

**Individual and Institution in the Musical
Life of Leeds 1900-1914**

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Abstract

In the years immediately before the First World War the city of Leeds enjoyed a rich and diverse musical life which has remained largely unchronicled thanks in part to an emphasis on London in much English musical history. This thesis attempts to redress the balance by charting the development of local institutions in the fields of choral, orchestral and chamber music which were created by the industry and dedication of a small number of outstanding individuals, now long-forgotten, whose efforts in the cause of Leeds music are placed within their social and historical context.

The influence of the Leeds Triennial Festival, that cornerstone of the city's musical reputation in the latter half of the nineteenth century, is considered along with the work of the two leading choral societies which dominated so much of Leeds musical life at the time. Pioneering enterprises, such as those to establish a permanent municipal orchestra in the city and a regular series for the performance of contemporary chamber music, are examined in detail against the backdrop of a society undergoing fundamental change. It is often assumed that the First World War brought a violent and sudden end to what might be viewed as a golden age in English music. This thesis will show how the forces of change were already being experienced within local musical institutions which were attempting to come to terms with them even as the apocalyptic events of 1914 were approaching.

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Finally, I must record the unfailing support of my wife Elizabeth, who first suggested the project.

Abbreviations

LCU	Leeds Choral Union
<i>LE</i>	<i>Leeds Express</i>
<i>LI</i>	<i>Leeds Intelligencer</i>
<i>LM</i>	<i>Leeds Mercury</i>
LNCS	Leeds New Choral Society
LPS	Leeds Philharmonic Society
LSSO	Leeds Symphony Society Orchestra
<i>LYM</i>	<i>Leeds & Yorkshire Mercury</i>
<i>MT</i>	<i>Musical Times</i>
<i>YDO</i>	<i>Yorkshire Daily Observer</i>
<i>YEN</i>	<i>Yorkshire Evening News</i>
<i>YEP</i>	<i>Yorkshire Evening Post</i>
<i>YG</i>	<i>Yorkshire Gazette</i>
<i>YO</i>	<i>Yorkshire Observer</i>
<i>YP</i>	<i>Yorkshire Post</i>
<i>YWP</i>	<i>Yorkshire Weekly Post</i>

Map of central Leeds

The map of central Leeds reproduced overleaf is based on a copy from the author's collection of the map published by McCorquodale and Co Ltd in 1890.¹ While this date is slightly before the period under study the McCorquodale map is more suitable in terms of the balance between coverage and detail than later publications.

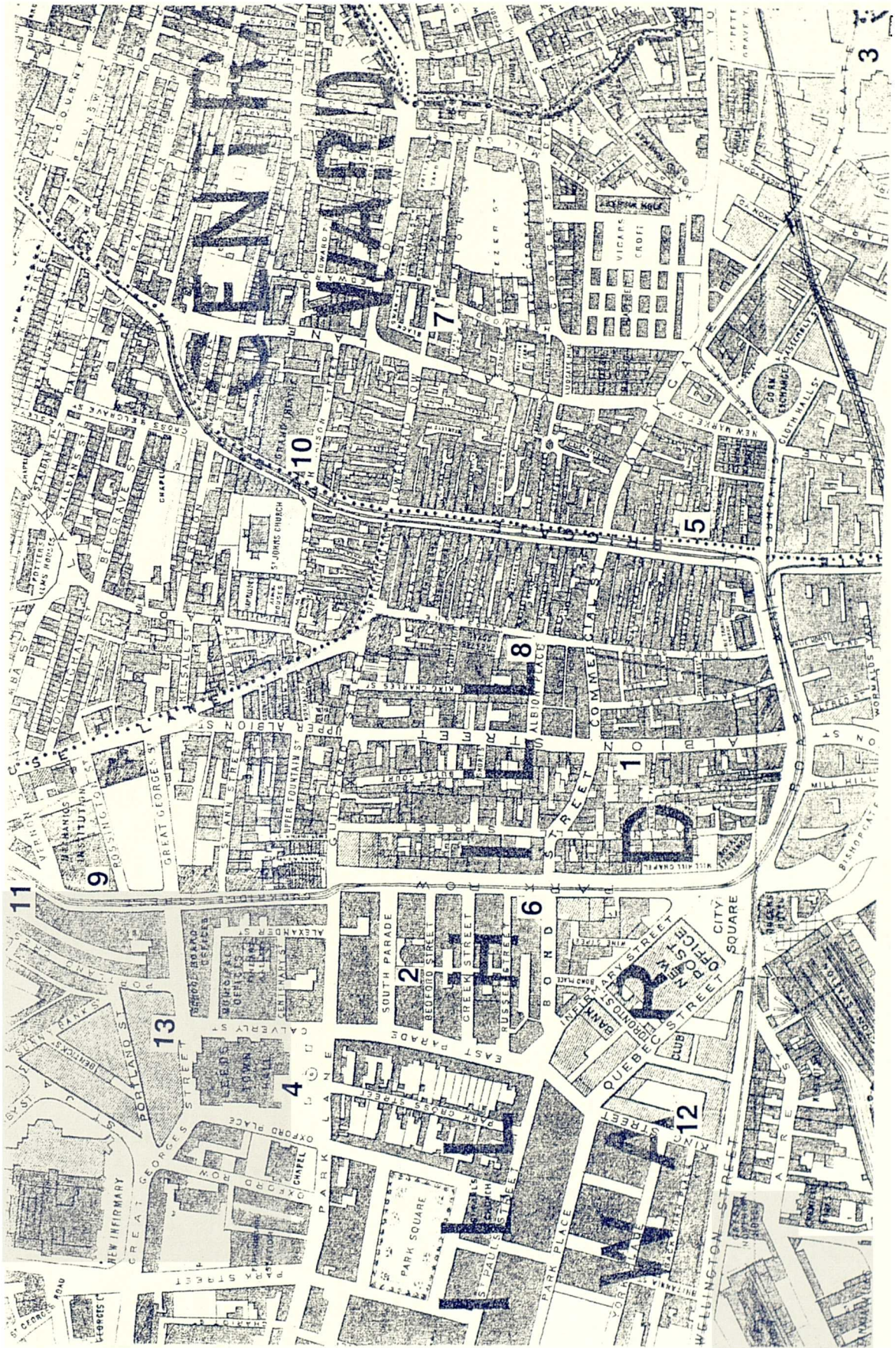
Key

The musical venues identified are:

- | | |
|----|--------------------------------------|
| 1 | Music Hall, Albion Street |
| 2 | Walton's Music Saloon, South Parade |
| 3 | Leeds Parish Church |
| 4 | Leeds Town Hall |
| 5 | Bull and Mouth Hotel, Briggate |
| 6 | Philosophical Hall, Park Row |
| 7 | Lees Hall, off Vicar Lane |
| 8 | Leeds Church Institute, Albion Place |
| 9 | Albert Hall, Cookridge Street |
| 10 | Grand Theatre, New Briggate |
| 11 | Coliseum, Cookridge Street |
| 12 | Hotel Metropole, King Street |
| 13 | Powolny's Rooms, Great George Street |

¹ *Map of the Borough of Leeds corrected from Ordnance and Leeds Corporation Surveys up to date.* (Leeds 1890). Further information may be found in the comprehensive study by Bonser and Nichols of Leeds cartography. See Kenneth J Bonser and Harold Nichols, *Printed Maps and Plans of Leeds, 1711-1900* (Leeds 1960), 101-102.

Map of central Leeds



Introduction

...for the growing good of the world is partly dependent on unhistoric acts; and that things are not so ill with you and me as they might have been, is half owing to the number who lived faithfully a hidden life, and rest in unvisited tombs.

George Eliot, *Middlemarch* (1874), *Finale*.

Provincial music has perhaps not always been well served by its chroniclers. In a review of his book on music in Birmingham, J Sutcliffe Smith was taken to task for his lack of judgement in glorifying ‘a collection of local nonentities’.¹ Clearly, a sense of proportion is a vital prerequisite for the local music historian, who must resist the temptation to ‘depict his own place and people in colours too bright to be true or too dark to be just’.² The pages which follow may contain unfamiliar or long-forgotten names, but the case for their inclusion rests neither on mere antiquarian interest nor on parochial partisanship.

At the heart of this thesis lies an examination of the achievements of a number of admittedly obscure but nonetheless remarkable individuals who helped shape the musical life of Leeds in the years leading up to the First World War. The plea for a musical equivalent of Pevsner has much to commend it, for, as with fine old buildings, the musical institutions of the past bear testimony to the vision and industry of their creators, and contribute to a broader understanding of our cultural heritage.³ In the case of Leeds, these musical institutions gave rise to a sense of tradition and continuity which was still alive in the 1960s, when the author performed with a school orchestra on the platform of the Town Hall and made the weekly pilgrimage, ‘cello on shoulder, to the College of Music. Since then the Leeds Triennial Festival may have been lost, but enterprises such as the Leeds International Piano Competition have ensured that the city’s wider musical reputation has been maintained. A century on from the period under consideration here, the Victoria Hall of the Town Hall, regularly visited by leading orchestras, and the Grand Theatre, home of Opera

¹ John Stone, review of *The Story of Music in Birmingham*, by J Sutcliffe Smith, *MT*, 86 (December 1945): 372.

² Frank Howes, preface to *Music in the Five Towns 1840-1914*, by Reginald Nettel (Oxford 1944).

³ E D Mackerness, ‘The Study of Local Musical History’, *Journal of the British Music Society*, 3 (1981): 26.

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North since 1978, have both been magnificently restored to their original splendour, and remain important venues for musical performance.

In common with several major provincial centres, Leeds still awaits a comprehensive study of its musical history, but it is hoped that the following chapters will make some contribution towards our understanding of what Reginald Nettel termed 'the history of a commercial society in the throes of an artistic urge'.⁴ While by no means unique, Leeds offers an instructive example of this phenomenon in that, unlike Bradford and Manchester with their wealthy German merchant communities, cultural aspirations were drawn largely from within rather than being grafted on.⁵ The impulse to prove that Leeds was a place not merely devoted to the acquisition of material wealth was both powerful and persistent, and informed many of its musical institutions. Comparison with other towns, especially those in the north, can be illuminating, and it is a cause for regret that the literature of provincial music-making is so patchy. The superficiality of Sutcliffe Smith's book on Birmingham is matched by that of Taylor on Liverpool⁶: Mackerness's study of music in Sheffield is more thorough in its coverage but suffers from a total lack of scholarly apparatus.⁷ Manchester is far better served by Michael Kennedy's authoritative studies of two of its most famed musical institutions: the Hallé Orchestra and the Royal Manchester School of Music.⁸ While broader in scope, the work of Cyril Ehrlich in placing music within its social and economic context has not only provided useful insights into music in the provinces but has also underlined the importance of detailed evidence gathering.⁹ More recently, Stradling and

⁴ Nettel, *Music in the Five Towns*, 108.

⁵ Despite Leeds having the second largest Jewish community outside London by the turn of the century (about 15,000 people), a result of large-scale immigration from Russia and Poland from 1881 onwards, there is little evidence of any significant impact on the cultural life of the city during this period, either collectively or through the emergence of notable individuals. For a study of Jewish immigration into Leeds see Joseph Buckman, *Immigrants and the Class Struggle. The Jewish Immigrant in Leeds, 1880-1914*. (Manchester 1983).

⁶ Stainton de B Taylor, *Two Centuries of Music in Liverpool* (Liverpool [1976]).

⁷ E B Mackerness, *Somewhere Further North. A History of Music in Sheffield* (Sheffield 1974).

⁸ Michael Kennedy, *The Hallé Tradition. A Century of Music* (Manchester 1960) and *The History of the Royal Manchester College of Music 1893-1972* (Manchester 1971).

⁹ Cyril Ehrlich, *The Music Profession in Britain since the Eighteenth Century. A Social History* (Oxford 1985).

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Hughes, although focusing primarily on the world of South Kensington, have explored the tensions between London and the provinces, and demonstrated the value of examining the political context within which musical institutions are created.¹⁰

The present study encompasses the years 1900 to 1914 – a period which might conveniently, if not strictly accurately, be termed the Edwardian era. While the death of Queen Victoria was not to occur until January 1901, it might be argued that the last rites of the Victorian age were administered somewhat earlier: perhaps on the occasion of the Diamond Jubilee celebrations of 1897, or more probably in October 1899, when the Boers invaded Natal, marking the start of a conflict which was to undermine old certainties and usher in a period of social and political upheaval the like of which had not been experienced since the 1830s and 40s. This appears to be the perception of many people, including that of Novello's reader A J Jaeger (1860-1909), who in his 1903 analysis of Elgar's *The Apostles* wrote of 'these days of unprecedented stress and complexity'.¹¹ In a diary entry written as 1901 drew to a close, the news editor of the *Daily Mail*, Ralph D Blumenfeld (1864-1948), enumerated some of the perceived forces for change within society and gave expression to the unease which they engendered at the time:

Queen Victoria's death alone will ever mark 1901 in the story of the nation. With her departed, perhaps, the most glorious era of English history. The end of the Boer War, which was so confidently assumed with the fall of Pretoria, is not yet, and De Wet keeps a great army always on the alert. Lord Kitchener does not expect it to be over for many months. Trade has been only fair. We are on the eve of great electrification movements. The automobile has come to stay, and there are even some people who predict that in another generation our traffic will be horseless, and that the horse will disappear like the great auk. Women are coming more and more in competition with men in business, and even well-to-do girls are devoting themselves to callings other than nursing.¹²

¹⁰ Robert Stradling and Meirion Hughes, *The English Musical Renaissance 1860-1940: Construction and deconstruction* (London & New York 1993).

¹¹ Quoted in Michael Kennedy, *A Portrait of Elgar* (Second edition, London 1982), 168.

¹² Diary entry for 31st December 1901 in R D Blumenfeld, *R.D.B's Diary 1887-1914* (London 1930), 191-192.

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Despite testimony such as this, the myth of an Edwardian Golden Age has proved both potent and persistent.¹³ Subsequent generations have invented an idealized England which would probably have been barely recognizable to most Edwardians, save perhaps those from the uppermost echelons of society.¹⁴ The pioneering studies by social reformers, such as Seebohm Rowntree (1871-1954), of the appalling living conditions among the growing numbers of urban poor furnish ample contemporary evidence of a world far removed from country house parties and cricket on the village green.¹⁵ Poverty, unemployment, the growing militancy of the trade union and suffragist movements, Irish Home Rule, and the ever-present threat posed by German militarism, all produced fissures in the façade of a society built on over half a century of industrial and imperial might.

Technological no less than social and political change threatened the Edwardian *status quo*. New developments in naval architecture represented a challenge to the hitherto unquestioned supremacy of the Royal Navy, and hence to Britain's position as a world power¹⁶, while a more immediately discernible threat to the English way of life was perceived by some in the shape of the motor car and aeroplane, as we may see from this passage taken from *Vanishing England* of 1910:

Now the wayside inns wake up again with the bellow of the motor-car, which like a hideous monster rushes through the old-world villages, startling and killing old slow-footed rustics and scampering children, dogs and hens, and clouds of dust strive in very mercy to hide the view of the terrible rushing demon. In a few years' time the air will be conquered, and aeroplanes, balloons, flying-machines and air-ships, will drop down upon us from the skies and add a new terror to life.¹⁷

¹³ According to Asa Briggs, 'The golden summer of 1911, with its sun-shades, straw hats, and record temperatures, has cast its spell on historians'. Briggs, 'The Political Scene' in *Edwardian England 1901-1914*, ed. Simon Nowell-Smith, (Oxford 1966), 47.

¹⁴ See J B Priestley, *The Edwardians* (London 1970), 55-71.

¹⁵ B Seebohm Rowntree, *Poverty: A Study of Town Life* (London 1901). Rowntree wrote in the conclusion to his study, 'That in this land of abounding wealth, during a time of perhaps unexampled prosperity, probably more than one-fourth of the population are living in poverty, is a fact which may well cause great searchings of heart'. (p.304).

¹⁶ See Arthur J Marder, *The Anatomy of British Sea Power* (London 1964), ch.26 & 27.

¹⁷ P H Ditchfield and Fred Roe, *Vanishing England* (London 1910, repr. 1994), 2.

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Nostalgia for the traditions and landscape of a lost rural England, as expressed for example in the poetry of A E Housman and, to a lesser extent, Thomas Hardy, was echoed both in the music of the so-called pastoral school of English composers and in that of the leading composer of the pre-war years, with whom the Edwardian age has later been so strongly identified, Edward Elgar. In his survey of the period J B Priestley succinctly captured the nature of this association:

Elgar is essentially Edwardian, not because of his pomps and circumstances and his increasing enjoyment...of the society of important personages and a fine style of living; but because there is in him and his music all the rich confusion of this age, the deepening doubt, the melancholy whispers from the unconscious, as well as all that hope and glory.¹⁸

Elgar's creative inspiration often led him back to an England of other days, as for example in the two works which received their first performances at Leeds Festivals: to the Malvern Hills of Roman times in the cantata *Caractacus* (1898) 'a kind of Elgarian fantasy-pastiche on the Englishness of English music',¹⁹ and to the court of Henry IV filtered through Shakespearean eyes in the symphonic study *Falstaff* (1913) 'the greatest association of English literature and music that has yet been made'.²⁰ Elgar's elevation to the status of unofficial English musical laureate arose at least in part from a further portent of the end of the Victorian age, namely the death in November 1900 at the age of 58 of Sir Arthur Sullivan.

According to *The Times*, Sullivan's death 'may be said without hyperbole to have plunged the whole of the Empire in gloom'.²¹ Sullivan had probably been the most celebrated musician of his day, and some have since viewed his passing as coincident with that of Victorian music itself.²² His long and distinguished association with the Leeds

¹⁸ Priestley, *The Edwardians*, 138.

¹⁹ Kennedy, *Portrait*, 74.

²⁰ John F Porte, *Elgar and His Music* (London 1933), 77.

²¹ *The Times*, 23rd November 1900.

²² Ernest Walker considered Sullivan to be 'beyond all question, the most widely popular English composer of the nineteenth century'. However, his judgement of some of Sullivan's output was severe, describing 'The Lost Chord' as 'disgraceful rubbish' and referring to the 'abysmally cheap sentimentality' of the opening theme of the overture *In Memoriam*. See Walker, *A History of Music in England* (London 1924), 292-293. Lewis Foreman believes that Sullivan's death 'symbolises for us the end of a musical age

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Triennial Festival, which dated back to 1880, had ended less than a year earlier under somewhat unhappy circumstances, a fact which should not be allowed to obscure the high regard in which he was held.²³ Sullivan had done much to enhance the Festival's reputation during his tenure of office, and indeed had been accorded one of the most enthusiastic ovations ever witnessed at a Leeds Festival after conducting the first performance of *The Golden Legend* on 15th October 1886.²⁴

Sullivan was succeeded as Festival Conductor by Charles Villiers Stanford (1852-1924). Then in his late forties, Stanford already had some connection with the city through his conductorship of the Leeds Philharmonic Society, which he had assumed in June 1897. The development of the Festival under his direction, and his sometimes difficult relationship with members of the committee, notably the highly influential Honorary Secretary of the Festival, Fred R Spark, will be discussed in Chapter 2. A true exemplar of the Victorian self-made man, who would not have been out of place in a Dickens novel, Spark figures prominently in a number of Leeds musical enterprises, but most notably in the affairs of the Festival, with which he had been associated in one capacity or another since 1858. The importance of the Festival in establishing and maintaining the reputation of Leeds as a musical centre is incontestable, yet contemporary criticism of the provincial festival as an institution was considerable: from the very public strictures of critics such as George Bernard Shaw and Ernest Newman, to the private utterances of insiders such as A J Jaeger and Stanford. The triennial arrangement, it was argued, led to a week-long orgy of music-making by imported performers which effectively stifled any meaningful local musical development during each interregnum. This and other criticisms will be examined in some detail.

For many years much of the fame of Leeds rested on the quality of its chorus, of which the music critic of *The Times*, J A Fuller-Maitland, wrote in 1898:

in Britain'. See his *From Parry to Britten. British Music in Letters 1900-1945* (London 1987), 1.

²³ In 1899 concern over Sullivan's health and his failure to produce a new work for Leeds led the committee to seek his resignation as festival conductor. Sullivan ultimately did resign, but refused to cite ill-health as the reason. For a full account see Arthur Jacobs, *Arthur Sullivan, A Victorian Musician* (Oxford 1984), 389-390.

²⁴ Herbert Sullivan and Newman Flower, *Sir Arthur Sullivan* (London 1927), 162.

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The Leeds choir has long held a position of supremacy in the musical world, for no other chorus in England – and certainly none abroad – possesses, as the northern singers do, the secret of combining overwhelming power with purity, not only of intonation, but also of style.²⁵

During the nineteenth century, fuelled by Nonconformism, the adoption of Tonic Sol-Fa, and the increased availability of cheap vocal scores, the practice of choral music was widespread in Leeds and the West Riding, as evidenced by the number of choral societies established from the 1850s onwards.²⁶ A large pool of local talent therefore existed from which festival choruses could readily be drawn. Fierce rivalries existed, not only between towns, but within towns themselves. It was what can only be described as the feud between the Leeds Choral Society and the Leeds Madrigal and Motet Society, or perhaps more properly their respective conductors, Robert Burton and William Spark, which led to the abandonment of the proposed 1861 Festival, and to the failure of the town to promote another until 1874.²⁷ Accounts of such in-fighting make sorry reading today, highlighting as they do some of the less admirable personal qualities of the protagonists. However, they do give us some insight into the seriousness with which choral singing was undertaken and, on the more positive side, it seems probable that an element of local competition tended to drive up standards.

An additional centre of choral excellence had existed in Leeds since the mid-nineteenth century. Under the expert guidance of the irascible but inspirational Robert Senior Burton, the choir of Leeds Parish Church was trained to a level of perfection which led the organist W T Best to describe it as ‘a body of singers unparalleled throughout the country’, adding

²⁵ *The Times*, 6th October 1898.

²⁶ David Russell, "The Popular Musical Societies of the Yorkshire Textile District, 1850-1914", D.Phil. thesis, University of York, 1979, 105. The following table shows Russell's estimate of the number of choral societies founded in the West Riding from 1850:

1850-1859	1860-1869	1870-1879	1880-1889	1890-1899	1900-1909	1910-1914
9	10	11	36	67	36	7

²⁷ Fred R Spark and Joseph Bennett, *History of the Leeds Musical Festivals 1858-1889* (Leeds 1892), 39-56.

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that it was 'only at Leeds where the ideal of a truly efficient choral service is realised'.²⁸ This tradition was maintained by Burton's successors with the help of financial support from the wealthy mining engineer Henry Cawood Embleton. In 1895, drawing on his connections with the Parish Church and with the choral forces of the Leeds Festival, Embleton created the Leeds Choral Union, funding the entire enterprise from his own substantial personal fortune. With it he was able to indulge his passion both for Victorian church music and for the music of his friend Edward Elgar. A man of immense generosity yet also of great modesty, his achievements with the Choral Union and his tireless promotion of Elgar's music will be assessed in Chapter 3.

Unlike its older rival the Leeds Philharmonic Society, which had been founded in 1870, the Choral Union employed local instrumentalists when orchestral forces were required. Leeds did not lack first-class players, and indeed several were engaged to play at the Leeds Festival alongside the London professionals. It is therefore surprising that the city was never able to boast its own permanent orchestra, as Manchester could with the Hallé. After a series of false starts, a bold attempt was made in 1902 by the Borough Organist, Herbert A Fricker, who proposed an extension of the Town Hall organ recitals into an orchestral series with its own municipal orchestra. Once underway in 1903 the scheme aroused national interest and not a little admiration. The impact of the venture on the musical life of Leeds, and the complex reasons for its ultimate demise, will be considered in Chapter 4.

Another organist, Arthur Grimshaw, son of the painter Atkinson Grimshaw, was a key figure behind a very different form of musical institution, the Leeds Bohemian Chamber Concerts. Founded in late 1899, these concerts were intended to bring the finest classical and contemporary chamber music to Leeds audiences in a relaxed social milieu, where smoking and informal dress were encouraged. High ticket prices and the use of venues such as the newly-built and luxurious Hotel Metropole inevitably led to the concerts assuming something of an élitist character, in contrast to the more deliberately populist efforts of Samuel Midgley in Bradford²⁹, but the series enjoyed considerable success and survived well

²⁸ W T Best, letter to the *Leeds Mercury*, 6th March 1869, quoted in Donald Webster, *"Parish" Past and Present: 275 years of Leeds Parish Church Music* (Leeds 1988), 39.

²⁹ Midgley's Bradford Free Chamber Concerts, which began in 1911, are discussed in Chapter 5. See also Samuel Midgley, *My 70 Years' Musical Memories* (London 1934), 32-38.

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into the 1920s. Through the Bohemian concerts the chamber works of contemporary composers such as Debussy, Reger and Sibelius appeared before Yorkshire audiences, often for the first time.

This examination of the musical life of Edwardian Leeds will concentrate on the areas of choral, orchestral and chamber music.³⁰ A number of aspects of Leeds music will not be covered in detail, among them opera, music hall, brass bands, musical education and the music trade. In large measure this selective approach has been determined by the availability of primary source material. The surviving minute books of the Leeds Festival, together with the material accumulated over many years by Fred Spark, document the internal dynamics of that important musical enterprise in a striking way. Similarly, the letter books and annotated programmes of the Leeds Philharmonic Society reveal the inner workings of a major choral society, reflecting the values and perceptions of those who ran it. Orchestral music and, to a lesser extent, chamber music, are both well represented in the holdings of the Leeds Local History Library. In addition, the papers of the music critic Herbert Thompson, deposited in the Brotherton Library at the University of Leeds – diaries, reviews, and correspondence – yield a rich supplementary vein of information which often can fill in the gaps in other collections.

Another consideration has been the amount which a given area of musical activity tells us specifically about Leeds. In the field of opera, for example, the opening of the Grand Theatre in November 1878 created an immediate demand for opera in Leeds, which soon enjoyed regular visits from the Carl Rosa and D'Oyly Carte companies.³¹ These touring companies were by definition not local musical institutions and were thus common to many other towns and cities. One fact worthy of note, however, is that in 1911 Leeds was the venue for the first complete *Ring* cycle staged in the English provinces.³²

Finally, it has been my intention to focus on those institutions which underwent significant development or were actually created during the period 1900-1914. While brass

³⁰ For a summary of the development of the major Leeds institutions in their various, and occasionally confusing, incarnations, see Appendix 7.

³¹ For the history of the building of the Grand Theatre see Derek Linstrum, *West Yorkshire Architects and Architecture* (London 1978), 272-275.

³² Under the title 'Yorkshire Operatic Festival, Spring 1911' the Leeds Local History Library holds a file of newspaper reports on the *Ring* cycle. Shelfmark LQ 782.2 Y82.

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bands were undoubtedly active in Leeds during the Edwardian era, perhaps the town's most celebrated and successful body, the Leeds Forge Band, had ceased operations in 1892.³³ Moreover, as with the music halls, there seems little prospect of adding significantly to the sum of knowledge available from the existing secondary literature.³⁴

Despite these constraints, the musical institutions on which this thesis will focus reveal much about the dynamics of the society in which they came into being. Time and again during the pre-war years, and indeed afterwards, the question was posed in the Leeds press: is Leeds musical?³⁵ The frequency of the question suggests at least a degree of self-doubt, despite many confident assertions. Establishing precisely what the criteria are for judging whether or not a city is musical is itself no easy task: objective measurements such as the number of concerts given or of tickets sold reveal only part of the story. In the broadest terms the test must surely be to what extent music is woven into the fabric of society. Messrs Spark, Embleton, Fricker and Grimshaw were all weavers in this sense, and an assessment of their achievements will lead us to a more convincing if not necessarily definitive answer.

³³ J F Russell and J H Elliot, *The Brass Band Movement* (London 1936), 160-161.

³⁴ G J Mellor, in his book *The Northern Music Hall* (Newcastle 1970), provides an absorbing history of such institutions as the City Varieties, the Empire and Thornton's Varieties.

³⁵ See *YP* and *YEP*, 11th October 1912.

Chapter 1: 'Dull and Dirty Leeds' - Musical Life before 1900

Oh! Smoked city! Dull and dirty Leeds!
Anonymous poem, *London Magazine*,
November 1820

The transformation of a modest Yorkshire town celebrated chiefly for its cloth markets into one of the great powerhouses of the Victorian economy may without exaggeration be termed phenomenal. It is difficult now to imagine the compactness of the Leeds township of the late eighteenth century, when nearly half of the borough's 6,000 houses were concentrated within an area of less than four square miles, and the remainder spread across the forty square miles of the rural out-townships such as Armley, Bramley, Holbeck and Hunslet.¹ The pace of growth from humble beginnings is quite remarkable: in 1775 the population of the borough of Leeds stood at 30,609, by 1811 this figure had doubled, by 1831 it had doubled again, and by 1871 had reached well over a quarter of a million.² In 1911, according to the last census conducted before the First World War, the population of Leeds totalled 445,550.

The contrast between the town at the opening of the nineteenth century and the industrial giant at its close transcended mere numbers of people or houses: in 1883 the editor of the *Leeds Mercury*, Thomas Wemyss Reid (1842-1905), characterized turn of the century Leeds thus:

...Leeds was at that time distinguished by a distinct smack of rusticity in its life and in the characteristics of the community who dwelt there. They were townspeople, it is true; but they had such close and constant intercourse with those manufacturers from the West Riding villages who thronged their streets and filled their Cloth Halls twice a week, that their sympathies were almost equally divided between town and country. And so, though not so 'quick' as the people of neighbouring Bradford, they possessed in an unwonted degree, for an urban community, some of those solid and wholesome characteristics that are as a rule peculiar to village life.³

¹ Maurice Beresford, 'The face of Leeds, 1780-1914' in Derek Fraser (ed.), *A History of Modern Leeds* (Manchester 1980), 72.

² C J Morgan, 'Demographic change, 1771-1911' in Fraser, *Modern Leeds*, 48.

³ T Wemyss Reid, *A Memoir of John Deakin Heaton, M.D. of Leeds* (London 1883), 12.

Chapter 1: 'Dull and Dirty Leeds' - Musical Life before 1900

Shrewd and somewhat cautious in business dealings, sober and regular in their religious observance, it might seem that the majority of Leeds people lived a quietly dull existence largely untroubled by matters literary, artistic or musical. This is the implication from a contemporary guide to the town, whose author noted that as for the arts and sciences there was 'nothing that is particularly interesting to communicate'

for excepting those arts which have an immediate reference to commerce and manufacture, the town of Leeds has not been eminently disposed to foster the productions of art and genius, or to aid and encourage the researches of the philosopher. No societies of a literary or philosophical nature exist, to afford the means of concentrating and bringing before the public eye the discoveries or improvements made by individuals, and for the rational employment of the leisure of young men, who might be inspired by such an institution with a taste for literary refinement, instead of cultivating vicious habits.⁴

The cause of culture in Leeds was not entirely lost, however, and in this same guide reference was made to the 'exceedingly commodious' concert hall which it transpired would serve as the town's principal musical venue for over half a century until the building of Leeds Town Hall.⁵

The Music Hall, Albion Street

It was in July 1792 that the *Leeds Intelligencer* had 'the pleasure to inform our readers that the first stone of the intended Concert Hall was laid on Monday last, in the street now making from Boar Lane to Upperhead Row (and which we understand is to be called Albion Street)'.⁶ The spacious, two-storey building, known as The Music Hall, was completed in January 1794, and opened with concerts on the 29th and 31st of that month for which the cellist J A Dahmen (1766-1794) and his brother, both leading instrumentalists based in London, were specially engaged. Announcing the events in the local press, the management of the concerts assured patrons that 'proper Care will be taken that the Room

⁴ John Ryley, *The Leeds Guide* (Leeds 1806), 131. Ryley (1747-1815) was master of the Leeds Charity School and a mathematician of note. As editor of the *Leeds Correspondent* it might be assumed that he was reasonably well-informed about local cultural matters. See Ann Heap and Peter Brears, *Leeds Describ'd* (Derby 1993), 35.

⁵ *Ibid.*, 61.

⁶ *LI*, 7th July 1792.

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is well aired' and 'that to make the Road easy & commodious Torches will be placed at proper distances to light the carriages from Boar Lane'.⁷ Sadly, no reports of the concerts were carried in the Leeds newspapers.

However, the private investors of late eighteenth-century Leeds were not yet ready to back a building whose sole function was to provide a venue for artistic enterprises, and the ground floor of the new Music Hall was given over to clothiers who were otherwise excluded from the other Leeds cloth halls on the grounds that they had not served the customary seven year apprenticeship. The new building also came to be used for a variety of other purposes, including political meetings, and soon became known locally as "Tom Paine's Hall".⁸

In his memoirs George Haddock has left us with this description of the Music Hall in the 1830s, which was by then probably little changed from the time of its original construction:

The building itself was unpretentious in the way of architecture, the entrance being in Albion Street. This opened into a moderately-sized vestibule, with a flight of broad stone steps on either side leading to the concert-room entrances. The hall itself, simple of decoration, was furnished with rows of seats, with a fixed platform of two or three tiers at one end and a small gallery at the other. From the roof, slightly arched, hung a number of chandeliers suspended by long chains, each chandelier containing 20 or 30 wax candles, by which means the hall was lighted. The body of the hall would seat about 700 or 800, and the gallery possibly 150 more. A very comfortable artists' room and a tuning room for the orchestra had an entrance at the side of the building.⁹

Pious orgies: early Leeds Festivals

The great series of Leeds Musical Festivals which came to rival and indeed surpass the Birmingham and Three Choirs Festivals did not begin until 1858. Nevertheless there are examples to be found in the late eighteenth century of early festivals based around the

⁷ Emily Hargrave, 'Musical Leeds in the Eighteenth Century', *Publications of the Thoresby Society*, 28 (1928), 349.

⁸ Percy Robinson, *Leeds: Old and New* (Leeds 1926), 67; Herbert Heaton, 'The Leeds White Cloth Hall', *Publications of the Thoresby Society*, Miscellanea, 22 (1915), 158-159.

⁹ George Haddock, *Some Early Musical Recollections* (London 1906), 37-38.

performance of Handel oratorios in aid of local charities. Though oratorios had been given in Leeds for the benefit of charity as early as 1769, the first event to be styled a "festival" took place over three days at Trinity Church on Boar Lane in November 1784.¹⁰ The first morning, on 24th November, featured a selection of sacred music by Handel which included the *Dettingen Te Deum*; the second morning saw a performance of *Samson*, and the third, *Messiah*. On the first evening *Acis and Galatea* was performed at the Theatre Royal.

In October 1790 another Handel Festival took place in Holy Trinity Church, Boar Lane, again over a three-day period. The event was organised by Samuel Harrison (1760-1812) and John Ashley (d.1805), the managers of the Lenten 'Oratorios' at the Theatre Royal, Drury Lane, London, and was on a far more lavish scale than anything which had gone before. A complete band, led by Wilhelm Cramer (1745-1799), with a full chorus, was engaged and the 'double drums', used in the 1784 Handel Commemoration, were brought from Westminster Abbey.¹¹

The account books of Leeds Infirmary reveal that during the early years of the nineteenth century it derived generous funding from musical events held in the town. In 1805, for example, the sum of £151/18/6 was forthcoming from benefit concerts, while in 1809 a single oratorio performance raised £66/2/0.¹² Until around 1820 the York-born musician John White (1779-1831) organized and directed the majority of such events. Hugely influential at the time, White came to Leeds shortly after his marriage in 1803, establishing himself as a music teacher and taking up residence at 5 Park Square. In 1807 he was appointed organist at nearby St Paul's, a highly select place of worship seating over 1,000 in which all the pews were reserved at an annual rent of sixteen shillings each.¹³ An accomplished instrumentalist, equally skilled on the piano, organ, violin or cello, White was much in demand as conductor or leader of the band at events throughout Yorkshire and enjoyed wide patronage, not least through his long-standing connection with the Lascelles

¹⁰ Programme book, *Festival of Music at Leeds, November, 1784*. Leeds Local History Library.

¹¹ Hargrave, 'Musical Leeds', 344-345. For a detailed account of the activities of John Ashley see Brian W Pritchard, 'The Provincial Festivals of the Ashley Family', *Galpin Society Journal*, 22 (March 1969), 58-77.

¹² F R Spark and J Bennett, *History of the Leeds Musical Festivals* (Leeds 1892), 379.

¹³ M W Beresford, 'East End, West End: The Face of Leeds during Urbanisation 1684-1842', *Publications of the Thoresby Society*, 60 & 61 (1988), 156.

family at Harewood House, whose private musical director he had been since the age of fifteen.¹⁴ At the Yorkshire Musical Festival of 1823, held in York, White was an assistant conductor, engaging and superintending the vast chorus, as well as playing principal second violin.¹⁵ From this highly successful York gathering the Leeds General Infirmary received the considerable sum of £1,800, representing a quarter of the profits.¹⁶

These were times of growing prosperity in Leeds, when substantial fortunes could be made, such as that of the textile manufacturer William Hirst (1777-1858) who, within fifteen years of his arrival in the town in 1810, had amassed £80,000.¹⁷ With a rapidly growing population and a dramatic expansion of its industry and commerce, the face of Leeds was changing, thanks to ambitious building programmes financed by private enterprise. At the close of 1824 the *Leeds Intelligencer* recorded with evident satisfaction:

There is perhaps hardly a town in England in which the passion for improvement is so strong as it is in Leeds. Scarcely a week elapses that we have not the pleasure to announce some project for improving and adorning the town...It is a rather curious coincidence that we have now erected or in contemplation three churches, three dissenting meeting houses, three markets, three bridges, and streets innumerable.¹⁸

Three famous visitors

Along with other provincial towns of growing importance during the nineteenth century, Leeds figured frequently on the itineraries of celebrated European musicians touring the country. Among the earliest of such visitors was Paganini (1782-1840) who, in the course of a punishing schedule of concerts, made two appearances at the Music Hall, Albion Street on 17th and 18th January 1832.¹⁹ At the height of his fame, or perhaps rather

¹⁴ Sainsbury and Co., *A Dictionary of Musicians* (London 1824), II:537-538.

¹⁵ David Griffiths, *A Musical Place of the First Quality* (York [1994]), 89.

¹⁶ Spark and Bennett, *History*, 379.

¹⁷ Arnold N Shimmin, 'The Twenty-Seven Industries of Leeds' in *Leeds and its History* (Leeds 1926), 51.

¹⁸ *LI*, 2nd December 1824.

¹⁹ See Frederick Dawson, 'Paganini in Leeds 1832', *Publications of the Thoresby Society*, 33 (1935), 447-458.

notoriety, Paganini's presence in Leeds gave rise to 'the most respectable and numerous audience which has graced our Music Hall for some years past'.²⁰ With tickets at ten shillings for the saloon and seven shillings for the gallery, this was certainly an event for the more affluent citizens of the town. It seems likely that their numbers were not sufficient to fill the Music Hall twice, for on the second night the auditorium was barely half full, despite the price of admission to the saloon having been reduced to seven shillings.²¹ The concerts were promoted by Messrs Sykes & Sons, the Leeds music sellers, who donated the sum of £50 to the Leeds poor fund, to which Paganini himself generously added a further twenty guineas.²²

During the afternoon of 10th December 1840 a party arrived by coach from Wakefield at Henry Scarbrough's Hotel in Bishopgate Street, a favoured haunt of musicians visiting Leeds and only a short walk from the Music Hall.²³ Among their number was Franz Liszt (1811-1886), who was engaged on a ten-week tour of the British Isles organized by music-seller, composer and impresario Louis Henry Lavenu (1818-1859). The *Leeds Mercury's* correspondent, reporting on that evening's concert the following Saturday, judged it 'beyond all doubt one of the most remarkable and interesting that we ever attended in this town'.²⁴ Liszt's *Guillaume Tell* was encored, and back at the hotel the party celebrated with egg flips made, alas, 'with *musty* eggs'.²⁵ Inevitably, comparisons were made with the other great piano virtuoso of the day, Sigismund Thalberg (1812-1871), and the conclusion may perhaps surprise the reader of today:

As a composer, Thalberg undoubtedly stands higher; his compositions are truly classical: but, as a performer, we prefer Liszt, and he is, in our opinion, the greatest piano-forte player we ever had the happiness to hear.²⁶

²⁰ *LM*, 21st January 1832.

²¹ *LI*, 19th January 1832.

²² *Ibid.*

²³ Jack Hallas, 'Franz Liszt in Leeds', *The Leeds Library, Occasional Publication No.2* (Leeds 1992); Haddock, *Recollections*, 57.

²⁴ *LM*, 12th December 1840.

²⁵ David Ian Allsobrook, *Liszt: My Travelling Circus Life* (London 1991), 121.

²⁶ *Ibid.*

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After this tour, which proved a financial disaster for him, it would be forty-five years before Liszt would return to England, and, save for an overnight stay in the town on 28th January 1841 on the final leg of his journey, the great man was never again seen in Leeds.

One artist who did come back to Leeds was the celebrated Swedish soprano Jenny Lind (1820-1887). Her first appearance took place at the Music Hall on 4th December 1848 under the auspices of the music dealers Messrs J & J Hopkinson of Commercial Street. The concert was given for the benefit of the members of the band who had accompanied Miss Lind during her provincial tour.²⁷ The conductor was Michael William Balfe (1808-1870), then enjoying considerable acclaim as the composer of the enormously successful opera *The Bohemian Girl* (1843). The receipts of £700 could have been far more had the seating capacity of the Music Hall been greater, a serious drawback to its continued use as a musical venue. Lind returned to the Music Hall on 28th April 1856, now as Madame Goldschmidt, assisted by her husband at the piano, the violinist Heinrich Ernst, the cellist Alfred Piatti, and the singer W H Weiss.²⁸ Her final appearances in Leeds took place in the Town Hall on 31st October 1861, where she sang in a performance of Haydn's *Creation*, and the next day when a miscellaneous concert was given.

However much audiences might gasp at Paganini's violinistic pyrotechnics, or marvel at the prodigious piano technique of Franz Liszt, such visits were essentially curiosities - exotic dishes which briefly spiced the plain musical fare of early and mid-nineteenth century Leeds. Their contribution to the town's musical culture must be seen as negligible, compared to that of other musicians of the period whose association with the town was far longer. Of these, perhaps the most notable was S S Wesley.

Samuel Sebastian Wesley

In January 1837 the Rev. Richard Fawcett, the Vicar of Leeds, died.²⁹ It had been Fawcett who in 1818 had introduced to Leeds Parish Church a professional choir robed with surplices, the first such choir to be seen in an English parish church since the time of the

²⁷ Undated cutting, *Leeds Mercury Supplement*, Local Notes & Queries. Leeds Local History Library.

²⁸ Programme book, Mdme Jenny Goldschmidt's Evening Concert, 28th April 1856. Leeds Local History Library.

²⁹ *LI*, 28th January 1837.

Reformation.³⁰ The post left vacant by Fawcett's death was a relatively prestigious one, carrying with it significant patronage and influence as well as an income of £1,257 per year. It was also something of a rarity, Leeds having had only four vicars since 1716. Seven candidates applied, among them the Rev. Charles Dodgson of Daresbury, the father of a boy of five also called Charles who later would become better known to the world as Lewis Carroll.³¹

In the event in March 1837 the trustees elected Walter Farquhar Hook (1798-1875) as the new vicar of Leeds. He came from Holy Trinity, Coventry, where his energy and qualities of leadership had transformed the parish in just nine years: Sunday evening service by gaslight attracted congregations of almost 2,000, the number of Sunday schools had increased tenfold; and a dispensary and a savings bank for the poor had been established.³² Hook himself was distinctly unmusical - he is reputed to have been unable to distinguish the "Old Hundredth" from the National Anthem - but he did recognize the value of music as part of Christian worship, and was determined to have the finest choir possible, with no expense spared.³³ He introduced daily choral services, a proud tradition maintained to this day, and secured for Leeds the services of the foremost church musician of the time, Samuel Sebastian Wesley (1810-1876).³⁴

On the advice of the Leeds ironmaster Martin Cawood (d.1867), an active amateur musician and an enthusiastic patron of the arts, Wesley had been engaged to open the organ, rebuilt by the brothers Greenwood, on 18th October 1841. The Church of St Peter itself had also just been rebuilt at the substantial cost of £30,000, financed entirely by local

³⁰ Joseph Sprittles, 'Links with Bygone Leeds', *Publications of the Thoresby Society*, 52 (1969), 1.

³¹ C J Stranks, *Dean Hook* (London 1954), 45.

³² H W Dalton, 'Walter Farquhar Hook, Vicar of Leeds: his Work for the Church and the Town, 1837-1848', *Publications of the Thoresby Society*, 63 (1988), 28.

³³ Simon Lindley, *Wonder, Love and Praise* (Leeds 1981), 19.

³⁴ In November 1841 Thomas Attwood Walmisley (1814-1856), professor of music at the University of Cambridge wrote in a testimonial to the Principal of the University of Edinburgh that ... 'Dr Wesley is the first among us, both for extraordinary talent and for unwearied diligence in improving that talent to the utmost. He is not only the finest organ-player that we have, but also a most accomplished musician'. Quoted in Paul Chappell, *Dr S S Wesley 1810-1876. Portrait of a Victorian Musician* (Great Wakering 1977), 43.

subscription.³⁵ Wesley and the prosperous supporters of Leeds Parish Church quickly established a cordial relationship:

He was so much impressed with the wealth of Leeds, and delighted to be asked by two rich merchants to select grand Broadwood pianofortes for them, that bearing in mind his disagreement with Dean Lowe at Exeter, he forthwith accepted from the vicar and churchwardens the offer of organist at £200 per annum, guaranteed for ten years.³⁶

In April 1842 William Spark (1823-1897), his articled pupil, arrived from Exeter to join Wesley. The town to which they had come was 'one huge mass of dingy-looking mills, warehouses, poorly built houses, badly paved streets, uninviting shops, and huge chimneys that poured forth their miles of black smoke, begriming and blackening all that came in its course'.³⁷ A greater contrast with the more rural charms of Wesley's previous homes in Hereford and Exeter is hard to imagine, and Spark tells us that both Wesley and his wife were 'eternally grumbling and craving to go somewhere else'.³⁸ A certain restlessness may be inferred from the fact that in seven and a half years of residence in the town the Wesleys lived at four different, albeit equally prestigious addresses.³⁹

Leeds had nevertheless much to offer Wesley: a generous salary, a fine new neo-gothic building, a well-trained choir required to perform at only one daily service, and a free hand in matters musical. In return, Wesley's inspired solo and service playing raised the level of musical performance to unprecedented heights which, together with Hook's celebrated preaching ensured that the new church was routinely filled to capacity.⁴⁰ Wesley also produced a number of outstanding compositions during his stay, the most significant of

³⁵ The new church was consecrated on 2nd September 1841. See Christopher Webster, 'R D Chantrell, Architect: His Life and Work in Leeds 1818-1847', *Publications of the Thoresby Society*, Second Series, 2 (1991), 120-142.

³⁶ William Spark, *Musical Reminiscences* (London 1892), 166.

³⁷ William Spark, *Musical Memories* (London 1888), 81-82.

³⁸ *Ibid.*, 82.

³⁹ Chappell, *Wesley*, 56. The Wesleys lived in Park Square, Albion Street, Grove Terrace and finally Hanover Square.

⁴⁰ William Spark recalled that 'His fame and talents were in the mouths of all Yorkshire musicians; they flocked in scores to hear his extempore fugues, etc., after the evening service - performances which were often of the grandest, most beautiful, and elaborate character'. *Musical Memories*, 89.

which, the *Service in E* (1844-1845), was commissioned by Martin Cawood who paid the composer the sum of 50 guineas for the copyright.⁴¹ This generous act of patronage was duly acknowledged by Wesley in a preface to the work:

The good intentions of Mr Cawood surely deserve notice, in times when an act of such *liberality is entirely without parallel*; and when it is remembered that Cathedral bodies rarely encourage (even by the purchasing of a few copies for the use of their Choirs) such undertakings.⁴²

In addition to his work at the Parish Church, Wesley conducted orchestral and choral concerts held in the Music Hall and the Mechanics' Institute, though the same success did not attend these undertakings, according to George Haddock, who as a young man played second violin under Wesley's direction:

Dr Wesley, although undoubtedly a genius as a musician and organist, was not by any means a good conductor. On practice-nights he appeared to suffer from nervous excitement and irritability; his occasional eccentricities in changing the tempo militated frequently against the perfect rendering of the music.⁴³

Wesley left Leeds in 1849 to take up the post of organist at Winchester Cathedral made vacant by the death of George Chard. His reasons for leaving are not entirely clear, but in a later letter he cited a preference for a more rural location and, rather unjustly, lack of support from Dr Hook, as two reasons for his disenchantment with his situation.⁴⁴ The *Leeds Intelligencer* summed up feelings in the town in the following terms:

We exceedingly regret his departure from Leeds; his loss will be much felt by those who have been accustomed, week after week, to hear his grand, solemn and sublime accompaniments to the psalms, services, and anthems. His wonderful extemporaneous music never degenerated into a mere showy, exhibitional style, too often adopted by organists of the present day...⁴⁵

⁴¹ *Dictionary of National Biography* (London 1903), 20:1232.

⁴² Quoted in Chappell, *Wesley*, 56.

⁴³ Haddock, *Recollections*, 24-25.

⁴⁴ Peter Horton, 'Samuel Sebastian Wesley at Leeds: A Victorian Church Musician reflects on his Craft', in Nicholas Temperley (ed.), *The Lost Chord. Essays on Victorian Music* (Bloomington & Indianapolis 1989), 100. See also William J Gatens, *Victorian Cathedral Music in Theory and Practice* (Cambridge 1986), 133.

⁴⁵ Quoted in Betty Matthews, *Samuel Sebastian Wesley 1810-1876* (Bournemouth 1976), 10.

Early chamber concerts

Among the Leeds artists who appeared at the Music Hall in 1832 with Paganini was Emanuel Walton, who along with two other singers provided the vocal items of the programme. A prominent local musician of the early decades of the century, Walton was not only a vocalist of some standing, blessed with a pure tenor voice,⁴⁶ but also a composer and organist.⁴⁷ In a directory of 1837 he was described as a 'music preceptor, & dealer in musical instruments'.⁴⁸ It was around this time that Walton's Music Saloon was built on South Parade just off Park Row, in the once fashionable West End of Leeds, by then rapidly becoming part of the commercial heart of the town. The building's concert room seated around 400 people and was intended principally for the performance of chamber music.⁴⁹ A letter to the editor of the *Leeds Intelligencer* signed "Musarum Custos" welcomed the establishment of the new musical venue:

After a long absence I returned almost a stranger to Leeds...I found, however, great improvement in the musical world. Mr Walton's concert room is a fine acquisition to the town...The saloon is "complete," and built on decidedly "sound" principles.⁵⁰

It was at Walton's Music Saloon that the first chamber concerts in Leeds took place, under the guiding hand of the cellist Thomas Haddock (1812-1893). As a young man Haddock had shown such promise that a number of Leeds musical amateurs, including the proprietor of the Music Hall, Charles Coupland, and the surgeon Dr William Hey, had paid for the fourteen-year-old to go to London to study with the greatest English cellist of the day, Robert Lindley (1776-1855).⁵¹ Haddock repaid their faith in him and returned to become a principal with several musical organizations in the north of England, enjoying a reputation as a fine performer of chamber music. Through his influence several celebrated

⁴⁶ Haddock, *Recollections*, 27.

⁴⁷ It was in his capacity as composer and organist that Walton merited his brief entry in Brown and Stratton's *British Musical Biography* of 1897, which listed a selection of his works which included psalms, hymn tunes and songs (p.431). He was organist at the Roman Catholic Chapel in Lady Lane.

⁴⁸ William White, *History, Gazetteer and Directory of the West Riding* (Sheffield 1837), 614.

⁴⁹ The building later housed the Mechanics' Institute before becoming the headquarters of the YMCA. It was finally demolished in 1904.

⁵⁰ *LI*, 21st January 1837.

⁵¹ *YWP*, 23rd September 1916.

performers visited Leeds to play at these concerts, among them the violinists Ole Bull, Joseph Rudersdorff, J D Loder and Madame Filipowicz.⁵² The quartets of Beethoven, Haydn and Mozart, previously heard only in private performances in the homes of the town's élite, were brought before the Leeds public for the first time.⁵³

Thomas Haddock left Leeds in 1844 to take up the post of principal cello of the Liverpool Philharmonic Society, but the pioneering work which he had begun was to be resumed some three or four years later by his younger brother George (1823-1907). George had received instruction from two of the best teachers in Leeds, R A Brown and Joseph Bywater, but in March 1846 his musical education was completely transformed when the Belgian virtuoso Henri Vieuxtemps (1820-1881) agreed to take him as a pupil.⁵⁴ George Haddock stayed in London throughout the 1846 musical season, attending three lessons a week with Vieuxtemps. No less important as a formative experience was the opportunity for the young violinist to sample the rich musical life of the capital, which included the Philharmonic Society Concerts at the Hanover Square Rooms, the Royal Italian Opera at Her Majesty's in the Haymarket, and John Ella's Musical Union chamber concerts at Willis's Rooms.⁵⁵

Upon his return George Haddock was soon persuaded to remove to Bradford where, notwithstanding a serious slump in the local economy and consequent sporadic outbreaks of civil disorder, he succeeded in introducing chamber concerts to the town and formed the Bradford String Quartet during a two-year residence. Back once more in his native Leeds, Haddock gave frequent concerts of chamber music, chiefly in the Music Hall, though one of the more noteworthy events, the first performance in Leeds of Mendelssohn's D minor

⁵² Haddock, *Recollections*, 27-33.

⁵³ There is some evidence of a keen interest in the cultivation of chamber music among the Leeds élite during the 1830s. According to George Haddock there were in his youth 'a dozen houses of our first and most influential families at which weekly quartet meetings were held, these being the principal recreations for the winter months'. Haddock, *Recollections*, 16.

⁵⁴ *Ibid.*, 57-60.

⁵⁵ There is in the *Illustrated London News* for 27th June 1846 a picture of Vieuxtemps' quartet party performing at the Musical Union. George Haddock can be seen seated on the second row next to Madame Vieuxtemps.

Piano Trio in April 1850, took place in the large room of the Stock Exchange on Albion Street.⁵⁶

Still seeking to develop his violin technique, George left for London once more in May 1850 to commence further studies, not with Vieuxtemps, who had left England to become solo violinist to the Czar of Russia in St Petersburg, but this time with Bernhard Molique (1802-1869), in his youth a pupil of Louis Spohr.⁵⁷ He undertook a second period of study with Molique the following year and while in the capital was engaged by the Sacred Harmonic Society to play at their concerts at the Exeter Hall for the season, taking the opportunity of attending as many other musical events as time would permit. Among these was a series of chamber recitals in the rooms on Mortimer Street given by Sterndale Bennett and the violinist Henry Blagrove. Inspired by their example, on his return Haddock, with the pianist Fred Hird, arranged a series of four concerts in Leeds to be given at the Music Hall. For the first concert, on 27th January 1852, Haddock persuaded his teacher to make his first visit to the town. Molique obliged with a performance of his own *Fantasia on Themes from "Norma"* and the first public performance given in Leeds of the famous Chaconne from Bach's Second Violin Partita.⁵⁸

A noble municipal palace

Two entirely unrelated events may be regarded as having provided the necessary stimulus for Leeds to contemplate the building of a Town Hall. The first took place in 1849 when Samuel Smith (1804-1873), a wealthy Bradford stuff dyer and finisher, called a public meeting to consider the erection of a 'great building' in Bradford. A joint stock company was formed, which quickly raised £16,000 in £10 shares.⁵⁹ The design by local architects Lockwood and Mawson was selected after a competition held in 1851. St George's Hall, an imposing structure designed to seat in excess of 3,000 people, was finally completed on 27th August 1853 at a cost (including the organ) of over £35,000. Its dimensions were

⁵⁶ *LM*, 20th April 1850.

⁵⁷ A Ehrlich, *Celebrated Violinists, Past and Present* (London 1913), 10-12.

⁵⁸ Haddock, *Recollections*, 99-101.

⁵⁹ Asa Briggs, *Victorian Cities* (London 1963), 153.

impressive at 152 feet long, 76 feet wide, and 60 feet high. It was lit by more than sixteen hundred gas jets.⁶⁰

Only a matter of months after Samuel Smith's meeting, in July 1850, the former Prime Minister Sir Robert Peel died as a result of a riding accident.⁶¹ Several towns, Leeds among them, felt it appropriate to commemorate one of the great national figures of the day.⁶² A committee was formed to raise subscriptions for a Peel memorial and also to canvas local opinion on the building of a large public hall. While the Peel monument fund proved successful, attempts to raise funds for the hall by public subscription as Bradford had done met with less enthusiasm. Nevertheless, the notion of a Town Hall had taken root, and in January 1851 the Council resolved that it was 'desirable to erect a Town Hall including suitable corporate buildings'.⁶³ Strong support came from the Leeds Improvement Society, founded that same month, whose secretary Dr John Deakin Heaton (1817-1880) became a passionate advocate of the venture, arguing that such a building would raise the moral and aesthetic tone of the town. His biographer, Thomas Wemyss Reid, explained the rationale of Heaton and his colleagues thus:

The public-spirited men of the borough saw that a splendid opportunity had presented itself for revolutionising the architecture of Leeds. They believed, and as it proved with entire justice, that, if a noble municipal palace that might fairly vie with some of the best Town Halls of the Continent were to be erected in the middle of their hitherto squalid and unbeautiful town, it would become a practical admonition to the populace of the value of beauty and art, and in course of time men would learn to live up to it.⁶⁴

The detailed story of the building of Leeds Town Hall, designed by the twenty-nine year old Hull architect Cuthbert Brodrick (1821-1905) and destined to become an icon of Victorian civic architecture, has been eloquently told elsewhere and need not concern us

⁶⁰ G F Sewell, *A History of the Bradford Choral Society* (Bradford 1907), 22.

⁶¹ John Mayhall, *The Annals of Yorkshire* (London n.d.), 1:588.

⁶² Peel (1788-1850) had left office in 1846 but enjoyed immense popularity in the country at large. His death gave rise to an 'unprecedented number of memorial statues'. See Norman McCord, *British History 1815-1906* (Oxford 1971), 170.

⁶³ Asa Briggs, 'The Building of Leeds Town Hall: A Study in Victorian Civic Pride', *Publications of the Thoresby Society*, 46 (1963): 277.

⁶⁴ Reid, *Memoir*, 142-143.

here.⁶⁵ What is perhaps worthy of note is the battle between the men of vision, such as Dr Heaton, and the utilitarians, which took place throughout the five years of its construction and which came to typify so much of cultural endeavour in the town. Bitter conflict arose around the building of the tower which would be purely decorative rather than functional, yet significantly the installation of a magnificent organ costing £6,500 was approved without dissent.⁶⁶

Music accompanied both the beginning and the end of the enterprise. The first stone of the new Town Hall was laid by the Mayor of Leeds, John Hope Shaw (1792-1864), on 17th August 1853 at a ceremony 'in the presence of a vast concourse of spectators'.⁶⁷ At the conclusion of the ceremony the Leeds Madrigal and Motet Society sang a chorus specially composed for the occasion by William Spark, which began:

A blessing we ask on the work now begun,
May it prosper in doing - be useful when done:
May the Hall whose foundations thus broadly are laid
Stand a trophy to Freedom - to Peace, and to Trade;⁶⁸

In March 1858, as the building approached completion, it was decided, rather belatedly, to celebrate its opening with a Musical Festival, the proceeds to go to the Leeds General Infirmary. This decision may have been influenced to some extent by the desire to outdo Bradford, which had opened its own St George's Hall with a musical festival in 1853 and followed it with a second in 1856.⁶⁹ With little over five months at their disposal it says much for the members of the Festival Committee how swiftly they were able to make the necessary arrangements. Within a month of its formation William Sterndale Bennett had been appointed conductor at a fee of 200 guineas, and a further month later the selection

⁶⁵ See Briggs, 'The Building of Leeds Town Hall' and Derek Linstrum, *Towers and Colonnades. The Architecture of Cuthbert Brodrick* (Leeds 1999), 16-42.

⁶⁶ See Kenneth I Johnstone, *The Organ in Leeds Town Hall* (Leeds 1978) for an account of this instrument.

⁶⁷ Mayhall, *Annals of Leeds*, 633.

⁶⁸ *Ibid.*, 635.

⁶⁹ See Dave Russell, 'Awaking to the reality of our new and loftier position. The Bradford Triennial Music Festivals 1853-1859', *The Bradford Antiquary*, Third Series, 6 (1992): 3-21.

of the chorus began.⁷⁰ The sub-committee charged with overseeing this task left the choice of singers to the judgement of the man appointed as Festival chorus master, R S Burton.

Robert Senior Burton

Born at Thornhill near Dewsbury in 1820, the son of a professional musician, Robert Senior Burton was a former pupil of Cipriani Potter, had sung in the chorus at the 1835 York Festival and at the age of 17 had become organist of St George's Church, Leeds.⁷¹ In 1849 he was appointed organist at Leeds Parish Church in succession to Wesley, a position he retained until 1880. He was, according to Henry Coward, 'a man of strong will and firm convictions, with a large share of combativeness'.⁷² Certainly during the years which Burton spent in Leeds, controversy was never far away, with disputes often conducted in a very public manner, even on occasion spilling over into litigation.⁷³ He was nevertheless not without a certain dry humour. On one occasion at Leeds Parish Church, after what he considered to be an unorthodox sermon, he chose as his concluding voluntary the chorus from *St Paul* "Now this man ceaseth not to utter blasphemous things".⁷⁴ The allusion was apparently not lost on the Parish Church congregation.

Burton was fiercely independent and did not shrink from embracing the unfashionable when he believed in the value of what he was doing. It was he who in 1877 began the practice of the annual performance of Bach's *St Matthew Passion* at Leeds Parish Church at a time when Bach's choral music was little known or valued.⁷⁵ Burton's fierce independence and uncompromising attitude gave rise to bad feeling on several occasions, of which his selection of the 1858 Festival Chorus is but one example. Unwilling to

⁷⁰ Spark and Bennett, *History*, 3-16.

⁷¹ James D Brown and Stephen S Stratton, *British Musical Biography* (Birmingham 1897), 71-72; Donald Webster, *'Parish' Past and Present* (Leeds 1988), 38.

⁷² Henry Coward, *Reminiscences of Henry Coward* (London 1919), 265.

⁷³ The attempt by the Vicar of Leeds to dismiss Burton in 1869 received coverage in the national musical press. See the *Musical Standard*, 13th February 1869. Some years before, in 1852, Burton had been sued by S S Wesley at York Assizes over payment for Wesley's Leeds teaching practice. See Webster, *Parish*, 30.

⁷⁴ Coward, *Reminiscences*, 265.

⁷⁵ Francis Jackson, *Blessed City. The Life and Works of Edward C. Bairstow* (York 1996), 62.

compromise choral standards in deference to local sensibilities, Burton provoked a storm of protest by selecting only 80 singers from Leeds as being of sufficient ability for the chorus of 245 voices, the rest coming from various parts of the West Riding.⁷⁶

Of Burton, Edward Bairstow was to write later:

He might be termed the father of a race of musicians who specialised in teaching choirs. Many were not executants; some of them were rough diamonds; but the one thing they possessed was personal magnetism.⁷⁷

The Leeds Musical Festivals

Burton's insistence on the finest singers paid dividends in what proved to be a spectacularly successful inaugural Festival. His chorus received universal praise, establishing a reputation for the Leeds chorus which was to be jealously guarded over the coming years. Reporting on the Friday morning programme, which included a complete performance of Handel's *Israel in Egypt*, the correspondent of *The Times*, J W Davison, enthused:

The 'Hailstone' chorus was nothing short of prodigious, and, in obedience to an overwhelming demand from the whole audience expressed in reiterated volleys of applause, it was repeated. Such vigorous, powerful, and full-toned voices as these Yorkshire choristers possess, it rejoices the heart of the jaded Londoner to hear. The trebles and basses, especially, are unrivalled anywhere.⁷⁸

The seven performances attracted a total audience of over 13,000, while the balance sheet revealed a handsome surplus of £2,000 which was in due course presented to the Leeds General Infirmary.⁷⁹ The symbolic significance of the new Town Hall, opened amid great ceremonial by Queen Victoria, and the festivities which followed, should not be underestimated: Leeds was now placed firmly on the map as a major centre of industry, progress and culture. 'For a portion of two days, through the condescension of Her

⁷⁶ Spark and Bennett, *History*, 15.

⁷⁷ Jackson, *Blessed City*, 62.

⁷⁸ *The Times*, 13th September 1858.

⁷⁹ Spark and Bennett, *History*, 32-35.

