

Introduction

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I

To study British music of the early twentieth century through the lens of modernism may seem perverse. According to conventional wisdom, this repertory is notable precisely for its lack of modernity. After all, most British composers did not set out to shock their audiences. They seldom posed as dandies, bohemians or pioneers. In Britain there was little of the bold theorizing and proselytizing that accompanied Continental modernism in music and the other arts. Traditional genres such as the symphony remained well cultivated, and there was a conspicuous movement against urban life and cosmopolitanism in favour of the ‘national’ past, local traditions, folk song and the native countryside. In terms of compositional technique, to be sure, experimentation with form and syntax took place, sometimes closely paralleling, or even anticipating, that on the Continent. Yet these innovations were made piecemeal and were not underpinned by a sustained commitment to ‘the new’ for its own sake.¹ Despite the strenuous efforts of individuals, it was not until the 1960s that modernism as an ideology secured lasting patronage and institutional support in Britain. At first sight it may seem tempting to agree with the view that, although Britain in this period ‘was never a land without music’, it was ‘a land without musical modernism’.²

Conventional wisdom is in some respects sound: the topic of this book is problematic. Yet recent work has shown the overall picture to be far more differentiated than was once assumed. Contrary to allegations made by composers and critics of the 1950s and 1960s, Britain in the early twentieth century was by no means a provincial backwater of music, and not all its musicians were preoccupied

¹ David J. Lambourn, *Modernism in British Music, 1900–22* (MLitt diss., Cambridge, 1993), 9. ‘[I]t now appears that many composers here were exploring atonality, polytonality, style juxtaposition, spatial separation and indeterminacy in the early decades of the century, in some cases before their European contemporaries.’ However, ‘the picture that emerges is disconcertingly uneven, with a haphazard mixture of experimental and ephemeral works varying from first- to third-rate.’

² Chris Walton, ‘Auf der Suche nach der Moderne in England’, in *Klischee und Wirklichkeit in der musikalischen Moderne* (Vienna: Universal, 1994), 256–69. ‘Behauptung war jedoch England zwar nie ein Land ohne Musik, wohl aber, wie hier erläutert werden soll, ein Land ohne musikalische Moderne.’

by the distant past.³ The most advanced Continental music was well known in London in the first decades of the century, and most progressive composers visited the city to promote their work. Before the First World War, London heard *Elektra*, *Prometheus*, *Petrushka*, *Jeux* and *Le Sacre du printemps*, and received six visits from Diaghilev's Ballets Russes. London staged the world premieres of works by Schoenberg, Falla, Stravinsky, Bartók and Ravel,⁴ and in 1922 was chosen as the headquarters of the International Society for Contemporary Music. In the inter-war period the BBC frequently broadcast the music of the Second Viennese School.⁵ 'Modern music' was reviewed and debated in the press and in music journals from the early years of the century, and by the 1910s even unsympathetic critics realized that it had to be taken seriously. British composers were well aware of these developments and responded to them. This is true of well-known names such as Elgar, Holst and Vaughan Williams, and of more neglected figures such as Bantock, Brian, Bax, Holbrooke, Foulds, Goossens and Berners.⁶

Although the patterns of reception and response reveal conflict and friction at times, they offer rewarding perspectives and may throw up surprising insights. They help us to understand British music in a European context and to draw on the insights of critical theory. This approach is far preferable to several familiar alternatives: 'English Musical Renaissance' thinking which views the music in splendid isolation; textbooks on twentieth-century music that shunt it away under

³ For some opinions, see Lambourn, *Modernism in British Music*, 6. For instance, Donald Mitchell wrote in 1963: '[T]he musical scene in England after the turn of the century possessed all the immobility of a waxworks stacked with dummy composers and the effigies that they passed off as compositions. "How to go on?" was not so much the question; it was, rather "How to go back?"' *The Language of Modern Music* (London: Faber, 1963), 110.

