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Spring 2018

# Connecting Gerald Finzi to the English Musical Renaissance: A Comparative Study of Early 20th Century British Song

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CONNECTING GERALD FINZI TO THE ENGLISH MUSICAL RENAISSANCE: A  
COMPARATIVE STUDY OF EARLY 20TH CENTURY BRITISH SONG

by

Benjamin Ross

A thesis submitted in partial fulfillment of the requirements  
for graduation with Honors in the Music

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Stephen Swanson  
Thesis Mentor

Spring 2018

All requirements for graduation with Honors in the  
Music have been completed.

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Katherine Eberle  
Music Honors Advisor

**Connecting Gerald Finzi to the English Musical Renaissance:  
A Comparative Study of Early 20th Century British Song**

**Benjamin Ross**

**Honors Thesis in Music, Spring 2018**

**Professor Stephen Swanson, Primary Advisor**

## **ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS**

I would be remiss if I did not mention those who made this paper possible. First and foremost is my voice teacher and primary advisor, Stephen Swanson, who supported me through this whole process. In one of our first lessons he told me, “You really should check out this Finzi guy. I think you would really like him.” This “checking out” developed into a real love of Finzi and the English Musical Renaissance.

I would also like to thank the rest of the voice faculty at the University of Iowa, and especially Katherine Eberle, the Honors advisor for the School of Music. Their help in this and many other projects has proved invaluable.

Finally, this research was supported in part by an international undergraduate research grant from the Stanley Foundation. With their support I was able to travel to London and Oxford to study Finzi archival material in depth. The wonderful librarians at the British Library, the RCM Library and Archives, and the Bodleian deserve special credit for helping me with my first time in the archives. This experience gave me a much better picture both of who Finzi was and how he fit into the larger picture. I certainly hope that this project, though my first on the period, will not be my last.

## **ABSTRACT**

Gerald Finzi (1901-1956) was a British composer well known for his settings of classic British poetry for solo. He came at the end of a movement known as the English Musical Renaissance (ER). Although scholars still debate the motives and effectiveness of the ER in its goal of creating a new British national music, there are a number of themes that tie composers of the period together: lyrical pastoral writing, extensive use of folk tunes, and measured dissonance. In this study I compare Finzi's settings of Shakespeare texts to settings of the same texts by Roger Quilter, Hubert Parry, and Ralph Vaughan Williams, some of the standard bearers of the movement. Looking at these pairs of settings side by side not only connects Finzi directly to the ER, but also shows how he further developed its voice with increased harmonic tension, great attention to text setting and meter, and a more complete use of the piano as a musical partner. Finzi thus stands as a closing figure in this movement, accepting its ideas but pushing them one step further.

## INTRODUCTION AND SCOPE

Gerald Finzi (1901-1956) was one of the last composers in a burst of musical productivity known as the English Musical Renaissance, taking place from the mid 19th to the early 20th century. Characterised by musical depictions inspired by English county life and folk song, many describe it as a new flowering of British musical culture after a relatively dormant 19th century. Finzi focused primarily on the solo song, a genre which regained popularity in this period. His settings of classic British texts, like those of Shakespeare and Thomas Hardy, showcase an emotional purity that rivals that of many of his contemporaries.<sup>1</sup>

This study hopes to further solidify Finzi's place as a concluding composer of the period, one who developed some of the core principles of the renaissance to their apex. Much of this work has already been completed by Finzi biographers Stephen Banfield and Diana McVeagh, as well as musicologists like Tim Rayborn, Merrion Hughes and Robert Stradling, and Trevor Hold. Their research has proven invaluable to this project

Building on their work, I will directly compare sections of three Finzi settings of Shakespeare poetry to three settings of the same texts by several different English Musical Renaissance composers, Hubert Parry, Ralph Vaughan Williams, and Roger Quilter. The connections made between these settings clearly show that Finzi was not just writing in the renaissance idiom, but also building on the work of his predecessors expanding upon its basic language. This was accomplished through expanding tonal harmonies, directly following poetic meter in text setting at the expense of a consistent musical meter, and treating the piano as an equal partner in expressing the meaning of the text. Through these methods Finzi was able to

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<sup>1</sup> Stephen Banfield. *Sensibility and English song : critical studies of the early 20th century*. (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1985) 299.

further refine the music of the renaissance and achieve settings that more directly convey the emotional content of the poetry.<sup>2</sup>

A great deal of controversy still remains over how the English Musical Renaissance should be remembered as a whole. Should its success or failure be measured its international reach, its compositional output, or simply by the work of its architects and sustainers? This study of the period and Finzi's role in it as a developing and closing figure cannot hope to answer this question once and for all. However, understanding the birth, growth, and evolution of the English Musical Renaissance in its entirety along with Finzi's contribution demonstrates his part in a larger historical narrative that has been shaped by composers, British society, the press, musicologists, listeners and many others since the period began.

## **SOCIAL AND HISTORICAL CONTEXT**

In order to situate Finzi in the English Musical Renaissance one must first understand the social, political, and aesthetic goals behind the movement. After being outlined in totality by music critic and journalist Frank Howes in his 1966 work *The English Musical Renaissance*, there has been great deal of debate over just how important of this period of British music history really is.<sup>3</sup> More recent scholars, like Meirion Hughes and Robert Stradling, question just how much of a "rebirth" of British music this renaissance actually was, likening it more to an expansion on a largely German themes.<sup>4</sup> In exploring the historical context surrounding this period and the musical and artistic ideas identified as its central dogmas, I will examine the

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<sup>2</sup> Stephen Banfield. *Sensibility and English song: critical studies of the early 20th century*. (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1985), 275.

<sup>3</sup> Rayborn, Tim. *A new English music: composers and folk traditions in England's musical renaissance from the late 19th to the mid-20th century*. (Jefferson, North Carolina : McFarland & Company, Inc. 2016.), 11-16.

<sup>4</sup> Stradling, R. A. and Meirion Hughes *The English musical Renaissance 1860-1940 : construction and deconstruction*. (London : Routledge, 1993.), 208.

current debate over the legitimacy of the use of the name English Musical Renaissance (ER) to describe the period, as well as better situate Finzi's role in it.

Stretching from about the mid-19th into the mid-20th centuries the United Kingdom and much of Europe witnessed a great deal of social and political change. Rapid industrialization and urbanization led to changes in the everyday life of the common man, largely disrupting rural cottage industry in favor of standardization and mass production. This was the dawn of a modern mechanized capitalist society, inspiring many artists to create work wishing for simpler times.<sup>5</sup> Encompassing the latter half of the Victorian Era through the First and Second World Wars, the British Empire was at its height, with major influence on the world stage. Britain was the dominant industrial force and began to desire greater cultural influence as well. However, their musical culture remained largely underdeveloped due to their concentration on industry. Composer Ralph Vaughan Williams called this British musical deficiency the "cigar theory of music." Both the best cigars and the best music had to be imported as the ingredients did not exist to do so on British soil.<sup>6</sup>

In addition the stringent and moralistic tone of the Victorian era restricted musical development as well. Many of these conservative mores remained present in the music of the ER even as other societal pressures relaxed.<sup>7</sup> Victorian moralism contrasted developing aesthetic ideas on the European continent, especially in Germany; largely seen as Europe's dominant musical power. German music in the late 19th century was epitomized in new genres like the program symphony and tone poem, forms of absolute music meant to transcend human

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<sup>5</sup> Stradling, R. A. and Meirion Hughes *The English musical Renaissance 1860-1940 : construction and deconstruction*. (London : Routledge, 1993.), 12-18.

<sup>6</sup> Rayborn, Tim. *A new English music : composers and folk traditions in England's musical renaissance from the late 19th to the mid-20th century*. (Jefferson, North Carolina : McFarland & Company, Inc. 2016.), 13.

<sup>7</sup> Hughes, Meirion. *The English musical renaissance and the press 1850-1914 : watchmen of music*. (Aldershot: Ashgate, 2002.), 1-5.



experience through its expressive content. Composers like Wagner and Liszt became known as founders of the New German School, a classification popularized by music journalist and critic, Franz Brendel.<sup>8</sup> Their use of harmony, orchestration, and the development and transformation of motives would come to represent a new progressive ideal, leaving well established forms and genres behind.<sup>9</sup>

Brendel traced their compositional lineage back to Beethoven thus firmly planting them in the Germanic tradition. He portrayed the New German School as the next inevitable step in the development of music as an art form by connecting it directly to German history and culture. Brendel's attempt was to create a universal European music culture, dominated by German ideals.<sup>10</sup> As Wagner's music dramas, many depicting German folklore, came to dominate the international scene Brendel's prophecy seemed to be fulfilling itself, much to the chagrin of societal elites in the United Kingdom.

The excesses of Romanticism and the New German School, especially in the music of Wagner, were largely seen as a negative by many leading British composers and critics of the era. Many thought that art and music should be an expression of positive moral values. Art, to British social elites, was a tool for preserving the existing social order and controlling the whims of the masses. If art depicted good behavior, those that consumed it would behave well, creating an orderly society, retaining the prevailing class structure. Likewise if negative or sinful behaviors were espoused in art and music the public would turn assuredly mimic those behaviors, turning to drinking, and other more carnal pleasures. The press espoused these ideals

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<sup>8</sup> Grey, Thomas S. "Brendel, (Karl) Franz." *Grove Music Online*. 5 May. 2018.  
<http://www.oxfordmusiconline.com>.

<sup>9</sup> Grey, Thomas S. "New German School." *Grove Music Online*. 5 May. 2018.  
<http://www.oxfordmusiconline.com>.

