Geoffrey Douglas Madge, Good Friday 1980 (4 April).

For a while Madge limited his performances to the first two sections of *Opus clavicembalisticum*. Then, on 11 June 1982, he gave a complete performance at the Muziekcentrum Vredenburg in Utrecht, which was broadcast live on two stations of the Nederlandse Omroepprogramma Stichting. Unsurprisingly, Sorabji did nothing to attend, saying, "I can't face travels these days and the project of jeering crowds of musicians fills me with HORROR."[35] The broadcast included excerpts from an interview conducted at Sorabji's home on Madge's third visit to the composer in November 1981. The performance, recorded for later release on disc, began at 8:16 p.m. and ended at 12:47 a.m., with two intervals of approximately twenty-five and twenty minutes,[36] for a total of three hours and fifty minutes. Madge played (from) *Opus clavicembalisticum* eleven times between 1982 and 1988. Five were complete performances, four were limited to two or three sections, and two were devoted to the *pars tertia* only. Since then he has performed it in its entirety only once (Berlin, March 2002).

In January 1982 Sorabji appropriately decided to dedicate his recently completed *Passeggiata arlecchinesca sopra un frammento di Busoni ("Rondò arlecchinesco")* to the Busoni advocate. Then, in March 1983, he confirmed to Madge his "complete consent" to proceed with the recording of the Utrecht concert[37] and, on 1 September, signed a copyright agreement with Keytone Music (Amsterdam). The four-record set was released on the Royal Conservatory Series label in September.

The next series of major performances of *Opus clavicembalisticum* was given by John Ogdon (b. Mansfield Woodhouse, Nottinghamshire, 27 January 1937; d. London, 1 August 1989), one of the greatest pianists England has produced. Ogdon, who had taken classes with Busoni's disciple—and a favourite pianist of Sorabji—Egon Petri in Basel in the winter of 1958, made his debut in Liverpool that same year playing Busoni's Piano Concerto. At some point in the 1950s, before Ogdon had studied with Petri, the composer Peter Maxwell Davies (1934–2016) had bought the score from a second-hand book barrow in Manchester. Ogdon having mentioned his interest in Sorabji, Davies took the score to his friend, who "sat down and promptly played it from beginning to end, having *never* seen it before. It took about three hours." Davies dates this event to 1954 or 1955, which would have made Ogdon seventeen or eighteen. On the other hand, Ogdon himself told Alistair Hinton that he received the score around 1956. He had apparently played it for the members of the Manchester Group, which included Davies himself.[38]

A few years after this private performance in Manchester, Ogdon gave another private, and partial, reading of lengthy excerpts from *Opus clavicembalisticum* at Ronald Stevenson's home on 1 December 1959.[39] That Ogdon had been a pupil of Petri was much to his credit in the eyes of Sorabji, who was "deeply touched by the artistic enthusiasm of someone who can go to the titanic trouble of mastering even portions" of it; he even looked forward to hearing him play it, "in private of course". He was delighted to hear from Christopher Murray Grieve "the astonishing information that he had just heard Ogdon play several movements of my Opus Clav. and that it was *ahurissant*".[40] Sorabji and Ogdon later

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[35]KSS to KD, 23 January 1982 {Derus, S44, p. 219}.

[36]Rapoport, "Opus erat", *Tempo*, no. 142 (September 1982): 37–38; 37.

[37]KSS to Geoffrey Douglas Madge, 2 March 1983, reproduced in *SCC*, 394, and in the booklet for his recording of the work on the Royal Conservatory Series label.

[38]Peter Maxwell Davies to MAR, 23 October 1996; Mike Seabrook, *MAX: The Life and Music of Peter Maxwell Davies* (London: Victor Gollancz, 1994), 38. Davies orchestrated the first two sections of *Opus clavicembalisticum* in the mid-1950s (whereabouts currently unknown); see Stewart R. Craggs, *Peter Maxwell Davies: A Source Book* (Aldershot: Ashgate, 2002), 60–61. The orchestration bears number J. 41 in Craggs's list of works, and WoO 41 (i.e., *Werk ohne Opuszahl*) on the Max Trust's website, https://www.themaxtrust.org/catalogue.html.

[39]RS to KSS, end of January 1960 (draft), 1; see also John Ogdon to KSS, 20 May 1961 {2/F.2}.

[40]KSS to CMG, 18 December 1959; KSS to CE, 15 January 1960.

met for the first and only time in London through Stevenson. The composer found him to be "a very simpatico person utterly free from that 'vanity native to the concert platform' of which Busoni speaks so devastatingly".[41] On this or another occasion, he said that despite Ogdon's wish to play his music, his ban would last "as long as I can maintain it"; no argument would shake him.[42] Sorabji must have heard a broadcast of Ogdon's performance of the Busoni Concerto in Liverpool on 29 November 1958, for he wrote him a "wonderful and inspiring letter" after the performance. The pianist, after thanking him for his comments, mentioned his various performances (including that for Davies) and asked whether he would relax his "very fierce general prohibition" in his case.[43] However, he did not, consider attending a recital given by Ogdon in nearby Swanage in 1961. Not only was hiring a car at night "FAR too costly", but—as usual— he refused "to speak [to], and still less to see" anyone.[44]

Ogdon participated with Stevenson and Grieve in a taped conversation planned by Stevenson as the final section of a Sorabji symposium, eventually published in 1965. He contributed an essay entitled "Sorabji and Hermann Melville", which Stevenson included in his typescript *Sorabji, Composer and Critic: A Study in Solitude*. Stevenson's volume has remained unpublished in its original form, although parts of it have appeared in print; Ogdon's text only appeared in 1989 in the booklet for his recording of *Opus clavicembalisticum*.[45]

Frank Holliday worked hard in the early 1960s to convince Sorabji to let him send to Ogdon the discs he had made of his playing. The composer thought Ogdon would feel he was "courting a performer" and refused the request. Holliday found it "grievous in the extreme" to refuse permission to such a pianist, but diplomacy prevailed and Sorabji began to soften his stance in 1963.[46] The possibility of a recording, however, continued to be a major problem.[47] Holliday also considered approaching Ronald Smith (1922–2004), the well-known exponent of Alkan, to make a tape of *Opus clavicembalisticum* and drafted a letter; after receiving comments from Norman Peterkin, he dropped the idea.[48]

Alistair Hinton toyed with the idea of approaching Ogdon to record *Opus clavicembalisticum* in the 1970s, but not knowing him made things difficult.[49] In the spring of 1985 Ronald Stevenson was contacted by Chris Rice, a young Cornish record producer and the owner of Altarus Records, then based in Sevenoaks, Kent, about making such a recording.[50] Stevenson, who could not afford the time required to master such a large score, suggested Ogdon. Sorabji, for whom it had become acceptable to record his music, did not object. The recording was made in three sets of sessions supervised by Hinton as executive producer: 8 to 12 July, 8 to 15 November 1985, and 10 to 15 March 1986, with Ogdon playing a Bösendorfer Model 290. The four-CD set was not released until May 1989 and was

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[41]KSS to RS, 15 November 1960.
[42]KSS to FH, 22 March 1961 {2/F.2}.
[43]John Ogdon to KSS, 20 May 1961 {2/F.2}. The "wonderful and inspiring letter" to Ogdon could not be located.
[44]KSS to RS, 7 November 1961, 2.
[45]For some comments on the symposium, see KSS to CMG, 18 June 1965, and KSS to FH, 20 September 1965 {2/F.6}.
[46]KSS to FH, 23 July 1962 {2/F.3}, 9 April 1963 {2/F.4}; FH to John Ogdon, 11 April 1963 {2/F.4}.
[47]KSS to FH, 1 May 1972 {3/F.3}.
[48]Draft, FH to Ronald Smith, undated (ca. 15 July 1971) {2/F.2}.
[49]Hinton, "Magnum opus: John Ogdon Remembered", *International Piano Quarterly*, no. 3 (Spring 1998): 16–22 (source for all the information in the paragraph; also provides an account of the sessions). For the recording dates, see Michael Glover, "John Ogdon: The Complete Discography", ibid., 24–32; 31.
[50]Over the next few years, Rice would produce several recordings devoted to Sorabji, Stevenson, Ogdon, and Hinton. For an interview with him about his record company and his work on behalf of Sorabji, see Royal S. Brown, "Altarus… America", *Fanfare* 17, no. 1 (September–October 1993): 66–80 (even pages).

reissued as a five-CD set in 2005. It included a lavishly illustrated booklet of sixty-two A5 pages, with contributions by Stevenson, Hinton, and Ogdon as well as a transcription of Sorabji's own analysis.[51]

On 14 July 1988, less than a year before the release of his recording, Ogdon performed the entire work at Queen Elizabeth Hall. In the words of Alistair Hinton, his "command, control and compulsion became all-consuming, almost as if he were propelling not only the music itself but its enraptured listeners towards its cataclysmic conclusion [...]", with almost the entire audience rising to its feet "in unison with the soloist rising from the piano-stool".[52] His only other performance took place on 2 November 1988 at Skinners' Hall in London.[53] A few days after the first concert, Sorabji dictated a letter to Hinton thanking Ogdon for his "splendid work".[54] Ogdon died in August 1989, at which time he was working on the set of one hundred *Études transcendantes* for recording.

The period ranging from 1976, when Sorabji began to allow public hearings of his music, to 1991, on the eve of the centenary of his birth, saw many isolated performances, usually of single works selected among those published in the 1920s, often in university settings, and often by pianists not associated with Sorabji's music. Such performances have been given by Valerie Tryon, Ronald Stevenson, Martin Offord, Robert Keeley, Raymond Clarke, Victor Sangiorgio, Andrew Ball, John Gibbons, Malcolm Rycraft, Christopher Seed, Julian Saphir, Douglas Finch, and Gordon Rumson. The often modest context in which these performances took place obviously prevented them from making a significant impact, although this was not the case for Kevin Bowyer and Marc-André Hamelin.

Kevin Bowyer was the first modern performer to tackle Sorabji's *Symphony [no. 1] for Organ*. Although his first performance, given on 25 July 1987 in London, was limited to the two outer movements—the middle movement was played by Thomas Trotter—, he went on to play it twice in its complete form in 1988 and made a recording released in the same year on the Continuum label. He has since prepared critical editions of all three organ symphonies and gave the first performance of the second one in 2010.

Another important performer is Marc-André Hamelin, the Canadian pianist-composer who has developed a cult following for his performances and recordings of unusually complex music, including works by many of Sorabji's favourite composers. On 19 March 1989 Hamelin gave the first of eight performances of the *Sonata no. 1 for Piano*, which he recorded for Altarus in 1990. Then, in 1998, he recorded for Hyperion Records the *Pastiche on the Hindu Merchant's Song from "Sadko" by Rimsky-Korsakov*. Hamelin, who is truly an heir of Ogdon in the scope of his artistry, also prepared for the Sorabji Archive fair manuscript copies, chief among which are the first eighteen numbers of the *Études transcendantes* and *"Gulistān"—Nocturne for Piano*.

The major event associated with the centenary of Sorabji's birth in 1992 was the publication of Paul Rapoport's *Sorabji: A Critical Celebration*, which provided a solid basis for further research. Occasional performances continued to add to our knowledge of the music. Between 1992 and the millennium, the American pianist Donna Amato who gave the world premieres of seven works. She also recorded three discs for the Altarus label, owned by Chris Rice, with whom she prepared corrected editions of two previously published pieces. Separately, they produced fair copies of two and four previously

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[51]For an account of the recording sessions, see Charles Beauclerk, *Piano Man: A Life of John Ogdon* (London: Simon & Schuster, 2014), 343–44. The book's endpapers reproduce the last page of Ogdon's annotated copy of *Opus clavicembalisticum*.

[52]Hinton, "Kaikhosru Sorabji and Erik Chisholm", 32.

[53]A very detailed description of the concert of 14 July 1988 forms the foreword (entitled "Half Piano, Half Man") of Beauclerk, *Piano Man: A Life of John Ogdon*, ix–xvi.

[54]KSS to John Ogdon, 24 July 1988.

unpublished titles, respectively. In March 2003 Amato gave the long-awaited first performance of Sorabji's published piano concerto; the first complete performance of the *Symphonia brevis for Piano* followed in June 2004.

As well as isolated performances by pianists such as Derek Bell, Bengt Forsberg, Stephen Gosling, John Kameel Farah, David Pitman, and Steven Mayer, there are first performances (mostly of short works or of excerpts) by Albert Frantz, Carlo Grante, Michael Habermann, Giampaolo Nuti, Solon Pierce, Justin Rubin, and Nicola Ventrella. Kevin Bowyer premiered the opening movement of the *Second Symphony for Organ* in 1994 and a group of students at London's City University performed the *Fantasiettina atematica*. The *Quintet no. 1 for Piano and Quartet of Stringed Instruments* was first performed in New York in December 1998 by the pianist Christopher Berg and an assembled string quartet. The concert included the first modern performance of the *Sonata seconda for Piano* by Tellef Johnson (recorded by Altarus), who also gave the first hearing outside Europe of the *Sonata III for Piano* in August 2001. A notable recording, released by Altarus in 1995, was that of *"Gulistān"—Nocturne for Piano* by the English pianist Charles Hopkins (1952–2007).

Christopher Berg was also the pianist in the April 1999 premiere of the *Trois poèmes du "Gulistān" de Saʿdī* with the baritone Peter Clark. This recital was the first to be devoted to songs other than the two early published sets. First performances of all the remaining songs for female voice have been given since 1999 by Amy Burton, Debra Skeen, Sarah Leonard, Loré Lixenberg, and Elizabeth Farnum. In November 2002 Farnum gave a recital in New York featuring seven world premieres to celebrate the release of her recording (on Centaur Records) of all the songs for female voice, except for the *Movement for Voice and Piano*, which is scored for mezzo (or baritone).

The new millennium has given a new impetus to performances, especially by the British pianist and composer Jonathan Powell. The author of a doctoral dissertation on Russian music at Cambridge University, he contributed more than a dozen articles to the second edition of the *New Grove*, including the one on Scriabin. After an initial foray with a single performance of the *Sonata no. 1 for Piano* in 1990, Powell embarked in February 2000 on a cycle of performances of several medium-size works of considerable complexity, released between 2002 and 2007 on the Altarus label. He played important works not heard since Yonty Solomon's recitals of the late 1970s, such as *Rosario d'arabeschi*, *"Gulistān"—Nocturne for Piano* and the *Concerto da suonare da me solo e senza orchestra, per divertirmi*. More importantly, he gave the first performances of nine works, including the large *Sonata IV for Piano* and the *Sequentia cyclica super "Dies irae" ex Missa pro defunctis*; his recording of the latter work, which lasts nearly eight hours and a half, was released in 2020. He is the fourth pianist to have performed *Opus clavicembalisticum* in public, in his case ten times between 2003 and 2017. The need for legible scores has led him to contribute a dozen magnificent engraved editions to the growing catalogue of the Sorabji Archive.

The Italian pianist Carlo Grante, well known for his championship of Godowsky, gave the first performance of the late *Opus secretum atque necromanticum* in November 2001. In September 2002 the New York pianist Soheil Nasseri gave the first hearing of the *Sonata no. 0*, his recording of which was released in 2007. In February and March 2003, the Muziekcentrum Vredenburg (Utrecht) hosted four concerts devoted in whole or in part to Sorabji. These included first hearings of the published piano concerto played by Donna Amato and of the *Fourth Symphony for Piano Alone* performed by the Dutch pianist Reinier van Houdt as well as the first European performance of the *Quintet no. 1 for Piano and Quartet of Stringed Instruments* with Frank Peters and the Quatuor Danel. Last but not least, the Swedish pianist Fredrik Ullén, well known as an exponent of Ligeti's music as well as a professor of cognitive neuroscience, has been performing many *Études transcendantes* since 2002; his complete

recording, on seven discs, was released in installments between 2006 and 2020; he also recorded the *Pastiche on the "Minute Waltz" by Chopin* and the *Pasticcio capriccioso sopra l'op. 64, no 1 del Chopin*.

More recently, the Spanish pianist Abel Sánchez-Aguilera gave several performances of the *Toccata seconda per pianoforte* starting in 2019 and then recorded it on two discs in addition to preparing critical editions of four large-scale works totalling more than 1,200 pages. Like Ullén, he has a scientific background, in his case a Ph.D. in biochemistry and molecular biology. A recent phenomenon, which took off around 2005, is the posting of live performances on the video hosting website YouTube, sometimes with synchronized score, not to mention sound files created with notation software. The most extensive and accomplished of these realizations, by the English tuba player David Carter, who worked on it between 2002 and 2021, is a complete recording accompanied by an on-screen running commentary of the entire *Symphony [no. 2], "Jāmī", for Large Orchestra, Wordless Chorus, and Baritone Solo*, a massive work of four hours and three quarters.

This account of the performance and recording history of Sorabji's music shows how was only gradually discovered, mainly in England and the United States, thanks to a few enterprising performers, usually pianists. As of 2023, the list of performers known to have played his music available on the website of the Sorabji Archive contains close to 250 names, of which just over 140 are pianists.[55] A growing number of performers are therefore ready to tackle his works with a view to public performance. The obstacle of costly international travel to attend individual hearings remains, not to mention the risk of last-minute cancellations. Only as more recordings become available will it become easier to study the music in depth, but it will always be difficult to persuade record companies to take the risk of releasing discs devoted to the music of a little-known composer. Without the invaluable contribution of Chris Rice, who has produced many of the available recordings on his Altarus Records label, our knowledge of the music would be very limited. There are still many works yet to be discovered, especially the large orchestral works and most of the piano concertos, which remain to be edited. Fortunately, the chamber, vocal, organ, and (most of the) piano works are now available in editions prepared with notation software, several with extensive critical reports.[56]

Sixth Symphony for Piano (Symphonia claviensis)

In 1975, at the age of eighty-three, Sorabji began work on what was to be his last large-scale work divided into parts or movements. On 29 September he reported to Norman Gentieu that he had "already started the first page of another this time *very large piano work* but that's going to be a very leisurely business I promise you!"[57] After considering titles such as *Symphonia magna* and *Clavisymphonica*, he settled on *Sixth Symphony for Piano (Symphonia claviensis)* (1975–76; 270 pp.); he had reached the end of the second movement on 4 June 1976 and finished the whole work on 11 November. As with many of his late works, Sorabji dedicated it to his "dear and beloved" friend Alistair Hinton: "Per l'amico caro e diletto: A.H."

The *Symphonia claviensis* consists of seven movements grouped as follows in three *partes*: I, II–IV, V–VII. It begins, appropriately enough, with a solemn, hieratic "Introito" ([ED]pp. 1–3). It begins with a motive played in octaves over four octaves, with great emphasis on the notes A, B♭, and B♮, which form the dedicatee's initials (B♮ = H in German notation). This is followed by an ascending and descending line in chords in both hands; its opening recurs a dozen times in the first movement,

[55]The Sorabji Archive, "All Sorabji performers", http://www.sorabji-archive.co.uk/performers/performers.php.

[56]The Sorabji Archive, "Progress in Sorabji editing, performing and recording", http://www.sorabji-archive.co.uk/compositions/progress.php.

[57]KSS to NG, 29 September 1975 {18/F.63}.

including on the last page (pp. 14, 25, 45, 47, 48, 51, 59, 63, 71, 81, 90, 94, 96), and the entire passage is heard at the very end of the work **(example 22.1)**. Sorabji calls most of what follows an "Intrecciata"; in correct Italian, this would be "Intrecciatura" or "Intreccio", meaning interlacing. Despite the name, the music is no more or less contrapuntal or rich in detail than his similar works. It begins "Animato assai" (pp. 4–12), then pauses for a short "Interludio fugato" on one subject with the same tempo indication (pp. 12–13), after which the "Intreccia" resumes (pp. 14–90) with a restatement of the work's chordal motive. This section is quite massive and highly virtuosic throughout. The only external reference (identified by the composer as "Allusion to O.C.") is a link to a motive from *Opus clavicembalisticum*, namely, the right-hand figuration in var. 37 of the "Interludium primum". The first part ends with a substantial "Coda-Epilogo" (pp. 90–96).

The second movement (pp. 97–115) begins, again quite appropriately, with a rapid "Preludio" (pp. 97–99) in toccata style. This is followed by another very short section, a slow "Interludio placido" (pp. 100–102), as an introduction to a longer, scherzo-like section (pp. 103–12); the bass of the first bar consists only of the notes A and B (=H), which stand for Alistair Hinton. A short "Moto perpetuo" (pp. 113–15) leads to the core of the movement, an "Ostinato" consisting of a theme and sixty-four variations (pp. 116–66). The long theme, in semibreves and crotchets, is played at the octave by both hands, a rare procedure in Sorabji. It gives great prominence to the notes A, B♭, and B♮. The variations are numbered, and the six phrases of the theme are identified by either numbers or letters. Perhaps writing a large variation section on a multi-phrase theme had become difficult and the composer needed a little help to keep his bearings.

The third movement (pp. 167–92) consists of two sections. One is a "Quasi adagio" (pp. 167–87) in nocturne style. This is followed by a "Toccata–quasi cadenza—ovvero moto perpetuo" (pp. 188–92), with mostly runs of groups of seven semiquavers. The fourth and final movement of the second part (pp. 193–208) is entitled "Quasi Alkan". There is no clear indication of what Sorabji meant by this reference, but the series of repeated chords on pp. 193 and 207 may be a link with the beginning of the eleventh piece ("Ouverture") from the *Douze études dans les tons mineurs*, op. 39. The first two notes of the bass line, A and B (= H), again refer to the dedicatee.

The fifth movement (pp. 209–27) is an "Arabesque-Nocturne" set in the appropriate style. It is followed by a "Quasi fuga" (pp. 228–58) consisting of five short fugues on one subject each, with an interlude between each pair. All the subjects, except the fourth, have the dedicatee's initials in their opening notes. The fugues, identified by lowercase letters (*a*–*e*), may be characterized thus: simple, rather sparse texture (pp. 228–30); mostly semiquavers (pp. 232–33); mostly semiquavers, ending "Grandioso" (pp. 236–39); quavers throughout, ending climactically (pp. 243–47); long note values, mostly breves, semibreves, and crotchets, with more animation as the fugue nears its end (pp. 250–58). The interludes, labelled with upper case letters (*A*–*D*), can be summarized as follows: study in double notes and octaves (pp. 230–31); expansive, virtuosic treatment (pp. 234–35); nocturne style, with a rather sparse texture (pp. 240–43); study in broken intervals, in semiquavers throughout, with a link to the subject of the previous fugue (pp. 248–49).

The seventh and final movement is an extended "Coda-Epilogo" (pp. 258–70) in nocturne style. It includes, near the end, a section with an inner A pedal point, much like a tolling bell, with a low B pedal (pp. 263–65); the last page contains a virtually identical restatement of the opening chordal motive of the work.

Frammenti aforistici (4)

From 1962 Sorabji had begun to write sets of pieces of "aphoristic fragments". Fifteen years later he produced a final set, and a tiny one at that, of four *Frammenti aforistici* (1977; 1 p.). The four aphorisms are undated, and the date offered here is the year in which Alistair Hinton received the score from Sorabji.[58] Each of these pieces, again dedicated to Hinton ("For dear Alistair from K. with love"), requires less than one system on Sorabji's usual oblong paper. The most notable feature of the music is the presence of the dedicatee's initials at various points in the musical texture. In the first fragment, the letters A and H are part of the B–A–C–H motive, which is stated in octaves. In the three remaining fragments, Hinton's initials appear prominently at the very beginning **(example 22.2)**. There is no specific indication by the composer, not even for the B–A–C–H motive.

Symphonic Nocturne for Piano Alone

On 17 September 1977 Sorabji began work on his longest one-movement piece, the *Symphonic Nocturne for Piano Alone* (1977–78; 113 pp.). Completed on 4 April 1978, the score bears no inscription; the composer dedicated it (verbally) to Alistair Hinton, as he did with all but one of his works written between 1973 and 1978.[59] Despite its name, this substantial piece does not use the nocturne style throughout. It contains many expansive and virtuosic passages, although Sorabji does not demand as much of his performer as he had done in the past; the scale is more moderate, shall we say intimate. There are few clear divisions, apart from the occasional fermata. The style is very free and improvisatory, apart from a recurring gesture in the form of series of pounding chords or octaves, usually in the lower register ([ED]pp. 1, 11, 15, 18, 27 [twice], 31, 38, 44, 57, 63, 69, 84, 85). A performer might feel authorized to breathe midway through the work, in the middle of p. 39, where Sorabji marks "lunga" above a fermata; this is where Lukas Huisman makes the break between the two discs of his 2016 recording. As usual in this kind of work, we find all the gestures associated with Sorabji's luxuriant piano writing, such as those series of chords played staccato and *quasi saltando* in the high register **(example 22.3)**.

"Il gallo d'oro" da Rimsky-Korsakov: Variazioni frivole con una fuga anarchica, eretica e perversa

In September 1978 at the latest, Sorabji "tentatively started a new small piano work (I say 64 pages or so) called THE GOLDEN COCKEREL CROWS, a variation thing on that wonderful motive, the crow of this creature in Rimsky-Korsakov's MARVELLOUS opera. Whether I shall go on with it or not I don't know."[60] He did so, completing the work on 20 May 1979 with a dedication "To Michael Habermann". He had learned that the American pianist to whom he had given permission to play his music in 1976 wanted to play a work by him, but without poaching on Yonty Solomon's territory (for whom this was not a problem).[61] Scribbled on the title page is a strongly worded condemnation of musicologists (would Sorabji, perhaps prompted by Alistair Hinton, have made an exception for Paul Rapoport and me?): "for the confoundation [*recte* confounding] of earnest solemn high-minded dolts and musicological pedants and bigots". His description of the piece to Kenneth Derus gives us a variant of the above comment: "a lark… a kicking up of the heels ending with a Fuga perversa anarchistica [*sic*] e eretica written for the greater confoundation [*sic*] of earnest high-minded musicological numskulls

[58]AH to MAR, 4 November 1998.
[59]AH to MAR, 4 November 1998.
[60]KSS to KD, 10 September 1978 {Derus, S22, p. 106}.
[61]KSS to KD, 15 May 1979 {Derus, S29, p. 134}.

and pedants. MY GOD WHAT a crew."[62] In the 1930s he had mentioned the "outstanding eminence as a musicologist (foul word!)" of the organist and scholar Albert Schweitzer (1875–1965).[63]

In writing this new work, Sorabji drew for the second time on a work by Nikolay Rimsky-Korsakov (1844–1908), the first one being the *Pastiche on the Hindu Merchant's Song from "Sadko"*. On the whole, he had little admiration for the Russian composer. In discussing the powerful Oriental evocations of Szymanowski's *Song of the Night*, he referred to the "Brummagem-Benares efforts" of Rimsky as of an "appalling and shattering crudity". Reviewing a recording of Schoenberg's *Gurrelieder*, whose "richness, subtlety, and flexibility" in orchestration was unparalleled in any existing music, he wrote of "Rimsky-Korsakoffian pla[n]gencies and tom-tommings".[64] The *Golden Cockerel* (1906–7; in Russian *Zolotoy petushok*), seems to have escaped his wrath. He saw *fioritura* coming back into favour, with this opera leading the way, particularly with the part of the Queen of Shemakha, which is "tinged, as is the whole of that charming work, with a fascinating exotic 'legendary' and Arabian Night quality".[65] As noted in chapter 8, this character's "Hymn to the Sun" has motives quite similar to those used in the Hindu merchant's song. Fifteen years later Sorabji wrote that Rimsky-Korsakov had "dallied with the fantastic, the necromantic, the magical, the uncanny", obviously a feature likely to attract his interest. Although he noted a "remarkable flair for the fantastic and the legendary", he often found "a superficiality, a surface-decorative handling of the matter". However, in the *Golden Cockerel*, which he regarded as the Russian composer's finest stage work, he felt a "necromantic suspense" brooding over certain scenes in a remarkable way.[66] In his 1941 review of a recording of Prokofiev's "March" from *The Love of the Three Oranges*, op. 33 (1921), he remarked that "the descent—of Prokofieff as of so many of the younger Russians—from Rimsky-Korsakov is very evident in this piece, which could hardly have been written at all had 'Coq d'Or' never existed".[67]

Sorabji's final theme and variations uses a striking motive from the Russian composer's opera in which King Dodon receives from his astrologer a golden cockerel with the gift of prophecy crowing as a sign of impending danger. The motive is the very first gesture of the opera and recurs several times in the first act and in the epilogue. The text is "Kirikuku! Beregis', bud'na cheku!" (Cockadoodledoo! Watch out, be on your guard!) and, when it is first stated, the motive is played by two muted trumpets joined in bar 3 by two oboes and in bar 5 by the first violins. It consists of two short phrases: a staccato arpeggiation of the D♭ major chord and a filled-in arpeggiation of the E major chord. Sorabji triples the melodic line and follows it with a dissonant chord in the low register, after which he writes three systems of music developing the opening cry **(example 22.4)**.

As he had done in the *Concerto da suonare da me solo e senza orchestra, per divertirmi* and *Un nido di scatole sopra il nome del grande e buon amico Harold Rutland*, Sorabji gave free rein to his sense of humour in the interpretative directions at the beginning of several variations. For var. 10 he wrote: "Valse impertinente. Con la grazia elefantina d'un'orchestra [*recte* di un'orchestra] inglese suonante un Valzer di Strauss. Pesante e parodisticamente, molto esagerato"; one passage has the direction

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[62]KSS to KD, 15 May 1979 {Derus, S29, p. 134}.

[63]Sorabji, "Music", *NA* 51, no. 9 (30 June 1932): 105–6; 105. See also "Music", *NEW* 8, no. 19 (20 February 1936): 375–76; 376, where he writes "of all things 'musicological' (WHAT a word!)".

[64]Sorabji, "Music", *NA* 46, no. 22 (3 April 1930): 261; "Music", *NEW* 5, no. 24 (27 September 1934): 472–74; 473. Brummagem is the local name for the city of Birmingham, once also used to refer to cheap imitations of mass-produced goods; Benares is an Indian city on the banks of the Ganges. Sorabji referred to "pinchbeck Brummagem-Benares nick-nackery" as a derogatory expression for something cheap; see "The Modern Piano Sonata", in *AM*, 52–65; 63.

[65]Sorabji, "Animadversions on Singing in General, with Remarks on the Misuse of the Term 'Coloratura'", in *AM*, 38–51; 50.

[66]Sorabji, "Metapsychic Motivation in Music", in *MCF*, 193–216; 208–9.

[67]"Music", *NEW* 18, no. 24 (3 April 1941): 277–78; 278.

"Nello stile della canaglia democratica, vulgarmente e pesante". Var. 28 should be played "come une macchina da cucire".[68]

Few outstanding details of these *variazioni frivole* need be recorded. There is a short "Codetta a piacere" consisting of four descending stark octaves at the end of var. 11[a]. Var. 18 is a "Passacagliettina" with sixteen variations on a stepwise thirteen-note line in crotchets given to the left hand as a counterpoint to the cockerel's cry in the right hand. Var. 22 is built over a C pedal point. Finally, var. 44, an extended "Quasi notturno", ends with an "Eco del nome del [*recte* dell']amico diletto". This echo of the beloved friend's name takes the form of a long meandering line played over a trill on a low A. Sorabji is obviously alluding to Alistair Hinton, described as "amico caro e diletto" in the dedication of the *Sixth Symphony for Piano (Symphonia claviensis)*. His name can be associated with the first five notes, shown in the second part of the example, followed by two sequential repetitions.

The concluding "Fuga eretica, perversa ed anche anarchica assai",[69] as it is styled at the beginning with Sorabji's characteristic humour ([ED]p. 84), uses two subjects unrelated to any previously heard material. The two sections frame a virtuosic "Interludio" (bars 504–12) that is an appropriate musical translation of the adjectives used in the title. The work ends with a long *decrescendo* of eighteen statements of a single dissonant pounded chord followed by a final flurry in the upper register and a last cry, marked "Gridando acutissimo". The last four pages, which Sorabji described as a "délassement" and as "good fun to write" are spread on five-staff systems (in the manuscript) and show that he had lost none of his ability to write expansively.[70]

Il tessuto d'arabeschi

Sorabji always wrote first and foremost to satisfy his own inner creative needs, not to respond to the demands of others. One composition conceived for a specific need was the *Suggested Bell-Chorale for St. Luke's Carillon*, written for his American friend Norman Gentieu. Another was his first and only commission, made by Gentieu for the Philadelphia branch of the Delius Society, of which he had been a founding member in 1977. The resulting work, *Il tessuto d'arabeschi* (1979; 32 pp.) for flute and string quartet, is appropriately dedicated "To the memory of Delius". As he was often fond of doing, he added, after the date of completion (24 November 1979), a Latin inscription in praise of God: "Opus perfectum est. Deo maxime gratiando laudem". The work was first performed on 2 May 1982, with William Smith (1925–93) conducting members of the Philadelphia Orchestra. Gentieu had financed the commission, for which Sorabji received a sum of £1,000 (worth £5,172 in 2020) and, after the performance, one hundred dollars.[71]

As Sorabji did not produce instrumental parts (he never did for any of his works), these had to be prepared by Elma Miller, a Canadian composer and music typographer based in Hamilton, Ontario. One can easily understand the need for a fair copy of Sorabji's music by reading his comments on sending the score to Gentieu, reproduced *verbatim* as another example of Sorabji's atrocious handling of the typewriter in his later years.

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[68]"Impertinent waltz. [To be played] with the elephantine grace of an English orchestra playing a Strauss waltz. Heavy and parodistically, very exaggerated"; "In the style of the democratic canaille, vulgarly and heavily"; "like a sewing machine".

[69]"Heretic, perverse, and also quite anarchic fugue".

[70]KSS to KD, 24 December 1978 {Derus S27, p. 124}.

[71]NG to MAR, 8 June 1999 (with the currency symbol written in ink in the typewritten letter). Rapoport, note to Hinton, "Kaikhosru Shapurji Sorabji: An Introduction", in *SCC*, 45n47, writes "was paid the equivalent of $1000 for the quintet (closer to $2000 in 1992 [$3,730 in 2021])"; transmission slip, dated 18 June 1982.

> Fjrst ka all forgive my godorful tyiping..fingers not at all goof… The TESSUTO thing enckoised herewith.I hope its ffairly legible in spite of my bad fingers. I've been sparing a purpose with expression markks and such and lealeave that to the performaes and their discretion.[72]

Sorabji began work on the nineteen-minute *Il tessuto d'arabeschi* in September 1979, dropping "everything in which I was engaged to get on with it and hope that I haven't made too much of a mess of it". The work was finished less than two months later on 24 November and the composer sent it off on 10 December.[73] He admitted to his friend his difficulties with the piece: "I think I've told you already that I detest the sound of the string quartet and don't like the sound of it in the tessuto! Still it was a duty to try and do what I could with it."[74] Since he wrote two piano quintets, we must conclude that, in this case, friendship made up for the lack of a piano part, although it seems that "as I got quite a nice fee for doing it, I DID it".[75]

Sorabji described the style of his new work to Gentieu in terms that could easily apply to much of his music, namely, a "seamless coat".

> The strings in the flute quintet are in no manner or means just an accompaniment to the flute. The work might be called in a manner of speaking a Concertino non Grosso. It is designed as all my later works are, as a SEAMLESS COAT, what I call a TESSUTO IN SOUND from which the threads cannot be disassociated or—if you like—disentangled without destroying the Tessuto… same as what happens if you pulled out strand by strand of a Persian rug until the rug qua rug non esiste più.[76]

As usual, the instruments breathing life into this seamless coat have little time to rest and must deal with very complex rhythms throughout. The string parts form a very active contrapuntal structure, and all the instruments, with very few exceptions, play constantly. The flute part usually has long drawn-out lines with occasional cadential flourishes in fast note values **(example 22.5)**. Sorabji does, however, allow the flautist—who also needs an alto flute—a few bars of rest from time to time.[77] He had not tried to create "any Delian feeling in the work", but only to express his feelings "towards the incomparable music". The final cadence was "an allusion to the initials of his name… at least, I MEANT it so."[78] The very last notes, played by the violins and the viola over a C in the cello, read D–E–A–D♯ (= E♭), where the A is "la" for the letters "liu", and the E♭ (Es in German notation) stands for "s", hence "Delius'.

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[72]KSS to NG, 8 December 1979 {19/F.11}.

[73]KSS to NG, 17 December 1979; for a slightly later shipping date, see KSS to KD, 16 December 1979 {Derus, S33, p. 149}.

[74]KSS to NG, 25 October 1982 {19/F.35}; see also KSS to Henry Edward Lightly, undated (October 1979 at the earliest). Another expression of his dislike was "I don't like the sort of noise the quartet makes, that's all"; KSS to KD, 30 December 1977 {Derus, S17, p. 80}.

[75]KSS to Harold Morland, 26 June 1982, 1.

[76]KSS to NG, 28 November 1981 {19/F.31}.

[77]An analysis of *Il tessuto d'arabeschi* will be found in Brian Andrew Inglis, "The Life and Music of Kaikhosru Shapurji Sorabji" (M.A. thesis, London, City University, 1993), 69–74.

[78]KSS to NG, 15 December 1980 {19/F.19}.

23 / 1980–88 ▪ The Final Years

Dedications, Tributes, and Other Homages

Sorabji liked or disliked intensely, as the survey of his attitude to several composers shows (see chapter 20). His virtuosity in expressing his affection or admiration for a friend or personality knew no bounds, nor did his vitriol in venting his anger at people or attitudes contrary to his view of life or music (especially when writing for himself or for his friends, when possible accusations of libel were not a concern). His long and wordy dedications are the most striking examples of how he paid tribute to the members of his circle of friends. Like Liszt, Busoni, and Schoenberg, he was the object of a profound admiration by his close friends—and he relished it; as mentioned in chapter 15, he referred to people born under his sign (Leo) as "mop[ping] up flattery like a cat cream".[1] This admiration sometimes manifested itself in dedications of works and pieces written *à la manière de*, by using easily recognizable quotations from his works or incorporating his name into the texture as a *soggetto cavato*. There are some forty examples of published tributes to Sorabji, of which only a few can be discussed here.

In 1922 Sorabji received the dedication of a chapter from a book entitled *Sculptured Melodies* from an artist named Mera Sett. Published in a limited edition of 500 copies with illustrations by the author himself, the 110-page book consists of stories presumably inspired by 11 musical works by well-known composers. The author, whose name does not appear anywhere in the surviving documents, dedicated the second chapter, entitled "Valse Triste—*Chopin*" (i.e., the Waltz in A Minor, op. 34, no. 2), "to Kaikoo Sorabji, *Esq.*"[2] Sett, the son of a Bombay merchant, was a Parsi whose real name seems to have been Merwanji Kavasji Sett. He was born on 4 September 1888; his death date is unknown, but he was still alive in 1954. He came to London and was admitted to the Middle Temple, one of the four Inns of Court, in 1908. After matriculating at Downing College (Cambridge), in 1910, he was called to the bar in 1912. Thanks to his father's financial support, an edition of Omar Khayyām's *Rubaiyat* extravagantly illustrated (with explicit drawings) was published by Galloway and Porter (Cambridge) in 1914 in a limited edition of 250 copies. The foreword, signed by Mera Ben Kavas Sett of Pedder Road, Bombay, tells us that he had not discovered the works of Aubrey Beardsley "till quite lately" and had formed his style "on the study of Eastern drawings, especially Indian".[3] The style of Sett's drawings

[1]KSS to CE, 31 March 1953.

[2]Mera Sett, "Valse Triste—Chopin", in *Sculptured Melodies*, Illustrated by the Author (London: Privately printed and published for the author by Grant Richards Ltd., 1922), 21–27. The book includes chapters on five works by Chopin and one each by Beethoven, Dvořák, Gounod, Rubinstein, Schumann, and Tchaikovsky. The first and third chapters ("Romance—*Rubinstein*" and "Fantaisie Impromptu—*Chopin*") are dedicated to his wife, Rati Jamshidji Panday (b. 1892), and his mother, Mrs. J. L. Panday. The dedications appear on separate pages preceding each chapter.

[3]Much of the information on Sett comes from Bob Forrest, "Appendix 17: Mera K. Sett & Rupert Brooke", in *The Rubaiyat of Omar Khayyam*, http://bobforrestweb.co.uk/The_Rubaiyat/Appendices/app17.htm, and from personal communication. See also Garry Garrard, "A Cautionary Tale", *Omariana: Bulletin of the Dutch Omar Khayyám Society* 10, no. 1 (Summer 2010): 4–5, also available at http://omariana.nl/wp-content/uploads/2016/08/omariana-2010-vol.-10-nr-1-1.pdf.

is indeed very reminiscent of Beardley's. We may never know when or how Sorabji and Sett met, although the use of an affectionate name in the dedication suggests more than mere acquaintance. Although Sorabji did not become a member of the Incorporated Parsee Association of Europe until 1934 (see chapter 4), he may have attended various functions with a view to joining the community in or before 1913 (which is when Sett appears to have returned to Bombay) and probably struck up a friendship with him.

In addition to various poems by Harold Morland (see chapter 15), Sorabji received a literary dedication from his friend Hugh MacDiarmid in 1932. The twelve-line poem entitled *Cheville* is inscribed "To Kaikhosru Sorabji" (see chapter 19). Two other titles, not dedications but homages, must be mentioned. One is a poem entitled *Am I a Sort of Sorabji?* (1988), by David Holbrook (1923–2011), a former director of English studies at Downing College, University of Cambridge.[4] Holbrook had heard of Sorabji at a lecture by the music writer Wilfrid Mellers (1914–2008); he found it fantastic that a composer could write enormous works only to forbid anyone to play them.[5] Sorabji, a "prince-composer" and an "oriental Scriabin", is first mentioned in line 12 (of 35), and only the third and fourth stanzas are built directly around him. The poem refers to Corfe Castle, the difficulty of his music, his reservation of performance rights, and the permission he gave to one person but not to the BBC. As a work of the imagination, the poem contains examples of literary licences, such as a £300 fine (£22,160 in 2021) allegedly paid by John Tobin for his performance of *Opus clavicembalisticum*, and a reference in Sorabji's will that his works be burned at his death. The other homage is a poem entitled *For Ronald Stevenson* by Alan Bold (1943–98), the Scottish writer and MacDiarmid specialist. The text mentions many figures who have fascinated Stevenson and helped to shape his creative personality, such as Busoni, MacDiarmid, Scott, and Shostakovich. Bold calls Sorabji "the esoteric adventurer" in line 8 (of 148) and mentions *Opus clavicembalisticum* in line 41.[6]

Dedications of musical works began in 1924, with Christopher à Becket Williams, to whom Sorabji had expressed the wish to be the dedicatee of his *Impromptu and Double Fugue for Two Pianos* (1924). Williams was returning the compliment, as Sorabji had already dedicated his *Pastiche on the Hindu Merchant's Song from "Sadko" by Rimsky-Korsakov* to him. In 1929 the dedicatee of the *Fragment Written for Harold Rutland* returned the compliment with a *Toccata*. In 1932 the English composer Philip Christian Darnton (1905–81), who would attend John Tobin's partial performance of *Opus clavicembalisticum* in 1936, dedicated his Suite no. 2 for Piano to Sorabji. Contacts between the two composers are not otherwise documented, although Sorabji wrote a detailed review of his book *You and Music* in 1940 in which he discussed "many errors and omissions".[7] In 1950 York Bowen dedicated his remarkable set of *Twenty-Four Preludes in All Major and Minor Keys*, op. 102, to Sorabji, who would reciprocate six years later with his *Passeggiata veneziana sopra la Barcarola di Offenbach*. Mervyn Vicars, like Bowen a dedicatee of Sorabji, wrote three works for his friend in 1953, 1960, and 1973, the latter being a series of variations (with a fugue) on a theme by Sorabji (see chapter 17).

Further dedications then came from younger musicians, such as Michael Habermann, who was soon to become one of Sorabji's most important advocates. On 5 September 1972 he sent a short composition in the hope of persuading him to write some more short or medium-size pieces. Sorabji acknowledged receipt of the "charming" piece, entitled *À la manière de Sorabji: Au clair de la lune*

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[4]David Holbrook, "Am I a Sort of Sorabji", *London Magazine* n.s. 28, nos. 5–6 (August–September 1988): 95–96.

[5]David Holbrook to MAR, 19 July 1997.

[6]Alan Bold, "For Ronald Stevenson", in *Ronald Stevenson: The Man and His Music—A Symposium*, ed. Colin Scott-Sutherland (London: Toccata Press, 2005), 258–61 (first published in the *Glasgow Herald*, 16 December 1989, 28).

[7]Sorabji, "Music", *The New English Weekly* 17, no. 23 (26 September 1940): 258. See chapter 10 for more on Darnton's Suite no. 2.

(1972); part of a series of tributes to various composers, it uses the well-known French nursery rhyme as a cantus firmus.[8] Alistair Hinton, from 1974 onwards, dedicated various works containing dedications, quotations, allusions, etc., to his close friend (see chapter 21). And in the 1980s the gentleman mentioned in the *Passeggiata variata sul nome del caro e gentile giovane amico Clive Spencer-Bentley* dedicated no less than seven works to Sorabji.

In February 1980 the American composer Lowell Liebermann, then a student at the Juilliard School of Music (New York), sought the composer's permission to perform some of his works. Sorabji refused because he had already given permission to Michael Habermann and did not want to give any more until he had heard the pianist in person. Liebermann later sent a copy of his youthful Piano Sonata no. 1, op. 1 (1977), asking for the criticism "of a musician whom I respect so highly". Sorabji returned the letter, marked with his approval or disapproval of the problematic passages, and said he would look at the sonata as soon as his eyes would allow him to do so. In 1981 Liebermann wrote again, asking Sorabji's permission to dedicate to him his *Variations on a Theme by Anton Bruckner*, op. 19 (1986) to him. Two years later Sorabji received instead a twenty-minute Concerto for Piano, op. 12 (1983), inscribed "to Kaikhosru Shapurji Sorabji with admiration", which incorporated parts of the variations. Sorabji acknowledged receipt of the work but apologized that his poor eyesight did not allow him to study it.[9]

The Canadian pianist Marc-André Hamelin was the first of several musicians to pay homage to Sorabji after his death. In 1989, while preparing the *Sonata no. 1 for Piano* for performance, the renowned virtuoso wrote a *Praeambulum to an Imaginary Piano Symphony (Homage to Kaikhosru Shapurji Sorabji, 1892–1988)*. He wrote at the end of the four-page piece: "à mon très cher ami Marc-André Roberge, un des plus intrépides défenseurs de la 'cause Sorabji', en signe d'admiration, de reconnaissance et d'amitié—Marc-André Hamelin, January 23–26, 1989."[10] Four months later, on 31 May 1989, he gave a private performance of his deliberately humorous pastiche of Sorabji at his wildest for its dedicatee.

The American composer George Flynn, who is associated with the School of Music at DePaul University (Chicago), completed in January 1995 a virtuosic work entitled *Derus Simples for Piano Solo* (74 pp.); it was "commissioned by and written for my dear friend Kenneth Derus, and in memory of Kaikhosru Shapurji Sorabji (1892–1988)". The work, according to the composer's introductory notes, "acknowledges certain aspects of Ken's writings", including his contribution to Rapoport's *Sorabji: A Critical Celebration*, entitled "Perigraph—To Remember Sorabji's Music: A Short-Form Conclusion". Rapoport explains that Derus suggests "that we consider melodies, not notes, as basic elements ('simples') in listening to and remembering Sorabji's music".

There are several examples of Sorabji's influence in the works of the English composer Michael Finnissy, who by the age of thirteen had saved up enough money to buy the score of *Opus clavicembalisticum*.[11] Finnissy studied with Humphrey Searle (like Alistair Hinton) as well as with Bernard Stevens (who signed the first presentation letter) and Roman Vlad (a connoisseur of Busoni's

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[8]Michael Habermann, notes to the Élan CD 82264 recording, 8–9. The disc contains a recording of Habermann's piece. In KSS to DG, 10 September 1972, Sorabji described the piece as "amusing".

[9]Lowell Liebermann to KSS, 2, 5 February 1980, 18 April 1981, undated (early 1983); KSS to Liebermann, 18 February, 10 May 1980, 23 April 1981, 30 December 1983 (copies kindly provided by Liebermann). See also Hsiao-Ling Chang, "Lowell Liebermann's Concerto no. 1 for Piano and Orchestra, Opus 12: An Historical and Analytical Study" (D.M.A. diss., University of North Texas, 2010), 7–8, 52.

[10]"To my very dear friend Marc-André Roberge, one of the boldest defenders of the Sorabji 'cause', as a token of admiration, gratitude, and friendship."

[11]Much of the information in this section is drawn from Michael Finnissy to MAR, 1 October 2000, and Henrietta Brougham, Christopher Fox, and Ian Pace, eds., *Uncommon Ground: The Music of Michael Finnissy* (Aldershot: Ashgate, 1997).

music). Some of his works show an indebtedness to Sorabji: preference for landscape format, use of upper and lower octava signs, beaming style, and large groups of small note values. In "Green Meadows", for example, the first of his *English Country-Tunes* (1977), one notices the use of indications such as "subito ***ppp***, sonorità piena dolcissima e morbidissima", quite common in Sorabji's works. Finnissy once worked on a tribute entitled *Sorabji*. He abandoned this and reworked it in four passages of a section (bars 173–268) from *Folklore 1* for piano (1993–94). He also included a "fairly hefty allusion" to the first fugue of *Opus clavicembalisticum* in *The History of Photography in Sound* (1995–2001), a five-and-a-half-hour piano work that he himself describes as having "Sorabjian proportions".[12] A further link between Finnissy's writing and Sorabji's—whatever the aims of the respective composers—is the great complexity, partly due to the many rhythmic intricacies.

There are other tributes written since the late 1990s. Examples include *From Calamus: Song with Simultaneous Piano Nocturne in Homage to the Composer Kaikhosru Shapurji Sorabji* (1997) by Christopher Berg, who organized (and played in) the first performance of the *Quintet no. 1 for Piano and Quartet of Stringed Instruments*; Mark Applebaum's one-minute soundtrack *Aphoristic Fragment* (1999); and the *Nocturne (Hommage à Sorabji)* (2001) by Carlo Grante, who gave the first performance of *Opus secretum atque necromanticum* in that year. The Brazilian pianist Artur Cimirro wrote a set of Studies, op. 1 (2006–2007), of which the last number is marked "Homenagem à K. Sorabji", and his Sonata no. 1 (2007) uses the opening notes of the *Sonata V (Opus archimagicum)*. Another work is a piano piece by the Scottish composer Michael Spencer entitled *The Eemis Stane—Hommage [sic] to Kaikhosru Shapurji Sorabji* (2001). This thirteen-page work is based on a poem (whose title means "The Unsteady Stone") taken from the collection *Sangschaw* (1925) by Sorabji's friend Christopher Murray Grieve. Another is *Sequentia: Dies irae (Introduction and Passacaglia for Organ)* (1998–2003; 26 pp.) by the American organist Timothy J. Tikker. The piece is "at least partly inspired by [Sorabji's] style" and "does emulate something of his sense of rhetoric and gesture, as well as contrapuntal emphasis and harmonic density"; there is also an orchestral version written in 2003.[13]

Clint Tibbs, a biblical scholar with no background in music, recorded a fifty-minute improvised piano work in 2006 entitled *Alscriabjiani: A Free Fantasy in Three Movements for Solo Piano*. Its second movement ("Body: The Gardens of Samāhdi") pays homage to the kind of writing used by Sorabji in his nocturnes; the names of Alkan and Scriabin are easy to recognize in the first two syllables of the title. Finally, some large-scale piano works by the Irish composer Simon Mawhinney contain references to various works by Sorabji. As Sorabji becomes better known and musicians gain a better understanding of his style, homages and references are bound to appear from time to time.

Sorabji's admiration for, and championship of, other composers brought him more or less official recognition in three cases: Leopold Godowsky, Karol Szymanowski, and Charles-Valentin Alkan. Although he apparently never met Godowsky, he reviewed two of his London performances in the late 1920s.[14] If he was initially reserved in his praise of the original works, he later came to see their true

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[12]Ian Pace's liner notes for his recording on Métier MSV 77501, dated November 2013, contain a few references to Sorabji; see *Michael Finnissy's "The History of Photography in Sound": A Study of Sources, Techniques and Interpretation*, 12, 48–50, 209, 212; https://d42bo2445p9pu.cloudfront.net/assets/uploads/2013/11/15024257/HOPIS.pdf.

[13]Timothy J. Tikker, posting on the Sorabji discussion group on Yahoo!, 24 April 2003, http://launch.groups.yahoo.com/group/sorabjigroup/message/397 (link no longer active); see also Tikker to MAR, 20 May 2004.

[14]Sorabji, "Music: Godowsky. Aeolian: February 26", *NA* 40, no. 19 (10 March 1927): 225; "Music: Godowsky. (Queen's: 21st)", *NA* 43, no. 1 (3 May 1928): 6.

value, especially in the 1940s. The *Passacaglia* was "one of his very finest works", and the *Java Suite* he had "no hesitation in declaring to be among the masterpieces of modern piano music".[15]

A great admirer of Godowsky's music, Paul Howard (b. London, 8 April 1875; d. Adelaide, Australia, 8 March 1953), came into contact with Sorabji in the 1940s. Although he was born in England, he moved to Australia at the age of nine. He made a career out of the problems caused by the isolation and long distances that are part of his country's way of life, setting up a correspondence college for secretarial work and later one for wool classing, an important subject in an economy heavily dependent on sheep.[16] His fanatical passion for the great pianist-composer led him to found an International Godowsky Society in 1936, with "representatives throughout the world".[17] Although not a professional musician, as a pianist he seems to have had sufficient technical ability to play most of Godowsky's works, many of them in public.[18] He never met his idol, but exchanged several letters with him. Until 1951 the members of his society received instalments of a typewritten newsletter entitled *After Midnight Thoughts on Godowsky, Etc.*—a clear example of how to outdo Sorabji in the devotion to, and praise of, a composer. Like many such societies of devotees, it died with its moving spirit.

Sorabji was recruited as a member of the International Godowsky Society by his friend Clinton Gray-Fisk, its representative for the British Isles. Howard described Sorabji—with typical hyperbole—as "probably the greatest living genius, whose works have the unstinted praise of the leading reviewers of the day". His copy of *Opus clavicembalisticum* bears the following inscription, dated 15 March 1945: "To the admirable, redoubtable, indefatigable, and valiant amateur—in the best French sense, not the insulting English one—Paul Howard:– Enthusiast and Virtuoso—again in an elder and better sense. His very respectful, deeply admiring and obleeged (sic) servant."[19] Godowsky's reputation had grown, Sorabji wrote in 1947, "due largely to the magnificently and fanatically enthusiastic work of a most remarkable Australian amateur (in the good French sense), Paul Howard".[20] The few items of correspondence between Howard and Sorabji show "Apostle Paul", as Godowsky called him, addressing the composer as "Tremendous Enigma Sorabji" and "Great and Mighty Master of so many things".[21] Howard, like Norman Gentieu, probably sent various gifts to Sorabji to ease his post-war life, as the wording of the letters suggests.

In April 1982 Sorabji responded favourably to an offer of patronage from Harry Winstanley (b. 26 March 1931; d. 6 January 2014), an Edinburgh civil servant who had recently founded a Godowsky Society as a successor to Howard's association.[22] His name therefore began to appear on the society's newsletter, along with those of the pianist Shura Cherkassky (1909–95) and the composer Ronald Stevenson. The typewritten newsletter (produced single-handedly by its founder) counted

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[15]Sorabji, "Music", *NEW* 17, no. 9 (20 June 1940): 109–10; 110.

[16]For a biographical sketch of Howard, see Andrew Cockburn, "Paul Howard, Founder of the International Godowsky Society (1936–53): An Appreciation", *Godowsky Society Newsletter*, [no. 1] (undated): 11–12.

[17]Paul Howard, "A Letter to Members from the Founder", *After Midnight Thoughts on Godowsky, Etc.*, no. 2 (undated), 8–13; 8.

[18]Jeremy Nicholas, *Godowsky, the Pianists' Pianist: A Biography of Leopold Godowsky* (Hexham, Northumberland: Appian Publications & Recordings, 1989), 159.

[19]Howard, "British Isles", *After Midnight Thoughts on Godowsky, Etc.*, no. 12 (undated): 13.

[20]Sorabji, "Leopold Godowsky as Creative Transcriber", in *MCF*, 62–70; 63.

[21]Paul Howard to KSS, 3 July 1942, 10 February 1953. Sorabji probably had Godowsky's nickname for Howard in mind when he called Paul Rapoport "Paul non Apostle".

[22]Harry Winstanley to KSS, 26 April 1982; Sorabji's reply appears directly on the letter. For an obituary of Winstanley, see Marilyn Jackson (Humanist Society of Scotland), "Henry Sim Winstanley (Harry), 26th March 1931 to 6th January 2014. Funeral Ceremony, Seafield Crematorium. 1.00 pm Friday 17th January 2014", http://www.theartofthelefthand.com/Society/docs/HS-Obit.pdf.

Stevenson among its occasional contributors and featured original articles on Godowsky and, alongside book and record reviews, reprints of published articles (including pieces by Sorabji on Godowsky).

Another of Sorabji's favourites was Karol Szymanowski. Sorabji was evidently greatly attracted by the Polish composer's interest in Persian poetry, as shown in his *Song of the Night*, completed in 1916. He described it as "music of a radiant purity of spirit, of an elevated ecstasy of expression, music so permeated with the very essence of the choicest and rarest specimens of Iránian [*sic*] art".[23] On the Polish composer's centenary of birth (6 October 1982), the Polish Ministry of Culture and Arts recognized his championship of his music with a medal.

In 1979 Sorabji became one of the (honorary) vice-presidents of the Alkan Society in recognition of his early championship.[24] Indeed, in the chapter devoted to the French composer in *Around Music*, Sorabji had described him as one of the "few remarkable and outstanding figures in music [that] have been the subject of such persistent misunderstanding, denigration and belittlement".[25] He obviously felt part of the same club. A misanthrope like himself, Alkan had retired from the concert stage and avoided visitors, and, for a long time, only a few people knew his works.[26]

One last direct homage to Sorabji came from his friends. In or around March 1987 Alistair Hinton invited those closest to him to make a financial contribution towards the purchase of high fidelity equipment (a value of £850, worth £2,544 in 2021) to enable him to listen to music in his nursing home.[27] Twenty-five people—friends young and old, performers, editors, musicologists—authorized Hinton to add their names to a presentation letter written by him (and later calligraphed by another person), in which the signatories expressed their admiration for the composer and his music.[28]

Sorabji's growing popularity, however small the number of people who took an interest in his work, brought him letters. Many came from the United States, such as a proposal from the composer David Diamond (1915–2005) to become an honorary member of the National Institute of Arts and Letters, and an invitation from Enharmonic Records to make a disc of his music.[29] Yonty Solomon's recitals and the *Aquarius* television programme of 1977, among others, brought their share of fan mail.

Two very young people contacted Sorabji to express their interest in his music. In 1984 a teenage Parsi girl from Bombay, Khursheed N. Khurody, sent him flowers and a box of Alphonso mangoes (grown mainly in western India and one of the most expensive, with a long shelf life) along with an article about the Parsis from the *Times of India*. Khurody, then a pupil at Stowe School, Buckingham, wanted to enquire about the score of *Opus clavicembalisticum* and the availability of recordings of Sorabji's works for an essay she was writing for her music A-levels. The composer thanked her briefly and suggested contacting Oxford University Press. He then wrote a more detailed reply and, fearing it might reach her in India, wrote again, but to Stowe. He had found the mangoes delicious, but insisted

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[23]Sorabji, "Karol Szymanowsky [*sic*]", in *MCF*, 178–87; 183–84.

[24]"News Items", *Alkan Society Bulletin*, 1 January 1979: 2.

[25]Sorabji, "Charles Henri Victorin Morhange (Alkan)", in *AM*, 213–19; 213.

[26]For a detailed discussion of Alkan's importance for Sorabji, see Jonathan Powell, "Charles-Valentin Alkan and British Piano Music of the 20th Century and Beyond", *Alkan Society Bulletin*, no. 90 (January 2014): 10–24, esp. 11–17.

[27]AH to NG, 31 March 1987 {16/F.13}.

[28]The signatories of the second presentation letter are: Martin Anderson, Anthony Burton-Page, Alastair Chisholm, Martin Cotton, Kenneth Derus, Dr. Cecil Ewing, Donald Garvelmann, Norman Gentieu, Michael Habermann, Alistair Hinton, Charles Hopkins, Geoffrey Douglas Madge, Jane Manning, Harold Morland, C. Robert Montgomery, Edward Nairn, Anthony Payne, Paul Rapoport, Sir Sacheverell Sitwell, Ronald Smith, Yonty Solomon, Clive Spencer-Bentley, Ronald Stevenson, Mervyn Vicars, Ian Watson, Harry Winstanley.

[29]David Diamond to KSS, 27 December 1973; David DeBoer Canfield, of Enharmonic Records (Bloomington, Indiana), to KSS, 17 February 1982.

the Venezuelan variety was "even finer than the Bombay ones".[30] As was often the case, he did not refrain from expressing some displeasure, namely, that he "most violently disapprove[d]" of his correspondent approaching Frank Holliday, with whom he had severed all links, and recalling negative memories of his stay in Bombay some fifty years earlier. He also asked her to "not suggest nor encourage anybody whoever it may be to come here uninvited and unasked by myself". Khurody sent Sorabji gifts of flowers and mangoes again in 1985 and 1987.[31] After her years in the United Kingdom, she studied humanities at the University of San Francisco and Harvard University, as well as piano and ballet, which she now teaches in Mumbai.[32]

Sorabji also received letters from the conductor and pianist Lloyd Paguia Arriola (1971–2016), then a fifteen-year-old "sometimes conductor and composer from San Francisco". He had been looking for material about his idol for five years. He finally received a reply to his fourth letter from Alistair Hinton, writing on behalf of the composer. Hinton duly answered the young man's questions, but noted that Sorabji would not be able to review the choral piece he had sent.[33]

It will be fitting to conclude this section on a lighter note by summarizing a series of practical jokes played on Sorabji between August 1969 and September 1970, which caused him to express some ideas about politics. The letters, all purporting to be from different sources, were obviously from the same person, who even went to the trouble of forging letterheads. The first one, signed "L. J. Pinchnep, Secretary, Socialists in Art Movement", invited Sorabji to give a lecture in London "on the social context of your own music". The addressee replied that he had "no connection whatsoever and never will have with any political group of any sort, all of which I execrate and detest, and your kind rather more than most".[34]

A few weeks later came a letter from "Emmanuel G. Dodin", who introduced himself as "a well-known writer of lyrics from America". He had been asked by the North Kensington Labour Party to write an anthem for the Band of Socialist Youth on a text beginning with "Rise, Red Youth, and sweep the Tories / Hand and heart into the sea, / Find how glorious civil war is, / Follow Sorabji and me!" The correspondent asked whether Sorabji might want to write something "in the style of the late Sir Edward Elgar". But "no one who knows the least thing about me & my work could imagine for one split-second that I could have anything *on earth* to do with such a proposal as you suggest".[35]

The next letter was from "B. V. D. Humperstone" who, as a pianist and drummer, enjoyed playing Sorabji's music. He invited him, on the basis of his "well[-]known Socialist sympathies", to join a committee "of extremely rich left-wing businessmen" who had formed a society whose main aim was the return to power of the Labour administration. Sorabji's telegram bumped at an unknown address.[36]

Some three months later "I. S. Bull", purportedly from the BBC's music department, enclosed a short poem entitled *Silver Skates* by the "distinguished American poet Herb Hofmann", to be used to

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[30]Khursheed N. Khurody to KSS, 8 June 1984, August 1984, 5 September 1984.

[31]Khurody to KSS, Christmas 1985, 20 August 1987; Khurody to AH, 18 April 1987.

[32]Khurody has also performed in films, for example, as a pianist in Sanjay Leela Bhansali's award-winning *Black* (2005) and as the wife of the lead character in Dev Anand's *Mr. Prime Minister* (2005). For more on Khurody, see Philip G. Kreyenbroek, in collaboration with Shehnaz Neville Munshi, "Ms Khursheed Khurody", in *Living Zoroastrianism: Urban Parsis Speak about Their Religion* (Richmond: Curzon, 2001), 153–65 (as part of a chapter entitled "Neo-Traditionalists").

[33]Lloyd Paguia Arriola to KSS, before December 1987 (two letters have not survived), 12 December 1987, 21 April 1988; AH to Arriola, 29 May 1988 {collection of Lloyd Paguia Arriola}.

[34]"L. J. Pinchnep, Secretary, Socialists in Art Movement" to KSS, 1 August 1969; Sorabji's reply is undated.

[35]"Emmanuel G. Dodin", to KSS, 30 August 1969; Sorabji's reply is dated 5 September 1969.

[36]"B. V. D. Humperstone", 21 October 1969; the notice of non-delivery is dated 28 October 1969. One wonders whether Sorabji noticed that the surname "B.V.D." was probably a reference to the Bradley, Voorhees & Day's brand of men's underwear, or to the composer Bernard van Dieren, whom he admired.

introduce "the world ice-skating finals to be televised next Spring from Alice Springs in Australia". The author asked Sorabji for a "cheerful tune, rather along the lines of a television commercial".[37]

The last item came from "L. C. Bradley, Secretary, The Friends of Covent Garden". It was an invitation to write an opera on one of two subjects (or a combination of the two): "a fictitious revolution in Britain, based on a recent book, in which Communist forces successfully take over the country" or "an erotic fantasy based on the novel *Fanny Hill*" that would take advantage of the "current cult of nudity".[38]

Sorabji was also the subject of an April Fool's Day joke in 2004, when the American composer Jed Distler published an imaginative review of a recording (on eight CDs) of a recently discovered nine-hour, 6,969-page piano work performed by "Hugh G. Rackshawn": *Opus amorassissimo [recte amorassissimum] en [recte in] tre atti, LXIX variationibus, cadenza, romanza e fuga (Ommaggio [recte Omaggio] a Ronaldus Jeremici Stevensonicus)*.[39]

Villa Tasca: Mezzogiorno siciliano—Evocazione nostalgica e memoria tanta cara e preziosa del giardino meraviglioso, splendido, tropicale / Ronald Stevenson

Sorabji found inspiration in Palermo for the work with his longest and most evocative title. One of his visits to the Sicilian capital had left its mark on the second movement of the *Sonata IV for Piano*, a nocturne whose tempo indication is followed by the words "Count Tasca's Garden:". It was not until the early 1980s, however, that he dedicated an entire work to one of the most beautiful places in the city. The title of the work, *Villa Tasca: Mezzogiorno siciliano—Evocazione nostalgica e memoria tanta cara e preziosa del giardino meraviglioso, splendido, tropicale* (1979–80; 47 pp.), refers to a welcome oasis of peace and beauty south-west of the bustling city centre, about halfway on the drive to the twelfth-century Norman cathedral and the adjoining cloister at Monreale.

Villa Tasca was originally built between 1555 and 1559 for Aloisio Bologna, Barone di Montefranco. In 1855 the French gardens were transformed by the then owners, Beatrice Lanza Branciforte (1825–1900) and her husband Lucio Mastrogiovanni Tasca, Conte di Almerita (1820–92). Among their illustrious guests in the late nineteenth century were the Wagner couple, who stayed in Palermo between November 1881 and April 1882.[40] Behind the eight-bedroom villa (now available for rent), on the right, is a duck pond ("laghetto") and next to it a small grotto with an overhanging small tower. In the dense exotic vegetation surrounding the grotto, there is a remarkable *Ficus magnolioides*, a large tree with roots that snake above the ground like fences and branches reaching down to the ground like columns.[41] Sorabji must have often leafed through the album of large-format photographs of various sights he had brought back from Palermo, including a photograph of the laghetto.[42] The Tasca name is well known today thanks to the wines produced by the family in Vallelunga Pratameno.

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[37]"I. S. Bull" to KSS, 12 February 1970.

[38]"L. C. Bradley, Secretary, The Friends of Covent Garden", to KSS, 5 September 1970.

[39]Published in *Classics Today*, 1 April 2004, https://www.classicstoday.com/review/review-10103/.

[40]*Cosima Wagner's Diaries*, ed. Martin Gregor-Dellin, trans. Geoffrey Skelton (New York and London: Harcourt Brace Jovanovich, 1980), vol. 2, *1878–1883*, 752. The villa was then called Camastra.

[41]For details of the villa and photographs, see Salvatore Requirez, *Le ville di Palermo* (Palermo: Flaccovio Editore, 1996), 109, 111–15; Ettore Sessa, "Villa Tasca, a Mezzomonreale", in Eliana Mauro, *Le ville a Palermo* (Palermo and Rome: Ugo LaRosa Editore, [1992]), 118–20, 187–88.

[42]"(Ed.ne Alinari) P.oI.aN.o 18622. Palermo—Villa Tasca. Il Laghetto nel Giardino".