⁴ Respectively, the *Five Orchestral Pieces*, Op. 16 (1912), *The Three-Cornered Hat* (1919), *Ragtime* (1920), *Symphonies of Wind Instruments* (1921), Violin Sonatas Nos. 1 and 2 (1922, 1923), *Tzigane* (1924).

⁵ Jennifer Doctor, *The BBC and Ultra-Modern Music 1922–1936: Shaping a Nation's Tastes* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1999).

⁶ For introductions to the field, see the excellent study by Lambourn (*Modernism in British Music*) for the period until 1922, and, for later years, Stephen Banfield, 'England, 1918–45', in Robert P. Morgan (ed.), *Modern Times: From World War I to the Present* (Basingstoke: Macmillan, 1993), 180–205. In some respects the way was prepared by Peter J. Pirie, *The English Musical Renaissance* (London: Gollancz, 1979). For recent essays in this field, see *Musical Quarterly* 91/1–2 (2008), including an introduction by Byron Adams, 1–7; Charles Edward McGuire, 'Edward Elgar: "Modern" or "Modernist"?' Construction of an Aesthetic Identity in the British Musical Press, 1895–1934', 8–38; Eric Saylor, "'It's not Lambkins Frisking at all": English Pastoral Music and the Great War', 39–59; Anthony Barone, 'Modernist Rifts in a Pastoral Landscape: Observations on the manuscripts of Vaughan Williams's Fourth Symphony', 60–88; Jenny Doctor, 'The Parataxis of "British Musical Modernism"', 89–115; and Daniel M. Grimley, 'Music, Ice and the "Geometry of Fear": the Landscapes of Vaughan Williams's *Sinfonia Antartica*', 116–50.

‘nationalism’ or ‘folk song influences’; or the stance of Richard Taruskin in the *Oxford History of Western Music* (2005), who simply ignores all British music before *Peter Grimes* (1945).⁷

This book is not the last word on British music and modernism before 1960, for its coverage is not comprehensive as regards composers, institutions or genres. Its main contribution lies in the application of new ideas and theoretical approaches. Three overall themes emerge from its chapters: description of the British reaction to Continental versions of modernism and the forms it took; links between music and the visual arts (in particular painting and cinema) in both theory and practice; and analysis and interpretation of compositions in the light of recent theoretical work on form, tonality, pitch organization and hermeneutics. The book is not intended as an exercise in affirmative ‘re-branding’. ‘Modernism’, after all, has become a magic word: as a label it bestows authenticity. The ‘and’ in the book’s title is thus significant. All contributors keep an eye on the tensions inherent in the topic, and develop nuanced accounts of the phenomena they study.

II

A recent survey of the usages of ‘modern’, ‘modernity’ and ‘modernism’ in literary and cultural theory uncovered not just disagreements over definitions and semantic fields but a state of multiple contradiction.⁸ These terms can connote order or chaos, stasis or flux, grand narratives or the rejection of grand narratives, the celebration of Enlightenment rationality and universal progress or a critique of the turn of instrumental reason to domination. It is therefore essential to sort out the meanings currently in play in musicology.

In Anglophone musicology alone, there are widely divergent usages, perhaps reflecting the relatively recent establishment of the term as an ‘-ism’. (In academic musicology ‘modernism’ probably postdates ‘postmodernism’, although ‘modern music’ has a longer history.⁹) In part these differences reflect the long-standing divide between Schoenbergians and Stravinskians, which persists in the domain of historiography. The former regard genuine modern music as an extension of tradition

⁷ Richard Taruskin, *The Oxford History of Western Music*, vol. 4, *The Early Twentieth Century* (New York: Oxford University Press, 2005).

⁸ Susan Stanford Friedman, ‘Definitional Excursions: The Meanings of Modern/Modernity/Modernism’, *Modernism/Modernity* 8/3 (2001), 493–513.