<sup>10</sup> Taruskin, Richard. "Nationalism." *Grove Music Online*. 5 May. 2018.  
<http://www.oxfordmusiconline.com>.

as well. J.W. Davidson, lead music critic for *The Times*, one of highest circulating papers in London said of Wagner's music, "If worshipped universally, music would cease to be an art."<sup>11</sup> Thus, the perceived formlessness and lewdness in Wagner's music were painted as direct threat to British Society and lambasted in the press.<sup>12</sup>

Wagner's music was disliked in Britain not only because of its progressivism, but also for its Germanic influences. Wagner, and the ideas of the New German School were sweeping across the European landscape expressing German musical, cultural, and even national dominance across Europe. Wagner himself was a large proponent of this philosophy, seeing German music as the epitome of the art form. In his own words, "The Italian is a singer, the Frenchman a virtuoso, the German a—musician. The German has a right to be styled by the exclusive name 'Musician,' for of him one may say that he loves Music for herself."<sup>13</sup> Notice here that the Englishman is not even worth mentioning in the preceding list. These ideas along with the general popularity of German music internationally, were a major catalyst for British musicians' desire to develop their own national sound.<sup>14</sup>

The international popularity of German music had been obscuring domestic British composers for decades, leaving them without composers of international prominence. In Britain, Mendelssohn remained hugely popular after multiple tours of England in 1829 and 1832. Even into the late 19th century works like *Elijah* remained perennial favorites at choral festivals across the country, even as Mendelssohn became old fashioned on the continent. This Mendelssonian

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<sup>11</sup> Hughes, Meirion. *The English Musical Renaissance and the Press 1850-1914: Watchmen of Music*. (Aldershot: Ashgate, 2002), 17.

<sup>12</sup> Ibid. 1-5.

<sup>13</sup> Richard Wagner, "On German Music" in *Pilgrimage to Beethoven and Other Essays*, trans. William Ashton Ellis (Omaha: University of Nebraska Press, 1994), 85.

<sup>14</sup> Rayborn, Tim. *A new English music: composers and folk traditions in England's musical renaissance from the late 19th to the mid-20th century*. (Jefferson, North Carolina: McFarland & Company, Inc. 2016.), 20.

style, conventional harmony with a very measured approach to dissonance, would become the British ideal, even though it had been grown from a German seed.<sup>15</sup>

Foreign language opera also remained popular in Britain, with hardly any British competitors, save the light operettas of Gilbert and Sullivan. However, these were largely seen as frivolous in the face of massive German works like Wagner's *Ring* cycle.<sup>16</sup> Victorian social commentator and art critic John Ruskin summarized contemporary opinions of British music well in 1876 saying, "The less we compose at present the better: there is good music enough written to serve to world forever."<sup>17</sup> The public was largely satisfied with works by foreign composers and had little desire for domestic composers.

In spite of this, British composers, journalist, and social elites began to see the development of nationalistic musical culture as a political necessity. With the official unification of the German state in 1871 under Otto von Bismarck, Germany became a both a political and cultural threat.<sup>18</sup> An acceptance of German musical hegemony was seen as the first step to German political domination. The ER would serve to combat this German aggression, reinvigorating a sense of British nationalism at home, exporting British culture abroad, and creating Britain's place as the world's industrial, political, and cultural leader.

## **GEORGE GROVE AND THE RCM**

Without a longstanding tradition of composers or even centers of musical training the British were at a major disadvantage. Founding conservatories to train composers was thus a

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<sup>15</sup> Stradling, R. A. and Meirion Hughes *The English musical Renaissance 1860-1940: construction and deconstruction*. (London: Routledge, 1993.), 12-18.

<sup>16</sup> Hughes, Meirion. *The English Musical Renaissance and the Press 1850-1914: Watchmen of Music*. (Aldershot: Ashgate, 2002), 140.

<sup>17</sup> John Ruskin quoted in R.A. Stradling and Meirion Hughes, *The English musical Renaissance 1860-1940: construction and deconstruction*. Ed. Meirion Hughes. (London:Routledge, 1993) 1.

<sup>18</sup> Taruskin, Richard. "Nationalism." *Grove Music Online*. 5 May. 2018.  
<http://www.oxfordmusiconline.com>.

major initial goal. In fact, 18 schools of music were founded between 1860 and 1900 in Britain.<sup>19</sup> At the forefront of this new educational push was George Grove, the author of the eponymous musical dictionary.<sup>20</sup> His essential role in founding and running the Royal College of Music (RCM) would have a profound impact on the development of the ER, and thus the work of composers like Gerald Finzi, the musical descendant of the RCM's most prominent figures.

Before Grove's involvement, Prince Albert, the husband of Queen Victoria and a major cultural patron, was an instigator for reinvigorating homegrown music on British soil. The Great Exhibition of 1851, also known as the Crystal Palace Exhibition after its most prominent structure, was an attempt to to celebrate British manufacturing and innovation on the international stage spearheaded Prince Albert. With it came the major development of London's Kensington and Knightsbridge districts fostering a building boom to support the upcoming exhibition. Prince Albert and Hugh Cole, the director of the Royal Academy of Music, Britain's oldest conservatory founded in 1822, began to wonder if some of this vitality might be directed into the development of a new music school near the exhibition site. Doing such would allow the school both to take advantage of the new venues being designed for the Exhibition, while showcasing British culture alongside their manufacturing prowess.<sup>21</sup>

As the Royal Academy of Music (RAM) was facing financial difficulty at the time, plans were made to start a new institution on firmer financial footing. Thus in 1876 Cole founded the National Training School of Music, with composer Arthur Sullivan, of Gilbert and Sullivan fame, at its head. As the most prominent British composer of the day, Sullivan appeared to be the clear choice. However, he largely preferring instead working on his own compositions, to

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<sup>19</sup> Rayborn, Tim. *A new English music: composers and folk traditions in England's musical renaissance from the late 19th to the mid-20th century*. (Jefferson, North Carolina: McFarland & Company, Inc. 2016.), 13.

<sup>20</sup> Stradling, R. A. and Meirion Hughes *The English musical Renaissance 1860-1940: construction and deconstruction*. (London: Routledge, 1993.), 34.

<sup>21</sup> *Ibid.* 19-25.

devoting the time required for supervising the RAM. With Sullivan as director this new venture appeared to be stalling out from the beginning.<sup>22</sup>

George Grove soon assumed leadership of the school, attempting to secure a royal charter for the school, a designation that could bring prestige, government funding, and recognition to the fledgling institution. In 1881, shortly after Grove took charge, the National Training School for Music became the Royal College of Music (RCM). Grove would receive knighthood a mere four days after its opening for his work securing the charter. Both the Prince of Wales and Prime Minister William Gladstone attended the dedication, their presence certainly a show of governmental support of the project. With government support, a new title, and a royal charter, Grove could begin his work of creating a new institution to foster the ER.<sup>23</sup>

Grove's background was not what one might expect for the head of a new school of music trained not as a musician, but as a civil engineer and manager of a railroad company. His lifelong interest in music as well as his business sense, masterful fundraising, and upper class connections gave him the right skill set to foster and publicize a new British music. He shrewdly used the press and printed word to his advantage to shape the movement as he desired.<sup>24</sup> Many historians of the period, like Frank Howes, call him the progenitor of the movement.<sup>25</sup>

He is most well known today as the first editor for *Grove's Dictionary of Music and Musicians*, in its first edition largely biased toward British music and musicians. As the first and most comprehensive musical reference of its time, there were few to check the facts on what Grove published. Most of the contributing authors were British journalists and composers, including Hubert Parry, a founding composer the ER. Thus the initial editions were much more a

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<sup>22</sup> Ibid. 16.

<sup>23</sup> Ibid. 24.

<sup>24</sup> Hughes, Meirion. *The English Musical Renaissance and the Press 1850-1914: Watchmen of Music*. (Aldershot: Ashgate, 2002), 30.

<sup>25</sup> Howes, Frank. *The English musical renaissance*. (London: Secker & Warburg, 1966.), 35.

tool to propagate Grove's personal biases about the prominence of British music than a legitimate historical testament.<sup>26</sup>

Early on Grove recruited composers Hubert Parry, and Charles Stanford to serve at the helm of the RCM. Stanford and Parry were the perfect candidates to shape the new movement. Stanford's work had received performances and positive reviews both in Britain and in Germany, the first English composer to do so since Arthur Sullivan. In addition, both men were upper class, both were opposed to Wagnerian progressivism on moral grounds, and both were fervently interested in fostering a British national music. Their relatively conservative Mendelssohnian approach would serve as the basis for the ER.<sup>27</sup>

Parry and Stanfords' music was not well known among the British public early on in their careers. However with the help of the press and the emerging prominence of RCM, they would eventually be labeled as the greatest composers of their generation, and the roots of a new movement of British music.<sup>28</sup> The praise for Parry was abundant: the term English Musical Renaissance coined to describe Parry's *Symphony in G*. Of his oratorio, *Job*, J.A. Fuller Maitland chief music critic for *The Times of London* wrote, "It must be said deliberately that recent years have not seen a composition more free from flaw or weak point of any kind."<sup>29</sup> In a short period of time these two men were transformed into cultural icons by the press.

With such high, consistent, and effusive praise, it certainly calls to question its deservedness. Upon personal review of Parry's work after reading such positive reviews, one wonders if the reviewers were really paying attention. British music scholar Merrion Hughes

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<sup>26</sup> Stradling, R. A. and Meirion Hughes *The English musical Renaissance 1860-1940: construction and deconstruction*. (London: Routledge, 1993.), 21.

