

- APPRECIATION -

## Nicholas Temperley (1932 – 2020)

Nicholas Temperley was a tall, reserved, and mild-mannered man, but an incisive and fearless scholar. I loved and admired this combination and shall miss him very much.

His lifelong aim as a musicologist was to present the correct facts, in the broadest understanding of what a musical fact is. Call them musical truths. It may be that he will be best remembered for *The Music of the English Parish Church* (1979), a masterly two-volume study of the music that was actually heard in Anglican churches large and small (as opposed to cathedrals and college chapels) across the country from the Reformation to the present day. In its Preface, he pointed out that parish church music had been 'until recently [...] the only regular, formal musical experience for perhaps half the population of England'.<sup>1</sup> This, to Temperley, was a huge and obvious musical fact. But it was one of which music historians had taken no notice, and their reasons for this amounted to another fact, a cultural one, that it was the musicologist's duty to tease out, uncovering the convenient suppositions, vested interests, and defence of taste that had produced it.

Nicholas once said to me that he regarded himself as a rebel, and at first sight it is difficult to see how so gentlemanly and traditional a personage could have done so. (Living in the USA for 56 years did nothing at all to modify his impeccable English accent, vocabulary, and, on the evidence of a shared lunch in 2018, taste for puddings.) But further consideration makes the statement appear not just plausible but self-evident, for this was a man from a family with military connections, born in Beaconsfield and educated at Eton, the Royal College of Music, and King's College Cambridge, who emigrated to the USA, married an American, and chose to champion some of the most unfashionable and demotic musicological areas conceivable at the time. Moreover, examination of his early appearances in print, many of them in short articles or 'Letters to the editor' for the *Musical Times*, soon makes it clear that he was a campaigner armed with formidable scholarly weaponry

which he intended to use. Perhaps something of the family background came through here, though not without deliciously dry humour. One early intervention that proved controversial was his dismissal of contemporary English church music and its dwindling audience as a hopeless case. He thought he would look at what was being published in other countries to see how it compared. His verdict on an American setting of The Beatitudes was that, ‘printed in attractive blue type’, it ‘would make an excellent wallpaper (about 2 sq ft per copy)’.<sup>2</sup>

Two facts go a long way towards explaining his scholarly stance: he was a fine musician and a fine mathematician. He claimed that he learnt his prose style with its economy and crystal-clear logic from his Maths master at Eton, and I believe Maths was what he started out or was to have started out studying when he left school. Numbers told the truth: if there was a lot of something about, then it was by definition important to the scholar, and this naturally applied to English parish church music and to his later mammoth project, *The Hymn Tune Index*. It took someone not afraid of big data—and the *HTI* became an early online publication—to sort out the Anglo-American Protestant hymn tune in musical and bibliographical terms, which he did triumphantly from his long-term base at the School of Music of the University of Illinois at Urbana-Champaign.<sup>3</sup> His American wife, Mary, was from a scientific background and became a structural linguist, and the science and cognition of music is one of the research fields of their son David Temperley, Professor at the Eastman School of Music. Nicholas was also well versed in acoustics, which led to a rapier-sharp demolition of another scholar’s dissonance theory in the *Journal of Music Theory* and occasioned his earliest publication I have been able to find, a response to an article on Mozart and the flute in *Music and Letters*, written no doubt fresh from the Cambridge undergraduate Music Tripos’s excellent course on acoustics, if that was taught in the second year then as it was in my day 17 years later.<sup>4</sup> A much later assertion in print reminded his readers, in a *Musical Times* review, that the ‘notion that a [pianist] [...] can influence the tone of his instrument by the way he plays the notes, independently of volume, pedalling and timing’, is ‘an old fallacy [...] still fostered by piano teachers [...] [but with] no

physical reality'.<sup>5</sup> You can only play a note louder or softer, the velocity with which the hammer strikes the string being the one variable. This too generated sparks.