⁹ Paul Griffiths, *A Concise History of Modern Music from Debussy to Boulez* (London: Thames & Hudson, 1978), and several later revised editions. On the relationship of musical modernism to postmodernism, see Björn Heile, ‘Introduction: New Music and the Modernist Legacy’, in Björn Heile (ed.), *The Modernist Legacy: Essays on New Music* (Aldershot: Ashgate, 2009), 1–10. It is interesting to compare Heile’s Introduction with this one: the two approach modernism from opposite ends of the twentieth century and with different repertoires in mind.

and a heightening of progressive trends, and, when periodizing music history, are likely to date its onset relatively early. The latter consider it a sharp break with the worn-out legacy of romanticism, and are likely to claim that romanticism extends to the First World War and includes, for instance, Schoenberg's Expressionist works.¹⁰ But sometimes a far broader semantic field is implied. In 1984 Peter Burkholder argued for Brahms as the first 'modernist', on the grounds that his music presents a self-conscious response to and commentary on the past masterpieces of a reified musical 'tradition', a practice that became near-universal for twentieth-century composers. More recently scholars have cited the work of Carl Dahlhaus to argue that much of the large-scale symphonic music composed in the decades around 1900, once considered 'late-romantic', in fact represents the first phase of modernism.¹¹ This strategy – which can seem occasionally dubious – serves in part to legitimize the academic study of once-unrespectable composers. Walter Frisch, significantly a scholar of Schoenberg, puts the date even earlier, speaking of 'German modernism' already with Wagner. More radically, James Webster has coined the phrase 'First Viennese Modernism' for the Viennese realm between approximately 1750 and 1815.¹² These positive usages contrast curiously with

¹⁰ See Taruskin, *The Early Twentieth Century*, 448. 'The history of twentieth-century music as something esthetically distinct from that of the nineteenth century begins not at the *fin-de-siècle*, then, but here, in the 1920s.' Compare with Walter Frisch, *German Modernism: Music and the Arts* (Berkeley and London: University of California Press, 2005).

¹¹ This was not quite Dahlhaus's intention, but is sometimes implied by the English translation of his book *Die Musik des 19. Jahrhunderts* (*Neues Handbuch der Musikwissenschaft*, vol. 7; Laaber: Laaber-Verlag, 1980) as *Nineteenth-Century Music*, trans. J. Bradford Robinson (Berkeley and London: University of California Press, 1989). Dahlhaus was not interested in 'back-dating' the start of 'Neue Musik' (note the capital 'N') but in replacing the label 'Spätromantik' for the previous style period with 'Moderne'. This move helps to position Schoenberg at the core of 'Neue Musik' at the expense of Stravinsky. Matthew Riley, 'Musikalische Moderne: Dahlhaus and After', paper read to the Elgar and Musical Modernism Conference, Gresham College, London, 14 December 2007.

¹² J. Peter Burkholder, 'Brahms and Twentieth-Century Classical Music, *19th-Century Music* 8/1 (1984), 75–83; Dahlhaus, *Nineteenth-Century Music*; Frisch, *German Modernism*; James Hepokoski, 'Fiery-Pulsed Libertine or Domestic Hero? Strauss's Don Juan Reinvestigated', in Bryan Gilliam (ed.), *Richard Strauss: New Perspectives on the Composer and his Work* (Durham, NC and London: Duke University Press, 1992), 135–75; James Hepokoski, *Sibelius: Symphony No. 5* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1993), Introduction; Charles Youmans, *Richard Strauss's Orchestral Music and the German Intellectual Tradition: The Philosophical Roots of Musical Modernism* (Bloomington: Indiana University Press, 2005); Daniel M. Grimley, 'Modernism and Closure: Nielsen's Fifth Symphony', *Musical Quarterly* 86/1, 149–73; J.P.E. Harper-Scott, *Edward Elgar, Modernist* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2006); see also Rudolf Stephan, 'Moderne', in Ludwig Finscher (ed.), *Die Musik in Geschichte und Gegenwart*, Sachteil 6 (Kassel and Stuttgart: Bärenreiter and Metzler, 1997), 391–7; and Siegfried Mauser, 'Musikalische Moderne und Neue Musik als kompositionsgeschichtliche Paradigmen', in Siegfried Mauser and Matthias Schmidt (eds), *Geschichte der Musik im 20. Jahrhundert*:

the simultaneous attacks on allegedly ‘modernist’ institutions by postmodernists, which bring charges of hegemony and elitism and point to ‘grand narratives’ that entrench existing power relations within the academy and beyond.¹³ In one form of musicological revisionism, then, ‘modernism’ is a term of opprobrium thrown at a perceived establishment, in another a term of approbation extended to the fringe to bring it inside a ‘big tent’.

