WALTER WILSON COBBETT AND THE ENGLISH PHANTASY

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ABSTRACT

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Walter Wilson Cobbett (1847-1937), amateur violonist and philanthropist during the English Musical Renaissance, supported the composition and performance of chamber music in England. In 1905 and 1907 Cobbett held competitions, followed by a series of commissions over the next decade, for compositions that he called Phantasies. According to Cobbett’s announcement, the phantasies were to be twelve minutes in length, have sections that differed in tempo and meter, and had parts of equal importance. These works were to be reminiscent of the early English fantasies and were intended to supplement the longer chamber works that were popular at the time.

Following a discussion of the English Fantasia and Cobbett’s musical knowledge, this thesis examines Cobbett’s phantasy competitions and commissions in addition to his definition of the term “phantasy.” After Cobbett’s ideas are established, the reactions and comments of his contemporaries are presented and discussed. The final pages discuss and analyze three of the award winning phantasies in terms of Liszt’s thematic transformation and Brahms’s developing variation.
To My Mom
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INTRODUCTION

The period in England between 1840 and 1940 is known as the English Musical Renaissance.\(^1\) Culturally, England was waking up, and for the first time since the sixteenth and seventeenth centuries was beginning to re-gain international attention in musical circles. Many of England’s highly respected educational institutions were founded during this time, including the Royal College of Organists in 1864, Trinity College in 1872, the Guildhall School of Music in 1880, the Royal College of Music in 1882, and the London College of Music in 1887, to name just a few.\(^2\) This Renaissance also saw the appearance of musical societies. The Musical Association, now the Royal Musical Association, was established in 1874, “for the investigation and discussion of subjects connected with the Science and Art of music.”\(^3\) Another notable product of this time is The Dictionary of Music and Musicians, edited by George Grove and published between 1879 and 1889.\(^4\)

In their book The English Musical Renaissance, 1840-1940, Meirion Hughes and Robert Stradling note that, “music in England was no longer enough; there had to be an English Music, too. Such matters could no longer be taken lightly. A Music for England became a political priority, an extension of competing nationalisms.”\(^5\) English composers answered this call for an English national music by returning to their roots. Many turned to the folk music of Great Britain, as well as Tudor music from the Elizabethan and Jacobean courts. This interest can be seen in the Folk-Song Society (1889) and the English Folk Dance Society (1911), which merged into The English Folk Dance and Song Society in 1932,\(^6\) as well as the Purcell Society, which

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\(^2\) Ibid., 47.
\(^3\) Ibid.
\(^4\) Ibid., 16.
\(^5\) Ibid., 25.
\(^6\) Ibid., 47; Derek Schofield, “History of the EFDSS,” The English Folk Dance and Song Society (accessed May 20,
formed in 1876 with the goal of publishing all of Henry Purcell’s music. These new interests were reflected in the music of the time, for example Ralph Vaughan Williams’s *Fantasia on a Theme by Thomas Tallis* (1910), or his Six Studies in English Folksong for violin and pianoforte (1926).

Amateur violinist Walter Wilson Cobbett (1847–1937), although not well known today, was an important figure in the English Musical Renaissance. Those who know of Cobbett most likely know his *Cyclopedic Survey of Chamber Music* (1929), which was the first comprehensive dictionary covering the history of chamber music. Perhaps an equally important contribution, however, was his origination of a new genre of English music called the phantasy. With the help of a musicians’ guild called the Worshipful Company of Musicians, Cobbett claimed he coined the term “phantasy” in place of the more commonly spelled *fantasy*, in reference to music. In 1905 and 1907 he set up competitions requesting string quartets and trios, respectively, in his phantasy genre. Following these two competitions Cobbett commissioned twelve phantasies, each with different instrumentation and from a different English composer. These competitions and commissions resulted in a body of work exhibiting the so-called “phantasy” characteristics.

Being an amateur musician, Cobbett was unable to provide a clear musical definition of “phantasy,” causing confusion among his contemporaries who attempted to discuss his phantasy.

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8 A common title that emerged as part of the English Musical Renaissance was “Fantasia on a theme by…,” and Vaughan Williams’s piece is an example of this. These fantasias are not the concern of this thesis. The phantasies discussed here are not based on pre-existing Tudor melodies, but are instrumental pieces of newly composed material.
10 The most famous example is Benjamin Britten’s Phantasy Quartet for Oboe and Strings (1932). Britten also composed a Phantasy in F minor for string quartet, which was first performed in 1932 and won a Cobbett Chamber Music Prize at the RCM. Both pieces follow in the tradition of Cobbett’s phantasy, neither of them, however, were part of the original flourish of competitions and commissions and so will not be discussed here. Philip Brett, “Britten, Benjamin,” *Grove Music Online*, ed. L. Macy (accessed June 5, 2008), <www.grovemusic.com>. 
ideals. This resulted in even more confusion among following generations of musicologists, such as Anthony Pople, who relied on the work of contemporary scholars to understand the music. Over time, this confusion led to a lack of interest and scholarship, and therefore a lack of understanding regarding the importance of Cobbett and his Phantasy Competitions.

In his article “Vaughan Williams, Tallis, and the Phantasy Principle,” Pople discusses Vaughan Williams’s *Fantasia on a Theme by Thomas Tallis* as a phantasy. He coins the term “Phantasy Principle” and uses it in a way that encompasses both phantasies and fantasies, specifically Vaughan Williams’s *Fantasia on a Theme by Thomas Tallis*. Pople briefly discusses Cobbett’s competitions and the attempts of Fuller-Maitland, Stanford, and Walker to capture the definition of the word phantasy. He does not question their definitions, nor does it appear that he actually looked at any of Cobbett’s phantasies. He does make some attempt to discuss the difference between a “fantasy” and a “phantasy,” but never reaches a definite conclusion.

This thesis attempts to eliminate confusion regarding the concept of “phantasy” through placing it in the context of late nineteenth-century music and to show the importance of Cobbett and the phantasy for the English Musical Renaissance. I will discuss the phantasy in Cobbett’s writings and those of his contemporaries in order to better understand his intentions.

Chapter One begins with a discussion of Walter Wilson Cobbett, the originator of the Phantasy Competitions. I then briefly touch on chamber music during the English Musical Renaissance and end with a historical discussion of the English Fantasia of the sixteenth and seventeenth centuries.

Chapter Two narrows its focus to the ideas surrounding Cobbett’s competitions and commissions. I begin with a discussion of Cobbett’s exposure to and knowledge of the English

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fantasia. The remainder of the chapter explores the concept of phantasy by looking at definitions by Cobbett.

Chapter Three continues this discussion by looking at other ways in which phantasy has been defined. This includes a discussion of the differences and similarities between thematic transformation and developing variation as applied to Cobbett’s phantasy. This discussion is accompanied by a thematic analysis of three phantasies in terms of the Brahmsian technique of developing variation.
CHAPTER I. BACKGROUND AND TERMINOLOGY

Walter Wilson Cobbett

Walter Wilson Cobbett (1847-1937) was born in London. His father, a businessman, introduced Cobbett to music at a young age and purchased for him a Guadagnini violin on which he played while studying with Joseph Haydon Bourne Dando. In addition to his general studies, Cobbett spent time in both France and Germany where he was exposed to a wide variety of ideas and ways of thinking. Cobbett’s career was that of a businessman like his father. He worked as a foreign correspondent and founded the Scandinavia Belting Company, while devoting a significant amount of his free time to his love of chamber music.

Cobbett owed his love of chamber music to the experience of hearing a Beethoven String quartet led by Joseph Joachim at St. James Hall in London. He wrote, “it is not an exaggeration to say that there opened out before me an enchanted world into which I longed to gain entrance.” While Cobbett had been exposed to chamber music previously through concerts by

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15 “Cobbett, Walter Wilson,” in Cobbett’s Cyclopedic Survey of Chamber Music, 1:283-284. Cobbett’s father sent him to study privately in France and Germany, from which he owes “the cosmopolitan trend of thought which clings to me to this day.” While in Normandy he learned a great deal about French literature. While in Frankfurt he stayed with a German pastor who “was a proud compatriot of the world’s greatest composers.” Cobbett wrote that, “He taught me to respect as well as love the art of music. This was not the matter of course it is now supposed to be in England. In any case, it was very far from representing the attitude of the English gentleman of that period, who was all for sport; and the lesson was the more valuable.” Ibid., 284.
16 Ibid.
Dando, he had thought of it as "a mere pastime." Joachim’s performance opened the door to more profound possibilities in chamber music, and from that time on Cobbett became "a very humble devotee of this infinitely beautiful art." Following this event, Cobbett became an active amateur chamber musician. He also began performing in amateur orchestras such as the Strolling Players Orchestral Society. Cobbett’s financial success as a businessman allowed him to retire at the age of sixty and devote the remainder of his life to promoting chamber music.

Cobbett’s most important contributions to chamber music in England were due to his ability to provide funding. He established the Free Library of Chamber Music, which was kept at the headquarters of the Society of Women’s Musicians, and contained "every chamber work of importance published by British composers." He also provided libraries of chamber music for students at educational institutions. Between 1913 and 1916 Cobbett edited Chamber Music, a bimonthly supplement to the journal Music Student, which provided information about native and foreign performers and composers of chamber music that was not available elsewhere. In 1934 he gave £1000 to establish the Chamber Music Association, a group that promoted chamber music life in London. He also promoted the use of British-made violins and set up occasional competitions for their production after 1918.

Beginning in 1920, Cobbett annually donated fifty guineas to the Royal College of Music to fund the study of chamber music. In 1928, his generous donation to the Royal College of Music permanently established the Cobbett Prizes, which were presented to composers and...
performers for their active role in chamber music. Prizes were given for performances of standard chamber music literature, British chamber music literature, performances of chamber music without professional coaching, and compositions of chamber works by college students.\textsuperscript{27}

Cobbett is perhaps most famous for his \textit{Cyclopedic Survey of Chamber Music}, which was published in 1929 by Oxford University Press. This monumental work is the first of its kind. It is in two volumes and includes alphabetical entries that address composers, performers, ideas, and activities that in any way relate to chamber music. Cobbett began work on the \textit{Cyclopedia} in the mid-1920s and expected it to take two years to compile. Perhaps Cobbett underestimated the breadth of the project, for he ended up dedicating over four years to its completion. He felt that this was his “final effort” to promote chamber music.\textsuperscript{28} Not only was the \textit{Cyclopedia} important in Cobbett’s times, but it has also continued to prove useful as a source of information about the life of its author, musical life in England at the turn of the century, and other musical knowledge.

Cobbett was a member of the Worshipful Company of Musicians, a London guild dating back to the 1500s. The purpose of the guild was the “promot[ion of] all aspects of the art and science of music.”\textsuperscript{29} Cobbett was an active member through his promotion of chamber music and was appointed Master in 1928.\textsuperscript{30} His wealth and musical knowledge helped him to distribute his money in the most effective manner, and the Worshipful Company of Musicians helped make that possible. The Company provided financial support when Cobbett commissioned pieces for chamber orchestra from notable British composers and in 1924 endowed “an annual medal ‘for services to chamber music,’”\textsuperscript{31} which is still awarded today.\textsuperscript{32} It was through the Worshipful

\textsuperscript{27} “Cobbett Prizes at the Royal College of Music,” in \textit{Cobbett’s Cyclopedic Survey of Chamber Music}, 1:288.
Company of Musicians that Cobbett began his series of chamber music competitions and commissions for phantasy compositions. As they had previously, the Company financially aided Cobbett in awarding prizes for the first two Phantasy Competitions.\textsuperscript{33}

Chamber Music During The English Musical Renaissance

Cobbett’s competitions and commissions added to the chamber music of the English Musical Renaissance. The composition of chamber music in England at the beginning of the nineteenth century was limited. Often chamber music by foreign composers was performed due to the lack of native output. Chamber music performances were limited to the homes of the wealthy, where the “Viennese Classics” were played.\textsuperscript{34} Speaking of the first half of the nineteenth century, Geoffery Bush states that, “Any English composer writing a string quartet was performing an act of selfless dedication to his art, without hope of advancing his reputation or gaining any reward.”\textsuperscript{35}

The emerging British chamber music repertoire was dominated by names that are not well known today. Lodge Ellerton (1801-73) composed fifty string quartets between 1840 and 1860. Stylistically they were a mix of “Viennese Classical masters,” “tinged with Romanticism.” Sir William Sterndale Bennett (1816-75) composed one string quartet. Sir Frederic Cowen (1852-1935) composed one string quartet in C minor, which premiered in 1866 at the Leipzig

\textsuperscript{32} This award is still listed on the Worshipful Company of Musicians website. It is described as, “Endowed by Walter Wilson Cobbett (Master 1928-1929), a silver gilt medal presented annually to a distinguished musician in recognition of services to chamber music.” According to the website, the current recipient is Joseph Horovitz. The medal was awarded on April 9, 2008 at Ironmongers Hall in London. Other recipients of the award have been Frank Bridge, Ralph Vaughan Williams, Lady Barbirolli and Levon Chilingirian. “Grants and Awards; Walter Wilson Cobbett Medal – 1924,” The Worshipful Company of Musicians (accessed May 14, 2008), <http://www.wcom.org.uk/gandadetails.asp?Award_ID=41>.


