

Voice, Speech and Accent in England (and Australia?)

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When Tchaikovsky was in London in 1893, *en route* to Cambridge to receive his honorary doctorate, he visited the Empire Theatre and saw a ballet, *The Sports of England*, complete with a *corps* of females impersonating a cricket match between the MCC and Australia. The Empire was the place in Leicester Square where one might pick up a high-class prostitute in the promenade around the auditorium.¹ Whatever Tchaikovsky went there for—it was presumably not for the women, either on the stage or in the auditorium—worshipping at the shrine of English music will have been far from his thoughts (and the music was actually French). Indeed, perhaps luckily for him, the shrine had not yet been built: Elgar's *Enigma Variations* were still six years away, and such lesser entries in the foreigner's mental guide book as the Gilbert and Sullivan comic operas and the South Kensington cultural project (which included the Royal College of Music) could, one imagines, be painlessly subsumed under the canopy of architecture or entertainment.

England, *Das Land ohne Musik* as Germany enjoyed calling it a little later,² had got on perfectly well for a long time, not without music, which was profuse enough everywhere as society's and entertainment's handmaid, but without mythicised or monumentalised *English* music. Today the English get on contentedly enough, by and large, without a school of national cuisine, being instead quite happy to eat out well on the food of any other nation that cares to come along and supply it. Just so, for a good while prior to the later nineteenth century, did the music-consuming English public and the intelligentsia willingly patronise any fine musician (so long as already approved abroad) of more or less any nationality or persuasion. On the highbrow plane, Handel, Bononcini, Haydn, Mozart, Beethoven, Clementi, Weber, Paganini, Chopin, above all Mendelssohn, and even Berlioz and Wagner had a pretty hospitable welcome in London at one point or another, in person or by proxy, and in most cases made excellent money out of it. So, in the Victorian period, did a prodigious and ever-increasing flood of lowbrow imports in person or in print, from Stephen Foster and minstrelsy troupes to family concert parties and Sankey and Moody hymns.

¹ Gerald Norris, *Stanford, the Cambridge Jubilee and Tchaikovsky* (Newton Abbot: David and Charles, 1980) 315.

² See Wendy Sheridan, Nicholas Temperley and Neal Zaslaw, 'Letters to the editor,' *Musical Times* 116 (1975): 439, 625 and 877.

The great nationalist programmes of the later nineteenth and twentieth centuries changed all that. Music in England had been a perfectly unselfconscious, serviceable and sometimes important token of trade within and beyond the British Empire—a commodity for import and, despite what has just been said, export too, on many planes. Nationalism turned it into a linguistic discourse all too conscious of its voice, speech and accent; or rather, its varied voices, speech and accents asserted themselves manifestly, demanded their own spaces, took themselves to be truth rather than play, fought for dominance, and rushed headlong into that nemesis of Englishness, class snobbery, which I would argue affected and affects cross-national as well as regional and local relations. The old world of music in England was a Babel of voices; the new one a segregation of ghettos where a particular way of speaking was incumbent, indicative and hence ideological. Tastes diverged not because people were no longer capable of liking more than one thing but because likings and habits had come to mean cultural intentions. The English have long known this, though it took an Irishman, George Bernard Shaw, to write a play about it and an American, Alan Jay Lerner, to point it out in verse when he made Professor Higgins say ‘An Englishman’s way of speaking absolutely classifies him. / The moment he talks he makes some other Englishman despise him. / One common language I’m afraid we’ll never get,’ which is of course from the song ‘Why can’t the English’ in *My Fair Lady*.³

If, then, language, as voice, speech and accent, erects barriers between people, one might lament that music in England ever became a language, found its voice, started speaking, developed recognisable accents, at all. That happened the moment the whole idea of the English composer was born, in late-romantic, nationalist terms and times. Edward Cone, in his book *The Composer’s Voice*, asks, ‘If music is a language, then who is speaking?’ and responds: ‘This is not a trivial question, nor is it satisfied by the trivial answer, “the composer”.’⁴ Trivial or no, the young, earnest Gerald Finzi’s version of the answer, in a letter to his Australian Jewish friend Vera Somerfield in 1923, was categorical: ‘I don’t think you have the least conception as to what Art is,’ he wrote. ‘Art is ordinary conversation & like speech is to bring affinities into spiritual contact. This is quite straight forward.’⁵

It is a tempting definition, but communication only between ‘affinities’, kindred spirits, is likely to leave them in a state of anxiety about everyone else, anxiety they can only vanquish by asserting power over them if they are not prepared to make an effort, in terms of musical production, to talk to *unkindred* spirits. It was not like that before music in England became ideologically—as opposed to economically—empowered, somewhere between the time of Sullivan and the 1920s. Whatever happened to what Cyril Ehrlich has called the old ‘profusion of the musical marketplace?’⁶

Symptoms of the old profusion may be lovingly if frivolously shared. Take St James’s Hall in London. It was a venue mixing concert hall with music hall, restaurant and other facilities. The restaurant was a place to take one’s mistress, equally ‘a good place for a man to dine

³ Alan Jay Lerner, *My Fair Lady* (Harmondsworth: Penguin, 1959) 20–21.

⁴ Edward Cone, *The Composer’s Voice* (Berkeley and Los Angeles: University of California Press, 1973) 1.

⁵ Gerald Finzi, letter to Vera Somerfield, 22 Jan. 1923, quoted in Stephen Banfield, *Gerald Finzi: An English Composer* (London: Faber, 1997) 30.

