Chapter 4: Rutland Boughton and *The Immortal Hour*

The inaugural 1922-1923 run of Rutland Boughton's *The Immortal Hour* at the Regent at King's Cross Theatre in London, fueled by a devoted, almost hysterical audience, reached a previously unheard-of run for a British opera of 216 performances.[239] The following year saw a revival of 160 performances, with subsequent revivals bringing the total to over 600. While *The Immortal Hour* failed to find success overseas, its London triumph was nothing short of phenomenal, and it "still holds the world-record for a continuous run of any serious opera by an Englishman."[240] This meteoric yet fleeting popularity makes *The Immortal Hour* a ripe subject for this study.[241]

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[239] A notice regarding the end of the work's first historic run reads:

> 'Immortal Hour' Ended: There was a scene of extraordinary enthusiasm at the Regent Theatre on Saturday night, when 'The Immortal Hour' was played for the 216th and last time. An Album containing the autographs of 226 persons of some distinction was publicly presented to [producer] Mr. Barry V. Jackson. Princess Helena Victoria, with whom was Princess Marie Louise, made the presentation with the company standing all around. Sir Denison Ross organized the collection of the names.

Anon., *The Era*, "Immortal Hour' Ended,'" Wednesday, May 2, 1923, 10. https://www.britishnewspaperarchive.co.uk/viewer/BL/0000053/19230502/127/0010?browse=False

[240] http://rutland-boughton-music-trust.blogspot.com/p/rutland-boughton.html (Accessed February, 1 2015 – the trust is under new management and the website is now closed).

[241] Even during its time, the reasons for the success of *The Immortal Hour* were not comprehended fully. Consider the following review from its first revival at the Regent in 1923:

> Only a very optimistic person would have prophesied that Mr. Rutland Boughton's music drama would have run over a hundred nights and then be revived again after the lapse of a month or two. Yet this is the case, and on Wednesday last 'The

One of the most interesting features of *The Immortal Hour* is that it was the victim of an unusual malady: a strange case of repeated attendance. In his monograph, *Rutland Boughton and the Glastonbury Festivals*, Michael Hurd states that audience members who visited the Regent did so with a devotion that prompted then to return "to see it time and time again."[242] Among those who repeatedly attended *The Immortal Hour* were the Princesses Marie Louise (1872-1956) and Helena Victoria (1870-1948). According to Hurd, the gossip columns "had a merry time" recording their visits, "devoting to them some of the fervor normally accorded to batting averages (in cricket)."[243] Yet even though Marie Louise attended *The Immortal Hour* fifty-two times, the papers reported that she was still outdone by the "claims of a certain Miss Parker to a record of 133 performances."[244] Who was this "Miss Parker" that managed to attend over half the performances of a record-breaking run of an English opera, and what compelled

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> Immortal Hour' was received so enthusiastically that the short season at the Regent Theatre promises to be more successful than the previous one. The truth is that 'The Immortal Hour' has become a cult. It would appear that most of the audience had heard the play many times, and evidently the oftener it is seen and heard the more excited one gets about it. To a comparative novice, who has only seen the play once or twice, the enormous enthusiasm for this rather shadowy tale of a mortal's dream for a beauty not of the earth is not altogether understandable. But it exists, and the reception on Wednesday was reminiscent of some of the first nights at the Old vic.

Anon., "The Immortal Hour: Revival at the Regent Theatre, "*The Era* (London), Wednesday November, 21,1923, 9. https://www.britishnewspaperarchive.co.uk/viewer/BL/0000053/19231121/108/0009?browse=False

[242] Michael Hurd, *Rutland Boughton and the Glastonbury Festivals,* (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1993), 149.

[243] Ibid., 149.

[244] Ibid., 149.

her to this feat? If Miss Parker's reasons for attending the work are for the present moment lost to history, the question of just what motivated her to see *The Immortal Hour* so often still remains significant, if only for one reason: while most British composers might have been overjoyed at *The Immortal Hour's* success, Boughton, rather than feeling elated, was downright "horrified."[245]

Boughton was particularly upset that "a work into which he had poured his very soul had been taken up by the rich and idle as a fashionable plaything."[246] The newspapers, to Boughton's chagrin, confirmed that "all fashionable London" was "running to see" *The Immortal Hour*.[247] The work's high profile guests included the Marchioness of Londonderry, Lord and Lady Ridley, Lady Winifride Elwes, Lord Clifton, Lord Beaverbrook, Lady Maud Warrender, Lady Cunard, Lady Falmouth, Mr. and Mrs. Lionel Fox Pitt, the Duchess of Sutherland, Lady Betty Butler, etc.[248] No doubt this list could have continued for quite some time, and while it is refreshing that name dropping must not have been Boughton's cup of tea, it is possible that his reasons for bristling at the presence of the elite were more political than practical. He was a staunch socialist, and his beliefs took no cues form a desire to be "fashionable," or to rub elbows with the upper class. His unapologetic views clashed with the politics of royalty,

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[245] Ibid., 149.

[246] Ibid., 149.

[247] Arthur Mee, ed. "The Immortal Hour: New Conqueror of London, A rare and lovely thing that will not die," *The Children's Newspaper,* no. 209, March 17, 1923, 2.

[248] Hurd, *Rutland Boughton,* 149.

Lady Winifride Elwes, daughter of the Eighth Earl of Denbigh, was the widow of the great tenor Gervase Elwes, who had died in a tragic accident in 1921.

business, and the affluent, to the degree that he "refused to conduct (*The Immortal Hour*) for a suggested visit of the King and Queen, and is said to have turned down the offer of a knighthood."[249] Clearly he was allergic to the elites, but did Boughton blow the presence of these notables out of proportion? Possibly. Yet, even if one assured Boughton that his masterpiece was patronized by nothing but card-carrying communists (a political party which he joined not just once but twice), he still would have found cause to protest.

Another thing that upset Boughton was that, in his opinion, the audience at the Regent did not react properly to *The Immortal Hour*, and did not give it the solemn reception it deserved. According to Hurd, Boughton claimed that, "the hysterical response to the last curtain, when only silence will prove that the effect made has been a true one, sickened me."[250] However, as if to directly contradict Boughton's interpretation of how the audience received and regarded the work, a review in the *Children's Newspaper* offered the following eulogy to *The Immortal Hour*:

> How we should like again and again to listen to the Druid's song, all too short for a thing so beautiful. It is one of the most striking tributes to this matchless hour of music that, while every hand is aching to clap to bring this old Druid back, the stillness of that moment is unbroken lest the clap of a hand or the beating of a heart should disturb a poignant scene.[251]

The *Sunday Times* reported the audience's reaction in a similar, if not quite so poetic, manner, stating that, "the silence with which it was listened to and the applause at the end

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[249] Hurd, *Rutland Boughton,* 149.

[250] Ibid., 149.

[251] Ed. Arthur Mee, "The Immortal Hour: New Conqueror of London," 2.

of each act were manifestly sincere."[252] If the audience couldn't resist the urge to applaud the final curtain, at least they received the work's most powerful moments with the very "silence" for which Boughton yearned.

Regardless of who clapped when, Boughton had his reasons for wanting a reverent audience. He interpreted the work as a metaphor for the soul leaving the body. His belief that someone who truly understood *The Immortal Hour* would refrain from making celebratory noises reflects the seriousness he attached to this spiritual content.[253]

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[252] H. M. W. and Syndey W. Carroll, "The Immortal Hour," *The Sunday Times* (London England), October 15, 1922, 6, Issue 5192.

[253] Boughton's interpretation was very much a Theosophical one. One can conclude that Boughton was indeed a spiritualist, though there is no evidence yet that he was a practicing occultist as were Yeats and Macleod. Further research may prove this at some point. However, the Etain myth was ripe for Theosophical interpretations. For a complete Theosophical take on the story, see: Dr. James H. Cousins, *The Story of Etain: A Celtic Myth and An Interpretation. Reprinted in from "Theosophy in Ireland"* publisher unknown, short booklet, circa 1929. In this volume, Cousins states:

> The burden of this ancient Myster-drama [sic] is that of the passage of the Soul (Etain) from the state of union with the Spirit (Mider), which state is called by the Vedantists the plane of sattivic consciousness, through the rajasic - the region of Gods and Daemons- to the plane of manifestation, the tamasic or gross consciousness, and her return to their original state"(19)

That both Boughton's socialist and spiritual views alienated him from his adoring crowds may not be a coincidence. As Janet Oppenheim observes, "in the ferment of ideas and movements that animated the decades of the nineteenth century and the opening years of the twentieth it was possible to perceive Theosophy as part of a vast liberation movement designed to topple the materialistic, patriarchal, capitalistic, and utterly philistine culture of the Victorian age." While there is no direct evidence linking Boughton to Theosophy, there are numerous indicators that his spiritualist beliefs were related to the esoteric practice. Not only was *The Immortal Hour's* original author a member of The Golden Dawn*,* an organization too radical even for theosophists, there are, as noted above and shall be demonstrated further below, numerous Theosophical interpretations of Boughton's *The Immortal Hour* as well as the original Etain myth. *The Other World,* 183.

Matthew Beaumont makes a detailed case for the connection between socialism and spiritualism in "Socialism and Occultism at the 'Fin de Siècle': Elective Affinities," *Victorian Review,* vol. 36, no.1 (spring 2010): 217-232.

Was the "silence" that the reporter for the *Children's Newspaper* described at the end of the druid's song simply a testament to the lyricism and poetry of that enchanting scene, or did it perhaps signal an understanding of the very same themes to which Boughton thought audience members were oblivious? When Sir Dension Ross, in a presentation to producer Barry Jackson made at the end of the work's first run, "summed up the attitude of all the work's admirers" by claiming that they had come "to look upon a visit to *The Immortal Hour* as almost a religious service,"[254] he certainly implied that the spiritual messages in the work had not gone unnoticed.[255] *The Children's Newspaper*, also, by signaling a desire to spread "a touch of the spirit of *The Immortal Hour*," hinted that there was something at play in the work that went beyond its musical appeal. Even those who balked at the notion of an artwork anchored by mysticism and spiritualism could not deny that *The Immortal Hour* seemed to possess an uncanny power. Ernest Newman, whose critiques of the work seemed perennially negative, wrote that despite his assesment that

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As for Boughton's actual religious beliefs, a description of him as "an agnostic of deep religious feeling" appears the most likely to be accurate, as Boughton is co-author of the article from which it is sourced. Herbert Antcliffe and Rutland Boughton, "A British School of Music Drama: The Work of Rutland Boughton," *The Musical Quarterly* vol. 4 no. 1 (January 1918): 117-119.

[254] Hurd, *Rutland Boughton,* 147.

For more on how Boughton transformed the second Act of *The Immortal Hour* into, almost unbelievably, the first religious ritual of the so-called Celtic 'pagan' gods, see: Williams, *Ireland's Immortals,* 438. Indeed, the processional in the second Act may have been in important element of the Theosophical interpretations of the work to be discussed below.

[255] Denison Ross was Director of the School of Oriental Studies at the University of London and was familiar with the occult as well as various mystical and theosophical traditions. See: Ariel Benison, with an introduction by Denison Ross, *The Zohar in Muslim and Christian Spain,* (London: Routledge, 1932), xiii.

the work was unintelligible, it transported listeners into a "land of secular fancy"[256] that was able to "grip us all." He went on to write that, "I myself can testify to the power of its effect on people who, one would say a priori, had not a spark of mysticism in them."[257] In a similar vein Dame Ethyl Smythe wrote to Boughton the following:

> I came away yesterday with a great, great 'impression on my chest' from the Regent. When I tell you I'm not fond of mysticism you can imagine what I think about your music... the performance enchants me in every way.[258]

It seems that, contrary to Boughton's views, in the eyes of both skeptics and devotees, the work's spiritualism was recognized, though it may not have been read exactly as he intended. What if audiences appreciated *The Immortal Hour* in a fashion more adapted to the historical moment than Boughton may have realized or could have anticipated when he wrote it? Indeed, many historical events unfolded between 1912 when Boughton initially scored *The Immortal Hour*, and 1922 when it made its London debut. This investigation seeks to discover with what aspects of its devotees' lives *The Immortal Hour* resonated and to do so while also illuminating connections between the work and the Celtic Twilight aesthetic. Ironically, it is thanks to the noble patrons who upset Boughton so badly that such connections can be made now. By searching the cultural history articulated by some of the socially prominent noblewomen mentioned above, including Princess Marie Louise, Lady Maud Warrender, Millicent Sutherland, and

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[256] Ernest Newman, "The Week's Music: Mr. Boughton's Bethlehem," *The Sunday Times* (London, England) Sunday, January 7, 1923, 5, issue 5204.

[257] Ernest Newman, "The World of Music: English Opera and English Singers," *The Sunday Times* (London, England), December 3, 7, 1922, issue 5199.

[258] Hurd, *Rutland Boughton,* 147.

others, in the form of published memoirs, reminiscences, and historical documents, it may be possible to parse out the meaning behind the work's allure, and to question whether Boughton was justified in the "horror" he felt at its London success.

Princess Marie Louise, *The Immortal Hour*, spiritualism/supernaturalism

What about *The Immortal Hour* could have inspired someone like Princess Marie Louise to attend fifty-two performances, and how could this supposedly rich and idle princess possibly have understood Boughton's music? To begin, she had a more musical background than Boughton may have imagined. In her memoir, *My Memories of Six Reigns* she regales readers with astonishing tales of close encounters with prominent German musicians including Clara Schumann, Hans von Bulow, and Joseph Joachim, and even recounts how Cosima Wagner shepherded her through a crash course in Wagner appreciation, which included attending rehearsals at Wanfried.[259] Despite encountering so many luminaries, she reserves her greatest praise for the violinist Johannes Wolff, a student of Henryk Wieniawski of whom she wrote in the following terms:

> Perhaps he did not have a very outstanding international reputation as a violinist, but there was something about his playing which, to my mind, made a greater appeal to his audience than perhaps more celebrated artists.[260]

Marie Louise's preference for this underappreciated violinist suggests that she may have preferred a folk-melody – if played with appropriate taste and sensibility – over the

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[259] Princess Marie Louise, *My Memories of Six Reigns* (New York: Dutton and Co., 1957), 49, 59.

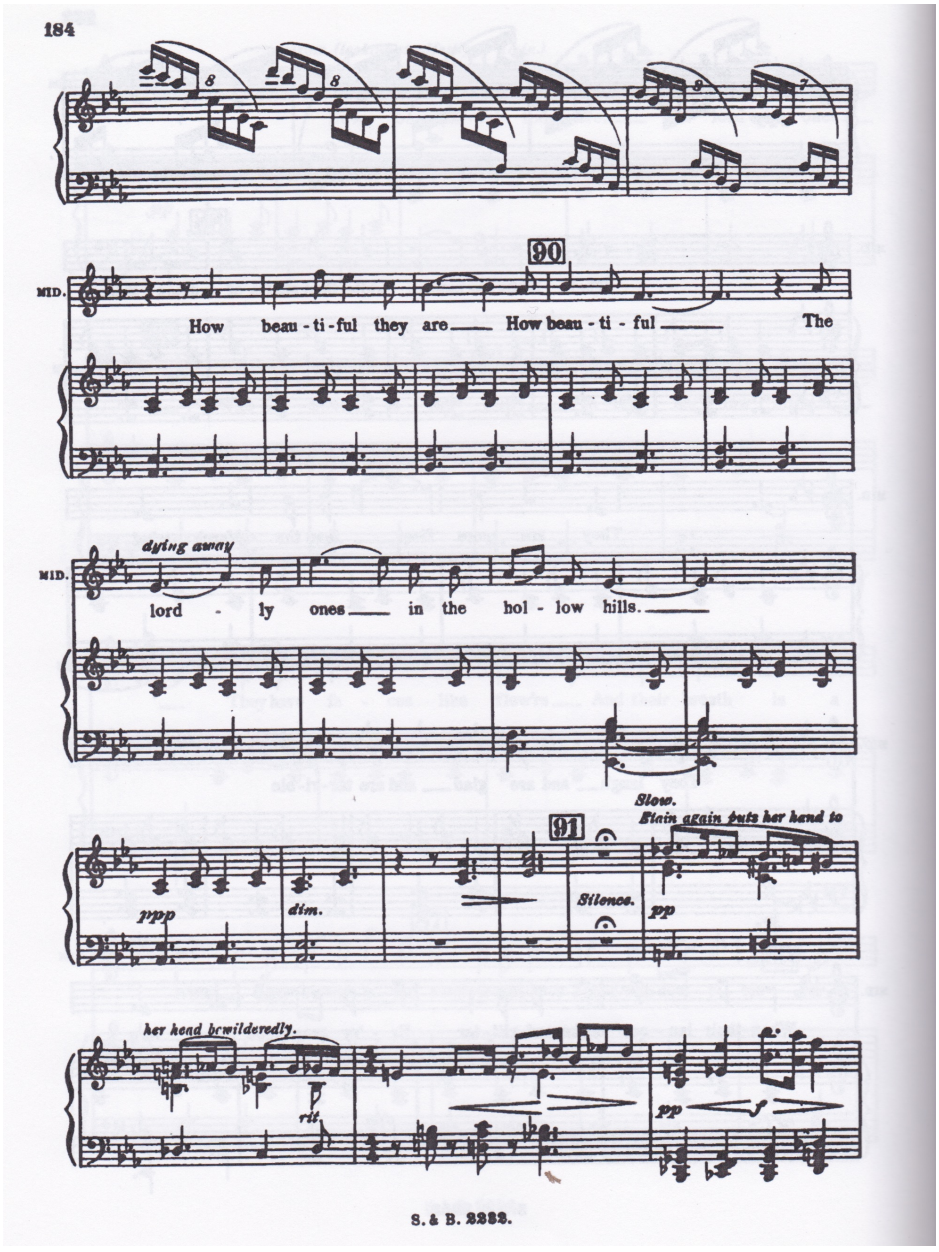
[260] Ibid.,165.

chromatic extravagance of a work like Strauss' *Elektra.* As shall be demonstrated below, the compositional aesthetic of Boughton's score was perfectly suited to someone with tastes like Marie Louise.

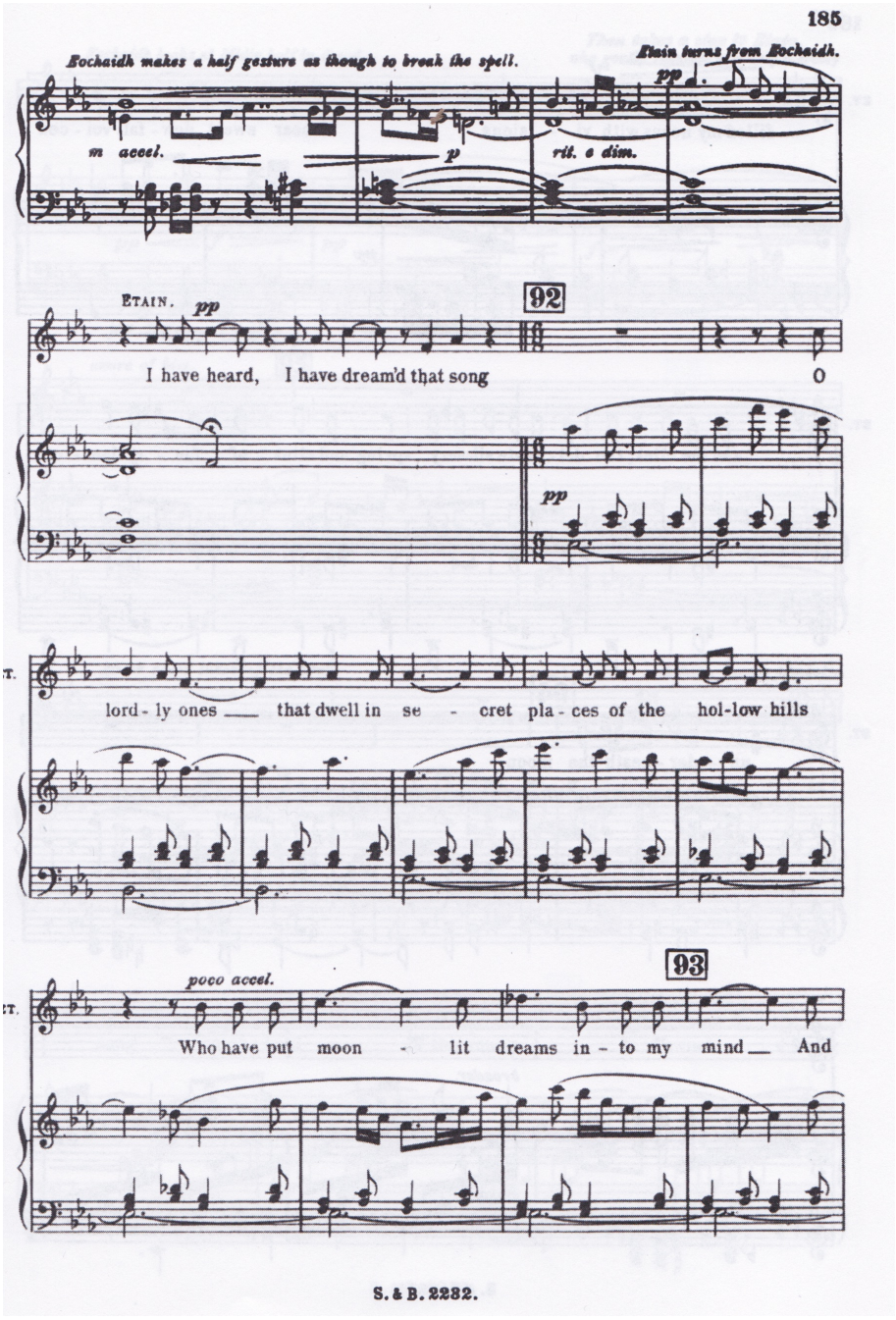
Like other composers of the Celtic Twilight, Boughton had a strong attraction to the music and the ideas of Richard Wagner, and with Wagner *The Immortal Hour* makes its first connection to Celtic Twilight. As noted previously, the Wagnerian element of Celtic Twilight could be a major stumbling block for a composer. Thankfully, Boughton did not let Wagner's influence run roughshod over his score. Though *The Immortal Hour* certainly engages in some Wagnerian chromaticism and modest use of leitmotifs, it is still essentially a number opera. It also avoids the giganticism of Bantock or any attempt at an excessive orchestration. Boughton further tempers the work's Wagnerian elements by incorporating the influence of Celtic folk song. This folk influence came directly from his recent study of Kennedy-Fraser's *Folksongs of the Hebrides*. These folk materials helped him imbue *The Immortal Hour* with "a personal vein of simple lyricism."[261] The work's Wagnerian sections often serve as connecting tissue or to heighten the drama, while the work's most important songs, such as "The Faery Song," drawn from Fiona Macloed's *From the Hills of Dream,* follow Kennedy-Fraser's folk idiom.