<sup>27</sup> Rayborn, Tim. *A new English musi : composers and folk traditions in England's musical renaissance from the late 19th to the mid-20th century*. (Jefferson, North Carolina: McFarland & Company, Inc. 2016.), 13.

<sup>28</sup> Howes, Frank. *The English musical renaissance*. (London: Secker & Warburg, 1966.), 1-12.

<sup>29</sup> Hughes, Meirion. *The English Musical Renaissance and the Press 1850-1914: Watchmen of Music*. (Aldershot: Ashgate, 2002), 31.

argues that most music journalists at the time were biased against Wagnerian progressivism and were fervently pro-British. With the founding of the RCM and the appointment of two musically conservative composers to lead it, the press' conservative tastes were satisfied. Thus, any composer who fit in Parry and Stanfords' mold and were associated with the RCM were much more likely to receive good reviews. With good reviews came public attention, publication, and further performance of their work.<sup>30</sup> With the assistance of the press, the founding of the RCM, and Parry and Stanfords' leadership the ER was ready to begin.

### **CHARACTERISTICS OF THE ENGLISH MUSICAL RENAISSANCE**

What would this new British music sound like? What were the musical goals of the movement? These were major questions tackled by Parry and Stanford, developed further largely by their students, Ralph Vaughan Williams and Gustav Holst, and carried to conclusion by composers like Gerald Finzi. Vaughan Williams and Holst would be popularized by the press as members the Pastoral School, drawing their inspiration from the English countryside, essential to the nationalistic idiom.<sup>31</sup> A renewed focus on folk song and the setting of native texts in art song were also major components of the whole movement that would become essential to Finzi. Connected to this interest in song was a desire to emulate the music and culture of the Tudor Period, a high point in British political and cultural history. Referring to the Tudors was a way to connect this new movement to what was seen as a previous golden age in British musical history.<sup>32</sup> These references British history and literature along with a consonant, lyrical, and tuneful idiom reminiscent of folk song were the core components of the ER, grounding the movement in national identity

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<sup>30</sup> Ibid.

<sup>31</sup> Rayborn, Tim. *A new English music: composers and folk traditions in England's musical renaissance from the late 19th to the mid-20th century*. (Jefferson, North Carolina: McFarland & Company, Inc. 2016.), 60.

<sup>32</sup> Howes, Frank. *The English musical renaissance*. (London: Secker & Warburg, 1966.), 95.

Perhaps the most important national contribution was a heavy dependence on British folk song. This was a deliberate attempt to ground the movement in British culture. The folk idiom was used, however, to a variety of degrees. On one end of the spectrum were people like Cecil Sharp, largely seen as the chief instigator in the British Folk Song Revival, a movement running concurrently to the Renaissance.<sup>33</sup> Sharp not a composer but a folk song collector who went out into the English countryside and notated the largely unwritten, sung tradition of the common people. He saw collecting and publishing these songs as a method of preserving and reviving a dying art form in a rapidly urbanizing and industrializing society. In Sharpe's words "Folk music is the product of a race and reflects feelings and tastes that are communal."<sup>34</sup> He also would found, with Parry and Vaughan Williams, the English Folk Song Society in 1911, to continue spreading the folk song tradition.

Stanford, Parry, and their students' use of folk music in their work was often quite overt. Pieces like Stanford's *Irish Rhapsody*, Parry's *Symphony No. 3 "English"*, and Holst's *I Love my Love* were works that incorporated folk tunes as central ideas. By quoting folk music directly they were able to make clear connections to the national aims of their music. Works like these largely began to acclimate the public to the new British style, a sort of bucolic ideal which musicologist Merrion Hughes deems the "historical-pastoral."<sup>35</sup>

Vaughan Williams song *Linden Lea*, or Holst's work for chamber orchestra *Two Songs Without Words* represent a third way in which folk song influenced composition. Neither quotes folk music directly, but both distinctly allude to the idiom. Indeed, many casual listeners believe *Linden Lea* to be a folk melody as it remains nearly as popular as true folk tunes like *The Water*

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<sup>33</sup> Rayborn, Tim. *A new English music: composers and folk traditions in England's musical renaissance from the late 19th to the mid-20th century*. (Jefferson, North Carolina: McFarland & Company, Inc. 2016.), 39-59.

<sup>34</sup> Cecil Sharp. *English Folk Song: Some Conclusions* (London:Novello, 1907), 15.

<sup>35</sup> Stradling, R. A. and Meirion Hughes *The English musical Renaissance 1860-1940: construction and deconstruction*. (London: Routledge, 1993.), 62.



*is Wide* or *Down by the Sally Gardens*. However, it is simply Vaughan Williams extremely convincing pastiche of British folk song. It is not a folk song, but rather a folk-like song. This complete infiltration of folk song into a composer's voice represents a further development of the Renaissance idiom.

Modern scholarship has questioned the purity of Cecil Sharp and the Folk Song Revival's intentions. Tim Rayborn wonders if writing down a largely oral tradition truly preserves it or corrupts it. As an alternative he offers Sharp's contemporary, composer Percy Grainger, who recorded folk singers in action using a phonograph, creating a much more accurate record. Other scholars like A.L. Lloyd, consider what songs and texts were selected and edited for publication. Many of the more bawdy elements of the texts were removed and replaced to suit a middle class values and tastes.<sup>36</sup> Similarly C.J. Bearman questions collectors' rights to take folk art and use it for their own artistic and financial gains. As this folk-like music became publicly popular and profitable, the deliberate marketing of art music as an expression of bucolic utopianism certainly becomes more problematic. These concerns were largely ignored by composers in the period who often instead took these melodies without consent for their own gain.<sup>37</sup>

Setting these criticisms aside, the use of folk song was largely meant to be a statement of unifying nationalism. Parry's words from his inaugural address to the English Folk Song Society show his commitment to this connection "All of the things that mark the folk-music of the race also betoken the qualities of the race, and, as a faithful reflection of ourselves we must cherish it. Moreover, it is worth remembering that the great composers of other countries have concentrated

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<sup>36</sup> Rayborn, Tim. *A new English music : composers and folk traditions in England's musical renaissance from the late 19th to the mid-20th century*. (Jefferson, North Carolina : McFarland & Company, Inc. 2016.), 47.

<sup>37</sup> Bearman, C. J. "The Folk-Song Society and the Phonograph." *Folk Music Journal* 10, no. 3 (2013): 370-74. <http://www.jstor.org/stable/43590071>.

upon their folk music much attention, *since style is ultimately national* [emphasis added].”<sup>38</sup>

Thus he hoped to use one distinctly British musical idea to give birth to another.

Vaughan Williams also made deliberately national statements on folk music in a series of lectures given on the topic at Bryn Mawr College. Throughout he uses the metaphor of the folk song as a wildflower, something which can only be grown in a particularly national soil. His intentions are made clear in saying, “Folk song is not a cause of national music, it is a manifestation of it... National music is not necessarily folk song; on the other hand folk song is, by nature, necessarily national.”<sup>39</sup> This idea clearly grows directly out of Parry’s line of thought

Interestingly however, he also states that, “It is surely as bad to be self-consciously national as self-consciously cosmopolitan.”<sup>40</sup> Vaughan Williams goal was thus more subtle than that of Parry and Stanford’s. Rather than overt quotations from folk tunes he chose to base his style in the sound of folk music, as discussed above with *Linden Lea*. Vaughan William’s saw his work as nationalist simply because of his British upbringing and training rather than by and direct attempt. In other words, there was no way a British citizen could write anything *other* than British music, having been raised in that musical culture.<sup>41</sup> This idea would come to be central to the works of Gerald Finzi, not directly built out of folk music and not overtly national, but certainly a branch from the same tree.<sup>42</sup>

Setting folk song aside, another important musical idea used throughout the ER was an interest in setting classic British texts.<sup>43</sup> By relying on Britain's strong literary tradition of authors

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<sup>38</sup> Hubert Parry. “Inaugural Address.” *Journal of the Folk-Song Society*, vol. 1, no. 1, 1899, pp. 1–3. JSTOR, JSTOR, [www.jstor.org/stable/4433848](http://www.jstor.org/stable/4433848).

<sup>39</sup> Ralph Vaughan Williams. *National Music*. (O.U.P., 1959) 114.

<sup>40</sup> Ibid. 6.

<sup>41</sup> Ibid. 24.

<sup>42</sup> Gerald Finzi. “The Crees Lectures.” The Finzi Trust. Ed. Diana McVeagh, November 2007, [http://geraldfinzi.org/01-about/crees\\_lectures.php](http://geraldfinzi.org/01-about/crees_lectures.php).

