

The RCM Novello Library

Jeremy Dibble

The Royal College of Music has recently added an important collection to its already extensive library of manuscripts and first editions. This addition, acquired nearly two decades ago, consists of a large assemblage of proof copies (mainly full scores) and some autograph manuscripts, which had been collecting dust in various cupboards until it was listed in April of last year. The collection originally belonged to Novello, but in 1964 Walter Emery, expressing little interest in keeping the material at the company, decided to offer it to the British Museum. After sifting off a few autographs, most of the collection remained with Novello; at this stage Emery offered it to the RCM who accepted it at a price of about £40. It arrived at the College in the latter part of 1964, then underwent a series of moves from cupboard to cupboard until it reached its present resting place on the third floor. Its contents were unlisted until the present reference librarian in the Parry Room Library and the present writer set about the task of preparing a basic catalogue. (A more detailed one is soon to be completed by the Librarian, Christopher Bornet.)

The collection is housed in three large cupboards. The upper shelves of the first two accommodate the private library of Vincent Novello (1781–1861), consisting of proof copies, mainly in his own hand, of music that was eventually printed for his pioneering editions in the early 19th century. As a Roman Catholic, Novello had grown up in the musical environments of the Catholic embassy chapels, first in 1793 as a choirboy in the Sardinian Embassy, then as deputy organist to Samuel Webbe at the Sardinian and Bavarian embassies (and John Danby at the Spanish Embassy), and finally, in 1797, as organist and choirmaster at the Portuguese Embassy in South Street, Grosvenor Square, a post he held until 1822. The collection is one of the few extant of English 19th-century Catholic music, comparing favourably with those of Ushaw College near Durham and the Church of Our Lady and St Gregory in Warwick Street (formerly the Chapel of the Bavarian Embassy). Some of the earliest MS copies in it are in hands other than Novello's; being chiefly Italian sacred music by popular 18th-century composers, such as Jommelli and Leo,

they are undoubtedly from the South Street music library – reflecting an era when virtually nothing but Italian music was sung at Roman Catholic services in this country.¹ When Novello took office he introduced a large number of new and up-to-date Mass settings, mainly from German-speaking countries, notably works of Haydn and Mozart with which he had become familiar through the voluminous library of his friend the Rev. C.J. Latrobe,² as several scores in the collection acknowledge. For example, Mozart's *Litanie de venerabili altaris sacramento* K125 is inscribed: 'From the manuscript score in the possession of the Rev'd C.J. Latrobe', while such works as Mozart's Mass in F K192 and a Haydn Mass in C bear the inscription: 'The Gift of the Rev'd C.J. Latrobe'.

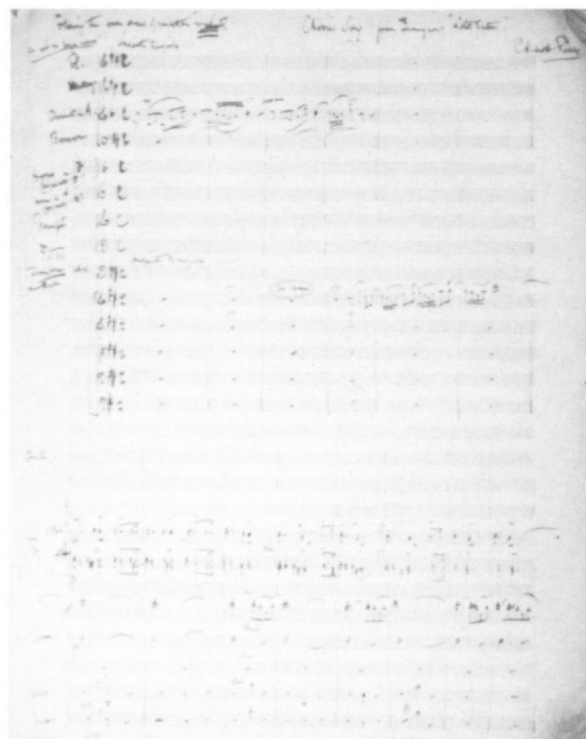
Novello's performances of Haydn and Mozart masses – music until that time