[261] Hurd, *Rutland Boughton,* 54.

Figure 17: Conclusion of the "Faery Song" from the Piano Score of *The Immortal Hour,* followed by Princess Etain's response:[262]



[262] For a synopsis of the plot, see below. Boughton*, The Immortal Hour,* 184-185.



One of the major features of Kennedy-Fraser's folk-melodies is their reliance on the pentatonic scale, and Boughton used this scale at key points in his opera to great effect, particularly with the melody of the "Faery Song" which begins in the fourth measure of the selection. Of course, the pentatonic scale avoids the 'leading tones' – the

fourth and seventh scale degrees of a major scare. Often the pentatonic scale is interpreted from the perspective the minor scale, in which it is the second and sixth degrees that are omitted. The "Faery Song," simple as it appears on the page, deftly combines the pentatonic scale with a Lydian harmonization. The tonic of the melody, regardless of what the key signature may suggest, is A flat, and the song is harmonized in A-flat Lydian. Thoroughly pentatonic, the melody avoids notes D and G at all times. Meanwhile, the harmony alternates between an A flat major chord, and a B flat major chord, which sneaks in the raised 4^{th} (D) necessary to complete the Lydian effect. Finally, a G appears in the cadential E-flat-major chord at the third measure of the third system during the phrase "hollow hills." This is followed by a final A flat major chord, completing a plagal (IV-I) cadence. Thus, the "Faery Song" combines modality and pentatonicism, two features associated with both English and Celtic folk music.

Though the gentle melody is, like the harmony, very much in the vein of folksong, Boughton did not adopt Hebridean "irregular rhythms" (as found in Kennedy-Fraser's studies).[263] The "Faery Song's" rhythm is simple, arriving neatly on the downbeat, and the phrasing is square, and this adds to the music's folksy character, wether it is an exact representation of Hebridean folksong or not. The "Faery Song" is an enactment of 'folk-music' not beholden to any concept of 'authenticity.' This freewheeling adoption of folk elements is analogous to Yeats's approach to Celtic mythology and folktales in *The Celtic Twilight.*

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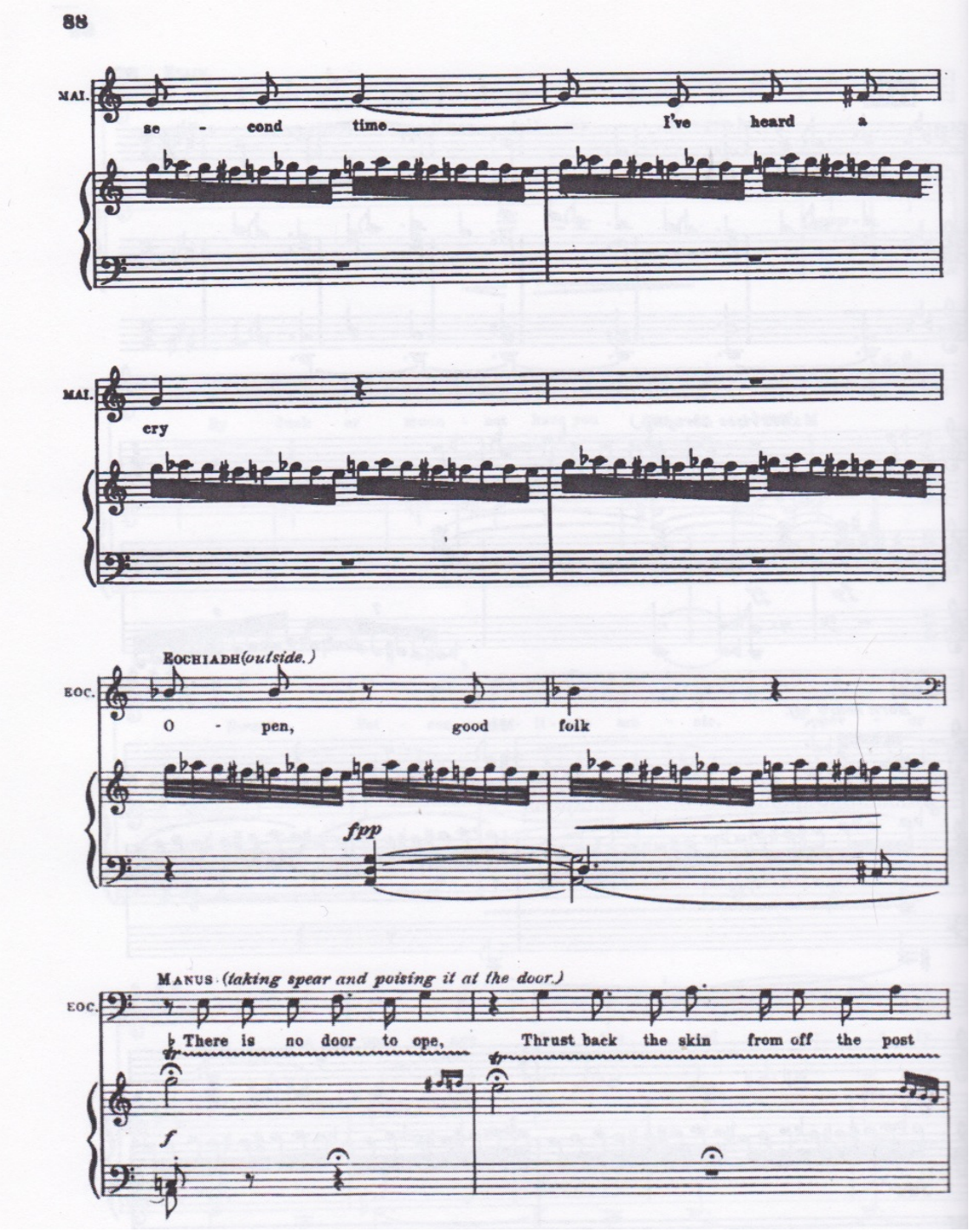
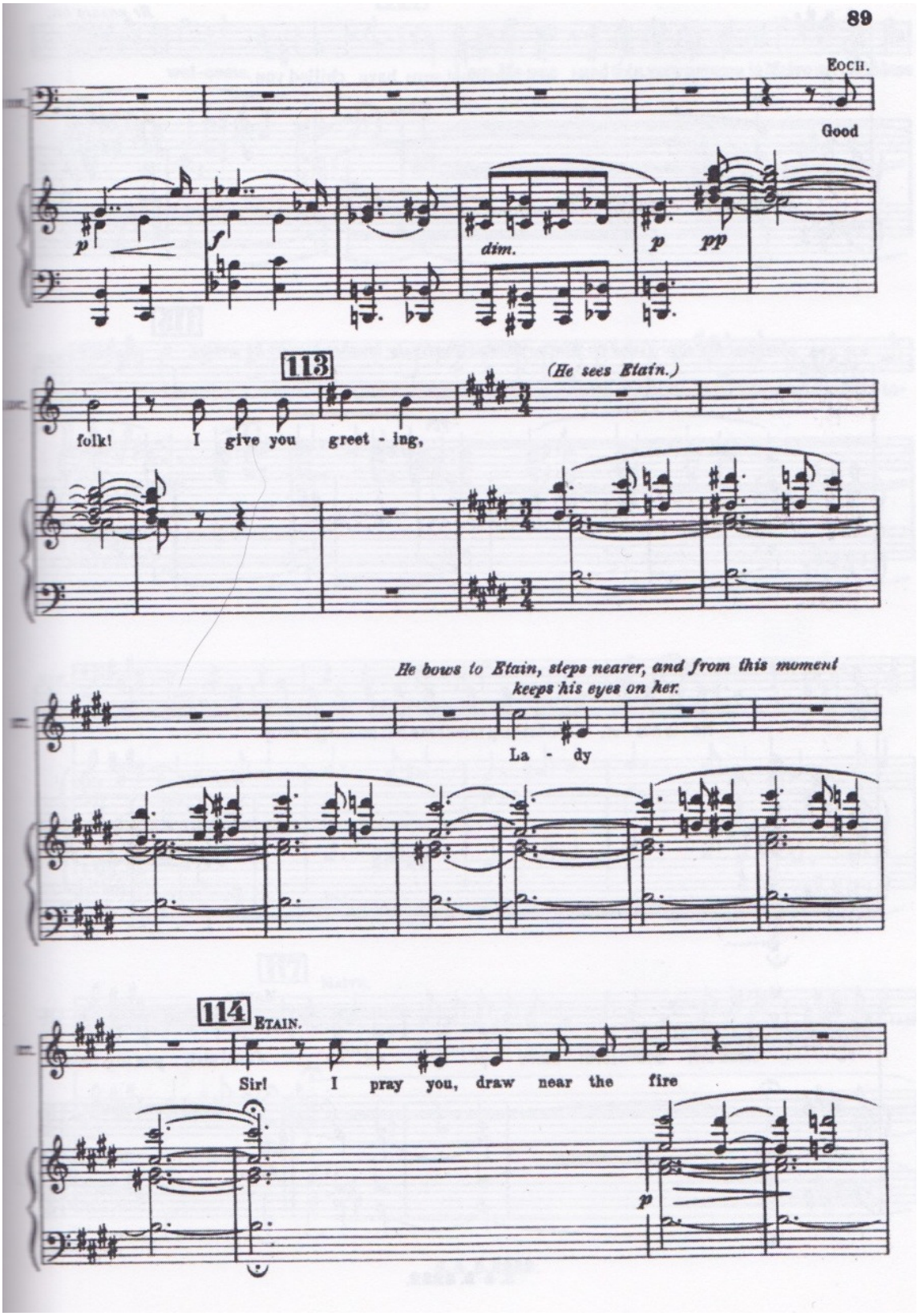
[263] Munro, "Review: Songs of Hebrides," 185.

Taking a closer look, Wagner's influence shows itself in the sixth measure of the fourth system of the first page. A descending chromatic line unfolds over a series of dissonant chords that indicate Etain's bewilderment. This leads to a half diminished seventh chord in second inversion (D, F, A flat, C –the Tristan chord, a French augmented 6^{th}), at the beginning of the second measure of the second page. In the second system, when Etain realizes that the song is familiar to her, Boughton returns to the pentatonic idiom, but this time with a contrapuntal elaboration (beginning at rehearsal #92), in which the violin takes the main melody, and the voice enters in imitation beginning in the third system. The inclusion of a Wagnerian transitionary section between two folk-like sections is a typical example of Boughton balances the various aesthetic positions at play within the score of *The Immortal Hour*.

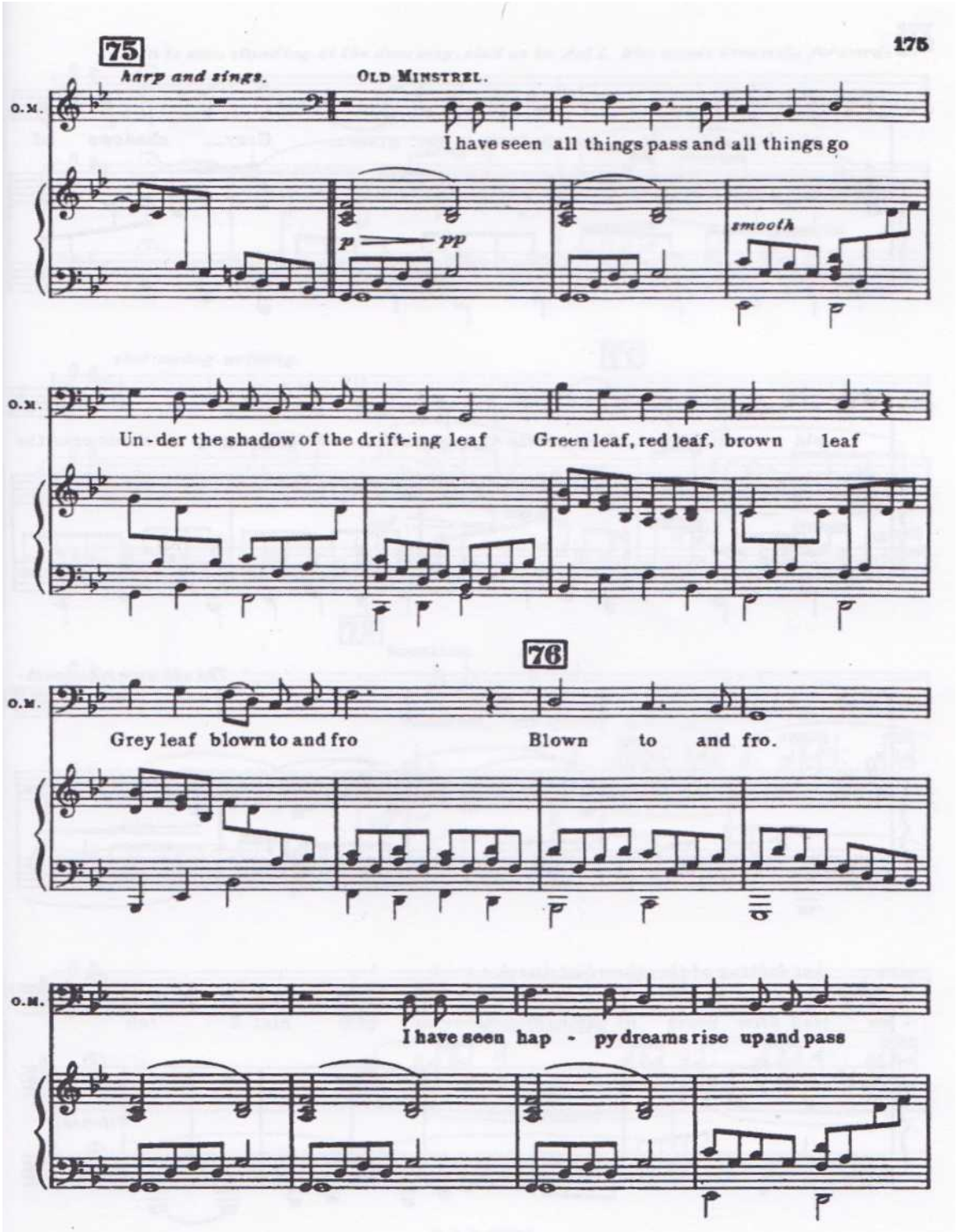
Figure 18: Rutland Boughton, *The Immortal Hour,* 88-89.




Eoch.
Good
p
f
dim.
p
pp
113
(He sees Etain.)
folk! I give you greet - ing,
He bows to Etain, steps nearer, and from this moment keeps his eyes on her.
La - dy
114
Etain.
Sir! I pray you, draw near the fire
p

This second example further reveals Boughton's balanced compositional approach. These two pages mark the arrival of the Eochaidh, the King of Ireland, to a peasant's hut where he meets Etain. The chromatic passages in the first three systems, played by the violin section in the orchestral version, symbolize the raging storm outside. As Eochaidh meets Etain, the music passes through Tristan-like modulations, and unseen in this piano score is the continuation of the chromatic figurations of the previous page. The dense chromaticism of this section is well suited here because it conveys not only the instability of the evening's weather but also the strangeness of the meeting of these two ill-fated lovers, as well as Etain's otherworldliness. Some supernaturalism is even attached to Eochaidh during this encounter when Manus, the peasant, exclaims in an upcoming passage that Eochaidh is bone dry despite the gale-driven downpour. These pages represent one of the opera's most dramatic and Wagnerian moments, yet the rhythm of the recitative is uncomplicated. It is through Boughton's subdued approach to rhythm that he manages to sustain a folk-like atmosphere even in work's most Wagnerian sections.

Figure 19: Rutland Boughton, *The Immortal Hour,* "I have Seen All Things Pass," 175.



The song of the 'Old Bard,' 'Minstrel,' or 'Druid' (in the case of the *Children's Newspaper*) lies at the opposite extreme. It is fully pentatonic (g minor pentatonic scale – note the absence of A and E-flat form the melody) and contains absolutely no chromaticism: an operatic rarity. The Old Bard, accompanied by his harp, invokes the old Ossianic trope, but here he does so with straightforward language – a direct nod from Macleod to the language of Yeats's *Fairy and Folktales of the Irish Peasantry*, and the poetry of William Allingham.[264]

Whether one interprets Boughton's compositional approach as somewhat ingenious or simply saccharine is the determining factor in whether – or not – one finds this opera touching or a bore.[265] For example, consider *New York Times* critic Olin Downes, who, in a review of a failed attempt to bring *The Immortal Hour* to New York in 1926, expresses his own inability to appreciate Boughton's score:

> Allowing for the shortcomings in the performance that doubtless weakened the opera's effect, it is very hard to see why it should exert a popular appeal before audiences of experience if only because of the undramatic and unoriginal quality of the music… there is also the frequent flavor of folksong and its attendant pleasures. But the music, in no instance that can be recalled, gives the impression of individuality of matter or workmanship or of a poignantly emotional quality. The drama… is itself a tenuous, symbolic, sentimental and untheatrical affair… it cannot be said that the composer's treatment materially conceals these defects…. *The Immortal Hour* is actually a cantata rather than an opera – a cantata, one would say, for amateur societies… There are composers who might have made of this a convincing musical exposition. We cannot see that Mr. Boughton is among them. The opera may well be one of the numerous works which appeal to the people and the communities that produce them, but have not

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[264] The progression through a series of colors is reminiscent of William Allingham's "Green Jacket, Red Cap, and White Owl's feather!"

[265] The laudatory review in *The Children's Newspaper* claims that an evening at the Regent is "two hours of rarest charm and joy to any whose heart responds to glorious harmony." Not all critics shared this view. Mee ed., "The Immortal Hour: New Conqueror of London," 2.

> the qualities that command interest and long-continued public support in other places.[266]

For Downes, Boughton's music is "sentimental," and lacking in real emotional content or dramatic resonance. Its strong reliance on the contours of folk melodies is mawkish and ineffective, unless a listener is in the mood to relish such "attendant pleasures." In a less damning mention regarding a 1926 London revival of *Immortal Hour,* the *Sunday Times* music critic Maitland Davidson describes the work as that "celebrated, rather sugary, but always enchanting bit of exquisite musical sentimentality."[267] In a much later review of an attempt to mount *The Immortal Hour* at the Julliard Theatre in 1994, James Oestreich, writing for the *New York Times* penned the following:

> Maybe it's the season, but Rutland Boughton's *Immortal Hour* seems to resemble nothing so much as a spectacular balloon for the Macy's Thanksgiving Day parade that sprang an irreparable leak after its wildly acclaimed early appearances. Lord knows, plenty of hot air is available… Mr. Frank Corsaro (producing this 1994 revival at the Julliard Opera Center) tries heroically… but none of it can patch over the ultimate weakness of Boughton's scores which alternates between maundering and jaunty folkishness.[268]

Unless one is prepared to appreciate 'jaunty folkishness,' *The Immortal Hour* appears to be best avoided. Still, these reviews offer some insight regarding *The Immortal Hour's* reception. Both Maitland Davidson and Ernest Newman manage to mete out

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[266] Olin Downes, "Opera: Opera Players Open Season," *New York Times,* April 26, 1926, 26. http://search.proquest.com/docview/103857072/C29BFB8A77AA4C0FPQ/9?accountid=14521

[267] Maitland Davidson, "Plays and Players," *The Sunday Times* (London, England), Sunday, January 24, 1926, 6, issue 5363.

[268] James Oestreich, "An 'Immortal' Hour Shows Signs of Mortality: Julliard Theatre," *New York Times*, November, 21,1994, C10.

some small measure of praise. However, in the case of the New York reviewers who are separated by cultural, literal, and temporal distance, *The Immortal Hour* fails to connect with the audience. Downes' observation that "the opera may well be one of the numerous works which appeal to the people and the communities that produce them" seems right on the mark: *The Immortal Hour* only appealed to British audiences. This suggests that one must look to some factor beyond the score itself to explain the work's appeal. On that note, *The Immortal Hour's* folksy, late-romantic compositional aesthetic may have been a perfect match the to musical tastes of Marie Louise, but her repeated visits suggest that she was enchanted by more than just the works hints of Wagnérisme, or its chord progressions, its tasteful orchestration, and its use of folk-like melodies.

There is another plausible theory that may explain Marie Lousie's presence at so many presentations of *The Immortal Hour*: she attended because she was enamored with actress Gwen Ffrangcon-Davies (1891-1992), who played the character of Etain. Louise sent letters to Davies and was devoted to her. Did the work's other repeat visitors attend because they felt similarly about Ffrangçon-Davies? It is possible. This theory also brings to light other things that Marie Louise and Ffrangcon-Davies had in common besides their mutual admiration. They both shared roles as early British feminists who daringly chose to live unconventional lifestyles.

As Helen Grime notes, Ffrangcon-Davies was "a highly feminized lesbian actress who achieved significant commercial success as a (heterosexual) romantic lead while

risking the occasional unconventional role in the Theatre Club scene."[269] Meanwhile, Marie Louise had divorced her husband in 1900 and remained unmarried afterward. Her prominent position as a member of the Royal family made this a bold step. Marie Louise also started "The Princess Club," a place for "working-class girls employed in the factories along the riverfront at Rotherhithe."[270] When the First World broke out in 1914, the club was converted into a military convalescent hospital. All these actions suggest that Marie Louise was keenly interested in the welfare of women. In fact, several of the prominent women whose memoirs will be investigated here similarly worked in wartime hospitals like the one founded by Marie Louise. They stood against patriarchy by pursuing the unconventional, advocating for women's suffrage, and agitating for a more significant role for women in the British armed forces. However, that Davies may have been a lesbian icon for some audience members can't alone account for the opera's astonishing runs. Nor can the presence in the cast of a budding star be used to explain away *The Immortal Hour's* extraordinary success. There are direct newspaper reports that celebrate Davies as the star of the show, and yet attribute the work's allure to some other, still indefinable factor.[271]

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[269] Helen Grime, *Gwen Frangcon-Davies, Twentieth Century Actress* (London: Pickering and Chatto, 2013), 3.

Ffrangcon-Davies was in a hugely successful 1924 production of *Rome and Juliet* opposite John Gielgud. Meanwhile, Marie Louise was also enamored of Beatrice Harrison, also a lesbian, who was a famous cellist.

[270] Coryne Hall, *Princesses on the Wards: Royal Women in Nursing through Wars and Revolutions* (Gloucestershire: The History Press, 2014), unpaginated (ebook).

