

JOSEPH HOLBROOKE: A STUDY OF THE PUBLISHED AND UNPUBLISHED SOLO AND CHAMBER
WORKS FOR CLARINET WITH AN ANNOTATED BIBLIOGRAPHY

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The name Joseph Holbrooke is, for the most part, unknown today, but that was not the case in the early years of the 20th century. Conductors such as Sir Thomas Beecham and Henry Wood performed his works throughout England, and his opera, *The Children of Don*, was performed in Vienna and Salzburg. However, his popularity did not last, and the performances of his works began to decline sharply after 1925. By the last quarter of the 20th century, performances of his works were very rare, even in England, and most, if not all, were out of print. As reason for this decline, some have cited the long duration and large instrumentation required by some his works, while others have said the neglect is well deserved, but the critical pendulum now seems to be swinging in the other direction. Many of his pieces have come back into print and new recordings are being released. This is especially good news for clarinetists because of the quality and number of his works for that instrument. His compositions for clarinet include chamber and solo works, and a double concerto for clarinet and bassoon. These melodic and intriguing works for the clarinet deserve more investigation and exposure. This document provides an annotated bibliography of all of Holbrooke's solo and chamber works involving the clarinet. Each entry lists title, publisher, date of composition/publication, duration, commercially available recordings, and provides a brief description. In addition, a biographical sketch is provided along with an overview of his compositional style.

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CHAPTER 1

INTRODUCTION

The name Joseph Holbrooke¹ is, for the most part, unknown today, but that was not the case in the early years of the 20th century. Ann-Marie Forbes said in *Musicology Australia*, “Lauded by a number of contemporary critics and fellow musicians as the great hope of English music in the early decades of this century, Josef Holbrooke was an eccentric composer given to monumental conceptions.”² He wrote in almost every genre, including opera, ballet, orchestral, choral, song, chamber and solo works. Conductors such as Sir Thomas Beecham and Henry Wood performed his works throughout England, and his opera, *The Children of Don*, was performed in Vienna and Salzburg. He was also a music critic and vociferous champion of young British composers. In 1925, his book *Contemporary British Composers* was published. However, his popularity did not last, and the performances of his works began to decline sharply after 1925. By the last quarter of the 20th century, performances of his works were very rare, even in England, and most, if not all, were out of print.

As reason for this decline, some have cited the long duration and large instrumentation required by some his works, while others have said the neglect is well deserved. The critical pendulum now seems to be swinging in the other direction. An example of this can be seen by comparing entries in two different editions of *The New Grove Dictionary of Music and Musicians*. While Peter J. Pirie is not entirely negative in the 1980 *New Grove* entry, he does

¹ Holbrooke sometimes spelled his first name as “Josef.” There are different theories as to why this was done. For the sake of consistency, this author will follow the lead of *The New Grove Dictionary of Music and Musicians* and use “Joseph” throughout the body of this document.

² Ann-Marie H. Forbes, “Josef Holbrooke’s Cauldron of Annwn and Metempsychosis in Music,” *Musicology Australia* 17, (1994): 43.

describe Holbrooke's music as, "sometimes clumsy and tasteless...", and his orchestral textures as, "restless and rhythmically jerky."³ Contrasting with this is the *New Grove* entry from 2001, in which Ann-Marie Forbes remarks, "Holbrooke's idiom is characterized by its accessibility and melodic appeal." Affirming that Holbrooke's works are experiencing a sort of renaissance, she concludes her article with, "At the end of the 20th century re-releases and new recordings of his compositions began to appear."⁴

The renewal of interest in Holbrooke is of particularly good news for clarinetists. While the overall tone of the two *New Grove* articles is different, they both make mention of the quality of his clarinet works. Forbes goes so far as to say, "He wrote idiomatically for instruments in smaller ensembles and produces a number of appealing works for the clarinet that feature sweeping melodies and piquant harmonies."⁵ These clarinet works, some of which have recently come back into print, include chamber and solo works, and a double concerto for clarinet and bassoon. These melodic and intriguing pieces deserve more investigation and exposure.

The current research available on Holbrooke is sparse. It consists mostly of recording reviews and commentary on his larger works. Ann-Marie Forbes' 1994 article in *Musicology Australia* examines Holbrooke's mammoth operatic trilogy *Cauldron of Annwn*, while in the Spring 2001 issue of *International Piano Quarterly*, Francis Pott makes mention of the composer's *First Piano Concerto* ("The Song of Gwyn ap Nudd"). There is no current or

³ Peter J. Pirie, "Joseph Holbrooke," *The New Grove Dictionary of Music and Musicians*, 20 vols., ed. Stanley Sadie (New York: Macmillan Publishers Ltd., 1980), vol. 8, 642-643.

