

## Musical trends and the western church: a collision of the 'ancient' and 'modern'

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To appreciate the part played by church music in the nineteenth century, specifically in continental Europe and Britain, it is vital to acknowledge a number of key issues, most of them inherited from the second half of the eighteenth century. The new secular age, heralded by the philosophical developments of the Enlightenment and major events such as American Independence and the French Revolution, signalled a sea-change in music's function within society, and the church, once the principal patron, and indeed custodian, of musical 'progress', saw its relationship with the art and its diverse profession decline as other musical genres became the foci for creativity and ambition. The opera house replaced the church as the 'cathedral' of the bourgeoisie, while the concert hall became the home of the new cultural intelligentsia and *cognoscenti* as instrumental music assumed a supremacy over vocal. As Julian Rushton has pointed out, 'churches were themselves partly responsible for the fact that their liturgies were no longer the natural home of advanced musical art'.<sup>1</sup>

Eighteenth-century Lutheran music provides an apposite illustration of how the steady growth of pietism and the influence of Calvinism witnessed a decline away from the ornate creations of cantatas, motets and chorale preludes, until, by 1800, the music of German Protestantism consisted of little more than the singing of chorales. No better example of this process can be observed than at Leipzig by the comparison between J. S. Bach's sophisticated sacred works written for his post as cantor at St Thomas's Church, and those of his successor, J. A. Hiller, who wrote little for the liturgy. Though less draconian, the Catholic Church was also driven by a reforming zeal which eschewed the use of instrumental music in the liturgy except as a subordinate role to voices. Such restrictions only served to galvanise a greater polemical distinction between 'old' and 'new' in church music. As evidenced by the works of Mozart, Haydn, Jomelli, Galuppi and Pergolesi, the 'strict' practice of counterpoint,

<sup>1</sup> Rushton, *Classical music*, p. 118.

demonstrated in fugues and the Palestrina-inspired 'motet' style, stood out in marked contrast to the *style galant* and the imported, florid style of opera. Perhaps the most fertile synthesis of late classical liturgical styles was the symphonic mass – works for four-part choir, orchestra and organ continuo – most prevalent in Catholic Austria and its wealthy monastical tradition. Joseph Haydn's last six masses, composed for the court at Esterházy, are often cited as the most typical examples of the genre, but there was considerable industry throughout the empire with F. X. Brixi in Bohemia (Prague) and K. V. Wratny in Slovenia (Ljubljana and Gorizia) as authors of many works. The greatest and most substantial industry, however, took place in Salzburg where, under the patronage of Archbishop Colloredo, Mozart and Haydn's brother Michael were active. Economic privation, caused by Austria's war with Napoleon, constrained musical activity, and the larger, more ambitious masses (and requiems) were commissioned as *pièces d'occasion*. The tradition of the symphonic mass continued to enjoy popularity into the nineteenth century. Hummel produced an appreciable corpus of masses as concert master to the Esterházy court between 1804 and 1811; Beethoven was commissioned by the Esterházy court to write his Mass in C (1807) and Cherubini's personal fusion of ancient and modern techniques gave rise to two fine requiems, in C minor (1816) and D minor (1836), and several Solemn Masses for the restored Bourbon monarchy in Paris. Even by the middle of the century, Bruckner, then a monastery organist at St Florian, was still wedded to the paradigms of the classical mass, as can be seen in his Requiem (1848–9) and *Missa Solemnis* (1854). With the transformation of Bruckner's style in the late 1860s, his later masses expanded in length and spiritual aspiration to a point where their natural home was the concert hall, a tendency he shared with the earlier conceptions of Beethoven's monumental *Missa Solemnis* (1819–23) and Schubert's late masses in A flat (1819–22) and E flat (1828). Indeed, during the later nineteenth century, the mass and requiem developed into a large-scale choral genre comparable with the oratorio in terms of its dramatic and narrative possibilities, and open to a wide range of heterodox interpretations ranging from those of traditional believers (Dvořák, Liszt, Bruckner, Gounod and Stanford), through the sceptical (Berlioz, Brahms and Fauré), to the outright atheist (Verdi and Delius).