⁶ See Cyril Ehrlich, ‘The Marketplace,’ *Music in Britain: The Twentieth Century*, ed. Stephen Banfield (Oxford: Blackwell, 1995) 40–46.

alone; if he did not want to remain alone, he would soon find a companion of the opposite sex,' as MacQueen-Pope put it.⁷ The concert hall was not insulated from the sounds of blackface minstrelsy filtering up from the music hall: George Henschel recalled Joachim pouring forth 'sounds that seem to come straight from heaven,' accompanied by a 'distant jingle of castanets and tambourines.'⁸

Some composers happily played up to the old profusion, consorting for example with the opera house one minute, the commercial musical theatre the next. Stanford's *Shamus O'Brien*, rather like *Carmen* and *Porgy and Bess*, was destined to swing between the two, for it ran as a West End and Broadway musical in 1896–97 (starring George Bernard Shaw's sister in New York), and as all-sung Italian opera some years later.⁹ In addition to his grand operas *Colomba* and *The Troubadour*, Mackenzie composed not only *His Majesty*, a comic opera in the Gilbert and Sullivan tradition (albeit with a coon song), but the utterly lowbrow *Knights of the Road*, written for what he called 'the music-hall stage.'¹⁰ Granville Bantock toured the world conducting *A Gaiety Girl* in 1894–5 and wrote a book about it.¹¹ Both Cecil Armstrong Gibbs and Fritz Hart enjoyed writing detective fiction when they were not busy with their respectable production of English art songs and symphonies. They saw no reason to be artistically confined to their day job (if one could say which of the two that was). Bruce Montgomery, somewhat later, went further and, in addition to publishing murder thrillers in Penguin under the name of Edmund Crispin (one of them is about a cathedral organist, just as one of Fritz Hart's features what must be the Sydney Town Hall instrument), composed music for the unspeakable *Carry On* films.¹² It was all a delightful mixture of 'U' and 'Non-U', to use terms seldom heard nowadays. And with or without the glue of wit between high and low, there was often, at least in the Victorian period, a most fertile ambiguity of taste built very deeply into the matter and manner of the parlour. We should not underestimate the efficacy of Victorian sentimentality as a taste lubricant, even as the Victorians themselves and their inheritors loved to point to misconstructions of taste and sentiment. Jerome K. Jerome's classic *Three Men in a Boat* of 1889 contains a famous scene in which Harris tries to sing a comic song (from Gilbert and Sullivan) in a musical evening and a 'nervous old lady near the fire begins to cry, and has to be led out;' an adjacent anecdote tells of Herr Slossenn Boschen singing a tragic folk song in German at which, misunderstanding it thoroughly, the narrator laughs uproariously to help him along.¹³ As for Balfé's 'Excelsior', Michael Turner says that 'it is still genuinely exciting and yet, because of its overstatement, is *also* genuinely hilarious. It is, in fact, the supreme example of good bad

⁷ Quoted in Norris, *Stanford* 349.

⁸ Norris, *Stanford* 350.

⁹ See Kurt Gänzl, *The British Musical Theatre: volume I: 1865-1914* (Basingstoke: Macmillan, 1986) 574–77; Harry Plunket Greene, *Charles Villiers Stanford* (London: E. Arnold, 1935) 197–98.

¹⁰ Sir Alexander Campbell Mackenzie, *A Musician's Narrative* (London: Cassell, 1927) 220.

¹¹ Granville Bantock and F.G. Aflalo, *Round the World with 'A Gaiety Girl'* (London: J. MacQueen, 1896).

¹² Gibbs's unpublished thriller is entitled *The Chillingham Casket*; the Crispin novel in question is *Holy Disorders* (London: Victor Gollancz, 1946), Hart's (again unpublished) *The Enigma Mystery*. See Ro Hancock-Child, *A Ballad-Maker: The Life and Songs of C. Armstrong Gibbs* (London: Thames, 1993) 28; David Whittle, 'The Decline and Fall of Bruce Montgomery,' *Irish Musical Studies 4: The Maynooth International Musicological Conference 1995: Selected Proceedings, Part 1*, ed. Patrick F. Devine and Harry White (Dublin: Four Courts Press, 1996) 247–54; Peter Tregear, *Fritz Benicke Hart: An Introduction to his Life and Music* (MMus dissertation, University of Melbourne, 1993) 99.

¹³ Jerome K. Jerome, *Three Men in a Boat* (1889; London: J.M. Dent [Everyman's Library], 1957) 66–72.

music.¹⁴ So is Sullivan's 'The lost chord', which for all the vast revolutions in taste since the 1870s one can still find utterly enticing and thoroughly satisfying, like Sullivan's hymn tunes.¹⁵

But if the tragicomic and the sentimental were sturdy reach-me-downs of the old profusion, we should remember that English humour did not—and does not—always travel well. In his memoirs Ernest Irving recounts how *The Geisha*, a *Mikado* clone of 1896 that played all over the world, went down badly in Spain when the Daly's Theatre production travelled to Vigo in 1907. 'We soon found out why our performance was not popular,' he explained, '[when we witnessed in Madrid an] Italian company [play] *The Geisha* in dead, serious earnest, with a very stout and loud soprano singing a counter melody to the Goldfish Song an octave too high from the roof of the house with tragic accents of despair on every face.'¹⁶

That kind of song ('The amorous goldfish', closely modelled on 'Tit-willow') is indeed easily misconstrued, and the recent recording of *The Geisha* fails to capture its archness.¹⁷ However, the space between the serious and the comic always had been electrically charged, and not just by English Victorianism: the good grace of burlesque, one of the supreme safety-valves of art and culture from the Elizabethan jig to Offenbach, has been a great artistic loss in the twentieth century, its demise no doubt partly due to the increasing power of copyright. 'The lost chord' was burlesqued, true to tradition—right from the start, in all probability; that is, it was made fun of against the grain of people's personal identification with its sentiments or ideology or power of association. One thinks particularly of Jimmy Durante's American comedy song: 'I'm the guy who found the lost chord.' In the vaudeville days, when a variety bill was likely to contain everything from modern dance to performing dogs, the two versions could share the same platform.¹⁸

¹⁴ Michael R. Turner (ed.), *The Parlour Song Book* (London: Michael Joseph, 1972) 20.