[271] Nevertheless, Ffrangcon-Davies' performances were highly celebrated. As Grime recounts, "she was described in positive terms by the *Times* critic as 'shadowy, ethereal but always

Figure 20: Gwen Davies as Etain at the Regent Theatre [272]

Two Studies of Miss Gwen Ffrangcon-Davies

Yvonne Park

As the Princess Etain in Mr. Rutland Boughton's music-drama, "The Immortal Hour," at the Regent Theatre, King's Cross

beautiful.'" Grimes also notes that during *The Immortal Hour's* early performances at the Glastonbury festivals "it was reported that audiences at Glastonbury, on the bench seats in the assembly rooms were 'oblivious of their crowded and cramped condition, [and] sat breathless till the end.'" One cannot attribute the breathlessness of the audience to Davies' presences alone. There were criticisms of Ffrangcon-Davies, notably that her voice lacked sufficient strength to carry operatic roles. Such objections to her singing help one understand why Ffrangcon-Davies, though the daughter of the famous baritone David Ffrangcon-Davies, eventually pursued acting over singing. *Gwen Ffrangcon-Davies, Twentieth Century Actress,* (London: Pickering and Chatto, 2013), 70-74.

[272] Francis Toye, "Music of the Week," *The Sphere,* Saturday, November 18, 1922, 10. *https://www.britishnewspaperarchive.co.uk/viewer/BL/0001861/19221118/018/0010?browse=False*

Note: It may be of interest, for upcoming sections, that the previous page of this issue of *The Sphere* features many pictures of the Cenotaph on Armistice day.

A number of other plausible explanations for the acclaim afforded *The Immortal Hour*, and the repeated attendance of its many guests, also fall apart upon further investigation. The immense popularity "The Faery Song" might initially explain the situation. The "Faery Song was a 'hit' sung at concerts, society weddings, and voice competitions. An article from the *Burnley Express* in 1923 regarding an afternoon vocal recital by Frank Mullings reports that he sang the "Faery Song" twice – once in his program and again as an encore. This double performance suggests that the "Faery Song" had become an audience favorite. However, the music critic tempers the implications of this repeat performance by noting that the singer was limited in his choice of encore because only a harp was available to accompany him. Still, the "Faery Song" seems to have remained popular, like *The Immortal Hour*, until the mid-1930s. As late as 1935, the *Derby Daily Telegraph* reports its inclusion in vocal recitals.[273] The "Faery Song" appears to have been a meaningful element of *The Immortal Hour's* success, but this single song alone cannot account for the opera's popularity.

Another theory is that the work's appeal stemmed from a general trend at the time in favor of all things Celtic. While there was, in the words of Christopher Fleming, "a great deal of pentatonic as well as modal nostalgia in the air,"[274] works with the distinct signatures of Celtic music were not, as mentioned above, even close to uniformly

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[273] Anon., "Municipal Music," *Burnley Express,* Wednsday, November 25, 1925, 2. https://www.britishnewspaperarchive.co.uk/viewer/bl/0000283/19251125/044/0002
Anon. "Big Attendance at Concert," *Derby Daily Telegraph,* Monday, February 4, 1935, 5. https://www.britishnewspaperarchive.co.uk/viewer/bl/0000521/19350204/036/0005

[274] Hughes and Stradling, *The English Musical Renaissance,* 233.

successful during this period. Other works engaging in Celticism from the same era, including Holbrooke's *The Children of Don* and Bantock's *The Seal Woman*, failed miserably. Indeed, to dismiss *The Immortal Hour's* triumph as solely a consequence of its Celtic themes is not only a poorly informed opinion but also one that strips the work of its agency. In a similar vein, one cannot attribute *The Immortal Hour's* success to the popularity of "Yeats" at this time. Indeed Yeats did much to promote all things Celtic. Could fans of Yeats's work have been inspired to see *The Immortal Hour?* Undoubtedly. But would such fans have come to see the work over and over?

The abundance of theories regarding *The Immortal Hour's* popularity suggests at least one thing: the work had substance; even the poorly received revival at the Juilliard implies a continuing fascination. In this spirit, one further potential explanation for the work's success should be explored. This posits that *The Immortal Hour* had become a magnet for Theosophists.[275] Boughton had attempted to imbue his work with symbolic dimensions, ones that he felt, as suggested above, were overlooked. There is evidence that Theosophists of the time gravitated towards the work as a result of these 'hidden meanings.' Lurking on the internet is a review of Rutland Boughton's *The Immortal Hour* whose origins have been difficult to trace. Originally published under the pseudonym of 'Mac Tyler,' the real author is claimed to be a Marie Fornario, a member of an occult group, "The New Golden Dawn in Bradford," who died strangely on the island of Iona off the west coast of Scotland in 1929. Though her death remains a mystery, her review

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[275] Joseph Holbrooke writes that Boughton "has attracted to his music a real and strange community – which is growing amongst us – the Theosophists." *Contemporary British Composers* (London: Cecil Palmer, 1925), 110.

helps shed light on the different ways that attendees appreciated *The Immortal Hour*. She writes:

> Visitors to the Regent Theatre may be roughly classified as follows; students of mysticism and folk-lore who are able to understand the great truths concealed behind this gossamer curtain of faery; (a small clan, but they come frequently and every time discover some new aspect of illuminating significance), a large number of people who think the play beautiful but sad; and many for whom the whole drama is so elusive and incomprehensible that they… are frankly bored… and there is a fourth class who, while keenly appreciating the artistic beauty of the performance, also sense the existence of a deeper meaning.[276]

Fornario's division of the audience is interesting, and, as far is it can be considered a reliable source, it also clearly states that the Theosophical fringe only comprised a small portion of the audience body. For Fornario, the various characters in *The Immortal Hour* represent the "psychological and spiritual effects of initiation" –initiation into a higher level of consciousness. She also describes this as "the raising of the lower self or personality to the level of the higher self."[277] This interpretation reflects the general goals of the esoteric and theosophical practices that formed a mystical subculture in Britain. In general terms, these practices promoted the belief that through the pursuit of "hidden knowledge" one could come to understand "the bonds that unite the universe, humanity, and the divine" and thereby "reach enlightenment and salvation."[278]

For students of the occult like Fornario, *The Immortal Hour* is essentially a step-by-step guide to Theosophical enlightenment, one in which the discovery of "hidden

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[276]Mac Tyler [Marie Fornario]. "The Immortal Hour," Undated. http://www.servantsofthelight.org/knowledge/the-immortal-hour/

[277] Fornario, "The Immortal Hour."

[278]Anon., "Theosophy" in *Wikipedia,* from http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Theosophy

knowledge" rests in an accurate understanding of the work's various characters and their inter-relationships. Here *The Immortal Hour* makes another vital connection to Celtic Twilight; it is imbued with those very same occult elements with which Yeats leavened his own volume.[279] Yet, as Fornario states, local occultists alone did not sustain *The Immortal Hour's* hundreds of performances, though they were indeed repeatedly in the audience.[280] However, the same content that lured the Theosophists and the occultists may also have had an unexpected effect on the average attendee, those who "sensed the existence of a deeper meaning." It is possible that this vague "deeper meaning" that was an integral part of the spiritual content about which Boughton was so serious may have resonated with contemporary audiences in a way that eludes those who seek easy explanations for the *The Immortal Hour's* acclaim. Is it possible that the work's unusual *mis en scène*, one characterized by a set of elements so significant to Celtic Twilight – the spiritual, the mythical, and the supernatural – played a most crucial and curious role in fueling the devotion of Marie Louise and so many others who flocked to *The Immortal Hour*?

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[279] Anon., "William Butler Yeats," http://www.golden-dawn.org/bioyeats.html

[280] Theosophical lectures on the work were given at the Gloucestershire Theosophical lodge. Here the speaker, Mr. G.D. Bond, conveyed that "few productions are so full of theosophical ideas and occult symbolism as 'The Immortal Hour': the colours of costumes worn even, and names of the characters are full of deep meaning to the student." Anon., "The Immortal Hour," *Gloucestershire Echo,* Saturday, November 29, 1924, 5. https://www.britishnewspaperarchive.co.uk/viewer/bl/0000320/19241129/124/0005

Lectures also took place at the Theosophical Societies of Burnley and Folkstone. See: Anon., "Public Lecture," *Burnley Express,* Saturday, October 10, 1925, 2. https://www.britishnewspaperarchive.co.uk/viewer/BL/0000283/19251010/031/0002?browse=False. See also, Anon., "Untitled," *Folkstone, Hythe, Sandgate & Cheriton Herald*, Saturday, March 10, 1923, 4.

To investigate this question, one must study how the tropes of spiritualism, supernaturalism, and myth function in *The Immortal Hour's* text. Here it is necessary to consider the source for the libretto. Boughton adapted his libretto from a stage play written by Fiona Macleod in 1908, also titled *The Immortal Hour*, which is itself based on the ancient Irish legend, *The Wooing of Etain*. Here another interesting connection to Celtic Twilight arises.

As noted in chapter one, Fiona Macleod was a pseudonym used by the Scottish writer William Sharp. Sharp was both a poet and a critic, and, like Yeats, was a member of the occult society The Golden Dawn during the 1890s. In a letter to Catherine Janvier, one of the few people to whom he revealed the secret identity of Macleod, Sharp claims that,

> I can write out of my heart [as Macleod] in a way I could not do as William Sharp, and indeed that I could not do if I were the woman whom Fiona Macleod is supposed to be, unless veiled in scrupulous anonymity… This rapt sense of oneness with nature, this *cosmic ecstasy* and elation, this wayfaring along the extreme verges of the common world, all this is wrought up with the romance of life, that I could not bring myself to expression by my outer self, insistent and tyrannical as that need is… My truest self, the self who is below all other selves, and my most intimate life and joys and sufferings, thoughts, emotions and dreams, *must* find expression, yet I cannot, save in this hidden way.[281]

That Sharp channeled Macleod in order to access the deepest level of his poetic imagination is yet another nod to a feminist element present simultaneously on the stage, in the audience, and in the text of *The Immortal Hour*. As will be discussed in chapter five, the Celt had long been associated with femininity in a stereotypical and

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[281] Catherine A Janvier, "Fiona Macleod and Her Creator William Sharp," *North American Review* vol. 184, no. 162 (April 5, 1907): 727.

uncomplimentary fashion. In Sharp's case, there are no negative connotations to 'the feminine.' Rather, the feminine persona of Macleod gave him the strength and emotional depth to be able to treat that subject so essential to Celtic Twilight – the liminal boundary between worlds.

Sharp's desire to express "*cosmic ecstasy* and elation," and what he calls "this wayfaring along the verges of the common world" echoes Yeats's wish from the pages of *The Celtic Twilight* that he "receive a message from those beings or bodiless moods, or whatever they be, who inhabit the world of spirits."[282] In both passages, each writer longs to express something just beyond reach. Yeats uses the music of the strange and mysterious fiddler on the train to Sligo as the metaphorical vehicle through which to approach his poetic objective. However, for Sharp, an entirely new identity was needed because as 'William Sharp' he simply could not express what he calls "my most intimate life and joys and sufferings, thoughts, emotions and dreams," dreams which nevertheless "must find expression." Yeats and Sharp's approaches are not as different as they may seem. Both have to adopt a role to engage in the twilit, mystical, and dreamlike subject matter that fascinates them. In *The Celtic Twilight*, Yeats, as mentioned above, takes on many different roles: reporter, ethnographer, social commentator, and translator of spiritual experiences. However, he is always the observer, rather than the actor. He observes the bizarre occult activities of the clerks whose evil ceremony he attends. He encounters the strange fiddler who conjures his visions of a fallen world mirrored by the world of faery. He even uses the figure of A.E., whom he presents as a man maddened by

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[282] Yeats, *The Celtic Twilight,* 145.

spiritual longings, to place his own poetic identity behind a veil. Sharp employed a virtually identical strategy. He reported on Fiona's activities to others, and could only find the twilight expression that came from her pen when he had similarly veiled his true self. For both Yeats and Sharp, the prosaic and numinous worlds are gated by personal boundaries, and both use their own unique artistic and poetic devices to try to cross these thresholds.[283]

In *The Immortal Hour*, Macleod also continues the Celtic Twilight tradition of only loosely adhering to notions of 'authenticity' in folklore or any set understanding of Celtic mythology. This lack of concern was a characteristic of much of Macleod's (and, indeed Sharp's) work. As Georgiana Goddard King notes, Sharp had an "easy-going conscience in matters intellectual." She argues that Sharp's volume *Green Fire* was "never republished because the Brêton lore and the Bêrton description were done too much out of his head."[284] In her stage version of *The Immortal Hour*, Macleod continues this process. She takes the ancient version of *The Wooing of Etain* and streamlines, simplifies, and modernizes it by reducing something complicated and bizarre to its most

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[283] Boughton did not engage in such a layered and veiled approach in the creation of his version of *The Immortal Hour*. What is interesting, however, is that many of Boughton's works stem from librettos of his devising. His grandest project, the creation of a cycle of operas based on the legend of King Arthur, likewise, was the result of a collaboration between Boughton and Reginald Buckley, a young poet who unfortunately died before their work together could be finished. *The Immortal Hour* is a rare example of Boughton using another work almost outright. Of course, he does make some significant changes to Macleod's version, which will be discussed below. Yet, to the degree that he mostly stays faithful to Macleod's text, he fulfills that unusual position of artistic intermediary so essential to conjuring Celtic Twilight.

[284] Georgina Goddard King, "Fiona Macleod," *Modern Language Notes* vol. 33, no. 6 (June, 1918): 353.

symbolic dimensions (Boughton also continued this process with his subtle revisions).[285] In Macleod's text, the most startling example of this revisionary approach is its introduction of 'Dalua' (the 'fairy fool,' and the first character to appear on the stage), into the world of Celtic deities. As Mark Williams notes, Dalua is a character created out of whole cloth by Macleod.[286] In her foreword to the play, Macleod describes Dalua as follows:

> The fool is at once an elder and dreadful god, a mysterious and potent spirit, avoided even of the proud immortal folk themselves: and an abstraction: the shadow of pale hopes, forgotten dreams, and the madness of men's minds.

Dalua is a god outside of the gods, and therefore reminiscent of the 'Norns' who oversee the action in Wagner's *Götterdämmerung*. With this character, Macleod skillfully indicates the pagan qualities of the other Irish deities who are part of the play by casting Dalua as a figure from 'before;' before religion, before time, and one yet destined to exist beyond these confines as well.

The opera begins as Dalua and Etain, a princess of the *Sídhe*, encounter one another in a misty forest. Dalua casts a spell on Etain, which causes her to forget her past. She then meets, in a peasant's hovel, the Irish King, Eochaidh, a man disillusioned by

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[285] In the introduction to the play, Macleod offers her own interpretation of the work's symbolism: "I have no doubt that the legend, though only honey for the later Gaelic poets, had originally a deep significance, and that the Wooing to the Otherworld… i.e. the Gaelic Tir na'n Og, the Land of Youth, of the Ever Living, of Love, the Land of Heart's Desire… [of] the beautiful woman Etain, wife of King Eochaidh, symbolized another wooing and another mystery than that alone of the man for woman. It symbolized, I think, the winning of life back to the world after an enforced thraldom: the renewal of Spring." In other words, for Macleod, *The Immortal Hour* was the Celtic version of *Orpheus and Eurydice*. Fiona Macleod [William Sharp], "The Immortal Hour: A Drama in Two Acts," (Edinburgh and London: T.N. Foulis), 1908. https://archive.org/details/imortalhourdrama00sharuoft

[286] Williams, *Ireland's Immortals,* 385-387.

war and suffering. The two declare their love for one another during a passionate duet at the end of Act 1. Act 2 begins at an anniversary celebrating one year of love between the couple. The king receives an unknown visitor, who asks him for a boon: to sing and play the harp for Queen Etain and to kiss her hand (this is one of the opera's main diversions from the stage play, in which Eoachaidh and the visitor play chess). The visitor's strange music stirs Etain's lost memories, and she recognizes the mysterious man as her husband Midir, the Faery King. Midir sweeps her away to strains of the famous "Faery Song," sung by a chorus of spirits off stage, while Eochaidh is left devastated. In an act of mercy, Dalua appears and touches Eoachaid with an icy finger, and the King of Ireland falls dead.

Etain and Eochaidh's relationship is the focal point of the work. It is a meeting between a human and an apparition, or a guest from the spirit world. The opera's final and most significant point of action involves the threshold between worlds, that essential feature of Celtic Twilight. Conjuring this boundary on the stage as a tangible place of spiritual transformation and crossover may have been an overlooked point of resonance for audiences at the Regent. Taking a closer look at Marie Louise's personal history, it seems likely that this kind of symbolism could have resonated with her: her memoirs include several encounters, ranging from the mundane to the profound, with the supernatural.

Uncanny experiences (of *The Immortal Hour* devotees)

In her memoirs, Marie Louise tells of a manor house in Gloucestershire, called Chavenage, of which she was a constant visitor. Here Marie Louise is haunted by the man her room is named after, Sir Hugh Cholmondeley, a renegade Royalist who fought alongside Oliver Cromwell. She writes:

> I was often interrupted, while sitting in my room, by my door quietly opening, remaining open for a few minutes, and then gently shutting again. I used at first to call out 'come in…' …no one answered. Could it have been Sir Hugh, who wished to see what this very distant descendant of the King he had turned against was like, and whether he approved of her inhabiting his room?[287]

While this seems rather historical for a ghost story, Louise is nevertheless not alone in this encounter. Her host confirms that "other visitors ...(have) had the same experience."[288] In a more personal vignette, Marie Louise recounts a visitation from her brother, who has been fighting in Pretoria during the Second Boer War. She has just divorced her husband Aribert of Anhalt:

> On my return to England after the dissolution of my marriage, I took a small house in South Kensington… I was arranging my books and odds and ends in my sitting room when the door opened and in walked my oldest brother, Christian Victor. "Oh Kicky (the pet name we brothers and sisters called him by), how nice to see you again." He replied: "I just came to see that you were all right and happy." He sat down in the chair near the fire and I then noticed he had his favorite dachshund on his knee. We talked a little, and then he got up and told me I was not to follow him downstairs, that he was very happy, and all was well with him. After he had gone, and shut the door, I realized that he was in khaki but did not have his medal ribbons on. I then remembered that during the African war an order had been issued that officers were not to wear their ribbons so that the enemy should not be able to distinguish them from their men. Only then did I suddenly realize that this dearly loved brother had died eighteen months previously, and lay in his resting place in South Africa.[289]

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[287] Louise, *My Memories of Six Reigns,* 224-5.

[288] Ibid., 225.
[289] Ibid., 223-224.

Once again her experience is corroborated:

> My sister came to see me that same afternoon, and I told her of what had taken place. She was sitting in the same chair as he had done, and when she got up remarked, "I know he has been here – I feel it.[290]

These stories show that Marie Louise's experiences of the supernatural included both the unexceptional and the highly personal, and also suggest that her proclivity for the uncanny, which may have attracted her to *The Immortal Hour*, was not unusual. In fact, occurrences such as her meeting with her dead brother Prince Christian Victor were actively sought out during and after the Great War. In his volume *Sites of Memory, Sites of Mourning*, Jay Winter describes a rise in spiritualism and a desire for spiritual encounters that was at its heart "inevitably and inextricably tied up with the need to communicate with the fallen."[291] Winter remarks that through séances and spirit photography, ordinary citizens sought to conjure the presence of lost loved ones and to open channels of communication with them. Such esoteric practices were publicly legitimized by the writings and lectures of a cultural vanguard that included Sir Arthur Conan Doyle and the celebrated physicist and writer Sir Oliver Lodge. Thus, during the Post-war era, the story of Etain's fleeting year of love with Eoachaidh, and its concluding vanishing act, may have been a coincidental if powerful representation of something many wished to make real: a meeting with a loved one from the other side. Did Etain's

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Her brother was Prince Christian Victor of Schleswig Holstein (1867-1900), a keen cricketer, who died of enteric fever in Pretoria.

[290] Ibid., 223-224.

[291] Jay Winter, *Sites of Memory, Sites of Mourning: The Great War in European Cultural History* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1995), 58.

visitation remind Marie Louise of her meeting with her brother? If so, is it possible that the supernatural elements of *The Immortal Hour* communicated with others as well, and possibly offered the vicarious experience of a meeting with the spirit of someone lost during the Great War?[292]

That Marie Louise is not the only member of Boughton's public who includes encounters with the uncanny in their publications suggests that the vogue for spiritualism

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[292] Winter's research emphasizes the notion that the war helped transform spiritualism from something that existed more on the fringes of society into a practice that took on a degree of normalcy. In a cross-the-pond confirmation of this suggestion, Upton Sinclair's *Oil!*, a muckraking expose of the California oil industry, features an encounter with spiritualism as part of its plot. The work features the adventures of a father/son duo. As the father becomes an oil baron, the son grows up seeing the damage that wealth and industry wreak both upon ordinary people and the environment. The novel reads not only as a condemnation of the oil industry but also as a damning snapshot of the follies of 1920s culture that doubles as a record, fictional though it may be, of the times. Curiously, "Bunny," the young and pampered scion, becomes carried away, much like Rutland Boughton, with the Bolshevik revolution, and the growing awareness of the "workers of the world." The most unpredictable turn in the novel occurs when the father, James Arnold Ross, attempting to evade subpoenas from the US government, spends the year of 1923 in Paris accompanied by his young son (precisely the same time that, across the channel, *The Immortal Hour* is reaching its greatest fame). Sick and consumed with boredom, Mr. Ross is duped by a spiritualist divorcée who helps him to reunite, at one of her séances, with his deceased mother. Bunny recounts how his father is taken in by what Sinclair obviously believes is a con-artist's profession: "the most amazing things had happened, there had been horns floating in the air, and voices coming out of them, and lights flickering about… and finally this old lady ghost who asked for 'Little Jim,' and started right off to tell these things that had taken Dad's breath away. How could a medium have known such things?"(456) For Bunny, it is evident that the medium, Mrs. Olivier, wants "to marry Dad," so that she can one day inherit his massive fortune. Sinclair, as narrator, remarks that Ross was "old and tired and sick, he craved something to lean on. He was shame-faced, afraid his son would ridicule him."(456) Similarly, Jay Winter notes that spiritualist practices such as séances, etc., often functioned as a means for tricksters to make a profit off of desperate, bereaved people. That such a story found its way into an American novel functioning as an exposé of industry, society, and culture, both in American and across the Atlantic, is telling. It suggests that even if the general population wasn't necessarily going to events like that attended by Ross, the idea of the séance, and the spiritualism associated with it, had entered the cultural imagination and was popularly accepted. *The Immortal Hour* may have acted, unlike Sinclair's condemning narrative, to condone such practices, and to offer an experience, albeit a staged one, of a 1920s spiritualist encounter thankfully devoid of the troubling connotations of the séance. *Oil!* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1997).

described by Jay Winter was undoubtedly real. Lady Maud Warrender (1870-1945), a well-known amateur singer, cultural philanthropist, and lesbian also in attendance,[293] describes in her memoir *My First Sixty Years* an encounter with the supernatural while staying at a former "home of the Knights Templar" supposedly haunted by "friendly ghosts."[294] One night, things take a turn for the mildly sinister when the fire irons are rattled together.[295] In another anecdote, while journeying through India, Maud meets a "Mr. Jacob of Simla." He presents her with a published account of his magical abilities, which includes treating a dinner party of Boer War veterans to mass hallucinations that allow them to relive together, quite humorously, their heroic and otherwise harrowing war stories.[296] While stories such as these have a sense of whimsy, even patrons of *The*

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[293] Lady Warrender was also a friend and patron of Sir Edward Elgar.