These difficulties are less pronounced in German scholarship, where the terminology is more stable. ‘Neue Musik’ denotes the radical movements in composition from around the time of the First World War, starting with Schoenberg and Stravinsky and continuing through the avant-gardes that followed the Second World War. The phrase roughly corresponds to the well-established meaning of ‘modern music’ in late twentieth-century English.¹⁴ ‘Moderne’, by contrast, primarily means ‘modernity’ (in practice dated to about 1800 or just before), although when used with reference to movements in the history of the arts, it functions like the English ‘modernism’, but with a very early date. This becomes clearer when the term is qualified as ‘ästhetische Moderne’: aesthetic modernity, or post-Enlightenment modernity in the arts. Thus, in German, whatever the usages of ‘Moderne’ as style periods in different Humanities disciplines, the concept can also be deployed in an overarching sense as a ‘macro-epoch’ in the history of culture.¹⁵ From this perspective it becomes clear that the English ‘modernism’ touches on both ‘neue Musik’ and ‘Moderne’. Recent developments in musicology can be viewed as loosening it from the first and moving it towards the second, although this process has been partial and unsystematic.

The notion of ‘aesthetic modernity’ is worth pursuing for its flexibility. It refers to the establishment of a degree of autonomy for art (independence from social functions and traditional modes of patronage). It implies an ambivalent stance towards social modernity that can range from affirmation to aggressive rejection

1900–1925 (*Handbuch der Musik im 20. Jahrhundert*, vol. 1; Laaber: Laaber-Verlag, 2005); James Webster, ‘Between Enlightenment and Romanticism in Music History: “First Viennese Modernism” and the Delayed Nineteenth Century’, *19th-Century Music* 25/2–3 (2001–02), 108–126.

¹³ See, for instance, Susan McClary, ‘Terminal Prestige: The Case of Avant-Garde Music Composition’, *Cultural Critique* 12 (1989), 57–81; Lawrence Kramer, *Musical Meaning: Toward a Critical History* (Berkeley and London: University of California Press, 2002), esp. 260, 267, 271. Björn Heile makes a convincing critique of these arguments. ‘Darmstadt as Other: British and American Responses to Musical Modernism’, *Twentieth-Century Music* 1/2 (2004), 161–78.

¹⁴ Griffiths, *A Concise History of Modern Music*.

¹⁵ Silvio Vietta and Dirk Kemper, ‘Einleitung’, in Dirk Kemper and Silvio Vietta (eds), *Ästhetische Moderne in Europa: Grundzüge und Problemzusammenhänge seit der Romantik* (Munich: Wilhelm Fink Verlag, 1998), 1–55 (pp. 8–21); Dirk Kemper, ‘Ästhetische Moderne als Makroepoche’, in Kemper and Vietta, *Ästhetische Moderne in Europa*, 97–126.

and assault, and that may combine aspects of both.¹⁶ This can result in heightened reflexivity, the questioning of normative poetics, the urge for artistic freedom, and, on the negative side, disillusion, fragmentation, the destruction of tradition, and nihilism. Above all, the dimension of time becomes problematic. The loss of belief in timeless, ‘classical’ ideals in the arts leads to a new awareness of history: the past is distant; aesthetic values are relative. The ‘original genius’ is now esteemed, yet the prospect of continuous change blurs the distinction between art and fashion. These developments open the way for ugliness, caricature, incoherence and dissonance as legitimate aesthetic phenomena, and for similarly negative, albeit less aggressive, reactions such as nostalgia and melancholy. In this sense the sentimental – in the technical sense of Schiller – is as ‘modern’ as the grotesque.¹⁷

