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Music from the trenches: Solo vocal literature influenced by and composed in "No Man's Land"

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Music from the Trenches:
Solo Vocal Literature Influenced by and Composed in “No Man’s Land”

A Project Presented to
the Faculty of the Undergraduate
College of Visual and Performing Arts
James Madison University

in Partial Fulfillment of the Requirements
for the Degree of Bachelor of Music

by Jennifer Elizabeth Weyman

May 2014

Accepted by the faculty of the Department of Music, James Madison University, in partial fulfillment of the requirements for the Degree of Bachelor of Music.

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Dedication

For Severn, Vienna, Danbury, and France.

Bach and the Sentry

“Watching the dark my spirit rose in flood
On that most dearest Prelude of my delight.
The low-lying mist lifted its hood,
The October stars showed nobly in clear night.

When I return, and to real music-making,
And play that Prelude, how will it happen then?
Shall I feel as I felt, a sentry hardly waking,
With a dull sense of No Man's Land again?”

- Ivor Gurney

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Preface

In an overview of American history, the historical significance and meaning of World War I (1914-1918) in its own right is often overlooked. World War I is frequently presented as merely a footnote leading to the beginning of World War II, rather than a tragic and horrific wartime experience, the magnitude of which had never before been experienced in human history prior to the 20th century. Through this thesis, I will explore the global impact of World War I, its role as a largely omitted chapter in our national history, as well as the impact of WWI upon the composers of solo vocal literature between 1910 and 1920. Specifically, this project will investigate the lives and works of Anton Webern (Austria-Hungary), Ivor Gurney (Great Britain), Charles Ives (The United States), and Claude Debussy (France). Further, my project will detail the impact of the war itself on the lives and careers of these composers from four dissimilar vantage points: during the historical development between 1910 and 1914 before war actually broke out, at the outset of military action, in the midst of fighting itself, and at the termination of hostilities.

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Introduction

An examination of history at the turn of the twentieth century portrays Europe in a state of political chaos, with many countries allying themselves with each other for political gain. Multiple levels of shifting alliances created the potential for a perfect storm. If war were to break out between any one of them, all countries involved were bound to follow each other into war through this web-like bond of alliances (Howard, 2002).

The main conflict that would spark the beginning of the war was the 1908 annexing of Bosnia and Herzegovina from the Ottoman Empire by the Austro-Hungarian Empire. This political maneuver understandably angered the political forces in the Kingdom of Serbia, and in turn the Russian Empire, one of Serbia's strongest allies. Just a few short years later, after the First Balkan War (1912-1913) increased the territory of Serbia and Bulgaria, Gavrilo Princip, a Bosnian Serb who resented Austro-Hungarian rule, took matters into his own hands and assassinated Archduke Franz Ferdinand of Austria on June 28, 1914; this was the powder-keg that ignited the war. After intense negotiations between all the European powers collapsed in what is referred to as the "July Crisis" (Howard, 2002, p. 19), Austria-Hungary declared war on Serbia. Unwilling to have its authority questioned in Eastern Europe, Russia quickly supported Serbia, declaring war on Austria-Hungary. Due to an alliance between Austria-Hungary and Germany, along with a desire to prevent France from mobilizing to support Serbia, Germany launched an early invasion of Belgium on August 2, 1914, declaring war on Russia on the same day. Due to Belgium's neutral standing, Great Britain entered the fray and launched an offensive to protect Belgium's position, declaring war on Germany two days later (Howard, 2002).

Despite the changing alliances and late inclusion of various countries throughout World War I, consensus exists as to the member states of both the Allied Forces and the Central

Powers. The Allies were regarded to be France, Great Britain, Russia, Italy (1915), the United States (1917), and The Kingdom of Serbia. A collection of smaller, less powerful countries formed a second bloc of the Allied Forces, and consisted of Romania, Portugal, and Belgium. The Central Powers of the WWI offensive were Germany, Austria-Hungary, The Ottoman Empire, and Bulgaria (1915) (Howard, 2002).

Although the war spread across the whole of Europe and northern Africa, the main sites of fortified battle were the Eastern and Western Fronts, which would later become similar battlegrounds for WWII. In this new, global conflict, modern technologies such as the machine gun, explosive shells designed to shoot shrapnel in all directions, barbed wire, tanks (first used in 1916), and mustard gas were implemented, with lethal and wide-spread results. In addition to technical advances in weaponry, the use of trench warfare was employed. It is important to note that the scale and manner of combat enacted during World War I had never before been witnessed in global history. While the use of trenches had been utilized during the American Civil War, its magnitude was nowhere near that of the “Great War” (Howard, 2002, p. 6). The soldiers who saw battle and managed to survive to make their way home from these damaging conditions were never the same again. Shell shock, later identified as Post-Traumatic Stress Disorder (PTSD), was rampant in the years after the war (Howard, 2002).

The impact of World War I on the general populations of over a dozen European countries, and also on the lives and careers of musicians and artists, was unimaginable. Many composers of this era either served in the armed forces, or wanted to but were unable due to health issues or other obstacles. The impact of this wartime reality was that composers were unable to publish a great deal of their output, if they were able to compose at all. It is difficult to specifically document the exact time of composition during the war years because a great deal of

time would often transpire between composition, editing, and publication. Composers including Anton Webern (Austria-Hungary), Ivor Gurney (Great Britain), Charles Ives (The United States), and Claude Debussy (France) were four composers who were most certainly writing during the war. In each case, it is possible to document the impact of the war on both their daily lives, as well as their compositional processes. Each of these composers, whether they originally supported the war or not, eventually became disillusioned with the entire purpose of the fight; that disillusionment is evident in their music.

Through exploring the lives and selected compositions of Webern, Gurney, Ives, and Debussy, I will showcase four different perspectives throughout the war's timeline, as each of these composers is emblematic of a different perspective of the war itself: the historical development period before war actually began, at the outset of military action, in the midst of fighting itself, and at the termination of hostilities. As is quoted by Allan Kozinn in the New York Times in 1997, "When nationalism is asserted, music is rarely far behind" (as cited in Watkins, 2002, p.1). The goal of my project is to not only understand those personal reactions, but also chronicle them as they manifested compositionally.

Anton Webern – Austria-Hungary

Anton Webern was born in Vienna on December 3, 1883. His family was middle-class, descendent of an Austrian aristocratic family that had lived in Carinthia since the 16th century. His father, Carl von Webern, was a successful mining engineer, and his mother was the third daughter of a master butcher. The family moved a great deal during Webern's childhood due to his father's successful career; they relocated back to Vienna in time for Webern to begin his university studies. The elder von Webern had inherited the family's country estate in Lower Carinthia, and though the family never lived there permanently, it is likely that young Anton began his lifelong love of nature during their visits (Bailey, 1998, p. 7). The sole musical background in Webern's family was that of his mother, who was a competent pianist and accomplished singer. Young Webern spent afternoons sitting beside his mother on the piano bench, imitating her fingers, and singing complex melodies with ease (Bailey, 1998).

Webern's teenage years were relatively uneventful in regards to music. Because his family was not musical in focus, he did a great deal of independent study, writing many journals, which he filled with his opinions on music, his favorite poems, and other personal essays. Two of his most influential composers at this age, Ludwig van Beethoven and Richard Wagner, would greatly influence Webern's early music. Webern was hypercritical of anyone whose taste strayed from the Austrian tradition, or audiences that did not treat this music with the same reverence and religious ferocity that he had developed. He hated applause, and was disgusted by audiences on a trip to Bayreuth; he had come to the realization that what he viewed with devout piety, others viewed as fashionable (Bailey, 1998).

