

The Main Solo Songs of the 1920s (1924-1928)

Introduction

Milford's musical style was not innovatory in terms of melody, harmony, texture or tonal development. Although quite "personal" in concept, it shows mild influences of nineteenth-century "Romanticism" and twentieth-century Europe (ranging from Sibelius or Mahler, of whom Milford was particularly fond, to the more experimental features of the second Viennese school). More importantly, Milford's musical style was founded, both initially and continuously, on the "English" school, involving English folk-song and *Renaissance* music). Milford's musical style is distinctive and "English" in the broadest sense.

A strong sense of communication and imagery was all-important to Milford throughout his output but, in particular, in the songs and choral works. The majority of his compositions were programmatic to some degree (involving the illumination of titles, texts, quotations or imagery). The descriptive writing which follows, in this and the following chapters, focuses on such illumination through Milford's musical features. Again, there is nothing innovatory in such illumination but it is the craftsmanship, dedication and close correlation between Milford's sensitivity to English literature, temperament and social/musical backgrounds which the following considerations seek to highlight.

Unlike some of his contemporaries, Milford composed songs throughout his life. Showing succinct development, Milford's songs for solo voice and piano can be considered in three groups - early, middle and late. The early group consists of those songs composed during the 1920s, as shown below.

Song	Composition Date	Publication Date	Original Publisher
'The Moor'	pre-1924	1925	OUP
'The Fiddler of Dooney'	pre-1925	1925	OUP
'On His Mistress'	1925	1926	OUP
'Old Age'	pre-1928	1928	OUP

From his early songs onwards, Milford can be considered as a successful song composer through his particular use of musical features interacting with texts. He

clearly saw his songs as a medium through which to express the message and imagery of a poem, achieving an enhanced level of artistic experience. This use of music transcends basic musical techniques such as word-painting, word-highlighting, colourful harmony and obvious overall texture into an area of subtlety which enables the listener to initially recognise and retain memorable features which serve as the foundation or backcloth to each song. Like many of his contemporaries, Milford was good at creating this dimension. Developing from the style of Stanford and Parry, the main aspect of interest with these songs is the manner in which each unfolds within its individual style through melody, tonality, harmony and texture.

The many letters written by Milford to Kirstie during the years of their engagement supply a wealth of information about the composer and his temperament. In some of these the composer expresses some of his deepest and most personal feelings, including the need for security. Kirstie's importance to Milford also involved composition, emphasised by Anne Ridler who stated, "Among the influences of the 20s [was] that of his [Robin's] wife; and it was her beautiful soprano voice that inspired him to write his best songs".¹ Musically, Kirstie had a profound influence on Milford throughout their married life. As a solo singer, she not only discussed poetry and the settings of poems to music but she also sang a number of her husband's works. Describing the occasion of their engagement, Anne Ridler wrote, "I well remember the Christmas when Robin and Kirstie Newsom were engaged, and he brought her to stay, and accompanied her as she sang his hymn to the words 'God who has created me nimble and light of limb' – written for the new hymnbook, *Songs of Praise*, 1931."²

The Songs

The songs of this period reflect the composer's joy in his marriage to Kirstie, his philosophical and humorous temperament, his appreciation of poetry ranging from the Jacobean period to that of the twentieth century, and his respect for his uncle and housemaster at Rugby.

The first main song for solo voice and piano is entitled 'The Moor'. It belongs to *Three Songs of the Moors*, a set of songs written before 1924 and published by Oxford University Press in 1925. The first and third songs, 'The Gipsy Girl' and 'Meg Merrilies', are not truly representative of solo song as an art form, emphasised by the fact that both were published by Banks Publications as unison songs for choir.

'The Moor'

¹ Anne Ridler letter to Peter Hunter, 31 March, 1991

² Anne Ridler letter to Peter Hunter, 31 March, 1991

This is the second and most important song in the set, and can be considered as truly belonging to the genre of solo song because of its depth and breadth. This song is a setting of a three-verse poem by Ralph Hodgson (1871-1962) in which the poet reflects on what life has to offer an elderly man in terms of the remainder of his days, his death and the life hereafter. The intensity of the poem is highlighted by a comment made by Siegfried Sassoon “R.H. has the most religious mind I know. By that I mean he is passionately concerned with goodness. Poetry is the central point of his religion.”³ The mysticism and spirituality inherent in Hodgson’s poem would, most certainly, have greatly appealed to Milford. The overall philosophy of the poem is suggested by its setting in the E Aeolian mode.