Majesty,' observed the *Leeds Mercury*, 'this old and busy seat of industry becomes in a sense the seat of the Empire'.⁸⁰

With such a success on their hands it is scarcely surprising that the great and good of Leeds should have contemplated a further festival for 1861. They had not, however, counted on the damaging effect of local squabbles between the two leading choral societies of the town, the Leeds Choral Society under Burton and the Leeds Madrigal and Motet Society under William Spark. Their mutual enmity, centred on the issue of representation in the festival chorus, ultimately led to such confusion and delay that the entire project had to be abandoned.⁸¹

Such was the depth of feeling generated by the events leading up to 1861 that it was not until 1874 that another musical festival was attempted. For this and the 1877 Festival Sir Michael Costa (1808-1884), probably the finest choral conductor in England at the time, was engaged at a fee of 300 guineas plus expenses.⁸² Imperious in manner, though ever the gentleman, Costa drove a hard bargain with the businessmen of the Committee and duly confirmed the later judgement of him as 'perhaps the severest martinet that ever wielded a baton'.⁸³ He could also exhibit idiosyncratic tendencies in his readings, as Herbert Thompson vividly recalled over thirty years later:

I never shall forget the performance of that magnificent oratorio, "Solomon," at the Leeds Festival of 1877, under Costa's *direction*, and with his additional accompaniments. In the chorus, "Shake the Dome," a piece in the characteristic Handelian hammer-and-tongs vein, Handel planned a tremendous effect by making chorus and orchestra end abruptly together, but Costa, not content to leave well alone, must needs weaken it by adding a couple of bars of the most conventional "tum-ti-tum" ritornello for the orchestra alone! The wrath of a couple of old West Riding Handelians sitting near me, who asked in dismay, "What was that?" and were told "That's Costa," was delightful to witness.⁸⁴

⁸⁰ Quoted by Briggs, *Victorian Cities*, 177.

⁸¹ See Spark and Bennett, *History*, 39-56 for a complete chronicle of this unhappy chapter in the annals of Leeds music.

⁸² Spark and Bennett, *History*, 63; 104.

⁸³ Hermann Klein, *Thirty Years of Musical Life in London: 1870-1900* (London 1903), 54.

⁸⁴ *YP*, 19th April 1912.

During the preparations for the revival of the Festival in 1874 Robert Burton was yet again in the thick of controversy, embroiled in a disagreement with the Committee over the selection of the chorus which finally led to the cancellation of his appointment as chorus master.⁸⁵ He was replaced by James Broughton (1833-1887), a very different character but no less able a musician. 'A man of ready wit and assiduous in his endeavours', Broughton built up the reputation of Leeds choruses still further during his tenure of office which was to last until 1883, when failing health obliged him to relinquish his post.⁸⁶ *The Times* declared the chorus of 1877 to be 'unquestionably the finest in Great Britain, and it may be added, without much fear of contradiction, in Europe'.⁸⁷

When in early 1880 Costa's supercilious manner finally became too much for the Festival Committee and Charles Hallé would only conduct if allowed to select the band, the choice of conductor settled on the thirty-eight-year-old Arthur Sullivan. Thus began an association which was to take the Festival through to the turn of the century, and raise it to a position of pre-eminence among the English provincial festivals, eclipsing even the older established events such as Three Choirs and Birmingham. These were indeed golden times for Leeds, save perhaps for the 1889 Festival, when an overworked and exhausted chorus failed to meet the exacting standards which were by now expected.⁸⁸ Dvořák came to conduct his new oratorio *St Ludmila*, Sullivan's own *Golden Legend* was rapturously received, while commissions from the likes of Parry, Stanford, and Alexander Mackenzie shared the programmes with superb performances of the masterpieces of the choral canon.⁸⁹ Many years later Sullivan as conductor was recalled by the American baritone David Bispham who made his Leeds debut in 1895:

⁸⁵ As in the past Burton made the dispute a very public affair, on this occasion publishing at his own expense a pamphlet entitled *A Letter to the Guarantors of the Leeds Musical Festival* in which he took to task the 'two young gentlemen' of the Committee, Charles Wurtzburg and Edward Dykes, who saw fit to usurp his authority over chorus selection. A copy is held in the Leeds Local History Library.

⁸⁶ J Sutcliffe Smith, 'A Cyclopaedic Dictionary of Yorkshire Music', unpublished MS, Leeds Local History Library.

⁸⁷ *The Times*, 21st September 1877.

⁸⁸ *The Times* correspondent observed that 'At the end of a week like this it is painful to reflect upon the number of overstrained, if not absolutely ruined, voices which must of necessity be the result of that compression of hard work into the smallest possible space of time'. (14th October 1889).

⁸⁹ Sullivan's performance of Beethoven's Ninth Symphony was judged to be 'unsurpassed - nay, unequalled, by any previous rendering in England'. (*The Times*, 15th October 1880).

At the desk his demeanor was quite different from that of any other leader under whom it has been my good fortune to sing. Sullivan had thick dark hair, a swarthy skin, and wore glasses. He invariably sat in the usual high chair and seemed to keep his eyes always on the score in front of him. His beat was restrained and rather cramped, his baton moving across the top or up and down the sides of the score; yet nothing in the world escaped the attention of this quiet, reserved little man, the fingers of whose well-manicured right hand were invariably stained with cigarette smoke.⁹⁰

Yet Sullivan's contribution extended beyond his undoubted success on the concert platform. Thanks to his well-developed social connections the prestige of the Leeds Festival was raised to a national level. In 1880 the Festival was opened by the Duke of Edinburgh who had agreed to be its President and whose presence would, as *The Times* reflected, 'no doubt largely contribute to the success of the present gathering'.⁹¹ As Sullivan's own personal reputation increased, notably with a knighthood in 1883, so his diligent cultivation of royal patronage on behalf of Leeds continued, reaching full fruition in 1895 when the Prince of Wales consented to be President:

Apart from its intrinsic attractions, unusual interest has attached to this year's gathering owing to the fact of its having secured for Leeds the honour of a visit from the Heir-Apparent, who holds the presidency for the 1895 Festival. This is the first occasion on which the Prince of Wales has attended a Leeds Musical Festival, and though the fact that he has been induced to do so is in large measure due to the good offices of the distinguished conductor, Sir Arthur Sullivan, the presence of his Highness at the Festival may also be attributed in a goodly measure to his desire to hear the Yorkshire Chorus.⁹²

Financial success also attended the Sullivan era in full measure, with never less than £2,000 being donated to the local medical charities (twice the amount raised under Costa). Leeds had good cause to be grateful to Sir Arthur Sullivan, which makes it all the more surprising that the treatment of him during the final months of his association with the city should be, to say the least, lacking in sympathy, if not verging on the shabby. In a biography published not long after Sullivan's death, and admittedly written by a distant relation of the composer, the bitterness is plain enough, with the accusation that 'They took the best of

⁹⁰ David Bispham, *A Quaker Singer's Recollections* (New York 1920), 174-175.

⁹¹ *The Times*, 14th October 1880.

⁹² *LM*, 3rd October 1895.

him, and when he was gone he was of no more account in their eyes than the factory engine which had outworn its usefulness'.⁹³ While the state of Sullivan's health had been a legitimate cause for concern on the part of the Festival Committee, it does seem that some of their number, such as W S Hannam, had been actively campaigning for some time for his replacement by Charles Villiers Stanford. On a visit to Leeds in November 1899, Elgar heard that Sullivan's resignation had been brought about by 'Stanford's politicking'.⁹⁴

In fairness to Stanford the "politicking" was more probably undertaken by his many admirers, unbeknown to him, especially if we are to believe Herbert Thompson's version of events written over twenty years later:

...it is, perhaps, well to assert as a fact, which is within my own cognisance, that Stanford did not raise a finger to promote his candidature, and, indeed, his own standing as a musician was then such that his selection was natural if not inevitable. At the first Festival Stanford conducted, Sullivan's "In Memoriam" overture was included as a tribute to his memory, and the conductor was in some quarters blamed that no more important work was chosen for the purpose, which was so far from being near the truth that, as I was assured at the time, he suggested to the committee the inclusion of Sullivan's most distinguished concert work, "The Golden Legend," but was overruled.⁹⁵

A remarkable enthusiast

While many of the leading citizens of Victorian Leeds were engaged in the promotion of music on the grand scale, others preferred its cultivation in a private, though far from modest, context. In 1866 Thomas Stuart Kennedy, a partner in the Leeds engineering firm of Fairbairn, Kennedy & Naylor, commissioned the architect Edward Welby Pugin (1834-1875), the eldest son of Augustus Pugin, to design a new house for him on a thirty-four acre plot to the west of Stonegate Road, Meanwood.⁹⁶ The resulting neo-Gothic confection, "The Towers" (later more commonly known as Meanwood Towers) featured 'gables,

⁹³ B W Findon, *Sir Arthur Sullivan. His Life and Music* (London 1904), 169.

⁹⁴ J N Moore. *Edward Elgar. Letters of a Lifetime* (Oxford 1990), 81.

⁹⁵ *YP*, 9th November 1923.

⁹⁶ W Arthur Hopwood & Frederic P Casperson, *Meanwood. Village, Valley and People, Industry* (Leeds 1986), 68. It is interesting to note that although the house was built in 1867 the sale of the land to Kennedy by Joshua Buckton, Alexander Crawford and Mary Oates was not completed until 13th June 1868.

ornamental chimney stacks and oriel windows in abandoned profusion' and was completed in 1867.⁹⁷ While the house was under construction Kennedy, returning from a climbing holiday in Switzerland with the Leeds physician Clifford Allbutt, indulged another of his passions - a love of organs and organ music - and visited the leading German organ builder Heinrich Edmund Schulze (c.1824-1878) at his workshops in Paulinzelle, Thuringia. During the course of a two-day stay it was agreed that Schulze would build a four manual organ for Kennedy, whose wife had taken up the instrument with enthusiasm and some success.⁹⁸

The scale of the proposed instrument was such that it could not be accommodated within Meanwood Towers, and on his return Kennedy asked Pugin to design and build an organ house in the grounds. Completed in May 1869, it was

a picturesque building in ch  let style, large enough to seat some eight hundred people. Built mainly of wooden framing, protected by slates and panelled within with fine white woods its acoustic properties proved to be sympathetic with the music.⁹⁹

From August that year Schulze stayed for some months with the Kennedys to voice the completed instrument in its new home. But Mr and Mrs Kennedy were not yet satisfied: they wished to have a formal "opening" and, in keeping with the extravagant scale of the project, approached no less a figure than Samuel Sebastian Wesley, still the foremost cathedral organist of the day, to undertake an inaugural performance. Negotiations with Wesley proved difficult, and he finally agreed to play on the condition that only the Kennedys, Allbutt and Schulze should be present. Allbutt has left us with an evocative account of that private recital:

So the master came; appearing and disappearing like a wraith, but a wraith under a radiant halo of illumination. He lifted us up in an organ glory which none of us had known before, or since. For, almost as he sat down, Wesley pulled out every stop he could see, and himself lifted up in the glorious noise for nearly two hours took a long flight of improvisation, mostly in counterpoint and on big combinations. Then he descended to earth, or nearer to it, and strayed delightfully among the several stops. Finally he turned to Bach, playing the preludes and fugues by the old tradition and

⁹⁷ Derek Linstrum, *Historic Architecture of Leeds* (Newcastle-upon-Tyne 1969), 78.

⁹⁸ Clifford Allbutt, 'Reminiscences of Edmund Schulze and the Armley Organ', *The Organ*, 5 (July 1925): 78-86.

⁹⁹ *Ibid.*, 81.

giving out the first subject on the great diapasons and rather slowly throughout. It was a wonderful afternoon, - for Wesley himself (as he fully admitted) as well as for us.¹⁰⁰

For a number of years Mrs Kennedy played the Schulze organ for her own enjoyment and that of guests at Meanwood Towers, but at length ill health forced her to give up. This, combined with intractable problems of damp in the organ house, despite its central heating, persuaded Thomas Kennedy finally to sell the instrument. It was purchased by the Misses Carter of Harrogate and installed at St Peter's Church, Harrogate in 1877. Two years later, following a disagreement between the Misses Carter and the vicar of St Peter's, it was again sold, to Henry William Eyres, who presented it to the newly-built Church of St Bartholomew at Armley, where it remains to this day.¹⁰¹

Musical exclusivity

Although the majority of the wealthier members of Leeds society were content to remain mere consumers of culture, there were others inclined to be actively involved in musical pursuits, notably the cultivation of vocal music. A number of organisations emerged over the years which catered for this need. The oldest, and the most socially exclusive, was the Leeds Musical Soirées, founded in 1848. Its object was 'the practice and performance of Vocal Music', though programmes might contain a certain amount of instrumental music. Its rules permitted a maximum of thirty-two members plus a musical director. The names of all the leading families of Leeds - the Marshalls, Luptons, Barrans, Kitsons - are to be found among its membership at one time or another. It also numbered among its members (albeit briefly) Daniel Delius, uncle of Frederick, who played a violin solo in 1869.¹⁰² Meetings were held at the homes of members every three weeks between the beginning of November and the end of May at 7pm. Part-songs and glees would typically occupy the first part of the evening, while after supper more substantial works would be attempted.

¹⁰⁰ Ibid., 82.

¹⁰¹ See Kenneth I Johnstone, *The Armley Schulze Organ* (Leeds 1978) for a detailed history and description of this magnificent instrument.

¹⁰² Bernard P Scattergood's privately printed *A Short History of the Leeds Musical Soirées 1848-1931* (Leeds 1931) provides a fascinating insight into this remarkable institution.

Sterndale Bennett's *The May Queen*, written for the first Leeds Festival in 1858, was apparently a particular favourite.¹⁰³

The Leeds Private Vocal Society was founded in 1862 by a group of friends at Leeds Parish Church including the Precentor, the Rev. G Croke Robinson, its object being 'the practice and performance of Part Songs, Glees, Madrigals, &c., written for male voices'.¹⁰⁴ Its membership was limited to eighty gentlemen, divided between Honorary and Practical Members. From 1869 to 1880 the Honorary Conductor was the banker Edward Octavius Dykes (1834-1925), the brother of the celebrated composer of hymn tunes John Bacchus Dykes (1823-1876). As did the Musical Soirées, the Private Vocal Society would occasionally give public performances, often for the benefit of some worthy cause. On 1st April 1879, for example, a benefit concert was given at the Albert Hall in aid of a fund for the musical education of the young Leeds pianist Frederick Dawson.¹⁰⁵

The rise of Leeds choralism

The mid-nineteenth century witnessed the emergence of choral societies in most English towns. Usually the choirs were of mixed voice numbering between perhaps fifty and one hundred singers, though in time forces grew steadily larger. The increasing availability of much cheaper printed scores, chiefly thanks to the efforts of Alfred Novello, meant that the classics of choral repertoire were now within reach of almost any aspiring choralist:

...instead of the old plan of some half-dozen singers singing from one copy placed on a music-stand, each person may at a cost of a few pence be provided with vocal scores of the oratorio choruses, together with all the best anthems, of both ancient and modern composers. Messrs. Novello & Co...deserve the thanks of all lovers of music for the inestimable boon thus conferred upon singers, by means of which the painful and laborious task of making manuscript copies is now rendered unnecessary.¹⁰⁶

¹⁰³ Scattergood, *Short History*, 14.

¹⁰⁴ Leeds Private Vocal Society, Fifteenth Annual Report, 1877. Leeds Local History Library. See Spark, *History*, ch.16 for an account of the society's foundation.

¹⁰⁵ Leeds Private Vocal Society, Seventeenth Annual Report, 1879. Leeds Local History Library.

¹⁰⁶ Sewell, *History*, 242. In July 1846 Novello announced the publication of the vocal score of Handel's *Messiah* in twelve monthly numbers, priced 6d each. See Michael Hurd, *Vincent Novello - and Company* (London 1981), ch.5 and 6.

In 1847 the Leeds Choral Society was established 'for the practice and occasional public performance, entirely by our local talent, of the works of the most eminent composers, both sacred and secular, with the object of cultivating and advancing a higher musical taste in the town'.¹⁰⁷ Robert Burton was appointed conductor, and achieved some notable successes with performances of Spohr's *The Last Judgement* and the inevitable *Elijah*. The appearance in April 1850 of the Leeds Madrigal and Motet Society under the direction of William Spark was not well received by Burton who, among other things, accused the new organization of poaching members.¹⁰⁸ Thus began the feud which filled many column inches of the local press and, as we have seen, later put paid to the proposed 1861 Festival. These squabbles should not distract our attention from the fact that some splendid music was made in Leeds by these bodies which laid the foundations of a tradition of choralism in the town which considerably enhanced its reputation. This description of the Leeds Madrigal and Motet Society's performance of the *Credo* from Henry Smart's *Service in F* in 1868 captures the spirit of what could be achieved:

The effect produced at Leeds by the performance of this *Credo*, shortly after its composition, and conducted by the composer, was long remembered by those who heard it. The Leeds Madrigal and Motett Society was then at the zenith of its fame, numbering 250 magnificent Yorkshire voices. They sang with an *aplomb* and spirit which so delighted Smart that, in his enthusiasm at its conclusion, he kissed his hands to the chorus and said, with agitation: "Magnificent! With you, as Wellington with his army, I could go anywhere; do anything! God bless you! Good night!" This was quite sufficient for the warm-hearted Yorkshire people to respond at once with a thrilling, enthusiastic cheer. Smart was quite overcome, and said: "Thanks for all your attention and for the opportunity I have had to conduct this splendid chorus. We have no such voices in London, I assure you."¹⁰⁹

As with so many musical institutions of the nineteenth century, the precise origins of the Leeds Philharmonic Society are somewhat obscure.¹¹⁰ The Leeds Amateur Vocal

¹⁰⁷ R S Burton, *A Letter to the Members and Musicians of the Leeds Choral Society* (Leeds 1852).

¹⁰⁸ *Ibid.*

¹⁰⁹ Bumpus, *History*, II: 497-498.

¹¹⁰ Much of the following account of the early history of the LPS is drawn from an article by Edgar Haddock ('Music in Yorkshire', *YWP*, 2nd December 1916) and on a subsequent article based on information received from James J Briggs, one of the founding members ('The Origin of the Leeds

Society was an all-male choir of about sixty voices founded some time in the early eighteenth-century and conducted by Tom Dodds. For several seasons it gave two concerts annually in the Town Hall which were something of a social occasion, with comfortable seats replacing the usual wooden benches and with refreshments served during the interval. In light of the restricted repertoire available for male voices, the management committee eventually resolved to open the society to women and to rename it the Leeds Philharmonic Society. This was in 1869 or 1870. It is recorded that the first general meeting of the LPS took place on 8th August 1872 at the Bank of England on Park Row, with Mr R Bickerton Turner in the chair. The first chorus master and conductor of the LPS was James Broughton, a highly capable musician whose success as chorus master of the Leeds Festival has already been discussed. Broughton conducted the first public performance given by the LPS in 1873 at the Town Hall, with a lengthy, miscellaneous programme which included the first part of Haydn's *The Seasons* and Handel's *Coronation Anthem*.¹¹¹ The supporting orchestra was known as the Leeds Philharmonic Band and was initially formed from local amateur players, but later reinforced with professional musicians. The LPS prospered under Broughton's guidance, but in 1883 ill-health forced his retirement and replacement by his younger brother, Alfred. Many years later Stanford recalled a meeting with James Broughton after a performance of *The Revenge* under Alfred Broughton in 1886:

His successor was not built on the same lines, and had not the same force, or control over his material. After the first performance of the "Revenge," in which the chorus fell once or twice slightly and were not dead sure of their intonation, I met James B. in the lobby, who said, with tears in his eyes, "To think that my children should lose their pitch like that!" I comforted him as much as I could by pointing out the passages in which they excelled, and the difficulties of getting four hundred singers to declaim a ballad written in an unfamiliar style.¹¹²

Philharmonic Society', *YWP*, 9th December 1916).

¹¹¹ Michael Colbert, 'Leeds Philharmonic Society 1870-1970' in *Leeds Philharmonic Society Centenary. Brochure & programme* (Leeds 1970), 7.

¹¹² C V Stanford, *Pages from an Unwritten Diary* (London 1914), 252.

Despite Stanford's reservations about the younger Broughton, the musical reputation of the LPS continued to grow, resulting in invitations to sing outside Leeds.¹¹³ However, falling subscriptions resulted in a financial crisis which by 1895 had produced a debt of £200.¹¹⁴ That same year Alfred Broughton died, plunging the LPS further into crisis. He was replaced briefly by Adolf Beyschlag (1845-1914), before new management brought about a merger with the Leeds Subscription Concerts in 1896 and the appointment of Stanford in June 1897.¹¹⁵

The Leeds Popular Concerts

The Leeds solicitor John Rawlinson Ford (1844-1934) belonged to a prosperous Quaker family which had close ties with several prominent families within the Society of Friends in the north of England, among them the Peases of Darlington and Leeds, and the Whitelocks of Bradford.¹¹⁶ As had his father before him, Ford built up a highly successful practice - Ford & Warren - with offices in Albion Street, but it was for his civic and charitable work that he was to gain recognition and universal respect in the city.

All the Ford children had been encouraged by their mother to enjoy music, dancing and painting: Ford's younger sister Bessie (1848-1919) owned a Stradivarius violin which she played to professional standard, often accompanied on the piano by another sister, the social activist and novelist Isabella Ford (1855-1924).¹¹⁷ While there is no evidence of his playing a musical instrument, J R Ford clearly shared with his sisters a passion for music, and in 1881 decided with his friend W B Townshend to establish and underwrite a series known as the Leeds Chamber Concerts to be held at the Philosophical Hall on Park Row.¹¹⁸

¹¹³ The first visit to London of the LPS took place in 1889, when over 160 singers took part in a performance of Beethoven's Ninth Symphony and Mendelssohn's *Walpurgisnacht* at St James's Hall with the Henschel Symphony Orchestra.

¹¹⁴ *The Yorkshire Owl*, 27th January 1897.

¹¹⁵ This period of the Leeds Philharmonic Society's history will be discussed in chapter 3.

¹¹⁶ June Hannam, *Isabella Ford* (Oxford 1989), 7-8.

¹¹⁷ *Ibid.*, 21. Bessie Ford went on to establish free chamber concerts for the poor of Leeds. These are discussed in more detail in chapter 5.

¹¹⁸ *YEP*, 9th April 1934.

Ford's first concert took place on the evening of Wednesday, 2nd November 1881 and was reported at some length in the *Yorkshire Post* which, unusually, listed the programme in full:¹¹⁹

Grand Trio in D minor, Op.49	Mendelssohn
Violin Solo, Preludium and Fuga in G minor	Bach
Songs, "In Praise of Tears" "My Sweet Repose"	Schubert
Duo Sonata in F major, op.24	Beethoven
Pianoforte Solo "St Francis of Assisi preaching to the Birds"	Liszt
Song "The Shadow Song" from <i>Dinorah</i>	Meyerbeer
Violoncello Solos - Romance	Davidoff
Gavotte	Popper
Song "Lullaby"	Poutet
Trio in G major	Haydn

The performances, given by Otto Peiniger (violin), Charles Ould (cello), Charles Wilkinson (piano) and Henrietta Tomlinson (vocalist), were favourably received and despite a modest turnout the evening was pronounced an overall success. The attendance at the second concert of the series on 16th November was rather better, and Ford was again congratulated on his enterprise with the *Yorkshire Post* observing that 'If there were fifty gentlemen amongst us who had the interest and advancement of music as much at heart as Mr Rawlinson Ford, Leeds would become in reality what our southern friends already suppose it to be - the most musical town in the north of England'.¹²⁰ By the start of the second season on 14th November 1882 audiences had grown sufficiently to justify a change of venue to the Albert Hall on Cookridge Street.¹²¹ After a third season Ford felt sufficiently encouraged to increase the number of concerts to six, in two series of three, trusting that 'his friends will support him as heartily in the future as they have done in the past'.¹²² The concerts were now known as the Leeds Popular Concerts, and although chamber music still predominated, the fifth concert, given in the Town Hall in February 1885, featured the Band of the Glasgow Choral Union under the direction of August Manns with a programme including Schubert's Symphony No.9 and two orchestral movements from Alexander

¹¹⁹ *YP*, 3rd November 1881.

¹²⁰ *YP*, 17th November 1881.

¹²¹ *The Yorkshire Owl*, 27th January 1897.

¹²² Programme book, Leeds Chamber Concerts, 11th March 1884.

Mackenzie's oratorio *The Rose of Sharon* (first performed at the Norwich Festival the previous October).¹²³

For the fifth season (1885-86) the venue was again changed, this time to the recently completed Coliseum on Cookridge Street.¹²⁴ Among the highlights of that season was a performance of the Violin Sonata of Saint-Saëns which, according to an insert in the printed programme, had been 'expressly composed by him for this visit to Yorkshire'.¹²⁵ The composer himself played the piano part in the new sonata and in his Piano Quartet in B flat, in addition to performing solos on both piano and organ.

The next season continued with a similar blend of chamber and orchestral concerts performed by first-rate ensembles such as the Joachim Quartet and Charles Hallé's Band. A performance of Schubert's Octet in F, op.166 gave rise to this curious note in the programme: 'Owing to the great length of this work, and the consequent fatigue entailed upon the performers on the wind instruments, it is found necessary to make an Interval after the Scherzo'.¹²⁶ By the end of this, the sixth season, in March 1887 Ford announced his intention to broaden the appeal of the concerts still further. In the notes of the final programme on 16th March he expressed his disappointment that the number of people interested in chamber music in Leeds was far less than he had suspected or hoped. The expected growth in support had not materialized sufficiently quickly to stop continuing financial losses:

It has, therefore, occurred to him that it would be possible to recruit the ranks of the subscribers from amongst those who have hitherto been repelled by the fancied dullness or severity of the music, and at the same time to maintain the high standard which has been set up; that is to say, whilst not deteriorating those concerts at which chamber music is performed, to introduce others into the series at which there may be a more varied programme not only of music but of artists, especially of vocalists of high repute. Thus an

¹²³ Programme book, Leeds Popular Concerts, 17th February 1885.

¹²⁴ Built by William Bakewell, the Coliseum was opened by the Prince of Wales in July 1885. It seated almost 3,500 people, with additional standing room for 400, and was lit by electricity. See Sprittles, 'Musical Festivals', 220.

¹²⁵ Insert in programme book, Leeds Popular Concerts, 18th November 1885.

¹²⁶ Programme book, Leeds Popular Concerts, 16th February 1887.

effort will be made to cover the whole field of music, except that so well occupied by the Philharmonic Society.¹²⁷

Ten concerts were given in the 1887-88 season, ending with a "Drawing-Room Concert" on 21st March 1888. At this final event the intention was to create a very different atmosphere which in some ways anticipated that of the Bohemian Concerts over ten years later. The benches in the area of the hall were removed and replaced by easy chairs; the room was decorated throughout with plants, and tea and coffee was served during the interval. Unashamedly élitist, the notice of the concert announced that 'None but Subscribers to the Front Reserved Seats and their friends will be admitted to the Concert'.¹²⁸ Many years later, Ford recalled this concert as one of his less successful experiments:

We were always experimenting one way or another with those concerts, but the biggest disappointment we had was when we endeavoured to have a chamber concert in the Coliseum by dispensing with the gallery, and having the area furnished with chairs. Everything was very comfortable and nice – too comfortable, in fact for the audience, in their ease, failed to applaud in the way that the artists expected.¹²⁹

In the programme book of this final concert of the seventh season the announcement was made of the cessation of Ford's series and its replacement by a new series to be known as the Leeds Subscription Concerts. A committee of ten had been formed with Ford as chairman and W S Hannam as *Hon. Secretary*. To cover any possible losses a guarantee fund was proposed with subscriptions invited of between one and five guineas.¹³⁰ The new venture met with some success. In due course Hannam was able to issue a circular inviting subscriptions for the concerts containing a list of 219 guarantors which included most of the Leeds élite including the Barrans, Kitsons and Luptons. A total of £466/11/0 had been guaranteed. When the programme book for the first concert on 31st October 1888 was published (now priced sixpence instead of threepence!) it listed 231 subscribers.¹³¹

¹²⁷ Programme book, Leeds Popular Concerts, 16th March 1887.

¹²⁸ Programme book, Leeds Popular Concerts, 14th March 1888.

¹²⁹ *YEP*, 9th April 1934.

¹³⁰ Programme book, Leeds Popular Concerts, 21st March 1888.

¹³¹ Programme book, Leeds Subscription Concerts, 31st October 1888.

The Leeds Subscription Concerts carried on the familiar combination of chamber, orchestral and miscellaneous concerts until 1896, when for economic reasons it seemed that amalgamation with the troubled Leeds Philharmonic Society would be of benefit to both organizations and avoid unnecessary duplication of effort. As ever, the first task was to secure a sound financial base for the venture:

After the scheme of combination had been accepted by the two Societies, the new executive declared that a subscription list controlling a minimum sum of £1,200 yearly must be forthcoming. The demand was received with a feeling of doubt as to its possibility. How it was now to be arrived at was quite beyond the reach of their experience. But the confidence they were called upon to place in their executive was neither extravagant nor misplaced, for this effort resulted in a subscription list which totalled to the sum of £1,630.¹³²

The Leeds String Quartet

In 1891, notwithstanding the patchy support given to J R Ford's chamber concerts, a group of four musicians decided to form the Leeds String Quartet, and gave their first concert at the Philosophical Hall in January 1892. The leader, John Müller, had only recently taken up residence in Leeds, having previously been concertmaster at the Opera House in Kassel.¹³³ The quartet's Danish cellist, Alfred Giessing, had settled in Leeds some years earlier after playing for two years with the Berlin Philharmonic Orchestra, while the second violinist Verdi Fawcett came from a well-known West Riding musical family.¹³⁴ Of the violist A John Gutfeld very little is known, other than that he was the first Honorary Conductor of the Leeds Symphony Society Orchestra (established in 1890).

The quartet gave concerts in Leeds sporadically over the next two years, but usually to audiences much smaller than their efforts deserved. As well as bringing works by Haydn, Mozart and Beethoven to the Leeds public they also gave the first performance in the town of the recently composed String Quintet in G op.111 by Brahms.¹³⁵ This lack of support

¹³² *The Yorkshire Owl*, 27th January 1897.

¹³³ *YP*, 11th November 1891.

¹³⁴ Brief biographical notes on Giessing and Fawcett may be found in chapter 5.

¹³⁵ *YP*, 22nd February 1894. The Quintet dated from 1891. Walter Haigh was the second viola.

presumably led to a degree of disillusionment on the part of the players and at their concert on 21st March 1894 they announced that this would be their last. The quartet appeared briefly again in 1898, but then disbanded.¹³⁶

The Leeds Permanent Orchestra

As the nineteenth century drew to a close the need for a permanent body of professional musicians in the city increasingly occupied the thoughts and energies of those concerned with its musical development. The Leeds oboist Frank Holt canvassed local opinion during 1894-95, and on 5th November 1895 called a meeting at the Old George Inn on Lower Briggate at which those present pledged their support for the formation of a permanent orchestra for Leeds.¹³⁷ By a stroke of good fortune Henry Embleton was at this time planning his Leeds Choral Union, which was to have its own orchestra and be directed by the Parish Church organist Alfred Benton. Benton was approached to accept the conductorship of Holt's embryonic enterprise and agreed to do so, while Embleton was characteristically generous in his support for the new venture, and in due course provided opportunities for it to perform with the newly founded Choral Union.

The first concert of the Leeds Permanent Orchestra took place at the Albert Hall, Cookridge Street on 8th February 1896 under Benton's direction and was warmly received. A programme of familiar music was performed which included Wagner's *Tannhäuser* Overture and two movements of Mendelssohn's Violin Concerto with the leader George Buckley as soloist.¹³⁸ A second concert on 21st March was equally successful, followed on the 26th by a performance of Gounod's *Redemption* which marked the first appearance of Embleton's Choral Union.

Later that year a further joint venture with the Choral Union took place in the form of a "Sullivan Concert", conducted by the then Dr Hubert Parry, with a performance of *The Martyr of Antioch* (first performed at the 1880 Leeds Festival) as its centrepiece. A contemporary review spoke of 'a rare treat indeed', but noted:

¹³⁶ *MT*, 39 (April 1898): 263.

¹³⁷ *The Yorkshire Owl*, 25th November 1896.

¹³⁸ *MT*, 37 (March 1896): 188.

A very large audience nigh filled the Hall, but our "Leaders of Society" were conspicuous by their absence. Truly they are in a parlous state when the magic of a "Sullivan" Concert won't draw them.¹³⁹

As would be seen later, without the backing of the Leeds élite and with them a fashionable middle-class audience for whom attendance at such events was "the done thing", any such undertaking would always be likely to struggle, especially if it refused to make concessions to "popular" taste. After some initial success the orchestra failed to consolidate its position, as may be seen from this notice from February 1897:

Though the entertainment was a real musical treat, the audience was sparse, a fact which may be due to the severely classical nature of the programme. Rightly or wrongly, the patrons of concerts are not satisfied with the ultra-aesthetic either in music or the drama; and as the gratification of their taste regulates their numbers, sparseness is a lesson not to be misunderstood.¹⁴⁰

Thus despite the hopes expressed by Herbert Thompson that the Permanent Orchestra would live up to its name, it soon disappeared from view as a separate entity, subsumed at least in part into the Choral Union which, thanks to Embleton's prodigious generosity, did not need to pay its way as other organizations did. Other short-lived ventures came and went, such as the "Leeds Orchestra" which gave a well-received concert on 28th March 1896 under the direction of the Leeds violinist Edward Elliott, who was also soloist in a violin concerto by Vieuxtemps.¹⁴¹

Taking stock

By the turn of the century many people were beginning to look "somewhere further north", in Elgar's famous phrase, for the future development of English musical life. The critic Hermann Klein put it thus:

Indeed, as regards the future of the art in England, it is the great provincial centres that display the promise to be sought for in vain

¹³⁹ *The Yorkshire Owl*, 23rd December 1896.

¹⁴⁰ *The Yorkshire Owl*, 17th February 1897.

¹⁴¹ *MT*, 37 (May 1896), 333.

amid the invertebrate elements which constitute musical life in the huge, overgrown metropolis of the British Empire.¹⁴²

The outlook for the musical life of Leeds in 1900 was a mixed one. On the one hand its primacy in the field of choral music was unchallenged. At the opening of Leeds College of Music in June 1894, the composer Sir Joseph Barnby (1838-1896), then principal of the Guildhall School of Music, had declared that as far as choral music was concerned Leeds was 'the centre of the universe'.¹⁴³ The city (for such it had become in 1893) had a sufficient number of first-rate vocalists to support two major choral societies, but still had not been able to produce its own permanent orchestra and instead relied on the visits of the Hallé and others for its orchestral concerts. The amateur orchestral musician was well catered for as the Leeds Symphony Society, founded in 1890, developed its repertoire under the guiding hand of Arthur Grimshaw.¹⁴⁴ While the visits of the Joachim Quartet and others had revealed the beauties of chamber music to Leeds music lovers, the city had failed to demonstrate much interest in chamber concerts given by local players, and was probably less active in this field than it had been in the days of Thomas and George Haddock.

Thus the foundations for a flourishing musical life were to some extent in place by the turn of the century, but much work still needed to be done.

¹⁴² Klein, *Thirty Years*, 471.

¹⁴³ *The Yorkshire Owl*, 27th January 1897.

¹⁴⁴ For full biographical information on Grimshaw see chapter 5.

Chapter 2: 'A Pleasing Fiction' - The Leeds Triennial Festivals

...but there can be no doubt that the pleasing fiction that Leeds is a specially musical place is largely due to its festivals.

Herbert Thompson¹

...for of all the farces in modern musical life the festival is the greatest.

Holbrook Jackson²

At eleven o'clock on the morning of Saturday 4th October 1913, Artur Nikisch (1855-1922) stepped on to the platform of Leeds Town Hall to make his final appearance at that year's Festival with an all-Wagner programme.³ Probably the most celebrated conductor in Europe, holding the conductorships of both the Leipzig Gewandhaus and Berlin Philharmonic Orchestras, Nikisch's engagement as joint conductor with Sir Edward Elgar and Dr Hugh Allen confirmed the prestige enjoyed by the Leeds Triennial Festival at this time. It might be argued that this, the fifteenth Triennial Festival, represented the apogee of a musical tradition dating back to 1858: four new works by British composers had received their premières, among them Elgar's symphonic study *Falstaff*; the finest artists had been engaged, including the violinist Mischa Elman, the pianist Teresa Carreño and the tenor Gervase Elwes; and there had been memorable performances, notably Nikisch's reading of the Verdi *Requiem*, which was talked and written about so much in later years that it achieved almost legendary status.⁴

In her book *The Story of Oratorio*, published some two years later, the Irish organist and music lecturer Annie Patterson described the Festival as 'one of the musical forces of

¹ Herbert Thompson, 'What Leeds has done in music' in *Leeds and its History* (Leeds 1926), 185-186.

² *YDO*, 14th January 1911.

³ Programme book, Leeds Musical Festival, 1913.

⁴ The critic Herbert Thompson was to recall the performance, 'the unique perfection of which will remain a delightful memory with all who heard it'. Thompson, *Leeds and Its History*, 188. Wynn Reeves, who played at the first desk of the first violins that day, regarded it as one of the greatest events of his musical life. See Hubert Foss and Noel Goodwin, *London Symphony. Portrait of an Orchestra* (London 1954), 26.

the age' deserving 'every support that energy and means can bestow upon it'.⁵ It is no surprise that Leeds should figure in such terms in a book on oratorio, since like other provincial festivals it had pandered to the seemingly insatiable demand of the Victorian public for oratorio and cantata, as the listing of first performances in Appendix 1 will attest. Such acclaim was, however, by no means universal. George Bernard Shaw had his tongue firmly in cheek when expressing his regret at missing the Leeds Festival of 1889 'not so much on account of the music as of the improving influence of all the oratorios and cantatas'.⁶ Over the years Shaw railed unremittingly and often colourfully against such works, complaining that 'every year at the provincial festivals some dreary doctor of music wrecks his counterpoint on a string of execrable balderdash with Mesopotamia or some other blessed word for a title'.⁷

Other dissenting voices went even further than Shaw, as the value of the provincial music festival itself began to be called into question. In May 1899, in the first issue of the short-lived musical journal *The Chord*, an unsigned article, probably by the editor John F Runciman, launched an uncompromising attack on these 'overgrown church bazaars':⁸

Our indictment of the provincial musical festival, then, is this: it diverts to charity the money that should go to music; it actually prevents innocent people giving to music what they might give if they knew their festival subscriptions were entirely devoted to charity; it represses musical activity in its vicinity; it prevents the standard of musical performances rising to the height it has reached in London; it inflicts on a suffering country a flood of tenth-rate cantatas written by musicians who must live, and are not adequately paid for the production of good music; it fosters a habit of artistic gluttony in those who hear no music for three years, and then are compelled to hear a dozen concerts in a week - a most revolting exhibition.⁹

⁵ Annie W Patterson, *The Story of Oratorio* (Second issue, London 1915), 174.

⁶ G B Shaw, *London Music in 1888-89 as Heard by Corno di Bassetto* (London 1937), 227.

⁷ G B Shaw, *Music in London 1890-94*, 3 vols. (London 1932), 1:22.

⁸ *The Chord*, 1 (May 1899): 8.

⁹ *Ibid.*, 12-13.

The author concluded his catalogue of charges with the memorable observation that 'Yorkshire is cursed with Leeds'.¹⁰ Unsurprisingly, such a diatribe was not allowed to pass unchallenged, and in the next issue of *The Chord* one B W Findon leapt to the defence of the festival, stressing the richness of music in Yorkshire and claiming that 'the Festival at Leeds, as elsewhere, is the central organ of circulation, the heart of provincial musical life'.¹¹ In a rejoinder published in the same issue, the editor of *The Chord* was unimpressed by Findon's assertions, and demanded supporting evidence in the form of the printed programmes from a provincial winter season. It is not known whether Findon obliged. Unrepentant, the editor added further weight to the case against festivals, citing the customary practice of engaging London artists to the exclusion of local ones in what was meant to be a provincial event.¹²

Let us therefore consider these and other criticisms of the festival tradition in more detail and how they might apply to the Leeds Triennial Festival as we attempt to assess its influence on the musical life of the city. At the same time it would be useful to remind ourselves of the aims of the Leeds Festivals as put forward by Fred R Spark, who was closely involved in the management of every festival from the first in 1858 until 1907, and was arguably the single most influential individual on the committee. According to Spark, the aims of the festivals were these:¹³

- (1) To bring together the best singers and players for a series of concerts of the highest order.
- (2) To encourage and cultivate music in the homes of the people, and especially to create the practice of choral music.
- (3) To aid the local medical charities.
- (4) To obtain the gratuitous services of amateurs in the management of Festivals.

¹⁰ *Ibid.*, 13.

¹¹ *The Chord*, 2 (September 1899): 66. Benjamin William Findon (1859-1943) was in fact second cousin to Sir Arthur Sullivan, and later published two studies of the composer, *Sir Arthur Sullivan: His Life and Work* (1904) and *Sir Arthur Sullivan and His Operas* (1908).

¹² *Ibid.*, 70.

¹³ Fred R Spark, *Memories of My Life* (Leeds 1913), 44.

Festivals and philanthropy

During the nineteenth century the Leeds festivals consistently emerged in profit: to such an extent that throughout the 1880s and 1890s the festival committee would typically donate around £2,000 to local medical charities such as the General Infirmary and the Leeds Women's Hospital. Indeed it was not until 1931 that, for the first time, a call was made upon the guarantors. After Charles Stanford's first festival in 1901 the sum of £1,651 was given to Leeds hospitals; still a respectable figure, but a foretaste of the serious decline in festival profitability which was to characterize the coming years.¹⁴ An examination of the Festival's financial reports from 1901 to 1913 reveals that a significant overall reduction in ticket sales coupled with more or less constant expenditure levels gave rise to a considerably less healthy financial position during the Edwardian period than that enjoyed during the era of Sullivan.¹⁵ The increasing severity of the problem became plain after the 1904 Festival where the net profits amounted to only £384 5s 0d, the lowest recorded to that date. To reduce the hardship to the medical charities of the city the committee decided on that occasion to use money from the Reserve Fund to bring the sum distributed to Leeds hospitals up to £1,000.¹⁶ For the charities worse was to follow, for in 1910, when for the first time the festival recorded a loss (albeit a small one), the chairman of the Management Committee, John Rawlinson Ford, recommended that no donation be made to the medical charities.¹⁷

The tradition of musical performances for charitable purposes was a long and distinguished one, having its origins in the days of the annual cathedral charity sermon, which became the annual oratorio, which in turn evolved into the festival. The Three Choirs Festival, begun early in the eighteenth century, existed to support the widows and orphans of the clergy in the dioceses of Hereford, Worcester and Gloucester, and indeed in later

¹⁴ J Sprittles, 'Leeds Musical Festivals', *Publications of the Thoresby Society*, Miscellany, vol.13, part 2 (1960): 226-248 passim. In her book *Lutyens and the Edwardians* (Harmondsworth 1996) Jane Brown proposes that 'figures from before the First World War must be multiplied by 35 to give an equivalent present value' (p.261). This produces a figure of £57,785 as the current equivalent for the 1901 Festival proceeds.

¹⁵ Festival accounts 1901-1913 are detailed in Appendix 2.

¹⁶ *MT*, 46 (January 1905): 24.

¹⁷ Report of the Leeds Musical Festival, October 12, 13, 14, and 15, 1910.

years owed its very survival to this function.¹⁸ Similarly, Birmingham's festival, dating from 1768, was established to bolster the finances of the town's General Hospital. By 1909 more than £100,000 had been raised for the Birmingham hospital.¹⁹

No less impressive were the amounts pledged by guarantors against any possible financial loss. Writing in 1889, the Berlin music critic Otto Lessmann praised the support given to the Leeds Festival, comparing it with the 'deplorable want of sympathy' shown at Wiesbaden in the same year:

A striking proof of this [interest in Art], and one which might almost inspire us with envy in Germany, is the immense sum subscribed by the inhabitants of Leeds and the county of Yorkshire as a guarantee fund for the Festival. In the list of guarantors there are 33 names down for £200, 95 for £100, 145 for £50, 155 for £25, and 94 for £10 each, so that the committee would have a sum of about £28,500 (570,000 marks) at their disposal in an emergency.²⁰

Such a sum was by no means exceptional: for the 1898 Festival, the last one at which a detailed listing of the amount subscribed by individuals was published in the programme, the total came to £31,840.²¹ As we have already suggested, the financial risk to guarantors in the pre-war years was minimal, but this public gesture of support is not without significance. Where Lessmann does perhaps miss the point is in his equation of the size of the guarantee fund with a similarly massive enthusiasm for music. Many factors other than a love of the arts in general or music in particular were likely to provoke such a response. Charitable works loomed large among the perceived duties and responsibilities of many of the Leeds élite who comprised the majority of the guarantors, while civic pride surely had a significant part to play. As an illustration of the latter the following paragraph from the programme of a fund-raising concert given in the Town Hall during the Boer War demonstrates unequivocally an awareness of the need to maintain the city's reputation:

It is a matter for regret that the Leeds Fund is considered insufficient to relieve the necessities that have arisen or will surely arise when the real extent of the distress is ascertained, and that the

¹⁸ W J Turner, *Musical Meanderings* (London 1932), 89.

¹⁹ W J Galloway, *Musical England* (London 1910), 91.

²⁰ *MT*, 30 (November 1889): 663.

²¹ Programme book, Leeds Musical Festival, 1898.

amount raised falls short of the sum raised in other towns of similar standing. It is hoped that the present occasion offers to the Leeds public a practical and pleasant opportunity for supplying the deficiency.²²

From the 1880s onwards, objections began to be raised against the diversion of funding from music, notwithstanding the worthy nature of the causes supported. An article in the *Musical Times* from 1885, for example, concluded that the linkage of music and charity reflected badly on the status of both:

On the one hand, the charitable institutions of the country ought to receive sufficient sustenance without bribes to the wealthy in the form of concert tickets, and, on the other, the love of art should be so general that there should be no necessity to urge the public to listen to the finest oratorios on the ground that by doing so they would benefit the sick and the poor. If it be absolutely necessary to combine festival-giving with charity, it proves that as a nation we are not yet sufficiently benevolent nor sufficiently musical.²³

Important figures within the musical establishment, such as Sir Herbert Oakeley, argued the case for holding festivals, at least sometimes, 'unhampered by any ulterior motive, even charitable, except the advancement of Art'.²⁴ As we might expect, Shaw fulminated against the practice with characteristic candour, his target in this instance being the Norwich Festival of 1893, the proceeds of which were destined for the charities of Norwich and Norfolk:

Art, being a beggar in England, is to be robbed of her casual earnings to save rich East Anglians from supporting their local charities. I never heard a meaner proposal.²⁵

In common with other festivals, that of Leeds failed to generate any financial return which might be used for the benefit of local music. But the charitable imperative had other equally serious consequences. The need to emerge with a profit to be donated to the

²² Programme, *Patriotic Concert in Aid of the Lord Mayor's Relief Fund*, 29th March 1900.

²³ *MT*, 26 (January 1885): 9.

²⁴ Edward Murray Oakeley, *The Life of Sir Herbert Stanley Oakeley* (London 1904), 207. Sir Herbert Oakeley (1830-1903) was an organist of note, and for many years Reid Professor of Music at the University of Edinburgh. During his tenure he instituted the Reid Concerts, which brought high-quality orchestral music performed by artists such as Charles Hallé and Clara Schumann before the Edinburgh public. Oakeley was knighted in 1876.

²⁵ Shaw, *Music in London*, III:31.

medical charities persuaded the committee to adopt an essentially conservative approach to programming. While a modest number of "novelties" continued to be commissioned, the festival programmes tended, as we shall see, to err on the side of caution in order to ensure the highest possible attendance. As a result the opportunities for contemporary composers were steadily reduced from about 1900, and the public was subjected to a core repertoire of reliable festival warhorses rather than to a broader and more challenging range of musical experience.

The aesthetics of the balance sheet also led to economies in the engagement of artists. Singers had on occasion to represent two or more characters in cantatas, with unsatisfactory, not to mention incongruous results.²⁶ Stanford's understandable frustration with the committee's cheese-paring inclinations before the 1904 Festival is only too apparent in a letter to his friend William S Hannam, a Leeds solicitor and a long-standing member of the Festival executive committee:

I'm glad you're all so happy. I'm not. Who the devil is to sing Beckmesser beats me, now that you leave out the only man who knows it - Bispham - Why, why, why? and why is Brema out? Is it economy? It cannot be because they are not good enough, for they are two of the biggest artists we have anywhere. The Wagner cast is two men short. No King in *Lohengrin*, no David...I'm getting simply sick of the worry of the whole thing...I do happen to know what the parts are, what their styles and ranges are and what type of voices they want. If it were not so you are wasting a lot of money on me when 10 shillings would buy a Maelzel Metronome!²⁷

²⁶ In a letter to Nicholas Kilburn written shortly after the 1901 Festival, Coleridge-Taylor complained of the absurdities which resulted from the doubling up of parts:

For instance, Nokomis in *The Death of Minnehaha* speaks through the chorus - Minnehaha herself is 'Famine' and after she is dead she sings 'Spring has come'!

There is strong dramatic inconsistency for you! In an opera, of course, I should be the first to take care of these things.

(Coleridge-Taylor to Kilburn, 17th October 1901. Quoted in Geoffrey Self, *The Hiawatha Man* (Aldershot 1995), 125.)

²⁷ Stanford to Hannam, 27th April 1904, quoted in H Plunket Greene, *Charles Villiers Stanford* (London 1935), 133.

The great and the good

The appointment of a committee of local worthies to manage the affairs of the festival on a purely voluntary basis was customary at all major provincial festivals. Often the merits of such an arrangement were questionable. In 1893 Shaw had fired a heavily ironic broadside at the Norwich Festival committee, whose constituency was broadly typical of such committees throughout the country, at least in the level of its musical expertise, if not perhaps the social standing of its members:

I note that the committee includes twenty-five peers or sons of peers, nineteen baronets, sixteen members of Parliament, four knights, three mayors, a high sheriff and an ordinary sheriff, two judges (of law), a dean, an esquire, a colonel, and not a solitary musician or artist of any degree - not even a critic to see fair. There will therefore be no danger of having the festival spoiled by the interference of specialists.²⁸

Of the eighty-three members who served on the Leeds Festival General Committee between 1901 and 1913 not a single professional musician nor a woman is to be found. There were, however, thirteen solicitors and no fewer than forty Justices of the Peace. Piecing together information from directories, contemporary biographies and newspaper obituaries it is possible to construct the profile of a typical committee member. Born in Leeds in the 1850s, he would be educated at public school and Oxbridge, before embarking on a successful career in either manufacturing or the law. A Conservative in politics, he was likely to have served on the city council, and may well have been an alderman and a Justice of the Peace. An active churchman, he would be involved in a variety of good works covering such areas as health, relief of the poor, or education.²⁹ Many threads bound this Leeds élite together into a tightly-knit community. Examples of connections by marriage are numerous, while paths may have crossed in any number of spheres: the Parish Church, the Leeds Club, the masonic lodge, the Chamber of Commerce or the golf course.³⁰ A remarkable number of committee men were graduates of Trinity College, Cambridge and

²⁸ Shaw, *Music in London*, III:31.

²⁹ Brief biographical sketches of a number of committee members are included in Appendix 3.

³⁰ Golf enjoyed unprecedented popularity among the well-to-do during the Edwardian period and many members listed it among their recreations. In 1911 *Punch* magazine explained that while golf had been fashionable for some time 'it was only now that not to play put one outside the pale'. See Donald Read, *Edwardian England 1901-15* (London 1972), 47.

one cannot help wondering if this fact had any bearing on the appointment of Stanford, himself a Trinity man.³¹

In a lecture to the Incorporated Society of Musicians delivered in December 1910, J A Rodgers, a Sheffield music teacher and chorus master of some note, suggested that the ideal festival committee should be 'a permanent body of enlightened business men of artistic equipment, with a leavening of practical musicians holding progressive views'.³² Only a small proportion of Leeds committee members appear to have had any musical training or facility. Those with first-hand experience of singing in the festival chorus, such as Edward Ward and the Reverend G Surtees Talbot, were a rarity. If we recall Fred Spark's objective of obtaining the 'gratuitous services of amateurs' we must wonder how appropriate the term 'amateur' might actually be, particularly when we read in the Management Minutes of December 1911 that 'five gentlemen members of the Executive Committee did not subscribe for serial tickets for the Festival 1910'.³³

Fred Spark received his musical training as a chorister at Exeter Cathedral under Samuel Sebastian Wesley, before embarking on a career in journalism and printing. Despite some autocratic tendencies Spark was nevertheless prepared to seek advice from those whose musical judgement he respected. Thus it was that in the matter of selecting new works for the festival he sought the 'competent, valuable and unbiassed opinion' of Edward Elgar.³⁴

Yet as a body the Festival Committee did tend on occasion to ignore professional advice, believing that it collectively knew best. As Fred Spark's son-in-law, and numbering several committee members among his friends and acquaintances, Herbert Thompson was sufficiently close to observe a certain degree of arrogance among their ranks, to which he made oblique reference in a retrospective piece on the 1913 Festival:

To see ourselves as others see us is often a salutary experience, if usually a painful one, and it should be of especial service to

³¹ Perhaps more convincing is the claim of Charles Graves that Stanford was offered the post on the recommendation of Hubert Parry. See Charles L Graves, *Hubert Parry. His Life and Works* (London 1926), 1:393.

³² Reported in *MT*, 52 (March 1911): 184.

³³ Management Committee minutes, 20th December 1911.

³⁴ Spark, *Memories*, 34.

Yorkshiremen, who are apt to entertain a rather exalted opinion of their many virtues.³⁵

The thorny issue of programme selection provides the most obvious examples of the tendency of the committee to ignore wiser counsel.

The 'eternal rut'

It is an inescapable fact that of the fifteen festivals up to and including 1913 no fewer than ten of them featured a performance of Mendelssohn's *Elijah*.³⁶ Of the remaining five, three (1874, 1889 and 1895) included Handel's *Messiah* in the programme. Only the festivals of 1901 and 1907 passed without the appearance of either of these quintessential Victorian icons.³⁷ There can be little doubt that this bucking of the trend owed much to the influence of Stanford. In his correspondence with William Hannam, Stanford clearly reveals the difficulties he faced with the conservative programming policy which held sway at Leeds. 'Get out of this eternal rut of *Messiah* and *Elijah*,' he urged in November 1900 as preparations for the 1901 Festival were underway. 'Set the example of what ought to be done at a Festival like yours'.³⁸

Since 1892 it had been the custom at Leeds to perform *Elijah* only at alternate festivals, thereby avoiding what *The Times* described as 'the perfunctory and comatose performances which we all know so well at other festival centres'.³⁹ But this grudging concession to variety was scarcely enough for Stanford. Rather as he had shaken Cambridge University Musical Society from its lethargy as a young man, Stanford endeavoured to bring flair and imagination to an organization set in its ways and with firm ideas about how things should be done.⁴⁰ A cautionary note had been sounded in February 1901 when Herbert

³⁵ *YP*, 24th October 1913.

³⁶ Programme books, Leeds Musical Festival, 1858-1913.

³⁷ Writing in 1904, Herbert Thompson asserted that 'Nothing illustrates the stupid conservatism of the average Briton in matters musical than his blindly exclusive adherence to one or two favoured oratorios'. *YP*, 6th October 1904.

³⁸ Greene, *Stanford*, 131.

³⁹ *The Times*, 13th October 1910.

⁴⁰ See Frida Knight, *Cambridge Music from the Middle Ages to Modern Times* (Cambridge & New York 1980), chapter 6, for an account of Stanford's work with the C.U.M.S. Stanford's association with Leeds from 1897 as the conductor of the Leeds Philharmonic Society is described in chapter 3.

Thompson, writing in the *Musical Times*, welcomed Stanford's appointment, praising his programmes with the Leeds Philharmonic Society as 'the most interesting of their kind in the West Riding', but commenting somewhat prophetically:

It is to be hoped he will be allowed to exercise a similarly good influence on the festival programme; but the ways of festival committees are peculiar, especially when the independence of the Yorkshire character has to be taken into account.⁴¹

Lack of consultation remained the constant complaint of Stanford with regard to the committee. It was felt all the more keenly since he recognized, quite rightly, that in the final analysis it would be *his* head on the block when criticism arose of the Leeds programmes:

The whole situation is ludicrous and unprecedented in any festival. The result of the programme is a long series of solemn funeral music, without a single point of relief...It is all Black-edged, and it will be damnably depressing, *Tod* without *Verklärung* and ending with the *Golden Legend* which is dead played out.

A little timely consultation would have prevented it; but as they made their own programme, I said nothing beyond suggesting alterations when they wanted them: and I must be content to take, and I shall have to, whether the Committee think this or not, the severe criticisms which will most certainly be made, on my own shoulders...The report will probably say that the programme has been arranged 'after consultation with me.' This must not be allowed to pass uncorrected. In no important particular was I consulted at all.⁴²

By 1910, which was to be his fourth and last festival in charge, Stanford was finally making some progress with the committee. Although an invitation to Rachmaninov was made against his wishes, the programme for that year was much more to his satisfaction. He wrote to Herbert Thompson, 'Considering that one can't get everything really as one wants with a body of men of wildly different tastes, I think the programme is wonderfully interesting & representative'.⁴³ In the same letter he included a witty spoof festival programme as he supposed might be drawn up by the *Daily Telegraph's* music critic Robin Legge (1862-1933). As well as Strauss's *Elektra* and *Sinfonia Domestica*, and Debussy's *Pelléas et Mélisande*, it included the imaginary oratorios *The Black Country* by Rutland

⁴¹ *MT*, 42 (February 1901): 117.

⁴² Stanford to William Hannam, 15th November 1903. Quoted in Greene, *Stanford*, 131-132.

⁴³ Stanford to Thompson, 7th August 1910. Thompson Papers, MS.361/277, Brotherton Collection, University of Leeds. Quoted in Lewis Foreman, *From Parry to Britten* (London 1987), 43.

Boughton and *The Loan Guarantee Assn Bankruptcy* by Granville Bantock. Behind the humour Stanford recognized the need to produce a programme which would keep the festival on a sound financial footing while maintaining its national reputation.

Some idea of the dynamics of programme selection may be gleaned from the few surviving minutes of the Programme Committee. Included with the minutes of a meeting in June 1909 is an extract from a letter to the chairman Thomas Marshall from Stanford:

I can't see how you can get in the Tchaikowsky No.4 Symphony. It is a bit hackneyed and does not wear too well and you have four Symphonies as it is - quite enough and all far better stuff than the Tchaikowsky. My other suggestion I hope you will for many reasons agree to viz. Parry's Pied Piper. It is excessively lively and jolly and just fits the joviality of Saturday evening...it is right and proper to represent him.⁴⁴

Stanford's advice on dropping the Tchaikovsky symphony was not taken, and while his suggestion of the Parry work for Saturday was adopted, it was not unanimously approved. The minutes further record a 'strong objection' on the part of Hannam and Atkinson to the Friday morning programme, which resulted in the dropping of Schumann's *Manfred* overture and Liszt's *Faust* symphony.⁴⁵

'The rice pudding of music'

At the conclusion of his twenty-seven page survey of oratorio written for the first edition of Grove's *Dictionary of Music and Musicians*, W S Rockstro (1823-1895) expressed the late Victorian view of the genre as the ultimate challenge to the serious musician:

The Oratorio is to the Musician the exact analogy of what the Cathedral is to the Architect - the highest Art-form to the construction of which he can aspire. Very few Architects get the chance of building a Cathedral. Certainly such work is never entrusted to any one who has not already given abundant proof of his talent and experience.⁴⁶

⁴⁴ Stanford to Thomas Marshall, typescript extract of undated letter included with minutes of Programme Committee meeting, 22nd June 1909.

⁴⁵ Programme Committee minutes, 22nd June 1909.

⁴⁶ W S Rockstro, in Sir George Grove (ed.), *A Dictionary of Music and Musicians* (London 1899), II:559.

By the time the second edition appeared (1904-1910), under the general editorship of J A Fuller-Maitland, tastes were already changing and much of Rockstro's entry, including the extract quoted above, had been replaced by a new one from the pen of Ernest Walker. Today few people would be likely to agree with Rockstro's assessment of oratorio as the supreme form of musical expression. The historian Ronald Pearsall rather neatly summed up the significance of oratorio from a late twentieth-century perspective:

Oratorio filled a need; it was the rice-pudding of music - starchy, filling, but rather uninteresting. It is to its credit that it gave employment to a good many worthy people at a time when composers had to get jobs as organists to survive, and it helped to keep alive the English choral tradition.⁴⁷

While this view is undoubtedly valid it ignores the dead hand which oratorio placed on the creativity of successive generations of composers. With some justification Donald Mitchell wrote of 'an appetite for oratorio that often, in more senses than one, devoured the many composers it stimulated'.⁴⁸ The simple fact was that composers attempting to write an oratorio at this time did so in the shadow of *Elijah*, and the temptation to lapse into a sub-Mendelssohnian idiom proved too much for many, particularly if this was likely to lead to public acclaim and probable financial success. Some indication of the phenomenal sales figures which could be achieved by best-selling choral works appeared in a full page advertisement placed by Novello's in the *Musical Times* promoting the compositions of the now largely forgotten Alfred R Gaul, not long after the composer's death in 1913. Among the vocal scores listed were *Joan of Arc* (45,000 copies sold), *Ruth* (70,000 copies sold) and *The Holy City* (a staggering 162,000 copies sold).⁴⁹ The firm of Novello clearly saw financial advantage in an association with the major festivals. Their agent was in attendance at Leeds, and new works would be promoted, often by publishing the score before the work had received its first performance.⁵⁰ The young Adrian Boult was impressed by seeing Elgar

⁴⁷ Ronald Pearsall, *Victorian Popular Music* (Newton Abbot 1973), 147.

⁴⁸ Donald Mitchell, *Cradles of the New* (London 1995), 251.

⁴⁹ *MT*, 55 (January 1914): 67.

⁵⁰ As an example a review of the piano score of Mackenzie's *The Witch's Daughter* appeared in the *Yorkshire Post* several days before the first performance. (*YP*, 29th September 1904.)

hand over a printed full score of his symphonic study *Falstaff* to Artur Nikisch at the final rehearsal in 1913.⁵¹

By the early years of the century, however, times and tastes were changing, and not only at the Leeds Festival. While the tradition was maintained of including the great oratorios of Handel and Mendelssohn in the programme the attendance figures suggest that the enthusiasm of festival goers may have been beginning to gravitate in other directions: towards the choral works of Elgar and, increasingly, symphonic and operatic music. At the Three Choirs Festival in 1904 the audience for *Elijah* was 2,324, but the largest attendance of the week was 2,784 for Elgar's oratorio *The Apostles*.⁵² Still more telling are the figures for Sheffield in 1911, where in a hall with a capacity of 1,650 only 808 people came to hear *Messiah*, the lowest attendance of the week, whereas 1,312 people attended a programme featuring Bantock's *Omar Khayyám* and excerpts from Wagner's *Parsifal*.⁵³

In parallel with the oratorio industry, the continuing demand for both sacred and secular cantata had composers ransacking the attics and basements of literature and history in search of suitable subjects. What they brought forth might perhaps have better been left where it lay. Hubert Parry wrote of the 'truly fearful libretto' and 'drivelling feebleness' of Alexander Mackenzie's *The Witch's Daughter*, first performed at Leeds in 1904, and later referred to it scathingly as *The Ditch's Water*.⁵⁴ In fairness to Mackenzie, who at the time was rumoured to have renounced festival commissions, only to succumb to the blandishments of the Leeds committee, the musical content of the work showed far greater merit than J G Whittier's mediocre libretto. While conceding that 'the workmanship is as ingenious and clever as we have a right to expect', the critic of *The Times* found little else to enthuse over, commenting:

It was a disappointment...to find the cantata nothing but a musical setting of an excessively tame pastoral by Whittier, wherein the entirely uneventful loves of a couple of rustics were narrated in verse of a singularly inflexible nature. It is little wonder that the

⁵¹ Adrian C Boult, *My Own Trumpet* (London 1973), 67.

⁵² Anthony Boden, *Three Choirs. A History of the Festival* (Stroud 1992), 147.

⁵³ *MT*, 52 (October 1911): 673.

⁵⁴ Jeremy Dibble, *C Hubert H Parry: His Life and Music* (Oxford 1992), 407.

composer has not been very happily inspired or that his hearers care little what becomes of the lovers.⁵⁵

The quality of compositions also doubtless suffered as a result of the commercial pressures and deadlines imposed upon composers. The ever perceptive A J Jaeger remarked upon this in a letter to Herbert Brewer (1865-1928), the Gloucester organist and Three Choirs conductor:

My friend Mr Elgar told me a week ago that he has refused an offer to write an orchestral work for your Festival. I am glad to hear it for *his* sake for he has his hands full with "Caractacus" and the haste with which most of you good men have to compose their Festival works is on the whole the great bane of English music. Everybody seems to write under fearful pressure (especially Parry) and the consequences we all know, alas! Well, it is not my business, but I am awfully sorry it is so.⁵⁶

Clearly the majority of works commissioned by Leeds have not stood the test of time, and in all probability did not deserve to. Perhaps more important than their individual survival was the spirit of encouragement which these commissions fostered, forming a soil from which more precious and longer lasting blooms would grow.

The Edwardian appetite

The festival programmes of the pre-war years resemble nothing so much as the dinner table of the affluent Edwardian, groaning under the weight of countless rich and lavish dishes. While the programmes of the Victorians could be protracted, they tended on the whole to favour a mixture of worthy but dull stodge together with more easily digestible fare: overtures or dismembered symphonic movements interlaced with glees and part songs. As an illustration, the following programme comes from the 1886 Festival:⁵⁷

The Story of Sayid	A C Mackenzie
Idomeneo (Selection)	Mozart
Part song, The days of long ago	Berthold Tours
Madrigal, Thine eyes so bright	Henry Leslie
Overture, Euryanthe	Weber

⁵⁵ *The Times*, 6th October 1904.