The liberal thought of the Enlightenment and the new aesthetics of Romanticism inevitably provoked debate within the ecclesiastical arena and across denominational barriers, motivated by a desire to restore a sense of traditional religious sentiment, the authority of the church and the imperative of the liturgy, and by a sensibility inspired by the Romantic era itself – a longing for the past and a passion for historicisation. An early eighteenth-century fervour

for an 'ideal' church music with little or no instrumental participation gave rise to the establishment of Caecilian-Bündnisse (Cecilian Leagues) in Munich, Passau and Vienna as well as in other cities in Bavaria and Austria, and found endorsement in Pope Benedict XIV's encyclical of 1749, later pronouncements by Leo XII in 1824 and Pius VIII in 1830, and most notably Pope Pius X's *Motu Proprio* in 1903, which, besides giving final enfranchisement to Cecilianism, intended to proscribe perceived aberrant practices in countries such as Italy. The aesthetic principles of a 'true church music' had begun to emerge in the writings of Herder, J. F. Reichardt, K. A. von Mastiaux, Friedrich and August Wilhelm von Schlegel and J. A. P. Schulz, whose ideas chimed with the Fuxian *stile antico* ('the Palestrina style') of composers such as C. P. E. Bach and especially Michael Haydn. The latter, in his sacred works, demonstrated a singular enthusiasm for archaic musical techniques including canon, fugue, imitation, use of cantus firmi, and much effective yet practicably accessible homophonic writing (particularly in the Gradual settings). These works not only made him popular within the nineteenth-century Catholic Church but also ensured his reputation (which, sadly, has not endured to the same extent as his brother's in the province of secular music).

Michael Haydn's sacred output drew the approbation of E. T. A. Hoffmann, whose *Alte und neue Kirchenmusik* (1814) proved to be influential on the Cecilians along with A. F. J. Thibaut's widely read *Über Reinheit der Tonkunst* (1825) and Sailer's *Von dem Bunde der Religion mit der Kunst* (1839). The Cecilian movement sought to re-create a style of sacred music that was equal to the purity, devotion and 'unworldliness' of Palestrina, a composer who enjoyed iconic status among Catholic reformers. Palestrina's pre-eminence was given further impetus by the Italian musicologist and one-time choir member of the papal chapel Giuseppe Baini, who produced an historical study of the composer (1828). In F. S. Kandler's translation, published posthumously and edited by R. G. Kiesewetter (who himself produced a study of the Netherlands composers), Baini's book was widely disseminated and contributed significantly to the extraordinary escalation of Palestrina's standing throughout Europe, not least through the popularity of his *Stabat Mater* and *Missa Papae Marcelli* as concert works. Other important literary and scholarly works followed, with Winterfeld's biography in 1834, Bellerma's theoretical treatise in 1862 and A. W. Ambros's informative commentary in volume iv of his *Geschichte der Musik* (1878); Parry included him in his *Studies of great composers* (1887) and Hans Pfitzner painted a romanticised picture of the composer in his opera, *Palestrina*, of 1915. As for Palestrina's music, Baini's editions (begun in 1841 and completed by Alfieri in 1846) in the *Raccolta di musica sacra* were superseded



by a monumental series in thirty-three volumes under the editorial leadership of F. X. Haberl between 1862 and 1903.

As musical Romanticism gathered momentum, so did the fervour and influence of the Cecilian movement which spread outwards from Bavaria. An important symbolic event on Good Friday 1816 was the revival of Gregorio Allegri's setting of Psalm 51 (the *Miserere*) at the service of *Tenebrae* by Ett and Schmid. Once the exclusive property of the papal choir in Rome, this most famous of penitential works impressed Mozart in 1770 and later both Goethe and Mendelssohn were deeply moved by it. Ett's efforts to revive sacred music of the sixteenth and early seventeenth centuries received the support of King Ludwig I of Bavaria, but much of the significant scholarly work was taken up by Carl Proske at Regensburg. Proske, whose *Denkschrift, Die Verbesserung der Domkirchenmusik* of 1829–30 was hugely influential, did much to promote a new musicological rigour as part of the Cecilian ideals. A vast collector of Catholic liturgical works, he began to publish them in the collection *Musica Divina* in 1853; three volumes were published during his lifetime and a fourth posthumously in 1864 (further publications were continued by Franz X. Haberl from 1872). Haberl was even more important in this branch of scholarship. In addition to the work he continued for *Musica Divina* after the death of Proske, he founded a Palestrina society in 1879 and took on the demanding task of editing the complete Palestrina edition begun by Breitkopf and Härtel in 1862. With the musicologist Adolf Sandberger, he worked on the early volumes of the complete edition of Lassus's music, and produced new books of plainchant based on the *Editio Medicaea* of 1614, approved by Rome in 1868. These editions, however, were effectively made redundant when Pius X sanctioned the *Editio Vaticana* (1905–23) prepared by Guéranger, Jausions and Pothier of the Benedictine Abbey at Solesmes. This religious foundation would henceforth find itself at the vanguard of the plainchant revival, with such seminal though controversial publications as Pothier's *Les mélodies grégoriennes* (1880) and *Liber Usualis* (1883).