The introduction (Ex.1) instantly creates a series of musical images. Weariness and the slower, plodding, pace of old age are suggested by repeated octave E’s in the bass within the ‘Larghetto’ tempo, while the rising contour through a seventh in bars 3-5 suggests movement forward and anticipation. Neighbour-note gestures (BAB and EDE), which become crucial repeating units throughout the song, suggest the mystery of pending death through the modal effect of the falling and rising 2nd. These gestures were employed by Mahler in a similar form during ‘Autumn Loneliness’ in *Song of the Earth*; Mahler’s motif, however, consists of a falling 3rd (DBD).

Ex. 1

The musical score for Ex. 1 is presented in a grand staff format, with a treble clef on the upper staff and a bass clef on the lower staff. The key signature is one sharp (F#), and the time signature is 3/4. The piece begins with a piano introduction marked 'pp ben legato'. The bass line consists of repeated octave E's, while the treble line features a rising contour through a seventh in bars 3-5. Neighbour-note gestures (BAB and EDE) are highlighted in the treble line. A first ending bracket is shown above the treble staff in bars 4-5. The score is numbered '1' at the beginning of the bass line.

In terms of the solo line, Milford’s use of rising 5th melodic gestures in quavers also suggests time moving forward. These were also employed by Finzi in late songs to suggest time moving forward, for example, the third phrase of ‘Proud Songsters’, while Mahler also employed a rising 5th in conjunct movement as part of the first theme (after the fall and rise of the 4th) in movement one of *Symphony No. 1*. Use of neighbour-note motifs in each verse create haunting conclusions to phrases, e.g. “dying day”, perhaps suggesting a ‘death’ motif (Ex.2),

³ Roberts (1999), *Siegfried Sassoon*, p. 255

Ex.2

shreds of dy - ing day.

18

and “get thee home” (Ex.3).

Ex.3

find - and get me home.

50

The falling 3rd melodic cell also creates a haunting conclusion to “moorland bare”(Ex.4),

Ex.4

moor - land bare, lit

15

while disjunct falling 5th melodic units decorate appropriate words, for example, “dropt” (Ex. 5).

Ex.5

fair, And dropt an old man

8

The accompaniment echo of the melody also contributes to the haunting images of this song (Ex.6).

Ex.6

still, A jour-ney -

29

The interlude between verses two and three creates tension before the arrival of death through such features as a rising contour to a top register, wider piano ranges, a gradual crescendo to fortissimo, chromaticism and gentle discords (Ex.7),

Ex.7

cresc.

f

42

while fortissimo piano figuration with a reference to the melody appropriately heralds the arrival of death (Ex.8).

Ex.8

ff

47

The climax of this poem, the arrival of death in verse four, is, however, in dramatic contrast to the fanfare-type previous two bars. It introduces death softly, almost as an apparition appearing quietly. The image of the “Heavenly Seraphim” continues with the melody moving into the left hand of the piano while the right sounds chords in the bright upper register (Ex.9).

Ex.9

p

"But thou art Death." "Of Heav-enly Ser - a

pp una corda

49

Harmonically, the mystery of old age and pending death are suggested through the constant return to the principal E chord and small use of chromatic added-note chords. The mystical flow of ‘The Moor’ is allowed to proceed without hindrance from strong dissonant or chromatic harmony. The simplicity of chords (for example, I, III, IV,V, VII) is paramount to this end. Similarly, the non-classical form of harmonic progression (for example, I, VII, IV, VII, IV, III I) in bars 6-10) helps to reflect the overall nature of Hodgson’s poem. In the final bars of the codetta (Ex.10), the uncertainty of death is illuminated through Milford’s avoidance of the very harmonic device which gives psychological security, V - I closure.

Ex.10

rit.

ppp

61

Issue could be taken with the composer’s use of a falling contour in verse three on the words “riding up the hill”. He might well, however, have employed a falling

contour as a point of irony – it is, in fact, Death riding up the hill as the old man is near his end and going, decisively, down the hill.

The reasons why Milford selected such a dark philosophical poem, with its shadows of old age and death, are intriguing given the composer's youth and relatively optimistic prospects. Its selection may highlight the pessimistic side of Milford's nature and his known affinity with older people. His empathy with the poem may even point to the fact that Milford was already suffering from the depression which ultimately claimed his life.