Webern began attending college at Vienna University in 1902, where he studied musicology with Guido Adler. Prior to this point, he had not been exposed to music written by

non-Germanic composers. After he began his studies, he soon found a growing interest in early music, which would later manifest itself in his compositional style. While Webern's experiences in University were influential, it was his move to Vienna that allowed him to make the connections that would influence his life for decades after his education. During his early years in Vienna, Webern saw Gustav Mahler conduct, which would serve as both positive and negative influences. He would comment in one of his journal entries that, "[Mahler] appears in my eyes...as a great, inspired conductor and a serious, deeply introspective composer to whom I look up with admiration, and I burn with desire to learn more his works" (as cited in Bailey, 1998, p. 14). However, in a letter to his cousin Ernst, dated just a month after this observation, Webern makes a comparison between the music of Richard Strauss and Mahler, stating, "Strauss' themes are much more splendid, more ingenious, more powerful. Mahler's music makes really an almost childlike impression, despite the quite enormous orchestral apparatus (as cited in Bailey, 1998, p. 15). This apparent mixed opinion of Mahler would define the majority of Webern's perspectives in life. Even his fervid approval of Wagner would wane in the years to come, despite his evident adoration at a young age. These early shifts in partiality would mirror his quick disillusionment in the years to come during the war (Bailey, 1998).

It was during this time that Webern would forge the most important connections of his career: his close-knit friendships with Arnold Schoenberg and Alban Berg (Bailey, 1998). After his time at the University, Webern studied extensively with Schoenberg and befriended Schoenberg's other pupil, Alban Berg, consolidating a group that came to be known as the Second Viennese School (Bailey, 1998). These connections would be the most influential of his life, especially in the years to come during the war as he poured his heart into letters when composition proved impossible.

While he conducted ensembles across Austria, Webern eventually returned to make his home in Vienna, composing using Schoenberg's twelve-tone technique; his compositional output led to the development of total serialism. Webern was obsessive in his strict following of Schoenberg's method, yet among the members of the Viennese School, Webern retained the closest spiritual link with the natural world in his music (Auner, 2004). Based on Webern's behavioral patterns, it seemed that an obsessive ferocity was programmed in Webern's psyche; once he had latched onto an idea, whether it was religious, musical, or philosophical, he would never let it go (Bailey, 1998).

It was perhaps the obsessive quality of Webern's character that was in part the reason why the war proved to be such a terrible influence on him. His initial heroic optimism, born out of deep, nationalistic roots, soon evolved into abject despair throughout the length of the war itself (Bailey, 1998). During the war years, Webern suffered severe anxiety brought on by a conflict between his sense of patriotism and his awareness of the ravages of war (Watkins, 2002). Webern had always had a fierce sense of nationalism, even taking nationalist classes as electives while attending university (Bailey, 1998). A letter to Schoenberg in late August of 1914 captured the full force of the moment for the 31 year-old Webern, and probably for most Austrians. In it he stated, "I can hardly wait any longer to be called up. Day and night the wish haunts me: to be able to fight for this great, sublime cause...Oh, everything will end well...The courage of our soldiers in the face of death and their daredevil fighting spirit are said to be without example. If only I could soon take part. How gladly" (as cited in Watkins, 2002, p. 229). Few Europeans had any sense of what the continent would be suffering over the next four years. The shift from this naïve bravado to horror was painfully slow, and Webern and his contemporaries were all subjected to it (Johnson, 1999).

Webern's compulsive turn toward the setting of texts at this time may to some degree be read as mirroring the composite forces facing him. His appreciation of folk music, patriotic mindset, and study of nature informed the first and last songs of his opus 12 song cycle: *Vier Lieder für Singstimme und Klavier* ("Four Songs for Voice and Piano"). Not only was he attracted to the story of the flower and the bee in the Goethe poem *Gleich und Gleich*, ("Like to Like") but he was also drawn to the folk-like simplicity of *Der Tag ist Vergangen* ("The Day has Past"). The latter, specifically labeled a folk song, plays on the precariousness and shortness of life, while maintaining religious reverence as a prayer to the Madonna. Composed on January 13, 1915, the song invites a reading as a soldier's prayer. The melody of this piece is much closer to a tonal conceptualization than is typical of Webern's later works. However, the melodic structure contrasts notably with the piano accompaniment, which has crossed the boundary into the world of dissonance, not only within itself but also with its relationship to the vocal line (Watkins, 2002).

"Der Tag ist Vergangen" – The Day has Passed (Peter Rosegger)

The day has passed,
And night is already here;
Goodnight, O Maria,
Stay with me forever.

The day has passed,
And night is coming;
Give also to the dead
Eternal Peace.

The remainder of the pieces in this set, including *Gleich und Gleich*, are texts on the subject of nature, which in addition to religious themes, Webern held in the highest regard.

“Gleich und Gleich” – Like to Like (Goethe)

A little flower-bell blossomed early
From the ground in a lovely bloom;

There came a little bee and sipped it delicately:
They must have been made for each other.

Both poems are clearly in binary structure, with Webern’s settings appropriately mirroring the poetic decisions, acknowledging the antecedent and consequent phrases in each stanza. Webern further highlights the phrase structure of the poetry throughout *Der Tag ist Vergangen* by alternating between a low and high tessitura between phrases. While Webern employs a similar technique of alternating tessituras in *Gleich und Gleich*, it is used less to denote phrases, and more to be illustrative of the text. Webern’s use of sub-phrases in *Gleich und Gleich* allows him to create a division of the melody that accentuates the rhyme scheme, and to further divide the ideas of the piece between the flower and the bee (Marvin & Wason, 1996).

Only a few weeks after *Der Tag ist Vergangen* was composed, Webern’s desire to serve in the ranks of the Austrian-Hungarian army was fulfilled. Having repeatedly failed the physical exam, he was finally passed in February 1915, and joined a reserve infantry regiment. *Der Tag ist Vergangen* would be the last song he would compose before enlisting, and *Gleich und Gleich* would be the first he would compose upon his discharge in 1917 (Marvin & Wason, 1996).

Webern was quickly disillusioned about army life; his nationalistic bravado began to fade. In a letter to Schoenberg in March, Webern stated: “This is really terrible and truly not necessary...how much more efficient one would be if one could live privately in cleanliness” (as cited in Watkins, 2002, p. 230). Webern was repeatedly transferred and eventually he was assigned to a battalion of Corinthian mountain troops. His faith was shaken, and he grew bitter as he realized there would be nothing quick or glorious about this conflict. Writing to Schoenberg

in November 1916, “It is really as if Christ had never existed. ‘Eye for eye, tooth for tooth’ – the ancient law of the Old Testament alone has validity” (as cited in Johnson, 1999, p. 132). In December of 1916, shortly after that letter was written, Webern was discharged from formal military conscription. He left the ranks with both a new outlook on the war and on music (Watkins, 2002).