In a surprising variety of contexts, Nicholas Temperley went a long way towards righting the historical record, but the music itself always came first. Volume 2 of *The Music of the English Parish Church* is a meticulously edited anthology of the repertoire across the ages. In a useful early article on Prince Albert's important contribution to the realignment of musical culture in mid-19th-century England, Nicholas did not hesitate to assert, after listing the Prince Consort's own musical works, that 'not one of these compositions is of the slightest musical interest', suggesting moreover that much of their substance apart from the tunes may well have been created by others.<sup>6</sup> And as music in 19th-century England, the enduring centre of gravity of his endeavours, eventually became widely studied, due in large part to his own example and achievements, he pointed out what was (and, I would say, still is) wanting in the fashion for reception studies: 'In the end, music itself matters more than past opinions of it.'<sup>7</sup>

It is no surprise that these qualities and concerns made him a superb editor. Musical scholarship had become fully professionalised in his generation, especially in the USA, and Nicholas could not be faulted for his command of bibliography, his identification and interrogation of primary and secondary sources, his critical acumen towards a composer's aims and procedures, and his sharp awareness of style and repertoire, all wrapped up in a genius for logical argument and organisation of material. Some of his contemporaries regretted that he had not exercised these skills on what then were considered mainstream musical topics, forgetting that he *did* exercise them on such topics. At the instigation of his Cambridge associate Hugh Macdonald, he edited the *Symphonie fantastique* for the New Berlioz Edition, quite a task when it came to the collation of 14 different versions of the work's dramatic programme.<sup>8</sup> It appeared in 1972, and he followed up this radical look at a familiar work with an edition of Haydn's *Creation* in 1988.<sup>9</sup>

But it was the shunned topic in clear view that attracted Nicholas's lifelong loyalty and most complex investigations. Four of these he brought to triumphant conclusions of startling breadth and comprehensiveness, the *Hymn Tune Index* and

*The Music of the English Parish Church* already mentioned, the 20-volume edition of *The London Piano School*,<sup>10</sup> and his final project, a major two-volume scholarly edition of Sternhold and Hopkins's metrical psalter, co-edited with Beth Quitslund.<sup>11</sup> The hymn tune and metrical psalm undertakings dealt with music (and, in the latter case, poetic texts) of such everyday currency over an extremely long period that the proliferation of printed sources is scarcely conceivable; yet all were mastered. *The London Piano School* again aimed at and succeeded in presenting an entire repertoire, that of what by the time of its culmination around 1860 was the most popular instrument ever. All four of these projects changed the scholarly terrain for good. The *HTI* woke people up to the cultural links between the English and American musical vernaculars. That and *The Music of the English Parish Church* also did much to bring 'west gallery' psalmody and fugging tunes out of what in the UK (though not in the USA) had hitherto been a ghetto of amateur enthusiasts, and have them understood as a major part of the British nation's musical history, though their wealth of consecutive and bare fifths and residual modality in 18th-century contexts raised eyebrows around the editorial committee table of the prestigious *Musica Britannica* collected edition when a psalmody volume was proposed. (It was published in 2007, co-edited with Sally Drage.)<sup>12</sup> Uncovering 'The old way of singing', a horrendous slow drawl of the psalms practised in anglophone (and Gaelic) churches over a long period, was a major contribution to the history of performance practice. The Genevan (i.e., francophone) origin of the Sternhold and Hopkins tunes and their complete lack of relationship to English folk music have now become blindingly obvious. Finally, it was a brilliant scholarly turn, in *The London Piano School*, to have removed a large body of music from peripheral national confines and recast it, correctly, as a product of the world's foremost metropolitan centre in terms of economic and industrial enterprise. The words 'London' and 'school' in the series title saw to that, though not uncontroversially. Clementi, Dussek, Cramer and Moscheles now rubbed shoulders with the Wesleys, Pinto, Macfarren and W. T. Best. The series, produced in facsimile by Garland and not kept in print, is now like gold dust, but it will be a long time before such an upheaved landscape of musical value and context settles down to become the 'new

normal'. Nicholas recognised this lengthy delay as a concomitant of scholarly achievement that upsets norms without being sensational, and wrote to tell me so when I published my own first book.