Similar to 'The Moor', Turnbull's haunting 'Guess, Guess' (1924) also employs winding quaver figuration, slow moving and sustained harmony. Turnbull's song, however, makes extended use of gentle chromaticism whereas 'The Moor' is almost unspoilt modality. Gibbs' profoundly haunting 'The Ballad of Semmerwater' is an altogether larger concept which, like 'The Moor' has its foundation in sustained harmony which permits recurring figuration depicting the text. Gibbs' song, however, can also be considered with reference to 'On His Mistress' and 'Elegy' through its larger concept, drama and form. Gibbs also employs repeated minor chords in 'The fields are full' (1920). Similar to Milford's depiction of an elderly man in 'The Moor', these chords depict the elderly couple in the poem. Gibbs also employs repeated (and oscillating) minor chords in 'Take heed, young heart' (1925), suggesting philosophical thoughts on the progression of time. As in 'The Moor', Gibbs also uses declamatory syllabic vocal writing in 'When I was one and twenty' (1921) to relate the poetic story. The repeated chords which Milford employs in 'The Moor' are also employed by Warlock and Finzi where, in both cases, they reflect movement as in Milford's song. Warlock employs such chords in 'The Cricketers' and 'Milkmaids', while Finzi uses them in 'Only the wanderer'. The neighbour-note unit, of which Milford was so fond in 'The Moor', is not prevalent in any of the songs by his contemporaries. Finzi employs a "plodding" chordal effect in 'Come away, come away, death', also underpinned by slow harmonic rhythm. Finzi, however, contrasts this texture with sections of flowing quavers and faster moving harmony. Unlike Milford, Finzi does not employ any suggestion the of a "death" motif.

The Fiddler of Dooney

Milford's second song, 'The Fiddler of Dooney' highlights the other extreme of his temperament. This song is a pre-1925 setting of the famous and light-hearted poem by W B Yeats (1865-1938). It employs an Irish folk-style through the use of off-beat harmony (possibly painting the movement of an Irish 'jaunting car'), melodic flattened 7ths and pentatonic implications (Ex.11).

Ex.11

fair. When we come at the end of time To Pe - ter sit-ting in state, He will

smile on the three - old - spi - rits, But call me first - thro' the gate; For the

21

26

'The Fiddler of Dooney' successfully captures the mood of Yeats' poem through such features as syncopation (giving a humorous character), triadic melodic construction (creating a melodic lift to the lyrics) and gentle chromaticism (adding colour). 'Chloris in the snow' was the first song composed by Turnbull (although it was not published until 1950). Here, Turnbull also creates a jaunting backcloth to his song through its frequent off-beats, tonic-dominant emphasis, flattened 7ths, melodic contours influenced by triads, controlled word-painting and conversation between voice and accompaniment. Turnbull's 'Piping down the valley wild' also features off-beat harmony and, like 'The Fiddler of Dooney', gives the piper a distinct character but, in this case, through the use of triplet rhythms. Turnbull's song is clearly more sophisticated in terms of harmony and texture. Like the rhythms in 'The Fiddler of Dooney', Warlock also employs off-beat rhythm in 'Jillian of Berry' to paint humour and Finzi in 'Proud Songsters' (celebrating the thrushes and other birds) and 'Rollicum-Rorum' to create the image of humorous relationships. Finzi, again, employs off-beat harmony in 'It was a lover and his lass' but on an altogether higher plane through the use of fast-moving harmony, and a more succinct melody and rhythm which subtly reflects the text in general and individual words (e.g. "hey ding a ding a ding").

Finally, 'The Fiddler of Dooney' suggests the possible influence of the "Celtic" movement, fashionable during the early years of the twentieth century (commencing with Stanford and reaching a climax with Bax and Moeran).

On His Mistress

The third song of the period, 'On His Mistress' (1925) is more complex, suggesting a development in Milford's musical style. It is a setting of a poem by Sir Henry Wotton in praise of Elizabeth of Bohemia. The poem was not published until 1651, but was probably written about 1620. Since James I died in 1625, it can be accurately described as Jacobean. Elizabeth was James' daughter. She married the Elector Palatine, hence the reference to Bohemia.

Milford's setting of Wotton's poem demonstrates the breadth of the composer's youthful literary interest. Clearly, interest in historical themes and literature outweighed his personal emotional anxieties and expressions. Through his setting of 'On His Mistress', Milford displayed not only his breadth of knowledge of English literature but also of mythology. The accompaniment of 'On His Mistress' is a fine example of the "dialogue" form of accompaniment which Milford quickly introduced into his song composition. It employs a form of accompaniment alongside the one which simply gives harmonic support, as in 'The Moor' and 'The Fiddler of Dooney'.