Unfortunately for Webern, by the time the Second World War was underway, he appeared to have forgotten his negative experiences in battle, and his disillusionment with the institution of war. He expressed conflicting ideas concerning the Nazi party; in private lectures given in 1933, Webern condemned the Nazi cultural policies, and yet also expressed Nazi sympathies in private correspondence. Further, he welcomed the Nazis during the political alliance of Austria and Germany known as the *Anschluss*, only to later have his music declared as “cultural Bolshevism” and “degenerate art” by the Nazi party (Bailey, 1998, p. 165). All publication and performance of his works was banned, and soon Webern was struggling to find work. Yet even despite his oppression, his support of the Nazis did not wane during the war, and he continued to endorse the party. He attached to the Nazis with the same fervid obsession that had gripped him throughout the First World War. This was perhaps due to a deep-seated hope that WWII would validate his idealistic notions of war that WWI had left floundering (Bailey, 1998).

Partially due to his initial sense of patriotism, Webern remained in Austria and harm’s way throughout the majority of the war, only leaving once to attend the premier of his *Variations for Orchestra, Op. 30* in Winterthur, Switzerland in 1943. It is ironic that death found Webern only after he relocated for his own safety. After moving to Salzburg in 1945, he was accidentally killed by an American soldier during the Allied occupation of Austria.

Ivor Gurney – Great Britain

Another soldier-composer who spent the latter half of his life torn between memories of his home and the ravages of the battlefield was Ivor Gurney (1890-1937). Gurney's name is not known by many, and perhaps unfairly so. His name is inscribed in Westminster Abbey in Poet's Corner, included in a list of "Great War Poets" who wrote extensively during WWI (Westminster Abbey, 2011). However, Ivor Gurney was also a composer by trade. In his regrettably short life of forty-seven years, Gurney wrote over three hundred songs for solo voice, two major orchestral works, two piano sonatas, four string quartets, five choral works, seven violin sonatas with piano, twelve other violin and piano works, nine separate sonata movements for violin and piano, a string trio, a piano trio, thirty-six individual piano pieces, and two piano solo sets. In addition to this prolific compositional output, Gurney also wrote nearly two thousand poems. As of yet, the bulk of Gurney's songs and poems remain unpublished (R. Smith, 1994).

Gurney was born in Gloucester in 1890 to a non-musical family, growing up above his family's tailor shop. His father as a simple man who loved the land, and it is obvious that same appreciation was fully embraced by Gurney, serving as his inspiration throughout his life, especially during his time in the trenches. Despite their physical proximity to Gloucester Cathedral, his family attended All Saints Church; curate Rev. Alfred Hunter Cheesman became Gurney's godfather, as he was the only person present to witness the christening. Cheesman would fulfill this role beautifully, giving Gurney the emotional foundations and support for a truly successful career (Renas, 1991).

By 1900, when Gurney began to manifest exceptional musical ability, Cheesman procured him a position at Gloucester Cathedral, where he became a pupil and chorister at the

King's School. It was here that Gurney received his early training in piano, theory, and harmony. While he developed his musical gifts at school, he also developed a love of literature outside of classes. Gurney spent hours in Rev. Cheesman's library, reading the works of Kipling, Tennyson, and many others. Cheesman encouraged him to read aloud, and treated him as an adult, which would be more influential than Gurney could realize at his young age. Marion Scott, a close friend and future biographer whom Gurney would meet in his years at the Royal College of Music, commented later, "Gurney's remarkable sense of word-setting may well have been nurtured by this" (as cited in Renas, 1991, p. 10). By the time he was fourteen, he had started composing seriously (Renas, 1991).

Two of Gurney's early childhood friends, Emmy and Margaret Hunt, both of whom played the violin and piano, encouraged Gurney's compositions; he composed many of his earliest pieces for them. Throughout his life, Gurney dedicated piano pieces, poems, and songs to each of his dear friends in gratitude for his early foundations. Because of his obvious gift for music, Gurney soon left the Cathedral Choir and became a full time apprentice to Dr. Herbert Brewer, the organist at the Cathedral and Gurney's music teacher at the King's School. It is during these years that he met fellow composer Herbert Howells and fellow poet F. W. Harvey, who would both become life-long friends (Renas, 1991).

Throughout his life Gurney struggled with mental illness; most scholars have postulated this to be a case of undiagnosed bipolar disorder (Renas, 1991, p. 11). This condition manifested itself early in his life, noticed even by his childhood friends. He spent a great deal of time alone, and his friends teasingly referred to him as "Batty Gurney", a word play of his middle name "Berty" (Renas, 1991, p. 11). Perhaps it was because of this undiagnosed condition that Gurney's love for his home country was almost irrational, leaving him obsessed with the beautiful

Gloucester countryside. As he matured, Gurney's eccentric behavior increased. He would come and go from his home at odd hours, and often only came home when the overwhelming need for sleep forced him to return to his bed. His eating habits were poor and he suffered from serious digestion problems. He would go for long periods without food, and would then gorge on sweet and fatty foods. His friends would often awaken to Gurney raiding their pantries (Renas, 1991).

Despite his physical and mental complications, Gurney composed pieces that were rewarded for their merit. In 1911, he won a scholarship to the Royal College of Music. This scholarship was not enough to cover the costs of room and board, but Rev. Cheesman raised enough money to match the award so that Gurney could attend. Despite this advantage, Gurney would struggle with poverty, as well as the transition from the rolling hills of beautiful Gloucester to the polluted hustle and bustle of city life in London. While attending the Royal College of Music, Gurney studied with Sir Charles Stanford, the teacher of renowned composers Ralph Vaughan Williams, John Ireland, Herbert Howells, and most importantly to Gurney, Marion Scott, who would become Gurney's closest friend, confidante, and editor throughout the war. Marion Scott, upon seeing Gurney for the first time, remarked at a later time that his "uncommon" appearance and the "look of latent force in him" were enough to take notice, especially the unique color of his eyes, "hazel, grey, green, and agate...denoting genius" (Blevins, 2008, p. 16).

Despite Gurney's talents, Stanford remarked to Howells that Gurney was potentially "the biggest of them all," but he was "unteachable" (as cited in Renas, 1991, p. 16). Gurney did not have a high regard for Stanford, and while the feeling appeared to be mutual, Stanford was actually fond of Gurney. The friction between the two was largely due to conflicting

personalities and styles of working; Gurney was scattered and disorganized, and Stanford struggled to tolerate those conditions (Renas, 1991).

Gurney struggled with drastic mood swings but he continued with his studies. He was confused by his own desire to bring his music to the global scale in honor of Gloucester. Gurney was determined to write symphonies, concertos, and even operas that would be recognized by the greats on the European continent. His true passion belonged to art songs, yet he failed to recognize that they were the best match for his temperament, despite the observations of his friends and colleagues. Although Gurney struggled to maintain normalcy in his daily routine, his mental stability collapsed into his first breakdown in 1913, resulting in an interruption of his collegiate studies. Long walks in his native Gloucester, good friends, music, and poetry revived his spirits and his health, and soon he returned to school. However, shortly after returning to his studies, WWI proved an even larger interruption (Renas, 1991).