Sorabji dedicated *Villa Tasca* "a Ronald Stevenson: egregio musicista e caro amico".[43] The Scottish composer, pianist, and music writer Ronald Stevenson (b. Blackburn, Lancashire, 6 March 1928; d. West Linton, Scotland, 28 March 2015), one of the most profound connoisseurs of Busoni, is the author of the remarkable *Passacaglia on DSCH* (1960–62), an eighty-minute piano work with similarities to the master's *Fantasia contrappuntistica*. This multisectional work, which features several set forms, including a final section that fuses the passacaglia with a triple fugue, was his creative response to *Opus clavicembalisticum.* Sorabji, who discovered it in a broadcast on 22 May 1966, congratulated the composer on his "really monumental work of great mastery and power vastly diversified yet of a consistent interior unity and cohesion that are most impressive".[44] Frank Holliday reported to his friend Stevenson's comment that "quite frankly […] without the example of 'your great piano work' it could not have been written".[45] While composing his *Passacaglia*, Stevenson wrote an extended and illuminating essay on *Opus clavicembalisticum*, based entirely on the score and the partial private reading by John Ogdon he had hosted at his West Linton home on 1 December 1959 in the presence of the dedicatee, Christopher Murray Grieve. Two years later, the three men met to record a symposium published in 1966 as part of the poet's autobiographical *The Company I've Kept*. Sorabji read it much later and "ENORMOUSLY enjoyed" it.[46]

Sorabji, who had corresponded with Stevenson since 1958, had great respect for him as a writer. Two years later he wondered whether "any of THAT tribe", that is to say professional critics, were "capable of anything so deeply perceptive, unless it be our mutual good friend Ronald Stevenson".[47] He found him "as intelligent and perceptive as they are made. *Extraordinary* in a professional writer on music."[48] He even sent him—for his "diversion"—the manuscripts of three piano works, which he could keep for three months provided they were not passed around.[49] The two composers met on two occasions in 1979: first for a filmed interview about Francis George Scott, then for a radio programme about Nicolas Medtner (see chapter 16). Stevenson recalled the elapsed year as one in which "il mago Sorabji has become my dear Kaikhosru".[50]

Villa Tasca, "inspired by memories of the marvellous tropical garden on Villa Tasca up above Palermo which I know so well",[51] was written between 21 September 1979 and 4 February 1980. Sorabji described it as "a sort of sultry heat-study and luxuriant stifling and tropical… or at least as far as I can make it so…"[52] In two places in his manuscript, he wrote "Le fier silence du Midi", which is a corrupted version ("the proud silence of the south" instead of "of midday") of one of the last verses from *L'après-midi d'un faune* (1876) by Stéphane Mallarmé (1842–98): "[Je tiens la reine! / Ô sûr châtiment… / Non, mais l'âme / De paroles vacante et ce corps alourdi / Tard succombent] au fier silence de midi:".

Although the main tempo indication is "Lento, morbido e sonnolento", Sorabji offered to his performer a highly expressive direction on a separate page: "Il tutto di questo pezzo suonato col calore languido, voluttuoso, quasi sensuale, con una sonorità ricca, dolce e piena, sempre *senza* durezza

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[43]"To RS: distinguished musician and dear friend".
[44]KSS to RS, 24 May 1966.
[45]FH to KSS, 27 May 1966 {2/F.7}.
[46]KSS to RS, 28 July 1979, 1.
[47]KSS to CMG, 17 December 1960.
[48]KSS to FH, 4 March 1961 {2/F.2}.
[49]KSS to RS, 18 October 1965.
[50]RS to KSS, 29 December 1979 (sent from Dorchester, Dorset). In early 1961 Sorabji asked Stevenson if they could meet at his pension in London, where he was going for a fortnight, insisting, of course, that there should be no chance call; KSS to RS, 22 January 1961, 1. The meeting obviously did not take place.
[51]KSS to CSB, 17 February 1979.
[52]KSS to KD, 16 December 1979 {Derus, S33, p. 149}.

alcuna".[53] The presence of a few fermatas in the music is not enough to suggest a formal division, and the whole is best described as an improvisatory work written almost throughout in nocturne style. There are, however, dynamic and textural climaxes, including three very closely spaced ones, the last of which occurs just before the one-page coda ([ED]bars 68, 117–19, 130–34, 197). One notable passage is bar 144, marked "Quasi campane di chiesa",[54] and written in a plain B♭ major.

Several passages in the fifty-five-minute piece feature a texture reduced to mostly two voices (bars 40–45, 51–53, 152, 160–65). The last such passage consists of a melody played against an accompaniment in quaver quintuplets that, for Ronald Stevenson, has a connection with a folk song known as the "Sicilian Cart Driver's Song", published in an anthology by Geni Sadero as *Amuri, amuri: Canzone dei carrettieri siciliani*.[55] Sorabji had heard this "miracle of evocative magic" performed by Blanche Marchesi in 1928 (and later in her 1936 recording) and devoted as many as seventeen lines of *Mi contra fa* to it.[56]

> But quite one of her most astounding performances was the "Sicilian Muleteers' Song" from the great Geni Sadero collection of Italian Folk Songs—a collection of unique importance and completeness—a strange, exotic, haunting piece of vocal writing that steps right out of Europe and vividly brings to the mind how near to the East artistically, spiritually and culturally, is that ancient illustrious and incomparable land, the cradle of European civilisation, whose very name clutches at the heart of all who are privileged in some way to belong to her, and for whose light and sun a desperate crazed agony of longing seizes on those of her children who are debarred from the Homelands by the quarrels of the Northern Barbarians, now as always the enemies of all real civilisation. Here in this song is the sort of melody with its turning, twisting *melismata*, its intricate ornaments, that you might hear sung any night in an Indian city. The muleteer is driving his mule home, through that strange enigmatic quasi-tropical Sicilian dusk, singing this most haunting hallucinating song: he tells how his heart and senses are consumed and dazed with love, interrupted from time to time with an invocation to Our Lady, and a spoken exhortation to the donkey in Sicilian dialect. To hear Blanche Marchesi do this, lapsing into broadest Sicilian the while, with the very tone, accent and inflection that once heard eats its way into your memory like the Sicilian sun, like everything that IS Sicily, is to have heard something that words cannot describe.[57]

Sorabji's essay conveys the meaning of the text, but he used the passage mainly to share his idealized view of Italy, and of Sicily in particular. Although he correctly describes the melismatic style of the melody, the passage to which Stevenson refers bears no relation to the actual intervallic content of the folk song other than the sinuous, stepwise, movement. The original (in E minor as set by Sadero) consists of two related strains (AA′), heard twice, and followed by a final repetition of the A′ (**example 23.1**). The folk song, then, if Sorabji did have it in mind when he composed his late piano piece, seems to have been an inspiration that was ultimately completely absorbed and transformed.[58]

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[53]"Slowly, delicate, and somnolent"; "This entire piece to be played with a languid, voluptuous, almost sensual warmth, with a rich, soft, and full sonority, always without any hardness".

[54]"Almost like church bells".

[55]Geni Sadero was the pseudonym of the Constantinople-born Triestine singer and pianist Eugenia Scarpa (1886–1961), who was Marian Anderson's coach for Italian during the 1930s in Europe. The anthology mentioned by Sorabji is *Le più belle canzoni d'Italia*, Raccolta nazionale delle musiche italiane, Serie IV, Quaderno n. 1005 (Milan: Società Anonima Notari, 1921), or *Le più belle canzoni d'Italia. Raccolte, elaborate ed armonizzate [da] G. Sadero (English version by Dr. T. Baker)* (New York: G. Schirmer, 1925).

[56]Sorabji, "Music", *NA* 43, no. 12 (19 July 1928): 140. The piece, originally released on His Master's Voice, is available on a disc entitled "The Marchesi School" (Symposium 1188, released in 1995). There have also been recordings by Toti Dal Monte, Tito Gobbi, Rosa Ponselle, and Ferruccio Tagliavini.

[57]Sorabji, "Blanche Marchesi", in *MCF*, 133–40; 134–35.

[58]Stevenson's transcription of part of this passage, with a key signature of F♯ major and fingerings for most of the left hand, appears in a note thanking Alistair and Terry Hinton for their hospitality, dated 25 October 1988. The title of the song, as usually found, uses the singular form (muleteer or cart driver), but the Italian form seems to be in the plural (*carrettieri*). It is therefore

Opus secretum atque necromanticum / Kenneth Derus

Sorabji embarked on 16 October 1980 on what would become the longest piece he would write in the last four years of his compositional career; he completed it on 28 February 1981 "after a concentrated feverish working at a phenomenal speed".[59] He originally wrote *Opus secretum atque necromanticum* (1980–81; 48 pp.) for Norman Gentieu, to whom he was very grateful for microfilming of his manuscripts. Only Alistair Hinton knew of the project, and he would "keep it dark from all others if so you insist and wish and will enjoin on him to do so under pain of having some of the ELEMENTALS lurking in the Popus Necromanticum let loose on him". It was "inspired by my perennial interest and leanings thereunto; it will have lots of devilment in it with hidden allusions of a diabolic tinge in them to various well-known and/or notorious themes…"[60] For some reason he wrote a versified example of misanthropic feelings on the title page: "I do not love the human race / I cannot stand its silly face / I do not like the way it walks / I don't like the way it talks. / And when I'm introduced to one / I want to turn away and run."[61]

Sorabji sent Gentieu (already the dedicatee of three works) an envelope marked "Dedication of Opus Secretum atque Necromanticum" and containing a card with the inscription "To and for my dear friend Norman Gentieu. K.S.S. XVIII.III.MCMLXXXI". Hinton made photocopies of the work and sent one to the dedicatee, although Sorabji made it clear to Gentieu that it was the manuscript he wanted and intended to give to him. The photocopy arrived somewhat damaged, and Gentieu returned it to the composer, who soon decided to send the actual manuscript.[62] Before sending it, he added the inscription "To and for my great and dear friend Norman Gentieu".

Three years later Sorabji had forgotten his dedication of *Opus secretum* to Gentieu. Therefore, on 26 May 1984, he announced to another American friend, Kenneth Derus, that the work "full of necromantic and magical implications" was still undedicated and would henceforth be dedicated to him. He wrote "To dear Kenneth Derus: Tante buone cose!"[63] on his photocopy of the manuscript and sent him a copy. The manuscript (listed by Rapoport as unknown in his catalogue) is in fact among the three other scores that Gentieu donated to the George Arents Research Library at Syracuse University (New York) in 1982.

Kenneth Derus, the second dedicatee of *Opus secretum*, is an American mathematician and logician living in the Chicago area. From 1973 to 1978 he was director of the Center for Combinatorial Mathematics (Kalamazoo, Mich.). He first contacted Sorabji by telegram in 1974, on the latter's eighty-second birthday. His first letter to the composer, thanking him for making possible Donald Garvelmann's radio programme, which he had been instrumental in having broadcast on the WMUK station (Kalamazoo, Michigan),[64] marked the beginning of an extensive correspondence that stopped in the year of the composer's death; there are 120 letters from Derus and 74 from Sorabji.

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a song associated with cart drivers, not just with a specific one.

[59]KSS to NG, 28 February 1981, 1 {19/F.21}.

[60]KSS to NG, 29 October 1980 {19/F.18}.

[61]Sorabji is paraphrasing "Wishes of an Elderly Man", taken from *Laughter from a Cloud* (London and Sydney: Constable and Company, 1923) by the scholar Sir Walter Alexander Raleigh (1861–1922), which reads "I wish I loved the human race; / I wish I loved its silly face; / I wish I liked the way it walks; / I wish I liked the way it talks; / And when I'm introduced to one / I wish I thought *What Jolly Fun!*" (marked "Wishes at a Garden Party, June 1914).

[62]KSS to NG, 18 March 1981 {19/F.22–23}; NG to KSS, 24 March 1981 {21/F.28}; NG to MAR, 8 June 1999 {author's collection}; KSS to NG, 4 April {19/F.25}, 17 May 1981 {19/F.26}.

[63]KSS to KD, 26 May 1984 {Derus, S58, p. 303}. "So many good things!"

[64]KD to KSS, 5 March 1975 {Derus, D002, p. 2}.

Derus had developed a keen interest in Sorabji's life and work. In the spring of 1977, together with Paul Rapoport, he prepared a microfilm containing a substantial part of his reviews and open letters.[65] On 21 November of that year, he gave a lecture on Sorabji entitled *Another Alkan* to members of the Alkan Society in London, followed a few days later by his only meeting with the composer. By then, Sorabji had "taken a great liking to you, both from your charming letters and your equally charming photograph. I sense you as a warmhearted kindly person."[66] In April 1983 Derus organized a concert in Chicago at which Geoffrey Douglas Madge gave the first North American performance of *Opus clavicembalisticum*; several years later he produced a series of recitals by Carlo Grante, given at the School of Music at Northwestern University (Chicago), where *Opus secretum* received its first hearing on 28 November 2001. His annotated edition of excerpts from Sorabji's letters to Philip Heseltine was published as part of Rapoport's *Sorabji: A Critical Celebration*, to which he also contributed an essay of poetic philosophy entitled *Perigraph: To Remember Sorabji's Music—A Short-Form Conclusion*.[67]

In 1983 Sorabji told Derus how much he owed him, but did not miss the opportunity to launch a verbal attack on the English.

> Meanwhile I'd like you to know how much I appreciate your vast trouble and work on my behalf and think myself lucky in such good and loving friends your way! You have done vastly more for me than anybody among the *Anglo Saxons*!! You and the Scots, like Alistair and dear late Erik Chisholm are at the top of the list of those to whom I owe so much.
>
> For the Anglo Saxon musical establishment they dislike me nothing like as I execrate and detest them [...].[68]

Opus secretum atque necromanticum is a one-movement piece, although there is a clear break on [ED]p. 29 after the ***ff***, which is to be played "yelling most acutely and ferociously", after which the composer asks that the sound be allowed to die away for a few bars. One might wonder whether those present at Carlo Grante's first performance felt the "necromantic and magical implications" intended by the composer; in any case, they are hinted at in three related interpretative directions involving the word *minaccioso* (menacing) on pp. 10, 13, and 31. Curiously, the opening motive begins with the notes C–E♭–B, which translate as C–S–B, the initials of Clive Spencer-Bentley, the dedicatee of Sorabji's next work, the *Passeggiata variata sul nome del caro e gentile giovane amico Clive Spencer-Bentley*. This motive forms the beginning of an ascending angular ten-note line in octaves starting in the middle register over an accompaniment figure based on a D♯ minor chord in first inversion. (This chord, which has a strong association with *Opus clavicembalisticum*, also features prominently on the last page.) The ascending motive recurs in various shapes, lengths, and registers throughout the piece, helping to give it a certain unity.

The piece contains a good dozen examples of a texture Sorabji favoured throughout his life in his medium-size and large works: a slow meandering line of single notes or chords set above chords, often in very long values, such as dotted or double-dotted semibreves. More often than not, these rather contemplative passages come with an indication having to do with a liturgical feeling (**example 23.2**); here the marking is "quasi liturgicamente, legatissimo sempre".

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[65]"Collected Writings from Five Serial Publications", compiled by Paul Rapoport and Kenneth Derus (Chicago: The University of Chicago, Joseph Regenstein Library, Photoduplication Department, 1977), microfilm, one reel.

[66]KSS to KD, 29 September 1977 {Derus, S13, p. 55}.

[67]Derus wrote an unpublished addendum in January 1992 entitled "Memories and Their Subjects" (4 pp.), intended as a conclusion to his published essay. There is also an unpublished "Addenda and Corrigenda" to this addendum (8 pp.), dating from 1996.

[68]KSS to KD, 30 June 1983 {Derus, S51, p. 268}.

Passeggiata variata sul nome del caro e gentile giovane amico Clive Spencer-Bentley / Clive Spencer-Bentley

Sorabji wrote the first of his three "promenades", the *Passeggiata veneziana sopra la Barcarola di Offenbach*, in the mid-1950s; his last one, the *Passeggiata arlecchinesca sopra un frammento di Busoni ("Rondò arlecchinesco")*, was completed nearly twenty-five years later. In between is his smallest such work, the *Passeggiata variata sul nome del caro e gentile giovane amico Clive Spencer-Bentley* (1981; 3 pp.). Completed on 24 April 1981, it is written "sul nome del caro e gentile giovane Amico Clive Spencer Bentley dallo Zio (quasi!)".[69]

Clive Spencer-Bentley, the youngest of Sorabji's dedicatees, studied theology at Durham University, graduating in 1982. He went on to study theology, Latin and Greek, and music and computing at boys' preparatory schools in Surrey, Hampshire, Middlesex, and now in rural Derbyshire. Having first heard of Sorabji in 1977 through Yonty Solomon's recitals, he contacted him two years later, when he was in his final year at grammar school, asking for a photograph for his collection of autographed photographs of musicians. Much to his surprise, Sorabji sent the photograph he wanted, followed shortly afterwards by another one. Spencer-Bentley, who then corresponded with Sorabji until 1984, paid many visits to The Eye and to the nursing homes where he later resided, at one time almost every week.[70] Sorabji liked to think of himself as an informal parent to his young acquaintances: in this case, his uncle (the *zio* of the dedication). He also befriended Anthony Burton-Page, the dedicatee of the *Fantasiettina atematica*, whom he liked to call his brother ("Frater Antonius"). He commented: "for an old ruin like me it really is rather marvellous to have two charming young friends like C.S.B. and A.B.P."[71]

In July 1979 Spencer-Bentley, who is also a composer, sent Sorabji a *Credo* with a dedication. The older composer, who had given his younger friend some compositional advice, saw "much in it of interest, above all its blessed freedom from the fashionable (too fashionable) compositional tricks of the day".[72] Six of Spencer-Bentley's works bear dedications to Sorabji, who soon reciprocated with the dedication of his *Passeggiata variata*, his present for his young friend's twenty-first birthday. He wrote to him: "You'll find your name incorporated in one form or another into every bar. The final cadence of which I'm very proud must be played with a full rich soft tone, the final it were, inlaid to the preceding ones in C major… the whole must blend in a warm perfumed mist of sound like in one of my Sicilian tropical gardens." **(example 23.3)**[73]

The *Passeggiata variata* begins in a fiery manner, begins in a fiery manner, but after four bars of introduction, this changes to a delicate nocturne style. There is no clear *soggetto cavato* despite what Sorabji wrote to the dedicatee. A closer look, however, reveals a certain emphasis throughout on the six pitches (B♭–B–C–D–E♭–E) that can be derived from his name: C l (m)i v E / S (= E♭) p E n C E R (= ré)-B E n t l E y, that is, C–E–E, E♭–E–C–E–D, B–E–E. An example of this is the melodic motive in the middle staff in bar 17.

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[69]"on the name of the dear and kind young friend, Clive Spencer Bentley, from his uncle (almost!)".
[70]CSB to MAR, 4 May 1992, 8 October 2001.
[71]KSS to CSB, 27 January 1984, 2.
[72]KSS to CSB, 20 July 1979.
[73]KSS to CSB, 29 April 1981, 1.

Fantasiettina atematica / Anthony Burton-Page

Sorabji's shortest (and last) chamber work, the *Fantasiettina atematica* (1981; 2 pp.), was composed between 22 June at the earliest and 17 August at the latest.[74] The composer, who identified himself as "Kaikhosru Catamontanus Corfiensis", wrote the piece "per A. B.-P. per divertirsi! [*recte* divertirlo]".[75] Anthony Burton-Page (b. London, 10 January 1954; d. Jerez, Spain, 21 November 2018), Sorabji's other young friend in his later years, then taught various subjects, including music, at The Old Malthouse School, a private preparatory school in Langton Matravers, near Corfe Castle. He had discovered Sorabji's books while studying music at Manchester University and the Royal Northern College of Music. In 1976 he moved to Church Knowle, near Wareham, and heard from his brother Piers about a composer living in the area. Being an aspiring composer himself and keen to meet as many composers as possible, he wrote to Sorabji in 1979 (21 April at the latest) inviting him to a concert he was giving in Church Knowle with the Capricorn Trio, in which he played the oboe. The repertoire was admittedly "not terribly interesting", with no contribution from Reger, Szymanowski, and Busoni—or Sorabji, "unless you would care to add to the canon one day". The composer, who never went out at night, did not attend, but invited Burton-Page to his home for a glass of Sicilian Marsala. The young composer took his portable cassette player with him on his visits to Sorabji and played to him one of his own pieces; the two also listened together to the live recordings of the *Cinque sonetti di Michelagniolo Buonarroti* and *Il tessuto d'arabeschi*. Sorabji phoned Burton-Page about once a month to ask if he would like to come over; these visits continued until the end of 1983, when professional commitments limited them to the school holidays.[76] The two friends exchanged letters, with Sorabji often sending articles on subjects that had annoyed him, such as goose cramming, or his own open letters. He was fond of giving Burton-Page affectionate nicknames, such as "Carissimo Fratello non-Nipote", "Frater Antonius non Padovensis", and "Carissimo Quasi-Nipote".[77]

At some point Sorabji, despite his deep dislike of chamber music ("chamber-pot music" he called it), announced to Burton-Page that he was going to write a short work for wind ensemble. He could not believe it until the composer showed him the completed manuscript. A few visits later, he agreed to let Burton-Page and his ensemble play through the work for him. They planned to give the first public performance, but the ensemble disbanded and the premiere was not given until 9 March 1995 at City University, London, by a trio assembled by Brian Inglis, who had received a master's degree from the same institution in 1993 with a thesis on Sorabji's life and music.[78]

The *Fantasiettina atematica* uses the instruments of Burton-Page's ensemble: oboe, flute, and clarinet in B-flat. Sorabji gave him permission to play his piece in 1983, saying that he would "like it made clear that the fons et origo of the piece is A.B.P.!!! for whom and but for whom it would not have been written".[79] In fact, at the bottom of the first page of the music manuscript, there is a further note: "Per il caro e gentile amico FRATER ANTONIUS".[80]

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[74]Undated notes by ABP, 1 p. (written on a sheet carrying the BBC's logo; probably dating from the 1990s); AH to MAR, 4 November 1998.

[75]"Kaikhosru Cougar of Corfe"; "for A.B.-P., to divert him".

[76]Anthony Burton-Page's contacts with Sorabji are documented in *OB*, 245–71, and in a four-page memoir written for MAR, 11 April 2011.

[77]"Dearest brother non nephew"; "Brother Anthony not of Padua"; "Dearest almost nephew".

[78]For an analysis, see Brian Andrew Inglis, "The Life and Music of Kaikhosru Shapurji Sorabji" (M.A. thesis, London, City University, 1993), 74–76 (Burton-Page's handwritten edition is reproduced on pp. 129–32).

[79]KSS to ABP, 30 September 1983, 1–2.

[80]"For the dear and nice friend, Brother Anthony".

The two-minute work consists of the superimposition of free, flowing lines typical of the composer's style **(example 23.4)**. It begins with a section in a moderate tempo ending with a three-chord punctuating gesture ([ED]bars 1–17). A second section leads to a climactic conclusion (bars 18–35). After a brief fermata, a short coda ends the piece on a C♯ minor chord (bars 36–39). The order in which the instruments appear in the score—with the oboe, rather than the flute, as the highest part—can be explained by the range of the oboe, which plays consistently higher than the other instruments and is therefore treated as a sort of a soloist. Indeed, Sorabji wanted the oboe to "float on top of the music", as it was the solo instrument played by the dedicatee.

Passeggiata arlecchinesca sopra un frammento di Busoni ("Rondò arlecchinesco")

Strangely for a composer who so admired Busoni, Sorabji waited until his very late years to write an entire composition on one of his themes. The *Passeggiata arlecchinesca sopra un frammento di Busoni ("Rondò arlecchinesco")* (1981–82; 16 pp.) uses as its main motive the opening phrase of the *Rondò arlecchinesco* (1915), also heard in *Arlecchino* (1914–16), the opera for which it is a preparatory study. Sorabji left little more than a few passing and indirect references to both the rondo and the opera in his writings. For example, he saw in the *Indian Fantasy* for piano and orchestra (1913–14) "the Busoni of the sardonic, eldritch 'Rondo Arlecchinesco'". At the time of the composition of his new piece, he mentioned it in connection with Stravinsky: "and incidentally how stale and demoded his Sacre du Printemps sounds side by side with the tremendous original piece of Busoni in say that sardonic Rondo Arlecchinesco with that wonderful mocking solo tenor voice and that miraculous use of 'false relation'!"[81]

In Busoni's opera, the five-bar theme (in triple time) is played by a solo trumpet as an introductory fanfare to Arlecchino's spoken address before the curtain. It contains all twelve pitches (with E being repeated) arranged as broken chords of A, B♭, B, and C (all major), followed by A♭, E♭, and A. The successive notes are therefore A–E–C♯–A, F–D–B♭, F♯–D♯–B, G–E–C, A♭–E♭–A. Sorabji replaces the staccatos found in the original with portamentos and makes the values even, except for the third beat. The theme, played by the right hand, is interrupted on the antepenultimate note (A♭) and immediately proceeds to an accented dissonant sonority; it is harmonized with first-inversion chords in the left hand, with only three of the thirteen resulting sonorities being consonant **(example 23.5)**. The piece is worked out almost entirely with statements of the theme, either as single lines as part of accompaniment figures or as three- or four-note chords. In fact, Sorabji never wrote a work so dependent on a single idea. Apart from the furious "Coda vertiginosa", two passages stand out: one is a reference to the *Dies irae* ([ED]p. 18), the other a reference to the D♯ minor chord in first inversion (p. 21) associated with the "Introito" of *Opus clavicembalisticum*.

The *Passeggiata arlecchinesca* was begun at an unspecified date (but probably around October 1981) and completed on 21 January 1982. It is dedicated simply "To Geoffrey Douglas Madge", the Australian pianist who, on 11 June 1982, was to give the long-awaited first performance in more than fifty years of *Opus clavicembalisticum* (see chapter 22).

[81]Sorabji, "The Modern Piano Concerto", in *AM*, 66–77; 68; KSS to NG, 12 October 1981 {19/F.29}.

Due sutras sul nome dell'amico Alexis / Robert William Procter

Sorabji's last work, entitled *Due sutras sul nome dell'amico Alexis* (1981, 1984; 2 pp.), was written for Robert William Procter (b. Portsmouth, Hampshire, 1 July 1945; d. 2005), an aircraft engineer with British Aerospace in Warton, Lancashire. In 1980 he discovered the poetry of Sorabji's friend and dedicatee Harold Morland in the parish church at Hill Top, a small village near Windermere, in the Lake District, Cumbria. Intrigued by the man rather than by the poetry, he decided to ring the poet's doorbell and the two men struck up an instant friendship. In 1984 Morland, who had been diagnosed with high blood pressure, moved away from the hills to live with Procter in St. Anne's-on-Sea, Lancashire, where the climate was more suited to his health.[82] Procter's nickname Alexis most probably refers to "fair Alexis", the boy loved by the shepherd Corydon in the Latin poet Virgile's "Eclogue II" of his *Bucolics* (42–39 BCE).

The poet's "good friend and companion" often heard about the composer through Morland, although he never met him.[83] Sorabji expressed his gratitude for Proctor's care of his poet friend by calling him "quasi nipote" and styling himself "quasi uncle". This explains the dedication of the second sutra, written "Per il caro amico quasi Nipote—Alexis".[84] In 1990 Procter founded the Cudworth Press (named after the street in which he lived) to publish Morland's poetry and worked on an archive of his poetry after the latter's death in 1999.

Some research by Alistair Hinton in 1994 led to the conclusion that Sorabji had misdated the first piece: he had forgotten an *X* in "MCMLXXXI", meaning that it had been composed in 1981 and not 1971, as Paul Rapoport suggested in his catalogue. Not only was it written on a type of paper that Sorabji did not use until 1975, but the composer became acquainted with the Alexis of the title through his friendship with Morland, who himself met Alexis in 1980. Furthermore, a letter from Sorabji to Morland, dated Christmas 1981, contains the following passage: "Also a Sutra on his name using the 3 initial letters thereof that can be translated into musical notation for you to give him along with the photo." Sorabji sent the second piece to Alexis after he and Morland had moved into the house they shared in St. Anne's-on-Sea in 1984.[85] The poet had the fragments framed in two pieces and hung on his bedroom wall, with Sorabji's photograph between them.[86] The young man's attitude to Sorabji's music was "one of deep awe", and he used to "sit in trance" when listening to it. After a dozen hearings of *"Gulistān"—Nocturne for Piano*, he "came out of his trance to murmur simply 'PARADISE'".[87]

As Sorabji wrote to Morland, he used the three letters from Alexis's name that can be translated into musical notation, namely, A, L(a), and E. Thus, the pieces feature three and two statements of the notes A–A–E (**example 23.6**). In the first piece, the third statement is varied to A–A♭–A.

Death and Funeral

From the summer of 1986, Sorabji's health began to show serious signs of decline requiring short stays in hospital. On 21 October 1986 he left The Eye, where he had lived since 1956, for good, and was admitted to Christmas Close Hospital, in Wareham (now Wareham Hospital), until Alistair Hinton found proper accommodation at Marley House Nursing Home, in Winfrith Newburgh, near Dorchester. On 20 March 1987 Sorabji moved into a two-room suite in this private nursing home with his long-time

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[82]The material on Procter and Morland come from Robert William Procter to MAR, 30, 31 May 2003; Procter, "Obituary for Harold Morland", 4 pp. (kindly provided by the author).

[83]Harold Morland to AH, 11 March 1991.

[84]"For the dear friend and almost nephew, Alexis".

[85]The explanations of the revised dating of the *Due sutras* come from AH to PR and MAR, 25 July 1994.

[86]Harold Morland to AH, 28 July 1987; Harold Morland to KSS, undated (on a Wednesday, late 1987).

[87]Harold Morland to KSS, 19 March 1981, 2.

companion, Reginald Norman Best. He called him "darling" and said how wonderful he looked, which scandalized the nurses. His room was to some extent a replica of his home, with its dark atmosphere and the smell of incense. A special friend was Gola Martin-Smith (1899–1989), a piano teacher in Wareham, whom he may have met through Clinton Gray-Fisk; her admiration for Sorabji's musical gifts led her to move into Marley House, where she died shortly after him.[88] The composer also received frequent visits from Hinton and his wife, Terry, and from Denise Vicars, the wife of his friend Mervyn. He was able to spend time listening to music thanks to a high-fidelity system purchased with donations from the signatories of the second presentation letter. Only once, in January 1987, when he was in the hospital, did he say that he could not "take much more of this"; this was the only time when Hinton heard him complain.[89]

Best's passing on 29 February 1988 was obviously a blow to Sorabji, who suffered a mild stroke in June.[90] This caused him intermittent difficulties of speech and comprehension, but did not rob him of his lively mental faculties in between. On 15 October, at the age of ninety-six years, two months, and one day, Sorabji "quietly but firmly declined his supper… and within minutes, quietly but suddenly, his heart failed him, and his physical presence slipped away…", to quote Hinton. The obituary notice in the *Times* reported that the "Composer and Pianist of international renown" had died "peacefully at a Nursing Home in the Purbecks".[91] According to his death certificate, he died of congestive heart failure and arteriosclerotic heart disease.[92] The National Probate Calendar lists a sum of £89,893 (£256,400 in 2021).[93]

The body was cremated at 10.30 a.m. on 24 October at Bournemouth Crematorium, followed at 3.00 p.m. by a memorial service at the Church of St. Edward, King and Martyr, in Corfe Castle. This was in accordance with the wishes of Sorabji, who had become a member of the Cremation Society of Great Britain in 1953.[94] Traditionally, Zoroastrians lie naked in well-shaped stone structure called a *dakhma* or, more recently, a "Tower of Silence", where their bodies are devoured by vultures and their bones dried by the sun. This is done to avoid polluting nature with rotting flesh but, in countries where this is not possible, cremation is an alternative. Sorabji had written after his mother's death: "All my Zarathustrian instincts rise in revolt against the *to me* revolting concomitants of Christian burial, and I'm taking bloody fine care that that never shall happen to ME! A chariot of fire is to mark MY exit…"[95]

During the ceremony, Ronald Stevenson read two poems by Rūmī in the translation by the eminent orientalist Reynold Alleyne Nicholson (1868–1945), and Alistair Hinton read a text emphasizing Sorabji's idea of the celebratory character of the musical performance.[96] The latter reading served as a prelude to the hearing of a taped excerpt from the then forthcoming recording of the *Symphony [no. 1] for Organ* by Kevin Bowyer, who was present. After the collect, the vicar of the church, the Reverend Gerald Squarey, led a slow procession through the village to "God's Acre", the cemetery where the

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[88] *OB*, 197, 198, 209, 216.

[89] *OB*, 275; AH to MAR, 10 May 2013.

[90] The events surrounding Sorabji's death are reported in Hinton, "Kaikhosru Shapurji Sorabji: An Introduction", in *SCC*, 50–52. Some details relevant to the funeral come from Denise Vicars to NG, 7 February 1989 {19/F.56}.

[91] "Announcements & Personal: Deaths—Sorabji", *The Times*, 18 October 1988, 17.

[92] Certified copy of an entry of death, issued on 18 October 1988, no. IZ156216; informant: Denise Hermione Dunbar Vicars.

[93] National Probate Calendar, no. 8852424027B.

[94] Sorabji's membership card is no. J19559/12978. He joined on 13 July 1953; G. M. Payne, The Cremation Society of Great Britain, to MAR, 23 February 1999.

[95] KSS to FH, 9 May 1959, 2 {1/F.21}. See also KSS to RS, 5 April 1959, where he says that he "shall be cremated, going up in flames like Elijah or Elijah, was it, or perhaps tutte due?"

[96] The English titles of the poems read by Stevenson are "The Song of the Reed" and "The Ascending Soul", taken from Robert Alleyne Nicholson, *Rumi, Poet and Mystic* (London: Allen & Unwin, 1950); Alistair Hinton, "Text of address by A.H. @ K.S.'s funeral, 24.10.88", 2 pp. (dated 21 October 1988).

composer's ashes were interred alongside those of his friend Reggie. The stone plate laid in the grass recalls his most famous score, *Opus clavicembalisticum*, thanks to the imitation of the Neuland font and the beige colour. The inscription reads: "SORABJI / XIV VIII MdCCCXCII / XV X MCMLXXXVIII" (the "d" *is* lowercase and the "i"s have spurious dots). Sorabji, who was a monarchist (see chapter 16), had wished to be buried next to Prince Peter Sergeyevich Troubetzkoy (1881–1960) and his wife, Princess Maria (née Rodzianko, 1877–1958), two White Russian nobles who had fled their country before the Revolution; his wish was partly granted, as he at least rests in the same cemetery.[97]

Nearly thirty obituaries—though often simply annoucements—appeared in newspapers and music magazines, mostly in Britain. Some were written by friends: Anthony Burton-Page, Alistair Hinton, Paul Rapoport, Yonty Solomon, and Ronald Stevenson. Although I never met Sorabji, I had been close to his music for some twelve years and also wrote an obituary—one of the very few not in English.[98]

In September 1988, about a month before the composer's death, Alistair Hinton founded the Sorabji Music Archive (renamed the Sorabji Archive in January 1993). This has made it possible to preserve, organize, and make available to all interested scholars and performers the precious legacy of a truly unique figure in the history of music, a "man whose very spirit is pure fire", in the words of Harold Morland quoted in the epigraph to this book. Despite the recent flurry of editions and recordings, much remains to be done before we have a full knowledge and understanding of Sorabji's vast creative output. The scholarly world still has a long way to go before it becomes normal to include a few lines about him in music histories. A rare exception, and a fairly early one (1966), was the twelve-line paragraph devoted to him by the Hungarian-American musicologist Paul Henry Lang (1901–91) in the twentieth-century volume of W. W. Norton's original music history series. Although Sorabji's place was "minute and marginal", "he too was a characteristic part of this world".[99] May others begin to consider that his music is valid enough to be included in larger discussions of music history. This may give hope that the day (still a long way off, admittedly) will come when we can attend with some regularity performances of such "cathedrals of majestic sound" more or less on the scale of *Opus clavicembalisticum*, if not of the largest ones, such as the *Messa grande sinfonica*.

Morland, after Sorabji's death, expressed in a few words (unlike musicologists), and as only poets can do, the essence—not only as a musician but also as a human being—of one who certainly belongs among the monuments in the history of music.[100] With the hope that Sorabji's music will continue to resonate like the last notes of his remarkable *"Gulistān"*, there can be no more fitting or inspiring conclusion to this book.

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[97] *OB*, 244n319.

[98] For a full list of obituaries, see the relevant section in the bibliography.

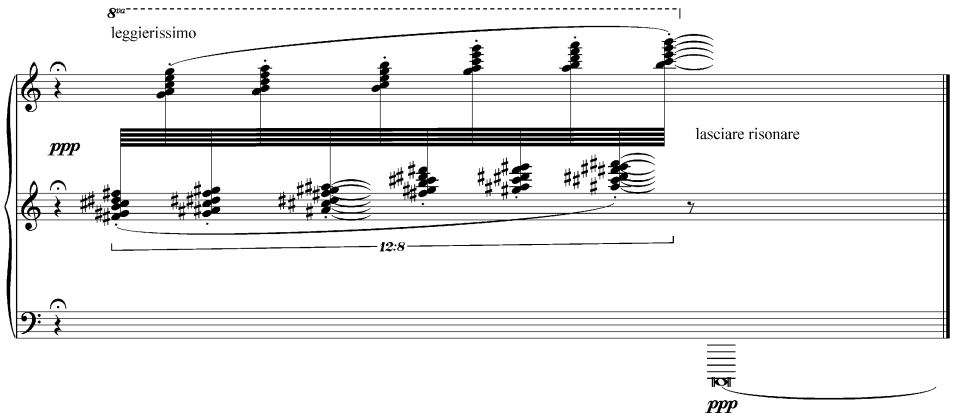
[99] Paul Henry Lang, "Varèse, Orff, Messiaen, and Many Others", in *Music in the 20th Century from Debussy to Stravinsky* (New York: W. W. Norton, 1966), 371–95; 372. For another exception, see the two paragraphs devoted by Ronald Stevenson, who already had an intimate knowledge of Sorabji's music and was also very partial, in his *Western Music: An Introduction* (London: Kahn & Averill, 1971), 203–4.

[100] Morland, "In memoriam K.S.S.", in *The Moving Finger* (St. Annes-on-Sea: The Cudworth Press, 1991), 26. Alistair Hinton received on 28 September 1990 a copy of this obituary poem on an undated sheet.

In memoriam K.S.S.

Your being was pure fibres—taut
and intricate not for a mind
to delight in but the spirit;
subtle to touch into being again
that music which beyond mere human thought
echoes eternity.
And all this
from your fingers devoutly praying.

I have heard you in your private room
making the air not this I breathe
but patterned with a worship…..
And I've wondered,
silently as I departed,
Aye, to what divinity?



Appendices, Bibliography, and Index

Appendix 1 / List of Works

The following list provides the essential information about Sorabji's works as an aid to orientation in his musical production. The titles are given according to the categories used in the introduction. A chronological presentation can be found in the table of contents of this book or in the catalogue of works in Appendix 2. Each entry consists of: title in the original language [author of the text and, if applicable, translator; medium if helpful] (years of composition; number of pages of the manuscript, with "0 p." for works that are not extant); name of the dedicatee (additional dedication if applicable). The absence of a dedication means that a given work has none.

Piano Solo

Sonata no. 0 (1917; 30 pp.)
Quasi habanera (1917; 6 pp.); ded. Norman Peterkin.
Désir éperdu (Fragment) (1917; 1 p.)
Fantaisie espagnole (1919; 23 pp.); ded. Norman Peterkin (published edition only).
Sonata no. 1 for Piano (1919; 42 pp.); ded. Ferruccio Busoni (manuscript only).
Two Piano Pieces: "In the Hothouse", "Toccata" (1918, 1920; 20 pp.); ded. Theodore Jenkins.
Sonata seconda for Piano (1920; 49 pp.); ded. Ferruccio Busoni.
Sonata III for Piano (1922; 75 pp.); ded. Alistair Hinton and Yonty Solomon (retrospectively and separately).
Prelude, Interlude, and Fugue for Piano (1920, 1922; 17 pp.); ded. Richard Henry Brittain.
Le jardin parfumé—Poem for Piano Solo (1923; 16 pp.); ded. Christopher à Becket Williams.
Valse-fantaisie for Piano (1925; 16 pp.); ded. H. Vincent Marrot.
Variazioni e fuga triplice sopra "Dies irae" per pianoforte (1923–26; 201 pp.); ded. Ferruccio Busoni (inscription to Alistair Hinton added ca. 1978).
Fragment: Prelude and Fugue on FxAxx DAxEx (1926; 3 pp.); ded. Frank G. Davey.
Toccata [no. 1] for Piano (1928; 66 pp.); ded. Bernard Bromage (name obliterated and replaced with Frank Holliday in 1964).
Nocturne, "Jāmī" (1928; 28 pp.); ded. Reginald Norman Best.
Sonata IV for Piano (1928–29; 111 pp.); ded. Francis George Scott.
Toccatinetta sopra C.G.F. (1929; 8 pp.); ded. Clinton Gray-Fisk.
Introduction, Passacaglia, Cadenza, and Fugue (1929; compl. Alexander Abercrombie, 2004; 79 pp.)
Opus clavicembalisticum (1929–30; 253 pp.); ded. Christopher Murray Grieve (pseud. Hugh MacDiarmid).
Symphony no. 0 for Piano Solo (1930–31; 333 pp.); written for Erik Chisholm, but includes a dedication to Alistair Hinton, added in 1975.
Fantasia ispanica (1933; 54 pp.); ded. Alec Rowley.

Toccata seconda per pianoforte (1933–34; 111 pp.); ded. Norman Peterkin.
Sonata V (Opus archimagicum) (1934–35; 336 pp.); ded. Clinton Gray-Fisk (previously dedicated to Bernard Bromage).
Fragment Written for Harold Rutland (three versions: 1926, 1928, 1937; 2 pp.); ded. Harold Rutland.
Symphonic Variations for Piano (1935–37; 484 pp.); ded. Edward Clarke Ashworth (as mentioned by the composer in 1985).
Tāntrik Symphony for Piano Alone (1938–39; 284 pp.); ded. Erik Chisholm.
"Quaere reliqua hujus materiei inter secretiora" (1940; 16 pp.); ded. Edward Nason.
"Gulistān"—Nocturne for Piano (1940; 28 pp.); ded. Frank Holliday (name obliterated and replaced in 1979 by Harold Morland).
St. Bertrand de Comminges: "He was laughing in the tower" (1941; 16 pp.); ded. Edward Nason.
Études transcendantes (100) (1940–44; 456 pp.); ded. Henry Welsh.
Concerto da suonare da me solo e senza orchestra, per divertirmi (1946; 70 pp.); ded. Norman Peterkin.
Sequentia cyclica super "Dies irae" ex Missa pro defunctis (1948–49; 335 pp.); ded. Egon Petri.
Le agonie (1951; 0 p.)
Un nido di scatole sopra il nome del grande e buon amico Harold Rutland (1954; 26 pp.); ded. Harold Rutland.
Second Symphony for Piano (1954; 248 pp.); ded. Frank Holliday.
Toccata terza (1955; 91 p.); ded. Clinton Gray-Fisk.
Passeggiata veneziana sopra la Barcarola di Offenbach (1955–56; 24 pp.); ded. York Bowen.
Rosario d'arabeschi (1956; 45 pp.); ded. Sacheverell Sitwell.
Third Symphony for Piano Solo (1959–60; 144 pp.); ded. George Richards.
Fantasiettina sul nome illustre dell'egregio poeta Christopher Grieve ossia Hugh M'Diarmid (1961; 10 pp.); ded. Christopher Murray Grieve (pseud. Hugh MacDiarmid).
Fourth Symphony for Piano Alone (1962–64; 240 pp.); ded. Harold Rutland.
Frammenti aforistici (20) (1964; 9 pp.); ded. Harold Morland.
Frammenti aforistici (Sutras) (104) (1962–64; 37 pp.); ded. Donald Garvelmann.
Toccata quarta (1964–67; 149 pp.); ded. Frank Holliday (replaced with Paul Rapoport in 1979).
Symphonia brevis for Piano (1973; 120 pp.); ded. Alistair Hinton.
Variazione maliziosa e perversa sopra "La morte d'Åse" da Grieg (1974; 2 pp.)
Sixth Symphony for Piano (Symphonia claviensis) (1975–76; 270 pp.); ded. Alistair Hinton.
Frammenti aforistici (4) (1977; 1 p.); ded. Alistair Hinton.
Symphonic Nocturne for Piano Alone (1977–78; 113 pp.); ded. Alistair Hinton (verbally).
"Il gallo d'oro" da Rimsky-Korsakov: Variazioni frivole con una fuga anarchica, eretica e perversa (1978–79; 93 pp.); ded. Michael Habermann.
Villa Tasca: Mezzogiorno siciliano—Evocazione nostalgica e memoria tanta cara e preziosa del giardino meraviglioso, splendido, tropicale (1979–80; 47 pp.); ded. Ronald Stevenson.
Opus secretum atque necromanticum (1980–81; 48 pp.); ded. Norman P. Gentieu (also dedicated by oversight to Kenneth Derus shortly after).
Passeggiata variata sul nome del caro e gentile giovane amico Clive Spencer-Bentley (1981; 3 pp.); ded. Clive Spencer-Bentley.
Passeggiata arlecchinesca sopra un frammento di Busoni ("Rondò arlecchinesco") (1981–82; 16 pp.); ded. Geoffrey Douglas Madge.
Due sutras sul nome dell'amico Alexis (1981, 1984; 2 pp.); ded. Alexis (Robert William Procter).

Organ Solo

Symphony [no. 1] for Organ (1924; 81 pp.); ded. Emily Edroff-Smith.
Second Symphony for Organ (1929–32; 350 pp.); ded. E. Emlyn Davies.
Third Organ Symphony (1949–53; 305 pp.); ded. Norman P. Gentieu.

Piano and Orchestra

Concerto [no. 1] pour piano et grand orchestre (1915–16; 177 pp.); ded. Philip Heseltine.
Concerto II pour piano et grand orchestre (1916–17; 49 pp.)
Concerto pour piano et orchestra da camera [no. 3] (1918; 100 pp.); ded. Charles A. Trew.
Concerto pour piano et grand orchestre [no. 4] (1918; 100 pp.); ded. Norman P. Gentieu (added probably in 1953).
Concerto for Piano and Orchestra [no. 5] (1920; 144 pp.); ded. Alfred Cortot.
Concerto for Piano and Orchestra [no.] III [no. 6] (1922; 144 pp.); ded. Bernard Bromage (partly obliterated).
Concerto per pianoforte e piccola orchestra, "Simorg-Anka" [no. 7] (1924; 100 pp.); ded. Havelock Ellis (dedication to Norman P. Gentieu added in 1952).
Concerto V for Piano and Large Orchestra [no. 8] (1927–28; 344 pp.); ded. Aldo Solito De Solis.
Symphonic Variations for Piano and Orchestra (1935–37, 1953–56; 540 pp.)
Opus clavisymphonicum—Concerto for Piano and Large Orchestra (1957–59; 333 pp.); ded. John Ireland.
Opusculum clavisymphonicum vel claviorchestrale (1973–75; 334 pp.); ded. Alistair Hinton.

Orchestra without Voices

Chaleur—Poème (1916–17; 32 pp.)
Opusculum for Orchestra (1923; 36 pp.); ded. John Ireland.

Orchestra with Voices

Medea (1916; 0 p.)
Symphony [no. 1] for Piano, Large Orchestra, Chorus, and Organ (1921–22; 300 pp.); ded. Madeline Matilda Worthy (Sorabji's mother).
Black Mass [chorus and large orchestra with organ] (1922; 0 p.).
Symphony [no. 2], "Jāmī", for Large Orchestra, Wordless Chorus, and Baritone Solo [Mawlānā Nūruʾd-Dīn ʿAbduʾr-Raḥmān Ǧāmī, trans. Edward Browne] (1942–51; 826 pp.); ded. Mervyn Vicars.
Messa grande sinfonica (1955–61; 1,001 pp.); ded. Reginald Norman Best.

Chamber Ensemble without Voices

Quintet no. 1 for Piano and Quartet of Stringed Instruments (1919–20; 72 pp.); ded. Philip Heseltine (published edition).
Quintet II for Piano and String Quartet (1932–33; 432 pp.); ded. Denis Saurat (inscription to Mervyn Vicars added in 1969).
Concertino non grosso for String Sextet with Piano obbligato quasi continuo [piano, four violins, viola, cello] (1968; 48 pp.); ded. Mervyn, Denise, Adrian, and Kevin Vicars.
Il tessuto d'arabeschi [for flute and string quartet] (1979; 32 pp.); ded. Frederick Delius.
Fantasiettina atematica [for flute, oboe, clarinet] (1981; 2 pp.); ded. Anthony Burton-Page.

Chamber Ensemble with Voices

Music to "The Rider by Night" [Robert (Malise Bowyer) Nichols] (1919; 54 pp.)
Cinque sonetti di Michelagniolo Buonarroti [Michelangelo Buonarroti] (1923; 40 pp.)

Voice and Piano

The Poplars [Jovan Dučić, trans. Paul Selver] (1915; 3 pp.)
Chrysilla [Henri de Régnier] (1915; 4 pp.)
Roses du soir [Pierre Louÿs] (1915; 4 pp.)
L'heure exquise [Paul Verlaine] (1916; 2 pp.)
Vocalise pour soprano fioriturata (1916; 3 pp.)
Vocalise no. 2 (1916; 0 p.)
Apparition [Stéphane Mallarmé] (1916; 5 pp.)
Hymne à Aphrodite [Laurent Tailhade] (1916; 5 pp.)
L'étang [Maurice Rollinat] (1917; 2 pp.)
I Was Not Sorrowful—Poem for Voice and Piano [Spleen] [Ernest Dowson] (between 1917 and 1919; 3 pp.)
Le mauvais jardinier [Iwan Gilkin] (1919; 1 p.)
Trois fêtes galantes de Verlaine [Paul Verlaine] (ca. 1919; 11 pp.); ded. Madeline Matilda Worthy (Sorabji's mother).
Trois poèmes pour chant et piano [Charles Baudelaire (no. 1), Paul Verlaine (nos. 2, 3)] (1918, 1919; 9 pp.); ded. Marthe Martine.
Arabesque [Šamsu'd-Dīn Ibrāhīm Mīrzā] (1920; 2 pp.); ded. Richard Henry Brittain (Rex).
Movement for Voice and Piano [wordless voice and piano] (1927, 1931; 9 pp.); ded. Madeline Matilda Worthy (Sorabji's mother).
Trois poèmes du "Gulistān" de Saʿdī [Saʿdī; Abū Abdi'llah Mušarrifu'd-Dīn Ibn Muṣliḥud-Dīn Saʿdī, trans. Franz Toussaint] (1926; 16 pp.); ded. Erik Chisholm.
L'irrémédiable [Charles Baudelaire] (1927; 8 pp.); ded. Blanche Marchesi.
Trois poèmes [Charles Baudelaire (no. 2), Paul Verlaine (nos. 1, 3)] (1941; 13 pp.); ded. Jim Cooper and Joy McArden Cooper.
Frammento cantato [Harold Morland (after Kālidāsa)] (1967; 1 p.); ded. Harold Morland.

Voice and Organ

Benedizione di San Francesco d'Assisi [Saint Francis of Assisi] (1973; 2 pp.); ded. Alistair Hinton.

Carillon

Suggested Bell-Chorale for St. Luke's Carillon (1961; 1 p.); ded. Norman P. Gentieu.

(Piano) Transcriptions

Transcription of "In a Summer Garden" (1914; 0 p.)
Three Pastiches for Piano [on the "Minute Waltz" by Chopin, on the Habanera from "Carmen" by Bizet, on the Hindu Merchant's Song from "Sadko" by Rimsky-Korsakov] (1922; 4, 7, 6 pp.); ded. Christopher à Becket Williams (no. 3).

Pasticcio capriccioso sopra l'op. 64, no 1 del Chopin (1933; 8 pp.); ded. Madeline Matilda Worthy (Sorabji's mother), Donald Garvelmann.

Transcription in the Light of Harpsichord Technique for the Modern Piano of the Chromatic Fantasia of J. S. Bach, Followed by a Fugue (1940; 15 pp.); ded. Emily Edroff-Smith.

Rapsodie espagnole de Maurice Ravel—Transcription de concert pour piano (two independent versions: 1923, 16 pp.; 1945, 26 pp.)

Transcription of the Prelude in E-flat by Bach (1945; 4 pp.); ded. Reginald Norman Best.

Schlussszene aus "Salome" von Richard Strauss—Konzertmäßige Übertragung zu zwei Händen (1947; 25 pp.)

Unknown

Music for "Faust" (ca. 1930; 0 p.)

Appendix 2 / Catalogue of Works

This catalogue of the works of Kaikhosru Shapurji Sorabji uses a layout very similar to that of the section "A 'Complete Provisional' Chronological Catalog of Sorabji's Compositions" (pp. 105–92) that forms the second part of Paul Rapoport's extensive contribution entitled "'Could you just send me a list of his works?'" to his *Sorabji: A Critical Celebration (SCC)*. It is not intended to replace that pioneering compilation of remarkable completeness and accuracy, which includes items of information not reproduced here, such as vocal range, detailed instrumentation for the orchestral works, full wording of the dedications (here given in the main text), exhaustive division into sections with tempo indications and inclusive page numbers, and various notes.

The present catalogue differs from Rapoport's in a number of ways, all of which are documented when appropriate under the heading "Com.", but summarized here.

Four titles have been expanded from the manuscripts: *Introduction, Passacaglia, Cadenza, and Fugue*; *Villa Tasca: Mezzogiorno siciliano—Evocazione nostalgica e memoria tanta cara e preziosa del giardino meraviglioso, splendido, tropicale*; *Opus secretum atque necromanticum*; *Passeggiata variata sul nome del caro e gentile giovane amico Clive Spencer-Bentley*.

Five works have revised titles (for musical or linguistic reasons): *Introduction, Passacaglia, Cadenza, and Fugue*; *Symphony no. 0 for Piano Solo*; *Concerto da suonare da me solo e senza orchestra, per divertirmi*; *Messa grande sinfonica*; *Concertino non grosso for String Sextet with Piano obbligato quasi continuo.*

"Æ" ligatures are not used in the two works that include *Dies irae* in their titles and in *"Quaere reliqua hujus materiei inter secretiora"*.

Three page numbers have been corrected: *Fourth Symphony for Piano Alone*; *Symphony [no. 2], "Jāmī", for Large Orchestra, Wordless Chorus, and Baritone Solo* (the latter also renumbered from "[no. 3]" to "[no. 2]", and *Symphonic Variations for Piano and Orchestra*.

Two works, unknown in 1992, have been added: *Fragment: Prelude and Fugue on FxAxx DAxEx*; and the first version of *Rapsodie espagnole de Maurice Ravel—Transcription de concert pour piano*.

The chronological order of three works has been changed: the *Toccata terza* is now after the *Second Symphony for Piano*, the *Frammenti aforistici (104)* now appears after *Frammenti aforistici (20)*, and the *Due sutras sul nome dell'amico Alexis* have been moved from after *Concertino non grosso for String Sextet with Piano obbligato quasi continuo* to the end of the list.

Minor changes resulting from close examination of the manuscripts and recent research findings are included under the heading "Com." These mostly concern page and variation numbering, tempo markings, and interpretative directions.

Details of works hitherto known only through references in Sorabji's correspondence and not given an entry here, such as *The Reiterated Chord* (1916; 0 p.) and *The Line* (1932; 0 p.), are given as part of the section "Works lost, not extant, or known only through letters" in the introduction.

All data have been checked against the manuscripts or photocopies of them, and updated information is given, especially concerning new editions, performances, and recordings that have become available since (and even before) the publication of *SCC*. Durations (estimated for unperformed works) are an addition. Dedications and contents are given as briefly as possible; they appear in fuller form, with appropriate explanations, in the sections devoted to the works themselves. The locations of the manuscripts (mostly the Paul Sacher Stiftung[1]) are indicated, but the identity of private owners is respected by writing "private collection" when appropriate.

Headings are omitted where unnecessary; for example, the absence of a "First perf." heading means that a given work has not yet been performed. Sample pages from both the manuscripts and the published editions as well as details of all known performances, broadcasts, and recordings are given for each work on the Sorabji Archive's website at http://www.sorabji-archive.co.uk/compositions/compositions.php, whose database is constantly updated.

Format of Entries

Note: Categories not found in *SCC*, or considerably expanded from it, are indicated in the following list by bullets (•) at the beginning of the headings. Bullets are also used in the catalogue to separate run-in multiple entries containing several elements, but indentation is preferred in complex cases such as *Opus clavicembalisticum* and *Études transcendantes*.

Title — The title is given with the year(s) of composition and the number of pages of the manuscript. The number of pages is given as "0" when the manuscript is not extant. For ease of reference, the number of the chapter in which the work is discussed is given in brackets at the end of the title (e.g., [5]). The wording is usually that of *SCC*, which differs substantially from that used by the Sorabji Archive, especially in matters of capitalization. The problems affecting Sorabji's titles, which justify the use of editorial titles, are discussed on page "Linguistic, Terminological, and Musical Problems in Titles of Works" of the Sorabji Resource Site (https://roberge.mus.ulaval.ca/srs/04-lingu.htm).

KSS — Numbers (from 1 to 105; plus 11a, 41a, and 48a) used in the Sorabji Archive's catalogue, on its website, and in some of the scores published under its imprint, for example, KSS 50. The presentation follows the model of the works published under the composer's supervision between 1921 and 1931, where they appear in the lower centre, for example, K.S.16. Six of the works listed below have not been assigned a number because they are not extant; such entries read "N/A". There are several discrepancies between the order given by the KSS numbers and that used in *SCC* and

[1] *Kaikhosru Shapurji Sorabji: Musikmanuskripte*, Inventare der Paul Sacher Stiftung, no. 15, comp. Felix Meyer and Sabine Hänggi-Stampfli (Winterthur: Amadeus Verlag, 1995), 16 pp. (no call numbers given).

the present catalogue, the former having been decided upon at a very early stage of research.

Trans. English translation for titles not in English.

Med. Instrument(s), if not part of the title. Full details for the orchestral work are given in *SCC*.

•Dates Dates are given for the beginning (rarely specified by the composer) and end of a work using the following formats:

25 December 1940: date written in the manuscript, usually at the end;
[25 December 1940]: date mentioned in a letter, usually preceded by "Before" or "After" (documented in the text);
{25 December 1940}: date derived from other evidence, to be taken as a suggestion;
{}: date not known, leaving as possibility a date following the completion of the previous work, although Sorabji may have been working on more than one at the same time.

•Duration Actual durations of live or recorded performances, with the names of the performers, in ascending order if more than one; durations of sound files generated by appropriate software (in many cases mine) are given when available. Where no duration can be offered, an estimate suggested by Alistair Hinton in the catalogue of the Sorabji Archive's at http://www.sorabji-archive.co.uk/compositions/compositions.php, is given in curly brackets. Sorabji's few own estimates are given, and the durations of his recorded performances are mostly taken from the finding aid of the Kaikhosru Shapurji Sorabji Collection at McMaster University, where they are marked as being approximate.

Author Name of the poet and, when appropriate, translator.

Ded. Name of the dedicatee. The full wording of the dedication and any relevant explanations can be found in the section of the main text where the work is discussed.

Cont. Indication of contents, consisting of a summary of the number of movements or sections, with an indication of notable features (e.g., theme and variations, passacaglias, and fugues). See *SCC* for details.

Ms. Library or institution (with call number, if available) where the manuscript is held, or "private collection", when appropriate.

•Publ. City, place, and year of publication, with plate number or publisher's number and number of pages. In the case of recent editions, the name of the editor is given, together with an indication of the number of pages and any additional text (e.g., introduction, critical report). All editions are typeset unless otherwise stated.

•First perf. Date, performer; city, venue, title of concert series or name of sponsoring institution.

•Notable perf. Date, performer; city, venue, title of concert series or name of sponsoring institution, with (when appropriate) a characterization of the event (e.g., first performance in North America); the notable performance is usually the second one, often taking place several years after the first one. The absence of notable performances does not mean that there were no performances other than the first. See *SCC*, 425–51, for the details of known performances given up to the end of 1991, and the Sorabji Archive's website at http://www.sorabji-archive.co.uk/compositions/compositions.php for a full list including broadcasts of recordings.

•Rec. Commercial recordings as well as private tapes made by Sorabji and tapes available in archives are identified by means of author-date references for which full details are given in the discography. Entries are arranged chronologically, with years of reissues listed as part of a given reference (e.g., Habermann 1980, 1989, 2003b, 2015). When appropriate, the identification of the individual sections included is given in parentheses.

Com. Comments or additional information.

Title **Transcription of "In a Summer Garden" (1914; 0 p.) [2]**
KSS N/A
Med. Piano
Dates [Before 8 September 1914]–{}
Duration 14:00 (Delius's original)
Ms. Unknown

Title **The Poplars (1915; 3 pp.) [4]**
KSS 1
Med. Voice and piano
Dates {}–17 May 1915
Duration 3:05 (Farnum)
Author Jovan Dučić
Ms. *First manuscript:* Paul Sacher Stiftung, Basel • *Second manuscript:* Paul Sacher Stiftung, Basel.
Publ. Sorabji Archive, completed in 2006 but temporarily withheld (ed. Marc-André Roberge; iv, 10; music: pp. 1–6; with introduction and critical report).
First perf. 14 November 2002, Elizabeth Farnum (soprano), Margaret Kampmeier (piano); New York, Merkin Concert Hall.
Rec. Farnum 2002

Title **Chrysilla (1915; 4 pp.) [4]**
KSS 2
Med. Voice and piano
Dates {}–21 May 1915

Duration	3:01 (Farnum)
Author	Henri de Régnier
Ms.	Private collection
Publ.	Sorabji Archive, 2007 (ed. Marc-André Roberge; iv, 13 pp.; music: pp. 1–7; with introduction and critical report); second impression, 2009.
First perf.	14 November 2002, Elizabeth Farnum (soprano), Margaret Kampmeier (piano); New York, Merkin Concert Hall.
Rec.	Farnum 2002

Title	**Roses du soir (1915; 4 pp.) [4]**
KSS	3
Trans.	Evening Roses
Med.	Voice and piano
Dates	{}–8 July 1915
Duration	3:01 (Farnum)
Author	Pierre Louÿs
Ms.	Private collection
Publ.	Sorabji Archive, 2002 (ed. Jonathan Powell; 3 pp.).
First perf.	15 May 2001, Loré Lixenberg (soprano), Jonathan Powell (piano); London, British Music Information Centre.
Notable perf.	14 November 2002, Elizabeth Farnum (soprano), Margaret Kampmeier (piano); New York, Merkin Concert Hall.
Rec.	Farnum 2002

Title	**L'heure exquise (1916; 2 pp.) [4]**
KSS	4
Trans.	The Exquisite Hour
Med.	Voice and piano
Dates	{}–10 February 1916
Duration	2:13 (Farnum); 4:00 (Sarah Leonard).
Author	Paul Verlaine
Ms.	Paul Sacher Stiftung, Basel.
Publ.	Sorabji Archive, 1992 (ed. Marc-André Hamelin; handwritten; 4 pp.) • Sorabji Archive, 2006 (ed. Marc-André Roberge; iv, 9 pp.; music: pp. 1–4; with introduction and critical report); second impression, 2009.
First perf.	20 April 1999, Amy Burton (soprano), John Musto (piano); New York, Columbia University, Miller Theater, "Opulent Music" series.
Notable perf.	14 November 2002, Elizabeth Farnum (soprano), Margaret Kampmeier (piano); New York, Merkin Concert Hall.
Rec.	Farnum 2002

Title	**Vocalise pour soprano fioriturata (1916; 3 pp.) [4]**
KSS	5
Trans.	Vocalise for Florid Soprano
Med.	Voice (wordless) and piano
Dates	{}–23 March 1916

Duration 2:21 (Farnum)
Ms. *First manuscript:* Paul Sacher Stiftung, Basel • *Second manuscript:* Paul Sacher Stiftung, Basel.
Publ. Sorabji Archive, 2006 (ed. Marc-André Roberge; iv, 10 pp.; music: pp. 1–5; with introduction and critical report); second impression, 2009.
First perf. 23 March 2000, Debra Skeen (soprano), Lydia Newlands (piano); London, British Music Information Centre.
Rec. Farnum 2002
Com. The song was performed in an arrangement for violin and piano by Anna-Maria Barth (violon) and Florian Steininger (piano) as part of an A-MB Masters recital, at the Hochschule für Musik Karlsruhe (University of Music) on 16 February 2016.

Title **Concerto [no. 1] pour piano et grand orchestre (1915–16; 177 pp.) [5]**
KSS 6
Trans. Concerto [no. 1] for Piano and Large Orchestra
Dates April 1915–17 June 1916
Duration {35:00}
Ded. Philip Heseltine
Cont. Three movements
Ms. British Library (full score), Add. 65183; two-piano reduction untraced.
Com. The total number of bars is 484, with bar numbers in the composer's hand every tenth bar. The numbers are located at the position of the starting barline, or at the position of the ending barline on the previous page if the round number is at the beginning of a page. The three movements correspond to bars 1–245, 246–332, and 333–484. The movements cover pp. 1–75, 76–112, and 113–77 according to *SCC*, 111, and pp. 1–79, 80–116, and 117–81 according to the editorial numbering of the Sorabji Archive, which nevertheless contains 177 pages of music. In this version, pp. 24–25 and 55–56 are skipped without affecting the bar numbering sequence. An illogical continuation in several parts between pp. 24 and 25 suggests that Sorabji may have misplaced these pages and numbered his bars without taking them into account.

Title **Vocalise no. 2 (1916; 0 p.) [4]**
KSS N/A
Med. Voice and piano
Dates {}–[6 July 1916]
Ms. Unknown
Com. Editorial title

Title **Medea (1916; 0 p.) [5]**
KSS N/A
Med. Music drama
Dates [6 July 1916]–{}
Ms. Unknown

Title	**Apparition (1916; 5 pp.) [4]**
KSS	7
Med.	Voice and piano
Dates	{}–26 September 1916
Duration	2:40 (Farnum)
Author	Stéphane Mallarmé
Ms.	Paul Sacher Stiftung, Basel.
Publ.	Sorabji Archive, 2001 (ed. Simon Abrahams; 6 pp.).
First perf.	3 November 2000, Sarah Leonard (soprano), Steven Gutman (piano); London, Conway Hall, Red Lion Square, Planet Tree Festival.
Notable perf.	14 November 2002, Elizabeth Farnum (soprano), Margaret Kampmeier (piano); New York, Merkin Concert Hall.
Rec.	Farnum 2002

Title	**Hymne à Aphrodite (1916; 5 pp.) [4]**
KSS	8
Trans.	Hymn to Aphrodite
Med.	Voice and piano
Dates	{}–15 October 1916
Duration	4:59 (Farnum)
Author	Laurent Tailhade
Ms.	Paul Sacher Stiftung, Basel (two manuscripts).
Publ.	Sorabji Archive, 2006 (ed. Marc-André Roberge; v, 19 pp.; music: pp. 1–11; with introduction and critical report); second impression, 2009.
First perf.	3 November 2000, Sarah Leonard (soprano), Steven Gutman (piano); London, Conway Hall, Red Lion Square, Planet Tree Festival.
Notable perf.	14 November 2002, Elizabeth Farnum (soprano), Margaret Kampmeier (piano); New York, Merkin Concert Hall.
Rec.	Farnum 2002

Title	**Sonata no. 0 (1917; 30 pp.) [5]**
KSS	9
Med.	Piano
Dates	{}–8 March 1917
Duration	24:38 (Nasseri)
Ms.	Private collections (manuscript in two sections)
Publ.	Sorabji Archive, 2015 (ed. Frazer Jarvis; [iv], 41 pp.; music: pp. 1–40). Includes an editorial preface dated March 2015 and acknowledgements (p. i), a note on the edition (p. ii), and editorial comments (p. 41). The music consists of 260 bars. The several bars that are crossed out in the manuscript are printed in smaller type and framed by dotted vertical lines extending above and below the staves. Three other versions have been deposited in the Sorabji Archive; the "faithful" in the second and third versions listed below refers to Sorabji's unusual treatment of accidentals. "Performing edition - with deleted material omitted"; [iv], 34 pp.; music: pp. 1–33. Includes an editorial preface dated April 2015 and acknowledgements (p. i; the

last paragraph is different), a note about the edition (p. ii), and (shorter) editorial comments (p. 34). The music consists of 213 bars.

"Faithful edition - with deleted material restored"; [iv], 36 pp.; music: pp. 1–36. Includes an editorial preface dated April 2015 (the last two paragraphs of the main version have been replaced by three shorter paragraphs). The music consists of 260 bars.

"Faithful edition - with deleted material omitted"; [iv], 29 pp.; music: pp. 1–29. Includes an editorial preface dated April 2015 (the last two paragraphs of the main version have been replaced by three shorter paragraphs). The music consists of 213 bars.

First perf. 17 September 2002, Soheil Nasseri; New York, Carnegie Hall, Weill Recital Hall (preceded by a performance on 11 September 2002, in New York, Metropolitan Museum of Art, Grace Rainey Rogers Auditorium).

Rec. Nasseri 2007

Title **Chaleur—Poème (1916–17; 32 pp.) [5]**

KSS 15

Trans. Heat—Poem

Med. Orchestra

Dates 26 August 1916–21 April 1917

Duration 6:30 (sound file by Roberge); 6:00–8:00 (Sorabji's MS); 9:20 (Schmitt).

Ded. Madeline Matilda Worthy (Sorabji's mother)

Ms. Paul Sacher Stiftung, Basel (manuscript and copyist's copy with annotations by the composer).

Publ. Sorabji Archive, 2013 (ed. Frazer Jarvis; 20 pp.; a set of parts is available).

First perf. 13 June 1999, Frankfurter Orchester Gesellschaft, cond. Stefan Schmitt; Frankfurt am Main, Sendesaal des Hessischen Rundfunks.