⁵⁶ A J Jaeger to Herbert Brewer, 12th May 1898. Quoted in A Herbert Brewer, *Memories of Choirs and Cloisters* (London 1931), 93-94.

⁵⁷ Spark and Bennett, *History*, 301-302.

The contrast with the opening concert of the 1913 Festival, conducted by Elgar, could not be clearer:⁵⁸

Overture, Leonora No.3	Beethoven
The Dream of Gerontius	Elgar
Ode to Music	Parry
Alto Rhapsody	Brahms
Symphony No.3	Brahms

Herbert Thompson's diary entry for that day records that the Brahms symphony ended at 3.28. With an interval of just over an hour after *Gerontius* this means that the audience sat through almost three and a half hours of music at this concert.⁵⁹ The mammoth proportions of this and subsequent programmes during the festival, particularly that of Thursday evening, which featured first performances of works by Elgar, Bantock and Hamilton Harty, provoked the critic Ernest Newman to complain:

Not only are the Leeds Festival people so overcrowding their programmes that it is a pure impossibility for the critics to hear them throughout, but they have added to our difficulties by placing three novelties on the same day. In addition they imposed on Elgar the strain of conducting three works before his own came on...⁶⁰

Indeed, so overladen was the programme that evening that at 10.45, after three hours of music, the Festival Secretary Charles Haigh announced from the platform that the final work, Mozart's G Minor Symphony, would not now be performed.⁶¹ The following evening Berlioz's *Benvenuto Cellini* Overture was cut from the opening of another enormous programme which featured Stanford's *Irish Rhapsody No.1*, Beethoven's Violin Concerto, Strauss's *Tailfefer* and *Ein Heldenleben*, rounded off by extracts from *Götterdämmerung*!⁶² No less a figure than Joseph Joachim, whose experience of playing at Leeds Festivals spanned almost half a century, was on one occasion moved to remark to Hermann Klein:

⁵⁸ Programme book, Leeds Musical Festival 1913.

⁵⁹ Herbert Thompson. Diary, 1st October 1913, Brotherton Collection, University of Leeds.

⁶⁰ *Birmingham Daily Post*, 3rd October 1913, quoted in J N Moore, *Edward Elgar, A Creative Life* (Oxford 1984), 654.

⁶¹ Thompson, Diary, 2nd October 1913.

⁶² *MT*, 54 (November 1913): 736.

But what a pity it is that those Festivals attempt to do so much! The programmes are always too long, too heavy, too overloaded with good things. And they go on for four days and nights. What an infliction for your poor musical critics!⁶³

Rather more deserving of our sympathy than the critics must surely be the orchestra and chorus, confronted as they were with two enormous programmes per day from Wednesday through until Saturday. One cannot help but assume that a workload of this magnitude must surely have taken its toll, and that the quality of performance inevitably suffered as a result. Pressures at rehearsal must have been equally severe, given the number of works to be got through. On the eve of the 1913 Festival Elgar conducted the final rehearsal of his new symphonic study *Falstaff*. His wife Alice noted in her diary that day:

September 30. E's rehearsal was to be at 11 - but Nikisch had a cold & E. let him finish first. So E. had only a short time & tired Orchestra. A. drefful nerves about it.⁶⁴

At the 1910 Festival Hubert Parry, rehearsing his *Pied Piper of Hamelin*, found to his discomfort that the chorus, already burdened with new works from Vaughan Williams and Stanford, scarcely knew their parts. He noted later in his diary that the rehearsal was 'one of the most dreadful things I have ever experienced'.⁶⁵ Edward Bairstow, organist at the 1907 and 1910 Festivals, was of the opinion that they included far more music than any chorus could reasonably be expected to learn. He later recounted how from his position in the organ loft he was ideally placed to hear the 'mistakes and hesitancy' of the tenors and basses behind him.⁶⁶

What precisely lay behind this predilection for the gargantuan is difficult to say. It may simply have been part of the general Edwardian inclination towards excess, percolating

⁶³ *MT*, 60 (February 1919): 67.

⁶⁴ Quoted in Moore, *Edward Elgar*, 654. Tensions over rehearsal time were evident at Elgar's first Leeds appearance in 1898 at which he conducted *Caractacus*. In a letter to A J Jaeger he wrote, 'I had a good rehearsal at Leeds with the chorus but it makes me, an artist, sick to see that fool Gray allowed as long to rehearse his blasted rot as I am...' Elgar to A J Jaeger, 29th August 1898. Quoted in Jerrold Northrop Moore, *Elgar and his Publishers* (Oxford 1987), 1: 87.

⁶⁵ Quoted in Dibble, *Parry*, 441.

⁶⁶ Francis Jackson, *Blessed City. The Life and Works of Edward C Bairstow* (York 1996), 67.

down from the very monarch himself.⁶⁷ It could equally have been the desire to outdo the competition (Birmingham or the Three Choirs) by presenting ever more lavish productions with a huge orchestra and chorus.

'A wholly provincial matter'

It is perhaps a sad reflection on contemporary perceptions of provincial instrumentalists that throughout the nineteenth century all the great festivals had maintained the tradition of importing the vast majority of their orchestral forces, usually from London. By the dawn of the Edwardian era little had changed since 1888, when the *Musical Times* identified the creation of local orchestras as 'that great and crying need of musical England' and complained about the exclusion of competent local talent:

...we rarely see a Festival so managed as that it shall promote general executive efficiency in its immediate neighbourhood... We think it will be found, on enquiry, that in all the large Festival towns there are instrumentalists of no mean capacity whom the present system entirely shuts out.⁶⁸

Leeds was certainly not alone among the festival towns in engaging outside instrumentalists for its festival orchestra. For its 1903 Festival Birmingham engaged the entire Hallé band of ninety-five players, supplemented by eighteen London players and a mere eight local musicians, with a joint leader (Mr Schiever) from Liverpool. As a result, orchestral rehearsals were held in Manchester and not in London as had been the case previously.⁶⁹

One of the economies arising from the financial loss of 1910 was the engagement of the orchestra *en bloc* rather than on an individual basis. Enquiries were made in late 1911 with the London Symphony Orchestra. In a statement prepared by the committee for the LSO the names of the twenty-four instrumentalists from the local area and the Hallé Orchestra who had participated in the 1910 Festival were listed, together with a request for

⁶⁷ In *Edward VII and His Circle* (London 1956), 267, Virginia Cowles wrote 'Edwardian society modelled itself to suit the King's personal demands. Everything was larger than life-size.[...] More money was spent on clothes, more food was consumed, more horses were raced, more infidelities were committed, more birds were shot, more yachts were commissioned, more late hours were kept, than ever before. It was, in short, the most ostentatious and extravagant decade that England had known'.

⁶⁸ *MT*, 29 (November 1888): 649.

⁶⁹ *MT*, 44 (September 1903): 600.

Chapter 2: 'A Pleasing Fiction': The Leeds Triennial Festivals

their retention, as the committee thought it 'their duty as far as possible in a local Festival to support the men who make their living in the District out of Orchestral playing'.⁷⁰ No further correspondence on this matter survives, but the 1913 programme book shows that of the twenty-four players listed only three were actually engaged - Edward Mills (clarinet) and Harry Barlow (tuba) from the Hallé Orchestra, and just one local musician, the trumpeter Mark Hemingway.

Based on such evidence there is a strong case in support of the editorial from *The Chord* cited earlier:

...it was one of our points that a Provincial Festival was too much a London matter...It ought to be a wholly provincial matter; both singers and players ought to be drawn from the neighbourhood. We should not dream of going so far as to exclude London artists: we merely protest against the exclusion of provincial artists, so that the whole Festival trade is kept in the hands of a few London artists, who get all the honour and the profits.⁷¹

The Leeds chorus

Over the years the constitution of the Leeds Festival Chorus underwent periodic change. Quite properly there was always a nucleus of local Leeds singers, but this would be supplemented to a greater or lesser extent by vocalists either from neighbouring towns such as Bradford, Pudsey and Morley or from more distant centres of West Riding choral excellence such as Huddersfield and Halifax. It was generally believed that Leeds alone did not possess the 350 or so voices of sufficient quality to make up a festival choir.⁷² Thus the 1898 programme book, for example, lists the chorus divided into five contingents, drawn from Leeds, Bradford, Huddersfield, Halifax, and Dewsbury and Batley, each with its own chorus master and pianist. Needless to say, this distributed approach made for logistical complexity and ran the risk of a lack of interpretative uniformity among the various contingents. As a result, in 1901 the committee decided to take what Stanford was later to term the 'fatal step' of abandoning the West Riding chorus in favour of a more locally based

⁷⁰ Management Committee Minutes, 7th December 1911, West Yorkshire Archive Service 1076/1.

⁷¹ *The Chord*, 2 (September 1899): 70.

⁷² The *MT* noted in 1895 that the committee had 'very wisely decided to continue the plan, adopted three years ago with such success, of obtaining choral contingents from all the chief West Riding towns'. *MT*, 36 (January 1895): 47.

one under a single chorus master.⁷³ While this simplified the business of rehearsals and afforded the opportunity for better overall preparation, there was a price to be paid in that interest in the festival among West Riding people was much reduced. Stanford, who strongly advised against the change, believed not only that the Leeds Festival should be much more than a local event, but that its continued artistic and financial success, indeed its very survival, relied on county-wide support.

It had, however, been a long cherished ambition of Fred Spark to engage a chorus composed entirely of Leeds singers, and it seems likely that his influence, bolstered by his confident belief in an abundance of locally available talent, eventually prevailed over the committee. For 1904 the method of chorus selection followed the 1901 model, but in 1907 Spark's dream was finally realised:

Without test, which is often delusive and restrictive, about 200 well-known, able, and practical members of the 1904 Festival were engaged. Two hundred more were required, and we had 700 or 800 applicants. It was decided first to examine the Leeds applicants, and the Committee and Chorus Master (Mr H A Fricker) found no reason for engaging any chorus applicant outside Leeds.⁷⁴

The Leeds chorus acquitted itself extremely well and provided Spark with perhaps the crowning achievement of his long and distinguished association with the festival:

I am jealous for the honour of the 1907 Chorus - as it was my "child," so to speak, secured my ideal Leeds Festival Chorus, and roused in the breast of every Leeds singer patriotic pride in the prestige attached to the City.⁷⁵

Despite favourable press comment, some members of the committee did not share Spark's enthusiasm for the 1907 chorus.⁷⁶ As preparations got under way in early 1909 for the next festival George W Atkinson prepared a report for the management committee in which he wrote:

I am convinced that Leeds can only supply about 200 singers who are of the very highest standard and that the suggestion to take 160

⁷³ Management Committee minutes, 1st February 1912.

⁷⁴ Spark, *Memories*, 48.

⁷⁵ *Ibid.*

⁷⁶ Other than noting some tiredness towards the end of the festival, Herbert Thompson was full of praise for the 1907 chorus which he described as 'the most highly-trained chorus the Leeds Festival has ever boasted of'. (*YP*, 11th October 1907).

singers from outside areas will greatly improve the quality and tone of the chorus.⁷⁷

It was, according to Atkinson, 'eminently desirable to make the Leeds Festival a Yorkshire Festival', a view shared by others, including Stanford, as we have seen. The achievements of Henry Coward with the Sheffield Choral Union were perhaps by now beginning to dent the slightly complacent attitude of earlier years:

...in face of the competition with Sheffield and other Festivals it is imperative that no effort should be spared to obtain for the 1910 Festival the very finest Chorus that can be procured as it is only by this and by engaging the best principals that we can hold our own.⁷⁸

The decision to engage only around 200 local choralists for the 1910 Festival with the remainder being drawn from other West Riding towns caused considerable indignation in some quarters. To make matters worse, it was further resolved to reduce the fee of Leeds singers to £3 while paying the outsiders £4 plus expenses. According to Fred Spark 'the pride, the honour, and the prestige of Leeds as a Festival Chorus city were all destroyed at "one fell stroke"'.⁷⁹ There must have been disappointment in many Leeds households in the spring of 1909 since only 208 singers from the Leeds area were selected by the highly respected organist and choirmaster of Ripon Cathedral, C H Moody, from 380 applicants.⁸⁰ Despite the protestations and the resultant damaged pride this more selective approach appears to have produced the desired effect:

The quality of the chorus is this year exceptionally fine. As Leeds festivals succeed one another, various alterations are made in the constitution of the chorus; now it is drawn from Leeds alone, now from Leeds with the assistance of one or two other towns, and again from the West Riding. It is from this last that the choir of this year has been recruited; and the result, to judge by this morning, is admirable. Not merely is there a very powerful and noble tone, but

⁷⁷ Management Committee minutes, 1st March 1909.

⁷⁸ Ibid.

⁷⁹ Spark, *Memories*, 49.

⁸⁰ Management Committee minutes, 30th June 1909; Programme book, Leeds Musical Festival 1910. The figure includes singers from Armley, Beeston, Headingley, Hunslet, Roundhay and Wortley.

the hearer feels intelligence, enthusiasm, and artistry coming through it...⁸¹

For a committee anxious to cut costs the reduced fee for Leeds singers and the inclusion of amateurs yielded the additional advantage of a saving of £237 over the cost of the 1907 chorus.⁸² The success of the scheme financially and artistically led the secretary to conclude:

The method of selection has completely justified itself by the production of the finest Chorus ever heard in Leeds and it is suggested that the same method shall be adopted for the Festival of 1913.⁸³

The chorus master

For a festival such as Leeds the choice of chorus master was a crucial one. Stanford regarded the chorus master as his 'Chief of Staff' and naturally expected to be consulted about the appointment.⁸⁴ Alfred Benton, the organist of Leeds Parish Church who had been chorus master of the Leeds contingent in 1895 and of the whole chorus in 1898 under Sullivan, was appointed for the 1901 Festival. Despite generally favourable comment on the quality of the chorus during the festival, Stanford was highly critical of Benton afterwards, claiming in a lengthy letter to the Lord Mayor that he was 'not gifted with the quality which interests and stimulates a choral body'.⁸⁵ The eight-page typed memorandum, marked "Private and Confidential, and for communication to the Committee alone", was in fact suppressed by the three recipients.⁸⁶ Enumerating as it does in painful detail the many

⁸¹ *The Times*, 13th October 1910.

⁸² Management Committee minutes, 1st October 1909.

⁸³ Management Committee minutes, 18th November 1910.

⁸⁴ Greene, *Stanford*, 127. However, it would appear that Stanford was faced with a *fait accompli* not only in the case of Benton but also of his successor, Fricker. In 1904 Herbert Thompson was critical of 'the method invariably adopted by the Festival Committee, who, by nominating a chorus-master before they fix upon a conductor, allow the latter no say in the appointment of his deputy'. (*YP*, 14th October 1904).

⁸⁵ Stanford to the Lord Mayor of Leeds, 13th October 1901. Spark, *Collection of brochures*, Leeds Local History Library. The letter was copied to Spark and Thomas Marshall.

⁸⁶ Spark's copy bears the pencil annotation in his own hand: "Sent to me Dec 9, 1901. The Mayor, Mr Marshall and I met & decided that the letter should not be read to the Committee."

perceived shortcomings of Benton as chorus master, it is not difficult to see why they chose to do so:

Of training in the all-important matters of rhythm, expression and clear enunciation of words there was a lamentable lack...In *Parsifal*...the chorus ended on one key and the orchestra in another...The Festival in future must have an alert and gifted Chorus Master, who teaches the spirit as well as the letter: and who is able to detect the smallest error in detail.⁸⁷

Such brutal honesty may have its place, but one must seriously question Stanford's decision to write to Benton informing him of the existence of the memorandum and its contents. Even though he realised that his comments would prove deeply hurtful to Benton – indeed he admits as much in his letter ('I know you must be wounded by my judgment, who would not be?') – Stanford persisted in the task of telling the Leeds chorus master that the post required 'greater equipment than I felt you were able to bring to bear upon it'.⁸⁸ The letter concluded with the scarcely veiled intimation that Benton's association with the festival was at an end. Poor Benton was indeed wounded, and penned a vigorous reply which included the following paragraph:

This is not the opportunity to go into detail, but I may assure you, that some time previous to the Festival you had lost the respect and confidence of practically the whole Chorus: so much so that on the final concert, if I had not personally intervened, you would have undergone a most humiliating experience - my non-intervention however would have saved me from your ill-advised letter.⁸⁹

In the event Benton's reply was never sent, on the advice of his friend Henry Embleton, who presumably had been shown the correspondence by Benton himself.⁹⁰

As to the reason for such hostility we can only surmise: it may have been Benton's friendship with Elgar or perhaps his association with the Leeds Choral Union, the rival of Stanford's Leeds Philharmonic Society, but whatever the motives Stanford and his supporters on the committee finally succeeded in removing Benton, despite a spirited rearguard action from Spark. In a letter to Elgar marked *Strictly Private*, Spark told the

⁸⁷ Ibid..

⁸⁸ Stanford to Alfred Benton, 7th December 1901. Spark, *Collection of brochures*.

⁸⁹ Alfred Benton to Stanford, undated. Spark, *Collection of brochures*.

⁹⁰ An annotation in Spark's hand reads "Copy of Benton's reply. Not sent at Embleton's request."

composer that his choice of the Sheffield chorus rather than the Leeds chorus for a performance of his *Coronation Ode* in London had been used by 'some of Stanford's people' to suggest that Benton was not fit to be a chorus master. He concluded 'This foisting upon you of opinions, to serve professional jealousies by Leeds men, I have long intended to bring to your notice'.⁹¹ It surely cannot be a coincidence that Henry Embleton, a loyal Benton supporter at the Parish Church and the Choral Union, ceased to serve on the Festival Committee after 1901.

In search of novelty

Spark and Bennett's detailed history of the Leeds Festival is remarkably candid in its account of the many snubs received by the Festival Committee over the years in their endeavours to secure new works from eminent composers: Liszt, Verdi and Brahms number among those who declined approaches from Leeds with varying degrees of civility.⁹² Through the offices of the music critic of *The Sunday Times*, Hermann Klein, negotiations were opened with Saint-Saëns regarding an oratorio, but on this occasion it was the Leeds committee who withdrew, questioning 'the prudence of accepting an oratorio from a composer without experience in that class of work'.⁹³

A potent mixture of naïveté, ineptitude and plain bad luck runs through this sorry narrative and indeed continued beyond it, leading the *Yorkshire Post* to comment in early 1901 that the festival committee had 'so far been singularly unfortunate in their efforts to procure novelties for the Festival of next October'.⁹⁴ Dvořák had not even troubled to reply, while Edward German had been persuaded to abandon his projected Violin Concerto in favour of the more lucrative venture of completing Sullivan's unfinished Savoy operetta *The Emerald Isle*. In retrospect, it may not have been too great a loss to Leeds that

⁹¹ F R Spark to Elgar, 27th October 1902. Quoted in Young, *Elgar O.M* (London 1955), 118-119.

⁹² Spark and Bennett, *History*, 101; 208-210; 321-324.

⁹³ *Ibid.*, 325. In fairness to the Leeds committee, their counterparts at Norwich had already declared themselves unwilling to 'accept a work of unknown proportions'. See Hermann Klein, *Thirty Years of Musical Life in London* (London 1903), 176.

⁹⁴ *YP*, 30th January 1901.

Alexander Mackenzie's proposed cantata *Balder, the Sun-God* met a similar fate, withdrawn from the festival partly on the grounds of the composer's ill-health.⁹⁵

In terms of new works the 1901 Festival could not be regarded as an unqualified success. Samuel Coleridge-Taylor, a rising star due to the phenomenal popularity of the *Hiawatha* trilogy, had a distinctly cool reception for his *Blind Girl of Castel Cuillé*, whose choral writing, *The Times* critic noted, was 'sadly wanting in the very quality of inspiration which brought Mr Coleridge-Taylor so suddenly to the front'.⁹⁶ Charles Wood's *A Dirge for Two Veterans*, the first of several Whitman settings to receive a first performance at Leeds before the Great War, fared somewhat better at the hands of the critics, but the days were coming to a close when well-crafted work from the pen of an academic or a cathedral organist could sustain the reputation of a festival. Perhaps it was in the light of this experience that Fred Spark approached Elgar in late 1902 inviting him to write a symphony for the 1904 Festival. Spark was well aware of the delicate balance to be struck between old and new, believing that a festival committee should be 'catholic in its views, not omitting those works which are loved of the people, and yet judiciously including new and little-known works'.⁹⁷

Elgar's reputation was by this time very much in the ascendant. At the 1901 Festival he had conducted his *Variations on an Original Theme* with great success, and more significantly he had secured further commissions as a result of informal meetings during the festival with Harry V Higgins of the Covent Garden Grand Opera Syndicate and with George Hope Johnstone, chairman of the Birmingham Festival Orchestral Sub-Committee. From these discussions were ultimately to emerge the *Coronation Ode* (Sheffield 1902) and *The Apostles* (Birmingham 1903). Alarm bells were soon ringing at Novello's where, according to Jaeger, Alfred and Augustus Littleton had 'had an eye-opener over the Leeds Festival' and, fearing the loss of potentially lucrative new works to other publishers after a

⁹⁵ Mackenzie subsequently did produce a cantata entitled *The Sun-God's Return*, which was first performed on 21st September 1910 at the Cardiff Festival. See *MT*, 51 (October 1910): 652.

⁹⁶ *The Times*, 10th October 1901.

⁹⁷ Spark, *Memories*, 34.

series of disputes with the composer, would be prepared to meet Elgar 'in every way in future'.⁹⁸

Over the years relations between the shrewd and worldly Spark and the erratic composer were not particularly warm, though their correspondence never betrays any overt hostility. One has the impression that Elgar was always of the view that the Leeds committee, through its secretary, was trying to "put one over" on him, especially in financial matters, while Spark was often exasperated by the hesitancy and unreliability of the composer who more than once promised one thing and then did another. In March 1903, after protracted negotiations by letter, Elgar finally accepted Spark's offer of 100 guineas for the first performance of his symphony, knowing full well that this had already been promised to Richter for Manchester.⁹⁹ When Elgar finally did withdraw the symphony for Leeds in October, Spark made one last bid to save the situation:

Could you write for us a short choral work, if a Mass would be too exacting for the time at which our Festival is held?

We have a Committee meeting on Wednesday next, & I should like to be in a position to say that we are to have something new from your pen.¹⁰⁰

Spark's restraint in dealing with the man who in February had pledged to do his 'very best for Leeds' does him credit, but alas it was to be of no avail, and the 1904 Festival passed without a new work from Elgar. Likewise the 1907 Festival, though Elgar did conduct *The Kingdom* for a fee of 100 guineas which the 1910 Management Committee later regarded as excessive.¹⁰¹ Spark persevered as before, but Elgar continued to believe that Stanford and others on the committee were against him, and the invitation merely a matter of form. In a letter to Littleton he cast himself, not for the first time, as the injured party, conveniently forgetting the promises and half-promises broken earlier:

⁹⁸ A J Jaeger to Edward Elgar, 16th October 1901. Quoted in Moore, *Elgar and his Publishers*, 1:305.

⁹⁹ Moore, *A Creative Life*, 398. In December 1908 Elgar wrote to Arthur Troyte Griffith from Alassio: "The history of the Leeds Symphony is this: I always promised the *dedication* to Richter: early this year (I think) I promised the first performance at Leeds: at the Birmingham festival time I learned that R. was counting upon conducting the *first performance* - so I withdrew it from Leeds & gave it to him - *if it's ever ready*: That's all." Percy M Young, *Elgar O.M* (London 1955), 122.

¹⁰⁰ Spark to Elgar, 31st October 1903, HWRO 705:445:5988.

¹⁰¹ Management Committee minutes, 19th July 1909.

I know that 'they' (generally) do not want me, but they want to be able to say I have been asked. I am not conceited about it but I do strongly object to my being treated a third time in the way 'they' have done twice before. You see much as the Conductor wishes to leave me out they save their face by putting in an orchl. work - or by asking an *impossible* thing very late.¹⁰²

The criticism of Stanford was rather unfair: it was Stanford who had exerted his influence to find a place for *In the South* in the 1904 programme, at a time when some members of the committee, angered by the debacle over the promised symphony, had favoured removing Elgar from the programme entirely. As he explained to Hannam:

Fair play, old chap, and a man's artistic work ought to rank independently of his personality. If it had not been that Hans von Bülow had taken this view of Wagner, the Bayreuth theatre would not be standing now.¹⁰³

In March 1909 the committee received a letter from Elgar expressing his regret that no new work would be available for 1910, but indicating his willingness to conduct his new symphony, should it be included in the programme.¹⁰⁴ The minutes of the next Management Committee meeting, at which Stanford was present, suggest that this offer may have given rise to some internal strife, since it was resolved that 'a final decision...should stand over for the present': shorthand for a committee which could not agree.¹⁰⁵ It may have been the prospect of another 100 guinea conducting fee, as in 1907, which decided the matter, but in the event no invitation was forthcoming, though Elgar was well represented on the programme.¹⁰⁶

In consequence Elgar did not attend the 1910 Festival. In a letter to Alice Stuart-Wortley faintly redolent of sour grapes he wrote:

They propose to ruin the Variations, to travesty (the accompaniments) to the Sea Pictures & conventionalize Go song

¹⁰² Elgar to Alfred Littleton, 14th July 1906. Quoted in Moore, *Elgar and his Publishers*, 2:650.

¹⁰³ Stanford to William Hannam, 20th January 1904. Quoted in Greene, *Stanford*, 155.

¹⁰⁴ Management Committee minutes, 2nd March 1909.

¹⁰⁵ Management Committee minutes, 30th June 1909.

¹⁰⁶ Programme book, Leeds Musical Festival 1907.

of mine. The festival has steadily gone down in interest & is now a dull affair of only Kapellmeister interest.¹⁰⁷

As it turned out, Elgar's dire predictions were not realized. Stanford produced an interpretation of the *Variations* which, though somewhat different from that of the composer, was judged 'remarkably fine' by *The Times*.¹⁰⁸ The same festival also witnessed a landmark in English symphonic music with the triumphant first performance of Vaughan Williams' *A Sea Symphony*, one of the handful of enduring works premièred at Leeds.

By the time preparations for 1913 were under way Spark had long departed - he had resigned formally in January 1909¹⁰⁹ - but mistrust and misunderstanding continued to dog Elgar's relations with the Leeds committee. Early in 1912 he was approached about a joint conductorship with colleagues yet to be engaged. For whatever reason Elgar extrapolated this invitation to such an extent that in a remarkable letter to the secretary Charles Haigh he requested that a public announcement be made forthwith of his appointment as Musical Director of the Festival. Furthermore the report should state that he was to be consulted on the engagement of 'some celebrated conductors'.¹¹⁰ On this occasion it fell to J R Ford and Hannam to disabuse Elgar of such notions. In fact the engagement of Nikisch and Allen was announced in the *Musical Times* while that of Elgar had not as yet progressed beyond rumour.¹¹¹

Despite these difficulties the committee evidently remained eager to engage Elgar both as conductor and composer for the 1913 Festival. Hannam approached Novello's, now acting as Elgar's agents in his negotiations with Leeds, about including *The Music Makers* in the programme as well as the newly commissioned *Falstaff*.¹¹² This did not in fact come about. A far greater loss to Leeds, and something not referred to in any of the standard

¹⁰⁷ Elgar to Alice Stuart-Wortley, 31st July 1910. Quoted in Jerrold Northrop Moore, *Edward Elgar: The Windflower Letters* (Oxford 1989), 56.

¹⁰⁸ *The Times*, 15th October 1910.

¹⁰⁹ *The Times*, 20th January 1909.

¹¹⁰ Elgar to C F Haigh, 22nd February 1912. Copy with Management Committee Minutes, 27th February 1912.

¹¹¹ *MT*, 53 (May 1912): 305.

¹¹² Henry R Clayton to William Hannam, 8th November 1912, quoted in Moore, *Elgar and his Publishers*, 2:768.

works on Elgar, was the ultimately unrealised plan of a first performance of the Cello Concerto with Casals as soloist. This tantalizing prospect is hidden away in the minutes of the Management Committee who in July 1912 resolved to include 'the new Concerto for Violoncello and Orchestra if Senor Casals can be engaged for a fee not exceeding 100 guineas and if Sir Edward Elgar is prepared to complete this work'.¹¹³

Yet for all the often strained nature of much of his relationship with Leeds, it should be noted that Elgar did not forget the efforts of those in Yorkshire who helped to make his music more widely known: among the examples of this are his gift of inscribed full scores of *Gerontius* to Alfred Benton and to the organist of York Minster, T Tertius Noble ('these two pioneers') in 1904, and the dedication of *The Reveille* to Henry Embleton.¹¹⁴

As for Stanford, his position as festival conductor placed him in an ideal position to promote his own compositions, but he never chose to abuse this privilege. On the contrary he would appear to have been somewhat diffident when it came to offering new works, as the following scribbled note on the back of a draft programme for 1910 shows:

My new 'Songs of the Fleet' (for Bass and Full Chorus) will be ready for the Naval Concert in July: about the same length as the Sea Songs. They might suit you I think somewhere! But if they don't, no matter. CVS.¹¹⁵

The surviving minutes of the committee from 1909 onwards reveal that several enquiries were received from composers offering new works for their consideration, but none of these were taken up. It would seem that some hard lessons had been learned by this time, and that the committee had become increasingly reluctant to take risks:

The Committee are not in favour of including much new music and they desire expecially [*sic*] to deprecate the introduction of works the nature of which is unknown to the Committee. In the past the time and energies of the Chorus have often been wasted on new works of great difficulty and little merit.¹¹⁶

It is tempting to speculate on what the nature of the proposed works might have been from the likes of Haydn Wood, J H Foulds, J F Barnett, Ethel Smyth and York Bowen, all

¹¹³ Management Committee minutes, 2nd July 1912.

¹¹⁴ Elgar to Alfred Littleton, 23rd October 1904. Quoted in Moore, *Elgar and his Publishers*, 2:591.

¹¹⁵ Draft programme appended to Management Committee minutes, 20th December 1909.

¹¹⁶ William Hannam, report presented to Management Committee, 1st March 1909.

of whom approached the committee with offers of new compositions for performance at Leeds.

Reviewing the 1913 Festival, Herbert Thompson argued in defence of the musical festival in its role as promoter of new works of importance. Orchestral music might be successfully produced in London or Manchester, but a work such as Hamilton Harty's *The Mystic Trumpeter* required soloists, chorus and orchestra of the highest calibre - normally only possible within the context of a festival. Moreover, the standards set would act as a national benchmark:

Festivals serve a national purpose in bringing responsible experts from the chief centres in the country to focus their attention upon what is new, and to reconsider what is old. New standards, summarized at these gatherings, are helped to spread their influence over the country.¹¹⁷

The impact of the Festival on local music

Recalling his happy association with the Leeds Festival during his period as organist at the Parish Church, Edward Bairstow nevertheless recognized the potentially damaging effect of festivals on local music in both economic and artistic terms:

The other drawback to orgies of music of this sort is that they bleed the district. Everyone has a certain amount of money to spend on concerts, and no-one wants to miss the Festival, even when the cheapest reserved seat is 8/-. Lastly the local choruses are jaded with festival work and get stale for their own programmes.¹¹⁸

Contemporary accounts only rarely gave expression to this view, though the *Musical Times* did note as early as 1895 that the festival 'tends to exhaust the soil of musical activity for the time being'.¹¹⁹ It was suggested, for example, that the festival could inhibit local concert promoters, causing them to adopt a cautious and unadventurous approach to programming:

The fact that this is a Festival year may be urged in mitigation for a certain timidity...but, after all, at Leeds it is always either the Festival year, or the year after it, or the year before it, and if such circumstance could really be imagined to stifle local enterprise,

¹¹⁷ *MT*, 56 (November 1913): 736.

¹¹⁸ Jackson, *Blessed City*, 68.

¹¹⁹ *MT*, 26 (November 1895): 762.

instead of stimulating it by raising a high standard, one could be tempted to say, "Away with the Festival!" There should, however, be ample room for both, especially since they appeal to different sections of the public.¹²⁰

Others were of the opinion that a festival whose conductor, principals and orchestra were imported from elsewhere did little to promote local musical activity, and therefore was of limited value to the city. Paradoxically, it was an outsider who made the most vigorous, indeed outspoken, call for a genuinely local festival. Holbrook Jackson, co-founder with Alfred Orage of the Leeds Arts Club during his period of residence in Leeds, was interviewed by the *Yorkshire Daily Observer* in 1911 and asked to give his views on the musical life of the city:¹²¹

I am not overlooking the fact that Leeds has a musical festival, which I rejoice to hear does not pay, for of all the farces in modern musical life the festival is the greatest. If Leeds people had any real and deep interest in music they would do as I have suggested the playgoers should do - produce a musical festival entirely their own, with purely local singers, players, and compositions.¹²²

Evidence from those directly affected by the festival is not easy to discover; however, buried among the correspondence of the Leeds Philharmonic Society is a letter from its secretary, John Green, to Charles Stanford which does provide an indication of the strained relations between festival and local music society. The conductor had evidently urged the LPS to consider more adventurous programmes. While having every sympathy with this view, Green points out that in a festival year there was simply not enough rehearsal time available to prepare new works adequately:

We want to do new things - but we want to do them well, nay we must do them well or not at all. The L.M.F is always a great trouble to us and it bothers us this time more than ever.¹²³

¹²⁰ YP, 21st September 1910.

¹²¹ Holbrook Jackson was a lace merchant, Fabian and freelance journalist, who moved to Leeds in 1900. A chance meeting with Alfred Orage, then a schoolteacher, in a Leeds bookshop became the start of a life-long friendship. The Leeds Arts Club, which they founded in 1903, became a major focus for radical thought and experimental art outside London. For a detailed account of the club see Tom Steele, *Alfred Orage and the Leeds Arts Club 1893-1923* (Aldershot 1990).

¹²² YDO, 14th January 1911.

¹²³ Green to Stanford, 18th April 1901. LPS letter books.

Festival ticket prices

Throughout the Edwardian period the price of most festival tickets remained the same, reflecting in large measure the monetary stability and low inflation of the time. Nevertheless, the cost of tickets was considerable, placing them far beyond the reach of most of the population. A serial ticket admitting the holder to all eight concerts cost £6, which using the factor described earlier equates to £210 at 1996 prices. The best single seat for a morning concert was £1/1/0 and for the evening 15/-; the cheapest evening seat was 8/- (£14 at 1996 prices).

The high cost of tickets was a source of constant criticism. "Kester", the pseudonym adopted by the caricaturist James Dodgson, reflected in the *Yorkshire Post* on the national status of the festival, but at the same time noted that its very status rendered it inaccessible to some:

The only pity of it all is that the cost of production is so great that the prices have, in consequence, to be great also, and this prohibits the small man with his small means, but large musical taste, from hearing this feast of sound.[...] It has been said that the rehearsals would have to be discontinued, because a great many people bought tickets for the rehearsal instead of the concert proper, as it was much cheaper. There may be some who could afford the concerts, but the majority are those who haven't the money for the concerts, and would never hear either orchestra or singers but for the rehearsals...¹²⁴

Ticket sales in 1910 were particularly disappointing. As early as August, Stanford was expressing concern at the poor uptake of serial tickets, linking this to public criticism of the proposed programme from critics such as Robin Legge at the *Daily Telegraph*.¹²⁵ Festival accounts show sales of serial tickets down by almost 1,000 from 1907, though single ticket sales improved slightly. In light of this the reassuring words of *The Times* seem slightly at variance with the true facts:

During recent years, and notably at Birmingham a year ago, it has seemed as if the Musical Festival as an institution were showing signs of ceasing to attract the great public. Whether the cause were to be found in an excess or a lack of musical taste, the fact seemed fairly established; but the signs of great and widespread interest in the present Leeds Festival are unmistakable, and the excellent sales

¹²⁴ *YP*, 4th October 1913.

¹²⁵ Stanford to Herbert Thompson, 7th August 1910. Quoted in Foreman, *From Parry*, 43.

of tickets...could well be left out of consideration by any one who saw the crowded condition of the Town Hall to-day.¹²⁶

After the poor results of 1910 the nature of the final Saturday night concert was reconsidered, both in terms of programming and pricing. Such a review was long overdue, bearing in mind that the final concert of 1901 had produced 'one of the emptiest rooms...ever seen at a Leeds Festival', while the *Yorkshire Post* had warned in 1907 that 'the day is past when the Saturday night's audience had to be satisfied with the cold remains of the Festival, flung like a bone to a dog'.¹²⁷ The report from secretary Charles Haigh recommended that:

...prices charged for admission to this Concert should be entirely revised. The programme should be made of a popular character and the prices of admission should range from 2/6 to 10/- for the Gallery.¹²⁸

For 1913 Mendelssohn's *Elijah* was performed on the Saturday evening with tickets available at 2s 6d and 5s 0d in addition to the customary single evening tickets at 8s 0d and 15s 0d. This change resulted in almost a doubling of the ticket revenue over the equivalent performance in 1910.¹²⁹ Interestingly, this 1913 programme bears an uncanny resemblance to that of the Three Choirs Festival held a month earlier in Gloucester. As well as *Elijah*, both programmes feature *The Dream of Gerontius* coupled with a Brahms symphony, a performance of the Verdi *Requiem*, and a major Bach work (*St Matthew Passion* at Gloucester, the *B Minor Mass* at Leeds).¹³⁰ It seems likely that in the context of falling receipts both committees endeavoured to include a proportion of "safe bets" to offset any losses arising from the performances featuring new commissioned works.

Responsiveness to the tastes of the musical public through pricing changes could only be taken so far, however, due to the inherent limitations of the Town Hall seating arrangements, which precluded the provision of adequate numbers of moderately priced seats - a fact which adversely affected the profitability not only of the festivals, but also that

¹²⁶ *The Times*, 13th October 1910.

¹²⁷ *YP*, 10th October 1904; *YP*, 14th October 1907.

¹²⁸ Management Committee minutes, 18th November 1910.

¹²⁹ See Appendix 2.

¹³⁰ *The Times*, 1st July 1913.

of other undertakings such as the Leeds Philharmonic Society which regularly used it as a venue. The long-time secretary of the LPS, John H Green, wrote of the 'tremendous handicap' from which Leeds suffered compared with other towns:

Quite fresh in my mind is the performance the other day of "La Vita Nuova," in the Victoria Hall, Halifax, and the sight of a thousand people cheaply and comfortably seated, able to see and hear as perfectly as any of those who were in the dress circle or on the floor of the hall - and these quite apart from the first and second class seat subscribers, a class of concert supporters non-existent in Leeds, because there is no room for them. It was the same at the Bradford Festival Society's performance...last week in St George's Hall. The crowded audience in the west and side galleries made all the difference between a profit and a loss.¹³¹

The phrase "comfortably seated" is not without significance. Despite the fact that festival audiences were charged considerable sums of money for the privilege of attending, the quality of the Town Hall seating left much to be desired:

A minor source of annoyance on this and other occasions has arisen from the cheap and nasty seats which the parsimonious Corporation of the fifth town in England provides for its Town Hall. Badly put together, and out of repair, many of them squeakingly protest against any burden that is placed upon them, and the unfortunate people condemned to sit on them have either to assume an attitude so rigid that enjoyment of the music is impossible, or else must run the risk of perforce disturbing all their neighbours.¹³²

Festival audiences

What are we able to discover about festival audiences at this remove? Certainly in the late Victorian period there appears to have been a far greater degree of musical literacy in the audience than some accounts may lead us to believe. Once again it is instructive to turn to Otto Lessmann's account of the 1889 Festival written for the *Allgemeine Musik-Zeitung*:

To anyone who could observe this mass of human beings (for the most part provided with the cheap and handy pianoforte scores published by the great house of Novello, Ewer and Co.), which eight times over filled every seat of the vast hall, it must have been evident that so much devotion, such an assemblage, and such

¹³¹ *YWO*, 11th April 1914.

¹³² *YP*, 14th October 1907.

enthusiasm would be impossible if the people were unmusical by nature.¹³³

As the festival assumed growing national importance, with royal patronage and wide newspaper coverage, fashion played a significant rôle in determining the nature of the festival audience, and the requirement to see and be seen at this major event on the social calendar was evident. The Festival Committee took into account other fashionable social events when deciding on the festival date in order to avoid clashes, as for example in 1901, when it was put back by a week due to an important race meeting at Newmarket.¹³⁴ Later commentators often pointed to the evident lack of interest in music on the part of many of the festival's patrons to question the validity of the city's claim to musical pre-eminence:

...in the old days many of those who preened their new clothes under the dazzling light of the chandeliers had not heard a note of music since the last Festival, and would not until the next. Some of them wilted sadly by the evening of the last day under the burden of this unaccustomed feast.¹³⁵

Surprisingly perhaps, for one genuinely interested in music, Fred Spark regarded the extra-musical aspects of the festival with equanimity, indeed enthusiasm:

The Leeds Musical Festival has become a social institution as well as a musical gathering. All the well-to-do citizens receive into their houses, for the Festival week, relations and friends from a distance. Moreover, many friendly families take advantage of the seat arrangements, and form large groups in pleasant contiguity. To secure this privilege, as many as eight, ten, sometimes fourteen, serial tickets are balloted for in one person's name to secure the advantage described.¹³⁶

This stands in marked contrast to the views of his son-in-law, Herbert Thompson, who was never quite able to reconcile the artistic objects of the festival with the social:

The charitable and social aspects of the event are too apt to relegate to the background its possible artistic value. A crowd of people is got together, the large majority of which regards the

¹³³ *MT*, 30 (November 1889): 666.

¹³⁴ *MT*, 42 (February 1901): 117.

¹³⁵ Lettice Cooper, *Yorkshire, West Riding* (London 1950), 163.

¹³⁶ Spark and Bennett, *History*, 374.

occasion just as it would a fashionable bazaar, at which charity is made the cloak for mild dissipation.¹³⁷

At Leeds, as elsewhere, women formed the vast majority of the audience, to a degree scarcely believable today. After the 1910 Festival the *Musical Times* observed that 'At the daytime concerts there were at least twelve ladies to one man, and the proportion at evening concerts was nearly the same'.¹³⁸ The reasons for this remarkable phenomenon seem likely to remain in the realms of conjecture, given the apparent absence of any contemporary explanation.

In his *Yorkshire Post* column Herbert Thompson painted a telling portrait of the "triennial musician", who every three years affected an interest in serious music, attending performances which 'would have bored him to death were he not uplifted by the thought that all "the best people" were enduring a similar penance'.¹³⁹ Innately conservative, he would gravitate towards the familiar and resist works of a progressive nature. With sufficient social standing, Thompson concluded somewhat waspishly, 'not a few of his type would...find their way into the committee'. It was presumably with "the best people" in mind that for the 1910 Festival it was decided to publish a list of patrons in the programme, *pour encourager les autres*. This proved an enormously successful ploy which 'did a considerable amount of good and attracted many people to the Festival who otherwise would not have come. As a matter of fact the Festival appears to be supported more largely from outside Leeds than from within'.¹⁴⁰ The list included His Majesty the King, the Lord-Lieutenants of the three Ridings, the Duke and Duchess of Norfolk, and the Duke of Devonshire in addition to sundry lords, earls and countesses. Another indication of the social *milieu* of the festival from 1910 was the enormous increase in the use of cars to bring the audience to the Town Hall, giving rise to the inclusion for the first time in the programme book of an item on the "General Arrangements" page headed "Motor Cars":

¹³⁷ *YP*, 6th October 1904.

¹³⁸ *MT*, 51 (November 1910): 720.

¹³⁹ *YP*, 20th February 1920.

¹⁴⁰ Management Committee minutes, 18th November 1910.

Owners of Motor Cars are requested to caution their Chauffeurs against sounding the horn in the streets adjoining the Town Hall during the performances.¹⁴¹

Further clues to the affluence of the festival audience may be found in the advertisements placed in the lavishly illustrated souvenir programmes produced for the occasion. Along with the advertisements for grand pianos starting at ninety guineas came others for the latest technological innovation for the music lover, the gramophone. The Perfectophone, a 'hornless cabinet talking machine, unsurpassed for the reproduction of the Human Voice and Instrumental Music' was actually made in Leeds, at the Jumbo Works on Kirkstall Road, with models ranging in price from £5 to £27.¹⁴² This was at a time when an elementary school teacher was earning an average of £75 per year.¹⁴³

The epicurean tastes of the festival visitor were not forgotten amid all the high culture. During festival week the front page of the *Yorkshire Post* was awash with invitations to enjoy table d'hôte luncheons and dinners at a range of establishments including Powolny's Assembly Rooms (conveniently located opposite the Great George Street entrance of the Town Hall), Wray's Refreshment and Dining Rooms, and Ashby's Café and Oriental Magazin ('The Daintiest Café in Leeds').¹⁴⁴ Those replete with both food and music could visit the collection of old china and curios at Riley's in County Arcade.¹⁴⁵

The Honorary Secretary

There can be no doubt that from 1880, when he assumed sole responsibility for the festival secretaryship, previously shared with J W Atkinson, Fred Spark became the driving force behind the Leeds Festival, and was to remain so for almost thirty years. Indeed during this period there was scarcely an aspect of the public life of Leeds in which he was not actively involved. Obituaries published on his death in November 1919 recorded that at one

¹⁴¹ Programme book, Leeds Musical Festival 1910. The *Yorkshire Evening Post* styled 1910 'The Motor-Car Festival' (*YEP*, 14th October 1910).

¹⁴² F Toothill and W J Fletcher, *Official Programme of the Leeds Musical Festival, 1907* (Leeds 1907); Frank Toothill, *The Leeds Musical Festival Souvenir* (Leeds 1910).

¹⁴³ Read, *Edwardian England*, 44.

¹⁴⁴ *YP*, 7th October 1904.

¹⁴⁵ *Ibid.*

stage Spark held no fewer than forty honorary positions in the city, resulting in some four to five hundred meetings per year.¹⁴⁶ This was in addition to running the thriving printing business of F R Spark and Son! Some idea of the breadth of his activities may be gathered from the following incomplete list of his associations:

Founder and chairman, Leeds Workpeople's Hospital Fund
Member of Pious Uses Trust
Governor of Leeds Grammar School
Member of Leeds General Infirmary Board
Member of Board of Directors, Leeds Permanent Benefit Building Society
Honorary Secretary, Leeds Liberal Association
City Magistrate
Honorary Director, Leeds Private Vocal Society

In many ways Spark can seem to be the embodiment of an innate conservatism within the festival authorities. It is interesting to note, however, that the idea of a joint conductorship originated with Spark, who after Sullivan's death proposed the appointment of Richter and Elgar, which he believed 'would help greatly to maintain the high repute of the Leeds Festivals'.¹⁴⁷ The proposal was rejected as 'utopian', which probably means too expensive. Spark later learned that their services could have been secured 'on reasonable terms', and it was with a certain grim satisfaction that he noted in his autobiography that for 1913 his idea had finally been adopted.¹⁴⁸

Notwithstanding a bluntness of manner more usually associated with natives of his adopted county, Spark could be considerate and encouraging, particularly towards younger artists striving to build their reputations. One of these was Josef Holbrooke (1878-1958). Despite complaints about a lack of rehearsal time and some logistical problems occasioned chiefly by the demands of his own extravagant scoring, Holbrooke was grateful to Spark for his support before the 1904 Festival, and showed his appreciation by dedicating *Queen Mab* to him.¹⁴⁹ Even those who did not secure a performance at Leeds recognized their indebtedness to Spark, among them Havergal Brian (1876-1972), who in October 1909 wrote to him from Stoke-on-Trent enclosing recent criticisms of his work *By the Waters of*

¹⁴⁶ *YWP*, 22nd November 1919.

¹⁴⁷ Spark, *Memories*, 47.

¹⁴⁸ *Ibid.*

¹⁴⁹ Josef Holbrooke to Herbert Thompson, 4th October 1904. Quoted in Foreman, *From Parry*, 29.

Babylon which had just received its first performance in Liverpool 'to prove that your interest was, in the case of my work, not an unjust one'.¹⁵⁰

A man of principle, Spark was never averse to making his views known, and as a consequence had his share of disputes and controversy in the course of a long career. We have already recorded his opposition to the reinstatement of the West Riding chorus in 1910. When this arrangement was to be retained in 1913 Spark resigned his vice-chairmanship of the festival, which had been conferred upon him in recognition of his many years of distinguished service.¹⁵¹ Similarly, Spark's acute sense of propriety led him to disapprove of Stanford's appointment as festival conductor in view of his existing links with the Leeds Philharmonic Society. Relations with Stanford and his supporters were always strained, and from 1901 there was a strong rift within the committee between Spark and what he termed "the old crew" on the one hand, and the Stanford faction on the other. A letter from W H Eagland to Spark, written from the Imperial Hotel, Bournemouth in 1902 illustrates this perfectly:

I have your letter & quite agree with all you say & the sooner the management of the Festival is got back to the old lines the better. Everything & everybody should be subservient to the Committee, but last year from the first meeting to the end there was undoubtedly a division in the camp, which I fear was not improved by the Conductor. The remedy you suggest if cordially acted on will do much to reverse all that. It must be so if the Festival is to remain at its old standard - I am glad to learn that your views are supported by so many of the old members of the Committee who have always taken such interest in the work .¹⁵²

Spark was always deeply suspicious of Stanford, believing him inclined to usurp the authority of the Committee. The notorious memorandum concerning Benton, which caused such offence, contained in addition to the unrestrained and quite devastating criticism of the chorus master a series of proposals from Stanford about future appointments, chorus training, the approval of libretti and the commissioning of new works. Some of these were not without merit:

¹⁵⁰ Havergal Brian to Spark, 9th October 1909. Spark. *Collection of letters, press cuttings etc on miscellaneous matters*. Leeds Local History Library.

¹⁵¹ *YWP*, 22nd November 1919.

¹⁵² Eagland to F R Spark, 5th February 1902. Headed notepaper, Imperial Hotel, Eastcliff, Bournemouth. Spark, *Collection of brochures*.

...I should like to direct the attention of the Committee to the prevailing tendency both among Festivals and concert undertakings of insisting upon entirely new and unperformed works, to the exclusion of many which have made their mark in the past, but which, owing to this increasing craving for novelty, are unfairly and unjustly shelved soon after their first appearance. To encourage contemporary Composers to write is an excellent thing in itself, but the best works are not written to order, as a rule: and I feel sure that many of them would be as deeply gratified by the revival of their best works which have stood the test of performance but have been crowded out by the flood of novelties, as by requests for new compositions.¹⁵³

Nevertheless Spark was outraged, and in a letter to E B Faber he contended that Stanford was 'attempting to assume a dictatorship over the Committee'.¹⁵⁴ As for Stanford's verdict on Benton, it was 'too much tainted with partizanship & with hostility to the Leeds Choral Union to be of any value'. Unequivocal evidence of conflict, were it needed, is provided in the same paragraph which concludes that Stanford 'knows my strong views & wishes, yet he continues in season & out of season to oppose them'.¹⁵⁵ Examples may also be found in Spark's correspondence of pointed exchanges with one of Stanford's closest allies, William Hannam, to whom he wrote, 'Some new methods have unhappily been introduced by you & your musical colleagues which, if continued, will greatly injure future Festivals'.¹⁵⁶

Yet it would be misleading to focus purely on the combative side of Spark's nature. He could be as loyal and kind a friend as he was a robust adversary. He enjoyed a warm friendship with the Leeds piano dealer Archibald Ramsden (1835-1916), despite their widely differing political views. Both men belonged to the famous You-Be-Quiet Club, an informal association of musical friends which numbered Elgar, Alexander Mackenzie, Eaton Fanning, Edward Lloyd and Joseph Bennett among its members.¹⁵⁷ Spark was regarded with respect and genuine affection by many people with whom he came into contact. After Spark fell

¹⁵³ Stanford to the Lord Mayor of Leeds, 13th October 1901.

¹⁵⁴ Spark to E B Faber, 8th January 1902. Spark, *Collection of brochures*.

¹⁵⁵ *Ibid.*

¹⁵⁶ Spark to William Hannam, 18th December 1901. Spark, *Collection of brochures*.

¹⁵⁷ Some correspondence and printed matter such as menus and programmes relating to the club may be found in Spark, *Collection of letters, press cuttings &c.*, held in Leeds Local History Library.

from a train at Arthington Station in Wharfedale, falling between carriage and platform, the editor of the *Yorkshire Post* and fellow magistrate, J S R Phillips, wrote immediately to wish him a speedy recovery:

I am very sorry to hear of your accident, and hope that in this we may be able to agree that there is newspaper exaggeration. You are such a good veteran journalist that, quite apart from your public work in other directions, and from the kindness of heart and cheery bearing which you have always exhibited, one would be very sorry indeed to think of you as laid up by injuries such as are reported.¹⁵⁸

Spark's achievements in diverse areas of civic life were considerable, his industry and commitment to the common good immense. Though remembered until now only in the footnotes of books about Elgar, he deserves recognition for fifty years of dedicated and selfless service to the cause of music in Leeds.

A pleasing fiction

As the epigraph to this chapter suggests, Herbert Thompson had few illusions about the claims of Leeds to be a musical city, or about the value of its festival. Time and again his writings drew unfavourable comparison with the vibrancy and variety of Manchester's musical life. While acknowledging the rôle of the festival in raising the overall standard of music making, he looked forward to the day when it might no longer be required, thus anticipating the post-war strictures of critics such as Ernest Newman, who maintained that 'a town can have a vigorous musical life or it can have a festival; but it cannot have both'.¹⁵⁹ Through its triennial festival Leeds became firmly established on the musical map of late Victorian and Edwardian England, but the price to be paid appears on the evidence to have been a high one.

¹⁵⁸ Phillips to F R Spark, 22nd August 1907. Spark, *Collection of Letters*.

¹⁵⁹ *The Observer*, 6th October 1918.

Chapter 3: 'Apostles of Beauty' - The Leeds Choral Societies

We are apostles of beauty in an ugly world.
Edward C Bairstow.¹

The choral society exists, or should exist,
primarily for the realisation of an ideal, the
flower and fruit of this being a performance,
as perfect as possible, of the work undertaken.
Henry Coward.²

The Leeds Philharmonic Society

By the time that Stanford assumed the conductorship of the Leeds Philharmonic Society in June 1897 it had come a long way from the sixty strong male voice Leeds Amateur Vocal Society whence it sprang in 1870. Under the inspired leadership of first James Broughton (1870 to 1884), and then his brother Alfred (1884 to 1895), the society had grown both in size and reputation to become one of the outstanding choral bodies in England. Such was the pre-eminence of the chorus that for many years a contingent of anything up to 100 singers from the LPS formed the backbone of the choruses at the Three Choirs, Chester, and Norwich Festivals, occasionally provoking considerable local resentment.³ After a brief and largely undistinguished association with the German conductor Adolf Beyschlag⁴ (from 1895 to 1896) the LPS, through the good offices of its Honorary Secretary, John Green, had succeeded in securing the services of Stanford, by now established as one of the leading musicians in England. The engagement of Stanford was without question a major coup. A distinguished teacher and composer, he had also achieved notable success as a conductor, first with Cambridge University Musical Society and later the Bach Choir. He quickly won over local opinion such that even his

¹ *YEP*, 18th February, 1944.

² Henry Coward, *Choral Technique and Interpretation* (London 1911), 8.

³ Boden, *Three Choirs*, 126-127.

⁴ Adolf Beyschlag (1845-1914), a pupil of Franz Lachner in Mannheim, held various posts as *Kapellmeister* in Germany, before coming to Britain in the 1880s as conductor of the Belfast Philharmonic Society and, briefly, deputy conductor of the Hallé. He is not to be found in any edition of Grove's *Dictionary of Music and Musicians*, but does have an entry in *The International Cyclopaedia of Music and Musicians*, tenth edition (New York 1975), 220.

interpretation of a work as familiar to West Riding audiences as *Messiah* commended itself to the critics for its honesty and freshness:

Dr Stanford's reading of the music is artistic, and as free from fads as it is from Philistinism. While his *tempi* are not of the cast-iron description affected by most of our West Riding conductors, his modifications are not solely in the direction of slackening the time to at least half-speed at the end of each movement, which seems to be the average conductor's solitary idea of expression.⁵

The appointment of Beyschlag had ruffled a few feathers in a society which had relied on Yorkshire conductors since its inception.⁶ While Stanford was unlikely to have been regarded with similar hostility, it was perhaps in some measure in recognition of civic sensitivities that a Leeds man was appointed as choral trainer. Frederick Kilvington Hattersley, born in Leeds in 1861, was a graduate of the Royal Academy of Music, where his contemporaries had included Edward German.⁷ A pupil of Rheinberger, he had gained a modest reputation as a composer, numbering among his works a Concert Overture in E Minor commissioned for the Leeds Festival of 1886.⁸ Hattersley had also previously been commissioned to write a work for LPS, and his cantata *Robert of Sicily* was performed under his direction at an LPS concert in March 1894 in a programme which included Smart's *The Bride of Dunkerron* and Sullivan's *Kenilworth*.⁹ In March 1899 his eight-part chorus *From Harmony, from Heavenly Harmony* was given its first performance by the LPS, with Hattersley conducting. It was described as 'a specimen of well-wrought vocal counterpoint, learned, but without smelling too much of the lamp'.¹⁰

The Leeds Subscription Concerts

In 1896, the year before Stanford's arrival, an important change to the programming of the LPS took place in the form of an amalgamation with the Leeds Subscription Concerts.

⁵ *MT*, 42 (February 1901): 121.

⁶ *MT*, 37 (March 1896): 188.

⁷ William Herbert Scott, *Edward German. An Intimate Biography* (London 1932), 28.

⁸ Spark & Bennett, *History*, 312.

⁹ Programme book, Leeds Philharmonic Society, 14th March 1894.

¹⁰ *MT*, 40 (April 1899): 262.

Chapter 3: 'Apostles of Beauty': The Leeds Choral Societies

As has already been described in chapter 1, this series had been established in 1888, in succession to the Leeds Popular Concerts run by the Leeds solicitor John Rawlinson Ford. Under the new scheme a total of six concerts would be given during the season: three choral in nature, together with two chiefly orchestral concerts which would include a modest contribution from the LPS chorus. One further concert would feature only chamber or orchestral works. This format was retained until the 1910-11 season when growing financial difficulties necessitated a reduction in the number of concerts from six to four.¹¹ Such a merger had been proposed some ten years before, but it seems that it was not until the advent of John Green as Honorary Secretary of the LPS that a satisfactory arrangement could be agreed with his opposite number, William Hannam.¹² Press comment was in favour of the merger, particularly at the prospect of cheaper tickets:

For many years it has been felt that the interests of music and the subscriber public would be better served by combining the two hitherto separate undertakings, the one representing choral, the other orchestral and chamber music, and offering a united series to the public. For one reason the organising expenses and general details of management will apply to the combined series, and thus save the waste of two executives. As a result, exceptional inducements by way of reduction in prices can be offered.¹³

The LPS and the Festival Chorus

As early as 1900 favourable comparisons were being drawn between the LPS and festival performances. In November 1900 for example, a performance of Beethoven's Ninth Symphony was hailed as 'the Society's highest achievement, and one that has, on the whole, never been surpassed at Leeds, even on the three occasions when the work has been heard at Leeds Festivals'.¹⁴ Similarly, the performance of Walford Davies's *Everyman* by the LPS on 24th November 1904, was regarded as superior to the first performance which it had received only a few weeks earlier at the Festival.¹⁵

¹¹ *MT*, 51 (October 1910): 663.

¹² *YP*, 24th June 1896.

¹³ *Ibid.*

¹⁴ *MT*, 42 (January 1901): 50.

¹⁵ H C Colles, *Walford Davies* (London 1942), 82.

The extremely high standard which Stanford and his chorus master Herbert Fricker brought to the LPS was to embarrass the Festival Committee on a number of occasions. Towards the end of Stanford's tenure of office G W Atkinson, in a report to the Festival Management Committee, conceded that 'Our Festival Chorus as at present constituted is in reality little better than the Chorus of either the Leeds Philharmonic or the Choral Union'.¹⁶ The same report went on to conclude that the LPS concerts

...have been gradually improving until apart from the band there is little in a Festival performance to attract the general public of Leeds musically for the bulk of them cannot appreciate the undoubted superiority of the Festival performances sufficiently to induce them to pay the higher charges of a Festival.¹⁷

Among those not directly involved with choral music in Leeds there was a degree of confusion between the Leeds Festival Chorus, and the LPS, from whom many of its members were drawn. Writing to the Belgian violinist and conductor Henri Verbrugghen (1873-1934) about a proposed visit of the LPS to Glasgow in March 1910, John Green cautioned:

You must not advertise us as the Leeds Festival Chorus therefore, though we flatter ourselves that in many things we can do better and in the very nature of things, a permanent chorus has much more enthusiasm than one selected from time to time from various societies and choirs. Moreover the great strain of rehearsing weekly (often twice a week) for a whole year keeps out of the Festival chorus many good singers.¹⁸

Musical ambassadors

The growing prestige of the LPS led to regular invitations to perform outside Leeds. By way of example, in November 1907 the poster for a Grand Festival Concert given by the North Staffordshire Orchestra in Hanley advertised the appearance of 'The World-Renowned Yorkshire Choir, the Leeds Philharmonic Society' in a programme which

¹⁶ Management Committee minutes, 1st March 1909.

¹⁷ Ibid.

¹⁸ Green to Henri Verbrugghen, 4th January 1910. LPS letter books.

included excerpts from *Israel in Egypt*.¹⁹ In 1911 Margaret Meredith, a wealthy composer, chose the LPS to sing two of her choral works at the Queen's Hall in London with the London Symphony Orchestra under Wassili Safonoff (1852-1918). The entire enterprise was underwritten by Meredith.²⁰ While her choice of executants could not be faulted, her judgement of the merits of her compositions may perhaps have been questionable, in the light of reviews such as this:

Mrs Margaret Meredith's settings of Mr Owen Seaman's two poems on the deaths of Queen Victoria and King Edward VII were sung and played excellently, but no amount of good singing and playing could make the music sound anything but dull and commonplace. Suave phrases follow one upon another with little sense of contrast or climax and not too much regard for the words, and both in the vocal and orchestral writing the technique is as weak as the ideas.²¹

Rather greater artistic success attended other appearances at the Queen's Hall such as that with Artur Nikisch and the London Symphony Orchestra in June 1913, and the week-long Beethoven Festival organized by Henri Verbrugghen in April 1914. Concerning the latter John Green noted on his programme 'Ranks with the Paris visit 1906 of the Leeds chorus in importance and success'.²²

It was this January 1906 visit to Paris which confirmed Leeds as a choral centre of European standing. While not promoted as the LPS, the visit was nevertheless conducted under its auspices, with John Green and William Hannam doing the organizational work, and the majority of vocalists in the "Leeds chorus" being LPS members. No less than 217 of the 302 singers who performed in Paris were drawn from the LPS chorus for the 1905-06 season.²³ Planning was meticulous: eight rehearsals were scheduled to take place in Leeds

¹⁹ Programme book, Grand Festival Concert, Victoria Hall, Hanley, 16th November 1907. Copy held at Leeds Local History Library. This was not their first visit. Reginald Nettl described how the musical patron Marie Reymond 'brought the Leeds Philharmonic Choir to Hanley to show the people how the *Messiah* should be sung', in his *Music in the Five Towns* (London 1944), 82.

²⁰ On the title page of John Green's copy of the programme he noted 'Financed by Mrs M Meredith who wished a first class performance of her choral compositions'. LPS programme books.

²¹ *The Times*, 14th January 1911. In fairness to Meredith, it should be borne in mind that at the time much musical criticism reflected the view that women composers were incapable of producing successful large-scale works. See Sophie Fuller, *The Pandora Guide to Women Composers* (London 1994), 18-19.

²² LPS programme books.

²³ Programme book, Leeds Philharmonic Society, 8th November 1905. The complete Leeds party including Stanford and the soloists, was listed in a special supplement to the *YWP*, 20th January 1906.

at the Philosophical Hall on Park Row, beginning in late November. The highest standards of discipline were expected from the chosen singers, the printed letter of acceptance warning that 'excepting by special permission, and for exceptional reasons, the non-attendance at any Rehearsal will disqualify a singer, and the vacancy will be filled from a list of reserves who will attend all Rehearsals in the hope of being included'.²⁴ In fact eleven rehearsals were eventually held in the space of forty-four days, with a ninety-eight per cent attendance record on the part of the chorus. The result was, according to John Green, 'the finest chorus I ever heard or sang with'.²⁵

Notwithstanding a horrendous Channel crossing aboard the steamer *Invicta* and their train to Paris catching fire, the Leeds chorus took the French capital by storm.²⁶ Performing at the Théâtre du Châtelet with the London Symphony Orchestra before an enthusiastic and distinguished audience of well over 3,000 which included the French president Emile Loubet, these 'musical missionaries' as Herbert Fricker styled them,²⁷ revealed to the French choral singing of an artistry and technique quite beyond their experience and drew a warm critical reception from the Parisian press.²⁸ Such was their success that 4,000 people attended the second concert two days later, packing the Châtelet to the rafters. With excerpts from Elgar's *King Olaf* and Stanford's *Requiem* in the first half, and Beethoven's Ninth Symphony in the second, the chorus produced another superb performance to universal acclaim.²⁹

After the Paris visit the French critic Alfred Bruneau, writing in *Le Matin*, characterized the chorus thus:

Formés d'amateurs, humbles gens de travail, employés, étudiants, que réunit et enflamme la passion de l'art, ces choeurs possèdent une discipline, une souplesse, une justesse, une précision, une cohésion incomparables. [Comprising amateurs, humble working

²⁴ Copy in Leeds Local History Library.

²⁵ *YP*, 6th April 1914.