Haberl was encouraged by Liszt (who remained on the margins of the Cecilian orbit) and Franz X. Witt who, with Michael Haller, composed works for publication (and which came recommended as part of the Cecilian movement's promulgation through their journals). Witt's most important contribution, however, lay in his proselytisation of the Cecilian goals, through his editing of several key Cecilian journals, his seminal publication *Der Zustand der katholischen Kirchenmusik zunächst in Altbayern* (1865), and the founding of the Allgemeiner Deutscher Cäcilienverein in 1868. As a result of the work of Proske, Haberl and Witt, Regensburg became the centre of scholarship,

education and a *cappella* performance in the later nineteenth century, and the foundation of the Regensburger Domspatzen (the Regensburg cathedral choir), with boys and men, which was (and remains) well known throughout Catholic Europe.

With the powerful endorsement of successive popes, the Cecilian reforms were also embraced in France (Choron and Niedermeyer), Italy (Basili, Spontini, Baini, Alfieri, Zingarelli and Raimondi), Spain (Eslava), Switzerland (Schubiger) and Belgium (Fétis). In Belgium, the cause of Catholic church music was taken up by the organist, teacher and composer Jaak Nikolaas Lemmens, who, under the auspices of the Belgian bishops, established the *Ecole de Musique Religieuse* at Mechelen in January 1879. There Lemmens inaugurated the *Société de St Grégoire*, an organisation devoted to the amelioration of musical standards in church which involved the training of clergy, organists and choirmasters. Lemmens led his new institute until his death in 1881, after which the cause was taken up by his successor and ardent Cecilian, Edgard Tinel. One of the most significant effects of the institute and its training was the number of Flemish organists invited over by the Irish bishops to fill new posts in the cathedrals and larger churches in Ireland, where church building since Emancipation in 1829 had been extremely active. Through the work of Archbishop Cullen, moves to establish a footing for Irish church music were made at the Synod of Thurles in 1850 in which the Cecilian ideals of Palestrina and Gregorian chant were reiterated. Irish church music moved into a higher gear, however, when the German priest and Haberl pupil Heinrich Beyerunge was appointed to the chair of 'Church Chant and Organ' at St Patrick's College, Maynooth in June 1888. Beyerunge, an important scholar and commentator on matters of Catholic church music, proved to be one of the most significant musical forces in Ireland. He was not blind to the merits and cultural contemporaneity of opera in western music, but this admiration was articulated as a means of explicating the need for a distinctive musical voice for the expression of sacred ethics and doctrinal truths.<sup>2</sup> Beyerunge's advocacy of Palestrina and Lassus was later endorsed by Edward Martyn who, emanating from Catholic landed gentry in County Galway, had the means to endow the choir of St Mary's Pro-Cathedral with the princely sum of £10,000 in order to establish its Palestrina Choir. At much the same time, English Catholicism saw the foundation of its own cathedral choir at Westminster Cathedral in 1903 under R. R. Terry. The Westminster choir generated excitement outside Catholic circles for its performances of Palestrina, Victoria and Lassus, which not only spawned a

<sup>2</sup> See White, *The Keeper's recital*, pp. 74–93.

revival of interest in Britain's Tudor heritage but also encouraged contemporaries such as Stanford, Charles Wood and Holst to write contemporary Latin works in an archaic style.

While many in the Catholic Church welcomed the Cecilians' historicising reforms, there was significant opposition from many quarters to the conservative restraints implied by the movement's search for a 'pure' ecclesiastical style. Moreover, there seemed little scope for aspiring composers to step beyond the limited stylistic parameters laid down by Cecilian values; indeed, much of the original liturgical music written by Cecilian composers was, by dint of its own aesthetic and theological imperatives, artistically modest and often banal. Adherents to the new harmonic progressivism, such as Liszt and Bruckner (and even the more conservative Rheinberger), were scorned for their 'secularism'. Indeed Bruckner's extraordinary corpus of motets, notably 'Ave Maria' (1861), the graduals 'Locus iste' (1869) and 'Christus factus est' (1879), the antiphon 'Ecce sacerdos magnum' (1885) and the Mass in E minor for choir and windband (1866, but revised in 1876 and 1882), shocked many hearers by their shameless chromaticism and tonal dissolution, even though those very constituents of plainchant and strict counterpoint were still active currency in the composer's language. Others such as Johannes Habert spent their lives waging an offensive against the Cecilian proscription of instrumental music in church, and defiantly performed the Viennese symphonic masses in Austrian churches and cathedrals. In Italy, where opera and instrumental *concertato* reigned supreme, congregations were more accustomed to hearing arias, cavatinas, military marches, brilliant organ solos and boisterous choruses. Sacred texts would be adapted to familiar operatic numbers, operatic singers were drafted in to sing for solemn feast days and it was common to hear well-known arias of Rossini, Donizetti, Bellini and Mercadante. It was a stylistic mindset that cut across the growing school of Vatican-based Cecilian musicians such as Baini and Basily, and none other than Spontini, once at the forefront of European opera with works such as *La Vestale* and *Olympie*, denounced the profane demeanour of the music he heard in Italian churches in 1839.<sup>3</sup> The truth was that Italy's churchgoers did not distinguish between the 'sacred' and the 'profane', nor did its foremost composers such as Rossini, who happily juxtaposed 'learned' polyphony and fugues with operatic arias in his *Stabat Mater* (1832, rev. 1841) and *Petite messe solennelle* (1863). Furthermore, Italian church choirs, which suffered a serious decline in numbers during the last third of the nineteenth century, were less well equipped to deal with the

