

Roger Quilter : some afterthoughts

Valerie Langfield

Roger Quilter died fifty years ago, on September 21st 1953. He is acknowledged primarily as a writer of songs, but his contribution to light music is also well recognized, especially his *Children's Overture* and his incidental music to the children's fairy play *Where the Rainbow Ends*. The basic biographical details are well-known: he was born on November 1st 1877 into a very wealthy land-owning family; his father was a stockbroker, and his grandfather, an accountant. He went to Eton, and then studied piano with Ernst Engesser and composition with Ivan Knorr at the Frankfurt Conservatory. He and his mother were devoted to each other, but his father largely ignored him, rejecting the notion of having a son who was musical in both senses. He was constantly ill, and yet outlived his siblings; he was tall, he was shy and he stammered. He used his considerable personal wealth to help young musicians at the start of their careers; he also used it to help Jewish friends into England in 1938. He was a lifelong friend of Percy Grainger, who had also studied at Frankfurt; they were complete opposites, and admired each other deeply.

After the long period of research and writing during which I was working very intensively, the year since the publication of my book on Quilter^[1] has given me a little time to reflect on the man and his music, and I offer here some thoughts, somewhat random, on Quilter and his place in British music. I include a comparison of settings of a Shakespeare text, comments on performance practice, and notes on contemporary critical reception. Further information has come to light since publication (as is inevitable in such undertakings), and so I also take this opportunity to make some additions and corrections.

When Roger Quilter died, he went quietly. He caused no ripples during his lifetime, and he causes none now. His vein, 'delicate and distinguished',^[2] is almost too delicate and distinguished for its own good: like the man, self-effacing. There is an air of faded elegance pervading his music that makes it — and him — seem at times irrecoverably unfashionable, not helped by the English manner of deprecating work that is

immediately accessible, especially when it is not foreign. Never a team person, he was outside the establishment then, and he still remains outside it. His very English sense of autumn sorrow — in his case, almost weariness — is a sense that there is no advantage in moving into new musical fields, no need to develop a new musical language. And so we stay with him in the past.

But if Quilter was happier staying in the past, he brought us — as Walter Crane said of his *Baby's Opera* — 'old rhymes with new dresses'.^[3] He was at his best with Shakespeare and Herrick, and with other sixteenth and seventeenth century poets. He grew up with the sound of the songs of composers such as Maude Valérie White (for whom he had a very high regard). He often set to music the same texts as they did, but he set them in a very different way, revealing particular layers of meaning in the text and allowing the speech rhythms to be the creative drive behind the vocal lines. In White's 1885 setting of 'Go, Lovely Rose', for example, the melody — a simple, but most attractive and lyrical one — could be mapped against a range of texts (see Ex.1a) but Quilter's, of 1922, matches the speech rhythm exactly, the words and the musical line inseparable (see Ex.1b).

Ex.1a Maude Valère White: melody line of 'Go, Lovely Rose'

6 [Andantino Arioso] *p*

Go love - ly Rose! — Tell her that wastes her time — and me, — That

11 now — she knows — When I — re - sem - ble her to thee, —

18 — How — sweet and fair — she seems to be — Tell her — that's *con espress.*

25 young, — And shuns — to have her beau - ty spied, — That hadst — thou *accel.*

32 sprung In de - serts where no men a - bide, Thou must — have un - com - men - ded died. — *a Tempo p*

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Ex.1b Quilter: melody line of 'Go, Lovely Rose'

[Moderato, un poco con moto]
mp *espressivo*

3
Go, love-ly rose Tell her that wastes her time and me... That now she knows.

7
When I re-semble her to thee, How sweet and fair she seems to be.

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Bryan Gooch and David Thatcher's *Shakespeare Music Catalogue*^[4] lists 243 settings of the text 'Blow, Blow, Thou Winter Wind'; one of these is by Quilter, from his first set of Shakespeare songs, Op.6. It took about two years before he was able to interest a publisher in the set, and it was thanks to the tenor Gervase Elwes, champion of so many English composers, that in 1905 he finally succeeded. At first sight, it seems surprising that it should have taken so long: Shakespeare settings were plentiful enough and it was not that publishers were reluctant to publish them. But Quilter's were a kind of song different from the usual fare, and although there was no particular increase in the number of songs set to Shakespeare texts after Quilter's had appeared, his 'Blow, Blow, Thou Winter Wind' has lasting qualities: it is still in print, one of only a small handful,^[5] it is still frequently performed and there have been well over twenty recordings of it.