<sup>43</sup> Trevor Hold, *Parry to Finzi: Twenty English Song Composers*. (Woodbridge: Boydell Press, 2005), 5.

like Shakespeare, A.E. Houseman, and Thomas Hardy composers hoped to give credence to the newly budding national style. Nearly every composer of the period had some settings of Shakespeare text. Parry's 12 volumes of *English Lyrics*, featuring both Elizabethan and contemporary British works is highly representative of this idea, while Vaughan Williams *Elizabethan Partsongs* certainly followed in Parry's footsteps. Vaughan Williams would continue to promote British text in British song with works like *Songs of Travel*, a collection of Robert Louis Stevenson's work, and *On Wenlock Edge*, settings of Housman's *A Shropshire Lad*. Finzi would latch on to this idea of native text quite heavily and use it a central part of his own style.<sup>44</sup>

Parry and Stanford were highly influential in supporting and passing the Folk Music Revival and the use of national texts to their students. Vaughan Williams, however, would be largely responsible for the Tudor Revival, another major component of the developing ER. The reign of Elizabeth I, the work of William Shakespeare, and the music of composers like Henry Purcell, Thomas Tallis, and William Byrd, were all highlights of this much older climax in English cultural and political history. By referencing the Tudor period, as in Vaughan Williams *Fantasia on the Theme by Thomas Tallis*, composers could connect the flowering of the ER to that of a previous cultural bloom.<sup>45</sup>

The Tudor revival was another reason why composers like Finzi, Roger Quilter, and even Vaughan Williams were so obsessed with the solo song. In writing in this genre, they were referencing the tradition of the Tudor lutenists like John Dowland and John Taverner, and even the songs of Henry Purcell.<sup>46</sup> In addition the solo song was highly marketable and much easier to

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<sup>44</sup> Gerald Finzi. "The Crees Lectures." The Finzi Trust. Ed. Diana McVeagh, November 2007, [http://geraldfinzi.org/01-about/crees\\_lectures.php](http://geraldfinzi.org/01-about/crees_lectures.php).

<sup>45</sup> Howes, Frank. *The English musical renaissance*. (London: Secker & Warburg, 1966.), 95.

<sup>46</sup> *Ibid.* 99.

produce and perform than large scale orchestral work. The Tudor Revival coupled with a desire to set great texts in native language helped to lead to an explosion of solo song during the ER.<sup>47</sup>

The Folk Song Revival, The Tudor Revival, and a desire to use English texts were the three main components that set the new British idiom apart, and were used heavily by students and faculty at the Royal College of Music. However, any discussion of the ER would be incomplete without briefly mentioning a composer who was a giant in the period, but an outsider from the Royal College of Music and its teachings, Sir Edward Elgar.. Elgar largely used the same musical techniques as the Renaissance establishment, but portrayed himself as an outsider; a roaming bard writing in a truer British style than the elites at the RCM.<sup>48</sup>

The son of a shopkeeper from Worcester, he was largely self-taught, and of a lower class than many other composers of his day. His own fears that his upbringing and training made him and his works lesser would plague him, even as he gained great success with the public and press after the premier of the *Enigma Variations*. In spite of this, he was largely seen as too progressive and Wagnerian by the establishment at the RCM. The dislike between the two camps was clearly mutual as Elgar was quoted as saying, “The stuff I hate and which I know is ruining any chance for good music in England is stuff like Stanford’s which is neither fish, flesh, fowl, nor good red herring!”<sup>49</sup>

Even as he directly spoke out against the Renaissance establishment, Stanford and Parry realized that his popularity could be key to their work gaining publicity. Thus, they plied him with the trappings of social status, honorary doctorates, memberships to gentlemen’s clubs, and finally his knighthood in 1904, as a way to guild his lower class upbringing. In spite of this

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<sup>47</sup> Trevor Hold, *Parry to Finzi: Twenty English Song Composers*. (Woodbridge: Boydell Press, 2005), 7.

<sup>48</sup> Hughes, Meirion. *The English Musical Renaissance and the Press 1850-1914: Watchmen of Music*. (Aldershot: Ashgate, 2002), 57.

<sup>49</sup> *Ibid.* 50.

wooing he largely turned away from the London establishment by becoming chief composition professor at the University of Birmingham from 1905-1908, rather than working at the RCM.<sup>50</sup>

Here, in his Peyton Lectures, he deliberately bashes the work of the RCM and academic musicians saying that true national music comes from unstifled provincial creativity, using himself as a model. His later lectures lay out plans to found his own movement for English national music outside of London, the Midland School, but these plans largely fizzle out before they begin. Elgar withdrew from his academic post with his lecture series unfinished, ending his only attempt at a teaching career. Without students to follow in his footsteps, his dream of a provincial British national school largely died on the vine.<sup>51</sup>

How could Elgar become so popular even with his direct antagonism against the academic establishment? British music historian, Meirion Hughes argues that his close relationships with music journalists and a carefully crafted public persona allowed for his success. Elgar would come to emphasize his lower class, provincial roots as that which made him truly English. The papers would often depict him as a bard, connected more directly to the most ancient sentiments of English music than Londoners like Parry, Stanford, and Vaughan Williams could ever be.

Elgar stated, "I have not read a single paragraph in a newspaper or a magazine about myself- not a word of criticism... As to fame, I care nothing for it."<sup>52</sup> It seems clear that his actions state the contrary. Elgar was able to use the same idea of appealing to older English musical glory and depictions of country life to support his own national music, even without the support of the RCM. He also largely wrote in the historical-pastoral style of the Renaissance,

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<sup>50</sup> Stradling, R. A. and Meirion Hughes. *The English musical Renaissance 1860-1940: construction and deconstruction*. (London: Routledge, 1993.), 51.

<sup>51</sup> *Ibid.* 54.

<sup>52</sup> Hughes, Meirion. *The English Musical Renaissance and the Press 1850-1914: Watchmen of Music*. (Aldershot: Ashgate, 2002), 181.

albeit with slightly greater use of extended harmonies.<sup>53</sup> However, Parry, Stanford, their roster of students, and their connection to London society and the press would serve to maximize their impact. A quote from Frank Howes, chief music critic at the *Times* shows the impact of these connections well, “Parry was a voluminous composer; Elgar’s productive life is hardly longer than 20 years.”<sup>54</sup> Through Elgar is certainly remembered more fondly today than Parry, the narrative crafted by the press of the period certainly favored the ER.

The example of Elgar shows just how integral the press was to the spread of British national music. Although Elgar and the RCM establishment positioned themselves in opposition they were both able to use the press to their advantage by forging personal relationships with journalists. Writing in an overtly national but musically conservative style satisfied the press’ desire for British music on their terms.<sup>55</sup> Elgar’s failure at establishing the Midland School in Birmingham largely left his legacy unfulfilled without any successors leaving the RCM once again the designated leaders in British national music

The lines between the press and the RCM slowly became more blurred as journalists like Frank Howes were brought on as professors to write stories chronicling the beginning of the movement<sup>56</sup>. With the help of the press, the ER was able to establish itself as a legitimate movement, spread its reach to the larger public, and ensure its place in the historical record. Howes account in his 1966 book, *The English Musical Renaissance*, heavily favors the RCM and the contributions of George Grove, Stanford, Parry, and Vaughan Williams. This foundational

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<sup>53</sup> Stradling, R. A. and Meirion Hughes *The English musical Renaissance 1860-1940 : construction and deconstruction*. (London : Routledge, 1993.), 55.

<sup>54</sup> Frank Howes. *The English musical renaissance*. (London: Secker & Warburg, 1996.) 129

<sup>55</sup> Hughes, Meirion. *The English Musical Renaissance and the Press 1850-1914 : Watchmen of Music*. (Aldershot: Ashgate, 2002), 5-6.

<sup>56</sup> Stradling, R. A. and Meirion Hughes *The English musical Renaissance 1860-1940 : construction and deconstruction*. (London : Routledge, 1993.), 82.

account, though heavily skewed towards one viewpoint, has laid the base for much of the other scholarship on the period.

The Renaissance, was able to sustain its impact with the help of the multiple generations of composers educated through the RCM. These composers and musicians continued the work of the Renaissance by writing and developing the same idiom, heavily influenced by folk song and British pastoral-historicism. It is out of this mold and in this oeuvre that Gerald Finzi and his works would arise.

### **THE LIFE AND WORKS OF GERALD FINZI**

With the dictates of the ER largely established and developed by figures like Parry, Stanford, and Vaughan Williams, what room was left for Finzi in the movement? Where these men actively debated the purposes, goals, and methods of how to create a new British music, Finzi largely came of age when the once new ideas around British musical culture were accepted as fact. He thus was able to use his predecessors as a model of British style rather than working to create and refine an entirely new set of aesthetic ideas.<sup>57</sup> Thus his work built on that of Parry and Vaughan Williams as a closing figure in the movement.

Following the dictates of the renaissance gave Finzi the freedom to stretch within its confines rather than establish an entirely new set of rules. Finzi biographer Stephen Banfield put it well, saying, “Finzi stands at the end of a lyrical tradition... While Britten was able to build on parts of that tradition, there were vital aspects of its codification of deep, timeless emotions through the expressiveness of tonality that Finzi was perhaps the last composer fully to

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<sup>57</sup> Trevor Hold, *Parry to Finzi: Twenty English Song Composers*. (Woodbridge: Boydell Press, 2005), 393.

understand.”<sup>58</sup> By highlighting certain important aspects of Finzi’s biography, I hope to elucidate his place as a closing figure in the movement.

Nearest and dearest to the renaissance is Finzi’s penchant for song composition, a genre which occupies the majority of his output. Finzi is well known for his settings of difficult English poetry, especially that of Thomas Hardy. Many scholars remark that Finzi had a way of setting text that gets at the emotional heart of a poem in a way that many other of his contemporaries could not.<sup>59</sup> This paired with syllabic yet lyrical text setting, and selective yet intentional use of dissonance clearly places Finzi’s idiom in renaissance style.

Finzi’s near-filial relationship with Ralph Vaughan Williams certainly cements him and his work as a major influence. Vaughan Williams was a teacher, mentor, and friend to Finzi throughout his life helping not only to edit Finzi’s work, but also perform and conduct it himself.<sup>60</sup> Letters between them show the importance of the relationship in both their lives. Often signed as and addressed to “Uncle Ralph” they share jokes and stories, but also help each other through the difficulties of the life of a composer.<sup>61</sup> Their important relationship shows itself in Finzi’s style, folk-like in character with less overtly nationalistic aims.