3 Hutchings, *Church music*, pp. 61–2.



demands of polyphony. It was a situation exacerbated by *Motu Proprio* which, in attempting to stem the secular musical practices of many Italian churches, forbade women to sing in church choirs, much to the chagrin of more liberal Catholic organists such as Konrad Swertz (Cork), who resigned and emigrated to the USA in disgust.

In France, church music experienced a major hiatus after the Revolution in 1789. Since 1725, under the aegis of Philidor's *concerts spirituels*, Parisians were familiar with hearing church music performed outside church, and much elaborate church music in the form of the 'grand motet' had become a fashionable feature of concert-going. By the Revolution there is evidence that interest in this genre of sacred music was already in decline, and a more dramatic form of church music, influenced by oratorio, was in the ascendant and led by Jean-François Le Sueur, the director of the choir of Notre-Dame Cathedral between 1786 and 1787. Le Sueur's innovations were censured by the cathedral chapter and he was dismissed, but his appointment later as director of the Tuileries Chapel under Napoleon meant that his ideas could be reintroduced. After the Revolution the choir schools (the *maîtrises*) were abolished and there followed a period of silence for almost twelve years, until the concordat of July 1801, when little or no sacred music was composed or sung publicly. After the signing of the concordat, Napoleon, as first consul, quickly resolved to continue the traditions of former French kings by establishing a chapel in the Tuileries. An admirer of Italian opera, notably the music of Paisiello and Cimarosa, he appointed the Neapolitan composer Paisiello as his new musical director of the chapel. Extremely well paid in his new post and the envy of his jealous French contemporaries, Paisiello composed large quantities of church music for his employer including masses and motets, but failed to succeed at the Grand Opéra, where his own brand of Italian *opera seria* conflicted with the emerging new operatic styles of Méhul, Le Sueur, Cherubini and Spontini. Disenchanted with his artistic predicament in Paris, Paisiello left France in the spring of 1804, having already composed a lavish setting of the *Te Deum* for Napoleon's coronation in the following December. He was succeeded by Le Sueur, who remained in place until 1830, sharing the position with J. P. E. Martini after the Restoration of the Bourbons in 1816 and with Cherubini after Martini's death in 1816. The Tuileries Chapel was unquestionably the most important focus of French church music for the first thirty years of the nineteenth century, and its surviving payrolls bear witness to an ever-increasing number of singers and instrumentalists and a lavish repertoire of masses, funeral music, settings of the *Stabat Mater* and other miscellaneous pieces, not only by their directors but also by Plantade, Gossec, Martini, Zingarelli,

Durante, Jomelli, Roze and Persuis.<sup>4</sup> After the 1830 Revolution, however, Le Sueur and Cherubini were made redundant (as were their large retinue of musicians) by the new regime under the 'citizen king', Louis-Philippe, and though Napoleon III revived the Chapelle Royale, the music was never as flamboyant or spectacular.