Quilter's response to Shakespeare's freedom of rhythm and metre retains its appeal and his use of texts from within the central song-canon enabled him to make assumptions about how the texts were perceived. 'O Mistress Mine' is a poignant song in which the poet tries to persuade the loved one to take present opportunities and not to hesitate. Parry's setting of it (from his *Second Set of English Lyrics*, published in 1886) is, like Quilter's, a fluid setting, changing tempo from 2/4 for the first verse to 3/4 for the second (based on the 2/4 material), and returning to 2/4 for a coda. The turbulent semiquavers reflect the turbulence of the lover's emotions, and the introduction of crotchets in the 3/4 verse evokes an appropriate hesitation, with a pleading effect. It is, on the whole, a delightful version that is well aware of the text it supports, and contrasts with Stanford's lyrical but rather bland setting of 1896. This is in 3/4 throughout, and like Parry's (but unlike Quilter's) repeats rhythmic motifs; Quilter's has more rhythmic variety.

Quilter was out of England for much of the period 1896 to 1901, studying at Frankfurt, and since he did not greatly admire the South Kensington

school, Parry's and Stanford's settings — even if he knew them — may not have influenced him, although it is very tempting to hope that he did know and appreciate the subtleties of Parry's song, and Stanford's pause just after "What is love?" at the beginning of the second verse would seem to anticipate Quilter's *tenuto* at the same point, a *tenuto* that is unspecified in the score but usually performed to some degree or other (see Ex.2a); Gervase Elwes's 1916 recording, with its prolonged pause at that point, was a strong influence on subsequent performances.

Ex.2a Quilter: piano interlude and beginning of second verse, 'O Mistress Mine', 1905

[Allegro moderato ($\text{♩} = 80$)]

f a tempo *poco riten.* *a tempo* *p*

What is
love? 'tis not here - af - ter; Pre - sent mirth hath pre - sent laugh - ter;
etc.

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Sullivan's 1865 setting, pre-dating Parry's by more than twenty years, is in 2/4 throughout, it repeats much of the text (Stanford repeats no text, and Quilter repeats only a little) and it has a rigid accompaniment that prevents the fluidity of interpretation of Quilter's setting; it has no connection with the text. Extracts from the four settings, from the piano interlude at the beginning of the second verse, at the words 'What is love?', illustrate the point (see Exx.2a-2d).

All have a strong harmonic outline, but Quilter's — obviously more complex — has a positive bass line and clear part-writing. There are far more performance directions, which are, notably, directed to the pianist, and concerned with articulation; performance directions in the others are much broader.

Ex.2b Sullivan: piano interlude and beginning of second verse, 'O Mistress Mine', 1865

[Allegretto] [p]

What is love? 'Tis not here -
af - ter; Pre - sent mirth hath pre - sent laugh - ter, etc.

Ex.2c Stanford: piano interlude and beginning of second verse, 'O Mistress Mine', 1896

[Allegretto con moto] *mp*

What is
mf *p*

love? 'Tis not here - af - ter; Pre - sent mirth hath pre - sent laugh - ter; etc.

Ex.2d Parry: piano interlude and beginning of second verse, 'O Mistress Mine', 1886

The image shows a musical score for 'O Mistress Mine' by Parry. It is divided into three systems. The first system is a piano interlude marked [Allegretto] in E-flat major and 3/4 time. It features a treble clef with a melodic line and a bass clef with a steady accompaniment. A *cresc.* marking is present in the bass line. The second system begins the second verse with the vocal line starting on the lyrics 'What is love? 'tis not here'. The piano accompaniment continues with a *p* marking. The third system continues the verse with lyrics 'af - ter; Pre - sent mirth hath pre - sent laugh - ter;'. The piano accompaniment includes *cresc.* markings and ends with *etc.*

Vaughan Williams's SATB setting is from a set of *Three Elizabethan Songs* and dates from the early 1890s, but was not performed and published until 1913. Like Quilter's song, it is in E flat major and in 3/4; its rhythms, similar to the earlier songs, arise naturally from the word stresses.

Quilter and Philip Heseltine were both pupils at Eton, Quilter from 1892 to 1895, Heseltine from 1908 to 1911. On June 26th 1910, Quilter returned to Eton for a concert at which he accompanied Christopher Stone in the three Shakespeare songs. Heseltine was enchanted by them, especially 'O Mistress Mine'; which he himself subsequently set to music, calling it 'Sweet and Twenty'.^[6] It is in 3/8, runs in steady and continuous quavers, and owes much to Quilter's setting, so much so that it is possible to combine Warlock's bass line (unaltered) with Quilter's melody line (with only minor rhythmic adjustments) quite successfully. Only at a few

points does the rest of Warlock's accompaniment clash with Quilter's vocal line (see Ex.3).