On August 8, 1914, Gurney went back to Gloucester to enlist, but was denied due to poor eyesight, chronic indigestion, and “neurasthenia,” the diagnosis of his nervous condition (Renas, 1991, p. 22). Heartbroken, as his best friend Will Harvey had successfully enlisted, he continued to seek military service. Despite his conditions, the British Army eventually relented and he was drafted as a private soldier into the 2nd/5th Gloucestershire Regiment in February 1915, coincidentally in the same period in which Anton Webern enlisted in the Austro-Hungarian army (Renas, 1991; Watkins, 2002). It wasn't until the war that Gurney began writing poetry seriously, as opportunities for musical composition were more difficult with no access to a piano and minimal blocks of free time. Everything he composed, whether poetry or song, was sent home through his correspondence with Marion Scott, who would become essential in preserving every aspect of Gurney's life work (Renas, 1991).

Through a study of the five songs that Gurney wrote specifically while in the trenches, it is clear that he knew he would never forget what he had seen and experienced in the war. Each song showcases a different side to Gurney and how he coped with the death and destruction around him. While many of his war letters reveal a more light-hearted attitude towards his conditions during the war, there is a great deal of speculation as to whether his letters were indeed an honest representation of his true feelings and experiences. As the war raged on, his mental constitution deteriorated, yet he attempted to keep things simple; largely he wrote of home, not of his own conditions (D. Smith, 1999).

By a Bierside was Gurney's first war song and is a setting of the poem by John Masefield. It was set by Gurney while in a disused trench mortar emplacement during the late summer of 1916. Gurney had written to Scott in July of 1916, requesting a copy of the poem. Gurney's setting varies the original poem; because he had a copy of the poem on hand, his alterations in the text appear to have been poetic license (Herendeen, 1993).

By a Bierside (John Masefield)

This is a sacred city, built of marvelous earth.
Life was lived nobly there to give such Beauty birth.
Beauty was in that [Heart] and in that eager hand.
Death is so blind and dumb, death does not understand.

Death drifts the brain with dust and soils the young limbs' glory.
Death makes justice a dream and strength a traveler's story.
Death makes the lovely soul to wander under the sky.
Death opens unknown doors. It is most grand to die

Gurney remarked in a letter to Marion Scott that he was proud of his freedom from the piano: "Once I could not write away from the piano; that [By a Bierside] was written in the front line. Indeed I am becoming fit for my job..." (as cited in D. Smith, 1999, p. 209). After having sent the manuscript to Marion Scott for safekeeping, she responded back that Gurney's

manuscripts were “human documents bearing witness that the soul of Man is greater than all material devastation and horror” (as cited in Blevins, 2008, p. 103).

Gurney created a rich accompaniment for *By a Bierside* with thick chordal accompaniment indicated in the piano writing, expecting Herbert Howells to fully orchestrate the piece, which he soon did. *By a Bierside* was premiered in London at the Royal College of Music while Gurney was still entrenched in France (Pilkington, 1989). In a letter to Marion Scott regarding the performance, Gurney described the song as a “rhapsody on beauty, full of grief, but not bitter, until the unreason of death closes the thought of loveliness that Death unmakes, and then the heart grows bitter with the revelation and has no choice but to disassociate the soul from the body” (Blevins, 105, 2008).

Gurney stayed true to many aspects of his compositional style. *By a Bierside* has long, lyrical vocal lines, and the often-extended range is barely noticeable due to the excellent text setting. The pauses between the vocal lines and piano interludes and changes in momentum, give a great deal of responsibility of propulsion to the singer, leaving him or her to expound each new definition of Death. A new addition to Gurney’s compositional style was his use of the minor seventh chord, which has become known as the “Gloucester” chord in Gurney’s music (Herendeen, 1993, p. 54). This chord was first seen in *By a Bierside* and would soon be seen in his later compositions: *In Flanders* and *Severn Meadows* (Herendeen, 1993).

In *Even Such is Time*, Gurney returned to the poetry to which he was most familiar during his studies at the Royal College of Music. Just prior to military service, Gurney had written his *Five Elizabethan Songs*, which would become his most well known pieces; each of which contained texts by his favorite Elizabethan poets. In *Even Such is Time*, Gurney returned to this familiar source, while at the same time embracing themes that accurately described his

then current surroundings: death, life, fate, and redemption. The text is taken from a poem composed by Sir Walter Raleigh, said to have been written the night before Raleigh's execution in 1618 (R. Smith, 1994).

Epitaph (Sir Walter Raleigh)

Even such is time, which takes in trust
Our youth, our joys, and all we have,
And pays us but with age and dust,
Who in the dark and silent grave
When we have wandered all our ways
Shuts up the story of our days,
But from [His] earth, [this] grave, [this] dust
[My God] will raise me up, I trust!

As is true of most of the pieces composed by Gurney during this time-period, the poetry is altered slightly, either because Gurney was relying on memory alone to write this piece, or because he could not withhold his own poetic license. *Even Such is Time* has a comparable rich chordal structure to *By a Bierside*, revealing Gurney's similar desire to have it orchestrated. It is through-composed and carefully unified using a connection between the piano and vocal lines. The piano interludes and postlude create a space in which the emotions of the text have room to develop. There is a very large shift between the bitterness of the first section of text to the statement of faith at the very end of the work. The piano accompaniment is vital in expressing these emotional changes of direction (R. Smith, 1994).

The third piece of the set is *The Fiddler of Dooney*, the only up-beat and energetic piece of the five. William Butler Yeats wrote the poem in commemoration of a favorite childhood spot, Dooney Rock, just a few miles away from Innisfree, Ireland.

The Fiddler of Dooney (W.B. Yeats)

When I play on my fiddle in Dooney,
Folk dance like a wave of the sea;
My cousin is priest in Kilvarnet,
My brother in Mocharabuiee.

I passed my brother and cousin:
They read in their books of prayer;
I read in my book of songs
I bought at the Sligo fair.

When we come at the end of time
To Peter sitting in state,
He will smile on the three old spirits,
But call me first through the gate;

For the good are always the merry,
Save by an evil chance,
And the merry love the fiddle,
And the merry love to dance:

And when the folk there spy me,
They will all come up to me,
With 'Here is the fiddler of Dooney!'
And dance like a wave of the sea.

It is unknown where exactly Gurney was when he composed this piece. There were versions of the piece as early as 1915, but based on his correspondence with Marion Scott, historians assume that Gurney completed the majority of his edits in the trenches. Around the time that *Severn Meadows* was composed, Gurney stayed in an abandoned mausoleum in the area near Caulincourt, France. He spoke of the sounds that resonated in that hollow place: of tin whistles, mouth organs, and Scottish tunes. While it is unlikely this space served as the inspiration for *Severn Meadows*, it could have certainly been the inspiration for edits on *The Fiddler of Dooney* (D. Smith, 1999).

Gurney attempted to remain predominantly light-hearted in his letters and correspondence. *The Fiddler of Dooney*, while mirroring that light-hearted quality, does speak of music and death, two subjects that loomed greatly on Gurney's mind and war-torn surroundings. This juxtaposition of contrasting themes allowed Gurney a vehicle to explore the dichotomy between humor and horror in war, themes he had often discussed and processed through his letters home. In war, Gurney believed that what would seem to be horrific under normal circumstances often seemed humorous, and that distinction of circumstance was very important (Herendeen, 1993).

As mentioned earlier, Gurney was lifelong friends with poet F. W. Harvey, who was also serving and writing poetry during the war. Harvey published his poem *In Flanders* in the *Glosters Gazette* and Gurney stumbled upon it, writing to Marion Scott that it spoke in every way to him of homesickness.