Many of the large-scale works for Napoleon's chapel and the Chapelle Royale of Louis XVIII and Charles X were composed in an operatic and theatrical style largely devoid of counterpoint and the *style sévère* (the equivalent of the *stile antico*). Of varied quality, it nevertheless stood in stark contrast to the poor state of music in the cathedrals and parishes where little more than plainchant was sung. Some relief came with the restoration of a few *maîtrises* (such as the one at Notre-Dame) which proved to be the only significant agency of musical education during the Monarchy, but the church, impoverished after the Revolution and war, had only meagre funds to support music. Aware of this glaring deficiency, and in contradistinction to the musical trends set by the courts of the head of state, the composer, publisher and teacher Alexandre Choron took up the mantle of promoting sacred works by the Italian masters, and though publication of this music ultimately failed through lack of public subscription, Choron continued to pursue his interest in 'historical' music. After the Restoration he published his *Collection des pièces de musique religieuse qui s'exécutent tous les ans à Rome durant la semaine sainte dans la Chapelle du Souverain Pontife* (1820) which drew broadly on Burney's eponymous collection; it made available a range of Italian *a cappella* works to a French public largely unfamiliar with early church music, a familiarity reinforced by the performance of Renaissance and Baroque music by students of his own school, the Institution Royale de Musique Classique et Religieuse (opened in 1818). With lack of funds, however, Choron's school declined and it was only after public concern was expressed for the low standards of musical attainment in church that the French government agreed financially to support a reopening of the institution in 1853 as the Ecole Niedermeyer, named after its leader Louis Niedermeyer, a Swiss educationist and composer. The mission of Niedermeyer was to revitalise France's atrophying church music tradition and the *maîtrises*. Moreover, in addition to a basic education, pupils at the school were to gain a firm grounding in plainchant and its accompaniment, a broad knowledge of Palestrina, and, at the organ, a thorough understanding of the methods of J. S. Bach. Niedermeyer collaborated with Joseph d'Ortigue in the publication of his *Traité théorique et pratique de l'accompagnement du plainchant* (1857) in

4 See Mongrédien, *French music*, pp. 162–87.



which he attempted to demonstrate how modern harmonic practices and the modality of plainchant could be reconciled; the two men also collaborated in *La Maîtrise*, a periodical devoted to higher standards of musical performance in sacred worship, though it only endured for four years between 1857 and 1861. Though a competent composer himself, Niedermeyer was more influential in his teaching. By all accounts his tolerance of contemporary harmony, with particular emphasis on enharmonic modulation, the use of more distant tonalities, a freer attitude to dissonance and a creative use of modal colour in harmonic progressions, suggests that his methods were more advanced and liberal than those of the Paris Conservatoire. After Niedermeyer's death in 1861, Saint-Saëns was appointed to the school, where he taught until 1865. Though infrequently sung, Saint-Saëns's corpus of sacred works, much of it for organ and a range of soloists, is varied and extensive, added to which his subtle yet conservative harmonic language is well suited to the constraints advocated by Niedermeyer; yet there is also something of the civilised salon in his musical rhetoric and the refined taste of Massenet. Saint-Saëns numbered among his pupils André Messager, Eugène Gigout and Gabriel Fauré, of whom the latter benefited enormously from the atmosphere of the Ecole.<sup>5</sup> Perhaps more than any other composer of his generation, Fauré overtly espoused the modal leanings of his 'harmonic' education which he used with increasing creativity and originality in his output. Although substantially Mendelssohnian in form (a 'song without words') and gesture, the early *Cantique de Jean Racine* Op. 11 of 1865 bears many of the embryonic hallmarks of the composer's intense harmonic vocabulary. The later *Messe basse* (1881, and revised by Fauré in 1906) has more of that individual tonal and modal amalgam so recognisable in the Requiem, first performed at the Madeleine church in 1888 with small orchestra and organ, a boy soprano for the 'Pie Jesu', and the soprano line taken by the children Fauré trained at the church. In this unconventional work (undoubtedly suited best for a liturgical context rather than the concert hall), Fauré was able to merge those distinguishing elements of an 'old' style (in his deployment of modal harmonies and melodic lines) with a 'new' romantic parlance, showing some awareness of Wagner and Liszt, yet also displaying something strikingly modern whether in the stark tritones and austere, imitative counterpoint at the opening of the Offertoire or the chromatic harmonies that accompany quasi-plainchant lines in the Kyrie. Fauré's delicate musical chemistry perfectly embodied the composer's agnostic spirituality which was devoid of all sense of judgement or damnation. A different French sensibility

5 Orledge, *Gabriel Fauré*, pp. 6–7.

was manifested in the fifteen masses of Gounod, which reveal a multiplicity of styles, endorsing the purity of Palestrina at one end of the spectrum (such as the *Messe dite de Clovis* of 1895) and the unabashedly emotional and richly operatic at the other (the *Messe solonelle de Sainte Cécile* of 1855). As Alfred Einstein said of the latter: 'This Mass tends towards Catholicism, but it is not itself Catholic. Despite one or another grandiose and orchestrally unified movement like the Credo, it is poetical, subjective, lyric. It is Romanticized church music.'<sup>6</sup> A similar tendency is exhibited in the sacred works of César Franck, Guilmant, Pierné, Widor and the gargantuan *Messe solonelle* of Vierne for choir and two organs written for Saint-Sulpice.