To speak of ‘aesthetic modernity’ highlights continuities between nineteenth- and twentieth-century developments in the arts, and defuses quarrels over precisely where to date the transition between the style categories ‘romantic’ and ‘modernist’. Nevertheless, distinctions can be made within this ‘macro-epoch’. The twentieth-century avant-gardes can be understood as especially aggressive critiques of social modernity, critiques that are conducted in more covert or ambivalent ways elsewhere. Although the process of modernization is universal, and, as we see all-too clearly today, tends to erase local variations, different cultures nevertheless start from different positions (the process may be swift or slow), and the products of aesthetic modernity draw on these specific traditions and values in their reactions to the process. For instance, in the nineteenth and early twentieth centuries, European versions of aesthetic modernity tended to be more negative and aggressive towards social modernity than their North American counterparts, their assaults on tradition more destructive, their nihilism more pervasive.¹⁸

There was no lack of social modernity in nineteenth-century Britain. Yet, because industrial society was familiar, having developed early and grown steadily, the impact of modernization was not experienced as sudden, collective shock, as

¹⁶ Matei Calinescu speaks of ‘two modernities’, which have been ‘irreducibly hostile’ since the early nineteenth century, although this may be an exaggeration. *Five Faces of Modernity: Modernism, Avant-Garde, Decadence, Kitsch, Postmodernism* (Durham, NC: Duke University Press, 1987), 41.

¹⁷ See the following essays from Vietta and Kemper, *Ästhetische Moderne in Europa*. Jürgen H. Petersen, ‘Grundzüge einer Ästhetik des Inkohärenten in Romantik und Moderne’, 179–95; Carsten Zelle, ‘Ästhetik des Häßlichen: Friedrich Schlegels Theorie und die Schock- und Ekelstrategien der ästhetischen Moderne’, 197–233; Werner Keil, ‘“O wundervoller Kapellmeister, der solcher Dissonanzen mächtig!” – Romantische Musikästhetik und die Frankfurter Schule. Von E.T.A. Hoffmanns Kreisler zu Th.W. Adornos Dissonanzen’, 235–58; Günter Oesterle, ‘Karikatur als Vorschule von Modernität. Überlegungen zu einer Kulturpoetik der Karikatur mit Rücksicht auf Charles Baudelaire’, 259–86; Jean-Marie Paul, ‘Von der romantischen Desillusion zur Dekonstruktion’, 509–530; and (on nostalgia) Vietta and Kemper, ‘Einleitung’, 6–7.

¹⁸ Vietta and Kemper, ‘Einleitung’, 5–6.

in some other parts of Europe. Furthermore, there was no military invasion and no political revolution in nineteenth-century Britain, and constitutional reform was not altogether outpaced by social change, as it was, for instance, in Wilhemine Germany. As Stefan Collini explains:

[D]uring the nineteenth century, ‘the English’ ... did not undergo two of the most formative experiences of modern European cultural history. On the one hand, political, military, and commercial success insulated them from invasion, defeat, or the other common promptings to a self-conscious ‘liberationist’ nationalism and its associated imperative of political, cultural, or ethnic self-definition. And on the other hand, the relative internal stability and continuity of constitutional development since the end of the seventeenth century (or, in another idiom, the highly successful adaptation by the governing classes to changing social circumstances) meant that Victorian Britain was not marked by the kind of fundamental political and ideological division which, systematically and repetitively, makes all aspects of a society’s life into material for partisan dispute.¹⁹

To view British history in this way is not to make a claim for ‘exceptionalism’, for all countries have unique histories, and there is no ‘normal’ path through modernity. Nor should it be understood automatically to carry either a positive or a negative value judgement, to imply either a celebration of the British way as specially providential (a ‘Whig interpretation’) or a lament for the middle class’s failure to develop a general theory of society and its aping of aristocratic values and behaviour (the ‘Anderson–Nairn hypothesis’ put forward in the *New Left Review* in the 1960s).²⁰