\textsuperscript{35} Ibid.
Conservatory where he had been a student. Sir George Macfarren (1813-87) composed five string quartets between ca. 1834 and 1878, but they were not received well.\(^\text{36}\)

The next generation of British composers gained more recognition both within Britain and internationally. Sir Hubert Parry (1848-1918), who is known for his choral works, composed three string quartets. The first two were in the style of Mendelssohn, while the third was more influenced by Brahms. Sir John McEwen (1868-1948) composed nineteen string quartets in the romantic style, with some Scottish and French influences. Sir Alexander Mackenzie (1847-1935) composed one string quartet in the style of Mendelssohn and Brahms. Charles Wood (1866-1926), an Irish composer, wrote six string quartets inspired by Irish folk music, which were published posthumously in 1929. Sir Charles Villiers Stanford (1852-1924) composed eight string quartets in the style of Mendelssohn and Brahms, with some Irish influence in the later quartets. He was best known as a teacher, and many of his students went on to make contributions to English chamber music, including Samuel Coleridge-Taylor (1875-1912), Vaughan Williams (1872-1958), Thomas Dunhill (1877-1946), Frank Bridge (1879-1941), Herbert Howells (1892-1983), John Ireland (1879-1962), and Eugene Goossens (1893-1962),\(^\text{37}\) many of whom went on to compose phantasies for Cobbett.

Public concerts devoted to chamber music began in 1835 and in 1845 the Beethoven Quartet Society began performing cycles of Beethoven’s nine quartets. The Society of British Musicians, founded in 1834, encouraged the composition of British chamber music and


\(^{37}\) Ibid., 260.
premiered 77 pieces before 1850. It is with activities such as these that the English Musical Renaissance began to grow.

By the time Cobbett became involved in English chamber music, the Joachim String Quartet frequently performed in London (between 1900 and 1906). Their repertoire included Haydn, Mozart, Schubert, Mendelssohn, Schumann, and Brahms, but they were especially famous for their performances of Beethoven’s late string quartets. In 1906 they gave a performance of the complete chamber works of Brahms. Brahms’s influence was strong in England, and may be seen in many of Cobbett’s phantasies.

The two greatest influences on composers of British chamber music during the nineteenth century were Mendelssohn early on and Brahms later in the century. Much of the music of the later English Musical Renaissance emphasized the viola due to the presence of Lionel Tertis (1876-1975), one of the world’s leading violists. The increased use of the viola has come to be associated with music of the English Musical Renaissance and a rise in the importance of British chamber music. Beginning in 1893 there was an increase in chamber music festivals and series, including those presented by the Musical Artists’ Society (1873-99), the Musical Guild (1889-98), the Broadwood Chamber Concerts (1902-12), and the South Place Concerts that began in 1887, which are still active today under the name London Chamber Music Series.

Cobbett’s Phantasy Competitions came out of this growth in chamber music. As a lover of chamber music during the English Musical Renaissance, it is not surprising that he took interest in the earliest form of English chamber music, the English fantasia of the fifteenth and

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39 Roger Thomas Oliver and Beatrix Borshard, “Joachim Quartet,” *Grove Music Online*.
41 Ibid., 398.
42 Ibid.
sixteenth centuries. Though not often thought of as chamber music, the fantasia fits the definition perfectly: it was composed for small ensembles with one player to a part, to be played in private for personal enjoyment.\textsuperscript{44} A brief discussion about the stylistic history of the English fantasia will help us understand the origin of Cobbett’s phantasy.

The English Fantasia

The term fantasia had been used in Europe since the late Middle Ages to identify a composition in free form based on newly-composed material. It was associated with a sense of “imagination,” and was derived from the Greek word \textit{phantasia},\textsuperscript{45} with the same meaning. The first known piece to bear the title of \textit{fantasia} is an instrumental composition by Josquin in an imitative style, from around 1480-85. By 1520 the term was used as a title for German keyboard compositions and was used throughout Italy by 1536.\textsuperscript{46} As a keyboard title, the term \textit{fantasia} was interchangeable with \textit{ricercar} during the mid-sixteenth century, but by the end of the century it was more associated with the term \textit{canzona}, a chanson arranged for instruments.\textsuperscript{47} The fantasia in England originated from performances of vocal motets on instruments, such as those by William Cornysh, Robert Fayrfax, Christopher Tye, and Thomas Tallis.\textsuperscript{48} Over time the need for purely instrumental compositions led to the development of the fantasia as an instrumental genre.

The English fantasia was a freely composed style of early instrumental music, originating from the sixteenth-century vocal motet. Like the motet, the fantasia has a series of polyphonic

\textsuperscript{46} Ibid.
\textsuperscript{48} Christopher D. S. Field, “Fantasia,” \textit{Grove Music Online}. 
sections, each based on the “contrapuntal development of one thematic subject.” While some motet melodies were based on chant, the fantasia was always based on newly composed material.

Fantasias were composed for viol consorts of three, four, five, or six instruments and were played in courts, churches, universities, and in the homes of the wealthy during the Elizabethan (1558-1603), Jacobean (1603-1625) and Carolinian (1625-1649) periods. They were composed for private performances by viol consorts of both professionals and amateurs. Out of all the fantasia compositions, few were printed, those being for richer patrons. Most of the music was disseminated through individual copies, with most of what has survived in manuscript form. Often houses would have collections of manuscript part books.

The earliest definition of the fantasia comes from Thomas Morley’s compositional treatise, *Plaine and Easie Introduction to Practicall Musick*, of 1597. Morley defined the fantasia thus:

The most principall and chiefest kind of musicke which is made without a dittie is the fantasies, that is, when a musician taketh a point at his pleasure, and wresteth and turneth it as he list, making either much or little of it according as shall seeme best in his own

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49 Ernst H. Meyer, *Early English Chamber Music: From the Middle Ages to Purcell*, ed. Author and Diana Poulton (Boston: M. Boyars, 1982), 154.
50 Ibid.
54 Christopher D. S. Field, “Fantasia,” *Grove Music Online*.
56 Meyer, H. Ernst, *Early English Chamber Music: From the Middle Ages to Purcell*, 153.
57 Ibid., 154.
58 Christopher D. S. Field, “Fantasia,” *Grove Music Online*.
conceit. In this may more art be showne then in any other musicke, because the composer is tide to nothing but that he may adde, diminish, and alter at his pleasure. And this kind will beare any allowances whatsoeuer tolerable in other musicke, except changing the ayre & leaving the key, which in fantasie may neuer be suffered Other things you may use at your pleasure, as bindings with discords, quicke motions, slow motions, proportions, and what you list. Likewise, this kind of musick is with them who practice instruments of parts in greatest use, but for voices it is but sildone used.\textsuperscript{59}

According to Morley’s definition, while the fantasia began as an instrumental version of the motet, it became an independent instrumental genre. The composer was able to play with the thematic material in any way; he stated that they were “tie[d] to nothing,” free to “adde, diminish, and alter at his pleasure.”\textsuperscript{60} The only restriction was that they could not change the “ayre” or key.

Following Morley’s 1597 description, the fantasia continued to develop. In 1667 Christopher Simpson discussed the form of the fancy, a later advancement of the fantasia,\textsuperscript{61} in his \textit{Compendium of Practical Musick}. He wrote:

Of Musick design’d for Instruments … the chief and most excellent, for Art and Contrivance, are Fancies, of 6, 5, 4, and 3 parts, intended commonly for Viols. In this sort of Musick the Composer (being not limitted to words) doth imploy all his Art and Invention solely about the bringing in and carrying on of … Fuges, according to the Order and Method formerly shewed. When he has tryed all the several wayes which he thinks fit to be used therein; he takes some other point, and does the like with it: or else, for variety, introduces some Chromatick Notes, with Bindings and Intermixtures of

\textsuperscript{59} Ernst H. Meyer, \textit{Early English Chamber Music: From the Middle Ages to Purcell}, 155.
\textsuperscript{60} Christopher D. S. Field, “Fantasia,” \textit{Grove Music Online}.
Discords; or, falls into some lighter Humour like a Madrigal, or what else his own fancy shall lead him to: but still concluding with something which hath Art and excellency in it.  

The change in terminology from fantasia to fancy is seen here. Simpson gives a clear sense of the structure of the fancy, and how it has changed since Morley’s definition of the fantasia. These later fancies, for 3, 4, 5, or 6 parts, are described as having different sections, each with a different character. While there seems to have been a clear distinction between the fantasia and the fancy at the time, they are often now used interchangeably due to the number of variants of the above definitions, and they will be used as such throughout this study.

Some of the most prolific fantasia composers were John Coprario, Richard Dering, Michael East, Alfonso Ferrabosco the younger, Thomas Ford, Orlando Gibbons, Thomas Lupo, Martin Peerson, Thomas Tomkins, John Ward, William White, Charles Coleman, William Cranford, John Hingeston, Simon Ives, John Jenkins, William Lawes, Richard Mico, and John Okeover. I will briefly discuss three generations of English fantasia composers.

The first generation is represented by the fantasias of Alfonso Ferrabosco (1543-1588). Ferrabosco’s fantasias tend to be structured around a single theme. A single thematic idea would be introduced, used throughout in augmentation and diminution, and then restated in its original form. This use of a single theme created a style known as the monothematic fantasia. Other composers in this first generation include William Byrd (ca. 1540-1623), who helped establish the fantasia as the main type of chamber music in England, and Thomas Lupo (1587-1628),

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62 Christopher D. S. Field, “Fantasia,” Grove Music Online.
63 Ibid.
64 Ibid.
66 Christopher D. S. Field, “Fantasia,” Grove Music Online.
who composed fantasias with more than one theme.\textsuperscript{67} This first generation established the fantasia as an instrumental genre separate from the vocal motet.\textsuperscript{68}

The second generation included composers John Jenkins (1592-1678) and William Lawes (1602-1645). The fantasias of Jenkins have clear sections, marked by “rests, cadences, change of motives, change of style, and in a few cases even by change of meter,”\textsuperscript{69} and are written in a standard polyphonic style.\textsuperscript{70} The fantasias of Lawes are characterized by “bold, ardent gestures, adventurous textures and a fondness for rugged subjects and strong-willed lines.”\textsuperscript{71} Many of his six-part fantasias have concerted sections between small groups or between a soloist and the remainder of the group.\textsuperscript{72}

The last generation of fantasia composition is dominated by Henry Purcell (1659-1695). Purcell’s fantasias are in one movement with clearly delineated changes between slow and fast sections. New sections are marked by new motives, cadences, or rhythmic changes.\textsuperscript{73} The fantasia tradition in England came to an end with Purcell. By 1680 the use of treble and tenor viols had almost disappeared, and many of his fantasias never circulated beyond his immediate circle. The majority of his fantasias were written in or before 1680 and can be viewed as self-education composition exercises.\textsuperscript{74} As John Baron reflects, with Purcell the intimate, active participative nature of chamber music was replaced with passive listening to public concerts and virtuosic performances.\textsuperscript{75}

\textsuperscript{68} Ibid., 33.
\textsuperscript{70} Christopher D. S. Field, “Fantasia,” \textit{Grove Music Online}.
\textsuperscript{71} Ibid.
\textsuperscript{72} Ibid.
CHAPTER II. COBBETT AND THE PHANTASY

Cobbett and the English Fantasia

The majority of Cobbett’s knowledge regarding the English fantasia most likely came from a series of Gresham Lectures given by Sir Frederick Bridge. Because he was not an institutionally educated musician, it is difficult to know exactly what Cobbett had heard or read and how it had influenced him. The following section will attempt to reconstruct what Cobbett could have been exposed to by the time of his first phantasy competition in 1905. The generally accepted knowledge at the time regarding the English fantasia can be taken from Grove’s original *Dictionary of Music and Musicians* (1878-89), so I will begin with a brief overview of the information it provides.