Com. In *SCC*, 112, the page count is given as "40 pp.", which is the number of pages in the copyist's copy, the only manuscript known at the time. The manuscript consists of a blank page of orchestral manuscript paper with only a preliminary version of the first bar of the last page (double basses only). Its verso (?) has three beats of unknown origin or destination.

Title **Quasi habanera (1917; 6 pp.) [5]**

KSS 12

Med. Piano

Dates 10 August 1917–14 August 1917

Duration 4:03 (Traxler); 4:59 (Habermann); 6:45 (Madge).

Ded. Norman Peterkin

Ms. Paul Sacher Stiftung, Basel.

Publ. Sorabji Archive, 1992 (ed. Marc-André Roberge; iv, 19 pp.; music: pp. 1–9; with introduction and critical report); second impression, 2009.

First perf. *Broadcast performance:* 24 February 1989, Geoffrey Douglas Madge; Hilversum, Nederlandse Omroepprogramma Stichting broadcast • *Public performance:* 21 March 1998; Michael Habermann, Sollentuna, Sollentuna Centrum, Amorinasalen Bibliotekshuset, Franz Liszt Festival.

Rec. Habermann 2003a

Title **L'étang (1917; 2 pp.) [4]**
KSS 10
Trans. The Pond
Med. Voice and piano
Dates {}–25 April 1917
Duration 2:37 (Farnum)
Author Maurice Rollinat
Ms. Paul Sacher Stiftung, Basel.
Publ. Sorabji Archive, 2006 (ed. Marc-André Roberge; iv, 10 pp.; music: pp. 1–5; with introduction and critical report); second impression, 2009.
First perf. 14 November 2002, Elizabeth Farnum (soprano), Margaret Kampmeier (piano); New York, Merkin Concert Hall.
Rec. Farnum 2002

Title **Désir éperdu (Fragment) (1917; 1 p.) [5]**
KSS 13
Trans. Frantic Desire—Fragment
Med. Piano
Dates {}–22 September 1917
Duration 0:26 (sound file by Roberge)
Ms. Paul Sacher Stiftung, Basel.
Publ. Sorabji Archive, 2005 (ed. Frazer Jarvis; 1 p.).
First perf. 21 February 1990, Malcolm Rycraft; London, Royal College of Music, Concert Hall.
Com. What appears to be visible in extremely faint ink to the right and below the title of the piece as an initial *F* and the bottom of the letter *g* suggests the word "Fragment", which aptly describes the one-page, three-bar piece.

Title **Concerto II pour piano et grand orchestre (1916–17; 49 pp.) [5]**
KSS 14
Trans. Concerto II for Piano and Large Orchestra
Med. Two pianos (reduction)
Dates [Before 6 July 1916]–27 December 1917
Duration {25:00}
Cont. Three movements
Ms. Paul Sacher Stiftung, Basel.
Com. Full score untraced

Title **Concerto pour piano et orchestra da camera [no. 3] (1918; 100 pp.) [5]**
KSS 16
Trans. Concerto for Piano and Chamber Orchestra [no. 3]
Dates {}–25 August 1918
Duration {25:00}

Ded. Charles A. Trew
Cont. Three movements
Ms. The William Ready Division of Archives and Research Collections, Mills Memorial Library, McMaster University, Hamilton, Ont..

Title **Concerto pour piano et grand orchestre [no. 4] (1918; 100 pp.) [5]**
KSS 18
Trans. Concerto for Piano and Large Orchestra [no. 4]
Dates {}–20 December 1918
Duration {25:00}
Ded. Norman P. Gentieu (added probably in 1953)
Cont. Three movements
Ms. Special Collections Research Center, Syracuse University, Syracuse, N.Y. (no call number used). A solo piano part (44 pp.), dated Autumn 1918, is at Northwestern University, Evanston, Ill.
Com. Most of the third movement is identical to that of the *Concerto II pour piano et grand orchestre* (1916–17; 49 pp.), which exists only in the form of a version for two pianos.

Title **I Was Not Sorrowful—Poem for Voice and Piano [Spleen] (between 1917 and 1919; 3 pp.) [4]**
KSS 11
Med. Voice and piano
Dates {1917}–{1919}
Duration 2:30 (Farnum)
Author Ernest Dowson
Ms. Paul Sacher Stiftung, Basel.
Publ. Sorabji Archive, 2006 (ed. Marc-André Roberge; iv, 8 pp.; music: pp. 1–4; with introduction and critical report); second impression, 2009.
First perf. 14 November 2002, Elizabeth Farnum (soprano), Margaret Kampmeier (piano); New York, Merkin Concert Hall.
Rec. Farnum 2002

Title **Le mauvais jardinier (1919; 1 p.) [4]**
KSS 11a
Trans. The Wicked Gardener
Med. Voice and piano
Dates {1918 or 1919}–{1918 or 1919}
Duration 0:35 (sound file by Roberge)
Author Iwan Gilkin
Ms. Paul Sacher Stiftung, Basel (incomplete).
Publ. Sorabji Archive, 2006 (ed. Marc-André Roberge; iv, 5 pp.; music: pp. 1–2; with introduction and critical report); second impression, 2009.
First perf. 12 April 2011, Amy Fuller (soprano), Kent R. Conrad (piano); Urbana, Ill., Smith Music Hall, Memorial Room (as part of the requirements for the pianist's D.M.A. degree).

Com. A completion, extending Sorabji's seven bars to thirty-one, was written in 2023 by Chappell Kingsland.

Title **Trois fêtes galantes de Verlaine (ca. 1919; 11 pp.) [4]**
KSS 37
Trans. Three Amorous Revels of Verlaine
Med. Voice and piano
Dates {ca. 1919}–{ca. 1919}
Duration 2:54, 2:59, 1:53 = 7:46 (Manning); 2:44, 2:57, 2:02 = 7:43 (Farnum).
Author Paul Verlaine: "L'allée", "À la promenade", "Dans la grotte".
Ded. Madeline Matilda Worthy (Sorabji's mother)
Ms. Unknown
Publ. London: J. Curwen and Sons Ltd., 1924 (K.S.10, Curwen Edition 902005; 11 pp.).
First perf. 3 June 1979, Jane Manning (soprano), Yonty Solomon (piano); London, British Broadcasting Corporation, Radio 3.
Notable perf. *First American (and public) performance:* 6 December 1998, Felicity La Fortune (soprano), Christopher Berg (piano); New York, Merkin Concert Hall • 14 November 2002, Elizabeth Farnum (soprano), Margaret Kampmeier (piano); New York, Merkin Concert Hall.
Rec. Manning 1979; Farnum 2002.
Com. No. 3 ("Dans la grotte") exists in an arrangement for piano (1986) by Ronald Stevenson dedicated to Alistair Hinton.

Title **Fantaisie espagnole (1919; 23 pp.) [6]**
KSS 19
Trans. Spanish Fantasy
Med. Piano
Dates {}–5 March 1919
Duration 13:54 (Long); 15:09 (Habermann); 17:55 (Amato).
Ded. Norman Peterkin (published edition only)
Cont. Three sections
Ms. *First manuscript:* Library of Congress, Washington, ML96.S729 (Case) • *Second manuscript:* Paul Sacher Stiftung, Basel.
Publ. London: London and Continental Music Publishing Co. Ltd., 1922 (K.S.4; 30 pp.) • Sorabji Archive, 1993 (ed. Donna Amato and Chris Rice; corrected copy of publication).
First perf. 20 October 1966, John Gates; New York, Carnegie Hall. This performance was preceded by two semi-public ones, in Greenfield, Indiana, and Indianapolis.
Notable perf. 12 December 1973, Michael Habermann; Glen Cove, N.Y., Glen Cove Hospital, School of Nursing Auditorium • *First authorized European performance:* 7 December 1976, Yonty Solomon; London, Wigmore Hall • *First authorized American performance:* 22 May 1977, Michael Habermann; New York, Carnegie Recital Hall.
Rec. Solomon 1977; Habermann 1980, 1989, 2003b, 2015; Amato 1993a; Long 2015.

Title	**Sonata no. 1 for Piano (1919; 42 pp.) [6]**
KSS	20
Dates	{}–5 August 1919
Duration	22:06 (Hamelin)
Ded.	Ferruccio Busoni (manuscript only)
Ms.	Library of Congress, Washington, ML96.S729 (Case).
Publ.	London: The London and Continental Music Publishing Co. Ltd., 1921 (42 pp.). Includes a separate "Errata in Sonata N°. 1" sheet with seven emendations.
First perf.	2 November 1920, Kaikhosru Shapurji Sorabji; London, Mortimer Hall, Second Sackbut Concert.
Notable perf.	13 January 1922, Kaikhosru Shapurji Sorabji; Vienna, Musikvereinsaal, Kammersaal • *First modern (broadcast) performance:* 14 August 1984, Yonty Solomon; London, British Broadcasting Corporation, Radio 3 • *First modern (live) performance:* 10 February 1988, Yonty Solomon; Leicester, Leicester Polytechnic • *First performance in North America:* 19 March 1989, Marc-André Hamelin; Hamilton, Ont., Canada; McMaster University, Convocation Hall, Celebrity Concert.
Rec.	Solomon 1987b; Hamelin 1990.

Title	**Trois poèmes pour chant et piano (1918, 1919; 9 pp.) [4]**
KSS	21
Trans.	Three Poems for Voice and Piano
Med.	Voice and piano
Dates	1918, 1918, 2 November 1919.
Duration	2:40, 2:36, 1:15 = 6:31 (Manning); 2:41, 2:42, 1:26 = 6:49 (Farnum).
Author	Charles Baudelaire: "Correspondances"; Paul Verlaine: "Crépuscule du soir mystique", "Pantomime".
Ded.	Marthe Martine
Ms.	Paul Sacher Stiftung, Basel ("Pantomime"); other manuscripts untraced.
Publ.	London: London and Continental Music Publishing Co., 1921 (K.S.1; 9 pp.).
First perf.	2 June 1921, Marthe Martine (soprano), Kaikhosru Shapurji Sorabji (piano); Paris, Société des Agriculteurs de France, Société Musicale Indépendante.
Notable perf.	*First modern (broadcast) performance:* 3 June 1979, Jane Manning (soprano), Yonty Solomon (piano); London, British Broadcasting Corporation, Radio 3 • *First modern (public) performance:* 14 November 2002, Elizabeth Farnum (soprano), Margaret Kampmeier (piano); New York, Merkin Concert Hall.
Rec.	Manning 1979; Farnum 2002.

Title	**Music to "The Rider by Night" (1919; 54 pp.) [6]**
KSS	22
Med.	Voices and small orchestra
Dates	{}–13 November 1919
Duration	6:35 (sound file by Roberge; extant music)
Author	Robert (Malise Bowyer) Nichols
Ms.	British Library, London (incomplete manuscript, lacking pp. 21–40 of 54), Add. 57786, ff. 29–45v.

Publ. Sorabji Archive, 2008 (ed. Marc-André Roberge; viii, 65 pp.; music: pp. 1–38; with introduction and critical report, including the first edition of Robert Nichols's complete libretto on pp. 50–65); second impression, 2009.

Title **Quintet no. 1 for Piano and Quartet of Stringed Instruments (1919–20; 72 pp.) [7]**
KSS 26
Dates {1919}–[after 26 January 1920]
Duration 26:20 (Berg)
Ded. Philip Heseltine (published edition)
Ms. Unknown; a copyist's copy (A. J. Collins, 144 pp.) with annotations by the composer is at the Westminster City Archives (previously at the Central Music Library).
Publ. London: London and Continental Music Publishing Co. Ltd., 1923 (K.S.5; 62 pp.).
First perf. 6 December 1998, Christopher Berg (piano), Marshall Coid and Lalit Gampel (violins), David Cerutti (viola), Christine Gummere (cello); New York, Merkin Concert Hall.
Notable perf. *First European performance:* 22 February 2003, Frank Peters (piano); Quatuor Danel (Marc Danel, Gilles Millet, violins; Tony Nys, viola; Guy Danel, cello); Utrecht, Muziekcentrum Vredenburg.

Title **Arabesque (1920; 2 pp.) [4]**
KSS 24
Med. Voice and piano
Dates {}–12 February 1920
Duration 1:37 (Farnum)
Author Šamsu'd-Dīn Ibrāhīm Mīrzā
Ded. Richard Henry Brittain (Rex)
Ms. Private collection
Publ. Sorabji Archive, 2006 (ed. Marc-André Roberge; iv, 6 pp.; music: pp. 1–2; with introduction and critical report); second impression, 2009.
First perf. 14 November 2002, Elizabeth Farnum (soprano), Margaret Kampmeier (piano); New York, Merkin Concert Hall.
Rec. Farnum 2002

Title **Two Piano Pieces: "In the Hothouse", "Toccata" (1918, 1920; 20 pp.) [7]**
KSS 17, 23
Dates 1918, 1920.
Duration 6:01, 3:31 = 9:34 (Habermann).
Ded. Theodore Jenkins
Ms. Unknown
Publ. London: The London and Continental Music Publishing Co., Ltd., 1921 (20 pp.). • Sorabji Archive, 2019 (ed. R. D. [Ramer Davey] Lee; [iv], 16 pp.; music: pp. 1–12; with an editor's note, acknowledgement, and "About the piece".

First perf. *In the Hothouse:* 17 May 1946, Cecil Ewing; Bristol, University of Bristol, Reception Room, Annual Concert • *Complete (thus including the first performance of "Toccata"):* 7 December 1976, Yonty Solomon; London, Wigmore Hall.
Notable perf. *First American performance of "In the Hothouse":* 11 May 1975, Michael Habermann; Oyster Bay, N.Y., Christ Church, Parish Hall.
Rec. Habermann 1980, 1989, 2003b, 2015.

Title **Concerto for Piano and Orchestra [no. 5] (1920; 144 pp.) [7]**
KSS 27
Dates {}–1 August 1920
Duration 29:00 (Amato)
Ded. Alfred Cortot
Ms. Unknown; a copyist's copy of the piano part (48 pp.), with annotations by the composer, is in a private collection; full score untraced.
Publ. London: F. and B. Goodwin Ltd (Sole distributors: J. and W. Chester Ltd.), 1923 (K.S.7; 144 pp.). Parts (312 pp.) prepared by Peter Visser for the first performance (see below).
First perf. 16 March 2003, Donna Amato, piano; Radio Symfonie Orkest, cond. Ed Spanjaard; Utrecht, Muziekcentrum Vredenburg (Rondom Kaikhosru Sorabji). Given together with the world premiere of the *Fourth Symphony for Piano Alone*.
Com. The published score has bar numbers placed every ten bars, but the first bar is "0" and the entire numbering consequently off by one. The total number of bars is 289.

Title **Sonata seconda for Piano (1920; 49 pp.) [7]**
KSS 28
Dates {}–24 December 1920
Duration 52:13 (Johnson)
Ded. Ferruccio Busoni
Ms. *Autograph:* Library of Congress, Washington, ML96.S729 (Case) • *Copy:* Staatsbibliothek zu Berlin, Mus. ms. Anlage K. Sorabji 1, copyist's copy (A. J. Collins) with annotations by the composer.
Publ. London: F. and B. Goodwin Ltd. (Sole distributors: J. and W. Chester Ltd.), 1923 (K.S.6; 63 pp.) • Sorabji Archive, 2021 (ed. William A.P.M. [William Penafiel]; [vi], 49 pp.; music: pp. 1–49; with "Editorial Notes" at the beginning and "Appendix: Alternative Readings" on three unnumbered pages at the end.
First perf. 13 January 1922, Kaikhosru Shapurji Sorabji; Vienna, Musikvereinsaal, Kammersaal.
Notable perf. 13 May 1924, Kaikhosru Shapurji Sorabji; London, Contemporary Music Centre, British Music Society • *First modern performance:* 6 December 1998, Tellef Johnson; New York, Merkin Concert Hall.
Rec. Johnson 1999

Title **Sonata III for Piano (1922; 75 pp.) [7]**
KSS 29
Dates {}–5 May 1922
Duration 87:00 (Johnson); 98:00 (Solomon; recording breaks at indicated time; supposed to last 100 minutes).

Ded. Alistair Hinton and Yonty Solomon (retrospectively and separately, namely, 1973 and 1977)
Ms. Library of Congress, Washington, ML96.S729 (Case).
Publ. London: J. Curwen and Sons Ltd. 1924 (K.S.9, Curwen Edition 999002; 78 pp.) • Sorabji Archive, 2021 (ed. R. D. [Ramer Davey] Lee; [v], 78 pp.; music: pp. 1–78; with an editor's note, acknowledgement, and "About the piece".
First perf. 16 June 1977, Yonty Solomon; London, Wigmore Hall.
Notable perf. *First broadcast performance (live):* 14 August 1987, Yonty Solomon; British Broadcasting Corporation • *First performance outside England:* 25 August 2001, Tellef Johnson; Ridgefield, Conn., Ridgefield Playhouse for Movies and the Performing Arts.
Rec. Solomon 1985

Title **Symphony [no. 1] for Piano, Large Orchestra, Chorus, and Organ (1921–22; 300 pp.) [7]**
KSS 30
Dates {}–12 February 1922 (6 September 1922 for the small percussion score)
Duration {100:00}
Ded. Madeline Matilda Worthy (Sorabji's mother)
Ms. Paul Sacher Stiftung, Basel.
Com. A previously unknown piano part in oblong format (204 pp.), on pages with twenty-eight staves plus a two-line staff at the bottom, surfaced in September 2019 and is now at the Paul Sacher Stiftung together with the full score. The cover reads "Kaikhosru Sorabji / Symphony / for / Piano and Orchestra / MCMXXI"; there is no title or date on the first page of music or at the end. The first page lists the instruments, which are not as numerous as in the final full score: piccolo, 3 flutes, oboes, clarinets, bass clarinet, bassoons, side drum, brass, xylophone, celesta, glockenspiel, harp, kettle drums, tambourine, castanets, piano, triangle, cymbals, violins I, violins II, viola, cellos, basses, big drum, gong. On p. 2 the labels at the top of the page are summarized as upper and lower winds (three staves for each), and the labelling stops completely on p. 58. Time signatures are provided on pp. 4–7, 10–13, and 17 only, and bars are usually much longer than in the full score. A note on p. 200, referring to the breath mark before the ascending arpeggio, reads "N.B. * here follows a: b. c. d: on Inlined flyleaves." The music found in the full score after this gesture on p. 295, up to the descending cascade of chords in the second bar of p. 299 of the full score, appears on pp. [200]a, 200b, [200c], and [200]d.

Title **Black Mass (1922; 0 p.) [7]**
KSS N/A
Med. Chorus and large orchestra with organ
Dates [Before 24 June 1922]–{}
Ms. Unknown

Title **Three Pastiches for Piano: Pastiche on the "Minute Waltz" by Chopin (1922; 7 pp.) [8]**
KSS 31
Dates {}–{29 September 1922}

Duration 4:19 (Habermann); 5:03 (Ullén).
Ms. *First manuscript:* International Piano Archives at Maryland, Michelle Smith Performing Arts Library, College Park, Md. • *Second manuscript:* private collection.
Publ. Bronx, N.Y. (full address crossed out and replaced with a sticker giving the city as New York): Music Treasure Publications, 1969 (ed. Donald Garvelmann; 16 pp.), as part of *Thirteen Transcriptions for Piano Solo of Chopin's Waltz in D Flat, Op. 64, No. 1 (The Minute Waltz)* • Sorabji Archive, 2005 (ed. Marc-André Roberge; viii, 36 pp.; music: pp. 1–17; with introduction and critical report); second impression, 2009 • Sorabji Archive, 2014 (ed. Marc-André Roberge; xviii, 62 pp.; music: pp. 1–32 (new edition in one volume, entitled *Three Pastiches for Piano*, with introduction and critical report; this piece is on pp. 1–15).
First perf. 21 March 1973, Neely Bruce; Urbana, Ill., University of Illinois School of Music, Urbana-Champaign Campus, Phoenix 73: New Music for Keyboard.
Rec. Habermann 1982a, 1988b, 2003b, 2015; Ullén 2000.

Title **Three Pastiches for Piano: Pastiche on the Habanera from "Carmen" by Bizet (1922; 6 pp.) [8]**
KSS 31
Dates {}–{29 September 1922}
Duration 4:37 (Habermann); 6:49 (Grante).
Ms. International Piano Archives at Maryland, Michelle Smith Performing Arts Library, College Park, Md.
Publ. Sorabji Archive, 1992 (ed. Marc-André Roberge; viii, 23 pp., music: pp. 1–11; with introduction and critical report); second impression, 2009 • Sorabji Archive, 2014 (ed. Marc-André Roberge; xviii, 62 pp.; music: pp. 1–32 (new edition in one volume, entitled *Three Pastiches for Piano*, with introduction and critical report; this piece is on pp. 16–25).
First perf. 11 May 1975, Michael Habermann; Oyster Bay, N.Y., Christ Church, Parish Hall.
Notable perf. *First performance in a major concert hall:* 22 May 1977, Michael Habermann; New York, Carnegie Hall.
Rec. Habermann 1980, 1989, 2003b, 2015; Grante 1993.

Title **Three Pastiches for Piano: Pastiche on the Hindu Merchant's Song from "Sadko" by Rimsky-Korsakov (1922; 4 pp.) [8]**
KSS 31
Dates {}–29 September 1922
Duration 4:05 (Hamelin); 4:10 (Habermann); 4:19 (Nishimura).
Ded. Christopher à Becket Williams
Ms. International Piano Archives at Maryland, Michelle Smith Performing Arts Library, College Park, Md.
Publ. Sorabji Archive, 1992 (ed. Marc-André Roberge; xi, 16 pp.; music: pp. 1–5; with introduction and critical report); second impression, 2009 • Sorabji Archive, 2014 (ed. Marc-André Roberge; xviii, 62 pp.; music: pp. 1–32 (new edition in one volume, entitled *Three Pastiches for Piano*, with introduction and critical report; this piece is on pp. 26–32).

First perf. 19 November 1984, Michael Habermann; Cleveland, Ohio, West Shore Unitarian Church, Rocky River Chamber Music Society. The first performance took place later than the recording.
Rec. Habermann 1982a, 1988b, 2003b, 2015; Hamelin 1998; Nishimura 2017.

Title **Prelude, Interlude, and Fugue for Piano (1920, 1922; 17 pp.) [8]**
KSS 25
Dates {}–27 February 1920 ("Fugue"), 6 October 1922 ("Interlude").
Duration 2:34, 5:45, 5:51 = 14:10 (Habermann).
Ded. Richard Henry Brittain
Cont. Three sections
Ms. Unknown
Publ. London: J. Curwen and Sons Ltd., 1924 (K.S.8, Curwen Edition 909001; 17 pp.).
First perf. 28 September 1982, Michael Habermann; Baltimore; Peabody Institute, Leakin Hall.
Notable perf. *First performance on a distant continent:* 11 April 1990, Martin Offord; Adelaide, Australia; University of Adelaide, Edler Conservatorium of Music.
Rec. Habermann 1987, 2003b, 2015.

Title **Concerto for Piano and Orchestra [no. III [no. 6] (1922; 144 pp.) [8]**
KSS 32
Dates {}–16 December 1922
Duration {35:00}
Ded. Bernard Bromage (partly obliterated)
Cont. Three movements
Ms. Paul Sacher Stiftung, Basel.

Title **Opusculum for Orchestra (1923; 36 pp.) [8]**
KSS 34
Dates {}–19 May 1923
Duration 17:00 (sound file by René)
Ded. John Ireland
Ms. Paul Sacher Stiftung, Basel.
Publ. Private edition prepared as part of the work of an M.A. thesis (Université Laval, Québec), 2000 (ed. Benjamin René; 56 pp.) • Sorabji Archive, 2014 (ed. Frazer Jarvis; [iii], 31 pp.; editorial notes and editorial issues, 6 pp.; a set of parts is available).
Com. In *SCC*, 125 ("Instr'n"), the instrument "org" should read "org pedal".

Title **Le jardin parfumé—Poem for Piano Solo (1923; 16 pp.) [8]**
KSS 35
Trans. The Perfumed Garden
Dates {}–1923
Duration 21:07 (Sorabji); 19:01 (Habermann); 26:51 (Solomon).
Ded. Christopher à Becket Williams
Ms. Northwestern University, Evanston, Ill., Mss 3 (control no. ILNG85-A999)

Publ. London: J. Curwen and Sons Ltd., 1927 (K.S.14, Curwen Edition 999.019; 17 pp.) • Sorabji Archive, 2014 (ed. Jonathan Powell; 21 pp.).

First perf. 22 April 1930, Kaikhosru Shapurji Sorabji; London, British Broadcasting Corporation).

Notable perf. *First modern performance:* 7 December 1976, Yonty Solomon; London, Wigmore Hall • *First American performance:* 19 December 1979, Michael Habermann; Greenvale, N.Y., Post College, Great Hall • *First modern performance of solo piano music by Sorabji in India:* 17 April 2015, Karl Lutchmayer; Mumbai, National Centre for the Performing Arts, Conversational Concert.

Rec. Sorabji 1965; Habermann 1982a, 1983 (excerpt), 1988b, 2003b, 2015; Solomon 1992.

Com.: Sorabji played in Bombay on 19 October and 7 December 1932 (and possibly also on an unknown date in 1933); the content of these performances is unknown. The notable performance of 17 April 2015 may therefore have been the first time that any of his solo piano music was played by someone other than himself. Four songs (*Crépuscule du soir mystique*, *Arabesque*, *Pantomime*, *L'heure exquise*) had already been performed in Mumbai, on 5 January 2014, by Patricia Rozario (soprano) and Parvesh Java (piano) in a programme entitled "The Exquisite Hour: Introducing Sorabji" at the National Gallery of Modern Art, with Lutchmayer reading from *Around Music* and *Mi contra fa*.

Title **Cinque sonetti di Michelagniolo Buonarroti (1923; 40 pp.) [8]**

KSS 36

Trans. Five Sonnets of Michelangelo Buonarroti

Med. Baritone and small orchestra

Dates {}–16 December 1923

Duration 11:15 (sound file by Roberge); 13:15 (New Music Concerts).

Author Michelangelo Buonarroti

Cont. Five movements

Ms. Paul Sacher Stiftung, Basel.

Publ. Paul Rapoport (McMaster University), 1980 (parts only) • Sorabji Archive, 2005; second impression, 2009 (ed. Marc-André Roberge; x, 90 pp.; music: pp. 1–66; with introduction and critical report; a set of parts is available); second edition, 2022 (xii, 96 pp.; music: pp. 1–66).

First perf. 2 February 1980, Henry Ingram (baritone), New Music Concerts Ensemble, Robert Aitken (conductor); Toronto, Ont., University of Toronto, Walter Hall, New Music Concerts.

Second perf. 11 March 2023, Andrew Garland (baritone), Wild Beautiful Orchestra, cond. Taylor Gonzales; Central Presbyterian Church, Denver, Colo., Into the Spotlight: Composers of Color—Revueltas, Léon, Sorabji.

Com. The poems set to music are: (1) "Tu sa' ch'i'so, signor mie, che tu sai" (You know that I know, my lord), (2) "Non so se s'è la desïata luce" (I do not know if it's the wished-for light), (3) "A che più debb'i'omai l'intensa voglia" (Where should I let loose still more my keen longing), (4) "Veggio nel tuo bel viso, signor mio" (I see within your beautiful face, my lord), and (5) "Se nel volto per gli occhi il cor si vede" (Since through the eyes the heart's seen in the face).

Title	**Concerto per pianoforte e piccola orchestra, "Simorg-Anka" [no. 7] (1924; 100 pp.) [8]**
KSS	38
Trans.	Concerto for Piano and Small Orchestra, "Simorg-Anka" [no. 7]
Dates	{}–10 August 1924 (piano line), 3 October 1924 (whole score).
Duration	9:44, 7:58, 9:42 = 27:24 (sound file of Powell's edition by David Hackbridge Johnson)
Ded.	Havelock Ellis; dedication to Norman P. Gentieu added in 1952.
Cont.	Three movements
Ms.	Special Collections Research Center, Syracuse University, Syracuse, N.Y. (no call number used).
Publ.	Sorabji Archive, 2020 (ed. Jonathan Powell; 118 pp.).

Title	**Symphony [no. 1] for Organ (1924; 81 pp.) [8]**
KSS	39
Dates	{}–17 December 1924
Duration	34:36, 36:25, 46:53 = 117:54 (Bowyer).
Ded.	Emily Edroff-Smith
Cont.	Three movements (three, four, and five sections)
Ms.	Library of Congress, Washington, ML96.S729 (Case).
Publ.	London: J. Curwen and Sons Ltd., 1925 (K.S.13, Curwen Edition 909.009; 105 pp.) • Sorabji Archive, 1988 (ed. Kevin Bowyer; corrected copy of publication on the basis of the manuscript and of a copy annotated by the composer) • Sorabji Archive, 2013 (ed. Kevin Bowyer; xxiii, 142 pp.; music: pp. 1–92; with "General Preface", dated May 2014, and editorial notes.
First perf.	*Second movement:* 17 May 1928, E. Emlyn Davies; London, Westminster Congregational Church • *Complete:* 25 July 1987, Kevin Bowyer (first and third movements) and Thomas Trotter (second movement); London, Holy Trinity Church, International Congress of Organists.
Notable perf.	*First performance by a single person:* 28 April 1988, Kevin Bowyer; Århus, Århus Cathedral (Bowyer 1988b).
Rec.	Bowyer 1988a, Bowyer 1988b.

Title	**Valse-fantaisie for Piano (1925; 16 pp.) [8]**
KSS	40
Trans.	Waltz-Fantasy for Piano
Dates	{}–17 April 1925
Duration	15:27 (Habermann)
Ded.	H. Vincent Marrot
Ms.	Library of Congress, Washington, ML96.S729 (Case).
Publ.	London: J. Curwen and Sons Ltd., 1927 (K.S.15, Curwen Edition 909.018; 33 pp.) • Sorabji Archive, 1993 (ed. Chris Rice and Donna Amato; corrected copy of publication).
First perf.	28 September 1982, Michael Habermann; Baltimore, Peabody Institute, Leakin Hall.
Notable perf.	21 October 1993, Donna Amato; New York, St. Peter's Lutheran Church, Lexington Avenue.
Rec.	Habermann 1987, 2003b, 2015.

Title **Variazioni e fuga triplice sopra "Dies irae" per pianoforte (1923–26; 201 pp.) [9]**
KSS 41
Trans. Variations and Triple Fugue on "Dies irae" for Pianoforte
Dates January 1923–March 1926
Duration {220:00}
Ded. Ferruccio Busoni; inscription to Alistair Hinton added ca. 1978.
Cont. Three *partes* (theme and 64 variations, triple fugue)
Ms. Paul Sacher Stiftung, Basel.
Com. In *SCC*, 128 (under "Title, date" and "Transl'n), the ligature *æ* is used in "irae".

Title **Fragment: Prelude and Fugue on FxAxx DAxEx (1926; 3 pp.) [9]**
KSS 41a
Med. Piano
Dates {}–15 July 1926
Duration {2:00}
Ded. Frank G. Davey
Ms. Private collection
Publ. Sorabji Archive, 2004 (ed. Richard Younger; 2 pp.) • Sorabji Archive, 2013 (ed. Lukas Huisman; [ii], 2 pp.; with introduction and critical report).
First perf. 22 April 2007, Jonathan Powell; Twickenham, Oceanic Studios.
Com. This work was discovered in 2004 and is therefore missing from *SCC*.

Title **Trois poèmes du "Gulistān" de Saʿdī (1926, rev. 1930; 16 pp.) [9]**
KSS 42
Trans. Three Poems from "The Rose Garden" by Saʿdī
Med. Voice and piano
Dates {}–12 July 1926 (first song), {}–27 September 1926 (third song), {}–27 September 1926 and 13 April 1930 (second manuscript).
Duration 4:00, 3:50, 7:00 = 14:50 (Clark).
Author Abū Abdiʾllah Mušarrifuʾd-Dīn Ibn Muṣliḥud-Dīn Saʿdī: "La lampe", "La jalousie", "La fidélité".
Ded. Erik Chisholm
Ms. *Autograph:* Paul Sacher Stiftung, Basel • *Fragmentary manuscript:* University of Cape Town, Manuscripts and Archives Department, TP 780.3 SOR 70/713 (stamped 26 October 1970 at the bottom of p. 16).
Publ. Sorabji Archive, 1991 (ed. David Wolfson; 9, 7, 9 pp.).
First perf. 10 April 1999, Peter Clark (baritone), Christopher Berg (piano); Santa Fe, Calif., College of Santa Fe, Southwest Annex. The concert, which was entitled "An Evening of Music and Theater about Music (and Other Things)", also included *De Chirico, Sorabji and Me: A Free Ramble on the Lives and Works of Giorgio De Chirico (1888–1977), Italian Painter, and Kaikhosru Shapurji Sorabji (1892–1988), Parsi/Spanish/Sicilian Composer, Written, Designed and Performed by Christopher Berg, with Texts*

Drawn from the Writings of De Chirico and Sorabji, and Music by Sorabji and G. A. Rossini.

Notable perf. 5 March 2019, Jeremy Huw Williams (baritone), Paula Fan (piano); Concert Room, Block Grove B, Middlesex University, The Burroughs, London.

Title **L'irrémédiable (1927; 8 pp.) [9]**
KSS 44
Trans. The Irremediable
Med. Voice and piano
Dates {}–16 February 1927
Duration 6:10 (Farnum)
Author Charles Baudelaire
Ded. Blanche Marchesi
Ms. Paul Sacher Stiftung, Basel.
Publ. Sorabji Archive, 1993 (ed. Marc-André Roberge; vi, 18 pp., music: pp. 1–11; with introduction and critical report); second impression, 2009.
First perf. 14 November 2002, Elizabeth Farnum (soprano), Margaret Kampmeier (piano); New York, Merkin Concert Hall.
Rec. Farnum 2002

Title **Concerto V for Piano and Large Orchestra [no. 8] (1927–28; 344 pp.) [9]**
KSS 45
Dates {}–12 February 1928 (large score), 20 March 1928 (small percussion score).
Duration {100:00}
Ded. Aldo Solito De Solis
Cont. Three movements, the third of which comprises a passacaglia with 48 variations.
Ms. Paul Sacher Stiftung, Basel (full score and solo part).

Title **Toccata [no. 1] for Piano (1928; 66 pp.) [9]**
KSS 46
Dates {}–6 June 1928
Duration 45:00 (Sorabji's estimate); 74:55 (Powell).
Ded. Bernard Bromage; obliterated and replaced with Frank Holliday in 1964.
Cont. Five movements
Ms. The William Ready Division of Archives and Research Collections, Mills Memorial Library, McMaster University, Hamilton, Ont., LB 114, 12R, c-d, box 9, item #1.
Publ. Sorabji Archive, 2001 (ed. Richard Younger [credited only on the cover]; 85 pp.).
First perf. 18 December 2001, Jonathan Powell; London, British Music Information Centre.
Rec. Powell 2003

Title **Nocturne, "Jāmī" (1928; 28 pp.) [9]**
KSS 47
Med. Piano
Dates {}–15 November 1928

Duration	21:10 (Habermann, Élan); 22:00 (Sorabji); 22:10 (Habermann, Musical Heritage Society); 26:51 (Powell).
Ded.	Reginald Norman Best
Ms.	Paul Sacher Stiftung, Basel.
Publ.	Sorabji Archive, 1994 (ed. Charles Hopkins; handwritten; 70 pp.) • Private publication, 1999 (ed. Michael Habermann and Christian Jensen; 61 pp.) • Sorabji Archive, 2004 (ed. Jonathan Powell; 26 pp.).
First perf.	16 January 1930, Kaikhosru Shapurji Sorabji; London, Westminster Congregational Church.
Notable perf.	29 April 1931, Kaikhosru Shapurji Sorabji; Glasgow, Stevenson Hall, Active Society for the Propagation of Contemporary Music • *First performance in the United Kingdom since 1931:* 20 February 2004, Jonathan Powell; London, St. Cyprian's Church.
Rec.	Sorabji 1965; Habermann 1982a, 1988a, 1995, 2003b, 2015; Powell 2007a.

Title	**Sonata IV for Piano (1928–29; 111 pp.) [9]**
KSS	48
Dates	November 1928–22 March 1929
Duration	120:00 (Sorabji's estimate); 47:45, 35:47, 55:55 = 139:26 (Powell).
Ded.	Francis George Scott
Cont.	Three movements, the third of which comprises five sections.
Ms.	Paul Sacher Stiftung, Basel.
Publ.	Sorabji Archive, 2004 (ed. Simon Abrahams; 129 pp.).
First perf.	1 April 1930, Kaikhosru Shapurji Sorabji; Glasgow, Stevenson Hall, Fourth Concert of National Music.
Notable perf.	*First modern performance:* 25 July 2002, Jonathan Powell; London, The Warehouse (Theed Street).
Rec.	Powell 2004a
Com.	In *SCC*, 133 ("Cont., pag."), the pages for the "Coda-Stretta" should read "103–111" instead of "102–111". On p. 433, the venue is given as Active Society for the Propagation of Contemporary Music, which was founded around June 1930; the concert was, however, organized by Erik Chisholm.

Title	**Toccatinetta sopra C.G.F. (1929; 8 pp.) [9]**
KSS	49
Trans.	Small Toccata on C.G.F.
Med.	Piano
Dates	{}–24 June 1929
Duration	8:01 (Amato)
Ded.	Clinton Gray-Fisk
Cont.	Three sections, the second of which is a passacaglia with 33 variations.
Ms.	Private collection
Publ.	Sorabji Archive, 1992 (ed. Donna Amato; handwritten; 15 pp.) • Sorabji Archive, 2013 (ed. Frazer Jarvis; 10 pp.).
First perf.	16 September 1992, Donna Amato; London, British Music Information Centre.
Rec.	Amato 1993b

Title **Introduction, Passacaglia, Cadenza, and Fugue (1929; compl. Alexander Abercrombie, 2004; 79 pp.) [9]**
KSS 48a
Med. Piano
Dates [Before 25 December 1929]–[After January 1932]
Duration 75:00 (Abercrombie's estimate of completed version)
Ded. Ferruccio Busoni (in memory of; dedication by Abercrombie)
Cont. Four sections
Ms. Paul Sacher Stiftung, Basel (Sorabji's original only).
Publ. Sorabji Archive, 2005 (ed. Alexander Abercrombie; 79 pp.).
Com. The work is given as *Passacaglia* in *SCC*, 135, and consists of 41 pages. As written by Sorabji, it breaks during var. 76. It was completed by Alexander Abercrombie on 26 December 2004 under the title *Introduction, Passacaglia, Cadenza, and Fugue* (pp. 1–6, 7–50, 51–56, 57–79), and subtitled "An edition and completion of Sorabji's unfinished *Passacaglia* for piano solo"; in this form it is dedicated "Ferruccio Busoni in memoriam". Abercrombie extended the "Passacaglia" to 81 variations, as opposed to Sorabji's suggestion that it should contain 100 variations.

Title **Music for "Faust" (ca. 1930; 0 p.) [9]**
KSS N/A
Med. Unknown (probably includes chorus)
Dates [5 April 1930]–[After 6 June 1932]
Ms. Unknown

Title **Opus clavicembalisticum (1929–30; 253 pp.) [10]**
KSS 50
Trans. Work for Keyboard
Med. Piano
Dates [Before 25 December 1929]–25 June 1930
Duration 2:15, 10:56 (Habermann, Musical Heritage Society; first two sections).
Pars prima: 2:55, 13:51, 10:51, 5:35, 15:06 = 48:18 • *Pars altera:* 47:46, 4:25, 32:23 = 84:34 • *Pars tertia:* 53:36, 2:49, 33:42, 7:17 = 97:24 • *Total* = 230:16 (Geoffrey Douglas Madge, Royal Conservatory Series).
Pars prima: 3:03, 13:33, 12:06, 5: 35, 15:30 = 49:47 • *Pars altera:* 44:44, 4:40, 33:18 = 82:42 • *Pars tertia:* 57:17, 3:04, 33:18, 7:30 = 101:09 • *Total* = 243:23 (Geoffrey Douglas Madge, BIS).
Pars prima: 2:49, 13:20, 12:37, 4:20, 18:07 = 51:13 • *Pars altera:* 58:10, 4:23, 45:17 = 107:50; *Pars tertia:* 72:59, 3:05, 51:52 (sections 11 and 12) = 127:56 • *Total* = 283:29 (John Ogdon, Altarus Records, second edition).
Pars prima: 2:36, 13:00, 11:40, 5:29, 19:17 = 52:02 • *Pars altera:* 44:41, 4:40, 44:36 = 93:57 • *Pars tertia:* 55:51, 2:58, 46:33 = 105:22 • *Total:* 251:21 (Jonathan Powell, Merkin Concert Hall).
Ded. Christopher Murray Grieve (pseud. Hugh MacDiarmid)
Cont. Three *partes* (five, three, four sections, including four fugues, a theme with 49 variations, and a passacaglia with 81 variations).

Ms. University of Cape Town, Manuscripts and Archives Department, TPA 781.4 SOR 73/175; BCZA86/1 (microfilm).

Publ. London: J. Curwen and Sons Ltd., 1931 (K.S.16, Curwen Edition 909021; 248 pp.). For a partial list, see Michael Edwards, *List of Possible Errors in Opus Clavicembalisticum by Kaikhosru Shapurji Sorabji* (last modified: 4 October 2002; http://www.foxall.com.au/users/mje/OpusClav.htm).

First perf. 1 December 1930, Kaikhosru Shapurji Sorabji; Glasgow, Stevenson Hall, Active Society for the Propagation of Contemporary Music.

Notable perf. *First performance (limited to pars prima) by a pianist other than the composer:* 10 March 1936, John Tobin; London, Cowdray Hall, London Contemporary Music Centre, British Section of the International Society for Contemporary Music.

First complete modern performance: 11 June 1982, Geoffrey Douglas Madge; Utrecht, Muziekcentrum Vredenburg, Holland Festival. Simultaneous broadcast on Nederlandse Omroepprogramma Stichting.

First complete performance in North America: 24 April 1983, Geoffrey Douglas Madge; Chicago, University of Chicago, Mandel Hall, Contemporary Concerts.

First complete performance in Germany: 10 May 1983, Geoffrey Douglas Madge; Bonn, Beethovenhalle.

First performance in Canada: 9 November 1984; Geoffrey Douglas Madge; Montréal, Que., Redpath Hall, McGill University.

First complete performance in England: 14 July 1988, John Ogdon; London, Queen Elizabeth Hall.

First performance in France: 9 October 1988, Geoffrey Douglas Madge; Paris, Opéra Comique.

First complete performance since 1988: 12 March 2002, Geoffrey Douglas Madge; Berlin, Konzertsaal der Universität der Künste.

First performance in England since 1988: 16 September 2003, Jonathan Powell; London, Purcell Room.

First performance in Belgium: 7 March 2004, Daan Vandewalle; Bruges, Concertgebouw.

First performance in the United States since 1983: 20 June 2004, Jonathan Powell; New York, Merkin Concert Hall.

First performance in Finland: 12 March 2005, Jonathan Powell; Helsinki, Opera House, Almi Hall.

First performance in Russia: 17 March 2005, Jonathan Powell; St. Petersburg, Sheremetevsky Palace.

First performance in Spain: 27 February 2009, Daan Vandewalle; Madrid, Auditorio Nacional.

First complete performance in Japan: 28 August 2017, Hiroaki Ooi; Tokyo University of the Arts School of Music, Second Hall.

First performance in Scotland since the composer's: 6 October 2017, Jonathan Powell; University of Glasgow, Concert Hall 13.

First performance in Central Europe: 13 November 2017, Jonathan Powell; Brno, Janáčkova akademie múzických umění v Brně (Janáček Academy of Music and Performing Arts in Brno), Concert Hall.

Rec. Madge 1980 (sections 1 and 2); Habermann 1980, 1983 (section 1), 1986 (section 1 and excerpt from section 2); Madge 1983, 1999; Ogdon 1989, 2004.
Com. Peter Maxwell Davies orchestrated the first two movements in the mid-1950s; the whereabouts of what is referred to in the catalogues of his works as J.41 or WoO41 are unknown.

Title **Symphony no. 0 for Piano Solo (1930–31; 333 pp.) [11]**
KSS 51
Dates [3 April 1930]–18 June 1931
Duration {320:00}
Ded. Written for Erik Chisholm, but includes a dedication to Alistair Hinton, added in 1975.
Cont. Three movements (five, four, four sections), including a theme with 64 variations
Ms. Paul Sacher Stiftung, Basel.
Publ. Sorabji Archive, 2019 (ed. Abel Sánchez-Aguilera; 2 unnumbered pages, ii, 458 pp.
Com. In *SCC*, 136 ("Title, date"), the title is given as *Symphony II for Piano, Large Orchestra, Organ, Final Chorus, and Six Solo Voices*, but consists of only a piano part, which explains the new (editorial) title.

Title **Movement for Voice and Piano (1927, 1931; 9 pp.) [11]**
KSS 52
Med. Wordless voice and piano
Dates [1927; work resumed before 18 September 1931]–28 September 1931
Duration Ca. 8:00 (Farnum); ca. 11:30 (sound file by Abrahams).
Ded. Madeline Matilda Worthy (Sorabji's mother)
Ms. Paul Sacher Stiftung, Basel.
Publ. Sorabji Archive, 2001 (ed. Simon Abrahams; 16 pp.).
First perf. 3 May 2015, Ariadne Greif (soprano), Jason Wirth (piano); New York, St. Mark's Church-in-the-Bowery.

Title **Second Symphony for Organ (1929–32; 350 pp.) [12]**
KSS 53
Dates [Before 25 December 1929]–2 May 1932
Duration 80:00, 270:00, 190:00 = 540:00 (Bowyer).
Ded. E. Emlyn Davies
Cont. Three movements (the third of which comprises four sections, including a triple fugue).
Ms. Paul Sacher Stiftung, Basel.
Publ. Sorabji Archive, 1991 (ed. Kevin Bowyer; handwritten, 396 pp.) • Sorabji Archive, 2014 (ed. Kevin Bowyer; xxiii, 439 pp.; music: pp. 1–301; with "General Preface", dated May 2014, and editorial notes). The "Toccata" from the third movement (24 pp.) is also offered as a separate publication.
First perf. *First movement:* 22 November 1994, Kevin Bowyer; Warwick, Collegiate Church of St. Mary • *Third movement:* Kevin Bowyer; International Organ Festival, University of Glasgow, Memorial Chapel, Glasgow Pipeworks 9, 7 June 2009 • *Complete:* 6 June

2010, Kevin Bowyer; International Organ Festival, University of Glasgow, Memorial Chapel.

Notable perf. *Second performance of the first movement:* 3 February 2008, Kevin Bowyer; University of Glasgow, Memorial Chapel • *First performance of any organ music by Sorabji in North America*: 10 February 2017, Kevin Bowyer; Iowa City, University of Iowa, Voxman Music Building (second movement limited to vars. 1–22).

Com. The 2014 edition includes a section entitled "Appendices to the Middle Movement (Thema cum variationibus)" prepared by Kevin Bowyer between 2010 and 2014 (pp. 299–309), consisting of "Appendix A: Variation XXII for instruments without sustaining devices" (pp. 300–301), "Appendix B: Varation XXIX arranged for a single keyboard and pedals" (pp. 302–5), and "Appendix C: Variation XLI edited for performance on three keyboards and pedal" (pp. 306–9). Explanatory notes for the appendices are provided on pp. 354, 365, and 380, respectively.

Title **Quintet II for Piano and String Quartet (1932–33; 432 pp.) [12]**
KSS 54
Dates [10 August 1932]–24 June 1933 (piano line), 12 July 1933 (string lines).
Duration {240:00}
Ded. Denis Saurat; inscription to Mervyn Vicars added in 1969.
Cont. Four movements (three, two, one, four sections), the second of which comprises a theme with 100 variations).
Ms. Private collection
Publ. Sorabji Archive, 2007 (ed. Alexander Abercrombie; 459 pp.).

Title **Fantasia ispanica (1933; 54 pp.) [12]**
KSS 55
Trans. Spanish Fantasy
Med. Piano
Dates {}–30 July 1933
Duration 4:19, 15:49, 12:14, 24:27, 7:08 = 63:57 (Powell).
Ded. Alec Rowley
Cont. Five movements
Ms. Paul Sacher Stiftung, Basel.
Publ. Sorabji Archive, 2002 (ed. Jonathan Powell; 64 pp.).
First perf. 26 October 2001, Jonathan Powell; London, London University, King's College, Great Hall.
Rec. Powell 2004b

Title **Pasticcio capriccioso sopra l'op. 64, no 1 del Chopin (1933; 8 pp.) [12]**
KSS 56
Trans. Capricious Pastiche on op. 64, no. 1, of Chopin
Med. Piano
Dates {}–13 August 1933
Duration 4:13 (Habermann); 4:11 (Ullén).

Ded. Madeline Matilda Worthy; Donald Garvelmann (added some time in or after 1969).
Ms. Paul Sacher Stiftung, Basel.
Publ. Sorabji Archive, 1994 (ed. Marc-André Roberge; ix, 28 pp.; music: pp. 1–17; with introduction and critical report); second impression, 2009.
First perf. 21 March 1998, Michael Habermann; Sollentuna, Sollentuna Centrum, Amorinasalen Bibliotekshuset, Franz Liszt Festival.
Rec. Ullén 2000, Habermann 2003a.

Title **Toccata seconda per pianoforte (1933–34; 111 pp.) [12]**
KSS 57
Trans. Second Toccata for Piano
Dates [Before 22 August 1933]–21 March 1934
Duration 60:00, 90:00 (Sorabji's estimates); 60:00 (reviews of the first performance); 15:11, 17:27, 10:26, 11:36, 21:50, 14:18, 8:03, 4:23, 32:28, 10:10 = 145:52 (recording by Abel Sánchez-Aguilera).
Ded. Norman Peterkin
Cont. Nine movements, including a theme and 49 variations and a fugue.
Ms. *Complete manuscript:* The William Ready Division of Archives and Research Collections, Mills Memorial Library, McMaster University, Hamilton, Ont., LB 114, 12R, c-d, box 9, item #1 • *Fragmentary manuscript:* Paul Sacher Stiftung, Basel.
Publ. Sorabji Archive, 2004 (ed. Alexander Abercrombie; 164 pp.).
First perf. 16 December 1936, Kaikhosru Shapurji Sorabji; Glasgow, Stevenson Hall, Active Society for the Propagation of Contemporary Music.
Notable perf. *First performance in the United States and first performance since 1936:* 13 March 2016, Donna Amato; Pittsburgh, Pa., Carnegie Mellon University, College of Fine Arts, Alumni Concert Hall • *First performance in Europe since 1936:* 12 January 2019, Abel Sánchez-Aguilera, Sala Eutherpe, Léon, Spain.
Rec. Sánchez 2020
Com. The fragmentary manuscript corresponds to pp. 57–98 (numbered 57–87 due to the use of more staff lines per page) of the complete manuscript.

Title **Sonata V (Opus archimagicum) (1934–35; 336 pp.) [12]**
KSS 58
Trans. Sonata V (Work of the Arch-Mage)
Med. Piano
Dates {}–29 May 1935
Duration *Pars prima:* 50:17, 5:49, 31:15, 52:35 = 139:56 • *Pars altera:* 63:19, 60:11 = 123:30 • *Pars tertia et ultima:* 13:10, 31:19, 3:00, 80:17 = 127:46 • *Total:* 391:12 (as yet unreleased recording by Tellef Johnson).
Ded. Clinton Gray-Fisk
Cont. Three *partes* (four, two, four sections), including a triple fugue.
Ms. Paul Sacher Stiftung, Basel.
Publ. Sorabji Archive, 2009 (ed. Alexander Abercrombie; 432 pp.).
First perf. *Movements 8 and 9* ("Preludio-corale sopra "Dies irae", "Cadenza"): 6 November 2022, Tellef Johnson; Jeannik Méquet Littlefield Concert Hall, Mills College, Oakland, Calif.

Title **Fragment Written for Harold Rutland (1926, 1928, 1937; 2 pp.) [14]**
KSS 43
Med. Piano
Dates {}–10 October 1926 (1926 version), 26 March 1928 (1928 version), 7 June 1937 (1937 version).
Duration 2:44 (Habermann)
Ded. Harold Rutland
Ms. *1926 and 1928 versions:* Jerwood Library of the Performing Arts, Trinity College of Music, London, MS/MISC 25, MS/MISC 26 • *1937 version:* Paul Sacher Stiftung, Basel.
Publ. Sorabji Archive, 1993 (ed. Marc-André Roberge; xii, 22 pp.; music: pp. 1–14; with introduction and critical report; includes the three versions); second impression, 2009 • Michael Habermann (unpublished edition of the 1937 version, co-edited with Christian Jensen).
First perf. *1926 version:* 12 October 1927, Harold Rutland; London, Aeolian Hall • *1928 version:* 21 March 2003, Karl Lutchmayer; London, Trinity College of Music • *1937 version:* 15 April 1978, Michael Habermann; Greenvale, N.Y., Post College, Great Hall.
Notable perf. *First performance of all three versions in one recital:* 21 March 2003, Karl Lutchmayer; London, Trinity College of Music.
Rec. Habermann 1980, 1989, 2003b, 2015 (1937 version).
Com. Counted as one work.

Title **Symphonic Variations for Piano (1935–37; 484 pp.) [14]**
KSS 59
Dates 1935–30 August 1937
Duration {600:00}
Ded. Edward Clarke Ashworth (as mentioned by the composer in 1985)
Cont. Three volumes consisting of a theme and 81 variations, including a passacaglia with 100 variations and a triple fugue.
Ms. Paul Sacher Stiftung, Basel.
Publ. Sorabji Archive, 2022 (ed. Frazer Jarvis; [iv], 693 [numbered], 42 [unnumbered]; music: pp. 1–693). Begins with an "Editorial introduction" (p. [ii]) and a list of contents (p. [iii]); ends with "The typesetting of *Symphonic Variations*" (dated 30 August 2022; 1 unnumbered page), "Editorial comments" (39 unnumbered pages in two columns), and a table showing the first and last pages in both manuscript and edition, along with the number of noteheads (362,181).
First perf. *Var. 34* ("Quasi rāg indiana"): 6 November 2022, Tellef Johnson; Jeannik Méquet Littlefield Concert Hall, Mills College, Oakland, Calif. • *Var. 56* ("Allusion to the finale of B-flat minor Sonata of Chopin"): 7 and 8 October 2011, Chappell Kingsland; Bloomington, Indiana University Ballet Theater, Musical Arts Center; played as (partial) music for a performance of *Dear Frédéric* by choreographer Dwight Rhoden presented by the Indiana University Ballet Theater, part of a production entitled *Steps in Time*.
Rec. Habermann 2003a (var. 56 only).

Com. Vol. 1 also exists in a version for piano and orchestra as *Symphonic Variations for Piano and Orchestra* (1935–37, 1953–56; 540 pp.), which title is used in *SCC*, 158 ("Title, date").

Title **Tāntrik Symphony for Piano Alone (1938–39; 284 pp.) [14]**
KSS 60
Dates [Before 6 July 1938]–4 December 1939
Duration {270:00}
Ded. Erik Chisholm
Cont. Seven movements, including a quintuple fugue.
Ms. Paul Sacher Stiftung, Basel.
Publ. Sorabji Archive, 2015 (ed. Abel Sánchez-Aguilera; 4 unnumbered pages, 447 pp., critical report on pp. i–xxxvi at the end, with two logical pages on each physical page).

Title **Transcription in the Light of Harpsichord Technique for the Modern Piano of the Chromatic Fantasia of J. S. Bach, Followed by a Fugue (1940; 15 pp.) [15]**
KSS 61
Dates {}–26 March 1940
Duration 9:36, 5:19 = 14:55 (Habermann).
Ded. Emily Edroff-Smith
Cont. Two sections, including a fugue (BWV 948 rather than the one that is part of BWV 903).
Ms. Paul Sacher Stiftung, Basel.
Publ. Sorabji Archive, 1993 (ed. Marc-André Roberge; ix, 41 pp.; music: pp. 1–29; with introduction and critical report); second impression, 2009.
First perf. 15 April 1978, Michael Habermann; Greenvale, N.Y., Post College, Great Hall.
Notable perf. 21 March 1998, Michael Habermann; Sollentuna, Sollentuna Centrum, Amorinasalen Bibliotekshuset, Franz Liszt Festival.
Rec. Habermann 2003a

Title **"Quaere reliqua hujus materiei inter secretiora" (1940; 16 pp.) [15]**
KSS 62
Trans. "Seek the Rest of This Matter among the More Private Things"
Med. Piano
Dates {}–30 May 1940
Duration 13:00 (Sorabji); 16:55 (Habermann); 20:23 (Amato).
Ded. Edward Nason
Ms. Paul Sacher Stiftung, Basel.
Publ. Sorabji Archive, 1993 (ed. Chris Rice; handwritten; 32 pp.) • Sorabji Archive, 2013 (ed. Frazer Jarvis; 22 pp.).
First perf. 21 March 1993, Donna Amato; New York, St. Peter's Lutheran Church.
Rec. Sorabji 1962c; Amato 1993b; Habermann 1995.
Com. In *SCC*, 147 (under "Title, date"), the ligature *æ* is used in "Quaere".

Title **"Gulistān"—Nocturne for Piano (1940; 28 pp.) [15]**
KSS 63
Trans. "The Rose Garden"—Nocturne for Piano
Dates [Before 6 January 1940]–13 August 1940
Duration 19:21 (Solomon); 22:15, 25:00 (Sorabji); 28:55 (Habermann, private performance); 29:38 (Habermann); 35:25 (Hopkins); 35:35 (Powell).
Ded. Frank Holliday; obliterated and replaced in 1979 by a dedication to Harold Morland.
Ms. Paul Sacher Stiftung, Basel.
Publ. Sorabji Archive, 1993 (ed. Marc-André Hamelin; handwritten; 54 pp.) • Typeset copy of Hamelin's edition by Richard Younger, 2000 (unpublished, 63 pp.) • Sorabji Archive, 2012 (ed. Jonathan Powell; 28 pp.).
First perf. 13 December 1970, Kaikhosru Shapurji Sorabji; New York, WNCN, broadcast of "The Composer Sorabji".
Notable perf. *First public performance:* 22 November 1977, Yonty Solomon; London, Wigmore Hall • *First performance in the United States:* 8 August 1993, Michael Habermann; Washington, Catholic University of America, American Liszt Society Festival.
Rec. Sorabji 1962c; Solomon 1979; Habermann 1995, 2003b, 2015; Hopkins 1995; Powell 2005.

Title **St. Bertrand de Comminges: "He was laughing in the tower" (1941; 16 pp.) [15]**
KSS 64
Med. Piano
Dates {}–26 August 1941
Duration 13:00 (Sorabji); 18:49 (Powell); 20:12 (Habermann); 22:54 (Amato).
Ded. Edward Nason
Ms. Private collection
Publ. Sorabji Archive, 1992 (ed. Chris Rice; handwritten; 42 pp.) • Sorabji Archive, 2014 (ed. Jonathan Powell; 18 pp.).
First perf. 22 November 1977, Yonty Solomon; London, Wigmore Hall.
Rec. Sorabji 1962; Solomon 1987a; Habermann 1987, 2003b, 2015; Amato 1994; Powell 2007.
Com. This work exists in a two-piano version (59 pp., with pencil additions and emendations; around 1956) by Erik Chisholm); the manuscript is at the University of Cape Town, Manuscripts and Archives Department (Transcription Box 3 folder 11).

Title **Trois poèmes (1941; 13 pp.) [15]**
KSS 65
Trans. Three Poems
Med. Voice and piano
Dates 8 August 1941–9 August 1941; {}–6 October 1941; {}–10 October 1941.
Duration 1:31, 3:01, 2:33 = 7:05 (Farnum).
Author Paul Verlaine: "Le faune"; Charles Baudelaire: "Les chats"; Paul Verlaine: "La dernière fête galante".
Ded. Jim Cooper and Joy McArden Cooper

Ms. Paul Sacher Stiftung, Basel.

Publ. Sorabji Archive, [1988] (ed. Alistair Hinton; handwritten; 4, 7, 7 pp.); the edition was prepared in 1979 and approved by the composer • Sorabji Archive, 2007 (ed. Marc-André Roberge; viii, 36 pp.; music: pp. 1–22; with an introduction and a critical report); second impression, 2009; second edition, 2021 (ix, 37 pp.; music: pp. 1–22).

First perf. *"La dernière fête galante":* 3 November 2000, Sarah Leonard (soprano), Steven Gutman (piano); London, Conway Hall, Red Lion Square, Planet Tree Festival • *Complete:* 15 May 2001, Loré Lixenberg (soprano), Jonathan Powell (piano); London, British Music Information Centre.

Notable perf. 14 November 2002, Elizabeth Farnum (soprano), Margaret Kampmeier (piano); New York, Merkin Concert Hall.

Rec. Farnum 2002

Com. The title is editorial.

Title **Études transcendantes (100) (1940–44; 456 pp.) [16]**

KSS 66

Trans. Transcendental Studies

Med. Piano

Dates [September? 1940]–7 February 1944

Duration 504:43 (performances by Ullén); 71:11 (nos. 1–25), 76:18 (nos. 26–43), 80:25 (nos. 44–62), 79:26 (nos. 63–71), 79:25 (nos. 72–83), 117:58 (nos. 84–100).

Ded. Henry Welsh

Cont. Three volumes comprising 100 studies, including a passacaglia with 100 variations and a quintuple fugue.

Ms. Paul Sacher Stiftung, Basel.

Publ. *Nos. 1–18:* Sorabji Archive, 1994 (ed. Marc-André Hamelin; handwritten; 121 pp.; work begun on 31 August 1989).

No. 99: in Maria Rosaria Margiotta, "Sorabji: A History of the First Publishers and an Edition (Transcendental Study no. 99), vol. 2, "*Transcendental Study No. 99* from *Études transcendantes* (1940–44)" (ed. Maria Rosaria Margiotta; 66 pp.; music: pp. 1–53), 1999; with a critical report at the end of vol. 2 as well as history, analysis, and description of editorial problems in chaps. 4–6 of vol. 1.

Complete: Sorabji Archive, 2007 (nos. 1–18, ed. Marc-André Hamelin, nos. 1–16 and 18 revised and typeset by Lukas Huisman and no. 17 by Frazer Jarvis; nos. 19, 21, ed. Simon Abrahams; nos. 73, 84 by Jonathan Powell; nos. 20, 22–72, 74–83, 85–100, ed. Alexander Abercrombie; 2 vols. [nos. 1–63, 64–100], 864 pp.).

First perf. *Nos. 1, 10, 24:* 30 September 1979, Yonty Solomon; Como, Italy, Salone Villa Olmo, 13th Autunno musicale (Pionieri sconosciuti della nuova musica).

Nos. 2, 7, 31: 20 July 1995, Carlo Grante; Newport, Rhode Island, The Breakers, XXVII Newport Music Festival.

No. 86: 23 January 1996, Carlo Grante; Bari, Italy, Villa Romanazzi Carducci, Sala Europea.

No. 19: 2 June 1996, Carlo Grante; London, Wigmore Hall.

No. 12: 23 August 1996, Husum, Germany, Rittersaal/Konzertsaal, Raritäten der Klaviermusik im Schloß vor Husum; Carlo Grante.

Nos. 66, 81: 7 September 1996, Nicola Ventrella; Matera, Italy, Auditorium "E. R. Duni", Polifonica Materana "P. L. da Palestrina", Piano Forum 1996.

Nos. 9, 15: 2 November 1997, Andrew Ball; York, York Arts Centre, The Late Music Festival '97.

Nos. 72, 76, 77, 88: 19 December 1997, Nicola Ventrella; Pisa, Italy, Teatro Giuseppe Verdi.

No. 16: 8 February 1998, Carlo Grante; Padua, Italy, Amici della Musica, Auditorium "Cesare Pollini".

No. 4: 18 October 1998, Carlo Grante; London, Wigmore Hall.

Nos. 17, 18: 13 November 1999, Giampaolo Nuti; Empoli, Convento degli Agostiniani, Sala Maggiore, "Ferruccio Busoni e il pianoforte del Novecento" conference.

Nos. 36, 83, 85, 95: 20 November 1999, Nicola Ventrella; Treviso, Italy, Auditorium "Concordia".

No. 3: 24 March 2000, Carlo Grante; Milan, Auditorium "Di Vittorio" della Camera, Associazione culturale Secondo Maggio, Musica & Atelier.

No. 5: 27 April 2002, Fredrik Ullén; Stockholm, Dance Museum.

No. 6: 15 July 2002, Fredrik Ullén; Williamstown, Mass., Taubmann Festival.

No. 84: 1 February 2003, Jonathan Powell; Utrecht, Muziekcentrum Vredenburg (Rondom Kaikhosru Sorabji).

No. 8, 13, 14: 15 February 2003, Fredrik Ullén; Stockholm, Allhelgonakyrkan.

No. 59: 18 May 2003, Fredrik Ullén; Paris, Centre culturel suédois.

Nos. 52, 70: 12 April 2003, Alexander Abercrombie; Lytham St Anne's, St Anne's Parish Church.

Nos. 20–22: 9 July 2003, Fredrik Ullén; Yxtaholm Castle, Flen, Sörmland, Sweden.

Nos. 25, 26, 31, 37: 11 August 2003, Fredrik Ullén; Norrköping, Musikföreningen Crescendo.

Nos. 65, 67, 89: 12 August 2003, Fredrik Ullén; Bjärka-Säby Castle, near Linköping, Sweden.

Nos. 11, 28, 32, 34, 40, 49, 50, 52, 75, 92: 17 August 2003, Fredrik Ullén; Hamburg, Norddeutscher Rundfunk, Rolf-Liebermann-Studio, Schleswig-Holstein Musik Festival 2003 ("Großbritannien lässt bitten", "The Sorabji-Project: Transzendentale Etüden von Kaikhosru Shapurji Sorabji"; as part of a concert featuring 47 of the etudes).

Nos. 23, 29, 30: 22 September 2005, Fredrik Ullén; Bærum Kulturhus, Sandvika, Masters Series.

Nos. 99, 100: 4 January 2006, Kentaro Noda; Nakameguro GT Plaza Hall, Tokyo.

No. 35: 22 March 2006, Fredrik Ullén; Falun (Sweden), Music Conservatory.

Nos. 35, 41, 43: 19 August 2006, Fredrik Ullén; Amandola, Teatro La Fenice; PerPianoSolo Festival.

Nos. 97, 98: 19 July 2007, Kentaro Noda; Matsuo Steinway-Salon, Tokyo.

Nos. 44, 73, 80, 96: 2 November 2008, Kentaro Noda; Waseda University, Tokyo.

No. 79: 9 April 2011, Jørgen Hald Nielsen; Esberg (Denmark), Syddansk Musikkonservatoriet og Skuespillerskole, Konservatoriets koncertsal.

No. 94: 15 February 2013, Florian Steininger; Kulturzentrum Tempel (Musentempel), Karlsruhe, "In modo esotico", vol. 1.

No. 38: 10 September 2013, Sid Samberg; Queen of Angels Church, Chicago; Chicago Soundings.
No. 69: 1 February 2014, Florian Steininger; Kulturzentrum Tempel (Musentempel), Karlsruhe, "In modo esotico", vol. 2.
No. 71: 8 August 2014, Fredrik Ullén; Mänttä Music Festival 2014.
No. 78: 21 March 2020, Ernest So; Ernest So Piano Library (Hong Kong).

Rec. Sorabji 1968; Ullén 2004 (no. 13), 2006 (nos. 1–25), 2009 (nos. 26–43), 2010 (nos. 44–62), 2015 (nos. 63–71), 2016 (nos. 72–83), 2020 (nos. 84–100).

Com. The title can read "Cent études transcendantes". The following studies were premiered: nos. 1–26, 28–32, 34–38, 40, 41, 43, 44, 49, 50, 52, 59, 65–67, 69–73, 75–81, 83–86, 88, 89, 92, 94–100.

Alexander Abercrombie: nos. 52 and 70.
Andrew Ball: nos. 9, 15.
Carlo Grante: nos. 2–4, 7, 12, 16, 19, 31, 86.
Jørgen Hald Nielsen: no. 79.
Kentaro Noda: nos. 44, 73, 80, 96–100.
Giampaolo Nuti: nos. 17, 18.
Jonathan Powell: no. 84.
Sid Samberg: no. 38.
Ernest So: no. 78.
Yonty Solomon: nos. 1, 10, 24.
Florian Steininger: nos. 69, 94.
Fredrik Ullén: nos. 5, 6, 8, 11, 13, 14, 20–23, 25, 26, 28–30, 32, 34, 35, 37, 40, 41, 43, 49, 50, 59, 65, 67, 71, 75, 89, 92.
Nicola Ventrella: nos. 36, 66, 72, 76, 77, 81, 83, 85, 88, 95.

Title **Rapsodie espagnole de Maurice Ravel—Transcription de concert pour piano (1923, 16 pp.; 1945, 26 pp.) [16]**

KSS 67

Trans. Spanish Rhapsody of Maurice Ravel—Concert Transcription for Piano

Dates *First version:* {}–11 November 1923 (16 pp.) • *Second version:* {}–30 May 1945 (26 pp.).

Duration 16:30 (Ravel's original) • *Second version:* 5:00, 2:27, 2:16, 8:15 = 17:58 (Habermann).

Cont. Four movements

Ms. *First version:* Pierpont Morgan Library, New York (Cary 622) • *Second version:* Paul Sacher Stiftung, Basel.