unknown in England – became so popular that he brought out a series of them edited into an accessible form 'at his own cost of time and money', in order to introduce them among his countrymen in England.³ Also at his own expense, Novello published a two-volume *Collection of Sacred Music* in 1811, the year the publishing company was founded (a second edition appeared in 1825), for which Latrobe provided many of the items. This publication, and the two-volume *Evening Service: being a Collection of Pieces appropriate to Vespers, Compline and Tenebrae* (1822), contain a selection of extracts from works by Handel, Gluck, Haydn, Mozart, Cherubini, Hummel and Beethoven. Such extracts remind us of the practice, spreading rapidly at the turn of the century, of arranging established works by well-known composers to different words for liturgical purposes. Novello, thankfully, was explicit in his arrangements, and it may be noted that his sources were not only sacred (*In te Domine speravi* is arranged from the

¹ see Arthur Hutchings: *Church Music in the Nineteenth Century* (London, 1967), chap.4, Continental Church Music: 2, Choral Music of the Roman Church

² Latrobe's *Selection of Sacred Music* (London, 1806–26); this publication had introduced works by Graun, Hasse, Pergolesi, Haydn and Mozart.

³ V. Gigliucci, ed.: *Clara Novello's Reminiscences* (London, 1910)



Parry's 'The Lotos-Eaters': the opening page of the autograph

'Dona nobis' from Hummel's Second Grand Mass, for example) but also secular (like the *Ave verum*, a tenor solo from *Don Giovanni*, or *Mater divinae*, a treble solo from Gluck's 'Nova vi turbata' in *Alceste*).

German composers and earlier Italian masters predominate, but a few English composers also feature in the two volumes. Perhaps the most interesting of them – made the more so by the ambiguity of his religious affiliations – is Samuel Wesley (1766–1837). It was no doubt the richer musical environment of the Catholic embassies and Novello's own forward-looking activities, reflected in the 1811 and 1822 collections, that made the Roman church so attractive to him and provided the inspiration for his impressive array of Latin motets. A later volume of 1840, given to Novello by the widow of his friend Charles Stokes, is made up of English music and dominated by Samuel Wesley. That Novello thought highly of Wesley's work is evident from his short introductory paragraph: 'The collection is a very fine one and contains several beautiful compositions (unpublished manuscripts) by one of the greatest musical geniuses and the finest extempore fuguist that England has produced – Samuel Wesley'. Among the mixture of sacred and secular music, Wesley's Latin works predominate with pieces such as *Requiem aeternam* – *Introitus in Missa solenni pro defunctis* (dated 18 May 1800); *Domine exaudi*, a canon; *Qui tollis peccata mundi*, for unison trebles and organ; and an arrangement by Novello of one of Wesley's greatest motets, *Tu es sacerdos*, to an English text, *He is our God*, for Anglican use. At the bottom of the final page he commented, in May 1840, 'A grand and masterly composition, full of vigorous energy, dignified expression and admirable counterpoint'.

In 1816 Novello was asked by the senate of Cambridge University to examine a great collection of MS music bequeathed to the University by Viscount Fitzwilliam. This provided the stimulus for another editorial project, *The Fitzwilliam Music*, which appeared in 1825 in five volumes. These are of 17th-century Italian sacred music; it is known that Novello prepared enough music to fill a further ten. Three such volumes and a separately bound *Dixit Dominus* are dated 1827, indicating that they were copied from Fitzwilliam Museum MSS; a further volume of Italian madrigals, perhaps prepared in connection with his

Studies in Madrigalian Scoring (1841), is dated 1832. Unfortunately missing from the collection is Novello's invaluable *Purcell's Sacred Music* (1826–32; five volumes), although a single work, *O sing unto the Lord*, has remained with his added accompaniment for orchestra, dated 1839. He also published masses, cantatas and litanies by Hummel, Beethoven, Spohr and Weber in reductions with organ accompaniment; these too are absent except for a Mass in E flat for four voices by Weber, which bears the note: 'This Mass is from an extremely rare manuscript formerly in the possession of Signor Bellini, the composer, at the sale of whose musical library after his death in 1835, this manuscript was purchased by a friend and kindly presented to the Editor of the present work – Nice. February, 1853'.