¹⁵ I was astounded to hear how my students took to it in a class singalong a year or two ago; what is more, some of them with a brass band background told me that it and other Victorian staples were still performed but they had never heard the words.

¹⁶ Ernest Irving, *Cue for Music* (London: Dennis Dobson, 1959) 43–44.

¹⁷ Sidney Jones (lyrics by Harry Greenbank), *The Geisha*, Hyperion recording CD A67006 (London, 1999). The lyrics go like this:

A goldfish swam in a big glass bowl,
As dear little goldfish do,
But she loved with the whole of her heart and soul
An officer brave from the ocean wave,
And she thought that he loved her too!
Her small inside he daily fed
With crumbs of the best digestive bread;
'This kind attention proves,' said she,
'How exceeding fond he is of me!
And she thought 'It's fit-fit-fitter
He should love my glit-glit-glitter
Than his heart give away
To the butterflies gay,
Or the birds that twit-twit-twitter.'

She flash'd her frock in the sunshine bright,
That officer brave to charm,
And he vowed she was quite a delightful sight,
So her spirits were gay till he came one day
With a girl on his stalwart arm!
In whispers low they talked of love;
He begged for a rose and worn-out glove;

But when they kissed a fond goodbye,
The poor little goldfish longed to die!
And she sobbed, 'It's bit-bit-bitter
He should love this crit-crit-critter
When I thought he would wish
For a nice little fish,
With a frock all glit-glit-glitter.'

That charming girl for a time upset
The officer brave and gay,
And his sad little pet he contrived to forget,
For with never a crumb did chance to come,
So the goldfish pined away
Until at last some careless soul
With a smash knock'd over the big glass bowl,
And there on the carpet, dead and cold,
Lay the poor little fish in her frock of gold!
But her fate so bit-bit-bitter
Is a story fit-fit-fitter
For a sad little sigh
And a tear in the eye
Than a thoughtless tit-tit-titter!

¹⁸ 'The Moody Blues' 1968 album *In Search of the Lost Chord* offers a more distant intertextual link.

What happened to the old profusion, then? The clash of empires towards the end of the nineteenth century, a clash that meant mass emigration, xenophobia and re-armament leading to World War I, should probably be blamed for the loss of *accommodation* in music. The unconstrained tastes and carnivalesque interchange that had flourished in Victorian Britain, a kind of artistic *laissez-faire*, was seen as cosmopolitan decadence and replaced by an increasingly rhetorical, masculine—let us call it masculated—idea of musical language and representation.

To keep the argument on the level of voice, speech and accent, I should like to introduce the idea of *addressivity*. Steven Connor, writing of Joyce's *Ulysses*, states that 'recognizing and acknowledging cultural identity is in *Ulysses* very often a matter of being summoned into it by certain kinds of address, especially public address, which may be inviting or (as is more usually the case in *Ulysses*) hostile.' The issues there are between Irishness and Jewishness. He explains that this addressivity is 'a particular preoccupation of the ethical philosophy elaborated by the principal Jewish philosophers of the twentieth century, Martin Buber and Emmanuel Levinas—the concern with the invocation or implication of the other in every kind of speech or utterance.' The 'philosophy of dialogue...central to Buber's philosophy of the 'I-Thou' is the need to prevent the original openness of a speech directed toward an autonomous other from deteriorating into the closure of a speech-relation in which the other is reduced to an object of representation.' Levinas says that 'what is important is not thinking *about* the other, even *as* an other, but of directly confronting it and of saying Thou to it'—'Speaking *to* another preserves a primordial relatedness between beings (the "I-Thou") that speaking *of* another shrinks to a relation between subject and object (the "I-It").'

When we speak to someone else, especially someone from far away in time, space or class (someone with a different native language, a child, a servant), we modify 'our' voice, our speech, our accent in order to accommodate theirs. This is a mutually affecting, two-way process, never entirely comfortable, ranging from patronage through mimicry to assimilation, and it undermines notions of ownership and sincerity as address is constantly adjusted, negotiated, reined in, tried out, played with. The same is true if you are learning to speak someone else's language: a radical loss of power is sensed as you can no longer be yourself, your protected, constructed self, in speech. The point is that Victorian music as a profuse, diverse commodity was rich in such open addressivity, but the attribute declined as variety was lost and power focused. We should furthermore note, concerning the old profusion in music, that speech, voice and accent require a *platform*, a *theatre* or a *promenade* for their addressivity, both literally, as will be shown, and figuratively. A *museum*—and we have heard plenty about music becoming a museum culture as the canon ceased to change shape in the twentieth century—is not addressive, merely a receptacle for *representation*, which is what Buber deplors.