Britain’s route through modernity may help to explain why, by the end of the nineteenth century – in a world of imperialism, industrial capitalism and mass media – overt challenges to the ideals of liberal humanism inherited from the Renaissance and the Enlightenment met with limited response from artists and intellectuals. The allegations that these ideals were hypocritical, complacent or self-deluding gathered few supporters; critics of the old world such as Ibsen and prophets of the new such as Nietzsche made a limited impact in the years between 1895 and 1914. Aestheticism swiftly withered after the disgrace of Oscar Wilde. Even in the well-cultivated fields of the visual arts and literature, modernist production was not strong in early twentieth-century Britain. In London

¹⁹ Stefan Collini, *Public Moralists: Political Thought and Intellectual Life in Britain 1850–1930* (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1993), 345.

²⁰ Stefan Collini, ‘British Exceptionalism Reconsidered: Annan, Anderson and other Accounts’, in Christophe Charle, Julien Vincent and Jay Winter (eds), *Anglo-French Attitudes: Comparisons and Transfers between English and French Intellectuals since the Eighteenth Century* (Manchester: Manchester University Press, 2007), 45–60. See also Perry Anderson, *English Questions* (London and New York: Verso, 1992), esp. Chapter 1, ‘Origins of the Present Crisis’ and Chapter 2, ‘Components of the National Culture’.

most modernists were immigrants or visitors (Conrad, Pound, Eliot, Joyce, Yeats, Gaudier-Brzeska, Epstein, Lewis), and many eventually left the country. One of the few native modernists, D.H. Lawrence, hated Britain intensely and emigrated as soon as he could. In this light, as Richard Sheppard points out in relation to Vorticism in painting, ‘it is not surprising that England should have produced a Modernist movement which combined a will to explore with a fundamental and durable sense of security, but it is surprising that England should have produced a version of Modernism at all’. Comparing Vorticism with German Expressionism, Sheppard detects after 1914 a ‘tendency to humanize what is potentially demonic.’ ‘[T]he Vorticist knows of Dionysos and even approaches him, but only appears to let him get the upper hand.’²¹

David Peters Corbett discerns a further stage in this process after the First World War, arguing that the understanding of modernity in English painting was ‘subject to a struggle of competing definitions, the majority of which were marked by retreat, evasion, and concealment of modernity’s impact’. Although in some cases these responses could be ‘subversive’, in general for Corbett modernism dwindled ‘into a formal idiom merely, or into a celebration of the sensuous immediacy of the world, and the versions of modern life which were promulgated in painting became largely uncritical. Any real engagement with modernity as experience took place in private languages or above all negatively, through evasive statements and subjects’.²² He cites the landscapes of Paul Nash and C.R.W. Nevinson and the still lifes of Edward Wadsworth. These works did not develop an overtly critical vocabulary from the pre-war examples of Vorticism; nevertheless, ‘modernity is still registered within their subject-matter and constitution and in ways which are revealing of the deferral of confrontation common to the culture generally’.²³

Modernism in music faced a further obstacle in Britain, for here the very conditions of aesthetic modernity were not securely in place even by the late nineteenth century. Of course music-making was abundant in Britain during the Victorian age, but much of it fitted a utilitarian programme, serving religious worship, charitable causes, domestic entertainment or working men’s recreation. Old beliefs about the non-respectability of professional musicians proved tenacious, and justifications of the art of music had to appeal to its supposed moral edification. Progressive music from the Continent such as Berlioz, Liszt, Wagner and even Chopin met resistance from influential London critics until at least the 1860s. The self-styled ‘Renaissance’ of English music, beginning in the 1870s, sought to establish autonomy by securing the institutions and values needed for music to be taken seriously as a profession and an aesthetic experience. Its success

²¹ Richard Sheppard, ‘Expressionism and Vorticism: An Analytical Comparison’, in Janet Garton (ed.), *Facets of European Modernism* (Norwich: University of East Anglia, 1985), 149–74 (pp. 168–9, 162, 165).

²² David Peters Corbett, *The Modernity of English Art, 1914–30* (Manchester: Manchester University Press, 1997), 1.