[294] Maud Warrender, *My First Sixty Years* (London: Cassell and Company, LTD., 1933), 195.

[295] Ibid., 195.

[296] Ibid., 99-104.

The story of "Jacob of Simla's" magical abilities is written by "Tautriadelta," a "pupil of Bulwer Lytton."(100) That Warrender includes the full text of the account in her memoir suggests that the supernatural was an important element of British culture. Jacob displays a variety of "tricks" to Tautriadelta and a dinner party of notables, including an unnamed general "whose name was a household word in England and India." Jacob makes a walking stick grow grapes, which the party then eats. Next, he plunges a sword through Tautridelta, who recounts that the "point came out through my back, and penetrated the paneling of cedar wood behind me." Finally, Tautriadelta describes how Jacob proceeds to induce group hallucinations. Together, they witness the famous general as he is wounded during the "Balaclava ride" (also known as the storied 'charge of the light brigade,' a charge led on October 25, 1854 by Lord Cardigan during the Battle of Balaclava, the Crimean war). Jacob continues to amaze his guests by recreating visualizations of the battle stories of the other war heroes at the dinner party. Jacob explains to his fascinated guests that, "every event that had ever taken place in the world's history was actually existing in the astral light, and could be reproduced at any time or place by those who possessed the knowledge and the power."(102) The evening concludes with Jacob walking on water, producing a swarm of butterflies, and then transporting Tautriadelta to his bungalow. When Tautriadelta refuses to let Jacob transport him back to the dinner party, Jacob vanishes.

Immortal Hour whose biographies give the impression of a very practically-minded person can still include a reference to the possibility that there are supernatural forces at play in the world.

In a biography of Lady Edith Vane-Tempest-Stewart, Marchioness of Londonderry (1878-1959) (another devotee of the opera who would later attempt to support Boughton – see chapter five), after a matter-of-fact retelling of lineages and fox-hunting parties, one encounters an unusual story from the night of Edward the VII's death. Edith is in Scotland, and the news has not yet reached her. That night the "most vivid flash of lightning I had ever seen" spooks her dogs, who leap through the window.[297] To make sense of this bizarre occurrence, Lady Edith later interprets it as a supernatural premonition of the King's death. While this last story emphasizes the appeal of spiritual thinking to a range of personalities, it also helps hint at an underlying theme contained in all the previous stories. From an encounter with a cranky knight templar, to a brush with the shy ghost of a Cromwellian soldier, a bittersweet visitation of a relative killed in action, a hallucinatory recreation of chaotic battle scenes, and a supernatural warning regarding the death of the Sovereign of the Realm, each of these stories contains an element of militarism.[298]

Warrender doesn't say in her memoir if she experiences Jacob's magical powers herself, but she mentions that Madame Blavatsky (co-founder of the Theosophical Society) had been "amazed at what he could do with his occult power."(98) Warrender, *My First Sixty Years.*

[297] Anne De Courcy, *Society's Queen: the life of Edith, Marchioness of Londonderry* (Phoenix: Phoenix Mass Market, 2004), 109-112.

[298] A classic example of the Victorian connection between spiritualism and militarism can be found in Henry James' short story "Owen Wingrave." Owen is the descendant of an ancient line of English soldiers. One particular room in the family house is haunted by a "Colonel Wingrave"

Spiritualism and militarism, The "Faery Song's" militaristic imagery

The connection between spiritualism and militarism can be regarded as a natural consequence of the practice of spiritualism during wartime. Bereaved relatives and friends often sought an encounter, as Jay Winter suggests, with someone lost due to war, and in particular the Great War. *The Immortal Hour* played into this situation in two ways. First, through its evocation of a visitation from the spirit-world, symbolized, as discussed earlier, by Etain's 'immortal hour' with Eochaidh. Second, the opera participates in this connection through the militaristic imagery found in the work's famous "Faery Song:"

Midir sings:

> How beautiful they are the lordly ones,
> That dwell in the hills, in the hollow hills.
> They have faces like flowers and their breath is wind
> That blows over grass filled with dewy clover.
> There limbs more white than shafts of moonshine:
> They are more fleet than the March wind.

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who lived during the time of George II and died mysteriously after giving his son a smashing blow over the head following an argument. When Owen decides to refuse his family's expectation that he follow the Wingrave tradition and join the military, he is 'put up' as a coward by "Miss Julian," a young lady of the house who would have become his betrothed if not for his sudden change of colors. Owen's tutor Spencer Coyle notes with irony that, in refusing a military career, Owen is forced to battle it out with his family and Miss Julian. Miss Julian challenges Owen to spend the night in the haunted room of the house to prove his manhood. History repeats itself, and in the morning, Owen is found dead in the Colonel's room. Coyle observes with sadness that, "Owen Wingrave, dressed as he had last seen him, lay dead on the spot on which his ancestor had been found. He was all the young soldier on the gained field" (Benjamin Britten used this story as the basis of his late opera *Owen Wingrave,* op. 85, 1971). Henry James, "Owen Wingrave" in *The Turn of the Screw and Other Stories,* ed. T. J. Lustig (Oxford University Press: Oxford, 1992), 78.

They laugh and are glad and are terrible:
When their lances shake and glitter every green reed quivers.

To which Etain replies:

I hear sweet dewfall voices, and the clink,
The delicate silvery spring and clink
Of faery lances underneath the moon.

In its final iteration, which, sung by an unseen chorus of the *Sídhe* offstage are the opera's final lines, the words are rearranged to increase the effect:

They play with lances
And are proud and terrible,
Marching in the moonlight
With fierce blue eyes.[299]

[299] Libretto taken from the liner notes to *The Immortal Hour,* conducted by Alan G Melville (Hyperion Records Limited, 1984), 14-15.

Figure 21: "How Beautiful They Are" [300]

"How beautiful they are"—The Famous Faery Song

Midir (Mr. William Heseltine), a Prince of the Hidden People, calling to Etain (Miss Gwen Ffrangcon Davies) in his wonderful faery song

[300] Francis Toye, "'The Immortal Hour' at the Regent Theatre," *The Sphere,* Saturday, February 3, 1923, 20-22. https://www.britishnewspaperarchive.co.uk/viewer/BL/0001861/19230203/024/0020?browse=False

As theses lines suggest, the Faery world that Boughton invokes in *The Immortal Hour* is far from "a child's fancy," and does not "involve tiny creatures with fluttering wings, sitting on toadstools or prancing in magic circles." Instead, in the words of Michael Hurd, the libretto presents "an awesome mirror-image of the mortal world and a proud, fierce race to whom the comings and goings of humans are no more than the peregrination of ants."[301] By combining the image of instruments of war – the lances that inspires fear in "every green reed" – with references to the confidence of youth, characterized by glad terrible laughter, athletic ability, and flower-like faces, the "Faery Song" portrays the *Sídhe* as a troop of young soldiers "marching in the moonlight with fierce blue eyes" as they accompany Midir while he sweeps Etain away from Eochaidh at the opera's breathtaking conclusion.[302]

To suggest that the *Sídhe* were militaristic was not an original step for either Macleod or Boughton to take. They built upon a tradition well-established in Celtic literature. In Yeats's *Stories of Red Hanrahan*, his next published volume after *The Celtic Twilight,* Hanrahan catches echoes of warring faery soldiers in the following excerpt:

> And sometimes he would hear coming and going in the wood music that when it stopped went from his memory like a dream; and once in the stillness of

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[301] Michael Hurd, Liner notes to *The Immortal Hour,* conducted by Alan G Melville, (Hyperion Records Limited, 1984), 4.

Note: A 'lancer' was a cavalry soldier who fought with a lance. There were British lancers in WWI; there are still the Royal Lancers today – although the lances are for ceremony.

[302] Libretto, *The Immortal Hour,* conducted by Alan G Melville, 14-15.

It was with this very same conflation of the soldier and the immortal that O'Grady first identified the *Túatha Dé Danann/Sídhe* as Ireland's pagan gods: he identified them as "both 'eternal' (In other words, supernatural immortals) and as the historically specific 'first and best' of the nation's past (that is long dead heroes)." Williams, *Ireland's Immortals,* 304.

> midday he heard a sound like the clashing of many swords, that went on for a long time without any break.[303]

Here, Hanrahan's awareness of the *Sídhe* is distinctly similar to the experience presented in *The Immortal Hour's* conclusion, where the music of the *Sídhe* accompanies traces of warlike imagery.

Lady Gregory's *Complete Irish Mythology* (1902 and 1904), features a chapter titled "Donn, Son of Midhir." In this tale, a mysterious fawn leads Finn, the legendary Irish leader, and his band of warriors to a hill where a group of the *Sídhe* is living with King Midhir (a slightly different spelling than that used in the text of *The Immortal Hour*). These *Sídhe* explain to Finn that they have been battling hordes of various clans who try to conquer them year after year, and are in desperate need of his military expertise.[304] As a student of Irish mythology and a friend and associate of both Yeats and Gregory, Macleod was well aware of these texts and tropes.

Some of the passages from songs for *The Immortal Hour,* which Boughton found in Macleod's volume, *The Hill of Dreams*, are reminiscent of passages from Yeats. In particular, one of Hanrahan's poem's, "The Twisting of the Rope," [305] may have provided material for the "Faery Song," "The Land of Youth" (another example of Midir's wooing

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[303] W.B. Yeats, "Stories of Red Hanrahan" in *The Collected Works of W.B. Yeats, Vol. 5.* (Shakespeare Head Press, Stratford-on-Avon, 1908), 251.

[304] Lady Gregory, *Lady Gregory's Complete Irish Mythology,* (Finland: Reed International Books, 1994), 175-181.

[305] Yeats, "Stories of Red Hanrahan," 218.

poetry that comes in between iterations of the Faery song), as well as for the lament, "I Have Seen All Things Pass."

Yeats's poem, "The Twisting of the Rope" from *Stories of Red Hanrahan:*

> O Death's old bony finger
> Will never find us there
> In the high hollow townland,
> Where love's to give and to spare;
> Where boughs have fruit and blossom
> At all times of the year;
> Where rivers are running over
> With red beer and brown beer.
> An old man plays the bagpipes
> In a gold and silver wood;
> Queens, their eyes blue like the ice,
> Are dancing in a crowd.
>
> When their hearts are so high
> That they would come to blows,
> They unhook their heavy swords
> From golden and silver boughs:
> But all that are killed in battle
> Awaken to life again [306]

Compare the above to the texts of the "Faery Song" as well as "The Land of Youth:"

> In the Land of Youth there are pleasant places,
> Green joyful woods and fields, swift grey-blue waters.
> There is no age there, nor any sorrow,
> As the stars in heaven are the cattle in the valleys.
> Great rivers wander through flowery plains,
> Streams of milk and mead, streams of strong ale.

There is a noticeable overlap between the lines of these three poems. "The hills, the hollow hills" from the "Faery Song" matches neatly with "the high hollow townland." The youthful invocations found in both the "Faery Song" as well as "The Land of Youth"

[306] Yeats, "Stories of Red Hanrahan," 242-243.

match as well to Yeats's invocation of a place where "Death's bony finger will never find us." Furthermore, there are the amusing lines regarding copious beverages:

> Where rivers are running over
> With red beer and brown beer.
> (The Twisting of the Rope)

> Great rivers wander through flowery plains,
> Streams of milk and mead, streams of strong ale
> (The Land of Youth)

The point here is not to suggest that Yeats was the originator of such poetry, but rather to argue that all these poems contribute to another Celtic Twilight trope: the 'Land of Youth' (*Tir Na nÓg*). Most importantly, in the cultural imagination, this 'Land of Youth' was linked to militaristic imagery and the idea that the *Sídhe* were a type of faery soldier; one that if killed "awakens to new life again." It seems highly unlikely that "Faery Song's" invocation of this well-known trope would not have made an impact on post-war audiences still reeling from the tragedies of the front.

That Boughton scores the "Faery Song" for harp and voice is significant. The association of lost heroes and the harp, Midir's instrument of choice, is one of the oldest Celtic tropes. John Daverio, in his analysis of Gade's Ossianic compositions, writes,

> The harp, a primary color in Gade's orchestral palette, is not only a signifier for bardic song; in Ossianic poetry it often serves to summon the spirits of heroes of yore, who in turn make their presence known through its ethereal sounds. Thus, when Comala [here Daverio is referring to Gade's *Comala,* "no. 7, Chorus of Spirits," circa. 1846] is visited by the ghosts of her ancestors who escort the souls of fallen heroes to the next world, their solemn march is accompanied by the harp as if to highlight the fact that the spirits emanate from an extratemporal realm.[307]

[307] Daverio, "Schumann's Ossianic Manner," 259.

Daverio's commentary implies that the "Faery Song's" harp accompaniment may have remind audiences of the thousands of young men recently killed in the war because of the harp's special power to conjures up the "souls of fallen heroes" (in other words, it is an aural signifier of dead soldiers). In the "Faery Song," these fallen heroes are specifically invoked as "marching in the moonlight." That member's of Boughton's audience shared their own encounters with soldiers on the march in their biographies and memoirs suggests the currency and power of this image in the postwar era.

Soldiers on the march in the lives of *The Immortal Hour* Devotees

Just as the devotees of *The Immortal hour* listed above had a predilection for a militaristic spiritualism, they also conjured and experienced the image of the marching soldier in their memoirs and lives. Lady Warrender's volume describes a defeated British battalion retreating from encroaching Germans during the early days of the war. They are too exhausted to move, when luckily their Major

> then happened to see a toy drum and a penny whistle in a shop window. These he bought, found a couple of men to play, and started off down the road, his 'band' in front. The others followed and he got them along a few miles that night and on again next day, when they rejoined the Division.[308]

In this touching story, music is a transcendent force that re-energizes British troops as they march to an at least temporary safety. Stories such as these are uplifting and inspiring, however, they are rarer than the grim march of the wounded, which elicited

[308] Warrender, *My First Sixty Years*, 120-121.

anguished emotional reactions in witnesses. In *Six Weeks at the War*, Millicent Sutherland (1867-1955), as a nurse trapped behind enemy lines, recounts breaking into tears after saying goodbye to her patients who are being force marched to prison-trains despite many of them being near death. Millicent recounts her last walk with these soldiers in the following anecdote:

> The nurses and I walked up the town beside the stretchers and ambulance carts that were removing them to the Jesuit College. The Jesuit brothers were very kind and very sad also. They said the Germans were taking away the wounded in a pitiable state. Some had only just been operated on, and some were in a high fever. In the big hall of the Jesuit College there were quantities of wounded all herded together. The Jesuit brothers were doing all they could for them, but, of course, it was an entirely different matter to our hospital... When I went to say 'Good-bye' to each one and wish them luck, I wept like a child and could not help it."[309]

Marie Louise also describes the pain of reading daily the lists of wounded and dead, and of treating in her hospital the first waves of British soldiers struck by poison gas, "men half blind and choking their lives away."[310] No doubt similar scenes must have played out at "The Princess Patricia Hospital," which was named after Lady Patricia Ramsey (1886-1974).[311] This devotee of *The Immortal Hour* also had a regiment named after her, many of whom lost their lives on a battle-ground ironically titled "Sanctuary Wood," and described as a place with nothing but "remnants of ragged stumps and bits of

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[309] Millicent Sutherland, *Six Weeks at the War* (Chicago: AC McClurg and Co., 1915), 66. Millicent Sutherland-Leveson-Gower, Duchess of Sutherland, was an author and social reformer who was painted by John Singer Seargent in 1904.

[310] Louise, *My Memories of Six Reigns,* 142.

[311] Lady Patricia Ramsey was one of Queen Victoria's granddaughters.

splintered boles."[312] Did the "Faery Song's" invocation of joyously marching troops give those in the audience who remembered these dead soldiers an imaginative space to exchange, as a final resting place, the destruction of cursed battlegrounds like "sanctuary wood" for an enchanted and timeless world characterized by youth and happiness? If so, it may have provided those in the audience with an opportunity to embrace an alternative to the terrifying destinies of the soldiers they had cared for, and to recast the image of the marching soldier as a symbol not of bodies soon to be shattered and broken but of a youthful, carefree, and glorious immortality.[313]

Indeed, the "Faery Song" may have offered audiences a way to bring the dead back to life, if only on the stage or in the imagination. In this same spirit, the work as a whole, through its nostalgically romantic aesthetic, evoked the pre-war era, its optimism, and, along with it, the dreams of a bright future that many had had at that time. In his own attempt to justify the work's popularity, Michael Hurd suggests that *The Immortal Hour* offered a "dream world" that "a war-weary generation were ready to escape into." The

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[312] Anon, "Third Battle for Ypres," *The Times* (London, England), Monday, June 12, 1916, issue 41191, 5.

[313] Yeats invokes a similar sense of a new and more pleasant destiny in an untitled selection of poetry from *The Celtic Twilight's* chapter, "The Queen and the Fool":

> Heardest thou not sweet words among
> That heaven-resounding minstrelsy?
> Heardest thou not that those who die
> Awake in a world of ecstasy?
> How love, when limbs are interwoven,
> And sleep, when the night of life is cloven,
> And thought to the world's dim boundaries clinging,
> And music when one's beloved is singing
> Is death?

dream he alludes to is not just the mythical world represented on the stage, but "the earlier saner age" in which the work was originally composed, and to which its style is indebted. By positing a visit to *The Immortal Hour* as a chance to reanimate long lost dreams, Hurd hints at the notion that such dreams were an unquantifiable casualty of the Great War, and a secondary casualty of the many lives and loves lost to its destruction.[314] The idea of the "broken dream" as a symbol of lost love is specifically evoked by Eochaidh in the final scene when he calls out, just before he dies: "My dreams, my dreams, give me my dreams."[315] If Eoachiad's loss of Etain symbolized the loss of a loved one during the Great War, as this investigation has argued, was the evocation of lost dreams in the work's final lines strong enough to express this? How could any form of expression match the terrible devastation, the grief, and the sense of loss, created by the war? Jay Winter highlights the universality of this question, with his observation that "the Great War brought the search for an appropriate language of loss to the center of cultural and political life."[316] One consequence of the difficulty of finding this "appropriate language" was that much was left 'unsaid.'

The 'Unsaid' and Boughton's modified conclusion to *The Immortal Hour*

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[314] Hurd, *Rutland Boughton,* 148.

[315] Libretto taken from the notes of *The Immortal Hour,* conducted by Alan G Melville on (Hyperion Records Limited, 1984), 15.

[316] Winter, *Sites of Memory, Sites of Mourning,* 5.

The notion or concept of the 'unsaid' manifests itself in different ways in the writings of those in attendance at *The Immortal Hour*. In Lady Warrender's story, mentioned earlier, of Mr. Jacob and his dinner party of Boer War veterans, the 'unsaid' appeals to the idea of the heroic but modest soldier, who neglects to mention that he once killed "two gigantic sepoys" in hand-to-hand combat.[317] However, in other situations, the "unsaid" is invoked to stop grief from overwhelming and destabilizing its victims. In one of her most touching narratives, Marie Louise describes her friendship with her dear cousin "Alix, who became the wife of the last Czar of Russia."[318] When Alix is brutally murdered by the Bolsheviks (she was assassinated along with her husband and children), Marie Louise takes it upon herself to deliver the painful news to Alix's sister, Victoria. She poignantly recalls how,

> we did not talk at great length about it at all; there was so little one could say. The horror of this ghastly tragedy was too overwhelming for mere words, and just the ordinary expressions of condolence seemed utterly out of place.[319]

Marie Louise emphasizes how not dwelling on what had happened seemed the only right way to deal with it, stating that "silence did not mean careless indifference to what she was suffering, but that it was the only way I could convey my sympathy." Victoria later writes Marie Louise thanking her for this silence "which had helped her to get a grip on herself and her emotions," something which wouldn't have happened had they "discussed

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[317] Warrender, *My First Sixty Years,* 99-104.

[318] Louise, *My Memories of Six Reigns,* 50.

[319] Ibid., 146-147.

at length the details of the tragedy and what she had suffered."[320] How many other British subjects could not allow grief to "interfere with the ordered daily routine of life," and how many, "after that first half-hour," never again spoke of the tragedies caused by the war? The subtext of this silence is simple: the search for the "appropriate language of loss" had failed. While leaving things 'unsaid' may have helped those dealing with tragedy get through the day-to-day, the consequence of this decision was that grief became an entirely private, rather than public, event. For those who witnessed Etain's year of love spent with Eochaidh as a symbolic visitation of a loved one from beyond, is it possible that the work's dramatic conclusion was able to help express the "unsaid" by taking an expression of the private nature of grief and changing it into a public ritual?

Boughton designed the conclusion of *The Immortal Hour* in a subtle yet important way that transformed the experience of its final moments. In the play by Fiona Macleod, Dalua has the last word when he states, "there is none left but this… the dream of death,"[321] as he touches and kills Eoachiad. In this original staging, these lines shift the audience's focus away from Eoachaidh and onto Dalua, allowing viewers to interpret Eoachaidh's death from a safe, objective distance, and without the ironic commentary of the "Faery Song." However, by eliminating these lines, Boughton completely recast the effect of the final scene. Instead of hearing Dalua's dire pronouncement, the listener hears the immortal "Faery Song" fading into the distance as the *Sídhe* march and sing together on their way back to the Faery kingdom. It is as if one hears this fading, joyful

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[320] Ibid.,146-147.

[321] Macleod, *The Immortal Hour,* ed. Laura Wilson, 75.

chorus from Eoachiad's ears, and therefore one cannot help but identify subjectively with the Irish King. Indeed, the receding chorus creates an aural illusion, whose effect is quite powerful; one truly feels left behind, in the hall of the Irish King, in a state of emotional devastation. There is no safe distance from which to hide from the irony of the moment: it is the dead that march joyously together offstage to a land of youthful immortality, while the living, are, like Eochaidh, left to die alone from the crushing grief of lost love. It has been suggested earlier, that as a consequence of leaving things "unsaid," the inexpressibility of grief made mourning for many Britons a profoundly solitary experience. Eochaidh's last words, no longer interrupted by Dalua's lines, resonate profoundly with this loneliness. His call – "My dreams, my dreams, give me my dreams" – is a cry, not for the joyous union of love, but for lost dreams: the broken hopes and anguished memories of those who lived through the postwar era.