The longest delay in Nicholas's career was between his revival of Edward J. Loder's English opera *Raymond and Agnes* at the Arts Theatre in Cambridge in 1966 and its first commercial recording, by Retrospect Opera conducted by Richard Bonyngé, more than 50 years later.<sup>13</sup> He was, of course, extremely happy to see the latter accomplished, and attended the recording sessions in Hampstead in 2017 on what was his final trip to the UK, though he disagreed with Bonyngé's choice of cuts. He believed in this opera unshakeably, and as with other hard-pressed endeavours relating to music in 19th-century England, put his money where his mouth was: he was a generous donor to Retrospect Opera, to the fledgling North American British Music Studies Association (NABMSA) – of which he became its first elected President, to CHOMBEC – the Centre for the History of Music in Britain, the Empire and the Commonwealth which I set up at the University of Bristol in 2006 (he was one of its first honorary associates), and no doubt to many other causes. This sponsorship followed naturally from the fact that, first, he had through his own scholarly work firmly recognised and defined the quality of those musical phenomena others were at last furthering, and second, had similarly known and proved in his research that the fulcrum between value and success has always been and will always be promotion, in all its forms.

Nicholas must have been an extraordinarily disciplined and dutiful worker throughout his life, for time and again one consults a *Grove* article on some elusive English or transatlantic figure to find that Nicholas Temperley was its author. His major *Grove* articles are a phenomenon too, eventually comprising the only place one can go for a clear and authoritative journey through topics new to encyclopaedic treatment, such as 'Methodist church music' and 'Anglican and Episcopalian church music', as well as some, a number of them co-authored, that would tax even a generalist in this context, for example 'Overture', 'Sinfonietta', 'Hymn', 'Psalmody', and 'London'.

The music of earlier 19th-century England was where he had chosen to focus his research as a young man. It is difficult now to grasp just how narrow and hidebound the academic rules were when he set out on his career, and indeed for some time afterwards. Research fields were expected to be mediaeval, renaissance or baroque—and foreign, unless you wanted to be considered weak at languages and not properly up to the job in general. He would have found few kindred spirits in the mid-1950s, and even those there were, like Stanley Sadie and Charles Cudworth, worked on 18th- rather than 19th-century England and were not salaried academics. Nicholas tirelessly accomplished a great deal in his field, soon extended to take in the whole of the century, a field which even today no one knows better than he did. His work covered all areas, including popular music (who else would have risen to the obligation to sum up the melodic appeal of ‘Home, sweet home!’?),<sup>14</sup> opera, and keyboard and chamber music as well as the sacred music on which three of those major projects concentrated. He remains the leading expert on William Sterndale Bennett, George Macfarren, and many other Victorian composers, and on the musical ramifications of the Wesley family (a *Grove* article and *Music and the Wesleys*, 2010, co-edited with myself).<sup>15</sup> He published authoritatively on John Stainer, Arthur Sullivan, and opera composers such as Balfe and Wallace as well as Edward Loder, whose eminent musical family was the subject of a late edited book.<sup>16</sup> He co-edited a *Musica Britannica* volume of 19th-century English songs,<sup>17</sup> and organised the first ever conference on Victorian music, at the University of Leicester in 1979. (Its heirs are now biennial.) To Nicholas, naturally, the 19th-century volume of *The Athlone* [later *Blackwell*] *History of Music in Britain* was entrusted, and through sheer determination—he was a proactive and exacting editor, and contributors rose to the challenge—managed to get it published almost a decade before the other volumes dribbled their way into print (one of them never did).<sup>18</sup> He also edited a second volume on English music of the 19th century, *The Lost Chord*, and a third, edited by Bennett Zon, was his *Festschrift*.<sup>19</sup> I personally regret that he never published his PhD thesis, on instrumental music in England in the first half of the 19th century, for until recently, when it became freely available online, scholars still beat a path to the door of the University Library in

Cambridge to read it; it has not been superseded.<sup>20</sup> And we still need the monograph, the single author's take, on English music across the whole of the 19th century that only he could have written but for whatever reason chose not to—or is it simply that no one ever asked him to?

He was in some ways strangely reticent about his lifelong relationship with Victorian music—this was a case of Pevsner's type of artistic devotion rather than Betjeman's—but somewhere he wrote that its curious sweetness had fascinated and attracted him since his schooldays. Something similar might be said of the man. He was a loyal, true, and generous friend to a great many scholars indeed, especially younger ones, and he attracted them all, much to the good of the subject and the enrichment of those of us still able to pursue it.