According to Grove, the English fantasia was a predecessor of sonata form and is similar to the ricercar in that both terms were among the first used to refer to purely instrumental compositions. The fantasia descended from the madrigal, in that the first fantasias were simply madrigals played on instruments. Over time, composers began writing music that was intended to be purely instrumental. Pieces were composed for instruments in families, such as the chests of viols, or cornets. Fantasias are characterized by fugues and “responsive passages.” In his *Cyclopedic Survey of Chamber Music*, Cobbett enhances the definition of the English “fancy,” identifying it as an improvement on the Italian fantasias, and he finds this change important to

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76 Gresham Lecturers have given free public lectures in the city of London since 1497. The lecture series is named after Sir Thomas Gresham who first proposed the idea of public lectures. He established seven topics for seven professors, one of each in Astronomy, Divinity, Geometry, Law, Music, Physics and Rhetoric. In 1985 the Chair of Commerce was added to the already established seven. Since 1991, the college is based at Barnard’s Inn Hall. “In addition to the free public lectures, the College runs occasional seminars and conferences, and provides support to initiatives by the Gresham Professors and others which seek to reinterpret the ‘new learning’ of Sir Thomas Gresham’s time in contemporary terms.” The current Gresham Professors are Professor Ian Morison – Astronomy, Professor Michael Mainelli – Chair of Commerce, Professor Keith Ward – Divinity, Professor Robin Wilson – Geometry, Professor Vernon Bogdanor – Law, Professor Roger Parker – Music, Professor Christopher Dye – Physics, Professor Rodney Barker – Rhetoric, Raj Persaud – Visiting Gresham Professor of Psychiatry. Professors generally have a three-year tenure. “What is Gresham College?” Gresham College (accessed May 22, 2008), <http://www.gresham.ac.uk/text.a-sp?Pageld=3>.

the history of chamber music. Gresham Lecturer at the time, Sir Frederick Bridge referred to the fancy as “the counterpart of the chamber quartet and trio of the present day.” Chamber music was as popular among viol amateurs of the seventeenth century as it was among amateur string players at the turn of the twentieth century.

Cobbett first heard performances of fancies, albeit on modern instruments, during the Gresham Lectures given by Sir Frederick Bridge. He heard pieces by Orlando Gibbons, Thomas Ravenscroft, Richard Deering, John Ward, William Lawes, Matthew Locke, as well as others. Bridge also mentioned compositions by Alfonso Ferrabosco, John Coperario, Thomas Lupo, Qilliam White, Charles Coleman, Henry Purcell, and John Jenkins, so it is possible that Cobbett heard their compositions as well. These fantasias and/or fancies cover the three generations of composers of the fantasia and reflect many of the different styles of composition discussed in chapter one. Cobbett refers to the form of the fancies he heard as “not of the academic type.” While they are all in one movement, they do have distinct sections, leaving Cobbett to compare them to “abbreviated sonata form.”

Speaking strictly of performances of fancies by Purcell, Cobbett found there to be a notable “thickness of tone.” He described Gibbons’s three-part fancies as “less of the imaginative quality which becomes a writer of fancies than that of other composers.” He was, however, particularly taken with the fancies of Ravenscroft, Deering, Ward, Lawes, Crawford, and Locke. Cobbett described their fancies as not resembling “modern harmony,” and he heard them as ending in a different key than they began. He stated that, “they were full of naïvetés of

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79 Ibid.
80 Ibid.
81 Ibid.
construction and tonality,” but due to their age, they still inspired him.\textsuperscript{82} In his \textit{Cyclopedia}, Cobbett quotes a lecture given by Bridge that states:

The fancy was cultivated as an instrumental form of chamber music down to the Stuart period, and there are examples on record by Ferrabosco, Coperario, Lupo, William White, John Ward, Dr. Charles Coleman, John Jenkins, Matthew Locke, and in fact nearly every composer of instrumental music during about eighty years previous to 1670.

The fancy was the counterpart of the chamber quartet and trio of the present day.\textsuperscript{83} Cobbett claims that Bridge devoted a whole lecture to the music of Gibbons on “the eve of the commemoration of Orlando Gibbons, then about to take place in Westminster Abbey, to a consideration of that instrumental music of that composer.”\textsuperscript{84} It is at this lecture where presumably Cobbett would have heard the music of Gibbons. At later lectures he heard performances of works by Ravenscroft, Deering, Ward, Lawes, Crawford, and Locke. Of these fancies he said, “I expected little except that they would prove of archaic interest; as a matter of fact they were a revelation to me […]”.\textsuperscript{85}

The only published lecture that Bridge gave is titled, “Music in England in the Year 1604,” from a conference that took place in June and July of 1904 under the direction of the Worshipful Company of Musicians. A series of lectures and an exhibition of old instruments and manuscripts took place to celebrate the Tercentenary of the charter being granted to the company by King James I.\textsuperscript{86} Bridge’s paper was presented on July 4\textsuperscript{th} and then again on the 16\textsuperscript{th}. While

\begin{footnotesize}
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\item \textsuperscript{82} Ibid.
\item \textsuperscript{83} Ibid.
\item \textsuperscript{84} W. W. Cobbett, “The Beginnings of British Chamber Music,” \textit{Chamber Music} 13 (1915): 49.
\item \textsuperscript{85} Ibid.
\item \textsuperscript{86} Sir Frederick Bridge, “Music in England in the Year 1604,” in \textit{English Music, 1604 to 1904: Being the Lectures Given at the Music Loan Exhibition of the Worshipful Company of Musicians, held at Fishmongers’ Hall, London Bridge, June-July, 1904}, 2\textsuperscript{nd} ed. (New York: Scribner, 1911), 164-189. The paper was “given at the Music Loan Exhibition of the Worshipful Company of Musicians held at Fishmongers’ Hall, London Bridge June-July 1904.” Bridge was a member of the Worshipful Company of Musicians.
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Cobbett did not become a member of the Musicians’ Company until 1905, he presented a paper at this event on July 13th titled, “The Violin Family and its Music.” That Cobbett was present and aware of the events, and that Bridge presented his paper twice, makes it safe to assume that Cobbett did in fact hear his lecture.

Bridge divided his lecture into three parts: instrumental and church music, instrumental and secular vocal music, and, lastly, just instrumental music. He began by providing broad comments on England and its musical scene at the time, comparing the level of musicians then in England to be “equal to that produced by any foreign country.” He stated:

[T]here [was] Byrde […] Bull (the first Gresham Professor of Music), Wiley, Morley, Dowland, Bennet, Edwardes, Weelkes, and Orlando Gibbons – surely a splendid force, splendidly endowed! No musician can make himself acquainted with the works of these men, both theoretical and practical, without feeling a glow of pride in our English school if music of that day. What a deal of ground they covered. Byrde and Bull composed for the clavier and organ; Bennet, Morley, Wilbye, and Ravenscroft wrote vocal and instrumental music; Orlando Gibbons, who almost equaled Palestrina in his church music, wrote some admirable chamber music and fancies, with Jenkins opening the way for Purcell’s sonatas and the string quartet.

Based on the above quote, this particular lecture does not appear to be the same one that Cobbett discussed in his Cyclopedia, however, it does provide the same type of general knowledge that Cobbett claimed to have heard. Knowing that Cobbett was present at this particular lecture, however, means that the information discussed in his encyclopedia came from another Bridge

89 Ibid., 169-170.
lecture. It is also possible that Cobbett attended many different lectures over an extended period of time and summarized what he heard.

At this lecture, Cobbett heard a selection of pieces played on period instruments. In his *Cyclopedia*, however, Cobbett claims that the pieces he heard during a different Bridge lecture were performed on modern instruments, because it was not practical at the time to play them on original instruments, as Cobbett claims Bridge had wanted.\(^9^0\) Regardless, the pieces performed during this particular lecture were a Prelude in G by Orlando Gibbons, Lord Souche’s Maske (Masque) for Six Instruments from Morley’s Consort Lessons,\(^9^1\) and a Gibbons Fancy for “two viols and a bass,” which Bridge saw as the predecessor of Purcell’s sonatas, and eventually the modern string quartet.\(^9^2\)

Bridge concluded his lecture with a reflection on how chamber music had changed since the year 1604:

In conclusion, I might ask, is home music as much practiced now as it was about 1604? That our concerts multiply exceedingly, and the people delight in splendid orchestral performances is apparent. But what of music in the home, especially *concerted* music? Where are not the ‘Sets of Recorders’ or the ‘Chest of Viols’ once found in not a few English houses in Elizabethan and Jacobean times? Will you find families able to play upon the strings the “Fancies” our composers put forth? Again, in what present-day houses can the Madrigal books be placed upon the table, and the members of the family display their skill in singing this delightful music? I know of none.\(^9^3\)

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\(^9^0\) “Fancy,” in *Cobbett’s Cyclopedic Survey of Chamber Music*, 1:385.
\(^9^1\) Sir Frederick Bridge, “Music in England in the Year 1604,” in *English Music, 1604 to 1904*, 165.
\(^9^2\) Ibid., 181.
\(^9^3\) Ibid., 189.
As an amateur chamber musician, and soon to be promoter of the new phantasy, Cobbett would have at the least been able to relate to this statement, if not find it inspiring.

Beyond the 1904 lecture, without copies of Bridge’s lecture notes or specific accounts, it is impossible to know exactly what he said, and subsequently, what Cobbett would have heard. While we do know that Cobbett heard pieces by Gibbons and Purcell, it is also impossible to know exactly which pieces of music Cobbett could have heard. A brief look at a fantasia that may have inspired Cobbett will shed light on those aspects of the old style Cobbett was trying to capture in his phantasies. I have chosen an example by John Ward to discuss.

John Ward (ca. 1598-1638) composed his Fantasia No. 9 sometime before 1619. The instrumentation is for five viols and organ, although the organ part doubles the viol parts and was most likely only used when the instruments needed help staying in tune. A large number of sources have survived of the five- and six-part consort music of Ward, indicating that it was popular during its time and that it is possible for Cobbett to have heard one of his pieces. The Fantasia is in ABA form, with three contrasting sections, each based on new thematic material.

As an amateur listener, Cobbett would have heard a fantasia like Ward’s as being comprised of three distinct sections, delineated by cadences or rests. Each section begins by stating a theme, which is restated in each voice through points of imitation. In true polyphonic nature, each of the five voices plays an equally important role in creating the texture. The entire piece would have been between two and three minutes long, much shorter than most

95 John D. Ward, Consort Music of Five and Six Parts, XV.
96 John Ward, Fantasy, on Bara Faustus’ Dreame: Mr. Francis Tregian His Choice, Les Witches, NAXOS ALPHA063. On this recording the piece is 2 minutes and 50 seconds long.
nineteenth-century instrumental works. A deeper analysis would have required multiple hearings or access to the score, which may have been possible but is not documented.

Cobbett was inspired by what he heard in the fancies; they greatly influenced the later part of his career, as well as the musical life of England. Hearing this style of composition for the first time was a “revelation” for Cobbett. He found the subtleties of the old fancy style appealing and was, as he admitted, “moved to commission a number of composers of the younger generation to write so-called Phantasies for various chamber combinations—works which may be described as the modern analogues of the fancies, conceived of course in modern idiom, and without their structural defects.” This led to the establishment of a series of competitions and commissions of chamber works in the phantasy style.

The Competitions and Commissions

Cobbett’s first Phantasy Competition took place in 1905. An advertisement was placed in The Musical Times requesting submissions. It stated:

The attention of composers is directed to the “Cobbett Musical Competition.” Offered under the auspices of the Worshipful Company of Musicians. This valuable opportunity consists of three prizes – (i.) (£50), presented by Mr. W. W. Cobbett, (ii.) (£10), presented by the Worshipful Master, and (iii.) a special prize (£10), presented by Mr. Herman Sternberg. The subject of the competition is thus set forth:

The composition of a short ‘Phantasy’ in the form of a String Quartet for two violins, viola and violoncello. The parts must be of equal importance, and the duration of the piece should not exceed twelve minutes. Though the Phantasy is to be performed without a break, it may consist of different sections varying in tempi and rhythms.