Also like Vaughan Williams, and to some extent Elgar, Finzi took a liking to the English countryside and the slower lifestyle it provided. Although Finzi enjoyed London’s musical culture, he found it difficult to accomplish much in such a busy atmosphere. In order to escape from London, Finzi and his wife, Joy, moved to Ashmansworth, near Reading. Here on their

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<sup>58</sup> Stephen Banfield. *Sensibility and English song : critical studies of the early 20th century*. (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1985) 299.

<sup>59</sup> Trevor Hold, *Parry to Finzi: Twenty English Song Composers*. (Woodbridge: Boydell Press, 2005), 399; Stephen Banfield. *Sensibility and English song: critical studies of the early 20th century*. (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1985) 299.; Diana McVeagh. *Gerald Finzi: his life and music*. (Woodbridge: Boydell, 2005), 43.

<sup>60</sup> Diana McVeagh. *Gerald Finzi: his life and music*. (Woodbridge: Boydell Press, 2005), 53.

<sup>61</sup> Ralph Vaughan Williams. *Letters of Ralph Vaughan Williams 1895-1958*. Ed. Ralph Hugh Cobb. (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2008) 238.



estate, Church Farm, Finzi could compose at his own pace while pursuing an interest in horticulture. Finzi thought this the ideal life for the composer, rising early, walking often in nature, and living off the land to whatever extent possible.<sup>62</sup> His desire for a physical connection with the English soil also speaks to his connection to the aims of the ER.

This desire for a slower lifestyle also lends itself to descriptions of Finzi's compositional process. By most standards he was an exceedingly slow writer often refining compositions over periods of several years. In his art song, this was a way to ensure that each line of music clearly expressed the inner intention of the text. Both Finzi biographers, Banfield and McVeagh, have stated that this making figuring out his compositional process and dating his complete work quite difficult.<sup>63</sup> Finzi was reported to have written one line at a time, waiting until the perfect musical idea struck him.<sup>64</sup>

From my own observation of his archival materials at the Bodleian Library in Oxford, his process seems to have begun with selection of text first. Pages and pages of potential texts typewritten on sheets of paper or clipped from the newspaper.. Settings of individual lines are occasionally handwritten next to the poetry. Finzi's wife, Joy recounts in her journals that it was common for Finzi to be struck suddenly by inspiration for the setting of a single line of text. Many of these initial attempts appear to have then laid dormant waiting for their completion.<sup>65</sup>

Finzi's sketchbooks, likewise, show very fragmentary ideas, also often only single phrases or lines of text. However, that which does survive of his sketches are shockingly close the final musical products. Several strophes of his Shakespeare settings appear in their entirety

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<sup>62</sup> Diana McVeagh. *Gerald Finzi: his life and music*. (Woodbridge: Boydell Press, 2005), 100.

<sup>63</sup> Diana McVeagh. *Gerald Finzi: his life and music*. (Woodbridge: Boydell Press, 2005), vii.; Stephen Banfield. *Gerald Finzi : an English composer*. (London: Faber, 1997), 143.

<sup>64</sup> Stephen Banfield. *Sensibility and English song: critical studies of the early 20th century*. (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1985), 275.

<sup>65</sup> *Ibid.* 275

with few deviations from the print copies for publication. However, in most cases few intermediate drafts remain in between the initial sketches and final publication.<sup>66</sup> This is most likely representative of Finzi's desire to share only what he considered his best and most completed work as well as his ability to work through poetry line by line.

Fortunately Finzi's own words on his compositional process survive in his notes for the Crees' Lectures given at the Royal College of Music in 1954.<sup>67</sup> These lectures, which survive in the form of Finzi's handwritten notes and a partial script in the Bodleian Library as well as an edited version on the Finzi Trust's website, give great insight into his own thoughts on his music and compositional process. They help to further elucidate Finzi's extreme care in text setting and the reasons behind his fascination with English poetry.

Most prominent throughout is the idea that "native song comes from native text."<sup>68</sup> In Finzi's eyes only English composers could adequately connect with and understand both the meaning, grammatical structure, and culture behind English poetry. Only in understanding each of these could a truly apt setting be created. Thus, English composers must set only English texts, leaving those of other languages to their native speakers. Finzi even bashes some of Parry's early songs in German, for simply expressing the meaning of the text while ignoring the underlying linguistic structure and cultural context. In order to uncover the true meaning, and thus create meaningful music, a composer must understand not only the overall sentiment of the text, but how each word functions both in the context of the poem and the national culture.

A second overall theme is that composers must only set texts with which they have a personal connection. To quote Finzi's paraphrase of Shakespeare, "Bright is the ring of words

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<sup>66</sup> Gerald Finzi. Sketchbooks A-F. MSS. Mus e.57-82. Bodleian Library, Oxford University, Oxford, U.K.

<sup>67</sup> Gerald Finzi. "The Crees Lectures." The Finzi Trust. Ed. Diana McVeagh, November 2007, [http://geraldfinzi.org/01-about/crees\\_lectures.php](http://geraldfinzi.org/01-about/crees_lectures.php).

<sup>68</sup> Ibid.

when the right man rings them.’ Conversely, dull is the ring of words when the wrong man rings them.”<sup>69</sup> Text selection to Finzi should not be about finding what is current and popular, but what the composer can relate to on a personal level. Without a personal connection, the composer can never craft a convincing musical counterpart to the already established poem. This does a great deal in explaining the vast number for Thomas Hardy settings in Finzi’s output. As Finzi felt a personal connection to Hardy’s work he set a large amount of it.<sup>70</sup>

Finzi uses these ideas as a justification of his slow compositional process. To use his metaphor, true composition is not an exercise completed like a student for their teacher. In order to properly set the text, the composer should be meticulous in following the natural rhythm, accent, and contour of the poem as if it were being recited. In doing so one can be sure that they are elucidating the meaning that appears behind the surface rather than just setting text to music. Finzi talks about leaving the poem “simmering in his mind for years” only to emerge as “winged words.”<sup>71</sup> He thought of his meticulous drafting process as a benefit to the text rather than a detriment to the size of his output.

Finally, Finzi makes reference to his work in the context of the British national movement. His outlook is similar to that of Vaughan Williams, driven by his English upbringing and text selection rather than an overt attempt to create a national music. Finzi, as an Englishman setting English texts thus has no choice but to create British national music. Even if musical styles and tastes change, for Finzi native text set by a native composer will always result in national music<sup>72</sup>.

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<sup>69</sup> Ibid.

<sup>70</sup> Ibid.

<sup>71</sup> Ibid.

<sup>72</sup> Ibid.

Setting process aside, several other characteristics of Finzi's taste and style aligned with the renaissance, most notably a general dislike of musical progressivism. He much preferred the work of Vaughan Williams and Parry to that of contemporaries like Benjamin Britten. Finzi referred to himself as "allergic" to Britten's music, categorizing it in letters as "absolute piffle; undigested piffle at that."<sup>73</sup> However, Finzi did recognize that new music, even Britten, deserved a place at the table, even if he had no desire to write in the same style. This quote from a letter to his composition student Kenneth Leighton, illustrates his feelings well:

"These little miseries, who spend their time putting a microscope to 3 bars of Schonberg [*sic*] and imagining that they are getting inside music are something of a menace. They try to narrow the language of music down to one particular idiom. I take it that the experience of art implies a widening of understanding and there's no reason why we shouldn't appreciate Schonberg or Walton, or Rubbra, V.W., Elgar, you, or anyone else whose mind is worth knowing."<sup>74</sup>

Thus Finzi was not a close-minded conservative, but simply a man who knew what he liked. He simply wrote and engaged most heavily with the idiom that spoke to him most, that of the ER.

Finzi also had a great interest in the publication and performance of British music from earlier eras. Finzi also spent time researching and preparing new editions of work by little known English Baroque composers for performance with an amateur group he founded near his home in Ashmansworth, the Newbury String Players. This, along with his personal library's extensive collection of English literature show his interest in supporting the entirety of Britain's cultural

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<sup>73</sup> Diana McVeagh. *Gerald Finzi: his life and music*. (Woodbridge: Boydell Press, 2005), 145

<sup>74</sup> Various, Compiled and Edited by Rolf Jordan. 2007. *The Clock of the Years: A Gerald and Joy Finzi Anthology*. (Lichfield: Chosen Press.), 56

history.<sup>75</sup> In many ways Finzi took his cues from the Tudor Revival, attempting to restore and celebrate works from an earlier flowering of cultures.

The most difficult aspect of Finzi's biography is how he reconciled his struggle with heritage with his desire to continue the creation of a British idiom. Finzi, although raised a British citizen was in fact Italian and Jewish in heritage. Finzi chose to reject his background in order to craft a new identity as a British composer. In many ways this explains his obsession with the preservation and continuation of British musical culture; it was a method of identity creation. This idea is explored extensively in Stephen Banfield's biography *Gerald Finzi: an English Composer*.<sup>76</sup> If Finzi's definition of a national composer is a person raised in the native culture and connected to its heritage, he certainly meets the standard regardless of his own background.

### **CONNECTING FINZI'S VOICE TO THE RENAISSANCE**

Finzi's biography connects heavily to the ideas of the ER, as does his music. His care in setting texts by British poets, his balanced use of consonance and dissonance within the confines of the tonal system, and the general folk-like quality of his work are all clear markers of his position in the movement.<sup>77</sup> However, Finzi was able to build on the work of his predecessors having been brought up in the movement, internalizing their style as he developed his own. In comparing and contrasting several settings of the same texts by Finzi and other renaissance era composers these stylistic connections will be made clearer.