'On His Mistress' demonstrates Milford's strengthening musical imagery, not only through melodic contours and harmony, but also through variation within the accompaniment of a strophic song. Although looking back to an ayre form of accompaniment, the replacement of the chordal accompaniment with lighter textures in verse three, looks ahead to the form of texture which becomes such a feature in the songs of the 1930s.

Imaginative touches in 'On His Mistress' (1925) include opening contrary motion suggesting Elizabeth's approach (Ex.12),

Ex.12



a pedal with countermelody above the voice line painting the drone of the “chanters of the wood” (Ex.13),

Ex.13 *mp*

You cur - ious chant - ers of the

22

short imitative phrases suggesting violets appearing one by one (Ex.14),

Ex.14

raise? You vi - o - lets that first ap - pear, By

36

and rising arpeggiation painting Elizabeth’s “form and beauty” (Ex.15).

Ex.15

form and beau - ty of her mind, By

61

Warlock also employs a pedal note in 'Sleep', suggesting the image of a long sleep while Finzi uses a pedal F in 'So have I fared' to suggest a long period of the past. The fanfare effect in 'On His Mistress' (Ex.16) is also to be found in Finzi's 'When I Set Out For Lyonesse' introducing a prophet and wizard.

Ex.16

rise?

20

Similar to the late expansive piano textures in 'On His Mistress', Gibbs also employs expanding piano figuration in 'Neglected Moon' (1924) to express the grand traditions "In good Victoria's ampler day". The textural expanse from small-spread to wide-spread chords in 'On His Mistress' is also found in Gibbs' 'Araby'. Characterised by its initial harmonic texture, 'On His Mistress' was composed in 1924, before Finzi's homophonic setting of Shakespeare's 'Fear no more the heat of the sun'. Whereas Finzi's texture remains constant, Milford's song shows profound development into varied textures before returning to its majestic final verse.

Old Age

While he was at Rugby, the Bradby family was an important emotional anchor for Milford, particularly H C Bradby, the composer's uncle by marriage, and Anne - who later became the poet Anne Ridler. H C Bradby was also Milford's Housemaster at

school. Of the relationship between pupil and teacher/uncle, Anne Ridler explained, “Robin was very fond of my father”.⁴

Milford used to visit the private part of the School Field, where the Bradby family lived, each Sunday. Recently, Anne Ridler recounted “I remember my mother telling me that he [Robin] would sit for hours at the 3/4 size Broadwood Grand Piano in our drawing-room, playing the common chord (which she had taught him) over and over again: she supposed that wonderful harmonies were floating through his mind as he played”.⁵

Anne became particularly close to Milford through her belief in his musical ability, support of his musical aspirations, the appeal of her literary writings and through her philosophical outlook. The two cousins maintained this relationship throughout Milford’s life.

‘Old Age’ (pre-1928) shows Milford being prepared to tackle a more independent and challenging setting. This song was written and dedicated to H C Bradby, a devotee of J S Bach, on his retirement from Rugby. Milford’s response to setting Waller’s poem ‘Old Age’ (1686) is a song which employs a texture similar to a Bach organ chorale-prelude. He creates a three-stranded texture in which the left hand depicts the pedal part, the upper part of the right hand corresponds to the chorale melody, while the inner quaver movement represents weaving counterpoint (perhaps suggesting passing time). Against this texture, the voice-line is strategically placed.

Apart from the obvious Bach chorale-prelude texture in ‘Old Age’, Milford possibly intended the texture of this song to go a stage further involving personification. The melody in the voice-line obviously represents the poet while the piano chorale prelude perhaps suggests H C Bradby (the composer’s Housemaster at Rugby and uncle) – someone not, of course, mentioned in the poem (Ex.17).

⁴ Anne Ridler letter to Peter Hunter, 31 March, 1991

⁵ Anne Ridler letter to Peter Hunter, 31 March, 1991

Ex.17

The _ seas are qui - et when the _ winds _ give o'er;

p legato (The melody well marked)

6

A definite conversation takes place between these two aspects. There does not appear to be an obvious contemporary comparison to Milford's chorale-prelude texture in the accompaniment of 'Old Age'. Finzi employed a texture similar to J S Bach in the Aria of *Farewell to Arms* (1925). Here, however, the similarity applies to a two-part structure where the upper line employs Bach figuration against a walking-type bass. But this is quite different from Milford's texture.