Ex.3 'O Mistress Mine', Quilter and Warlock

Allegro moderato ♩ = 80

Quilter:
'O Mistress Mine',
vocal line, with slight
rhythmic adjustments

Allegretto con moto

Warlock:
'Sweet and Twenty',
accompaniment,
unaltered

8

12

It is not often that Quilter's songs influence other composers quite so plainly, though Eric Thiman's 1938 setting of 'Now Sleeps the Crimson Petal' is an instance where the composer obviously knew the Quilter setting well. ^[7] Clearly — despite the party-trick nature of such an example — Warlock was deeply imbued with the sound of Quilter's setting of 'O Mistress Mine', which is still extremely popular and has been recorded at least thirty-two times. ^[8]

Indeed, the Quilter discography is considerable and highlights his most popular songs, chief amongst them 'Love's Philosophy', 'Drink to Me Only', 'Go, Lovely Rose', 'Now Sleeps the Crimson Petal' and the *Three Shakespeare Songs*, Op.6. In my book, I indicated those that I believed

remain unrecorded, in the hope that this might stimulate ideas for fresh repertoire. It can prove difficult to trace a song, however, if it goes under a different name. One such is a Negro Spiritual sometimes known by its title, 'Heav'n, Heav'n', but also known by its first line, 'I Got a Robe'. It was first arranged by Harry Burleigh, and Quilter arranged it for Marian Anderson for her recital at the Wigmore Hall, London, on June 16th 1928. The manuscript, in Quilter's hand, calls it 'I Got a Robe', and it has three verses. Despite my searches, knowledge of the existence of a recording of it eluded me until after publication: Anderson recorded it on August 28th 1928, accompanied by Lawrence Brown, under the title, 'Heav'n, Heav'n', in a version with four verses and some other minor changes.^[9] The accompaniment for the fourth verse ('I Got Wings') is the same as that for the third, and the song was recently published by Boosey and Hawkes, in a new, anniversary compilation album of Quilter songs.

Quilter's own recorded performances are sometimes invaluable in establishing his real intentions. The manuscripts of the *Three Pastoral Songs*, for voice and piano trio, are dated 1920, and they were published as a set, Op.22, in 1921. The violin and cello parts are doubled, either in unison or at the octave (or the fifteenth), by the piano. By this means, it was possible to publish an edition for piano and voice alone, with no changes needed to the piano part, and indeed one was published at the same time as the piano trio.

However, in Mark Raphael's recording with Quilter of 'Cherry Valley' (the best of the set), Quilter largely eliminated the doubling, allowing the violin and cello to show the melodic progressions more clearly, and sharing the melodic motifs more evenly.^[10] In other words, the piano part in the voice and piano arrangement is a piano reduction. In Ex.4, the cue-sized notes are those which Quilter suppressed from the original scoring. The editorially-marked arpeggiated chord indicates a further change from the score, of a kind that Quilter frequently made in performance.

Robert Philip's fine work on performance practice in the first half of the twentieth century, as demonstrated by recordings,^[11] focuses exclusively on instrumental performance, but many of the points he makes are equally valid applied to vocal performance. His comment that 'many of the changes in performance practice over the century can be seen in the context of the increasing demand for precision and clarity'^[12] is observable in vocal performance as well, with less emphasis on the text than on the notes and the barlines. Composers from the beginning of the twentieth century wrote with the text in mind, Quilter especially so, and performances of the period show the central rôle that the text played. A direct consequence of the declamatory style was a fluidity and flexibility of phrasing that gave weight and meaning to the words, while still giving shape to the musical line. Over the decades, performances have tended to

Ex.4 'Cherry Valley', bars 25-28

[Moderato un poco Andante ($\text{♩} = 60$)]

Vln *pp* *pochiss. riten.*

Vc *pp* *pochiss. riten.*

p *pochiss. riten.*

The feet of fairies pass and *pochiss. riten.*

p *rit.*

dolce *rit.*

rit.

rit.

pass. *rit.*

mp *p*

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speed up, and are frequently less flexible; older recordings are often relaxed and free in a way that would not always be thought appropriate now. In a performance of 'Blow, Blow' for example, recorded in 1926,

George Baker inserts a turn on the minim B, in the middle of the word 'jolly' at the end of the first chorus. The flourish is executed in so natural and theatrical a manner that it was clearly a normal part of his performance.