As a majority of renaissance song literature focuses on setting of distinctly British poetry, this study focuses on settings of Shakespeare. Not only is Shakespeare quintessentially British, it also connects directly to the aims of the Tudor Revival, discussed above. In addition, these

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<sup>75</sup> Diana McVeagh. *Gerald Finzi: his life and music*. (Woodbridge: Boydell Press, 2005), 209.

<sup>76</sup> Stephen Banfield. *Gerald Finzi : an English composer*. (London: Faber, 1997).

<sup>77</sup> Stephen Banfield. *Sensibility and English song: critical studies of the early 20th century*. (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1985), 277.

poems were set by multiple composers throughout the period making for an easy comparison between settings. The three texts used here, “Come Away Death” and “Oh Mistress Mine” both from *Twelfth Night* and “Fear No More the Heat of the Sun” from *Cymbeline* represent some of the most commonly set of Shakespeare’s texts in the period.<sup>78</sup> However, these same texts produced a wide diversity of settings explored below.

Finzi generally pushed the confines of the renaissance idiom in pursuit of more direct expression of his reading of the text using these methods: increased harmonic complexity, more direct following of the poetic meter, and use of the piano as more equal musical partner. In exploring how Finzi uses each of these techniques his distinctive voice as a closing figure in the renaissance becomes clear. Comparing and contrasting Finzi’s settings of the three texts mentioned above with settings by Hubert Parry, Roger Quilter, and Ralph Vaughan Williams, illustrates well Finzi’s connection to the music of the renaissance and his ability to stretch its characteristic sound to its limits.

Although a detailed harmonic analysis would reveal myriad of links between each of these works, I will avoid repetition and instead compare in detail small sections of each pair showcasing how one particular aspect of Finzi’s style expands on that of his predecessors Rather than an exhaustive comparison between works this should serve to give a basic framework to study Finzi’s role in the ER.

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<sup>78</sup> Trevor Hold, *Parry to Finzi: Twenty English Song Composers*. (Woodbridge: Boydell Press, 2005), 12.

## **Come Away Death**

|   |   |
|---|---|
| Come away, come away, death,            | Not a flower, not a flower sweet,               |
| And in sad cypress let me be laid.      | On my black coffin let there be strown.         |
| Fly away, fly away, breath;             | Not a friend, not a friend greet                |
| I am slain by a fair cruel maid.        | My poor corpse, where my bones shall be thrown. |
| My shroud of white, stuck all with yew, | A thousand thousand sighs to save,              |
| O, prepare it!                          | Lay me, O, where                                |
| My part of death, no one so true        | Sad true lover never find my grave,             |
| Did share it.                           | To weep there! <sup>79</sup>                    |

Finzi and Quilter's settings of "Come Away Death" do well to express the speaker's despair at having been "slain by a fair, cruel maid." Throughout this strophic poem, they outline the preparations required for their funeral, readying the coffin and the funeral shroud, ensuring they are laid to rest "where sad true lover never find my grave." It is from this melancholy atmosphere that these two settings spring, expressing the same text in two different ways

The settings use a variety of the same tactics to accomplish similar goals. Both settings feature lyrical and largely syllabic settings of the text in minor keys. The similarity of most interest here are the melismatic setting of the words "To weep." This is a clear attempt to connect the text with a musical gesture that suggests mourning. Diving deeper into these melismas will help to draw clear distinctions between the two composers' styles showing how Finzi pushed the renaissance idiom ahead.

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<sup>79</sup> Gerald Finzi. *Let Us Garlands Bring*. (London: Boosey & Hawkes, 1942.)

Figure 1a. Quilter, Op. 6 No. 1 “Come Away Death” mm. 40-42

The musical score consists of three systems. The first system shows the vocal line with the lyrics "to weep" and the piano accompaniment. The second system shows the vocal line with the lyrics "there." and the piano accompaniment. The piano accompaniment features a cadential progression:  $V^6_4$  (German augmented 6th),  $V^5_3$  (7th chord), and I (C major). A red box highlights a 4-3 suspension in the alto voice of the piano part. The vocal line includes performance markings such as *mf*, *espressivo*, and *mp*.

Figure 1a.<sup>80</sup> shows Quilter’s setting with a brief harmonic analysis. A standard cadential progression used placing the melisma over a cadential 6/4 clearly leading to a perfect authentic cadence in C major. This mode mixture is of some interest as the rest of the piece revolves around c minor. I believe it effectively suggest a sense of rest or acceptance by the speaker of the poem as they come to terms with their mortality. Other moments of harmonic interest include the German augmented 6th chord that opens the selected passage, increasing the tension into the release of the cadence. A 4-3 suspension in alto voice of the piano delaying the introduction of B natural over the 7th of the chord provides additional agitation into the cadence. Although these devices are effective in conveying the text, they are quite standard methods in tonal harmony.

Comparison of these excerpts side by side show the main difference between the settings of these two melismas, a major increase in harmonic complexity. Even a simple visual comparison makes this clear. Although both aim to heighten the harmonic strain before its cadential release Finzi’s heavily figured music echoes the speaker’s inner tempest even further.

<sup>80</sup> Roger Quilter. *Three Shakespeare Songs*. (London: Boosey & Co. 1906.)



**Figure 1b.** shows how the voice moves against the bass throughout creating a chain of suspensions that tug against the prevailing harmonies (boxed in green). Descending eighth note patterns consisting of neighboring non-chord tones in the right hand of the piano (circled in blue) also furthers the idea that the music is nearly spinning out of control, reinforcing the singer's keening melody.

**Figure 1b. Finzi, Op. 18, No. 1 "Come Away Death" mm. 69-76**

**bm: iv Fr. +6**

**i vii7 i**

Further exploration of the cadence boxed in red in **Figure 1b**.<sup>81</sup> shows a very different procedure than Quilter's analyzed above. Beginning in the fourth full bar of the example above with an e minor chord, this may be expected to function as a traditional pre-dominant. Following it is what at first glance may appear to be a C-sharp augmented chord, however it is in fact an oddly voiced French sixth (Fr+6) with scale degree one omitted and scale degree two in the bass rather than the expected sharp scale degree four. This voicing certainly comes as a surprise even though the harmony could be expected after a more traditional predominant.

Following this things become slightly, but not totally, harmonically unhinged. A strong dominant is expected following a French sixth, in this case F-sharp major. Although scale degree five appears in the bass the complete chord here is b minor, and is further obscured by an accented neighbor in the soprano voice of the piano on the downbeat. This comes as somewhat of a surprise after a strong predominant. One might wonder if this is an attempt at a cadential 6/4, however, the chord that follows obliterates that hypothesis. The final chord before the cadence is not V or V<sup>7</sup>, but an a-minor seventh chord built off of lowered scale degree seven in b minor with scale degree four in the bass.

Why then does this passage function cadentially if it contains few of the ingredients for a traditional cadence? By leaping from E to B in the bass and introducing C natural a certain pull towards B can still be felt. In addition the previous harmonies and the rest of the piece cement B major as tonic, even though this cadence serves as a harmonic detour. Although not a traditional cadence this pseudo-plagal motion still serves to provide closure reaffirming B as tonic.

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<sup>81</sup> Gerald Finzi. *Let Us Garlands Bring*. (London: Boosey & Hawkes, 1942.)

Figure 1c. Score Reduction of Finzi's "Come Away Death" mm. 69-76

bm c#dim bm em bm em Fr+6 bm am7 bm

bm: i ii6 i/F# iv6 i/F# iv Fr+6 i vii7 i

The reduction of this section into two voices with suspensions removed provided in **Figure 1c**.<sup>82</sup> showcases what a difference harmony and figuration can make, especially when compared to the full score in **Figure 1b**. The notes in parentheses represent the figurations in the vocal line. The harmony with the exception of the cadential progression in the red box is relatively conventional. It is largely the rhythmic figuration here that provides the majority of the complexity combined with some non-conventional, yet tonal, harmonies. This also demonstrates the larger role the piano plays as a more equal partner in Finzi's setting. It is not just accompaniment, but assists in conveying the emotion in the text. This section, though brief, shows how Finzi's use of extended harmonies only serve to further express the emotional content of the poetry, a consistent feature throughout his setting of "Come Away Death."

This excerpts studied above clearly demonstrate how Finzi took up the mantle of the renaissance and expanded on it. Both Finzi's and Quilter's melismas feature similar lyrical writing and both serve to enhance the text. However, it is clear even just by visual comparison that Finzi's is more complex in scope and size, and more clearly communicating the speaker of the poem's distraught emotions through dissonance. One setting is not better or worse than the

<sup>82</sup> Gerald Finzi. *Let Us Garlands Bring*. (London: Boosey & Hawkes, 1942.)

other. On the contrary, because composers like Quilter laid the groundwork establishing a set of rules, Finzi was able to push them to their limits using the larger set of musical tools available to him. This brief excerpt serves as just one example of how increased harmonic complexity allowed Finzi to further the goals of the ER using his own compositional voice.