²³ *Ibid.*, 11.

was only partial, however, as testified by the apologetic tone of Donald Francis Tovey's criticism well into the twentieth century.²⁴

These interrelated factors – the special experience of modernization, the perceived plausibility of the liberal-humanist outlook and the late and precarious establishment of autonomy – help to explain the form that aesthetic modernity took in British music, and suggest how best to approach it and where to look for it. Technical innovation, it should be stressed once again, was not absent from British composition, but it was seldom conceived as the necessary and inevitable response to the contemporary situation in either music or society. For some composers the new vocabulary of music took its place next to the old and could be drawn on freely and eclectically. For others modernity was referred to more obliquely – Corbett's categories of concealment, allusion and deferral are appropriate – while, in typically English fashion, the music's public face preserved the outward appearance of harmony.

III

The decades covered by this book span the period between the trials of Oscar Wilde (1895) and the institutionalization of musical modernism in Britain at the BBC and in the universities (a moment at which it arguably becomes part of a different problematic). Wilde's conviction for 'gross indecency' seemed to confirm once and for all Victorian suspicions about the questionable morality of artists. Similar anxieties were taking shape in response to the vogue for Russian music in London, a taste seen by some as decadent and primitive.²⁵ Meanwhile a reconfiguration of conservative and progressive elements was taking place in British music. In 1895 Parry was appointed Director of the Royal College of Music in succession to Sir George Grove, bringing to the post his thoroughly moralistic attitude to the arts.²⁶ By contrast, in the provinces, Elgar was about to emerge as a new artistic force with the premiere in 1896 of his Wagnerian cantata *Scenes from the Saga of King Olaf* at the North Staffordshire Festival.

The first four chapters of the book deal mainly with aesthetics and criticism. Matthew Riley sketches the patterns of intellectual resistance to modernism in the British musical establishment in the early twentieth century. Musicians who

²⁴ In 1928 Tovey complained sarcastically '[w]e all know that in England a person of general culture is a person who knows nothing about music and cannot abide musical jargon'. 'Tonality [in Schubert]', *Music & Letters* 9/4 (1928), 341–63 (p. 341). Tovey tailored much of his criticism to this type of reader as best he could.

²⁵ Gareth Thomas, *The Impact of Russian Music in England 1893–1929* (PhD thesis, University of Birmingham, 2005).

²⁶ Meirion Hughes and Robert Stradling, *The English Musical Renaissance 1840–1940: Constructing a National Music*, 2nd edn (Manchester: Manchester University Press, 2001), 52–3.

assumed the stance of ‘cultural liberalism’ – such as W.H. Hadow, Hubert Parry and Charles Villiers Stanford – regarded themselves as ‘progressives’ and gave new music a fair hearing, yet the kind of change they approved of (incremental, always observing timeless principles) betrayed a mode of thinking rooted in traditional metaphysics. Style and technique might change, but the principles of beauty were eternal. The chapter argues for a clear distinction between modernism and progressive liberalism (the latter retained a tenacious hold in British musical attitudes for decades). Meirion Hughes nevertheless finds an early alternative to this outlook in the reception of Elgar’s music in the newspaper of provincial Nonconformism, the *Manchester Guardian*. One critic, Arthur Johnstone, even drew on the ideas of Nietzsche, whose philosophy of life in a world stripped of every residue of metaphysics was of immense significance for Continental modernists at the time. Deborah Heckert examines a crucial phase in the early reception of ‘the new music’ in Britain: the contrasting reactions of London critics to the first two British performances of Schoenberg’s *Five Orchestral Pieces*, Op. 16 (1912, 1914). The relative acceptance of Schoenberg’s atonal language by 1914 can be linked to the public’s increased familiarity with modernism in the visual arts after Roger Fry’s ‘post-Impressionist’ exhibitions and with the formalist theories that Fry developed to make sense of modern painting. Gareth Thomas surveys the London seasons of Diaghilev’s *Ballets Russes*, the most visible public forum for modernism in Britain for almost 20 years, and assesses the controversies that Diaghilev’s productions caused.