Publ. *First version:* Sorabji Archive, 2005 (ed. Frazer Jarvis; 30 pp.) • *Second version:* Sorabji Archive, 2005 (ed. Frazer Jarvis and Jason Acuña; 33 pp.).

First perf. *Second version:* 21 March 1998, Michael Habermann; Sollentuna, Sollentuna Centrum, Amorinasalen Bibliotekshuset, Franz Liszt Festival.

Notable perf. *Second version:* 13 November 2007, Jørgen Hald Nielsen; Esbjerg, Denmark, Vestjysk Musikkonservatorium (Royal Academy of Music).

Rec. Habermann 2003a (second version)

Com. The first version was discovered in 2000 and is therefore not listed in *SCC*; the two versions are counted as separate works.

Title **Transcription of the Prelude in E-flat by Bach (1945; 4 pp.) [16]**
KSS 68
Med. Piano
Dates {}–20 September 1945
Duration 1:40 (sound files by Roberge); 3:32 (Pierce).
Ded. Reginald Norman Best
Ms. Paul Sacher Stiftung, Basel.
Publ. Sorabji Archive, 1992 (ed. Marc-André Roberge; iv, 13 pp.; music: pp. 1–6; with introduction and critical report); second impression, 2009.
First perf. 4 April 1999, Solon Pierce; Madison, Wis., Brittingham Gallery III of the Elvehjem Museum of Art (now the Chazen Museum of Art). Broadcast simultaneously on Wisconsin Public Radio.
Notable perf. 5 June 1999, Donna Amato; Sewickley, Pa., St. Andrew's Presbyterian Church • *First performance in England:* 6 January 2000, Solon Pierce; London, British Music Information Centre.

Title **Concerto da suonare da me solo e senza orchestra, per divertirmi (1946; 70 pp.) [16]**
KSS 69
Trans. Concerto to Be Played by Me Alone and Without Orchestra, for One's Own Diversion
Med. Piano
Dates {}–20 July 1946
Duration 35:20 (Solomon); 46:12 (Sorabji); 22:04, 21:34, 22:55 = 66:33 (Powell).
Ded. Norman Peterkin
Cont. Three movements
Ms. Paul Sacher Stiftung, Basel.
Publ. Sorabji Archive, 2004 (ed. Jonathan Powell [general editor], François Fabre, Alexander Abercrombie, and Richard Younger; 72 pp.).
First perf. 13 December 1970, Kaikhosru Shapurji Sorabji; New York, WNCN, broadcast of "The Composer Sorabji".
Notable perf. *First live performance:* 27 June 1978, Yonty Solomon; London, Wigmore Hall • *First performance since 1978:* 2 May 2002, Jonathan Powell; London, London University, King's College, The Great Hall.
Rec. Sorabji 1962; Powell 2006.
Com. In *SCC*, 152 ("Title, date"), the last word of the title is given as "divertirsi", but the "Comments" suggest that "divertirmi" would reflect "more consistent grammar".

Title **Schlussszene aus "Salome" von Richard Strauss—Konzertmäßige Übertragung zu zwei Händen (1947; 25 pp.) [16]**
KSS 70
Trans. Closing Scene from "Salome" of Richard Strauss—Concert Transcription for Piano Two Hands
Med. Piano
Dates {}–14 March 1947

Duration 17:13 (Powell)
Ms. Paul Sacher Stiftung, Basel.
Publ. Sorabji Archive, 2007 (ed. Jonathan Powell; 35 pp.).
First perf. 22 June 2007, Jonathan Powell; London, St John's Smith Square.
Com. The model begins with a one-crochet upbeat that is the conclusion of the previous tremolo in the low register (three beats, followed by a thin double barline), after which the closing scene begins at rehearsal number 314 and ends eight bars after 362. Sorabji's transcription adds an E♭ major chord in first inversion (minim) in the low register before the upbeat. In the edition, this three-beat (and thus incomplete) bar corresponds to [2], since the first bar of the second system (whose first beat is at the end of the first system) is numbered 4. The first incomplete bar would normally be [0], and the first numbered bar 2 instead of 4; the numbering is off by two bars.

Title **Sequentia cyclica super "Dies irae" ex Missa pro defunctis (1948–49; 335 pp.) [16]**
KSS 71
Trans. Cyclic Sequence on "Dies irae" from the Mass of the Dead
Med. Piano
Dates [Before January 1948]–27 April 1949
Duration 503:03 (Powell)
Ded. Egon Petri
Cont. Theme with 27 variations, including a passacaglia with 100 variations and a quintuple fugue.
Ms. Paul Sacher Stiftung, Basel.
Publ. Sorabji Archive, 2008 (ed. Alexander Abercrombie; 377 pp.).
First perf. *Theme and vars. 1–3, 8, 14, 22:* 8 April 1999, Justin Rubin; Duluth, Minnesota, University of Minnesota, Bohannon 90 (the performance of var. 22 was limited to the theme and the first 53 statements of the Passacaglia plus the last one. *Theme and vars. 1–13:* 18 December 2008, Jonathan Powell; London, Bauer & Hieber. *Vars. 14–22:* 29 January 2010, Jonathan Powell; London, Schott Recital Room. *Complete:* Jonathan Powell; Glasgow, University of Glasgow, Concert Hall, 18 June 2010.
Rec. Powell 2020, Powell 2021 (part 1 of var. 4 only).
Com. The title, as written on the title page, continues with "in clavicembali usum Kaikhosru Shapurji Sorabji scripsit" [written for the use of the piano by Kaikhosru Shapurji Sorabji]. In *SCC*, 153–54 (under "Title, date" and "Transl'n), the ligature *æ* is used in "irae".

Title **Symphony [no. 2], "Jāmī", for Large Orchestra, Wordless Chorus, and Baritone Solo (1942–51; 826 pp.) [17]**
KSS 72
Dates 1942–24 November 1947 (large score), 6 February 1951 (small percussion score).
Duration 94:00, 23:40, 123:47, 44:17 = 295:44 (sound files by David Carter).
Author Mawlānā Nūruʾd-Dīn ʿAbduʾr-Raḥmān Ǧāmī
Ded. Mervyn Vicars
Cont. Four movements (with the baritone singing only in the fourth one)

Ms. Paul Sacher Stiftung, Basel.
Com. In *SCC*, 155 ("Med., pp."), the number of pages is given as 824. A new examination of the manuscript shows that it consists of 826 pages. Furthermore, the work is now labelled "[no. 2]" instead of "[no. 3]" following the editorial renaming of the *Symphony II for Piano, Large Orchestra, Organ, Final Chorus, and Six Solo Voices* to *Symphony no. 0 for Piano Solo*. The chorus is not silent in movement II (as mentioned under "Comments"), having four bars on pp. 334–35.

Title **Le agonie (1951; 0 p.) [17]**
KSS N/A
Trans. The Agonies
Med. Piano
Dates [Before 17 March 1951]–{}
Cont. Three movements
Ms. Unknown

Title **Third Organ Symphony (1949–53; 305 pp.) [17]**
KSS 73
Dates [6 September 1949]–14 March 1953
Duration {500:00}
Ded. Norman P. Gentieu
Cont. Three movements (three, three, four sections), including a theme with 49 variations and a sextuple fugue.
Ms. Paul Sacher Stiftung, Basel.
Publ. Sorabji Archive, 2014 (ed. Kevin Bowyer; xxiii, 430 pp.; music: pp. 1–309; with "General Preface", dated May 2014, and editorial notes).
Com. The editorial page numbers in the Sorabji Archive's copy of the manuscript differ from those given for the sections in *SCC*, 156 ("Cont., pag."), which explains the complex page numbering of the manuscript (under "Comments").

Title **Un nido di scatole sopra il nome del grande e buon amico Harold Rutland (1954; 26 pp.) [18]**
KSS 74
Trans. A Nest of Boxes on the Name of the Great and Good Friend Harold Rutland
Med. Piano
Dates {}–15 January 1954
Duration 31:36 (Powell)
Ded. Harold Rutland
Cont. Introductory section followed by sixteen "boxes"
Ms. Jerwood Library of the Performing Arts, Trinity College of Music, London, MS/MISC 27.
Publ. Sorabji Archive, 2002 (ed. Jonathan Powell; 26 pp.).
First perf. 1 March 2001, Jonathan Powell; London, British Music Information Centre.
Rec. Powell 2007a
Com. In *SCC*, 157 ("Dedic'n"), the words "sopra il nome del grande e buon amico Harold Rutland" are missing.

Title **Second Symphony for Piano (1954; 248 pp.) [18]**
KSS 75
Dates {Before mid-July 1954}–25 October 1954
Duration 193:00 (Sorabji); {270:00}.
Ded. Frank Holliday (changed in 1979 to Harold Morland)
Cont. Five *partes* (one, two, five, one sections), including a quintuple fugue.
Ms. Paul Sacher Stiftung, Basel.
First perf. *Movement 4* (without the "Fanfare"): 29 March 2023, Tellef Johnson; La Crosse, Wis., Annett Recital Hall, University of Wisconsin.
Rec. Sorabji 1962d, 1963a.

Title **Toccata terza (1955; 91 p.) [18]**
KSS 76
Trans. Third Toccata
Med. Piano
Dates {}–28 September 1955
Duration 12:56, 7:42, 50:14, 1:38, 2:41, 12:05, 3:16, 16:56, 4:23, 8:45, 7:22 = 126:20 (Sánchez-Aguilera).
Ded. Clinton Gray-Fisk
Cont. Ten movements marked "Movimento vivo" (pp. 1–12), "Adagio" (pp. 12–14), "Passacaglia" (with 100 variations; pp. 15–50), "Cadenza fiorita" (pp. 50–53), "Quasi fugato" (on two themes; pp. 53–60), "Corrente" (pp. 61–64), "Fantasia" (pp. 65–76), "Interludio" (pp. 77–82), "Capriccio" (pp. 82–88), and "Epilogo – Coda Stretta" (pp. 89–91).
Ms. Paul Sacher Stiftung, Basel.
Publ. Sorabji Archive, 2021 (ed. Abel Sánchez-Aguilera; 127 pp., critical report on pp. i–xvi at the end, with two logical pages on each physical page).
First perf. 3 July 2022, Abel Sánchez-Aguilera; 's-Hertogenbosch, Willem Twee Toonzaal.
Com. In *SCC*, 145 ("Title, date"), the manuscript was tentatively dated "1937?–38?" and appeared between the *Symphonic Variations for Piano* (1935–37; 484 pp.) and the *Tāntrik Symphony for Piano Alone* (1938–39; 284 pp.). Long thought to be lost, it surfaced in September 2019 and was established to date from 1955.

Title **Passeggiata veneziana sopra la Barcarola di Offenbach (1955–56; 24 pp.) [18]**
KSS 77
Trans. Venetian Promenade on the Barcarole of Offenbach
Med. Piano
Dates {}–[between 20 April and 20 May 1956]
Duration 14:00 (Sorabji); 8:00, 4:05, 6:46, 0:56, 1:31 = 21:18 (Habermann); 8:24, 3:51, 7:10, 0:59, 1:53 (approximate individual durations) = 22:30 (Powell).
Ded. York Bowen
Cont. Five sections
Ms. Paul Sacher Stiftung, Basel.
Publ. Sorabji Archive, 2002 (ed. Jonathan Powell; 24 pp.) • Michael Habermann (unpublished).

First perf. *"Notturnino" (third movement):* 29 March 1980, Michael Habermann; Richmond, Va., University of Richmond, Modlin Fine Arts Building (played as part of an illustrated lecture) • *Complete:* 1 March 2001, Jonathan Powell; London, British Music Information Centre.
Rec. Sorabji 1963a; Powell 2002; Habermann 2003a.
Com. In *SCC*, 158 ("Title"), the words "sopra la Barcarola di Offenbach" are missing at the end of the title. Under "Cont., pag.", the editorial title should read "[Barcarola]" instead of "[Barcarolla]".

Title **Symphonic Variations for Piano and Orchestra (1935–37, 1953–56; 540 pp.) [18]**
KSS 78
Dates [After 14 March 1953]–1 June 1955 (large score), 23 September 1956 (small percussion score).
Duration {200:00}
Cont. Introitus and theme with 27 variations
Ms. Paul Sacher Stiftung, Basel.
Publ. Sorabji Archive, 2014 (ed. Alberto Vignani; 519 pp.). The score consists of a reproduction of the cover, 9 preliminary pages [with three blank pages inserted where needed], 519 pages of music, one page for the dates given in the manuscript, and 72 pages of editorial notes with musical examples, for a total of 602 pages.
Com. Version for piano and orchestra of vol. 1 of the *Symphonic Variations for Piano* (1935–37; 484 pp.).

Title **Rosario d'arabeschi (1956; 45 pp.) [18]**
KSS 79
Trans. A Rosary of Arabesques
Med. Piano
Dates {October 1956}–26 November 1956
Duration 13:30 (Solomon); 36:46 (Powell).
Ded. Sacheverell Sitwell
Cont. Five movements
Ms. Private collection
Publ. Sorabji Archive, 2002 (ed. Jonathan Powell; 43 pp.).
First perf. 6 June 1979, Yonty Solomon; London, Wigmore Hall.
Notable perf. 10 February 2000, Jonathan Powell; London, British Music Information Centre.
Rec. Powell 2005

Title **Opus clavisymphonicum—Concerto for Piano and Large Orchestra (1957–59; 333 pp.) [18]**
KSS 80
Trans. Work for Keyboard and Orchestra—Concerto for Piano and Large Orchestra
Dates [12 March 1957]–28 April 1957 (piano line in large score), 13 November 1957 (last line in large score), [August 1959] (small percussion score).
Duration {100:00}
Ded. John Ireland

Cont. Two movements (one, three sections)
Ms. Paul Sacher Stiftung, Basel (full score and piano part).

Title **Third Symphony for Piano Solo (1959–60; 144 pp.) [19]**
KSS 81
Dates {After August 1959}–22 February 1960
Duration {135:00}
Ded. George Richards
Cont. One movement including a double fugue and a theme with 82 variations
Ms. Northwestern University, Evanston, Ill.
Publ. Sorabji Archive, 2016 (ed. Abel Sánchez-Aguilera; 197 pp., critical report on pp. i–xxiv at the end, with two logical pages on each physical page).
Rec. Sorabji 1962a, 1962b.

Title **Suggested Bell-Chorale for St. Luke's Carillon (1961; 1 p.) [19]**
KSS 82
Dates {}–7 January 1961
Duration 1:55 (sound file by Roberge)
Ded. Norman P. Gentieu
Ms. Special Collections Research Center, Syracuse University, Syracuse, N.Y. (no call number used).
Publ. Sorabji Archive, 1989 (ed. Marc-André Hamelin, handwritten copy; 1 p.) • Sorabji Archive, 2004 (ed. Marc-André Roberge; iv, 8 pp.; music: pp. 1–4; with introduction and critical report); second impression, 2009.
First perf. 5 November 1961, Norman P. Gentieu; Germantown, Pa., St. Luke's Church.
Com. The single line is used in a harmonization for unaccompanied SATB chorus by Ronald Stevenson as *Hymnus in Memoriam KSS* (29 August 1990; 4 pp.), dedicated "To celebrate the nuptials of Terry and Alistair [Hinton]". The text is by Rūmī in a translation by Reynold Alleyne Nicholson (1868–1945) as "The Song of the Reeds", taken from *Rumi, Poet and Mystic* (London: Allen & Unwin, 1950).

Title **Fantasiettina sul nome illustre dell'egregio poeta Christopher Grieve ossia Hugh M'Diarmid (1961; 10 pp.) [19]**
KSS 83
Trans. Tiny Little Fantasy on the Illustrious Name of the Distinguished Poet Christopher Grieve, that is, Hugh M'Diarmid
Med. Piano
Dates {}–10 April 1961
Duration 2:43 (Habermann); 3:14 (Stevenson); 3:06 (McLachlan).
Ms. Unknown (lost after it was returned to the composer by Ronald Stevenson, who had made a handwritten copy)
Publ. Aylesbury, Buckinghamshire: Bardic Edition, 1981 (ed. Ronald Stevenson; Bravura Series of Piano Masterworks; 14 unnumbered pp., music: 7 pp.). Includes "Notes on Sorabji's Fantasiettina" by Alistair Hinton and Ronald Stevenson and "Fantasiettina Exercises" by Stevenson.

First perf. 19 November 1979, Michael Habermann; Roanoke, Va., Hollins College, Talmadge Hall.
Notable perf. 9 March 1981, Ronald Stevenson; Edinburgh, Saltire House, Edinburgh International Festival [Fringe].
Rec. Stevenson 1992; Habermann 1995; McLachlan 2004.

Title **Messa grande sinfonica (1955–61; 1,001 pp.) [19]**
KSS 84
Trans. Symphonic High Mass
Med. Eight vocal soloists, two choirs, and orchestra
Dates [Before 13 November 1955]–25 July 1961
Duration 44:00, 71:00, 47:00, 21:00, 39:00, 33:00, 26:00, 23:00 = 304:00 (sound files by François Fabre).
Author Mass Ordinary with the addition of a Pater Noster
Ded. Reginald Norman Best
Cont. Eight movements, the second of which comprises a passacaglia with 48 variations.
Ms. Paul Sacher Stiftung, Basel.
Publ. Sorabji Archive, 2017 (ed. François Fabre; 1,001 pp.).
Com. In *SCC*, 162 ("Title, date"), the title is given as *Messa alta sinfonica*. Under "Cont., pag.", the Credo and the Offertorium are numbered "III" and "IIIa" in the manuscript, which explains why the Amen is labelled "VII". The edition has the same number of pages as the manuscript, and the initial page numbers of each movement also match. The numbers of bars for the movements are as follows: 645, 876, 709, 229, 493, 410, 440, and 222 (for a total of 4,024).

Title **Fourth Symphony for Piano Alone (1962–64; 240 pp.) [20]**
KSS 85
Dates 7 November 1962–5 February 1964
Duration 83:00, 154:00, 37:00 = 274:00 (van Houdt; approximate durations); 145:00 (Sorabji; movements 2 and 3).
Ded. Harold Rutland
Cont. Three movements (one, four, one sections), including a theme with 49 variations and a triple fugue.
Ms. Paul Sacher Stiftung, Basel.
Publ. Sorabji Archive, 2014 (ed. Alexander Abercrombie; 232 pp.).
First perf. 16 March 2003, Reinier van Houdt, piano; Utrecht, Muziekcentrum Vredenburg (Rondom Kaikhosru Sorabji). Given together with the world premiere of the *Concerto for Piano and Orchestra [no. 5]*.
Notable perf. *First performance in North America:* 20 September 2003, Reinier van Houdt, piano; Toronto, Ont., The Music Gallery at the Church of St. George the Martyr, New Music Concerts.
Rec. Sorabji 1964; Houdt 2003 (vars. 14–17, 25–30, 34, and 35 from the second movement).
Com. In *SCC*, 163 ("Med., pp.", "Cont.", and "Comments"), the number of pages reads 242 rather than 240.

Title	**Frammenti aforistici (20) (1964; 9 pp.) [20]**
KSS	86
Trans.	Aphoristic Fragments
Med.	Piano
Dates	{5 February 1964}–29 February 1964
Duration	6:20 (sound file by Roberge); 10:19 (Powell); 14:10 (recording by Gaston Polle Ansaldi).
Ded.	Harold Morland
Ms.	Paul Sacher Stiftung, Basel.
Publ.	Sorabji Archive, 2012 (ed. Florian Steininger; 9 pp.).
First perf.	20 February 2004, Jonathan Powell; London, St. Cyprian's Church.
Notable perf.	28 September 2019, Florian Steininger; Berlin, Saitenflügel – Konzertsaal L12.
Rec.	Ansaldi 2021.
Com.	The title can read "Venti frammenti aforistici".

Title	**Frammenti aforistici (Sutras) (104) (1962–64; 37 pp.) [20]**
KSS	90
Trans.	Aphoristic Fragments (Sutras)
Med.	Piano
Dates	[Before 25 July 1962]–{after July 1964}
Duration	{35:00}; between 60 and 70 minutes (Daan Vandewalle's recollection of his own performance).
Ded.	Donald Garvelmann
Ms.	International Piano Archives at Maryland, Michelle Smith Performing Arts Library, College Park, Md.
Publ.	Sorabji Archive, [2007] (ed. Thomas Smetryns and Lukas Huisman; 46 pp.; with a critical report).
First perf.	6 March 2005, Daan Vandewalle; Ghent, Stedelijke concertzaal "de bijloke", Steinway Festival.
Com.	In *SCC*, 167, this work appears between the *Due sutras sul nome dell'amico Alexis* (1981, 1984; 2 pp.) and the *Benedizione di San Francesco d'Assisi* (1973; 2 pp.); the date is given as "1962–64, 1972?". The title can read "Centoquattro frammenti aforistici".

Title	**Toccata quarta (1964–67; 149 pp.) [20]**
KSS	87
Trans.	Fourth Toccata
Med.	Piano
Dates	23 May 1964–5 May 1967
Duration	Between 90 and 120 minutes (Sorabji's estimate); {150:00}; 9:55 (Steininger; fifth movement only).
Ded.	Frank Holliday; replaced with a dedication to Paul Rapoport in 1979.
Cont.	Seven movements, including a theme with 24 variations and a passacaglia with 100 variations, and a quintuple fugue.
Ms.	Paul Sacher Stiftung, Basel.

First perf. *Fifth movement:* 20 December 2014, Florian Steininger; Kulturzentrum Tempel (Musentempel), Karlsruhe, "In modo esotico", vol. 4.

Title **Frammento cantato (1967; 1 p.) [20]**
KSS 88
Trans. Vocal Fragment
Med. Baritone and piano
Dates {}–10 June 1967
Duration 1:42 (Oldfield)
Author Harold Morland (after Kālidāsa)
Ded. Harold Morland
Ms. Paul Sacher Stiftung, Basel.
Publ. Sorabji Archive, 2007 (ed. Marc-André Roberge; [vi], 6 pp.; music: pp. 2–3; with introduction and critical report); second impression, 2009; third impression, 2013.
First perf. 23 November 2014, Mark Oldfield (baritone), Christopher Scobie (piano); Sutton House, Stoke Newington, London, Stoke Newington Contemporary Music Festival and Sutton House Music Society, "Trauma and Withdrawal".
Com. The work exists in an arrangement (2 pp.; unpublished) for baritone, organ, and assistant organist (based on the edition by Roberge) made in 2021 by Chappell Kingsland. The assistant organist plays a melodic line above the main organ part in bars 5–6 and below it in bars 11–13.

Title **Concertino non grosso for String Sextet with Piano obbligato quasi continuo (1968; 48 pp.) [20]**
KSS 89
Med. Piano, four violins, viola, cello.
Dates {}–9 December 1968
Duration 21:00 (sound file by Roberge)
Ded. Mervyn, Denise, Adrian, and Kevin Vicars.
Cont. Three movements, including a fugue.
Ms. Private collection
Publ. Sorabji Archive, 2004 (ed. Marc-André Roberge; iii, 128 pp.; music: pp. 1–108; with introduction and critical report; a set of parts is available); second impression, 2009.
Com. In *SCC*, 166 ("Title, date"), the medium is given as "String Septet". This is changed here to "String Sextet" to reflect the presence of only one cello part, although Sorabji indicated two in the manuscript (as mentioned under "Comments").

Title **Benedizione di San Francesco d'Assisi (1973; 2 pp.) [21]**
KSS 91
Trans. Benediction of Saint Francis of Assisi
Med. Baritone and organ
Dates {}–20 February 1973
Duration 1:00 (sound file by Roberge)
Author Saint Francis of Assisi
Ded. Alistair Hinton
Ms. Paul Sacher Stiftung, Basel (first manuscript); private collection (second manuscript).

Publ. Sorabji Archive, 2013 (ed. Marc-André Roberge; v, 9 pp.; music: pp. 1–4; with introduction and critical report).
First perf. 5 June 1999, Brent Stater (baritone), Donna Amato (piano [not organ]); Sewickley, Pa., St. Andrew's Presbyterian Church, Sewickley BACHfest.
Notable perf. 27 April 2004, Richard Barrett (baritone), Randall Harlow (organ); School of Music, Indiana University (Bloomington).
Com. In *SCC*, 167 ("Med., pp."), the upper note of the voice range is given as f^4 rather than $f\sharp^4$.

Title **Symphonia brevis for Piano (1973; 120 pp.) [21]**
KSS 92
Trans. Brief Symphony for Piano
Dates March 1973–17 November 1973
Duration *First part:* 35:53 • *Second part:* 13:06, 6:36, 11:01, 5:33, 22:41, 29:38 = 88:24 (the duration of the last section includes "Quasi fuga" and "Coda-epilogo" with "Punta d'organo") • *Total* = 124:17 (Amato).
Ded. Alistair Hinton
Cont. Two movements (one, eight sections), including a "Quasi fuga" with two subjects.
Ms. Paul Sacher Stiftung, Basel.
Publ. Sorabji Archive, 2010 (ed. Simon Abrahams, 113 pp.).
First perf. *First movement:* 2 July 1996, Donna Amato; London, British Music Information Centre • *Third movement:* 26 October 2000, Donna Amato; Pittsburgh, Pa., University of Pittsburgh, Department of Music, Music Building, Room 132 • *Complete:* 17 June 2004, Donna Amato; New York, Merkin Concert Hall.
Rec. Amato 2011

Title **Variazione maliziosa e perversa sopra "La morte d'Åse" da Grieg (1974; 2 pp.) [21]**
KSS 93
Trans. Malicious and Perverse Variation on "Åse's Death" by Grieg
Med. Piano
Dates {April 1974}–{April 1974}
Duration 0:52 (Amato)
Ms. Paul Sacher Stiftung, Basel.
Publ. Sorabji Archive, 1991 (ed. Chris Rice; handwritten; 2 pp.) • Sorabji Archive, 2005 (ed. Chris Rice, typeset by Frazer Jarvis; 2 pp.).
First perf. 23 July 1991, Donna Amato; London, Purcell Room.
Rec. Amato 1993b

Title **Opusculum clavisymphonicum vel claviorchestrale (1973–75; 334 pp.) [21]**
KSS 94
Trans. Little Work for Keyboard and Orchestra
Med. Piano and orchestra
Dates 26 December 1973–24 September 1975
Duration {160:00}

Ded. Alistair Hinton
Cont. Two movements, the second of which is a theme with 39 variations, of which no. 21 is an ostinato with 27 variations.
Ms. Paul Sacher Stiftung, Basel.

Title **Sixth Symphony for Piano (Symphonia claviensis) (1975–76; 270 pp.) [22]**
KSS 95
Trans. Sixth Symphony for Piano (Symphony for Piano)
Dates [Before 29 September 1975]–11 November 1976
Duration *Prima parte:* 3:10, 4:32, 7:08, 1:27, 10:20 (*I*) = 101:41 • *Seconda parte:* 2:14, 4:04, 6:41, 1:58, 56:00 (*II*) = 70:57; 26:13, 3:28 (*III*) = 29:41; 14:56 (*IV*) • *Terza parte:* 22:36, 33:18, 17:16 (*V–VII*) = 73:10 • *Total* = 290:25 (Powell).
Ded. Alistair Hinton
Cont. Three *partes* (containing sixteen sections grouped in seven movements), including a fugue, an ostinato with 64 variations, and a "Quasi fuga" consisting of five fugues.
Ms. Paul Sacher Stiftung, Basel.
Publ. Sorabji Archive, 2012 (ed. Jonathan Powell, parts 1 and 3, and edition and reformatting of part 2, initially typeset by Alexander Abercrombie; 270 pp.).
First perf. 27 October 2013, Jonathan Powell; 's-Hertogenbosch, Muziekcentrum De Toonzaal.
Com. In *SCC*, 170 ("Cont., pag."), the "ossia" in direction "Toccata–Quasi cadenza—ossia moto perpetuo" reads "ovvero" in the manuscript.

Title **Frammenti aforistici (4) (1977; 1 p.) [22]**
KSS 96
Trans. Aphoristic Fragments
Med. Piano
Dates {1977}–{1977}
Duration 1:20 (Rumson); 2:10 (Álvares).
Ded. Alistair Hinton
Cont. Four sections
Ms. Paul Sacher Stiftung, Basel.
Publ. Sorabji Archive, 2008 (ed. Lukas Huisman; 1 p.) • Sorabji Archive, 2013 (ed. Lukas Huisman; [ii], 1 p.; with introduction and critical report).
First perf. 19 August 1991, Gordon Rumson; Calgary, Alta., Pleasant Heights United Church.
Notable perf. 7 October 2020, Paulo Álvares; Bonn, Kreuzung an Sankt Helena, Dialograum (in reverse order).
Com. The title can read "Quattro frammenti aforistici". Possible performance on 16 September 1989, Mark Thomas, Oberlin College Conservatory.

Title **Symphonic Nocturne for Piano Alone (1977–78; 113 pp.) [22]**
KSS 97
Dates 17 September 1977–24 April 1978
Duration 140:00 (Huisman)
Ded. Alistair Hinton (verbally)
Ms. Paul Sacher Stiftung, Basel.

Publ. Sorabji Archive, 2016 (ed. Lukas Huisman; [iii], 85 pp., A–C; with introduction and critical report).
First perf. 3 December 2015, Lukas Huisman; Ghent, MIRY Concertzaal, School of Arts, Koninklijk Conservatorium.
Rec. Huisman 2016

Title **"Il gallo d'oro" da Rimsky-Korsakov: Variazioni frivole con una fuga anarchica, eretica e perversa (1978–79; 93 pp.) [22]**
KSS 98
Trans. "The Golden Cockerel" by Rimsky-Korsakov: Frivolous Variations with an Anarchic, Heretical, and Perverse Fugue
Med. Piano
Dates [Before 10 September 1978]–20 May 1979
Duration 86:00 (Powell)
Ded. Michael Habermann
Cont. Theme and 49 variations, including a passacaglia with 16 variations, followed by a double fugue.
Ms. Paul Sacher Stiftung, Basel.
Publ. Sorabji Archive, 2004 (ed. Alexander Abercrombie; 95 pp.).
First perf. 24 July 2005, Jonathan Powell; Montpellier, Centre Corum, Salle Pasteur.
Com. In *SCC*, 171 ("Title, date"), for var. 3, a missing tempo indication reads "Presto" (the "Distaccato assai" is an interpretative marking); for var. 10, the "d'un'orchestra" should read "di un'orchestra", and "Pesante parodisticamente" reads "Pesante e parodisticamente" in the manuscript. In the published edition, the variations are labelled (with roman numerals) as follows: 1–5, 6a, 6b, 6c, 7, 8a, 8, 9a, 9b, 12–16, [17], 18–21, 20, [22], 23–49. The numbers 17 and 22 are missing, and the total number of variations is 53. Var. 6c consists of two systems with the marking "Oscuro" found between the two variations numbered VII (p. 7; 7 and 7[a] in *SCC*). The variations of the passacaglia forming var. 18 are labelled *a* to *h*, *j*, *k*, *l* (doubled), *m*–*q* in the manuscript, *a* to *q*, skipping *i*, in *SCC*, and *a* to *q* in the edition. The total number of these short variations is therefore seventeen instead of sixteen.

Title **Il tessuto d'arabeschi (1979; 32 pp.) [22]**
KSS 99
Trans. The Tapestry of Arabesques
Med. Flute and string quartet
Dates [September 1979]–24 November 1979
Duration 18:55 (Delius Society); 16:25 (sound file by Roberge).
Ded. To the memory of Frederick Delius
Ms. Private collection
Publ. Sorabji Archive, 2004 (ed. Marc-André Roberge; v, 52 pp.; music: pp. 1–38; with introduction and critical report; a set of parts is available); second impression, 2009; second edition, 2022 (ix, 54 pp.; music: pp. 1–38; critical report: pp. 39–54).
First perf. 2 May 1982, Deborah Carter (flute), Jonathan Beiler and Davyd Booth (violins), Sidney Curtiss (viola), Gloria Johns (cello), William Smith (conductor); Philadelphia, Pa., Old Pine Street Church, Chamber Concert Honoring the 120th Anniversary of the

Birth of Frederick Delius and the 90th Birthday of Kaikhosru Shapurji Sorabji and Herbert Howells, The Delius Society Philadelphia Branch.

Notable perf. *Second performance:* 11 and 12 June 2011, Simon Berry (flute), David Lin and Hung-yin Cho (violins), Adrianna Smith (viola), Andrew Wilhelm (cello); Rocky Ridge, Colo., Central Recital Hall, Rocky Ridge Music Center, Young Artist Recital Series, Rocky Ridge Music Festival • *Third performance:* 11 March 2023, Catherine Flinchum (flute), Ronnie Crisp and Olasuyi Ige (violins), Josquin Larsen (viola), Kevin McFarland (cello), Chappell Kingsland (conductor); Central Presbyterian Church, Denver, Colo.

Com. A set of parts was prepared in 1981 by Elma Miller for the performance sponsored by the Delius Society, Philadelphia Branch (1982).

Title **Villa Tasca: Mezzogiorno siciliano—Evocazione nostalgica e memoria tanta cara e preziosa del giardino meraviglioso, splendido, tropicale (1979–80; 47 pp.) [23]**

KSS 100

Trans. Villa Tasca: Sicilian Noontime—Nostalgic Evocation and Very Dear and Precious Recollection of the Marvellous and Splendid Tropical Garden

Med. Piano

Dates 21 September 1979–4 February 1980

Duration 54:26 (Powell)

Ded. Ronald Stevenson

Ms. Paul Sacher Stiftung, Basel.

Publ. Sorabji Archive, 2008 (ed. Simon Abrahams; 47 pp.).

First perf. 15 May 2001, Jonathan Powell; London, British Music Information Centre.

Rec. Powell 2002

Com. In *SCC*, 173 ("Title, date"), the words "e memoria tanta cara e preziosa del giardino meraviglioso, splendido, tropicale" are missing.

Title **Opus secretum atque necromanticum (1980–81; 48 pp.) [23]**

KSS 101

Trans. Occult and Necromantic Work

Med. Piano

Dates 16 October 1980–28 February 1981

Duration 54:22 (Grante)

Ded. Norman P. Gentieu; also dedicated by oversight to Kenneth Derus in 1984.

Ms. Special Collections Research Center, Syracuse University, Syracuse, N.Y. (no call number used).

Publ. Sorabji Archive, 2007 (ed. Thomas Smetryns, compl. Lukas Huisman; 48 pp.).

First perf. 28 November 2001, Carlo Grante; Evanston, Ill., Northwestern University School of Music, Lutkin Hall, "Piano and Utopia".

Com. In *SCC*, 173 ("Title, date"), the words "atque necromanticum" are missing.

Title **Passeggiata variata sul nome del caro e gentile giovane amico Clive Spencer-Bentley (1981; 3 pp.) [23]**

KSS 102

Trans.	Varied Promenade on the Name of the Dear and Nice Young Friend Clive Spencer-Bentley
Med.	Piano
Dates	{}–24 April 1981
Duration	3:05 (Frantz)
Ded.	Clive Spencer-Bentley
Ms.	Private collection
Publ.	Sorabji Archive, 2013 (ed. Marc-André Roberge; iv, 12 pp.; music: pp. 1–7; with introduction and critical report); second impression, 2013.
First perf.	31 January 1998, Albert Frantz; University Park, Pa., Penn State College of Arts and Architecture, Recital Hall, Music Building I. Performance given as part of a recital for a Bachelor of Music degree in piano performance.
Notable perf.	*Second performance:* 27 January 2019, Jonathan Powell; Oxford, Jacqueline du Pré Music Building.
Com.	In *SCC*, 174 ("Title, date"), the words "sul nome del caro e gentile giovane amico Clive Spencer-Bentley" are missing.

Title	**Fantasiettina atematica (1981; 2 pp.) [23]**
KSS	103
Trans.	Tiny Little Athematic Fantasy
Med.	Flute, oboe, clarinet.
Dates	{}–{between 22 June and 17 August 1981}
Duration	1:48 (sound file by Roberge); 2:09 (McIlvie, McIntosh, and O'Donnell)
Ded.	Anthony Burton-Page
Ms.	Private collection
Publ.	Sorabji Archive, 1989 (ed. Anthony Burton-Page; handwritten; 4 pp., with transposed clarinet part) • Sorabji Archive, 2005 (ed. Marc-André Roberge; ii, 10 pp.; music: pp. 1–5; with introduction and critical report; a set of parts is available); second impression, 2009; second edition, 2021 (v, 10 pp.; music: pp. 1–5).
First perf.	9 March 1995, Victoria Matthews (oboe), Daniel Harrison (flute), Katie Golding (clarinet); London, City University, Department of Music, Performance Area.
Notable perf.	7 May 2001, John McIlvie (oboe), Jonathan McIntosh (flute), Ciaran O'Donnell (clarinet); Belfast, Queen's University, Harty Room.

Title	**Passeggiata arlecchinesca sopra un frammento di Busoni ("Rondò arlecchinesco") (1981–82; 16 pp.) [23]**
KSS	105
Trans.	Harlequinesque Promenade on a Fragment of Busoni ("Rondo arlecchinesco")
Med.	Piano
Dates	{October 1981}–21 January 1981
Duration	15:27 (Amato)
Ded.	Geoffrey Douglas Madge
Ms.	Paul Sacher Stiftung, Basel.
Publ.	Sorabji Archive, 1993 (ed. Donna Amato; handwritten; 30 pp.).
First perf.	26 March 1993, Donna Amato; Vienna, Wiener Sezession, Welttöne Indien contemporary: Eine Veranstaltung der Wiener Festwochen.

Rec.	Amato 1994

Title	**Due sutras sul nome dell'amico Alexis (1981, 1984; 2 pp.) [23]**
KSS	104
Trans.	Two Sutras on the Name of Friend Alexis
Med.	Piano
Dates	[1981], {1984}.
Duration	0:25, 0:50 = 1:15 (Amato).
Ded.	Alexis (Robert William Procter)
Cont.	Two sections
Ms.	Paul Sacher Stiftung, Basel.
Publ.	Sorabji Archive, [1992] (ed. Chris Rice; handwritten; 3 pp.) • Sorabji Archive, 2013 (ed. Frazer Jarvis; 2 pp.).
First perf.	9 October 1992, Donna Amato; London, British Music Information Centre.
Rec.	Amato 1994
Com.	In *SCC*, 174, the work appears between the *Concertino non grosso for String Sextet with Piano obbligato quasi continuo* (1968; 48 pp.) and the *Frammenti aforistici (Sutras) (104)* (1962–64; 37 pp.) and the dating is given as "1971, ?". The two pieces are written on two partial pages that fill one single page when assembled; they are given as consisting of a single page in *SCC*. The brochure published by the Paul Sacher Stiftung says "Reinschrift [1 S. + 1 S.]".

Appendix 3 / Discography

This discography of Sorabji's works provides full details for the brief author-date references given under "Recordings" in the catalogue of works (appendix 2). In addition to commercially produced discs, it includes the recordings of Sorabji's own playing made in the 1960s by Erik Chisholm (whereabouts unknown) and Frank Holliday (held by KSSC); see Paul Rapoport, "The Recordings of Sorabji's Music", in *SCC*, 480–82, for a different presentation and contextual notes. Also listed are tape recordings available in archives, such as those of the British Broadcasting Corporation, and discs issued as supplements to periodicals. Private recordings by performers and taped or digitized radio broadcasts (authorized or not) circulating among connoisseurs are not listed. Many of the recordings listed below are now also available on the music streaming service Naxos Music Library and the video hosting website YouTube.

The list is arranged chronologically by the performer's family name and year of release, followed by a letter to distinguish multiple recordings from the same year, for example, Habermann 1982a. Entries include:

(1) label and number, with type of disc (and number of discs in boxed sets), title (if different from a simple indication of composer and content), and, if known, date of recording (given after the titles in the case of multiple dates);
(2) performer's full name and instrument;
(3) titles recorded, in chronological order of composition;
(4) booklet, with number of pages (often laid out in two columns) and details of liner notes (in English only unless otherwise stated);
(5) illustrations.

Additional information or special features are given when appropriate. No special mention is made of the standard biographical notes on the performer(s). Reissues have their own entries referring to the original release. A bullet (•) after a title indicates a first commercial recording (based on the year of release); in other words, a piece first recorded for the radio and available only in archives is not counted as such (such recordings are often associated with public performances). Durations are given in the catalogue of works (Appendix 2).

Amato 1993a — Altarus AIR-CD-9022 (CD, undated). Donna Amato, piano. *Fantaisie espagnole*. Booklet (3 unnumbered pp.) with uncredited liner notes. Photographs of Sorabji and Amato.

Amato 1993b — Altarus AIR-CD-9021 (CD, undated). Donna Amato, piano. *Variazione maliziosa e perversa sopra "La morte d'Åse" da Grieg* •. Also includes works by Ronald

Stevenson and Alistair Hinton (*Variations and Fugue on a Theme of Grieg*). Booklet (8 unnumbered pp.) with uncredited liner notes. Photographs of Sorabji, Stevenson, Hinton, and Amato (among others).

Amato 1994 — Altarus AIR-CD-9025 (CD). Donna Amato, piano. *Toccatinetta sopra C.G.F.*•; *"Quaere reliqua hujus materiei inter secretiora"*•; *St. Bertrand de Comminges: "He was laughing in the tower"*; *Passeggiata arlecchinesca sopra un frammento di Busoni ("Rondò arlecchinesco")*•; *Due sutras sul nome dell'amico Alexis*•. Booklet (15 unnumbered pp.) with uncredited liner notes. Photographs of Sorabji (in 1977, by Jeremy Grayson; ca. 1945, by Joan Muspratt; in 1977, inscribed to Robert William Procter), and Amato. Three drawings by James McBride for M. R. James's *Count Magnus* (preliminary pencil sketch, … something fell on the pavement with a clash", from the collection of the Library of King's College, Cambridge) and *Canon Alberic's Scrap-book* ("The Englishman was too deep in his note-book to give more than an occasional glance to the sacristan", "A hand like the hand in that picture") and four photographs of the cathedral at Saint-Bertrand-de-Comminges.

Amato 2011 — Altarus AIR-CD-9064(2) (2 CDs). Donna Amato, piano. *Symphonia brevis for Piano*•. Booklet (14 unnumbered pp.) with uncredited liner notes divided into "The Composer Sorabji", "The Evolution of the Sorabji Piano Symphony", and "Symphonia brevis"). Photographs of Sorabji (in 1988, by Clive Spencer-Bentley) and Donna Amato. The cover shows the ruins of Corfe Castle, Dorset. The inside of the jewel box reproduces part of p. 111 of the manuscript of the *Symphony no. 0 for Piano Solo* (1930–31; 333 pp.), which (with very few modifications) is used in the "Coda-epilogo" (p. 110) of the *Symphonia brevis*.

Ansaldi 2021 — YouTube, publ. 23 October 2021 by ensemble Codec, https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=cbNq6J6a3gg. Gaston Polle Ansaldi, piano. *Frammenti aforistici (20)*. Piano tuning is 436 Hz ("jazz-oriented tuning").

Bowyer 1988a — Continuum CCD 1001/2 (2 CDs; rec. April 1988, Church of St. Mary Redcliffe, Bristol). Kevin Bowyer, organ. *Symphony [no. 1] for Organ*•. Booklet (6 unnumbered pp.) with liner notes by Alistair Hinton ("Kaikhosru Sorabji and His First Organ Symphony"). Description of the instrument by Douglas R. Carrington. Photograph of Bowyer. Reissued in 2020 by Heritage Records.

Bowyer 1988b — The International Historical Organ Recording Collection IHORC-29 (rec. 24 April 1988, Århus Cathedral). Kevin Bowyer, organ. *Symphony [no. 1] for Organ*. Links for playlist and recording previously available from "Kevin Bowyer playing K. S. Sorabji — Organ Symphony No. 1" (25 January 2012), http://ihorc.blogspot.com/2012/01/kevin-bowyer-playing-k-s-sorabji-organ.html (article only).

Farnum 2002 — Centaur CDC 2613 (CD, "Kaikhosru Shapurji Sorabji: The Complete Songs for Soprano"; rec. August, November 1999; August 2000). Elizabeth Farnum (soprano), Margaret Kampmeier (piano). *The Poplars*•; *Chrysilla*•; *Roses du soir*•;

L'heure exquise•; *Vocalise pour soprano fioriturata*•; *Apparition*•; *Hymne à Aphrodite*•; *L'étang*•; *I Was Not Sorrowful*•; *Trois fêtes galantes de Verlaine*•; *Trois poèmes pour chant et piano*•; *Arabesque*•; *L'irrémédiable*•; *Trois poèmes*•. Booklet (15 pp.) with liner notes by Alistair Hinton and English translations of the French sung texts by Charles Hopkins.

Grante 1993 — Altarus AIR-CD-9098 (CD, "Operatic Fantasias for Piano"). Carlo Grante, piano. *Pastiche on the Habanera from "Carmen" by Bizet*. Also includes works by Ferruccio Busoni and Franz Liszt. Booklet (13 unnumbered pp.) with liner notes by Frank Cooper. Photographs of Sorabji, Busoni, Liszt, and Grante.

Habermann 1980 — Musical Heritage Society MHS 4271/6271 (LP/cassette, "Piano Music by "Kaikhosru Shapurji Sorabji"; rec. June 1979). Michael Habermann, piano. *Two Piano Pieces*•; *Fantaisie espagnole*•; *Pastiche on the Habanera from "Carmen" by Bizet*•; *Fragment Written for Harold Rutland*• (1937 version); *Opus clavicembalisticum*• (sections 1 and 2). Text put together "from notes by Donald Garvelmann". Photographs of Sorabji and Habermann. The LP's cover reproduces p. 17 of the manuscript of the *Passeggiata veneziana sopra la Barcarola di Offenbach*. Reissued as Habermann 1989, 2003b.

Habermann 1981 — Musicmasters MM 20015 (LP; "Introducing: Sorabji—A Legend in His Own Time"). Reissue of Habermann 1980, reissued as Habermann 1989.

Habermann 1982a — Musical Heritage Society MHS 4811/6811 (LP/cassette; "Le Jardin Parfumé"; rec. June 1980). Michael Habermann, piano. *Pastiche on the "Minute Waltz" by Chopin*•; *Pastiche on the Hindu Merchant's Song from "Sadko" by Rimsky-Korsakov*•; *Le jardin parfumé—Poem for Piano Solo*•; *Nocturne, "Jāmī"*•. Liner notes by Donald Garvelmann. Photograph of Habermann. Reissued as Habermann 1988b, 2003b.

Habermann 1982b — Musicmasters 20019 (LP). Reissue of Habermann 1982a.

Habermann 1983 — Eight-inch Eva-Tone® Soundsheet (side 2: The Piano Quarterly Presents Michael Habermann Playing Music by Kaikhosru Shapurji Sorabji) accompanying *Piano Quarterly*, no. 122 (Summer 1983), taken from Habermann 1982a and 1981. Michael Habermann, piano. *Le jardin parfumé—Poem for Piano Solo* (excerpt); *Opus clavicembalisticum* (section 1).

Habermann 1986 — "Soundpage no. 19", accompanying *Keyboard*, no. 120 (April 1986), taken from Habermann 1982a. *Opus clavicembalisticum* (section 1 and excerpt from section 2). Michael Habermann, piano.

Habermann 1987 — Musicmasters MMD 60118W (CD; rec. live on 19 November 1984, Rocky River Chamber Music Society). Michael Habermann, piano. *Prelude, Interlude, and Fugue for Piano*•; *Valse-fantaisie for Piano*•; *St. Bertrand de Comminges: "He was*

laughing in the tower"•. Booklet (8 pp.) with liner notes by Habermann (reprinted from *Keyboard*, April 1986). Reissued as Habermann 2003b.

Habermann 1988a Musicmasters 60019Y (CD). Reissue of Habermann 1982b.

Habermann 1988b ASV [Academy Sound and Vision] ZC AMM159/CD AMM159 (cassette/CD), taken from Habermann 1982a, 1987. Michael Habermann, piano. *Pastiche on the Hindu Merchant's Song from "Sadko" by Rimsky-Korsakov*; *Pastiche on the "Minute Waltz" by Chopin*; *Prelude, Interlude, and Fugue for Piano*; *Le jardin parfumé—Poem for Piano Solo*. Reissued from Habermann 1982a, 1987.

Habermann 1989 Musicmasters MM 60015T (CD; "Sorabji: A Legend in His Own Time"). Reissue of Habermann 1980/1981, with booklet (3 pp.).

Habermann 1995 Élan CD 82264 (CD; "Michael Habermann Plays Sorabji: The Legendary Works for Piano"). Michael Habermann, piano. *Nocturne, "Jāmī"*• (rec. 28 September 1982); *"Quaere reliqua hujus materiei inter secretiora"*• (rec. 28 September 1982); *"Gulistān"—Nocturne for Piano*• (rec. 8 October 1993); *Fantasiettina sul nome illustre dell'egregio poeta Christopher Grieve ossia Hugh M'Diarmid* (rec. 5 March 1980). Also includes Habermann's *À la manière de Sorabji: "Au clair de la lune"*• (rec. 8 October 1993). Booklet (11 pp.) with liner notes by Donald Garvelmann ("Introduction") and Habermann ("Background", "The Music"). Reproduction (negative) of p. 17 from the manuscript of *Passeggiata veneziana sopra la Barcarola di Offenbach*.

Habermann 2003a BIS-CD-1306 (CD; "Transcription in the Light of Harpsichord Technique for the Modern Piano of the Chromatic Fantasia of J. S. Bach, Followed by a Fugue and Other Piano Music and Transcriptions by Kaikhosru Sorabji"; rec. 5, 6 January and 22 June 2001). Michael Habermann, piano. *Quasi habanera*•; *Pasticcio capriccioso sopra l'op. 64, no 1 del Chopin*; *Symphonic Variations for Piano*• (var. 56 only); *Transcription in the Light of Harpsichord Technique for the Modern Piano of the Chromatic Fantasia of J. S. Bach, Followed by a Fugue*•; *Rapsodie espagnole de Maurice Ravel—Transcription de concert pour piano*• (second version); *Passeggiata veneziana sopra la Barcarola di Offenbach*. Booklet (23 pp.; in English, German, and French) with notes by Habermann. Photographs of Habermann and Sorabji. Recording dedicated to the memory of Donald M. Garvelmann.

Habermann 2003b British Music Society BMS 427–429CD (3 CDs, "Sorabji: Legendary Works for Piano"). Michael Habermann, piano. The three discs, entitled "Early Works", "Nocturnes", and "Assertive Works", are reissues of Habermann 1980, 1982a, and 1987. Booklet (27 pp.) including preface by Donald Garvelmann (dated 1995) and "Introduction" and "The Man and His Music" (23 pp.) by Habermann. Photograph of Habermann.

Habermann 2015 Naxos 8.571363–65 (3 CDs, "Kaikhosru Shapurji Sorabji: Piano Music—Early Works, Nocturnes, Assertive Works". Michael Habermann, piano. These discs are reissues of Habermann 2003b. The booklet (15 pp.), next to a mention of the present book (which was forthcoming in 2003), adds a footnote call number, and a note at the end about the book (with the link to the download location). Photographs of Habermann and of Sorabji in 1977 (by Sir Jeremy Grayson).

Hamelin 1990 Altarus AIR-CD-9050 (CD). Marc-André Hamelin, piano. *Sonata no. 1 for Piano*•. Booklet (6 unnumbered pp.) with liner notes by Alistair Hinton (with a reproduction of Busoni's letter in French to Sorabji, November 1919). Photographs of Sorabji and Hamelin.

Hamelin 1998 Hyperion CDA67050 (CD; "Marc-André Hamelin Plays the Composer-Pianists: Alkan, Busoni, Feinberg, Godowsky, Hamelin, Medtner, Rachmaninov, Scriabin, Sorabji"; rec. 25, 26 January 1998). Marc-André Hamelin, piano. *Pastiche on the Hindu Merchant's Song from "Sadko" by Rimsky-Korsakov*. Booklet (31 pp.; in English, French, and German) with liner notes by Francis Pott. Photographs of Sorabji and Hamelin.

Hopkins 1995 Altarus AIR-CD-9036 (CD). Charles Hopkins, piano. *"Gulistān"—Nocturne for Piano*. Booklet (36 unnumbered pp.) with liner notes by Hopkins ("Gulistān—Love and Mysticism: Sorabji, Saʿdī, and the Ṣūfic Tradition", 26 pp., including 28 notes), accompanied by the text of Saʿdī's *La fidélité* translated into French by Franz Toussaint and into English by Hopkins. Photographs of Sorabji (ca. 1945, by Joan Muspratt) and Hopkins, together with three colour reproductions from Persian manuscripts. The back cover of the booklet reproduces the last page of the manuscript.

Houdt 2003 Musicworks 87 (CD; supplement to *Musicworks* [Toronto], no. 87 [Fall 2003]; rec. 16 March 2003, Utrecht, Muziekcentrum Vredenburg). Reinier van Houdt, piano. *Fourth Symphony for Piano Alone*• (vars. 14–17, 25–30, 34, and 35 from the second movement).

Huisman 2016 Piano Classics PCLD0119 (2 CDs). Lukas Huisman, piano. *Symphonic Nocturne for Piano Alone*•. Booklet (7 pp.) with liner notes by Marc-André Roberge ("Symphonic Nocturne for Piano Alone (KSS97)", "Kaikhosru Shapurji Sorabji", "His musical language" (all excerpted from *Opus sorabjianum* and revised by the author for this publication), and Lukas Huisman ("Performing the work"). Photographs of Sorabji (in 1977, by Sir Jeremy Grayson) and Huisman. Reproduction of p. 106 from the manuscript.

Johnson 1999 Altarus AIR-CD-9049 (CD; rec. live on 6 December 1998, New York, Abraham Goodman House, Merkin Concert Hall). Tellef Johnson, piano. *Sonata seconda for Piano*•. Booklet (6 unnumbered pp.) with liner notes by Alistair Hinton ("Kaikhosru Sorabji: The Piano Sonatas"). Photographs of Sorabji and Johnson.

Long 2015 — Veraphon Record [no number, but with bar code 40200796457235] (CD; rec. January 2015, Studio Veraphon Kiel). Yan Long, piano. *Fantaisie espagnole*. Uncredited liner notes in German, English, and Chinese. Produced by the ICoM (International College of Music, Hamburg), a private academy for musicians.

Madge 1980 — Radio Nederland Transcription Service LP 198051/052, side B (LP; from a performance given on 11 June 1980 in The Hague; released for broadcasting only). Geoffrey Douglas Madge, piano. *Opus clavicembalisticum*• (sections 1 and 2).

Madge 1983 — Royal Conservatory Series RCS 4–800 (4 LPs; rec. live on 11 June 1982, Utrecht, Muziekcentrum Vredenburg). Geoffrey Douglas Madge, piano. *Opus clavicembalisticum*•. Booklet (11 unnumbered pp.; in English and Dutch) with liner notes by Kenneth Derus ("Opus clavicembalisticum", "Kaikhosru Shapurji Sorabji"), Madge ("Perhaps the Music Can Best Speak for Itself!"), Paul Rapoport, "A Personal Note on the Utrecht Performance"), Hans Kroeze ("Geoffrey Douglas Madge"). Several photographs and a discography document Madge's career; there are some pictures related to Sorabji, including a reproduction of the final page of the printed score.

Madge 1999 — BIS-CD-1062/1064 (5 CDs for the price of 3; rec. live on 24 April 1983, Mandel Hall, Chicago). Geoffrey Douglas Madge, piano. *Opus clavicembalisticum*. Booklet (39 pp.; in English, German, and French) with liner notes by Kenneth Derus ("Kaikhosru Sorabji and *Opus clavicembalisticum*"; excerpt from "Kaikhosru Sorabji: A Centenary Lecture", given at DePaul University, Chicago, 11 February 1993) and Geoffrey Douglas Madge ("My Meetings with Sorabji and His *Opus clavicembalisticum*"). Reproduction of Sorabji's table of twenty-four themes. Photographs of Madge and Sorabji (inscribed to Madge).

Manning 1979 — British Library Sound Archive, no. T2270BW BDI (tape; rec. 8 February 1978, Concert Hall at Broadcasting House; broadcast 9 June 1979). Jane Manning, soprano; Yonty Solomon, piano. *Trois poèmes pour chant et piano*; *Trois fêtes galantes de Verlaine*.

McLachlan 2004 — Dunelm DRD0219 (CD; "Piano Music of Erik Chisholm & His Friends: Bartók, Sorabji, Stevenson, Busoni"; rec. 16, 17, 19 December 2003). Murray McLachlan, piano. *Fantasiettina sul nome illustre dell'egregio poeta Christopher Grieve ossia Hugh M'Diarmid*. Booklet (10 pp.) with liner notes by McLachlan. Photographs of McLachlan.

Nasseri 2007 — Centaur CRC 2894 (CD; rec. September–October 2006). Soheil Nasseri, piano. *Sonata no. 0*. Booklet (3 pp.) with liner notes by Daniel Scholsberg.

Nishimura 2017 — Pronunziato JNCD-1019 (CD; "Homage to the Composer-Pianists"; rec. various dates between 2011 and 2015; 30 September 2014 for Sorabji's piece). Eiji Nishimura, piano. *Pastiche on the Hindu Merchant's Song from "Sadko" by Rimsky-*

Korsakov. List of pieces in Japanese and English; booklet (10 pp.) with liner notes in Japanese only and biographical notes in English (translated by Hiroyuki Tanaka).

Ogdon 1989 — Altarus Records AIR-CD-9075(4) (4 CDs; rec. 8–12 July, 8–15 November 1985, and 10–15 March 1986). John Ogdon, piano. Booklet (62 pp., A5 format), encased in presentation box (178 × 282 mm), with texts by Chris Rice ("Introduction"); Ronald Stevenson ("A Zoroastrian Musician in Dorset", 1961, rev. 1988; "Opus Clavicembalisticum—A Critical Analysis", with 3 notes); Alistair Hinton ("Around Kaikhosru Sorabji", "Opus Clavicembalisticum—A Brief History", "Notes of the Life and Career of Sorabji", "Chronological List of Works", with 51 notes and one note numbered *a*; Kaikhosru Shapurji Sorabji ("Shortform-Analysis of Opus Clavicembalisticum", with introduction by Chris Rice); and John Ogdon ("Kaikhosru Sorabji and Hermann Melville", 1961). Includes twelve photographs.

Ogdon 2004 — Altarus Records AIR-CD-9075(5) (5 CDs). John Ogdon, piano. Reissued from Ogdon 1989 (remastered and redistributed on five discs). Revised booklet in standard CD format (100 pp.); texts by Alistair Hinton revised in 2002. The inside of the jewel box reproduces part of p. 162 of *Opus clavicembalisticum*.

Powell 2002 — Altarus AIR-CD-9067 (CD). Jonathan Powell, piano. *Passeggiata veneziana sopra la Barcarola di Offenbach*•; *Villa Tasca: Mezzogiorno siciliano—Evocazione nostalgica e memoria tanta cara e preziosa del giardino meraviglioso, splendido, tropicale*•. Booklet (18 unnumbered pp.) with liner notes by Powell. Photographs of Sorabji in 1988 (in colour), Villa Tasca, Monreale Cathedral, church of La Martorana, and Powell. The inside of the jewel box reproduces part of p. 17 of Powell's edition of *Passeggiata veneziana*.

Powell 2003 — Altarus AIR-CD-9068 (CD). Jonathan Powell, piano. *Toccata [no. 1] for Piano*•. Booklet (10 unnumbered pp.) with liner notes by Powell. Photographs of Sorabji (on the slopes above Corfe Castle in the mid-1930s, by Norman Peterkin) and Powell.

Powell 2004a — Altarus AIR-CD-9069(3) (3 CDs). Jonathan Powell, piano. *Sonata IV for Piano*•. Booklet (14 unnumbered pp.) with "Analytical Note" by Sorabji (1929) and liner notes by Powell. Photographs of Sorabji (ca. 1945, by Joan Muspratt), Count Tasca's garden at Villa Tasca, and Powell. The cover reproduces another view at Villa Tasca. The inside of the jewel box reproduces parts of pp. 57 and 127 of Simon Abrahams's edition.

Powell 2004b — Altarus AIR-CD-9084 (CD). Jonathan Powell, piano. *Fantasia ispanica*•. Booklet (9 unnumbered pp.) with liner notes by Powell. Photographs of Sorabji (in 1933, by "Rembrandt"; as a tourist in front of an old church or abbey) and Powell. The inside of the jewel box reproduces part of p. 28 of Powell's edition.

Powell 2005 — Altarus AIR-CD-9083 (CD). Jonathan Powell, piano. *Rosario d'arabeschi*•; *"Gulistān"—Nocturne for Piano*. Booklet (26 unnumbered pp.) with liner notes (9 pp.) by Powell on the first work (with transcriptions of ten letters between Sir Sacheverell Sitwell and Sorabji) and by Charles Hopkins (13 pp., 1995), adapted by Powell, on the second. Photographs of Sitwell, Sorabji, and Powell. The inside of the jewel box reproduces part of p. 13 of Powell's edition of *Rosario d'arabeschi*.

Powell 2006 — Altarus AIR-CD-9081 (CD). Jonathan Powell, piano. *Concerto da suonare da me solo e senza orchestra, per divertirmi*•. Booklet (9 unnumbered pp.) with liner notes by Powell. Photograph of Sorabji by Joan Muspratt. The inside of the jewel box reproduces part of p. 31 of Powell's edition of the work.

Powell 2007a — Altarus AIR-CD-9082 (CD). Jonathan Powell, piano. *Un nido di scatole sopra il nome del grande e buon amico Harold Rutland*•; *Nocturne, "Jāmī"*; *St. Bertrand de Comminges: "He was laughing in the tower"*. Booklet (20 unnumbered pp.) with liner notes by Hugh Polkinhorn and Powell. Photographs of Sorabji, c. 1930s; interior and exterior, choir stall carving, "dusty stuffed crocodile", and cloisters of the Cathedral of Saint-Bertrand-de-Comminges; and Powell. The inside of the jewel box reproduces part of p. 16 of Powell's edition of *Un nido di scatole*.

Powell 2020 — Piano Classics PCL10206 (7 CDs; rec. 23, 25, and 30 September, 29 November, 6 and 11 December 2015). *Sequentia cyclica super "Dies irae" ex Missa pro defunctis*•. Jonathan Powell, piano. Booklet (43 pp.) with liner notes by Powell as "Sorabji's *Sequentia cyclica*: An Introduction". Photograph of Powell.

Powell 2021 — Brilliant Classics BC96356. *Sequentia cyclica super "Dies irae" ex Missa pro defunctis*•. Jonathan Powell, piano. Part of a release entitled *Piano Variations, Volume 8*, containing var. 4 (part 1 on CD1, lasting 50:27), available on Naxos Music Library.

Sánchez 2020 — Piano Classics PCL10205 (2 CDs; rec. 15 April, 1 and 15 May 2019). Abel Sánchez-Aguilera, piano. *Toccata seconda per pianoforte*•. Booklet (4 pp.) with liner notes by Sánchez-Aguilera as "Sorabji's *Toccata seconda per pianoforte*". Photograph of Sánchez-Aguilera.

Solomon 1977 — British Library Sound Archive, no. T1734BW BDI (tape; rec. 14 February 1977 [studio recording], Concert Hall, BBC Broadcasting House; broadcast 7 November 1977). Yonty Solomon, piano. *Fantaisie espagnole*.

Solomon 1979 — British Library Sound Archive, no. T2270BW BDI (tape; rec. 8 February 1978 [studio recording], Concert Hall, BBC Broadcasting House; broadcast 9 June 1979). Yonty Solomon, piano. *"Gulistān"—Nocturne for Piano*.

Solomon 1985 British Library Sound Archive, no. B2634/1 (tape; rec. 26 November 1985, with an additional session on 27 November [studio recording], BBC, Maida Vale Studio). Yonty Solomon, piano. *Sonata III for Piano*.

Solomon 1987a British Library Sound Archive, no. H774/06 (tape; rec. 10 June 1987 [studio recording], BBC Studio 1, Maida Vale; live broadcast). Yonty Solomon, piano. *St. Bertrand de Comminges: "He was laughing in the tower"*.

Solomon 1987b British Library Sound Archive, no. NP8358BW (tape; rec. 14 August 1987 [studio recording], BBC Concert Hall, Broadcasting House; live broadcast). Yonty Solomon, piano. *Sonata no. 1 for Piano*.

Solomon 1992 Altarus AIR-CD-9037 (CD). Yonty Solomon, piano. *Le jardin parfumé—Poem for Piano Solo*. Booklet (9 unnumbered pp.) with uncredited liner notes. Includes a reproduction of Frederick Delius's letter to Sorabji, 23 July 1930. Photograph of Sorabji with Yonty Solomon (1977) and two illustrations for Baudelaire's *Les fleurs du mal* by Jacob Epstein.

Sorabji 1962a Tapes made by Erik Chisholm at the home of Neil Solomon, London; rec. 22 February 1962 (whereabouts unknown). Kaikhosru Shapurji Sorabji, piano. Short extemporization; reading of his "artistic creed" (presumably the text of October 1959 beginning with "I am not a 'modern' composer"); reading of the chapter "Yoga and the Composer" from *Mi contra fa*; *Third Symphony for Piano Solo* (ca. 45 minutes from the beginning).

Sorabji 1962b Tapes made by Erik Chisholm at the home of Neil Solomon, London; rec. 27 February 1962 (whereabouts unknown). Kaikhosru Shapurji Sorabji, piano. *Third Symphony for Piano Solo* (remainder).

Sorabji 1962c Tapes made by Frank Holliday at Sorabji's home, Corfe Castle. Kaikhosru Shapurji Sorabji, piano. *Concerto da suonare da me solo e senza orchestra, per divertirmi*; *"Gulistān"—Nocturne for Piano* (rec. 5 May 1962). *"Quaere reliqua hujus materiei inter secretiora"*; *St. Bertrand de Comminges: "He was laughing in the tower"*; reading from "Some Sacro-Sanct Modern Superstitions"; reading from Francis Michael Guercio, *Sicily, the Garden of the Mediterranean: The Country and Its People* (rec. 6 May 1962).

Sorabji 1962d Tapes made by Frank Holliday at Sorabji's home, Corfe Castle; rec. 5 October 1962. Kaikhosru Shapurji Sorabji, piano. *Second Symphony for Piano*: movements 1, 2, and 3 (rec. 5 October 1962).

Sorabji 1963a Tapes made by Frank Holliday at Sorabji's home, Corfe Castle. Kaikhosru Shapurji Sorabji, piano. *Second Symphony for Piano*: movement 4 (rec. 9 September 1963). Idem: movement 5; *Passeggiata veneziana sopra la Barcarola di Offenbach* (rec. 10 September 1962).

Sorabji 1964 — Tapes made by Frank Holliday at Sorabji's home, Corfe Castle (rec. 25, 26 September 1964). Kaikhosru Shapurji Sorabji, piano. *Fourth Symphony for Piano Alone*.

Sorabji 1965 — Tapes made by Frank Holliday at Sorabji's home, Corfe Castle (rec. 25, 26 September 1964). Kaikhosru Shapurji Sorabji, piano. *Le jardin parfumé—Poem for Piano Solo*; *Nocturne, "Jāmī"*; *"Gulistān"—Nocturne for Piano*; *Fourth Symphony for Piano Alone* (movement 2, Chorale Prelude only).

Sorabji 1968 — Tapes made by Frank Holliday at Sorabji's home, Corfe Castle (rec. 25, 26 September 1964). Kaikhosru Shapurji Sorabji, piano. *Études transcendantes (100)*: nos. 13, 18, 20, 22, 26, 28, 40, 44, 66, 69, 71, 81.

Stevenson 1992 — Altarus AIR-CD-9043 (CD, "Cathedrals in Sound: A Piano Recital by Ronald Stevenson"). Ronald Stevenson, piano. *Fantasiettina sul nome illustre dell'egregio poeta Christopher Grieve ossia Hugh M'Diarmid*•. Also includes works by Liszt, Chopin, Debussy, Czesław Marek, MacDowell, Stevenson, Liszt, and Bach-Busoni. Booklet (11 unnumbered pp.) with liner notes by Stevenson. Photographs of Sorabji and Stevenson (among others).

Ullén 2000 — BIS-CD-1083 (CD, "Got a Minute?"; rec. January 2000). Fredrik Ullén, piano. *Pastiche on the "Minute Waltz" by Chopin*; *Pasticcio capriccioso sopra l'op. 64, no 1 del Chopin*•. Also includes Chopin's *Minute Waltz* and nineteen transcriptions of that work and other works by Chopin. Booklet (19 pp.) with liner notes by Ullén (in English, German, and French). Photograph of Ullén.

Ullén 2004 — Danacord DACOCD 619 (CD; "Rarities of Piano Music at Schloss vor Husum from the 2003 Festival"; rec. 21 August 2003). Fredrik Ullén, piano. *Études transcendantes (100)*: no. 13. Booklet (15 pp.; in English and German) with liner notes by Peter Grove. Photograph of Ullén bowing to the audience at the end of his recital on the back cover of the booklet.

Ullén 2006 — BIS-CD-1373 (CD, "Fredrik Ullén plays Kaikhosru Sorabji—100 Transcendental Studies for Piano" [vol. 1]; rec. July 2003, December 2005). Fredrik Ullén, piano. *Études transcendantes (100)*•: nos. 1–25. Booklet (31 pp.) with biographical sketch ("Kaikhosru Sorabji") by Kenneth Derus and "Transcendental Studies" by Ullén, and biographical sketch of Ullén (in English, German, and French); "On Sorabji's Studies—An Essay by Kenneth Derus" (in English only). Photograph of Sorabji on p. 14 and of Ullén on the back cover.