Milford presents some subtle point of imagery painting in 'Old Age'. For example, he employs melodic low register to represent "lost passions". Warlock and Finzi both employ similar melodic register in 'The Night' and 'The Clock of the Years' respectively.

Conclusion

It seems clear that in the solo songs of the 1920s, melody and accompaniment (texture and harmony) interact profoundly together. In terms of the former such features include repeating units, specific contours, word-highlighting, word-decoration, climax, and register. Accompaniment interaction involves repeating units, particular forms of figuration, light texture, thick texture, imitation, suspensions, pedals, arpeggiation, chord progressions, high-register chords, low-register chords and chord spacing. Other features related to the interaction between musical features and text include the colour of specific keys and modes, dynamics, tempo, rhythmic patterns, syncopation, and rhythmic repeating units.

The Relationship between the Songs and Other Genres

Many of the features (including modality, melodic construction, harmony and texture) present in the songs of the 1920s and, indeed, those found in the later songs, are also found in Milford's other genres. *Three Sea Pictures* for piano were Milford's first compositions. The set consists of three movements, forming short tone-poems. The first is entitled 'The Cave'. The darkness of the cave is suggested by use of a B minor setting, bass-register chords, melodic and harmonic emphasis on B and F# (emphasising the implied "darkness" of B minor), descending and ascending harmonic movement by step and bass-register chromaticism (Ex.18).

Ex.18

Solennemente

The second movement is entitled 'Phosphorus on the Water'. The title suggests two main areas of imagery – sudden brightness followed by a fading of the light on the water. The image of brightness is depicted through the use of antiphonal answering of chords between the left hand (A major) and right hand (E minor) (Ex.19), lively melody (decorated with double acciaccaturas) based on tonic and dominant notes, a broken quaver D ostinato, chromatic harmony, and added-note harmony (all apparent in the songs).

Ex.19

Presto

The ultimate decline of light is painted through falling harmony (F#, F, E min., Eb, D) and falling melodic notes (the 3rd of the above chords). Set in A major, Milford maintains these features through an AABB form of construction with gentle dynamics. The final chord consists of an A7 chord, predicting the harmony within the songs of the 1930s and 1940s. Referring to the third movement, in her *Memoir Anne Ridler*, the composer's poet cousin, remembered Milford playing the third piece of the set ('The Porpoise') at family gatherings. She wrote: "We always had a 'family concert' at some point in his summer visit, at which he would play his first piano composition, a piece entitled 'The Porpoise', with much gambolling in the bass".⁶ Set in the E Aeolian mode, Milford creates the image of a moving porpoise

⁶ Copley (1984), *Robin Milford*, p. 10

through use of a broken quaver ostinato in compound duple time, a character-based melody of running quavers (heard twelve times), and constant movement between treble and bass registers (Ex.20).

Ex.20

Giocososo



Also written in 1924, *A Fairy Revel* is a short suite, consisting of six short movements, entitled 'Minuet', 'The Elves Dance', 'The Moon', 'The Stream', 'Elegy' and 'The March Home'. The delicate dance in 'Minuet' is depicted through use of a stately theme (with chordal accompaniment) constantly moving between simple triple and simple duple time and a chordal accompaniment (Ex.21).

Ex.21

Andante



The next four movements of *A Fairy Revel* are each characterised by varied features. The dancing elves are depicted through use of the E Aeolian mode, allegro tempo, and a continuous quaver melody and accompaniment – an ostinato perhaps predicting that of 'Elegy' (Ex.22).

Ex.22 **Allegro**



Musical score for Ex.22, Allegro, piano (p) staccato. The score is in 2/4 time and consists of two staves. The right hand plays a melody of eighth notes, and the left hand plays a bass line of eighth notes. The tempo is marked Allegro and the dynamics are piano (p) staccato.

The mystery of the moon is suggested through andante tempo, calm rhythm consisting of longer durational melodic notes (minims, crotchets) with “parallel” 5ths in the accompaniment, “step”-movement harmony, and chromatic “side-slips” (Ex.23).

Ex.23 **Andante**



Musical score for Ex.23, Andante, piano (p). The score is in 4/4 time and consists of two staves. The right hand plays a melody of quarter notes, and the left hand plays a bass line of quarter notes. The tempo is marked Andante and the dynamics are piano (p).