Mr. Sternberg’s special prize (£10) will be given “to the competitor whose work offers in
the opinion of the judges the best example of an art-form suited for a short piece of
chamber music for strings.” The works selected for publication will be issued by the
Musicians’ Company, to whom the copyrights shall be assigned. The competition is open
only to British subjects, and the manuscripts (score and parts) are to be delivered to Mr.
T.C. Fenwick Clerk to the Company, at 16, Berners Street, London, W., before the close
of the year 1905.\footnote{“Occasional Notes,” The Musical Times 46 (1905): 791.}

Cobbett received sixty-seven submissions for the 1905 competition. First prize was given
to William Yeates Hurlestone (1876-1906) for his Phantasy in A Minor (Hurlstone died a few
second competition in 1907, this time for trios in the Phantasy style set forth above, and again
received sixty-seven submissions. This time first place was awarded to Frank Bridge, second
place to James Friskin, and third place to John Ireland.\footnote{W.W. Cobbett, “More Plain Words,” The Musical Times 59 (1918): 63. In this article Cobbett states twice that Ireland took third prize in the 1907 competition, and Ernest Walker agrees in his article “The Modern British Phantasy.” However, in his Cyclopedie, under the “Cobbett Competitions and Commissions” entry, Cobbett implies that Ireland won second prize and James Friskin won third, and again under the “Ireland, John” entry written by Edwin Evans it is stated that Ireland won second prize.}

Cobbett’s style of judging the submissions was unique. As an amateur musician, his
musical expertise was limited; he was experienced in playing music, not in judging its
compositional merit based on theoretical technique. Cobbett judged the phantasies the best way
he knew how, by playing them. He got together a group of professionals with whom he played
chamber music, and they played through almost all of the compositions, selecting the top eight to
play for a jury headed by Alexander Mackenzie.\textsuperscript{102} Cobbett defended his method of judgment the following way:

I had recently sustained, at a meeting of the Musical Association, the thesis that really to appreciate chamber music you must play it yourself. In no other way can you, in my humble opinion, feel it to the same extent. Players form the best audience a composer can have. Here was an opportunity of putting my theory into practice. I make no claim to the knowledge of structure and form which master-musicians possess. I only claim to be able, by playing chamber music, to feel it, and so to judge it, as a composer should be judged, not entirely by his compeers but by those who listen to it, above all by those who listen to it so to speak bow in hand.\textsuperscript{103}

According to Cobbett, the only accurate way to judge a composition is to feel it, and the only way to truly feel a piece of music is to play it. There were pieces that he thought felt good to play, while others were less satisfying. Chamber music was originally meant for the enjoyment of the players, and being that the phantasies were an attempt at reviving this original purpose, it would only be right if the pieces felt good to play. Cobbett was not looking to identify specific structural or theoretical aspects of the music, for he had not specified any in his announcement. He was able to judge his one firm request of having each instrument be of equal importance by playing through the pieces. Cobbett’s method of judging the Phantasies proved to be sufficient, because not only were there no complaints, but many of those whose compositions won went on to compose other successful chamber music compositions.\textsuperscript{104}

\textsuperscript{102} Ibid.
\textsuperscript{103} W.W. Cobbett, “More Plain Words,” The Musical Times 59 (1918): 63. (Emphasis in original.)
\textsuperscript{104} Ibid. Following his 1907 Phantasy competition Cobbett held an international competition requesting sonatas for violin and piano. He received 133 manuscripts, but first place went to John Ireland who had won third prize in the 1907 competition. Cobbett attributes Ireland’s continued success as a composer of chamber music to these early
Cobbett’s next step in encouraging Phantasy compositions came in the form of twelve commissions, each with a different instrumentation. They are as follows:

- 1910-Piano Quintet, James Friskin
- 1910-Piano Quartet, Frank Bridge
- 1910-Cello and Piano, Walton O’Donnell
- 1911-Violin and Piano, York Bowen
- 1911-Violin, Viola and Cello, Von Ahn Carse
- 1911-String Quintet with two cellos, J. B. McEwen
- 1912-Viola and Piano, B. J. Dale
- 1912-Piano Quintet with double bass, Richard Walthew
- 1912-Piano Trio with Viola, T. F. Dunhill
- 1912-Two Violins and Piano, Ethel Barns
- 1914-String Quintet with two Violas, Ralph Vaughan Williams
- 1917/1918-Piano Trio, John Ireland

Cobbett quotes Mackenzie as saying that these commissions have been the most useful of Cobbett’s contributions thus far.

Following the commissions, an award was given to Albert Sammons for a Phantasy Quartet in 1915. In 1917 Cobbett awarded six prizes to Folk-Song Phantasies for string achievements. In 1915 Cobbett held another competition for a string quartet in sonata form. He received 47 manuscripts, and first prize went to Frank Bridge.

Glen Ballard of the newly formed York Bowen Society claims that the Phantasy commissioned by Cobbett was for Viola and Piano, Bowen’s Op. 54. The notes in the score, published “in association with the Royal Academy of Music,” state that Op. 54 was finished in 1918. Ernest Walker, in his 1915 article “The Modern British Phantasy” states that the Phantasy commissioned by Cobbett from Bowen was for violin and piano, Bowen’s Op. 34. Since each of Cobbett’s Phantasy commissions was for different instrumentation, and Cobbett went on to commission a Phantasy for viola and piano from B. J. Dale in 1912, it makes sense that he would have commissioned a piece for violin and piano from Bowen. Since the score notes state that Op. 54 was completed in 1918, it cannot be the same piece that Walker discusses in 1915. I argue that the Phantasy commissioned by Cobbett from Bowen was Op. 34 for violin and piano, not Op. 54 for viola and piano. In his article “More Plain Words,” Cobbett discusses how the Phantasy is “peculiarly fitted to the viola,” followed by a mention of B. J. Dale’s Phantasy for viola and piano. Had he also commissioned a viola Phantasy from Bowen it seems that he would have mentioned that one as well. It appears that Bowen’s Op. 54 Phantasy for viola and piano was a response to a competition for viola Phantasies that Cobbett mentions in passing in the same article. Op. 54 was not published until 1998, and Op. 34 is still in manuscript form.

McEwen’s Phantasy Quintet was first premiered at a concert of British chamber music organized by Thomas Dunhill on March 2nd, 9th, or 16th of 1915. “Editorial,” Chamber Music, 13 (1915): 60.

In 1917 Cobbett commissioned a Trio phantasy from Ireland, “in which the atmosphere of folk-song is to be produced.” “Miscellaneous,” The Musical Times 58 (1917): 281.


Albert Sammons founded the “New String Quartet” in 1910, which later became the London String Quartet.


Regarding the Folk-Song Phantasy Trio, first place was awarded to J. Cliffe Forrester, second place to Arnold
quartet or piano trio. Of these he wrote: “It was an experiment, and only time can prove if it has been a successful one.”\textsuperscript{112} Cobbett also mentions a competition in 1918 for phantasy viola works, for which York Bowen’s Op. 54 was most likely written. Following the 1918, competition Cobbett felt as though he had done everything he could to promote the phantasy, and he wrote: “I feel that I do not need to work any more at a revival of the Fancies.”\textsuperscript{113} He felt that there were enough pieces in circulation to “appeal to the general public.”\textsuperscript{114}

Cobbett’s Intentions

While Cobbett’s desire to revive the old English Fancy is clear, this was not his only goal. In 1918 he published an article in The Musical Times that summarized the activities that took place regarding the Phantasy. The article is in response to an earlier article by Frederick Corder, who attacked the British musical establishment for not promoting homegrown music.\textsuperscript{115} While Cobbett’s goal was to defend himself against Corder’s attack, he also clearly presents his actions and intentions regarding the phantasy competitions and commissions. Speaking of the phantasy competitions, Cobbett wrote:

\textsuperscript{112} W.W. Cobbett, “More Plain Words,” The Musical Times 59 (1918): 63. This particular competition is very interesting in that the compositions are a mix of folk-song and phantasy; since these pieces are different, however, they will not be part of my analysis.
\textsuperscript{113} Ibid.
\textsuperscript{114} Ibid.
\textsuperscript{115} On January 1, 1918, English composer and conductor Frederick Corder published an article in The Musical Times titled “Some Plain Words.” This article discussed the lack of cultivated cultural music in England during World War One. He stated: “During these forty months what has the nation done – what has the Government done – what have the publishers – the performers – the critics and writers – the composers done – to cultivate and further the progress of this kind of music?” Corder goes on for three pages, discussing what had not been done, in his opinion. In February 1918, an article titled “More Plain Words” was printed. It comprised a collection of responses to Corder from various people, including Cobbett. Cobbett presented what he had done for English chamber music in the past few years, as well as what he had seen other people doing. In May of 1918 Corder wrote a reply titled “Concerning ‘More Plain Words’” to the responses that appeared in the February article, as well as responses that appeared in the March publication. He acknowledged all that Cobbett had done, but continued to be pessimistic about the state of English music.
My object was (1.) To call the attention of native composers to the trend of the
British mind towards emotional reticence, and to the value of such a mentality in the
composition of chamber music, in which the absence of exaggeration is counted a great
merit. Also, to give them, as Dr. Ernest Walker puts it, “an outlet to activities hitherto
mainly exercised in orchestral channels.” (2.) To introduce a short form into the chamber
music repertoire. (3.) To institute a renaissance of the Fancies of the 17th century, the
counterparts of the chamber Quartet and Trio of the present day, free in form and,
consequently, in harmony with modern aspirations, besides being identified with English
music.¹¹⁶

Writing thirteen years after the first phantasy competition, Cobbett is able to concisely present
his intentions. He provides three clear goals that he hoped to accomplish through the phantasy.

Cobbett makes a broad generalization about the place of English chamber music in the
nineteenth century. Cobbett begins by making a generalization about the British nature of
“emotional reticence,” or a lack of emotional outpouring. Cobbett sees this as a positive tendency
when it comes to composing chamber music, and he believes that the ideals of chamber music
composition match this stereotypical emotional disposition of the “British mind.” This alleged
lack of emotion on the part of the British matches the “absence of exaggeration” that he finds
deserving in chamber music. His first goal was to give this British attitude a place in chamber
music composition.

Cobbett’s second goal of introducing the phantasy into chamber music was to fulfill the
need for shorter chamber music compositions.¹¹⁷ Cobbett is quoted as comparing chamber music
forms to both literature and the symphony. He stated:

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I reflected that in literature there are the lyrics and the epic poem, the short story and the long novel; in the orchestra, besides the symphony, the overture and the symphonic poem; but that in chamber music there is only one form that counts… And I concluded that a new type suited to the needs of the chamber-music composer was needed.\textsuperscript{118}

Standard string quartets at the time were fairly long with four movements, the first of which would be in sonata form. This four-movement structure can be seen in the chamber works of Beethoven, Mendelssohn, and Brahms, which made up the canonic chamber music of nineteenth-century England. The standard four-movement chamber work is comparable to the novel, or the orchestral symphony that Cobbett mentions. However, he observes that the short story and the overture or symphonic poem do not have an equivalent in chamber music. Cobbett wanted to create a composition that could supplement the established canon. He stated:

The Phantasies might well be accepted as numbers in a programme of chamber music which would not bear the weight of pieces written in full sonata form.\textsuperscript{119}

Geoffrey Bush refers to this as “a break with ossified sonata forms by resurrecting methods of an earlier time.”\textsuperscript{120} When paired with standard chamber music pieces on programs, the shorter length of the phantasy would complement the longer length of the other compositions. By the year 1928, Donald Tovey\textsuperscript{121} still found there to be a lack of shorter forms in chamber music. He stated:

There is a singular dearth of chamber music counterparts to the symphonic poem The only general remark that is feasible here is that W. W. Cobbett’s Phantasy prize-

\textsuperscript{118} Ibid.
\textsuperscript{121} Donald Tovey (1875-1940) was an English music scholar, composer and pianist. In 1894, at the age of 19, until 1914, he performed with the Joachim Quartet. In July of 1914 he was appointed to the Reid Chair of Music at Edinburgh University. His musicological writings impacted the English style of writing about music. Michael Tilmouth, “Tovey, Sir Donald (Francis),” \textit{Grove Music Online}, ed. L. Macy (accessed May 20, 2008), <http://www.grovemusic.com>.
competitions have induced many of the best English composers of the twentieth century to relieve this dearth with a series of remarkable works in one continuous movement (with changes of tempo on original lines).\textsuperscript{122}

The need for a shorter form of chamber music was identified by not only Cobbett, but by his contemporaries as well.