⁴ Ann-Marie Forbes, "Joseph Holbrooke," *The New Grove Dictionary of Music and Musicians*, 2nd ed., 29 vols., ed. Stanley Sadie (New York: Macmillan Publishers Ltd., 2001), vol. 11, 615.

⁵ *Ibid.*, 616.

complete listing of his compositions available. The 2001 *New Grove* contains only a selected works list. George Lowe's Holbrooke biography is obviously not complete since it dates from 1920, well before the composer's death in 1958. Frederic James provides a list of the clarinet works in the Winter 1984 issue of *The Clarinet* listing fewer works than Lowe does. The most complete listing of the clarinet works to date can be found in Jane Ellsworth's *Clarinet Music by British Composers, 1800-1914: a Repertorial Survey*.⁶ Ellsworth cites all of Holbrooke's works for clarinet, but discusses less than half of them since the others were composed after 1914. Since that time, many of these works have become available online or from Emerson Edition.

This document makes use of these new opportunities and expands upon Ellsworth's excellent work by providing an annotated bibliography of all of Holbrooke's solo and chamber works involving the clarinet. Each entry lists title, publisher, date of composition/publication, duration, commercially available recordings, and provides a brief description. In addition, a biographical sketch is provided along with an overview of his compositional style.

⁶ Jane Elizabeth Ellsworth, "Clarinet Music by British composers, 1800-1914: A Repertorial Survey" (DMA diss., The Ohio State University, 1991), 169-170.

CHAPTER 2

BIOGRAPHY

Joseph Holbrooke was born in Croydon, North London, on July 5, 1878. He was one of six children, three of whom died in childhood. His father was a pianist who traveled through England, Scotland, Ireland, and Wales accompanying various entertainers, while Joseph's mother was a professional vocalist of Scottish descent. She passed away when Joseph was only two leaving him in the care of his father.⁷

Not long after his wife's death, Joseph's father was engaged as the pianist at Collins' Music Hall, Islington, and then at Bedford Music Hall in London. Joseph became a member of the choir at St. Anne's Church and also attended school there. His early musical education came from his father, with whom he studied both violin and piano. His father sometimes allowed Joseph to come with him to the music hall and perform, but he did not limit his son's musical education to the "light" fare of the hall. Joseph was brought up on the music of Beethoven and Clementi, and he began to progress so rapidly that his father decided to enter him as a student at the Royal Academy of Music.⁸

At age fifteen in 1893, Joseph began his formal music education. As a pianist, he studied the works of composers including Clementi, Chopin, Beethoven, Liszt and Schumann. His biographer, Lowe, says, "there could be no doubt, however, that, in spite of his fine gifts as an executant, his true bent lay in the direction of composition."⁹ His works were soon heard on student concerts organized by his composition teacher, Frederick Corder. Even his initial works

⁷ George Lowe, *Josef Holbrooke and His Work* (New York: E.P. Dutton & Co., 1920), 1.

⁸ *Ibid.*, 2-3.

⁹ *Ibid.*, 3.

showed a preference for unconventional harmonies, and, as a result, he fell into disfavor with the conservative principal of the academy, Alexander Mackenzie. Subsequently, Holbrooke's compositions were placed at the end of the student concerts. Rebellious against this, instead of performing Schumann's *Toccata* as his first piece of the evening, he substituted three of his own pieces!¹⁰ The following morning he was reprimanded by the principal and other faculty for his "morbid music,' his 'horrible harmonies,' his 'lack of melody,' and his 'objectionable style.'"¹¹

After this incident, Holbrooke was extremely frustrated by his life at the Academy. His frustration coupled with troubles at home caused him to leave school in 1896, but he did not go empty-handed. In piano, he won the bronze and silver medals and the Heathcote Long prize. He also won the Potter Exhibition, but had to forfeit the honor in order to accept the Sterndale Bennett Scholarship for all round musicianship. This prize was won with his *G Minor Piano Quartet*, which had been his first piece performed at the school, and his *Pantomime Suite for String Orchestra* won the Lucas Medal prize.¹²

Holbrooke's first employment after leaving school was as a pianist and conductor for a tour of Scotland in which he played solos and accompanied comic songs. The tour came to an end in six weeks due to a lack of audience. He then tried making his living as a teacher but was not able to survive on the small income his studio provided. Answering an ad in the *Musical News* for a musical companion, he met his first patron, the Rev. E.S. Bengough. He also took the position of conductor for a theatrical company mounting their Christmas production in

¹⁰ Ibid., 4-5.

¹¹ Ibid., 5.

¹² Ibid., 6-7.