The flowing stream is suggested by running quavers 3rds, a texture which would appear again nearly ten years later representing the stream in ‘Elegy’ – a setting of Bridges’ poem (Ex.24),

Ex.24 **Con moto**



Musical score for Ex.24, Con moto, mezzo-piano (mp) legato. The score is in 3/4 time and consists of two staves. The right hand plays a melody of eighth notes, and the left hand plays a bass line of eighth notes. The tempo is marked Con moto and the dynamics are mezzo-piano (mp) legato.

while, finally, the march movement is painted by regular austere chords, the contrast between F# Aeolian and A major, falling harmony by “step”, added-note harmony, and constant changes between simple duple time and simple triple (Ex.25).

Ex.25 **Alla marcia**

pp

p

(Una corda)

These works are, however, typical of the period. Balfour Gardiner and John Ireland each had piano miniatures already in print. However, Milford's little compositions truly illuminate their programmatic intent and serve as interesting piano works for the early pianist.

Many composers of the period wrote solo songs, part-songs and orchestral compositions for children (e.g. Woodgate, Turnbull and Gibbs). Large-scale instrumental works were also composed (e.g. Walford Davies composed *A Children's Symphony in F* in 1927 and *London Calling the Schools* in 1932 (a Suite for Children). Milford also delighted in composing large-scale choral works for children (e.g. the opera entitled *The Shoemaker*, 1923). His use of children's voices in large-scale choral works (e.g. *A Prophet in the Land*) pre-empts that of Benjamin Britten.

Milford's joy in and love of making music with children was evident, culminating in his compositions for children. In her Memoir of Robin, Anne Ridler recalled her cousin's happy participation in annual family concerts at her home in Oxford. She stated, "Robin was ready to join in family music-making, however rudimentary the technique, and liked to write music for the young".⁷

Milford's songs, in comparison with those of his contemporaries, are clearly small-scale concepts. His earliest writing for solo voice and piano consisted of recitatives and arias in the children's work *The Shoemaker*. These show wonderful imagination within a work for young performers. The example below (Ex.26) shows the miniature scale.

⁷ Copley (1984), *Robin Milford*, p. 10

Ex.26

The SHOEMAKER is at work; his WIFE attends to the fire.
The CAT, sitting on the edge of the table and examining the shoes, sings,

Allegro

BOOTS *mf*

Taf - fe - ta coat _____ of sov - ereign price All

mp

sempre coll. 8va.

laced with gold at point de - vice, Fine silk waist - coat of

Even though *The Shoemaker* is a work for children, the example above shows Milford's inventiveness in terms of melodic interest and harmonic colour. The work comprises solo writing, ensemble singing, instrumental episodes and accompaniment for orchestra or piano. In two acts, it tells the story of the household mice making shoes for the shoemaker and his wife during the final hours of Christmas Eve. The characters involved in the story are the Shoemaker, Boots (the cat) and six Mice.

Milford creates musical inventiveness and challenge for children during the opera. The story of act one is told through the use of inventive melody, harmonic side-steps, oscillating harmony, syncopation, constant time changes and antiphonal answering between voice types, and harmony moving by step, all within such forms as overture, song, round, duet, minuet and chorus. The scenes in Act Two are illuminated through the use of parallel 5ths, ostinato, harmonic side-steps, wide registers, inner texture melodies, fanfare-effects, sustained harmony, bell-like effects, added-note chords, 2-part chorus, tierce de picardie within quasi-recitative, duets, trios, canon and minuet.

As will be seen with his large-scale works, Milford employs a tapestry of tonal and modal colours. Any idea of "related" tonality is abandoned. *The Shoemaker* employs a rich tapestry of tonal/modal colour. In Act One the story is told through F

major, Dorian mode, F# major, F# minor, Eb major, F major, C# minor and E major. Act Two is set in the Aeolian, E Aeolian and Dorian modes, F major, E minor, E major, F major, E minor, Eb major, E minor, Bb major, D major, Ab major and C# minor.