Figure 22: Etain leaving Eochaidh to join Midir in the world of the *Sídhe*[322]

A Scene from Mr. Rutland Boughton's Music Drama at the Regent Theatre

Concluding thoughts about *The Immortal Hour* in London

For audiences of *The Immortal Hour* in the years after the war, Eochaidh's final utterance highlighted the relationship between grief and loneliness in an explicitly public sphere. It offered those audience members sensitive to these themes a chance to experience such usually solitary feelings as a group. I believe that this created an opportunity for them to acknowledge each other's losses, and affirm that they were not

[322] Toye, "The Immortal Hour," Saturday, February 3, 1923, 20-22.

alone, but together, in their struggles. Indeed, the work had taken on the group-oriented qualities of, in the words of Sir Denison Ross quoted above, a "religious service." Significantly, there is a moment in *The Immortal Hour* that highlights the acceptance of grief, tragedy, and death as one of the work's most important themes. This is the song "I have Seen All Things Pass," mentioned earlier:

> I have seen all things pass and all things go
> Under the shadow of the drifting leaf:
> Green leaf, red leaf, brown leaf,
> Grey leaf blown to and fro.
>
> I have seen happy dreams rise up and pass
> Silent and swift as shadows on the grass:
> Grey shadows of old dream,
> Grey beauty of old dreams
> Grey shadows on the grass

This song, which seems to have eluded comment in nearly all writing regarding *The Immortal Hour,* perhaps offered audiences the work's greatest and most effective moment of consolation.[323]

Perhaps *The Immortal Hour* did not become the focus of international attention in the 1920s because it was not considered sophisticated enough, or because its material took a musical aesthetic that was fading in popularity and blended it with Celticism, Feminism, Theosophy, and Spiritualism in a way that has been underappreciated. Will *The Immortal Hour* re-enter the repertoire when its unique attributes are again needed by society? Indeed, the work's display of spiritualism was an ideal fit to its times, and to its

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[323] The moment of silence mentioned in the *Children's Newspaper* that this song inspired takes on a heightened significance in this context.

post-Glastonbury debut in 1920s London. In this sense, the work itself takes on an aspect of the uncanny, as Boughton could never have imagined in 1912 that a future war would lend his work new meanings, and it seems he never revised his own understanding of how the work communicated with its followers. It gave audience members, whether of high or low degree, a chance to imagine lost loved ones continuing to live happily in a "mirror world" and to re-envision the destinies of the many unfortunate soldiers they encountered during the war.[324]

The spiritual significance *The Immortal Hour* may have held for audiences once again demonstrates several elements of Celtic Twilight. In Celtic Twilight, Christianity and Celtic spiritualism co-exist in an uneasy and unresolved state. As Yeats had once bragged, he did not "rationalize a single hobgoblin." Similarly, he left his readers to their own devices when it came to rationalizing the opposing concepts of heaven and the 'Land of Youth.' *The Immmortal Hour* offered its audiences a similar conundrum. If they imagined their lost loved ones being reborn in *Tir-Na-nÓg,* then the 'Land of Youth' was simply a Celtic-heaven. However, the 'Land-of-Youth' is in actuality the home of the *Sídhe*, and only in special cases do humans pass through its gateways. In the case of Yeats's character Red Hanrahan, the troubled and lovesick poet reaches *Tir-Na-nÓg* only to be rejected and cast back into a mortal life of lost and ceaseless wandering. This is similar to Eochaidh's 'Immortal Hour' with Etain; like Red Hanrahan, he is cast out from a previously idyllic state. Another long-standing trope of Celtic spiritualism featured in

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[324] One reviewer described the work as "a happy lingering in the 'infinitude called youth.'" Grein, J.T. "'The Immortal Hour' at the Regent," *The Sketch*, Wednesday, October 25, 1922, 33. https://www.britishnewspaperarchive.co.uk/viewer/bl/0001860/19221025/034/0033

the tales of Yeats's *The Celtic Twilight* is one in which people of great beauty, such as newly wed brides or newly born babies, are stolen away by the *Sídhe*. This trope is especially suited to the war; it implies that those that had died in the war had similarly been stolen.

Yet another way to understand why an officially Christian population would look to spiritualist and folkloric explanations to make sense of recent events is to take a Yeatsian approach and simply avoid rationalizations. One of the War's most difficult to accept characteristics was the irrationality of its ceaseless destruction. The Christian notion of heaven was simply too rational; the turn to spiritualism that Jay Winter discusses was a turn to the irrational. The conclusion of *The Immortal Hour* offered an irrational way of comprehending what had happened: by suggesting that somehow fallen soldiers lived on in a supernatural 'otherworld' that had been a fabric of life and culture on the British isles from long before the arrival of the Christian era.[325]

Whatever reasons (or lack thereof) may have arisen in people's minds, what was most important about *The Immortal Hour* was that it was not only the dead that were presented on its stage. Eochaidh, who dies from grief, became a point of self-identification for the sufferers, those unfortunates that the Great War left behind to endure a fate of lonely suffering. He symbolized a projection of their grief onto that "mirror world" of the operatic stage in a way that was dignified and cathartic, that created a sense of community, and helped foster some acceptance of the tragedy brought on by

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[325] As Janet Oppenheim notes, spiritualism and psychical research "served as substitute religions for refugees from Christianity in the late nineteenth century and early twentieth century." *The Other World: Spiritualism and Psychical Research in England 1850-1914* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1985), 159-160.

the Great War. In this light, the hysterical response of the final curtain that upset Rutland Boughton may have been a real display of gratitude to for his opera. He had created a work that finally "found the appropriate language" – one that transcended rationalizations and instead reached back deeply into cultural memory – and gave voice in the most literal manner to those things that had remained unsaid for years.

Finally, *The Immortal Hour* and its Celtic Twilight aesthetics presented on the stage a fading culture. For devotees of *The Immortal Hour*, the 'broken dream' of wartime became intermixed symbolically with the 'broken dream' of a fading decadent romanticism that could only could be remembered in a tragic twilit reverie. Onstage the liminal boundary between this world and the next – the essential feature of Celtic Twilight – became not only a boundary between the crushed Irish King and his erstwhile bride, but a boundary as well between the present and the past, reality and what 'might have been.' Therefore, even for audience members unaware of its Theosophical resonance, its spiritualist overtones, or its marching soldiers, *The Immortal Hour* still offered a moving experience: it was a looking glass through which to see what had been. As time passed, scar tissue grew over the wounds of war. There were fewer people who had lived during that glorious, romantic, prewar era, and who could therefore identify strongly with the work's conjuration of yesteryear.[326] *The Immortal Hour's* impact

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[326] The following review from a 1934 revival at The Church Institute, Stroud, encapsulates many of the these arguments:

> The audience was, if anything, more enthusiastic than on Monday, for many came to see something with which they were familiar, and had learned to love many years ago. The commonplace hall became a dream world. Etaine dreamed, Eochaidh dreamed, even the sinister Dalua and the old Bard, dreamed. The audience only woke

receded, and its purposeful nostalgia became a cliché separated from a once powerful meaning. A series of stunning revivals eventually lost steam, and the work was forgotten, surviving only as a footnote in music history.

The *Immortal Hour* and the Great War: a second perspective

Those familiar with *The Immortal Hour* will know that long before its staggering runs at the Regent Theatre, the work had experienced a different and more humble form of success as part of Rutland Boughton's Glastonbury Festivals. The Glastonbury Festivals were yet another Wagnerian derivative. Boughton had hoped to create both an English version of Bayreuth and a cycle of operas based on Arthurian legend to serve as its British equivalent to the *Ring* cycle. Boughton did complete his cycle before his death, but he only succeeded in having it partially performed. However, *The Immortal Hour*, finished in 1912, was the perfect inaugural work for his festival scheme. Boughton went to great lengths to organize the festivals, and even put on several preliminary 'festival

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> when the curtain fell, and Etaine melted away with the Prince of Faery." The reviewer also celebrated "the last half-hour or so, which, in the sheer beauty of its artistic setting, the concerted singing of the chorus, and the pathos and tragedy of the ending, has surely never been surpassed in this district.

That this local revival of *The Immortal Hour* was patronized by those that had grown up with it suggests the generational specificity of the work. Meanwhile, the reviewer's belief that the work was a pleasurable dream that melted away contributes to the theory the opera was a window through which to look upon a lost past. Anon. "The Immortal Hour," *Gloucester Journal* Saturday, September 15, 1934, 2. https://www.britishnewspaperarchive.co.uk/viewer/BL/0000532/19340915/019/0002?browse=False

schools' as trial runs. He advertised these events, in accordance with his socialist beliefs, as the perfect vacation for the weary worker.[327] He even arranged to have Sir Thomas Beecham and his orchestra perform the premiere of *The Immortal Hour* at the first official festival. However, disaster struck. The war began just days before the first performances, Beecham's orchestra had to cancel, and grandiose talks of a new theatre fell through. Still, Boughton persevered, and *The Immortal Hour* premiered in the Glastonbury assembly rooms with piano accompaniment. Despite all obstacles, critics hailed the small festival as a success. The resilience required of Boughton and his collaborators to pull through as the festival continued during the war years resonated with the general spirit of the war effort. Despite their modest nature, the festivals received considerable press coverage, and in the pages of the daily press mentions of the festival and the Great War became intertwined.

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[327] This would become a continual theme for Boughton. In a review of a concert of Boughton's music given at Aeolian Hall in Oct of 1923, the critic for *The Era* wrote that,
"Mr. Rutland Boughton gave the first of two concerts of chamber music 'for the plain man who likes the common chord and an occasional tune, and not for high-brows.'" Anon., "Mr. Boughton's Concert," *The Era,* Wednesday, October 17, 1923, 6. https://www.britishnewspaperarchive.co.uk/viewer/bl/0000053/19231017/057/0006

As late as 1918, Boughton and his associates thought that the festivals and their quasi-socialist agenda still had the latent potential to change the nation. An article co-authored by Boughton and Hebert Antcliffe lays bare what they perceived as the festival's revolutionary potential:

> The Glastonbury Festival of Music-Drama, with its attached school of opera singing, acting and dancing – forms the pivot of the movement that should, if properly worked, do much to revolutionize British ideas upon and remake the conditions which exist in England with regard to music and all that appertains to the art of the theatre.

While not explicitly stated, Boughton felt that this musical revolution would extended out to the rest of society, and usher in the socialist utopia that he envisioned for mankind. "A British school of Music Drama,"118.

For example, sharing space with a notice for the second Glastonbury festival in the *Western Daily Press,* Monday, July 5, 1915, an essay by the Bishop of Hereford asks for the musical community to offer cheap concerts as a "means of elevating the people." He argues that such concerts would serve the public good, "not only in providing musical amusement," but by "doing something to brighten … and make better in all respects the lives of their fellow citizens."[328] For cultural enthusiasts such as the Bishop, Boughton's efforts with the festivals were indeed a contribution to the war effort.

The subsequent notice regarding the festival's program includes performances of Boughton's *The Immortal Hour* and *The Birth of Arthur,* Edgar Bainton's *Oithona,* and Purcell's *Dido and Aeneas*. Boughton, the unrepentant Wagnerian, did not think it amiss to also include excerpts from *Parsifal* and *Siegfried* during a war against German aggression. The juxtaposition of the German Master's name and an ad in the adjacent column aimed at bringing in recruits to the war effort is jarring:

> Glouchestershire RFA: Recruits Wanted, 3rd Line Above the Brigade for Imperial Service. Special Rates of Pay To: Shoeing Smiths Saddlers Fitters Wheelwrights. The First Line of this Brigade is now on active service. Drafts will be supplied from the Third Line to the Service Brigade. Enlist Today, artillery grounds, white ladies road, Clifton.[329]

A few months later, a notice for the festival in the *Western Gazette* comes directly at the end of the "Roll of Honour,"[330] a list of hundreds of local dead and wounded men,

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[328] Anon., "Musical Notes," *Western Daily Press*, Monday, July 5, 1915, 9. https://www.britishnewspaperarchive.co.uk/viewer/bl/0000264/19150705/083/0009

[329] Ibid., 9.

[330] Anon., "The Roll of Honour," *Western Gazette*, Friday, July 16, 1915, 3. https://www.britishnewspaperarchive.co.uk/viewer/bl/0000407/19150716/012/0003

which includes men wounded across the channel, in the Mediterranean, and in the Persian Gulf. Meanwhile, the notice for the festival promises that it will "be a great attraction to lovers of music." In this article, there is no mention of Wagnerian excerpts.

As the war began changing the way Britons perceived German culture, Boughton's idea of a British Bayreuth continued to garner press attention. The *Sheffield Independent* noted that the scheme was receiving "serious consideration" though it had "been hampered by the war." The article credits Boughton's "keenness" for building awareness of the project, and uses the Arthurian lore surrounding Glastonbury as a means of legitimizing Boughton's plan for a national project.[331] It claims that Boughton met Reginald Buckley, the librettist for the Arthurian cycle, on a visit to Tintagel Castle, a place "rich in Arthurian romance." The author notes with irony the uneasy relation of Boughton's project to the country that had become England's greatest enemy:

> Yesterday afternoon and evening performances were given of Mr. Bainton's opera 'Oithana' in two scenes and the second act of Wagner's 'Tristan and(sic) Isolda.' It is remarkable that the first production of the English composer's work should be given while he is a prisoner in Germany, and that his opera should be followed by the work of a German.[332]

Edgar Bainton, composer of the two-act opera *Oithona*, on holiday in Germany when the war broke out, had been interred in a prisoner-of-war camp, and the otherwise standard

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[331] Glastonbury is supposedly the burial site of King Arthur and Queen Guinivere. Glastonbury Tor, a small hill crowned by a small tower-like fortification, is linked with the 'Isle of Avalon' – King Arthur's resting place. There is an argument that in the past the water level in the area was higher, and this unusual mound would have been an island.

[332] Anon, "Festival of Music Drama: Glastonbury as the British Bayreuth," *Western Daily Press*, Thursday, August 12, 1915, 5. https://www.britishnewspaperarchive.co.uk/viewer/bl/0000264/19150812/041/0005

Wagnerian excerpts now appeared dreadfully out of place. Boughton negotiated his way through the muddle by claiming that, "Wagner was one of the least German in feeling of all German composers, and in his writings there was one continual denunciation of German methods." Readers interested in more than only musical fare would learn in a notice just beneath the one regarding Boughton's festival that,

> The Zepplin raid on the East Coast has given a stimulating fillip to recruiting. A welcome resumption of activity was noticeable at the recruiting offices in the City and West End yesterday, and telling posters conveying a stirring message quickly made their appearance, on the boardings. Many young men were successfully persuaded to enlist on their way to business.[333]

In the adjacent column, news of the grim submarine battle emerges:

> Thus for the week ended August 4 it was announced that six English merchant ships and nine fishing steamers fell victims to the U boats.[334]

From all sides, news of war surrounds notices for Boughton's festival. The public, motivated by a brand of artistic of patriotism, began showing "considerable interest" in the festival. A report remarks on the success of *The Immortal Hour* and states that people attended in such numbers that "many were unable to gain admission."[335] Still, news of the unlikely success of a British opera is only a momentary distraction for readers, as in the adjacent column the war continues its steady march. An advertisement, titled "Gifts and

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[333] Anon., Untitled and "Germany's Submarine Bogey," *Western Daily Press*, Thursday, August 12, 1915, 5. https://www.britishnewspaperarchive.co.uk/viewer/bl/0000264/19150812/041/0005

[334] Ibid., 5.

[335] Anon., "Festival of Music Drama," *Western Daily Press*, Saturday, August 14, 1915, 9. https://www.britishnewspaperarchive.co.uk/viewer/bl/0000264/19150814/055/0009

Comforts More Necessary Than Ever," calls for everything from shirts, to towels, fruit, chocolate, and tobacco to be donated to men at the front.

The appeal of Boughton's everyman approach, the same used by the army, also became a subject for discussion. In a laudatory review of the festivals, the *Western Daily Press* observes that "the general public were only just beginning to discover that this Festival is as much their show as that of the music-lover." The reviewer also notices an unusual degree of unity amongst Boughton and his cohort. He writes, "the jealousies of musicians provide amusement to the public. Happily, however, a very different spirit exists among the Glastonbury players." These comments suggest that the war may have heightened the significance of the festival for its participants and united their interests. Finally, just as its notices rally the troops, the *Western Daily Press* also rallies its readers to support the festival, writing that, "the best help they can give now is to turn up in strength and make a big success in the final week."[336]

One last press posting should be considered. It comes from after the war and is an anonymously authored poem attached to a notice regarding a war memorial rose garden. It directly links the soldier's ultimate sacrifice to an immortal hour:

> More than the record cut in mould'ring stone
> Shall be the witness of the living bloom,
> Memorial of that great host unknown,
> Whose passing has made beautiful the tomb.
>
> White for their youth; the crimson and the gold
> For blazoned glory of their offering;

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[336] Anon., "Glastonbury Festival," *Western Daily Press,* Saturday 21 August 1915, 5. https://www.britishnewspaperarchive.co.uk/viewer/BL/0000264/19150821/008/0005?browse=true

For they that wait, the first-sprung bud shall hold
Unchanging promise of their deathless spring.

Summer on summer shall the long years see
Within each rose some memory enshrined,
The fragrance of each opening flow'r shall be
Their names new given to the echoing wind.
True memory of their immortal hour
The flow'r of England writ in England's flow'r.[337]

As the above examples illustrate, the war followed the festival and its showpiece, *The Immortal Hour*, wherever it asserted itself in the newspapers. Furthermore, the festivals became a topic for debate within the broader context of the war because Boughton's steadfast Wagnerian sympathies and his desire to create an artistic monument to Britain were two ambitions that generated a problematic counterpoint. Still, the festival's links to German aesthetics did not hamper its popularity, and the march to the theatre was played out in tandem with the march to the recruiting office, both in reality and on the pages of the newspapers. Meanwhile, there was an implicit association made between British patriotism and public support for the festivals. Operating without significant patronage, the success of Boughton's festivals over incalculable odds mirrored the predicament of a British population pitted in a seemingly insurmountable struggle against the Germans. I have suggested that the reason for the London success of Boughton's opera was the relationship of its content to the tragedy of the Great War. For

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[337] Anon., "In Memory," *Sunday Times* (London England), Sunday, February 16, 1919, 8. Issue 5002.
http://find.galegroup.com/dvnw/infomark.do?&source=gale&prodId=DVNW&userGroupName=ucriverside&tabID=T003&docPage=article&docId=FP1801786678&type=multipage&contentSet=LTO&version=1.0

those that remain skeptical, the excerpts above demonstrate that the history of *The Immortal Hour* is deeply entwined with that of the war.

Adding Boughton to the Celtic context

With *The Immortal Hour,* Boughton joins the other composers mentioned previously as part of a select group who continued to work in a Romantic idiom well after the fashion for such an aesthetic had passed. Though Boughton stands out for his early success, all these composers are united, not only by their interest in Celtic subject matter, but also by what Pirie describes as an inability to "escape the Wagner craze of the first years of our century."[338] Their preference for Wagnerian aesthetics in part stemmed from studies with Fredrick Corder, who taught Bantock, Holbrooke, and Bax at the Royal Academy of Music.[339] In recent scholarship, Christopher Little has suggested that many of the composers mentioned above who indulged in Celtic themed works, including Bantock, Holbrooke, Rutland Boughton, Bax, and Havergal Brian, be dubbed the "English Romantics." These composers were "excluded from the 'historical-pastoral'

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[338] Pirie, "Bantock and His Generation," 715.

[339] Corder encouraged a "late Romantic, German-derived technique" in his teaching. However, his attachment to Wagner and Liszt went deeper than this comment suggests. He and his wife Henrrieta Louisa (née Walford) made "pioneering English translations of Wagner, which did much to spread an appreciation in England of the composer Corder admired above all others," and as late as 1925 he wrote "an exaggeratedly defensive biography of Liszt." John Warrack and Rosemary Williamson, "Frederick Corder," *Grove Music Online,* (2001). https://doi.org/10.1093/gmo/9781561592630.article.06467

narrative" that notably championed Gustav Holst and Ralph Vaughan Williams as the leaders of English musical composition. [340]

Much conjecture has been made about the neglect of these "English Romantics." While Pirie opines that Elgar, Delius, and Holst "retain enough vitality to create their own atmosphere" he also argues that the musical world conjured by Bantock, Holbrooke, and Brian "has gone past our ability to understand fully its peculiar atmosphere and assumptions." [341] Indeed, the 'giganticism' that afflicted Bantock and his associates took their works outside the scale of comprehension, distorting Wagner's grandiose worldview beyond a recognizable scope. However, whatever their quirks may have been, they shared, as the title 'English Romantics' suggests, an aesthetic that was unapologetically romantic, unabashedly Wagnerian, and correspondingly backward looking. Boughton's backward glance in *The Immortal Hour* was particularly poignant, asking audiences to look back at the very abyss of grief, as well as to the pre war era. Though Elgar's experiments with Celtic Twilight were limited, he certainly captured the spirit of Celtic Twilights' backwards glance in his correspondence with his friend Alice Stuart-Wortley. He wrote the following on 5 March 1917, as his joy at returning to the countryside was tempered by the tragedy of war and his realization of the passing of time:

> I was dreaming yesterday of woods and fields and, perhaps, a little drive round Harrogate – or a little play journey to Fountains or some lovely

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[340] Little, *Beyond England's 'Green and Pleasant Land*, 7.

After all, the pastoral style can be regarded as an aspect of a newly emerging British modernism. See: Eric Saylor, "Its Not Lambkins Frisking At All': English Pastoral Music and the Great War," *The Musical Quarterly,* vol. 91, no. 1-2 (Spring/Summer 2008): 39-59.

[341] Pirie, "Bantock and His Generation," 715.

> remembrance of long ago idylls, and now deep snow! Well, I have put it all in my music, and also much more that never happened.[342]

Consider as a final argument, Daverio's observation that "what I find most telling about the features of Gade's Nordic [Ossianic] character is their nearly uniform turn in the same direction: toward the past." [343] If in Gade's time – the heydey of Ossian mania – this backward look turned to a dying Celtic culture, after the Great War, it meant a look back to a lost generation.

Vaughan Williams' *Riders To The Sea* and the eclipse of Celtic Twilight musical aesthetics

Even by the 1910s, compositional innovations in works like Stravinsky's *Rite of Spring* (1913) or Schoenberg's *Pierrot Lunaire* (1912) demonstrated that the folksy, romantic idiom of *The Immortal Hour* was by no means at the vanguard of innovation in western classical music. Still, Boughton's synthesis of romantic and folk aesthetics is commendable and innovative in its own way. As discussed in a previous chapter, Synge's stage plays, notably *Riders to the Sea*, stylistically eclipsed the Celtic Twilight aesthetic. Similarly, though countless other works can serve as examples of compositions that go well beyond the limited scope of *The Immortal Hour*, Ralph Vaughan Williams' setting

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[342] Michael Kennedy, *Portrait of Elgar: New Edition,* 3rd ed. (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1987), 273.

Elgar wrote this during the time he composed his three great chamber music scores, which are both melancholic and nostalgic.