²⁶ *YEP*, 11th January 1906. It was reported that seventy-five per cent of the chorus were sea-sick during the crossing from Folkestone to Boulogne.

²⁷ *Ibid.*

²⁸ *LYM*, 12th January 1906.

²⁹ *LYM*, 13th January 1906.

people, employees and students, united and inspired by the love of art, these choirs are incomparable in their discipline, flexibility, exactness, precision and cohesion.]³⁰

John H Green

To be the Honorary Secretary of a major choral society was no sinecure: it required enthusiasm and dedication, a large amount of tact, and the ability on occasion to drive a hard bargain. This was a contemporary perception of the post:

Second only to the conductor in value to a society, and in many respects of even greater importance, is the Secretary. He is the cement that keeps the bricks (members) of the musical edifice together. The secretary who neglects to make the personal acquaintance of each member, and omits a pleasant word or smile as each enters or leaves the practice-room, is not the man for the post.³¹

John Henry Green was born on 21st November 1856 in Horbury near Bradford, the son of George Green. After a private education in Leeds and Wakefield he joined the family firm of Hartley, Green and Company Ltd, manufacturers of woollen goods, whose principal customers were the British Army and the horse clothing trade. A private company, registered in 1868, Hartley, Green and Company had been established on their premises at Hartley Hill, Leeds since around 1800. In due course Green became director and managing partner.³² He joined the LPS in November 1885, and sang in the chorus for the first time at the annual *Messiah* concert given in the Coliseum, Cookridge Street on 23rd December that year.³³ Alfred Broughton conducted and Edgar Haddock was leader of the band. In June 1895 Broughton died, and the two Honorary Secretaries, Edmund Ward and Thomas Piercy, stepped down. They were replaced by Green and the solicitor Harry Clifford Bowling, whose names were to appear on LPS programmes for the next twenty years.

Once established as Honorary Secretary, Green soon brought his business acumen to bear on the affairs of the LPS, engaging soloists who were good for the box office, even if

³⁰ Quoted in *MT*, 47 (February 1906): 101. (Translation by the author).

³¹ L C Venables, *Choral and Orchestral Societies* (London 1900), 9.

³² W Herbert Scott, *The West Riding of Yorkshire at the Opening of the Twentieth Century. Contemporary Biographies edited by W T Pike* (Brighton 1902), 291.

³³ Pencil annotation by Green, programme book, Leeds Philharmonic Society, 23rd December 1885.

their engagement did not necessarily find favour with Stanford, as in the case of the singer Robert Watkin Mills:

I do not forget that the latter [Mills] is not a favourite of yours but it is some time since we had him, and there is no bass so popular in the West Riding in "Why do the Nations" as he is.³⁴

As a businessman he could negotiate skilfully when required to do so, and the LPS letter books contain several examples of him securing the services of artists at the most favourable terms possible. Here he writes to Amy Dewhurst regarding the solo contralto part for a forthcoming performance of Beethoven's Ninth Symphony, using the prestige of an LPS appearance as an incentive:

Under usual circumstances we cannot afford to put principal solo voices on the platform at the same concert as an expensive band and eminent conductor...Mrs Briggs thought that as you were anxious to get a hearing in Leeds (and before the best of Leeds audiences) you might be willing to come and sing the part for a nominal fee.³⁵

Amy Dewhurst accepted Green's terms, as did the soprano Mrs Julian Clifford, each singer appearing for a fee of two guineas. Notwithstanding such examples, Green was shrewd and flexible enough to gauge his negotiating position carefully, realizing that on occasions the LPS simply had to pay to secure the services of the finest artists and thereby maintain the highest performing standards. In a letter to Emma Albani's husband and agent, Ernest Gye, he is characteristically frank:

We cannot be independent of the best artists, and I think that we shew this; for while some would urge that we have just as full a house at a Messiah performance with Agnes Nicholls at 15gns as with Madame Albani at 150 gns, our principle has always been to spend all the money we dare on our band and principals so as to give performances which cannot easily be equalled by other societies.³⁶

As might perhaps be expected from an active choral practitioner, purely artistic matters are equally in evidence throughout Green's correspondence. He was more than capable of exercising artistic judgement and arguing his case with his conductor. In a letter

³⁴ John Green to Stanford, 2nd March 1900. LPS letter books.

³⁵ Green to Amy Dewhurst, 12th October 1910. LPS letter books.

³⁶ Green to Ernest Gye, 7th March 1900, LPS letter books.

to Stanford he discussed the allocation of characters to the two principals, Andrew Black and Douglas Powell, in Berlioz's *L'enfance du Christ*:

...the natural order for the two baritones will be for Black to take Herod and the Father of the Family, and for Powell to take Polydorus and Joseph. There are two baritone soloists always wanted together, but I think the transition from Herod to Joseph is too ludicrous. There are four characters, and the question is which is the best transition in each case.³⁷

A week after this letter Green reported to Stanford on the progress of chorus rehearsals for the concert which in addition to the Berlioz work was to include Mendelssohn's *114th Psalm* and Stanford's own arrangement for chorus and orchestra of his setting of Tennyson's *Our enemies have fallen*. It is plain that the Honorary Secretary was no mere administrator doing the bidding of the committee, but a knowledgeable and critical observer of the musical scene prepared to comment frankly on the merits or otherwise of those involved:

The 114th Psalm will shew the tone of the chorus, but to all the young singers it is as new as "Our Enemies". They have "mastered" the latter but Hattersley is too apt to think that mastering a work is enough for rendering. It is not, they need to have the words well fitted to the music, well learnt. This is to be said of "The Childhood" also. You remember "Hiawatha".³⁸

One might well wonder how influential such comments as these may have been in determining the future course of Hattersley's association with the LPS. Within a few months he had submitted his resignation from his post amid circumstances which suggest it may even have been engineered by Green. His letter was acknowledged on 1st May 1900, and on the 10th Green wrote again to confirm formal acceptance of his resignation by the committee, adding that 'nothing has yet been done' about a replacement.³⁹ This was clearly not the case as the very next day Green wrote to Herbert Fricker to confirm his unanimous election to the post of chorus master.⁴⁰

³⁷ Green to Stanford, 2nd March 1900. LPS letter books.

³⁸ Green to Stanford, 9th March 1900. LPS letter books. The performance of Coleridge-Taylor's *Hiawatha* to which Green refers took place on 22nd November 1899.

³⁹ Green to F Kilvington Hattersley, 10th May 1900. LPS letter books.

⁴⁰ Green to Fricker, 11th May 1900. LPS letter books.

Green evidently required considerable political skills to fulfill his role as Honorary Secretary. The letter books contain some splendid examples of his ability to placate committee members disgruntled over some injustice or slight, real or imagined, and of his powers of persuasion when faced with a long-standing subscriber returning his tickets. But he could also crack the whip when necessary, as this letter to Leonard Rogers, Professor of Mathematics at Leeds University, shows:

At the Com^{tee} Meeting on Thursday I must bring up the question of unpaid subscriptions for the season now half through. Yours is the only one unpaid. I cannot think this is other than carelessness on your part but I think you ought as a com^{tee} man to take the view that every assistance should be given to the Hon Secs to get in subscriptions before the ballott [*sic*] in October each year, and that the imposition of writing dunning letters as an added duty to the Hon Secs especially by members of the Com^{tee} is quite unpardonable.⁴¹

This was not the only occasion upon which academic members of the committee incurred his displeasure: the Vice-Chancellor of Leeds University, Sir Nathan Bodington, neglected to subscribe to the LPS series for 1910-11 despite his membership of the committee, much to Green's undisguised disgust.⁴²

The LPS Committee

Unlike their counterparts on the Leeds Festival committee, the majority of those on the LPS committee took part in performances as members of the chorus. Taking as an example the 1905-06 season, the committee, excluding the President, Alderman C F Tetley, and the conductor, chorus master and organist, numbered twenty-six people. Of these all eight 'orchestral members' (the rather quaint term used for members of the chorus), all six chorus stewards, both Honorary Librarians, one of the Honorary Auditors and one of the Honorary Secretaries sang in the chorus, making eighteen in total. None of the five Vice-Presidents, four of whom were Festival Committee men, chose to engage in active music-making. Lest it be thought that their status as important men of affairs precluded them from making the commitment required of a chorus member, it is worth recalling that among those

⁴¹ Green to L J Rogers, 7th February 1911. LPS letter books.

⁴² Green to William Hannam, 17th July 1911. LPS letter books.

who did were Sir John Nicholson Barran, Bart., the clothing magnate, and John Green, notwithstanding the additional burden of his duties as Honorary Secretary.

As the First World War approached the LPS began to suffer from internal discord, the precise nature of which is not wholly clear. There may, however, be a clue in the new constitution drawn up in 1916 and with it the decision that 'representatives of the Leeds Triennial Musical Festival be dropped from the LPS committee'.⁴³ Over the years there had been rivalry and also a degree of friction between the two bodies. In the 1912-13 season the LPS gave a performance of Bach's B Minor Mass conducted by Herbert Fricker. John Green's copy of the programme bears his handwritten annotation on the cover:

This concert programme gave great offence to the L.M.F Com^{tee} who, after the B Minor Mass had long been agreed upon to be included in the L.P.S Series for this season decided to include it in the L.M.F prog. for 1913.⁴⁴

Another source of difficulty for the committee around 1914 may have been the chorus master, Herbert Fricker.

Herbert Fricker

As we have seen, Fricker succeeded F Kilvington Hattersley as chorus master in 1900. The Town Hall organist seems to have made a favourable impression, and on completion of the first year, enclosing his twenty-five guinea honorarium, Green commented:

We are indeed under deep obligation to you for your years [*sic*] work; and I am sure that with such a measure of success as you already have had, that there is a good prospect for the future.⁴⁵

Stanford must surely have been satisfied with Fricker, as he insisted on his appointment as Festival chorus master for 1904 instead of Alfred Benton, despite protests from Spark and from the Choral Union lobby.⁴⁶ Fricker prepared the LPS chorus for Stanford for ten seasons, until the latter resigned the conductorship of the LPS in April 1910. On Stanford's departure the post of LPS conductor was abolished, Green and the

⁴³ Colbert, 'The Leeds Philharmonic', 10.

⁴⁴ Programme book, Leeds Philharmonic Society, 12th March 1913.

⁴⁵ Green to Fricker, 18th April 1901. LPS letter books.

⁴⁶ See Chapter 2 for an account of this episode.

committee preferring to obtain the services of eminent conductors on an *ad hoc* basis. While officially still chorus master, Fricker had more opportunities to conduct, not only the annual Christmas *Messiah*, as he had done during Stanford's tenure of office, but major works such as his own personal favourite, the Bach B Minor Mass, in the course of the season.⁴⁷ In his addition to his achievements as a conductor with the Leeds Municipal Orchestra (later Leeds Symphony Orchestra) which will be discussed in the following chapter, Fricker also achieved considerable acclaim as conductor of both the Morley Choral Society and the Halifax Choral Society.

In view of this it is not difficult to imagine how Fricker might have reacted to being passed over for a performance of Verdi's *Requiem* in favour of Henri Verbrugghen, for whom he had already developed a marked antipathy, presumably following their collaboration during Verbrugghen's Beethoven Festival at the Queen's Hall, London in April 1914. Other tensions were present: in March 1914, for the fourth concert of the season, Fricker conducted an enterprising programme featuring Wolf-Ferrari's *La vita nuova* and César Franck's *The Beatitudes*. The performance of the latter took seventy minutes. John Green's copy of the programme is liberally covered with annotations including 'Mr Fricker said the Beatitudes took 40 to 45 mins', 'unpardonable!!', and 'many of the audience left at 10.5, complaints were made'.⁴⁸

The second Verbrugghen festival, again at the Queen's Hall, in April 1915, marked what Green termed 'the final straw' for Fricker. In his programme Green has left us a handwritten account of what followed:

Shortly afterwards, at the conclusion of the season, Mr. Fricker made it a condition of his continued connection with the L.P.S that he should be officially appointed conductor of the society and that [a] much greater share of the direction and control should be in his hands. These concessions were made. New Hon. Secs. were appointed, the Constitution and rules of the society were revised, the representatives of the Leeds Musical Festival Executive were dropped from the Committee. Mr. Fricker retained

⁴⁷ Fricker's enthusiasm for the B Minor Mass is recorded in an unpublished memoir written in 1962 by his son Eric, 'Herbert Austin Fricker. MS notes on his life', held in Leeds Local History Library (shelfmark LP 927.8 F911).

⁴⁸ Programme book, Leeds Philharmonic Society, 25th March 1914.

the post for one season only. He accepted a post at Toronto Canada and left Leeds - and the L.P.S. to other management.⁴⁹

Orchestral forces

In the years up to the Great War the LPS and the Hallé Orchestra enjoyed a special, one might say symbiotic, relationship. In a letter to Schott & Co of 1900 John Green explained how it operated. It would appear that there had been some suggestion of sharp practice designed to deny Schott's revenue, an insinuation deeply resented by Green:

We have an arrangement with the Halle Orchestra which practically amalgamates us with them...The Halle Band is our Band for all our concerts and we have a joint stock of music which we jointly pay for. My society has not made any charge or profit out of any hiring to the Halle concerts and neither do they make any charge to us. Indeed as I have just said the music is a joint stock affair we keep the vocal parts in our cupboards and they the orchestral parts in theirs.⁵⁰

The Hallé Orchestra was regularly engaged for orchestral concerts right up to 1914. Notwithstanding the presence of this expensive orchestra brought over from Manchester it was the custom of the LPS, deprecated by many of its supporters, to include in the programme a number of short choral works. Thus in January 1913 Hermann Goetz's *Noenia* and Charles Wood's *Dirge for Two Veterans* could find themselves somewhat unlikely companions in a programme which included Mozart's Symphony No.40 and Strauss's *Also sprach Zarathustra*.⁵¹

For concerts such as the annual *Messiah* held at Christmas a modest orchestra of local professional musicians was used. In December 1904 for example, an orchestra of forty-nine players performed under Stanford's direction. The forces comprised: nine first violins, nine second violins, six violas, six cellos, six double basses, and two each of flutes, oboes, clarinets, bassoons, horns and trumpets, with timpani. These musicians were among the best to be found in the county, and included the violinists Edward Elliott and Alice Simpkin, the

⁴⁹ Programme book, Bach Beethoven Brahms Festival, Queen's Hall, London, 19th -24th April 1915.

⁵⁰ Green to Schott & Co, 26th May 1900. LPS letter books.

⁵¹ *MT*, 54 (January 1913): 49.

cellist Alfred Giessing, and the trumpeter Mark Hemingway, as well as Hallé players Weber Fawcett (oboe) and Thornton Turner (viola).⁵²

By the 1908-09 season the LPS had begun to use local orchestral resources in the form of the recently established Leeds Symphony Orchestra, which was in effect the Municipal Orchestra minus its lady members.⁵³ In a performance of Mendelssohn's *St Paul* under Stanford on 4th November 1908 the orchestra 'proved so much more than equal to its task that we can now look forward to a time when Leeds need not, save on special occasions, go beyond its own borders for orchestral help'.⁵⁴

Despite such optimism from Herbert Thompson, the LPS remained unwilling completely to abandon its policy of looking outside Leeds for its orchestral forces. While diplomatic in his public statements, privately John Green exhibited scant enthusiasm for local orchestras, and had it been financially possible he would have always preferred to engage the Hallé or London Symphony. In a letter of 1913 to a long-standing subscriber he noted with a certain sourness that it was economic rather than artistic considerations which had dictated the use of local orchestras:

You will know probably that for the past seven or eight seasons there has been a greater or less loss made upon every high class orchestral concert given in Leeds. The call is undoubtedly for large numbers of cheap seats. We appear to have come to the parting of the ways, and if the people are content only to have local orchestras heard in Leeds, they will no doubt soon have it so.⁵⁵

Green's displeasure at these developments may have coloured his dealings with the Leeds Symphony Orchestra and its secretary, the violinist Edward Maude, with whom he exchanged some apparently rather brusque correspondence in early 1914. Maude had submitted an all-inclusive bill for £120 for the services of the orchestra at a concert on 25th March, contrary to the usual terms under which the individual fees for each player were

⁵² Programme book, Leeds Philharmonic Society, 21st December 1904.

⁵³ With the honourable exception of Henry Wood's Queen's Hall Orchestra, women players were not generally employed by professional orchestras before the First World War. Upon its initial formation the Leeds Symphony Orchestra Ltd seems to have excluded women, but later slightly relaxed this position. The violinist Lily Simms is to be found among the list of players in 1913. (See Appendix 6). Cyril Ehrlich discusses the prejudice against women players in his book *The Music Profession in Britain since the Eighteenth Century* (Oxford 1985), 156-161.

⁵⁴ *MT*, 49 (December 1908): 804.

⁵⁵ Green to J Rawlinson Ford, 30th October 1913. LPS letter books.

charged to the LPS. Green insisted on knowing how the figure had been arrived at, and refused to settle the account until an itemised statement was forthcoming.⁵⁶ By May, after a further exchange of letters, their respective positions had hardened:

I must refer you to my previous letter and can only repeat my demand...I assure you that you waste time in assuming that any other course than a full detailed list will satisfy the Com^{tee}, who will not pay this a/c...⁵⁷

Finally, in September, with Maude sticking to his guns on behalf of his fellow musicians and declining to revert to the old practice, Green settled the matter unilaterally:

Your statement of the a/c for the services of the band at our March 25th 1914 concert was laid before our Com^{tee} yesterday, when it was unanimously decided to send you a cheque for £100 in payment for the services of the players on that date.⁵⁸

Lack of financial support, warned Green, would mean that the concerts might not be continued, but by then the war in Europe had been underway for almost six weeks, and the musical life of Leeds, along with much else, would not be the same again. Green resigned from his post as Honorary Secretary in March 1916.⁵⁹

The Leeds Choral Union

It is unfortunate that no documentary evidence relating to the founding of the Leeds Choral Union appears to have survived. However, what is evident from contemporary accounts is that the LCU owes its existence above all to the vision, energy and personal wealth of one man, Henry Cawood Embleton.⁶⁰ A loyal and generous supporter of Leeds Parish Church, where he was Choir Treasurer and a major benefactor for some twenty-five years,⁶¹ Embleton sought a means to give expression to his passion for choral music in a

⁵⁶ Green to Edward Maude, 28th March 1914. LPS letter books. In a marginal annotation Green wrote '£90 was put down on estimate for this band'.

⁵⁷ Green to Edward Maude, 9th May 1914. LPS letter books.

⁵⁸ Green to Edward Maude, 17th September 1914. LPS letter books.

⁵⁹ Programme book, Leeds Philharmonic Society, 1st March 1916. A pencil annotation by Green reads 'War/my last concert. 3 concerts only this season'.

⁶⁰ According to Embleton's obituary in the *YEP*, 'It could, in fact, be said that he almost *was* the Choral Union'. (7th February 1930).

⁶¹ Webster, *Parish*, 44; 55.

wider context. Thus it was that in 1895 the Leeds Choral Union was called into being.⁶² It was in some ways an audacious move, considering that the principal choral society of the town, the Leeds Philharmonic Society, had been unable in recent years, despite its monopoly position, to secure consistent support. On the other hand, Embleton was in the happy circumstance of having access to a vast personal fortune which he was able to use to underwrite his creation.

Fons et origo – Henry Cawood Embleton

We can only guess at what influences may have shaped the musical inclinations of the Leeds Choral Union's *fons et origo*, as Henry Coward was to term him.⁶³ He was born in March 1854 in Middleton, a village and township four miles south of Leeds, known principally for its collieries and for its railway, which in 1812 demonstrated for the first time the successful commercial application of the steam locomotive.⁶⁴ Embleton's father, Thomas William Embleton, is described in White's 1853 Directory as 'colliery agent to the Revd R H Brandling'.⁶⁵ The Embletons lived at Middleton Hall, a Georgian mansion once the home of the Brandling family, but from 1808 occupied by their colliery steward.⁶⁶

Henry was educated in Leeds and London before following in his father's footsteps, entering a career as a mining engineer with the firm of Embleton, Barton, and Stancliff. His work led him to travel widely, particularly in the Middle and Far East. Over time he developed financial interests in the coal industry in Yorkshire and the North East, becoming chairman of the Bedlington Coal Company, Northumberland, director of the Barnsley Main Colliery Company, and director of the Wallsend and Hebburn Coal Company Limited.

⁶² Strictly, this was the second organization to bear the name 'The Leeds Choral Union'. In 1880 the organist of Leeds Parish Church, William Creser (1844-1933) founded and conducted a choral society of the same name in which the chorus was divided into amateur and paid singers. It did not survive for long. (*YP*, 6th April 1914). Henry Embleton provided the financial backing both in 1880 and 1895, leading Webster (*Parish*, 63) erroneously to conflate the two incarnations.

⁶³ Henry Coward, *Reminiscences of Henry Coward* (London 1919), 182.

⁶⁴ See W G Rimmer, 'Middleton Colliery, near Leeds, 1770-1830', *Yorkshire Bulletin of Economic and Social Research*, 7, No.1 (1955).

⁶⁵ William White, *Directory and Gazetteer of Leeds, Bradford, Halifax, Huddersfield, Wakefield and the Whole of the Clothing Districts of the West Riding of Yorkshire* (Sheffield 1853), 312.

⁶⁶ Edward Doherty, *Bygone Middleton* (Leeds 1987), 19.

Successful as Embleton was in his business affairs, much of the considerable wealth which he was to put to use in the service of music was acquired through inheritance. Under the will of his aunt, Emily Mathilde Easton of Nest House, Felling-on-Tyne and Layton Manor, near Darlington, he received a significant proportion of an estate whose gross value was estimated at over one million pounds. Later, on the death of their brother Thomas, he and his sister, Emily Maude Embleton, shared an estate with a net value of £291,000.⁶⁷

Of Embleton's musical training we know relatively little, other than that he studied the piano, cello and harp, and was sufficiently accomplished on the organ to take afternoon services and occasional Sunday services at Leeds Parish Church.⁶⁸ It seems likely that it was at the Parish Church, with its great musical tradition, that Embleton's lifelong enthusiasm for choral music was kindled. Here too, he first earned his reputation for unassuming munificence.⁶⁹

In April 1894 Embleton became a mason, as a member of the Lodge of Fidelity No.289. Over the years a number of prominent Leeds musicians had been members of Fidelity Lodge, among them the violinist George Haddock and William Spark, the Borough Organist.⁷⁰ Embleton was soon joined at the lodge by the Rev. Manley Power, Precentor at Leeds Parish Church, who was invited to become a member of the LCU committee.⁷¹

In his memoirs Henry Coward has left us this thumbnail portrait of Embleton which hints perhaps at a mildly eccentric figure:

His somewhat careless dress, thoughtful, preoccupied look and massive head, give him the air of a university mathematical don.

⁶⁷ This paragraph is based on the following obituary notices: *YEP*, 7th February 1930; *YP*, 8th February 1930; *The Times*, 10th February 1930.

⁶⁸ *MT*, 31 (March 1930): 270-271.

⁶⁹ According to Henry Coward, Embleton publicly subscribed five pounds to the organ restoration fund while privately donating £1000. (*Reminiscences*, 183).

⁷⁰ See J W Reddyhoff, *History of the Lodge of Fidelity No.289 1792 to 1992* (Leeds 1994). Among past lodge members was the inventor of the cinematograph, Louis le Prince, who resigned in 1885, five years before his mysterious disappearance in France.

⁷¹ Power was Precentor from 1893 until January 1899, when he left Leeds to become Rector of Bow in London. *Leeds Parish Church. Service Book for the Leeds Musical Festival Week October 4th to 11th, 1931* (Leeds 1931). Copy in the author's private collection.

But although immersed in large schemes and high finance, he has one soft spot, and that is choral music, of which he is a devotee.⁷²

While far from unworldly, Embleton, despite his prodigious wealth, cared little for what had recently become known as "conspicuous consumption".⁷³ His Yorkshire home, The Cedars, located in the mining village of Methley, some nine miles south-east of Leeds, was a detached residence of relatively modest proportions set in its own grounds opposite Methley Parish Church, itself another object of his generosity.⁷⁴ Lest too saintly a picture of the man should be painted, however, it is true to say that on occasions Embleton expected his rôle as benefactor to allow him to have his own way. Such expectations were thwarted when he came up against a man of uncompromising integrity such as Edward Bairstow, who took up his duties as Parish Church organist in early 1906 as successor to Benton. Conflicts between the two men soon arose over matters as diverse as choir appointments and the nature of Bairstow's organ accompaniments. The Precentor, quite properly, backed his organist, and Embleton resigned from the Choir Committee in September 1906.⁷⁵

In contrast with his increasingly difficult relations with the Parish Church, Embleton was able to enjoy near absolute control of the LCU, and undertook ever more ambitious and expensive projects. In April 1905 he financed performances of *The Dream of Gerontius* and *The Apostles* at the Queen's Hall, London on consecutive days with the composer conducting the Queen's Hall Orchestra and LCU. The *Musical Times* noted:

...in the lavish but judicious expenditure which the employment of such forces must have involved one cannot but recognize the liberality of a Leeds amateur who is the founder and chief stay of the society.⁷⁶

⁷² Coward, *Reminiscences*, 182-183.

⁷³ The term was first coined by Thorstein Veblen (1857-1929) in his book *Theory of the Leisure Class*, published in 1899.

⁷⁴ "JHM", *A Brief Guide to the Church*, leaflet dated October 1996, obtained from Methley Parish Church. The Cedars, visited by the author in October 1997, is now a residential nursing home for the elderly and much altered since Embleton's time.

⁷⁵ Jackson, *Blessed City*, 59, 61; Webster, *Parish*, 78.

⁷⁶ *MT*, 46 (May 1905): 335.

Visits by the LCU to France and Germany were paid for by Embleton, who in 1911 was proposing an ultimately unrealised scheme to perform *The Dream of Gerontius* in Italy.⁷⁷ Yet even for a man of Embleton's means there had to be some limits to expenditure, and as early as 1910 Henry Clayton, the company secretary of Novello's, was commenting to Elgar that 'Embleton has become ever so much more inclined to save than was the case a few years ago'.⁷⁸ When Embleton died in 1930 the true scale of his financial commitment to the promotion of choral music in general, and to Elgar's in particular, was finally revealed. He had literally spent a fortune, though sadly his dream of persuading his friend to complete the trilogy of oratorios, which he had pursued for over twenty years, remained unrealized:

Within a week his executors sent a polite demand for the return of the £500 loan made in 1921 against the completion of Part III. Edward protested that his friend had later made it a gift. But there was nothing in writing; and it transpired that Embleton had practically bankrupted himself in the cause of choral music – much of it Edward's. The executors needed the £500 to cover their obligations. There was nothing for it but to find the money.⁷⁹

But such tribulations lay far in the future when the LCU was born.

Beginnings

Upon its formation in 1895 the Leeds Choral Union drew upon many of the Leeds élite for its officers: William Lawies Jackson, then Mayor of Leeds, was President, while the three Vice-Presidents were Dr Edgar Gibson (the Vicar of Leeds, later to become Bishop of Gloucester), the redoubtable Thomas Marshall (chairman of the Leeds Festival Committee since 1877), and Dr W H Brown, a leading surgeon at Leeds Infirmary. Embleton's strong ties with Leeds Parish Church were apparent with the inclusion on the committee of the organist Alfred Benton and the Precentor, the Rev. Manley Power, together with a former Precentor, now Vicar of Kirkstall, the Rev. Neville Egerton Leigh.⁸⁰

⁷⁷ Elgar to Alfred Littleton, 2nd February 1911. Quoted in Moore, *Elgar and his Publishers*, 738.

⁷⁸ H R Clayton to Elgar, 11th February 1910. Quoted in Moore, *Elgar and his Publishers*, 730.

⁷⁹ Moore, *A Creative Life*, 783.

⁸⁰ The other members of the committee were Thomas Barnes, T Barton, D Gaunt, J W Horn, W Sykes, P Leigh and George Norley.

Once founded, the LCU rapidly attained the level of proficiency required for public performance, and within a matter of months gave its first concert - a performance of Gounod's *Redemption* with an orchestra and chorus of 380 in the Town Hall on 26th March 1896. The choice of *The Redemption* was a shrewd one on the part of Embleton and the LCU committee: other than a performance at the Parish Church with organ accompaniment, the work had never been heard at Leeds.⁸¹ Written for the 1882 Birmingham Festival by a composer familiar with the partiality of the British public for the theatrical and the sentimental, it was always likely to attract a good audience. Alfred Benton conducted, the principals being Esther Palliser, Madame Dews, Lloyd Chandos, John Browning and Douglas Powell. The orchestra was the newly-founded and somewhat optimistically named Leeds Permanent Orchestra, which had given its first concert on 8th February under Benton's direction.⁸² While praising the 'excellent chorus-singing' which demonstrated that Leeds could easily furnish two choral bodies, the *Musical Times* doubted whether audiences could be found with similar ease. Judgement was reserved on the new society until it attempted something more demanding than the Gounod.⁸³

During the winter season of 1896-97 two concerts were given, a performance of Berlioz's *Faust* and a Mendelssohn Commemoration Concert. For the 1898-99 season the number of concerts was increased to three, and the following year to four. By 1906 the *Musical Times* was reporting that the LCU consisted of 'about 420 members'.⁸⁴

Alfred Benton

For his conductor and chorus master Embleton selected his friend Alfred Benton. Given Embleton's vision for the LCU, Benton must have seemed the ideal man for the job. Born in Leeds on 21st December 1854, the son of Mark Benton, a joiner, Alfred Benton became a chorister at Leeds Parish Church at the age of nine and received his initial musical training from William Dawson, the father of pianist Frederick Dawson. He subsequently became the pupil of the Parish Church organist Robert Senior Burton, S S Wesley's

⁸¹ *YP*, 27th March 1896.

⁸² *MT*, 37 (March 1896): 188.

⁸³ *MT*, 37 (May 1896): 333.

⁸⁴ *MT*, 47 (April 1906): 240.

successor and a famed chorus trainer. He also studied harmony and counterpoint with F W Hird (1826-1887), a pupil of Sterndale Bennett and one of the foremost music teachers in the north of England. After a series of appointments, Benton became organist at Leeds Parish Church in 1892. Three years later he was appointed chorus master to the Leeds contingent of the Festival Chorus, having been Festival Organist in 1889 and 1892.

Critical comment on Benton's work with the LCU, as with his other conducting commitments such as the Morley Choral Society and the Barnsley St Cecilia Society, was universally favourable. When Samuel Coleridge-Taylor conducted his *Hiawatha* trilogy with the LCU on 28th November 1900 to great acclaim, the work of Benton in preparing the chorus attracted particular praise:

Conducted by the composer himself, the work met with what was probably the best performance it has yet had. The choir, though a very large one, sang with spirit and great beauty of tone, while their close acquaintance with the music must be placed to the credit of their ordinary conductor and trainer, Mr Benton.⁸⁵

In a subsequent letter Coleridge-Taylor himself acknowledged the debt owed to Benton:

May I take this opportunity of expressing my gratitude to, and admiration for, the choir that sang in "Hiawatha" so splendidly last Wednesday?...I cannot say too much about the rendering of the last section. The verve and abandon were praiseworthy in the highest degree. I hope the members of the choir will join with me in sincerely thanking Mr. Benton, to whose preparation such a fine performance was due – a performance that will make my visit to Leeds an ever-to-be-remembered one.⁸⁶

Other tributes from composers included the dedication to Benton by Josef Holbrooke of his Symphonic Poem *Byron*, first performed by the LCU on 7th December 1904, and the gift of a bound full score of *The Dream of Gerontius* from Elgar.

It would be difficult to imagine a more sudden or complete fall from grace than that experienced by Alfred Benton. Having been presented to King Edward VII along with Elgar and Embleton after a brilliantly successful concert at the Albert Hall, London in June 1904, only a little more than a year later he was to quit Leeds amid the most shocking

⁸⁵ *MT*, 42 (January 1901): 50.

⁸⁶ Quoted in *Mr Alfred Benton*, a privately printed promotional booklet (1905?). Copy in the Thoresby Society Library, Leeds.

scandal. In July 1905 the *Leeds Mercury* carried the story of how Benton was thwarted in a desperate bid to escape an unhappy marriage by running away with a twenty-year-old pupil, the daughter of 'one of his dearest friends'.⁸⁷ In a series of events worthy of a nineteenth-century novel, the young woman's father traced the runaway couple to Holland and set out to retrieve his daughter. The pupil returned safely home to Leeds with her father, but Benton's situation was by now irredeemably lost. His career and reputation in ruins, Benton resigned all his musical appointments in Leeds, severing his ties with the city for good.⁸⁸

The eagle in the dovecote

Early in April 1904 the Sheffield Musical Union, trained by its chorus master Henry Coward, created a sensation with a series of performances at a musical festival in London organized by the Australian violinist Johann Kruse (1859-1927). Praise for the chorus was universal and unqualified: singled out for particular attention were the effects produced by Coward's singers in a memorable performance of *The Dream of Gerontius*. Forty years later the much-respected journalist and editor William Linton Andrews still recalled the event vividly:

When the singers had to give a demon's chorus, Coward made them sing like demons, snarling and sneering. It is said that he made these ladies and gentlemen write on the music "I am a big, black demon". When they had to represent "psalm-droners and canting groaners" he made them sing through the nose...Elgar told me that he never knew what his choral effects were till he heard them done by a chorus trained by Coward.⁸⁹

Coward's reputation as the finest choral trainer in England was assured. He must have been the obvious choice a little over a year later when Embleton sought a replacement for his disgraced friend Benton. Matters moved swiftly, and on 26th July 1905, barely a week after Benton's departure, Henry Coward was approached by George Norley with a view to his assuming the conductorship of the Leeds Choral Union. These discussions were

⁸⁷ *LM*, 18th July 1905.

⁸⁸ For a summary of Benton's career after leaving Leeds see Webster, *Parish*, 68.

⁸⁹ *YP*, 12th June 1944.

presumably mutually satisfactory since shortly afterwards Coward received the formal invitation while on holiday in Austria:

When we arrived at Innsbruck and had had a good look round, I went to the post office to see if any letters had been forwarded, as arranged, and I received one signed by Mr. Henry C. Embleton, secretary and treasurer of the Leeds Choral Union, offering me the position of conductor of the society. Knowing the high character of the society and its officials, I immediately telegraphed my acceptance of the post, and I have held it ever since.⁹⁰

Coward's biographer, J A Rodgers, recounts how, even while celebrating his new appointment with friends at an open-air café, Coward was busy memorising a list of the officials and committee members of the LCU with the explanation that 'People like to think they are already known, if only by name'.⁹¹ Such an anecdote bears witness not only to Coward's single-mindedness, but also to his grasp of the internal dynamics of the provincial choral society. Rodgers ascribes Coward's success to 'sheer grit, fixity of purpose and a phenomenal application of systematic industry'.⁹² These qualities would be demonstrated in full measure by Embleton's new conductor, whose arrival at the LCU, as with Glasgow and Newcastle, was 'like that of an eagle in a dove-cote'.⁹³

Coward had enjoyed spectacular acclaim with the Sheffield Musical Union, which he had developed from its creation in 1892 into an instrument of both power and subtlety. His many years of experience as a choral trainer had led him to develop a radically different approach to choral technique, bringing together the best of the old and the new, which he described thus:

...it embraces all the splendid qualities, grand, rich tone, broad effects, and thrilling climaxes of the old style of choral singing, as exemplified at the Leeds and Birmingham Musical Festivals of the 'eighties and 'nineties, plus the more refined expression and greater dramatic import demanded by the more advanced and much more critical audiences of to-day.⁹⁴

⁹⁰ Coward, *Reminiscences*, 181.

⁹¹ J A Rodgers, *Dr Henry Coward. The Pioneer Chorus-Master* (London 1911), 55.

⁹² *Ibid.*, 4.

⁹³ *Ibid.*, 52.

⁹⁴ Coward, *Choral Technique*, 2.

One of Coward's aims was to train his choirs, which typically numbered four hundred singers, to be as flexible and responsive as a chamber ensemble. Among the vocal feats of which his choirs were capable was the production of a *pianissimo* scarcely believable given the forces involved:

A short time ago, when Sir Frederic Cowen was conducting the final rehearsal of his fine work *The Veil*, I told him to listen for the ticking of the clock, as when we heard this we knew we were singing sufficiently *pianissimo*; and sure enough, under his beat, we could hear distinctly, in every part of the room, the ticking of the ordinary eight-day clock over the four hundred voices, every one singing.⁹⁵

However impressive the vocal effects which Coward was able to achieve, he did also have a tendency to over-egg the pudding. In his notices, Herbert Thompson was not one to let such behaviour go unremarked. At the LCU concert of 4th April 1906 which featured choruses from several Handel oratorios including *Deborah*, *Saul* and *Israel in Egypt*, the choral forces of the Union were augmented by contingents from Sheffield, Huddersfield and Morley producing a body of over 650 voices. Pitting this against a band of only sixty-five players led Thompson to comment that 'the general effect lacked much sense of proportion'. To make matters worse, Coward engaged in an extravagant piece of self-indulgence which was in dubious taste even by the standards of the day:

Still more doubtful, from an artistic standpoint, was the expedient of giving the duet 'The Lord is a man of war' to the whole body of 280 tenors and basses, a practice which does not show conspicuous reverence for the composer's intention.⁹⁶

Coward's inclination to strive for effect was frequently noted as in the review of his performance of Bach's B Minor Mass on 8th April 1908 with the Choral Union where 'Dr Coward's reading of the work seemed to make for brilliant effect rather than to realize the majesty of the music'.⁹⁷ But despite Coward's occasional excesses and lapses of taste, Herbert Thompson, when reviewing his *Choral Technique and Interpretation*, had little doubt about the impact of the author on choral singing:

⁹⁵ *Ibid.*, 38.

⁹⁶ *MT*, 47 (May 1906): 341.

⁹⁷ *MT*, 49 (May 1908): 334.

As a conductor his interpretations may not always commend themselves to one's judgement, but as a choir-trainer it is no exaggeration to assert that his labours have marked a new era in chorus singing.⁹⁸

Indeed, though it may perhaps be guilty of some degree of partisanship, the *Sheffield Independent* ventured to dub Coward 'the father of British choralism',⁹⁹ while *The Times* observed that 'Dr Coward is as much of a virtuoso in relation to choir-singing as Mr Wood is to conducting'.¹⁰⁰ Those who had worked directly with him were unanimous in their admiration: Henry Wood regarded him as 'the master choir trainer of England', and Sir Dan Godfrey thought it 'doubtful whether England has ever produced a better or more gifted choir trainer than Coward'.¹⁰¹

While no-one doubted Coward's skill as a chorus master he was not without his critics when it came to handling an orchestra. The care lavished on preparing his singers was not always matched by a similar concern for the orchestra, as this review of a 1909 performance of Elgar's *King Olaf* testifies:

Dr Coward conducted with vigour, and if in one place he showed less familiarity with the score than one expects from a conductor, he made prompt and frank amends by taking the responsibility, and repeating the faulty episode. Though it was still obvious that his sympathies were too exclusively in the direction of the chorus, he paid rather more attention to the orchestra than is customary, and the performance profited accordingly.¹⁰²

This lack of sympathy with his orchestral players also manifested itself in other ways, as we see from the following account of the first performance in Leeds of Frederic Cowen's *The Veil* in 1912:

The orchestra was wonderfully efficient, but it cannot be said that this side of the work had justice done it; it demands highly sympathetic treatment, and Dr Coward's style as a conductor, though very energetic, can scarcely be described as subtle. Even if

⁹⁸ *YP*, 14th January 1914.

⁹⁹ *Sheffield Independent*, 20th December 1913.

¹⁰⁰ *The Times*, 5th March 1906.

¹⁰¹ Henry J Wood, *My Life of Music* (London 1939), 316; Sir Dan Godfrey, *Memories and Music* (London 1924), 128.

¹⁰² *YP*, 11th February 1909.

he would leave the orchestra more to themselves a better result might often be obtained, and it was certainly a work of supererogation to beat time to a short clarinet solo, which one would have thought an experienced orchestral conductor would have left to the very artistic player's discretion.¹⁰³

Coward's workload during the pre-war years was truly colossal. In addition to his posts as lecturer in music at Sheffield University and Sheffield Training College, and as music master at King Edward VII School and the Girls' High School, he was conductor of the Sheffield Musical Union, Leeds Choral Union, Huddersfield Festival Choral Society, Newcastle and Gateshead Choral Society, and Glasgow Choral and Orchestral Union. He also held the conductorship of the festivals at Morecambe, Aberdeen, Southport and Newcastle. These engagements, together with his work as an adjudicator, meant that Coward travelled something like 50,000 miles annually.¹⁰⁴

The finest hour

It is perhaps ironic that the LCU's greatest achievement, at least according to Coward, took place not in its home city but somewhere further south, namely Canterbury. The occasion, on 19th June 1914, was a performance of *The Apostles* given in the Cathedral in aid of the restoration fund. Elgar conducted the London Symphony Orchestra with Agnes Nicholls, Muriel Foster, John Coates, Thorpe Bates, Herbert Heyner, and Robert Radford as principals.¹⁰⁵ The chorus selected from the Leeds Choral Union numbered 264 voices in all: 83 sopranos, 61 contraltos, 58 tenors and 62 basses.

The notion of the performance, and its charitable object, was entirely Henry Embleton's, as a letter to *The Times* from the Dean made clear:

A Yorkshire gentleman, who had already promoted the performance of this oratorio in York Minster, happened to be visiting in this neighbourhood, and conceived a desire to have it adequately performed in this Cathedral...The performance...from first to last, is due entirely to this gentleman's munificence, and any benefit the reparation fund may receive will similarly be due entirely

¹⁰³ *YP*, 14th March 1912.

¹⁰⁴ Coward, *Reminiscences*, 211.

¹⁰⁵ *Ibid.*, 292.

to his initiation and his generosity. It is by his own desire that I abstain from mentioning his name.¹⁰⁶

Despite some minor critical reservations concerning occasional faulty intonation and the uncertainty of Elgar's beat, Embleton's aspirations for his ideal performance of *The Apostles* in the ideal venue seem largely to have been realised:

It hardly need be said that the quality of the voices was brilliant and penetrating. The singing had other and more subtle beauties. The mystic sound of the opening chorus, "The Spirit of the Lord is upon me," the gradual acquisition of power in the dawn scene, and the delicacy of the comments on the Beatitudes were unsurpassable... Sir Edward Elgar, of course, always knows what he wants, but he does not always make his forces know it. At some of the sudden changes of time, while the orchestra hesitated, the singers were apt to take matters into their own hands. But in the main it was a performance which placed before us in a vivid and convincing way the composer's interpretation of one of his biggest works, and it was one which none who heard it would willingly have missed.¹⁰⁷

Even by Embleton's own standards, this was indeed a lavish production, not only in the engagement of Elgar with a first-rate orchestra and principals, three of whom (Nicholls, Foster and Coates) had sung in the first performance at the Birmingham Festival in 1903, but also in smaller details such as the sixteen page commemorative programme specially printed for the chorus.¹⁰⁸ The programme reveals the careful planning which lay behind the venture, with its detailed itinerary beginning with the departure of two special trains from Leeds at 3.13 and 3.26 on the afternoon of Thursday, 18th June. We see from it the social as well as musical aspects of the visit: tea with the Dean and Chapter immediately after the performance, an evening reception given by the Mayor of Canterbury in St George's Hall, a guided tour of the Cathedral the next day, followed later by an excursion to Lord Northbourne's home at Betteshanger Park for tea prior to departure back to Leeds.¹⁰⁹

¹⁰⁶ *The Times*, 16th June 1914.

¹⁰⁷ *The Times*, 20th June 1914.

¹⁰⁸ A copy of this programme is in the author's private collection. It is beautifully produced, with a thick card cover bearing the embossed arms of Canterbury in blue and silver, and with a blue ribbon attached to the spine.

¹⁰⁹ The train from King's Cross was scheduled to arrive in Leeds at 4.15am on Sunday morning. Edwardian choruses were evidently composed of hardy individuals.

The repertoire of the choral societies

It must be admitted that in some respects the programming of both Leeds choral societies was tinged with a certain conservatism, reflecting the tastes of their audiences and the need to retain some semblance of financial stability. *Messiah* and *Elijah* inevitably figure prominently. That said, an examination of the programmes reveals an often surprising degree of enterprise.¹¹⁰ Stanford certainly believed it to be the duty of the LPS to place new and important works before the Leeds public, whatever his own views of their merits might be. Thus despite his personal dislike of *The Dream of Gerontius*, which did not appeal to the Irish Protestant in him, he argued the case for its performance with characteristic forthrightness in a letter to John Green:

[*The Dream of Gerontius*] is not a work to be simply dismissed because A or B don't personally care for it. It is the duty of a great choral society in a great town to let its public form their own judgement on such an important composition which has even reached with success Germany in its most Anglophobic temper... Surely it is for a choral society such as yours to lead and not to follow.¹¹¹

It is interesting to compare the list of choral works introduced to Leeds by the LPS and LCU. Quantity is decisively on the side of the LCU which brought more than twice as many new works before the Leeds public as its rival. This may reflect the very different funding arrangements of the two organizations: the LCU, with Embleton's money to underwrite its activities, was clearly in a position to take more risks. Among the works given their Leeds première by the LCU were Dvořák's *Te Deum*, Cowen's *The Veil*, Parry's *King Saul* and Holbrooke's *Byron*. As might be expected, given Embleton's enthusiasm for the music of Elgar, the first performances in Leeds of the *Coronation Ode* and *The Kingdom* took place at LCU concerts. Against this, the LPS could list Bantock's *Omar Khayyam* (part 2), Ernest Farrar's *The Blessed Damozel* and Franck's *The Beatitudes* among its novelties. In the realm of purely orchestral music, however, the LPS subscription series could offer impeccable credentials, with the first Leeds performances of both Elgar symphonies and the violin concerto to its credit.

¹¹⁰ The complete programmes of the LPS 1900-1914 are listed in Appendix 4.

¹¹¹ Stanford to Green, 15th March 1902. Quoted in Plunket Greene, *Stanford*, 156.

Yet there were occasionally some surprising omissions in the programming of the societies. In a review of an LCU concert of 14th November 1906 the *Musical Times* remarked somewhat tartly that:

It does not say much for the artistic enterprise of Leeds that Sir Hubert Parry's 'Judith' should have had to wait eighteen years before it was introduced to a town supposed to be specially interested in choral music.¹¹²

That the LCU might in general have been more responsive and flexible in its programming may have been due at least in part to the way it was managed. In this respect the LCU differed from the LPS and most other societies in that its committee meetings were held much more frequently, about once a fortnight. This practice was commented on by Henry Coward:

These [meetings] are generally held, after a rehearsal, in a private room of the Queen's Hotel, where all matters are freely and fully discussed by Messrs. Barnes, Blackburn, Brunton, Lawson Tuke, Wilkinson, Norley, Whitehead the secretary, and the conductor.

The foregoing explains why the Leeds Choral Union has such good management, enterprise, and accessories, and also explains its ever-growing success.¹¹³

Choralism and social class

Samuel Midgley, that tireless champion of music for all in his native Bradford, was a firm believer in the capacity of choral music to unite all social classes in a common cause:

...those who are acquainted with our West Yorkshire choral societies know how it [music] brings all classes together, making them one of heart and mind; woolcomber and master, scavenger and professional man all meet and rub shoulders together, and by so doing learn to appreciate each other in a way that is good for all.¹¹⁴

In his analysis of the social structure of the Leeds Philharmonic Society, based on a detailed examination of the chorus roll-books, Dave Russell bears out Midgley's view only to a limited extent, revealing that almost two-thirds of LPS members came from the lower

¹¹² *MT*, 47 (December 1906): 838.

¹¹³ Coward, *Reminiscences*, 185-186.

¹¹⁴ *YDO*, 15th July 1907.

middle or skilled working classes.¹¹⁵ This figure remained roughly constant between 1894-5 and 1908-9, but during the same period he notes 'a substantial decline in the number of singers from the higher reaches of the social scale'.¹¹⁶ Russell also observes that the chorus's changing social mix was not reflected at the organisational level, where those of the upper social strata continued to predominate. Here it is worth noting that, in contrast with the exclusively male Festival Committee, the LPS management committee encouraged the active participation of women in the running of its affairs. The eight committee seats set aside for 'orchestral' members (that is, those who actually sang in the chorus) were always split equally between the sexes.¹¹⁷ Russell's study further reveals that the LPS membership contained about twice as many working-class men as women. The duties of home and family suggest themselves as the obvious explanation for this, though it is interesting to note an increase in the number of women from working-class households in the Edwardian era.¹¹⁸

The lot of the chorus singer

Pressures on chorus singers, particularly during festival years, could be severe, with most evenings in the week taken up with rehearsals. A chorus member himself, John Green recognized this, and consequently strongly resisted Stanford's desire to attempt new and ambitious repertoire, knowing the burden it would place on his singers:

...do not suggest a work which we cannot have [time] to do justice to. For myself I will appeal no more to choruses to put in such extra effort as we did last season. They will not do it and to force it spells failure.¹¹⁹

Over the years the two leading choral societies retained their separate identities with relatively little commonality of membership as the following table indicates:

¹¹⁵ Russell, *Popular Music*, 202-207.

¹¹⁶ *Ibid.*, 205.

¹¹⁷ Programme books, Leeds Philharmonic Society.

¹¹⁸ Russell, *Popular Music*, 206-207. Russell records sixteen working-class women in 1894, and thirty-six by 1909.

¹¹⁹ Green to Stanford, 18th April 1901. LPS letter books.

	Sopranos	Contraltos	Tenors	Basses
LCU only	102	100	70	97
LPS only	101	79	74	70
Members of both	22	10	6	8
Total	225	189	150	175
Both as %	9.7%	5.3%	4.0%	4.6%

Table 1: Membership of Leeds choral societies for season 1908-09¹²⁰

The commitment required to be a member of one chorus was considerable, and one can only marvel at the stamina of those who belonged to both, for it is perhaps fair to say that to be an Edwardian choralist demanded unprecedented levels of dedication and discipline, due at least in part to the exigencies of what J A Rodgers chose to term "The New Choralism". Contemporary composers of choral works such as Bantock, Brian, and Holbrooke 'invented effects, made taxing demands upon the vocal technique, the poetic sensibilities, the dramatic sense, the tonal contrasts and infinite gradations of force... which go to make up choral virtuosity'.¹²¹ Pre-eminent among those who had revolutionized English choralism, Elgar expected from choruses not only technical competence but assiduous background preparation:

I want more intelligence from our Chorus singers - they should read up everything possible which bears upon the subject – the plot or story – of which they sing.¹²²

In the two premier Leeds societies vocal standards were rigorously maintained, with no-one exempt from the process of testing. Any chorus member failing to meet the required standard was likely to receive a letter such as the following:

Dear Sir,

I regret to inform you that the report on your voice is not such as warrants the Committee in asking you to continue as an

¹²⁰ Programme books, Leeds Philharmonic Society and Leeds Choral Union, 1908.

¹²¹ J A Rodgers, *The New Choralism* (London 1911), 2.

¹²² Edward Elgar, *A Future for English Music and other Lectures*, edited by Percy M Young (London 1968), 143.

orchestral member. The Com^{tee} however hope you will become an hon: member and take tickets for the concerts.

You will then have a right, whenever there is room, to attend all the rehearsals.¹²³

An appreciable degree of ruthlessness must have been employed, judging by a review of the first LPS concert of the 1908-09 season which reported that 'the chorus, which has been "weeded" since last season, sang with great refinement and beauty of tone-quality...'.¹²⁴ An examination of the chorus listings for the 1907-08 and 1908-09 seasons shows the true extent of the "weeding" which had taken place. Thirty-four sopranos (24%) had departed along with thirty-seven contraltos (32%). The male singers fared slightly better with eight tenors leaving (almost 10%) and thirteen basses (15%). New singers were admitted to the chorus but overall its size was reduced by forty-eight voices. With such exacting standards Leeds may have differed from towns with a less illustrious choral pedigree, if the experience of Edward Bairstow with the Barnsley St Cecilia Society is anything to go by. He took over as conductor from Henry Coward in 1909, and following in such illustrious footsteps expected great things:

But it was another of these choirs that are spoiled by old ladies. One in the front row of the contraltos, with a very obvious wig, told me that she had sung at the opening of Leeds Town Hall by Queen Victoria in 1858! How many organisations are spoiled by putting the importance of the individual before that of the institution.¹²⁵

Decline in popularity of choral music

While it is doubtless true that picture palaces and the music hall competed with the choral societies for the leisure time of working people, one reason for a declining interest in choral music lay, at least according to experienced practitioners such as Coward and Bairstow, with uninspiring and routine performances which failed to move either audience or executants:

¹²³ Unsigned letter to W C Moody, 17th September 1900. LPS letter books.

¹²⁴ *MT*, 49 (December 1908): 804. In Manchester, where Richter reorganised the Hallé Choir in June 1904 with the first complete retrial of voices for 40 years, one hundred of the 400 members were "weeded out". Michael Kennedy, *The Hallé Tradition* (Manchester 1960), 135.

¹²⁵ Jackson, *Blessed City*, 73.

Dull and lifeless performances (sometimes grossly incorrect) of dull and lifeless, worn-out music, have had more to do with the difficulties that have fallen upon many choral Societies than all the cinematographs and hippodromes together.¹²⁶

Although choral standards remained high, the relative lack of local amateur instrumental talent proved detrimental to the cause of choral music in Leeds and the West Riding. Local ensembles such as the Leeds Symphony Society Orchestra, comprising mostly amateur players stiffened by a few local professionals, were more than capable of turning in a creditable performance, providing the programme was not unduly ambitious. However, the orchestral forces which could be mustered for the smaller local societies were rarely capable of matching either the demands of the scores put before them or the standards achieved by the chorus:

...it must be said that the average amateur cannot play to the beat, cannot play *pianissimo*, and cannot get the required tone or play in tune anything like so well as the professional.¹²⁷

Financial difficulties

As Edward VII's reign drew to a close the Leeds choral societies, in common with others across the country, found it increasingly difficult to maintain a sound financial footing. Dwindling support, most notably from the well-to-do, combined with the expenses of top-class soloists and orchestras, meant that the majority of concerts inevitably resulted in a deficit. Very rapidly, the reserves built up by the Leeds Philharmonic Society during the years following its amalgamation with the Leeds Subscription Concerts were eaten away. The LPS made a loss of £360 in the 1908-9 season and of £300 in 1909-10.¹²⁸ In the face of mounting losses it was decided for the 1910-11 season to reduce the number of concerts from six to four. The LCU, kept solvent only by Embleton's continuing generosity, introduced a similar reduction from four concerts to three.¹²⁹ In the final season before the

¹²⁶ Edward Bairstow, quoted in *MT*, 55 (May 1914), 299.

¹²⁷ *Ibid.*

¹²⁸ Green to William Hannam, 17th July 1911. LPS letter books.

¹²⁹ *MT*, 51 (October 1910): 663.

Great War overall attendances fell away sufficiently to provoke comment in the *Musical Times* report on provincial music in Yorkshire:

The opening concerts of the two principal Societies have certainly been poorly attended, save in the cheaper seats, though their programmes were interesting enough.¹³⁰

While the élite of Leeds stayed away, support from those of more modest means by and large remained consistent but, as with the Festival, the inadequate provision of cheaper seats adversely affected ticket revenues.¹³¹ Impressive as the Town Hall might have been in visual terms, as a practical concert room it was woefully ill-equipped compared with St George's Hall, Bradford, whose gallery, which alone seated over 1500 people, was regularly filled with what the *Yorkshire Evening Post* termed "shilling folk".¹³²

Equally significant in determining the financial success or otherwise of the season was the apparent preference of Leeds audiences for choral concerts. This is perfectly illustrated in the accounts for the 1912-13 season where the two orchestral concerts given respectively by Henry Wood and Michael Balling each made a loss of £75, while the two choral concerts under Fricker's direction made a overall profit of £124. As if proof were needed of the continuing popularity of *Messiah*, it should be noted that single ticket sales for this performance, at £171, comfortably exceeded those of the other three concerts combined.¹³³ A few years earlier the LPS annual *Messiah* concert had been sufficiently successful to generate a 'very substantial surplus' which offset the losses during the rest of the season. The proceeds were donated to the cause of poor relief in the city.¹³⁴

Unfulfilled merger plans

The answer to the prevailing economic ills lay, in the view of many people, in a merger of the two principal choral bodies in the city. Some, among them John Green, had long

¹³⁰ *MT*, 54 (December 1913): 826.

¹³¹ Green to J R Ford, 30th October 1913. LPS letter books.

¹³² *YEP*, 28th September 1912. Reference has already been made in chapter 2 to the poor state of repair of many Town Hall seats.

¹³³ Green to J S Ostler, 12th April 1913. LPS letter books.

¹³⁴ Green to Stanford, 22nd January 1905. LPS letter books.

advocated such a course, but had come up against Embleton's unwillingness to relinquish control of his creation, as this letter of February 1910 (marked Private) indicates:

From yours of the 15th I gather that your Society for the moment prefer not to consider any scheme which would make one large united Chorus and Choral Society in Leeds. I am, so far, rather sorry for this, because I am inclined to think that wisdom was on this side.¹³⁵

It perhaps comes as something of a surprise that merger discussions were actually being conducted between Green and Alfred Benton some time before 1900, less than five years after the LCU's foundation. In a letter of April 1900 concerning the selection of a joint chorus for the Handel Festival at Crystal Palace, Green recalled:

You will remember that at one time I had hopes that an arrangement would be made which might have led to ultimate amalgamation of the two societies, but there was too much opposition and I dropped the negotiations which I had begun with you at your house.¹³⁶

Other pioneers

This chapter on Leeds choralism cannot be concluded without some reference to the valuable contribution of two other notable Leeds choral conductors of the period: H Percy Richardson with the St Chad's and Headingley Choral Societies, and H Matthias Turton with the Leeds New Choral Society. Much pioneering work was quietly undertaken by Richardson, notably in the revival of neglected or rarely heard repertoire. The lesser known works of Handel were represented in Richardson's enterprising programmes: in April 1902 *Alexander's Feast* was revived with the St Chad's Society, while in December 1904 the abbreviated version of *Joshua* prepared by Ebenezer Prout was performed 'it was said for the first time at Leeds, and certainly the first for many years past'.¹³⁷ Headingley Choral Society came into being in early 1903, with a performance of Handel's *Ode for St Cecilia's Day* with James Wilson and Tom Child as soloists.¹³⁸

¹³⁵ Green to Embleton, 18th February 1910. LPS letter books.

¹³⁶ Green to Alfred Benton, 27th April 1900. LPS letter books.

¹³⁷ *MT*, 43 (May 1902): 336; *MT*, 46 (January 1905): 50.

¹³⁸ *MT*, 44 (March 1903): 193.

Herbert Percy Richardson was born in Leeds in 1875, and at the age of 18 became organist at St Chad's, Far Headingley, a post he held with distinction until his death in April 1941. He came from a musical family: his father had been a bass in the Festival Chorus and as a boy had sung at the banquet given in Queen Victoria's honour in 1858.¹³⁹ Despite many offers of positions elsewhere, Richardson chose to remain in his native city, developing the musical life of St Chad's with ambitious and imaginative programming. It is unlikely that many provincial church choirs were performing the four *Passions* of Schütz in 1904.¹⁴⁰

H Matthias Turton (1876-1937) succeeded Herbert Fricker as organist and choirmaster at St Aidan's Church, Harehills, in 1902. That same year he founded a choral body which ultimately became the Leeds New Choral Society.¹⁴¹ While never enjoying the eminence of its older counterparts, the LNCS under Turton nevertheless did introduce to Leeds audiences for the first time works such as Samuel Coleridge-Taylor's *A Tale of Old Japan* and *Kubla Khan* and, surprisingly perhaps, Bach's *Christmas Oratorio*.¹⁴² Coleridge-Taylor's music seems to have had a particular appeal for Turton: for its first appearance in Leeds Town Hall in 1911 the LNCS performed the complete *Hiawatha* trilogy.

As will be seen later, both Richardson and Turton were also active as performers of chamber music.

In search of an orchestra

While the excellence of the choral forces in and around Leeds in the Edwardian era can be in little doubt, there remained the perennial problem, common to many provincial towns, of finding a local orchestral body of equivalent quality. Respected practitioners such as Edward Bairstow recognized that 'the orchestral accompaniment must be as good as the choral work'.¹⁴³ His solution, shared by many others, was to enlist the support of the

¹³⁹ Scattergood, *A Short History*, 70; *YP*, 9th April 1941.

¹⁴⁰ Concert given at St Chad's, 29th March 1904.

¹⁴¹ The area around St Aidan's Church in Roundhay Road was known at the time as New Leeds, thus the name New Leeds Choral Society was initially adopted. The first two words were later transposed. (*YEP*, 1st May 1946.)

¹⁴² Privately published, undated booklet (1925?) *H Matthias Turton. Organist - Conductor*. Copy in Leeds Local History Library.

¹⁴³ *MT*, 55 (May 1914), 299.

Chapter 3: 'Apostles of Beauty': The Leeds Choral Societies

municipal authorities in the formation of a local professional orchestra. How this ultimately came about in Leeds, only to fail after a brief flowering, will be examined in the following chapter.

Chapter 4: The Quest for a Leeds Orchestra

The advantages of maintaining a first-class municipal orchestra, even at a loss, are obvious. In the case of a health resort it is, of course, a great advertisement, but to any city, in my opinion, it is one of the most healthy forms of entertainment for the masses, and good for the mind.

Sir Dan Godfrey ¹

The time is coming when all towns must be able to give the people the good music they want.

Sir Edward Elgar ²

In December 1867 a letter to the editor of the newly-founded journal *The Yorkshire Orchestra* from the redoubtable Leeds chorus master Robert S Burton gave rise to a controversy which rumbled on within its correspondence columns for some months afterwards. Never a man to mince words, Burton averred that 'we have the finest choral bodies in the kingdom, but in the whole of the county of York we have not the resources for a good band'.³ An editorial published the following month did not take issue with Burton's assertion, but instead cited the lack of proper musical education for the majority of indigenous musicians and the consequent importation of well-trained foreign instrumentalists as the root causes of this sad state of affairs. Charles Hallé's band of sixty-four, it was pointed out, contained twenty-four foreigners.⁴ This theme was taken up by "A Yorkshire Violinist" writing from Leeds in March 1868:

We have been almost ruined by the introduction of foreigners into the town, who come only three or four times a-year and leave directly the concert is over. This is of no use to *us* or to the towns of Leeds and Bradford. For us there is neither organization nor practice.⁵

Others took a rather more positive view: a Mr Wilberforce of Leeds welcomed the debate provoked by Burton and in reply listed 'nearly half a band that can be found in Leeds

¹ Sir Dan Godfrey, *Memories and Music* (London 1924), 294.

² Quoted in Kennedy, *Portrait*, 168.

³ *The Yorkshire Orchestra*, vol.1, no.1, 7th December 1867: 9.

⁴ *Ibid.*, vol.1, no.5, 4th January 1868: 50.

⁵ *Ibid.*, vol.1, no.16, 21st March 1868: 188-89.

and a few miles around', among them the Haddocks (Thomas and George) and the Keighley-born violinist John Tiplady Carrodus.⁶

In fact Burton had touched on a much wider national problem and not a mere local difficulty. Two years before his letter was published the Society for the Encouragement of Arts, Manufactures and Commerce had appointed a Committee to investigate the state of musical education both at home and abroad.⁷ The report which emerged produced little in the way of tangible results, but it did reveal the chaotic and inadequate nature of musical education in general, and the grievous shortcomings of the Royal Academy of Music in particular. While it seems that standards did improve in the last decades of the nineteenth century,⁸ the lack of provincial orchestras remained an enduring problem, as Stanford lamented in his 1883 paper "The Development of Orchestras in England":

England, as a whole, has one very strong and one very weak point in her musical position. Her strength lies in the wealth of choral societies; her weakness in the dearth of provincial orchestras...Leeds, Hull, Halifax, Plymouth, Norwich, and a dozen other large towns which might be named, boast no orchestra whatever. This weakness, then, exists, and its baneful results upon the musical development of the country can scarcely be doubted; orchestral music being absent, one of the chief instigations to musical invention is absent too, and a large and healthy increase of English composers is not to be expected.⁹

The part played by provincial orchestras as vehicles for the promotion of native composers certainly remained a recurring theme among their late Victorian advocates, no less than their potential for what Stanford terms, in the same essay, 'raising the tone of public feeling'.¹⁰ The notion of "rational recreation" was well understood and had enjoyed a brief flowering in Leeds in the eighteen-fifties, with concerts designed to woo the working

⁶ *Ibid.*, vol.1, no.7, 18th January 1868: 81.

⁷ Cyril Ehrlich, *The Music Profession in Britain since the Eighteenth Century* (Oxford 1985), 88-99.

⁸ By 1905 Elgar felt able in his fourth Peyton lecture at the University of Birmingham to speak of English orchestral players as 'the finest in the world'. Elgar, *A Future for English Music, and Other Lectures* (London 1968), 129.

⁹ Charles Stanford, *Studies and Memories* (London 1908), 25-26.

¹⁰ *Ibid.*, 30.