In Flanders (F. W. Harvey)

I'm homesick for my hills again - My hills again!
To see above the Severn plain,
Unscabbarded against the sky,
The blue high blade of Cotswold lie;
The giant clouds go royally
By jagged Malvern with a train
Of shadows. Where the land is low
Like a huge imprisoning O
I hear a heart that's sound and high,
I hear the heart within me cry:
"I'm homesick for my hills again -
My hills again!
Cotswold or Malvern, sun or rain!
My hills again!"

This setting became particularly heartbreaking for Gurney because after having reunited with Harvey in August earlier in that year, Harvey went missing and his regiment believed him to be dead. It affected Gurney greatly, and he wrote to Marian Scott numerous times on the subject. It was not until October 1916 that he learned that Harvey was yet alive. He remarked joyfully in a letter to Scott, “Yes, FWH is well, but hungry. [Very good!] No more to be said, except – since I am freed from supposing him to be [dead], I have only to worry about not being [killed] myself, in order to meet him again” (Blevins, 111, 2008). Gurney had attempted setting “In Flanders” to music previously, but it was not until after Christmas of 1916 that he was able to compose this beautiful setting, most likely due to his comfort in knowing that Harvey was alive. It was sent to Marion Scott in a letter postmarked January 11, 1917, and had been composed near the large wooden cross at Crucifix Corner, near Thiepval, France (D. Smith, 1999).

Gurney intended *In Flanders* to conjure, literally and figuratively, the Severn hills in the minds of his listener. He commented to Scott that “the hills swim in sunlight like that, to the plucking of harps and a sustained sound of wood and strings” (Herendeen, 38, 1993), revealing his desire for *In Flanders* to be also orchestrated by Howells. There is a touch of impressionism in the piece, along with text painting. The music used during the description of lowlands contains the lowest part of the range, plus the warmest tone. Another aspect of Gurney’s wartime music mentioned earlier is the “Gloucester” chord (Herendeen, 1993, p. 41). Used right in the first introduction, the ii7/c chord appears and Gurney immediately outlines it with the vocal line. It continues to appear throughout the song, even at its climax. To Gurney, this chord represented home more than any other did, and it makes an appearance in most of the pieces composed about his beloved Gloucester (Herendeen, 1993).

In the same letter that brought Marion Scott the manuscript for *In Flanders*, Gurney enclosed his poem *Song* (“Only the Wanderer”), which would become Gurney’s piece *Severn Meadows* (D. Smith, 1999).

Song (Ivor Gurney)

Only the wanderer
Knows England’s graces,
Or can anew see clear
Familiar faces.

And who loves Joy as he
That dwells in shadows?
Do not forget me quite,
O Severn Meadows

Though his music illustrates the mood swings that the war itself only exacerbated, *Severn Meadows* is perhaps the most peaceful of his five pieces. *Severn Meadows* is an elegy for home, and it is simple in its setting as well as its text. Having spent the winter entrenched in France, worrying about Will Harvey, in addition to his own wellbeing after coming down with a “cold of the stomach” (D. Smith, 1999, p. 178), Gurney was longing for Gloucester while entrenched in war-shattered Caulaincourt, France in March 1917. Homesick and worn down, he sketched out a song to take him home to the Severn plain. As Gurney had pointed out in numerous letters, and which this poem reveals, those who live without joy are those that love it best (D. Smith, 1999).

In April of 1917, one month later, German forces shot Gurney in the shoulder. Due to this injury, he spent six weeks away from battle in a military hospital. Soon after, he returned in time to participate in a machine gun battery at Passchendaele. In September 1917, Gurney would see his last days of combat on the front. Gurney’s battalion was caught in a mustard gas attack, and despite only mild exposure, he was sent home to Edinburgh to recover. It was here that he met

and fell in love with Nurse Annie Drummond, who would eventually disappear from his life in spring of 1918, leading to a heartache that only encouraged his growing depression. From November to May, Gurney was in and out of the hospital, suffering from a stomach disorder and nervousness that the doctors attributed to his gassing. Despite being admitted to a hospital for soldiers experiencing extreme nervousness, it was the combination of ill health, poor mental perspective, and a broken heart that led him to his first suicide attempt in May 1918. Gurney went back to Gloucester to recover, and his spirits and health improved, although his poor personal habits made recovery slow and oftentimes ineffective (Renas, 1991).

Gurney briefly returned to the Royal College of Music to finish his degree and study under Ralph Vaughan Williams in late 1919. His most productive years are often said to be during this time, with the composition of over 100 songs. However, the intensity of his study, the reality of his home situation, the loss of his love, the aftermath of the war, and his undiagnosed bipolar disorder sent him spiraling over the edge, and in late 1921 he withdrew from studies. His father was terminally ill with cancer, his mother distracted, and his brother was bitter about Gurney's unstable career and the financial burdens it had cost the family. Ronald Gurney had intended to become a doctor, but due to the war, the cost of Ivor's education, and the failing family business, he had been forced to give up his personal aspirations. Nevertheless, after the passing of their father, Ronald Gurney, along with Marion Scott, were left to take care of a failing Gurney. By 1922, his family had Ivor declared insane, and he spent the last 15 years of his life in mental hospitals, kept away from his beloved home in Gloucester (Renas, 1991).

Towards the end of his life, Gurney sent a heartbreaking letter to the London Metropolitan Police. In it, he said, "For six months and a half now my confinement and pain has endured. My music, my verses – my war service should have saved me from so much pain. So

many times had I gone to honor, and really injured none. Asking for Death, Release or Imprisonment. An end to pain” (as cited in Lehmann, 1981, p. 93). Gurney found his end to pain on December 26, 1937, passing away from tuberculosis. Only then was he able to return to his beloved Gloucester, and to those whom he left behind. Rev. Cheesman officiated the service, Herbert Howells played the organ, and F. W. Harvey left a final tribute of rosemary on Gurney’s grave for remembrance (Renas, 1991).

Charles Ives – The United States

Charles Edward Ives, born in Danbury, Connecticut in 1874, experienced very early influences in patriotic music; his father had been a very successful Union bandmaster during the Civil War. Ives's early exposure to the patriotic music of the Civil War, in addition to his relationship with his father, would perpetually influence his compositions and his political involvement. For Ives, his childhood home of Danbury was a "sojourn in an American Arcady" (Feder, 1999, p.10). At the time Ives was born, the United States was still largely rural. In Ives's mind, the Danbury of his father's era was the ideal rural homestead and represented the golden age of the American childhood. These affections from his youth led Ives to hold an extreme reverence for his hometown and all that it represented throughout his life (Feder, 1999).

It is impossible to discuss Charles Ives without a discussion of his father, largely because in every autobiographical account that Ives gave of himself, he blended his own biography with that of his father. In Ives's *Scrapbook of collected Memos*, he wrote: "One thing I am certain of is that, if I had done anything good in music, it was, first, because of my father, and second, because of my wife" (as cited in Feder, 1999, p. 11). George Ives was a unique father in many ways. He was a caring, hands-on parent, a hero to Charles, and atypical when compared to the "father" archetype one would find in the post-Civil War United States. Charles shared his father's gift of perfect pitch, and the constant background of music that existed in the Ives household, in addition to their mutual understanding of the omnipresent nature of music, would forever unite father and son. By the end of Ives's career, he was famous for his ability to quote well-known melodies in his own pieces, and a large majority of those melodies, in addition to the experiences they represented, came from Ives's time studying music with his father. Another aspect of his father's musical understanding that Ives would extend and develop to its fullest

potential was the concept of experimentation. George Ives loved to play with music and the fundamentals of its very core. Perhaps for him, it was less about music and more about sound, and more importantly how a listener experienced sound. Charles would take George's experimentations and develop them almost to the point of musical incomprehension; yet at the heart of Ives's music is a simplicity that is so often overlooked (Feder, 1999).