In some cases, comparison of some performances shows not so much their differences, but rather, their similarities. When Elizabeth Harwood recorded 'The Fuchsia Tree', not one of Quilter's better known songs, there was only one other recording, that of Carmen Hill. These two performances are sixty-one years apart, yet have so much in common in their reactions to the music and phrase shaping, that it seems hardly likely that Harwood, in 1984, did not know Hill's recording of 1923. The timings are almost identical, but it is in the melisma at the end of the song where the difference does occur: Hill's indulgent portamento contrasts with Harwood's more straightforward rendering (see Ex.5).

Ex.5 'The Fuchsia Tree', ending, showing Carmen Hill's use of portamento

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The variant endings of 'It was a Lover and his Lass' show a similar freedom. At first sight a straightforward score, comparisons of speeds show that two performances can be of the same length but feel quite different depending on how the speed varies within the song. Raphael (1934) takes 2'32" for the whole song, but the last high note, which is sung in falsetto (starting at 2'18" within the track), is held on for three seconds, while the rest of the song is sung extremely flexibly.^[13] Anthony Rolfe Johnson and Lisa Milne (1998), in a duet version, take it strictly and spend no more than one second on the note (starting at 2'28"); that overall they take the same length of time as Raphael indicates how slowly they sing it.^[14] Heddle Nash (1952) and John Heddle Nash (1954) both hold the note for about two seconds, with Heddle Nash adding a mordent on 'love' immediately following the held note; other more recent singers (Keyte, 1976, and Ainsley, starting at 2'12", 1996) remain with the metrical one second.

The melisma at the end of 'Come Away, Death' gives further dramatic opportunity: from the start of the long semibreve on 'weep', until the start of the word 'there' (the final note), it can vary in recorded performance from about eleven to about seventeen seconds, but the quicker performances are not necessarily the least fluid; John Heddle Nash (1954) takes about fourteen seconds over the melisma, Ian Bostridge (1999) likewise, but Nash's portamento contrasts strongly with Bostridge's extremely accurate but somewhat clinical delivery. Singers on early recordings, before the mid-1950s, tend to perform the melisma freely and openly, with George Baker, in 1923, following the same richness of portamento as Hill in 'The Fuchsia Tree'. By 1976, with Christopher Keyte (2'30"), the freedom is largely lost and John Mark Ainsley has not quite rediscovered it twenty years later in 1996.^[15]

And it is a loss of freedom of the vocal line. Although the songs cannot perhaps be sung in the 'old' way now, one should be aware that this was the sound that Quilter grew up with and the way of singing that he wrote for; and it seems not entirely coincidental that with the present lack of emphasis on the words goes a lack of clear diction; few modern singers enunciate clearly.

One sometimes wishes that serendipity, which plays such an important rôle in research, would behave in a more timely manner. All I had ever been able to establish about Jeffrey Lambourne was that he had written the book for *Love at the Inn* (the only version of Quilter's light opera that was published), and that there was correspondence between him and Quilter in the early 1950s about working on another light opera. Quilter also had a secretary, William Cyril Lambourne, who was a beneficiary under Quilter's will, and I had wondered if there was any connection between William and Jeffrey. Quite by chance (and, inevitably, several months after publication), I was put in touch with someone who had known Jeffrey and after further investigation, it transpired that the two were the same person: William disliked his own name and used 'Jeffrey' instead. Quilter used to go down to visit the family, but Jeffrey's sister-in-law mistrusted him, convinced he would lead Jeffrey into bad ways.^[16]

Quilter's inscription on the manuscript of 'Good morrow, 'tis St Valentine's Day' is misleading: he mentions only d'Urfey, but it was the tune that was d'Urfey's — the text was Shakespeare's: Ophelia, from *Hamlet*, Act IV scene v. This song, published for the first time, is also included in the album from Boosey and Hawkes.^[17]

When I learned of a cartoon by Fred May published in *The Musical Times*, it enabled me to pinpoint a previously undated event.^[18] The 1932 annual dinner of the Musicians' Benevolent Fund (of which Quilter was a founder member) was held on November 22, at the Savoy Hotel, London.