The next five chapters are analytical or critical studies of British compositions. All the works show traits of ‘ästhetische Moderne’, above all a heightened awareness of problems of temporality, although, if they draw at all on the vocabulary of ‘neue Musik’, they do so intermittently. Stephen Downes examines the replacement of the romantic by the modern in Frank Bridge’s *The Sea*, treating the musical ‘wave form’ as an image of subjectivity in a post-metaphysical world. The heroic maritime narrative at first suggested by Bridge’s music fails to be realized; the crest of the waves must fall. Nothing here endures eternally. Christopher M. Scheer offers a fresh view of Gustav Holst’s aesthetics, demonstrating his debt to Bloomsbury formalism (Fry and Clive Bell) and showing these principles at work in the First Chamber Symphony, which in this light appears as a response to the First World War. Nevertheless, in his attachment to the concepts of ‘eternity’ and ‘beauty’, belief in the unity of all art, and open-mindedness to music of all times and places, Holst retained significant links to the old, liberal outlook. Tim Barringer brings a fresh perspective to William Walton’s *Façade*, attending to its visual dimension and placing it in the world of the Sitwells. Each of the front-cloths used for early performances places a different emphasis on the work’s mixture of contemporary and Victorian elements, the latter coming to the fore in later versions as the ‘Entertainment’ evolved. Memory gradually assumed prominence over irony. Ideas from all these chapters are echoed in Daniel M. Grimley’s account of Vaughan Williams’s ‘Pastoral’ Symphony. His analysis moves this work – long an icon of anti-modern, insular, ‘Englishness’ – into a European context, and he finds

parallels with the wartime painting of Paul Nash. The symphony presents a re-conception of the pastoral mode in the wake of the First World War, now emptied of its traditional meaning and speaking instead of remembrance and loss. In contrast to the 'Pastoral', Vaughan Williams's Fourth Symphony is sometimes cited as the best example of modernism in British music of the 1930s. J.P.E. Harper-Scott disputes this view, arguing that the violent gestures of the symphony's opening and its sometimes bitonal harmony are ultimately brought within a 'classical' symphonic design. The symphony 'feints' in several directions, including towards modernism, but its nature is parodic rather than modernist.

The 1930s witnessed a growing interest in 'applied' music that served a social or political purpose. Thomas Irvine examines the views of the neglected Anglo-German composer Walter Leigh, who argued for the principles of *Gebrauchsmusik* of his teacher Hindemith, first in correspondence with (the strongly antipathetic) Constant Lambert and later in his lectures at Cambridge University in 1939. Benjamin Britten's work (with W.H. Auden) for the General Post Office Film Unit is justly famous, but Christopher Dromey uncovers his little-known music for films of the British Commercial Gas Association, which Britten scored for the instrumental ensemble of Schoenberg's *Pierrot lunaire*. Matthew Riley evaluates Arthur Bliss's music for H.G. Wells's futuristic film *Things to Come* in the light of Wells's hopes for a new multi-media cinematic 'spectacle' and his disturbingly authoritarian politics.

In the final two chapters of the book, modernism in the sense of 'neue Musik' is reached. Laurel Parsons takes seriously Elisabeth Lutyens's claim that her move to serialism was prompted by Purcell's viol fantasias rather than by the Second Viennese School, finding evidence in Lutyens's first serial composition, the *Five-Part Fantasia for Strings* (1937). Lutyens shared with her more conservative peers an interest in the indigenous musical tradition, yet drew on it for its radical potential. Ben Earle argues that Humphrey Searle provides a glimpse of the modernist 'real thing' in British music. His First Symphony (1954) combines serialism with Schoenbergian techniques of 'musical logic' to the point of incoherence, momentarily dissolving the 'realism' of contemporary British symphonic composition. Searle remained outside the institutionalization of modernism that soon gathered momentum. 'Neue Musik' in this sense (Adorno's) was rare in Britain. In the light of the later institutionalization, it may have been possible only in the period covered by this book.