[343] Daverio, "Schumann's Ossianic Manner," 259.

of Synge's *Riders to the Sea* (circa 1925) is particularly telling in this regard. In his one-act opera, Vaughan Williams advances the treatment of Irish rural life beyond the Celtic Twilights' musical stylistic parameters in a way quite similar to the way in which Synge's play had transcended Yeats's literary incarnation of Celtic Twilight. Of key importance to the stylistic leap that Vaughan Williams brings his subject matter is the use of the octatonic scale. The octatonic scale alternates between whole steps and half steps, and spells out the fully diminished chord. As Walter Clark notes,

> Those who have analyzed *Riders to the Sea* have noted Vaughan Williams' use of harmonic devices quite advanced for the 1920s, especially bitonality. But the most unconventional procedure that Vaughan Williams employs, one with few precedents in his works before 1920, is the use of the octatonic scale… The octatonic scale contains a tri-tone between the first and fifth degrees of the scale, the 'tonic' and the 'dominant,' which is an important factor in creating the dark mood of this work.[344]

Critics have lauded Vaughan Williams' version of *Riders* for its "true representation of real people." This "true representation" is the very same quality of 'realism' for which Synge's theatrical version received praise. Key to Vaughan Williams' brand of musical realism is the concept that, in the words of Edmund Rubbra, "the melody is no longer shackled to a chord, but is free to companion the subtleties of speech-rhythm." In addition to liberating its musical speech through octatonic techniques, *Riders* further breaks the shackles of romantic aesthetics by employing "a dramatic kind of recitative that approaches actual lyricism only occasionally."[345] In other words, *The*

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[344] Walter Clark, "The 'night side of nature': Riders to the Sea" in *Vaughan Williams Essays,* ed. Byron Adams and Robin Wells (Aldershot: Ashgate, 2003), 60.

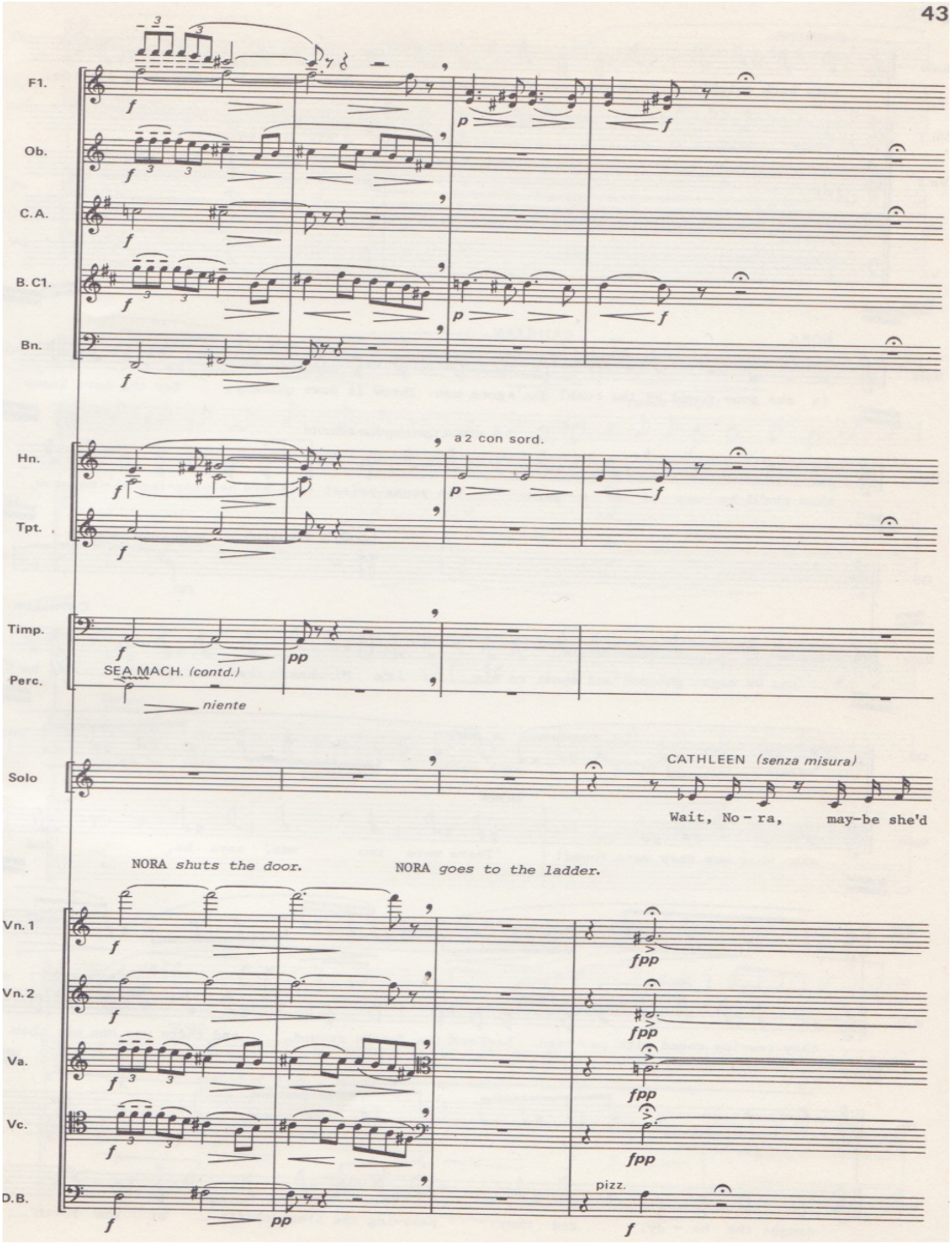
[345] Ibid., 59.
Here Vaughan Williams built on the declamatory innovations of Debussy's *Pelléas et Mélisande.*

Immortal Hour and *Riders,* though they share Celtic subject matter, exist at opposite ends of the compositional spectrum. The combined effect of the innovative lyrical and harmonic elements found in *Riders* are a musical analogue to Synge's play. What Rubbra calls "a stark earthiness" can justly be called "realism" – perhaps one of the most difficult qualities to convey on the operatic stage.

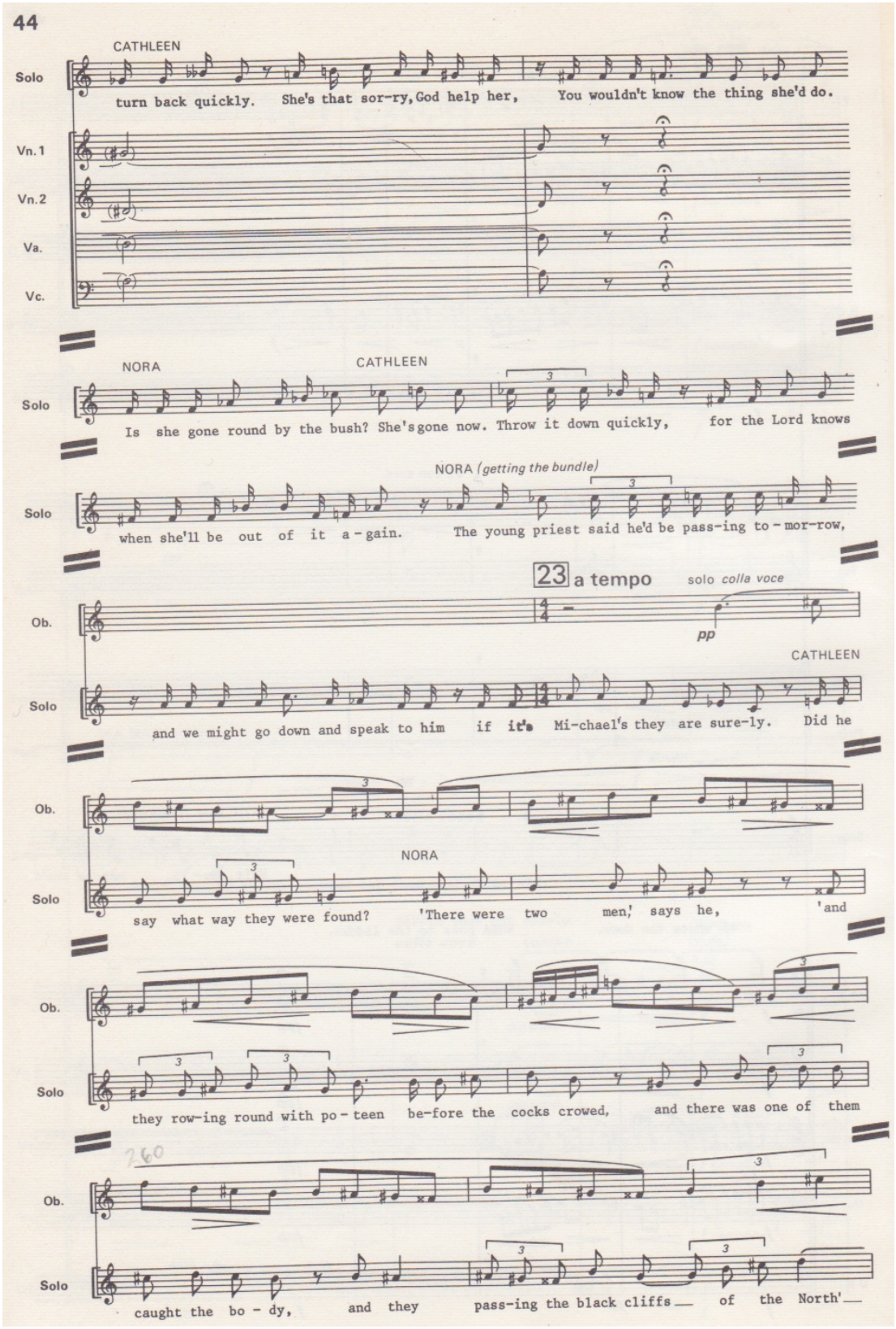
Clark's arguments regarding the use of octatonicism in *Riders to the Sea* have not gone uncontested.[346] However, the score shows that Vaughan Williams set several of the work's declamatory passages to octatonic pitch collections:

[346] For example, it has been suggested that these pitch collections are more likely 'hexatonic' than 'octatonic.' See: Alain Frogley, "Review: Vaughan Williams Essays by Byron Adams and Robin Legge," *Music & Letters* no.89, no. 3 (August, 2008), 405-408.

Figure 23: Ralph Vaughan Williams, *Riders to the Sea,* 43-44.[347]



[347] Ralph Vaughan Williams, *Riders to the Sea* (London: Oxford University Press, 1972), 59.


44
CATHLEEN
Solo
turn back quickly. She's that sor-ry, God help her, You wouldn't know the thing she'd do.
Vn. 1
Vn. 2
Va.
Vc.
NORA
CATHLEEN
Solo
Is she gone round by the bush? She's gone now. Throw it down quickly, for the Lord knows
NORA (getting the bundle)
Solo
when she'll be out of it a-gain. The young priest said he'd be pass-ing to-mor-row,
23 a tempo
solo colla voce
pp
Ob.
CATHLEEN
Solo
and we might go down and speak to him if it's Mi-chael's they are sure-ly. Did he
Ob.
NORA
Solo
say what way they were found? 'There were two men,' says he, 'and
Ob.
Solo
they row-ing round with po-teen be-fore the cocks crowed, and there was one of them
Ob.
Solo
caught the bo-dy, and they pass-ing the black cliffs of the North'

These vocal passages spell out octatonic scales with a sharp, intense declamatory rhythm quite unlike anything found in Boughton's pentatonically grounded score, and suggest that Clark's conclusions bear weight. It is through both octatonicism and a brand of declamation derived from Debussy and Ravel that Vaughan Williams creates a distinct musical atmosphere in *Riders*, one which inspired Rubbra to exclaim: "in no sense is this an opera: rather it is a spoken drama raised in emotional power and expressiveness to the nth degree."[348] Therefore, I believe that it would be a mistake to classify Vaughan Williams' *Riders* as a work that espouses the aesthetics of Celtic Twilight, as tempting as this may be, just as it would also be an error to classify Synge's play in such a way. In both versions of *Riders,* the folksy-romanticism of Celtic Twilight is abandoned for something altogether more modern.

In contrast to Vaughan Williams' *Riders,* the symbolism of Boughton's *The Immortal Hour* stands out ever more clearly. Boughton was anti-realist, and it is through his ingenious invention of 'living scenery,' and its debut, in collaboration with renowned dancer Margaret Morris (1891-1980) at a 'festival school' he organized in 1913 at the Bournemouth Winter Gardens that critics became attuned to this aspect of his aesthetics.[349] *The Musical Times* offered the following explanation of the concept:

> (Living scenery) consists in the substitution of persons for stage accessories and scenery – or, in the words of the producer, human staging: that is to say, the provision of the necessary atmosphere and environment is not

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[348] Walter Clark. "The 'night side of nature': Riders to the Sea," 59.

[349] Boughton's early 'festival schools' were the forerunners of the Glastonbury festivals.

> entrusted to stage 'hands,' but everything is suggested by means of the gestures and rhythmic movements of a body of dancers and singers.[350]

Alternatively called "human staging" it was so successful that it became incorporated into many works at the Glastonbury Festivals.[351] The following is a description of the concept in action:

> In 'Sumida River,' for instance, no attempt was made to bring the ferry boat across the stage in order to represent the crossing of the river, while the usual futile appeal to the imagination by means of cloths was equally avoided. Instead, the chorus, suitably garbed, moved slowly along against a backcloth (which was of a neutral tint with no tracery), and by the movement of their limbs suggested, in a manner more vivid than could have been expected, the motion of the water and the progress of the boat.[352]

The results were impressive, and the festival's presentation of Boughton's *Birth of Arthur* earned the following magnificent headline in the *Daily News*:

> 'SCENERY' BY SONG AND DANCE
> No Vulgar Realism in a Seaside Drama
> EVERYTHING LEFT TO THE IMAGINATION[353]

The reviewer for *The Musical Times* also wrote, in a less jubilant but still praiseworthy manner, "Mr. Boughton has definitely stated that his aims are other than realistic; and indeed the principles of realism could not with success be applied to such a scheme."[354]

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[350] Anon., "'Dancing Scenery' at Bournemouth: Mr. Rutland Boughton's Experiment," *The Musical Times* vol. 54, no. 848 (October 1, 1913): 664.

[351] Antcliffe and Boughton. "A British School of Music Drama," 126.

[352] Ibid., 126.

[353] Hurd, *Rutland Boughton,* 59.

[354] Anon.,"'Dancing Scenery' at Bournemouth," 664.

This staging would later become an important part of Glastonbury performances of *The Immortal Hour.*

Boughton's living scenery fulfilled a vision of a type staging that Yeats envisioned during the period when he first began to conceive of an Irish National Theatre. In a letter addressed to Fiona Macleod from January 1897, Yeats expressed some opinions regarding dramatic scenery:

> My own theory of poetical or legendary drama is that it should have no realistic, or elaborate, but only a symbolic and decorative setting. A forest for instance, should be represented by a forest pattern and not by a forest painting. One should design a scene which would be an accompaniment not a reflection of the text. This method would have further advantage of being fairly cheap, and altogether novel.[355]

This can only be explained as a case of elective affinity. While 'living scenery' appears to have been the product of a moment of artistic inspiration, its successful implementation was a reflection of the importance of dance to Boughton's music festivals, as well as the involvement of several important collaborators. He collaborated with Margaret Morris to make living scenery, and he delegated set designs to his soon-to-be second wife Christina Walshe. He also recruited Mary Neal, whose contributions to the English folk dance revival are incalculable – if contested at the time – as well as Morris' pupil, Florence Jolley. At his 1914 'holiday school' Morris "'interpreted' the whole of Beethoven's Seventh Symphony." Meanwhile there were dances by "Mary Neal, Clive Carey, and the Espérance Guild of Morris Dancers" as well as lectures from

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[355] Allan Wade, ed., *The Letters of W.B. Yeats* (London: Rupert Hart-Davis, 1954), 280.

Mary Neal on the art of Morris dancing.[356] Morris and Neal's involvement with women's folk dancing went hand in hand with an advocacy of women's rights. Furthermore, Mary Neal was, like Boughton, "strongly committed to the labor movement."[357] The festival school also included lectures from Edward Carpenter, a sexual progressive who advocated for the rights of homosexuals.[358]

Boughton's festivals may have been poorly funded, but his ingenious and enthusiastic colleagues made up for whatever was lacking. Looking back upon the many people that came together over Boughton's works and festivals and who participated in the success of *The Immortal Hour,* whether on stage or in the audience, it is clear that the world of Celtic Twilight that he conjured with his works and ideas drew to him the most progressive elements of British society. Earlier I suggested that Yeats used various narrative strategies in *The Celtic Twilight* to establish himself as a Bard. Boughton was simply too much of a radical to become the leader of England's musical establishment, but he was indeed the Bard of Glastonbury.

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[356] Hurd, *Rutland Boughton,* 70.

[357] Roy Judge, "Mary Neal and the Espérance Morris," *Folk Music Journal* vol.5 no.5 (1989): 545-591.

Unfortunately, Mary Neal's work with the Espérance came to an end with the onset of the war, and therefore her collaboration with the Glastonbury festivals was limited. For more on Neal's battle with Cecil Sharp over the English folk dance revival, see also this article.

[358] However, Carpenter's lectures were on organic farming and crafts, not 'gay liberation.' Boughton was terrified of homosexuals.

Chapter 5: Celtic Twilight in British Culture and Discourse, and the British Musical Establishment

Before Yeats's Twilight aesthetic reached Rutland Boughton, it had to make the artistic journey through that natural intermediary: poetry. The nostalgic, backward glance that characterizes Boughton's Celtic Twilight music did not stand alone, as nostalgia was essential to Celtic Twilight poetry as well. In one of the few proper studies of the Celtic Twilight, *The Celtic Twilight and the Nineties*, Austin Clarke uses the metaphor of the railway platform to illustrate the different artistic avenues available to artists during to the transitional era of the 1890s:

> One feels at times as if one were at a crowded railway platform with trains arriving and departing from various junctions. Some writers felt that a great epoch was ending and turned either to the passing moment or the romantic past. Others, however, like H.G. Wells, G.B. Shaw, felt that everything was only beginning and looked forward with an optimism which has been much disturbed since then, to the dazzling progress of a new century.[359]

Just as Yeats had conjured the train as the essential symbol of modernity with which to contrast Celtic Twilight, Clarke makes a similar rhetorical move. Clarke singles out, as members of the group who dared to look back, Yeats and other significant poets of the era:

> Most of the poets, such as Ernest Dowson, Lionel Johnson, Richard Le Gallienne, Arthur Symons – and we must include W. B. Yeats – looked back to the romantic period, feeling that they were in the twilight of the ages. [360]

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[359] Clarke, *The Celtic Twilight,* 9.

[360] Ibid., 9.

Clarke offers the poetry of Lionel Johnson as an earlier example of the Twilight aesthetic:

> Lionel Johnson… was one of the first to be influenced by the Celtic Twilight mood. He was of Irish descent and his poem 'Ways of War,' was much admired by Thomas MacDonagh. It begins:
>
> A terrible and splendid trust
> Heartens the host of Innisfail:
> Their dream is of the swift sword-thrust,
> A lightning glory of the Gael[361]

Clarke identifies the end of the 'Twilight mood' in the works of Joyce:

> In his first phase, Joyce was fascinated by the Celtic Twilight mood and this is obvious as we read *The Portrait of the Artist.* In *Chamber Music,* most of the poems are delicate experiments in Elizabethan lyric form, but a few echo the Celtic Twilight mood. The best of them is inspired by 'The Unappeasable Host;' which appeared in *The Wind among the Reeds.* Joyce's poem begins:
>
> I hear an army charging upon the land,
> And the thunder of horses plunging, foam about their knees:
> Arrogant, in black armour, behind them stand,
> Disdaining the reins, with fluttering whips, the charioteers.
>
> …. years later Joyce was still lured bye the Twilight mood, as in the song 'She weeps over Rahoon', which appeared in *Pomes Penyeach:*
>
> Rain on Rahoon falls softly, softly falling,
> Where my dark lover lies.
> Sad is his voice that calls me, sadly calling,
> At grey moonrise.
>
> Love, hear thou
> How soft how sad his voice is every calling
> Ever unanswered, and the dark rain falling,
> Then as now[362]

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[361] Ibid., 46.
(Innisfail meaning "the isle of destiny" – sometimes a synonym for Ireland).

[362] Ibid., 47.

As these lines of Johnson and Joyce reaffirm, the various associations of Celtic Twilight with nostalgia, loss, supernaturalism, and militarism are not unique to *The Immortal Hour*. Rather they are well-worn tropes that pervade this aesthetic. In both excerpts, nostalgia and symbol intertwine freely, particularly in Joyce's lines mentioning "arrogant black armour" of the charioteers; am an image that offers a parallel to the boatsman that waits beside the River Styx. However, if both Johnson and Joyce's verses verge upon the Ossianic, they are nevertheless penned by cosmopolitans conjuring dreams of an imagined past. These lines are not redolent of someone battling on the heathered hills. They are voiced by one consumed by decadent 'outworn' passions and imaginings.[363] Perceived through the lens of 1890s Celtic Twilight, the militarism in these verses takes a dimension quite un-Ossianic. For if Ossian symbolizes anything, it is the qualities of heroism and glory, and by extension the "epic;" epic love, epic war, etc. On the other hand, for these Celtic Twilight poets, the warrior is a symbol of fading glory, the losing battle – what Clarke calls "the twilight of the ages." Such militarism is more likely to kindle forlorn raptures than motivate Napoleonic despots.

Just as militarism of *The Immortal Hour* was an avenue for audiences to enact a broader contemplation of longing and loss, so to does Clarke's series of examples proceed in a similar manner. In the lines from "She weeps over Rahoon," Joyce offers a feeling akin to that inspired by Yeats's vision of the beleaguered dreamer riding the train endlessly, or fruitlessly wandering the rain-soaked hills. "Rahoon's" lines suggest that the

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[363]Indeed, Joyce's poem is not about battles, but about dreams, nightmares, and lost love; its militaristic imagery symbolizes loss and despair.

visions and exchanges with the mystical that the Celtic Twilight enthusiast must forever pursue will also always be "ever unanswered," except by the sound of the "dark falling rain." Consequentially, whichever path these three Irish poets lead their readers down, it is, "then as now," one that ends in nostalgia. This 'twilight' obsession with the past is often overdone. However, it gives insight into the spread of Celtic Twilight into the artistic imagination. The aesthetic held a magnetic allure for those artists who were moved, perhaps the by pressure of a new and uncertain century, to 'look back.'