As previously discussed, Cobbett’s last goal was to bring about a revival of the seventeenth-century fancies in the modern chamber music idioms. This idea of the seventeenth-century fancy as the counterpart of modern chamber music came from a Bridge lecture that Cobbett claims to have attended.\textsuperscript{123} The brief description provided by Cobbett in the 1905 competition announcement regarding his expectations for the phantasy compositions directly relates to what he could have heard in the Ward Fantasia: a short piece with different sections and equal parts. Cobbett believed that this mixture of the fancy with modern English compositional techniques was going to create a music that was truly English. He stated:

…I hope I am not over ambitious when I say that I should like to see this form of writing, translated into modern terms, become a national one once more.\textsuperscript{124}

This idea fits perfectly into the broad ideas of the English Musical Renaissance. Cobbett’s phantasy is an answer to what Hughes and Stradling identified as a need for music that is specifically English.\textsuperscript{125}

\textsuperscript{122} Donald Francis Tovey, \textit{Chamber Music}, Supplemental Volume, \textit{Essays In Musical Analysis} (London: Cambridge University Press, 1944), 19.
\textsuperscript{123} See “Cobbett and the English Fantasia” in the beginning of this chapter.
\textsuperscript{125} See “Introduction.”
Cobbett’s Definition of Phantasy

Cobbett often contradicted himself when attempting to define what he meant by phantasy. His definitions are often allusive in nature and lacking specificity. Since any one definition or description given by Cobbett is lacking, it is necessary to look at how his thoughts changed over time in order to grasp his concept of the “phantasy.”

The first of his descriptions or definitions is found in his 1905 competition advertisement. Cobbett used the term as the title for a piece that follows the broad guidelines that he then described. He identifies a phantasy as a composition in which all parts are equal in importance, does not exceed twelve minutes in length, and is made up of sections, which may differ in tempo and rhythm but are performed as one movement with no break.\(^\text{126}\) Cobbett provided the participants of his first competition with only three factual or formal guidelines. He did not address the origin of the piece in the original competition guidelines, which in his mind was connected to the English fantasia, and therefore gave no clues as to the aesthetic qualities of his phantasy.

In his later writings, however, Cobbett did provide his readers with some insight into how he viewed the origin of the phantasy. In a 1915 article from his *Chamber Music* Supplement, Cobbett included part of a speech he gave at a dinner of the Musicians’ Company during which some of the winning phantasies were played. Speaking of the phantasies being heard that night, he remarked, “In the earlier days of your Company, there were so-called Fancies written by English composers for the viols. These phantasies are an evolution from them… .”\(^\text{127}\) In his *Cyclopedia* of 1929, Cobbett again makes a connection between his phantasy and older styles:

\(^{126}\) See “The Competitions,” beginning of Chapter Two.
The ancient British fancy or fancie, cultivated as a brief, unfettered form of instrumental music down to the Stuart period, and constituting a notable advance on the ricercari and fantasias initiated by the Italians, was styled by the Gresham Lecturer in office early in the present century “the counterpart of the chamber quartet and trio of the present day.” The phantasy was designed as its modern analogue […]

It is clear that Cobbett connected the old English fantasia or fancy to the phantasy compositions composed under this direction. His quotation here is referencing the same lecture given by Bridge that was discussed earlier.

Cobbett chose to spell “phantasy” in a non-traditional way to create intentional associations. In his encyclopedia, he defines phantasy as “an alternative spelling of the word fantasy, by the Musicians’ Company as the sign manual for a short form of British chamber music, prizes for which were first offered in the Cobbett Competitions of 1905.” Cobbett claims that the original announcement of the 1905 competition in The Musical Times was the first time that this spelling of the word had been used in reference to music. Cobbett explained his spelling choice the following way:

It is a genuine old English word, occasionally used in modern times, and serves to identify the series. Perhaps Fantasy would have been better, but to my taste it approaches too near to the word Fantasia, a once noble word, stimulating to the imagination, but debased in modern times by innumerable instances of misuse. Ineffable trash is constantly issued by publishers under the names Fantasia and Fantaisie, whilst these Phantasies, in my expectation, were destined to show some signs of the influence of those great masters who found in chamber music what the Greeks found in sculpture,

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129 Ibid.
expression of their highest ideals of beauty. Occasionally and erroneously I used at first what Mr. Fuller Maitland rightly called a polyglot spelling – Phantasie, which appears, I fear, in some of the earlier published works. It happens to be German, and, though found in the title page of many a masterpiece published in Germany, I have long since disregarded it for the genuinely British word Phantasy, which has lately been used by those composers who desire to be identified with the series inaugurated by the Worshipful Company of Musicians.\textsuperscript{131}

The term Fantasie was associated with nineteenth-century German tendencies to use the term to identify pieces that in some way break away from the tradition of sonata form. Nicholas Marston, in his Cambridge Music Handbook on Schumann’s \textit{Fantasie}, Op. 17, discusses the traditional use of the term fantasy in the nineteenth century. He states that, “A generic name such as ‘sonata’ or ‘fantasy’ encourages us to consider the given work in relation to the tradition of similarly titled pieces.”\textsuperscript{132} Nineteenth-century composers replaced the standard multi-movement work with a more continuous sounding piece, blurring the line between fantasy and sonata. This was accomplished through the weakening of movement breaks, unifying thematic material, and recalling thematic material throughout a piece to create a cyclic effect.

The use of the term fantasy in this way can be traced to Beethoven’s Op. 27 \textit{Sonata quasi una fantasia} (1801). Beethoven uses the term \textit{fantasia} to represent his “rejection of the conventional sonata-allegro model for the opening movement.”\textsuperscript{133} Mendelssohn’s 1833 \textit{Fantasie} in F-sharp minor, Op. 28 is a three-movement piano work in which the first movement does not follow traditional sonata form. Marston identifies the other two movements as Scherzo and Trio

\begin{footnotesize}
\begin{tabular}{ll}
\textsuperscript{131} & Ibid. \\
\textsuperscript{133} & Ibid., 28.
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and Sonata form,\textsuperscript{134} but because the first movement strays from tradition, the fantasy term is applied. The same is true of Schumann’s 1839 \textit{Fantasie}. A three-movement work, its lack of traditional form cast it into the fantasy realm.\textsuperscript{135} These three examples represent a body of work that one can only assume Cobbett had been exposed to, if not through his own musical interest then through his time spent in Germany.

Cobbett’s negative associations with the term fantasy due the “ineffable trash” with which he believed the term had become associated is what led the Musicians’ Company, and Cobbett, to come up with a new spelling. Cobbett believed that the spelling of phantasy with a “ph” and a “y,” made it a truly British word. For Cobbett, the change in spelling clearly separated his phantasy from the old English Fantasia, the \textit{Fantaisie} pieces that he so disliked, and any German associations. The one association that is implied through Cobbett’s spelling, however, is its transliteration from the original Greek, which would not have gone unnoticed among the educated.

The English word phantasy comes from the Greek word \textit{φαντασία}. It was first translated into English as “fantasy” in the fifteenth century. The variants on this spelling included \textit{fantasie}, \textit{fantasye}, \textit{fantasazie}, \textit{fantasaysie}, and \textit{fantasesi}. The sixteenth and seventeenth centuries saw even more spellings, including \textit{fantsy}, \textit{fayntasie}, \textit{feintasy}, \textit{fantasy}, \textit{fantacie}, \textit{phantarie}, \textit{phantesie}, \textit{phant’sie}, \textit{phant’sy}, and \textit{phantasy}. The French used \textit{fantasie}, \textit{fantaisie} or \textit{fantasia}, the Spanish \textit{fantasia} and the Italians \textit{fantasia}.\textsuperscript{136} Before phantasy reached the English language, it traveled

\begin{flushright}
\textsuperscript{134} Ibid., 27. \\
\textsuperscript{135} Ibid., 24. \\
\end{flushright}
through Greek, Latin, and French. The original translation into English came from the French, and so used an “f,” however the correct transliteration from Greek to English is to use a “ph.”  

*Φαντασία* literally means “a making visible.” The connotations of the word are “appearance, in late Greek especially spectral apparition or phantom, mental process or faculty of sensuous perception” and “the faculty of imagination.” By Cobbett’s time, the word “phantasy” already had centuries of history separate from its counterpart “fantasy.”

After the revival of Greek learning, the longer form was often spelt *phantasy*, and its meaning was influenced by the Gr[eek] etymo[logy]. In mod[ern] use *fantasy* and *phantasy*, in spite of their identity in sound and in ultimate etymology, tend to be apprehended as separate words, the predominant sense of the former being “caprice, whim, fanciful invention,” while that of the latter is “imagination, visionary notion.”

The nineteenth-century fantasy had a non-musical definition of “caprice, whim, fanciful invention,” which describes the German fantasies discussed above. Fantasies were caprices, whims and fanciful inventions on sonata form; they were small, unmethodical adjustments to the traditional form. Cobbett’s spelling of choice, phantasy, already had a different non-musical definition from the fantasy, which helped to differentiate the two types of compositions. It is possible that Cobbett’s contemporaries would have made this association themselves due to the spelling. Cobbett’s phantasy is a freedom from the sonata form associated with fantasy; it requires “imagination,” and “visionary notion.”

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138 “fantasy, phantasy,” in *Oxford English Dictionary Online*.
139 Ibid.
140 Ibid.
141 Ibid
142 Ibid.
Cobbett took his spelling of phantasy one step further than just its Greek association; he expected pieces with this title “to show some signs of the influence of those great masters who found in chamber music what the Greeks found in sculpture, expression of their highest ideals of beauty.” The late nineteenth century in England saw the publication of many sources that discussed Greek art, particularly Greek sculpture. Due to Cobbett’s extensive education in London, France, and Germany, it is very possible that he at some point read writings on aesthetic aspects of Greek sculpture.

One source of Greek aesthetics that Cobbett might have encountered is “The Canon of Beauty in Greek Art,” published in July of 1874 in the *Edinburgh Review*. This article discussed two important principles regarding Greek sculpture. It stated: “[I]t is fully within our competence to dissect the actual proportions, and to define the laws of symmetry, which have been followed by the master sculptors of Greece.” The author identifies proportion and symmetry as two measurable principals that identify Greek sculpture. He goes on to say: “The more chiefly we measure the chief masterpieces of antiquity, the more clearly do we become convinced of that close adherence to the definite rules of proportion to which the great sculptures subjected themselves.” These two concepts, proportion and symmetry, had traditionally been identified as elements of beauty in Greek sculpture.

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146 Ibid., 88.
147 Ibid., 90.
These concepts can be applied to the phantasies as well. In terms of proportion, Cobbett wanted the pieces to comprise different sections, and a phantasy with proportionate sections, or equally weighted sections, would be more aesthetically pleasing than one with sections of different weight. A symmetrical phantasy would be one in which thematic material from the beginning returns at the end. This does occur in the phantasies and will be discussed in more detail in Chapter Three.

In terms of the form of the phantasy, Cobbett said the following: “To my mind the word Phantasy is not suggestive of finality, only of freedom in the matter of Form.”\(^\text{148}\) Cobbett was looking to inspire compositions that did not fit into pre-established standard musical form. He wanted to give composers the freedom to go wherever their imagination took them, in other words, create phantasies in the true sense of the word.

Cobbett’s various descriptions can be reduced to the following criteria, applicable to phantasy pieces:

1. The phantasy is a chamber piece, a modern analogue of the British Fancy or Fantasia
2. The phantasy is a piece in which all parts are equal
3. The phantasy is made up of sections that differ in tempo and rhythm
4. The phantasy does not exceed 12 minutes in length
5. The phantasy should reflect the beauty found in Greek sculpture
6. The form of a phantasy is essentially a freedom from form

With these points in mind, I will now discuss how Cobbett reacted to the outcome of the phantasies he inspired.