At the Musicians' Benevolent Fund Dinner



Quilter at the Musicians' Benevolent Fund Annual Dinner, November 22 1932
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The various speeches were introduced by fanfares. The previous June, musicians from the Royal Military School of Music at Kneller Hall, Twickenham, under Capt. H.E. Adkins, had recorded eight fanfares, by Bliss, Bantock, Quilter, Bax, Berners, Walford Davies, Dorothy Howell,

and Ethel Smyth,^[19] and some of these fanfares, along with others (according to Eugene Goossens, by Bliss, Bantock, Quilter, Bax, Walford Davies, Goossens and Ethel Smyth), were performed at the dinner by the Kneller Hall bandmen.^[20] On the record, Quilter's offering is called 'Fanfare for Fun'; the score calls it 'Fanfare for Children'. The *Musical Times* cartoon caricatures several guests at the dinner, Quilter among them.

A correspondent told me he had copies of two Quilter manuscripts. One of these was untitled, but the first line was 'Ask me not, Dear'; this was 'The Answer', a setting of a poem by Laurence Binyon, published in 1904 and later withdrawn; this particular copy is marked "for Bertram Binyon, Feb 29 1904". The other however was unpublished, a setting of a French text by the Comtesse de Castellane called 'Vous et Moi', and in the same mould as 'The Answer' (see Ex.6).^[21] Bertram Binyon, Laurence's third cousin, was a tenor who sang with the D'Oyly Carte operatic society in the early part of the twentieth century. He knew Quilter well (Quilter was godfather to Mario, one of Bertram and Honor's four children), and visited him at Quilter's family home, Bawdsey Manor, near Woodbridge in Suffolk, in August 1909.^[22] Appropriately enough, the song was performed at Bawdsey Manor, in September 2002, in a recital of Quilter songs given by David Wilson-Johnson and David Owen Norris; who knows when it was last heard?

Ex.6 Quilter: opening bars of 'Vous et Moi'

Moderato mp

Vos yeux se-reins et purs ont

vou-lu me_sou-ri-re Vo-tre main comme une ai-le a-ca-res-sé ma main, etc.

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Quilter maintained a considerable correspondence with many individuals, and the collections of these letters, of tangential rather than direct interest, nevertheless offer valuable insights into Quilter's day-to-day musical life. The letters to Harold Child, a baritone and later singing teacher who had trained at the Royal Academy of Music (he held the John Rhodes scholarship some time in the 1930s), are concerned with discussions about Child's career and concerts they were both involved with, but the working relationship clearly developed into one of friendship, with Quilter writing letters to both Harold and his wife Stella. Twenty-two letters from Quilter to Albert and Mary Webb are also personal, but with clear musical links; Webb appears to have been a freelance musician, undertaking copying work and other such activities. Some of the correspondence was clearly important to Quilter, lasting many years, but it is not always possible to determine who the other party was; letters from Marie Beaumont and her husband Harry are entertaining, but detailed information about the Beaumonts remains elusive. Evidence within the letters suggests that Harry was born in the late 1850s; there was a song composer called Henry Beaumont, who published songs at the beginning of the twentieth century, but it has not been possible to establish whether he is the Beaumont whom Quilter knew.^[23]

Between the wars, Quilter's songs were broadcast on radio very frequently, as the transmission archives show.^[24] However, throughout his career there were many detractors, and those that found fault with him were often more precise and detailed in their criticisms than those who found fine music. His several champions seldom provided more than a survey of Quilter's work, and were usually more concerned with emphasizing Quilter's 'non-standard' fare, promoting especially any recently published songs. Some, though, fell outside this category, writing with authority and knowledge.

At the end of his obituary tribute to Quilter, Mark Raphael, quoting from Wolf's *Italienisches Liederbuch*, reminded readers that 'Auch kleine Dinge können uns entzücken' ('Little things may please us too').^[25] However, in 1931, Roger Holdin, disappointed that Quilter had 'not yet essayed a higher flight',^[26] surmised that this stemmed from his public school upbringing — rather as Balfour Gardiner had felt stultified by his Oxford education. He wrote disparagingly of Quilter's 'gentle melancholy', and Basil Hogarth sensed something similar when he wrote, in the same year, and rather more sympathetically, that Quilter was the best since Sullivan to 'paint the more reflective sides of English Nature'.^[27] Scott Goddard in his often cited article of 1925 was distinctly sarcastic, referring negatively to Quilter's comfortable sadness and 'decorously maudlin susceptibility not far from tears'.^[28] Many seemed unable or unwilling to praise such popular and successful songs, seeing too much their roots in the drawing-room song and damning them for it.