Or, to put it another way, music in England lost its innocent addressivity and developed a discursiveness with the English musical renaissance. Its voice became masculine, with a purge of *camp*; its speech became parliamentary and evangelical (witness the over-earnest Finzi); its accent became patronising, BBC, centralised. It attempted to replace the multiple voices and costumes of entertainment and service with the overarching, persuasive tones and single uniform of authority. It learnt to wear a suit.

Consider those platforms, theatres, promenades. They were broadening continually throughout the Victorian period, in all kinds of addressive ways. More and more groups of

people in England acquired musical voices, speech and accents as the century wore on and led into the twentieth. Dave Russell acknowledges this as early as the second paragraph of his book *Popular Music in England, 1840-1914* when he posits *expansion, diversification* and *nationalisation* as the key facets of the period.¹⁹ And what a profusion of platforms that diversity shared! Nearly all of them were lost by the end of the second world war: St James's Hall with its Classical Monday Pops and its music hall; street music in all its nineteenth-century luridness; mixed concert hall programmes with their interspersed ballads and lollipops; the single national radio channel with its 'variety' approach to the spectrum of broadcasting; the vast Crystal Palace, itself an extension of the remarkable seventeenth- and eighteenth-century pleasure garden principle of Vauxhall and Ranelagh, expiring in a single night of conflagration in 1936, its great organ giving out one last ghastly symbolic groan as the fire's wind raged through its pipes; and the literal promenade of the coastal resort as Victorian piers collapsed, winter gardens crumbled and the British seaside slowly capitulated to foreign holidays and day-tripping mods and rockers on motorcycles who were hardly there for addressivity but for a fight. Study the seaside resort in order to understand British culture. Brighton's promenade even today plays host to a wider cross-section of the population at play, from conference politicians to New Age drifters, than is found in any other place. Sitting on the unyielding pebble beach, one still hears the steam organ of the merry-go-round playing everything from Lionel Monckton—'Soldiers in the park' of the 1890s—to Beatles or Spice Girls numbers. But, as with the railways, what remains in Brighton is a shadow of the vast enterprise once covering the country. Other platforms have survived but lost their addressivity. The Royal Albert Hall regains it perhaps once a year, at the Last Night of the Proms (that word again!). For the rest of its annual calendar, its audiences, be they for black gospel or all-in wrestling or schools' jazz-band finals or Tchaikovsky with cannons, must be blissfully unaware of each other, despite the arena's unique anachronism whereby certain seats are still permanently owned.²⁰ On a related front, Russell quotes an observation from 1909: 'The competitive festival movement is responsible for much socialism, although of a very different kind from that conventionally associated with the word. A festival brings into pleasant contact people of all classes who, in the ordinary course of events, would probably not be on speaking terms.'²¹ I doubt very much whether that is still true.

If one date has to be chosen to stand for the demise of the old profusion and concomitant loss of interchangeability in voice, speech and accent in England, it should surely be 1898, that of Hubert Parry's address at the inaugural meeting of the Folk-Song Society. The turn-of-the-century folk revival, not just in Britain, is the classic case of non-addressivity, of objectifying a musical constituency for authoritarian purposes. There was never any sense of what folksingers might want to get out of their encounter with the great and the good, only of what the great and the good wanted to get out of them. Most folksingers probably wanted a ticket to the music hall or a gramophone on which to play the latest ragtime hits; but they were told—or rather we, the educated elite, were told—that that was not what they ought to want (they were probably told nothing at all). Parry echoed what he had said in 1898 in his Oxford professorial lectures published in 1911 as *Style in Musical Art*:

¹⁹ Dave Russell, *Popular Music in England, 1840-1914: A Social History* (Manchester: Manchester UP, 1987) 1.

²⁰ See Percy Scholes, *The Mirror of Music: 1844-1944* (London: OUP and Novello, 1947) vol.1, 208.

²¹ Russell, *Popular Music in England* 20.

It is a very singular fact that the actual nature of the deterioration induced by the stupid levity of the low-class audience working through commercialism can be shown in exact detail. It is in nature a parallel to the cockney pronunciation of the English language, which is ultimately the result of sheer perverse delight in ugly and offensive sounds affected by a class which is shut out from the influences of beautiful things of any kind, and perpetually demoralized by squalid and hideous town conditions. The hideous cockney sounds have many meanings—one of them is that combination of reckless, stupid self-assertion of the creature that has been brutalized by unfavourable conditions with spite against what appears to be better off, which is summarized by the slang word 'cheek.' Its counterpart is met with in the snipping of words and the affectation of ugly pronunciation in the parallel sections of the uppermost classes—who, it may be observed in passing, are the most powerful and constant supporters of the music hall and the type of entertainment which it represents. The music which is supplied for such audiences (which represent the uppermost and the lowermost classes) on the baldest business principles has definite and decisive marks at different periods; just as the ladies' fashions, which are arranged by the trade and meekly accepted by the sex, are marked at one time by the exasperating wilfulness of the cart-wheel hat and at another by the silly wantonness of the hobble skirt.²²

Of course Parry, the astuteness of whose observations almost matches the breathtaking confidence of his ideological certainties, is hoist with his own petard when he admits that the upper classes love the music hall as well as, presumably, Beethoven and Verdi, whom they patronise at the Philharmonic and Covent Garden. As was remarked earlier, tastes can diverge and proliferate within individuals, not just between them. If the 'I-Thou' address flourishes inside us, there is even less reason to try to objectify it into an 'I-It' discourse beyond the self.

To this, three more dates might be added as watersheds: 1895, marking the trial of Oscar Wilde; 1918, signalling the end of the first world war; and 1922, when the BBC began broadcasting.