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## References

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## Endnotes:

- <sup>1</sup> Nicholas Temperley, *The Music of the English Parish Church* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1979), 1: xvii.
- <sup>2</sup> Nicholas Temperley, "Church Music from Abroad and Home", *Musical Times* 104, no. 1444 (June 1963): 435, <https://www.jstor.org/stable/950428>.
- <sup>3</sup> Nicholas Temperley, assisted by Charles G. Manns and Joseph Herl, *The Hymn Tune Index: A Census of English-Language Hymn Tunes in Printed Sources from 1535 to 1820*, 4 vols. (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1998).
- <sup>4</sup> Nicholas Temperley, "Re: Functional and Non-Functional Dissonance", *Journal of Music Theory* 4, no. 2 (November 1960): 233-5, <https://www.jstor.org/stable/843185>; "Mozart and the Flute", *Music & Letters* 36, no. 1 (January 1955): 108, <https://www.jstor.org/stable/730763>.

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- <sup>5</sup> Nicholas Temperley, “Chopin as he is played”, review of *Chopin Playing: from the Composer to the Present Day*, by James Methuen-Campbell (London: Gollancz, 1981), in *Musical Times* 122, no. 1663 (September 1981): 605, <https://www.jstor.org/stable/962975>.
- <sup>6</sup> Nicholas Temperley, “The Prince Consort, Champion of Music”, *Musical Times* 102, no. 1426 (December 1961): 762, <https://www.jstor.org/stable/949620>.
- <sup>7</sup> Nicholas Temperley, review of *Mendelssohn and Victorian England* by Colin Timothy Eatock (Farnham: Ashgate, 2008), in *Journal of British Studies* 49, no. 4 (October 2010): 901, <https://doi.org/10.1086/655005>.
- <sup>8</sup> Nicholas Temperley, ed., *Symphonie fantastique* (Kassel: Bärenreiter, 1972), vol. 16 of Hector Berlioz: *New Edition of the Complete Works*, ed. Hugh Macdonald.
- <sup>9</sup> Nicholas Temperley, ed., Urtext edition of *The Creation: an Oratorio for Solo Voices, Chorus and Orchestra* by Joseph Haydn, with piano accompaniment by Muzio Clementi (London: Peters, 1988).
- <sup>10</sup> Nicholas Temperley, general editor, *The London Pianoforte School 1766-1860*, 20 vols. (New York and London: Garland, 1984-6).
- <sup>11</sup> Beth Quitslund and Nicholas Temperley, eds., *The Whole Book of Psalms Collected into English Metre by Thomas Sternhold, John Hopkins, and Others: A Critical Edition of the Texts and Tunes*, 2 vols. (Tempe, AZ: Arizona Center for Medieval & Renaissance Studies, 2018).
- <sup>12</sup> Nicholas Temperley and Sally Drage, eds., *Eighteenth-Century Psalmody*, vol. 85 of *Musica Britannica: A National Collection of Music* (London: Stainer & Bell, 2007).
- <sup>13</sup> Edward J. Loder, *Raymond and Agnes*, Retrospect Opera, R0005, 2018, CD.
- <sup>14</sup> Nicholas Temperley, “Ballroom and drawing-room music”, in *The Athlone [later Blackwell] History of Music in Britain*, ed. Temperley, vol. 5, *The Romantic Age, 1800-1914* (London: Athlone, 1981): 125-6.
- <sup>15</sup> Nicholas Temperley and Stephen Banfield, eds., *Music and the Wesleys* (Urbana, IL: University of Illinois Press, 2010).
- <sup>16</sup> Nicholas Temperley, ed., *Musicians of Bath and Beyond: Edward Loder (1809-1865) and his family* (Woodbridge: Boydell, 2016).
- <sup>17</sup> Geoffrey Bush and Nicholas Temperley, eds., *English Songs, 1800-1860*, vol. 43 of *Musica Britannica: A National Collection of Music* (London: Stainer & Bell, 1979).
- <sup>18</sup> Temperley, *The Romantic Age*.
- <sup>19</sup> Nicholas Temperley, ed., *The Lost Chord: Essays in Victorian Music* (Bloomington, IN: Indiana University Press, 1989); Bennett Zon, ed., *Music and Performance Culture in Nineteenth-Century Britain: Essays in Honour of Nicholas Temperley* (Farnham: Ashgate, 2012).
- <sup>20</sup> Nicholas Temperley, “Instrumental Music in England, 1800-1850” (PhD diss., University of Cambridge, 1959), <https://ethos.bl.uk/OrderDetails.do?did=1&uin=uk.bl.ethos.576944>, accessed 1 September 2020.