1899. This venture also ended badly. The manager left the company stranded without pay, and Holbrooke had to ask Bengough for assistance in order to return to London.¹³

After this last setback, one might think Holbrooke would have been severely disillusioned, but his perseverance was about to be rewarded. While on this theatrical tour, he received a message from Sir Augustus Manns, the conductor at the Crystal Palace. Holbrooke had submitted his first orchestral poem, *The Raven*, to Manns, who had a reputation for helping young composers. *The Raven* was one of many of Holbrooke's compositions inspired by the work of Edgar Allen Poe. After Holbrooke played the piece for Manns, the conductor decided to program the work on one of his famous Saturday Afternoon Concerts.¹⁴

The Raven received a week of rehearsals in which Holbrooke learned much. Having had little experience of writing for a full orchestra, Holbrooke rewrote many passages at the request of both conductor and players. The work was performed on March 3, 1900, and received a favorable reception. Holbrooke was pleased but quickly set about correcting weaknesses in the work. The score that exists today is an entirely revised one.¹⁵

After the success of *The Raven*, Holbrooke's career was launched.¹⁶ Works were widely performed in the early part of the century. His *Queen Mab* for choir and orchestra was presented at the Leeds Festival in 1904. *The Bells* was performed in Birmingham in 1906.¹⁷ He began to receive commissions for large-scale choral works for provincial festivals. A number of his orchestral and choral works were conducted by Henry Wood and Thomas Beecham. At

¹³ Ibid., 7-9.

¹⁴ Ibid., 10.

¹⁵ Ibid., 10-11.

¹⁶ Forbes, "Joseph Holbrooke," 615.

¹⁷ Pirie, "Joseph Holbrooke," 642.

Queen's Hall in 1908, Beecham conducted the premiere of *Apollo and the Seaman*. It was at this concert that Holbrooke met the person that was to be the most important figure in his career, Thomas Evelyn Scott-Ellis, Eighth Baron Howard de Walden.¹⁸

Ellis provided Holbrooke with generous financial support for the performance as well as the publication of the composer's works, and he also aided Holbrooke's mission of promoting young British composers by underwriting a series of concerts to present new music. Ellis also provided the libretto for Holbrooke's operatic trilogy, *The Cauldron of Annwn*. The librettos were based on tales from Welsh mythology, and an extensive system of leitmotifs is employed to provide unity within the cycle.¹⁹ The first opera of the trilogy, *The Children of Don*, was performed under Arthur Nikisch at the London Opera House in 1912. Beecham conducted the second opera, *Dylan: Son of the Wave*, in his Drury Lane season of 1914. *Bronwen*, the third installment of the trilogy, was not performed until 1929 at Huddersfield.²⁰ By this time, *The Children of Don* had been performed in Vienna and Salzburg. These performances show the opportunities Holbrooke was afforded in the first part of the twentieth century to have his music performed.²¹

Holbrooke began to lose his hearing around 1920. "Visitors to the family home often had to contend with Holbrooke struggling with a massive old-fashioned hearing aid."²² Frederic James in his article in *The Clarinet* contends that Holbrooke's hearing loss began earlier.

¹⁸ Forbes, "Joseph Holbrooke," 615-616.

¹⁹ Ibid., 616.

²⁰ Forbes, "Josef Holbrooke's *Cauldron of Annwn*," 43.

²¹ Pirie, "Joseph Holbrooke," 642.

²² Robert Barnett, "Fame and Neglect: Joe Holbrooke – British Composer," MusicWeb International, <http://www.musicweb.uk.net/holbrooke/> (accessed 9 March 2006).

“Holbrooke’s introduction to the States was in 1915 when he was 37. He was knocked down by a car in Chicago and suffered a broken arm. (He was beginning to go deaf, and no doubt was jay-walking.)”²³

He continued to compose for the concert and music halls. Philip Scowcroft says, “In the early 1920s when fox-trots became the rage, he composed several, one of them rejoicing in the title *Let’s Brighten Brighton*.”²⁴ He continued to promote performances of his more serious works, but he or his patron, Ellis, eventually began having to pay for them. Toward the end of his life, Holbrooke began buying back the copyrights of his earlier works from various publishers. He then started “Modern Music Library,” which published his works and recordings. His son, Gwydion, took on this responsibility after his father’s death under the Blenheim imprint.²⁵

²³ Frederic James, “Josef Holbrooke (1878-1958): a brief retrospect on his clarinet works,” *The Clarinet* 11/2 (Winter 1984): 18.

²⁴ Philip L. Scowcroft, “Holbrooke (1878-1958): The Composer of Light Music,” MusicWeb International, <http://www.musicweb.uk.net/holbrooke/scowcroft.htm> (accessed 20 October 2008).

²⁵ Barnett, “Fame and Neglect.”