Apart from the Vincent Novello library, the collection essentially consists of large-scale choral, orchestral or operatic works of the mid- to late 19th century and the early 20th. Proof copies used at first performances predominate, but occasionally there are autograph manuscripts (some of these have been transferred to the Parry Room Library). Many of the composers here have fallen into obscurity: for instance, Hamilton Clarke, represented by *Pepin the Pippin* (alarmingly, his op.345!), Percy Fletcher, who provides a large selection of turgid cantatas with such titles as *The Enchanted Island* and *The Shafts of Cupid*, and Alfred Gaul, creator of an even more lamentably extensive list of choral non-events. Nevertheless, among the dross, a series of highly interesting works tracing the progress of British composers (or prominent musicians living and working in this country) over several generations can be sifted out, providing an invaluable reference library for scholars of 19th-century music, particularly those needing to study full scores of works not published in that form.

With the enthusiasm for Handel's choral music at festivals throughout the country, arrangements abound of the most popular oratorios and masques. Sir Michael Costa, director of the Royal Italian Opera and conductor of the Philharmonic Society, hailed by the critics for the greatly improved standard of instrumental playing brought about by his insistence on absolute, undivided con-

trol over the orchestra, is represented with his reorchestrations of *Acis and Galatea*, *Deborah*, *Israel in Egypt*, *Judas Maccabaeus*, *Solomon*, *Samson* and of course *Messiah*. His are not the only elaborations; another version of *Israel in Egypt* is arranged 'with new wind instruments from the Mendelssohn Handel Society Edition' (dated 1844) by George Macfarren, and there is Edward Silas's orchestration of *Zadok the Priest*. Of the central part of the 19th century (just before Parry and Stanford began to emerge), there are works by the two Oxford professors, the Rev. Sir Frederick Gore Ouseley (*Great is the Lord* and *It came even to pass*, for chorus and orchestra) and Sir John Stainer (the oratorio *St Mary Magdalene*), plus a handful of short choral numbers by Henry Hugo Pierson which, compared with his experiment in the field of orchestral music (such as his symphonic poem *Macbeth*), seem somewhat uncharacteristic.

Three works by Parry in the collection turn out to be of considerable interest. The initial pages of his proof copy of his choric song *The Lotos-Eaters* (1892) are in Parry's autograph; in addition, the proof of his scena *The Soldier's Tent* (1900) for baritone and orchestra is the only full score in existence, since only a piano reduction was published. The last piece of Parry, another proof of a full score, is of the anthem *I was glad when they said unto me*, in the version for Edward VII's coronation in 1902. This score contains Parry's original introduction, not the revised opening of the later edition, first performed at George V's coronation in 1911 and the version used nowadays.⁴ Proofs of choral works by Stanford (his oratorio *Eden*, and the ballad *The Battle of the Baltic*, both 1891), Elgar (mainly his early cantatas such as *The Black Knight*, *King Olaf* and *Caractacus*, written in 1893, 1896 and 1898) and Mackenzie (his cantata *Bethlehem* and the opera *Columba*) show markings going back to their first performances. Among the ranks of British composers are two works by Dvořák which he sold to Novello after severing relations with his previous publisher, Simrock. His Symphony no.8

⁴ The original introduction is slightly shorter than the revised one, lacking the characteristic dotted rhythms and the rising figure for massed trumpets at the opening. The orchestration is the same except for the addition of two more trumpets in F (see Add. MS4255, Parry Room). An organ short score of the original introduction may also be compared (Add. MS4492).

in G (1889) was first performed at a Philharmonic Society concert on 24 April 1890 under Dvořák's baton; the proof score bears a few instructions and the composer's signature with numerous additional tempo markings for publication. The other work, his Requiem Mass, with its title-page in Czech, is also signed by the composer and is dated 29 March

1891. As with the symphony, the score contains corrections in orchestration and tempo markings in Dvořák's hand; it was sent to Novello for the Birmingham Festival performance on 9 October of the same year.

Last, a handful of autograph MSS emerged from the sea of proofs, including Hamish MacCunn's cantata *The Wreck of*

the Hesperus and song *The Wanderer*, Hamilton Harty's *Mystic Trumpeter* for baritone, chorus and orchestra and his symphonic poem *With the Wild Geese*, and – not in keeping with the predominant idioms of choral and orchestral music – the First String Quartet in E flat of E.J. Moeran, with a letter from the composer listing corrections to the score.