Ullén 2009 — BIS-CD-1533 (CD, "Fredrik Ullén plays Kaikhosru Sorabji—100 Transcendental Studies for Piano" [vol. 2]; rec. December 2005, July 2006). Fredrik Ullén, piano. *Études transcendantes (100)*•: nos. 26–43. Booklet (27 pp.) with biographical sketch ("Kaikhosru Sorabji") by Kenneth Derus and "Transcendental Studies" by Ullén, and biographical sketch of Ullén (in English, German, and French); "On

Sorabji's Studies—An Essay by Kenneth Derus" (in English only). Photograph of Sorabji on p. 9 and of Ullén on the back cover.

Ullén 2010 BIS-CD-1713 (CD, "Fredrik Ullén plays Kaikhosru Sorabji—100 Transcendental Studies for Piano" [vol. 3]; rec. August 2006 (nos. 44–58, 60–62); July 2006 (no. 59). Fredrik Ullén, piano. *Études transcendantes (100)*•: nos. 44–62. Booklet (27 pp.) with biographical sketch ("Kaikhosru Sorabji") by Kenneth Derus and "Transcendental Studies" by Ullén, biographical sketch of Ullén, and quotations from a letter from Georg Kreisel to Derus (23 December 2003) and from "Kaikhosru Sorabji: A Centenary Lecture" (11 February 1993) by Derus (in English, German, and French). Photograph of Ullén on the back cover.

Ullén 2015 BIS-1853 (CD, "Fredrik Ullén plays Kaikhosru Sorabji—100 Transcendental Studies for Piano" [vol. 4]; rec. July 2014 (nos. 63–65, 67–71), no. 66 (December 2005). Fredrik Ullén, piano. *Études transcendantes (100)*•: nos. 44–62. Booklet (27 pp.) with biographical sketch ("Kaikhosru Sorabji") by Kenneth Derus and "Transcendental Studies" by Ullén, biographical sketch of Ullén, and quotations from a letter from Georg Kreisel to Derus (23 December 2003) and from "Kaikhosru Sorabji: A Centenary Lecture" (11 February 1993) by Derus (in English, German, and French). Photograph of Sorabji on p. 11 and of Ullén on the back cover.

Ullén 2016 BIS-2223 (CD, "Fredrik Ullén plays Kaikhosru Sorabji—100 Transcendental Studies for Piano" [vol. 5]; rec. July 2014 (nos. 72–74, March–April 2015 (nos. 75–83). Fredrik Ullén, piano. *Études transcendantes (100)*•: nos. 72–83. Booklet (27 pp.) with biographical sketch ("Kaikhosru Sorabji") by Kenneth Derus and "Transcendental Studies" by Ullén, biographical sketch of Ullén, and quotations from a letter from Georg Kreisel to Derus (23 December 2003) and from "Kaikhosru Sorabji: A Centenary Lecture" (11 February 1993) by Derus (in English, German, and French). Photograph of Sorabji on p. 11 and of Ullén on the back cover.

Ullén 2020 BIS-2433 (2 CDs, "Fredrik Ullén plays Kaikhosru Sorabji—100 Transcendental Studies for Piano" [vols. 6–7]; rec. June 2018 (nos. 84–88), May 2019 (nos. 89–91, 93–98), December 2019 (nos. 99–100). Fredrik Ullén, piano. *Études transcendantes (100)*•: nos. 84–100. Booklet (55 pp.) with untitled text by Alistair Hinton (2020), "The Transcendental Studies" followed by "Afterword and Acknowledgements" by Ullén (2020) and biographical sketch of Ullén, and three "Texts by Kenneth Derus", untitled biographical presentation (2009), "On Sorabji's Studies—An Essay" (2003), and "Kaikhosru Sorabji: A Centenary Lecture" (11 February 1993) (in English, German, and French). Photograph of Sorabji on p. 23 and of Ullén on the back cover.

Appendix 4 / Musical Examples

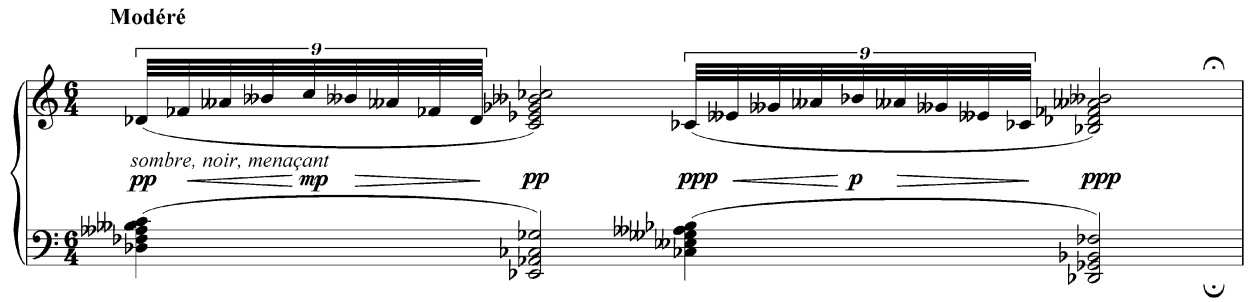
The following musical examples all serve a specific purpose evident from the comments offered on a given work in the main text (hyperlinks make it easy to move between comments and examples when reading on screen). The examples usually show a single, logical, section of a work, and the references to the examples are inserted at the most appropriate point in the discussion. For the few examples consisting of more than one passage, another section of an example can easily be linked to the relevant explanations. Not all works involving the orchestra come with an example, although a few such works are represented by a detail or a score reduction.

A single barline at the end indicates the end of a bar; a double barline separates sections within an example; and a final barline marks the end of a piece. The absence of a barline at the end of a system indicates that a bar has been split and continues in the next system or that it is not shown in its entirety; in the latter case, mordents are added at the end to indicate that only the beginning is shown for structural logic.

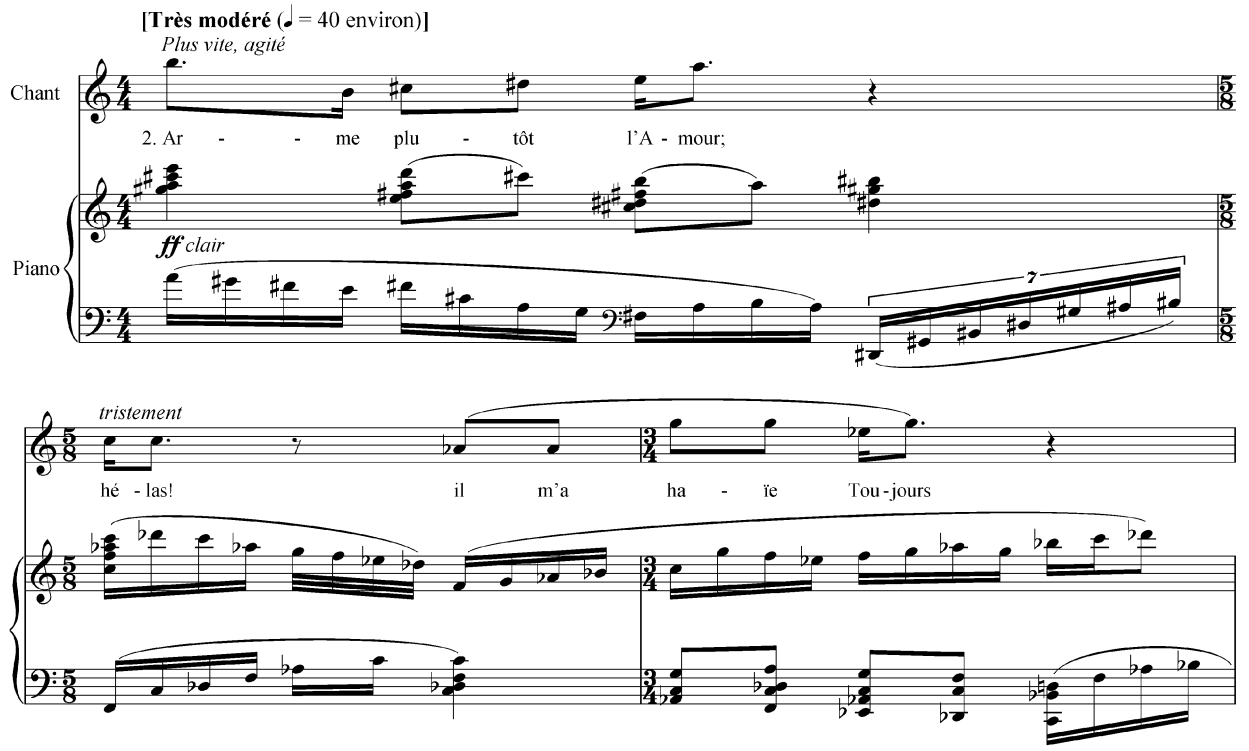
Editorial additions, usually in the form of musical letters indicating the use of *soggetti cavati*, appear in square brackets. Tempo indications are given when they exist, and are placed in square brackets when a meaningful indication can be taken from an earlier point in the score (several works, movements, or sections have no clear initial indication). Time signatures are used when present in the source or in the case of works for ensembles. A clef with an *8* above or below means that the content of the staff is to be played one octave above or below, respectively; however, the traditional *ottava sopra* with the dashed line (8va) is occasionally used. Unless clarity requires otherwise, accidentals are valid for one bar only and for one note only, except for notes that are immediately repeated.

The examples are based on the manuscripts and the editions, but should not be expected to be exact reproductions of either of them (or even of my own editions); they represent my interpretation of Sorabji's often unclear notation based on my experience as an editor. The examples have been set by me in *Sibelius* 6.2 by Avid Technology®, printed in the Opus font, then inserted as TIFF files with a resolution of 600 dpi. The captions give the exact location of the passage reproduced using bar numbers (when possible, especially in selected published editions) or as much as is applicable of a page/system/bar reference. The reference is ideally to a published edition (^{ED}), with an indication of the editor's name if there is more than one edition ($^{ED/Powell}$), or to the manuscript (^{MS}) if there is none. In the case of long works (especially those with a table of contents), page references are also used to make it easier to locate the excerpt, even if bar numbers can be given.

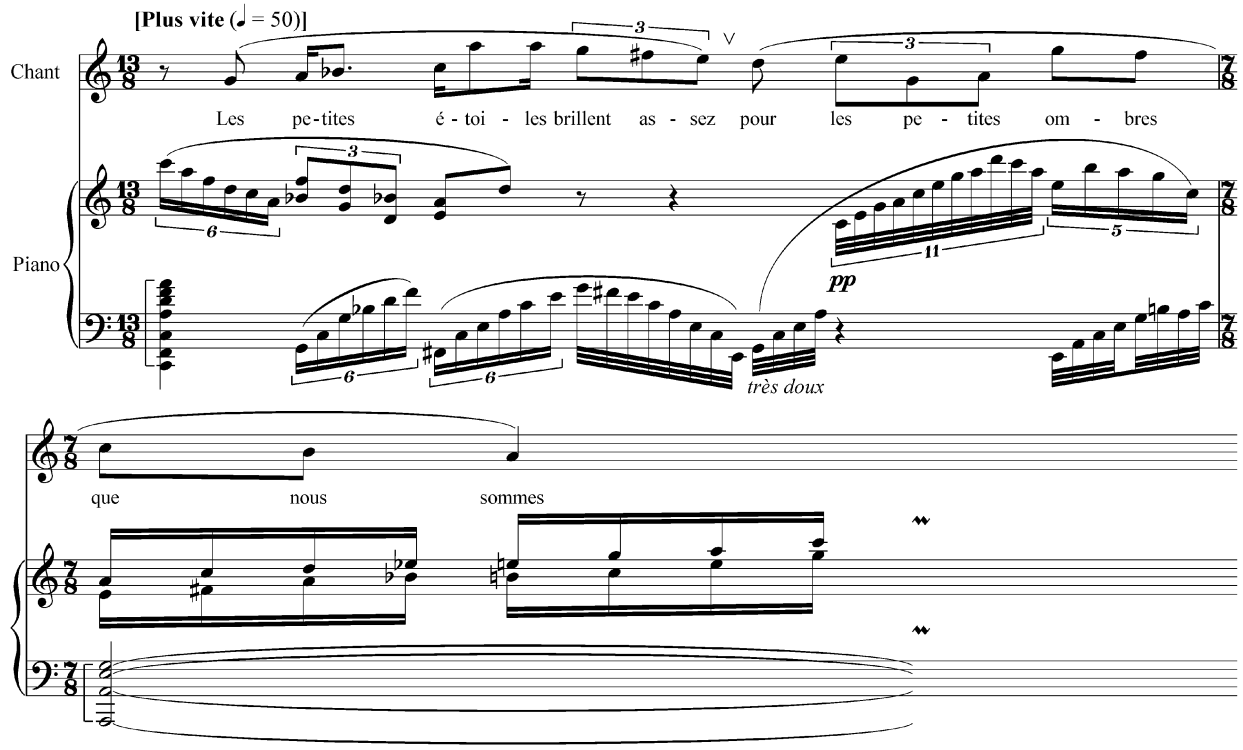
Example 4.1 / *The Poplars*; [ED]bar 1.



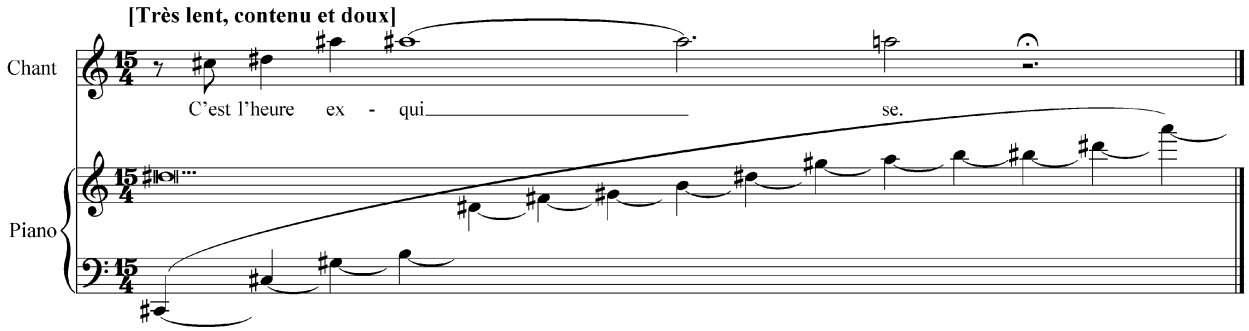
Example 4.2 / *Chrysilla*; [ED]bars 7–9.



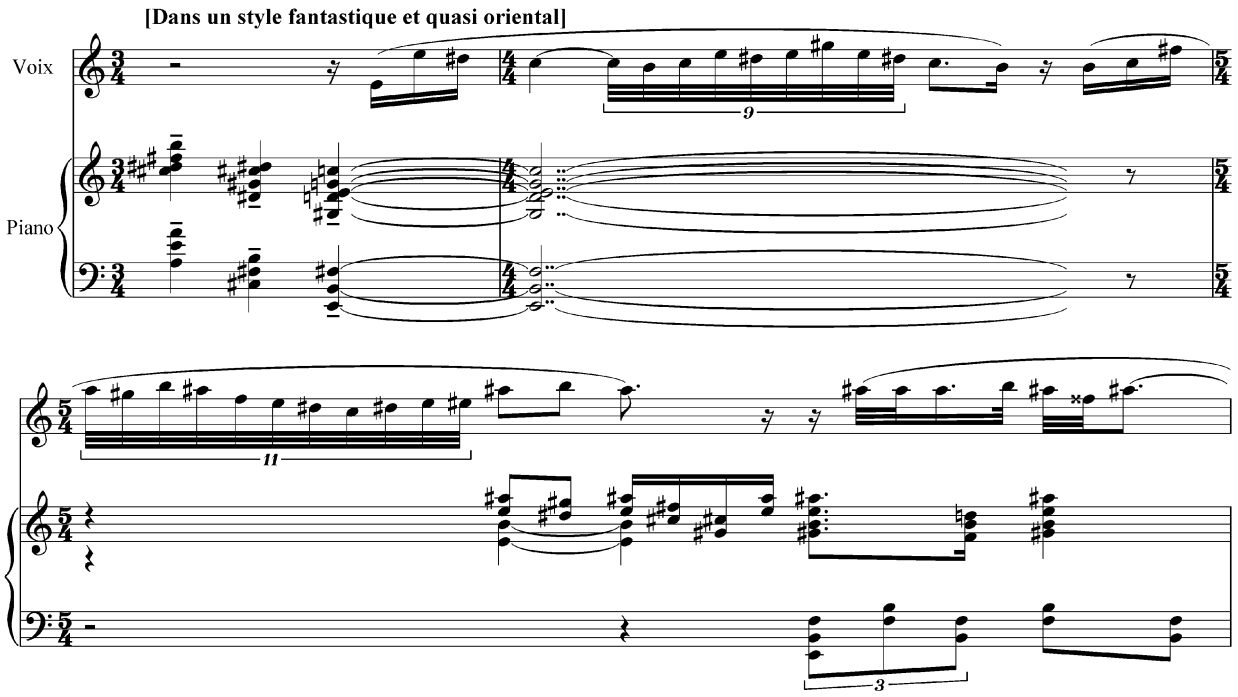
Example 4.3 / *Roses du soir*; [ED]bars 8–9.



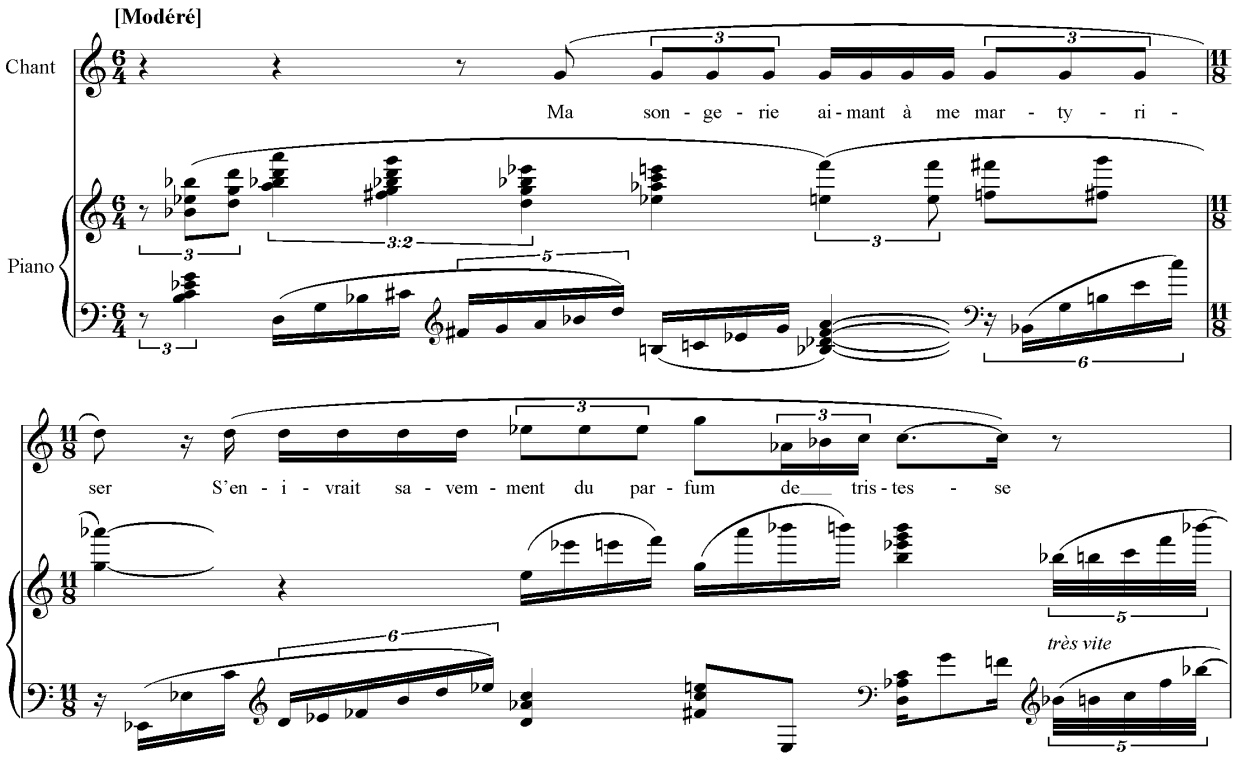
Example 4.4 / *L'heure exquise*; [ED]bar 19.



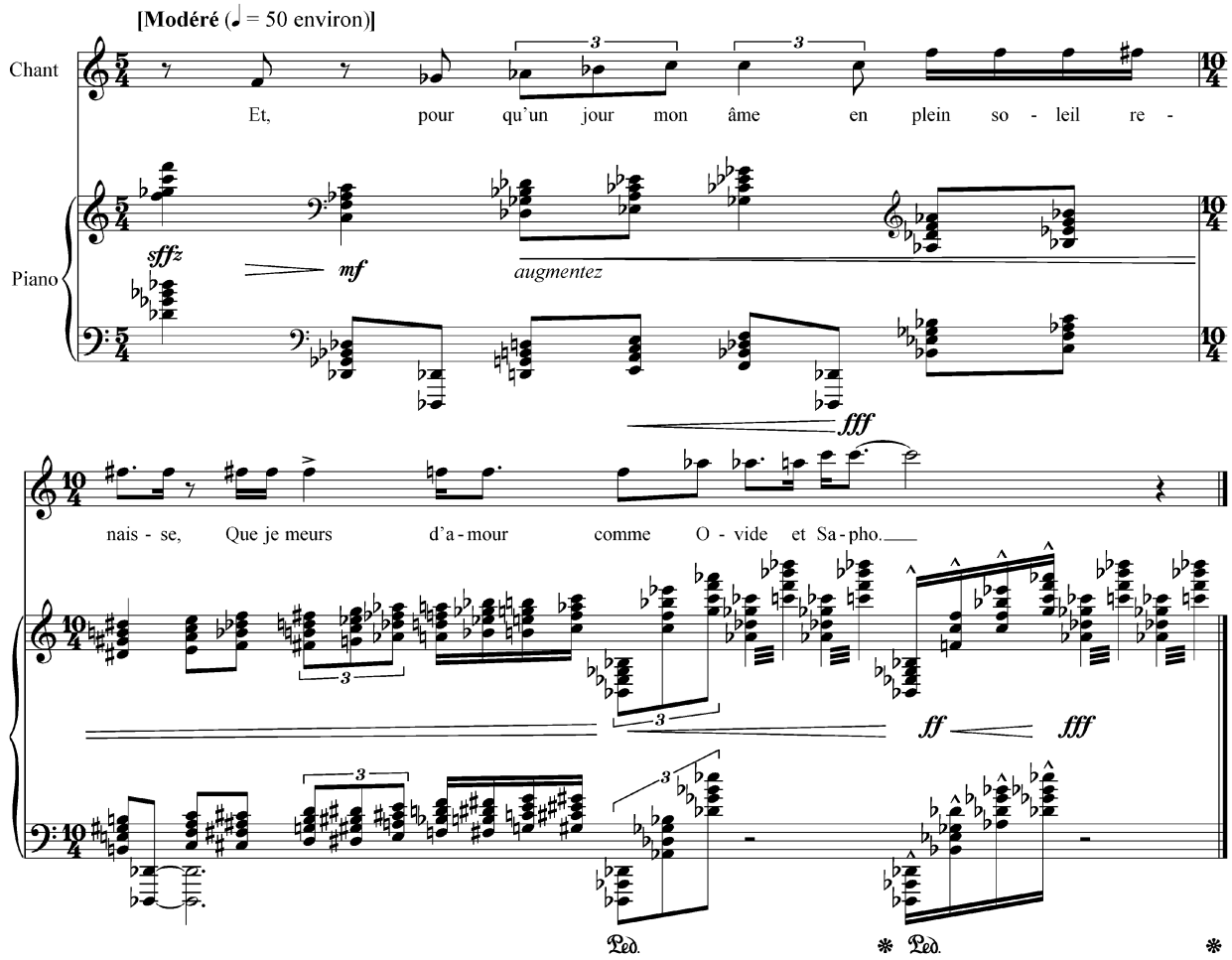
Example 4.5 / *Vocalise pour soprano fioriturata*; [ED]bars 17–19.



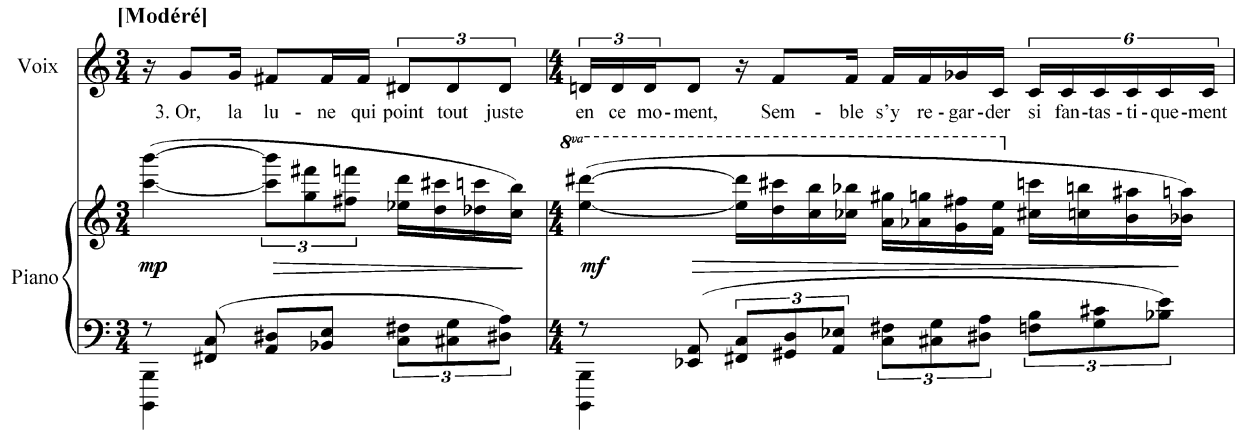
Example 4.6 / *Apparition*; [ED]bars 12–13.



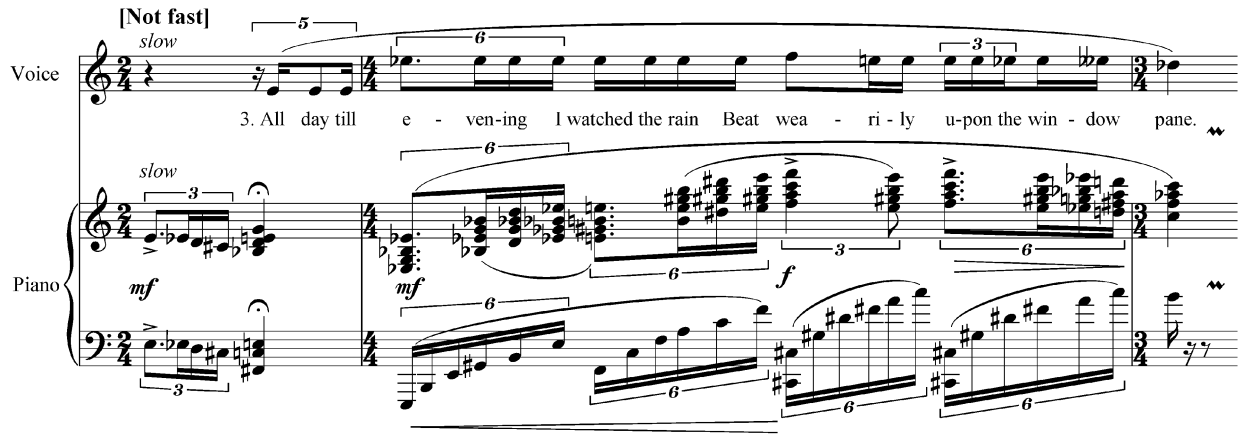
Example 4.7 / *Hymne à Aphrodite*; [ED]bars 36–37.



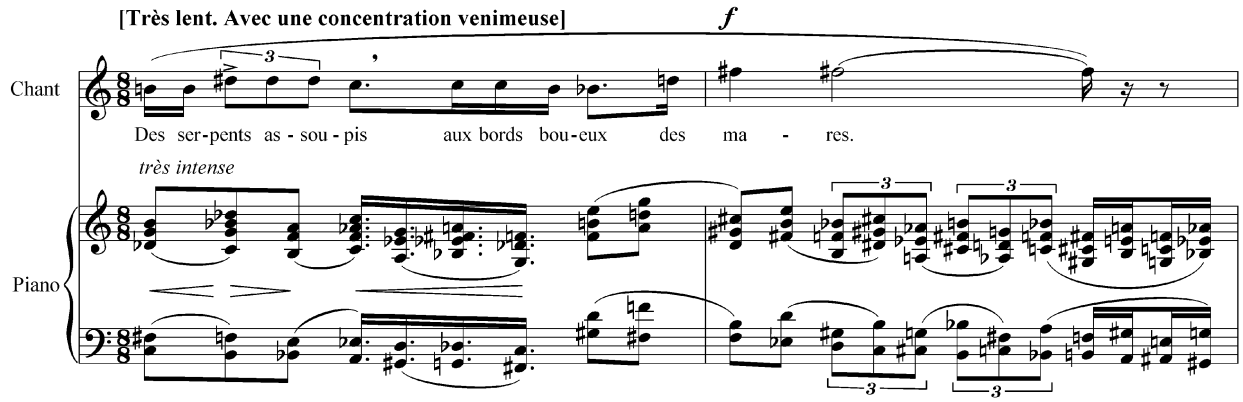
Example 4.8 / *L'étang*; [ED]bars 13–14.



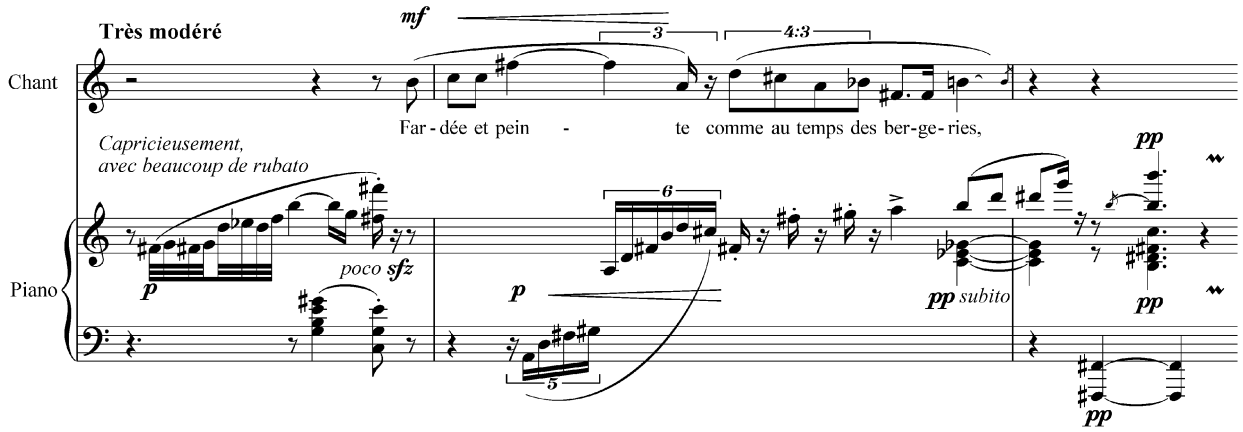
Example 4.9 / *I Was Not Sorrowful—Poem for Voice and Piano [Spleen]*; [ED]bars 7–9.



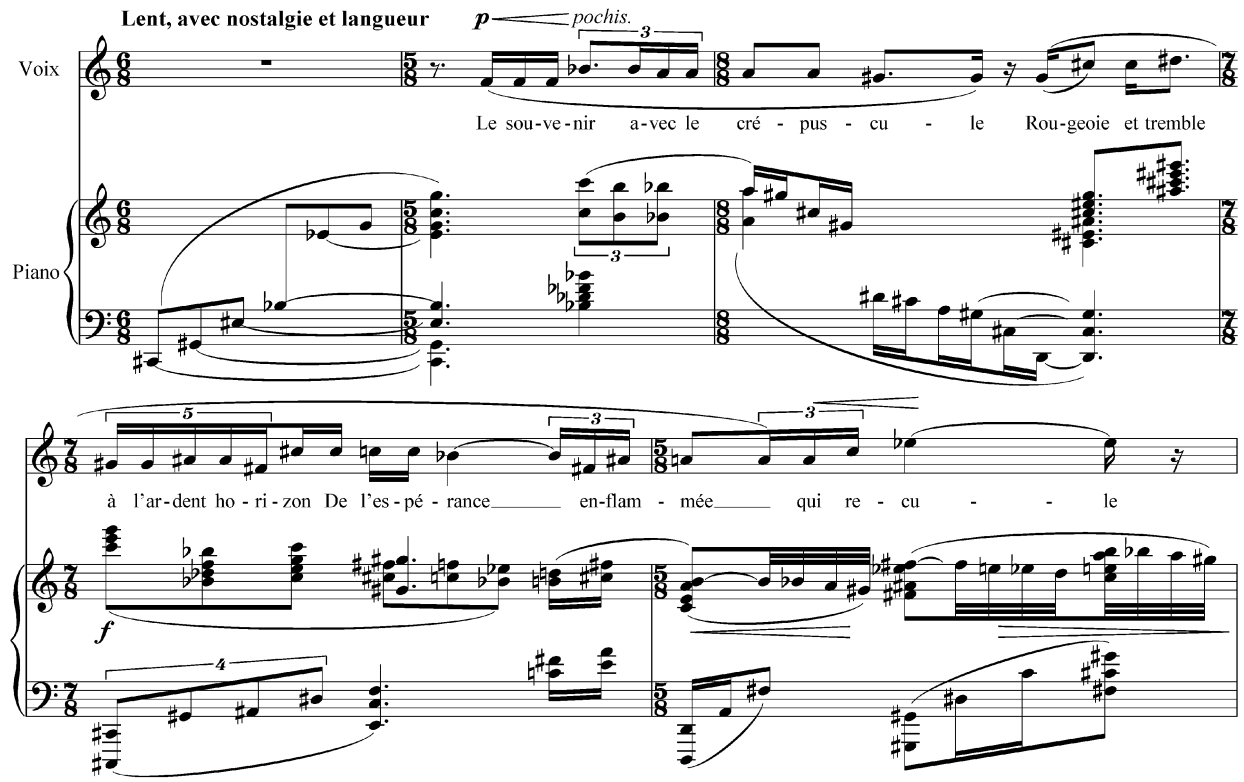
Example 4.10 / *Le mauvais jardinier*; [ED]bars 5–6.



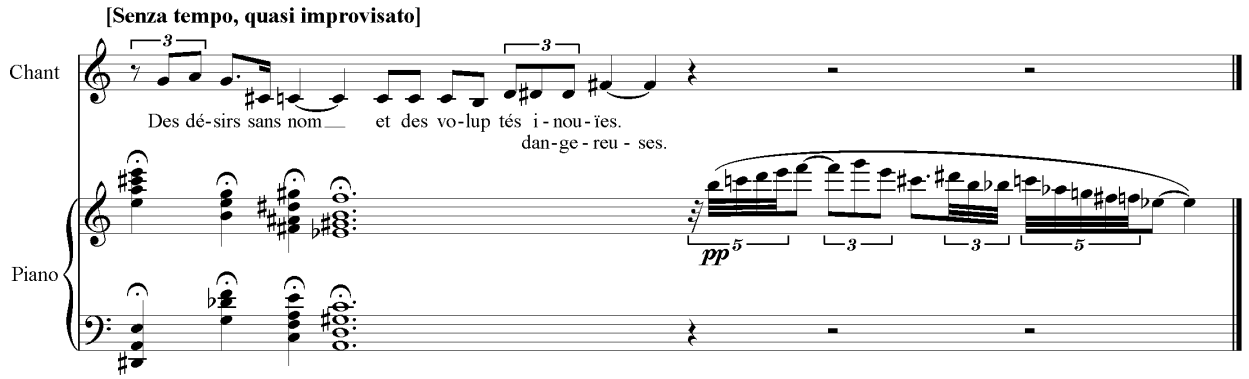
Example 4.11 / *Trois fêtes galantes de Verlaine*: "L'allée"; [ED]bars 1–3.



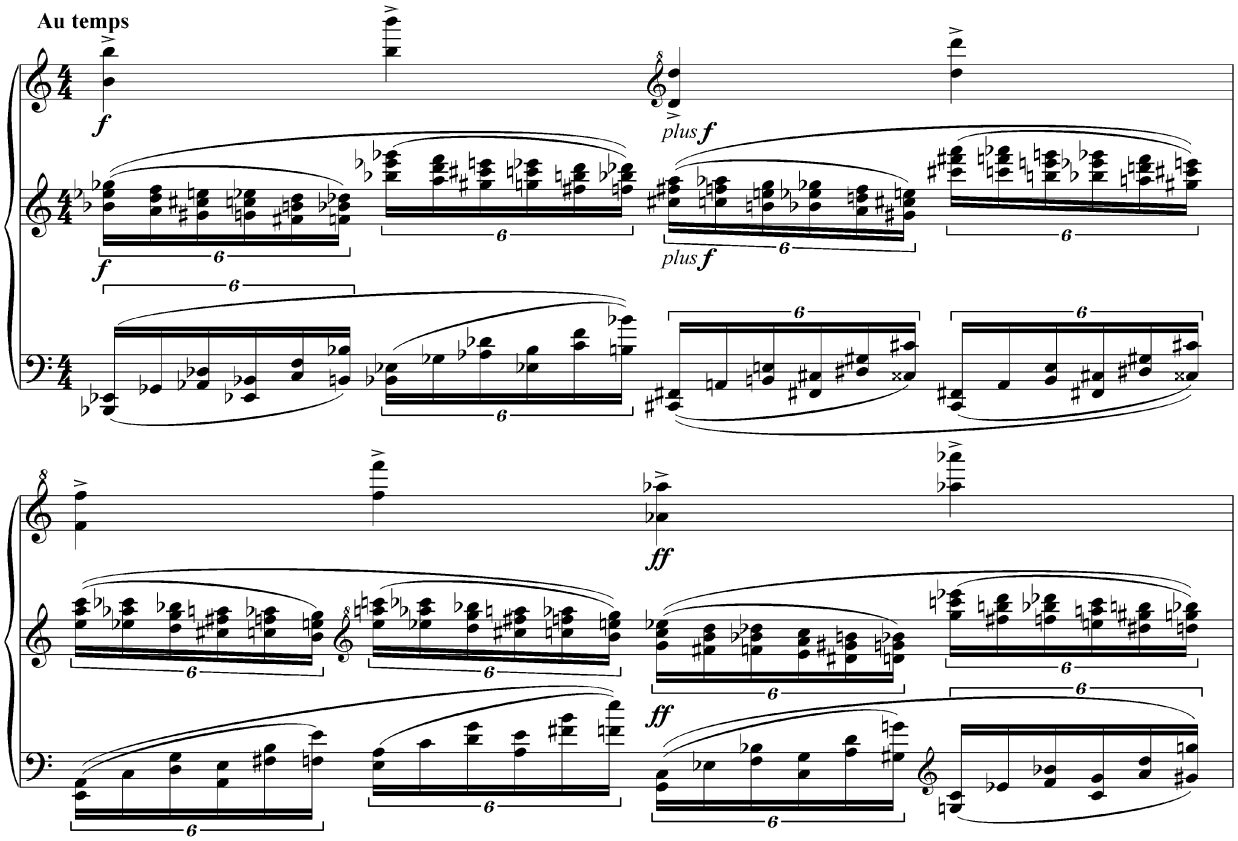
Example 4.12 / *Trois poèmes pour chant et piano*: "Crépuscule du soir mystique"; [ED]bars 1–5.



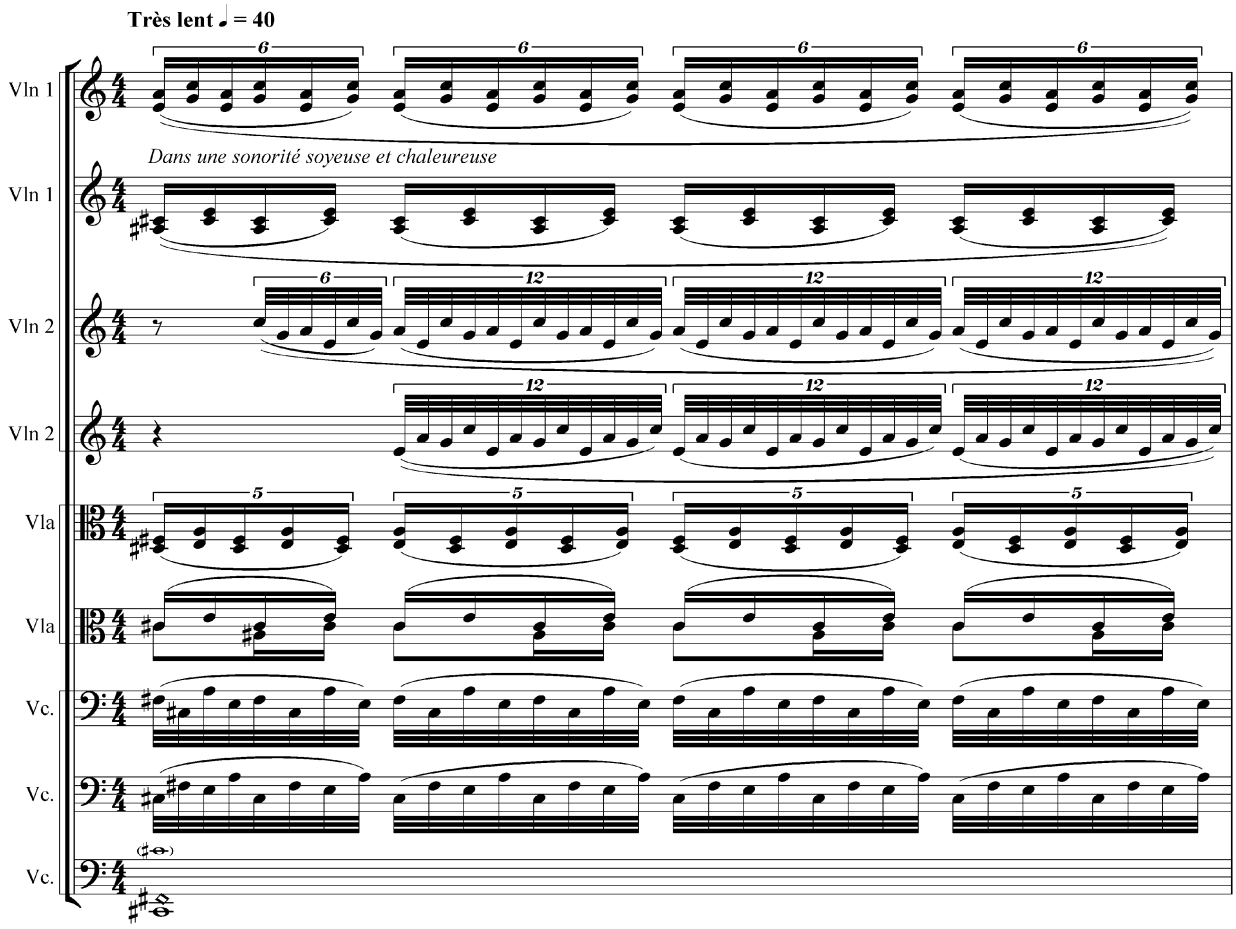
Example 4.13 / *Arabesque*; final bar.



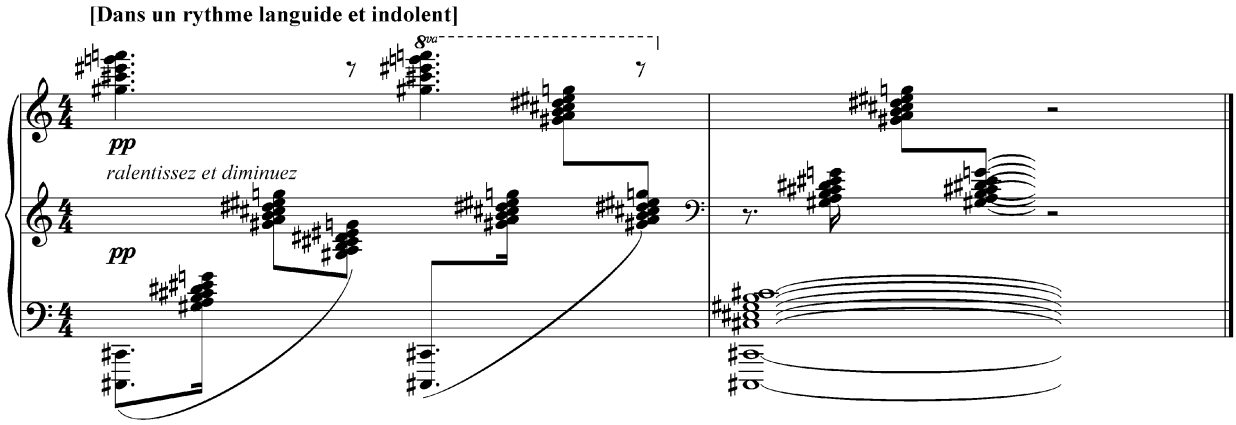
Example 5.1 / *Sonata no. 0*; ED/Jarvis bars 130–31.



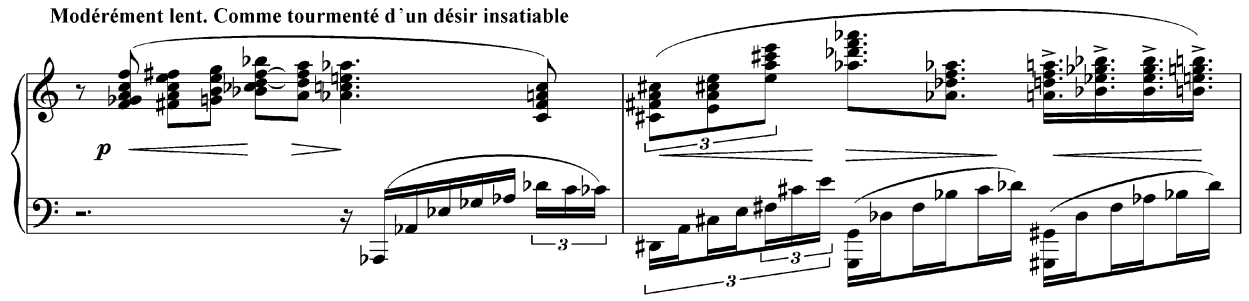
Example 5.2 / *Chaleur—Poème*; bar 1 (string parts only, double bass omitted [similar to violoncellos]). All parts are played ***ppp***.



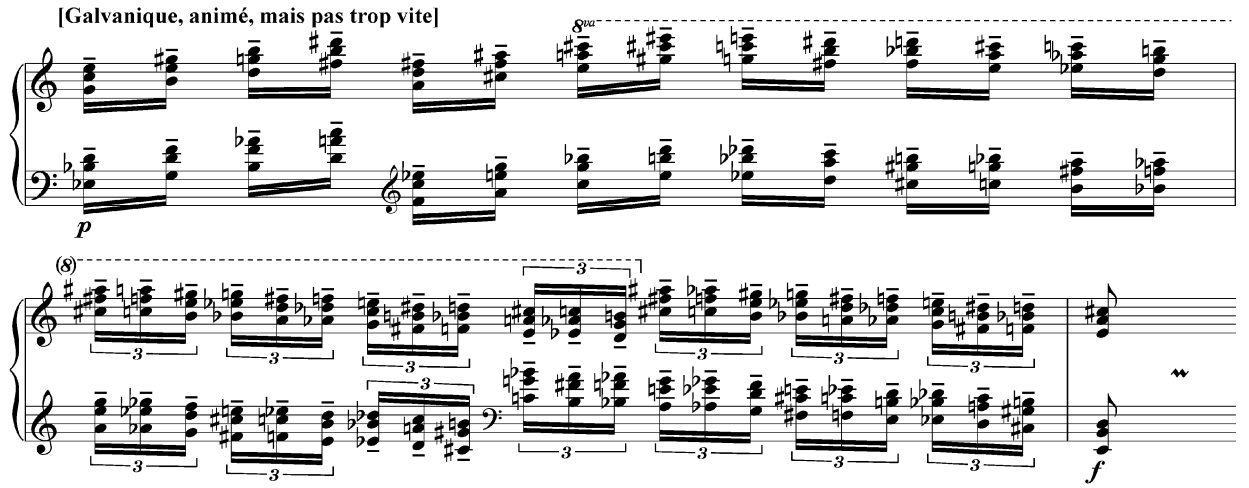
Example 5.3 / *Quasi habanera*; [ED]bars 54–55 (final bars).



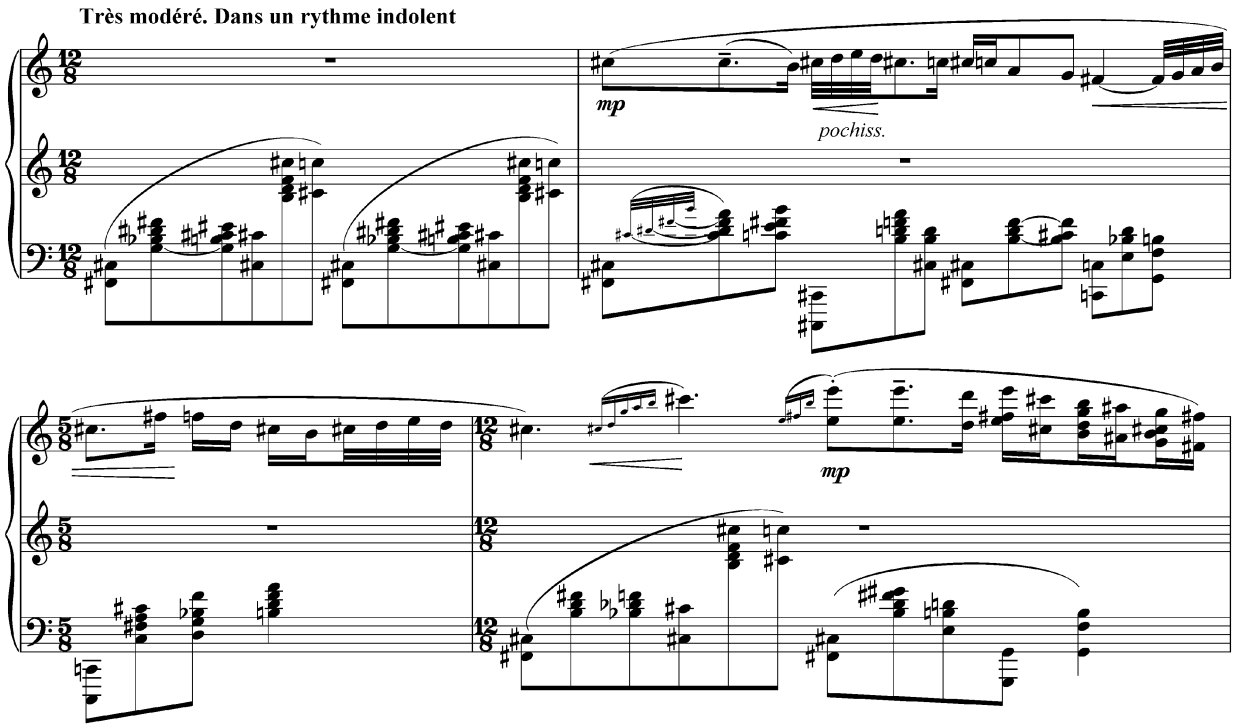
Example 5.4 / *Désir éperdu (Fragment)*; [ED]bars 1–2.



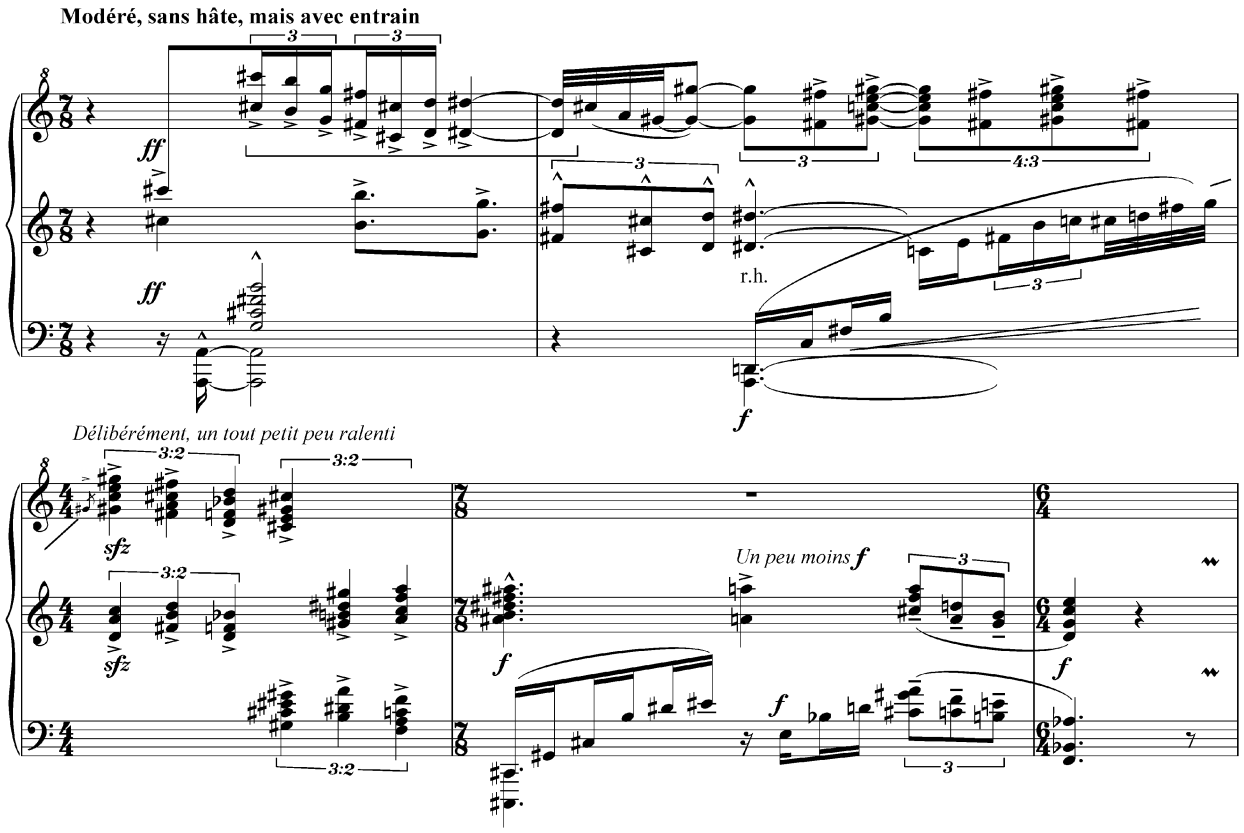
Example 5.5 / *Concerto pour piano et grand orchestre [no. 4]*: III; [MS]bars 199–201.



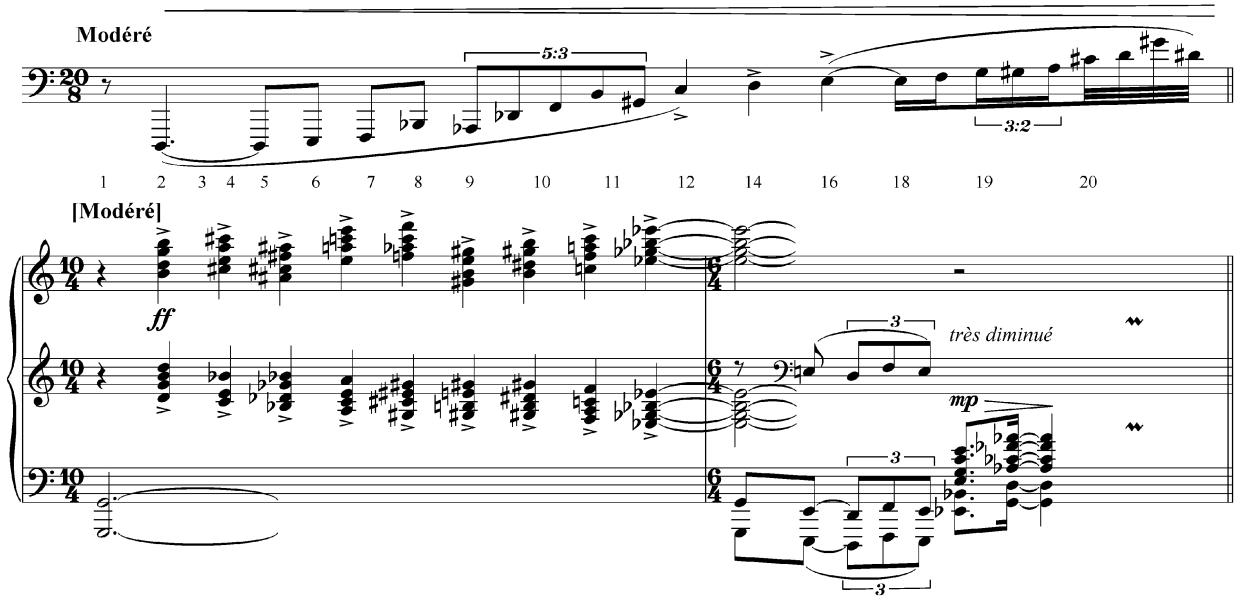
Example 6.1 / *Fantaisie espagnole*; [ED]bars 6–9.



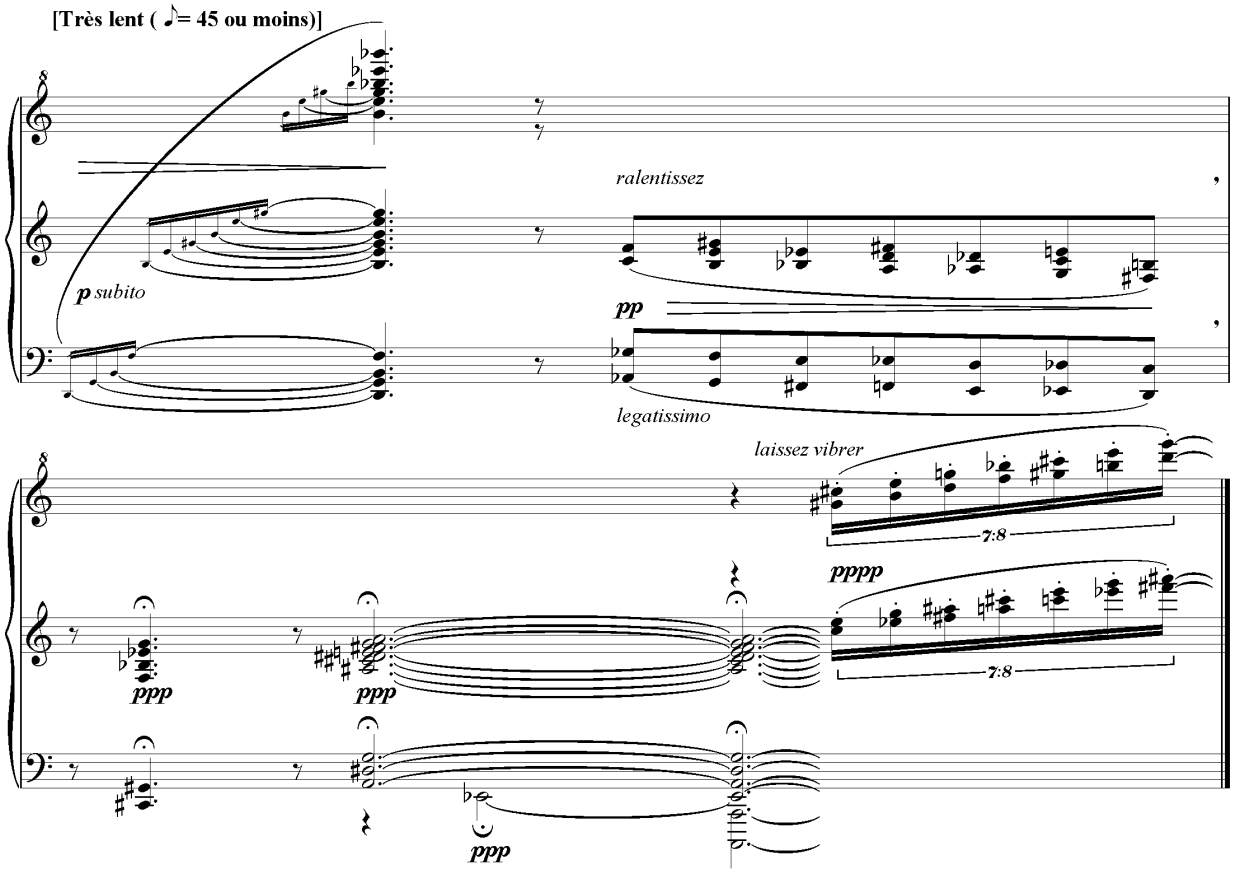
Example 6.2 / *Sonata no. 1 for Piano*; [ED]bars 1–5 (motto).



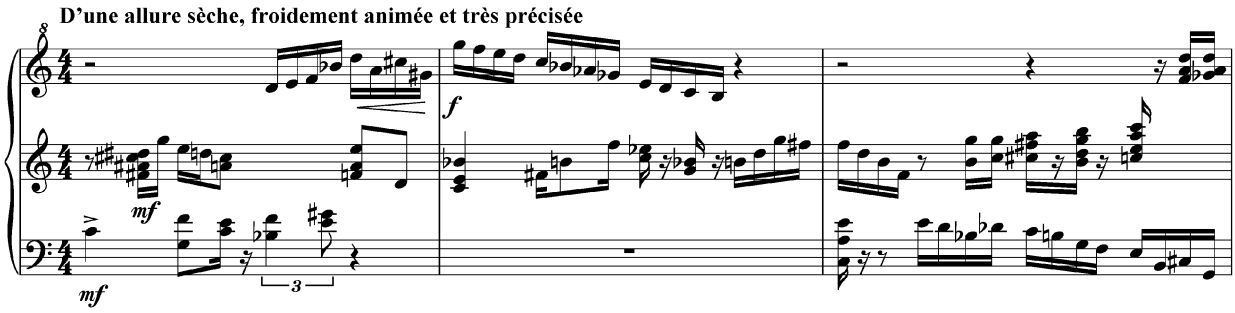
Example 7.1 / *Quintet no. 1 for Piano and Quartet of Stringed Instruments* ; [ED]p. 1/1/1 (piano part only); [ED]p. 12/2/1–2 (piano part only).



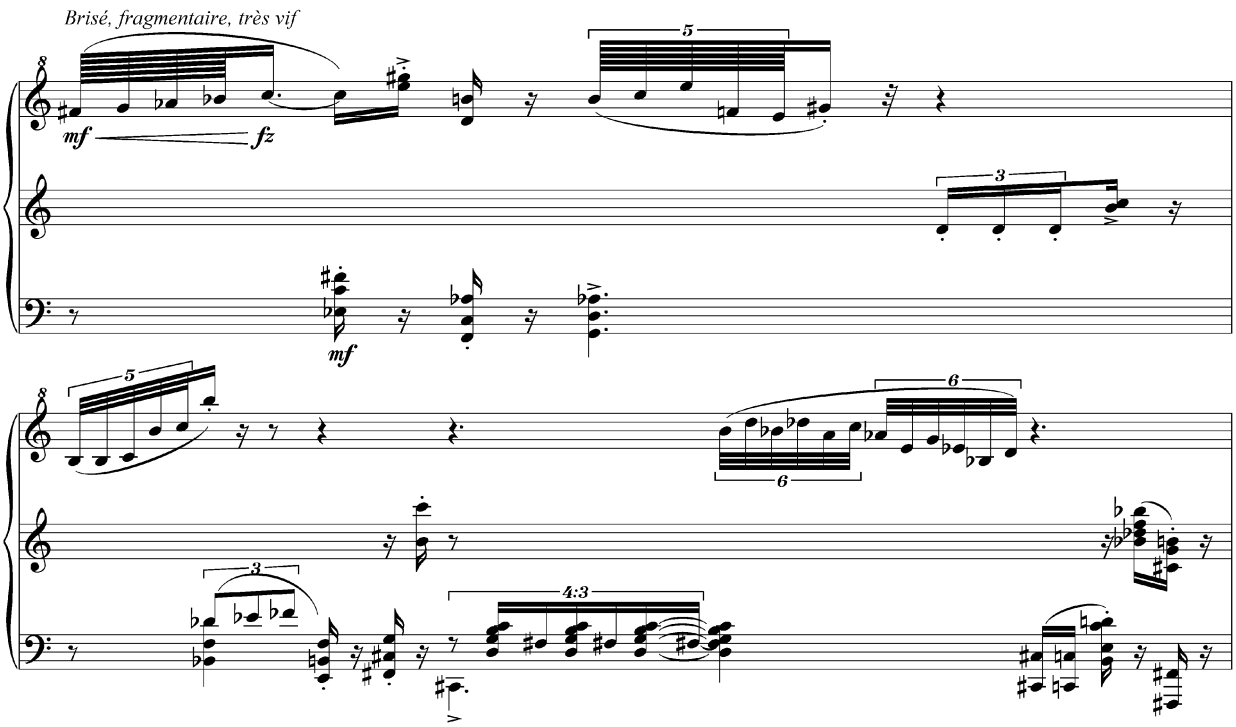
Example 7.2 / *Two Piano Pieces*: "In the Hothouse"; final bars.



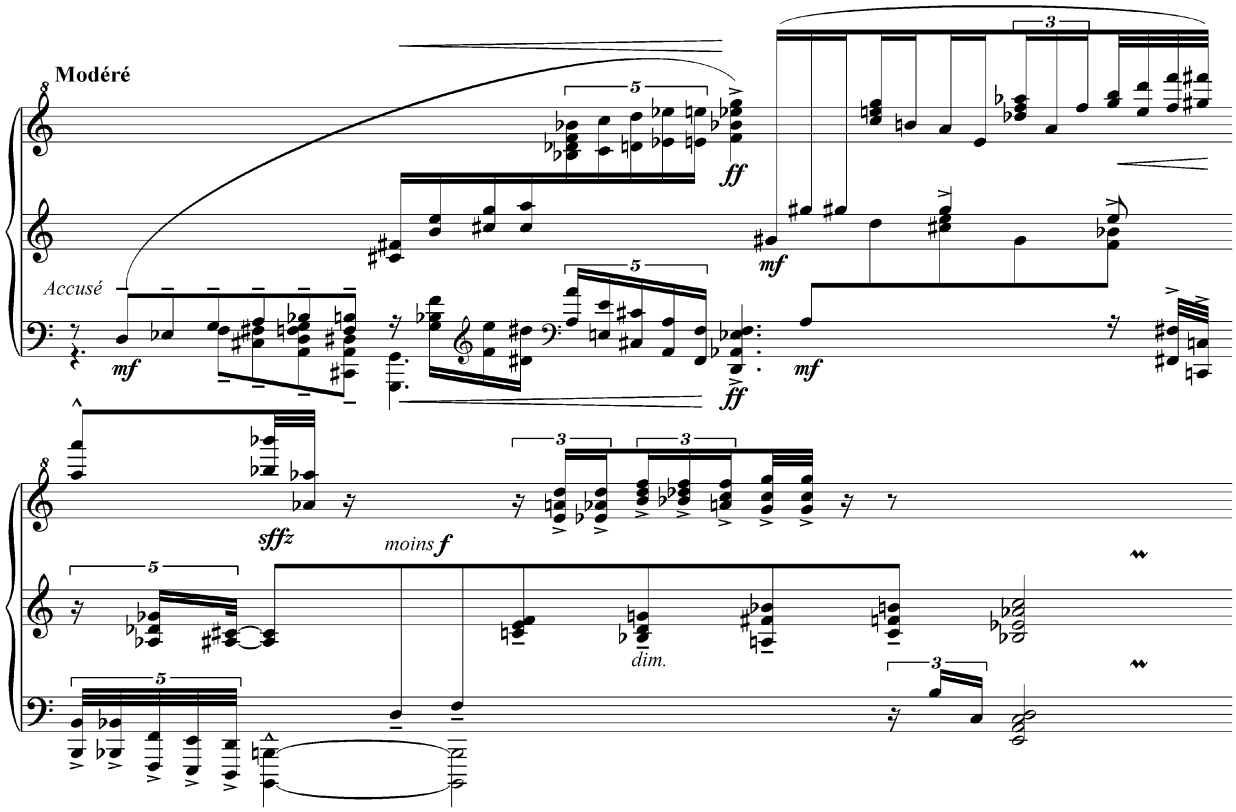
Example 7.3 / *Two Piano Pieces*: "Toccata"; [ED]bars 1–3.