Examples of dramatic illumination within this children’s work include a village setting painted through the use of the Aeolian and Dorian modes, harmony moving by “step” and “parallel” 5ths (suggesting the influence of Vaughan Williams); an ‘Angry Dance’ which employs fast tempo, an ostinato and short rhythmic motifs with short durational notes (Ex.27),

Ex.27 Allegro furioso, e molto vivace

1 Vln.
mp
2 vln.
Vc. & Vla. (8ve)

and, perhaps most dramatically of all, carol singing. This involves the singing of folk carols, for example, ‘Lo! Here are shepherds at your door’ (Act Two). This is one of the gems of the entire work, showing the influence of the English Folk-Song Movement at its strongest. Milford has fully absorbed the genre so strongly advocated by his teacher that he has been able to create a “true” carol, complete with verse, refrain, dance rhythm and modality. Set in the E Aeolian mode, ‘Lo! Here are shepherds at your door’ employs a sparseness of texture in the accompaniment – giving prominent emphasis to the folk-like melody (Ex.28).

Ex.28 MICE stand in a row and sing
Allegro *f*

Lo! here areshep-herds at ___ your door With ma-ny a jov - ial ca-rol; ___ Now_

Strs. & Fl. off
mp
Pfte.

The main solo songs are not the only works for solo voice and piano composed by Milford during the 1920s. In 1927 he composed four solo songs for young voices and piano entitled *Four Miniature Songs*. Similarly, in 1928, Milford set words by Robert Louis Stevenson in a collection entitled *Go Little Book* for voice and piano. The effectiveness of 'A Child's Grace' from *Four Miniature Songs*, however, reinforces Milford's interest and, perhaps, natural inclination to compose in miniature form.

'A Child's Grace' is simply a miniature gem (Ex.29).

Ex.29

Very slowly and simply

Here a lit-tle child_ I stand, Heav - ing up my ei - ther hand;

This song resembles some of the main 1920s published songs but in miniature. Many features employed in 'A Child's Grace' can also be found in the songs of the period: syncopated chords (in 'The Fiddler of Dooney'); the coupling of the piano to the voice line (in 'The Fiddler of Dooney' and 'On His Mistress'); balanced melodic phrases (in the entire output); repeated melodic phrases (in 'The Fiddler of Dooney'); quaver/semiquaver figuration (in 'Old Age'); fast moving modulation (in 'Old Age'); slight word-decoration (in 'The Fiddler of Dooney', 'Old Age' and 'On His Mistress'); and syllabic prominence (in the entire output).

In terms of scale and form, Milford's songs are small. In short, Milford is a "miniaturist" - a term which applies not only to Milford's quantity or scale of individual features employed in compositions but to the size of the canvas upon which he places the features. Milford seems to have given himself fairly strict parameters in which he placed his musical ideas. He clearly appreciated miniature canvases such as Ireland's *The Darkened Valley* and *Chelsea Reach*.

In writing 'Old Age' Milford may well also have been encouraged to write in the style of Bach because of the prevailing influence of renewed English interest in the composer during the 1920s and the vogue for young composers to compose in the style of Bach. Howes traces the first renewed interest in Bach on these shores back

to the work of Samuel Wesley; Mendelssohn's 1829 performance of the St. Matthew Passion; the formation of the Bach Choir (including the work achieved by Hugh Allen, Vaughan Williams.⁸ Adrian Boult, Reginald Jacques and David Willcocks); performances at the Promenade Concerts, universities and schools; the Stanford biography; and the organ revolution, influenced, of course, by Lady Jeans and Albert Schweitzer. The influence of Vaughan Williams and Bach can be found in Milford's two oratorios *A Prophet in the Land* (1929) and *The Pilgrim's Progress* (1931).

In *A Prophet in the Land* Milford employs frequent fugal writing in 'Gloria in excelsis Deo' and 'Miserere nobis' (Ex.30).

Ex.30 ♩ = 56

(Alto) *mp*
 Chorus (Tenor) *mp*
pp legato

Mis - er - er - e no - bis, Mis - er - er - e

In the chorale-prelude styled 'Magnificat', the soprano (Mary, mother of Jesus) takes the role of the chorale tune, the bass line represents the pedal, with middle texture representing the accompaniment manual part (Ex.31).

⁸ the present writer possesses the scores of the St. Matthew and St. John Passions from which Vaughan Williams conducted the Bach Choir at the Albert Hall performances, gifts from Miss Marion Milford

Ex.31

Andante *mf*

My — soul doth mag - ni - fy the Lord; and my

p

sempre coll. 8ve

spi - rit — hath re - joi - c d in God my Sa - viour;

As an organist, Milford would, of course, have been well acquainted with Bach organ chorale-pretudes. The ‘Pastoral Symphony’ in *A Prophet in the Land* also employs a chorale-pretude texture where the chorale tune, ‘St Columba’, is accompanied by quaver/semiquaver figuration (in later years, Milford transcribed this movement for organ).