Chapter 4: The Quest for a Leeds Orchestra

people of the town away from the blandishments of the public house.¹¹ The civilizing influence of orchestral music was in due course deemed of importance to all sections of society, not only the poor. For many social commentators, among them George Bernard Shaw, material wealth alone did not give rise to a well-rounded individual:

...the man who is brought up in a town where there are exchanges and chambers of commerce, but no orchestra and no opera, will never be a cultivated citizen of the world, though he were as rich as Cræsus.¹²

As the century was drawing to a close the challenge for those concerned with the cultural reputation of Leeds was to reduce the city's reliance on visiting orchestras, notably the Hallé, and to develop local institutions of comparable quality. This was indeed a daunting task, but fortunately for the city there existed a nucleus of men with sufficient resources and determination at least to make the attempt.

Early experiments

In 1898 Colonel T W Harding was elected the second Lord Mayor of Leeds, the title of 'Lord Mayor' having been created in June 1897.¹³ Harding, a manufacturer of cards, combs and steel pins for the textile industry, was a highly cultured man with many artistic and scientific interests, who had been instrumental in the foundation of the Leeds Art Gallery in 1887.¹⁴ Among the enterprises which he hoped to bring to fruition during his tenure of office was the formation of a municipal orchestra. In this he enlisted the help of his fellow Liberal alderman, and the incomparable mover and shaker of Leeds musical life at the time, Fred Spark.¹⁵ Within a matter of weeks Spark was writing to Henry Embleton: 'Our scheme is developing towards a "Leeds Municipal Orchestra" – to include (but to be

¹¹ See David Russell, 'The Leeds Rational Recreation Society, 1852-9: "Music for the People in a mid-Victorian city'. *Publications of the Thoresby Society*, Miscellany, vol.17 (1981), 137-158.

¹² *The World*, 9th August 1893. Quoted in Shaw, *Music in London*, 3:46.

¹³ Burt and Grady, *History of Leeds*, 225.

¹⁴ Harding's Tower Works on Globe Road featured a chimney constructed as a copy of the Lamberti Tower in Verona. It can still be seen by the visitor arriving in Leeds by train. For an account of Harding's cultural and philanthropic activities see George Black, 'City Square and Colonel Harding', *Publications of the Thoresby Society*, vol.54, part 2 (1975): 106-112.

¹⁵ Spark, *Memories*, 229.

beyond & above) all the good players in Leeds.’¹⁶ Early indications of some of the difficulties which lay ahead are however apparent in a letter to Harding written the following day:

I am convinced that we must endeavour to make the orchestra a municipal one, & so be above the petty jealousies of musicians. The Haddocks are calling their College band a Permanent Orchestra! Mr Holt is advertising "The Leeds Permanent Orchestra." We must have nothing to do with either, as organizations.¹⁷

Harding must have taken the comments on local rivalries to heart, for in a invitation issued to interested parties in January 1899 to discuss the project he added that ‘No professional musicians are being invited to this Preliminary Meeting, which will be an informal and a friendly conference.’¹⁸ The Lord Mayor had good reason to think that the presence of local musicians might cloud the issue, given the number of competing claims to the mantle of a representative Leeds orchestra.

Long before any substantive progress had been made Fred Spark was receiving solicitations from musicians eager to be associated with the new venture. That same January the Leeds violinist Irwin Sawdon wrote to offer his services as Deputy Director.¹⁹ Later in the year enquiries about the conductorship were received from Frederic Cowen and Samuel Coleridge-Taylor. Their differing tone casts an interesting light on the respective personalities of the two musicians. First to write was Cowen:

I see that the Leeds Municipal Orchestra is still on the "tapis" – I do not know whether any proposal or suggestion has yet been made as to the Conductorship should the scheme become an established fact, but perhaps you & those concerned in the matter might be willing to consider my name. I cannot help thinking that the great sympathy shown me in Leeds over the Manchester affair might cause such a suggestion to be received with favour. In any case I hope you will excuse my writing you these few lines on the matter

¹⁶ Spark to H C Embleton, 13th December 1898. This and other correspondence may be found in F R Spark, *Leeds Municipal Orchestra: Collection of correspondence, newspaper cuttings etc. relating to its formation 1898-99*. 2 vols, held at Leeds Local History Library, hereinafter referred to as Spark Collection.

¹⁷ Spark to T W Harding, 14th December 1898. Spark Collection.

¹⁸ Printed letter from T W Harding, 2nd January 1899. Spark Collection.

¹⁹ Irwin Sawdon to F R Spark, 23rd January 1899. Spark Collection.

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&, should you yourself be favourably disposed to such a course, asking your kind help & influence.²⁰

Cowen's business-like confidence contrasts strongly with the marked reticence of the creator of *Hiawatha's Wedding Feast*:

Regarding the New Permanent Orchestra at Leeds, – if the preliminaries turn out happily, would you think it worth while my submitting my name with a view to becoming one of the conductors?

Or have the gentlemen of the Committee decided upon this important point by now.

I thought there would be no harm in asking, in any case.²¹

Other enquiries came in from a number of orchestral players who were engaged over the summer at places such as Harrogate, Buxton and Blackpool, all eager to secure a place in the new orchestra.²²

A series of meetings were held in the Lord Mayor's Rooms at the Town Hall. At the meeting of 12th September 1899 Fred Spark, seconded by Arthur Grimshaw, moved 'That a memorial be presented to the Leeds City Council at its next meeting, urging upon that body to recognize and support a municipal orchestra, by which the highest and best class of music may be adequately performed on lines of management similar to those adopted in regard to the Municipal Art Gallery.'²³ But fatal divisions were already present among the supporters of the orchestra, particularly regarding the number of players required. As an experienced local politician, Spark favoured a modest beginning with no more than thirty players, realizing that the council was unlikely to fund the sixty or sixty-five advocated by Grimshaw and others.²⁴ At a further meeting a week later, attended by around thirty of the leading professional and amateur musicians in Leeds and chaired by Walter Harding, the submission to the Council was prepared.

²⁰ Frederic Cowen to F R Spark, 21st September 1899. Spark Collection. The "Manchester affair" alluded to by Cowen is his acrimonious departure from the conductorship of the Hallé. See Kennedy, *The Hallé Tradition*, 115-126.

²¹ Samuel Coleridge-Taylor to F R Spark, 16th October 1899. Spark Collection.

²² These letters may be found in the Spark Collection.

²³ *LE*, 20th September 1899.

²⁴ Spark, *Memories*, 229-230.

Finally, on 4th October 1899, at the last meeting of the full Council for the municipal year, the memorial was formally presented by a deputation representing the professional musicians of Leeds.²⁵ The members of the deputation were F Kilvington Hattersley, Herbert Fricker, Alfred Benton, Arthur Grimshaw and Edward Elliott. Hattersley, acting as spokesman, read out the memorial, which is worth examining in some detail, since it embodies many of the arguments used in the years which followed:

Music, as an art and an educational agency, has not in Leeds, up to the present, received the support and the attention which the City Council ought to accord to it. Whilst literature, painting, and sculpture have been fostered and subsidised by the Corporation, the highest forms of music have had little or no recognition from the municipal body. Music has an influence for good upon the morals and the education of the community beyond that of any other art agency. Regarded from this aspect, the Corporation of Leeds are urged to recognise, foster, and support an orchestra of instrumental players who shall adequately interpret the works of the great masters of all countries for the education and pleasure of the citizens of Leeds.²⁶

The memorial went on propose an orchestra of forty to forty-five players with an appointed conductor and sub-conductor, which would give concerts in the Town Hall and other venues at which a substantial proportion of the seats would cost no more than 3d. The educational nature of the venture would be further enhanced by the provision of periodic free lectures on musical subjects. Costings for a series of eight concerts were supplied, which indicated a likely shortfall of £195 in receipts against expenditure.²⁷ Against this, promises of support to the extent of £150 had been made by the Lord Mayor and the Leeds Festival Committee.²⁸

Attention was drawn to the general principle of municipal support already exemplified in such areas as a free library and art gallery, not to mention the £500 per year paid to brass bands providing musical entertainment in Leeds parks. Appealing to the civic pride of the

²⁵ The minutes of the council note without further comment 'A Deputation attended on behalf of the professional musicians of Leeds, and presented a memorial in favour of the establishment of a Municipal Orchestra for the City'. Leeds City Council. Proceedings, 4th October 1899.

²⁶ *YP*, 5th October 1899.

²⁷ The full costings are given in Appendix 5.

²⁸ *YP*, 5th October 1899.

gathered councillors, reference was made in conclusion to the successes achieved by municipal orchestras in other towns, though as far as England was concerned, this was slightly shaky ground.

Perhaps because it was the end of Harding's term of office, or perhaps because as Spark had warned, the scheme was too ambitious too soon, the council could not be persuaded to support the undertaking. Spark replied to Coleridge-Taylor on 18th October that the scheme was 'purely a tentative one' and indicated that the council would shortly appoint a committee to consider the question further.²⁹ There is also a strong possibility that the scheme had been seriously undermined by the existence of a "Leeds Permanent Orchestra" founded in November 1898 by Edgar and G Percy Haddock, the principals of the Leeds School of Music. In an interview in the *Leeds Mercury* under the headline 'Permanent Orchestra for Leeds. A Bold Project', the Haddock brothers announced that 'an orchestra of upwards of ninety male performers, drawn from all parts of the Leeds district, has been formed, and the concert it gave in March last enabled the Leeds music-loving public to judge of its quality.'³⁰ With such a privately funded venture already under way the chances of winning financial support from the council were bound to be slim.

With help from private individuals in Leeds, among them Harding and Spark, the Haddocks continued their efforts to bring affordable concerts to the people of the town, through the medium of their Musical Evenings, though inevitably these were rather more popular in tone than the advocates of a municipal orchestra might have preferred. A series of four "experimental" concerts underwritten by Leeds gentlemen, was mounted during the 1901-02 season. By engaging artists at much reduced fees, Edgar Haddock estimated the total cost of the concerts to be £150. Substantial contributions (£20 each) were guaranteed by the Leeds banker Ernest William Beckett and by the managing director of The Leeds Forge, Samson Fox, already well-known for his patronage of the Royal College of Music.³¹ The council was persuaded to grant free use of the Town Hall, but was unwilling to provide any additional financial support for the venture. Indeed, it even went so far as to appropriate

²⁹ F R Spark to Samuel Coleridge-Taylor, 18th October 1899. Spark Collection.

³⁰ *LM*, 15th July 1899.

³¹ In 1889 Samson Fox (1838-1903) donated the prodigious sum of £45,000 towards the cost of a new building for the Royal College of Music in South Kensington. See Sir George Grove, 'The Royal College of Music', *The Strand Musical Magazine*, 1 (February 1895): 82-89.

the ticket revenue from the gallery seats for which a charge was made, much to the evident disgust of Herbert Thompson, writing in the *Musical Times*:

From that august body, which gives pecuniary help to brass bands in the Leeds parks in the summer months, no subsidy has been procured; but they have graciously granted the use of the Town Hall without charge, while indemnifying themselves by reserving for their own use the shillings paid for admission to the gallery, the area being free. While it is to be regretted that the concerts are thus left on a purely charitable basis, it is something to have obtained from a municipal corporation a bare recognition of orchestral music, and it will be interesting to watch the development of this undertaking.³²

The final accounts for the concert series show that Edgar Haddock's estimate ultimately proved to be close to the mark, at £153, but that to balance the books he and his brother had to find the deficit of £28/12/0.³³ In a letter to Fred Spark, thanking him for his support, Haddock expressed the hope that the series might become established 'without the necessity of private financial help being given'.³⁴ In the event the experiment was not repeated, as other developments took place later that year which were to bring the prospect of a Leeds orchestra much closer.

The case for a municipal orchestra

In 1898, at the age of 30, Herbert Austin Fricker was appointed Organist to Leeds Town Hall, as successor to William Spark (1823-1897), the elder brother of Fred, who had held the post since 1860.³⁵ A native of Canterbury, Fricker had begun his musical career as a chorister and later assistant organist at the Cathedral. He had come to Leeds from Folkestone, where he had been organist and choirmaster at Holy Trinity Church since

³² *MT*, 43 (January 1902): 48.

³³ The typescript balance sheet, headed *The Leeds City Free Orchestral Concerts*, survives in the Spark Collection.

³⁴ Edgar Haddock to Spark, 13th March 1902. Spark Collection.

³⁵ Fricker was selected from six candidates who were tested on the Willis instrument in the Royal Albert Hall, London. The selection panel comprised Sir Frederick Bridge (organist of Westminster Abbey), Charles Villiers Stanford, and C W Perkins (organist to Birmingham Corporation). *MT*, 38 (April 1898): 240-241.

1889.³⁶ Percy Scholes recalled that ‘by the 1890s Spark’s attention to business had become somewhat perfunctory and...the audiences had greatly fallen off’.³⁷ Fricker soon set about restoring the reputation and attendances of the Town Hall organ recitals, held on Tuesday afternoons and Saturday evenings; however, he rapidly realized that the recitals had far greater potential to reach a much wider audience if they were extended in scope to include other forms of music.³⁸

Accordingly, in June 1902, Herbert Fricker appeared before the members of the Sub-Property (City Buildings) Committee with a proposal to include orchestral and choral music in the programming for the Town Hall recitals.³⁹ His stated intention was ‘to reach that very large portion of the public untouched by the efforts of the Philharmonic, Choral Union Societies, and Mr Haddock’s Musical Evenings’.⁴⁰ Mindful of local sensitivities, Fricker was at pains to stress that the proposed venture would not encroach upon those areas of musical activity already covered by the larger societies:

The Art of Music has many branches, and it will be an easy matter to select a few of the somewhat as yet unbeaten paths, and so provide, I hope, many a pleasant and instructive evening for the benefit of the masses.⁴¹

Fricker proposed ten concerts to be held during the winter season on Saturday evenings in the Town Hall. Among the local organizations to be invited to participate were the Haddock Orchestra, the Leeds Musical Union under Bernard Johnson, the Leeds Symphony Society Orchestra conducted by Arthur Grimshaw, and the Armley Choral Society under H H Pickard. This use of a broad range of local performers would, it was hoped, stimulate a greater interest in musical events at the Town Hall and encourage a

³⁶ *YEN*, 13th January 1908.

³⁷ Scholes, *Mirror*, II, 589.

³⁸ Fricker had already shown a flair for broadening the scope of local musical activity during his time at Holy Trinity Church, Folkestone, where he gave regular chamber concerts in which he played the viola. (*MT*, 38 (April 1898): 240).

³⁹ A copy of the proposal, entitled *Scheme for the Enlargement and Development of the Town Hall Recitals, Leeds, June 1902*, is preserved in the Leeds Local History Library.

⁴⁰ Fricker, *Scheme*, 2.

⁴¹ *Ibid.*, 2.

catholicity of musical taste not perhaps generally found in the Leeds public. Prudently, Fricker left his most radical proposal until last:

The last item of this Scheme is the establishment of a small but efficient Professional Orchestra. This cannot be done at once owing to the matter of expense, but I hope, with the aid of the evenings above mentioned, to establish a fund to enable me to organise later a Professional Orchestra, and to incorporate that Orchestra in the present scheme. The fund I hope to raise by means of a small charge at the Special Musical Evenings to the Festival Gallery, and to a few rows of seats at the front part of the Area, the rest of the Hall being free.⁴²

The Town Hall organist was given the council's blessing to go ahead with the scheme though, as expected, the council members were not minded to provide financial support for an orchestra, despite doing so for brass bands.⁴³ Looking back, one can only admire the industry and dedication of Herbert Fricker who, without any commensurate increase in salary and completely unaided, took on the job of organising an entire concert series in every detail. How much easier to have reeled off the required number of organ recitals. The hard-headed businessmen on the council must surely have wondered with what kind of man they were dealing.

The unbeaten path

The experimental concert series finally got underway on Saturday, 27th September 1902 with a choral programme featuring music selected from that performed on the occasion of the King's Coronation. Fricker conducted a chorus of 150 voices, while H H Pickard presided at the Town Hall organ. The title-page of the programme book proclaimed the event as the first of a 'Series of Special Saturday Evening Concerts'.⁴⁴ The Council maintained a discreet distance from the undertaking, other than allowing, from the second concert onwards, the city's coat of arms to appear on the programme. This policy of

⁴² *Ibid.*, 3.

⁴³ The resolution formally adopting Fricker's scheme was passed by Council on 2nd July 1902. Leeds City Council, Proceedings.

⁴⁴ Programme book, Town Hall, Leeds. Series of Special Saturday Evening Free Concerts, First Concert, 27th September 1902.

dissociation was carried yet further by the words 'Under the management of Mr. H. A. Fricker, City Organist' displayed prominently on the programme cover.

Orchestral music made its first appearance in the series with the second concert on 6th December when the Leeds Symphony Society Orchestra, specially augmented to 100 players for the occasion, gave a miscellaneous programme under the direction of Arthur Grimshaw. The most substantial work performed was Grieg's Piano Concerto, with Percy Richardson as soloist, while Edward Elliott, leading the orchestra, took the solo part in Svendsen's Romance for violin and orchestra. Works by Sullivan, Cowen, Gounod and Berlioz were given as well as a first performance of *Passamezzo* for orchestra by the local composer Bernard Johnson.⁴⁵

The thorny issue of admission costs arose again after the third concert in December 1902 when the *Yorkshire Daily Observer* noted that although all the free seats were taken, the remaining sections of the hall were but sparsely occupied.⁴⁶ Fricker's vision of free admission to all but a few reserved areas had to some extent been undermined. There were admittedly over 1,000 free seats, but a charge was made for a further 850 seats (450 in the gallery at 1/-, 200 in the area at 6d., and 200 in the orchestra at 3d.).⁴⁷

Nine concerts were given in all, employing the services of local bodies such as the Armley and Wortley Choral Society and the Leeds Musical Union. By the end of the season the experimental series had proved sufficiently successful for Herbert Fricker to return to the Council with some degree of confidence. His mission was not only to obtain official approval for a further series of Town Hall concerts, but to realise his ambition of establishing a municipal orchestra for the city.⁴⁸

⁴⁵ Programme book, Town Hall, Leeds. Series of Special Saturday Evening Free Concerts, Second Concert, 6th December 1902. Bernard Johnson (died 1935) was music master at Leeds Grammar School at the time.

⁴⁶ *YDO*, 22nd December 1902.

⁴⁷ Programme book, Town Hall, Leeds. Series of Special Saturday Evening Free Concerts, Second Concert, 6th December 1902.

⁴⁸ Fricker enlisted the help of the violinist Edward Maude, with whom he regularly played chamber music, in selecting musicians for the orchestra. On page 317 of Maude's copy of J Sutcliffe Smith's *A Musical Pilgrimage in Yorkshire*, where reference is made to the organization of the orchestra, Maude wrote 'I was a member & advised Mr Fricker as to suitable players'. The book is now in the possession of Mrs Barbara Errington of Leeds.

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Fricker appeared before the City Buildings Sub-Committee on 28th September 1903 where he 'presented report and statement of receipts and expenses in connection with the series of concerts given last winter and reported as to the arrangements for concerts during the forthcoming winter'.⁴⁹ The report was adopted and his arrangements for the coming season approved. In accordance with Fricker's original 1902 proposal the committee resolved to charge one shilling for seats in the Gallery, and sixpence for a limited number of seats in the body of the hall, the rest being free. The Lord Mayor's secretary, J F Walker, was appointed secretary of the concerts, his name appearing on the programme cover. Thus the way was now clear to begin the first series of the Leeds Municipal Concerts.

The Leeds Municipal Concerts

Notwithstanding its lack of any serious financial commitment to the concert series, the city council contrived to extract the maximum credit for the enterprise: the printed programme of the first concert, costing one penny and bearing the city's coat of arms, announced 'The First Municipal Orchestral Concert of 50 Performers. Under the Patronage and Presence of the Rt. Hon. The Lord Mayor & Lady Mayoress (Mr & Mrs John Ward) and Members of the City Council'.⁵⁰ It took place in the Town Hall on Saturday, 17th October 1903 with an orchestra of local musicians led by Edward Elliott and with the vocalists Clara J Winder and Henry Brearley.⁵¹ Fricker's choice of programme demonstrated that judicious blend of accessibility and quality which was to typify so much of his work. It is reproduced here in full:

Pomp and Circumstance March, op.39 no.1	Elgar
Overture, Rosamunde	Schubert
Elizabeth's Greeting (Tannhäuser)	Wagner
Suite, Peer Gynt	Grieg
Lohengrin's Narration (Lohengrin)	Wagner
Two movements from Symphony No.6	Tchaikovsky

⁴⁹ Leeds City Council. Epitome of proceedings of Committees from 1st October to 5th November 1903.

⁵⁰ Programme book, Leeds Municipal Concerts, 17th October 1903.

⁵¹ Brearley was a well-known figure in Leeds musical circles. He was principal tenor at Leeds Parish Church and had sung in the 1898 Festival. Clara Winder was a young Leeds soprano just embarking on her career as a soloist. She gave her first solo concert shortly afterwards at the Albert Hall, Leeds on 10th November 1903.

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Grand Chorus, March & Ballet Music (Aida, act 2)	Verdi
Song, "Il Bacio"	Arditi
Intermezzo	Cecil Gann
Introduction, Act 3, Lohengrin	Wagner
Song, "The Sailor's Grave"	Sullivan
Overture, Tannhäuser	Wagner

The growing fascination of the Edwardian concert-going public with the music of Richard Wagner is here exploited to the full, as it would continue to be throughout successive seasons, while the inclusion of two movements from Tchaikovsky's "Pathétique" Symphony, later referred to by the novelist Arnold Bennett as 'the most popular piece of high-class music in England today', illustrates how Fricker was careful to ease the Leeds audience gently into the world of symphonic music.⁵² The Bradford Subscription Concerts had drawn some criticism for a similar approach earlier that year:

With the idea of popularizing the concerts, which have not been supported as they deserve, serious music has been given in homeopathic doses, a couple of symphonic movements at a time representing the maximum dose, but the result has not been encouraging.⁵³

However it was always Fricker's intention to develop the appreciation of his audiences of the larger musical forms, and it is worthwhile to note that by the sixth concert of the series, on 9th January 1904, a complete symphony was included in the programme for the first time:

Last Saturday's programme marked a step in advance, in that it included an entire Symphony. The choice of Beethoven's in C minor was obviously a wise one, for this is so universally accepted a masterpiece that the voice of the Philistine is, for once, in a decided minority, and need not be considered.⁵⁴

Interestingly, no similar development took place in Bradford, where by 1908 that city's Permanent Orchestra, by then in its sixteenth season, had still to perform a symphony in its entirety.⁵⁵

⁵² Arnold Bennett, *How to live on 24 Hours a Day* (London 1913), 99.

⁵³ *MT*, 44 (January 1903): 48.

⁵⁴ *YP*, 11th January 1904.

⁵⁵ *YP*, 21st February 1908.

New or recent works by contemporary British composers would feature regularly in Fricker's programmes: Elgar's *Pomp and Circumstance No.1* had received its first performance only two years earlier.⁵⁶ The composer of the *Intermezzo*, Cecil Gann, was described in the programme book as 'a violinist and musician of Canterbury' and we may presume that Fricker's acquaintance with Gann and his music dates from the years spent in his native town. Another of Gann's works, the *Concert Overture in F*, was given its première at the sixth concert of the series. Local composers were also represented at the concerts, and the final concert of the first series on 12th March 1904 saw the first performance of F Kilvington Hattersley's *Symphony in D minor* which the *Yorkshire Post* considered to be 'probably the most distinguished composition that owes its origin to Leeds'.⁵⁷

There can be little doubt that the inaugural concert, and indeed those which followed, achieved a noteworthy success, in terms of both artistic standards and audience numbers, and more than justified Fricker's belief in the existence of a largely untapped source of musical enthusiasm among the people of Leeds. Attendances at the Town Hall were extremely encouraging. It was reported that at the opening concert sufficient people had paid for admission to the gallery and front rows of the area that the expenses could be met from the money taken at the door.⁵⁸ Soon after the start of the series Herbert Thompson would declare that 'There is no musical enterprise in the West Riding of greater interest and importance than the concerts of the Leeds Municipal Orchestra'.⁵⁹

Orchestral standards

Looking through the programmes of successive seasons one is struck by their increasingly ambitious character, reflecting the confidence which comes from a group of musicians playing together on a regular basis: complete symphonies by Beethoven, Tchaikovsky and Dvořák begin to replace the less substantial orchestral works commonly

⁵⁶ By the dedicatees, Alfred Rodewald and the Liverpool Orchestral Society on 19th October 1901.

⁵⁷ *YP*, 14th March 1904. A full score of the symphony, together with a piano transcription by the composer, is held in the Leeds Local History Library.

⁵⁸ *MT*, 44 (November 1903): 746.

⁵⁹ *YP*, 11th January 1904.

found in provincial programmes. Yet despite the obvious progress being made, there remained those who doubted that a municipal orchestra could ever achieve performances of the highest quality. After the spectacularly successful visit to Paris of the Leeds Chorus with the London Symphony Orchestra in January 1906, it was suggested in the local press that a special celebratory performance in Leeds of selected items from the Paris programme would be an appropriate way to mark the event. John Green publicly opposed such a suggestion, partly on financial grounds, but also because of his conviction that local orchestral forces would not be able to match the London Symphony Orchestra:

Any attempt to repeat our Paris success would be most incomplete unless it included Beethoven's [9th] Symphony, and excellent though our Municipal Orchestra is, it would be foolish to expect them to give anything like the finished performance of the London Orchestra.⁶⁰

In spite of such reservations the Paris chorus did in fact appear with the Leeds Municipal Orchestra just a few days later on 20th January 1906 with a programme which included several of the works performed in France with such success: Parry's *Blest Pair of Sirens*, a chorus from Elgar's *King Olaf* and the Sanctus from Bach's B Minor Mass. The chorus again covered itself with glory and was pronounced 'one of the best Leeds has ever turned out'.⁶¹ The misgivings expressed by Green as to the standard of orchestral playing were shown to be unfounded:

The quality of the orchestra was demonstrated very strikingly in a beautifully finished performance of the "Oberon" Overture, and one could not but regret they had so small a share of the proceedings. In the choral pieces they lacked only numbers to be quite equal to the situation, and it may be said that now for the first time Leeds is able to boast of a home-made orchestra and chorus able to tackle such masterpieces as were included in Saturday's programme.⁶²

The musicians of the Municipal Orchestra, like many of their colleagues elsewhere in England, appear to have made a virtue of necessity and been formidable sight-readers.⁶³ To

⁶⁰ *YEP*, 16th January 1906.

⁶¹ *YP*, 22nd January 1906.

⁶² *Ibid.*

⁶³ For a list of the members of the Leeds Municipal Orchestra and its successor, the Leeds Symphony Orchestra, between 1905 and 1913 see Appendix 6.

avoid any accusations of local bias, one may turn to Richard Ship, the music critic of the *Staffordshire Sentinel*, who described the successful première of Havergal Brian's *English Suite* in January 1907:

The pluck and skill of the orchestra was illustrated in a practical way by the fact that though Mr Brian's score is in ms, and the style is new, the players were enabled to play it with spirit and real intelligence only after half an hour's rehearsal in the afternoon.⁶⁴

What the *Sentinel's* critic neglected to mention in his review was that only forty members of the orchestra had attended the afternoon rehearsal as a result of Leeds Corporation's efforts to cut costs. The hapless Havergal Brian, who had not even expected to be conducting when he arrived in Leeds, was left to rehearse as best he could, minus the entire brass section.⁶⁵

'In the clutches of the Corporation'

At Leeds the Municipal Orchestra, founded and conducted by Mr Fricker, the Town Hall organist, gives concerts which are under the patronage, or, as a cynical person might put it, in the clutches of the Corporation.⁶⁶

Herbert Thompson's words in the columns of the *Musical Times* contain behind their ironic intent an encapsulation of the problems which were to beset the Municipal Concerts over the ensuing seasons despite their overall artistic success. The relationship of the Corporation with the concerts was always characterized by a certain ambivalence: oscillating between a lack of interest bordering on indifference, and a desire to exercise influence upon them by virtue of what little financial support it did provide. One council member reportedly complained that the programmes were 'too classy', and it is probable that Fricker felt compelled to retain 'popular' items such as part-songs and glees in his programmes as long as the Corporation had some degree of financial interest in the concerts.⁶⁷ Certainly, it is evident that once freed of these constraints, Fricker's programmes began to become less

⁶⁴ Quoted in Reginald Nettel, *North Staffordshire Music. A Social Experiment* (Rickmansworth 1977): 55-56.

⁶⁵ Reginald Nettel, *Havergal Brian and his Music* (London 1976), 40.

⁶⁶ *MT*, 48 (January 1907): 49.

⁶⁷ *Ibid.*

miscellaneous in character with the inclusion of a far greater number of more substantial works, particularly complete symphonies.

It is hard to discern if any direct interference in matters of programming actually took place, but for a brief period at least it did seem the Council might take some active interest in the Municipal Concerts as an established part of its activities. A Municipal Concerts Sub-Committee of the Property Committee was formed, and the finances of the concert series appeared in the published accounts of the city, alongside other cultural undertakings such as the brass band concerts in local parks and the Town Hall organ recitals.⁶⁸

It was widely held that one potential way to secure the future of the concerts was to gain support on the basis of their broad educational value. As part of an attempt to promote greater musical awareness, in the 1907-08 season each of the concerts was prefaced by a lecture the previous evening designed to aid the appreciation of the music to be performed. These lectures were given by professional musicians in collaboration with the newly-formed Municipal School of Music.⁶⁹ Such informal ties were encouraged by the Council, which in September 1908 took things a step further and resolved that in future the running of the concerts should be undertaken jointly with the School of Music under the auspices of the Board of Education, with its director, James Graham as Honorary Secretary.⁷⁰ For the Sixth Series beginning in October 1908 Graham's name replaced that of the Lord Mayor's Secretary, J F Walker, on the programme cover, with the legend "Education Department (Higher Section), Calverley Street, Leeds".

However, the political climate in Leeds had changed decisively when in November 1907 the Conservatives became the largest party in the Council, ushering in a long period of Tory dominance with the accountant Charles Henry Wilson (1859-1930) as leader of the Council and chairman of the Finance Committee.⁷¹ In this latter capacity Wilson scrutinized departmental estimates before their submission to the full Council and 'wielded his blue

⁶⁸ See Appendix 5.

⁶⁹ *MT*, 49 (March 1908): 188.

⁷⁰ Property Committee minutes, 22nd September 1908. Epitome of proceedings of Committees from 27th August to 30th September 1908. Leeds City Council Proceedings.

⁷¹ *YP*, 2nd November 1907.

pencil like a sceptre, sometimes like a battle-axe'.⁷² The Conservative majority on the Council was strongly committed to reversing what it regarded as the profligacy of the previous Liberal administration, and by the beginning of 1909 Wilson's colours were nailed very firmly to the mast:

This is the time when we cannot afford luxuries such as these grants for music and pictures. We are not going to put up the rates if we can possibly avoid it. Moreover, as regards these grants for municipal concerts, I do not think it is part of the duty of the corporation to enter into competition with the normal amusement caterers...The Conservative Party are pledged to economy and we are going to 'set about' it as it has never been 'set about' before.⁷³

The reference here to 'amusement caterers' bears eloquent testimony to how impervious Wilson and his colleagues were to any arguments in favour of serious music as an agent for social reform, cultural development or education. It can scarcely be surprising, then, that soon afterwards Wilson's axe fell inexorably and finally on any support of the municipal concerts by the ratepayers of Leeds. The Annual Report of the Property Committee for the year ending 31st March 1909 reported an attendance of some 14,700 people at the ten concerts and an increase in receipts over previous years. Yet even these impressive figures were not enough to save the concerts:

This increase is gratifying, but in view of the fact that the calls upon the Rates in other directions are becoming increasingly burdensome, the Council decided that they cannot see their way to be responsible for any deficit in connection with the Concerts after the 1st April, 1909.⁷⁴

The report went on to note that a voluntary committee was attempting to continue the concerts, funded by an increase in the cost of admission. There were of course protests, and the minutes of the Property Committee meeting for 23rd February 1909 record that:

A resolution passed at a joint Meeting of the Leeds Arts Club and Leeds Playgoers' Society, suggesting that the grant in aid of the Municipal Orchestra be continued, was read.⁷⁵

⁷² Andrews, *Yorkshire Folk*, 56.

⁷³ *YEP*, 27th January 1909.

⁷⁴ Annual Report of the Property Committee to the Council. Year ended 31st March 1909. Leeds City Council Proceedings.

⁷⁵ Epitome of proceedings of Committees from 28th January to 24th February 1909. Leeds City Council Proceedings.

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The Property Committee was left in possession of '158 full Orchestral Works by leading Composers' which had been bought for use by the Municipal Orchestra over the preceding six years. It is not known what became of this substantial library.

The Leeds Symphony Orchestra

In 1908, with the prospect of substantive council support for a municipal orchestra along the Fricker model already receding rapidly into the distance, the professional orchestral musicians of Leeds decided to seek their own salvation and formed the Leeds Symphony Orchestra Ltd. The *Yorkshire Evening News*, in a feature on its leader and secretary Edward Elliott, described the fledgling body as

...an organisation composed entirely of male professional musicians, and promoted to perform orchestral duties for choral societies, etc, on Hallé lines. This society, which supplies a long-felt want...will materially lessen the work of secretaries who have hitherto had to write to each individual performer...⁷⁶

As well as a secretary to carry out the considerable administrative workload associated with its operation, the orchestra had its own management committee to oversee its activities. Some of the players became shareholders and as such expected preferential treatment when a full orchestra was not required. Shareholders later became a problem when in the 1930s John Barbirolli introduced rigorous auditions to the orchestra (renamed the Northern Philharmonic in 1935). The violinist Edward Maude (1880-1967) took over from Elliott as secretary in 1912 and the orchestra's registered office moved to his home at 2, Kelso Road, which became in effect an unofficial clearing house for local musicians and musical societies.⁷⁷

As an ensemble the erstwhile municipal orchestra had matured sufficiently by this time to be invited to participate in the Leeds Subscription Concerts for the 1908-09 season, overcoming the prejudices of those who equated excellence with exclusivity:

Leeds has now for some years boasted a permanent orchestra which, under the conductorship of the Town Hall organist, has

⁷⁶ *YEN*, 10th February 1908.

⁷⁷ This paragraph is based on typescript notes made by Edward Maude now in the possession of his daughter Mrs Barbara Errington of Leeds, and on private correspondence with Maude's son, Mr Stephen Maude of Wetherby. Edward Maude remained secretary of the Leeds Symphony Orchestra and its successor the Northern Philharmonic until 1951. This is a remarkable record of achievement.

made great strides in efficiency. Possibly its ability has been somewhat under-rated by those who value things in proportion to their cost, since it has hitherto appeared only to Saturday evening audiences at "popular," otherwise cheap, prices. Now, however, it is to have an opportunity of being heard by a more fastidious, if not more appreciative, audience...⁷⁸

The annual performance of *Messiah* given at the Coliseum, Cookridge Street on 22nd December 1908 was a complete sell-out, with the orchestra receiving a warm critical reception:

The Leeds Symphony Orchestra was more than efficient; it was throughout most refined and artistic in its tone and performance, and again gave cause for congratulation that Leeds can supply its own orchestra on these occasions, and that without any artistic loss.⁷⁹

Yet despite the advances made by Fricker and the orchestra in raising the standard of performance there remained in the city a degree of snobbery in some quarters which gave rise to comment in the columns of the *Yorkshire Post*:

There are probably still some people who think that an orchestra which performs on Saturday nights to an audience that pays from tuppence to eighteenpence for the privilege of hearing it can hardly be worth the attention of the more select circle of people who foregather on Wednesdays and pay six times as much.⁸⁰

Herbert Fricker had correctly anticipated the latent demand in the city for good quality orchestral music, but *did not, and in fairness could not have been expected to, foresee* the indifference with which his ambitious scheme was to be met by the upper echelons of Leeds society, for whom attendance at Saturday concerts offered little in the way of social cachet:

The seventh series of the Leeds Municipal Concerts – now "Municipal" only by courtesy – began on Saturday night...There was a very large audience in the cheapest seats, but the attendance in the gallery - the "West End" of the Town Hall, as it has been styled - was no larger than was to be expected at a type of concert which confers little social prestige upon the audience. During the interval Mr James Graham, the honorary secretary essayed the

⁷⁸ *YP*, 16th July 1908.

⁷⁹ *YP*, 23rd December 1908.

⁸⁰ *YP*, 28th January 1909.

difficult task of whipping the dead horse of Leeds enthusiasm for art...⁸¹

Cessation of the Municipal Concerts, 1911

Looking back, it is not possible to establish with absolute certainty what were the precise circumstances which led to the cessation of the municipal concerts in late 1911. An item in the *Yorkshire Post* on 13th October announced the news thus:

It is announced that, owing to the resignation of Mr Fricker, the honorary conductor, and Mr Graham, the honorary secretary, the Leeds Municipal Concerts are to be abandoned, at any rate for the present.⁸²

However, no explanation was offered as to what had provoked these sudden resignations. It was widely believed at the time that the intransigence of the city council was chiefly responsible. Having ceased to support the concerts financially, the council decided to make a charge of £80 for the use of the Town Hall during the 1910-11 season, and was proposing to increase this to £100 for the 1911-12 season. Such a burden obviously put the forthcoming season in jeopardy, and representations were duly made. These resulted in a provisional reduction of the charge to £5 per concert, but with a stipulation that 300 free seats would be made available. Given that the average attendance was just over 1000, this condition made it equally difficult to place the concerts on a sound financial footing.

On the day of the announcement the *Yorkshire Post* carried a letter from the Leeds academic and musical amateur, Professor Julius Cohen, in which he expressed his regret that Fricker's work should have been 'nipped by the sudden frost of misdirected zeal, as some think, in the cause of economy'.⁸³ Despite the council's predisposition to penny-pinching, especially in matters concerning the arts, it seems that on this occasion at least, the charge may have been without foundation. Herbert Thompson, never slow to lambast civic parsimony, later defended the council against such accusations:

⁸¹ *YP*, 8th November 1909.

⁸² *YP*, 13th October 1911.

⁸³ *Ibid.* Julius Berend Cohen (1859-1935) was Professor of Organic Chemistry at the University of Leeds from 1904 to 1924. He played the viola and from the evidence of L P Balmforth's account books appears to have owned an instrument by Grancino. Balmforth's ledgers record a repair to Cohen's viola in November 1906.

The Corporation, for once in a way, seem to be free from blame in the matter, for by a majority of the Council it was decided to accede to the terms proposed by the promoters, and then, when all seemed to be plain sailing, the ship was secretly scuttled.⁸⁴

Some months later Thompson would come to their defence again, believing that 'it is only fair to the Leeds Corporation to say that it was not through their collective action that they fell through, nor is the oft-repeated assertion correct, that they were abandoned in order to save the ratepayers' money'.⁸⁵

In the absence of direct supporting evidence we can only conjecture as to the events which took place during 1911-12 and which ultimately paved the way for a resumption of the Saturday orchestral concerts the following year as an independent voluntary undertaking. Fortunately, from August 1912 onwards, the correspondence columns in the Leeds press featured a number of often quite lengthy letters on the subject which do provide a number of clues. There existed, it would seem, a substantial body of opinion which believed the abandonment of the concerts by the City Council to have been a serious mistake. Pre-eminent among those campaigning for their revival was the newly-appointed Vice-Chancellor of the University of Leeds, Michael Ernest Sadler.

Born in Barnsley in 1861, the son of a general practitioner, Sadler was a leading educationalist who in 1890 had refused the offer of C P Scott to become assistant manager of the *Manchester Guardian* in order to continue his work for the Oxford University Extension scheme. Deeply committed to the extension of university education to the working classes and to a closer relationship between town and gown, Sadler was in many ways the ideal person to coordinate the efforts of those seeking the restoration of the Saturday concerts.⁸⁶ Some of Sadler's personal qualities were summed up by the *Yorkshire Evening Post* when he was later awarded a knighthood:

It is uncommon to find a man who combines high intellectual gifts with the dynamic force of translating his thoughts by speedy and effective action. It is probably still more unusual to find this combination in association with a capacity for steady and

⁸⁴ *YP*, 29th March 1912.

⁸⁵ *YP*, 25th October 1912.

⁸⁶ For a fuller account of Sadler's work in Leeds see Tom Steele, *Alfred Orage and the Leeds Arts Club 1893-1923* (Aldershot 1990), chapter 9.

continuous work and with infinite painstaking. Sir Michael Sadler unites all these qualities with tact and with good humour.⁸⁷

On 1st August 1912, in a letter to the *Leeds Mercury* headed "Municipal Music. Story of an Artistic Tragedy", a correspondent signing himself "Melior" asked what was being done to revive the Leeds Municipal Orchestral Concerts which had become 'an indispensable factor in our city life'. Like many others, "Melior" found it hard to believe that the abandonment had taken place on purely financial grounds, since the burden on the ratepayers of Leeds had been infinitesimal:

After all, I cannot help thinking, and facts bear me out, that the majority of our city rulers were favourable to the continuance of these concerts, and that the obstacle which stood in the way was a very trivial one – and perhaps not a financial one at all.⁸⁸

The prospect of yet another winter season bereft of the best orchestral music for the sake of 'a paltry £200' appalled the writer who, interestingly, was neither a member of a musical society nor an executant, but rightly felt that this did not preclude him from considering himself as musical:

It is not pleasant to think that our musical pabulum (in the orchestral department) is again to be limited to a thin scattering of concerts run on business lines, and what stray pickings we can find at the music-halls, hotels, and cafés of the town, where one can get classical chippings, sandwiched in between the "gander glide," the "alligator amble," and other entrancing one-steps.⁸⁹

The next day the *Leeds Mercury* ran a story confirming that plans were already in train on the part of 'one or two public-spirited men' to revive the concerts, albeit on a revised basis and in the context of a broader and more ambitious plan to restore the musical fortunes of the city:

It is known that at the back of some minds there is a strong desire that united action should be taken by all the musical organisations of the district, and that the Popular Saturday Night Concerts should be only a small part of an ambitious scheme to bring Leeds into the very forefront of musical progress in the United Kingdom, and,

⁸⁷ *YEP*, 3rd June 1919.

⁸⁸ *LM*, 1st August 1912.

⁸⁹ *Ibid.*

maybe, in the world. The promoters of the idea are convinced that such federal action would meet with success.⁹⁰

According to the *Mercury*, the least the City Council could do was to make the Victoria Hall available for the concerts and to offer the services of the City Organist. It was further suggested that the same orchestra could be used and encouragement given to local amateur players without compromising the quality of the ensemble.

The same day the *Yorkshire Post* included an account of a meeting at the Education offices convened by Michael Sadler and chaired by Alderman Fred Kinder to discuss the resumption of the Saturday orchestral concerts. The attendance was 'thoroughly representative of artistic and educational interests in Leeds'.⁹¹ Among the proposals under discussion was a federation of the Leeds Choral Union and Philharmonic Societies to provide choral items, and the inclusion of amateur musicians in the orchestra. A sub-committee was appointed to consider these and other questions, and the meeting adjourned *sine die*.⁹²

The report of the meeting provoked a brief exchange of correspondence in the local press which reveals much about musical opinion at the time. In a lengthy critique published in the *Yorkshire Post*, "Tenax Propositi" welcomed the possible revival of the concerts but argued strongly in favour of retaining their original constitution. The recently formed committee appeared to be 'under the impression that what is wanted is a species of high-class entertainment'.⁹³ Such "watering down" of the concerts was to be resisted. The inclusion of choral items in the programme from the federated local choral societies found little favour with the writer, who pointed out the inability of the choral bodies to make their own concerts pay. He was even less enthusiastic about the introduction of amateurs to the orchestra, insisting that 'a body of professional musicians who have given for some years a series of orchestral concerts which have been a long crescendo of excellent musicianship and of artistic fulfilment surely do not require the inclusion of any amateur element in their

⁹⁰ *LM*, 2nd August 1912.

⁹¹ *YP*, 2nd August 1912.

⁹² *YP*, 25th October 1912.

⁹³ *YP*, 8th August 1912.

composition'.⁹⁴ Large numbers of free seats were not necessary since thousands of the Leeds public would happily pay sixpence or a shilling at the music hall or other entertainment, however the Council should give financial support to the provision of good music in the same way as it made good literature available through the public libraries.

This letter in turn provoked a response from "Choralist" who, in reply to the demands for the high character of the concerts to be retained, reported that 'it was the prevailing opinion both of the musical and lay section of the last [Property] Committee that the programmes had hitherto been too "stiff", so much so, that had the concerts been continued they would have been considerably relaxed'.⁹⁵ "Choralist" went on to object to "exceptional treatment" being granted to the Saturday concerts while it was withheld from the Philharmonic Society and the Choral Union. Here at last we perhaps have the hint of a possible explanation for the ultimate cutting adrift of the concerts by the Council. Could it be that the powerful Leeds choral lobby had cried foul over the free use of the Town Hall by the Saturday Orchestral Concerts while they still had to pay for the privilege? We know from council minutes that in late 1909 John Green, the Honorary Secretary of the Leeds Philharmonic Society, had had an interview with the Chairman of the Property Committee to discuss the work of the Society and the charges made for its concerts in the Town Hall. At its next meeting the Committee reported that it was 'unable to alter the previous decision in regard to charges for use of the Town Hall'.⁹⁶ Green had won no concessions, it would seem, but only months later it was announced that a charge of £50 per season would be made for use of the hall by the Saturday Orchestral Concerts, a figure later increased to £80.⁹⁷ While we have no conclusive evidence to support the hypothesis, is it so fanciful to suppose that the gentlemen running the two leading choral societies - influential men as we have already seen - were able to convince enough city councillors that the Saturday concerts adversely affected attendances at their own events, and that, this being the case, it was iniquitous that they should effectively receive council subvention so to do? Financial

⁹⁴ Ibid.

⁹⁵ *YP*, 9th August 1912.

⁹⁶ Epitome of proceedings of Committees from 25th November to 29th December 1909. Leeds City Council Proceedings.

⁹⁷ *MT*, 51 (April 1910): 256.

considerations alone cannot seriously have influenced the decision to levy punitive and potentially crippling charges on the Town Hall concerts, since in the absence of these concerts the Council was committed to the continuance of the series of free organ recitals, and thus still incurred all the costs associated with heating and lighting the Victoria Hall. A public statement later made by Alderman Charles Wilson, and reported in the local press, to the effect that the falling attendances at Philharmonic Society and Choral Union concerts were due to competition from the municipal concerts, suggests that this reasoning may have indeed lain behind the council's conduct and the resultant resignations of Fricker and Graham.⁹⁸ Wilson, whose antipathy to the concerts has already been discussed, may well have further provoked Fricker by publicly criticizing the city organist for his alleged failure to meet his contractual agreement of 80 concerts a year due, according to Wilson, to his being 'mixed up with this other undertaking'.⁹⁹ Such criticism was not only unfair - it being a matter of common knowledge that the Town Hall was often booked for other purposes and therefore unavailable for organ recitals - but also poor reward indeed for Fricker's additional unpaid work with the orchestra.

In the winter of 1912, the conductor Julian Clifford (1877-1921), who had achieved some notable success with the Municipal Orchestra in Harrogate since his appointment in 1906, seized the opportunity to fill the vacuum left by the cessation of the Saturday Orchestral concerts by announcing a modest series of his own. He assembled a band of some fifty players from his own Harrogate orchestra and from the Leeds Symphony Orchestra which he styled the "Yorkshire Permanent Orchestra". The first of these Leeds Saturday Popular Concerts took place at the end of November 1912 with a programme that was 'simply a conglomerate of all the most popular things in orchestral music'.¹⁰⁰ It began with Hérold's overture *Zampa* and ended with Tchaikovsky's *1812 Overture*, with Grieg's *Peer Gynt Suite No.1* at its heart. It seems that Clifford was not averse to a degree of

⁹⁸ *YP*, 13th October 1911. Wilson further claimed, incorrectly, that both organizations had been forced to reduce the number of their concerts to just one each. He was severely taken to task by Herbert Thompson not only for being out of touch with musical matters in Leeds, but for relying on 'dubious sources of information for his facts'.

⁹⁹ *Ibid.*

¹⁰⁰ *YP*, 2nd December 1912.

showmanship, and produced a 'sentimentalised version' of the Handelian air commonly known as the "Largo in G" in which:

...Mr Clifford took a leaf out of the Sousa book, and introduced a new sensation by making all the strings stand up to play the last stanza in octaves, whereby the audience was so impressed that it had to be repeated. So insatiable is the public for sweetmeats!¹⁰¹

Clifford continued to bow to popular taste with an all-Wagner programme on 14th December, and a final concert on 1st March 1913 which had as its centrepiece Tchaikovsky's Symphony No.6. The symphony, according to the review, had been 'as nearly as possible done to death by its excessive popularity', but it was conceded that the work showed 'signs that it has really an enduring vitality'.¹⁰² One noteworthy item on the programme was the first performance in Leeds of Saint-Saëns's Piano Concerto No.5 with Clifford as soloist and the leader John Lawson conducting.

The organization of the Leeds Saturday Orchestral Concerts

In addition to Michael Sadler as chairman, the Executive Committee of the Leeds Saturday Orchestral Concerts consisted of nine further members drawn from the *General Committee* which numbered fifty-six and the Ladies' Committee of fourteen. Sadler could count himself fortunate in the array of experience and influence at his disposal: Herbert Fricker and Thomas J Hoggett, organist and lecturer in music, were the professional musicians on the committee. The solicitor Charles F Haigh acted as Honorary Secretary. He had undertaken a similar role for the Leeds Festival since the resignation of Fred Spark in 1909 and had served on the Management Committee of the Leeds Subscription Concerts for many years. Another solicitor, W S Hannam, and the professor of mathematics at the University of Leeds, Leonard Rogers, have already been encountered in Chapter 2 through their work on the Festival Committee.¹⁰³ Two leading businessmen and amateur musicians sat on the committee: Thomas Harding Churton was an electrical engineer who ran a manufacturing business on Great Wilson Street, while Frank H Fulford was the Canadian-

¹⁰¹ Ibid.

¹⁰² *YP*, 3rd March 1913.

¹⁰³ For brief biographies of Hannam and Rogers see Appendix 3.

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born managing director of C E Fulford Ltd, manufacturing chemists.¹⁰⁴ The two female members of the committee were Mrs Schüddekopf, an active amateur musician and the wife of Albert Schüddekopf, professor of Teutonic languages at the University of Leeds, and Mrs P Austyn Barran, a member of the influential Barran family of Leeds. An impressive array of the most eminent figures of Leeds society was to be found among the sixty-three guarantors, including Lord Airedale, the piano dealer Archibald Ramsden and the Leeds surgeon Sir Berkeley Moynihan.

Sadler's committee went about its work during the last months of 1912, securing the financial backing of guarantors and planning an experimental series of four concerts for early 1913. On 27th December a prospectus was issued detailing the forthcoming Saturday concerts. This was reported in the national as well as local press. *The Times* published a brief item which explained that 'the object is to bring good instrumental music within the reach of a large number of persons who can only afford to pay a small fee, and in order to carry out the scheme, and if possible to increase their number next season, a guarantee fund is being formed'.¹⁰⁵

A brief resurrection

In January 1913, the Town Hall orchestral concerts duly resumed under the title of "Leeds Saturday Orchestral Concerts", the term "municipal" no longer being used, a point not lost on the *Musical Times*:

The change is more than verbal, for it means that, as the support of the Corporation has proved a broken reed, the concerts have been revived on a purely voluntary basis.¹⁰⁶

For the opening concert on 25th January the programme included Schubert's Unfinished Symphony, Grieg's Piano Concerto with the popular Leeds-born pianist Frederick Dawson (1868-1940) as soloist, and Wagner's *Meistersinger* Overture. In keeping

¹⁰⁴ From 1890 to 1895 Thomas Harding Churton (1866-?) was an Honorary (i.e non-playing) Member of the Leeds Symphony Society. Later he conducted the amateur Chapel Allerton Orchestra, and appears to have tried his hand at composition. A Symphony in C, composed circa 1920, was given a performance in 1937-38 by Kneale Kelley and the Eastbourne Municipal Orchestra. (Young, *Music's Great Days*, 165). More background on Fulford can be found in chapter 5.

¹⁰⁵ *The Times*, 28th December 1912.

¹⁰⁶ *MT*, 54 (March 1913): 189.

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with the tradition of the concerts, a "novelty" was placed alongside such favourites in the form of excerpts from a recent composition by the widely admired prodigy Erich Wolfgang Korngold. For the first time Alex Cohen led the orchestra which included the young Archie Camden among the bassoons and whose 'quality... was strikingly manifested'.¹⁰⁷ Attendance was extremely good, with the Victoria Hall almost full to capacity. The sheer numbers of those attending gave rise to problems before the start of the concert, thanks to inadequate access to the hall:

Having withdrawn the small amount of patronage involved in the free use of the place, Municipality seemed disposed to frown on this attempt to dispense with its bounty, and decreed that some two thousand persons should enter by one small door in Calverly [*sic*] Street. This somewhat delayed the concert, but even before the appointed hour the promoters were able to congratulate themselves that there was only standing room on the floor of the hall.¹⁰⁸

Not merely the size of the audience, but its constituency and the reception it gave to the works performed, led Herbert Thompson to sound a note of optimism in his assessment of the concert:

What was perhaps of still greater moment than the size of the audience was the attention it paid, and the unmistakable enthusiasm with which such things as the Unfinished Symphony and Grieg's pianoforte concerto were listened to and applauded. The audience was, too, very representative, and the next thing to do is to persuade the people that it is "the correct thing" to support the concerts.¹⁰⁹

Attendances at the next three concerts were equally encouraging, and the brief series of concerts, coming as it did after two seasons of orchestral drought in Leeds, proved a success, even realising a modest profit of £30, which led Michael Sadler and his committee to propose a six-concert series for 1913-14.¹¹⁰ But such enthusiasm was perhaps premature, and despite typically enterprising and imaginative programming on the part of Herbert Fricker, the audiences of the second series of the revived Saturday concerts were nothing like as large as for the first. The *Yorkshire Post* registered its disappointment in the

¹⁰⁷ *YP*, 27th January 1913.

¹⁰⁸ *YG*, 27th January 1913.

¹⁰⁹ *YP*, 31st January 1913.

¹¹⁰ *YP*, 1st August 1913.

review of the sixth and final concert on 21st February 1914 which included the first performance in Leeds of Rimsky-Korsakov's *Capriccio Espagnol*:

The sixth and last of these concerts...presented what, on general grounds, one would imagine to be a highly attractive programme, calculated to please both those who care for nothing they have not heard on at least half-a-dozen previous occasions, and those who like to explore the unfamiliar tracts of music. But the Leeds public, though by common consent so intensely musical, did not fill the Town Hall any more than they have done at any other series of concerts during the season, and one doubts whether the enterprise will merit the respect due to a "paying concern."¹¹¹

The winter of 1913-14 in Leeds was in retrospect not perhaps the most auspicious time or place to be promoting a concert series. The city was beset by an increasingly acrimonious strike of municipal workers which gave rise to widespread disruption of services and to escalating levels of violence. In December 1913 Michael Sadler wrote to his son:

Leeds is on strike. Gas is giving out, trams precarious, electric light threatened. The Goya streets are full of swirling paper; the class war is preached - so far with uninterrupted kindness of feeling in personal intercourse...I don't *think* there'll be very serious trouble, but there may be. There is no revolutionary feeling in Leeds *as a whole* though much of it is gathering...¹¹²

These must have also been difficult times personally for Sadler who, in keeping with deeply held principles of civic responsibility, had been instrumental in organizing university staff and students to keep essential services running during the strike, becoming in the process 'the best hated man in Leeds and in the Trade Union circles of the north'.¹¹³ Despite these distractions, his responsibilities as Vice-Chancellor, and his other interests, particularly in the visual arts, Sadler to his credit did much to further the cause of orchestral

¹¹¹ *YP*, 23rd February 1914.

¹¹² Michael Sadleir, *Michael Ernest Sadler. A Memoir by his Son* (London 1949), 257. Note that Sadler's son, also called Michael, changed the spelling of his surname to differentiate it from that of his well-known father.

¹¹³ *Ibid.*, 260. Sadler's house on Headingley Lane was put under police guard for a time. The strike came to a formal end on 13th January 1914.

music during this period and went some way to justifying the claim by Roger Fry that he had exercised a powerful civilizing influence on the city.¹¹⁴

'The Devil and the deep sea'

There was without doubt a section of the Leeds public interested in attending orchestral concerts but not, it seems, at any price, even when a prestigious band came to town. Thus when Henry Wood brought his Queen's Hall Orchestra to Leeds in February 1904 as part of the Leeds Philharmonic Subscription series the *Musical Times* noted that 'the people showed at once their interest and their economy by crowding the cheaper seats and leaving the more expensive ones severely alone'.¹¹⁵ Attendances well in excess of 1,000 people were not unusual at the Municipal Concerts, but in keeping with the original aim of making the concerts accessible to all, admission to large tracts of the Town Hall was either free or at nominal cost, thus making it all but impossible for them to be completely self-financing. This was the dilemma which faced the concerts, as recorded in 1909:

It seems likely that, with the Corporation grudging the relatively small expenditure of £300 a year, and those members of the audience who recently raised an outcry because they had not enough seats at twopence, and seemed to think they as citizens had a right to be admitted at that very nominal price, the municipal concerts are between the Devil and the deep sea.¹¹⁶

In his 1910 survey of municipal music, William Galloway concluded that 'perhaps the original enterprise was too ambitious to command instant success'.¹¹⁷ There may be some truth in this, though with a more enlightened local council and stronger support from the "shilling folk" the concerts might have established themselves more firmly as part of Leeds musical life. Contemplating their demise in late 1912, Herbert Thompson thought they had 'done more for music at Leeds than all the festivals and choral societies have accomplished

¹¹⁴ In a letter to Sadler's wife Fry wrote: "Every time I came to Leeds I got more and more impressed with the work Sir Michael was doing. He had civilized a whole population. Since I went to Leeds the first time more than ten years ago, the entire spirit has changed from a rather sullen suspicion of ideas to a genuine enthusiastic intellectual and spiritual life." *Ibid.*, 333.

¹¹⁵ *MT*, 45 (March 1904): 189.

¹¹⁶ *YP*, 5th February 1909.

¹¹⁷ Galloway, *Musical England*, 55.

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during the period'.¹¹⁸ Despite the expressions of regret on all sides he reminded his readers that "fine words butter no parsnips", adding that 'if I still harboured any pride in my native town, I think this would effectually extinguish it'.¹¹⁹

When the Saturday concerts were revived in 1913 the price of a single admission ranged from 3d to 2s 6d, a pricing structure designed to keep the concerts affordable to all sections of society. In April 1914, when T Harding Churton took over the post of honorary secretary from Charles Haigh, the prices were increased but remained on a relatively modest level compared to rival attractions. A serial ticket cost from 15s to 7s 6d for the series of six concerts, while a single admission varied from 6d to 3s. Only with the support of large numbers of people, especially those able to afford the most expensive tickets, would the series be financially sustainable. The plea went out once more to the wealthier citizens of Leeds:

At such prices it is obvious that only large audiences can adequately support the concerts, and it is to be hoped that for the credit of Leeds they may be forthcoming, and that the three-shilling people may not too frequently stray into the one shilling seats.¹²⁰

The orchestral repertoire

An examination of the orchestral repertoire presented to the Leeds public by the various concert series reveals a number of surprising discoveries: Brahms's First Symphony, for example, was not performed in the city until January 1904 when Hans Richter and the Hallé Orchestra gave it at a Leeds Subscription Concert.¹²¹ The Fourth Symphony had to wait until December 1907, when it was given by the same forces.¹²²

From the outset Herbert Fricker attempted to use the municipal concerts as a showcase for contemporary composers, who frequently were invited to conduct their own works. An early example of this practice was Josef Holbrooke, who conducted his *Variations on Three Blind Mice* op.48 for full orchestra at the fourth concert of the first

¹¹⁸ *YP*, 25th October 1912.

¹¹⁹ *Ibid.*

¹²⁰ *YP*, 11th April 1914.

¹²¹ *MT*, 45 (March 1904): 189.

¹²² *MT*, 48 (January 1907): 49.

series in December 1903. So successful was the piece that it was repeated in the following February.¹²³ Works by Vaughan Williams, Edgar Bainton, Rutland Boughton, Herbert Brewer and Cyril Scott appeared in the programmes along with a number by local composers Bernard Johnson, F Kilvington Hattersley and Fricker himself. Among the more obscure composers represented was the organist and violinist Joseph Weston Nicholl, a pupil of Rheinberger and Guilmant, whose music, the programme notes assured us, leant 'towards the romantic, being free from those trammels which at one time threatened to choke English art'.¹²⁴ Two works by Nicholl, a *Concert Overture* and an *Eclogue for Orchestra*, were performed at a concert in January 1905 which also featured the first performance in Leeds of Edward German's *Welsh Rhapsody*, written for the previous year's Cardiff Festival.¹²⁵ Later in the year German himself conducted an evening dedicated to his music.¹²⁶ Other composers had complete programmes built around their work: Beethoven, Mendelssohn, Tchaikovsky, Stanford, Elgar, and of course, Wagner.

The music of Richard Wagner became increasingly popular in the years up to the war, and miscellaneous Wagner programmes invariably attracted the Edwardian musical public in comparatively large numbers. Leeds was no exception. Reviewing the all-Wagner Municipal Concert of 17th October 1908 the *Musical Times* noted that such programmes 'have grown inevitable since it has been found that nothing else attracts such a crowd'.¹²⁷ The "Wagner Night" became an regular institution of the Municipal Concert season, eventually becoming two evenings, opening and closing the season, causing Herbert Thompson to comment:

At Leeds the precedent of beginning and ending the season with a Wagner programme has proved so popular that it is wise to adhere

¹²³ Programme, Leeds Municipal Concerts, 6th February 1904.

¹²⁴ *YP*, 9th January 1905. Joseph Weston Nicholl (born Halifax 1876) was later conductor of the Black Dyke Mills Band (1910-11). He revolutionized the band's repertoire during his brief association, pioneering the use of contemporary compositions and virtuosic arrangements of complete works or movements. See Russell, *Popular Music*, 189-191.

¹²⁵ Programme, Leeds Municipal Concerts, 7th January 1905.

¹²⁶ Programme, Leeds Municipal Concerts, 23rd December 1905.

¹²⁷ *MT*, 49 (December 1908): 804.

to it so long as this rather one-sided admiration for a single composer continues.¹²⁸

The Wagner concert typically featured orchestral favourites such as the overtures to *Rienzi*, *Tannhäuser* and *Meistersinger*, and should choral assistance be available from local bodies such as the Morley Choral Society, well-known excerpts such as the Bridal Chorus from *Lohengrin*.¹²⁹ Later this staple diet was leavened with novelties such as Wagner's little-known overture *Rule Britannia* (the first performance given in the West Riding)¹³⁰ or more often with works from those other composers finding favour with the Edwardians: Debussy, Sibelius and Grieg.

As well as "composer nights" Fricker made intelligent use of thematic programming to generate interest among his audiences. The opening concert of the third series in 1905, for example, commemorated the centenary of the Battle of Trafalgar and the death of Nelson with an appropriately nautical and national programme which included Stanford's *Songs of the Sea*, Alexander Mackenzie's overture *Britannia*, Elgar's *Imperial March* and, inevitably, a rendition of John Brahms's celebrated ballad *The Death of Nelson*, sung by Henry Brearley.¹³¹ The centenary of Mendelssohn's birth was celebrated in February 1909 with performances of the "Scotch" Symphony, the overture *Fingal's Cave* and the Violin Concerto, with soloist Alice Simpkin.¹³² Interesting juxtapositions in the programme were also made, such as placing the Elgar and Tchaikovsky serenades for strings either side of the interval.¹³³

A useful barometer of contemporary trends in musical taste was the "plebiscite" concert where subscribers could choose the works they wished to be performed. It was adopted with some success at the Crystal Palace Saturday Concerts in the 1880s and subsequently adopted by provincial concert series. While not absolutely reliable in that

¹²⁸ YP, 9th October 1908.

¹²⁹ The 10th and final concert of the fourth series is a perfect example of the genre, including all the works mentioned plus the *Flying Dutchman* overture and the *Siegfried Idyll* for good measure. Programme, Leeds Municipal Concerts, 7th March 1907.

¹³⁰ Programme, Leeds Municipal Concerts, 21st March 1908.

¹³¹ Programme, Leeds Municipal Concerts, 21st October 1905.

¹³² Programme, Leeds Municipal Concerts, 13th February 1909.

¹³³ Programme, Leeds Municipal Concerts, 4th February 1905.

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works usually had to be selected from a list compiled by the conductor or orchestral committee, the plebiscite concert is of some value in gauging musical opinion. In January 1908 the LPS/LSC plebiscite concert was given at the Town Hall. The programme, selected from a list prepared by Richter, was:¹³⁴

Tchaikovsky. Symphony No.4

Strauss. *Don Juan*

Wagner. Prelude to Act 1, *Lohengrin*

Schubert. Overture, *Rosamunde*

It would be interesting to know exactly what was on the original list, but this does not appear to have survived. We do, however, have some indication of its content from a contemporary account published in the *Yorkshire Post*:

In the present case the subscribers to the Leeds concerts are offered a list of orchestral compositions, overtures, symphonies and miscellaneous pieces, seven of each, ranging from Bach and Mozart to Liszt and Tchaikovsky. It consists almost entirely of accepted classics, and it is noteworthy that it includes but one living composer, Elgar, who is also the only Briton in the list. Still, out of these 21 works, which include symphonies by Mozart, Beethoven, Schubert, and Schumann, it should be possible to satisfy even the fastidious Leeds public.¹³⁵

Not being a true subscription series, the Municipal Concerts never included a plebiscite concert, but there is some evidence at least to suggest that the Saturday night concert-goers did make their opinions and preferences known. The programme for a concert in February 1909 contained two changes: 'Owing to numerous requests' Tchaikovsky's Symphony No.4 was given instead of Glazunov's Symphony No.5, while Glinka's overture *Ruslan and Ludmila* was replaced by a repeat performance of Havergal Brian's *English*

¹³⁴ *MT*, 49 (March 1908): 188. This programme makes an interesting comparison with a plebiscite held by the Glasgow Orchestral Concerts in 1903. There the two most popular symphonies were Schubert Symphony No.8 and Tchaikovsky Symphony No.5. Tchaikovsky's 1812 Overture emerged just ahead of Rossini's *William Tell* Overture in popularity, while Strauss's *Tod und Verklärung*, perhaps surprisingly, secured the most votes in the category of miscellaneous instrumental works. (*Musical Standard*, 21st February 1903)

¹³⁵ *YP*, 6th July 1906.