Cobbett’s Reaction to the Phantasy

Following his competitions, and about half of his commissions, Cobbett gave general conclusions regarding those phantasy pieces. His first reaction was published in *The Musical Times* in 1911, where he was quoted at a meeting of the Concert-goers’ Club at the Royal Academy of Music on the first of February. He stated:

The major number of the Phantasies so far composed have consisted of a sort of condensation of the scope of four movements, treated not less organically than in sonata form. In place of the development section, a movement of slower tempo is sometimes introduced, and this again may embody a movement of a *Scherzando* type. In any case the music is continuous, and logical connection is maintained. A return to the characteristics of the first part of the movement is made, but not necessarily a definite repetition, and a developed *Coda* is added, which as regards style and tempo might suggest the usual *Finale* of a four-movement work. Thus the essential characteristics of an ordinary chamber work may be embodied in one movement of moderate length.  

Cobbett identifies two familiar characteristics in the phantasies. First, he sees them as a condensation of a standard four-movement work. He views the contrasting phantasy sections as similar to the contrasting movements. Secondly, he identifies the “organic” treatment of material in sonata form, and finds it similar to the treatment of material in the phantasies. He sees a relationship between the slow sections in the phantasies and the development section in sonata form, and between the return of familiar music in the phantasies and the finale of a four-movement work.

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Cobbett’s next published reaction comes in an “Obiter Dicta” of 1915. Published in his *Music Student* supplement, Cobbett takes the opportunity to write down the details of his activities regarding the phantasy. Here he states:

> After ten years’ experience I have to confess that I was wrong. In these Phantasies, short as they are, the composers have strayed into paths which are totally unfamiliar to the average banqueting citizen; there are some of them packed pretty close with musical thought, and totally unfit for the hour of digestion. The old style of music, crystal clear, full of easily followed imitative writing, is very popular at the dinners of the Musicians’ Company, where the music performed is often of extraordinary beauty, but to speak quite frankly, these modern modes of thought, simple enough to those who have assimilated them, a process quite easy for young people, but difficult for some adult musicians, fail to win the sympathies of all but a few listeners, and so the older music remains for the present unchallenged in the “lordly halls” occupied on festive occasions by the Worshipful Company of Musicians. Fortunately, an audience for them has been found elsewhere, though in the first days a lack of interest was shown by the public which gave me a sense of deep discouragement.\(^{150}\)

Here, for the first time, Cobbett states that the purpose of the phantasy compositions was to have new chamber music to be performed at the Musicians’ Company festivities. He was looking for new compositions that were reminiscent of the old fantasias that were played centuries ago during similar events. Cobbett complains, however, that the phantasies are too complicated for the event and are perhaps too heavily modernist.

While the phantasies may not have found a place during the “hour of digestion,” they were accepted in public concerts. According to Cobbett, the London String Quartet played a

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series of concerts involving the phantasies alongside standard chamber music during the Monday Pops Concerts. He believed that the phantasies had earned “an honourable place,”151 and found them to be “firmly rooted in [their] musical life.”152 It is surprising that these “firmly rooted” pieces, these truly English pieces, are no longer a celebrated part of English music.

Later in the same article Cobbett discusses his commissions. He specifically mentions commissioning Tovey to compose a phantasy for clarinet and three strings, because Tovey found in this instrumentation “fascinating possibilities.”153 Commenting on Tovey’s statement, Cobbett states:

Those words “fascinating possibilities” represent to a nicety my own feelings with regard to “Phantasy Form.” The condensation of four movements into one has been a great success, though I may say in parenthesis, that few have confined themselves to the twelve minutes limit. Some have taken twenty minutes, to their detriment from the listener’s point of view, for one movement lasting twenty minutes without a break is more trying than four movements lasting much longer, but with a break between each of them.154

Cobbett presents his complaints here in a kinder way. His main complaint is the length of some of the phantasies that have been composed. If we return to Cobbett’s intentions, the creation of a form of chamber music that was shorter in length was one of his clear goals. Therefore, phantasies that are longer in length would not be pleasing to him.

In his encyclopedia, Cobbett identified Vaughan Williams’s commissioned Phantasy Quintet as encompassing everything that a phantasy should be. Vaughan Williams’s Quintet was

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151 Ibid., 30.
152 Ibid.
153 It appears that Tovey never wrote the Phantasy.
played on July 11, 1911 at a dinner celebrating Cobbett’s eightieth birthday. Of the Phantasy, Cobbett wrote:

\[
\text{A piece of music which represents so exactly the phantasy as I conceived it that it may well serve as prototype to those who care to write in this form in the future, is the string quintet which Dr. Ralph Vaughan Williams wrote to my commission.}\]

Vaughan Williams’s Phantasy Quintet is consists of five equal parts, has four different sections varying in tempo that are played without a break, and lasts fifteen minutes and six seconds. Perhaps what made Vaughan Williams’s Phantasy stand out for Cobbett was its ability to capture the essence of the phantasy associated with the aesthetic qualities implied in its spelling, such as the beauty that he saw in Greek sculpture.

Armed with Cobbett’s own thoughts and ideas regarding what “phantasy” meant to him, I will now discuss the reactions of his contemporaries.

\[^{155}\text{“Chamber Music Life, The,” in }\text{Cobbett’s Cyclopedic Survey of Chamber Music, 1:262.}\]

\[^{156}\text{Duration comes from the Naxos recording of the Maggini Quartet. Ralph Vaughan Williams, Phantasy Quintet, String Quartets Nos. 1 & 2. Maggini Quartet, with Garfield Jackson, NAXOS 8.555300.}\]
CHAPTER III. REACTIONS AND ANALYSIS

This chapter concerns written reactions to the phantasy compositions, beginning with the most broad and ending with the most specific. I will begin with a discussion of the attitude towards the importance of the phantasy, next I will look at different ways in which the form of the phantasy has been interpreted, and I will end with an analysis regarding compositional techniques.

Reactions

Ernest Walker’s 1915 article, “The Modern British Phantasy,” was written at Cobbett’s request, published in *Chamber Music*, and later re-printed in Cobbett’s *Cyclopedia*. The article, which individually discusses many of the phantasies in detail, provides a positive argument in support of the importance of the phantasy. Walker wrote:

> I feel convinced that the chamber-music Phantasy—whether under this or under any other name or names—has a distinct future before it, and its forms are capable of wellnigh unlimited variety, without in any way transgressing the spirit of Mr. Cobbett’s own rules.  

Following this quote, Walker addresses the practicality of the shorter length of the phantasy as another reason why he anticipated its success.

While Walker speaks positively about the phantasy, he goes on to underestimate the importance of the connection between the modern aspects of the phantasy and those that directly relate it to the fantasia and the Tudor revival of the English Musical Renaissance. Walker’s final reflection on the phantasy states:

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And so the word Phantasy comes to use under Mr. Cobbett’s auspices, with a pleasant old-world flavour about it that, perhaps, rather obscures its essential features. It is a present-day analogue of the old Fancy, in so far as it is a comparatively short piece of concerted chamber music; but it is not musically a resurrection of something in the past, it is a modification of something in the present.\textsuperscript{158}

His focus and constant referral back to the fantasia shows the importance that Cobbett placed on its playing a main role in the construction of his phantasy. So then, to say that the phantasy is in no way a musical resurrection of the fantasia, and only a modification of the present, is to ignore half of what identifies a phantasy. Even if Cobbett had not placed such emphasis on the connection between the fantasia and the phantasy, its arrival in the middle of the English Musical Renaissance makes it impossible not to take the aspects that represent a resurrection of the past into the same consideration as those that make the phantasy a modification of present musical ideas. Cobbett stated that his intention was “to institute a renaissance of the Fancies of the 17\textsuperscript{th} century, the counterparts of the chamber Quartet and Trio of the present day […]”\textsuperscript{159} Ignoring Cobbett’s clearly stated intention leads to a misunderstanding and an underestimation of the importance of the phantasy as a product of the English Musical Renaissance.

Another early reaction is found in the 1911 book \textit{Musical Composition}, by Sir Charles Stanford. As both a composer and teacher at the time of these compositions, Stanford writes:

The reason for their (\textit{i.e.}, the Phantasies’) existence may not improbably be a natural rebellion against the excessive length (and disproportionate interest) of many modern works….. The form which the remedy has taken

\textsuperscript{158} Ibid., 18.
\textsuperscript{159} W.W. Cobbett, “More Plain Words,” \textit{The Musical Times} 59 (1918): 63.
is to condense all the movements of a work in sonata-form into one…..

This tabloid preparation of the three or four movements of a sonata must contain all the ingredients of the prescription, and yet not exceed the proportions of any one of them.\textsuperscript{160}

It is true that Cobbett was looking to create a shorter chamber piece, but to consider the phantasy a “rebellion” against those longer works would be an exaggeration. Cobbett never complained about the length of other chamber pieces of the time, he simply believed that it would be beneficial to also have a collection of shorter pieces. As seen before (pp. 23-24), Cobbett retrospectively acknowledged the formal innovation implied by Stanford. In the same article he stated:

\begin{quote}
I should like to add that no revolt against convention was ever intended by me – not even the substitution of one convention for another…. Sonata form will always remain to lovers of absolute music the most service-able of musical structures. I would rather say that a new convention is wanted to stand side by side with the old one; which, though conceived on a less ambitious scale, is yet deemed worthy of academic sanction.\textsuperscript{161}
\end{quote}

Eighteen years later, in his \textit{Cyclopedia} entry under “Phantasy,” Cobbett reacted again to Stanford’s statement. He wrote:

\begin{quote}
It has been said of me, the initiator of these musical adventures, that I aimed at supplanting sonata form. No such idea ever crossed my mind. Sir Charles Stanford once spoke of “this tabloid preparation of the three or four movements of a sonata.” This was nearer the truth, for I doubt if there ever will be evolved a successful form which does not owe its origin to some period of the sonata. But his words imply some design on my part
\end{quote}


to impose conditions upon competitors, whereas they were asked simply to give free play to their imagination in the composition of one-movement works, to write what they liked—in any shape—so long as it was a shape.\textsuperscript{162}

Cobbett acknowledges the influence of traditional forms but does not agree with Stanford’s implication that it was his intention originally to create a formal blueprint for the structure of the phantasies. His goal was not to restrict the composers but to give them freedom of form. In a 1915 article Walker states:

…neither in his first competition, nor, so far as I am aware, on any other occasion has Mr. Cobbett ever laid down any definite rules, except (I) the moderate length, (II) the continuity of flow throughout the varying moods.\textsuperscript{163}

Aside from the two rules identified above, Cobbett never placed any other restrictions on the composition of phantasies.

Thematic Transformation and Developing Variation

An early definition of phantasy, other than that by Cobbett, is found in the appendix of the original 1910 edition of the \textit{Grove Dictionary of Music and Musicians}. The appendix, written by J. A. Fuller-Maitland, defines phantasy in the following way:

A piece for concerted instruments in a continuous movement (with occasional changes of tempo and measure), occupying a shorter time than the usual classical works, and free from the structural laws of the “classical” form. In place of these it is enjoined, or at least recommended, that the development section of the sonata-form is to be replaced by a


movement in slow tempo, which may include also a scherzando movement. In any case, a logical connection with the thematic material of the first part of the movement is made, but not necessarily a definite repetition; and a developed coda is added as finale. Thus the fundamental outlines are retained, but there is not a hard and fast line. It will be seen that the revival of an old form takes proper cognizance of the tendencies of modern music since Liszt, with his "transformation of themes."\(^{164}\)

Like Stanford, Fuller-Maitland is trying to fit the phantasy into traditional forms. The interesting part of Fuller-Maitland’s definition of the phantasy, however, is his mention of the treatment of thematic material. Like he did with the form, he tried to fit the unfamiliar thematic treatment into something he was familiar with, that is, Liszt’s thematic transformation. He saw “a logical connection with the thematic material of the first part of the movement…but not necessarily a definite repetition.”\(^{165}\) In an attempt to give a name to this connection, he used Liszt’s thematic transformation.