After George Ives's career during the Civil War, financial pressures eventually forced him to take a steady job to support his two sons as they approached the college age. George and Charles were no longer collaborating in composition; instead George took on the role of his son's manager. However, the longer George spent away from music, the more bitter his circumstances made him. Ives would always blame himself for his father's newfound pessimism, and he sought to strike a compromise in his own life between a love of music and a career that would support him financially. With a great deal of effort from himself and his extended family, Ives successfully applied to Yale in September 1894 and entered the class of 1898, leaving home and his father behind. Little did Ives know that he would lose his father forever on November 4, 1894, when George Ives suffered a massive stroke that took him without warning. The complicated relationship between father and son would thus remain forever broken and unfinished. Ives dealt with the loss in a way that surpassed grief; instead there was a sense of mourning that cast a permanent shadow on his psyche and his music (Feder, 1999).

After graduation from Yale, Ives quickly secured a job as an organist working in a church in New York, in addition to an introductory business job at the Mutual Life Insurance Company of New York. In 1899 he moved to a different insurance agency, Charles H. Raymond & Company, where he would remain until the failure of the business. This closure gave Ives a unique opportunity, and in 1907, Ives and his friend Julian Myrick formed their own insurance

company, Ives & Company, which would eventually become Ives & Myrick. While Ives continued to work as an organist and composer on the side for most of his life, he made his insurance agency and business venture his primary career, making him a walking paradox by most musical standards. Ives's vast output and visionary style throughout his life gradually brought him recognition as the most original and significant American composer of the late 19th and early 20th centuries. Inspired by transcendentalist philosophy, and a very deep connection to nature, Ives developed a highly personal, yet musical expression through the most innovative and radical technical means possible. For the most part, Ives's music became most popular after his retirement and death, reaching the ears of concertgoers across the globe (Feder, 1999).

The entry of the United States into World War I in 1917 led Charles Ives away from composing and at least partially reversed his beliefs concerning the war. Until then, he had undertaken a punishing schedule, building his highly successful insurance business in New York by day (making himself a multi-millionaire in the process) and composing at night until exhaustion prevented more work (Feder, 1999). He had written bitterly about the fallacies of modern government and the moral cowardice of those who rushed to fight. He even supported Woodrow Wilson, who had campaigned just half a year earlier using the slogan: "He kept us out of war" (as cited in Stevenson, 2013). However, while the socially conscious Ives had been steadfastly against the participation of the United States in the war, it was following President Wilson's insistence that "the world must be made safe for democracy," by calling for the establishment of a world "league of peace" (Wilson, 1917) that Ives turned nearly overnight into a supporter of the war. It was in reaction to this that Ives likely composed his document *Stand by the President and the People*. In it, he urged the citizens of the United States to see that a solution to a conflict of this nature was only possible through a democratic system: "This is a

war for democracy. It must be fought by democracy. It can only be won by democracy” (as cited in Boatwright, 1961, p. 136). He believed in the rightness of the Allied cause, especially after the invasion of Belgium by the Germans. He donated funds and even volunteered to drive an ambulance on French battlefields for six months (a duty for which he was apparently not accepted). One month after the U.S.'s declaration of war and a month before the first Yankee troops would arrive on the battlefields of Europe, Ives composed his *Three Songs of War*, which demonstrate the full scope of his personal conflict with the idea of war (Houtchens & Stout, 1997).

The first song in the cycle is *In Flanders Fields*, a setting of the incredibly popular text by Army Doctor, Lt. Colonel John McCrae of Canada, not to be confused with the poem “In Flanders” by F.W. Harvey. The poem was the single most popular poem of the war, and is still a recognized masterwork of the period. McCrae’s poem was responsible for making the poppy the symbol of the WWI, and it became the “battle cry” of home-front propaganda. It was penned in reaction to the death of a close friend during the Second Battle of Ypres, which was the first instance of the widespread use of chlorine gas by the Germans. Unlike the aggressive setting that Ives created, the poem itself is rather straightforward in its grief and combative urge to fight on (Houtchens & Stout, 1997).

In Flanders Fields (John McCrae)

In Flanders Fields the poppies blow
Between the crosses row on row,
That mark our place; and in the sky
The larks, still bravely singing, fly
Scarce heard amid the guns below.

We are the Dead. Short days ago
We lived, felt dawn, saw sunset glow,
Loved and were loved, and now we lie
In Flanders fields

Take up our quarrel with the foe:
To you from failing hands we throw
The torch; be yours to hold it high.
If ye break faith with us who die
We shall not sleep, though poppies grow
In Flanders fields.

Despite Ives's eventual support of the war, *In Flanders Fields* depicts the conflicting emotions of patriotism and tragedy associated with armed struggle. Ives was a master at quoting melodies from pre-existing music and incorporating them into his own works. In this setting, there are remnants of “Taps” and “The Red, White, and Blue” woven into the texture. The unrelieved sequence of dissonant intervals of the seventh, together with the octaves played in the low range of the piano with which the work begins, establishes the work's ominous tone. The persistent dark, percussive chords in the bass which define so much of the work are all that remain at its conclusion, reiterated more and more softly, emblematic of the solitary beat of a drum steadily moving off into the distance, underscoring the tragic loss of so many lives lost in war. Ives uses dissonance textually and technically throughout the piece. Through clashes in

chromatic and polychordal harmonies between the piano and voice, as well as syncopated rhythmic figures, he accents the mourning and horror that is veiled between the lines of McCrae's poetry (Houtchens & Stout, 1997).

The première performance of *In Flanders Fields* took place during a luncheon held for insurance company managers at New York's Waldorf-Astoria Hotel on April 15, 1917. It had been at the suggestion of Ives's business partner, Julian "Mike" Myrick, that Ives should compose a song based on the poem "In Flanders Fields." Col. McCrae had worked at Mutual Insurance before the war in its Montreal branch, and the idea of a collaborative creative effort between two insurance men (Ives and McCrae) apparently appealed to Ives, as did the fact that the occasion would represent a rare instance of a public performance of his work, so he consented to Myrick's plan. While representing one of Ives's more approachable works, the song was nevertheless hard to grasp by its contemporaries. The complexity of the song was also not supported by its apparently substandard performance on this occasion, which proved to be a great disappointment to the composer (Houtchens & Stout, 1997). The singer and the accompanist later commented that they "never [made] head or tail of it" (as cited in Houtchens & Stout, 1997, p. 66). However, this tends to be a common reaction to Ives' music, even today (Feder, 1992).

The second piece in the set of three is a highly jingoistic call to arms called "He is There" with strophic text written by Ives himself.

He is There (Charles Ives)

Fifteen years ago today
A little Yankee, little Yankee boy
Marched beside his granddaddy
In the Decoration Day parade.
The village band would play those old war tunes,
And the G. A. R. would shout,
"Hip Hip Hooray!" in the same old way,
As it sounded on the old campground.