In *Lady Windermere's Fan*, the Duchess says to Mr Hopper: 'dear Agatha and I are so much interested in Australia. It must be so pretty with all the dear little kangaroos flying about. Agatha has found it on the map.'²³ If a fairly direct line of voice can be traced between Wilde and Dame Edna Everage, it was not one that respectable English music would have anything to do with. Wilde was locked up in Reading gaol. Similarly discredited, progressively from then on, were anything decadent, Parisian, cosmopolitan, Jewish and glittering, urbane and suave (Wilde's most loyal supporter after his prison sentence, Ada Leverson—one of Finzi's relatives—was Jewish). Out went music as and for the social comedy of manners, along with the student Vaughan Williams's flamboyant ties and effete reading party debates.²⁴ In came *plein air* tone painting and the rustic musical accents of raw triads and white modes for folk song arrangements and clodhopping dances, all hiking and tramping their way through the symphonic landscape à la Whitman and Grainger, masculated to the hilt. Nor was this good news for female composers such as Maude Valérie White and Liza Lehmann, whose camp aesthetic had fitted snugly alongside Wilde's. Even Smyth's musical voice, latterly exercised

²² C. Hubert H. Parry, *Style in Musical Art* (London: Macmillan, 1911) 114–15.

²³ Oscar Wilde, *Lady Windermere's Fan*, Act 2, Sc. 1

²⁴ See Ursula Vaughan Williams, *RVW: A Biography of Ralph Vaughan Williams* (London: OUP, 1964) 37–45.

on comedy, went largely unheeded after the first world war, and Lutyens later masculated herself all the way to serialism.

This is why Sullivan and, still more, Edward German, have always been written out of the English musical renaissance. The rediscovery of merrie England emphatically did not include *Merrie England*. And so the gentle cross-dressing in music that composers had hitherto enjoyed, daintily masking and mincing as they did from time to time—consider their penchant for variations on vernacular or childish themes—was outlawed.²⁵ There was little further place for the quaint, the sidelong, the frivolous unless studiedly chic and neoclassical, or even for the simply popular.

All this is reading between the lines; but it takes little to do so, as a list of musical settings of Oscar Wilde quickly demonstrates (see Fig. 1).²⁶ There is hardly a respectable British example among them. Wilde was set to music by Americans, women, central Europeans, Australians, decadents such as Bantock and Cyril Scott, and light music composers such as Eric Coates, but shunned by the pillars of the English musical renaissance. (I am, however, completely at a loss to account for the apparent wealth of Czechoslovak settings.)

The old profusion and its addressivity, linked with social comedy above, found for a while a rising outlet in musical comedy, the acknowledged meeting-ground of high and low on the stage itself. (Music hall, by contrast, was becoming more a matter of addressivity between high in the audience and low on the stage, as Parry observed.) Wilde's disgrace notwithstanding, musical comedy flourished as never before in Britain until around 1918, our second terminal date. Then it suddenly fled to America, Vivian Ellis and even Noël Coward soon in chronic eclipse to Jerome Kern and George Gershwin. (Coward's own introduction to his songbook makes it clear how much in thrall he was to the good old days of English musical comedy.²⁷) A discussion of musical comedy would require a separate article, but consider for a moment horse-racing. It has always appealed, rather like the theatre which has enjoyed depicting it, to the upper and lower classes in Britain and been shunned by those in the terminally moralistic middle. Hence the wonderfully fecund addressivity of Eliza Doolittle and the Eynsford-Hills in the gin episode in *Pygmalion*, transferred to Ascot in *My Fair Lady*: the upper classes can hardly wait to take on her accent and grammar as the latest linguistic fashion, just as they can hardly wait to adopt the Arcadians' rustic dress and vegetarian eating habits in the 1909 musical of that name, once again with a racecourse scene, and overall a *locus classicus* of musical addressivity, its composers Howard Talbot and Lionel Monckton running the gamut from composition student of Hubert Parry (Talbot) to husband of pantomime star Gertie Millar (Monckton). Addressivity had in any case long been built into comic operas and musical comedies, from Sullivan onwards, by way of the ubiquitous double choruses of conflicting, counterpointed types or groups. To cite just one, the opening number of *The Quaker Girl*, a Lionel Monckton musical of 1910, depicts a rabble of village gossips outside the pub enjoying a country dance. They are confronted by a stern admonishing procession of Quakers

²⁵ These include 'Down among the dead men' (Stanford), 'Old King Cole' (Cecil Forsyth), 'The girl I left behind me' (Holbrooke), 'Three blind mice' (Holbrooke and Brian) and 'Little Jack Horner' à la Handel (Michael Diack).

²⁶ It is distilled from the Wilde listings in Bryan N.S. Gooch and David S. Thatcher, *Musical Settings of Late Victorian and Modern British Literature: A Catalogue* (New York: Garland, 1976) 809–23.

²⁷ See Noël Coward, 'Introduction,' *The Essential Noël Coward Song Book* (1953; London: Omnibus Press, 1980) 9–11.