The Pilgrim’s Progress also employs Bach-influenced figuration and textures (e.g. Christian’s aria in the style of a chorale-pretude). Similar to Bach’s use of chorales in large scale choral works, Milford employs direct quotes of hymn tunes (e.g. ‘St. Columba’ and ‘St. Anne’). He juxtaposes these with such twentieth-century features as choral passages singing “ah”, extreme chromaticism, repeated discords and harmonic movement by “step”.

The “Bach Revival” had its culmination during Milford’s lifetime in Dame Myra Hess’s popularisation of Bach through her well-known arrangement for piano of the chorale pretude ‘Jesu, bleibet meine Freude’ (known in English as ‘Jesu, Joy of Man’s Desiring’) from Johann Sebastian Bach’s Cantata No. 147 *Herz und Mund und Tat und Leben*. Many English composers responded to the cause by composing entire works and movements influenced by Bach. Finzi did not, however, employ Bach figuration in his songs but did so, of course, in *Dies Natalis*.

The song “Old Age” (1928) was not Milford’s first response to neo-Classicism which was greatly in vogue during the decade. Prior to 1924 he composed the *Suite in D minor* for oboe and strings. Milford’s best-known orchestral works are relatively small-scale chamber compositions. *Suite in D Minor* for oboe and strings or strings only (1926) was Milford’s first published orchestral work. This work clearly reflects the composer’s respect for the Baroque suite and was probably influenced by Holst’s *Fugal Concerto* which was written in 1923. Indeed, Imogen Holst felt her father’s work was a clear example of a eighteenth-century counterpoint. Milford’s *Suite* consists of five movements: ‘Overture’, ‘Gavotte’, ‘Minuet’ and ‘Musette’, and, finally, ‘Air’. The work abounds with lyricism and rhythmic vitality from the opening of the ‘Overture’ (Ex.32).

Ex.32 **Suite in D minor - Overture**

Allegro *f*

My Lady’s Pleasure, a more developed composition than the early works for piano, was written before 1925 and consists of three dance movements, entitled ‘Pastorale’, ‘Gavotte’ and ‘Jig’. The set shows the composer looking back in time for inspiration in terms of form. ‘Pastorale’ and ‘Jig’ show the influence on English folk-song through their use of melodic and rhythmic units while ‘Gavotte’ shows the influence of the Baroque/Neo-Classical vogue which swept through English music at this time. ‘Pastorale’ is written in the E Aeolian mode and consists of 7 variations on an 8–bar theme. It is particularly impressive in its two-part contrapuntal treatment of the two-phrase theme (Ex.33).

Ex.33

Andante con moto *p*

‘Gavotte’ is truly a stately dance in homophonic style, implying G major (Ex.34).

Ex.34
Moderato

The musical score for Ex. 34 is in 6/8 time and D major. The right-hand part begins with a melody in the treble clef, starting with a trill on G4. The left-hand part provides accompaniment in the bass clef, featuring a steady eighth-note pattern on E4 (pedal point) and rolling thirds. Dynamics include *f*, *ff*, and *f*. A fermata is placed over the final measure of the right-hand part.

The final movement, 'Jig', returns to the E Aeolian mode. It is based upon two themes. The first consists of an 11-bar melody with irregular phrases. This is first heard as an accompanied right-hand melody, followed by a harmonisation which is characterised by a pedal note E and rolling 3rds (Ex.35).

Ex.35
Allegro moderato

The musical score for Ex. 35 is in 6/8 time and D major. The right-hand part features a melody in the treble clef. The left-hand part provides accompaniment in the bass clef, featuring a steady eighth-note pattern on E4 (pedal point) and rolling thirds. Dynamics include *p*.

The second theme is first heard within middle texture. These themes alternate throughout the movement, appearing in various guises and occasions, separated by links.

The folk-style melodic writing of 'The Fiddler of Dooney' is clearly seen in the *Suite in D Minor* for oboe and strings and also in *My Lady's Pleasure*. Finally, the characteristic melodic neighbour-note structure of the 1920s songs can also be found again in *Prelude, Air and Finale* for piano (1935) – discussed in the next chapter. In this work, Milford develops the structure into a prevalent melodic unit, consisting of a lower mordent.