That boy has sailed o'er the ocean,
He is there, he is there, he is there.
He's fighting for the right, but when it comes to might,
He is there, he is there, he is there;
As the Allies beat up all the warlords!
He'll be there, he'll be there, and then the world will shout
the Battle-cry of Freedom
Tenting on a new campground.

Fifteen years ago today
A little Yankee, with a German name
Heard the tale of "forty-eight"
Why his Granddaddy joined Uncle Sam,
His fathers fought that medieval stuff and he will fight it now;
"Hip Hip Hooray! this is the day,"
When he'll finish up that aged job.

There's a time in ev'ry life,
When it's do or die, and our Yankee boy
Does his bit that we may live,
In a world where all may have a "say."
He's conscious always of his country's aim, which is Liberty for all,
"Hip Hip Hooray!" is all he'll say,
As he marches to the Flanders front.

For it's rally round the Flag boys,
Rally once again,
Shouting the battle cry of Freedom.

Despite Ives's compositional inklings to stray from tonality, in this piece he employed a standard tonal and harmonic language, although there are unusual sideslips into distantly related chordal harmonies in the piano interludes. As previously mentioned, nostalgic references to

parades and reminiscences of the Civil War of his father's era are common in Ives' music. In this work, Ives fully indulged another aspect of his radical style by weaving the song together with no fewer than 14 different fragments, both musical and textual, from pre-existing songs and marching tunes. Through referencing the Civil War, which he always viewed as the war of his father, Ives alluded to a link between the moral motivation of the Civil War, seen as the anti-slavery conflict, to the current World War I, seen by Ives as the war that would result in worldwide democracy (Houtchens & Stout, 1997).

Ives was a typically passionate person. This passion that permeates through all of his music and his character is evident in his reaction to a particular performance of this piece. He attempted to get his nephew Bigelow Ives to sing it, but when the young man was not spirited or loud enough, Ives would pound on the piano with both fists and demand, "Can't you shout better than that? That's the trouble with this country -- people are afraid to shout" (as cited in Feder, 1992, p. 82). Because of its upbeat nature, if not for Ives's obvious sincere passion, it could almost be perceived as a frivolous pastiche (Feder, 1992).

The last of the three pieces is "Tom Sails Away." It is an impressionist prose soliloquy with text by Ives himself.

Tom Sails Away (Charles Ives)

Scenes from my childhood are with me,
I'm in the lot behind our house upon the hill,
a spring day's sun is setting,
Mother with Tom in her arms is coming toward the garden;
the lettuce rows are showing green.
Thinner grows the smoke o'er the town,
stronger comes the breeze from the ridge,
'Tis after six, the whistles have blown,
the milk train's gone down the valley.
Daddy is coming up the hill from the mill,
We run down the lane to meet him.
But today! In freedom's cause
Tom sailed away for over there, over there, over there!
Scenes from my childhood are floating before my eyes

Ives intentionally uses vague images in his text, making it impossible to interpret the meaning in any concrete manner, leaving the listener to visualize Ives's childhood memories of his father's Civil War stories, or to provide the perspective of a soldier dreaming of home and "scenes from his childhood." This piece reflects Ives's ambiguity and apprehension in regards to the U.S.'s involvement in the war. Of the three works, it is the most dissonant, increasing the dream-like quality of the setting. It is also free of meter, with no time signature specified, and at times it is difficult to decide how many beats are actually in a measure due to the discrepancy between the piano line and vocal line. The free-flowing lack of meter and tendency towards whole-tone harmonics reveal Ives's appreciation of Claude Debussy. The impressionistic style of text painting throughout the piece also reveals his recognition of Debussy; one such example is the lively "running" sound imitated by the piano during the text "we run down the lane to meet him." Towards the end of the piece, there is a contrast established during the first half of the

piece and the mature act of Tom going to war. The final repetition of “scenes from my childhood” gives us the impression of “a vision blurred through tears” (as cited by Houtchens & Stout, 1997, p. 82). The famous patriotic tune “Over There” is quoted, which completes the set, having been quoted in all three pieces.

Claude Debussy – France

By 1918, after four years of strenuous combat on multiple fronts, the world was war-weary. With the addition of the United States to the Allied Forces three years after war had begun, the battle-fatigued alliance of the Central Powers was on the decline and unable to counter the newest manifestation of the Allied forces. Yet, while the war itself was nearing its conclusion, the bitterness that was brewing in Europe was only beginning (Howard, 2002).

Claude Debussy is one of the most prominent figures associated with the Impressionist movement in music of this period. Born in the Parisian suburb of Saint-Germain-en-Laye on August 22, 1862, neither of his parents possessed musical backgrounds. In 1870 his mother fled Paris during the Franco-Prussian war, taking Debussy with her; he began piano lessons in their new home of Cannes. Debussy's skills continued to blossom through his early years at the piano; at age 10 he entered the Paris Conservatoire where he spent eleven years studying piano and composition. Of all the great composers, Debussy's music is perhaps the least "impregnated with counterpoint" (Lederer, 2006). He strove to create a unique style by learning all he could about the styles and methods already in existence, attempting to purify his own music from outside influence. In order to assist with this, Debussy made an effort to meet as many well-known composers as he possibly could throughout his life in order to speak with them and understand their methods. Fame found Debussy long before he was 30, not just for his compositions but also for his piano performance; the same subtlety of color that defined the playing of his idol, Frederic Chopin, became Debussy's identifier as well. His character was quiet, internally passionate, and occasionally grouchy. Despite his internal passion, he had very few public outbursts throughout his life, containing his nature behind layers of reserve, irony, and artistic discipline. Debussy continued to revolutionize piano music for decades, and despite his self-

control, his compositions often reflected the turbulence of his own life: his declining health at the turn of the century, his numerous affairs, and his mounting debts (Lederer, 2006).

Debussy was not known to be a kind man. He was opportunistic, selfish, and sometimes even cruel. The passing of time has not been forgiving in regards to these details, and they were perhaps even more obvious during his life. The first instance in which we see Debussy's true character emerge is around 1880 when he began a love affair with Marie-Blanche Vasnier, who was a beautiful woman married to a much older man. Her husband, Eugene Vasnier, was a benefactor to Debussy. He was kind and encouraging, loaning Debussy money without the expectation of return, inviting him to numerous meals, and providing encouragement to the often pessimistic Debussy, all the while completely ignorant of his wife's affair with the composer. This was the first instance in which Debussy's inability to manage his money is revealed, and it would not be the last. While affairs in Debussy's time were nothing unique, it is Debussy's blatant misuse of his benefactor's kindness that leaves a black mark on his character, and this was only the beginning. He would have dozens of affairs throughout his life, not seeming to care if he, or the women he was seeing, had a commitment to another. The most revealing of these instances was after Debussy's first marriage in 1899 to Lily Texier, a model and seamstress. Five years after they were married, Debussy began a serious affair with a singer named Emma Bardac and demanded a divorce with Texier; she was heartbroken and threatened suicide. Debussy remained untouched by his wife's pleas, and in 1904, Bardac attempted suicide. Again, Debussy showed no sympathy and proceeded with the divorce, leaving Texier to recover on her own. His friends noticed this cruelty, and at that time a great many of them distanced themselves from Debussy because of his actions. He and Emma Bardac would marry in 1908, although it is not known why they waited so long after Debussy's divorce. However, their daughter, Claude-

Emma – “Chouchou” – was born on October 10, 1905. It was through his relationship with his daughter that Debussy’s affectionate and loving personality became more evident. He adored his daughter and was warm and caring with her, more so than he ever had been with anyone else (Lederer, 2006).