Figure 1. Musical Settings of Oscar Wilde

1880s [Gilbert and Sullivan: <i>Patience</i>] Cowen Lawrence Kellie Wilde	1930s ?Maurice Baron Eileen Belchamber Pierre Capdevielle x 2 ?Kathleen Clarke Henry Clough-Leighter ?Roland Farley ?Isadore Freed Charles Haubiel x 3 Jaroslav Kricka Lutyens ?Bernard Rogers x 2 Kurt Schindler ?Charles Seeger ?Slonimsky Edwin Wyble	1960s Pavel Blatny Don Allen Clayton Dallapiccola Petr Doubravsky Miloslav Duchác William Fisher Rostislav Haliska Derek Healey Jiri Kalach Julius Kalas Martin Kalmanoff Jiri Kosina Gustav Krivinka [McCabe] Petr Mandel Tauno Marttinen Lee Pockriss Miroslav Ponc Sutermeister Raymond White Williamson x 2
1890s Edwin Tilden	1940s Bantock Castelnuovo-Tedesco ?George Lessner Hans Schaeuble David van Vactor Otakar Zitek	1970s Carey Blyton Geoffrey Bush Castelnuovo-Tedesco Ferrari Margaret Garwood Alexandre Khaifel Hans Kox Francis Shaw Ladislav Stancel Charles Wilson
1900s Liza Lehmann Florent Schmitt Schreker ?Cyril Scott Richard Strauss ?Bothwell Thomson Sergey Wassilenko	1950s Flor Alpaerts Don Blosdale Bossi x 2 Burkhardt George Cory Noël Coward Fortner Frankel ?Gerald Gover x 2 K Hruby Arnost Kostal x 2 Frantisek Kovaricek Sherman Krane Antonin Kucera Eric McKenzie x 3 Jean Marais ?William Orchard Vernon Raines Rorem William Schaeffer Rhea Silberta Alexander Steinert Gordon Young	n.d. William Schaeffer ?Robert Jones ?Julia Perry
1910s Bantock Butterworth John Alden Carpenter x 3 Henry Castleman Carl Deis Pietro Florida-Napolino Glazunov Charles Griffes x 8 Henry Hadley Harold Jervis-Read x 5 Alexander Krein Antoine Mariotte Miklós Radnai Erwin Schulhoff x 3 Francis George Scott Bernhard Sekles Zemlinsky		
1920s Robert Bowers Ibert Jaroslav Kricka ?Arthur Lange Toupie Lowther Mossolov E Riadis Evelyn Sharpe x 2 ?Tcherepnin Henri Zagwijn Zemlinsky		

on their way to the meeting house, the latter at one point left musically stranded singing their counterpointed hymn *fortissimo*, all about 'our silent meeting.'

We may never reclaim that innocent kind of social as well as musical counterpoint, which had got somewhat above its station by the time of the Jets and the Sharks in *West Side Story* before disappearing altogether from the musical comedy stage. Mobility of voice, speech and accent will nevertheless probably continue to resurface in unexpected places. Here is a description by Joy Finzi of a visit she and Gerald paid in 1952 to Leslie Bridgewater, from whom banal light music poured in unstoppable quantities:

This prosperous little man who has the reputation of making a great deal of money as musical director of 7 or 8 London theatres & Stratford on Avon ... surprised G by quite another side to his character. In private he practices studies in 12 tone scale music [*sic*] & showed G exercise books full of notes & some good specimens of this school—as well as analyses of works such as the Schonberg piano concerto, bar by bar, which showed that he really understood the idiom. Rather a revelation when one thinks of his mock 16th 17th 18th 19th century styles, according to the play. He also has a valuable collection of clocks, about which he is very knowledgeable.²⁸

But how sad that he kept his 'other' voice in the closet! The English musician has learnt all too well to do that. Many a famous medical practitioner has played quartets in private with top professionals. Many a musical academic plays jazz on the side—but keeps it on the side.

The problems of voice, speech and accent in English music and the perceived need for their co-option came to a head at our third date with the birth of broadcasting and the establishment of the BBC. British radio broadcasting inherited the old profusion for its first two decades, but no-one was happy with it. Figure 2 shows the day's broadcasting for Friday 11 January 1935, taken from the *Radio Times*. Carnavalesque is hardly the word. The problem was perhaps not so much the variety bill that this sequence represented, from Vaughan Williams to jazz and from colonial pontification to the sounds of the cinema organ, to us little short of surreal in its contrasts, as the fact that it was mediated by 'Auntie', that uniquely British interpretation of the word 'corporation', meaning politically disinterested yet paternally commanding authority. The BBC was the parent speaking to the children, the invisible radio announcer in his dinner jacket the perfect embodiment of assumed rather than negotiated authority—just like the composer's voice, in fact. The problem was that the children eventually grew up and decided for themselves what they wanted. As Megan Prictor points out,²⁹ there was for decades no real dialogue, no addressivity, between the BBC and its audience, and the taste channels eventually split as though the parent had simply divided up the inheritance and withdrawn, a position that arts funding in general has taken ever since.

Percy Scholes, again the object of Prictor's focus,³⁰ was an intriguing figure in all this. Half his sympathies were those of an old profusionist. What other type could have come up with an encyclopaedia, the legendary *Oxford Companion to Music*, full of articles on such topics as

²⁸ Joy Finzi, journal entry, 24 Jan. 1952.

²⁹ Megan Prictor, 'Music and the Ordinary Listener: The Music Appreciation Movement in England, 1918-1939' (PhD dissertation, University of Melbourne, 2000) 152-90.

³⁰ Prictor, 'Music and the Ordinary Listener' 152-90.