Suite, first heard in 1907.¹³⁶ At the previous concert Elgar's suite *Wand of Youth No.2* had been performed 'by special request' instead of Sullivan's overture *Di ballo*.¹³⁷

As the series broke free of any direct municipal influence, the concerts witnessed a shift towards the inclusion of more substantial symphonic repertoire. Herbert Thompson noted with approval in 1908 that in the course of ten concerts no fewer than seven complete symphonies were being given: this was in contrast to Bradford, where symphonic excerpts were still the order of the day – a case, according to Thompson, where 'a little wholesome emulation between two neighbouring towns may be productive of good'.¹³⁸

The achievement of Herbert Fricker

The Leeds Symphony Orchestra had developed under the guidance of Herbert Fricker into a competent band, not in truth capable of rivalling the Hallé Orchestra, but more than able to place varied and challenging programmes of symphonic music before the people of Leeds. Indeed the reputation of the orchestra gradually began to spread beyond the confines of the West Riding, leading to engagements to play for choral societies in Newcastle and other northern towns.¹³⁹ Fricker himself deserves much of the credit for its success. The young flautist Gerald Jackson, a native of Leeds destined for a distinguished orchestral career, played under Fricker and found him 'quite inspiring - much more so than some visitors'.¹⁴⁰ His recollection of a concert under the direction of Frederic Cowen was in marked contrast:

Sir Frederic's lack of sympathy and understanding for what was then a very new piece [Vaughan Williams's *Sea Symphony*] nearly set me permanently against the composer, and also upset some private dreams about the glamour of symphony orchestra work. Fortunately my disappointment was quite short-lived, because at our next concert, under Fricker, we all acclaimed a dark young girl

¹³⁶ Programme book, Leeds Municipal Concerts, 27th February 1909.

¹³⁷ Programme, Leeds Municipal Concerts, 13th February 1909.

¹³⁸ *YP*, 21st February 1908.

¹³⁹ *YP*, 13th October 1911.

¹⁴⁰ Gerald Jackson, *First Flute* (London 1968), 17.

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called Myra Hess who came to Leeds to play the Schumann concerto.¹⁴¹

Had Fricker not left Leeds in 1917 to take up a post as organist and choirmaster in Toronto, it might have been that his quiet but inspirational leadership would have continued the development of the Leeds Symphony Orchestra and thereby rescued orchestral music in the city from the doldrums of the inter-war years. As it stands, his achievement should nonetheless be remembered and admired as a brave and pioneering attempt to bring orchestral concerts of quality to as wide an audience as possible, despite the indifference and ignorance of the municipal authorities and the hostility of some within the Leeds musical establishment.

¹⁴¹ Ibid., 17-18. Jackson's memory plays him slightly false here. Myra Hess played in Leeds on 28th October 1916 as a late replacement for Sapellnikov, but there is no record of Cowen conducting the *Sea Symphony* around this time. In fact the work was revived by the LPS under Fricker only weeks later on 14th November 1916, which may be the source of the confusion. See *MT*, 57 (December 1916): 567.

Chapter 5: Music with Tobacco Obligato - Chamber Music in Leeds

It is, we believe, very generally admitted that the contemplative mood necessary for the complete appreciation of high art of any description is best induced by the free consumption of tobacco.

Herbert Thompson ¹

The Leeds Bohemian Chamber Concerts

The Hotel Metropole, situated on King Street close to City Square, is an attractive building whose terracotta facing radiates a rich warmth, particularly in the sunshine of late afternoon. Designed by the Leeds architects Chorley, Connon and Chorley, it was built between 1897 and 1899 on the site of the Fourth White Cloth Hall whose cupola was preserved and still adorns the hotel's roofline. Pevsner describes the Metropole as being 'in an undisciplined French-Loire taste, with towering gables and completely asymmetrical'.² This was the venue in December 1899 for a bold experiment: a "smoking concert" of the finest chamber music, both classic and contemporary, to be given by some of the best local musicians amid informal and comfortable surroundings. It was to be the beginning of a concert series which would become a musical institution for the next quarter of a century, surviving even the vicissitudes of the Great War: the Leeds Bohemian Chamber Concerts.

The origins of the Bohemian concerts are shrouded in mystery. I have been unable to trace any records or correspondence relating to their foundation. What does seem certain, however, is that pre-eminent among the original founders was the enigmatic figure of the Leeds organist, composer and conductor Arthur Grimshaw.³ Born in Leeds in 1864, Arthur Edmund Grimshaw was the son of the artist John Atkinson Grimshaw (1836-1893). The family was a large one, eventually numbering no fewer than fifteen children, eight boys and seven girls, of whom several did not survive into adulthood.⁴ Arthur was one of five

¹ YP, 2nd December 1899.

² Pevsner, *Yorkshire, The West Riding*, 319; Dimes and Mitchell, *Building Stone*, 46.

³ YEN, 27th April 1908.

⁴ In the Grimshaw Collection in the Leeds Local History Library are several black-edged cards commemorating these childhood deaths: Lilian Josephine Theodosia, died 18th October 1868, aged 1 year and 7 months, Hubert James, died 22nd September 1874, aged 11 months, Gertrude, died 6th October 1874, aged 6, Clara Mary, died 27th October 1874, aged 12.

Grimshaw children named after characters in Tennyson's *Idylls of the King*, the others being Gertrude, Enid, Lancelot and Elaine. By the time of Arthur's birth his father was beginning to enjoy a modest success, having given up his job as a clerk with the Great Northern Railway in 1861 to devote himself full-time to painting.⁵ As a result of Grimshaw's steadily improving financial position the family had recently moved from the centre of town to the pleasant and leafy suburb of Woodhouse, to The Villas, a brick-built house on Cliff Road. Here Arthur spent his early childhood years until the family moved again, in 1870, to Knostrop Old Hall, a rented Jacobean mansion by the River Aire on the southern outskirts of the town which featured prominently in Atkinson Grimshaw's work thereafter.

It was his father's wish that Arthur should become an artist, but the boy demonstrated a far stronger interest in music.⁶ From an early age he received piano lessons from William Bower, a respected local musician. He also studied the violin with J W Acomb, another Leeds musician, who was of a sufficiently high standard to play in the first violins of the Festival Orchestra in 1874.⁷ It was some time during the late eighteen sixties that the Grimshaws converted to Roman Catholicism. Young Arthur became a member of the choir at the Cathedral Church of St Anne in Cookridge Street and when, in 1883, the post of organist and choirmaster became vacant on the death of the Rev. Fr James Downes, the eighteen-year-old, who had by now taken up the organ, applied and was appointed.⁸ Grimshaw retained this post for almost thirty years until his death in 1913.

The year of his appointment to St Anne's, two of Grimshaw's songs were published by Novello. Other songs soon followed, published by Boosey, Chappell and others, in addition to unpublished works such as a setting of Psalm 141 for chorus and orchestra, produced in Leeds in January 1885 (now lost).⁹ Grimshaw also undertook a number of

⁵ See David Bromfield's introductory essay "The Art of Atkinson Grimshaw" in *Atkinson Grimshaw 1836-1893. Leeds City Art Gallery 13 October-10 November 1979* (Leeds 1979), 5-21.

⁶ Atkinson Grimshaw seems to have valued the visual arts above music. In a letter of October 1886 to Arthur's sister Enid, who was to become a well-known contralto vocalist in the West Riding, he wrote, with a touch of typical Grimshaw humour 'Music, except composition is ephemeral - Art (painting & so on) is eternal - relatively of course'. Grimshaw Collection, Leeds Local History Library.

⁷ *YEN*, 27th April 1908.

⁸ Gerald B Lyons, *The Story of St Anne's Cathedral Choir, Leeds, 1838 to 1990* (Leeds 1992), 13; Frank Stubbs, 'The Organ in St Anne's Roman Catholic Cathedral, Leeds', *The Organ*, 22 (1942-43):169.

⁹ The *Musical Times* noted that Grimshaw was 'obviously a sound musician' and that his psalm setting was 'free from scholastic dryness or pedantry'. (*MT*, 26 (March 1885): 142-143).

arrangements including a piano duet version of Edward German's *Rhapsody on March Themes* (the original work first performed at the 1902 Norwich Festival), which he produced at the composer's special request.¹⁰

In November 1891 Grimshaw played the kettledrums at the inaugural concert of the Leeds Symphony Society Orchestra, beginning an association which was to last until 1911. He joined the viola section for the LSSO's third concert in March 1893 and made his conducting debut at the next, with a performance of his own *Two Old English Airs* for string orchestra.¹¹ By the tenth concert in March 1896 he was established as Honorary Conductor. This was just one of a number of posts held by Grimshaw in addition to his duties at St Anne's, yet somehow he contrived to find time to begin what might be regarded as his finest achievement. Here is what Herbert Thompson, writing in the *Musical Times*, in its issue for January 1900, had to say:

On the 1st ult. there was tried, with considerable success, what is to Leeds in the nature of an experiment - a smoking concert of chamber music being given at the Metropole Hotel. Mr E Elliott's string quartet, a party of able and artistic local players, gave quartets by Mozart, Beethoven, and Dvořák, and the mixture of music and nicotine seemed to be so well appreciated by the devotees of both who formed the audience, that the experiment is likely to be repeated.¹²

The concept of a "smoking concert" was not in itself a new one. Such events had started in London in the early eighteen-eighties, where the informality of the occasion extended even to the performers, who themselves smoked whenever the music permitted.¹³ Initially, the smoking concert was restricted to gentlemen only, it not being regarded as acceptable to smoke in mixed company. By the early nineties, however, social attitudes were beginning to change sufficiently, at least in the metropolis, to allow ladies to be present at such events.¹⁴ At the Queen's Hall Promenade Concerts in London at the turn of the century, smoking was permitted in all parts of the auditorium except for a specially reserved part of the Grand Circle, despite the fact that 'fatuous suggestions to abolish the desirable

¹⁰ *YEN*, 27th April 1908.

¹¹ Programme books, Leeds Symphony Society Orchestra. Thoresby Society Library.

¹² *MT*, 41 (January 1900): 50.

¹³ Scholes, *Mirror*, 1:196.

¹⁴ *Ibid.*, 1:197.

luxury had been made from time to time'.¹⁵ A certain degree of etiquette regarding smoking was nevertheless observed at the Leeds Bohemian concerts in that gentlemen were 'requested not to smoke until after the First Quartet has been performed'.¹⁶ Appropriately enough for a series bearing the epithet "Bohemian", dress codes were not strictly enforced for these evenings 'where tobacco is the rule and evening dress the exception'.¹⁷

The use of this term "Bohemian" sheds an interesting light on the social *mores* of the time, with its suggestion of unconventional and daring behaviour coupled with artistic tastes of a refined but possibly revolutionary nature. In a paper given to the Incorporated Society of Musicians in 1903, W Harding Bonner complained that 'the music hall and the Bohemian concert were preferred to the classical concert', which suggests that the notion had some general currency during this period.¹⁸ A contemporary dictionary defined a Bohemian as 'a person, especially a literary person, journalist, or artist, of unconventional and erratic habits'¹⁹, but it seems likely that our Leeds Bohemians were more akin to the genteel variety described in 1907 by Arthur Ransome - respectable citizens who 'dine comfortably, sleep in feather-beds, and find hot water waiting for them in the mornings'.²⁰ The year before the Leeds Bohemian Concerts were established the Leeds Savage Club was formed by a group of artists, musicians and writers meeting at the studio of the painter Owen Bowen (1873-1967) in Cookridge Street. Its object was 'the gathering together of kindred spirits, types of the true Bohemian class, for convivial amusement where for a few hours...they might throw off and forget artificial restraints, humdrum and worry of business life'.²¹ Among the members of the Savage Club were the violinists Edward Maude and Irwin Sawdon, the

¹⁵ *Musical Standard*, 8th August 1903. One of the stories in Arnold Bennett's *Tales of the Five Towns* (1905) features a fictitious concert series called "Otto's Bohemian Autumn Nightly Concerts" given at the Covent Garden Theatre.

¹⁶ Programme book, Leeds Bohemian Chamber Concerts, 25th November 1908.

¹⁷ *MT*, 41 (December 1900): 826.

¹⁸ *Musical Standard*, 15th August 1903.

¹⁹ Isaac K Funk (ed.) *A Standard Dictionary of the English Language* (London 1906), I: 216.

²⁰ Arthur Ransome, *Bohemia in London* (London 1907), 4.

²¹ See George Black, 'The Leeds Savage Club and its Origins', *Publications of the Thoresby Society*, 54 (1977): 298-204.

cellist John Walton, the composer Alfred Christensen, oboist Frank Holt, and vocalists Tom Child and Harry Blackie.²²

A relaxed and informal atmosphere prevailed at the Bohemian concerts, which began at 8pm and lasted for about two hours. ('Carriages at 10' announced the programme book, a useful indication of the social status of the audience.) Typically the programme consisted of three works: a contemporary piece sandwiched between two acknowledged masterpieces from the chamber music canon. There would be two intervals of fifteen to twenty minutes during which refreshments would be available. No serried ranks of hard seats for the Bohemians: comfortable armchairs were the order of the day, which could be arranged in groups to suit the needs of the assembled company.²³

The Bohemian concerts undoubtedly catered for a select and relatively affluent group of music lovers. With a single ticket costing two shillings and sixpence and a subscription to the whole series ten shillings and sixpence, the concerts were prohibitively expensive for many people. Aimed at the musical connoisseur, the programme book, with detailed analytical notes by the music critic of the *Leeds Mercury*, Frank Toothill, carried an advertisement from Hopkinsons' Successors Ltd, advising that 'The Music to be performed at these Concerts may be obtained in the Miniature Editions at 5 & 6, Commercial St. & at the Concert Room'.²⁴ The sale of miniature scores, at perhaps three shillings each, says as much for the affluence of the audience as for its musical literacy. Among the other advertisers were the local violin maker J W Owen and the organ builders Abbott & Smith.

The most musical audience in Yorkshire

Perhaps with some justification, those attending the Bohemian concerts were regarded by Herbert Thompson as 'the most musical audience in Yorkshire'.²⁵ The earliest surviving programme book which it has been possible to locate, dating from 1905, lists a total of sixty-eight subscribers, among them many professional musicians resident in Leeds such as

²² Programme book, The Leeds Savage Club Evening, in aid of The Gateforth Hall for Consumptives, 11th December 1903. Copy in Thoresby Society Library.

²³ In his diary entry for 22nd February 1901 Herbert Thompson recorded his attendance at the Metropole that evening and noted 'Sit in a most comfortable armchair in front - Toothill joins me before last 4tet & we go off tog'. Thompson Diaries, MS.80, Brotherton Collection, University of Leeds.

²⁴ Programme book, Leeds Bohemian Chamber Concerts, 15th March 1905.

²⁵ *MT*, 48 (February 1907): 117.

Herbert Fricker, Bernard Johnson, H Percy Richardson and Alice Simpkin.²⁶ The recently established University of Leeds, formerly the Yorkshire College, is equally strongly represented in the persons of the Vice-Chancellor Nathan Bodington and no less than eight of his senior academic staff. These included the professor of organic chemistry and amateur violist Julius Cohen, professor of biology Louis C Miall, professor of history Arthur J Grant, and professor of mathematics and accomplished amateur musician Leonard Rogers.²⁷ Passing references in the press suggest that, at least in the early years of the series, musicians constituted a large proportion of the audience.²⁸

The Bohemians in many ways constituted a homogeneous social group, drawn predominantly from the city's professional classes, with the majority resident in the area of Leeds to the north-west of the university covering Woodhouse, Hyde Park and Headingley. Many were acquainted with each other socially as well as professionally, through participation in amateur music making, either in the orchestra of the Leeds Symphony Society, or as singers in the Leeds Philharmonic Society or Leeds Choral Union. Whether academics, surgeons, architects, solicitors or industrialists, all shared a common interest in chamber music and their attendance was motivated more by enthusiasm than by considerations of fashion.

Among the most dedicated supporters of the Bohemian concerts was Frank Harris Fulford, managing director of C E Fulford Ltd, manufacturing chemists. Fulford had made his fortune with popular household medicinal products such as Zam Buk and Bile Beans. Born in Canada but resident in Leeds for many years, he was a generous patron of the arts in the city and an enthusiastic viola player. In his student days he had spent some time in Leipzig, where he had begun his collection of music scores which in 1936 was donated to

²⁶ Programme book, Leeds Bohemian Chamber Concerts, 15th March 1905.

²⁷ With the exception of Miall all were also regular subscribers to the Leeds Philharmonic Society concerts. Programme books, Leeds Philharmonic Society.

²⁸ The *Musical Standard* reported that the concert of 26th January 1900 was 'highly appreciated by the large assembly of Leeds musicians present' (3rd February 1900) and later that 'each succeeding concert has brought together a larger number of Leeds musicians, both professional and amateur'. (24th February 1900).

the University of Leeds.²⁹ His contribution to the cause of chamber music was such that it merited mention many years later in Cobbett's *Cyclopaedic Survey*.³⁰

The running of the Bohemian concerts was overseen by a management committee of six.³¹ Two of the committee were professional musicians: Arthur Grimshaw, and the leader of the Leeds Bohemian String Quartet, Edward Elliott. The four other members were all musical amateurs who at one time or another had played in the Leeds Symphony Society Orchestra: H B Jowett was Honorary Secretary of the LSSO in which he played the viola and horn; John Wales Smith was an amateur flautist who also sang tenor in the Leeds Choral Union; Bernard Hess, an oil merchant, played the kettle drums; Professor Leonard Rogers, better known as a pianist, had played alongside Grimshaw and Jowett in the viola section in the early years and was President of the Symphony Society from 1895 until 1903. Jowett, Hess and Rogers had all served on the LSSO committee with Grimshaw. The post of Honorary Secretary was filled by August Grahl from Headingley who, together with John Wales Smith, was largely responsible for the organization and administration of the concerts.³²

The Venues (1): The Hotel Metropole

How the Hotel Metropole came to be selected as the venue for these new concerts is not known. Having just opened that same year it is conceivable that the additional publicity brought about by this rather novel concert series was welcomed by the management: a gathering of upwards of fifty leading Leeds citizens was presumably regarded as good for business. Its central location close to City Square and the railway station, coupled with the availability of a modern, comfortable room of appropriate size, must have made it ideal for Grimshaw and the organising committee. The Metropole was opened on 28th June 1899.³³ This is how *The Builder* described it soon after the opening:

²⁹ *YP*, 21st August 1943.

³⁰ Walter Willson Cobbett, *Cobbett's Cyclopaedic Survey of Chamber Music* (London 1929), I:212.

³¹ The following information is derived from an examination of the programme books of several Leeds concert series and contemporary directories.

³² *Musical Standard*, 24th February 1900, 123.

³³ *YP*, 28th June 1899.

The grand staircase leads out of one end of the hall, other sides being occupied by the office, the hall porter's room, the passenger lift, and the doorway to various public rooms. The dining hall is capable of accommodating 250 guests. At one angle of the building is planned a complete suite of rooms devoted to commercial men, divided from the rest of the hotel, and with a separate entrance for luggage, &c. A wide staircase with wrought-iron balustrading connects the hall with the upper floors. On the first floor, in addition to bedrooms, are planned a large room for arbitrations or company meetings, a private billiard-room, a ladies' retiring-room, and several private sitting-rooms. The whole of the basement, which extends over the whole area, is devoted, with the exception of a range of stock-rooms, to administration. The lighting is by electricity. The total cost has been about 90,000*l.*³⁴

An advertisement in a contemporary directory described the Metropole as the 'most modern hotel in the city', with its 200 rooms, electric light and, with an unusual recourse to American parlance, 'elevator to all floors'.³⁵ It is perhaps fitting that at the beginning of a new century a novel musical venture such as the Bohemian concerts should start life amid such congenial modernity.

The Venues (2): The Bull and Mouth Hotel

The concerts remained at the Metropole for the first three seasons of their existence, before moving to a new venue for the 1902-1903 season. Located in the very centre of town on the eastern side of Briggate between Duncan Street and Kirkgate, the Bull and Mouth was one of the oldest inns in Leeds, having originally been known as the Red Bear, with a history dating back to at least 1680.³⁶ A coaching inn from the early 1800s, the Bull and Mouth was a three-storey building whose plain façade was broken by a high and formerly much broader archway, a reminder of days when lumbering freight waggons piled with merchandise passed into its courtyard.³⁷

In the light of growing attendances the Bohemian concerts switched from the Hotel Metropole to the more spacious accommodation of the Large Hall of the Bull and Mouth,

³⁴ *The Builder*, 15th July 1899, 67.

³⁵ *Robinson's Leeds Directory. 1900-1901* (Leeds 1900), 806.

³⁶ *The Yorkshire Owl*, 22nd July 1896, 275-276.

³⁷ See Tom Bradley, *The Old Coaching Days in Yorkshire* (Leeds 1889), 188-196 for an interesting account of the hotel's history.

which had the additional advantage of good acoustics. After the first concert on 12th November 1902 the *Yorkshire Post* reported that 'the quartet party have never been heard to greater advantage than they were last evening'.³⁸ It was during this period that the Bull and Mouth underwent some internal renovation, culminating in its transformation in 1903 into the Grand Central Hotel.³⁹ Here the concerts were to remain for the next five seasons.⁴⁰

The Venues (3): Powolny's Rooms

For the tenth season in 1908-09 the concerts changed venue once more, this time to Powolny's Rooms on Great George Street, just behind the Town Hall. Adolf Powolny (1839-1915) was a native of Zittau in Saxony who at the age of eighteen had come to Leeds, where he began work for a catering firm.⁴¹ In 1862 he set up in business on his own account and soon gained a considerable reputation as a caterer and "artistic confectioner", providing the refreshments for royal visits to Leeds such as that of the Prince and Princess of Wales to inaugurate new buildings at the Yorkshire College in July 1885.⁴² A contemporary account declared:

Mr Powolny has a first-class connection, and numbers among his patrons many of the aristocracy and gentry, as well as the leading civic dignitaries and principal residents of Leeds and the district. Amongst the many specialities for which this establishment is so justly celebrated may be mentioned turtle soup, which is made from live turtles always kept in stock, and prepared in three varieties - the thick turtle, invalids' turtle, and best dinner clear turtle. In the manufactory is confected every description of delicacy in the shape of artistic comestibles, bride cakes and birthday cakes, forming leading specialities.⁴³

Powolny's, which had been established for some time at premises on Bond Street, enjoyed a reputation as a fashionable meeting place, and social events of all kinds were

³⁸ *YP*, 13th November 1902.

³⁹ *YEP*, 25th November 1972.

⁴⁰ The Grand Central Hotel would also be used again for the 12th and 13th seasons (1910-1912) before the concerts returned once more to the Hotel Metropole.

⁴¹ *YEN*, 16th September 1915; *YP*, 17th September 1915.

⁴² In its account of the visit the *Times* reported that 'The arrangements for the hospitable entertainment of so large a number of guests were of the most excellent kind'. *The Times*, 16th July 1885.

⁴³ Historical Publishing Company, *Yorkshire. Part First, Leeds and Bradford* (London 1888), 104.

regularly held in private rooms. The Assembly Rooms opened in 1900 and were soon in use for a short series of recitals by the Rawdon Briggs Quartet during which their 'suitability from an acoustical point of view was satisfactorily demonstrated'.⁴⁴ At these concerts, as at the Bohemian gatherings, light refreshments were made available which, it was reported, 'furnished a welcome safety valve for the numerous conversationalists, who are apt to resent the restrictions of the concert-room'.⁴⁵ For whatever reason, the concerts stayed there for only one season before returning once more to the Hotel Metropole.

The Players (1): Edward Elliott

The Leeds-born violinist Edward Elliott led the first quartet to perform at the Bohemian concerts, and for thirteen successive seasons he was intimately involved with them as both performer and member of the organising committee.

Music was in the family: his maternal grandfather, Joseph Thackeray, was organist of Christ Church, Meadow Lane in the eighteen thirties and was one of the first teachers of the pianoforte in Leeds.⁴⁶ Elliott himself studied the violin first with Eckener, a Joachim pupil, and later with the Dutch violinist Benno Hollander (1853-1942) at the Guildhall School of Music. His career embraced teaching, solo and orchestral work and chamber music. He held teaching posts at several schools and colleges including Leeds School of Music and Leeds Girls' High School. It was while at the latter that he met the pianist Gertrude Wortley, to whom he was married in 1902.

In the mid-1890s Elliott made regular appearances at the concerts organised by the Leeds-based composer Alfred Christensen at the Philosophical Hall, often performing piano trios with Christensen and the cellist Arthur Bolton. He also took the opportunity to show his nascent ability as a soloist:

In choosing Max Bruch's violin concerto in G minor, one of the most inspired of modern works of the kind, Mr Edward Elliott showed ambition. It would have been too much to expect from so young a player a reading showing much individuality or finesse, but it was something that he played the notes. This he did with

⁴⁴ *YP*, 30th October 1900.

⁴⁵ *Ibid.*

⁴⁶ *YEN*, 10th February 1908.

admirable spirit and correctness. With such technical facility Mr Elliott ought to make an excellent violinist.⁴⁷

From 1897 until 1903 he was leader of the Leeds Symphony Society Orchestra, one of a handful of professional players brought in to stiffen the ranks of the predominantly amateur band. When the Leeds Municipal Orchestra began its activities in 1903 under Fricker, Elliott became its leader, retaining this position as it metamorphosed into the Leeds Symphony Orchestra Ltd in 1908. As a leading local musician he was one of the very few to be selected to play in the Festival orchestra, playing in the second violins in 1904 and the firsts in 1907 and 1910.⁴⁸

In addition to his work with the Bohemian concerts Edward Elliott actively championed the cause of contemporary chamber music through local concerts which he organised periodically, often with his wife as pianist. A typically adventurous programme is that of a concert given at the Leeds Church Institute on Albion Place on 17th January 1912 in collaboration with the flautist Lupton Whitelock. Among the more recent works performed were Reger's *Serenade for flute, violin and viola*, Debussy's *Rhapsody No. 1 for clarinet and piano* from 1910, and York Bowen's *Miniature Suite for flute and piano*, composed some five years earlier.⁴⁹ Elliott's enterprise was rewarded with an unusually large audience.

The Players (2): Alfred Giessing

The cellist Alfred Giessing joined the Leeds Bohemian String Quartet at the beginning of the second season, but played in only the first concert. He returned at the opening of the next season in October 1901 and remained until 1905.

Danish by birth, Giessing had studied initially with Fritz Bendix in Copenhagen, and later for four years at the Royal Academy in Berlin with Robert Hausmann, the cellist of the celebrated Joachim Quartet. For two years he was a member of the Berlin Philharmonic Orchestra performing under conductors such as Hans von Bülow, before settling in Leeds

⁴⁷ *YP*, 5th February 1895.

⁴⁸ Programme books, Leeds Musical Festival.

⁴⁹ *MT*, 53 (February 1912): 121. The other artists were Ernst Moxon (viola), Louis Booth (clarinet) and Elliott's wife, Gertrude (piano).

in 1885.⁵⁰ He was soon in demand as a recitalist, and formed the Eckener String Quartet, before joining the violinist and Joachim pupil John Müller in the short-lived Leeds String Quartet, which was active sporadically between 1892 and 1898.⁵¹ Around this time he also became involved in the free chamber concerts organized for the poor of Leeds by Miss Bessie Ford, with which he continued to be associated well into the 1920s.

After leaving the Leeds Bohemian String Quartet in 1905 he became a founder member of the Johan Rasch Quartet and stayed with this ensemble until its disbandment in 1913.

The Players (3): Alexander Cohen

Born in Leeds on 29th June 1884, the violinist Alexander Cohen was educated at Leeds Central Higher Grade School and at the University of Leeds, where he took a first in modern languages in 1908 and a year later obtained his M.A.⁵² Notwithstanding his academic brilliance and the offer of lectureships in Berlin and Göttingen, he opted for a career in music for which he had demonstrated an equally prodigious talent. Despite being largely self-taught, he had carried off the Withers Prize (1897) and Schott Prize (1899) at the Leeds College of Music and rapidly gained a considerable local reputation as a soloist and orchestral leader.⁵³

Like Edward Elliott and a number of other Leeds musicians, Cohen would from time to time promote a concert on his own account. A characteristically bold example of the genre was that of his concert of 25th January 1909, which was devoted entirely to the chamber works of Richard Strauss, during which the String Quartet op.2, Piano Quartet op.13 and Violin Sonata op.18 were performed. A review of the concert noted that any members of the audience expecting 'something anarchical' would have been disappointed

⁵⁰ YEN, 22nd May 1906; Sir Landon Ronald (ed), *Who's Who in Music* (London 1935), 116. Giessing's first appearance in local directories is in *Hanson's Directory of the Musicians, Music Traders, Dancing Masters, Elocutionists, and Entertainers in Yorkshire for 1894* (Leeds 1894), 51.

⁵¹ YEN, 22nd May 1906. I have been unable to trace any information about the Eckener Quartet.

⁵² Eric Blom (ed.), *Grove's Dictionary of Music and Musicians*, Fifth edition (London 1954), II:365.

⁵³ *The Leeds Triad*, VI, no.2. New Series (May 1912), 5.

as 'Strauss is indeed quite fairly orthodox in his chamber music, much of which was written when he was under the influence of Brahms...'.⁵⁴

In 1910, with the pianist Herbert Johnson and cellist George Schott, he formed the Leeds Trio, which with the addition of the violinist J Thorpe and violist Lily Simms would resolve as required into the Leeds String Quartet, producing programmes of outstanding quality and considerable innovation.⁵⁵ Among the works given their first performance in England by Cohen and his colleagues were the String Quartet in G minor by Riccardo Pick-Mangiagalli and an unpublished Quartet in D minor by Gustave Samazeuilh, while among the compositions receiving their first airing in Leeds were Dohnanyi's Piano Quintet in C minor and Rachmaninov's Elegaic Trio.⁵⁶

The rarely performed but charming Bagatelles by Dvořák, complete with American organ instead of harmonium, were essayed by Cohen, to the evident delight of an enthusiastic audience. The following account also provides a useful insight into the occasional problems besetting concert-giving at a venue such as the Metropole:

An American organ was employed, and though this was not any improvement on the proper instrument, it was discreetly used by Mr Herbert Johnson...and, so long as it remained a background, was harmless and agreeable, but its occasional outbursts were rather too reminiscent of domestic hymns on a Sunday afternoon to be quite acceptable from a purely aesthetic point of view. The concert was well attended, and the enthusiasm roused by the performances was quite beyond what is usual at a chamber concert, though the audience (and performers) had some reason to complain of the distracting effect caused by occasional noises which suggested that the operation of boiler-making was in full swing in the next apartment.⁵⁷

Cohen combined his considerable literary and musical talents to write informative and thoughtful programme notes, a practice which he would bring to the Bohemian concerts,

⁵⁴ *YP*, 26th January 1909.

⁵⁵ The first performance of the Leeds Trio took place on 6th December 1910 with a programme comprising Volkmann's Piano Trio in B flat and Franck's Piano Trio in F sharp minor. (*MT*, 52 (January 1911): 46).

⁵⁶ The Rachmaninov Trio was wrongly claimed to be a first performance in England. This took place at the Queen's Hall, London on 22nd August 1898. See Kenneth Thompson, *A Dictionary of Twentieth-Century Composers* (London 1973), 409.

⁵⁷ *YP*, 30th March 1912.

along with an enthusiasm for new or neglected works, when he took over from Edward Elliott in 1912.

The Players (4): 1899-1914

During the period of this study the Leeds Bohemian Chamber Concerts ran through sixteen seasons in all.⁵⁸ Edward Elliott's quartet party, customarily styled 'The Leeds Bohemian String Quartet', was in existence until 1912, when Alexander Cohen's Leeds String Quartet became the "resident" quartet for the series. The following is a list of the members of the two ensembles and the seasons in which they appeared:

- Violin I: Edward Elliott (1-13)
Alexander Cohen (14-16)
- Violin II: H Verdi Fawcett (1)
Harry Wright (2-5, 7-12)
Ernest Moxon (6)
Edward Maude (13)
Fred Kitchen (14)
Bensley Ghent (15-16)
S Nagley (16)
- Viola: Walter Haigh (1-8)
E P Hatton (6)
Ernest Moxon (7-13)
Lily Simms (14-16)
- Cello: Arthur Bolton (1-2, 7-9)
Alfred Giessing (2-6)
George S Drake (10-13)
Alfred Hemingway (14-16)

Biographical information about most of these musicians tends to be patchy, but what I have been able to establish suggests that they were probably without exception among the best instrumentalists in the north of England at the time.

The violinist H Verdi Fawcett came from a remarkable family of musicians from Eccleshill near Bradford, many of whom played in orchestras such as the Hallé, Crystal Palace, and Queen's Hall.⁵⁹ Fawcett had been a member of the first Leeds String Quartet

⁵⁸ The concerts continued without interruption through the Great War, and on into the nineteen-twenties, with the final season taking place in 1926-27.

⁵⁹ Sutcliffe, *Musical Pilgrimage*, 78-79, 97; Robert Elkin, *Queen's Hall 1893-1941* (London 1944), 113. Several of the Fawcett dynasty, like Verdi, bore the names of composers. The family included a Haydn, two Handels, a Mendelssohn and a Weber.

with Alfred Giessing and subsequently quitted the north of England to establish himself as a leading orchestral player in London.⁶⁰ Little is known of his successor, Harry Wright, who for a time led the second violins of the Leeds Symphony Orchestra, among whose number were Fred Kitchen and Bensley Ghent. Coincidentally, both Kitchen and Ghent went on to lead cinema orchestras after the war.⁶¹ Edward Maude's contribution to the musical life of Leeds as orchestral leader, chamber musician and teacher was immense, in the course of a long and distinguished career.⁶²

The violist for the first eight seasons, Walter Haigh, was a Hallé player, while E P Hatton, who played the viola for just one season, also visited Leeds regularly with the Hallé Orchestra, though as one of the first violins.⁶³ Ernest Moxon and Lily Simms both played in the Leeds Symphony Orchestra. A pupil of Rawdon Briggs and Edith Robinson in Manchester, Lily Simms was also a member of the Edith Robinson Quartet until 1915.⁶⁴

As for the cellists, Arthur Bolton appeared regularly at chamber concerts in Leeds, and was a member of the Leeds Municipal Orchestra under Fricker. George Scott Drake was another Hallé and Leeds Symphony Orchestra player who later moved to Harrogate where he taught the cello at the Beethoven School of Music.⁶⁵ Alfred Hemingway replaced George Schott in Cohen's Leeds Trio and played in the Leeds Symphony Orchestra. His career with the quartet was interrupted only when he joined the colours in 1916.

⁶⁰ In 1908 Fawcett used his encyclopaedic knowledge of the London musical world to provide Thomas Beecham with an eighty strong orchestra in three weeks. See Thomas Beecham, *A Mingled Chime* (London 1944), 81.

⁶¹ Kitchen led the orchestra at the Majestic in City Square, and Ghent the orchestra at the Tower on Briggate. See Robert E Preedy, *Leeds Cinemas 2* (Leeds 1982), 20.

⁶² *YP*, 24th February 1967.

⁶³ Programme books, Leeds Philharmonic Society.

⁶⁴ *YEN*, 9th June 1909; Cobbett, *Cyclopaedic Survey*, I:207.

⁶⁵ *The Musical Directory, Annual & Almanack. 1917* (London 1917), 261. The school was located at 54, East Parade, Harrogate.

The Bohemian programmes

As has been noted, the typical Bohemian programme would contain three works, with a newer or at least less familiar work juxtaposed with accepted masterpieces from the repertoire. This format served the dual purpose of maintaining variety and of introducing to Leeds, admittedly through a small subset of the musical public, works previously unheard in the city. It is instructive to chronicle briefly the progress of the concerts and local reaction to them, drawing principally on the notices and diaries of Herbert Thompson, who attended the vast majority of Bohemian concerts during this period.

The 'considerable number of the devotees of music and tobacco' who assembled at the Hotel Metropole on 13th November 1900 for the start of the second season for a programme of Mozart, Rubinstein and Grieg found that some changes had taken place in the quartet party, with Harry Wright taking over as second violin and Alfred Giessing as cellist.⁶⁶ *The new quartet was deemed a success by Thompson, both in terms of ensemble and of the balance between the parts which showed 'a distinct improvement'.*⁶⁷ Thompson was making his way to the Hotel Metropole and the first Bohemian concert of 1901 when he learned of the death of Queen Victoria.⁶⁸ The concert went ahead, albeit 'under a cloud', with quartets by Stanford and Volkmann, performed 'under conditions not unfitted for appreciating the quiet and sober joys of chamber music'.⁶⁹

Leeds was ever happy to steal a march on neighbouring Bradford, or even better, on the metropolis itself, in the matter of first or early performances of recent compositions. The second season saw Leeds enjoy the rare satisfaction of anticipating London, albeit by just three days, with a performance of Borodin's String Quartet No.2.⁷⁰ Such was the reception of the new work that it was repeated "by special desire" at the next and final concert of the series.⁷¹

⁶⁶ *YP*, 14th November 1900.

⁶⁷ *Ibid.*

⁶⁸ Thompson, *Diary*, 22nd January 1901.

⁶⁹ *YP*, 23rd January 1901.

⁷⁰ *MT*, 42 (April 1901): 263. The Borodin Quartet No.2 was performed by the Ysaÿe Quartet at the St James's Hall on 25th February 1901. Notwithstanding the Leeds performance three days earlier, the advertisement carried for the concert in the *Times* of 23rd February 1901 made the slightly ambiguous claim of "first time" for the Borodin.

⁷¹ *YP*, 3rd April 1901.

Audience numbers grew steadily, with a suggestion that the events were becoming a less exclusively male affair, the *Yorkshire Post* reporting that 'many ladies braved the nicotine for the sake of the music'.⁷² By the close of the 1901-02 series the Bohemian ideal of promoting the best of chamber music amid congenial surroundings seemed to have been fully realized:

The Bohemian Chamber Concerts are in a happy stage of existence. They appeal to the few, and, being on a modest scale, the few are able to support them, so that they have no need to "play down" to secure popular support. And, not being "popular," one is not oppressed by a crowd of bored people, who are led by fashion, but the enthusiasts who are present really enjoy themselves, while the desirable mood of contemplation seems to be greatly assisted by consumption of the sedative nicotine. Instead of a steady flow of small talk, the only interruption is the occasional striking of a match, and altogether there is a note of sympathy among the audience which is very conducive to one's individual enjoyment.⁷³

The next season was worthy of note for a change of venue (to the Bull and Mouth Hotel) and for two works previously unheard in Leeds. The concert of 11th March 1903 coupled the well-known fifth quartet of Beethoven's op.18 set with Tchaikovsky's Quartet in E flat minor op.30, dating from 1876, and the more recent Quartet in D by César Franck (1890). Of the Franck quartet Herbert Thompson ventured that 'it is bewildering music, and its strangeness is one of its charms, but it is the sincere expression of an artistic personality...It presents enormous difficulties of intonation to the executants, and they deserve the utmost credit for the success of a first attempt'.⁷⁴

At the end of the season the committee came under some pressure to broaden the scope of the music performed with the admission of the piano and even vocalists to the concert platform. The *Yorkshire Post* sounded a cautionary note:

It is...whispered that some of the subscribers sigh for the pianoforte, of which we surely hear enough, and that others hanker after the fleshpots of vocal music, of which we certainly have more than enough, but it is to be hoped the Committee will realise the

⁷² *YP*, 5th December 1901.

⁷³ *YP*, 13th March 1902.

⁷⁴ *YP*, 12th March 1903.

importance of not altering the distinguishing features of these excellent concerts.⁷⁵

Evidently the committee acceded to these requests, for the first concert of the following season saw Herbert Fricker joining the string players in a programme which included Dvořák's Piano Quintet and the Piano Quartet in E by Hermann Goetz. Fricker's presence at the piano does not seem to have materially affected the essential character of the Bohemian concerts.⁷⁶

Recent compositions or those somewhat off the beaten track continued to figure in the programmes, and some indication of increasing confidence and technical assurance may be inferred from the challenging nature of some of the works performed. The 'latest word in chamber music', Vincent d'Indy's Quartet in E op.45, appeared alongside Spohr and Haydn in February 1905, its structural complexities not intimidating Elliott, Moxon, Hatton and Bolton:

Here we have an extraordinarily individual work, a very maze of counterpoint, in which the parts almost jostle each other in their single-minded intention to follow their own way...Their performance was indeed of high merit, and they passed the many polyphonic and rhythmical entanglements with praiseworthy ease.⁷⁷

A brief survey of the next few seasons reveals quartets by Ippolitoff-Ivanoff, Arensky, Novák and Cui among more familiar works, while perhaps the most ambitious undertaking was the inclusion of Max Reger's Quartet in D minor for the concert of 6th January 1909. It had received its first performance in Frankfurt in December 1904 and was described by the *Musical Times* shortly afterwards as 'the most difficult quartet in existence'.⁷⁸ The work was 'valiantly played' by Messrs Elliott, Wright, Moxon and Drake, though Herbert Thompson harboured certain critical reservations regarding Reger:

...one approaches his music with diffidence, and, feeling how necessary it is to shift one's standpoint in order to appreciate him, is perplexed by an uncomfortable doubt as to whether the effort necessary to do this is quite repaid by the result.⁷⁹

⁷⁵ *YP*, 3rd April 1903.

⁷⁶ *YP*, 26th November 1903.

⁷⁷ *YP*, 9th February 1905.

⁷⁸ *MT*, 46 (May 1905): 327.

⁷⁹ *YP*, 7th January 1909.

Rather easier to assimilate for players, critics and audience alike was Charles Stanford's Quartet in G minor, dating from October 1906 and still in MS.⁸⁰ Performed at the final concert of that season on 10th March 1909, it was 'among Stanford's most genial and spontaneous works, free from a certain abstruseness that was noticeable in at least one of its predecessors'.⁸¹

As one of the architects of the Leeds Bohemian Concerts, it was fitting that Arthur Grimshaw should be able to hear his own works performed. His Quartet in D minor op.9 was first heard on 15th March 1905 at the Grand Central Hotel. In three movements, it is a well-crafted, balanced and fluent work, with idiomatic string writing as befits a composer who, though principally an organist, also played the viola.⁸² By no means derivative, it does nevertheless carry slight resonances of another organist composer, César Franck, whose Quartet in D was heard for the first time in Leeds almost exactly two years earlier. It is tempting to speculate whether some subconscious influence might have been at work. The new quartet, with its exquisite second movement, was well received:

The slow movement, which forms the supreme test of inspiration, is a really beautiful composition, a sort of dreamy nocturne, full of the charm of melody and colour, while the construction throughout shows a power of logical development and a keen sense of proportion.⁸³

The D minor Quartet proved such a success that it was performed again at the opening concert of the following season on 25th October 1905 and also three years later on 19th February 1908.⁸⁴ Two other works for string quartet by Grimshaw also received their premières at the Bohemian concerts: the *Divertimento in D on Old English Folk-Tunes* on 21st March 1906 (repeated on 25th November 1908), and the *Variations on a theme by Mrs Herz* on 11th February 1910.⁸⁵ The Mrs Herz of the title was Mrs Maria Herz of Bradford,

⁸⁰ *MT*, 50 (April 1909): 268.

⁸¹ *YP*, 11th March 1909.

⁸² The MS of Grimshaw's Quartet in D minor (parts and score) is held in the Leeds Local History Library.

⁸³ *MT*, 46 (April 1905): 269.

⁸⁴ The Quartet was also performed at the annual conference of the Incorporated Society of Musicians which took place at the Hotel Majestic, Harrogate from 31st December 1907 to 3rd January 1908. (*MT*, 49 (February 1908): 104).

⁸⁵ Like the D minor quartet, the MS of the *Variations* is preserved in the Leeds Local History Library.

a friend and pupil of Grimshaw's, who appeared at the next concert accompanying songs by Brahms, Strauss and Bruneau.⁸⁶ Commenting again on Grimshaw's adept handling of the quartet medium, the *Yorkshire Post* was full of praise for the *Variations*:

It is a really beautiful work, full of interest in the artistic metamorphoses to which the theme is subjected, and so thoroughly in the quartet idiom that one can hardly imagine it under any other conditions. The musicianship and fertility of resource in these variations are quite remarkable, and, while conforming to all the rules of the game, there is an originality of conception in the development of the subject and its accessories that takes the work quite outside the range of conventional "variations."⁸⁷

By the opening of the eleventh season in 1909, when the concerts returned briefly to the Hotel Metropole, the subscriber list had increased to almost one hundred. Some of this increase may be accounted for by several wives taking out an additional subscription in their own right, but newcomers to the concerts also included the surgeon Maxwell Telling, the Armley organ builder James J Binns, the printers E G Arnold and Alf Cooke, and the recently appointed registrar of the City of Leeds College of Music, Percy Scholes.⁸⁸ Frequent references to the size of audience made in contemporary reviews suggest that, unlike many other musical institutions in Leeds, the Bohemian concerts retained and even increased their support over successive seasons. Indeed the level of support achieved by the Bohemian concerts was described by Herbert Thompson as 'the most encouraging thing that has happened in Leeds music during the past twenty years'.⁸⁹

Back at the Grand Central Hotel for the following season, Reger's *D minor Quartet* received a second performance in December 1910, although under circumstances which suggest that the ambience at the hotel may not always have been ideal:

Probably, if the truth were known, some of the audience who were squirming at Reger's strange harmonies, yearned after the "fleshpots" represented by the only too audible band in the

⁸⁶ Programme book, Leeds Bohemian Chamber Concerts, 11th February 1910. Maria Herz was a Bradford pianist who in January 1914 introduced, with the violinist I W Sugden, Erich Wolfgang Korngold's Violin Sonata in G to Yorkshire. (*MT*, 55 (March 1914): 195)

⁸⁷ *YP*, 12th February 1910.

⁸⁸ Programme book, Leeds Bohemian Chamber Concerts, 11th February 1910; Percy Scholes, "Summary of the career of Dr Percy Scholes", typescript dated 14th October 1938, Scholes Collection, Music Division, National Library of Canada, Ottawa.

⁸⁹ *MT*, 48 (March 1907): 187.

adjoining restaurant. Seriously, however, one was grateful for a second opportunity of hearing this strange and undeniably interesting music, though its effect might have been greater had it not been postponed till recollections of the earlier performance were growing dim.⁹⁰

Quartets by Novák and ‘the extreme of modernity’, Ravel, may found among the programmes for late 1911, while a last-minute change of programme on 31st January 1912 brought together works by Debussy, York Bowen and Emile Bernard in a slightly revised version of a recital given two weeks earlier by Edward Elliott and Lupton Whitelock.⁹¹

The fourteenth season, which began in November 1912, was noteworthy on a number of counts: a substantial increase in the list of subscribers, yet another change of venue (back once more to the Hotel Metropole after an absence of two years) and a complete change of personnel. After thirteen consecutive seasons Edward Elliott and the Leeds Bohemian String Quartet made way for a totally new party led by the twenty-eight year old Alexander Cohen. During the past two seasons he and the musicians constituting his Leeds Trio and Leeds Quartet had distinguished themselves with bold and innovative programmes, which had earned enthusiastic support and critical acclaim.⁹²

For the opening concert, given on 13th November 1912, the Leeds Trio (Cohen, Alfred Hemingway and Herbert Johnson) stayed on safe ground with Brahms's Piano Trio op.101, Schumann's *Fantasiestücke*, and Schubert's Piano Trio op.99. The audience was a large one, and this increase in numbers, welcome though it no doubt was, may have brought with it problems unknown in the early years. Despite expressing his satisfaction with the concert from a musical point of view, Herbert Thompson commented that ‘a little more attention to the ventilation, and a greater respite for the non-smokers by observing the direction on the programme that smoking is to be delayed till after the first piece, would add to the amenities of these very enjoyable concerts’.⁹³ More esoteric delights were to come later in the form of quartets by Sinding and Taneyev, and there can be little doubt that under Cohen's stewardship the concerts maintained their reputation for high standards of

⁹⁰ *YP*, 8th December 1910.

⁹¹ *YP*, 1st February 1912. Ravel's Quartet was first performed in Paris on 5th March 1904.

⁹² *YP*, 30th March 1912.

⁹³ *YP*, 14th November 1912.

musicianship and for interesting and challenging repertoire. Sadly, with the standing of the series probably never higher, it lost one of its greatest supporters.

On the afternoon of Tuesday, 8th July 1913, with no word of explanation to his sister Enid, with whom he shared a house on Caledonian Road, Arthur Grimshaw suddenly and unexpectedly went out. He was never seen alive again. The mysterious disappearance of Grimshaw was the subject of speculation in the local press for some weeks, with many theories put forward as to the missing composer's fate. It was not until 1st August 1913 that his body was discovered near a beck on Hawksworth Moor just above Guiseley, at a place known as Cockle Springs. How and why Grimshaw came to be on the moor remains a complete mystery. It was revealed at the inquest that he had suffered some sort of breakdown the previous Christmas, probably as a result of overwork, and had taken doses of sulphonal to cure insomnia. The use of this powerful drug had given rise to delusions and was also believed to have damaged Grimshaw's heart. The inquest concluded that death was due to 'heart failure, caused by over-exertion'.⁹⁴

The climax of the final Bohemian season before the Great War was a fitting one for a series committed to bearing the torch of contemporary music: the first performance in England of Sibelius's Quartet in D minor, titled *Voces intimae*.⁹⁵ A large audience witnessed the performance given by Alexander Cohen, Bensley Ghent, Lily Simms and Alfred Hemingway at the Hotel Metropole on 4th March 1914. The *Yorkshire Evening News* thought that, 'like most modern works', the quartet lacked the 'organic structure, authority, and the finality of the old'.⁹⁶ The *Leeds Mercury* considered it 'highly interesting and significant in its way', and perhaps the most considered view came from the *Yorkshire Post*:⁹⁷

It is strange music, but not in the least extravagant, the idiom employed is perfectly orthodox, and it is the forms in which the ideas are couched, which are as varied as nature, that are novel. The quartet one may, or may not, like, but its strength, its earnestness, and its obvious sincerity are impressive. It is highly

⁹⁴ *LM*, 2nd and 4th August 1913.

⁹⁵ Thompson, *Dictionary*, 506.

⁹⁶ *YEN*, 5th March 1914.

⁹⁷ *LM*, 5th March 1914.

original, and there can be little doubt that it has some of the qualities of greatness.⁹⁸

When next the Bohemian concerts began, on 11th November 1914, the country would already have been at war with Germany for over three months, and would remain so for four more years.

Chamber music in the Town Hall

Leeds Town Hall was used periodically as a venue for chamber music. Until the 1908-09 season the Leeds Philharmonic Society subscription series traditionally included a single chamber music concert. However the sheer size of the auditorium and the number of people present tended to militate against the ideal realization of this type of music. Herbert Thompson once likened chamber music in the Town Hall to 'a Whistler etching hung in the Rubens room of the National Gallery' where 'for nine-tenths of the audience its delicacy is lost, its details smeared together'.⁹⁹ In his book on chamber music published in 1913 the composer Thomas Dunhill observed that the optimal conditions for listening to it were seldom achieved, remarking that 'Chamber Music is not for the crowd, and one cannot readily attune oneself to receive it if the crowd is present.'¹⁰⁰ Reviews such as this, from a 1902 Town Hall Subscription Concert, are not untypical:

Chamber music in a concert hall, where one is accustomed to witness a large chorus and orchestra disporting themselves, is necessarily at a disadvantage, and Brahms's String Quartet in B flat, played with the utmost sympathy by Mr Kruse's quartet-party, seemed out of place in the spacious and resonant Leeds Town Hall, at the subscription concert on February 26.¹⁰¹

The Haddock Musical Evenings, whose programmes were 'of a decidedly variegated character' but did contain items of chamber music, also took place in the Town Hall.¹⁰² In 1903, faced with growing but perhaps less discriminating audiences and with the

⁹⁸ *YP*, 5th March 1914.

⁹⁹ *YP*, 30th January 1896.

¹⁰⁰ Thomas F Dunhill, *Chamber Music. A Treatise for Students* (London 1913), 8.

¹⁰¹ *MT*, 43 (April 1902): 264.

¹⁰² *YP*, 14th February 1894.

unsuitability of the hall for such music, Messrs Haddock resolved to create a new series, the *Soirées Musicales*, to be held at the Alexandra Hall on Cookridge Street:

These "Musical Evenings" have outgrown their original compass, and now appeal to a wider audience, to whom, as a whole, sonatas are an infliction, while the Town Hall, in which they take place, is by no means an ideal place for appreciating the refinements of chamber music. So these energetic concert-givers have planned a series of supplementary concerts, slightly disguised under a French title, and echoing the pristine purity of the original "Evenings."¹⁰³

The capacity of the hall nevertheless meant that, despite its unsympathetic acoustic properties, it might still be used for visiting "star" performers likely to attract large audiences. We may assume that this was the case when it was chosen as the venue for the visit in October 1911 of the Kreisler-Casals-Bauer Trio, which gave memorable performances of trios by Beethoven, Tchaikovsky and Mendelssohn:

Certainly, every member of the very respectable and enthusiastic audience assembled in the Town Hall last evening would be willing to acknowledge that more artistic playing has never been heard at Leeds.¹⁰⁴

The Rawdon Briggs Quartet

Before the advent of the Bohemian concerts the cause of chamber music in Leeds was sustained largely by the single chamber concert per season of the Leeds Subscription Concerts and by the regular visits from Manchester of the Rawdon Briggs Quartet. Christopher Rawdon Briggs (1869-1948), who was generally regarded as one of the most finished violinists resident in the north of England, had studied with Edmund Singer in Stuttgart and with Joachim at the Hochschule in Berlin. From 1895 until 1920 he was second violin in the Brodsky Quartet, but he also formed his own quartet based in Manchester, where he taught at the College of Music and played first violin with the Hallé Orchestra.¹⁰⁵ The other members of the quartet were all Hallé colleagues: John Bridge, J Holme, and Walter Hatton. Born in Wakefield, Christopher Rawdon Briggs came from an old Yorkshire family and was the cousin of Arthur Curren Briggs, a wealthy mine owner and

¹⁰³ *YP*, 13th January 1903.

¹⁰⁴ *YP*, 7th October 1911.

¹⁰⁵ Carl Fuchs, *Musical and other Recollections of Carl Fuchs 'cellist* (Manchester 1937), 77. Rawdon Briggs led the Hallé from 1905 until the First World War.

competent amateur violinist, who became Lord Mayor of Leeds in 1903.¹⁰⁶ Whether these family ties helped to strengthen his association with the city is not clear, but it would seem that a section of the Leeds musical public was appreciative enough of Briggs's visits to take practical measures to ensure their continuance:

An effort is now being made to place the excellent chamber concerts, which Mr Rawdon Briggs has for some seasons given at Leeds, on a footing of something like permanence. Their organisation has been taken in hand by some enthusiastic amateurs, who realise the dearth of good chamber music in the town...The first concert took place last evening...while an audience fairly numerous for a concert of the kind may, it is hoped, be taken as an indication that these concerts will be regarded by many as a necessary supplement to the Subscription series.¹⁰⁷

While the programmes reflected a more conservative approach than that of later quartet parties, with a slightly greater emphasis on the core Viennese repertoire, there seems little doubt that the performances of the Rawdon Briggs Quartet were exemplary, attracting consistently enthusiastic reviews from Herbert Thompson in the *Yorkshire Post*. Even as late as 1909, by which time the quartets led by Elliott and Rasch were producing fine performances, Thompson was moved to write after a Rawdon Briggs concert: 'Playing so perfect in balance, so refined, so consistently true in intonation, and so full of the spirit of sympathy and artistic insight, one seldom hears'.¹⁰⁸

The Rasch Quartet

In 1905 a young Dutch violinist from the Hague named Johan Rasch came to settle in Leeds. In November of that year he gave a recital at the Leeds Church Institute accompanied by the pianist Noel Bell, with a programme of violinistic pyrotechnics which included concertos by Paganini and Wieniawski as well as shorter showpieces by Hubay, Wilhelmj and Ševčík.¹⁰⁹ The debut was a promising one:

Last evening Mr Johan Rasch, a young Dutch violinist who has come to Leeds with excellent credentials from no less a person than Dr Joachim, gave a recital in the Leeds Church Institute, the

¹⁰⁶ *LYM*, 22nd December 1905.

¹⁰⁷ *YP*, 30th October 1900.

¹⁰⁸ *YP*, 9th March 1909.

¹⁰⁹ Thompson. Diary, 2nd November 1905.

programme of which was well calculated to display the extent of his powers...His execution is neat and unerring, his intonation is never doubtful, his tone, if not broad or luscious...is even and incisive.¹¹⁰

Not long after his arrival in Leeds Rasch formed a quartet bearing his name.¹¹¹ In addition to Rasch the quartet members were Edgar Drake, Walter Haigh and Alfred Giessing, all highly experienced chamber music players. Giessing, as we have seen, had just spent five years as cellist of the Leeds Bohemian String Quartet, in which Haigh had been the original viola player. Drake was a Bradford musician who had studied under Adolf Brodsky, and who played regularly in Leeds at orchestral and chamber concerts. He later established the Edgar Drake Quartet.¹¹²

On 6th April 1906 the Rasch Quartet made its first appearance with a programme consisting of Schumann's Quartet in F op.41 no.2 and Beethoven's Quartet op.132. The *Musical Times* reported that they had 'played with remarkable fire and spirit', and with more opportunities of playing together would form 'an excellent quartet'.¹¹³ In the following November the Rasch Quartet began its first full season with an ambitious programme of recitals which would include all the late Beethoven quartets.¹¹⁴ The final concert featured a performance of Beethoven's monumental op.131 quartet which was 'very finely played, with freedom, force, and colour'.¹¹⁵ The ensemble appears to have rapidly built up a sizeable following among the chamber music *cognoscenti* of Leeds, for by the beginning of the next season it was reported the seating accommodation at the Hotel Metropole was 'taxed to the utmost'.¹¹⁶

The 1908-09 season for the Rasch Quartet opened amid optimism, with five concerts being scheduled instead of four, and the transference of the venue from a small room to a much larger hall within the Hotel Metropole.¹¹⁷ The new season witnessed also the

¹¹⁰ *YP*, 3rd November 1905.

¹¹¹ *LYM*, 11th April 1906.

¹¹² Ronald, *Who's who*, 92.

¹¹³ *MT*, 47 (May 1906): 341.

¹¹⁴ *MT*, 47 (December 1906): 838.

¹¹⁵ *MT*, 48 (May 1907): 331.

¹¹⁶ *YP*, 24th October 1907.

¹¹⁷ *YP*, 29th October 1908.

replacement of Walter Haigh by the Bradford-based Harry Thornton as the quartet's viola player and a broadening of the repertoire through collaboration with other instrumentalists such as the pianists Noel Bell and Percy Richardson. Encouraged by consistently good attendances at their concerts, and perhaps with half an eye on the rival Bohemian series, the Rasch Quartet continued to perform ever more enterprising programmes with each successive season. A good example comes from the final season where a concert featuring works all by living composers was given: Ippolitoff-Ivanoff's String Quartet op.13, Wolf-Ferrari's Piano Quintet op.6 (with the pianist Lloyd Hartley), and three movements from an unfinished quartet by Rasch himself.¹¹⁸

The last concert of the Rasch Quartet took place on 19th February 1913, ending rather fittingly with a performance of Beethoven's last quartet, op.135.¹¹⁹ Johan Rasch left Leeds shortly afterwards to take up an orchestral post in Germany.

The Alice Simpkin Quartet

In early 1908 the violinist Alice Simpkin formed a quartet of women players which made its first appearance on 11th April with the brilliant young Leeds pianist Ella Child in a programme which included Dvořák's Piano Quintet.¹²⁰ The other members of the quartet were Dorothy Broughton (the daughter of the chorus master Alfred Broughton, and soon replaced by Helen Butterfield), Hilda Yeates and Grace Barron. The *Musical Times* considered that 'with further practice together, these ladies should form a thoroughly efficient quartet'.¹²¹ Thereafter they made regular appearances in the local region, such as a Saturday afternoon concert at the Hotel Metropole in March 1909 during the interval of which, the programme announced, 'Afternoon Tea will be served in the Lounge'.¹²²

Alice Simpkin grew up in Newcastle-upon-Tyne, and did not begin to play the violin until the age of ten. After being taught by local music teachers she attended the Guildhall

¹¹⁸ *YP*, 19th December 1912.

¹¹⁹ *MT*, 54 (April 1913), 265.

¹²⁰ A number of all-women professional quartets were formed during this period, among them the Edith Robinson Quartet (c.1905) and the Norah Clench Quartet (c.1907). See W W Cobbett, *Cyclopaedic Survey of Chamber Music* (Oxford 1929), I:204-209. Ella Child, a pupil of Busoni, performed on several occasions with Alice Simpkin in violin and piano recitals as well as with the quartet.

¹²¹ *MT*, 49 (May 1908): 334.

¹²² Programme Book, The Alice Simpkin Quartet, 27th March 1909.

School of Music in London where, like Edward Elliott, she studied under Benno Hollander.¹²³ Her playing of Mackenzie's Violin Concerto apparently so impressed the cellist Alfredo Piatti that he wrote to the conductor August Manns suggesting that he give Alice the opportunity to take part in his Crystal Palace Concerts.¹²⁴ She came to Leeds in 1891 'with strong recommendations from many London musicians of note', making her debut with a concert at the Albert Hall on 9th October 1891, assisted by Alfred Broughton and his Select Choir.¹²⁵ A series of four violin and piano recitals followed at the Philosophical Hall, again with Broughton.

Described as 'one of the most artistic violinists in the West Riding', she stood out as a superior player to her colleagues in the quartet.¹²⁶ A review of a 1911 concert suggested that 'more confidence would...add to the point and brilliancy of the quartet, and bring its members nearer to the standard of their more experienced leader'.¹²⁷ The programmes of the Alice Simpkin Quartet generally lack the quality of audacity present in those of the Bohemians or of Johan Rasch, offering more of the staple fare of Mozart and early Beethoven, perhaps due in part to the technical limitations of the ensemble overall. In spite of this, some interesting contemporary works may be found, among them H Waldo Warner's Cobbett Prize winning Phantasy Quartet of 1905 and Dohnanyi's Quartet in D flat op.15 from 1907, previously unheard in Leeds.¹²⁸

Alice Simpkin married the cellist Alfred Giessing in London on 30th August 1912, having kept the fact of their engagement restricted to a few close friends.¹²⁹ From then on we can find no reports of her participation in any further concerts, and we must assume that after her marriage she retired from public performance. She continued to teach the violin,

¹²³ At the concert of 27th March 1909 Alice Simpkin paid homage to her teacher with a performance of his Quartet in B flat minor, op.20.

¹²⁴ *The Yorkshire Owl*, 30th December 1896.

¹²⁵ *YP*, 30th September 1891.

¹²⁶ *YP*, 17th November 1908.

¹²⁷ *YP*, 20th February 1911.

¹²⁸ Performed at the concerts of 2nd February 1910 and 18th February 1911 respectively.

¹²⁹ *YEN*, 31st August 1912.

however, and Mrs Giessing appears in a wartime directory as a music teacher, living with her husband at 9 Ryder Gardens, Roundhay, Leeds.¹³⁰

Some other notable chamber concerts

The visit to Leeds of Eugène Ysaÿe and Ferruccio Busoni in May 1901 underlined the apparent fickleness of Leeds audiences which so frustrated concert promoters at the time. Even the engagement of performers of this calibre would not necessarily guarantee a good attendance, and led Herbert Thompson on many occasions to question just how musical a city Leeds really was:

The appearance of such a constellation as Ysaÿe and Busoni brought to the Albert Hall last evening an audience which may have been select, but was hardly as numerous, save in the gallery, as the supreme merit of these consummate artists might have led one to expect. This may seem singular...but Leeds is not, we fear, very remarkable for its quickness to recognise genius, and we have vivid recollections of Sarasate, perhaps the most universally esteemed of modern virtuosi, playing to many empty benches in the same room, and, indeed, it is well known that he met with less encouragement in Leeds than in any other town he visited during his English tours.¹³¹

The German pianist Magda Eisele, whose fellow students at the Frankfurt Conservatoire in the 1880s included Fanny Davies, Leonard Borwick and Carl Fuchs, was responsible for bringing many fine artists to Leeds.¹³² In December 1900, assisted by members of Ernst Schiever's 'excellent quartet party' (Schiever, Akeroyd, Courvoisier, and Hatton), Eisele gave a performance of Brahms's Piano Quintet and the first performance in Leeds of Saint-Saëns's Piano Trio No.1.¹³³

A Saturday afternoon concert in February 1908 organized by Eisele brought the cellist Hugo Becker (1864-1941), described as 'one of the greatest violoncellists of this generation', with a programme which featured 'two modern sonatas of great interest', the

¹³⁰ *Musical Directory 1917*, 273.