After the decline of Lutheran church music at the end of the eighteenth century, a revival inspired by Frederick William IV of Prussia's unification of the liturgy gave momentum to the churches and cathedrals in Berlin, and provided a creative impetus for composers such as Mendelssohn and musicologists such as J. A. Spitta and R. von Liliencron. As president of the editorial commission of the *Denkmäler deutscher Tonkunst*, Liliencron did much to contribute to the revival of early German masters (notably Senfl, Praetorius, Schütz and Bach), but, unlike the southern German churches, where early music was fulsomely embraced as a liturgical vehicle, the scholarly products of the north Germans were restricted to the more structured liturgies of cathedrals or to the concert halls. Such limitations did not, however, prevent some Palestrina advocates of the 'revival', such as A. E. Grell, from taking a thoroughly dogmatic and didactic position condemning instrumental music as an anathema to church, school and domestic music-making. Mendelssohn's eclectic background, which assimilated Bach and Handel as well as the Classicists, was also open to a Romantic interpretation of Renaissance polyphony and the Gabrielis, a fact evident in his setting of 'Ehre sei Gott in der Höhe', 'Heilig, heilig ist Gott', the brief but sublime 'Kyrie' and the *Sechs Sprüche* Op. 79 written after he was appointed director of Berliner Domchor in 1843. The two psalms Opp. 78 and 91 are altogether more Romantic in deportment, as are the outer sections of the 'Ave Maria' Op. 23 No. 2, though the central section of the latter reveals Mendelssohn's devotion to Bach, one of course reflected in his all-important revival of Bach's *St Matthew Passion* at the Singakademie in 1829. The amalgam of Mendelssohn's Protestant sacred style was later promoted by Grell's pupil, Arnold Mendelssohn, by two Catholics, Herzogenberg and Reger, Kiel and, most substantial of all, Brahms,

<sup>6</sup> Einstein, *Romantic music*, p. 166.

whose study of Schütz, Gabrieli and Lotti profoundly influenced his *a cappella* motets (notably the *Fest- und Gedenksprüche* Op. 109), while his Lutheran background in the chorale, combined with his worship of Bach, emerged in motets such as *Es ist das Heil* Op. 29 No. 1 and *Warum ist das Licht gegeben den Mühseligen* Op. 74 No. 1.

The debate about 'ancient' and 'modern' emerged in the English theological and musical press during the 1830s and 1840s at a time when questions were being posed about the poor standards of choral singing of cathedral foundations, depleted numbers of boys, indisciplined men and restricted repertoire. Various reformist factors effected a transformation over the next thirty years, though it was from the parish and educational establishments, not the cathedral, that these reforms were led. Ecclesiastical reform, spearheaded by the Tractarian revival, ignited a huge improvement in standards of worship and greater emphasis was placed on externals such as choir demeanour, dress and attendance. In fact the greatest enthusiasts for reform came from the Ecclesiologists, who believed in a return to plainchant, the 'motet' style, new works composed in a sixteenth- and seventeenth-century manner and the general avoidance of contemporary church music. Examples of this more polemic reaction could be seen at Margaret Chapel (later All Saints, Margaret Street) and St Mark's College, Chelsea under Thomas Helmore.<sup>7</sup> For most parishes and collegiate institutions with musical aspirations (and latterly cathedrals), there was much less enthusiasm for chant and 'old' music; rather there was a desire to see higher standards in singing, musicianship and the composition of new liturgical works. In this regard, the appointments of E. J. Hopkins at the Temple Church in London and T. A. Walmisley at Trinity College, Cambridge became a focus for change, as did E. G. Monk's choral services at Radley College, and Ouseley's self-financed establishment of St Michael's College, Tenbury, intended as a model of the cathedral ideal, was perhaps the most remarkable. The most strident cry from the cathedral quarter, however, came from S. S. Wesley with his tract *A few words on cathedral music* (1849) written in response to the suggestions by parliament that cathedral choirs should be downgraded even further.

The Cathedrals Commission of 1852 marked a sea-change for cathedral music in England, in that, after much stagnation and indifference, cathedrals became central to diocesan life and, with the impetus provided by many

<sup>7</sup> See Zon, *The English plainchant revival*, and Adelman, *The contribution of Cambridge ecclesiologists*.



amateur parish choirs, began to invest in their choirs with a fresh vigour and professional idealism. This is perhaps best signified by the appointment of John Stainer as organist of St Paul's Cathedral in 1872. Building on the reforms already under way, Stainer (once Ouseley's assistant at Tenbury) honed and enlarged the St Paul's choir, ill-disciplined under the regime of his predecessor John Goss, into a well-regimented choral instrument which rapidly became the paradigm for other cathedral institutions. Reforms, under Ouseley and Sterndale Bennett, also took place in the ancient university music degrees whose musical aspirations – ultimately to train cathedral organists – were closely intertwined with the Anglican church.