Vaughan Williams, however, recognized Quilter's art, and wrote to tell him so in 1942, stating unequivocally that he had 'the whole craftsmanship of [his] exquisite art at [his] fingers ends'.^[29] A year later he wrote: "*Who would not rather have drawn eight bars straight from the fountainhead than have compiled whole symphonies strained very thin through the medium of the best foreign models?*", upholding those who may write very little but whose 'little' achieves greatness.^[30]

In November 1918, Edward Dent drew attention to the need to raise standards of performance and composition, and not to be complacent; in his usual acerbic style, he warned of using 'the methods of patent medicine vendors' to advance the cause of art.^[31] Many, seeing the decline of standards during the first World War, thought that British music was best served by making it more Continental. So Goddard complained of Quilter's 'drawing-room atmosphere' and his 'complacent melodies, quite charming, quite colourless, [giving] but an evanescent pleasure and no worthy commentary on the perfect poem'. But with such comments as Ampersand's in 1924, setting Quilter 'apart from the rank and file of vocal composers';^[32] and George Lowe's in 1919, where he uses such descriptors as 'charm', 'exquisite', 'appealing'^[33], Goddard's view becomes apparent as a reaction to the saccharine eulogies, as much as a reaction against British music; he compares Quilter unfavourably with, conspicuously, non-British composers: Ravel, Fauré and Pizzetti. The reviewer for *The Liverpool Echo*, after a concert in 1923, wrote: "[Quilter] finds it just a little too easy to write a song. Melody ... is inherent in him, and he has only to turn on the tap ... for it to flow out. But the flow is not of even strength"^[34] (nor, apparently, was Quilter's sense of rhythm on that occasion; the reviewer was unimpressed with Quilter's accompanying), and Herman Ould in *The English Review* wished for 'a little more acidity, a little less sweetness'.^[35] But Quilter's lesser songs do not diminish his superior works, and the notes of dissonance counterpoint the paeans of praise; there were countless laudatory reviews.

Quilter's manner of writing for the voice was universally acclaimed. Goddard was quite right when he commented that 'singers have cause to be very grateful to him'; Holdin too agreed that Quilter knew the human voice, and Rodney Bennett wrote a comprehensive article recommending particular songs as teaching material; 'Drink to me only' for its legato, and 'Dream Valley' as a study in tranquillity. Ampersand described the blend between piano and voice: "*The voice and the piano parts dovetail and sympathise without ever for an instant losing their independence*". Rodney Bennett did not know Quilter at this point, 1926, and so wrote without bias; he pointed out the pianistic nature of the accompaniments, which, while being 'rich, frequently complex, and occasionally difficult', did not overload or confuse the vocal issue.^[36] Lowe commented that even Quilter's early *Songs of the Sea* had accompaniments rather than

piano parts, and Holdin, too, remarked that the piano parts were of equal importance with the voice.

Nonetheless the consistent view was that Quilter matched words to music very carefully. In *The Birmingham Post*, the reviewer of a music competition perceived both the essence of Quilter's 'perfect adaptation of his melodies to the verbal values of the poems he set' and also how to determine the right tempo for a Quilter song — 'just the pace at which we would speak the words'^[37] — a perfectly expressed rule of thumb; would that more singers followed it. Equally, many realized that Gervase Elwes had done much to establish Quilter 'in the affections of the British public'^[38] and that Elwes had enabled the songs to be given performances of integrity. With his death, there was no longer anyone with quite the same ability to blend 'sentimentality and robustness', as Goddard put it; the 'interpretation of one gentleman by another'.

With the judgement of distance, Thomas Armstrong, in his substantial, and sympathetic, article of 1958 on the Frankfurt Group, distinguished Quilter from his forebears (Parry and Stanford) by his poetic feeling, while at the same time recognizing that they provided the necessary springboard. Sir Quintin Hill in his obituary article was equally sympathetic, emphasizing Quilter's personal qualities at least as much as his music. He surely agreed with Raphael when he wrote that Quilter had 'a talent exquisite but limited', limited as a Shakespeare lyric is limited in its precision and discipline, and referred to his 'perfect English settings of perfect English words'.^[39] Leslie Woodgate, Quilter's former personal secretary, stood aside from assessing Quilter's music; he wrote instead a biographical obituary, although he drew attention to the 'care and thought that [went] into this beautifully constructed music'.^[40]