¹³¹ *YP*, 20th May 1901.

¹³² Fuchs, *Recollections*, 30.

¹³³ *YP*, 4th December 1901.

Brahms Cello Sonata in E minor, and the Sonata in F by Richard Strauss.¹³⁴ The use of the word "modern" here seems slightly curious as the Brahms sonata was his opus 38 dating from 1866. Eisele moved back to Germany shortly before the outbreak of war and never returned to England.¹³⁵

According to a contemporary report in the local press it was the organist and chorus master H Matthias Turton (1876-1937) who played the first music by Debussy ever heard in Leeds.¹³⁶ The French composer was certainly not without his admirers in the town, and his String Quartet in G minor was performed at the Bohemian concerts in 1906 and 1907. Some evidence of a growing interest may also be seen from the concert of his music given at the Albert Hall, Cookridge Street on 25th February 1909 which included the Dances for harp & strings, the String Quartet played by the Parisian Quartet, piano works played by Ricardo Viñes, and songs performed by Mlle Luquiens:

Claude Debussy is quite the man of the moment - perhaps of more than the moment - and his fame has penetrated to Leeds...The sensitiveness and extreme delicacy with which Messrs Willaume, Morel, Macon, and Feuillard played the music was remarkable, and they made many of the rough places plain by the polish and ease of their performance, reconciling one to passages which would seem crude under other conditions. Their pianissimos were wonderful, clear, and sustained, yet as delicate as it was possible to make them....The large number of prominent Leeds musicians who were present was an indication of the great interest that is felt in Debussy at the moment.¹³⁷

Chamber music and the working classes

It must be acknowledged that during the late Victorian and Edwardian periods chamber music was still generally regarded as the domain of the privileged minority. Nevertheless, there were notable individuals who worked to promote an appreciation of this form of music among those disenfranchised from attending chamber concerts for want of

¹³⁴ *YP*, 10th February 1908. Among Becker's pupils was the young Beatrice Harrison. See Patricia Cleveland-Peck (ed.), *The Cello and the Nightingales* (London 1985), chapter 3.

¹³⁵ Fuchs, *Recollections*, 113.

¹³⁶ *YEN*, 18th February 1911.

¹³⁷ *YP*, 26th February 1909. In his diary Herbert Thompson recorded Harold Mason, T J Hoggett and H Percy Richardson as being present. Thompson, *Diary*, 25th February 1909.

musical education and of the one or two shillings required for a ticket. Across the Pennines from Leeds, Adolph Brodsky would take his celebrated quartet every winter 'to play gratuitously at a society for promoting recreation in the very poor part of Manchester'.¹³⁸ In nearby Bradford, Samuel Midgley (1849-1935) campaigned tirelessly for municipal support to provide free chamber concerts for the people.¹³⁹ When these efforts finally came to nothing he enlisted the help of anonymous local benefactors to underwrite the concert series which ran with considerable success from 1911 to 1924.¹⁴⁰

Leeds can lay claim to a longer, though far less well-known, tradition of chamber music for the working classes, thanks largely to the initiative of one woman. Based on the belief that 'in the hearts of all men and women is the love of good music, only needing to be awakened and cultivated', Elizabeth Helen ("Bessie") Ford (1848-1919) founded in the winter of 1893 an annual series of concerts for the poor of the city which lasted for thirty-four seasons.¹⁴¹ Bessie Ford was a member of the highly influential Leeds Quaker family which took an active part in social, educational and cultural affairs both locally and nationally. Her brother was the solicitor John Rawlinson Ford, the prime mover and underwriter of the Leeds Popular Concerts already discussed in chapter 1. She and her two sisters Isabella and Emily Ford were all accomplished in some branch of the arts: Bessie was an excellent violinist, Isabella a successful writer with published novels to her credit, while Emily had trained as an artist at the Slade. Talented and independent women of means, they campaigned vigorously for social reform, notably for womens' rights, and among many projects established evening classes to educate the mill girls of Leeds. In 1930 Michael Sadler wrote of the Ford sisters:

At Adel (once the Cranford of Leeds) their house and garden were a centre of radiant sympathy and of lively comment upon the outlook in foreign affairs and in English social reform. Typical of the finest culture of the West Riding, the three sisters were internationally minded, though deeply rooted in the soil and

¹³⁸ *MT*, 44 (May 1903): 320.

¹³⁹ *YDO*, 11th March 1907.

¹⁴⁰ See Samuel Midgley, *My 70 Years' Musical Memories* (London 1934), chapter 5, for his account of the Bradford Free Chamber Concerts.

¹⁴¹ Hannam, *Isabella Ford*, 63.

sentiment of Yorkshire. All three were feminist and feminine. In the trio there was both individuality and union.¹⁴²

Information about the Bessie Ford free concerts has proved immensely difficult to find: unlike Midgley's concerts in Bradford, they were never regularly reported in the local press. We know that they were held in the Lees Hall off Vicar Lane and that responsibility for the programmes and other purely musical matters lay with the cellist Alfred Giessing.¹⁴³ It also seems that around the turn of the century the Hull-born violinist John Dunn (1866-1940), who enjoyed a considerable reputation in the provinces as a soloist, led a quartet formed expressly for the free concerts which included his pupil Edward Maude (1880-1967).¹⁴⁴ On Bessie's death in 1919 the concerts were continued by her sisters Isabella and Emily, who sold Bessie's Stradivarius violin to help finance the venture.¹⁴⁵

Chamber music in the home

By its very nature, music in the home presents particular difficulties for the researcher in that the customary written records of musical events, such as concert programmes and press notices, are absent, leaving only tantalizing glimpses scattered in diaries or memoirs. The surviving evidence does suggest that while the level of activity may have been somewhat less than the dozen weekly quartet meetings of the 1830s described by George Haddock, there was a local network of professional and amateur players who regularly gathered for the performance of chamber music.

The musical 'at-homes' held by Fred Spark at 29 Hyde Terrace were for many years a feature of the social and musical calendar of a select group of aficionados.¹⁴⁶ On occasions they could provide an informal introduction for an artist newly arrived in the town, such as the young violinist from Paris, Dolores Fleischmann, who in 1891 came to take up an appointment as violin teacher at Leeds Girls High School. On a Saturday afternoon in October 1891 she played at the Spark household, accompanied by George Tetley, in a

¹⁴² *The Times*, 7th March 1930.

¹⁴³ *YEP*, 5th March 1930; Cobbett, *Cyclopaedic Survey*, I, 212.

¹⁴⁴ Undated typescript notes written by Edward Maude, Edward Maude papers. In the possession of Mrs Barbara Errington, Leeds.

¹⁴⁵ *YEP*, 4th March 1930.

¹⁴⁶ Spark, *Memories*, 163-166.

splendidly period programme which contained among other items Beethoven's *Romance in G*, a de Bériot concerto, and Raff's often performed *Cavatina*.¹⁴⁷

Professor Julius Cohen, the organic chemist and viola player mentioned earlier as a subscriber to the Bohemian concerts, frequently arranged quartet meetings at his home on Cardigan Road. Mrs Cohen was an excellent violinist, and the couple were joined by their friends the Leeds violinist Edward Maude, who lived nearby, and Carl Fuchs, the cellist of the Brodsky Quartet, who would make the journey from Manchester for these gatherings.¹⁴⁸ Despite a busy schedule of engagements and teaching commitments, Edward Maude often played chamber music with friends on a Sunday morning, or in the evening after giving his final lesson of the day.¹⁴⁹

A bound volume of Beethoven's op.18 quartets once owned by the Headingley organist Percy Richardson, another Bohemian subscriber, provides fascinating evidence of professional quartets performing in private houses in and around Leeds. Annotations in Richardson's hand next to the titles record some of the occasions on which they were performed. Among these are two entries for op.18 no.4:¹⁵⁰

Belmont Dec. 15 1904 (Elliott, Moxon, Hatton, Giessing)

Oaklea, Adel, Feb. 11 1907 Rasch Quartet

A further entry alongside the op.18 no.5 quartet reads:

Meriden Dec. 17 1906 (Rasch Quartet)

To date it has not proved possible to track down any further information about the location or owners of these houses.

¹⁴⁷ The "At Home" invitation card for 17th October 1891 detailing the full programme is preserved in the Leeds Local History Library in F R Spark, *Newspaper Cuttings on Miscellaneous Matters*, shelfmark LQ 927.8 SP26. George Tetley was Honorary Conductor of the Leeds Musical Soirées from 1866 to 1895 and organist at St John's Church, Upper Briggate. He died on 8th September 1899 at the age of fifty-six. See Scattergood, *Musical Soirées*, 59-61; *MT*, 40 (October 1899): 691.

¹⁴⁸ Undated typescript, Edward Maude papers.

¹⁴⁹ Mr Stephen Maude, conversation with the author, 14th March 1994.

¹⁵⁰ Mr Stephen Maude, letter to the author, 12th April 1998. The score was given by Richardson's widow Beatrice to Edward Maude in October 1941 and is now in the possession of Mr Stephen Maude.

Intimate voices: the Bohemian experiment in context

Just as the prosperous German merchant community in Manchester supported the Hallé Orchestra in order to promote the best orchestral music in the town, so too it provided the means for the performance of chamber music. The Schiller-Anstalt, a cultural society originally founded by members of Manchester's German colony in 1859, gave a regular series of chamber concerts from 1886 onwards which brought many leading musicians to the city, including Joseph Joachim, Richard Strauss, Pablo Casals, and the Brussels, Bohemian and Ševčík Quartets.¹⁵¹ Such was the extent of this cultural influence that until the 1911 season, when the concerts moved from 66 Nelson Street, Oxford Road, to the Milton Hall on Deansgate, the printed concert programmes were entirely in German. The experience of Manchester showed that under the right circumstances it was even possible to derive a profit from chamber music. During their 1901-02 season the quartet of Adolph Brodsky made £113 which Brodsky, as was his custom, donated to a fund for deserving students at the Royal Manchester School of Music.¹⁵²

No cultural institution analogous to the Schiller-Anstalt existed in Leeds, but it is interesting to observe that the cause of chamber music gained significant momentum from a number of foreign musicians who settled in the town around the turn of the century, notably the violinists John Müller and Johan Rasch, the cellist Alfred Giessing, and the pianist Magda Eisele. As has been noted, the visits of the Rawdon Briggs Quartet from Manchester were for some time the only regular quartet concerts given in a town which 'for its size and musical pretensions' was 'very behindhand' in the matter of chamber music.¹⁵³ The advent of the Leeds Bohemian Chamber Concerts in 1899 provided an opportunity for those sufficiently interested and sufficiently affluent to enjoy the best of chamber music, old and new, amid relaxed and congenial surroundings. Comfortable seating, informal dress, smoking, coffee and sandwiches during the interval all contributed to the enjoyment of the evening:

From its very nature chamber music cannot appeal to huge mixed audiences. It requires the intimacy which is only possible in a room

¹⁵¹ The concert programmes of the Schiller-Anstalt are held in the Henry Watson Music Library, Manchester.

¹⁵² *MT*, 43 (June 1902): 407.

¹⁵³ *MT*, 41 (December 1900): 826.

of moderate dimensions, where one can be in touch with the performers. Such conditions obtain at the Leeds Bohemian Concerts, where the players are in the midst of their hearers, and these are not embarrassed by being penned in rows of pews, but can group themselves in little parties about the room. And as so many men seem unable to concentrate their attention without the aid of a narcotic, the fact that smoking is allowed is no doubt a great assistance to the appreciation of the music - or else mitigates the tedium experienced by those who want to like it and can't.¹⁵⁴

The concerts further broke with tradition by moving away from the format of the "miscellaneous" concert where the inevitable vocalist would be present to lighten the proceedings. It should be remembered that even celebrated musicians such as Ysaÿe and Busoni were still obliged to pad their Leeds recital in 1901 with vocal items from Florence Schmidt, and the estimable Percy Pitt accompanying her 'like a thorough artist'.¹⁵⁵ Yet as an experiment the Bohemian Concerts were perhaps not bold enough. While the programmes which brought the recent works of Reger, Debussy and Ravel to Leeds for the first time could be regarded as adventurous, at times even audacious, the commonplace of chamber music as the realm of the specialist and the connoisseur remained fundamentally unchallenged. It was not until the outbreak of the First World War and the resultant climate of social change that the constituency of the chamber music audience began to broaden sufficiently to include those who in earlier seasons might have felt intimidated by its "exclusive" tone. During the first winter of the war H Sydney Pickering was an impecunious eighteen-year-old from the Kirkstall area of Leeds employed as a junior clerk in the council's Education Department. In his memoirs Pickering has left this evocative account of a wartime chamber music gathering which he attended with another young man from the office, Douglas Richardson:

At this time I went to my first chamber concert. It was in a room at the Metropole Hotel...and Douglas told me that the viola player was an amateur called Fulford who lived at Headingley Castle and made his money out of Zam Buk and Bile Beans. It seemed odd to me that a man who made his money out of quack medicines should also play Mozart. It was the winter 1914-15 and we sat immediately behind Lady Sadler, the wife of the University Vice-Chancellor, who knitted throughout the concert. That seemed quite

¹⁵⁴ YP, 16th January 1914.

¹⁵⁵ YP, 20th May 1901.

wrong but we noticed that her wool was very thick. She was probably knitting a scarf or balaclava helmet to be sent to the front in France and we excused her on patriotic grounds.¹⁵⁶

Thus for all their artistic success and quality, the Bohemian Concerts before 1914 never seriously attempted to bring chamber music before a wider musical public, and any assessment of their impact on Leeds musical life must be tempered by that fact. In contrast, Samuel Midgley's Bradford Free Chamber Concerts might be regarded as the more successful institution. Initially planned as a three year experiment, they ran from January 1911 for fourteen seasons. They were given in the Mechanics' Institute, hired for a nominal fee and seating over 1,000 people. In the early years the auditorium was regularly filled to capacity, and while these numbers were not maintained, support for the concerts remained strong. Midgley never 'played down' to his audience, insisting on music of the highest quality. His support of the cause of British music through the inclusion of works by composers such as Bridge, Ireland and Hurlstone is worthy of mention.¹⁵⁷

Despite its failure to match the Bradford series in the social mix of its audience, the experiment of Arthur Grimshaw and the other founding fathers proved that a programme consisted solely of chamber music of the highest quality could stand on its own merits. The modest scale of the series and its customary use of local musicians meant that costs and financial risk could be reduced to a minimum. As a result the Bohemian concerts were probably the only musical institution in Edwardian Leeds not to be constantly beset by problems of finance. Not needing to attract the public in large numbers the series could afford to eschew "safe" programming and take far more risks musically.

The success of the series was emulated briefly by the concerts of the Johan Rasch Quartet, which also secured a loyal following and used a regular Bohemian venue, the Hotel Metropole, during the seven years of its existence. Thus for a time, while orchestral and, to a lesser extent, choral music, were in the doldrums in Leeds, the city was blessed with enterprising institutions dedicated exclusively to the performance of the finest chamber music. Elitist they may perhaps have been, but they did nevertheless allow the intimate voices of the past and the present to be heard.

¹⁵⁶ H Sydney Pickering, *A Leeds Loiner* (Leeds 1985), 76. Knitting during wartime concerts was not confined to women. Herbert Thompson records in his diary that Professor Leonard Rogers took his knitting to a Bohemian concert in 1915. (Thompson, *Diary*, 27th January 1915).

¹⁵⁷ See Midgley, *Musical Memories*, 33-38.

Chapter 6: 'Dead Leaves and Faded Gold'

...it is safe to assert that musical activity tends to increase (or decline) in sympathy with the presence (or absence) of public institutions, and that a firm belief in the value of institutions carries with it a disposition to make way for musical developments.

E D Mackerness¹

...it always seems to me that the musical character of a town might fairly be determined by the opportunity it affords of hearing the best symphonies adequately performed.

Herbert Thompson²

In the closing months of the First World War the author and journalist J S Fletcher (1863-1935) was completing a book on Leeds in which he presented a sanguine assessment of the state of musical life in the city. 'There is music everywhere in Leeds,' he wrote, 'from the superior and high-class subscription concerts to the music of the bands in the parks.'³ Fletcher cited the noble tradition of music at the Parish Church, the world-famous Triennial Festival, and the work of the College of Music as evidence of a healthy state of affairs. Notwithstanding the cancellation of the 1916 Festival, the musical institutions of Leeds had survived the years of war largely intact. While the number of concerts given had unavoidably been reduced in wartime, the city's two great choral societies continued in existence, and the Hotel Metropole was still home to the Leeds Bohemian Chamber Concerts. Yet is Fletcher's depiction of a thriving musical city an accurate one? There is evidence that even before the coming of Armageddon in August 1914 some Leeds musical institutions were already experiencing a *crise de foi*, born of falling subscriptions and attendances. In this final chapter it is time to consider the achievements of the years 1900-1914 and to assess the musicality of the city at the end of what one later historian termed "the age of upheaval".⁴

The noble tradition

We have seen how in the mid-nineteenth century Dr Walter Farquhar Hook, the Vicar of Leeds, promoted music along cathedral lines as part of his efforts to revive the reputation

¹ 'The Study of Local Music History', *Journal of the British Music Society*, 3 (1981): 25.

² *YP*, 7th October 1904.

³ J S Fletcher, *Leeds* (London 1919), 115-116.

⁴ David Brooks, *The Age of Upheaval. Edwardian Politics 1899-1914* (Manchester 1995).

of the Anglican church in what was essentially a Dissenters' town. Although totally unmusical himself, Hook found the means to achieve his aims 'by a delightful instinct' which enlisted the genius of Samuel Sebastian Wesley in the cause of Leeds music.⁵ During his period as organist, Wesley wrote some of his finest works and established the basis of a musical tradition at Leeds Parish Church which was to survive more or less intact into the twentieth century.

Of Wesley's successors, only Edward Bairstow proved to be a composer of similar national standing. Shortly after his arrival in 1906, Bairstow, then thirty-two years old, composed for his new choir the unaccompanied anthem *Let all mortal flesh keep silence*, surely one of the finest works ever to emanate from the town. It was not published until 1925, its spare simplicity not perhaps in keeping with the generally more lush textures of much Edwardian church music. That same year Bairstow composed his *Evening Service In D*, characterized by Francis Jackson as 'ebullient and Wagnerian'.⁶ The story is told that at an early performance the priest was so overcome by the excitement of the *gloria* of the *Nunc Dimittis* that for a time he was unable to begin the creed.⁷

The choir which Bairstow inherited from his predecessor Alfred Benton was efficient but accustomed to a degree of indulgence not readily granted by the new man. The principal tenor and bass, Henry Brearley and John Browning, were first-class vocalists much in demand throughout the country and thus frequently away on engagements.⁸ Brearley and Bairstow worked amicably together, but relations with the other principal proved difficult and Browning eventually resigned in 1912.⁹ During his period at Leeds, Bairstow continued the tradition of oratorio performance which dated back to the time of R S Burton. Annual performances at the Parish Church of Bach's *St Matthew Passion* and Brahms's *German Requiem* invariably met with critical approval, not merely for their deep musicianship, but also for their devotional aspect. Bairstow was not a great reformer - his own tastes in

⁵ E Kitson Clark, *A History and Description of Saint Peter's Church at Leeds* (Leeds n.d.), 15.

⁶ Jackson, *Blessed City*, 266.

⁷ Ibid.

⁸ Browning, who regularly advertised in the *Musical Times* claiming 'an extensive repertoire of over 100 works' and listing an impressive array of engagements, had sung the part of the Arch Druid in the first performance of Elgar's *Caractacus* at the 1898 Leeds Festival. Brearley was often engaged as a soloist with the Leeds Choral Union.

⁹ Jackson, *Blessed City*, 89-90.

church music were essentially conservative - but the qualities of commitment and musical intelligence which he brought to Leeds had a lasting effect. The Vicar of Leeds, Dr Bickersteth, wrote on Bairstow's departure in 1913 to take up the post of organist at York Minster: 'Dr Bairstow has left an indelible mark of his great abilities on our Church Music. His fine taste has raised its standard, and our idea of what we can best offer to God for his House of Prayer'.¹⁰

The Triennial Festival

Long regarded as the jewel in the Leeds musical crown, the Triennial Festival developed from 1874 onwards to become a national institution, steadily growing in prestige and reputation until it stood on equal terms with, or indeed surpassed, long-established festivals such as the Three Choirs or Birmingham. It will be recalled that one of the prime original aims behind the Festival was the raising of funds for the local medical charities. This it did with conspicuous success, with consistent donations of £2,000 after every festival until 1901. However, the figures for 1901-1913 detailed in Appendix 2 show the sharp decline in profits which took place during that period. By this time, not only had the objective not been achieved, but the whole premiss of linking music and charity had been seriously brought into question. By 1910 W J Galloway was writing in his book *Musical England*:

From a purely musical standpoint the provincial festivals are open to a grave objection in the fact that most of them exist for charitable purposes. A charitable object means that a purely musical meeting exists for other than purely musical ends, and consequently tends to take on something of the character of a social function. It means possibly that unwise economies are practised to the detriment of the performances, and it results certainly in a scale of prohibitive prices which seriously restricts the local value of the functions by excluding the poorer classes.¹¹

Here Galloway touches also on the key issue of social exclusion, clearly not unique to Leeds, but nevertheless an important factor in assessing the value of the Festival. The Leeds Festival was indisputably a social occasion of some moment: the cream of county society attended and their presence was reported in detail. The question of ladies' hats occupied almost as much attention as the music in the weeks before the 1904 Festival.

¹⁰ Webster, *Parish*, 80.

¹¹ Galloway, *Musical England*, 110-111.

Large hats anything up to a yard in diameter were at that time the height of fashion, and pleas were made through the press for ladies not to wear hats likely to obstruct the view of those sitting behind:

Small, flat toques are strongly recommended for ladies not too advanced in years. If a feather is really necessary, and alas! it seems to be thought absolutely essential to vary the skyline by something of this sort, it should be kept low, and not allowed to spread itself about and beyond...Matronly ladies will be quite in the fashion if they wear bonnets without strings. In the interests of other visitors, however, they should show a little economy in the matter of chiffon, osprey, and mock chrysanthemums.¹²

The fashions of the performers were of no less interest. The *Musical Times* somewhat wryly illustrated this with a piece of florid prose culled from an unspecified local newspaper which described Madame Albani 'clad in the palest of silky green accordion-pleated fabric with white ruffle, gold and diamond ornaments, and a toque crowned with violet plumes'.¹³

The 1910 Festival was notable for three entirely unrelated social phenomena: the appearance of the hobble skirt, the attendance at the Festival in unprecedented numbers of members of the clergy, and the almost total replacement of horse-drawn vehicles by the motor car as the means of bringing the well-to-do to the Town Hall:

This morning was breezy and cold, and the lady visitors to the Festival arrived enshrouded in wraps - somewhat to the disappointment of the spectators, who expected to obtain another good view of the hobble skirts.

Once again there were over a hundred motor-cars, and with the single exception of the St Leger week at Doncaster, no such magnificent show of motor-cars has ever been seen in this part of the country. Some of these gorgeously upholstered machine-driven chariots have cost £1,500 a piece. Indeed, the average is not much below £1,000, so that at each of the morning performances this week there must have been a parade of well-nigh £100,000 worth of motor-cars . . .

"I have had duties at the Festival for the last 26 years," remarked a popular official today, "and I never remember seeing so many clergymen as on this occasion." The number of tight-stockinged archdeacons, sombre-coated priests and clergymen, and ministers of all denominations this morning was certainly most noticeable. It speaks well for their artistic taste that

¹² *YEP*, 23rd September 1904.

¹³ *MT*, 42 (November 1901): 736.

they should treat themselves - many of them at great sacrifice - to such a soul-inspiring luxury.¹⁴

The newspaper accounts of the comings and goings at the Town Hall reinforce the sense that the events taking place had very little to do with the people of Leeds. Separated by wealth and class, the spectators assembled outside in Victoria Square and Calverley Street, the majority of whom apparently were men, regarded the visitors with curiosity, as if they had been triennial visitors from Mars. On occasion their reaction might change to 'scarcely veiled ridicule', as the ladies attempted to mount the Town Hall steps in their hobble skirts.¹⁵ Reading such accounts, the gulf between them is almost palpable: 'Her husband 'll need to earn more'n a quid a week,' an observer is reported to have remarked of a fur-clad lady descending from her motor-brougham.¹⁶ It is scarcely surprising that in a 1913 pamphlet Rutland Boughton should characterize musical festivals as 'gatherings of such wealthy folk as are too kind, or too lazy, to pot grouse'.¹⁷

Though visitors came from many parts of the country, the Festival was above all a county affair: Stanford realized this, and always pressed for county-wide representation within the chorus to reflect the fact and to ensure that interest and thus attendances from around Yorkshire would be maintained. Traditionally, the Lord Mayor would entertain a large gathering of distinguished guests to lunch in his rooms, which adjoined the concert hall. The guest list for 1913 illustrates the broader constituency of the Festival audience, including as it did the Archbishop of York, Lady Harewood, Lady Margaret Boyne, the Countess of Rosse, Viscount Helmsley, Mr G R Lane Fox MP, the Hon. Spencer Lyttelton, and Colonel T W Harding.¹⁸

Reputations

To match the magnificence of the venue and of the assembled audience, successive Festival Committees endeavoured to meet another of the original aims: the bringing together of the best singers and instrumentalists for performances of the highest order. The Festival

¹⁴ *YEP*, 14th October 1910.

¹⁵ *YO*, 13th October 1910.

¹⁶ *YEN*, 15th October 1910.

¹⁷ Quoted in Mackerness, *Social History*, 211.

¹⁸ *LM*, 2nd October 1913.

was after all regarded as the cultural showcase of the city, an expression of the same civic pride which built the Town Hall, and in a sense as important in promoting the reputation of Leeds as the quality and diversity of the products leaving its many factories. Competition from other cities was keenly felt and compelled the festival authorities to maintain and improve standards. An examination of the surviving minutes of the Management Committee confirms a sensitivity to what was happening elsewhere and with it an acceptance, occasionally reluctant, that the demands of the market would have to be met.

The difference in the fees commanded by English and foreign performers casts an interesting sidelight on contemporary perceptions of their respective merits. A fee of 100 guineas was agreed with Rachmaninov for 1910.¹⁹ Elgar had received the same sum for conducting *The Kingdom* at the previous festival, but was not engaged in 1910 as this sum was considered on this occasion to be 'far too much'.²⁰ By 1913 the cult of the star conductor was becoming established and the committee was obliged not only to pay 400 guineas for Nikisch's services, but also to bring the entire festival forward by one week to accommodate his other commitments.²¹ Even allowing for his considerable international reputation, this contrasts sharply with the twenty guineas per concert plus travelling expenses offered to his co-conductor Hugh Allen.²²

The reputation of the Festival Chorus was jealously guarded. The selection by Elgar of the Sheffield chorus to perform his *Coronation Ode* at Edward VII's coronation, for example, was the cause of much mutual recrimination which spilled over into open conflict in the columns of the *Musical Standard* during May 1902. It was reported that at the Annual General Meeting of the Leeds Philharmonic Society, the Honorary Secretary John Green had suggested that a 'flatness and lack of enthusiasm about the chorus at the last musical festival' had influenced Elgar's choice of Sheffield over Leeds.²³ Without actually

¹⁹ Management Committee minutes, 19th July 1909.

²⁰ Ibid. It was later reported that Thomas Marshall, the long-serving chairman of the Executive Committee, refused to acknowledge the necessity for paying anyone such a substantial sum for "waving a stick about." (*YEP*, 7th February 1910).

²¹ Management Committee minutes, 7th March 1912 and 2nd April 1912.

²² Management Committee minutes, 23rd April 1912.

²³ In fact Elgar already had a high opinion of the Sheffield chorus well before the 1901 Festival. Two years earlier, in a letter to F G Edwards, the editor of the *Musical Times*, he wrote '...I went over to Sheffield to conduct a festl. rehearsal - do you know that the chorus is absolutely the finest in the world! Not so large

naming names, he went on to imply that the blame lay with the contingent from the Leeds Choral Union and more especially with their conductor, Alfred Benton, who was the 1901 Festival chorus master.²⁴ In a letter to the *Musical Standard*, Fred Spark mounted a characteristically spirited defence of Benton and the LCU, citing Hubert Parry's good opinion of both, and accusing Green of 'bitter musical partisanship'.²⁵ Further unpleasantness was to follow in the form of a reply from Green in which he publicly compared Benton unfavourably with both Henry Coward and Herbert Fricker, and reaffirmed his view that 'the last L.M.F chorus was not too largely endowed with either intelligence or enthusiasm'.²⁶ George W Atkinson, a fellow Honorary Secretary of the Leeds Philharmonic Society with Green and also a long-standing member of the Festival Committee, struck a more conciliatory note in a subsequent private letter to Spark. Conceding that 'our friend J H Green does not always say and do the wisest things', he concluded:

This foolish spirit of rivalry between the two Societies is to my mind neither dignified nor necessary, nor should it be in any way considered by members of the Festival Committee. We must do our work irrespective of such petty considerations as these, aiming for the best in everything as far as we can get it, *fearlessly, and without favour*.²⁷

Whatever the respective merits of the two leading choral societies, it is the case that during the Edwardian period either organization could mount a performance not significantly inferior to that of the Festival Chorus itself: a fact of which the Committee was only too aware. As Herbert Thompson pointed out, the hall, conductor, *chorus master* and many members of the chorus might well be identical to those at the Festival during a normal season. Only the price of admission would be noticeably different:

...apart from its social and philanthropic aspects, the Festival, it must be remembered, presents but little that the Leeds public

as Leeds but for fire, intelligence, dramatic force they are electrical'. Elgar to F G Edwards, 20th July 1899. Quoted in Moore, *Elgar and his Publishers*, I:131.

²⁴ *Musical Standard*, 3rd May 1902.

²⁵ *Musical Standard*, 10th May 1902.

²⁶ *Musical Standard*, 24th May 1902.

²⁷ G W Atkinson to F R Spark, 26th May 1902, Leeds Philharmonic Society headed notepaper. Spark, *Collection of brochures*, Leeds Local History Library.

cannot obtain at a quarter the cost during the ordinary concert season.²⁸

Thus, the argument for the Festival as a focus for excellence would become increasingly difficult to sustain. Thompson, however, continued to support the notion of the festival as a national benchmark of performance and to argue that at least in the case of modern choral works, which required a chorus, soloists and orchestra all of the first rank, their ideal realization was 'only attainable under Festival conditions':

The ordinary work of many Choral Societies, especially in the north, is habitually on the level with, or perhaps superior to, the Festival choral standard, but it does not provide for such all-round excellence as that which made the performance of Verdi's "Requiem" at Leeds memorable. Festivals serve a national purpose in bringing responsible experts from the chief centre in the country to focus their attention upon what is new, and to reconsider what is old. New standards, summarized at these meetings, are helped to spread their influence over the country.²⁹

A forum for new British music

For all its shortcomings, the provincial festival did give much-needed patronage to British composers, though in doing so it tended all too often to channel native talent into the stultifying confines of oratorio and cantata, motivated in part by moral imperative, in part by perceived market forces. Such commissions spawned a tradition of workmanlike but essentially uninspired compositions, in which musical creativity usually lost the unequal battle against libretti of astonishing banality. Even at the time it was recognized that such creations would inevitably, and justifiably, be of an ephemeral nature. As early as 1876, in their *Dictionary of Musical Terms*, John Stainer and W A Barrett believed that of recent oratorios there were 'few worthy to be particularized, as they are for [the] most part feeble filterings of an almost exhausted stream'.³⁰ The most celebrated manifestation of the stream in the nineteenth century, Mendelssohn's *Elijah*, had caught the imagination of mid-century England in a quite extraordinary manner, and had continued to resonate in the English

²⁸ *YP*, 14th October 1907.

²⁹ *MT*, 54 (November 1913): 735-736.

³⁰ J Stainer & W A Barrett, *A Dictionary of Musical Terms* (London 1876), 326. Stainer's views should be treated with some caution. He had yet to produce his own piece of Victorian sentimentalism, the highly successful *The Crucifixion* (1887), a work remembered today only for some splendid hymn tunes.

musical consciousness for far longer than anyone sitting in Birmingham Town Hall in 1846 could ever have imagined. It became an institution, a talisman and a benchmark: every festival of the High Victorian period had wanted to find another one. Yet by the turn of the century the public enthusiasm for such music was steadily diminishing, and in 1901 Ernest Newman was writing in the *Contemporary Review* that:

The passion for oratorio is dying - whether of repletion or of lack of nourishment, whether of too great a satisfaction of the appetite by the few good oratorios, or the too little satisfaction afforded by the many bad ones, is comparatively unimportant.³¹

In a characteristically provocative address to the Leeds Arts Club in 1905, given before a large gathering in the Philosophical Hall on Park Row, George Bernard Shaw went so far as to use the word "trash" in relation to *Elijah*.³² Soon afterwards, the rather more mild-mannered Herbert Thompson confessed to his *Yorkshire Post* readers:

I must say I envy Mr Shaw his boldness. Were I of the stuff of which heroes are made, there are many things I could say of Mendelssohn and other popular idols which I dare not utter, save in guarded phraseology, and with bated breath. What I dare say Mr Shaw means, in his heart of hearts, is that Mendelssohn was a genuine artist, possessed of the nicest taste and a highly perfected power of expression, and that he lacked one thing only, and that is any vital idea that demanded expression... I almost smell the lighted faggots as I write such hideous heresies as these...³³

Perhaps only Elgar's *Dream of Gerontius* which, in the words of the celebrated music critic of the *Manchester Guardian*, Samuel Langford (1863-1927), 'changed the face of music' in England, had the capacity to reverse the waning popularity of oratorio.³⁴ But while the pre-war Leeds Festivals had no *Gerontius*, they could at least lay claim to a handful of works which seem likely to stand the test of time: Elgar's *Falstaff* and Vaughan Williams's *Sea Symphony* spring instantly to mind, followed perhaps by George Butterworth's *A Shropshire Lad*. Finely crafted and worthy though they doubtless are,

³¹ Newman, *Testament of Music*, 44.

³² In this same address GBS also advocated burning Leeds down and replacing it with a better one. See Steele, *Alfred Orage*, 95-96. Later that year, the young writer Gerald Cumberland, in a letter to the *Manchester Guardian*, opined that despite its many virtues, *Elijah* was full of 'shallow philosophy and mawkish sentiment' containing within it the 'authentic spirit of Philistinism'. See Peter Gay, *Pleasure Wars* (London 1998), 81.

³³ *YP*, 3rd March 1905.

³⁴ Samuel Langford, *Musical Criticisms* (London 1929), 16.

Stanford's *Songs of the Sea* and *Songs of the Fleet*, from 1907 and 1910 respectively, may be too much of their time to be kindly regarded by posterity, and now retain a largely antiquarian interest. Hopefully Stanford's *Stabat Mater*, which in the opinion of Edward Bairstow contained 'some of the most beautiful and deeply moving music he ever wrote', may finally be due for reevaluation.³⁵ Other works, such as Walford Davies's *Everyman* and Hamilton Harty's *The Mystic Trumpeter*, enjoyed considerable critical acclaim and appeared in programmes for some years before finally falling into disfavour. At the time of writing, a revival of Charles Wood's *A Dirge for Two Veterans* or Coleridge-Taylor's *The Blind Girl of Castel-Cuillé*, both from 1901, seems unlikely.

In common with other festivals, Leeds also looked abroad in search of novelties. It is probably not widely known that in 1902 approaches were made to Richard Strauss for a new work for the 1904 Festival.³⁶ These negotiations were apparently somewhat tentative, the Committee being unwilling to risk the humiliation of a public rejection of their offer by the composer, who was regarded in some quarters with grave suspicion. Herbert Thompson took the opportunity to poke some gentle fun at the Committee:

And no doubt it was as well to act with caution towards a young composer who is suspected of being not over orthodox. It would be a terrible thing if he were to make the Leeds Festival a cloak for some artistic impropriety, and we should recommend the Committee, who, being Yorkshiremen, are not likely to be hindered by lack of confidence in their judgment, to examine carefully any score emanating from so suspicious a source with a view to the detection of anything subversive or anarchical.³⁷

This tantalizing prospect, which might have seen the *Sinfonia Domestica* given its première in Leeds, regrettably came to nothing. In fact, no works from foreign composers were commissioned during the Edwardian period. The reasons for this are several: the cost, the memory of humiliating rejection by leading European composers, an increasing

³⁵ Jackson, *Blessed City*, 78. Stanford's *Stabat Mater* was recorded for the first time, appropriately enough in Leeds Town Hall, by Richard Hickox with the BBC Philharmonic Orchestra and Leeds Philharmonic Chorus in November 1995. The recording was issued by Chandos as CHAN 9548.

³⁶ Within the context of the Edwardian music scene such a commission would indeed have been regarded as audacious. In 1907, after the first performance of *Ein Heldenleben* in Manchester by Richter, Herbert Thompson wrote 'Strauss is the enfant terrible of contemporary music. His bizarre conceptions and his outbreaks of rank and realism distress many people, and not a few earnest persons fear that music is rapidly "going to the dogs."' (*YP*, 8th February 1907).

³⁷ *YP*, 28th November 1902.

nationalistic inclination to support British musicians, and the indifferent quality of commissions in the recent past. The committee may well have been mindful of reviews such as that of Jules Massenet's symphonic poem *Visions*, given at the 1895 Festival, in which *The Musical Times* complained that 'foreign composers really should not send our Festivals the sweepings of their studios'.³⁸

The 1913 Festival

In common with other triennial events at this period, the 1913 Leeds Festival resulted in a financial loss.³⁹ The management committee, it would seem, attempted a degree of damage limitation in the presentation of the financial results. A loss of £278 was announced, the scale of which might appear acceptable enough in the light of earlier losses and of those at rival festivals. They were, however, quickly pounced upon by the more sharp-eyed of Leeds music-lovers, who pointed out in letters to the local press that the figure had failed to take into account £300 still owed towards the cost of new seating in the Town Hall and had rather dubiously included in the receipts £382 in interest from the Reserve Fund. The actual loss was therefore £960.⁴⁰

Questions were asked of a festival which, it could be argued, had failed to meet two of its primary objectives - to further the cause of music in Leeds and to aid the medical charities - and had lost nearly £1,000 in doing so. "Aequo Animo", writing to the editor of the *Yorkshire Post*, put it thus:

Will any one say that the holding of the 1913 Festival added lustre to Leeds or the cause of music by the works included, chorally, orchestrally, by its three conductors, or its general management? Is there any one feature outstanding that will leave a mark on music or in musical history? Was anything accomplished that a first-class regular series of concerts well supported by the public could not attain to in London, Manchester, Bradford, or Leeds, at about half the prices charged? The answer must be - No.⁴¹

³⁸ *MT*, 36 (November 1895): 743.

³⁹ In 1911 Sheffield had incurred a deficit of £1,287/19/1 (*T*, 52 (October 1911): 673). Birmingham fared even worse the following year with losses of £2,222/12/9 (*The Times*, 21st December 1912).

⁴⁰ These anomalies were pointed out in letters to the editor of the *Yorkshire Post* from "Banker" and "Amateur", published on 5th February 1914.

⁴¹ *YP*, 13th February 1914.

The music critic of *The Times* appeared to be of like mind: he warned against 'the tendency to look backward', concluding that 1913 had been 'a Festival of 19th century music - that is to say, of works which are thoroughly assimilated'.⁴² The forthright comments of "Aequo Animo" echo those of that outspoken critic of the festival culture, Ernest Newman, who wrote shortly after the 1913 Festival:

Surely, as I have urged before, all the money spent on these affairs could be much more wisely applied to the development of the permanent musical life of the town, if only people would sit down and think the problem out quietly, instead of sheepishly following tradition every three years.⁴³

The musical boa-constrictor

It is said that Sir Arthur Sullivan once described the music festival as 'a kind of musical boa-constrictor which so overfed itself during a given week that it required the whole of the intervening three years to go through the operation of digesting the feast'.⁴⁴ During the Edwardian period, many references may be found to the depressing effect of the festival on local musical activity. Herbert Thompson described Leeds in 1901 as 'making some recovery from the torpor succeeding a festival'.⁴⁵ Edward Bairstow, organist at the 1907 and 1910 Festivals, was critical of 'these gargantuan feasts of music', complaining of 'musical indigestion'.⁴⁶ As an experienced musician close to these events, we must take seriously his conviction that the regime of intensive rehearsals undertaken by the Festival chorus left the singers tired and stale for the remainder of the musical season.⁴⁷

By 1910, faced with mounting financial losses, the musical enterprises in Leeds were already playing increasingly safe in their choice of programme. This policy of prudence was believed by some to be at least partially a consequence of 1910 also being a Festival year,

⁴² *The Times*, 6th October 1913.

⁴³ *Birmingham Post*, 6th October 1913.

⁴⁴ Klein, *Thirty Years*, 230.

⁴⁵ *MT*, 42 (December 1901): 824.

⁴⁶ Jackson, *Blessed City*, 80; 67.

⁴⁷ Typically, a member of the chorus would be required to attend rehearsals once or twice a week for the whole year before the Festival.

demonstrating how the Festival might actually stifle local music instead of stimulating it.⁴⁸ In an address to the Incorporated Society of Musicians earlier that same year, J A Rodgers stated his belief that between festivals the committee should be 'applying the teaching of the festival, labouring to establish permanent orchestras, founding, if possible, schemes of municipal opera, and persuading philistine city councils that music is as worthy and deserving recipient of municipal aid as are the sister arts of painting and sculpture'.⁴⁹ There is little evidence to suggest, at least in Leeds, that the Festival Committee as a body undertook this type of evangelizing activity. Comparing the state of music in Leeds in 1914 with that pertaining in Bradford or Manchester, John Green referred to the 'eclipse and partial starvation' suffered triennially by the annual subscription series.⁵⁰

There was a body of opinion which suggested that in reality the Festival had little to do with meeting the musical needs of Leeds at all, but was rather staged for the benefit of the wealthy and fashionable coming from beyond the immediate environs of the city:

That the regular concerts have reached such a high state of efficiency is no doubt due to the high standard set by the Festival, and one might look forward to the time when there shall be no need for a Festival, just as is the case in Manchester to-day, were it not for the outside public, who are naturally more attracted by a series of concerts crammed into a brief period, than by an occasional event.⁵¹

Perhaps ultimately the Triennial Festival became, in the words of William Galloway, 'an unnecessary luxury'.⁵² At the very least, the Festival's value to the promotion of a vigorous musical life within Leeds, as opposed to the city's external reputation, must remain open to serious question. Of far greater importance to the establishment of any sort of lasting musical culture in the city was the regular practice of choralism, the true powerhouse

⁴⁸ *YP*, 21st September 1910. This was not a new phenomenon. Even as early as 1881, the potentially debilitating effects of the Festival were criticized in the strongest terms by the *Yorkshire Post* which argued that 'if these great triennial gatherings are to be the means of doing away with all other concerts during the year in which they are held, as well as in those intervening, the sooner they are discontinued the better, since they are for the favoured few, and not for the unprivileged multitude'. (*YP*, 17th November 1881).

⁴⁹ *MT*, 52 (March 1911): 184.

⁵⁰ *YP*, 7th April 1914.

⁵¹ *YP*, 14th October 1907.

⁵² Galloway, *Musical England*, 110.

of Leeds music, manifested not only in the two great choral societies, but also in the many smaller, less celebrated institutions.

The choral societies

One man's vision was responsible for the creation of the Leeds Choral Union. No trouble and no expense was spared in the pursuit of a dream - the perfect realization of choral music, and of sacred choral music in particular. After the departure in disgrace of Alfred Benton in 1905, Henry Embleton secured the services of the leading choral trainer of the day, Henry Coward, to direct the Leeds Choral Union. With his Sheffield chorus and with others, Coward had demonstrated that, given a conductor of sufficiently strong personality and a regimen of iron discipline, a large body of choralists could produce astonishing effects, the like of which had probably never been heard before. It must surely have been the efforts of Coward and his disciples which led Frederick Corder to rhapsodize in the *Musical Times* in 1905 about 'that crowning glory of the North, the well-selected mixed choir':

O young composers, young composers that I love so dearly! Waste not your lives in ineffectual rivalry of the great deeds of Wagner and Strauss. Go North, and learn what a marvellous field there is for you to work in if you only will. Here is England's strength and beauty; why is not the fact better recognized?⁵³

Whatever the capacity of the northern choir to 'touch the heart and compel the unwilling tear', virtuosity merely for its own sake did not find critical favour, as this review of Coward's performance of *Messiah* with the Huddersfield Choral Society in December 1901 attests:

He obtained crescendos, sforzandos, pianissimos, as well as the customary Yorkshire fortissimos, that were admirably realised, and were often quite sensational. As an exhibition of choral possibilities it was remarkable, but as an interpretation of Handel's music, it was open to criticism. One felt at times that Dr Coward was in danger of being, to parody a famous phrase, 'intoxicated by the exuberance of his own virtuosity,' and that his 'points' were introduced not so much for the purpose of expression, as for effect.⁵⁴

⁵³ *MT*, 46 (June 1905): 378.

⁵⁴ *MT*, 43 (February 1902): 122.

Such criticism aside, Embleton's choice cannot be faulted. He had obtained for the LCU the best choral conductor available, and it was, after all, his money. Embleton was the lynchpin of the LCU. He was its banker, keeping the institution afloat with seemingly limitless funding, and it is scarcely surprising that when he died his beloved creation did not long survive him. It was a magnificent undertaking which produced many memorable occasions and did much to further the career of his good friend, Edward Elgar. Whether it worked entirely for the good of Leeds music overall is more difficult to judge. Reference has already been made to the intense rivalry between the two leading choral societies of the city. There is no doubt that, though it was probably not Embleton's intention, the establishment of the LCU in 1896 did lead to the fragmentation of Leeds choralism. While there might have been enough vocalists in Leeds for two societies, it seems less certain that there existed audiences in corresponding numbers. One is tempted to speculate what a single unified Leeds choral society, backed by Embleton and others, might have achieved.

As the new century opened, the prospects for the other major Leeds society, the Leeds Philharmonic, could scarcely have seemed more auspicious. A deficit of £200 in 1895 had been turned into a surplus of almost £220 in 1900, despite the additional expense of engaging the Hallé Orchestra *en bloc* rather than on an individual basis.⁵⁵ The amalgamation with the Leeds Subscription Concerts in 1896 had proved a success in both artistic and financial terms; Stanford was by now well established as the Society's conductor, while in May 1900 the highly gifted Herbert Fricker, less flamboyant than Coward but an accomplished trainer nonetheless, had taken over as chorus master.

The LPS did not possess a benefactor on the prodigious scale of Henry Embleton, but it did benefit from the generosity of a number of patrons. Notable among these was the Society's President since 1888, Charles F Tetley (1848-1934), a member of the well-known Leeds brewing family and a liberal benefactor of art and music.⁵⁶ When in 1904 the LPS was to give a performance of Bach's B minor Mass, Tetley paid for the entire chorus to be taken over to Manchester for a full rehearsal with the Hallé Orchestra.⁵⁷ He was also prominent among the supporters of the Leeds Chorus visit to Paris in January 1906, his

⁵⁵ *Musical Standard*, 19th May 1900.

⁵⁶ The Tetley family were also faithful and generous supporters of the University of Leeds. See E J Brown, *The Private Donor in the History of the University* (Leeds 1953), 29.

⁵⁷ *MT*, 45 (May 1904): 325.

contribution of £100 being matched only by those of Sir James Kitson and one A Vicetti Esq.⁵⁸

The Leeds Philharmonic "Special Appeal" of 1914

In Chapter 3 we saw how the financial fortunes of the LPS began to decline during the Edwardian period, and how in common with other societies, each season's losses were to some extent offset by the annual sell-out *Messiah*. (It is recorded that at the Annual General Meeting of the Huddersfield Choral Society in 1909 someone had the temerity to suggest that *Messiah* should be "rested" for a year. The proposal was immediately dismissed on the grounds that to do so would be financially disastrous.)⁵⁹ In the summer of 1914, faced by a drastic decrease in the number of First Seat Subscribers to their concerts, the officers of the Leeds Philharmonic Society decided to canvass for support for a further season, launching a "special appeal" not only to past and present supporters but also to 'such of the public generally who may be presumed to have sufficient means to allow them to assist in continuing in the City the high class Choral and Orchestral Concerts which this Society has hitherto maintained'.⁶⁰ The two- page document revealed the stark economics of the LPS's plight: in 1900 the First Seat subscription totalled £1,367, representing 790 First Seats at each concert; by 1913 this figure had been reduced to just £403, or 330 seats per concert. The two orchestral concerts given the previous season by Landon Ronald with the New Symphony Orchestra and Michael Balling with the Hallé had resulted in a loss of over £200. The simple choice was put before the public in the plainest terms:

It must now be apparent to all, that unless the wealthier people of Leeds desire to hear first class orchestras from London or Manchester, and are willing to pay for them, the attempt to provide such music must be abandoned. It is well known that Leeds has no suitable hall in which audiences paying only popular prices can be accommodated in sufficient numbers to meet the cost of such orchestras, and it must be left to such of the people of Leeds who

⁵⁸ Printed notice 'The Visit of the Leeds Chorus to Paris', dated 14th December 1905. Copy in Leeds Local History Library (shelfmark LQ 780.6 L517). "A Vicetti" is in all probability Alberto Visetti (1846-1928), a prominent professor of singing of the day whose pupils included the soprano Agnes Nicholls. Visetti was the stepfather of the writer Radclyffe Hall. For a less than flattering biographical portrait of Visetti see Diane Souhani, *The Trials of Radclyffe Hall* (London 1998), 15-20.

⁵⁹ Edwards, *And the Glory*, 86.

⁶⁰ Special Appeal, 1914. Leeds Philharmonic Society. Copy in Leeds Local History Library.

can afford to subscribe and pay first seat prices to say whether such visits are to be continued or not.⁶¹

Two proposals were put forward: a series of four concerts, including two orchestral concerts, cost £1/5/0 for a serial ticket, or the same series plus an additional concert devoted to a performance of *Parsifal*, cost £1/11/6 for a serial ticket. Potential subscribers were requested to indicate on a form either their preference or their disinclination to subscribe in any event.

Many people remained convinced, right up to 1914, that a consolidation of Leeds choral forces, integrated into a single subscription series, constituted the only hope for the long-term survival of high-quality music in the city. However, internal jealousies, no less destructive than those of the 1860s, inhibited the formation of a unified representative body in both orchestral and choral music. Moreover, while the record of certain Leeds philanthropists is second to none, there was also in truth an insufficient number of the Leeds élite sufficiently committed to culture and the common good to underpin a sustained effort to promote musical activity in the broadest sense. In 1913 John Green wrote of 'the lamentable lack of interest in things musical...amongst the well-to-do in Leeds'.⁶² In the same letter he reported a long conversation with Rowland Hirst Barran, the managing director of the Leeds clothing firm John Barran and Sons and the Liberal Member for North Leeds. Barran was openly advocating the cessation of expensive high-class concerts for which he believed there was no demand.

Leeds choral tradition

While support from the upper echelons of Leeds society steadily waned, the same cannot be said of the population at large. There is ample evidence that in the Edwardian period there were many people in Leeds still prepared to give up their leisure time to participate in choral music and to attend concerts. Many Leeds singers were even prepared to pay their own expenses for the Leeds Chorus visit to Paris in January 1906.⁶³ A list of some of the new organizations created bears witness to the extent of continuing local

⁶¹ Ibid.

⁶² Green to J R Ford, 30th October 1913. LPS letter books.

⁶³ *LYM*, 22nd December 1905.

enthusiasm: The Leeds New Choral Society (1902), Headingley Choral Society (1903), Potternewton Choral Society (1905), Leeds Institute Vocal Society (1907), Leeds Catholic Choral Society (1908). Concert notices suggest that the overall standard of performance was high, despite the fact that choirs might on occasion be unbalanced due to a shortage of male singers or that often a piano had to suffice in place of an orchestra. The inaugural concert of the Potternewton Choral Society in February 1905 took place 'before a goodly gathering', and although the fledgling society had to bolster the number of male singers with assistance from the Leeds Musical Union, it acquitted itself well with a programme of part songs by Henry Smart, Edward German, Arthur Sullivan and Hubert Parry.⁶⁴

Not far from Leeds Bridge, along Hunslet Lane, the Salem Congregational Church brought music to thousands of working people in a deprived area of Leeds. Under the dedicated guidance of the choirmaster Frank Hobson and organist George H Farnell, a choir and band were formed and trained which within three years were capable of giving a good account of Elgar's *The Banner of St George*.⁶⁵ In November 1907, in a newly refurbished Central Hall seating over 1,000 and full to overflowing, with many people turned away at the door, they gave a performance of *Messiah* regarded as 'easily the best ever heard south of the river'.⁶⁶ The next year *Elijah* was attempted. Interestingly, the announcement of the forthcoming performance implied that many Salem people would not be familiar with the work, though not doubting that it would be 'listened to with enthusiastic appreciation'.⁶⁷ From then on, either *Messiah* or *Elijah* would be given annually, with a choir and band of anything up to 250 performers. Soloists were typically local professional singers. The price of admission was 4d – less than the price of a programme at the Leeds Philharmonic concerts, where the cheapest seats available cost a shilling.⁶⁸

Salem is but one example of the strong influence of Nonconformity on music-making in Leeds and the West Riding. It was a natural progression for those accustomed to

⁶⁴ *LM*, 1st March 1905; *YP*, 1st March 1905.

⁶⁵ *Progress*, 22nd April 1906. *Progress* was the weekly news-sheet of Salem Church, widely read around South Leeds and, with its coloured paper, commonly referred to as the 'Green 'un'. It provides a fascinating record of the life of an inner city church, recounting its musical and other cultural activities.

⁶⁶ *Progress*, 1st December 1907.

⁶⁷ *Progress*, 12th April 1908.

⁶⁸ Programme, Salem Central Hall, 17th April 1908. Copy held in Minister's Vestry, Salem Church, Leeds.

expressing their religious sentiments through the medium of rousing hymn-tunes to be attracted to the splendours of a Handelian chorus.⁶⁹ Nonconformity, the use of tonic sol-fa,⁷⁰ and the growing availability of cheap printed scores proved a potent combination, which led over the years to the development of a huge pool of vocal talent in the area, filling choruses which were more often remarkable for their power and precision than their subtlety.⁷¹

Edward Bairstow grew up in the West Riding and trained choirs in both Yorkshire and Lancashire. In an interview with a local newspaper he offered this typically candid assessment of Leeds singers in 1907:

I do not think that the number of good voices is greater in Leeds than in other parts of Yorkshire and Lancashire, but the enthusiasm for choral singing has increased the technical ability here. The Leeds chorus singers are undoubtedly good readers, and the only evil much chorus singing has brought in its train is a tendency to perfunctoriness, due perhaps to rehearsals almost every night; but this may be overcome by the chorus master who has the gift of inspiring his singers. This staleness seems to lead to a lot of singing out of tune, a fact which was especially noticeable at the last Musical Festival, where a great many of the softer passages were just sufficiently flat to take the 'atmosphere' out of the music. Voices which are not very well produced will not stand the strain which has to be put on them by a Leeds chorus singer.⁷²

The potential of northern choirs did succeed in capturing the imagination of some composers, just as Frederick Corder had urged. Elgar's successor as professor of music at the University of Birmingham, *Granville Bantock*, whose four movement "choral symphony" *Atalanta in Calydon* of 1911 was to typify the new choralism, believed that the effort expended on orchestras would be more profitably directed towards the choral tradition:

⁶⁹ Prominent among Yorkshire-born composers of hymn-tunes were John Bacchus Dykes (1824-1876) and Joseph Barnby (1838-1896). Leeds could boast Samuel Lawford Armitage (1833-1903), composer, choirmaster and compiler of *Armitage's Psalmody*. See William Heslop, *Biographical Sketches of Musical Composers* (Leeds 1914), 1-2.

⁷⁰ John Curwen (1816-1880), who developed tonic sol-fa in the 1850s, was a Yorkshire-born nonconformist minister. See Scholes, *Mirror*, 1:13-19.

⁷¹ Herbert Thompson was frequently critical of certain traits to be found in Yorkshire choruses. In one of his notices, for example, he remarked how the conductor 'had evidently taken great pains to teach his singers the meaning of *pianissimo*, which is not always grasped by the West Riding intellect'. (*MT*, 37 (December 1896): 827).

⁷² *YEN*, 9th December 1907.

If we would but devote the energies which are dissipated in attempting – and in failing – to establish orchestral societies, to the recognition and the fostering of existing choral organisations, I venture to think that the harvest would be rich and profitable. We have not yet, by a long way, exhausted all the possible effects to be obtained from the judicious combination of voices.⁷³

Bantock, however, was in a minority here. It was the dearest wish of the very chorus masters themselves who were responsible for maintaining the tradition that local permanent orchestras be established which were capable of matching the high performing standards of their choruses.

Orchestral music

The complex history of orchestral music in Leeds has been charted in Chapter 4. From this detailed study of internal conflicts and jealousies it is useful to step back and review these events in the broader context of orchestral music in Edwardian England.

Herbert Thompson's test of the "musical man" was that he should have at least a passing acquaintance with the symphonies of Beethoven. When the Fricker concerts began several of the symphonies were virtually unknown in Leeds, the Fourth not having been performed for at least a generation.⁷⁴ The field of the symphony in Leeds and the West Riding was fallow ground, and awaited the creation of a municipal orchestra which would play, as Thompson put it, 'what people ought to hear, rather than what, in their present state of limited knowledge, they want to hear'.⁷⁵ The case for municipal concerts was simple enough: bring good music to the people, help them to understand and appreciate it, and they would want more, thus increasing the base of musical literacy in a process of positive feedback. The importance of music within a civilized society was widely acknowledged, though not, crucially, by most of Leeds City Council who consistently regarded it as merely another amusement.

⁷³ *MT*, 50 (January 1909): 18. Over half an hour in duration, *Atalanta in Calydon*, for unaccompanied chorus, was scored for twenty parts with not less than ten voices to each part. It received its first (and second) performances in Leeds on 5th March 1913 when the LCU under Henry Coward sang it twice in one evening. The pitch of the LCU reportedly 'never wavered'. (*YP*, 6th March 1913).

⁷⁴ *YP*, 23rd January 1903.

⁷⁵ *Ibid.*

Many people grew increasingly exasperated with the perceived philistinism of a City Council which could with apparent equanimity support brass band concerts in the local parks to the extent of £500 per year, yet find it impossible to fund orchestral music to anything remotely approaching this level. Music, at least as manifested in first rate orchestral concerts, rarely achieved the same status as the visual arts or literature in the minds of those charged with providing public support for the provision of cultural amenities for the growing populations of British cities. In 1896 the Prime Minister, Lord Salisbury, when considering a proposal for funding municipal orchestras, declared that he could not 'look upon the maintenance of an orchestra as an expense that could be legitimately defrayed out of the local rates'.⁷⁶ In his weekly column "Music and Art", Herbert Thompson was often scathing in his criticism, of which the following is an early example:

If, in a town as big as Leeds, the money squandered on brass bands blowing bad and indifferent music, not listened to by three-quarters of their audience, and not worth listening to by the rest, were turned to the support of an orchestra capable of supplying rational enjoyment to an equal number of listeners, under conditions more favourable to appreciation, it would be far more to the advantage of popular culture. A hundred bands might blow operatic selections till they were black in the face, and would do as much for musical education as a single attempt to present decently a symphony by Haydn.⁷⁷

Ultimately, the city fathers failed the people of Leeds by allowing themselves to be persuaded by the city's powerful choral lobby that a subsidised municipal orchestral series represented unfair and damaging competition to their own enterprises and was therefore not in the best interests of Leeds music. From a purely political perspective, it was relatively easy for an administration which had been elected on a platform of cutting the rates to justify avoiding any additional burden on the ratepayers of Leeds, even though the actual amount involved was ludicrously small. How prophetic the words of "Melior", in a long letter to the *Leeds Mercury* in August 1912, now seem:

The future historian of Leeds will relate how its citizens, following up their great material prosperity, suddenly rose into sublime activity concerning their artistic welfare, an activity worthy of some ancient Greek state; how they initiated, through their civic

⁷⁶ Percy Young, *The Concert Tradition* (London 1965), 233.

⁷⁷ *YP*, 24th April 1903.

representatives, public performances of the highest type of music, thus setting a wonderful example to the rest of the nation, and to all public and private institutions: and how, alas, their courage proved shortlived; how, in a weak moment, they came tumbling down from their Olympian heights, back to the common level and the poor pursuits of the prosaic.⁷⁸

Paradoxically, as orchestral music in Leeds ran into increasing difficulties, the fortunes of the Bradford Subscription Concerts gradually improved. Inexorably, the centre of gravity of West Riding orchestral enterprise shifted west towards Leeds's traditional rival such that, by 1913, the concerts were being described as 'now beyond a doubt the best concerts given in Yorkshire'.⁷⁹

There are several reasons for this. Like Manchester, Bradford had benefited from the mid-century influx of a wealthy and influential merchant class of German extraction, whose tradition of providing generous funding for local musical enterprises had been maintained throughout the Victorian era and had formed the core of a larger base of support for music than existed in Leeds. At least in part due to this influence, a degree of social cachet had been attached to attendance at orchestral concerts which was never consistently in evidence in Leeds except perhaps during the festival. Moreover, the acknowledged superiority of Bradford's St George's Hall over the Leeds Town Hall as a venue, particularly in the provision of cheaper and more comfortable seats, gave less affluent Bradfordians access to orchestral music at affordable prices. As a result, attendances were healthy and the concerts maintained a relatively sound financial position.

Though the rivalry between adjacent towns is apt to amuse the outsider, it may sometimes be productive of good results. One hopes that the example which Bradford is setting Leeds in its concerts may prove a healthy stimulus to its neighbour, for at the moment when the Leeds Subscription Concerts have had to be curtailed, those of its neighbour have been extended. Nor is this the only advantage the Bradford subscribers will reap, since the area of St George's Hall has been re-seated with modern stalls, an interesting object lesson which those responsible for the ramshackle benches in the Leeds Town Hall might well take to heart.⁸⁰

⁷⁸ *LM*, 1st August 1912.

⁷⁹ *YP*, 21st March 1913.

⁸⁰ *YP*, 22nd October 1910.

In September 1909 Havergal Brian commented in the *Staffordshire Sentinel* that although these were days of unprecedented musical activity, orchestral music in England was 'never so near bankruptcy'.⁸¹ In Liverpool only weeks earlier, the Liverpool Orchestral Society, founded by Elgar's friend Alfred Rodewald in 1890, had folded due to financial difficulties, while in Brian's native Potteries, orchestral music survived only through the continuing generosity of Marie Reymond.⁸² Leicester's Municipal Orchestra of eighteen professional players and twenty-four amateurs limped on for a further year before its disbandment in 1910.⁸³ Against this backdrop the achievements of those promoting the cause of orchestral music in Leeds seem all the more praiseworthy.

The Leeds musical season

Triennial festivals were not the only phenomenon to produce a hiatus in musical activity in Leeds: every December the tradition of an unlikely combination of *Messiah* and pantomime was maintained. 'In this part of the world it is the custom to indulge at Christmas in a surfeit of "Messiah," and then to turn to a season of pantomime by way of a corrective. The result is that all serious music is at a discount'...⁸⁴ In effect, the Leeds concert season was compressed into the winter months:

From April to September there is little or no serious music heard in Yorkshire. Probably few towns of the size of Leeds are so destitute of good music for six months in the year as is that great and busy town – or city, as it now delights in being styled.⁸⁵

By the time Easter came around, many Yorkshire minds were starting to turn instead to cricket, and during the summer months brass band concerts in the municipal parks constituted the only source of public music making. It was left to other centres such as nearby Harrogate to fill the void, where Julian Clifford's Orchestra provided a season of music for the town's many summer visitors:

⁸¹ *Staffordshire Sentinel*, 30th September 1909. Quoted in Macdonald, *Havergal Brian*, 368.

⁸² Stainton de B Taylor, *Two Centuries of Music in Liverpool* (Liverpool 1976), 41-42; Nettel, *Five Towns*, 78-84.

⁸³ Max Wade-Matthews, *Musical Leicester* (Wymeswold 1998), 202-203.

⁸⁴ *MT*, 53 (February 1912): 121.

⁸⁵ *MT*, 38 (November 1897): 764.

Now that Easter has passed, the centre of gravity in musical matters has shifted to Harrogate, where at the Kursaal the summer series of twenty-seven weekly symphony concerts began on April 15. It is something that musical people in this part of Yorkshire can, on any Wednesday afternoon, be assured of a symphony, a concerto, and an overture or suite, adequately performed, and this to some extent alleviates the musical famine which the provinces suffer from in the summer months.⁸⁶

Harrogate enjoyed the additional advantage of a well-appointed and modern concert hall in the form of the Kursaal. (Later renamed the Royal Hall to placate anti-German sentiment, the hall still may be seen in the centre of the town). Opened in May 1903 with a Grand Concert conducted by Hubert Parry, it had cost £45,000 to build, could seat around 2,000 people, and was lavishly appointed with its 'marble columns, stained-glass windows, crushed-strawberry hangings, and sumptuous simulations of tapestries'.⁸⁷ Amid these palatial surroundings several Leeds musicians would spend their summer performing under Clifford's direction.⁸⁸

Unfavourable comparisons were often made between Leeds and Manchester, 'the Mecca of musical art in England' according to Granville Bantock, where musical activity was not confined exclusively to a short winter season.⁸⁹ The Birmingham music critic and author Sydney Grew described Manchester as 'the most musical of English cities in the orchestral sense'.⁹⁰ Could there be a barely perceptible note of envy in Herbert Thompson's announcement that:

Manchester is this season to hear all Beethoven's nine symphonies in chronological order, a privilege of which, assuredly, no other British town, not even the Metropolis, now that the Crystal Palace concerts are no more, can boast.⁹¹

⁸⁶ *MT*, 55 (May 1914): 338.