Due to the lack of a contemporary definition of thematic transformation, we will have to rely on a modern definition. Hugh McDonald defines thematic transformation in the following way:

\begin{quote}
A term used to define the process of modifying a theme so that in a new context it is different but yet manifestly made of the same elements; a variant term is “thematic metamorphosis.” With Cyclic form and the desire for continuity between movements, the process became a favourite method in 19th-century music of giving greater cohesion both between and within separate movements of multi-movement works… Great ingenuity was devoted to changing the rhythm, melodic detail, orchestration or dynamic character
\end{quote}


\(^{165}\) Ibid.
of a theme to adapt it to a different purpose, often for programmatic reasons. Thematic transformation is no more than a special application of the principle of variation; yet although the technique is similar the effect is usually different, since the transformed theme has a life and independence of its own and is no longer a sibling of the original theme.166

In essence, through thematic transformation a composer creates a theme, which is then changed in terms of rhythm, melodic detail, orchestration, or dynamic character, mainly for programmatic reasons. This creates a new theme with “a life independ[ent] of its own.”167 This compositional technique was used by nineteenth-century composers, most famously Liszt, and applied primarily in his symphonic poems.168

Fuller-Maitland was not the only contemporary scholar to identify the connections among the thematic material used in phantasies. Walker, in his 1915 article “The Modern British Phantasy,” states:

The Phantasy-composer need not economise in invention, but he is bound to economise in the conditions necessary for the presentation of his ideas… I feel a great deal to be said in favour of continuity of flow—of course, up to a reasonable length. It secures a certain type of organic unity, which is, otherwise, never quite feasible; it secures concentration of idea and expression, and of the listeners’ attention also.169

This idea of creating continuity, or as Walker called it, “organic unity,” within a large work was not a new idea. Berlioz used the idée fixe to connect the five movements in his Symphonie

167 Ibid.
168 Most famously his 1856 symphonic poem Les Préludes.
fantastique, Wagner used the technique of the *Leitmotiv* to form cohesion throughout his long operas, and while Liszt was using thematic transformation, Brahms was creating continuity throughout his works with a compositional technique that Arnold Schoenberg later called developing variation. Schoenberg first introduced his thoughts on developing variation in the following way:

> Music of the homophonic melodic style of composition, that is, music with a main theme, accompanied by and based on harmony, produces its material by, as I call it, *developing variation*. This means that variation of the features of a basic unit produces all the thematic formulations which provided for fluency, contrasts, variety, logic and unity on the one hand, and character, mood, expression, and every needed differentiation, on the other hand – thus elaborating the *idea* of the piece.\(^{170}\)

Schoenberg saw in Brahms’s music a single thematic germ or idea from which everything else was derived. He stated:

> [T]here is nothing in a piece of music but what comes from the theme, springs from it and can be traced back to it; to put it still more severely, nothing but the theme itself. Or, all the shapes appearing in a piece of music are *foreseen* in the “theme.” I say a piece of music is a picture-book consisting of a series of shapes, which for all their variety still (a) cohere with one another, [and] (b) are presented as variations (*in keeping with the idea*) of a basic shape, the various characters and forms arising from the fact that variation is carried out in a number of different ways.\(^{171}\)

The purpose of developing variation is to create coherence throughout a piece. The variant motives can be formed in a variety of ways as long as the “idea” is not destroyed.


\(^{171}\) Ibid., 290.
The “motive of the variation,” as I called it, is derived through “developing variations” of basic features of the theme and its motive. Thus, in fact, the same compositional procedure can be observed here as anywhere else in our established Western music, producing the thematic material for forms of all sizes: the melodies, main and subordinate theme, transitions, codettas, elaborations, etc., with all the necessary contrasts.172

The main thematic idea is not just used to create equally important thematic ideas but also melodic material secondary to the main theme, such as transitional material. Walter Frisch summarized Schoenberg’s main ideas in the following way:

[B]y developing variation Schoenberg means the construction of a theme by the continuous modification of one or more features (intervals, rhythms) of a basic idea, according to certain recognized procedures, such as inversion, fragmentation, extension, and displacement.173

I propose that what Fuller-Maitland described in the phantasies was not inspired by thematic transformation, but instead Brahms’s technique of developing variation. The recognized procedures identified by Frisch can be seen in each of the phantasies. Many of the themes are used in inversion and parts of them are taken out and fragmented throughout each phantasy. Many of the motives are extended, when extracted from their original context, through added material at the end or within the motive. Displacement occurs when motives are transferred between sections in different meters.

There are three important differences between thematic transformation and developing variation, which have led me to identify the latter in the phantasies. First, thematic

172 Ibid., 165-166.
transformation is primarily used for programmatic reasons and developing variation is generally not. Second, in developing variation new sections of a work are articulated with variants of the opening material, something that is not generally seen with thematic transformation. Third, in developing variation the opening material is broken into motivic cells from which the remainder of the material is derived; the opening material in thematic transformation is usually not treated in such a motivic way.

Thematic transformation is generally associated with programmatic music, as, for example, in Liszt’s *Les Préludes*. Developing variation is most prominent in the absolute chamber music of Brahms, for example his A-major Piano Quartet. There is no indication from Cobbett or any of his contemporaries that the phantasy was meant to be a programmatic piece of music.

The second important aspect of developing variation that separates it from thematic transformation is the correspondence of important thematic ideas with important structural elements. Frisch asserts that Brahms’s “music represented the first time in Western music that the ‘subjective’ elements of thematic development determined ‘objective’ formal structures.”174 Elsewhere, Frisch also notes how, “Brahms emphasizes the importance of the basic ‘idea’ as progenitor of the outward form.”175 This compositional technique matches well with Cobbett’s phantasy in that each new section is usually clearly articulated with motives that have developed from the original idea.

The process of generating new motivic material in developing variation allows for the tracing of material back to a single germ, an approach which differs from that seen in thematic

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transformation. As I will show in my analysis below, it is possible in the phantasies to trace back secondary melodic material, as well as transitional material, to a single germ or idea.

The music of Brahms had a strong presence in England during the English Musical Renaissance. His music had a strong influence on both Parry and Stanford, who were not only important composition teachers, but also taught many of the composers of phantasies. Developing variation often occurred in Brahms’s chamber music, and the technique can be found in the chamber music of Stanford, Parry and their students. In Cobbett’s *Chamber Music* journal, the chamber works of Parry and Stanford, for example, are usually described in terms of what Schoenberg was to call developing variation. In a 1915 issue, Fuller-Maitland discusses characteristics of developing variation in three chamber works of Parry. Of Parry’s Trio in B minor (1884), Fuller-Maitland stated that, “Throughout the first movement proper, *Allegro con fuoco*, the thematic material is closely related to that of the introduction.” Speaking of Parry’s String Quintet in E flat, Fuller-Maitland stated “…it is [easy] to trace every bar to its source in one or other of the principal subjects…” The most direct connection to developing variation comes in Parry’s *Partita* for violin and piano (1877), about which Fuller-Maitland states that, “Each of the six movements is developed from a single germ.” Fuller-Maitland’s “germ” seems to be the same as Schoenberg’s “idea,” or “basic unit.”

Following the article on Parry, T. Dunhill’s article addresses the chamber music of Stanford. There is less discussion regarding the developing variation-like characteristics in the music of Stanford, however, it does say that “the influence of Brahms is writ large upon

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179 Ibid., 53.

180 Ibid., 55.
Stanford’s chamber music.” In a 1915 article, Marion M. Scott, discussed chamber music at the Royal College of Music, where Stanford was a composition teacher. It stated that, “It was about this time [1885] that Brahms took a firm hold at the College… Though of late years the college has been rather taunted by the ultra-moderns for its devotion to Brahms.” Brahms continued to be strongly influential well into the twentieth century despite modernistic tendencies. It is without question that the students of the RCM were well-versed in Brahms’s compositional technique of developing variation, even though it had yet to be named.

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Analysis: Developing Variation in the Phantasies

The pieces analyzed in this section were chosen because they won prizes in Cobbett’s 1905 or 1907 competitions. They are representative of many of the phantasies composed under Cobbett’s suggestion and will serve as examples of the use of the technique of developing variation inherent in the phantasies.

*Hurlstone: Phantasie for String Quartet in A Minor*

Hurlstone’s Quartet can be divided into five sections, which differ in tempo and rhythm:

1. *Andante sostenuto* ………………………………………………………………..mm. 1-52
2. *Allegro non troppo* …………………………………………………………..mm. 53-227
3. *Andante sostenuto* …………………………………………………………..mm. 228-242
4. *Allegro vivace – scherzando* ………………………………………………..mm. 242-272
5. *Coda* …………………………………………………………………………..mm. 273-345

The first section, *Andante sostenuto*, begins with Theme 1, Example 1, which is composed of motives a, b, and c. Motive a consists of three ascending notes, followed by a descending minor third and an ascending minor sixth. The second and third notes of this motive can be viewed as passing notes, leaving the essential shape of motive a as an ascending minor sixth. Motive b is a dotted half note tied to a quarter note a minor second lower. Motive c is characterized by an ascending major third and minor sixth triplet followed by a descending minor second and major third that ends with an ascending major second. Theme 1 consists of three motives that provide the motivic material for the rest of the piece.

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Example 1: Hurlstone, *Phantasie for String Quartet*, Theme 1
Following the initial statement, Theme 1 is stated again in full by the first violin beginning in m. 6. These opening statements of Theme 1 are followed by Example 2, transitional material in the second violin. Here, the second violin explores and ornaments motive a. The first three notes of m. 23 come straight from motive a, and then beginning in m. 24 motive a appears in diminution and the ascending intervals gradually become larger.

Example 2: Hurlstone, *Phantasie for String Quartet*, Fragmentation

Example 2 is a transition between the introduction of Theme 1 and Theme 2. In Example 3, labeled Theme 2, Theme 1 is condensed into m. 27. The ascending minor sixth of motive a is reduced to a perfect fourth, and motives b and c are presented in diminution.

Example 3: Hurlstone, *Phantasie for String Quartet*, Theme 2

The second section, *Allegro non troppo*, begins with Theme 3, Example 4. Each measure of Theme 3 is derived from a corresponding measure in Theme 1. Like Theme 1, Theme 3 can be divided into three motivic ideas. Measure 57 is derived from motive a, and begins with a three-note ascending scale. Instead of then descending a minor third to return to the beginning note, it instead ascends a minor sixth, landing on the beginning note, an octave higher, thus condensing a return to the beginning note and the ascending minor sixth, from motive a, into one. Measure 58
is derived from motive b. The note-length has been diminished due to the change in time signature, and the melodic direction has been inverted. Measure 59 is the retrograde of motive c, in terms of the triplet placement and the inversion, in terms of the triplet direction. The two quarter notes that follow the triplet in motive c have been left out, and the half note at the end of motive c has been moved to the beginning of c³.

Example 4: Hurlstone, *Phantasie for String Quartet*, Theme 3

Following its initial statement, Theme 3 is fragmented, both rhythmically and melodically, until m. 141. Example 5 shows the rhythmic fragmentation of Theme 3. Here, m. 61 is clearly derived from the sixteenth and eighteenth notes first presented in motive a⁴ of Theme 3.
Example 6 shows the elaboration of Theme 1 through augmentation and canon, beginning with the second violin. Following complete statements of Theme 1, the second violin and viola begin playing free material loosely based on motives a and b. The first violin completes its full statement of Theme 1 in m. 164 and joins the other two parts in free material until the pick-up into m. 168. At this point, the first and second violins play motive a in augmentation, here labeled $a^6$. The viola joins at the pick-up to m. 170, and all three parts continue with a mixture of motive a and free material until m. 178. This free material is still reminiscent of the augmented Theme 1, and is really an extension of it. While $a^6$ retains the metric placement of motive a, here Hurlstone displaces the phrasing and removes the emphasis of what had, in motive a, been a pick-up note. The cello enters with Theme 1 in augmentation at the pick-up to m. 172, but breaks off into free material in m. 175 before completing a full statement of the theme.
The third section, *Andante sostenuto*, reprises the material from the first section of the piece, represented in Example 2.

Example 6: Hurlstone, *Phantasie for String Quartet*, Augmentation
Example 7 is a derivative of Theme 1 in diminution. Measure 258, labeled a⁷, is derived from motive a⁴ presented in Theme 3 because both have three ascending notes followed by an ascending sixth. Measure 259, labeled b⁴, is derived from the ascending version of motive b presented as b³ of Theme 3.

![Example 7: Hurlstone, *Phantasie for String Quartet*, Diminution](image1)

Immediately following is a statement of Example 7 in further diminution. This is shown in Example 8.

![Example 8: Hurlstone, *Phantasie for String Quartet*, Diminution](image2)

The Coda is a conglomeration of all the material presented thus far, beginning with a statement of Theme 1 in diminution. This is shown in Example 9.