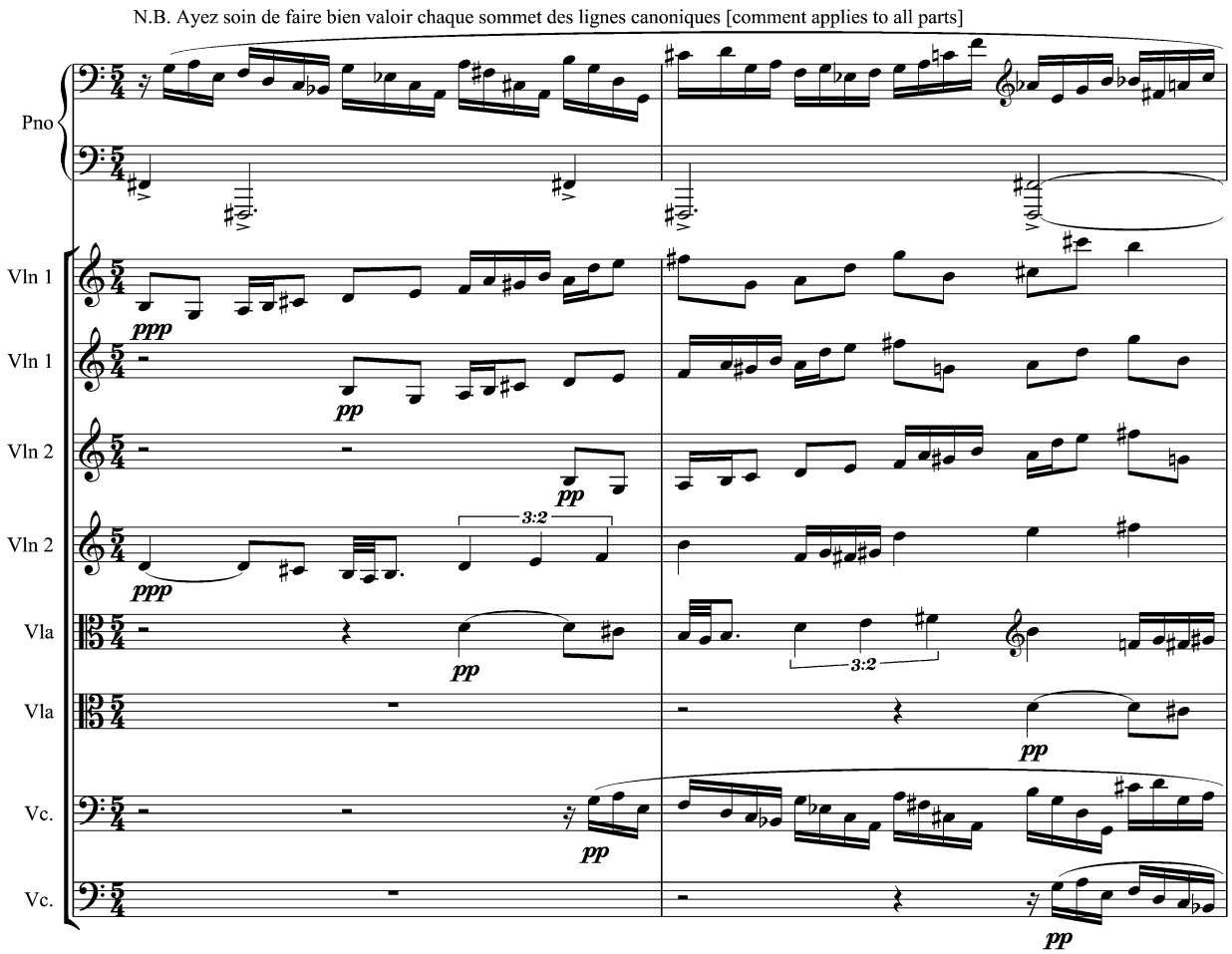
Example 7.4 / *Sonata seconda for Piano*; ED/William A.P.M. bars 251[7]–52.



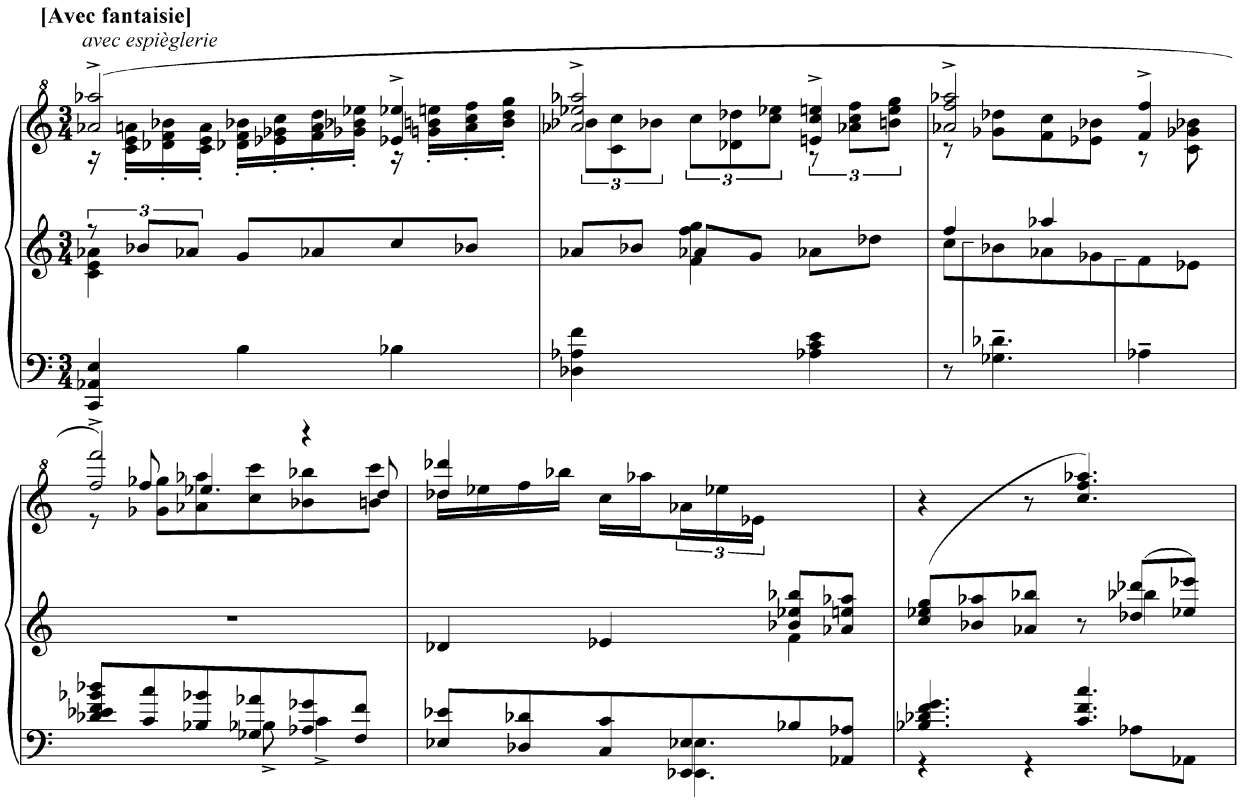
Example 7.5 / *Sonata III for Piano*; beginning (generating motive in the bottom staff, with upward-pointing stems).



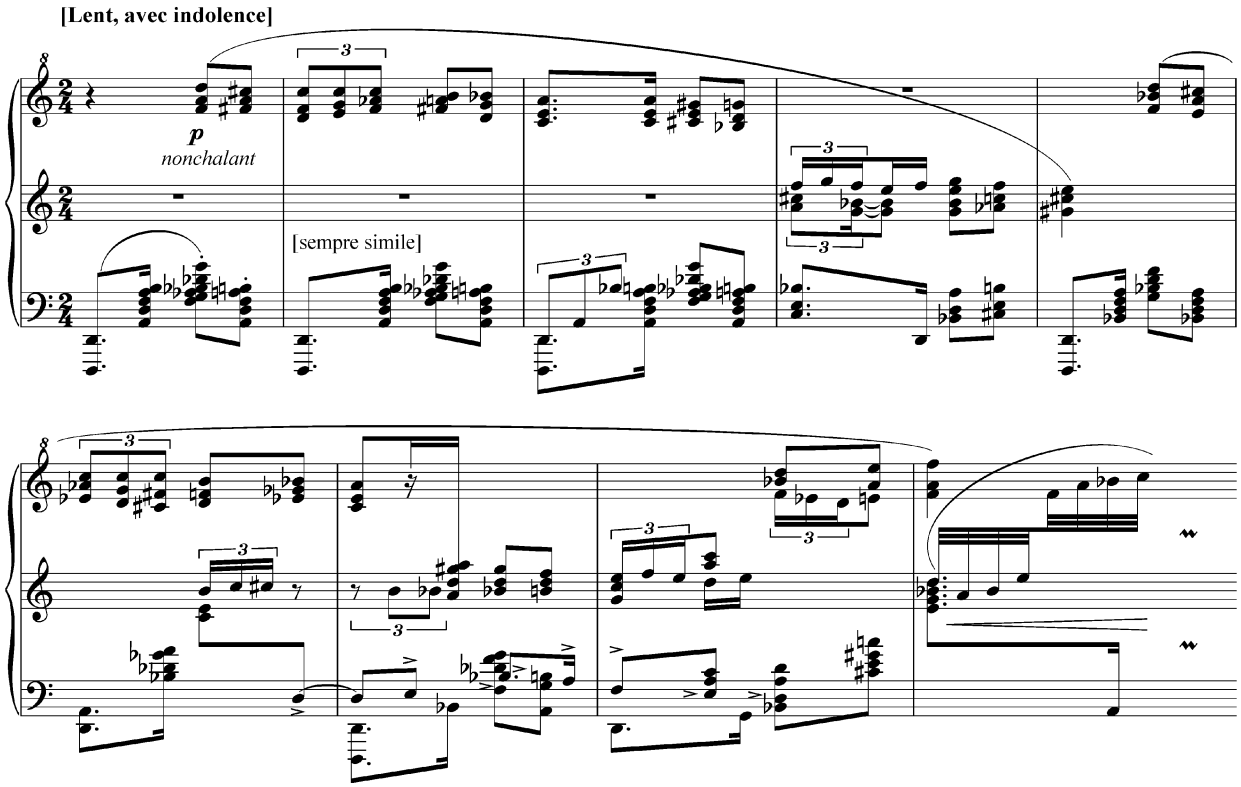
Example 7.6 / *Symphony [no. 1] for Piano, Large Orchestra, Chorus, and Organ*; [MS]p. 272 (piano and strings only).



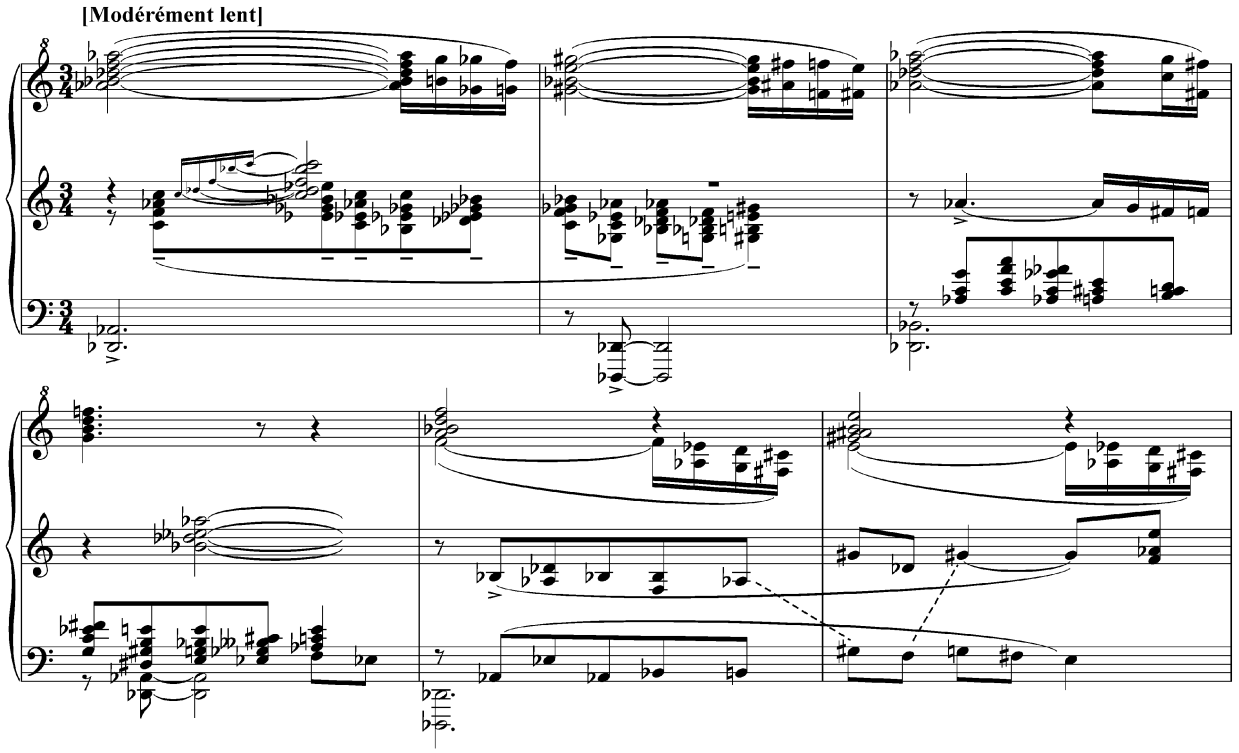
Example 8.1 / *Pastiche on the "Minute Waltz" by Chopin*; ED/Roberge bars 44–49.



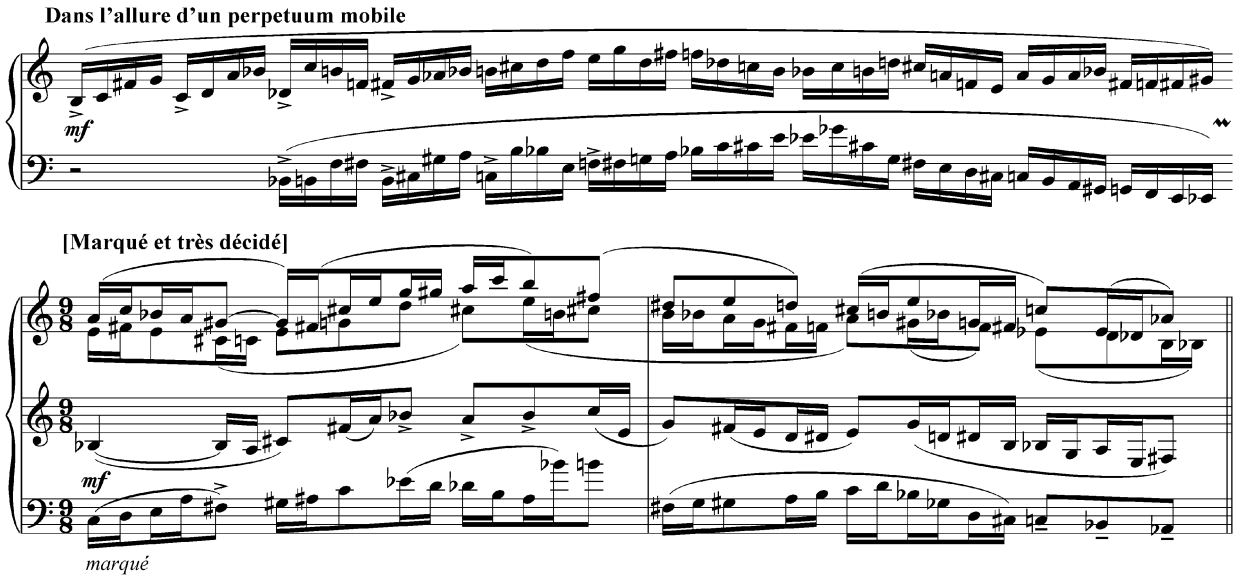
Example 8.2 / *Pastiche on the Habanera from "Carmen" by Bizet*; [ED]bars 13–24[1].



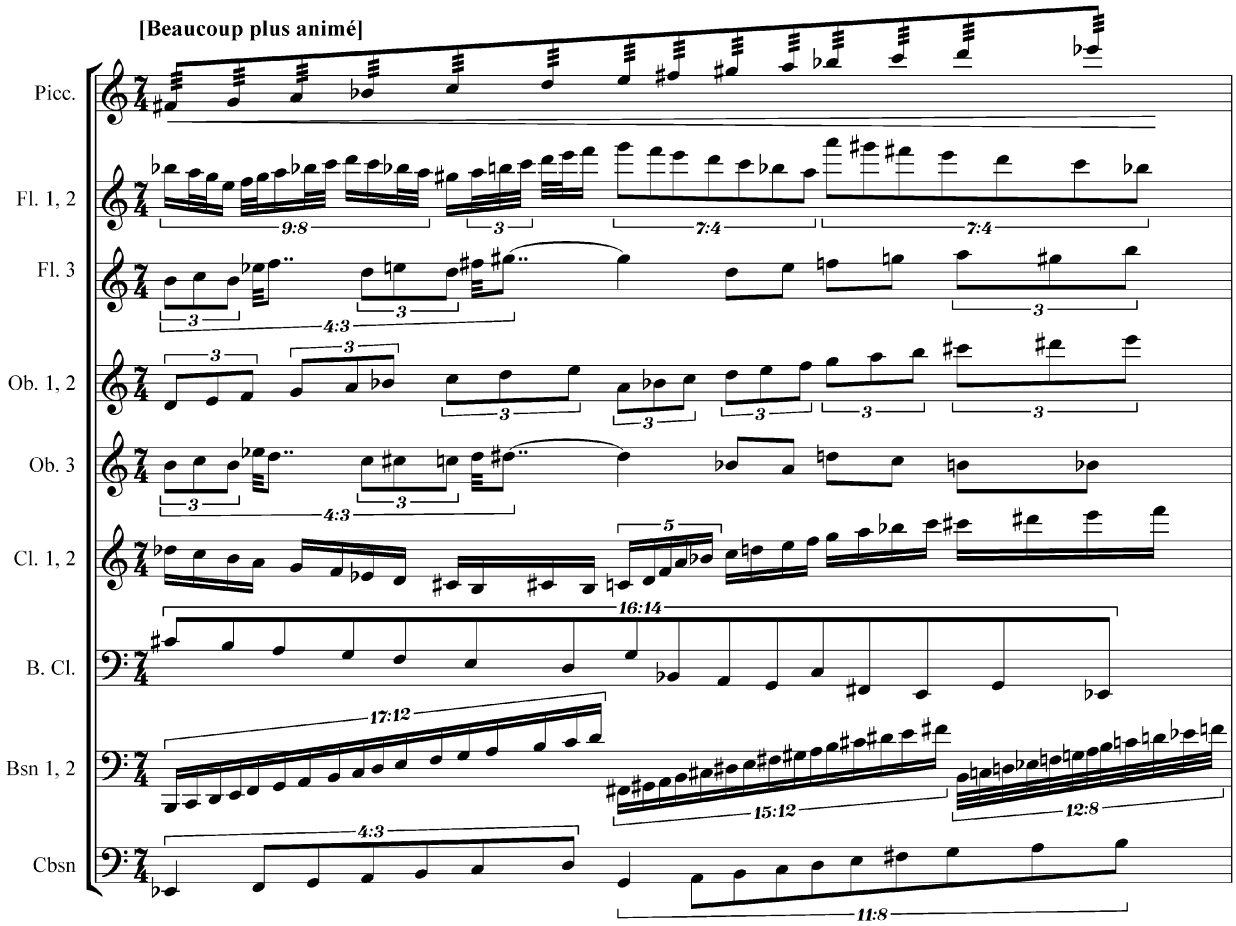
Example 8.3 / *Pastiche on the Hindu Merchant's Song from "Sadko" by Rimsky-Korsakov*; [ED]bars 22–27.



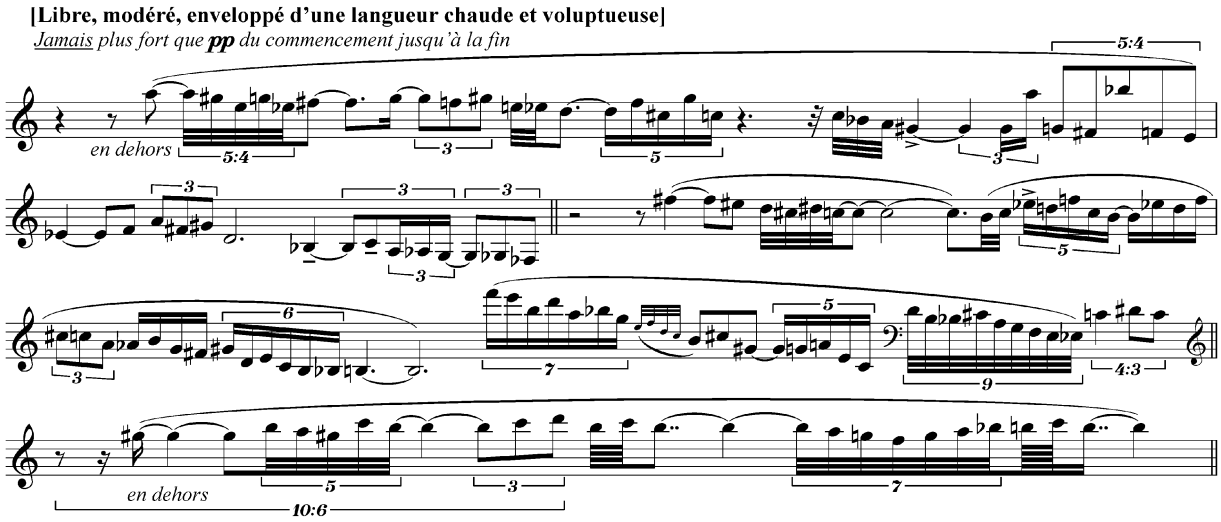
Example 8.4 / *Prelude, Interlude, and Fugue*: "Prelude", beginning; "Fugue", fourth entry of the subject (lowest staff); [ED]pp. 3/1/1; 11/3/2–3.



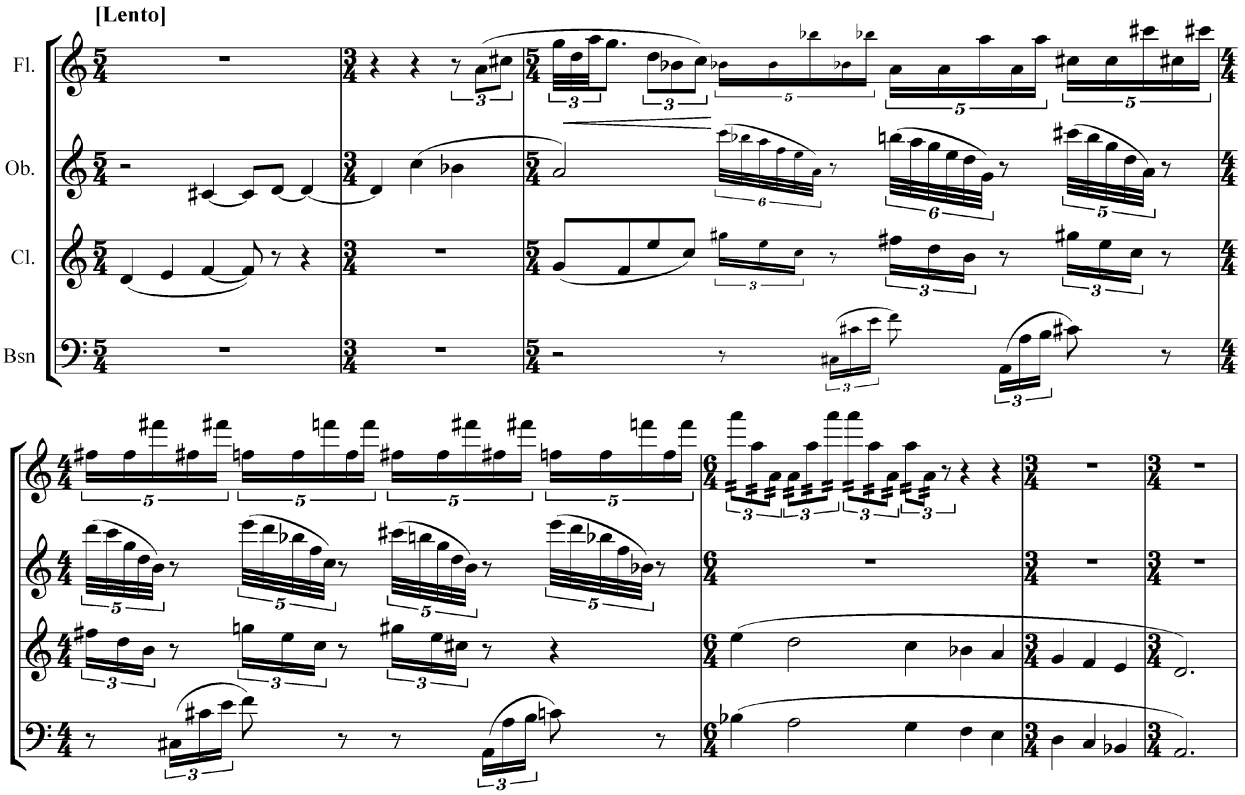
Example 8.5 / *Opusculum for Orchestra*; bar 94 (woodwinds only).



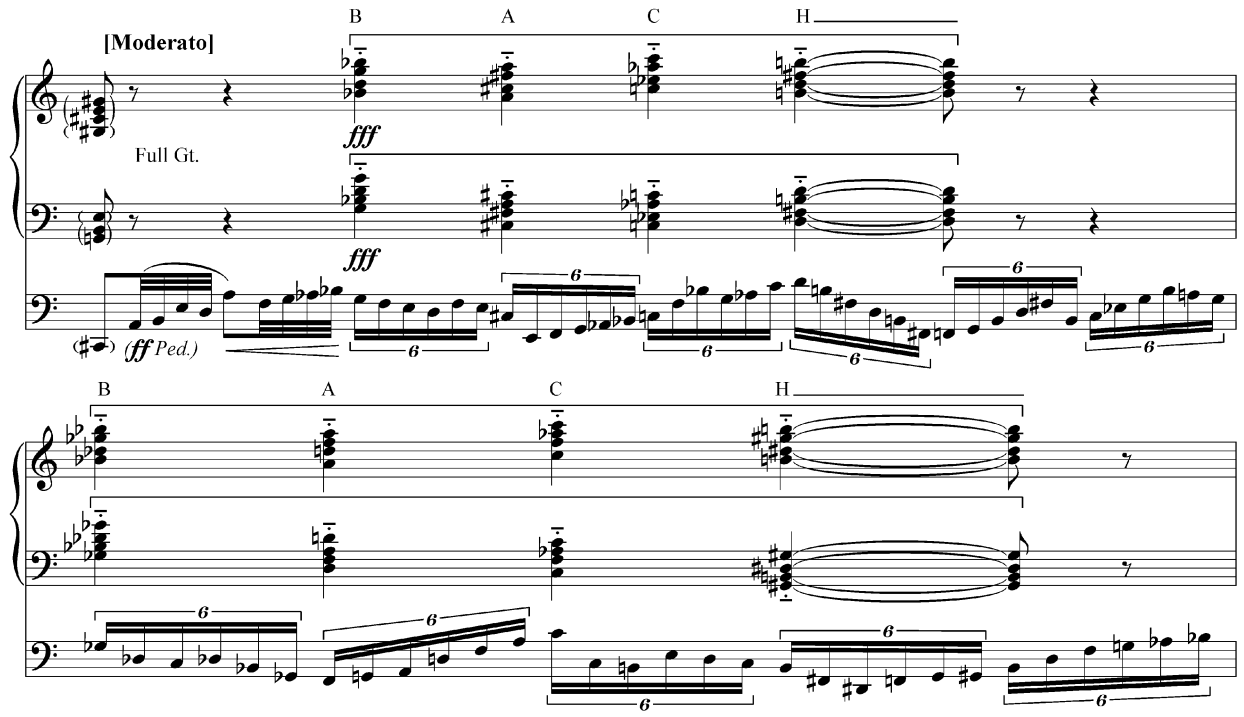
Example 8.6 / *Le jardin parfumé—Poem for Piano Solo*; ED/Powell pp. 1/2/1, 2/1/1–2, 3/3/1 (main melodic motive and two transformations).



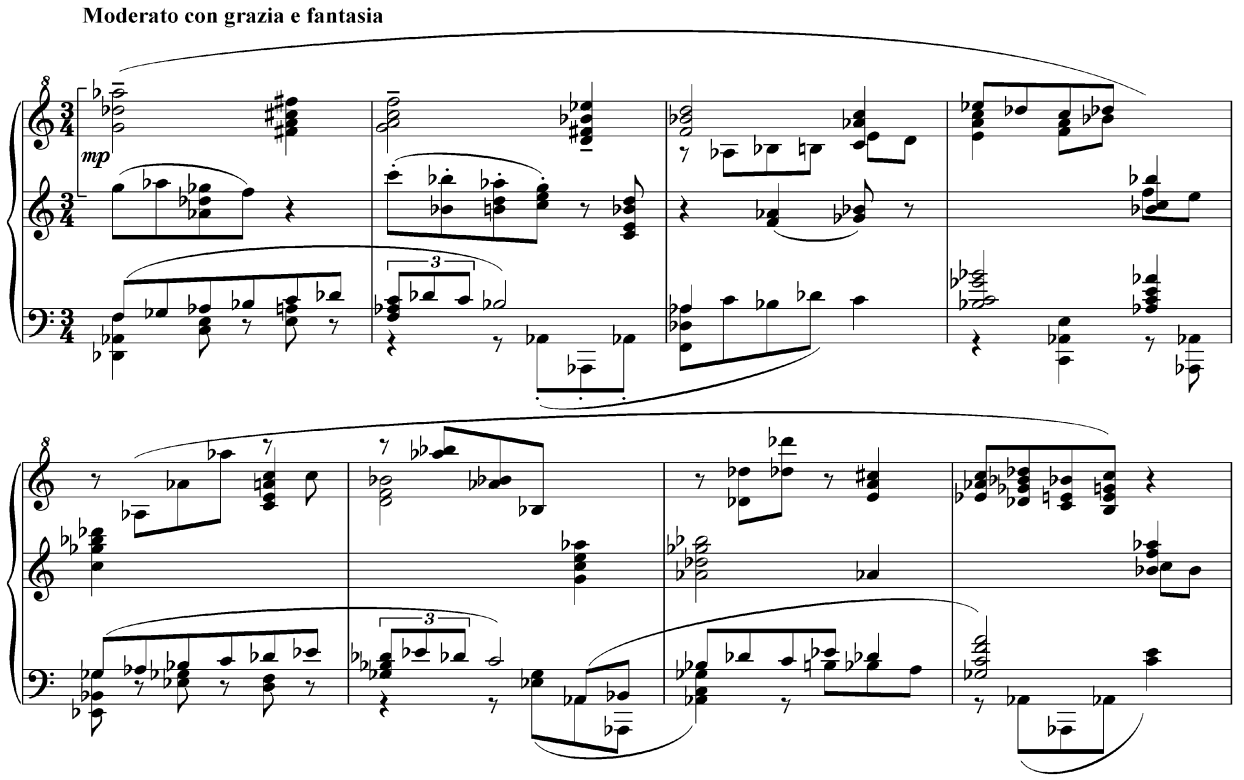
Example 8.7 / *Cinque sonetti di Michelagniolo Buonarroti*: V; [ED]pp. 62–66 (bars 151–57; woodwinds only). The third beat, in cue-size notes, is editorial and supplies a missing beat.



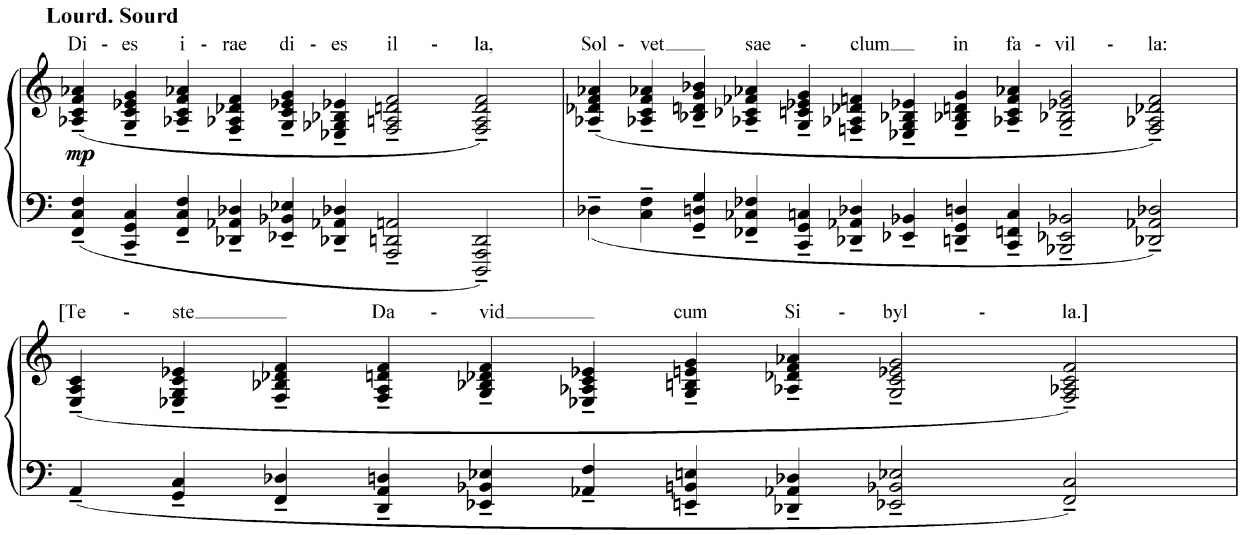
Example 8.8 / *Symphony [no. 1] for Organ*: "Cadenza-Toccata"; ED/Bowyer p. 86/1.



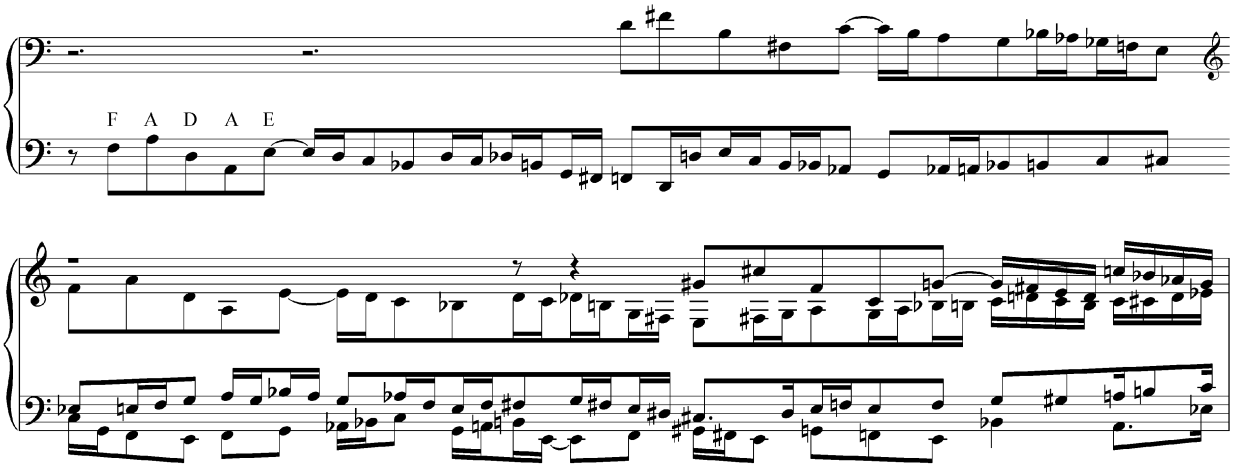
Example 8.9 / *Valse-fantaisie for Piano*; ED p. 5/1/5–5/3/1.



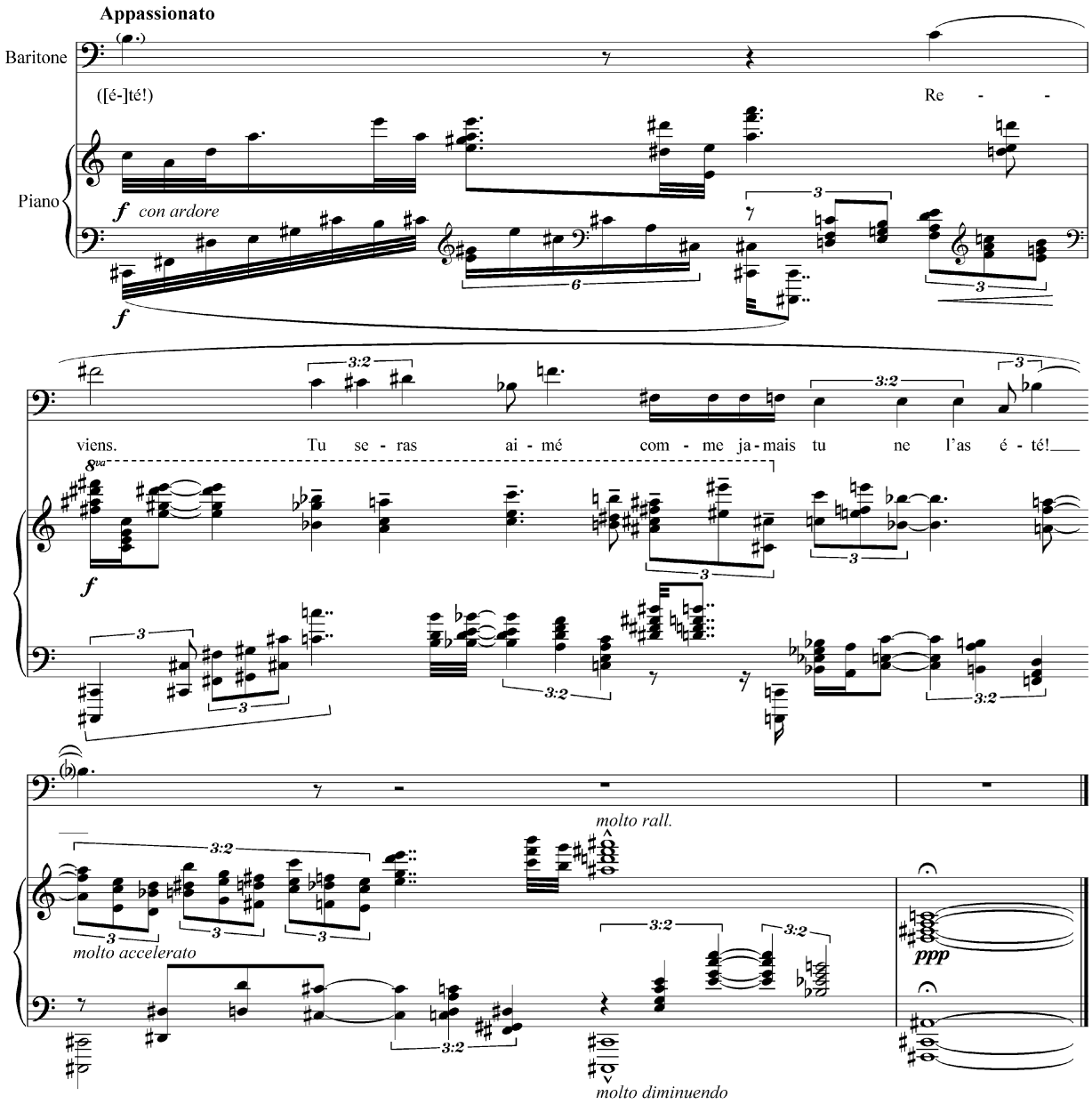
Example 9.1 / *Variazioni e fuga triplice sopra "Dies irae" per pianoforte*; bars 1–3 (theme).



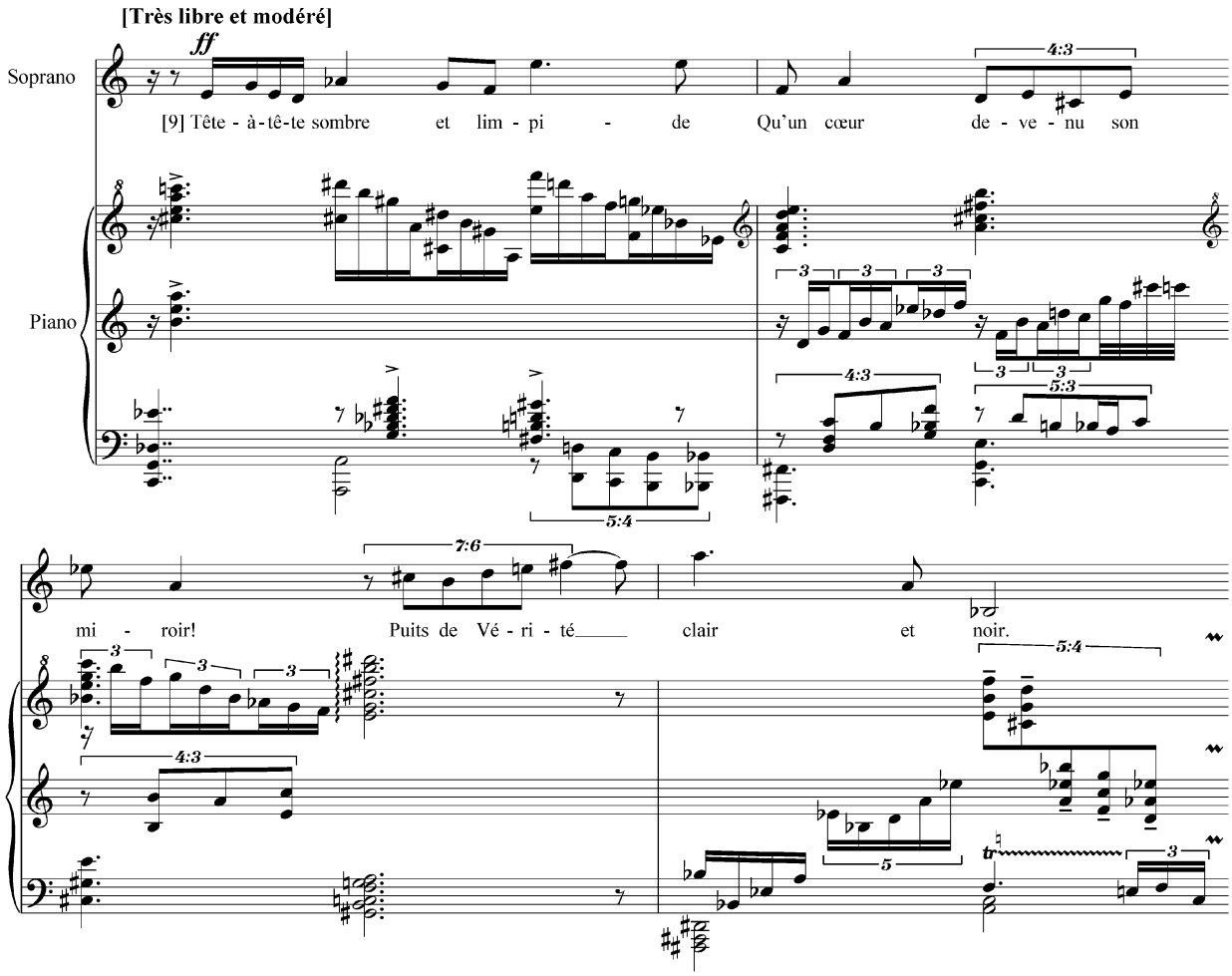
Example 9.2 / *Fragment: Prelude and Fugue on FxAxx DAxEx*; [ED]p. 1/3/1–2 (beginning of the fugue).



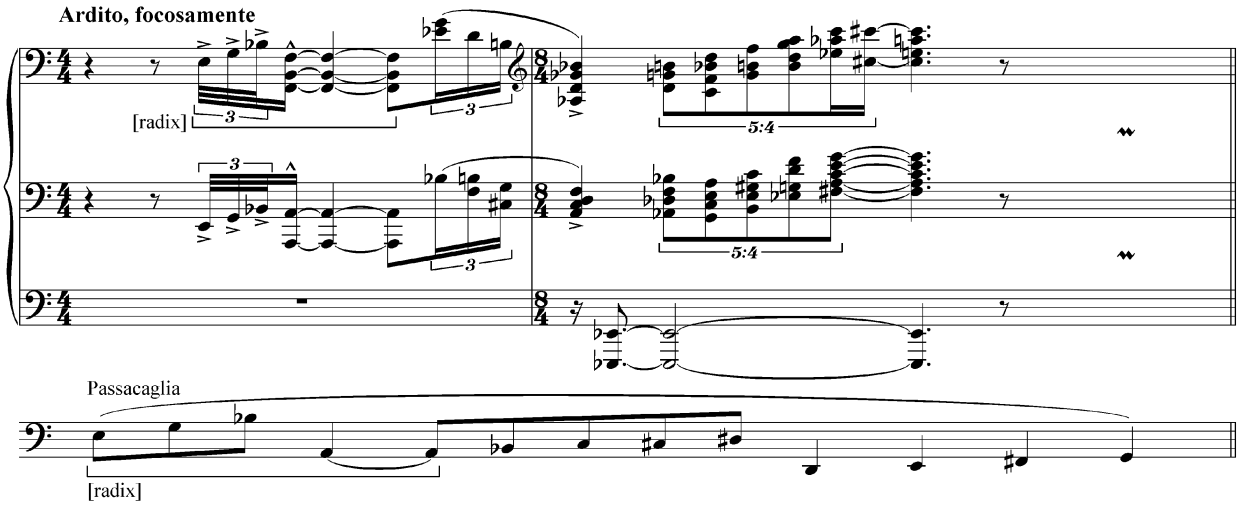
Example 9.3 / *Trois poèmes du "Gulistān" de Sa'dī:* "La fidélité" (alternative codetta, complete).



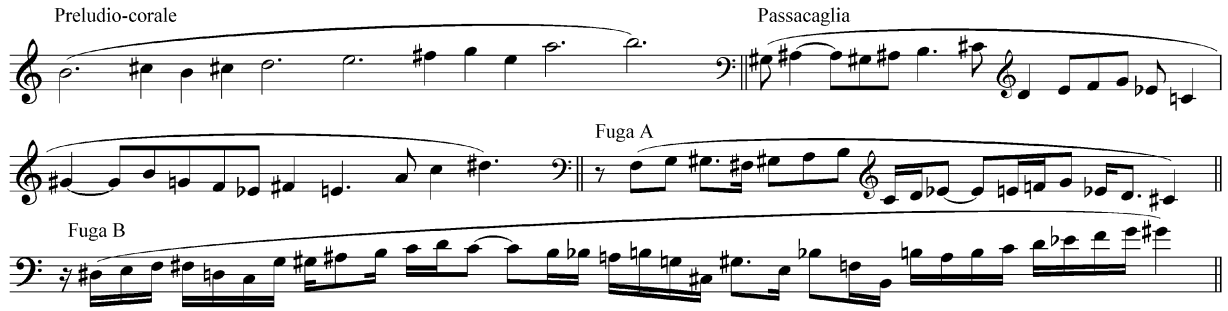
Example 9.4 / *L'irrémédiable*; [ED]bars 24–26.



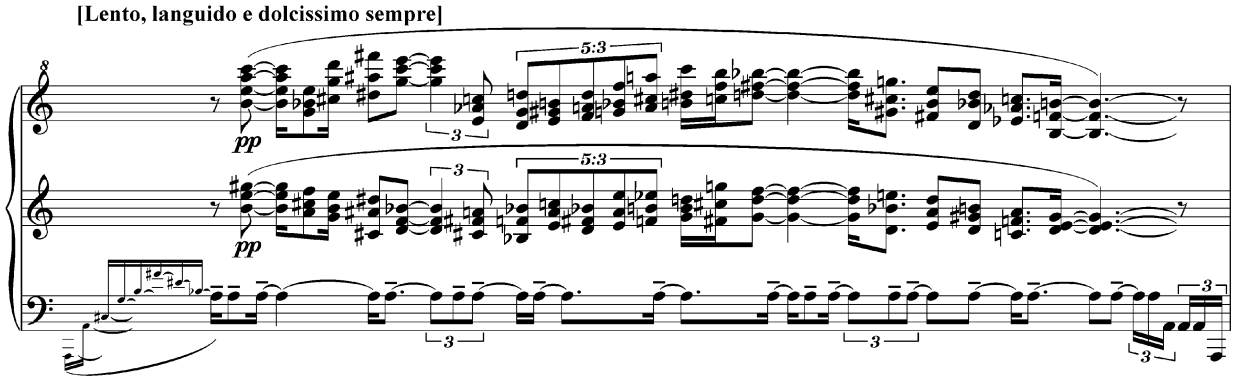
Example 9.5 / *Concerto V for Piano and Large Orchestra [no. 8]*: [MS]I, bars 1–2 (radix); III, p. 313 (theme of the passacaglia).



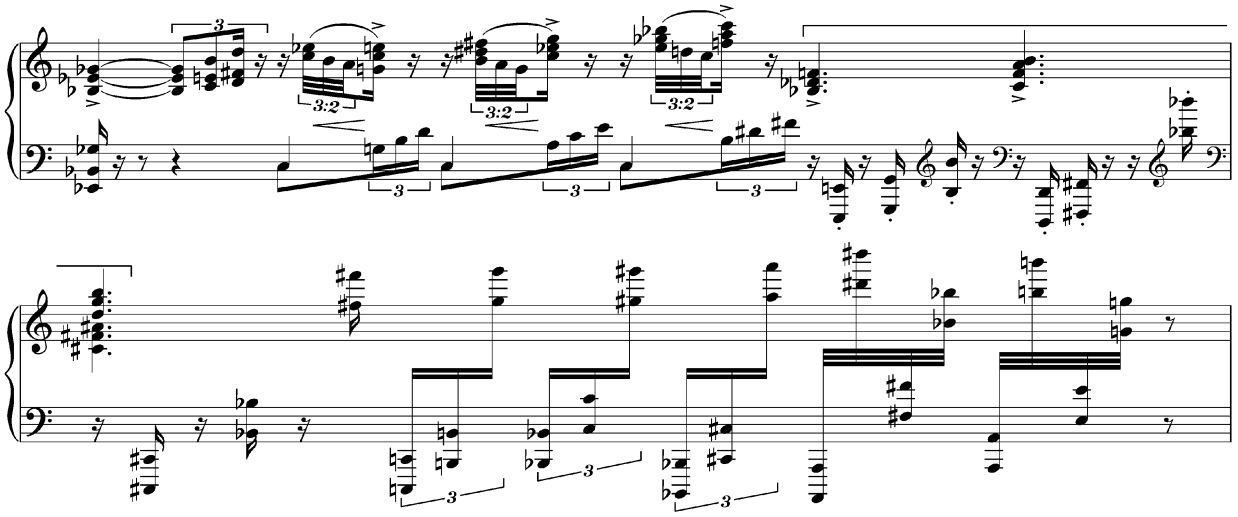
Example 9.6 / *Toccata [no. 1] for Piano*; themes stated in the "Thematic Table" (and first used on [ED]pp. 1, 11, 51, and 63).



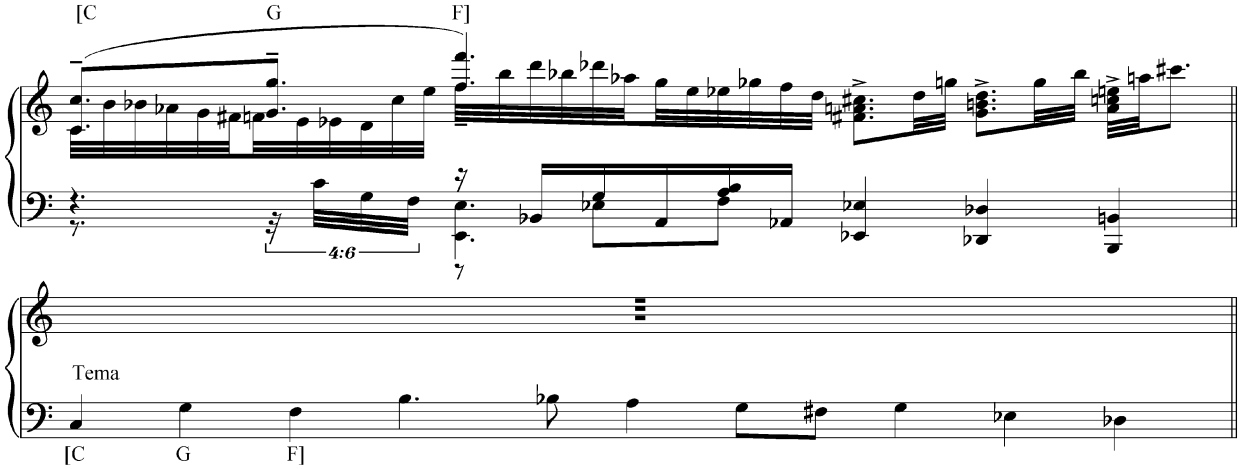
Example 9.7 / *Nocturne, "Jāmī"*; [ED/Powell]p. 15/2/2.



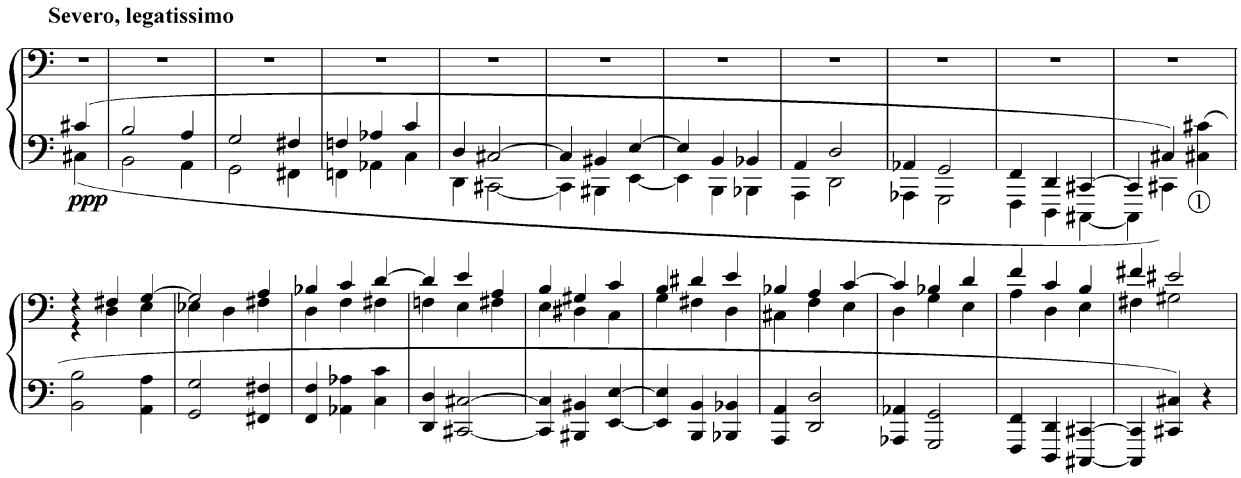
Example 9.8 / *Sonata IV for Piano*: "Fantasia"; [ED]p. 87 (bars 33–34).



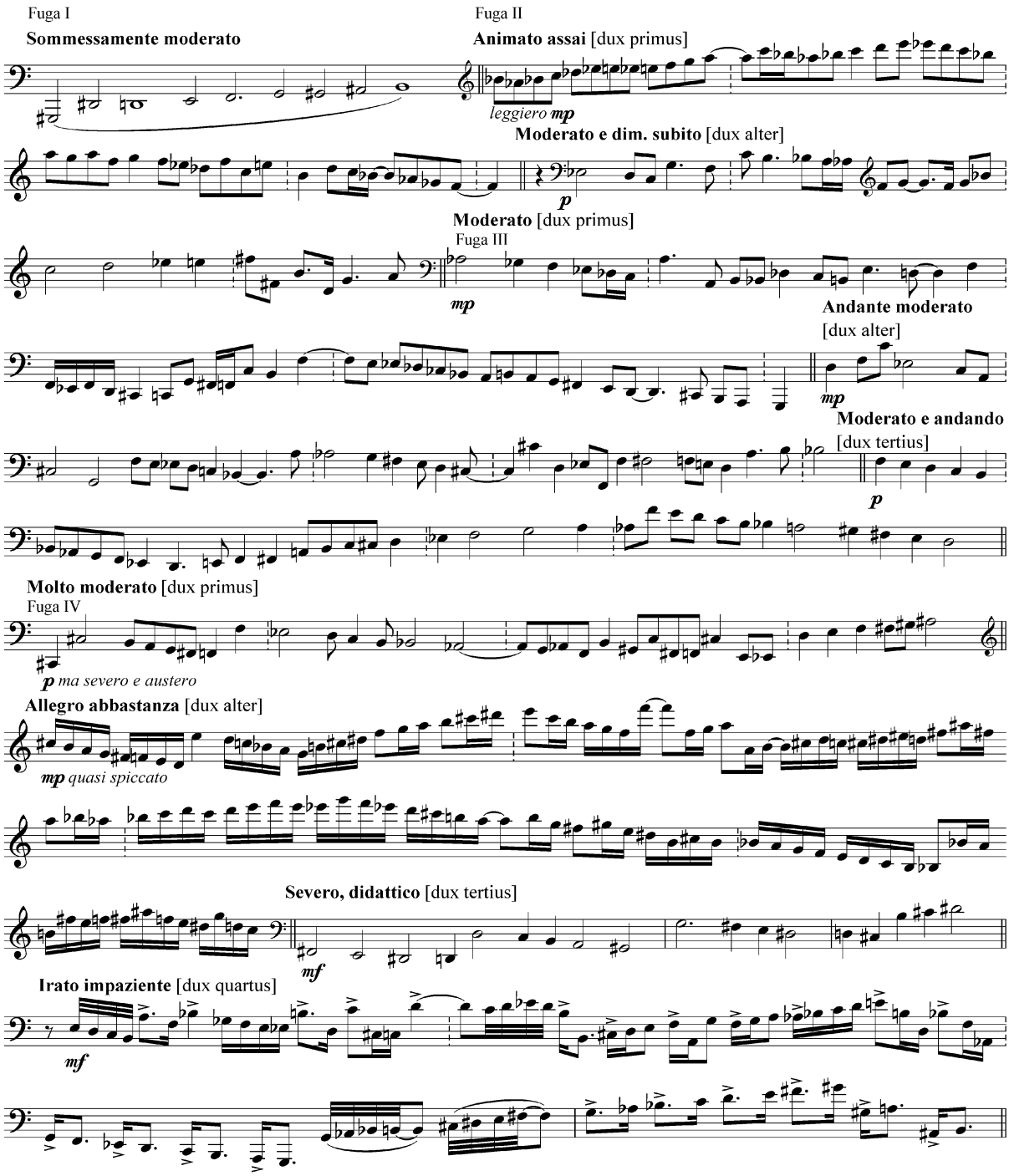
Example 9.9 / *Toccatinetta sopra C.G.F.*; bars 1 ("Preludietto"), 5 ("Piccola passacaglia maliziosa"), theme.



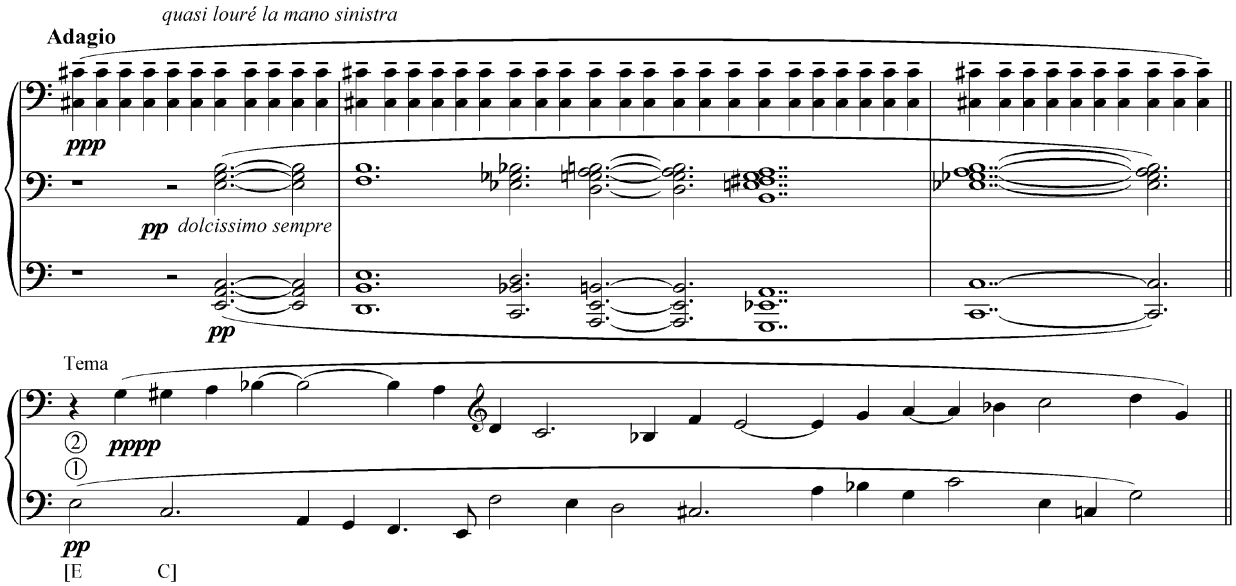
Example 9.10 / *Introduction, Passacaglia, Cadenza, and Fugue*; theme of the passacaglia and var. 1; ED p. 7.



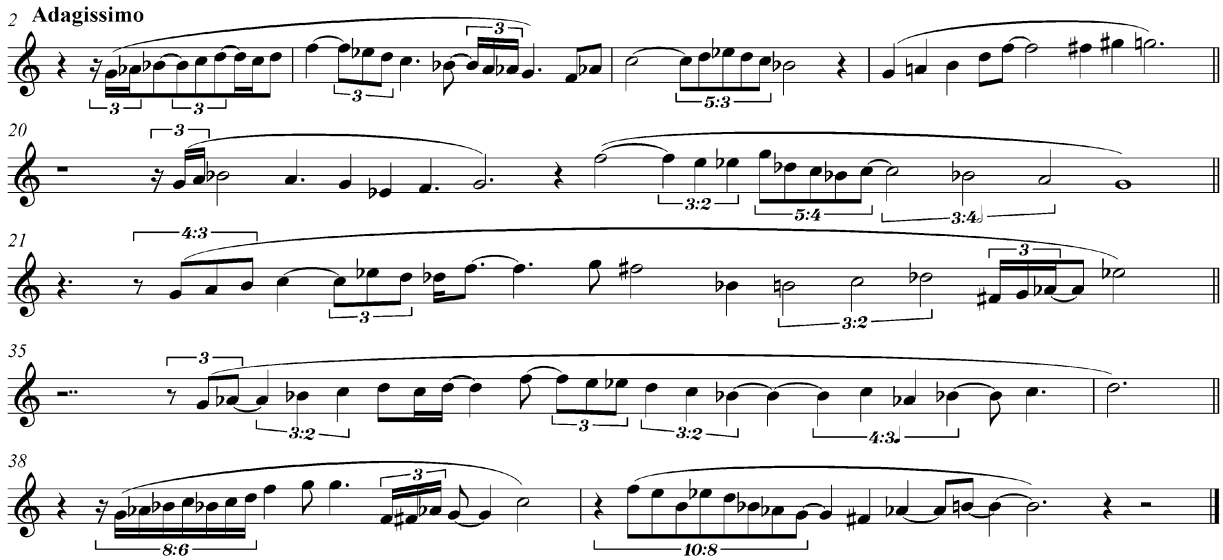
Example 10.1 / *Opus clavicembalisticum*; fugue subjects for the four fugue complexes; [ED]pp. 19 ("Fuga I"); 39, 49 ("Fuga II"); 105, 114, 124 ("Fuga III"); 198, 207, 219, 239 ("Fuga IV").



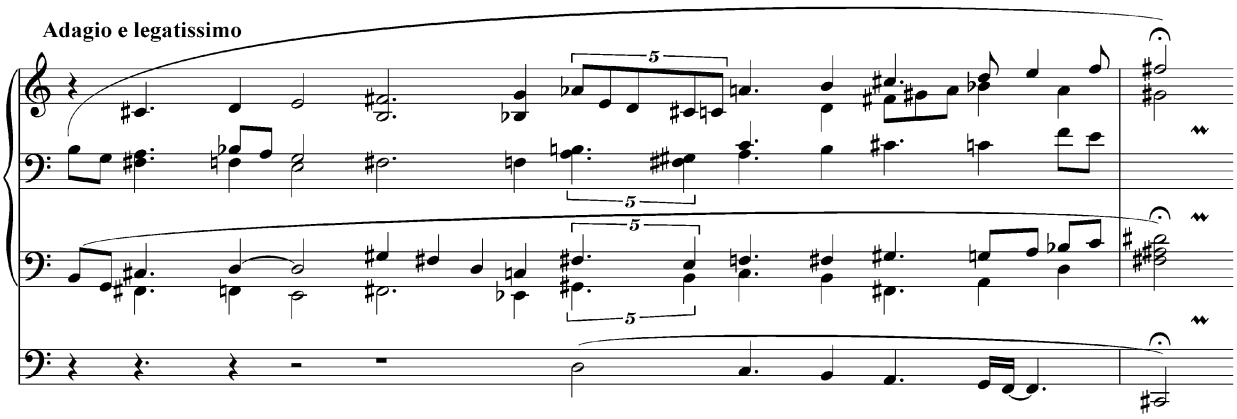
Example 11.1 / *Symphony no. 0 for Piano Solo*: II[b], "Punta d'organo"; bars 1–3 ([ED]p. 141); III[b]; "Toccata variata" (theme), bar 1 (p. 229).



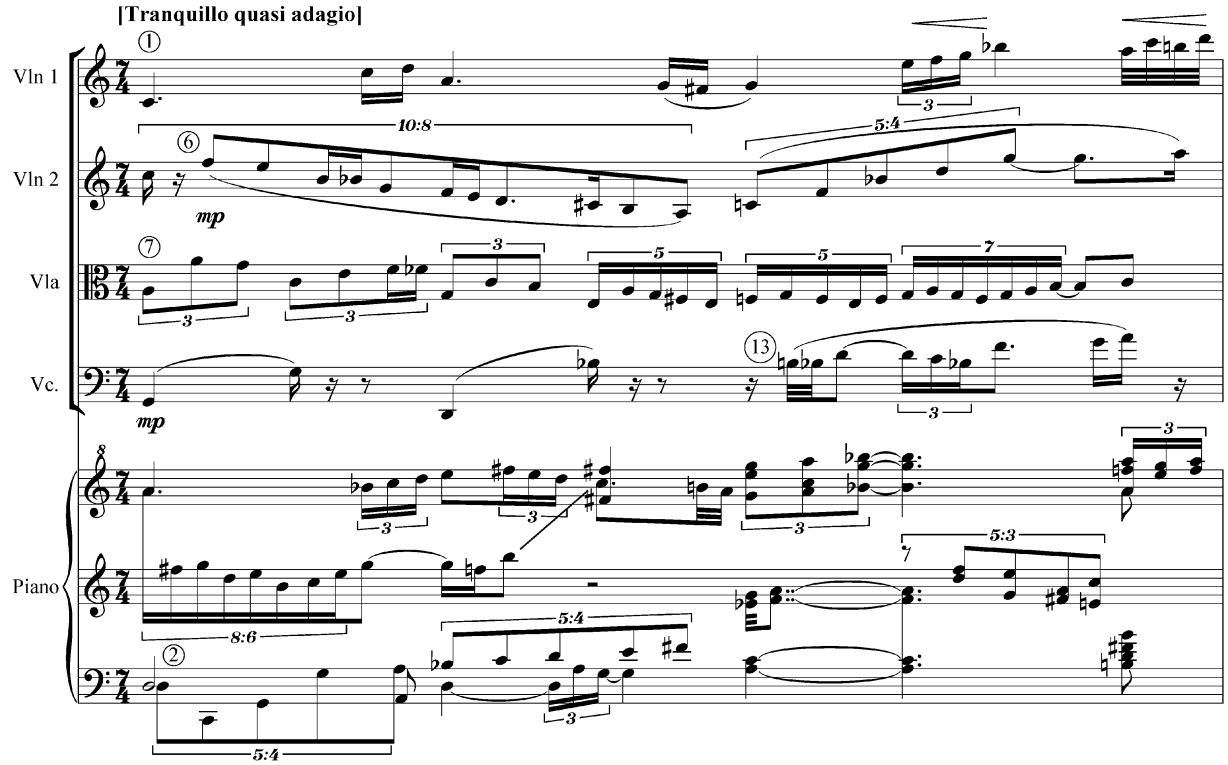
Example 11.2 / *Movement for Voice and Piano*; [ED]bars 2–5, 20, 21, 35–36, 38–39 (voice part only).



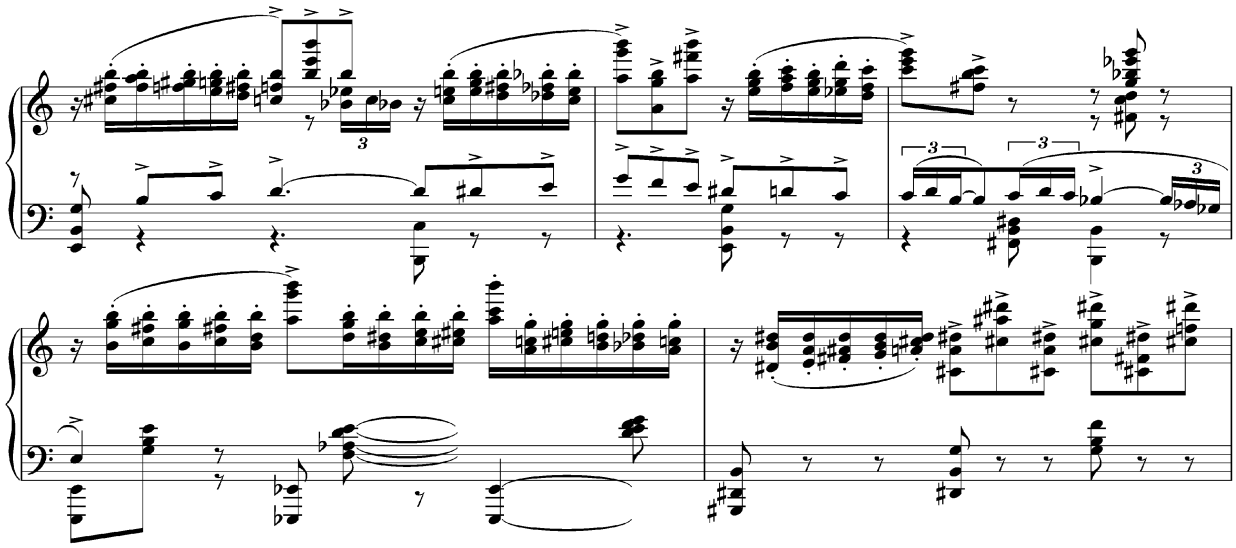
Example 12.1 / *Second Symphony for Organ*: II ("Tema cum variationibus"); [ED]p. 49 (bars 1–2).