### **Oh Mistress Mine**

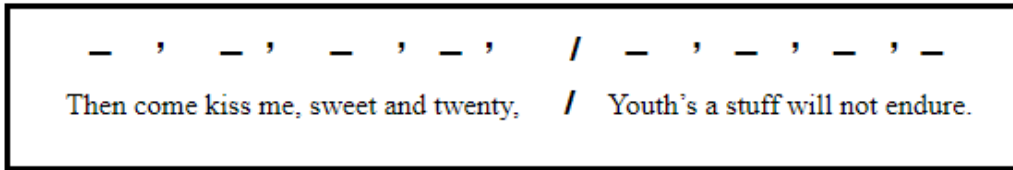
|  |  |
|--|--|
| O Mistress mine, where are you roaming?    | What is love? 'Tis not hereafter;              |
| O, stay and hear; your true love's coming, | Present mirth hath present laughter;           |
| That can sing both high and low:           | What's to come is still unsure:                |
| Trip no further, pretty sweeting;          | In delay there lies not plenty;                |
| Journeys end in lovers meeting,            | Then, come kiss me, sweet and twenty,          |
| Every wise man's son doth know.            | Youth's a stuff will not endure. <sup>83</sup> |

The text of “Oh Mistress Mine” begins as a love poem, but in its second strophe hints at a broader theme. One should enjoy love not only because it brings joy and pleasure, but also because one can never be sure of what the future holds. Youth and love may not last, so one must be sure to enjoy them while they can. Although a rather convincing argument, it sets up an interesting question for those that choose to set the text. Is the speaker aware of how their words touch on this deeper idea of mortality, or are they just looking to convince someone into a little “present mirth?” This execution of this question sits at the heart of Parry and Finzi’s settings of the text, reaching two very different outcomes largely because of their treatment of the text.

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<sup>83</sup> Gerald Finzi. *Let Us Garlands Bring*. (London: Boosey & Hawkes, 1942.)

**Figure 2a. Scansion of the final two lines of “Oh Mistress Mine”**



**Figure 2a.** shows the poetic scanning of the final two lines of the poem, its emotional climax. Long syllables are represented by \_ and short syllables by ‘. Note how alternating long and short syllables gives the poetry an lilting, sing-song, feel. Speaking this text aloud while keeping a steady beat showcases this nicely, especially if a breath is taken between the two lines. Comparing how both Parry and Finzi work with and against this established meter speaks volumes about their respective styles.

**Figure 2b. Parry, English Lyrics Set 2, No. 1 “Oh Mistress Mine” mm. 32-44 - Vocal Line<sup>84</sup>**



Parry takes this idea of poetic climax very literally, putting forth an explosion of energy that rolls until the final cadence. The dramatic change in dynamics from *piano* to *forte* in only seven measures, as well as the large crescendo on the high G, the highest note in the whole setting, certainly increases the drama and supports a more youthful interpretation of the poem.

<sup>84</sup> Hubert Parry. *English Lyrics: Second Set*. (London: Novello. 1895.)

The rhythm, however, does not exactly echo the scansion above. Clearly longer syllables receive greater rhythmic value as on kiss, sweet, youth's, and not. However, overall the lilting quality is lost as many of the short syllables are given their full due. "Sweet and twenty" not as one would speak it, but much snappier. The same is true of "not endure." In addition, there is no musical break to match the breath that one might take between lines of poetry. Instead the music barrels on through the line break to the high G

Missing from Parry's setting is the more reflective nature of the text. However, Finzi offers a slightly more balanced and contemplative setting. This is largely accomplished by the additional attention paid to reinforcing the meter of the poem with his setting of the text. Finzi works with rather than against its natural accent.

**Figure 2c. Finzi, Op. 18, No. 4 "Oh Mistress Mine" mm. 55-59 - Vocal Line**

*f* **ritard. poco** . . .

Then come kiss me, sweet and twen-ty,

*pp* **molto** . . . **a tempo**

Youth's a stuff will not en-dure.

Here Finzi more directly supports the lilting nature of the poetic meter. The rhythm of the excerpt in **Figure 2c.**<sup>85</sup> reads nearly identically to how it would be spoken. The tenuti and accents in the first two bars leave no question about the textual stress, while straight quarter notes in the voice support the iambic poetic foot, alternating stressed and unstressed syllables. The stronger

<sup>85</sup> Gerald Finzi. *Let Us Garlands Bring*. (London: Boosey & Hawkes, 1942.)

accent on beat three in this first bar also helps to neutralize the natural accent of cut time. This maintains a more equal weight between each syllable not found in Parry's setting. Following this, every stressed syllable is of a longer rhythmic duration as on youth's, stuff, and not. However, the relationship in rhythmic value the unstressed syllables that follow is much more equal eliminating any sense of snapping. Finzi also respects the pause between lines of poetry with a rest and breath mark, making sure the singer pauses between lines before continuing.

What makes Finzi's setting seem more grounded and reflective than Parry's? The respect for the poetic meter certainly makes a difference, as do several other musical choices. Where Parry's is high intensity, pushing the rhythm all the way to the end, Finzi's takes time, even adding an additional beat to the meter and a *molto ritardando* to slow things down. Parry saves his melodic climax on the high G for this phrase, while Finzi writes largely in a lower register with smaller range. Finally Parry *crescendos* from *piano* to *forte* while Finzi *decrecendos* from *forte* to *pianissimo*. These events taken together paint a more plaintive air in Finzi's setting contrasting a much more light hearted opening section. Both of these settings are clearly written in the style of the ER, however Finzi's care for preserving the poetic meter showcases a more nuanced reading of what first appears a simple love poem.

### **Fear No More the Heat o' the Sun**

Fear no more the heat o' the sun,  
Nor the furious winter's rages;  
Thou thy worldly task hast done,  
Home art gone, and ta'en thy wages:  
Golden lads and girls all must,  
As chimney-sweepers, come to dust.

Fear no more the lightning flash,  
Nor the all-dreaded thunder stone;  
Fear not slander, censure rash;  
Thou hast finished joy and moan:  
All lovers young, all lovers must  
Consign to thee, and come to dust.

Fear no more the frown o' the great;  
Thou art past the tyrant's stroke;  
Care no more to clothe and eat;  
To thee the reed is as the oak:  
The scepter, learning, physic, must  
All follow this, and come to dust.

No exorciser harm thee!  
Nor no witchcraft charm thee!  
Ghost unlaid forbear thee!  
Nothing ill come near thee!  
Quiet consummation have;  
And renownèd be thy grave!<sup>86</sup>

“Fear No More the Heat o' the Sun” is a meditation on the inevitability of death. It is given as a sort of eulogy in *Cymbaline* for the disguised Imogen, presumed dead, but actually under the effects of a sleeping potion.<sup>87</sup> The effect of the text is meant to be both sad and reflective, while celebrating the fact that in death the trials and tribulations of life come to an end giving way to peaceful rest. The section studied here is the final stanza. It presents an interesting challenge in text setting, altering the prevailing meter and rhyme scheme. This metrical shift echoes the change in focus from melancholy observations about death to a direct benediction for

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<sup>86</sup> Gerald Finzi. *Let Us Garlands Bring*. (London: Boosey & Hawkes, 1942.)

<sup>87</sup> William Shakespeare. *Shakespeare's Tragedy of Cymbeline*. Edited by W. J. Rolfe. (New York: Harper & Bros. 1885.)



the deceased. Comparing both Vaughan Williams's and Finzi's setting of this stanza show some startling similarities in compositional tactics which clearly connect the two composers' work

Although the Vaughan Williams is for a duet for two voices it still shares a great deal with Finzi's setting. Interestingly, Finzi dedicated this, and many of his other Shakespeare settings to Vaughan Williams on the event of his 70th birthday, although this cannot prove that one directly influenced the other. However It does highlight the connection and friendship between these two men, personally and professionally. In any case this serves as a clear example of how Finzi's style was directly developed out of his predecessors'

**Figure 3a. Vaughan Williams, "Dirge for Fidele" mm. 66-69**

The image shows a musical score for three parts: two voices and piano. The key signature is three sharps (F#, C#, G#) and the time signature is 4/4. The first voice part begins with the instruction *pp quasi recit.* and the lyrics "No ex-or-cis-er harm — thee!". The second voice part also begins with *pp quasi recit.* and the lyrics "Nor no witch-craft charm — thee!". The piano accompaniment is marked *pp colla voce* and features sustained chords and moving lines in both hands. The score spans measures 66 to 69.

Figure 3b. Finzi Op. 18 No. 3 “Fear No More the Heat o’ the Sun” mm. 58-62

The image displays a musical score for the vocal and piano parts of the song "Fear No More the Heat o' the Sun" by Gerald Finzi. The score is written in a key signature of three flats (B-flat, E-flat, A-flat) and a 3/4 time signature. The vocal line is marked with a dynamic of *p* (piano). The piano accompaniment is marked with *pp* (pianissimo). The lyrics are: "No ex - or - cis - er harm thee! Nor no witch - craft charm thee!". The vocal line begins with a long note on the pitch of "No", followed by a melodic line that rises to emphasize "er" and then descends. The piano accompaniment consists of long, sustained chords that provide a harmonic backdrop for the vocal line.

The side by side comparison of **Figures 3a.**<sup>88</sup> and **3b.**<sup>89</sup> show some direct commonalities. The construction of the vocal lines in both of these selections is shockingly similar. Both composers choose to begin each line with the singer intoning on one pitch. The music then emphasizes the second to last word in each line with ornamentation or a registral accent. This melodic contour brings greater attention to the rhyme scheme, but is also reminiscent of chant, a musical idiom that one might associate with funeral proceedings, connecting directly with the content of the text.