While encouraging some to aesthetic raptures, the rarefied atmosphere of Celtic Twilight became for others a pretext for mockery. Austin Clarke suggests as much when he observes, "when the prevailing mood is one of languor, world-weariness, and despair, we cannot take it too seriously."[364] In his introduction to *The Eighteen-nineties* [by Martin Secker], Sir John Betjeman sums up the comic despair of the period with what Clarke calls "the following pleasant recipe":

> Draw the curtains, kindle a joss-stick in a dark corner, settle down on a sofa by the fire, light an Egyptian cigarette and sip a brandy and soda, as you think yourself back to the world which ended in prison and disgrace for Wilde, suicide for Crackenthorpe and John Davidson, premature death for Beardsley, Dowson, Lionel Johnson, religion for some, drink and drugs for others, temporary or permanent oblivion for many more.[365]

As Betjeman's lines suggest, a thread of darkly comic fatalism would become associated with Celtic Twilight, one exacerbated by the aesthetic's deep links to nostalgia. One can observe a similar progression (with unexpected consequences) as Celtic Twilight transformed from a literary and artistic term into a phrase used in common parlance.

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[364] Ibid., 10.

[365] Ibid., 10.

Celtic Twilight as a phrase and part of common discourse

What is most interesting about Celtic Twilights' infiltration of everyday language is that before the publication of Yeats's volume, the phrase seems not to have appeared in British newspapers. Whether the term existed before is uncertain, but Yeats's volume was essential in bringing it, and all its associations, into the popular imagination. However, its use in discourse may not have been altogether to Yeats's liking. As early as 1901, an essay on humor in the *Warder and Dublin Weekly Mail* describes a talk from a lecturer who had a "preference for the humorists who did not seek to raise a laugh, or for such humour as pervaded Mr. Yeats's Celtic Twilight." This comment, from a lecture by "Mr. Stephen Gwynn" at the "Society of Arts, Adelphi, the Session 1900-1 of the Irish Literary Society," entitled "Humorists of the Nineteenth Century"[366] suggests that even at this early date, and even in locations as close to home as the "Irish Literary Society," the extreme seriousness of Yeats's volume had already been reinterpreted as comical.

One peculiar article from the *Dublin Weekly National* (Saturday 30 September 1899), titled "The Beautiful City," delights in celebrating the billiard club as a place where intelligent men can have open, frank, and witty discourse about the issues of the day. In one instance, a group of men take sides in regards to the electric company's proposal to line an important street with electric lights. Discussing one man who claims he would prefer that the street stay gaslit, the columnist writes:

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[366] Anon., "Humorists of the Nineteenth Century: Lecture by Mr. Stephen Gwynn," *Warder and Dublin Weekly Mail,* Saturday, November 3, 1900, 9. http://www.britishnewspaperarchive.co.uk/viewer/bl/0001519/19001103/130/0009

> First he objects in the interest of the gasworkers to the additional cost per lamp, though later we find him voting against the scheme, even on condition that it should cost no more than the original one. I pass over the rest of those who voted for the Celtic Twilight, as they did not even attempt to justify their action by argument.[367]

This second example, printed relatively close to *The Celtic Twilight's* initial publication, shows the speed with which the phrase became common currency. Furthermore, its association of Celtic Twilight and a state of mind that does not engage in reasoned thinking indicates the beginning of a broader trend in which the phrase began to be used for signifying negative view of Irishness.

In a 1968 review of Donald S. Connery's volume *The Irish* in the *Illustrated London News,* the author, arguing for the value of small nations to the world, states:

> The example of Ireland is in many ways the most striking, and there seems to be no end to the stream of books about its renaissance. Many of them are of doubtful value, either because they portray it as a verdant Cockaigne alive with leprechauns in the Celtic twilight, or, on the other hand, because they attempt to prove that the modern Irishry are intent on cutting themselves off from their past.[368]

This passage offers a subtle variation of the previous use of Celtic Twilight, as here it is viewed as a false and unrealistic presentation of Irishness. Still, the author, Iain Hamilton, puts his subject in somewhat of a bind. He finds that the nostalgia of the Twilight has become an item of ridicule, and yet argues that to be cut off from the past is equally ignominious. For Hamilton, such nostalgia is a trait simultaneously risible and inescapable.

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[367] Anon., "The Beautiful City," *Dublin Weekly National,* Saturday, September 30, 1899, 5. http://www.britishnewspaperarchive.co.uk/viewer/bl/0001479/18990930/061/0005

[368] Iain Hamilton, "Ireland Against the Megamachine," *Illustrated London News,* Saturday, April 13, 1968, 24. https://www.britishnewspaperarchive.co.uk/viewer/bl/0001578/19680413/081/0024

The negativity associated with the phrase also became a part of political discourse and was even uttered spitefully on the floor of the House of Commons. A Mr. Stanley Baldwin from the House (later to become Prime Minister), commenting in 1909 on the perceived "unfair competition of foreign producers in British markets," uses Celtic Twilight to mock a rival from the opposing party:

> (Mr. Baldwin) deplored the change which had come over the Chancellor of the Exchequer since he left the Board of Trade. He was simply the shadow of his former self, wandering in a sort of Celtic twilight contemplating the spoiling of 'hen-roosts.' (Laughter and Opposition cheers).[369]

An article recapitulating a speech by Lloyd George about the recent victory of the Labour party over the Tories continues this thread:

> Their opponents, he continued, said the victory was not a British one. That was not true. To say that the Government were deriving part of their majority from Ireland, and that therefore it must not count, was a shabby argument. The money of Ireland counted, their taxes counted, their soldiers counted, and their dollars counted in paying rent to Irish landlords – but their votes would not count unless they were Tory. (Cheers.) That was a thoroughly despicable policy. It was ungenerous, unchivalrous, unfair, and un-English. (Cheers.) But the Government would have a British majority of 60 – which was four times what Lord Rosebery had when he governed this country.[370]
>
> Why should they disparage Scotland in calculating the majority? The only man of brains they had got in their party was a Scotsman. (A voice: 'And he hasn't got much.') Well, the only man of first class brains. They had got a great Scotsman leading their party, and he was the one man who lent intellectual distinction to them. (Hear, hear.)Who was the man who supplied them with ideas? (A voice: 'Garvin.') Of what nationality was he? (Shouts of 'Irish.') They were led by a great Scotsman, their ideas were supplied to them by a great Irishman,

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[369] Anon., "The Extortation [sic] of Capital," *Aberdeen Daily Journal*, March 18, 1909, 6. http://find.galegroup.com/dvnw/infomark.do?&source=gale&prodId=DVNW&userGroupName=ucriverside&tabID=T003&docPage=article&docId=ID3229782544&type=multipage&contentSet=LTO&version=1.0

[370] Archibald Primrose, 5th Earl of Rosebery (1847-1929), Prime Minister from March 1894-June 1895.

> and they were the people who were turning up their noses at what they called the Celtic Twilight. (Laughter.) The Celtic Twilight was, he was afraid, going to lead them into darkness. Their second best man was a Scotsman, but as for the rest, they were the sorriest crew that ever ran a ship aground etc.etc.[371]

Articles featuring this same material were published in papers across Britain. The particular one quoted above features the attention-grabbing headline: "Mr. Lloyd George on Tory Pretensions," with the above quotes featured in a subsection fittingly titled "Celtic Twilight." As Lloyd George would later discover, Celtic Twilight could just as easily be used to attack others as it could be used against oneself. Nine years later, in a column attacking Lloyd George, the *Sunday Times* writes that though he "is superhuman in his elasticity," he nevertheless "also has his moments of Celtic twilight."[372] In this instance, Celtic Twilight – and its broader association of being in a vague state of stupor – refers to Lloyd George's growing difficulty in delivering impromptu speeches, and his habit of finding himself tongue-tied. The implications are clear: Celtic Twilight had not become a good term with which to be associated. It connoted fuzziness of thought and a mental state characterized by forgetfulness and confusion. It symbolized a loss of contact

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[371] Anon., "Mr. Lloyd George's Parable," *The Times* (London, England), Friday, December 16, 1910, 6. Issue 39457. http://find.galegroup.com/dvnw/infomark.do?&source=gale&prodId=DVNW&userGroupName=ucriverside&tabID=T003&docPage=article&docId=CS100989840&type=multipage&contentSet=LTO&version=1.0

[372] T.P. O'Conner, "Men Women and Memories," *The Sunday Times* (London, England) Saturday, November 12, 1922, 11, issue 5196. http://find.galegroup.com/dvnw/infomark.do?&source=gale&prodId=DVNW&userGroupName=ucriverside&tabID=T003&docPage=article&docId=FP1800922466&type=multipage&contentSet=LTO&version=1.0

with hard reality.[373] As the above quotation suggests, people turned to this usage of the phrase not to discuss aesthetics but to draw attention, in an unflattering manner, to the supposed racial differences between the Scottish, English, Welsh (in the case of Lloyd George), and Irish.

As the phrase continued its strange journey through the vernacular, even the death of Synge was not enough to dissuade writers from using Celtic Twilight in this derogatory and racially oriented manner:

> Mr. J.M. Synge, who died the other day at the age of thirty-six, promised to grow into a veritable dramatists. He began by accepting the theory of Ireland's inner life occupied as a basis of theatrical art by the Irish National Theatre. His first two plays: 'In the Valley of the Shadow,' and 'The Well of the Saint,' were inspired by the idealizing motive which causes the minor artists of the Irish Literary Society to persuade themselves, after endeavouring to persuade the coarse matter of fact Anglo-Saxon, that the Irish peasant is a visionary, living the better half of his life in a Celtic Twilight, thronged with the ghosts of vanished heroes and futile fairies and spectral freaks… in reality, as Mr. Bernard Shaw lately assured us, the Irishman is the truly practical man; it is the Anglo-Saxon who hurries over his work in order to indulge in day-dreams.[374]

Still another article uses Celtic Twilight to create a similar line of demarcation between the English and their less adept neighbors, the Celts of Ireland and Scotland:

> The electors have remembered that they are all Englishmen, and received the announcement of the result in that English spirit of mutual forbearance which is an everlasting enigma to the Celtic mind. For the time being, England seems too content to be governed by men who, born and brought up in the Celtic

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[373] Tragically, these disconnected states, 'disembodied moods' as Yeats had called them, are an essential characteristic of Celtic Twilight that proved easy to mock.

[374] Anon., "Concilio Et Labore," *Manchester Courier and Lancashire General Advertiser* (Manchester, England), April 16, 1909, 4. http://find.galegroup.com/dvnw/infomark.do?&source=gale&prodId=DVNW&userGroupName=ucriverside&tabID=T003&docPage=article&docId=GR3217360717&type=multipage&contentSet=LTO&version=1.0

> Twilight, cannot tolerate the broad sunlight of a stronger and more wholesome civilization than theirs.[375]

While the other passages selected sometimes have a cheeky character, the above quotation directly uses Celtic Twilight to assert English cultural and political hegemony. Celtic Twilight now stood as a symbol for the age-old division between Anglo-Saxons and Celts. This meaning developed from the term's public usage, but that did not mean that the phrase's artistic connotations remained unsullied. The term's racial connotations oozed into the art world, and dwelling in Celtic Twilight as part of one's artistic endeavors soon symbolized the opposite of artistic 'Englishness.' This was especially significant for the world of British music, which, after the Wilde trials, became obsessed with musical 'Englishness.' [376]

Celtic Twilight, essentializations based on race and gender, and their connection to changes in British musical culture after 1895

Racial essentialisms such as those found in the above articles were in common usage in British culture at the turn of the century. Texts from this period that celebrate

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[375] Anon., "The Crowd and the Crises," *The Times* (London, England), Tuesday, December 13, 1910, 9; Issue 39454. *The Times Digital Archive*. Web. 6 Jan. 2018. http://find.galegroup.com/dvnw/infomark.do?&source=gale&prodId=DVNW&userGroupName=ucriverside&tabID=T003&docPage=article&docId=CS151976845&type=multipage&contentSet=LTO&version=1.0

[376] For a detailed discussion of the impact of the 1895 Wild Trials on British music, see Byron Adams, "'Dark Saying of the Enigma': Homoeroticism and the Elgarian Paradox, " *Nineteenth-Century Music* vol. 23, no. 3 (Spring 2000): 218-235.

Celtic qualities do so through the process of essentializing mores, as Ernest Renan does famously in his 1904 essay *The Poetry of the Celtic Races.* He describes the Celts as a people who share a "powerful individuality" and "hatred of the foreigner." For Renan (whose racial theories derived from those of Jean-Baptiste Lamarck – 1744-1829), the Celt is at once "proud in feeling" and "feeble in action." Furthermore, the Celt (and Renan speaks exclusively of Celtic men) is only at home on his native soil, and once he leaves that land, his sense of freedom and lack off reservation are replaced by the image of a man now "awkward and embarrassed."[377] According to Renan, the Celt has many qualities that are attractive on a poetic level, but he lacks what at the time were perceived as the masculine qualities of being willing and able to take decisive action in any circumstance. It is implied that such qualities are left to other "races," and though Renan is himself French, it is the so-called 'English race' that is, in the broader invocation of this particular *fin de siècle* discourse, posited as the dialectical opposite of the Celt.

Racial essentialism such as that evinced by Renan went hand-in-hand with discussions of gender that would come across as highly inappropriate today. As a result, the division between the English and Celtic races became one inured with gendered overtones. Renan states that "if it be permitted us to assign sex to nations as to individuals, we should have to (say) without hesitance that the Celtic race… is an essentially feminine race."[378] Renan continues to write that "no human family, I believe, has conceived with more delicacy the ideal of woman, or been more fully dominated by

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[377] Ernest Renan, "The Poetry of the Celtic Races," in *Literary and Philosophical Essays, The Harvard Classics: 1909-1914.* Paragraph 7. http://www.bartleby.com/32/302.html

[378] Ibid., par. 7

it. It is a sort of intoxication, a madness, a vertigo."[379] Such a statement might seem an innocuous moment of waxing poetic. However, opinions about the presence and influence of feminine qualities in male artists changed dramatically between 1893 and 1904 when Renan wrote his essay.

As Byron Adams observes, the trials of Oscar Wilde in 1895 significantly changed the relation of British artists to the concept of femininity. Adams states that the trials led to a "fear of being taken for a homosexual among artists." Artists enacted a "a wholesale retrenchment," towards "masculinity," one that

> mandated Norfolk tweeds instead of velvet jackets; cakes and plain ale rather than oysters and scented wine; bracing tramps over the Malvern hills rather than languid games of dominoes at the Café Royale; and, in music, modally-inflected diatonicism rather than the Wagnerian chiaroscuro of chromaticism.[380]

The language Elgar uses while delivering his famous Peyton lectures at the Birmingham University in 1905 gives insight into this 'flight to masculinity.' As Adams has aptly pointed out, Elgar was particularly desirous to be perceived as a "manly" British composer. As Adams recounts, "Elgar uses the word *healthy,*" to describe qualities that he desired in British music, healthy being "a word that, like *clean,* possessed a distinct implication of controlled sublimated, masculine heterosexuality."[381] Not only did Elgar want to reclaim masculinity for the artist, but he also he wanted to reclaim nature as a site of masculinity. As Adams argues, "Achieving a 'healthy'

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[379] Ibid., par. 7

[380] Byron Adams, "Thor's Hammer," in *Jean Sibelius and his World,* ed. Daniel Grimley (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 2011), 131.

[381] Ibid., 131.

aesthetic for British music" depended on "cultivating an 'out-of-door spirit.'" Indeed, Elgar believed that "the musical salvation of the younger generation could only be achieved if they eschew the hothouse morbidity of decadence for the health promised by nature."[382]

The Wilde trials (1895) came neatly on the heels of Yeats's publication of *The Celtic Twilight.* As previously discussed, with *The Celtic Twilight* Yeats broke through with numerous literary innovations that brought the work to cultural consciousness and gave the phrase a life of its own. However, in addition to all its successes, Yeats had beautifully captured in *The Celtic Twilight* all the ideas about the Celt that would later turn the phrase Celtic Twilight into a racist insult.[383] Furthermore, the features of Celticism, and the traits that people believed to signify a Celtic person, come across in *The Celtic Twilight* – both the volume and the aesthetic – in a highly concentrated form. The Twilight's constant conjuration of a dream-world where poets linger in languor and rapture was the opposite of British – or more specifically English – masculinity, as well as other supposedly 'English' traits such as practicality, the English embrace materialism, etc. Celtic Twilight stood as the antithesis of the 'English masculinity,' and, by extension, musical works of Celtic Twilight like those mentioned above stood out against the musical establishment's desire to curate a 'manly' Englishness. There is a controversial theory that runs parallel to this sea change. It postulates that an unremittingly pro-English bias in the British musical community wanted to promote a distinctively 'English' style

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[382] Ibid., 131.

[383] The charge that Celts were by nature effeminate was scarcely refuted after 1895 by Oscar Wilde's Irish brith.

of music, and that this bias resulted in the exclusion of non-English composers and Celtic-themed works from the stage, and later, as radio became one of the chief ways of consuming music in the early twentieth century, the airwaves.

Celtic Twilight in Robert Stradling and Meirion Hughes's Royal College of Music conspiracy theory: a controversial thesis

The idea that British musical works with Celtic subjects or by Celtic composers have been purposefully obscured, initially by the musical establishment, but also in terms of musical scholarship and cultural stewardship, is a provocative hypothesis and one that Robert Stradling and Meirion Hughes (hereafter 'S. and H.') articulate in their volume *The English Musical Renaissance 1840-1940: Constructing a National Music.* Together they argue that a coterie of insiders at the Royal College of Music in London (hereafter 'RCM') played a powerful and nefarious role in shaping and constructing British musical history in a direction that promoted a specific and exclusive 'Englishness' over a more culturally inclusive 'Britishness.' While this theory is not without its flaws, this argument offers a compelling explanation for the dominance of British musical history by the 'pastoral style,' a musical trope deeply associated with Englishness. It also addresses the neglect of some of the English composers mentioned above who wrote some of Britain's finest Celtic themed works, and the corresponding preeminence of composers such as Ralph Vaughan Williams and Gustav Holst, two of pastoralism's most prominent representatives.

According to S. and H., the industrious George Grove set the Renaissance in motion by creating the *Grove Dictionary of Music and Musicians.* For S. and H., this dictionary is "a powerful anglocentric document which gives English musical culture an extraordinary coverage and bias within the overall format."[384] Grove's second move was to lead the charge to establish the RCM and to use it as the breeding ground for 'musical Englishness.' Later, as radio became an important cultural medium after 1922, a group of RCM loyalists, continuing in Grove's footsteps, used their prestige to obtain power at the BBC. Here this cabal supposedly created a bias in British broadcasting that was almost "relentlessly ethnic" and that favored English composers while relegating Scottish, Irish, and Welsh composers to the sidelines.[385]

S. and H.'s arguments have been highly critiqued. However, with the tantalizing binary oppositions of Celtic Twilight/femininity and Englishness/masculinity filling the atmosphere, one must entertain the question: is it possible that, as part of a multifaceted attempt to culturally control the 'English musical renaissance,' the influential figures at the RCM actively worked to marginalize (or discipline) artists who strayed too far from appropriate levels of Englishness and dared instead to engage in a dated Wagnerian brand of Celticism loaded with nostalgic, decadent, Celtic and feminine overtones?

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[384] Hughes and Stradling, *The English Musical Renaissance,* 24.

They argue that while Grove himself wrote "the longest articles on Beethoven, Schubert and Mendelssohn" he also included a "profusion" of articles on "the music and musicians of his own day – including Parry, Stanford and Sullivan, and even Prince Albert."(26)

[385] For a critique of S. and H.'s arguments, see: Alain Frogley, "Review–Article: Rewriting the Renaissance: History, Imperialism, and British Music Since 1840," *Music and Letters,* vol. 84, no. 2 (May, 2003): 249-250.

Though Edward Elgar's dalliance with the Celtic Twilight is limited, he is perhaps the most prominent composer to make a highly successful career outside of establishment institutions. Aiden Thomson notes that a number of RCM critics aligned themselves against Edward Elgar, including J.A. Fuller Maitland (1856-1936), Charles Maclean (1843-1916), and Henry Haddow (1859-1937). According to Thomson, one of the prime strategies Elgar's detractors used to discredit him was to associate him with the "ethically suspect school of Wagner and his followers."[386] Here Celtic Twilight comes into play. The "ethically suspect" qualities of Wagner's music were its sensuality and eroticism – would not those who objected to these qualities also object to Celtic Twilight because of its connotations of femininity and its suitability to Wagnerian aesthetics?

This is perhaps plausible, but there is plenty of evidence in the RCM's critical discourse suggesting that the institution was neither 'racist' against Irish or Celtic people, nor specifically biased against music treating Celtic subjects or themes. Particularly, Fuller Maitland praised the Celtic themed works of Stanford, who was coincidentally both an Irishman (though Anglo-Irish) and a faculty member at the RCM. Consider the following two comments: [387]

> Stanford reached the highest point of his popularity with his "Irish Symphony" given at a Richter Concert in 1887… It is so beautiful from start to finish that it seemed certain of being given occasionally.
>
> Returning to Stanford's orchestral works, it was about 1901 that he struck his most prolific vein of inspiration with the first of his five "Irish Rhapsodies,"

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[386] Ibid., 199.
One cannot help but sympathize with Elgar; he appears to lead the charge for 'manly' British music and is simultaneously accused of being an "ethically suspect" Wagnerian.

[387] For more detail on this distinction see Curtis, Jr. *Anglo-Saxons and Celts,* 17-35.

> op. 78, a piece that has never lost its hold upon the public…His Second Rhapsody, conducted by Mengelberg at a concert of the Amsterdam Orchestra, is a more extended piece than the first; its title "Lament for the sons of Ossian," is fitly chosen, and a good many folk-songs are handled with success.[388]

Fuller Maitland has no qualms celebrating the 'beauty' of Stanford's 'Irish' Symphony. Meanwhile, Stanford's inclusion of Celtic folksong material in the second of his *Irish Rhapsodies* is "handled with success," and the work's nod to Ossian goes uncontested.

To further demonstrate that the anti-Celtic bias of the RCM was far from clear-cut, one can also look to the 'ethnically balanced' makeup of the board of the English Folk-Song Society, which was stocked with RCM loyalists and featured Fuller Maitland as chair. As Alfred Percival Graves notes, it was

> intended to be representative of the four nations, its president (Maitland) was and is an Englishman; its vice-presidents, Sir Hubert Parry, Sir Alexander Mackenzie, and Sir Charles Stanford, represent the sister countries.[389]

As this attempt at cultural inclusiveness suggests, if the RCM was biased – and most institutions are to some degree – the lines of this bias were fungible at best. To say that the RCM shunned 'Celticism' in all its forms is an overstatement, though the relegation of Celtic-themed works to the far corner of both the stage and the airwaves may at times have been a consequence of the real bias plaguing the RCM: an institutional bias.

The RCM as an institution preferred its own students. For its students, it preferred upper middle class gentlemen. Of course, talent was the institution's main criterion for

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[388] Fuller-Maitland, *The Music of Parry and Stanford,* 40.

One notes that Stanford's Irish pupil, Charles Wood (1866-1926), was lauded by Fuller-Maitland; Wood was also on the RCM faculty.