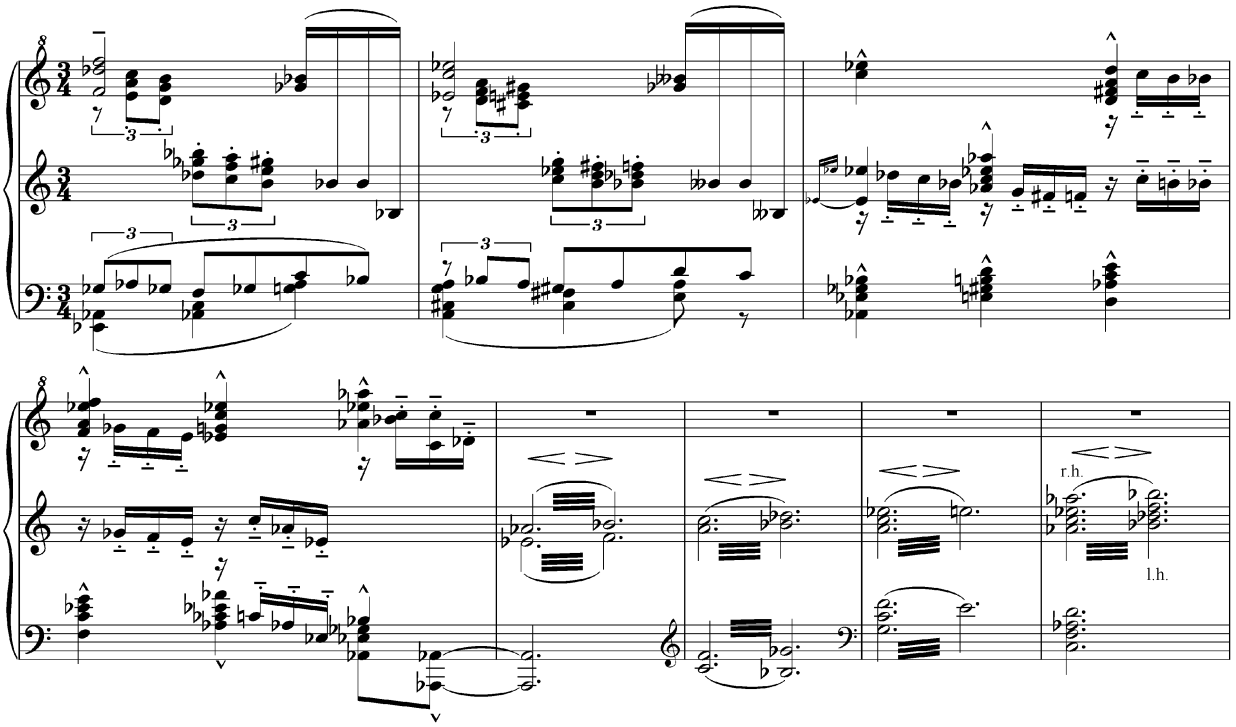
Example 12.2 / *Quintet II for Piano and String Quartet*: "Fantasia"; [ED]p. 70/1/1 (bar 305).



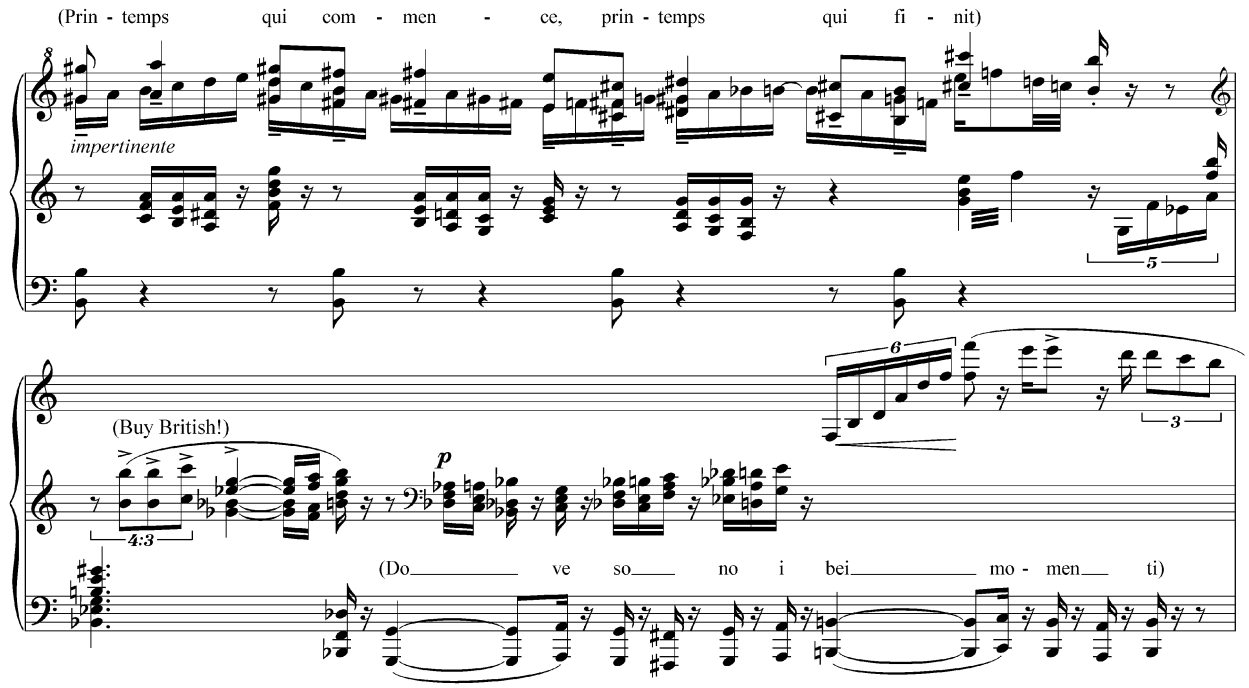
Example 12.3 / *Fantasia ispanica*: III; [ED]pp. 19/1/1–19/2/1.



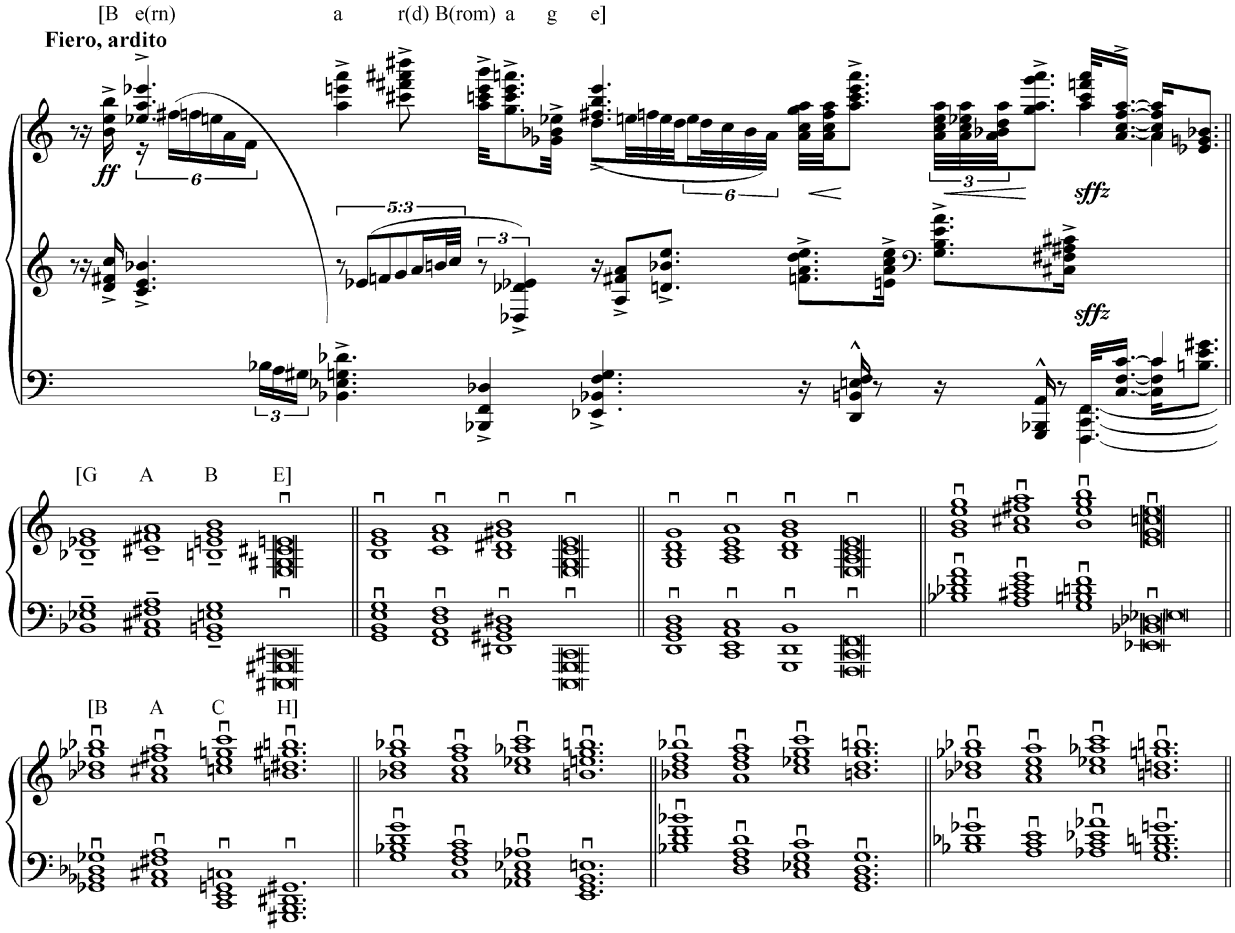
Example 12.4 / *Pasticcio capriccioso sopra l'op. 64, no 1 del Chopin*; [ED]bars 85–92.



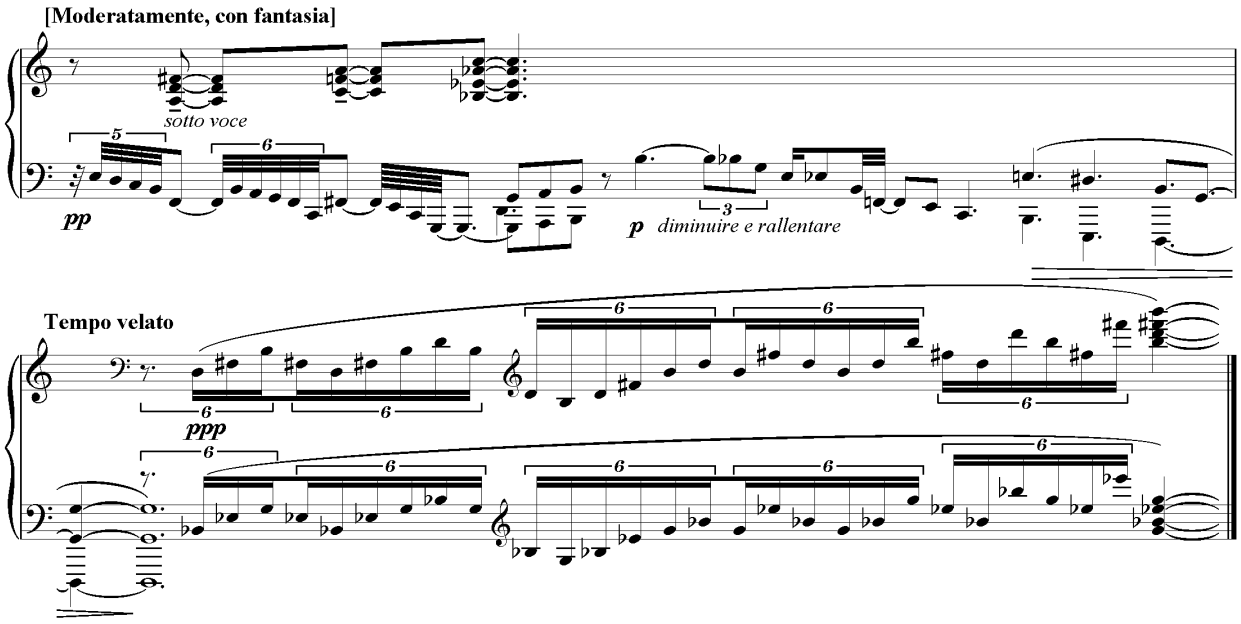
Example 12.5 / *Toccata seconda per pianoforte*: "Scherzo"; [ED]p. 45/2–3.



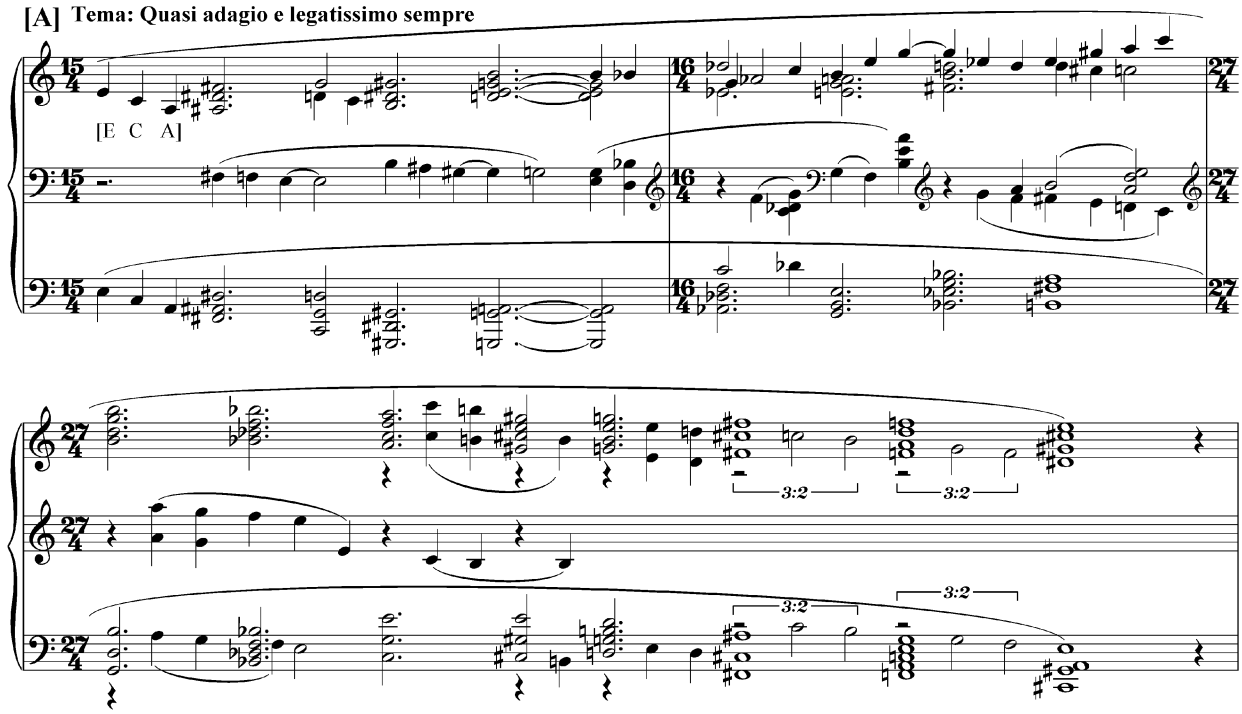
Example 12.6 / *Sonata V (Opus archimagicum)*: I, bar 1; VII ("Preludio"); first four statements of the G–A–B–E and B–A–C–H motives (chords only); [ED]pp. 1; 302–5, 314–15 (passim).



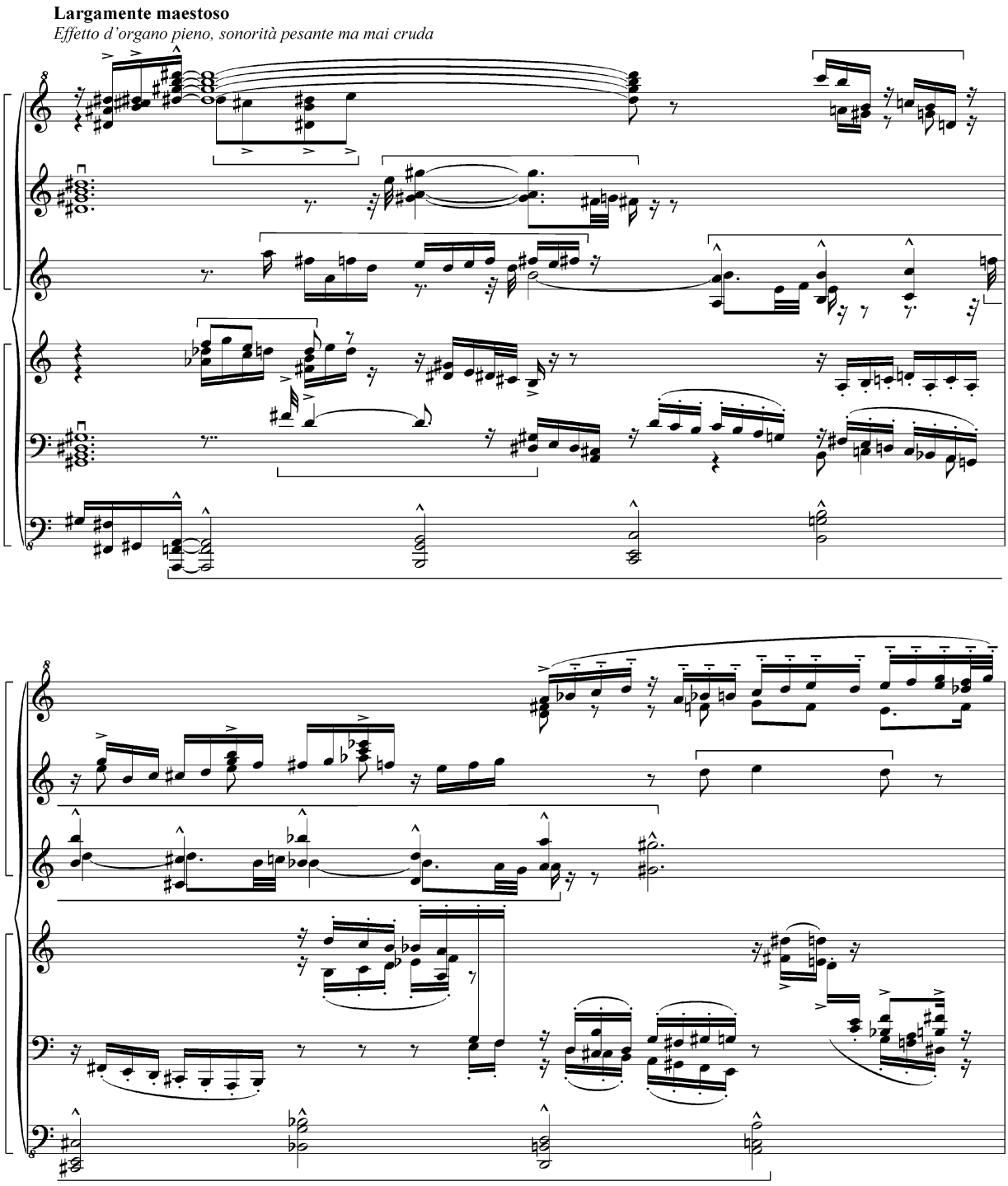
Example 14.1 / *Fragment Written for Harold Rutland* (1937 version); [ED]bars 12–13.



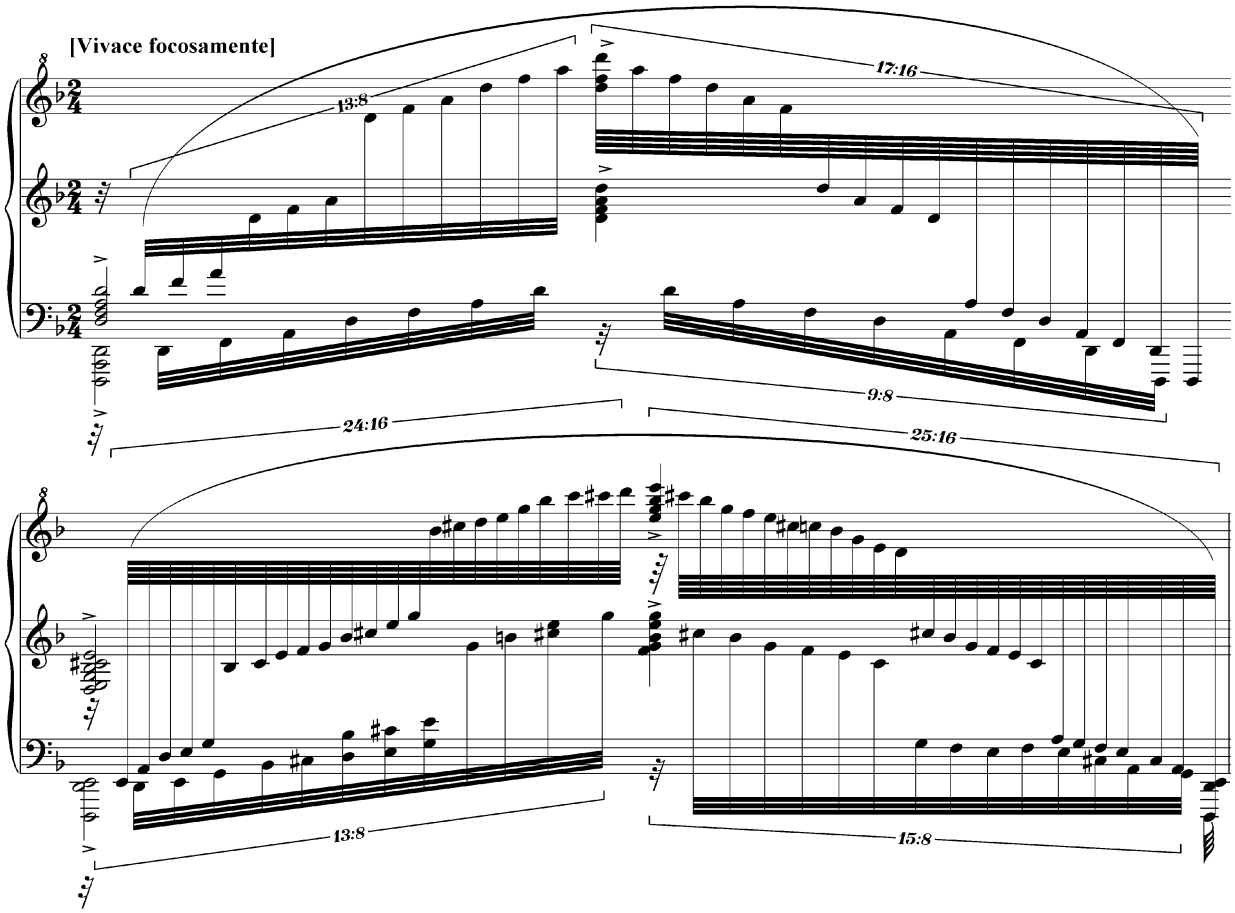
Example 14.2 / *Symphonic Variations for Piano*; theme (section A).



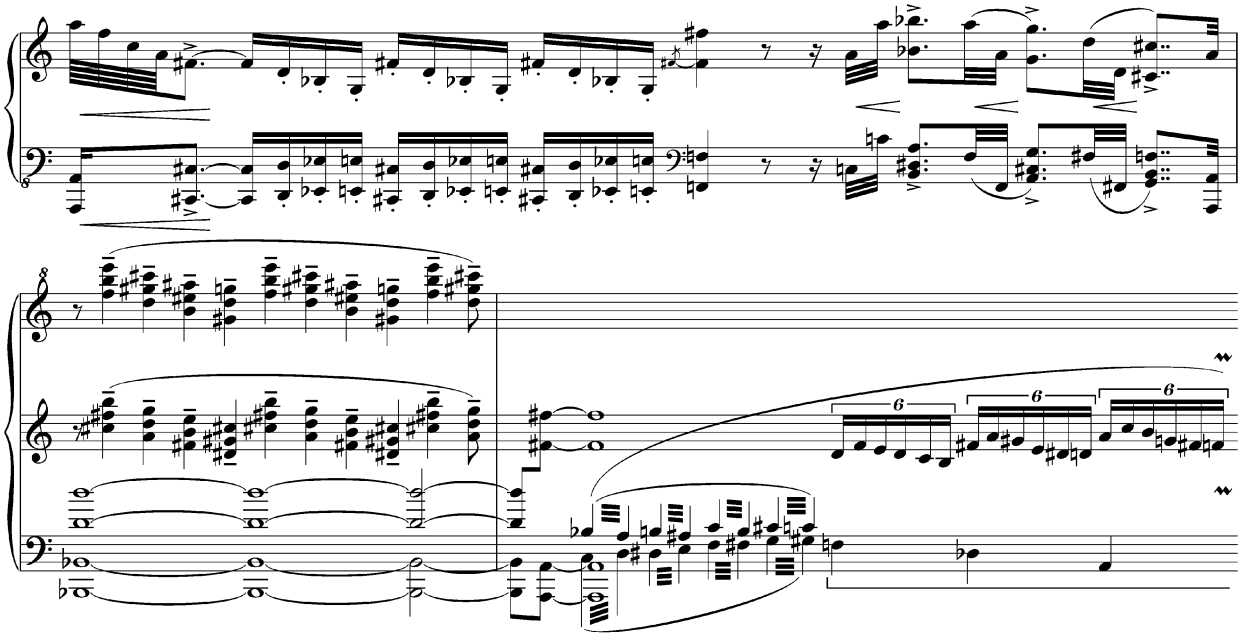
Example 14.3 / *Tāntrik Symphony for Piano Alone*: VII; [ED]bars 1143–44.



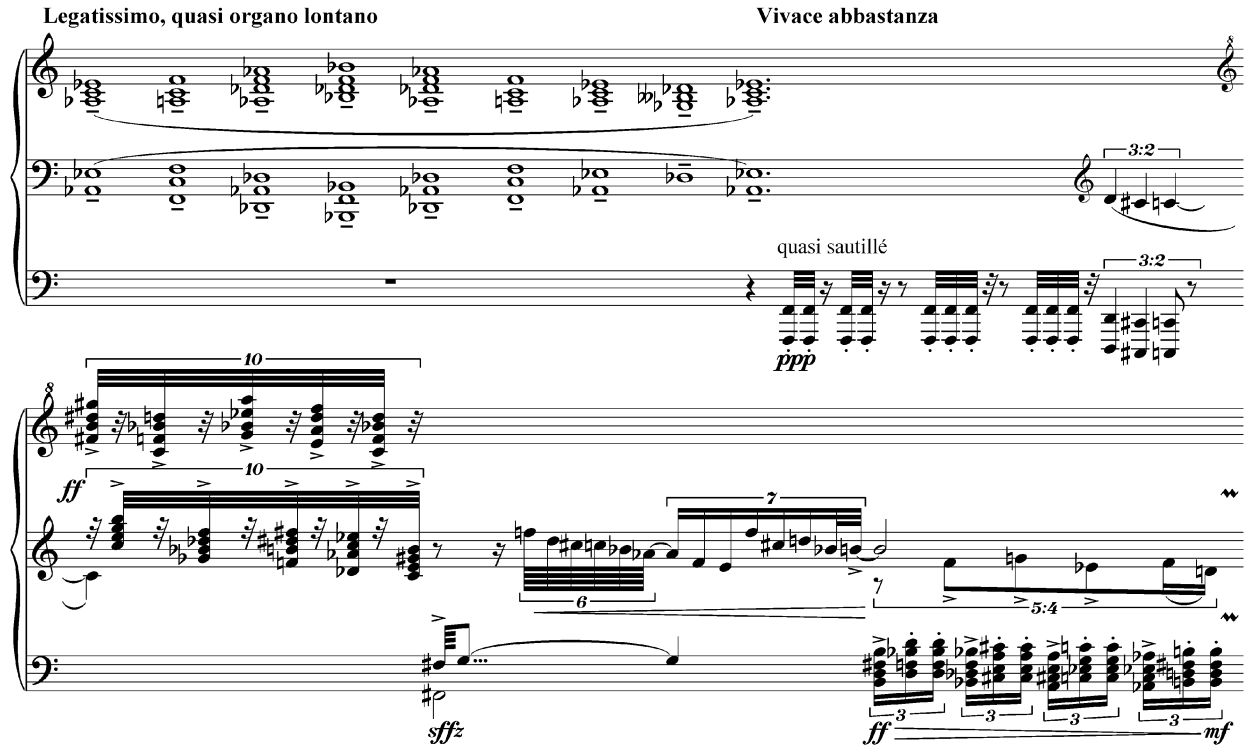
Example 15.1 / *Transcription in the Light of Harpsichord Technique for the Modern Piano of the Chromatic Fantasia of J. S. Bach, Followed by a Fugue*: "Fantasia"; [ED]bar 27.



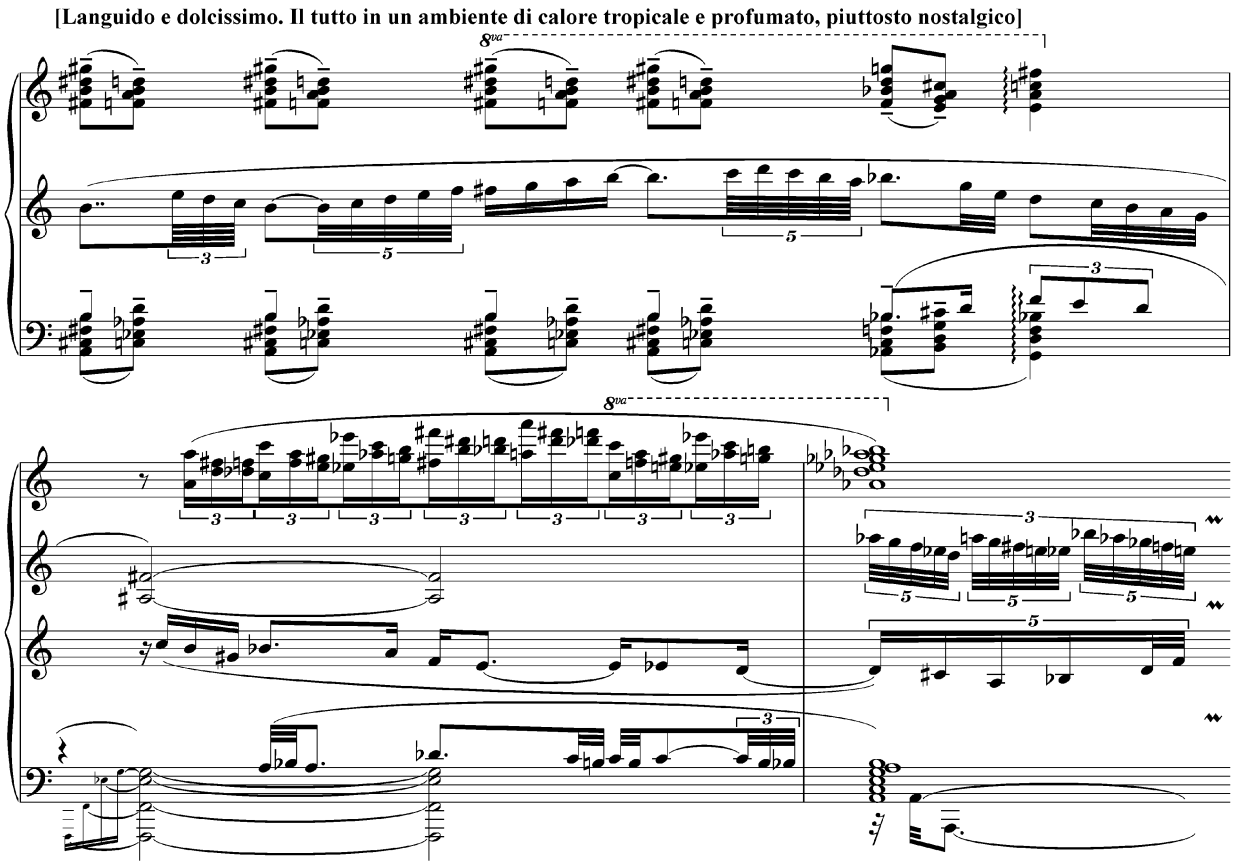
Example 15.2 / *"Quaere reliqua hujus materiei inter secretiora"*; ED/Jarvis pp. 12/3–4.



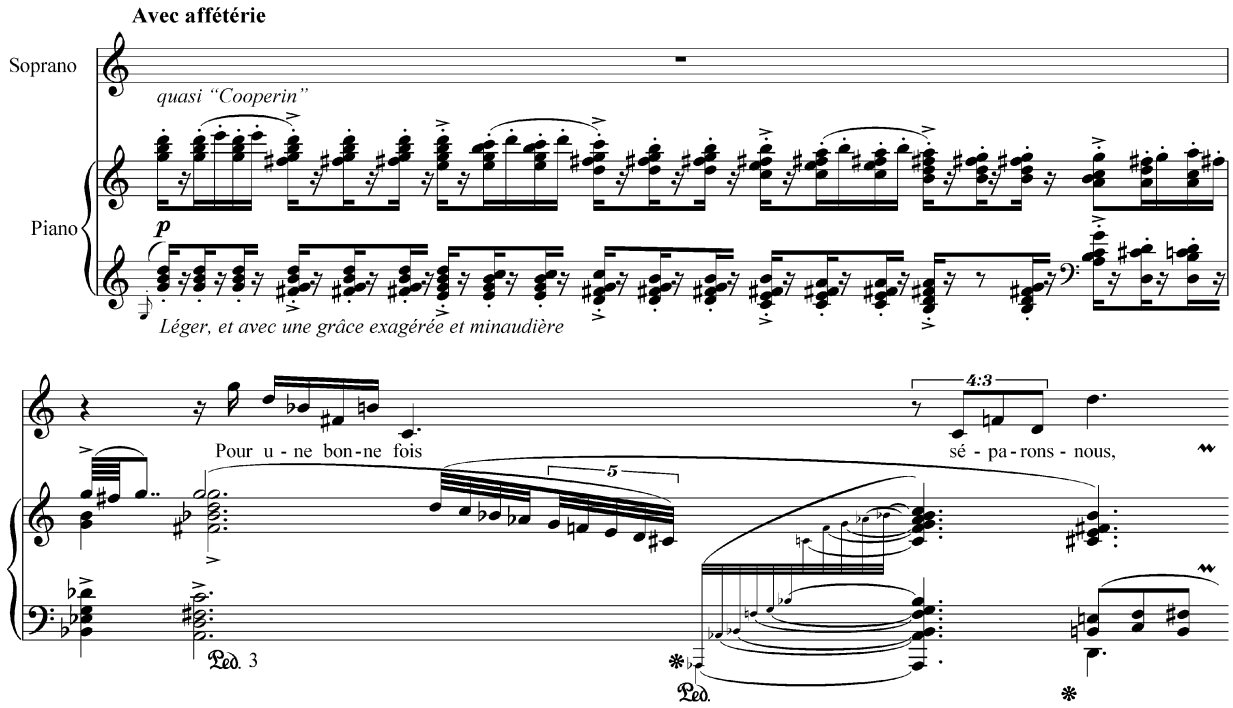
Example 15.3 / *St. Bertrand de Comminges: "He was laughing in the tower"*; beginning.



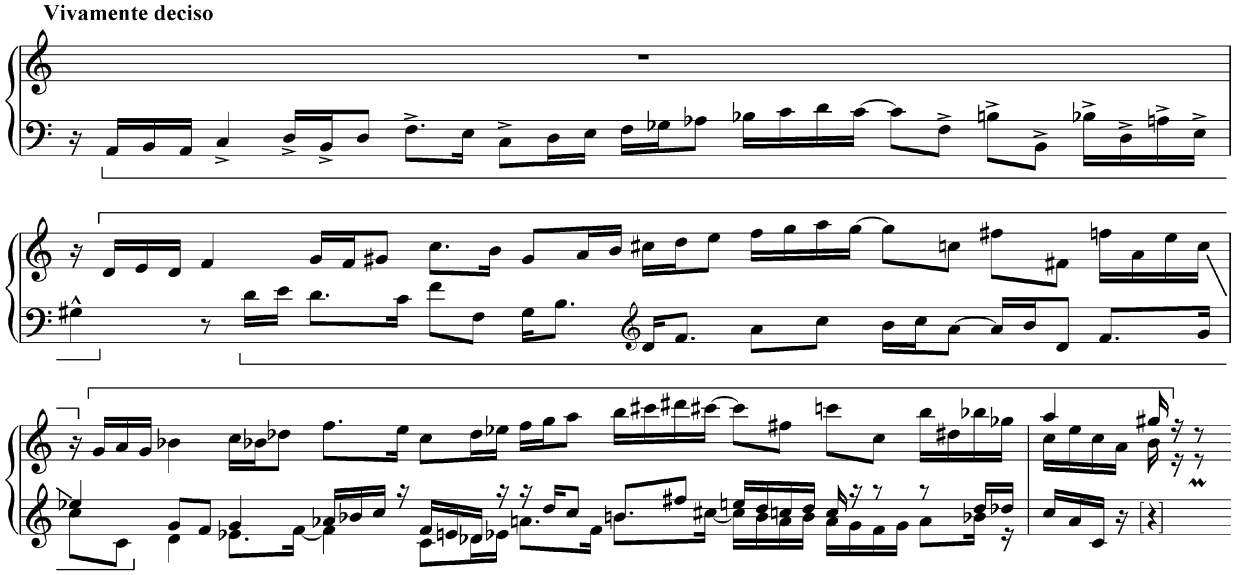
Example 15.4 / *"Gulistān"—Nocturne for Piano*; ED/Powell pp. 15/1/2–15/2/1.



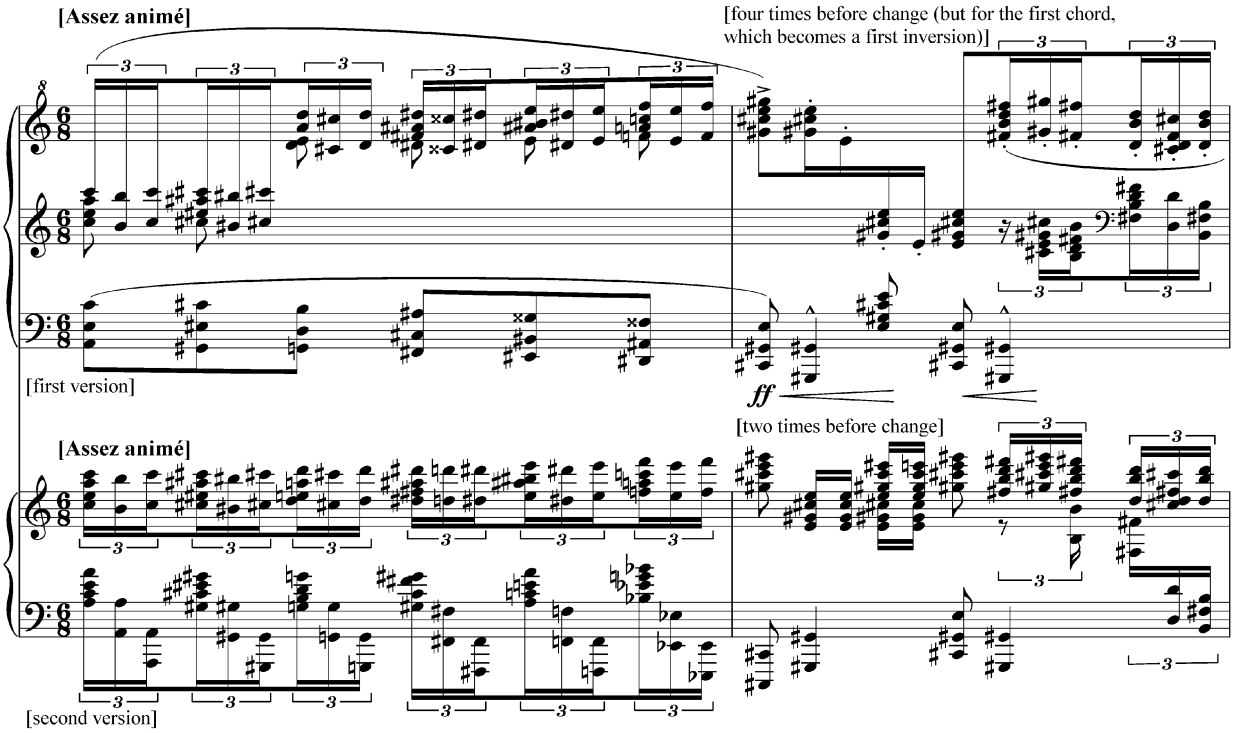
Example 15.5 / *Trois poèmes*: "La dernière fête galante"; beginning.



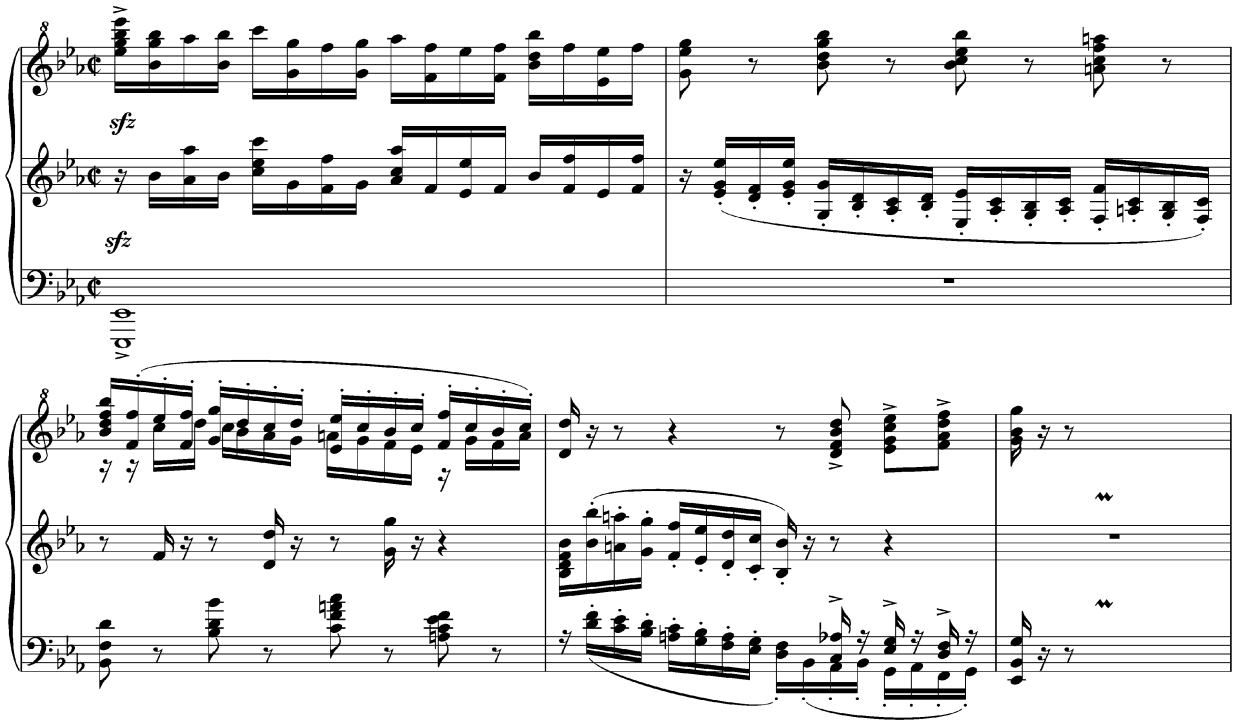
Example 16.1 / *Études transcendantes (100)*: no. 36 ("Mano sinistra sempre sola"; beginning of the fughetta); [ED]pp. 239/1/2–239/3/1.



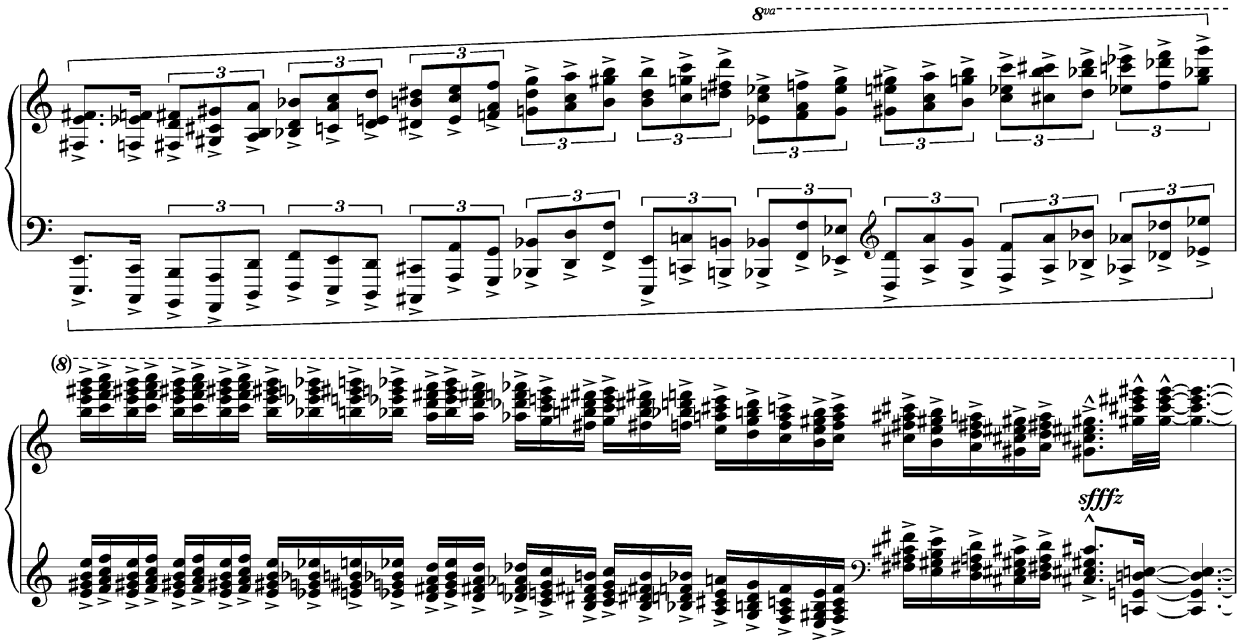
Example 16.2 / *Rapsodie espagnole de Maurice Ravel—Transcription de concert pour piano*: "Feria"; [ED]pp. 30/1/1–30/1/2 (first version); [ED]pp. 32/2/1–32/2/2 (second version).



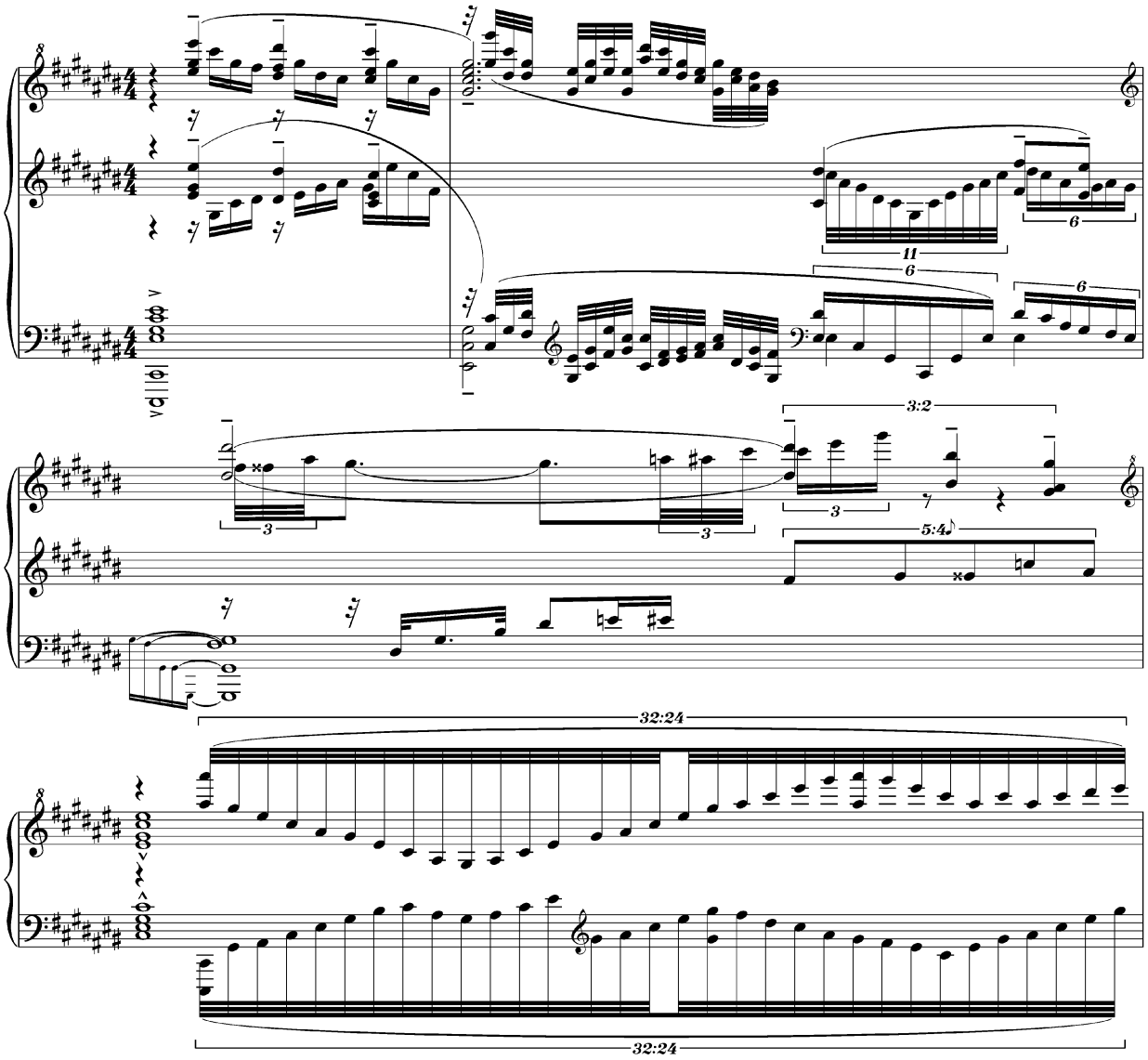
Example 16.3 / *Transcription of the Prelude in E-flat by Bach*; [ED]bars 19–23.



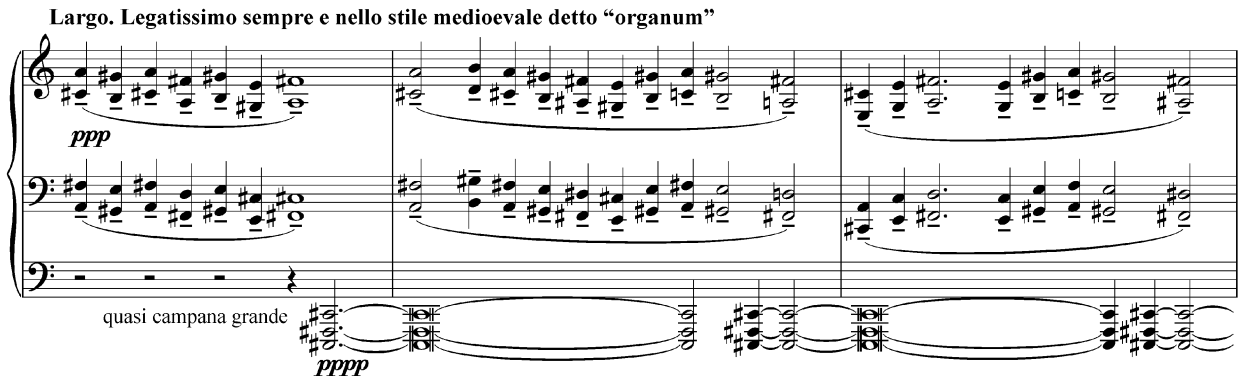
Example 16.4 / *Concerto da suonare da me solo e senza orchestra, per divertirmi*: III ("Scherzo diabolico"); [ED]pp. 65/2/1–65/3/1 (bars 98–99).



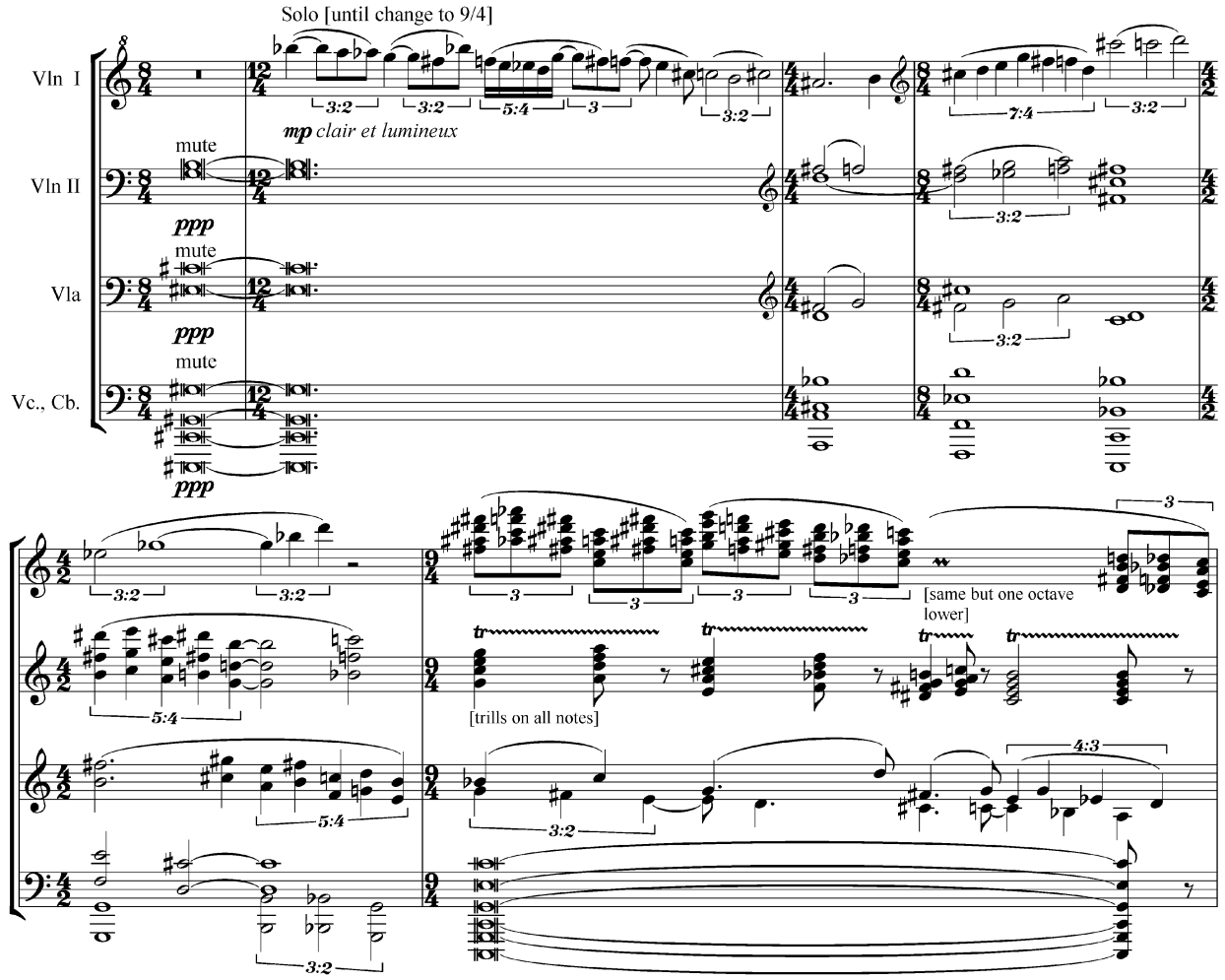
Example 16.5 / *Schlussszene aus "Salome" von Richard Strauss—Konzertmäßige Übertragung für Klavier zu zwei Händen*; [ED]bars 114–17 (the numbering is off by one).



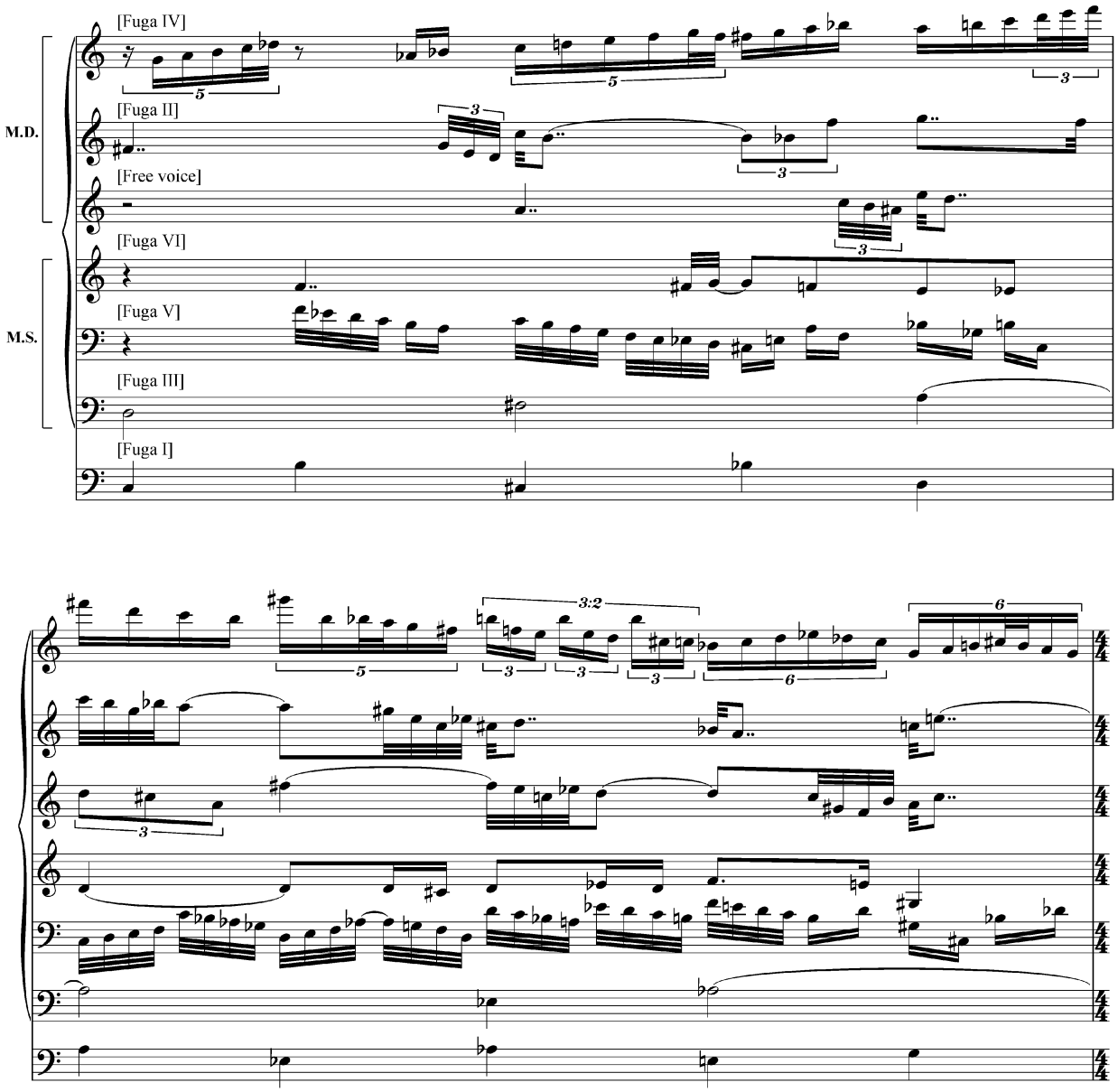
Example 16.6 / *Sequentia cyclica super "Dies irae" ex Missa pro defunctis*; theme (bars 1–3).

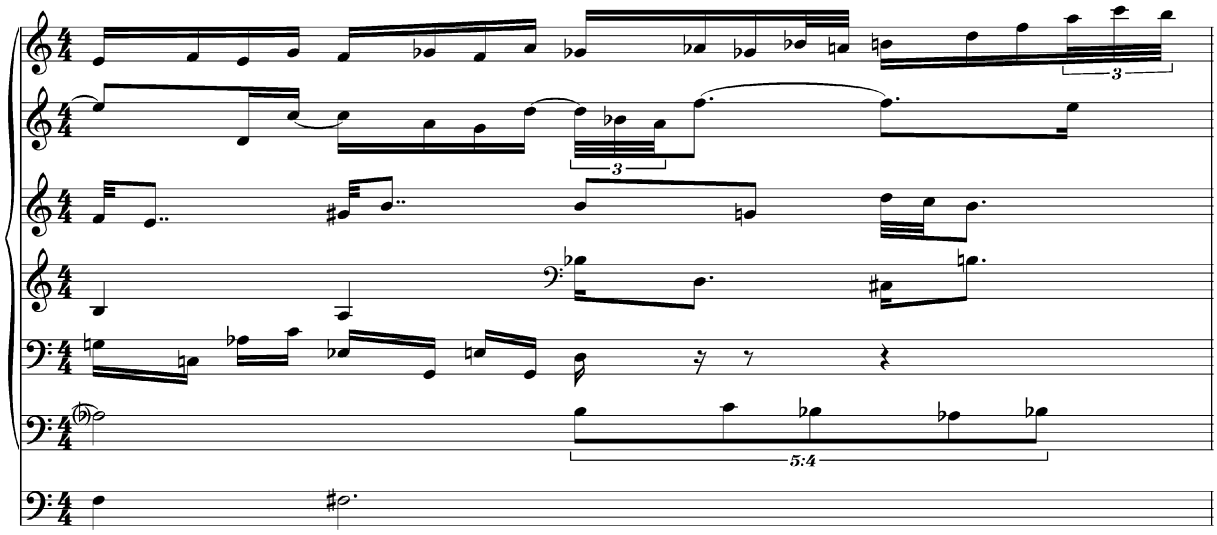


Example 17.1 / *Symphony [no. 2], "Jāmī", for Large Orchestra, Wordless Chorus, and Baritone Solo*: I; [MS]bars 1–6 (strings only, reduction onto four staves).

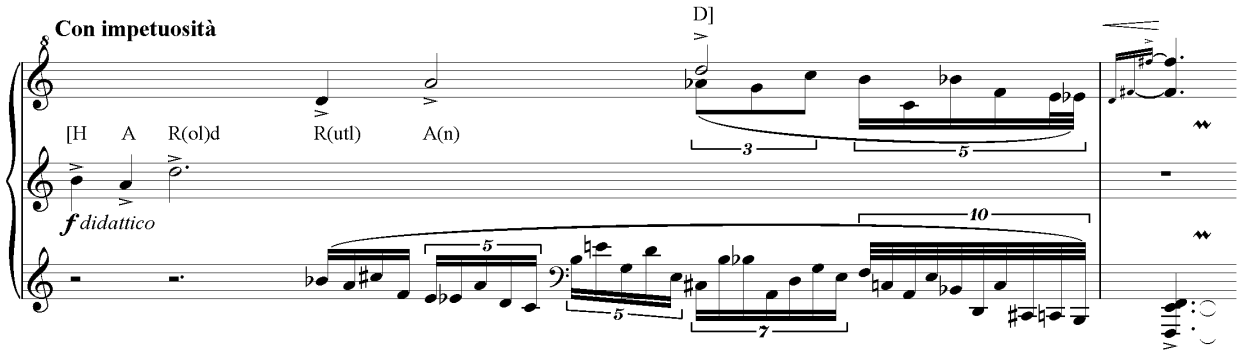


Example 17.2 / *Third Organ Symphony*: "Fuga sextuplex"; [ED]p. 268/1 ("stretto maestrale").

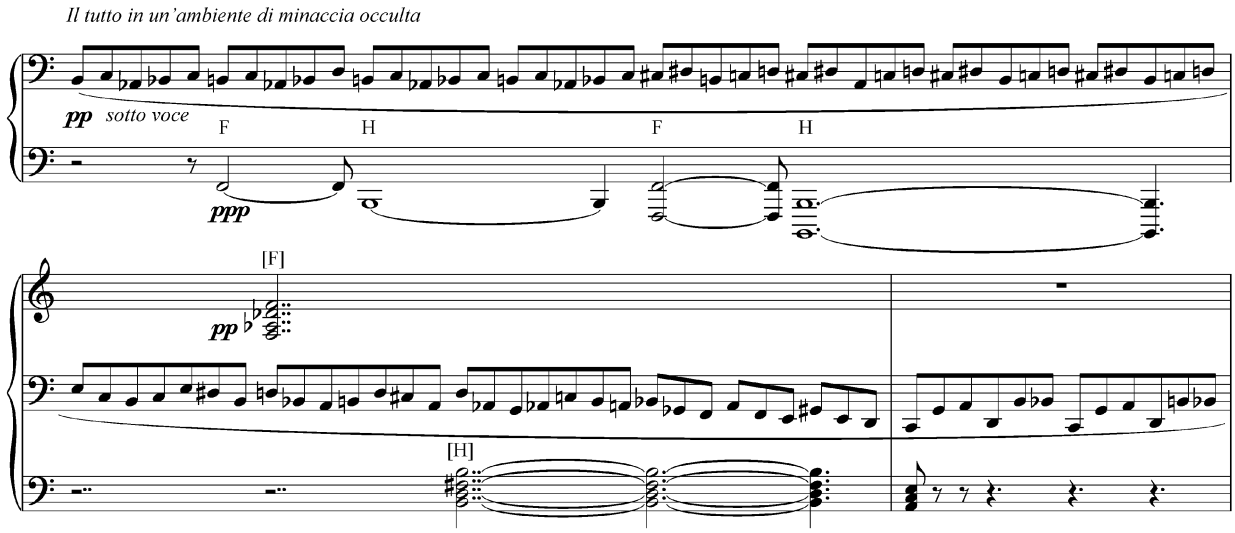




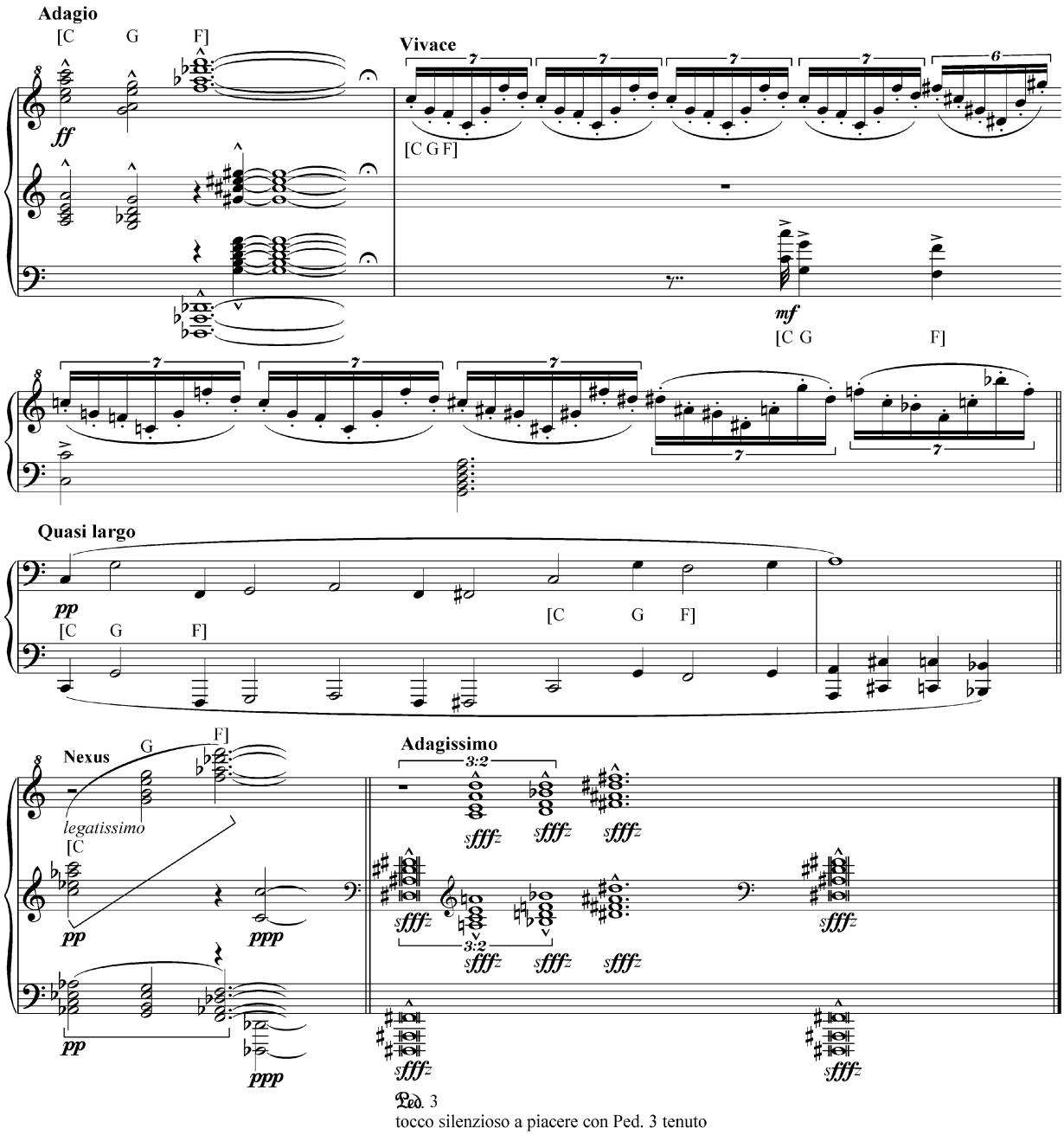
Example 18.1 / *Un nido di scatole sopra il nome del grande e buon amico Harold Rutland*: "Dapprima ecco la cosa che contengono le scatole"; [ED]bars 1–2.