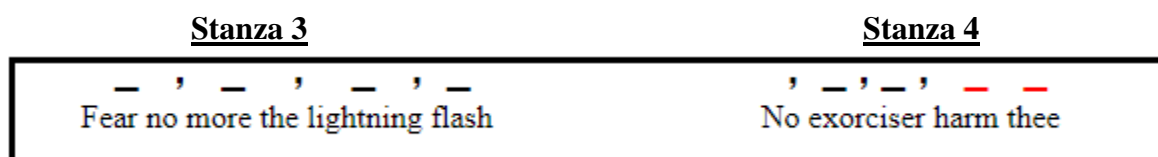
The treatment of the piano is also nearly identical. Long sustained chords leave space for the singer to perform this section almost as recitative, something which Vaughan Williams

<sup>88</sup> Ralph Vaughan Williams. *Dirge for Fidele*. (London: Boosey & Hawkes, 1961.)

<sup>89</sup> Gerald Finzi. *Let Us Garlands Bring*. (London: Boosey & Hawkes, 1942.)

clearly intended having written it directly into the voice and piano parts. Finzi further this idea of keeping this section in less strict time by placing the chord changes on weak beats, further obscuring the natural accent of the meter. Prior to this section in both settings the piano features a much busier chorale like accompaniment in triple meter. This stark contrast in texture and time draws attention to the speaker of the poem’s shift in focus from external thoughts about death to a blessing for the deceased.

**Figure 3c. Scansion of First Lines: Stanza 3 and Stanza 4**



The change common time for this section alone also better supports the poetic meter, outlined in **Figure 3c**. Note that the meter in stanza three alternates short and long syllables lending itself well to the lilting quality of a compound meter. In stanza four, however several lines end with two long syllables or spondees. This metrical change lends itself better to a more even duple meter. This also goes along with the change in rhyme scheme in this final stanza. Where the first three stanzas are quatrains with alternating rhyming lines followed by a single rhyming couplet, the last stanza is a quatrain that use the same rhyme on each line, followed by a single rhyming couplet. Thus changing the musical meter supports the poetry.

These two settings of “Fear No More the Heat o’ the Sun” appear more alike than the settings of other texts compared above. Their similarities show that both composers had a great understanding of the texts that they set on a deep level, directly connecting their styles within the renaissance idiom.

In all of three of brief cases studied above, Quilter, Parry, and Vaughan Williams, clear links can be made between each pair of settings. However, several key differences show how

Finzi expanded on the influence of these composers with his own voice. Increasing the harmonic complexity, respecting the poetic meter at all costs, and designing piano accompaniments that act as an equal partner with the voice allow his settings to portray the emotional heart of the text extremely deliberately and directly.

Although Finzi's output may not have been the largest, it did a great deal to develop and bring to a close a movement began a generation before striving to create a truly British musical idiom. Lyrical folk-like settings of classic British poetry paired with a judicious balance between consonance and dissonance was its aim. In Finzi it surely succeeds.

## **DISCUSSION AND CONCLUSION**

Finzi and his music bloomed near the end of a brief flourishing of British song in the English Musical Renaissance. In the face of Finzi's success expanding the movement the question remains: to what extent did the ER achieve its goals? Some earlier scholarship by Frank Howes argues that it was entirely successful. New schools of music were founded, composers developed an idiomatic style, and this style was passed down through the educational system to be developed by their successors. The successful dissemination of these ideas as well as the sheer amount of new British music written and performed during the period serve as hallmarks of prosperity.<sup>90</sup> However, more recent scholarship challenges this claim, and the supposition that English is a worthwhile descriptor for the period at all.

Meirion Hughes and Robert Stradling paint a very different picture than Howes citing English composers reliance on the ideas from German musical tradition. They argue that because the movement was based around a conservative Mendelssohnian (i.e. German) style there was no way it could ever escape the confines of the Germanic tradition. In addition, Parry and Stanford

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<sup>90</sup> Frank Howes. *The English musical renaissance*. (London: Secker & Warburg, 1996.)

were educated in Germany, while Vaughan Williams trained in Germany and France.<sup>91</sup> Even Frank Howes realized that the movement was largely German in origin writing, “Parry and Stanford, with their German training, hoped to grow an English tree by planting German cuttings in English soil.”<sup>92</sup> The press largely ignored this instead endorsing their English cultural heritage regardless of their training.<sup>93</sup>

Hughes and Stradling also rail against the movement as being deliberately constructed by social elites like George Grove, who hand-picked Parry and Stanford to lead the RCM because of their conservative style and upper class status.<sup>94</sup> Because their music suited upper class tastes, they became the poster children of the movement. Thus, two relatively unknown composers were transformed into national heroes for adhering to social norms and rejecting musical progressivism. These ideas spread not organically, but through massive press campaigns in daily London and regional newspapers containing stellar reviews only of works that fit the renaissance mold.<sup>95</sup> Those that were deemed too avant-garde were lambasted, never receiving repeat performances or publication offers.<sup>96</sup>

Abroad, the music of the renaissance received little play and few positive reviews being labeled as too conservative especially as musical movements like impressionism, expressionism, and non-tonality were developing in the early 20th century.<sup>97</sup> Hughes and Stradling question if

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<sup>91</sup> Stradling, R. A. and Meirion Hughes *The English musical Renaissance 1860-1940 : construction and deconstruction*. (London : Routledge, 1993.), 98, 180.

<sup>92</sup> Frank Howes. *The English musical renaissance*. (London: Secker & Warburg, 1996.) 68.

<sup>93</sup> Hughes, Meirion. *The English Musical Renaissance and the Press 1850-1914 : Watchmen of Music*. (Aldershot: Ashgate, 2002), 1-13.

<sup>94</sup> Stradling, R. A. and Meirion Hughes *The English musical Renaissance 1860-1940 : construction and deconstruction*. (London : Routledge, 1993.), 181-5

<sup>95</sup> Hughes, Meirion. *The English Musical Renaissance and the Press 1850-1914 : Watchmen of Music*. (Aldershot: Ashgate, 2002), 1-13.

<sup>96</sup> *Ibid.* 7.

<sup>97</sup> Stradling, R. A. and Meirion Hughes *The English musical Renaissance 1860-1940 : construction and deconstruction*. (London : Routledge, 1993.), 31.

the rise of Benjamin Britten was the final nail in the coffin for the renaissance, as he became an international success pursuing much of progressivism the renaissance advocated against.<sup>98</sup> Much like the earlier example of Elgar, his fame was able to shift the press in his favor against the will of the renaissance establishment.

How should this period be remembered? Is it as Howes' glorious flowering of new English culture, or Hughes and Stradlings' elitist German pastiche? I believe that the answer is somewhere between these two extremes. Recent scholarship by Tim Rayborn also supports this more moderate view.<sup>99</sup> The ER was not the all-encompassing success that Howes describes, given its lack of international renown and its leadership from German trained English composers writing in a Mendelssohnian style. However, clear connections and developments can be traced between the styles of composers like Parry, Stanford, Quilter, Holst, Vaughan Williams, and Finzi. Their music may be tinted Germanic, but is certainly not German. English folk music, lyrical melodies, harmonies favoring consonance over dissonance, use of British texts, and a desire to depict English country life all link these composers' unique voices.

Perhaps most importantly, those composers who took up the renaissance label, Finzi included, felt deeply that they were creating a new national music.<sup>100</sup> This may not be obvious from study of their compositions alone, but creating British music was their surely their intention. Just as Finzi conveyed in his Creech's lectures, a composer raised in a national culture absorbs its national style and cannot help but write national music. To quote Finzi directly,

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<sup>98</sup> Ibid. 242

<sup>99</sup> Rayborn, Tim. *A new English music : composers and folk traditions in England's musical renaissance from the late 19th to the mid-20th century*. (Jefferson, North Carolina : McFarland & Company, Inc. 2016.), 11-38.

<sup>100</sup> Diana McVeagh. *Gerald Finzi: his life and music*. (Woodbridge: Boydell Press, 2005), 264.

“When will people realize how unimportant the notes of music are compared with the mind which uses the notes?”<sup>101</sup> Perhaps the composers’ intentions overrule what appears on the page.

Finzi’s contribution to this movement, regardless of its place in history, cannot be ignored. As studied above his biography, his philosophy, and his music are clearly connected in style and intent to key renaissance composers like Hubert Parry, Ralph Vaughan Williams, and Roger Quilter. However, rather than writing directly in their voice, he pushed the scope of the renaissance idiom to its limit introducing a broader use of dissonance, creating phrases that directly echo the poetic meter, and designing collaborative piano that supports and furthers the meaning of the text often independent of the singer. With these contributions he created settings of British poetry that clearly and deliberately express the emotional heart of the texts themselves.

Finzi’s story serves to illustrate that even when using largely the same material- folk song, references to British History, use of texts by British authors, and depictions of British pastoralism- there is always more to be said. Entire movements are defined not just by the actions of individuals like Finzi, but also those of the press, the public, the government, academic institutions, historians, and a whole slew of other societal forces shaping our understanding of the past. Finzi, and others like him, may not be the most well-known and performed, but the study of their work shows how movements grow, develop, and come to a close, making way for new ideas. Whether Finzi and other members of English Musical Renaissance truly created a new British idiom is up for debate. Successful or not in this aim, they certainly believed their actions expressed British national identity and would outlast them far into the future. To quote the oft used words of Gerald Finzi, “A song outlasts a dynasty.”<sup>102</sup>

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<sup>101</sup> Gerald Finzi to Anthony Scott. January 18, 1948, Box 9, Gerald Finzi Papers, Bodleian Library, Oxford University, U.K..

<sup>102</sup> Diana McVeagh. *Gerald Finzi: his life and music*. (Woodbridge: Boydell Press, 2005), viii.

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