⁸⁷ *MT*, 44 (July 1903): 481.

⁸⁸ An annotated photograph of the Harrogate Municipal Orchestra taken *circa* 1912, and now in the possession of Mrs Barbara Errington, identifies Edward Maude (violin), Ernest Moxon (viola), Lupton Whitelock and Sam Middleton (flutes). Alexander Cohen became leader of the orchestra in 1915.

⁸⁹ Kennedy, *Hallé Tradition*, 178.

⁹⁰ *Ibid.*

⁹¹ *YP*, 10th January 1908.

Yet despite the universally acknowledged excellence of the Hallé Orchestra, setting new standards in English orchestral playing, and the quality of its programmes, the financial basis of music in Manchester proved as precarious as elsewhere. The *Musical Times* observed in July 1913 that:

The report of the Hallé Society on June 2 does not make pleasant reading. The loss on twenty Manchester concerts was £400, and twenty concerts in various other centres showed a deficit of £316; but this debit balance had been reduced to £572, necessitating a call of £3 per guarantor.⁹²

The following autumn the Denhof opera tour ran into serious difficulties in Manchester, and was rescued only by the last-minute intervention of Thomas Beecham. Worse news was to follow in May 1914 with the announcement of a loss of £1,648 6s 4d on the Hallé season.⁹³

Changing tastes, changing times

Times had changed, and not only in Leeds and Manchester. Across the country concert series were in difficulty. Even in the metropolis itself, Henry Wood's Promenade Concerts survived largely thanks to the munificence of Edgar Speyer (1862-1932) who, following the bankruptcy of Robert Newman in 1901, annually gave in excess of £2,000 in support of the series.⁹⁴ The *Yorkshire Post* suggested a correlation between the declining fortunes of the local subscription series and a degree of belt tightening on the part of their traditional supporters:

...there is no doubt that the concerts which are of real artistic account are in a bad way just now. Those on whose subscriptions they have chiefly depended in the past find themselves hard hit by recent legislation, and as they cannot retrench on such necessities as motoring, have to effect economies, among which concert-going finds a prominent place.⁹⁵

It was certainly the case that from 1909 onwards, with the so-called People's Budget, the burden of direct taxation had fallen increasingly on the wealthier members of society -

⁹² *MT*, 54 (July 1913): 473.

⁹³ Alan Jefferson, *Sir Thomas Beecham* (London 1979), 131; *MT*, 55 (July 1914): 476.

⁹⁴ C C Aronsfeld, 'German Jews in Victorian England', in *Leo Baeck Yearbook*, VII (1962): 312-29; Henry J Wood, *My Life of Music* (London 1938), 207.

⁹⁵ *YP*, 12th December 1913.

landowners, those living on unearned income, and car owners.⁹⁶ John Green believed that the falling off in LPS subscriptions dated from 1906 when the landslide victory for the Liberals ushered in a government which was 'pledged, among other things, to retrenchment'.⁹⁷ But purely economic factors tell only a part of the story. More significant were fundamental changes in the public taste, especially among those who traditionally might have supported public concerts:

The public concert drew its support from what was, socially, a relatively narrow audience. Mainly patronized by sections of the middle and upper classes it was extremely vulnerable to any change in their preferences...Musical instruments, tuition, and by the early 1900s the gramophone, were all within their grasp and their more comfortable domestic surroundings made private music making an acceptable alternative.⁹⁸

Thus while an interest in music might be retained, it would not necessarily find its expression in regular attendance at concerts. The increase in the number of music teachers in Leeds from 74 in 1899, to 136 in 1904 to 178 in 1913, would suggest that there was no lack of enthusiasm to acquire musical accomplishments.⁹⁹ Reference has been made earlier to the activities of quartet parties in some of the finer houses of Leeds. There is anecdotal evidence of musical ability being used as a means of social and professional advancement. Take this example from the memoirs of Henry Coward:

With respect to the status of being a "good amateur performer" I may say that it is a most valuable asset to any professional gentleman. I have known and know many lawyers, doctors, dentists, stockbrokers, bankers, and others who owe not a little of their professional success to the fact that they are good, accomplished musicians. One of my friends once told me that he "had fiddled himself into two thousand a year" and this is true in other cases also. Therefore it is better to be a good amateur than an indifferent professional musician.¹⁰⁰

⁹⁶ Brooks, *Age of Upheaval*, 112-114. For a contemporary view see R H Gretton, *A Modern History of the English People* (London 1913), vol.2, ch.15.

⁹⁷ YP, 15th July 1914.

⁹⁸ Alan Peacock & Ronald Weir, *The Composer in the Market Place* (London 1975), 40.

⁹⁹ These figures are derived from those listed under "Teachers of Music" from Leeds directories of the corresponding year.

¹⁰⁰ Coward, *Reminiscences*, 259. In Arnold Bennett's short story from 1912, 'Why the clock stopped', Simon Loggerheads, one of the finest tenors in the Five Towns, is reported to have been offered a promotion by the bank for whom he works if he defects to join the Hanbridge Choir. While the report turns out to be

Some writers have suggested that the decline in support of music and other cultural activities arose from the retreat of the middle classes to the suburbs.¹⁰¹ This represents only one aspect of behavioural change, and the explanation offered by Peacock and Weir seems to me a more compelling one. They argue that despite growing suburbanization, other places of leisure such as restaurants, supper rooms, music halls and theatres continued to flourish. The more affluent members of society still spent their leisure time in the city centre, but began to expect greater levels of comfort, sophistication and luxury:

Public demand - or at least a critical middle and upper class section of it - was shifting towards entertainments offering greater variety (as well as food and drink) in more luxurious surroundings. The concert halls of an earlier generation were unwilling or unable to adapt their fabric to the public's evident desire for clean electric lighting and electric fans.¹⁰²

The deficiencies of Leeds Town Hall as a venue, even in comparison with similar halls in the West Riding, have already been discussed.¹⁰³ Matched against the levels of comfort and convenience afforded by newer establishments, it simply could not compete. Increasingly relaxed social attitudes, especially those relating to the music halls, which were no longer regarded as dens of iniquity, meant that the traditional patrons of the orchestral concert could more readily exercise their freedom of choice:

...the music halls, having now become places at which it is understood one can be seen without loss of caste, attract a great many of the middle classes who require their entertainment to be of a light and varied nature, and prefer to enjoy it to the accompaniment of tobacco. And those who frequented the cheapest seats at concerts now join the ranks of the multitudes who frequent the picture-houses, which at Leeds, as we have just been told, have an average weekly attendance of 350,000 - a very considerable proportion of the entire population!¹⁰⁴

untrue, there is an implication that in the real world such dealings were not unknown. These examples illustrate an interesting shift in attitude from the Victorian era where a certain ambivalence surrounded the musically accomplished gentleman. See Nicholas Temperley (ed.) *Music in Britain: The Romantic Age 1800-1914* (London 1981), chapter 1.

¹⁰¹ Morris, 'Middle-class culture', 220.

¹⁰² Peacock & Weir, *The Composer*, 39.

¹⁰³ Manchester Town Hall was also a less than perfect venue - 'not enough seats, dreadful acoustics, inadequate platform' - a fact known to Charles Hallé, and confirmed when it was used briefly in 1913. See Kennedy, *Hallé Tradition*, 180.

¹⁰⁴ *YP*, 12th December 1913.

The sheer scale of the popularity of the picture halls in Edwardian Leeds is impressive. It may be explained, not simply in terms of their novelty, but rather in their more egalitarian treatment of the audience. The seating layouts of provincial town halls reflected the social divisions of the Victorian society which created them. Though price differentials operated in the picture hall, comfortable seating and a good view were available to all. Contemporary evidence, such as this letter to the editor of *The Strad* from "Fair Play" of Leeds, lends weight to this notion:

Why are picture halls making greater headway than music? Because, for a third of the cost of a great musical concert, you can obtain a fine seat at a cinema, and enjoy a fine educative and wholesome evening's entertainment.

The worker is not given the same chance as the privileged ones to see or hear any first-rate musician or orchestral concert. He goes, waits so long for a ticket, then goes expecting a good seat, and finds to his dismay that about half a dozen seats at the back of the Hall are allotted to the purchaser of a ticket which is only a modest sum.¹⁰⁵

Music of a lighter nature became an adjunct to other social activities, such as dining out or watching a film, rather than an end in itself. From about 1902 cafés started to open in Leeds which soon became immensely popular. With them came the rise of the café orchestra. One such orchestra consisted of 'eight accomplished musicians - a pianist, two violinists, a cello player, an operator on the double bass, a flautist, and a manipulator of the clarinet'.¹⁰⁶ Perhaps surprisingly, Herbert Thompson believed in all seriousness that the café orchestra had brought about 'a distinct improvement in the public taste for orchestral music' and to prove his point listed some of the works played.¹⁰⁷ A 1908 advertisement for the Grand Restaurant and Café on Boar Lane made much of its "Imperial Viennese Orchestra" which played daily under the direction of Herr André Presburg.¹⁰⁸ A few establishments, such as Collinson's Café, made a virtue of the absence of music and, appealing to 'people

¹⁰⁵ *The Strad*, 24 (May 1913): 34.

¹⁰⁶ *YEP*, 31st December 1904.

¹⁰⁷ *Ibid.* These included selections from Gounod's *Faust*, and Weber's overture *Oberon*.

¹⁰⁸ Illustrated Souvenir and Official Programme of the Royal Visit to Leeds by their Majesties King Edward VII and Queen Alexandra, July 7th, 1908.

of taste and refinement', proudly proclaimed in their advertising that there was 'no Band to interfere with conversation'.¹⁰⁹

These new trends in patterns of leisure and recreation - and we should not forget other Edwardian enthusiasms such as bicycling, skating and professional football - reflected changes on a massive scale throughout the whole of society. In politics, Labour had seen a significant increase in electoral support towards the end of 1913, and Leeds experienced first-hand the effect of trade union unrest in a bitter strike of council workers which lasted a month, ending finally in January 1914.¹¹⁰ These were uncertain times, and the writings of social reformers such as C F G Masterman (1873-1927), a radical member of the Liberal Government from 1908 to 1915, consistently reveal doubts about the future direction of society:

We are uncertain whether civilisation is about to blossom into flower, or wither in [a] tangle of dead leaves and faded gold. We can find no answer to the inquiry, whether we are about to plunge into a new period of tumult and upheaval, whether we are destined to an indefinite prolongation of the present half-lights and shadows, whether, as we sometimes try to anticipate, a door is to be suddenly opened, revealing unimaginable glories.¹¹¹

Reviewing the prospects for the Festival and for choral music in general in 1914, John Green acknowledged the changes which had taken place in society, and recognized the necessity of adapting to new circumstances:

It cannot be denied that, as compared with England 20 years ago, the people have generally become more gay, less puritanical, more pleasure-seeking. This is the altered position of affairs, which promoters of good music are foolish if they ignore.¹¹²

Whether those responsible for running concert series could or would have responded to change as Green suggests is impossible to say: time had run out, with the outbreak of war a matter of months away.

¹⁰⁹ *The Leeds Musical Festival Souvenir*. Annotated Programme by Frank Toothill (Leeds 1910). It would seem that things were not always so at Collinson's however. The account books of L P Balmforth's violin shop for 1906-07 contain entries for 'Mr Whitteran, Cellist, Collinsons Cafe'.

¹¹⁰ Michael Meadowcroft, 'The years of political transition 1914-39' in Fraser, *Modern Leeds*, 410.

¹¹¹ Masterman, *Condition of England*, 304.

¹¹² *YP*, 6th April 1914.

Herbert Thompson

Having quoted extensively from his published and unpublished writings throughout this study, it is fitting that acknowledgement be made of the contribution of the critic Herbert Thompson (1856-1945) to Leeds musical life.¹¹³ While his prose never achieved the poetic quality of Samuel Langford's or the incisiveness of that of Ernest Newman, throughout a long career he consistently brought balanced and thoughtful musical criticism to the Leeds public.¹¹⁴ Through his writings Thompson informed and encouraged, championing causes such as the municipal orchestra, while always retaining scrupulous impartiality.

Despite a well-developed ability to judge the mood of the day, Thompson was occasionally frankly bemused by the musical tastes of his fellow citizens. He wrote after a Leeds Philharmonic Society concert in February 1911, which included Sullivan's *The Golden Legend* and Hubert Bath's *The Wedding of Shon Maclean*:

...in spite of excellent performances...they seemed to fall rather flat. But indeed the taste of the Leeds public, like that of other towns, is hard to gauge, and the enthusiasm which 'The Quaker Girl' has just excited in the Leeds Theatre is not easily paralleled by works of more artistic pretensions.¹¹⁵

But Thompson was not a snob and certainly not parochial in outlook. He made the pilgrimage to Bayreuth seven times in all, sending reports back to the *Yorkshire Post* on each occasion.¹¹⁶ On his first tour, undertaken in 1889 in the company of Mr and Mrs William Hannam, Thompson visited Hamburg on the way home and met Brahms.¹¹⁷ Among Thompson's surviving correspondence may be found letters from virtually every major figure in English musical life at the time: composers such as Elgar, Parry, Stanford, Bantock, the

¹¹³ Born in Hunslet, Leeds, the son of a bank manager and amateur flautist, Thompson was educated privately and at St John's College, Cambridge. He initially entered the legal profession and was called to the Bar in 1879. His abiding interest in music led to the offer of the post of music critic to the *Yorkshire Post* in October 1886, a position he retained until 1936. (University of Leeds, Brotherton Library, Special Collections, Handlist 29).

¹¹⁴ Thompson was, according to Edward Bairstow, 'absolutely genuine and very fair'. Jackson, *Blessed City*, 61.

¹¹⁵ *MT*, 52 (April 1911): 264.

¹¹⁶ See P S Morrish, 'A Yorkshire Music Critic in Germany and Austria in 1889', *Publications of the Thoresby Society*, Miscellany, 16 (1979): 333-347.

¹¹⁷ *Ibid.*, 335.

performers Hans Richter and Harry Plunket Greene, and the critics Joseph Bennett and J A Fuller-Maitland.¹¹⁸

The record of achievement

Any study of musical life in Edwardian Leeds will inescapably find the major figures of English music such as Stanford and Elgar looming large over it. Yet influential as these eminent outsiders undoubtedly were, there is compelling evidence which shows that among the ranks of local musicians and musical amateurs were numbered several whose contribution to the musical culture of the city, though largely unrecorded until now, was no less valuable or impressive. For fifty years Fred Spark, one-time chorister and later successful entrepreneur and pillar of the community, devoted enormous amounts of time and effort to securing the best compositions and performers for the Leeds Festival. Herbert Fricker, arriving in Leeds as the new City Organist in 1898, was soon raising standards of choral performance to even greater heights as chorus master of the Leeds Philharmonic Society and later the Festival chorus. The municipal orchestral concerts, masterminded by Fricker in the face of an unenthusiastic city council, for the first time placed high-quality classical and contemporary orchestral repertoire before the Leeds public at affordable prices and were during their brief existence a model of their kind. Receiving neither payment nor encouragement for his efforts, Fricker was indeed a man touched by missionary zeal, and for his championing of contemporary British composers alone is deserving of recognition. The mining magnate Henry Embleton literally spent a fortune in supporting the cause of choral music, bringing into being the Leeds Choral Union and, along with Alfred Rodewald in Liverpool and Nicholas Kilburn in Bishop Auckland, forming the trinity of wealthy patrons who did so much to further the career of Edward Elgar. The enigmatic Arthur Grimshaw drove himself to a breakdown through sheer overwork as, in addition to his duties as cathedral organist and teacher, he developed the highly successful Leeds Bohemian Chamber Concerts, directed several vocal societies, and nurtured local amateur orchestral talent through his conductorship of the Leeds Symphony Society.

As with any chronicle of cultural endeavour, one discovers along the way lost opportunities and examples of what might have been. Just as the Leeds Parish Church choir

¹¹⁸ University of Leeds, Brotherton Library, Special Collections, Handlist 29.

Chapter 6: 'Dead Leaves and Faded Gold'

was attaining new levels of excellence and the organ had been remodelled, Edward Bairstow departed to restore the ailing fortunes of music at York Minster. What if the presiding genius of the Bohemian Concerts and composer of some merit, Arthur Grimshaw, had lived on instead of meeting a mysterious and untimely death on Hawksworth Moor? What if the oft-proposed merger of the Philharmonic Society and Choral Union had taken place, or the city councillors of Leeds had possessed the necessary vision to lend their full support to a municipal orchestra? But these matters are of little account now: Leeds suffered no more than anywhere else from the examples of folly, poor judgement or sheer bad luck which bedevilled many musical enterprises in Edwardian England.

If indeed the Edwardian age came to an end amid 'dead leaves and faded gold' as Masterman had feared – and few can doubt the scale of the catastrophe soon to overtake Europe – there is some consolation in the fact that amid troubled times there were in Leeds outstanding individuals prepared to work selflessly in the creation of institutions intended to make it a better and more civilized place in which to live.

Appendix 1: First Performances at the Leeds Musical Festival 1889-1913

GRANVILLE BANTOCK (1868-1946)

Sea Wanderers, Poem for chorus and orchestra (1907)

RUTLAND BOUGHTON (1878-1960)

Two Folk Songs with Variations, for unaccompanied chorus (1907)

HERBERT BREWER (1865-1928)

Pastorals, In Springtime, for tenor solo & male voice chorus (1907)

GEORGE BUTTERWORTH (1885-1916)

A Shropshire Lad, Rhapsody for full orchestra (1913)

FREDERIC CLIFFE (1857-1931)

Symphony No.2 in E minor (1892)

SAMUEL COLERIDGE-TAYLOR (1875-1912)

The Blind Girl of Castle-Cuillé (1901)

FREDERICK CORDER (1852-1932)

Dramatic Cantata: *The Sword of Argantyr* (1889)

FREDERIC COWEN (1852-1935)

Ode, *The Passions* (1898)

WILLIAM CRESER (1844-1933)

Cantata: *The Sacrifice of Freia* (1889)

HERBERT WALFORD DAVIES (1869-1941)

Cantata: *Everyman* (1904)

EDWARD ELGAR (1857-1934)

Caractacus (1898)

Falstaff, Symphonic Study for orchestra (1913)

Appendix I: First Performances at the Leeds Musical Festival 1889-1913

EDWARD GERMAN (1862-1936)

Suite in D minor for orchestra (1895)

OTTO GOLDSCHMIDT (1830-1913)

Music, An Ode, op.27 (1898)

ALAN GRAY(1855-1935)

Cantata: *Arethusa* (1892)

Ode, *A Song of Redemption* (1898)

HAMILTON HARTY (1879-1941)

The Mystic Trumpeter, Poem for baritone solo, chorus & orchestra (1913)

BASIL HARWOOD (1859-1949)

Song on May Morning, for chorus & orchestra (1913)

JOSEF HOLBROOKE (1878-1958)

Queen Mab, Poem for orchestra and chorus (1904)

ENGELBERT HUMPERDINCK (1854-1921)

Moorish Rhapsody for orchestra (1898)

ALEXANDER MACKENZIE (1847-1935)

Pibroch for violin & orchestra (1889)

Cantata: *The Witch's Daughter* (1904)

JULES MASSENET (1842-1912)

Visions, Symphonic Poem for orchestra (1895)

C HUBERT H PARRY (1848-1918)

Cantata: *Ode on St Cecilia's Day* (1889)

Ode, *Invocation to Music* (1895)

Appendix 1: First Performances at the Leeds Musical Festival 1889-1913

ARTHUR SOMERVELL (1863-1937)

The Forsaken Mermaid (1895)

Ode, Intimations of Immortality (1907)

CHARLES VILLIERS STANFORD (1852-1924)

The Voyage of Maeldune (1889)

Te Deum (1898)

Five Songs of the Sea (1904)

Violin Concerto in D (1904)

Stabat Mater op.96 (1907)

Songs of the Fleet (1910)

RALPH VAUGHAN WILLIAMS (1872-1958)

Toward the Unknown Region (1907)

A Sea Symphony (1910)

CHARLES WOOD (1866-1926)

A Dirge for Two Veterans (1901)

Cantata: A Ballad of Dundee (1904)

Appendix 2: Finances of the Leeds Festival 1901-1913

Table 2: Receipts and Expenditure, Leeds Festival 1901-1913

	Receipts (£)	Expenditure (£)	Profit (£)
1901	11,555	9,903	1,651
1904	9,409	9,105	304
1907	8,631	8,175	460
1910	7,749	7,912	-162
1913	7,709	8,637	-278

Sources: Report (typescript) tabled to Executive Committee, 16th April 1912;
Report of the Leeds Musical Festival...1913 (WYAS 1076/1/1)

Table 3: Income from ticket sales, Leeds Festival 1901-1913

	Serial tickets	Single tickets	Rehearsal tickets	Total (£)
1901	7,726	2,377	871	10,974
1904	5,587	2,647	708	8,942
1907	5,191	2,457	565	8,213
1910	4,227	2,664	516	7,406
1913	4,423	2,553	409	7,385

Source: *Report of the Leeds Musical Festival...1913* (WYAS 1076/1/1).
 Figures rounded to the nearest pound.

Table 4: Sales of single tickets by performance, Leeds Festival 1910

Day	Sales (£ s d)	Principal works
Wed am	584 17 0	Mendelssohn: Elijah
Wed pm	176 4 0	Vaughan Williams: Sea Symphony Rachmaninov: Piano Concerto
Thu am	493 11 0	Brahms: German Requiem Rachmaninov: Symphony No.2
Thu pm	232 5 0	Stanford: Songs of the Fleet Wagner: Die Walküre Act 1
Fri am	227 6 6	Elgar: Enigma Variations Beethoven: Symphony No.3
Fri pm	316 6 0	Debussy: The Blessed Damozel Schumann: Symphony No.3
Sat am	446 5 0	Bach: St Matthew Passion
Sat pm	187 14 0	Tchaikovsky: Symphony No.4 Wagner: Die Meistersinger Act 3

Sources: *Report of the Leeds Musical Festival...1910* (WYAS 1076/1/1);
Programme book, Leeds Musical Festival 1910.

Table 5: Sales of single tickets by performance, Leeds Festival 1913

Day	Sales (£ s d)	Principal works
Wed am	520 1 0	Elgar: Dream of Gerontius Brahms: Symphony No.3
Wed pm	200 14 0	Tchaikovsky: Piano Concerto No.1 Basil Harwood: On a May Morning
Thu am	345 15 0	Verdi: Requiem Beethoven: Symphony No.7
Thu pm	192 14 0	Elgar: Falstaff Hamilton Harty: The Mystic Trumpeter
Fri am	366 14 0	Bach: Mass in B minor
Fri pm	275 1 0	Beethoven: Violin Concerto Strauss: Ein Heldenleben
Sat am	298 10 0	Wagner: Parsifal selections & Die Meistersinger Act 3 selections
Sat pm	353 19 0	Mendelssohn: Elijah

Sources: *Report of the Leeds Musical Festival...1913* (WYAS 1076/1/1);
Programme book, Leeds Musical Festival 1913.

Appendix 3: Biographical sketches of some Leeds Festival Committee members

ERNEST WILLIAM BECKETT (1856-1917)

Born in Leeds, educated at Eton and Trinity College, Cambridge. A senior partner in the banking firm of Beckett and Company. A Justice of the Peace, and Member of Parliament for the Whitby Division of Yorkshire. President of Leeds Chamber of Commerce, 1900. Beckett became the second Lord Grimthorpe on the death of his uncle in 1905.¹ A cultured and widely-travelled man, in 1904 Beckett began the restoration of the eleventh-century Villa Cimbrone in Ravello on the Amalfi coast.²

AMBROSE EDMUND BUTLER (died 1923)

Born Kirkstall, Leeds, educated at Leeds Grammar School and in Brussels. An ironmaster, the senior partner in the Kirkstall Forge Company, Leeds, which had been in the Butler family since 1779. A patron of Leeds Parish Church and a Justice of the Peace, Butler was Lord Mayor of Leeds 1901-02. A Conservative in politics.³

EDWIN KITSON CLARK (1866-1943)

Educated at Shrewsbury and Trinity College, Cambridge, Kitson Clark was an engineer, and a director of two important Leeds engineering firms, Kitson & Co. and the Airedale Foundry. A member of the Leeds Club, he listed his hobbies as archaeology and gardening.⁴

EDMUND BECKETT FABER (1847-1920)

Educated at Eton and Trinity College, Cambridge, Faber was a senior partner in Beckett's Bank as well as a director of the *Yorkshire Post*, the London & North-Western Railway and the Sun Insurance Company. A Justice of the Peace and a Conservative

¹ W Herbert Scott, *The West Riding of Yorkshire at the Opening of the Twentieth Century. Contemporary Biographies edited by WT Pike.* (Brighton, 1902), 133.

² *Villa Cimbrone* (Ravello [1998?]). This short guidebook suggests that Vita Sackville-West, a friend of the Beckett family, may have helped with the planning of the gardens.

³ Scott, *The West Riding*, 124. See also E P Hennock, *Fit and Proper Persons* (London 1973), 263-264.

⁴ *Who was Who 1941-1950* (London 1952), 218.

Appendix 3: Biographical sketches of some Leeds Festival Committee members

Member of Parliament he became the first Baron Butterwick in 1905. Faber was for many years the Honorary Treasurer of the Leeds Festival.⁵

JOHN RAWLINSON FORD (1844-1934)

A member of a prominent Leeds Quaker family, Ford was a partner at Ford & Warren, solicitors, Albion Street. A councillor, Justice of the Peace and later alderman, Ford was unanimously elected leader of the Liberal Group in 1912. A patron of the Yorkshire College. He founded and financed a series of chamber concerts in 1881 which evolved into the Leeds Popular Concerts and brought the Joachim Quartet and Charles Hallé's Band to Leeds. After seven seasons the series was replaced in 1888 by the Leeds Subscription Concerts of which Ford became chairman.⁶ In keeping with his modesty and lack of ostentation, Ford declined the offer of a knighthood in 1913.⁷

WILLIAM SIMPSON HANNAM (born 1854)

Born in Knaresborough, entered the legal profession in 1872, becoming a partner in North & Sons, Leeds. A well-known musical amateur with a number of published compositions to his credit, Hannam obtained a B.Mus. from London University in 1888. Secretary of the Leeds Subscription Concerts from 1888 to 1898. Exercised considerable influence through membership of the Programme Sub-Committee which he chaired from 1912.⁸ A friend of both Stanford and Parry, the latter of whom stayed with Hannam when visiting Leeds.

JACKSON, WILLIAM LAWIES (1840-1917)

Born in Otley. Member of Parliament for North Leeds from 1880, holding a series of government posts including Chief Secretary for Ireland. He was Mayor of Leeds 1895-96, and a Justice of the Peace. Chairman of the Great Northern Railway, Jackson was elevated

⁵ *Who was Who 1916-1928* (London 1962), 340.

⁶ June Hannam, *Isabella Ford* (Oxford 1989), 16. See Chapter 1 for the history of Ford's concert series.

⁷ *YEN*, 7th June 1913.

⁸ B P Scattergood, *The Leeds Musical Soirées* (Leeds 1931), 67-68.

Appendix 3: Biographical sketches of some Leeds Festival Committee members

to the peerage as Baron Allerton in 1902. 'A devout churchman and a keen and prominent freemason'.⁹

THOMAS MARSHALL (1832-1910)

Educated at St John's College, Oxford. Practised for some years as a solicitor before being appointed Registrar of the County Court in 1865. Active in politics as a Liberal. From 1877 until his death Marshall was chairman of the Festival Executive Committee. Despite his long association with musical matters he was not himself an executant.¹⁰ Marshall was, according to Fred Spark, 'an ideal chairman'.¹¹

LEONARD JAMES ROGERS (1862-1933)

Educated at Balliol College, Oxford, where he obtained a first in mathematics, Rogers was Professor of Mathematics at the Yorkshire College and Leeds University from 1888 to 1919. An excellent pianist specializing in Chopin, and a formidable sight-reader capable of instant transposition at the keyboard, Rogers, along with Hannam, was often entrusted with playing through new works submitted for consideration by the committee.¹²

WILLIAM SHEEPSHANKS (1851-1928)

Educated at Eton and Trinity College, Cambridge. Called to the Bar in 1874, chairman of Petty Sessions 1895-1913. Director and Chairman of Yorkshire Penny Bank 1894-1911 and chairman of the Aire and Calder Navigation Co. A Justice of the Peace.¹³

⁹ Scott, *The West Riding*, 122; *DNB* 1912-1921, 285.

¹⁰ *YDO*, 8th February 1910.

¹¹ Spark, *Memories*, 54.

¹² Scattergood, *Soirées*, 68-70; Minutes of the Management Committee, WYAS 1076/1.

¹³ *Who was Who 1916-1928*, 954.

CHARLES FRANCIS TETLEY (1848-1934)

Born in Leeds, educated at Leeds Grammar School, Harrow, and Trinity College, Cambridge. A member of the brewing family which owned and ran Joshua Tetley and Son Limited. Lord Mayor of Leeds 1897-98. Alderman and Justice of the Peace for the city of Leeds, a life governor of the Yorkshire College of which he was a loyal and generous supporter. Tetley was for many years President of the Leeds Philharmonic Society. A Conservative in politics.¹⁴ Tetley was known as a man of high integrity and quick sense of humour who 'raised the tone and lowered the temperature of any controversy in which he took part'.¹⁵

EDMUND WARD (1856-1909)

Born in Leeds and educated at Leeds Grammar School, Ward entered the legal profession, articulated to his father, William Sykes Ward. A principal of Messrs Ward & Sons, one of the oldest practices in Leeds. Honorary Secretary of the Leeds Philharmonic Society for many years, and later a vice-president. Though a churchman and a Conservative, Ward was not active in ecclesiastical or political affairs.¹⁶ Percy Grainger stayed at Ward's house at 30 Park Square when visiting Leeds in 1906 and 1907.¹⁷

EDWARD WARD (died 1921)

Born at Horbury near Wakefield, Ward graduated in law at Trinity College, Cambridge in 1876, but later turned to medicine, becoming Professor of Surgery at Victoria University and clinical lecturer at the University of Leeds. A pianist and vocalist who sang in the Festival choirs of 1883 and 1889. An admirer of Wagner and of Russian music as represented by Rachmaninov and Glazunov.¹⁸

¹⁴ Scott, *The West Riding*, 343.

¹⁵ Shimmin, *University of Leeds*, 103.

¹⁶ *YDO*, 17th May 1909.

¹⁷ Kay Dreyfus (ed.), *The Farthest North of Humanness. Letters of Percy Grainger 1901-14* (London 1985), 56; 147.

¹⁸ *YP*, 4th May 1921.

Appendix 3: Biographical sketches of some Leeds Festival Committee members

REGINALD WIGRAM (1843-1915)

Born at Wanstead in Essex and educated at Marlborough College, Wigram was a director of the Leeds engineering firm John Fowler and Company, and of the Great Northern Railway. A Justice of the Peace, he was for five years chairman of Leeds Conservative Association.¹⁹

JOHN HENRY WURTZBURG (1835-1905)

Born in Leeds on 4th May 1835, the son of Edward Wurtzburg, a highly respected merchant, J H Wurtzburg was educated at Leeds Grammar School and at a private school in Bonn. After some years with his father's firm he joined the engineering firm of Greenwood and Batley, becoming managing director. A prominent churchman and a Justice of the Peace, Wurtzburg actively supported many organizations and causes, among them the Leeds School Board, the Church of St John the Evangelist on New Briggate, and the Thoresby Society. Vice-President of the Leeds Conservative Association and President of Leeds Chamber of Commerce 1904-5.²⁰

¹⁹ Scott, *The West Riding*, 354; *YEN*, 19th April 1915.

²⁰ Scott, *The West Riding*, 359; Beresford, *Leeds Chambers*, 179; *Yorkshire Owl*, 23rd September 1896.

Appendix 4: Leeds Philharmonic Society programmes, 1900-1914

Season 1900-1901¹

First Concert, 31st October 1900.

Richter/Hallé Orchestra

Beethoven	Symphony, No.5, in C minor
Dvořák	Symphonic Variations
Brahms	Triumphal Hymn, for Solo, Chorus and Orchestra
Liszt	Mephisto Walzer
Weber	Overture "Oberon"

Second Concert, 21st November 1900.

Stanford/Hallé Orchestra

Stanford	Elegaic Ode
Boito	Prologue to "Mephistopheles"
Beethoven	The Ninth (Choral) Symphony

Third Concert, 19th December 1900.

Stanford/Hallé Orchestra

Mozart	Maurerische Trauer-Musik ²
Handel	Messiah

Fourth Concert, 12th February 1901.³

Richter/Hallé Orchestra

Wagner	Death March "Götterdämmerung" ⁴
Beethoven	Overture "Die Weihe des Hauses"
Wagner	New Venusberg Music [<i>Tannhäuser</i>]
Wagner	Grail Scene, "Parsifal"
Stanford	Choral Song, "Last Post"
Schubert	Symphony, No.10, in C [No.9]

¹ The titles of musical works in this appendix are as transcribed from the LPS programme books, retaining the original punctuation and spelling. Editorial comments are enclosed within square brackets.

² Extra programme item performed in memory of Sir Arthur Sullivan who had died on 22nd November 1900.

³ This concert was originally scheduled for 30th January 1901, but postponed due to the death of Queen Victoria on 22nd January 1901.

⁴ This was an additional item which, according to the black-edged slip pasted into the programme, was 'Performed with Special Reference to the Death of our late beloved Queen Victoria'.

Appendix 4: Leeds Philharmonic Society programmes, 1900-1914

Fifth Concert, 27th February 1901. *Brodsky Quartet/Blanche Marchesi/H C Bird*

[Miscellaneous chamber and vocal concert]

Sixth Concert, 27th March 1901.

Stanford/Hallé Orchestra

Mendelssohn "St Paul"

Season 1901-1902

First Concert, 6th November 1901.

Stanford/Hallé Orchestra

Mendelssohn "Elijah"

Second Concert, 20th November 1901.

Richter/Hallé Orchestra

Bach	Suite in D major for orchestra
Franz	Unaccompanied chorus, "117 th Psalm"
Glazunov	Symphony, No.6, in C minor
Brahms	Overture "Academic Festival"
Wagner	Good Friday's Spell (Parsifal)
Wagner	Wach auf, and Hans Sachs Chorus (Die Meistersinger)
Dvořák	Slavonic Rhapsody, No.3

Third Concert, 18th December 1901.

Stanford/Hallé Orchestra

Handel Messiah

Fourth Concert, 29th January 1902.

Richter/Hallé Orchestra

Wagner	A "Faust" Overture
G G Wagner	Motet "Blessing, Glory and Wisdom"
Bruch	Concerto in G minor for Violin and Orchestra
Beethoven	Symphony No.7 in A Major
Brahms	"Song of the Fates," for Chorus and Orchestra ⁵
Cornelius	Overture "The Barber of Bagdad"

⁵ The Brahms work was omitted due to the indisposition of Madame Blanche Marchesi. Instead Miss Agnes Nicholls performed songs by Schubert, Somervell and Parry.

Fifth Concert, 26th February 1902.

*Kruse Quartet/Blanche Marchesi/
Fanny Davies/Henry Bird*

[Miscellaneous chamber and vocal concert]

Sixth Concert, 21st March 1902.

Stanford/Hallé Orchestra

Berlioz "Faust"

Season 1902-1903

First Concert, 22nd October 1902.

Stanford/Hallé Orchestra

Handel "Israel in Egypt"

Second Concert, 19th November 1902.⁶

Richter/Hallé Orchestra

Strauss	Symphonic Poem, "Don Juan"
Tchaikovsky	Symphony Pathétique [No.6]
Elgar	From the Bavarian Highlands (Choral Songs)
Liszt	Hungarian Rhapsody, No.4 in D minor and G
Wagner	Prelude and Closing Scene, "Tristan & Isolde"
Strauss	The Wanderer's Storm Song, for Six Part Chorus and Orchestra
Wagner	Ride of the Valkyries

Third Concert, 22nd December 1902.

Stanford/Full Band⁷

Handel Messiah

⁶ This concert was to have been given by Henry Wood and the Queen's Hall Orchestra. Richter and the Hallé Orchestra replaced them, leaving the programme unchanged other than performing Liszt's Hungarian Rhapsody No.2 instead of No.4.

⁷ The term "Full Band" used in the programme indicates a scratch orchestra comprised chiefly of local musicians.

Fourth Concert, 28th January 1903.⁸

Richter/Hallé Orchestra

Beethoven	Pastoral Symphony
Mozart	Overture, Magic Flute
Cornelius	Die Vätergruft
Bach	Concerto, in D minor [for two violins]
Wagner	Siegfried Idyll
Charles Wood	A Dirge for Two Veterans

Fifth Concert, 4th March 1903.

*Kruse Quartet/Blanche Marchesi/
Fanny Davies/Henry Bird*

[Miscellaneous chamber and vocal concert]

Sixth Concert, 18th March 1903.

Stanford/Hallé Orchestra

Stanford "Eden"

Extra Concert, 4th April 1903.

Fricker/Full Band

Mendelssohn "Elijah"

Season 1903-1904

First Concert, 28th October 1903.

Parry/Stanford/Hallé Orchestra

Schumann	"Genoveva," Act 1
Parry	Theme and Variations for orchestra
Parry	"War and Peace"

Second Concert, 17th November 1903.

Henry J Wood/Queen's Hall Orchestra

Weber	Overture, "Der Freischütz"
Tchaikovsky	Symphony No.5 in E Minor and Major
Strauss	The Wanderer's Storm Song, for Six Part Chorus and Orchestra
Bach	Gavotte in E for strings
Brahms	Minuet from Serenade in D

⁸ John Green's annotations show that the order of programme was changed on the day, opening with the Mozart overture, followed by the works by Cornelius and Beethoven.

Appendix 4: Leeds Philharmonic Society programmes, 1900-1914

Mendelssohn	Scherzo from "A Midsummer Night's Dream"
Liszt-Wood	Hungarian Rhapsodie No.2 in D Minor and Major

Third Concert, 22nd December 1903.

Stanford/Full Band

Handel	Messiah
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Fourth Concert, 27th January 1904.

Richter/Stanford/Hallé Orchestra

Wagner	Overture, "Die Meistersinger"
Brahms	Symphony No.1, in C Minor
Stanford	Motet, "The Lord of Might" for Chorus, Orchestra and Organ
Beethoven	Concerto, in G Major, for Pianoforte and Orchestra [No.4]
Beethoven	"A Calm Sea," for Chorus and Orchestra
Elgar	Variations on an Original Theme

Fifth Concert, 24th February 1904.

*Brodsky Quartet/Mabel Braine/
Wilhelm Backhaus*

[Miscellaneous chamber and vocal concert]

Sixth Concert, 23rd March 1904.

Stanford/Hallé Orchestra

Bach	Mass in B minor
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Season 1904-1905

First Concert, 26th October 1904.

Richter/Hallé Orchestra

Wagner	A "Faust" Overture
Brahms	"Song of Destiny," for Chorus and Orchestra
Dvořák	Symphony (In Memoriam) "From the New World," in E Minor
Tchaikovsky	Pianoforte Concerto, Op.23, in B flat minor
Parry	"Blest Pair of Sirens," for Chorus and Orchestra
Elgar	Overture "Cockaigne"

Appendix 4: Leeds Philharmonic Society programmes, 1900-1914

Second Concert, 23rd November 1904.

Stanford/Hallé Orchestra

Walford Davies "Everyman" (*conducted by the composer*)

Stanford "The Revenge"

Wagner "Kaisermarsch"

Third Concert, 21st December 1904.

Stanford/Full Band

Handel Messiah

Fourth Concert, 25th January 1905.

Richter/Hallé Orchestra

Beethoven Overture, "Die Weihe des Hauses"

Brahms Symphony in D, Op.73

Elgar Overture "In the South"

Bach "Now hath salvation," Cantata No.50

Strauss Symphonic Poem, "Don Juan"

Liszt First Hungarian Rhapsodie in F

Fifth Concert, 15th February 1905.

*Kruse Quartet/Fanny Davies/
Harry Plunket Greene*

[Miscellaneous chamber and vocal concert]

Sixth Concert, 22nd March 1905.

Stanford/Elgar/Hallé Orchestra

Elgar "The Dream of Gerontius" (*conducted by the composer*)

Brahms "Song of Triumph"

Season 1905-1906

First Concert, 8th November 1905.

Stanford/Hallé Orchestra

Beethoven "The Glorious Hour"

Elgar "King Olaf"

Appendix 4: Leeds Philharmonic Society programmes, 1900-1914

Second Concert, 29th November 1905.

Richter/Hallé Orchestra

Beethoven	Overture, "Coriolanus"
Wagner	Siegfried Idyll
Wagner	Introduction & Liebestod, "Tristan & Isolde"
Wagner	Choruses from "Die Meistersinger," Act 3
Wagner	Trauer Marsch, "Götterdämmerung"
Wagner	Herald & Male Voice Chorus of Vassals "Lohengrin," Act 2 Scene 3
Beethoven	Symphony in E flat, No.3 "Eroica"

Third Concert, 20th December 1905.

Fricker/Full Band

Handel	Messiah
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Fourth Concert, 24th January 1906.

Richter/Hallé Orchestra

Humperdinck	Overture, "Hänsel and Gretel"
Strauss	Symphonic Poem, "Till Eulenspiegel"
Tchaikovsky	Concerto for Violin and Orchestra
Bach	Concerto for Violin, 2 Solo Flutes, and String Orchestra, "Brandenburg", No.4
Bach	Chorus, "Sing ye to the Lord"
Mendelssohn	Symphony in A Minor, "The Scotch," Op.56

Fifth Concert, 21st February 1906.

*Ada Crossley/Maud McCarthy
Percy Grainger/Samuel Liddle*

[Miscellaneous chamber concert]

Sixth Concert, 28th March 1906.

Stanford/Hallé Orchestra

Brahms	"German Requiem"
Stanford	Sea Songs
Mendelssohn	Finale to "Loreley"

Season 1906-1907

First Concert, 31st October 1906.

Stanford/Hallé Orchestra

Dvořák	“The Spectre's Bride”
Parry	“The Pied Piper of Hamelin”
Goldmark	Grand Scena, “Queen of Sheba”
Weber	Overture “Euryanthe”

Second Concert, 5th December 1906.

Richter/Hallé Orchestra

Beethoven	Overture, “Leonora”, No.3
Brahms	Symphony, No.4
Grieg	Suite, “Peer Gynt”
Cliffe	Cantata, “Ode to the North-East Wind”
Tchaikovsky	Suite, “Casse noisette”
Liszt	[Hungarian] Rhapsody, No.4

Third Concert, 19th December 1906.

Stanford/Full Band

Handel	Messiah
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Fourth Concert, 30th January 1907.⁹

Richter/Hallé Orchestra

Bach	Orchestral Suite, No.3, in D major
S Wesley	Choral Work “In Exitu Israel”
Schubert	Symphony, in B minor “The Unfinished”
Beethoven	Symphony, No.8
Brahms	Rhapsody, for Contralto Solo and Chorus of Male Voices ¹⁰
Grieg	Holberg Suite, for Strings
Wagner	Overture “Flying Dutchman”

⁹ This was a plebiscite concert, with the programme chosen according the votes of the Leeds Philharmonic Society subscribers.

¹⁰ The Hon Norah Dawnay was unable to sing the solo part in the Brahms due to illness and was replaced at short notice by Susan Cover, a member of the chorus.

Fifth Concert, 20th February 1907.

*Agnes Nicholls/John Dunn/
Fanny Davies/Hamilton Harty*

[Miscellaneous chamber and vocal concert]

Sixth Concert, 20th March 1907.

Stanford/Hallé Orchestra

Beethoven	Overture "Egmont"
Cowen	"Ode to the Passions" (<i>conducted by the composer</i>)
Berlioz	"Grande messe des morts"

Season 1907-1908

First Concert, 30th October 1907.

Richter/Hallé Orchestra

Dvořák	Overture "In der Natur"
Verdi	Choral work "Stabat Mater"
Beethoven	Symphony No.5
Wagner	Overture & Venusberg Music [<i>Tannhäuser</i>]
Brahms	Variations on Haydn's "Chorale St Antonii"
Brahms	Choral work "Song of the Fates"
Bizet	Suite "L'Arlesienne," No.1

Second Concert, 27th November 1907.

Stanford/Hallé Orchestra

Berlioz	Overture "Benvenuto Cellini"
Berlioz	"Symphonie Fantastique"
Berlioz	Grande messe des morts

Third Concert, 18th December 1907.

Stanford/Full Band

Handel	Messiah ¹¹
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¹¹ According to John Green's annotations, Lloyd Chandos replaced William Green who was 'on tour in India at the time of the concert'.

Fourth Concert, 29th January 1908.

Richter/Hallé Orchestra

Wagner	Prelude "Lohengrin"
Cornelius	Part Song, "Grim Death"
Tchaikovsky	Symphony, No.4, in F minor
Mendelssohn	Concerto, for Violin and Orchestra
Strauss	Tone Poem "Don Juan"
Bach	Motet, "The Spirit Also"
Schubert	Overture "Rosamunde"

Fifth Concert, 26th February 1908.

*Antonia Dolores/
Nora McKay/Frederick Dawson*

[Miscellaneous chamber and vocal concert]

Sixth Concert, 25th March 1908.

Stanford/Hallé Orchestra

Wagner	Prelude "Tristan" and "Isolde's Liebestod"
Charles Wood	"Dirge for Two Veterans"
Ernest Farrar	"The Blessed Damsel" (<i>First performance of the work</i>)
Stanford	"Stabat Mater"

Season 1908-1909

First Concert, 4th November 1908.

Stanford/Leeds Symphony Orchestra

Mendelssohn	"St Paul"
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Second Concert, 2nd December 1908.

Richter/Hallé Orchestra

Mendelssohn	Overture "The Hebrides"
Brahms	Choral Work, Schiller's "Noenia"
Tchaikovsky	Symphony, No.5
Weber-Berlioz	L'Invitation à la valse
Bach	Motet, No.4, "Be not afraid"
Elgar	Variations on an Original Theme

Appendix 4: Leeds Philharmonic Society programmes, 1900-1914

Third Concert, 22nd December 1908. *Stanford/Leeds Symphony Orchestra*

Handel Messiah

Fourth Concert, 27th January 1909. *Fricker/Leeds Symphony Orchestra*

Mendelssohn Overture, "Ruy Blas"
Wagner Siegfried Idyll
Dvořák Symphony, "From the New World"
Mendelssohn Choral Work, "First Walpurgis Night"
Sibelius Tone Poem, "Finlandia"
Wagner Overture, "Tannhäuser"

Fifth Concert, 3rd March 1909. *Richter/Hallé Orchestra*

Wagner Die Walküre, Act 1
Wagner Pogner's Address, "Die Meistersinger"
Wagner Trial Song, "Die Meistersinger"
Wagner Closing Scene, "Götterdämmerung"
Wagner Prize Song, "Die Meistersinger"
Wagner Choruses, "Die Meistersinger" [Act 3]

Sixth Concert, 24th March 1909.¹² *Stanford/Hallé Orchestra*

Handel "Acis and Galatea"
Schumann "Faust," Part III

¹² An annotation by John Green in the programme book recorded that this was Stanford's 'last official concert as conductor of the LPS'. The title of official conductor was formally abolished in April 1910 with the retirement of Stanford from the post.

Season 1909-1910

First Concert, 2nd November 1909.

Richter/Hallé Orchestra

Weber	Overture, "Oberon"
Elgar	Symphony in A flat, Op.55 (<i>First performance in Leeds</i>)
Bantock	Comedy Overture, "The Pierrot of the Minute"
Brahms	"Triumphlied"
Tchaikovsky	Francesca da Rimini [Overture]
Dvořák	[Slavonic] Rhapsody No.3 in A flat

Second Concert, 30th November 1909.

Stanford/Hallé Orchestra

Stanford	"Eden" ¹³
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Third Concert, 22nd December 1909.

Fricker/Leeds Symphony Orchestra

Handel	Messiah
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Fourth Concert, 26th January 1910.

*Mrs George Swinton/Hamilton Harty/
Principals of the Queen's Hall Orchestra*

[Miscellaneous chamber and vocal recital]

Fifth Concert, 23rd February 1910.

Fricker/Leeds Symphony Orchestra

Dvořák	"Stabat Mater"
Mendelssohn	"Midsummer Night's Dream" [Incidental Music]
Wagner	"Elizabeth's Greeting," (Tannhäuser)

Sixth Concert, 16th March 1910.

Richter/Hallé Orchestra

Wagner	Overture, "Die Meistersinger"
Wagner	Act II, Scene 4, "Die Walküre"
Wagner	"The Elder's Scint," "Die Meistersinger"
Wagner	Choruses, Act II, Scenes 3 & 4, "Lohengrin"

¹³ Blanche Tomlinson replaced Mary Swailes who was ill.

Appendix 4: Leeds Philharmonic Society programmes, 1900-1914

Wagner	Act III, Scene 2, "Lohengrin"
Wagner	Sailor Choruses, Act III, Scene 1, "Flying Dutchman"
Wagner	Wotan's Farewell, "Die Walküre"
Wagner	Der Ritt der Walküren

Season 1910-1911

First Concert, 23rd November 1910.

Richter/Hallé Orchestra

Wagner	Vorspiel, "Parsifal"
Wagner	Good Friday Music from "Parsifal"
Wagner	Grail Scene, Act 1, "Parsifal"
Beethoven	Ninth Symphony (Choral)

Second Concert, 21st December 1910.

Fricker/Leeds Symphony Orchestra

Handel	Messiah
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Third Concert, 22nd February 1911.

Fricker/Leeds Symphony Orchestra

Hubert Bath	The Wedding of Shon Maclean (<i>conducted by the composer</i>)
Sullivan	The Golden Legend

Fourth Concert, 15th March 1911.

Wassily Safonoff/London Symphony Orchestra

Tchaikovsky	Francesca da Rimini
Tchaikovsky	Pianoforte Concerto in B flat minor, Op.23
Tchaikovsky	"Christus Legend" for Unaccompanied Chorus [from Children's Songs op.54 no.5]
Tchaikovsky	Symphony No.4 in F minor

Season 1911-1912

First Concert, 25th October 1911.

Michael Balling/Hallé Orchestra

Weber	Overture, "Der Freischütz"
Elgar	Violin Concerto in B minor (<i>First Performance in Leeds</i>)

Appendix 4: Leeds Philharmonic Society programmes, 1900-1914

Tchaikovsky	Chorus of Flowers & Insects, "Mandragora"
Beethoven	Symphony No.8
Wagner	Overture, "Flying Dutchman"

Second Concert, 20th December 1911.

Fricker/Full Band

Handel	Messiah
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Third Concert, 7th February 1912.

Elgar/Hallé Orchestra

Mozart	Overture, "Die Zauberflöte"
Elgar	Symphony, No.2, in E flat (<i>First Performance in Leeds</i>)
Elgar	"The Reveille," Male Voice Part Song
Bach	Concerto, No.4, for Violin, 2 Solo Flutes and Strings
Elgar	Part Song, "Go, song of mine"
Grieg	Suite, "Peer Gynt"

Fourth Concert, 20th March 1912.

Fricker/Full Band

Bantock	"Omar Khayyam," Part II (<i>First Performance in Leeds</i>)
Mozart	"Requiem"

Season 1912-1913

First Concert, 29th October 1912.

Henry J Wood/Queen's Hall Orchestra

Bach	Sanctus No.2
Saint-Saëns	Symphony No.3 in C Minor, for Pianoforte (four hands), Orchestra and Organ (<i>First Performance in Leeds</i>)
Dukas	Scherzo, "L'Apprenti Sorcier"
Beethoven	Rondino for wind instruments
Mozart	Gavotte from "Idomeneo"
Järnefelt	Praeludium
Elgar	Choral Suite, "From the Bavarian Highlands"
Saint-Saëns	Prelude to "The Deluge"
Balfour Gardiner	Ballade for Chorus and Orchestra, "The News from Whydah"

Appendix 4: Leeds Philharmonic Society programmes, 1900-1914

Second Concert, 19th December 1912. *Fricker/Leeds Symphony Orchestra*

Handel Messiah

Third Concert, 29th January 1913. *Michael Balling/Hallé Orchestra*

Reger Overture to a Comedy
Goetz "Noenia" for Chorus & Orchestra
J H Foulds Suite, "Music Pictures"
Mozart Symphony in G Minor [No.40]
Strauss Tone poem, "Thus spake Zarathustra"
Charles Wood "Dirge for Two Veterans"
William Wallace Symphonic Poem, "Villon"

Fourth Concert, 12th March 1913. *Fricker/Leeds Symphony Orchestra*

Bach Mass in B Minor

Season 1913-1914

First Concert, 12th November 1913. *Michael Balling/Hallé Orchestra*

Humperdinck Prelude, "Hänsel and Gretel"
Schumann Symphony No.1 in B flat
Bach Motet, "Come, Jesu, come"
Strauss Symphonic Poem "Death and Transfiguration"
Wagner Waldweben [*Siegfried*]
Beethoven A Calm Sea and Prosperous Voyage for Chorus and Orchestra
Liszt Hungarian Rhapsody No.1 in F

Second Concert, 22nd December 1913. *Fricker/Full Band*

Handel Messiah

Appendix 4: Leeds Philharmonic Society programmes, 1900-1914

Third Concert, 4th February 1914. *Landon Ronald/The New Symphony Orchestra*

Berlioz	Overture, "Carnaval Romain"
Beethoven	Symphony No.4 in B flat
Parry	Choral work, "Blest Pair of Sirens"
Schubert	Entr'acte (ii) and Ballet Music (i), "Rosamunde"
Tchaikovsky	"Theme & Variations" from Suite in G
Cornelius	Motet, "Love, I give myself to thee"
Dvořák	Overture, "Carneval"

Fourth Concert, 25th March 1914. *Fricker/Leeds Symphony Orchestra*

Wolf-Ferrari	La Vita Nuova [<i>first performance in Leeds</i>]
Franck	The Beatitudes [<i>first performance in Leeds</i>]

Appendix 5: Finances of the Leeds Municipal Concerts

Table 6: Costings for proposed Municipal Concert series, October 1899

EXPENDITURE	£
40 players at £1 each concert	320
Conductor (4 concerts)	160
Sub-conductor	100
Hire of music, soloists, extra players, &c.	250
Printing, advertising (£30 per concert)	240
Total	1,070
RECEIPTS	
400 subscribers at £1 1s. each (one ticket for each concert)	420
400 subscribers at 2s. 6d. each (4 best concerts)	200
500 subscribers at 2s. each (4 popular concerts)	200
500 subscribers at 3d. each (4 concerts)	25
600 subscribers at 3d. each (4 popular concerts)	30
Balance	195
Total	1,070

Source: *YP*, 5th October 1899.

Table 7: Accounts for Leeds Municipal Concerts, Financial Year to 25th March 1904

	Expenditure (£ s d)			Income (£ s d)		
Fees for Artistes	239	11	0			
Fees for Attendants	14	17	0			
Printing	37	18	2			
Advertising	20	4	0			
Purchase & Hire of Music	59	8	4			
Sundries	2	2	6			
Admissions				202	10	6
Sale of Programmes				33	4	10
Total	374	1	0	235	15	4

Source: *City Fund Revenue Account 1903-04. City of Leeds, Abstract of Accounts. 26th March 1903 to 25th March 1904.*

Table 8: Accounts for Leeds Municipal Concerts, Financial Year to 25th March 1905

	Expenditure (£ s d)			Income (£ s d)		
Fees for Artistes	291	6	6			
Fees for Attendants	19	14	3			
Printing and Advertising	71	11	5			
Purchase & Hire of Music	36	19	3			
Admissions				255	2	10
Sale of Programmes				30	14	11
Total	419	11	5	285	17	9

Source: *City Fund Revenue Account 1904-05. City of Leeds, Abstract of Accounts. 26th March 1904 to 25th March 1905.*

Table 9: Accounts for Leeds Municipal Concerts, Financial Year to 31st March 1906

	Expenditure (£ s d)			Income (£ s d)		
Fees for Artistes	316	11	4			
Fees for Attendants	26	19	0			
Printing and Advertising	66	4	4			
Purchase & Hire of Music	37	0	3			
Admissions				323	19	0
Sale of Programmes				35	8	0
Total	446	14	11	359	7	0

Source: *City Fund Revenue Account 1905-06. City of Leeds, Abstract of Accounts. 26th March 1905 to 31st March 1906.*

Appendix 5: Finances of the Leeds Municipal Concerts

The tables below include figures for other cultural activities supported by the City Council by way of comparison.

Table 10: Accounts for Leeds Municipal Concerts and other activities, Financial Year to 31st March 1908

	Expenditure (£ s d)			Income (£ s d)		
Band Performances	500	0	0			
Municipal Concerts	510	7	3	385	8	3
Organ Recitals	330	15	1	65	2	0
Public Free Libraries	12764	11	2	735	18	1

Source: Statement of Income and Expenditure of the City on Revenue Account, from 31st March 1907 to 31st March 1908. Annual Reports of Committees, Leeds City Council.

Table 11: Accounts for Leeds Municipal Concerts and other activities, Financial Year to 31st March 1909

	Expenditure (£ s d)			Income (£ s d)		
Band Performances	500	0	0			
Municipal Concerts	598	5	4	396	1	11
Organ Recitals	341	6	3	77	14	0
Public Free Libraries	15341	0	9	818	1	1

Source: Statement of Income and Expenditure of the City on Revenue Account, from 1st April 1908 to 31st March 1909. Annual Reports of Committees, Leeds City Council.

Appendix 6: Leeds orchestral personnel

Leeds Municipal Orchestra 1907-08¹

First Violins

E(dward) Elliott (principal)
Whitby Norton
Alice Simpkin
H(arry) Wright
Auber Norton
E(dward) Maude
L Busfield
A E Dunford
E(dgar) Drake
L(ily) Simms
M(ontague) Nathan
H Smith

Second Violins

H S Parker (principal)
I Shepherd
M Kellett
L Crawshaw
N Morrell
J Norton
A Fletcher
W H L(eopold) Jackson
A(thena) D Atha
Alex Cohen
N Baldwin
F N Wade
D(orothy) Broughton

Violas

Thornton Turner (principal)
E(rnest) Moxon
H(arry) Thornton
D Priestley
I(rwin) Sawdon
L(eo) Richer

Violoncellos

A(lfred) Giessing (principal)
A(rthur) Bolton (principal)
J(ohn) Walton (principal)
G(eorge) Scott Drake
A(lfred) Hemingway

Contra Basses

F Neuwirth (principal)
G Glover
T(om) H Shepherd
G Martin

Flutes

Lupton Whitelock
O Perkins

Oboes

F(rank) Holt
Weber Fawcett

Cor Anglais

F(rank) Holt

Clarinets

H Calvert
WW Lupton

Bassoons

S F Midgley
J Marshall

Horns

Squire Wood
W Calverley
H Jackson
S H Jones

Trumpets

Mark Hemingway
A Tomlinson

Trombones

I Hardaker
J Eycott
E Parkin

Tuba

George Boden

Kettle Drums

J Shaw

Bass Drum

A G Shaw

Pianist

Harold Mason

¹ Programme book, Ninth Municipal Concert, 29th February 1908. Forenames or initials are as transcribed from the programme. Where known from other sources, forenames are completed within parentheses.

The Leeds Symphony Orchestra 1913²

First Violins

A(lex) Cohen (principal)
W(hitby) Norton
E(dward) Maude
A E Dunford
E(dgar) Drake
L Busfield
W F Wilson
D Perkins
L(ily) Simms
C(harles) Mann

Second Violins

A(rthur) Boothroyd
I Shepherd
M Kellett
H Field
F Raper
J Terry
B(ensley) Ghent
A Lloyd

Violas

T(hornton) Turner
E(rnest) Moxon
H(arry) Thornton
H Bedford
W H L(eopold) Jackson

Violoncellos

G(eorge) Drake
J(ohn) Walton
A(lfred) Hemingway
H Drake

Contra Basses

T(om) H Shepherd
G Glover
J L Barker
W(eber) Fawcett

Flutes

L(upton) Whitelock
G F Lee
S(am) Middleton

Piccolo

S(am) Middleton

Oboes

F(rank) Holt
W(eber) Fawcett

Cor anglais

F(rank) Holt

Clarinets

J R Robinson
W W Lupton

Bassoons

A(rchie) L Camden
J Marshall

Horns

P Stuteley
S(quire) Wood
J A Haley
E Ward

Trumpets

M(ark) Hemingway
A Tomlinson

Trombones

J Eycott
M Hudson
E Parkin

Tuba

A Viney

Tympani

J Shaw

Bass Drum, &c.

L Wood

² Programme book, Leeds Saturday Orchestral Concerts, 22nd February 1913.

Appendix 7: Chronology of Leeds musical institutions 1858-1914

<i>Leeds Musical Festival</i>	
1858	First Leeds Musical Festival, conductor William Sterndale Bennett.
1874	Second Leeds Musical Festival, under Sir Michael Costa. Start of triennial series.
1880	Arthur Sullivan appointed Festival Conductor.
1900	Stanford appointed conductor on death of Sullivan.
1902	Alfred Benton replaced by Herbert Fricker as chorus master.
1907	Festival chorus composed entirely of Leeds vocalists.
1909	Resignation of Fred Spark as Honorary Secretary.
1910	The last Leeds Festival conducted by Stanford. First Leeds Festival to make a financial loss..
1913	Nikisch, Elgar and Allen engaged as joint conductors.

<i>Leeds Philharmonic Society</i>	
1870	Foundation of Leeds Philharmonic Society, conducted by James Broughton.
1884	Alfred Broughton succeeds his brother James as conductor.
1895	John Green becomes Honorary Secretary (held post until 1916). Death of Alfred Broughton, Adolf Beyschlag conducts for two seasons.
1896	Amalgamation of Leeds Philharmonic Society & Leeds Subscription Concerts.
1897	Stanford appointed conductor.
1900	Herbert Fricker succeeds F Kilvington Hattersley as chorus master.
1910	Number of concerts per season reduced from six to four.
1914	LPS "Special Appeal" in response to falling subscriptions.

Appendix 7: Chronology of Leeds musical institutions 1858-1914

<i>Leeds Choral Union</i>	
1880	First Leeds Choral Union founded by William Creser, but soon disbanded.
1895	Leeds Choral Union founded by Henry Embleton. Alfred Benton appointed as conductor.
1896	First performance of LCU - Gounod's <i>Redemption</i> .
1905	Henry Coward appointed conductor.
1914	Performance of <i>The Apostles</i> at Canterbury Cathedral conducted by Elgar

<i>Orchestral music</i>	
1890	Foundation of the predominantly amateur Leeds Symphony Society Orchestra (still in existence).
1896	First concert of the Leeds Permanent Orchestra. Soon subsumed into Leeds Choral Union.
1901	Leeds City Free Orchestral Concerts organised by Edgar and G Percy Haddock.
1902	Experimental series of "Special Saturday Evening Concerts" begins.
1903	First season of the Leeds Municipal Concerts, conducted by Herbert Fricker.
1908	Leeds Symphony Orchestra Ltd formed from the Leeds Municipal Orchestra.
1911	Cessation of Leeds Municipal Concerts.
1913	Town Hall concerts resumed as the Leeds Saturday Orchestral Concerts.

Appendix 7: Chronology of Leeds musical institutions 1858-1914

<i>Chamber music</i>	
1881	J Rawlinson Ford establishes the Leeds Chamber Concerts (from 1884 known as the Leeds Popular Concerts).
1888	Leeds Subscription Concerts replace the Leeds Popular Concerts.
1891	Formation of first Leeds String Quartet (Müller, Fawcett, Gutfeld, Giessing). Disbanded 1898.
1893	First season of Bessie Ford Chamber Concerts for the poor of Leeds.
1899	Start of the Leeds Bohemian Chamber Concerts performed by the Leeds Bohemian Quartet (Elliott, Fawcett, Haigh, Bolton).
1906	Formation of the Johan Rasch Quartet. Disbanded 1913.
1908	Formation of the Alice Simpkin Quartet. Disbanded 1912.
1912	Alexander Cohen's Leeds String Quartet (Cohen, Kitchen, Simms, Hemingway) becomes resident quartet for the Bohemian Concerts.

<i>Other events of note</i>	
1862	Leeds Private Vocal Society established.
1878	Opening of the Grand Theatre
1886	Herbert Thompson becomes music critic of the <i>Yorkshire Post</i> . Remained until 1936.
1892	Leeds Musical Union established, initially for semi-private performance of music for concerted male voices. An organisation bearing the same name was active from 1853 to 1856.
1894	Leeds College of Music founded.
1898	Herbert Fricker succeeds William Spark as organist to Leeds Town Hall.
1902	Leeds New Choral Society established by H Matthias Turton.
1906	Visit of the Leeds Chorus to Paris.
1911	First complete <i>Ring</i> cycle in the English provinces at the Grand Theatre.

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