Little was written about Quilter between his death in 1953 and the centenary of his birth in 1977, but nevertheless, there was a steady trickle of recordings. Performances on LP or CD consisting entirely, or almost entirely, of Quilter songs (the performances sometimes variable in quality but always extremely welcome) were recorded by Alexander Young and Gordon Watson in 1955; Robert Ivan Foster and Mary Earl in 1966; David Johnston and Daphne Ibbott in 1972; Christopher Keyte and Rae de Lisle in 1976; David Wilson-Johnson and David Owen Norris in 1986; Benjamin Luxon and David Willison in 1989; Lisa Milne, Anthony Rolfe Johnson, Graham Johnson and the Duke Quartet in 1998; and John Mark Ainsley and Malcolm Martineau in 1999.

One still reads a disparaging comment occasionally, yet the songs bear the test of time. If the final criterion of whether or not Quilter was a successful song-writer is whether or not his songs are still in print and performed, then it is abundantly clear that he was.

- [19] It was recorded on HMV C.2445, on June 17 1932.
- [20] Eugene Goossens: *Overture and Beginners* [London: Methuen, 1961], p.282
- [21] I am greatly indebted to Jonathan Chapple for contacting me in May 2002. He 'stumbled upon the original manuscript for this unpublished song and several other Quilter manuscripts in the eighties when visiting a friend, Bertram's daughter Rachel (known as Nini)'. He took copies of only the two mentioned here, and the others are now lost.
- [22] Percy Grainger to Rose Grainger, August 5 1909, in Kay Dreyfus ed.: *The Farthest North of Humanness* [Melbourne: Macmillan, 1985], p.305. Binyon and Grainger went swimming in the river Deben, which Bawdsey Manor overlooks.
- [23] The Child collection has recently been donated to the British Library; the Webb letters are within the part of the Norman McCann archive held by the Royal Academy of Music, London; the Beaumont letters are also held by the British Library, Add. MSS 70595, ff150-197.
- [24] BBC Written Archives, Caversham
- [25] Mark Raphael: 'Roger Quilter: 1877-1953, the man and his songs', *Tempo*, 30, 1953-54, p.20
- [26] Roger Holdin: 'Roger Quilter', *The Musical Mirror and Fanfare*, May 1931, pp.158-159
- [27] Basil Hogarth: 'Our Modern Music Makers', *The Musical Progress and Mail*, December 1931, pp.94-95
- [28] Scott Goddard: 'The Art of Roger Quilter', *The Chesterian*, vol.VI no.47, June 1925, pp.213-217
- [29] Ralph Vaughan Williams to Quilter, October 24 [1942] (private archive)
- [30] Ralph Vaughan Williams, 'Shrubsole': *Some Thoughts on Beethoven's Choral Symphony, with writings on other musical subjects* [London: Oxford University Press, 1953], pp.168-172
- [31] Edward Dent: 'The Future of British Music', *The Cambridge Magazine*, November 16 1918, reprinted in *The British Music Society Bulletin*, vol.1, January 1919, pp.6-9. The *BMSB* claims that this was first printed in *Cambridge Review*, November 30 1918, but this is an error. Dent's bibliography (Lawrence Haward: *Edward J Dent, A Bibliography* [Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1956]) is correct.
- [32] Ampersand: 'Song Composers of the Day', *Musical Opinion & Trade Review*, February 1924, pp.535-537
- [33] George Lowe: 'The Music of Roger Quilter', *Musical Opinion & Trade Review*, 496, January 1919, pp.210-211
- [34] *The Liverpool Echo*, [annotated by hand February 2 1923, but more likely to have been March 2, about the March 1st recital at the Rushworth Hall]. Dorothy Ledsome was accompanied by Quilter.
- [35] Herman Ould: 'Two English Song-Writers: Roger Quilter and Cyril Scott', *The English Review*, XLVIII, April 1929. pp.478-482
- [36] Rodney Bennett: 'Song-writers of the Day: II, Roger Quilter', *Music Teacher*, V, 1926, pp.409-411
- [37] Review of competition, *The Birmingham Post*, June 22 1923, page unidentified
- [38] Holdin (1931).
- [39] Sir Quintin Hill: 'Roger Quilter: 1877-1953', *Music & Letters*, xxxv, 1954, pp.15-16
- [40] Leslie Woodgate: 'Roger Quilter, 1 November 1877 - 21 September 1953', *The Musical Times*, vol.xciv, November 1953, pp.503-505

Acknowledgements

My thanks to *The Musical Times*, Boosey and Hawkes Ltd, Music Sales Ltd, Ricordi Ltd and Warner Chappell Ltd for their generosity in giving permission for the illustrative and musical extracts.