Up to this point in his life, Debussy had been politically apathetic, but WWI seemed to stir a patriotism that had been absent until this time. During the war years, Debussy had been repeatedly obliged to relocate his family in order to keep them out of harm’s way, all the while facing his own battle with cancer. The costs of his medical treatments and moving his wife and daughter were augmenting his already impossible debts, sending him into a downward spiral. During this harsh period he found it almost impossible to compose. *Noël des enfants qui n'ont plus de maison* (Christmas of the Homeless Children) is an outburst of understandable frustration and grief, while also being one of the last songs he ever composed (Wheeldon, 2009). In late 1915, Debussy underwent an operation to treat his cancer, and based on the medical treatments available at the time, there is no doubt that he was in extreme agony (Lederer, 2006). It was the night before this operation that Debussy wrote *Noël des enfants qui n'ont plus de maison* (Christmas of the Homeless Children), for voice and piano, published in 1916. Debussy was both composer and poet for this piece, and his text showcases the bitterness of the French people in the midst of hostilities.

Noël des enfants qui n'ont plus de maison - Claude Debussy

Our houses are gone!
The enemy has taken everything, even our little beds!
They burned the school and the schoolmaster.
They burned the church and the Lord Jesus!
And the poor old man who couldn't get away!
Of course, Papa has gone to war.
Poor Mama died before she saw all this.
Christmas! Little Christmas!
Don't go to their houses; never go there again. Punish them!
Avenge the children of France!
The little Belgians, the little Serbs, and the little Poles, too!
If we've forgotten anyone, forgive us.
Christmas! Christmas! Above all, no toys.
Try to give us our daily bread again.
Christmas, listen to us.
Our wooden shoes are gone,
But grant victory to the children of France!

France, of all the countries involved in the ravages of WWI, was perhaps the most war-torn (Howard, 2002). The French people would not soon forget the fact that Germany had attacked and destroyed their country without provocation. Despite the subtlety that Debussy was known for throughout his music, *Noël* is anything but subtle. Protest songs from the popular/folk tradition are repetitive in order to stir a group's blood further with each heated repetition. This setting is frequently anthem-like and rousing in a manner similar to a protest song, rhythmically enforcing key points in the melody that could easily be sung by a mob. These melodic phrases are paired against a consistent accompaniment, which spurs the fire of the vocal line while at the same time supporting it. Debussy was not being cynical with this piece; he was full of French chauvinism and falling prey to the nationalistic rage that sometimes grips the instincts of a nation caught up in war. The genuine hatred of the song's text is almost bizarre in its intensity. Debussy commented to a friend that he was uncertain whether it was the text or the music that made it so

popular among French audiences, asking, “Must I thank the poet or the musician?” (as cited in Federer, 2009, p. 31). After multiple performances, he was decidedly sure that it was the text; he made certain that his music was a perfect compliment to the fervor of the text without obscuring it. The compound meter of the accompaniment juxtaposes the common time of the vocal line, giving the entire piece a large sense of urgency. Unlike Debussy’s normal style, the piano part in *Noël* was entirely meant as accompaniment; it is in no way equal to the importance of the vocal line (Wheeldon, 2009). A few months later, Debussy decided that it was not enough to have an imagined narrator of a child performing this piece; he transcribed *Noël* for two-part children’s choir. With the addition of the choir, *Noël* distanced itself from the voice of Debussy and found the voices of the children of France (Wheeldon, 2009).

Debussy succumbed to cancer and died in March of 1918 in the midst of the aerial and artillery bombardment of Paris; he would never again see peace in France. The Armistice was drawn in November of the same year, with the war officially ending in June 1919 with the Treaty of Versailles after months of intense negotiations. In a sad twist of fate, Debussy’s young daughter Chouchou died of diphtheria within a month of the official end of the war, just shy of her fourteenth birthday (Federer, 2006).

An End to Hostilities

The bitterness embodied by Debussy at the end of his life is emblematic of the despair and grief rampant across Europe after years of death and destruction. By the end of the war, four empires had ceased to exist: the German, Austro-Hungarian, Ottoman, and Russian. In addition, out of the sixty million European soldiers who went to war between 1914 and 1918, eight million were killed, seven million were permanently disabled, and fifteen million were seriously injured. Famine from various blockades left millions dead, and even more homeless. Unfortunately, as is true of any comparable situation, human nature dictated that a scapegoat be identified, blamed, and accordingly punished. In the case of WWI, Germany became that scapegoat. Despite the negotiations of Woodrow Wilson to discourage this behavior, David Lloyd George of Britain, Vittorio Orlando of Italy, and especially Georges Clemenceau of France were too bitter to see through to the potential dangers of forcing the blame on Germany. The Treaty of Versailles left Germany with millions of dollars in reparations owed to the Allied powers, and no viable way to pay them (Howard, 2002).

Hyperinflation in Germany became so extreme that Germans were using German Marks for wallpaper insulation or firewood instead of for purchasing. Germany would borrow money from the U.S. to help pay those reparations, which would in part lead to the Great Depression in 1929. Further, because the people of the United States had been initially reluctant to join the war at all, and disliked the idea of the League of Nations in regards to future conflicts, the U.S. refused to ratify the Treaty of Versailles, despite the urging of President Woodrow Wilson (Howard, 2002). It is because of these failures, and the punishment of Germany rather than a unified rebuilding Europe that, through social, political, and economic manipulation, Adolf

Hitler was able to rise to power in the early 1930's. The Treaty of Versailles was an abject failure, which set the world stage for the occurrence of World War II.

Despite all of this, the United States has, in large part, established a worldview that allows WWI to be forgotten, at the very most giving it credence as the beginnings of WWII. The WWI memorial in Washington DC, off in a distant corner of the National Mall, has fallen into disrepair; many Americans don't realize it exists. In the Smithsonian Museum of American History, WWI has a singular display case, whereas WWII has an entire wing. Even on the exhibitions website, WWI has a single page of information, whereas WWII has 11 chapters of information posted (Smithsonian, 2013). There are multiple factors contributing to the unequal historical treatment of the two World Wars. These factors include the controversial nature in which the United States entered the war, the deeply political basis upon which WWI was begun in contrast to the deeply moral issues and human genocide that permeate the history of WWII, and the fact that veterans of the Great War are no longer with us to help ensure its active remembrance.

Regardless of these reasons, with historical investigation, insight and wisdom, the sacrifices of millions of people cannot and will not be overlooked or forgotten. Neither can we forget the music of the four eminent composers chronicled in this document. The lives and compositional canons of Anton Webern, Ivor Gurney, Charles Ives, and Claude Debussy were each forever changed by the global conflict that brought them, literally and figuratively into "No Man's Land". Their remaining musical record is an inextinguishable warning for all who study, perform and hear it: decrying the horrors of war, giving voice to the voiceless, yearning for home, and through their extraordinary musical talents, daring to say that which is unspeakable. It

is this musical legacy of horror, anger, truth, and wisdom that is the gift that Webern, Gurney, Ives and Debussy have left for generations to come, as their “Music from the Trenches”.

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