Figure 2. BBC radio broadcasting schedule, Friday 11 Jan. 1935 (from *Radio Times*, 4 Jan. 1935)

National	Midland
11.00 Reginald New (organ)	10.45 Western Studio Orchestra
11.30 Trocadero Cinema Orchestra	1.00 Coventry Hippodrome Orchestra
12.30 BBC Dance Orchestra	2.30 BBC Midland Orchestra
3.30 Imperial Hydro Hotel Orchestra	3.30 Pierre Fol Quintet
4.15 Hotel Metropole Orchestra	7.30 Vaughan Williams's Chamber Music
5.15 Troise and his Mandoliers	8.45 Jack Wilson's Versatile Five
7.30 Fred Hartley's Novelty Quintet	
8.15 Is That the Law?	
8.35 BBC Orchestra	
10.00 Lord Lloyd: India	
10.20 Hungaria Gypsy Band	

'Odour and music'? He was also a Yorkshireman, member therefore of a group like the Jews who have often forced the accents of addressivity on an otherwise unacknowledging dominant culture. Scholes revelled in multiple voice and speech—the voices of the street and its adversaries, for example, the following being an extract from his substantial *Companion* article on 'Street music':

... an English Act of Parliament early in Queen Victoria's reign gave London householders power to require street musicians to withdraw, on grounds of 'illness or other reasonable cause.' In 1864 Mr Michael T. Bass, MP (the brewer), led a campaign against street musicians ... Carlyle, Tennyson, Millais, Holman Hunt, and a great number of other distinguished intellectual and artistic workers supported Mr Bass ... Professor Babbage, the eminent mathematician and inventor of the Calculating Machine, considered ... that 'one-fourth of his entire working power had been destroyed by audible nuisances, to which his highly strung nerves rendered him peculiarly sensitive' ... He sent Mr Bass a list of 165 interruptions to his work in ninety days, including six brass bands and ninety-six street pianos and organs ... As a result of this well-justified agitation was passed the Metropolitan Police Act, 1864, which is still in force ...³¹

Yet he wanted the streets cleaned up, just as he wanted the ears of the 'common man' cleaned up through broadcasting, and he devoted much of his energy to the imposition rather than the exploration of taste. But Bernard Shaw (again) had long before satirised knowingly the sterile gains of such *embourgeoisement*, when he treated ousted barrel organs like so many saved prostitutes in this *feuilleton* of 1893:

The barrel-organ began its career as an adjunct to divine worship in churches. After about a century of this it took to the streets, and had to be excommunicated. Twenty

³¹ Percy A. Scholes, 'Street Music,' *The Oxford Companion to Music*, 9th ed. (London: OUP, 1955) 991–94. The quoted passage is on 994.

years ago it was driven out of the streets by the street piano ... [today] there is no barrel-organ question ... there are hundreds of thousands of children in London today who have never heard a barrel-organ. That is a tremendous fact.³²

Another of broadcasting's key musical figures, the light music composer Eric Coates, offers a further case study, and the problems he encountered at the Eastbourne Festival in 1925 with his orchestral work *The Selfish Giant*—an Oscar Wilde piece, it should be noted—were symptomatic. 'It caused something of a sensation,' Tim McDonald writes on the CD sleeve note,

because of what were then deemed to be daring syncopations—although to present-day ears, it all sounds comparatively tame ... [Coates] was especially partial to Jack Hylton and His Band which took *The Selfish Giant* into its repertoire ... But the jazzy influences did not go down well with 'straight' musicians and Chappell was too nervous to publish the score. Fortunately, Boosey & Co were more adventurous and they saw the work safely into print in 1926.³³

The English audience could hardly know how to classify (in every sense) Coates's voices. His composition begins with folk-like monody as though by Vaughan Williams and continues with Butterworth *tremolandi*. A ravishing landscape painted in the manner of Delius or Moeran ensues, followed by a Wagnerian harmonic stab—and then the syncopation! This was the year after *Rhapsody in Blue* took New York's Aeolian Hall by storm. Coates, whose contemporary *The Three Bears* exhibits fully-fledged mickey-mousing eleven years in advance of Disney's *Snow White and the Seven Dwarfs*, should have been an English Gershwin, but there was no English infrastructure for Gershwin's type of musical addressivity between voices and cultures. A few years later, when Vivian Ellis in the musical *Mr Cinders* went into the ragged refrain of the song 'eighteenth century drag' and wanted to cock a snook at its eighteenth-century decorum, he had to do so with the help of *Rhapsody in Blue*. There was no British reference point to hand. England has paid dearly for this lost opportunity, for no accepted Englishness has yet arisen in music remotely comparable with the American corporate identity in sound that Gershwin, Bernstein and even Copland achieved.

Probably the most significant attempt at it after Coates was by Malcolm Arnold. Hugo Cole said of Arnold in *The New Grove*: '[He stands] almost alone in his ability to move freely between many worlds of music, and in refusing to accept categorisation in any one of them.'³⁴ Mervyn Cooke, reviewing an account of Arnold by Peter Evans,³⁵ has pointed out that it 'inevitably trivializes the extraordinary tension between the comic and tragic which distinguishes the finest of Arnold's symphonic works,' proceeding to cite Arnold's 5th Symphony, its Mahlerian influence, and Donald Mitchell's vindication of Arnold.³⁶ Moreover,

³² George Bernard Shaw, 'The Barrel-Organ Question,' *The Morning Leader* 27 Nov. 1893, reprinted in Dan H. Laurence (ed.), *Shaw's Music*, vol.3 (London: Bodley Head, 1981) 43–47. The quoted passage is on 43–45.

³³ Tim McDonald, 'Eric Coates (1886–1957): "You are the man who writes tunes"', sleeve note, *British Light Music: Eric Coates*, Marco Polo CD 8.223445 (1993) 2–29. The quoted passage is on 25.