The genres of cathedral music at the beginning of the nineteenth century – the *verse* anthem (for soloists and chorus), the *full* anthem (for full choir, sometimes with a central verse) and the service (settings of the morning and evening canticles and the ordinary of the mass) – showed little change from those practised in the sixteenth and seventeenth centuries. Moreover the style of early nineteenth-century church music was one largely formed during the Baroque, and this only showed signs of change with Thomas Attwood, a Mozart pupil, and his classical anthems 'Turn thee again' (1817), 'Come, Holy Ghost' (1831) and 'Turn thy face from my sins' (1835), the latter very much influenced by Mozart's 'Ave verum';<sup>8</sup> John Goss's anthems in abridged sonata style, namely the dignified 'If we believe that Jesus died' for Wellington's state funeral (1852) and 'O Saviour of the world' (1869), also reveal classical thinking. The 'learned' contrapuntal style also enjoyed some currency among English ecclesiastical composers of this period, notably William Crotch, Samuel Wesley and Thomas Attwood Walmisley, whose Evening Service in D minor (1855), replete with modal harmony, counterpoint and *cantus firmus* (based on quasi-plainchant), reveals an archaic style popular since the 1830s. Classicism yielded to an appetite for Mendelssohn and Spohr in the music of Samuel Sebastian Wesley, undoubtedly England's most gifted composer of the early Victorian era. Wesley agitated vigorously against those who advocated the appropriateness of an 'old style' in favour of modernism and the full assimilation of Romanticism, a view manifested in his anthems 'Blessed be the God and Father' (1834), 'To my request and earnest cry' (c.1835), 'Let us lift up our heart' (c.1836) and 'Wash me thoroughly' (1840) as well as the influential Service in E major (1845). Wesley's service in particular articulated a brand of diatonic harmony, a thoroughly modern fusion of sixteenth- and seventeenth-century archaisms, Bachian counterpoint and contemporary dissonance, that would have a

8 See Temperley, 'Mozart's influence on English music'.

far-reaching effect on both his contemporaries and his successors. The opening of 'Drop down, ye heavens, from above' (1866) by Stainer shows this harmonic predisposition, but also prevalent in Stainer's style, more typical of the mid-nineteenth century, is a greater sense of theatricality and emotionalism often linked with 'High Victorianism'. This is most characteristically portrayed in his early anthem 'I saw the Lord' (1858), in 'Lead, kindly light' (1868) and in his universally popular setting of Christ's Passion, *The Crucifixion* (1887). In the 1870s a reaction to Stainer's 'emotional' style emerged in the church music of Irish-born and Leipzig-educated Charles Villiers Stanford. Full of Brahms and Schumann, and a fervent believer in the merits of instrumental composition, Stanford brought a symphonic and cyclic dimension to his Morning, Communion and Evening Service in B flat Op. 10 in which choir and organ are fully integrated. The avoidance of cadence, the integral role of key, the sense of continuing variation, and the seminal role of the organ are all features that set it apart from the more episodic settings of Wesley and Stainer. Indeed, the most striking attribute of Stanford's new style is the emphasis placed on musical issues – syntax, continuity and coherence – which take priority over the detail of word illustration and the portrayal of theological meaning. The famous Magnificat, perhaps Stanford's most enduring composition for the church, further extends the analogy of 'dance'. As a scherzo, in a clear-cut ternary design, it provides a thoroughly original interpretation of the 'Song of Mary' with its strong differentiation of two robust thematic ideas. However, the concept of a scherzo formed part of a wider scheme in which the composer attempted to create movements more analogous to those of the symphony. This is evident in the Nunc Dimittis, a 'slow movement' full of pathos, the Te Deum, a 'first movement', and the Jubilate, another dance movement. A further dimension of the service is its series of cyclic references to early Gregorian fragments such as the plainsong intonation of the Ambrosian Te Deum and the Dresden Amen. Use of this material was designed to create a larger sense of cohesion across the entire service and opened up the opportunity of hearing the service as a more expansive symphonic work as part of the Sunday liturgy. More significant still, this scheme enabled Stanford's involuted musical strata of organicism, analogy, and thematic and tonal symbols to form a more complex ecclesiastical *Gesamtkunstwerk* in which elements of time, architectural space, liturgy, music and words coalesced into an artistic entity greater than the sum of its parts. Stanford repeated this with his even more symphonically conceived Evening Service in A Op. 10, written for St Paul's Cathedral in 1880, but his masterpieces are his Service in G Op. 81 (1902), drawing on the German lieder tradition, and the elusively complex Service in C Op. 115 (1909) which

transforms the 'High Victorianism' of Stainer and the dissonance of Wesley into a wholly new vision of faith.