![Example 9: Hurlstone, *Phantasie for String Quartet*, Diminution](image3)
In this analysis of Hurlstone’s *Phantasie for String Quartet* I have identified inversion, fragmentation, extension, displacement, augmentation, and diminution as ways that Hurlstone was able to create thematic and transitional material in the style of developing variation.

*Bridge: Phantasie for String Quartet*

Bridge’s Quartet can be divided into four sections, which differ in tempo and rhythm:

1. *Allegro moderato* .........................................................mm. 1-252
2. *Andante moderato – Poco piu mosso – Tempo primo* ......mm. 253-339
3. *Allegro ma non troppo* .....................................................mm. 340-457
4. *Coda* ........................................................................mm. 458-488

The first section, *Allegro moderato*, begins with Theme 1, Example 10, and is composed of motives a, b, c and d. Motive a consists of a six-note ascending scale, moving from scale degrees 3 to 8 in F natural minor, of which the first, second, fourth and fifth are grace notes. This is preceded by a chord, labeled motive d, which has a tendency to precede motive a, although Theme 1, in subsequent appearances, will lack motive d. Motive b is made up of descending thirds, beamed in a 2/4 pattern, creating a hemiola. Motive c begins with a rhythmic continuation of motive b, but breaks into ascending eighth notes. Theme 1 includes all motivic germs from which the thematic material in the piece is derived.
Example 11 shows the fragmentation of motive a from Theme 1. Each instrument enters with material derived from motive a, but trails off before completing the theme. The descending scale in the viola is a diminished inversion of motive a.
Example 12 shows Theme 2, which is derived from Theme 1. Measure 65 is derived from motive b, here labeled $b^1$ – it uses the same rhythm as motive b, but here the direction of the notes has been inverted, and they now move stepwise instead of in thirds.

Example 12: Bridge, Phantasie for String Quartet, Theme 2

The second section, Andante moderato – Poco piu mosso – Tempo primo, begins with Theme 3, Example 13. Measure 253, labeled $b^2$, is a version of motive b with a passing note between the second and third main notes. The last note of $b^2$ overlaps with the first note of $c^1$, which is derived from motive c. Like motive c, m. 254 begins with a repeated note as part of an ascending eighth-note figure. Measure 255 is the same as m. 253 with a longer passing note. Measure 256, labeled $a^3$, is an ascending scalar passage derived from motive a; here the grace notes have become eighth notes. Measure 257 is derived from m. 254; here the eighth notes come first, followed by a repeated note. Measure 258 is a re-statement of m. 255 transferred up a whole step.

Example 13: Bridge, Phantasie For String Quartet, Theme 3

Example 14, Theme 4, is derived from Theme 3. The first half of m. 271, here labeled $b^4$, is a simplified version of $b^2$ from Theme 3. The pattern of three descending thirds with a passing note in $b^2$ is now presented without the middle third in $b^4$, resulting in a descending fifth with a
passing note. Measure 272, here labeled c\textsuperscript{3} derives from the ascending sixth in m. 254, which in turn is an expansion of the ascending fourth in motive c. Measures 273-274 are gesturally derived from mm. 271-272.

Example 14: Bridge, Phantasie for String Quartet, Theme 4

The third section, Allegro ma non troppo, begins with Theme 5, Example 15, which consists of motives a and b mixed with newly composed material, or expansion material. The second half of m. 341 and m. 342, here labeled a\textsuperscript{4}, are derived from motive a. Here the grace notes have been changed to sixteenth notes, but the ascending shape of the line stays the same. In m. 347, here labeled a\textsuperscript{5}, the sixteenth notes are derived from the grace notes of motive a. The triplet figures in mm. 343, 345, and 346, here labeled b\textsuperscript{5}, b\textsuperscript{6}, and b\textsuperscript{7}, are derived from the rhythm of motive b.

Example 15: Bridge, Phantasie for String Quartet, Theme 5

As this analysis of Bridge’s Phantasie for String Quartet has shown, the recognized procedures of inversion, fragmentation, extension, augmentation and diminution, identified as
elements of developing variation were used by Bridge to create new thematic and transitional material throughout each section.

**Bridge: Trio Phantasie**

Frank Bridge’s Trio can be divided into seven sections, which differ in tempo and rhythm:

1. *Allegro moderato ma con fuoco – Ben moderato – Con fuoco* …..mm. 1-82
2. *Poco tranquillo* ………………………………………………………………..mm. 83-164
3. *Andante con molto espressione* ……………………………………………..mm. 165-199
4. *Allegro scherzoso* ………………………………………………………………..mm. 200-317
5. *Andante* …………………………………………………………………………..mm. 318-352
6. *Allegro moderato* ………………………………………………………………..mm. 353-419
7. *Con anima – Poco più mosso* ……………………………………………………..mm. 420-464

The first section, *Allegro moderato ma con fuoco – Ben moderato – Con fuoco*, begins with Theme 1, Example 16, which consists of motives a, b, and c. Motive a is characterized by a dotted rhythm and ascending thirds. Motive b is characterized by a descending driving motion. Motive c is characterized by an ascending shape with a tied rhythm. Theme 1 constitutes a motivic germ used throughout the entire Phantasie.
Following Theme 1 is the introduction of Theme 2, Example 17, which consists of motive d. Motive d is characterized by two long notes, followed by an ascending step wise three-note figure leading into the next measure. Measures 17-18, labeled d^1, are a directional inversion of motive d, and use the same rhythm. Measures 19-21, labeled d^2, are a rhythmic augmentation of mm. 17-18. The only difference between mm. 19-21 and mm. 17-18 is the direction of the second note, which ascends in the former and descends in the later. Theme 2 is the second motivic germ used in this Phantasie.
Example 18, labeled $a^1$, is a fragment of motive $a$ that accompanies statements and fragments of Theme 2 from m. 11 to m. 56. The rhythm in the first half of m. 11 is the same as motive $a$, while the second half is new material.

Examples 19 and 20 include $c^1$ and $c^2$, which are fragments of motive $c$. Both examples are characterized by the tied rhythm of motive $c$; $c^1$ retains the ascending direction, while $c^2$ inverts the direction, and $c^3$ retains the rhythm.
Example 21 shows a combination of motives a and b. In m. 72 the violin and cello begin with a version of motive a, followed by a version of motive b in its original rhythmic placement, but melodically inverted. Motives a and b were previously heard as two separate ideas in separate voices, in Theme 1, but here they are combined to create one continuous idea. This is then repeated an octave higher in m. 73.

The second section, *Poco Tranquillo*, begins with transitional material derived from motive a, Example 22. The rhythm of m. 83, labeled $a^3$, is derived from the opening rhythm of
motive a. Here, the rhythm and direction have been inverted, and the middle dotted eighth note has been replaced by an eighth note and a grace note. This tweaked rhythm is then augmented in mm. 84-85 by the violin, a^4.

Example 22: Bridge, *Phantasie Piano Trio*, Fragmentation

The second section is characterized by Theme 3, Example 23, and is derived from motive d. Measure 91, here labeled d^3, is an augmentation of motive d^2 of Theme 2. The opening two intervals are changed, but the direction is the same, and it is followed by a descent that mixes steps and thirds. Measures 92 and 94 are transitional material. Measure 93, here labeled d^4, is an augmentation of the first half of d^3.
The third section, *Andante con molto espressione*, begins with Theme 4, Example 24. Measures 165, 166, and 169, each contain an inversion of motive b. Measures 167 and 168, here labeled $d^5$, are derived from $d^3$. The opening interval has been changed from a major third to a major second, but the shape is retained. The first three notes are shown in augmentation, and are tied to the following three notes, which are shown in diminution.

Example 24: Bridge, *Phantasie Piano Trio*, Theme 4
In the fourth section, *Allegro scherzoso*, there is a melody derived from fragments of motives c and d, Example 25. Measure 220 into 221 is derived from the ascending quarter notes and tied rhythm of motive c. The triplet at the end of m. 221 leading into m. 222 is a directional inversion of motive b. The rhythm of m. 222-225 are taken from $c^2$, of Example 18. The end of m. 225 and into m. 226 is derived from $d^1$. Here the rhythm is diminished and the melody is ornamented by the triplet.

![Musical notation](image)

*Example 25: Bridge, Phantasie Piano Trio, Fragmentation*

The fifth section, *Andante*, uses the same melodic material as section three. Section six, *Allegro moderato* (mm. 353-419), consists of a restatement of mm. 1-65. Section seven, *Con anima – Poco piu mosso*, consists of restatements of material from Themes 1 and 3.

These three analyses have shown the use of developing variation in the phantasies. Through the use of inversion, fragmentation, extension, displacement, augmentation, and diminution, each of the composers has taken a single germ or idea and used it to create an entire composition. Through this analysis and the proven influence of Brahms on composers of
chamber music of the English Musical Renaissance, I believe that phantasy composers used Brahms’s compositional technique of developing variation and not Liszt’s thematic transformation, as was proposed by Fuller-Maitland.

While Cobbett was most likely unaware of the compositional technique of developing variation, and he never mentioned any such technique as something he would have liked to see represented in the phantasies, he did, as was discussed above, identify an organic treatment of the material similar to what he saw in sonata form. The result of developing variation seems well suited to his concept of the phantasy.
CHAPTER IV. CONCLUSIONS

Walter Wilson Cobbett played an important role in the English Musical Renaissance. Through his funding and promotion of chamber music in London, Cobbett stressed the importance of British chamber music at a time when English composers were searching for a national music. Cobbett’s competitions and commissions resulted in the creation of phantasy chamber works by many of England’s well-known composers.

Cobbett introduced the phantasy, a short form of chamber music, into the chamber music repertoire. He defined the phantasy as a modern analogue to the British Fancy or Fantasia, a piece in which all parts are equal, and is made up of sections that differ in tempo and meter. The phantasy, he prescribed, should not exceed twelve minutes in length, should reflect the beauty found in Greek sculpture and can be essentially free from traditional forms.

Cobbett expressed a desire for the phantasy to become a genre of national music for England; he believed that its spelling made it truly English. During the English Musical Renaissance, as Stradling and Hughes identified, there was a need for purely English music – a national English style that could not only be identified as English, but could also be an international identifier of English music. This idea of an English national music becomes complicated, however, when a German influence upon many English composers is identified. Cobbett’s phantasies are an example of this nationalistic contradiction. While products of the English Musical Renaissance, the phantasies also show the clear influence of Brahms.

Understanding the intellectual process that went into the composition of many of the phantasies provides new angles from which to view the importance of the phantasy in the history of British music. Perhaps Cobbett was doing in England the equivalent of what Brahms was doing in Germany, for both were interested in the incorporation of old forms into new music. Are
the nationalistic associations in music more important than the intention and purpose of music? Does the German influence on the phantasies prevent them from being truly English nationalistic music? Further discussion of the nationalistic issues regarding the phantasy would surely create a better understanding of nationalistic attitudes in the English Musical Renaissance.

Though beautiful and intellectually rich pieces, few of Cobbett’s phantasies have been recorded and performances of them are rare. Those phantasies that were published were not widely distributed outside of England, and many of them are either lost or still in manuscript form. An awareness of and a historical interest in the phantasies can, and should, lead to the incorporation of these pieces into the established repertoire. Looking back, we can intellectually appreciate the role that the phantasy played in the musical history of England, but more importantly, we should begin to appreciate the phantasy as Cobbett did, “bow in hand.”
APPENDIX

The table in the Appendix outlines information that I was able to gather regarding the phantasies. Blank spaces have been left where information was unavailable.
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<td>Molto Allegro</td>
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<td>Andante</td>
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<td>Richard Walthew</td>
<td>Commissioned</td>
<td>1912</td>
<td>Violin, viola, violoncello,</td>
<td>Andante moderato</td>
<td>Stainer &amp; Bell</td>
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<td>double-bass, piano</td>
<td>Poco allegro</td>
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<td>Presto scherzando</td>
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<td>T.F. Dunhill</td>
<td>Commissioned</td>
<td>1912</td>
<td>Violin, viola, piano</td>
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<td>Stainer &amp; Bell</td>
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<td>Ethel Barns</td>
<td>Commissioned</td>
<td>1912</td>
<td>2 violins, and piano</td>
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<td>Commissioned</td>
<td>1912</td>
<td>String Quartet</td>
<td>Allegro con fuoco</td>
<td>Goodwin &amp; Tabb, 1915</td>
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<td>Allegro con fuoco</td>
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