My thanks also to the Royal Academy of Music, Jonathan Chapple, Peter Fussell, Stephen Gard, Pat Johnson and Dr Andrew Plant.

The family motto, '*Plûtôt mourir que changer*' ('Rather die than change'), is apt. Roger Quilter disliked change — it made him feel vulnerable. He preferred the security of the small, the beautiful, and the elegant, in everything, and in his songs not least.

Notes

- [1] Valerie Langfield: *Roger Quilter, his life and music* [Woodbridge: Boydell Press, 2002]
- [2] Obituary, *The Times*, September 22 1953
- [3] Walter Crane: *The Baby's Opera* [London: Routledge, 1877]
- [4] Bryan Gooch and David Thatcher, editors: *A Shakespeare Music Catalogue* (5 volumes) [Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1991]
- [5] In the period 1840-1960, thus covering several years either side of Quilter's life, there were 132 non-orchestral settings of 'Blow, Blow'. His setting thus maintains an enviable popularity.
- [6] By this time, of course, he had assumed the pseudonym Peter Warlock for his compositions. The MS is in the possession of Robert Beckhard; the date is scratched out but can be discerned as March 31 1924 (telephone conversation with Beckhard, August 30 2002). The song was dedicated to the baritone John Goss.
- [7] Quilter's setting was first published in 1904; a revised version was published in 1946.
- [8] Of 'O Mistress Mine', Gooch and Thatcher list 178 solo, duet or partsong settings with piano accompaniment or a *capella*, in the period 1840-1960. Sixteen of these appeared in the 53 years between 1842 and 1894; and more than that number, 21, in the eleven years between 1894 and 1905 (Quilter's setting was published in 1905 but had been written earlier); eighteen in the next ten years, 1906 to 1915, and a further eighteen from 1916 to 1925; fifteen from 1926 to 1935; nine until 1945; twelve until 1955.
- [9] She recorded it in "C" Studio at the Small Queen's Hall; Victor 22015-B; reissued on CD by Pearl GEMM 9318
- [10] Mark Raphael (baritone), Roger Quilter (piano), CD insert to Langfield: *Roger Quilter*, track 8
- [11] Robert Philip: *Early Recordings and Musical Style, Changing Tastes in Instrumental Performance, 1900-1950* [Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1992]
- [12] Philip, p.233
- [13] Mark Raphael (baritone), Roger Quilter (piano), CD insert to Langfield: *Roger Quilter*, track 10
- [14] Lisa Milne (soprano), Anthony Rolfe Johnson (tenor), Graham Johnson (piano); Collins Classics 15122 (reissued on Naxos 8.557116), track 1
- [15] In more detail: Oldham (1932; 2'31" overall) takes just twelve seconds on the melisma, but he is out of step with the trio, and he would clearly have preferred to pull the phrase back. Raphael (1934), accompanied by Quilter and a rather more sympathetic trio, takes about fifteen seconds (starting at 2'20"; 3'02" overall) [CD insert to Langfield: *Roger Quilter*, track 2], and George Baker takes a leisurely seventeen seconds. John Heddle Nash takes about fourteen seconds (2'48" overall), yet it does not feel rushed. Ainsley (starting at 2'06"; 2'43" overall) and Bostridge (starting at 2'11") take thirteen and fourteen seconds respectively [John Mark Ainsley (tenor), Malcolm Martineau (piano), Hyperion CDA66878, track 2; Ian Bostridge (tenor), Julius Drake (piano), EMI 5 56830 2, track 20], but Bostridge's timing belies the absolute precision with which he delineates the notes: no trace of portamento. Keyte and Stephen Varcoe (in an orchestral version lasting 2'27") take only eleven seconds [Stephen Varcoe (bass-baritone), City of London Sinfonia conducted by Richard Hickox; Chandos 8743, track 1].
- [16] My thanks to Peter Fussell for this information.
- [17] British Library, Add. MS 65526, not as in my book which shows Add. MS 72089; this item consists of manuscripts of several Quilter songs, published by R.H. Elkin.
- [18] 'At the Musicians' Benevolent Fund Dinner', *The Musical Times*, vol.74, no.1079, January 1933, p.32. My thanks to Dr Andrew Plant for drawing my attention to the cartoon.