Anglicanism led the way in English choir music, but it was tardy in recognising the value of hymnody, though when it did, it fostered arguably the richest and most popular tradition in the world. One important source of hymn-singing was the revival of the extensive Lutheran chorale literature which took place alongside the scholarship of early music throughout northern Germany (notably Wackernagel's *Das deutsche Kirchenlied von der ältesten Zeit bis zu Anfang des 17. Jahrhunderts* of 1864) and Scandinavia. This tradition, vibrant under pietist influence in the eighteenth century, inspired John Wesley and the Methodists in England and (especially) Wales, with the result that dissenting congregations began to reject the established metrical psalmody still practised in Anglican parish churches, and hymns became increasingly popular at Sunday worship and at open-air meetings. As the use of hymnody spread, two of its most seminal exponents, Isaac Watts and Charles Wesley, emerged as pioneers of the literary art. More importantly, John Wesley's *Collection of hymns for the use of people called Methodists* was published as the first denominational hymn book in 1780, indicating how quintessential hymnody had become to Nonconformist worship. In Anglican worship metrical psalmody, invariably sung unaccompanied, dominated parish worship, though 'west gallery music' performed by singers and instrumentalists (where the congregation would turn round to face the choir and musicians at the rear of the church) was also prevalent in some country parishes, especially in the west country; but after a tentative beginning, with localised, parochial hymn publications, a wider range of hymn books for high church and evangelical persuasions began to appear by the 1850s led by J. M. Neale's *The hymnal noted* (1851-4), a collection of translations of Latin hymns with music drawn mainly from plainchant, Edward Mercer's *Church psalter and hymn book* (1854), Edward Bickersteth's *Psalms and hymns based on the Christian Psalmody* (1858) and Catherine Winkworth's *Chorale book of England* (1863, with music edited by Sterndale Bennett). The culmination of this trend, in which there was now a major commercial interest, was *Hymns ancient & modern* (1861) edited by Henry Baker with W. H. Monk as musical editor. This publication, more than any other, sold thousands of copies, was soon expanded in further editions of 1868 and 1875 and helped to promulgate the 'Victorian' hymn (now led by the choir and organ) as a universally admired, fashionable and distinctive artistic genre. Moreover, its success encouraged other denominations to publish their own 'official' hymn books with musical editors of stature to give their publications a sense of prestige, as revealed by the *Church hymns* (1871, edited by Sullivan), the High Anglican *Hymnary*



(1872, edited by Barnby), the *Congregational Church hymnal* (1887, edited by E. J. Hopkins) and the *Presbyterian Church hymnary* (1898, edited by Stainer).<sup>9</sup> It was, however, *Hymns ancient & modern* that had the widest audience, appealing to all branches of the church with its combination of Gregorian melodies, chorales, eighteenth-century psalm tunes and hymns specially written for the collection, though it was the latter that caught the contemporary imagination.

Of the many composers who contributed tunes – Gauntlett, Barnby, S. S. Wesley, Sullivan, Goss, E. J. Hopkins, H. Smart, Stainer and Dykes – it was Dykes above all who seemed to encapsulate the archetypal art form and whose contributions were more abundant than any of his contemporaries. Melodies such as 'Dominus regit me' ('The King of love my shepherd is') were attractive for their yearning contours and sequential phrases, but what truly distinguished Dykes's work was the quality of his harmony, part-writing and bold structure. Dykes had been a keen Cambridge musician, a founder of the University Musical Society, and numbered Walmisley and Ouseley among his friends. His innate musicality drew him to contemporary Romantics such as Mendelssohn, Spohr, Schumann, Chopin and Weber. It was an assimilation of these continentals that found its way into the chromatic emotionalism of tunes such as 'Melita' ('Eternal Father, strong to save'), 'Strength and Stay' ('O strength and stay') and the little known 'Charitas' ('Lord of glory, Who hast bought us'), and it was Dykes's strong bass lines, suspensions, striking modulations, deft tonal recoveries and variation structures in microcosm that raised his art form to a higher level. Perhaps more significantly, Dykes's expressive style of hymn established a norm, which, though it provoked violent reactions in the next generation of hymn book editors (such as Vaughan Williams in the *English hymnal* of 1906) who either bowdlerised their chromaticisms or omitted them altogether, still remains one of the most widely sung examples of the genre.

<sup>9</sup> See Bradley, *Abide with me* and Watson, *The English hymn*.