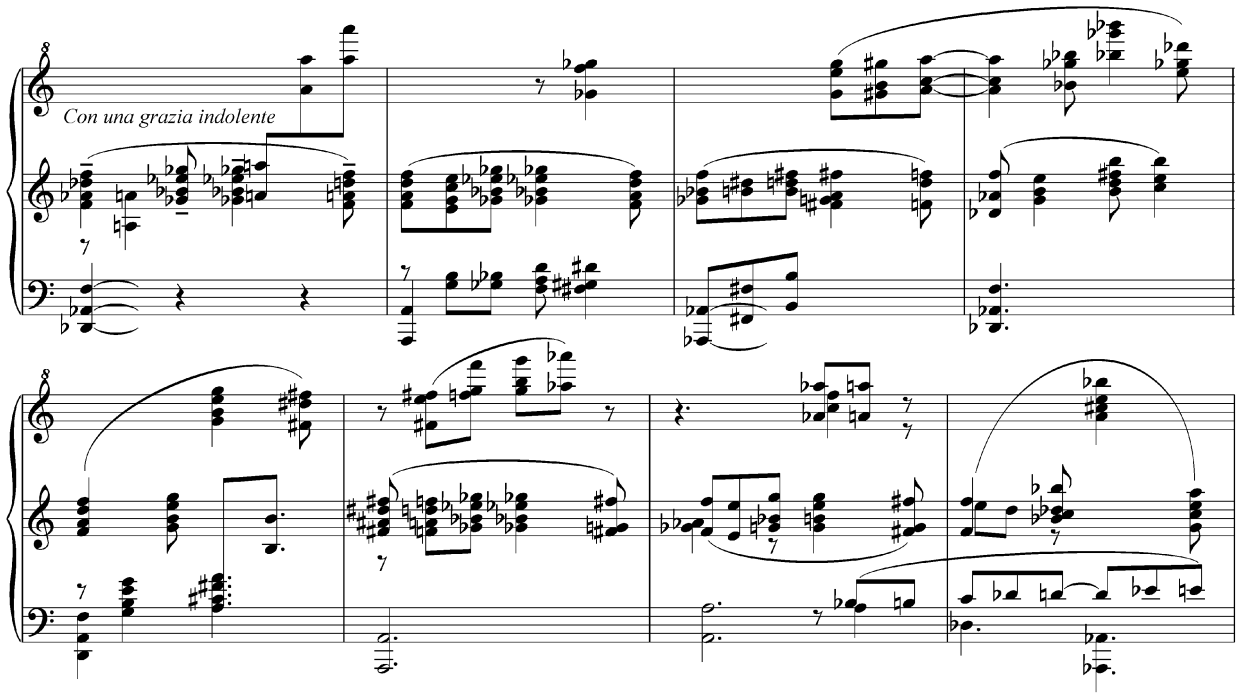
Example 18.2 / *Second Symphony for Piano*: III ("Moto perpetuo"); [MS]p. 138/1–3.



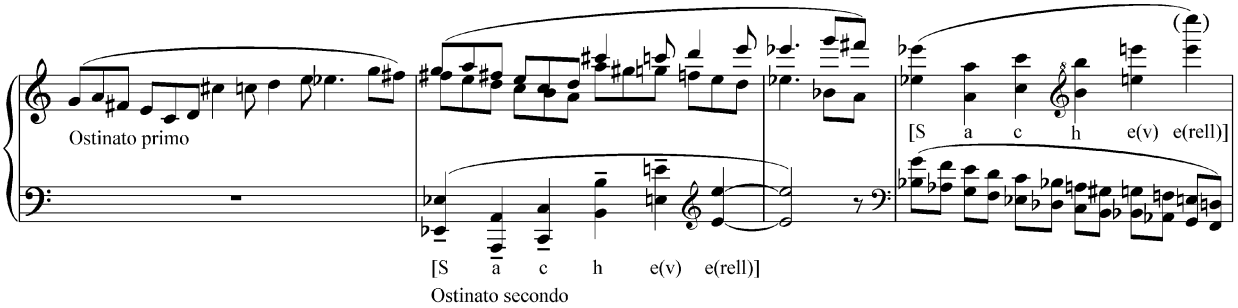
Example 18.3 / *Toccata terza*: I, [ED]bars 1–2; III, bars 1–2; IX, bar 44 (last bar); X, bar 17 (last bar).



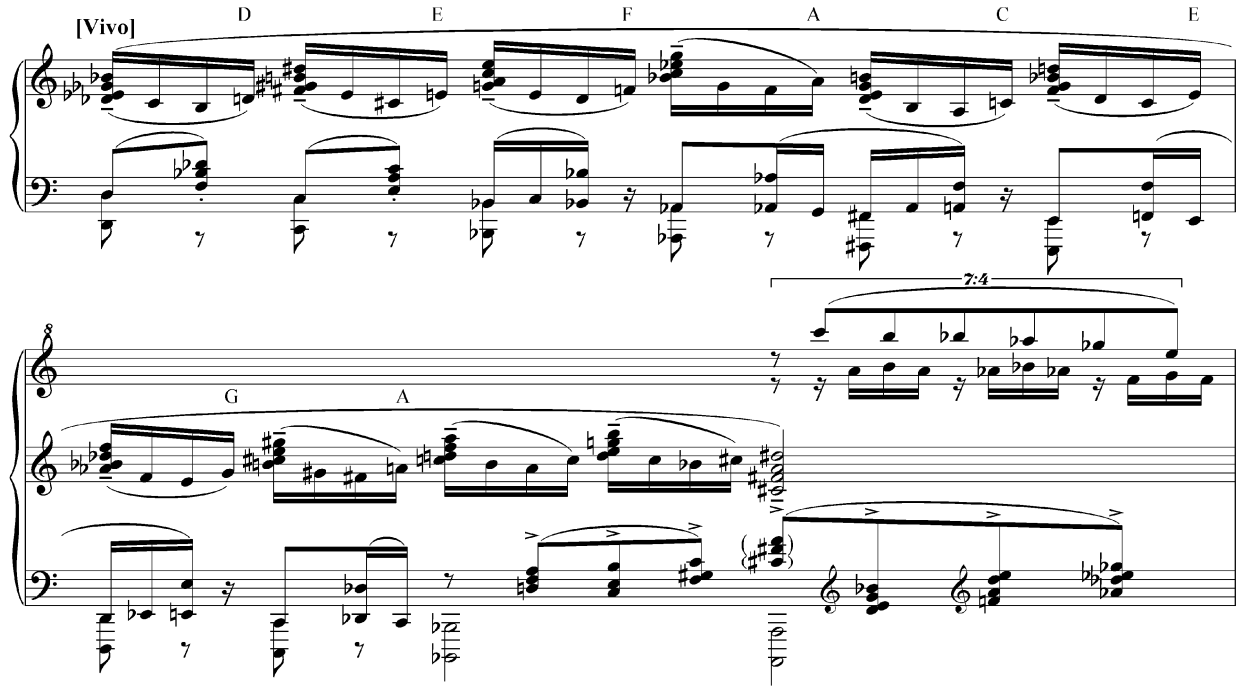
Example 18.4 / *Passeggiata veneziana sopra la Barcarola di Offenbach*: I ("Barcarola"); [ED]pp. 3/1/2–3/2/6.



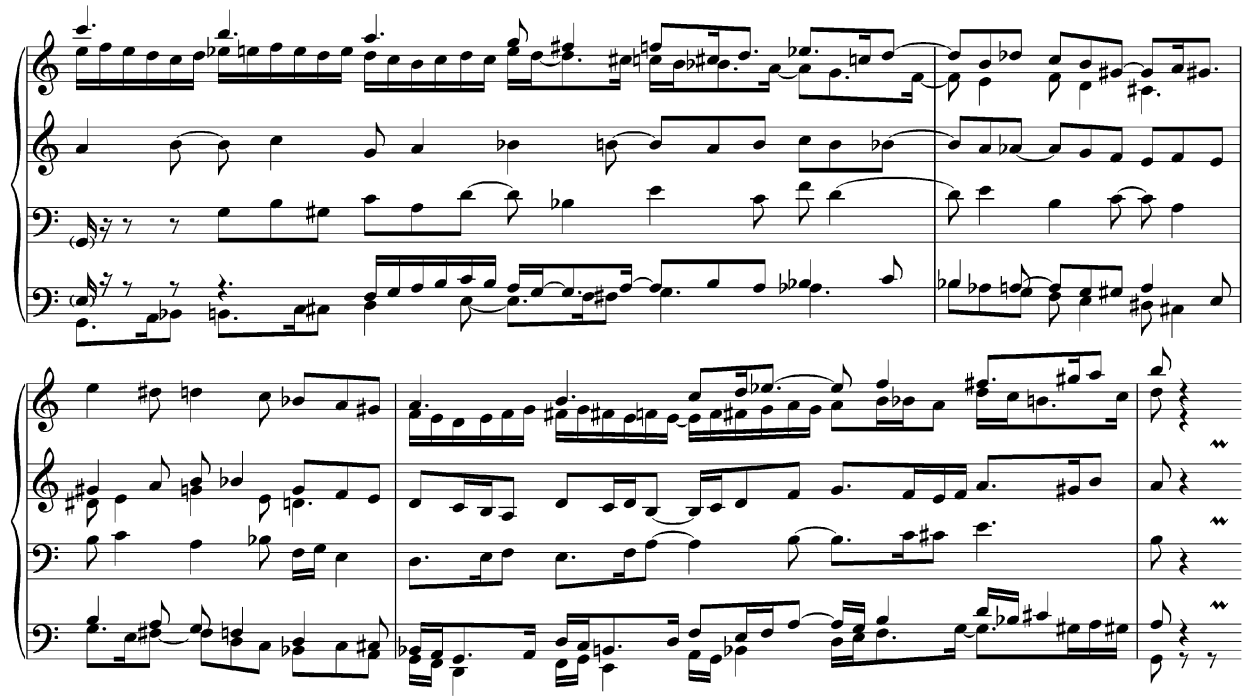
Example 18.5 / *Rosario d'arabeschi*: II ("Ostinato doppio"); [ED]pp. 11/2/3–11/2/5.



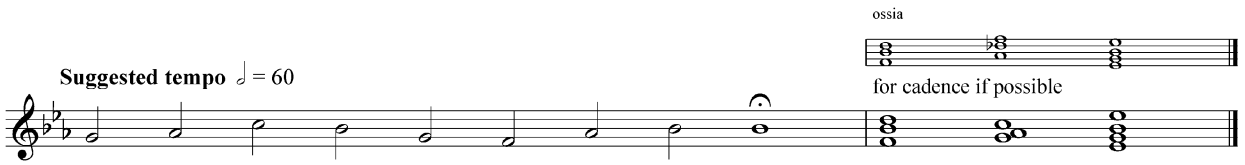
Example 18.6 / *Opus clavisymphonicum—Concerto for Piano and Large Orchestra*: II ("Toccata"); [MS]pp. 165–66 (full score), p. 50 (piano part).



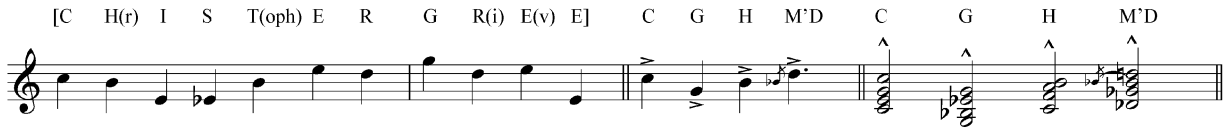
Example 19.1 / *Third Symphony for Piano Solo*; [ED]bars 432–36 (excerpt from the first part of the fugue).



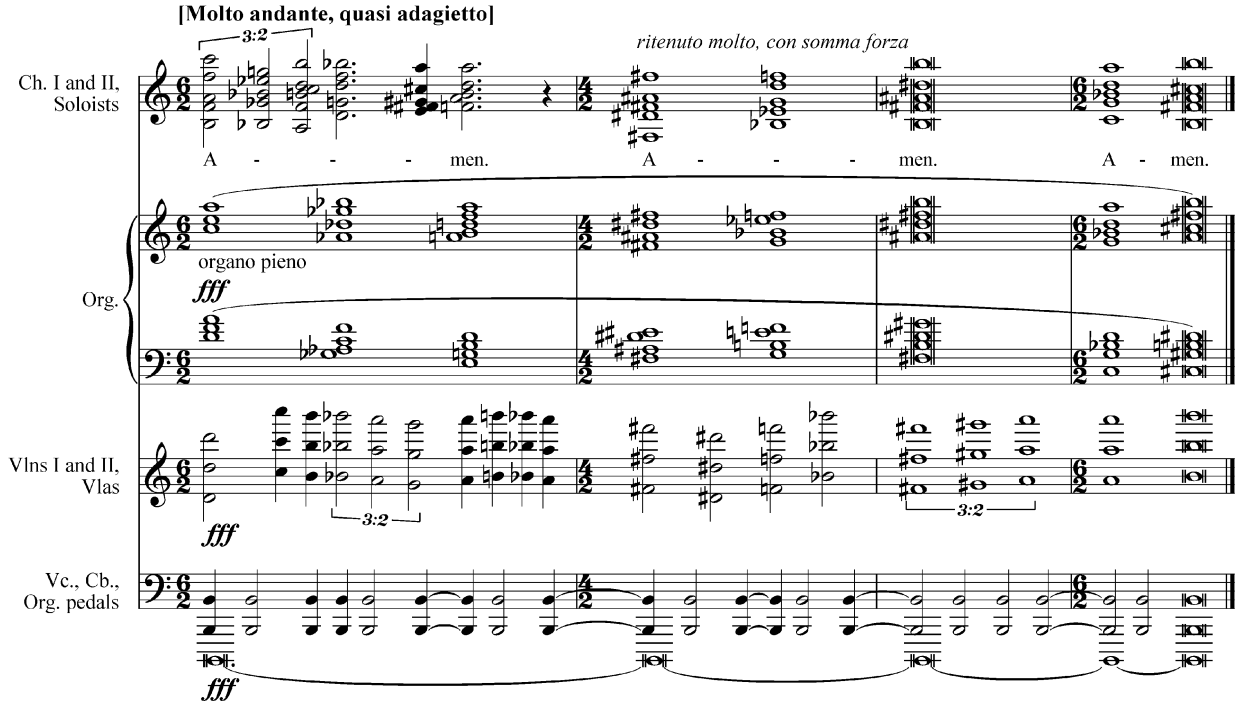
Example 19.2 / *Suggested Bell-Chorale for St. Luke's Carillon*; [ED]bars 9–10.



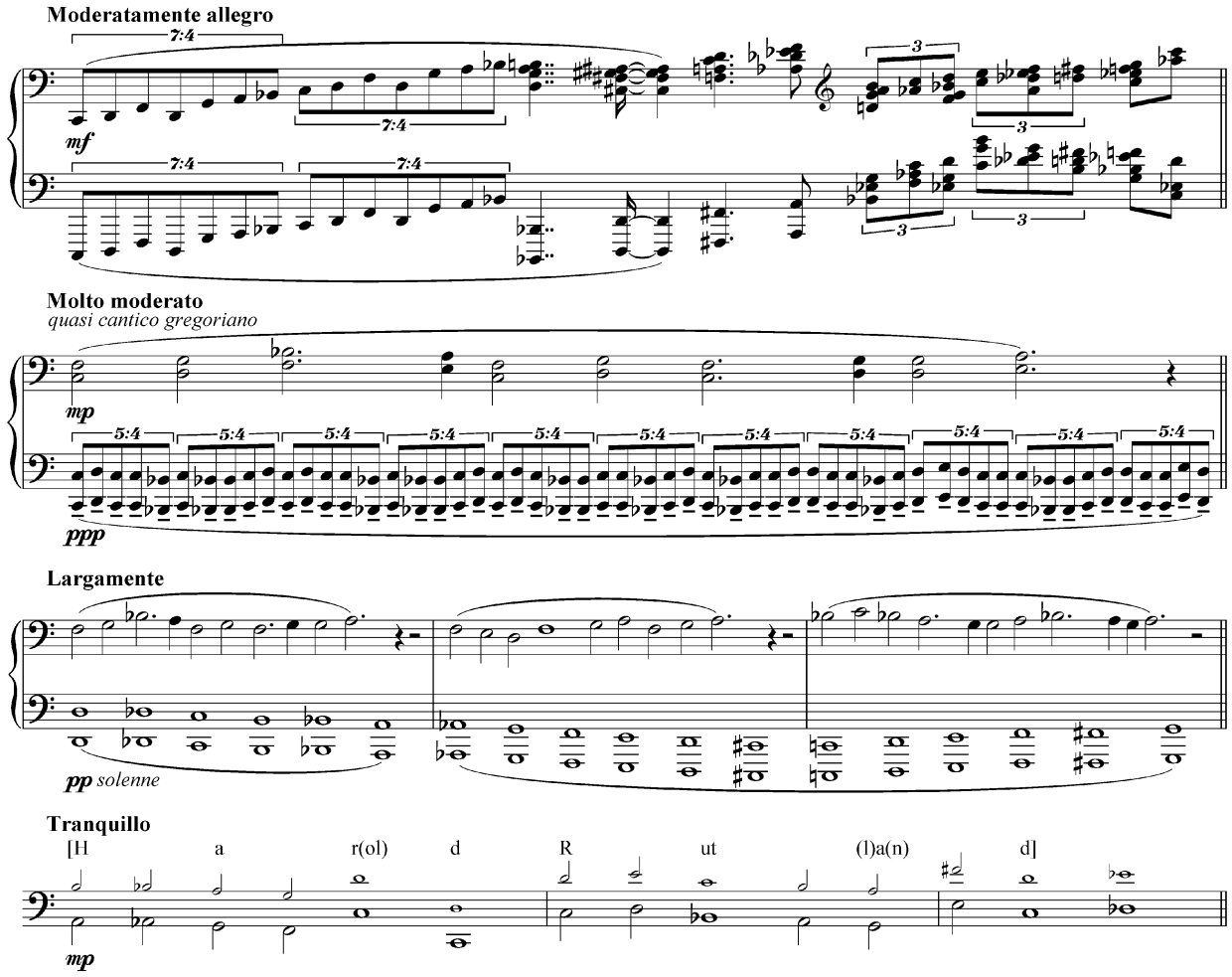
Example 19.3 / *Fantasiettina sul nome illustre dell'egregio poeta Christopher Grieve ossia Hugh M'Diarmid*; soggetto cavato. *Opus clavicembalisticum*: IV ("Fantasia"); [ED]pp. 38, 39 (musical letters of Hugh MacDiarmid's name, first in single notes, then in chords).



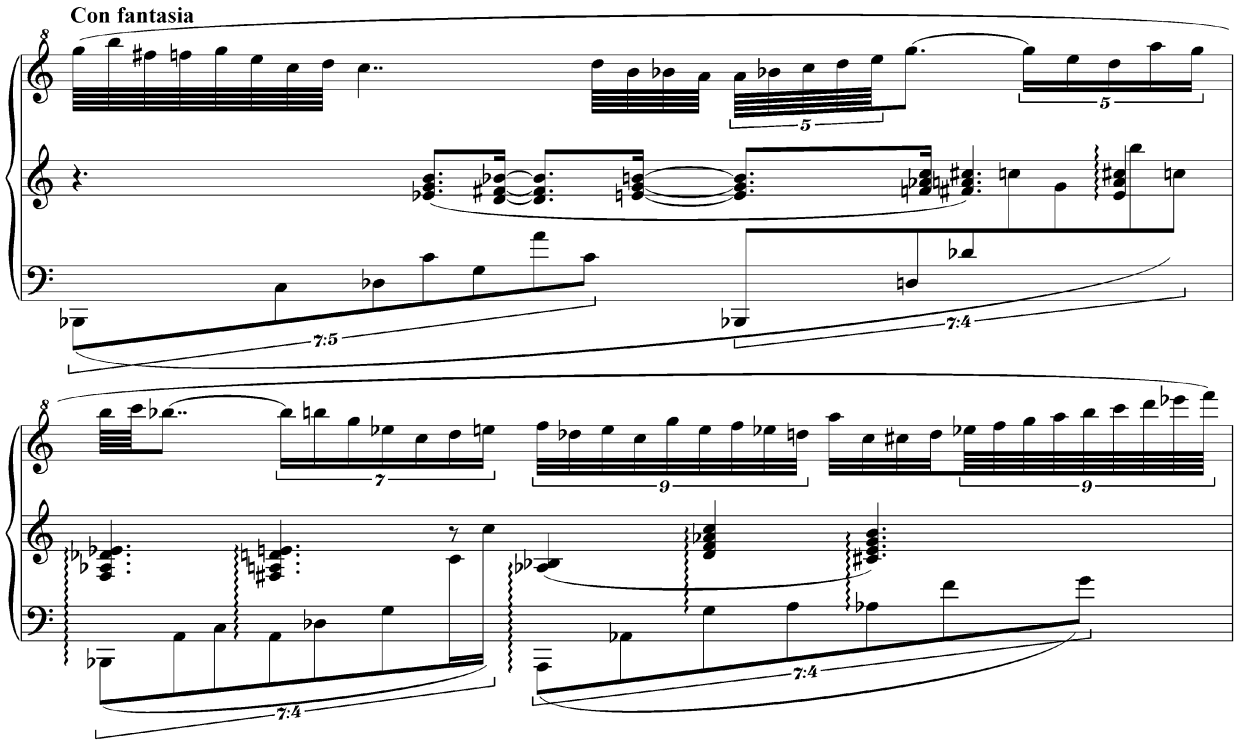
Example 19.4 / *Messa grande sinfonica*: VII ("Amen"); [ED]219–22 (four final bars; reduction, omitting woodwinds and brass).



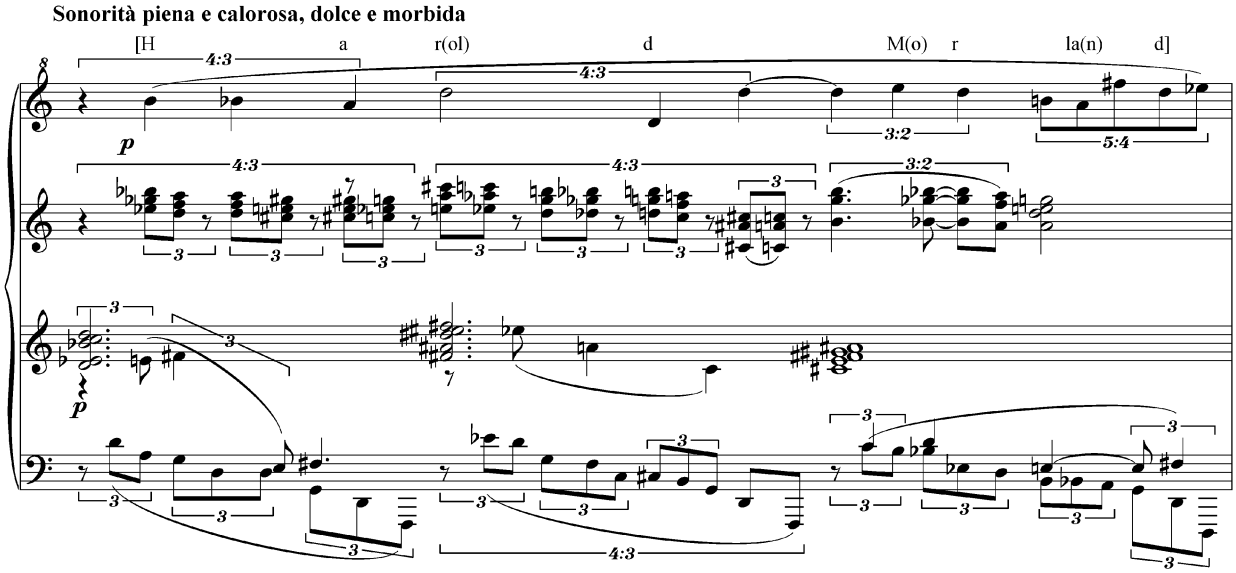
Example 20.1 / *Fourth Symphony for Piano Alone*: I; [ED]p. 1/1/1; II ("Preludio corale"; p. 74/1/1); II ("Variazioni"; p. 119/1/1–3); II ("Variazioni"; var. 49, second fugue subject, with the original *soggetto cavato* in smaller notes; p. 197/3/1–3).



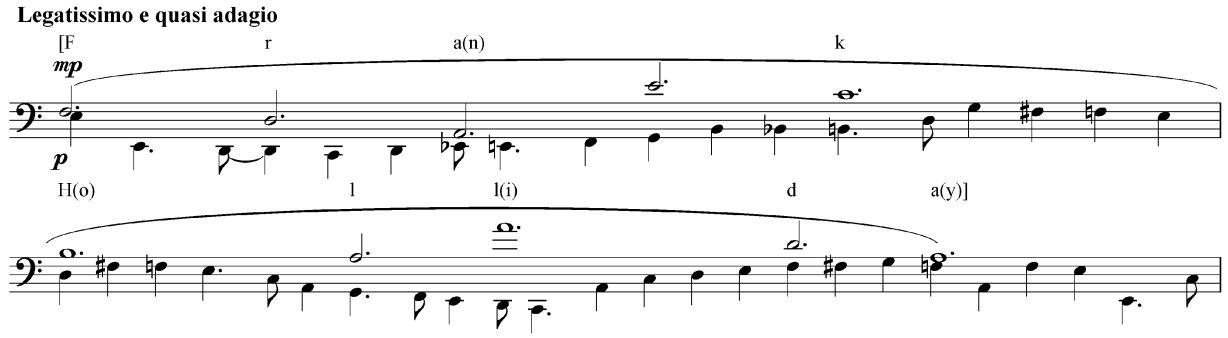
Example 20.2 / *Frammenti aforistici (Sutras) (104)*: no. LX; [ED]p. 27.



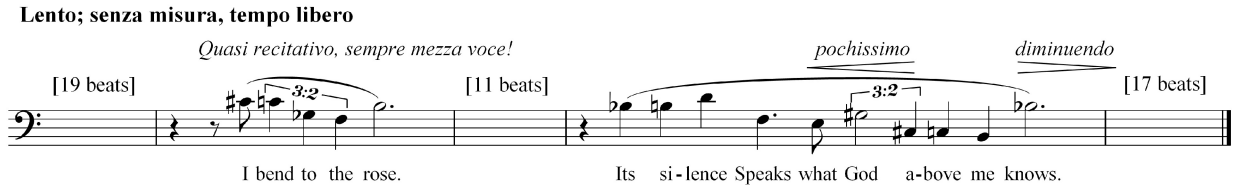
Example 20.3 / *Frammenti aforistici (20)*: no. LXIX(r); [ED]p. 7/1/1.



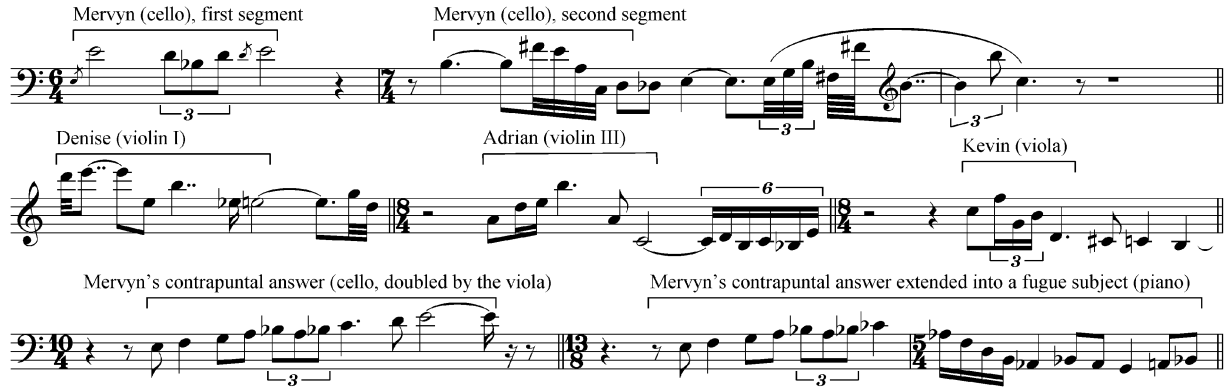
Example 20.4 / *Toccata quarta*; I (theme).



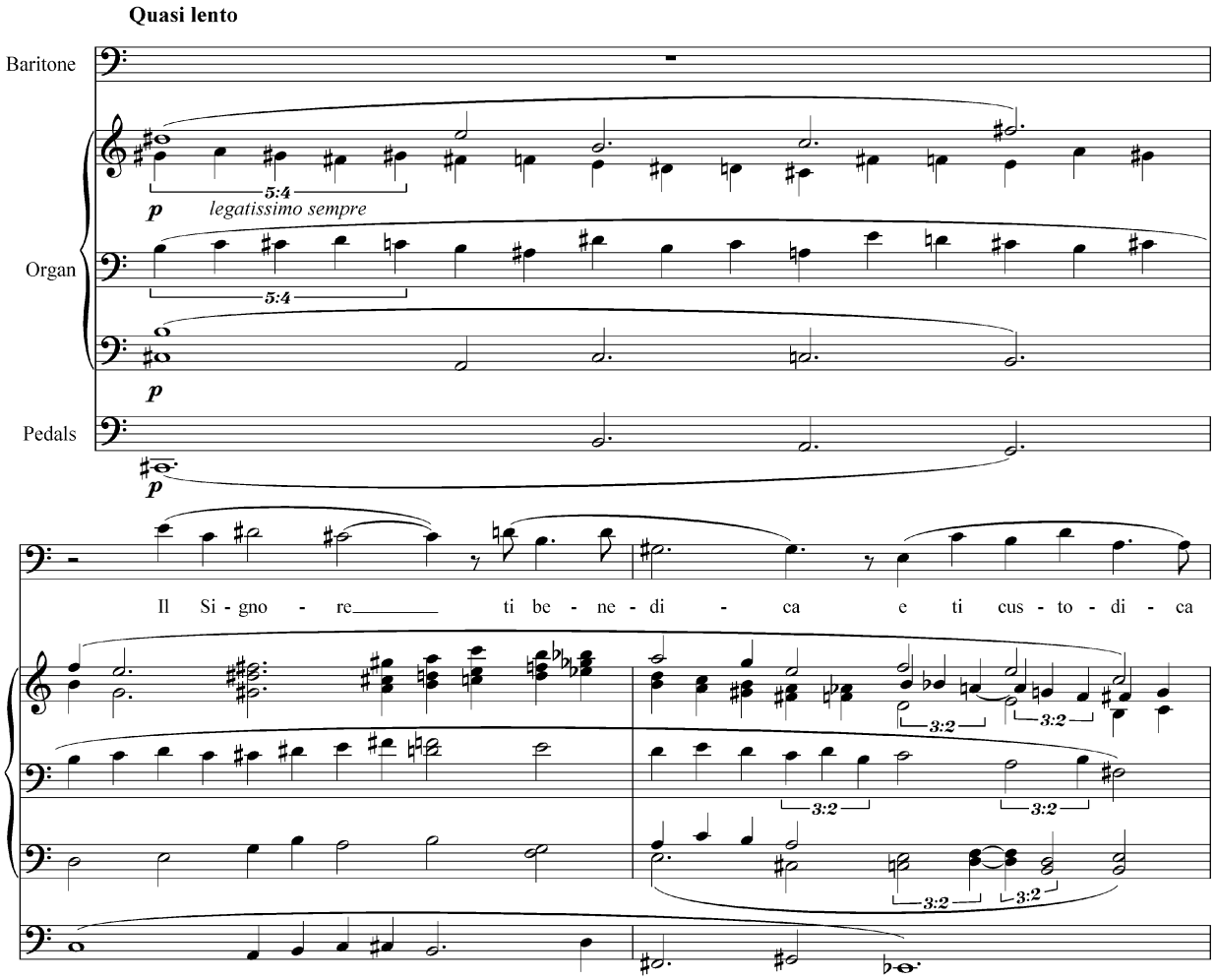
Example 20.5 / *Frammento cantato*; vocal part only (with indication of the number of intervening crotchet beats in the piano part).



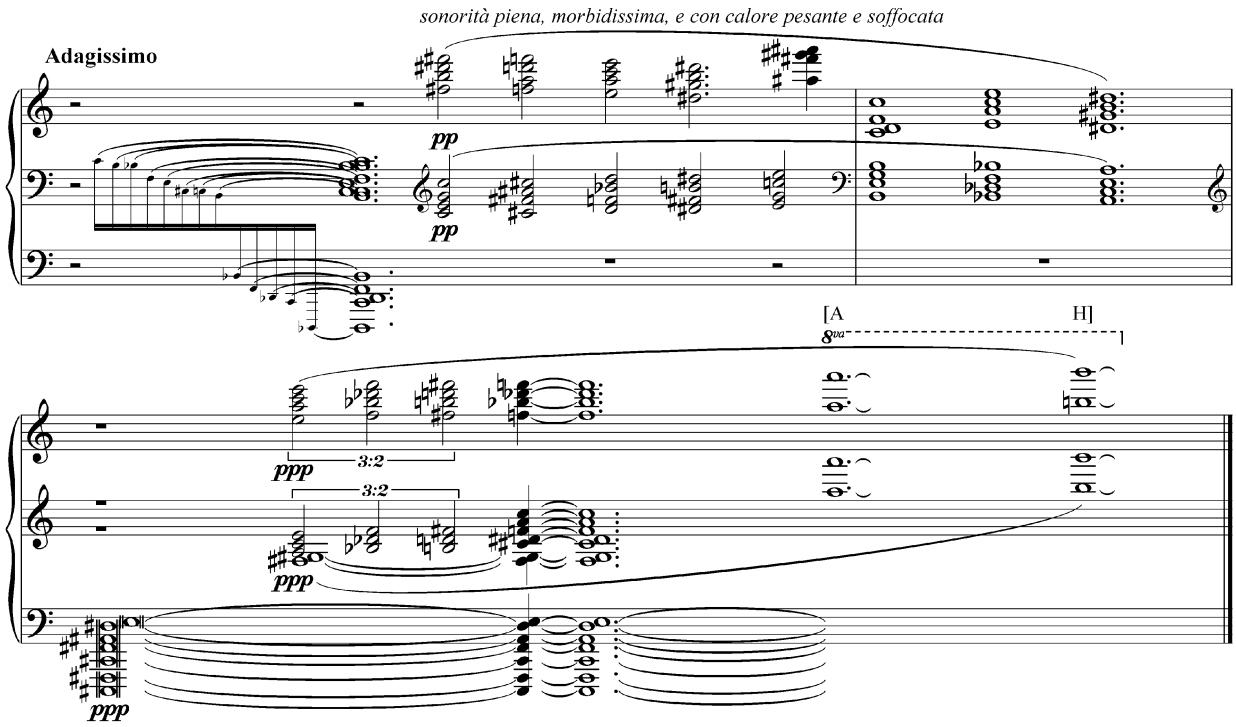
Example 20.6 / *Concertino non grosso for String Sextet with Piano obbligato quasi continuo*; musical motives associated with the names of the dedicatees; I, bars 2 (cello), 3–4 (cello); bar 5 (violin I); bar 6 (violin III); bar 6 (viola); bar 9 (cello); III, bars 34–35 (piano); [ED]pp. 1, 2, 3, 4, 4, 6, 73.



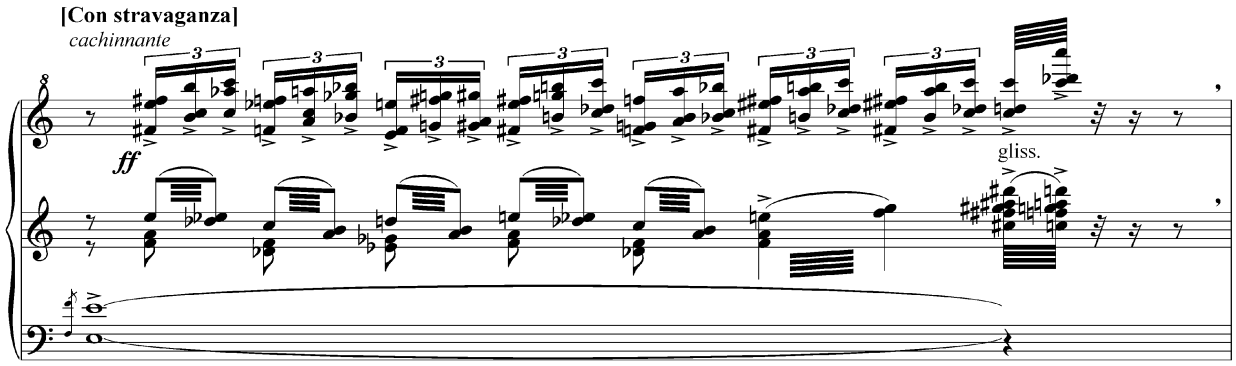
Example 21.1 / *Benedizione di San Francesco d'Assisi*; [ED]bars 1–3.



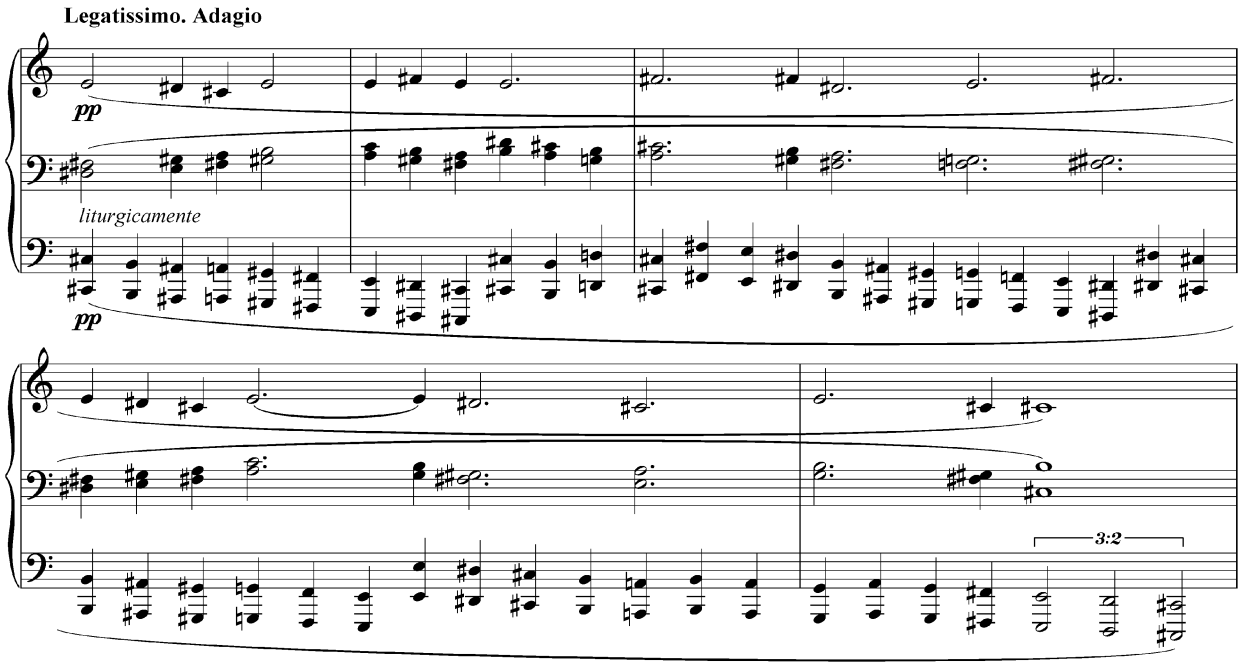
Example 21.2 / *Symphonia brevis for Piano*: "Coda epilogo. Punta d'organo"; [ED]p. 113 (bars 45–47).



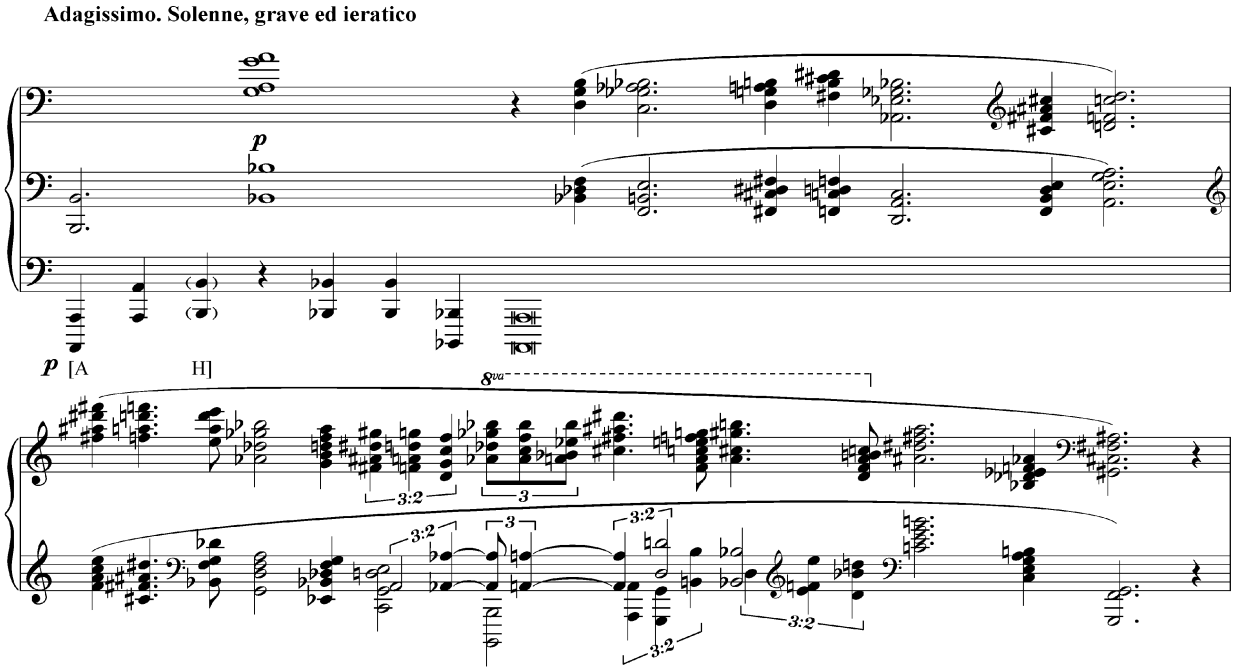
Example 21.3 / *Variazione maliziosa e perversa sopra "La morte d'Åse" da Grieg*; [MS]bar 3.



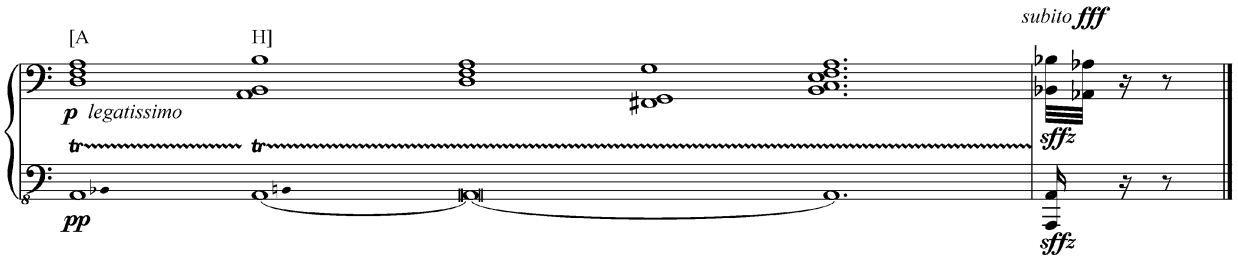
Example 21.4 / *Opusculum clavisymphonicum vel claviorchestrale*: II ("Variazioni sopra il Credo in qualsiasi modo del Gretchaninoff"); [MS]pp. 97/1/1–97/2/2.



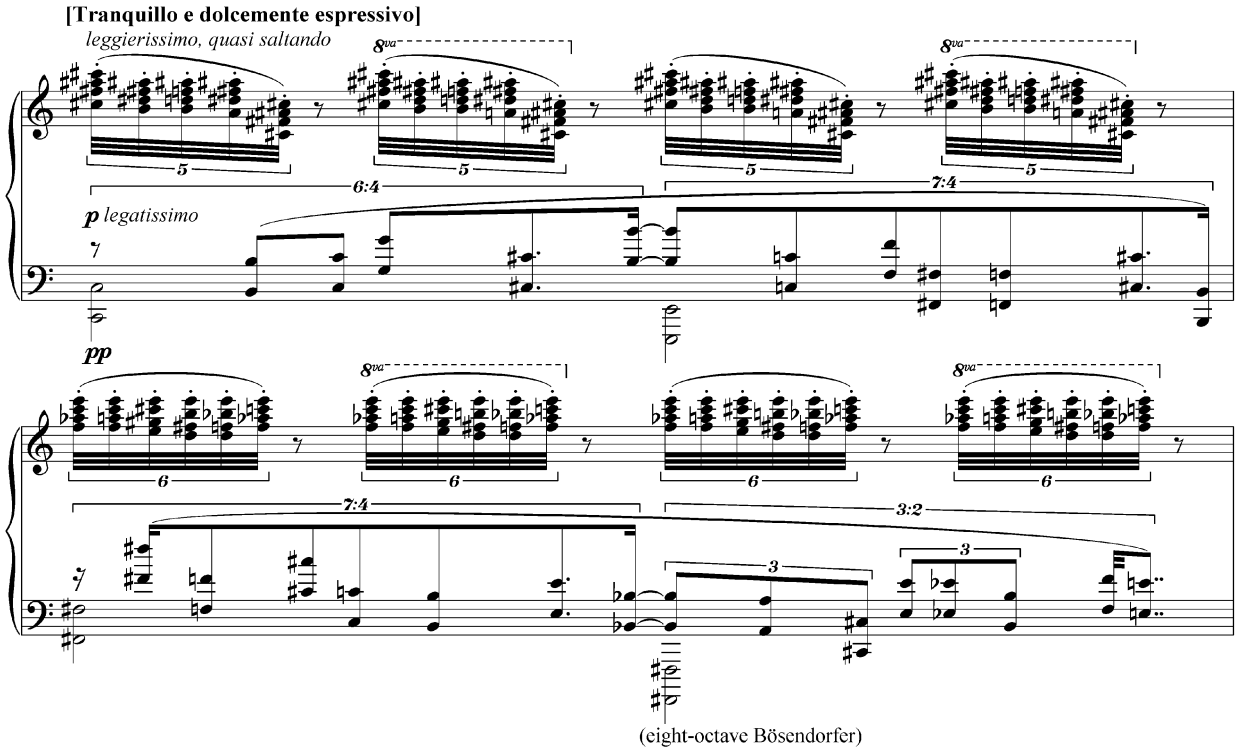
Example 22.1 / *Sixth Symphony for Piano (Symphonia claviensis)*: "Introito"; bar 1.



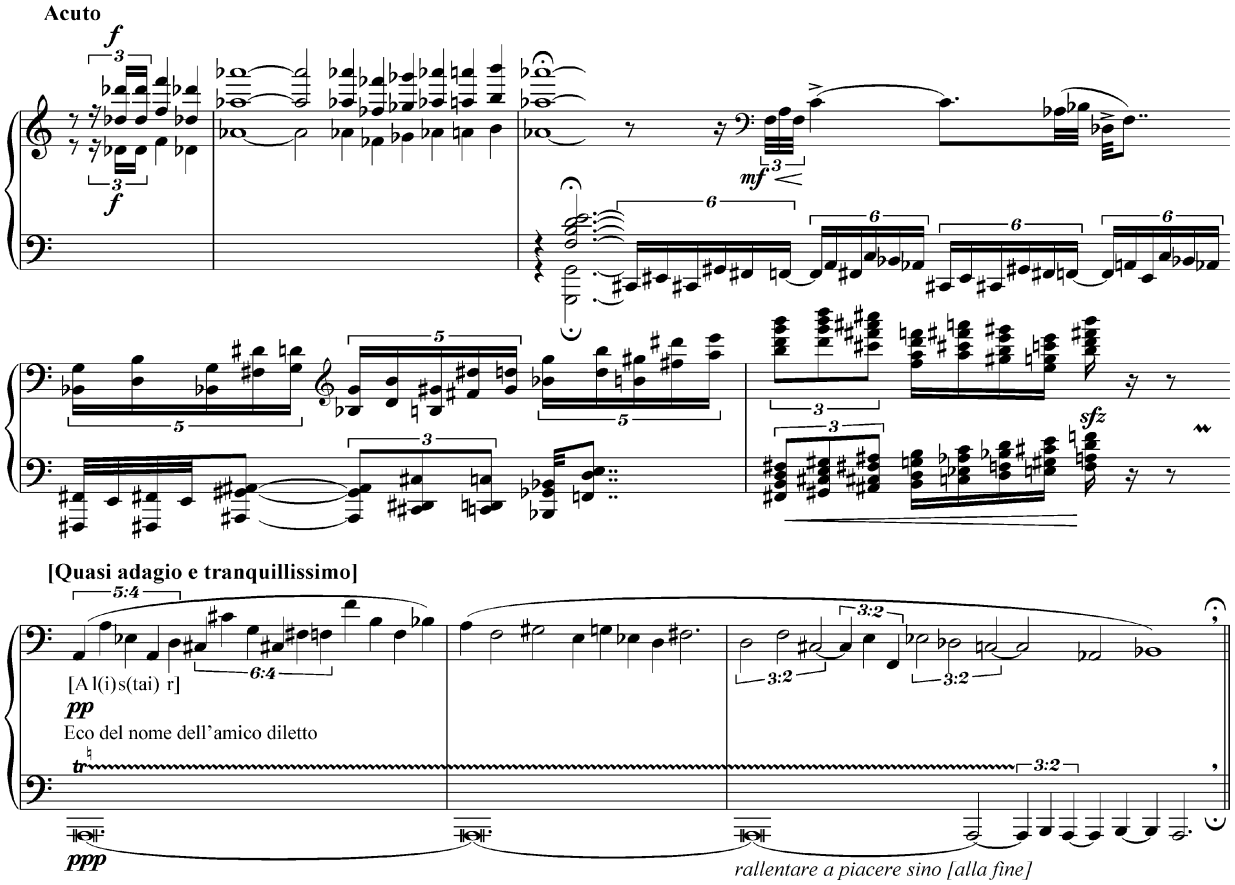
Example 22.2 / *Frammenti aforistici (4)*: no. 4 (complete).



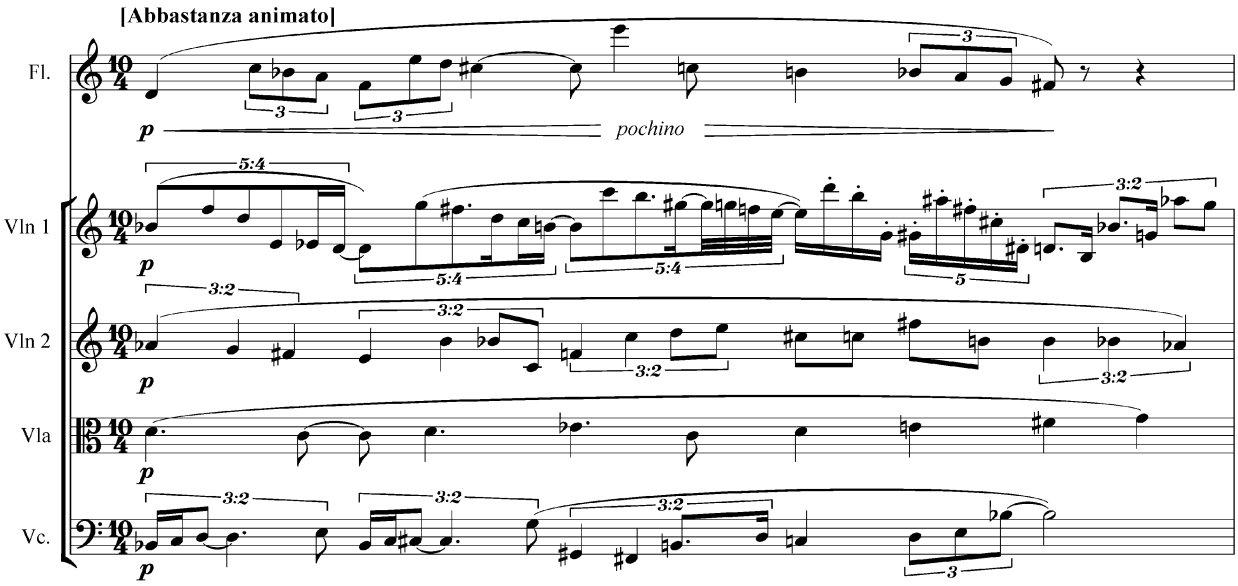
Example 22.3 / *Symphonic Nocturne for Piano Alone*; [ED]p. 50/2.



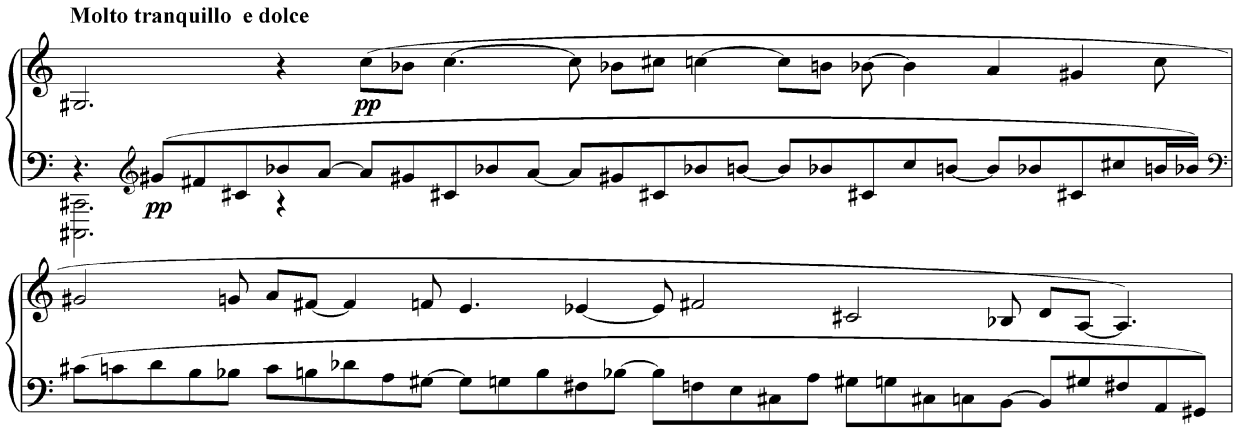
Example 22.4 / *"Il gallo d'oro" da Rimsky-Korsakov: Variazioni frivole con una fuga anarchica, eretica e perversa*: theme, end of var. 44; [ED]pp. 1, 377–79.



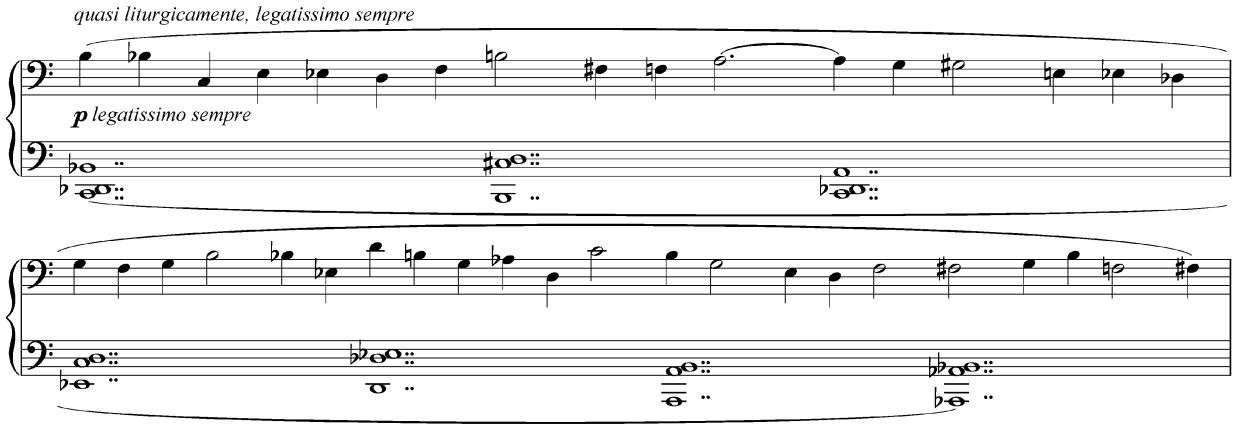
Example 22.5 / *Il tessuto d'arabeschi*; [ED]bar 14.



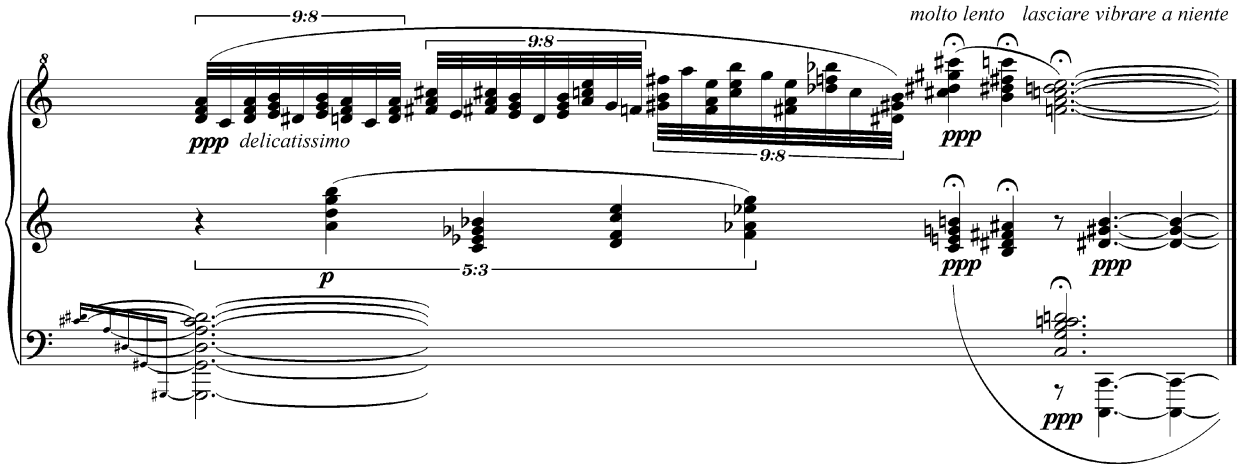
Example 23.1 / *Villa Tasca: Mezzogiorno siciliano—Evocazione nostalgica e memoria tanta cara e preziosa del giardino meraviglioso, splendido, tropicale*; [ED]p. 38 (bars 160–61).



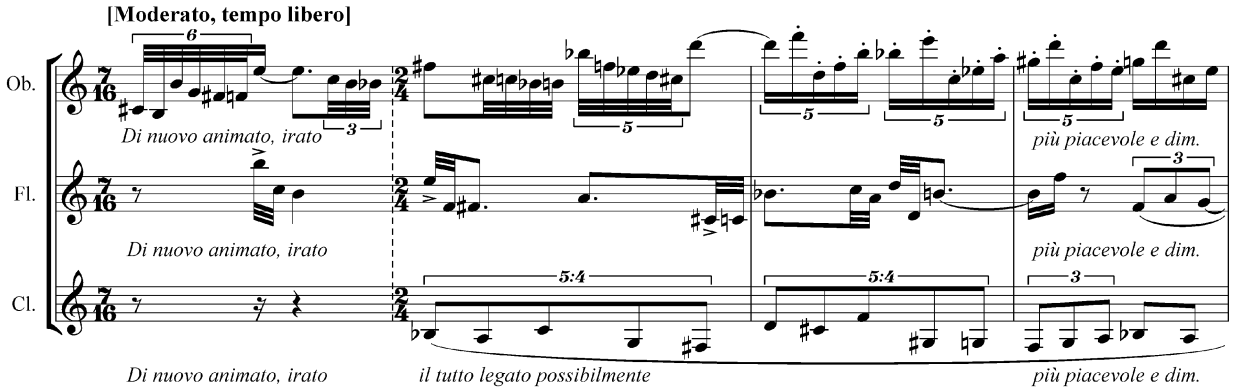
Example 23.2 / *Opus secretum atque necromanticum*; [ED]p. 16/1/1–2.



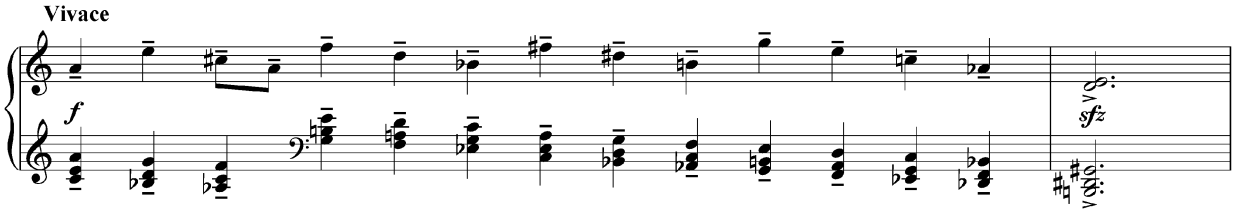
Example 23.3 / *Passeggiata variata sul nome del caro e gentile giovane amico Clive Spencer-Bentley*; final bar.



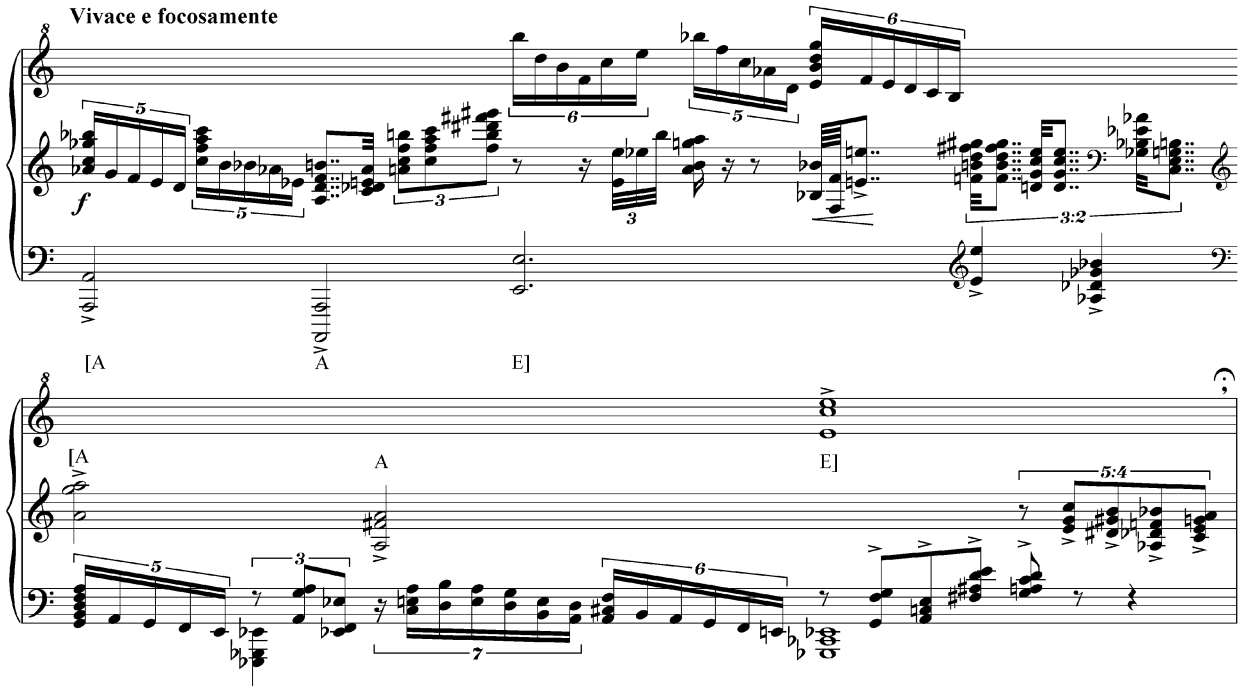
Example 23.4 / *Fantasiettina atematica*; ED/Roberge bars 18–21.



Example 23.5 / *Passeggiata arlecchinesca sopra un frammento di Busoni ("Rondò arlecchinesco")*; theme.



Example 23.6 / *Due sutras sul nome dell'amico Alexis*: no. 1; bar 1.



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A final section, intended primarily to satisfy scholarly requirements, is devoted to a categorized list of other publications cited in the notes (about 435 entries). In addition to providing references to the archival documents from the Sorabji Archive cited in the notes, they deal with people or subjects other than Sorabji, documenting his relationships with friends and acquaintances, the musical and extramusical references found in his works, etc.

Entries are listed alphabetically by author or title, ignoring initial articles. Links to online versions are provided whenever possible. Where available, Digital Object Identifiers (DOI) or stable URLs (permalinks) for articles in scholarly journals are given here (but not in the footnotes). Free access to such publications is usually only possible with a subscription or through a library. In other cases, only a preview of the first page is available.

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Index

This index lists all significant instances of names and titles in the main text, including the preface and the introduction. The following sections are not indexed: acknowledgements, sources and abbreviations, contents, and bibliography. Subject subentries are used only in the case of Sorabji; many of them imply attitude to, conception of, use of, etc. Page ranges are not used, and only the first occurrence in a series of contiguous paragraphs is tagged. The names of some obscure acquaintances are followed in parentheses by an identification such as landlord or physiotherapist; the same applies to relatives. The following categories collect many scattered entries whose relationship to the subject is not obvious.

Concert promoters
Concert venues
Corporate bodies
Libraries
Musical instruments and their builders
Newspapers and periodicals
Performers (of Sorabji's works, for occurrences in the catalogue of works; the following names also have separate entries for occurrences in the main text when mentioned in another capacity, such as dedicatee or editor: Alexander Abercrombie, Donna Amato, Christopher Berg, E. Emlyn Davies, Carlo Grante, Michael Habermann, Charles Hopkins, Marc-André Hamelin, Geoffrey Douglas Madge, John Ogdon, Jonathan Powell, Yonty Solomon, Ronald Stevenson)
Place names (buildings, churches, countries, cities, houses, streets, etc., relevant for Sorabji)
Publishers
Radio and television stations
Record labels

Professional indexing software, which can only work from a final printed document, had to be excluded in order to allow the index to be automatically generated and easily updated. As a result, the index does not fully follow traditional practices due to the limitations of the software used (Corel® *WordPerfect*), although some of these have been overcome by means of extensive custom macros. For example, the index is limited to two levels and does not use *see* references. All instances of Christopher Murray Grieve/Hugh MacDiarmid and Philip Heseltine/Peter Warlock are found under the first forms, which are their real names. The titles of works (both musical and literary) appear at the end of the second-level entries for an author. In the case of Sorabji's works, those that form series (such as concertos, sonatas, symphonies, toccatas) are listed in chronological order.

D

H

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S

Sorabji's Works and Writings

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About the Author

Marc-André Roberge received his B.A. in music history and literature from the School (now Faculty) of Music at Laval University (Québec) in 1979. He received his M.A. in musicology from McGill University (Montréal) in 1981 with a thesis on Ferruccio Busoni's Concerto for Piano, Orchestra, and Male Chorus, and his Ph.D. in musicology from the University of Toronto in 1988 with a dissertation on the transformation of the periodical *Die Musik* through three periods of German history in the first half of the twentieth century. From 1988 until his retirement in 2018, he was a professor of musicology at the Faculty of Music at Laval University.

In addition to music and musical life in German-speaking countries between 1850 and 1950 and opera, Roberge's research interests lie mainly in the field of virtuoso piano music by composer-pianists such as Alkan, Liszt, Busoni, Godowsky, Sorabji, etc. He has published articles and reviews in journals such as *American Music*, *BACH: Journal of the Riemenschneider Institute*, *Canadian University Music Review*, *Criticus musicus*, *Intersections: Revue canadienne de musique*, *The Music Review*, *The Musical Quarterly*, *Nineteenth-Century Music Review*, *Notes: The Quarterly Journal of the Music Library Association*, *Research Chronicle*, *Revue de musicologie*, *Revue musicale OICRM*, and *Tempo*. He is the author of the widely used reference book *Ferruccio Busoni: A Bio-Bibliography* (Greenwood Press, 1991).

Roberge wrote the articles on Godowsky and Sorabji for the second edition of the German encyclopedia *Die Musik in Geschichte und Gegenwart* and updated Paul Rapoport's article on Sorabji for the *Grove Music Online*. Between 1992 and 2013 he prepared critical editions of twenty-seven works by Sorabji and two bibliographical compilations, all of which are available from the Sorabji Archive.

As the French editor of the *Canadian University Music Review/Revue de musique des universités canadiennes* (now *Intersections: Canadian Journal of Music/Revue canadienne de musique*) for nine years, Roberge used his editorial expertise to prepare the Guide des difficultés de rédaction en musique (GDRM) (https://roberge.mus.ulaval.ca/gdrm/), a website (founded in 2002) devoted to the specific problems of writing about music in French, for which he received an award from the Office québécois de la langue française (OQLF) in 2003. In 2010 he launched the Sorabji Resource Site (https://roberge.mus.ulaval.ca/srs/), an extensive documentary website that complements this book.