[389] Alfred Percival Graves, "Ireland's Share In the Folk Song Revival," *The Celtic Review,* vol. 9 (November, 1913): 146.

Mackenzie was a Scot (1847-1935) and director of the Royal Academy of Music.

entry; A promising working class student like Frank Bridge (1879-1941) could certainly earn a scholarship and an Irishman like Stanford, who was also deeply gifted could make the cut. Most significantly, though Vaughan Williams was Welsh, his works in the 'pastoral' vein are considered the ultimate exemplars of musical 'Englishness.'[390] Nevertheless, despite this seeming inclusivity, Thomson cogently argues that critics loyal to the RCM such as Fuller-Maitland were "particularly keen to emphasize (the) social and intellectual elitism" of an RCM set composed of "university educated, upper middle classes," and were "less keen… to acknowledge the achievements" of outsiders.[391] Such a bias is of course not limited only to the British musical establishment. It is a well-known trope permeating a society famously divided by class.[392] Keeping this in mind allows one

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[390] Keep in mind, however, that Vaughan Williams was a member of the Wedgewood dynasty (and the great nephew of Charles Darwin), Stanford hailed from the Anglo-Irish ascendancy, and was certainly to be considered upper middle class, and that Bridge, as shall be demonstrated, became a *persona non-grata* at the various British musical institutions once he progressed beyond his student years.

[391] Consider that one of Elgar's chief critics, Henry Haddow, had been both a "classics Don at Worcester College, Oxford and later vice-chancellor of the University of Sheffield." On the other hand, Elgar was "a lower-middle class, self-taught, provincial Roman Catholic." Thomson, "Elgar's Critical Critics," 196.

[392] As L.P. Curtis Jr. notes, the 'gentlemen' class was almost its own race in England. He states that, "for some upper class Englishmen, the English working classes were almost a race apart, having darker skin and hair than their social superiors, and having more traits in common with their Celtic counterparts in Ireland than with the supposedly Norman aristocracy at home." Tellingly, Curtis notes that, "the intimate relationship between class and race consciousness is borne out by the fact that the word race was also used throughout the century as a synonym for class." *Anglo-Saxons and Celts,* 24.

to see that S. and H. have indeed not uncovered a conspiracy, though they do present their arguments in a way that desperately seeks to convince their readers of one.[393]

Painfully aware of his working class origins, Elgar knew well that he would never be 'the anointed one.' During his Payton lectures delivered at the University of Birmingham in 1905, he launched an attack at the RCM by implying that, "he wanted nothing less than his own 'renaissance' in the Midlands."[394] In fact, his fervent calls for 'manly' English music during these lectures may have been an attempt to hi-jack the RCM's own pursuit of musical 'Englishness.' Another example of Elgar's attempts to supersede the RCM can be found "a public letter to Rev. Canon Charles Gorton prior to the 1903 Morecambe Festival" in which he wrote that, "unknown to the sleepy London press… the living centre of music in Great Britain is not London, but somewhere farther North."[395]

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[393] In his review of S. and H.'s volume, Alain Frogley notes that their presentation of information creates an air of conspiracy. He writes, "through guilt by association, or… simple narrative juxtaposition, a colourful anecdote or quotation, often more striking for having been mined from an obscure or hitherto unknown source, is used to create an impression of conspiracy and dissimulation; the reader is usually left to make the final link, or to fill in the gaps as one selective quotation is quickly piled upon another, and with the miasma of conspiracy almost always in the air, connections that would not withstand explicit examination are made to appear beguilingly compelling." "Review-Article: Rewriting the Renaissance," 243.

[394] While Elgar's tenure at Birmingham proved unsatisfactory, he had nevertheless, "entered the lists of a kind of tournament which, like the real thing, was a hazardous game… his adversary proved more resilient than he imagined." The precarious and dangerous nature of Elgar's assault against the RCM is intimated in a sketch Elgar sent to his close friend A.J. Jaeger in which Elgar depicts himself as a knight at a jousting tournament. Hughes and Stradling, *The English Musical Renaissance,* 72, 73.

[395] Thomson, "Elgar's Critical Critics," 205.

Elgar was not the only one who recognized the RCM's institutional agenda during its day. Thomson notes that during discussions regarding a National Festival of British Music in November 1903,[396]

> the prospect that that [the] festival might be run on 'Royal College lines' caused *Musical Opinion's* columnist 'Common Time' to remark that the Royal College had a reputation for self-advancement, and that 'their idea of the best interests of the art [was] too limited by personal considerations.'[397]

Naturally, there were consequences for fighting the RCM. For Elgar, they were psychological. Deep insecurity offset Elgar's commendable fighting spirit. He would alternately stand against but then seek inclusion within the society that had cast him out. To distance himself from his humble origins he took on the character of an "English country squire" and adopted various personas to elevate himself culturally.[398]

Where does Rutland Boughton – this dissertations key Celtic Twilight composer – fit into this context? Is it possible to blame his obscurity on a conspiracy concocted to sideline Celtic works? Like RCM outsiders Arthur Sullivan (of *HMS Pinafore* fame – 1842-1900), Frank Bridge, and Edward Elgar, Boughton came from a working-class background (his father was a grocer). He also had a distinctive – though not terribly distinguished – relationship with the RCM. When Boughton was a young composer, he read an article by Robin Legge (1862-1933) in the *Daily Telegraph* in which Legge asked

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[396] These plans did not come to fruition, whereas Elgar did have quite a success with his Elgar festival in 1904.

[397] Thomson, "Elgar's Critical Critics," 205.

[398] Much of this activity was encouraged – if not instituted – by Lady Elgar. Ever class conscious, she greatly disapproved of Rutland Boughton, who, in her opinion, "never looked like a 'gentleman.'" Hurd, *Rutland Boughton,* 208.

where the, "'New Musical Messiah' England so badly needed was to be found." Boughton enthusiastically mailed Legge a bundle of scores, which were passed on to Stanford. Impressed, Stanford managed to obtain a yearlong scholarship for Boughton at the RCM paid on behalf of the MP of Aylesbury, Boughton's hometown. However, this did not result in a rags-to-riches success story. Rather, Stanford introduced Boughton to his classmates as "a fellow who's been playing Beethoven in a barn." Along with Boughton's pedigree, his lack of social graces appeared to make him incompatible with the RCM set. He was, as Hubert Parry put it, "a bad mixer."[399] When his scholarship ran out, Boughton was unable to renew it, and his brief tenure at the RCM ended. While the other students continued their studies, Boughton endured a period of extreme poverty doing musical hackwork in London.

Boughton went on to overcome his hardships and experience his various triumphs both with the Glastonbury festivals and later with *The Immortal Hour*. However, nearly thirty years after his brief period as a student with the RCM, one can still find him harboring ill-will towards the institution. In his 1929 essay for *The Musical Times* titled "In Mutual Contempt," Boughton criticized the RCM education:

> very well do I recall how easy it was to get through a week's work for my teachers at the Royal College of Music; it occupied not more than one or two days at the outside… there was no discipline to ensure that the greater part of the week was profitably spent.[400]

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[399] Boughton attended the RCM during the 1899-1900 school year. Hurd, *Rutland Boughton*, 14-15.

[400] Rutland Boughton, "In Mutual Contempt: Concluded," *The Musical Times,* vol. 70, no. 1037, (July 1, 1929): 595.

He described the RCM as a place where most students filled their idle time with hedonistic behavior, while the few who did their exercises became neurotic, even "stupid." Boughton argued that music students need balance, and looked to J.S. Bach as a model of a balanced musician. Of Bach, Boughton writes that,

> (his) manual skill in the construction of musical instruments, and his considerable theological studies were activities quite distinct from his creative musicianship; but they, no less than his purely musical genius, entered into the final make-up of his work.[401]

Boughton's attacks gained momentum in 1934 with the publication of his book *The Reality of Music,* in which he "assailed the Goodly House form a different angle – the 'Marxist:'"

> Boughton argued that use of folk-music was merely another form of capitalist exploitation – a cynical one, for it transformed the protest songs of the suffering workers into the frothy entertainment of the bourgeoisie.[402]

Boughton's convictions are ironic, considering that the score of *The Immortal Hour* is indebted to his studies of folk music.[403]

The Reality of Music, while giving Boughton a chance to express some of his deepest convictions about art as well as his ire with the RCM, also harmed his reputation. An exasperated review of *Reality* for the book by H. G. begins quite cuttingly:

> Mr. Boughton begins by saying that his book 'is not addressed to full-fledged musicians. They know of the facts it contains.' But some of Mr. Boughton's 'facts' will be new to musicians – *e.g.* 'the rite of the mass moved Bach so little that whenever he made music for it his creative faculty deserted him, and he was obliged [!] (sic) to use themes and movements previously

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[401] Ibid., 595.

[402] Stradling and Hughes, *The English Musical Renaissance,* 197.

[403] This may further explain why *The Immortal Hour's* London success so greatly upset him.

> composed for other words' ; 'The last great work of the greatest master of music shows that he had outgrown his religion' ; 'Having secured his themes from whatever source, they were developed not in the cause of reactionary religion, but according to the mathematical principles inherent in music itself' ; 'The autumnal languor of "Parsifal" arose less in the age of the composer as is generally believed, and more in the mental atmosphere of his age, coupled with the fact that Wagner himself, in order to fulfill his work even partially, had been forced to accept a royal patronage, instead of the communal conditions which he had demanded for his work.[404]

As this quote suggests, many of Boughton's statements take a fanciful approach to 'reality.' He even goes so far as to argue that "the Church did nothing but hinder the progress of music." Of this claim, H. G. jokes that, "he can even give us a picture of a dual Palestrina – one hobbled by the Church, the other occasionally escaping from his bonds and expressing himself fully."[405]

Boughton's writings, as the above examples illustrate, are highly speculative and informed by an unquestionably socialist – indeed communist – world-view. He finds a way to perceive almost everything through a Marxist lens. As H.G. observes, "many of his best pages are spoilt by his 'class-consciousness.'" H. G. goes so far as to alert readers that "(those) who are familiar with Mr. Boughton's articles on music will not be surprised to find the communal idea worked for all it is worth and a good deal more."[406]

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[404] H.G., "Reviews: The Reality of Music by Rutland Boughton," *The Musical Times*, vol. 75, no. 1093 (March, 1934): 277.

[405] Ibid., 277.

[406] It is the peculiar nature of Boughton's writing that can lend insight into Boughton's relationship with the occult. The kind of fact-free writing in which Boughton indulges in is reminiscent of the language of many books on occult practices being released at the time. Boughton did not directly publish on occult subjects because for him music was the primary avenue to spirituality. The pseudo mystical tone of his writing combined with his predilection for

If one is to speculate about reasons for the disappearance of *The Immortal Hour* from the stage (not to mention the canon) that are not related to its text or score, Boughton's ardent and combative communism, fully on display in *The Reality of Music,* would certainly be worth consideration: it brought him into conflict with more than his old alma matter.

Boughton had expensive dreams: he hoped to one day stage his Glastonbury Festivals and his five-part Arthurian music drama in a theatre that could rival the Bayreuth Festspielhaus. One figure in particular, Lady Londonderry (mentioned in chapter four), who was very wealthy and well-connected,[407] tried to champion Boughton. She went so far as to arrange for abstracts of Boughton's music to performed for the King and Queen and to sponsor "a performance of the third act of *The Round Table* in the long gallery" of Lady Londonderry's "splendid London home."

Unfortunately, Boughton and Lady Londonderry's relationship unraveled during the 1926s miners strike. Naturally, Boughton was on the side of the miners, yet this put him at odds with his patron's husband, a mine owner. Boughton's presence at Lady Londonderry's social gatherings became awkward because he never stopped from making his views "crystal clear."[408] This is best illustrated by the following anecdote,

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socialism created for Boughton a unique and personal kind of spiritualism: he was what one might call a spiritual socialist who felt, like Wagner, that music and art should replace religion.

[407] That Lady Londonderry and Boughton hit it off at all is quite remarkable. While Boughton was a card carrying communist, Lady Londonderry was, in the words of Andrew Blake, an "aristocratic fascist." *The Land Without Music: Music, culture and society in twentieth-century Britain* (Manchester: Manchester University Press, 1997), 43.

[408] Hurd, *Rutland Boughton,* 199-201.

retold by Boughton, which takes place at a dinner party where Lady Londonderry is attempting to ingratiate him (for what would prove to be the last time) with her wealthy friends:

> During supper Lady Cunard called out 'You are a communist, aren't you Mr. Boughton?' I answered 'Yes.' There was a silence broken by Mr. Sacheverell Sitwell who drawled 'Why are you a communist?' a proper answer would have meant a sermon on Christianity so I said the first thing that came into my head: 'I believe that Russia will be the salvation of Europe.'[409]

Unfortunately, on this occasion Boughton had overplayed his hand. Lady Londonderry realized that her attempts to promote this radical in the necessary circles were fruitless. As Boughton states, "it was the last effort of the many she made to establish me in the good will of her friends."[410] The *coup-de-gras* came during the winter of 1926. In the wake of the general strike of May 1926, he insisted on staging his highly successful *Bethlehem*, a mini-opera based on the Nativity story, in the context of the miner's strike, with Herod as a mine owner and Jesus as the son of a miner. The result was that his second most successful stage work became an astounding flop. Indeed, Boughton's far-left views were neither popular with the elites, nor the working-class that he had always kept in mind as his ideal audience when he sat down to compose.

Boughton's willingness to state obstreperously his political beliefs both on stage and in the presence of unsympathetic company had a disastrous effect on his career. The incidents described above were turning points for him. Though revivals of *The Immortal Hour* continued into the thirties, his career waned. One can only wonder what he might

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[409] Ibid., 200.

[410] Ibid., 200.

have achieved if only he had been more diplomatic. However, this was not in his character. In this sense, it seems only natural that Boughton's anti-establishment views should put him at odds with the establishment's official musical arms, the RCM and the BBC, and, as his writings above indicate, he had no qualms about attacking the RCM.

Shortly before his teacher Granville Bantock's death, Bantock wrote to Boughton that "the scandalous attitude of the B.B.C. towards Brian, Holbrooke and yourself rouses my wrath and indignation, and you shall have all the support I can give you."[411] Bantock may have been rightly aggrieved, but whatever cabals the various British musical institutions may have supposedly perpetrated against Boughton, it was Boughton himself who did the most to destroy his career.

[411] Jürgen Schaarwächter, *Two Centuries of British Symphonism: From the beginnings to 1945, a preliminary survey, Vol.II* (Hildesheim: Georg Olms Verlag, 2015), 779.

Conclusion: No Celtic composers on the BBC tonight?

The notion of a British musical establishment populated with insiders and outsiders, allows one to return to the binary opposition that began this enterprise: the cultural opposition of the English and the Celts. The very phrase Celtic Twilight arose out of a need for Irish writers to champion a free Ireland. They wanted to reclaim their cultural heritage and finally achieve victory in a centuries-long struggle with their English oppressors. Yeats' *The Celtic Twilight*, which created and brought forth to the public Celtic Twilight both as an aesthetic and a term, was the poet's ingenious attempt to overcome a number of ideological issues associated with a long-standing appropriation of Irish culture practiced by most European nations. Yeats's solution transformed the genre of the folktale and flew in the face of critics who, thanks their own ideology, could only laud an anthropological approach to the genre.

What Yeats began with *The Celtic Twilight* not only inspired him to create more works in a similar vein, it fascinated other artists as well. But there was an inevitable trade-off. The term lost connection with its nationalist origins and took on a life of its own. Even though realism and Modernism soon eclipsed the aesthetics of Celtic Twilight, it nevertheless lived on, particularly in the scores of certain British composers. These unrepentant romantics took hold of the genre, each attempting to create something transcendent. Many stumbled over the aesthetic's close association with Wagner. Those

who succeeded followed Yeats's approach, which leavened Wagnerism with folk influences. In Boughton's case, this leavening came from his studies of folk song, for Bax, his love of Ireland, and for Elgar, it came purely through his musical intuition.

As the Twilight further diffused into the ether, a retrenchment to masculinity combined with an institutional quest to construct musical 'Englishness' in a way that cast Celtic Twilight in opposition to the 'establishment.' Just as Celtic Twilight had been used in discourse to invoke the opposite of the practical English mind – the lost dreamer stereotype – so to could Celticism, and the invocation of Celtic Twilight become a focus point for those wishing to identify themselves against the status quo.

To engage in Celtic Twilight during an 'English Musical Renaissance' that promoted a 'pastoral' school and to do so during a parallel 'flight to masculinity' meant to take certain social, political, and cultural risks. Celtic Twilight celebrated a Wagnerian aesthetic of which the RCM theoretically disapproved, and it begged composers to languish in a Celtic wonderland that, for pro-English boot-men hell bent on conveying masculinity, was a forbidden playground. When Elgar, who sought to champion musical 'manliness,' realized the error of his ways, he fled the scene. Meanwhile, Arnold Bax, who adopted all things Celtic, relished in the supposedly forbidden fruit of Celtic Twilight and willfully engaged in a Tristanesque, Celticized-decadence. Most of his more inhibited colleagues who still could not resist the allure of Celtic Twilight opted for a safer *Ring*-inspired Wagnerism in their own Celtic works.[412]

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[412] Bax's *Tintagel* – with its dual allusions to Tristan and an illicit affair – is a perfect example of a score that dares to engage with the 'forbidden.' Boughton's *The Immortal Hour* was similarly inspired not only by Fraser-Kennedy's Celticized folk music but by the Celtic heritage of

Consider further that the 'flight to masculinity' manifested itself in more than just various artists' attempts to avoid creating artworks interpretable as 'feminine' and prevent themselves from being perceived as effeminate. It was a retreat from radicalisms of all sorts, a retreat to conservative lifestyles and, to a degree, conservative musical aesthetics. Stephen Banfield describes the "parallel triads, modal scales, duple meters eased with triplets, bass-dominated textures" and other techniques associated with musical "Englishness' as "the upholding of traditional values."[413] Upholding "traditional values" meant an end to the spiritualism, esotericism, and other heady indulgences of the 1890s with which Celtic Twilight composers dared to continue. It also meant, as the new century developed, a retreat away from what the public might perceive as disturbing political views, such the communism espoused by Rutland Boughton, or any flagrant abandonment of propriety, another form of radicalism well practiced by Boughton, who somehow managed to marry no less than three different women during this relatively conservative cultural period.

Therefore, if Celtic Twilight was, as I have argued, a 'backward glance,' it was nevertheless a rebellious one that stood for the exact opposite of everything that the

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Christina Walshe, the younger woman for whom Boughton left his first wife. According to Hurd, one cannot underestimate Walshe's influence on Boughton's *The Immortal Hour,* which "embodies the ideas that Christina brought into his life – Half-Irish herself, she was an ardent champion of Celtic revivalism and her enthusiasm kindled his." Hurd, *Rutland Boughton,* 53.

(Can the heavy handed, *Ring*-inspired Wagnersim of Bantock and Holbrooke be a consequence of the 'flight to masculinity' and an attempt to 'rescue' Celtic musical subjects from Celticism's supposedly inherent 'femininity'?) Stephen Banfield states of Bax, the Celticist, and Frank Bridge, the modernist, "they have to be seen as anti-Establishment figures, at odds with the prevailing musical life-styles of their times." "Review: Frank Bridge: A Thematic catalogue*,"* 183.

[413] Banfield, "Review: Frank Bridge: A Thematic catalogue," 183.

practically-minded upper-class Englishman thought was culturally appropriate. Rutland Boughton's Glastonbury festivals, where *The Immortal Hour* first premiered, are a shining example of this process of identification in action. Here he gathered artists, occultists, spiritualists, socialists, social progressives, feminists, and the average worker together an experiment in socialist utopia.[414] At these festivals Celtic Twilight found a home where the supposedly 'feminine' connotations of Celticism could thrive. Numerous female collaborators contributed to the success of the Glastonbury festivals. Later, when the prize of the festivals, *The Immortal Hour*, reached London, it was attended by prominent noblewomen and featured a young lesbian actress in the leading role. Fittingly, Princess Etain's fate at the end of *The Immortal Hour* is in contrast to the typical ending allotted to nineteenth-century operatic heroines: it is her husband who dies from 'hysteria' while she transcends time and space.

Despite all of its potential, Celtic Twilight had limited impact as a musical force – but not because of the actions of a group of elites running the British musical community. The strengths of Celtic Twilight were, paradoxically, its weaknesses. While its radicalism put it at odds with English musical institutions, it was also perennially backward-looking, always yearning for a nostalgic past. In a twentieth century marked by what art critic Robert Hughes called "the shock of the new," the inability of Celtic Twilight to move beyond nostalgia insured its eventual decline to the status of an abandoned cult. The movement's most successful musical work, *The Immortal Hour*, resonated only with

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[414] Matthew Beaumont observes that as far back as the 1850's "spiritualism had been 'tainted' (my quotations) by its association with radical reformist causes like feminism, socialism, and the movement for free love." "Socialism and Occultism," 224.

British audiences attuned to it at a given moment in history. Meanwhile, it appears that Boughton's career faded into its own 'twilight' because of his unrelenting and equally out-of-touch Morrisite socialist views that were, as Andrew Blake states, based on a vision of "pre-industrial Britain."[415]

Finally, as the popularity of Boughton's opera began to fade, Celtic Twilight received a daunting blow from an unexpected direction. The very aesthetic itself came under attack from pro-Gaelic scholars who mercilessly denounced Yeats as a charlatan, despite his decades-long effort to advance Irish culture. This attack was so effective that Yeats's *The Celtic Twilight* did not appear in Gaelic until the 1980s, nearly 100 years after its initial publication.[416] Tragically, the misuse of the phrase Celtic Twilight, begun shortly after the debut of Yeats's volume, would continue throughout the twentieth century. In modern times, the phrase appears most frequently in reviews of poorly staged Irish or Celtic-themed plays. However, the bright side to this is that the phrase's humorous implications appear to have triumphed over the highly racialized ways in which it was used in the early twentieth century.

I hope that what I have labored to do here is to, ironically, take Celtic Twilight out of the twilight gloom that has ensnared its history. It is now possible to understand precisely where and how the term's historical and cultural precedents arose; how exactly

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[415] Andrew Blake, *The Land Without Music,* 43.

Matthew Beaumont notes that, "After arriving in London, and at the precise time that he was identified with Blavatsky's theosophists, Yeats also briefly 'adopted Morrisite Communism.'" "Socialism and Occultism," 222. Internal quotation found in R.F. Foster, *W.B. Yeats: A Life. Vol.1* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1998) 64.

[416] Markey, "The Discovery of Irish Folklore," 24.

it came into being; how it lent agency to various artists; became an important element of early twentieth century British music; entered the vernacular and was misused; and may be used again in the future to cultivate those "impalpable moods" first brought to life by the volume which inspired this investigation.

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