³⁴ Hugo Cole, 'Arnold, Malcolm (Henry),' *The New Grove Dictionary of Music and Musicians*, ed. Stanley Sadie (London: Macmillan, 1980). The quoted passage is on 616.

³⁵ Peter Evans, 'Instrumental Music I,' *Music in Britain: The Twentieth Century*, ed. Stephen Banfield (Oxford: Blackwell, 1995) 179–277. The discussion of Arnold is on 237.

³⁶ Mervyn Cooke, untitled review, *Music and Letters* 78 (1997): 115–18. The quoted passage is on 117.

it was Arnold himself who in addition to claiming that composers are too narrow-minded—‘they have odd taboos,’ he has said—pointed out in his 1963 interview with Murray Schafer that American composers can only write for Hollywood or East Coast concerts, not for both, because of the tyranny of distance.³⁷ Stephen Sondheim has said the same. Both added that the British do not have this problem because both the ‘high’ and the ‘low’ music industries have always been located in London. Then why has England never cashed in on the advantage? Because of class, in a word, that continues to keep voice, speech and accent in their place, not the other person’s place. An English composer will never again make a real pact with an audience until he or she realises that the other person wants to see you in your place but talk to you from theirs—wants you to be the people’s princess; a star. This is what Gershwin and Bernstein knew but Britten and Tippett and the BBC did not.

This essay has sketched out an argument that requires researching and testing in further ways and might be questioned and countered in many others. Several may be mentioned in conclusion. First, it is probable that the topic would repay far more than the earlier brief nod towards Martin Buber. *I and Thou*³⁸ is a major twentieth-century text, and with its emphasis on the performative in creature relations it ought to offer a good deal of food for thought about the meaning not just of musical relations in twentieth-century England but of music in general, both as a performance art and as a mode of discourse that is constantly endeavouring to objectify Others.³⁹

Second, the referents ‘voice’, ‘speech’ and ‘accent’: they have hitherto been used as though they were indistinguishable. They are not, as yet one further appeal to the predicament of Eliza Doolittle testifies. In the gin scene, she fails comically because she has the accent—and the voice, thanks to Higgins’s introduction of her into polite society—but not yet the speech. Is there a musical corollary to this distinction? One hopes so, otherwise the requiems and oratorios of Sir Paul McCartney and Lord Lloyd-Webber would be the fruits of addressive genius, which they surely are not. They lack true negotiation of one or more of the three communicative terms. (One might consider, for example, that their popular fame has earned them the voice and their recognisable style furnishes the wished-for accent, but that like Eliza they cannot master the elevated speech. Or is it the speech—the musical form—that survives and the accent that is all wrong?) An analogical set of definitions will be needed if the proposition based on those terms is to be consolidated.

But—and this is the third testing-ground—it is not as though the application of voice, speech and accent to musical relations is always necessarily analogical. Real voices, using real speech and accents, are involved when music is sung. Twentieth-century performance practice, historically accessible through a wealth of recordings, and its implications for meaning in musical communication urgently need researching. Singing voices have changed as the cultural relations which they represent and mediate have changed, English voices and the voices of Englishness prime amongst them. By analogy (once more), so have the voice, speech and

³⁷ Murray Schafer, ‘Malcolm Arnold,’ *British Composers in Interview* (London: Faber, 1963) 147–54. The cited remarks are on 149–50 and 154.

³⁸ Martin Buber, *Ich und Du* (Berlin, 1923), trans Ronald Gregor Smith as *I and Thou* (Edinburgh: T. & T. Clark, 1937); 2nd ed. with Postscript by the author, also trans. Smith (Edinburgh: T. & T. Clark, 1957).

³⁹ See, for example, Georgina Born and David Hesmondhalgh (eds), *Western Music and Its Others: Difference, Representation, and Appropriation in Music* (Berkeley and Los Angeles: University of California Press, 2000).

accent of instruments. English musicians do not play in the way they did seventy years ago, and the whole tenor and rhetoric of a sonata performance by, for example, Albert Sammons, is quite different from that of a present-day violinist. We need to ask not just how, but why. As for the singers, there is a recording of Noël Coward singing his own song 'Lover of my dreams' (from *Cavalcade*) which might fruitfully be compared with that of Mark Raphael and Roger Quilter performing Quilter's 'Go, lovely rose.'⁴⁰ With the seven upbeats, the flexible phrasing past the downbeat, in each, can we really hear these 'unmanned' performances (to refer to a concept teased out elsewhere by Sophie Fuller) as belonging to different genres, different speeches? They have the same accent and voice.

A fourth consideration should be whether nostalgia infiltrates one's judgements of a bygone era; whether it is illusion that the old profusion was somehow all right because everything knew its place, whereas in the new profusion that appears to have ousted the period of cultural consensus, nothing does. It is a familiar social argument, especially about the English. Probably the only answer is that time will tell. Perhaps space will too, and that viewing English music from (say) Australia offers a better opportunity than at home for making sense of a whole panorama from the scores for Ealing Comedies through the Beatles to Blur, Oasis and Howard Goodall.

And finally, what about Australia? Those of us by and large ignorant of the country's music and conditions can only ask whether the producer and consumer in Australia perhaps somehow managed to preserve and invest a little more of that life-giving quality of 'cheek' in their music than the English, and hope that they did.

⁴⁰ Coward's recording, with the New Mayfair Orchestra conducted by Ray Noble, was issued by HMV in 1932 (B4001). The Raphael/Quilter performance of 'Go, lovely rose' was issued on Columbia in 1935 (DB 1583).