CHAPTER 3
COMPOSITIONAL STYLE

Stylistic Overview

Joseph Holbrooke was one of an impressive group of British composers in the early part of the twentieth century. Robert Barnett says, "Joseph Holbrooke belongs to the generation of composers at the core of the twentieth century British musical renaissance."²⁶ Edward Elgar, Charles Stanford, Ralph Vaughan Williams, Gustav Holst, and Arnold Bax were a few of his contemporaries. Stanford taught at the Royal College of Music and counted among his students Ralph Vaughan Williams, John Ireland, Gustav Holst, and Frank Bridge, while Holbrooke along with Granville Bantock, and Arnold Bax studied composition under Frederick Corder at the Royal Academy of Music. Stanford's compositional style was modeled after Brahms, while Corder was a disciple of Liszt and Wagner.

Peter J. Pirie, in his article "Bantock and his Generation," from the August 1968 issue of *The Musical Times* says, "Corder's methods were progressive but too easygoing, and all his pupils, even the devastatingly gifted Bax, suffered from it. Stanford was perhaps the better teacher, but he was also cruelly repressive, reactionary, and insensitive. . ." ²⁷ Pirie, who also wrote the 1980 *New Grove* entry mentioned in the introduction, is nothing if not consistent in his criticism of Holbrooke. He writes, "In his orchestral works Holbrooke bumps along with many jerky changes of harmony and rhythm, and a general sense of distracted restlessness

²⁶ Barnett, "Fame and Neglect."

²⁷ Peter J. Pirie, "Bantock and His Generation," *The Musical Times* 109/1506 (August 1968): 715.

(was this a Corder fingerprint?).”²⁸ Coming to Holbrooke’s defense, Ann Marie Forbes says, “In the symphonic poems his gift for pictorial representation is most readily apparent; music follows text almost in the manner of a film score. Consequently, these works tend to be episodic and occasionally disjunct.”²⁹

As a student of Corder, it is no surprise that Holbrooke has been constantly compared to Wagner. In fact his mammoth operatic trilogy, *The Cauldron of Annwn*, is often referred to as the “Welsh Ring Cycle.” In his large-scale works, his compositional practice reflects that of Wagner and sometimes Richard Strauss, but in his chamber and solo pieces for clarinet, one can hear a definite Impressionistic influence as well as a much simpler melodic and harmonic style.

Works for Clarinet

An Impressionistic influence is definitely audible in Holbrooke’s *Cyrene, Nocturne: “Fairyland,”* and *Phryne*. *Cyrene, op. 88 for clarinet and piano*, takes its name from the Greek mythological figure. The Cyrene of myth was a nymph and one of the many conquests of the sun-god Apollo. As the story goes, Apollo fell madly in love with the nymph upon their first encounter, spirited her away, and founded a city in North Africa in her honor.

In the beginning of the piece, the parallel use of oscillating accompanying chords, which maintain their intervals of perfect fourths and minor sixths, bring to mind the Impressionistic technique of planing. The work is tonal and based on 4 and 8 measure phrases. After a two-bar introduction, the clarinet enters with a delicate melody seeming to float above the dream-like accompaniment (ex. 1). The sustained and sinuous melody could easily represent Apollo’s

²⁸ Pirie, “Bantock,” 716.

²⁹ Forbes, “Holbrooke,” 616.

first glimpse of the seductive Cyrene. This combination of long-lined melody atop a static accompaniment is very reminiscent of Debussy's *Première Rhapsodie* (ex. 2).

Example 1. Measures 1-17.³⁰

CYRENE
For Clarinet and Piano

Duration: $4\frac{1}{2}$ mins (3½ with cut) JOSEF HOLBROOKE
(Opus 88)
(♩ = 84) *Larghetto e espressivo.*

♭ CLARINET

PIANO

The musical score consists of four systems. The first system shows the beginning of the piece with the clarinet playing a long-lined melody and the piano providing a static accompaniment. The second system continues the melody and accompaniment. The third system features a change in dynamics to *pp* in both parts. The fourth system, marked with a circled 1, shows the melody becoming more active with triplets and the piano accompaniment becoming more complex with triplets and a *cres.* marking.

³⁰ Josef Holbrooke, *Cyrene, op. 88 for clarinet and piano* (Blenheim Press, n.d.).

Example 2. Measures 9-14.³¹

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Along with this Impressionistic style, Holbrooke sometimes employed unusual harmonies and progressions. Ann-Marie Forbes wrote, “His compositions exhibit full recourse to chromatic harmony and some imaginative delays of dissonance resolution.”³² In *Eilean Shona for clarinet and piano/string quartet*, an example of this more chromatic style can be seen (ex. 3).

The tonal structure of *Eilean Shona* is based on simple large-scale harmonic progressions, oftentimes with chromatic embellishments added. Holbrooke appears to be more concerned with individual voice leading than local harmonic progressions. In fact, the voice leading itself causes harmonic ambiguity. From the beginning of the piece, Holbrooke employs an oscillating eighth-note figure that makes it difficult to ascertain which note is the chord tone and which is the non-harmonic tone. This can be seen in ex. 3, m. 17, beats 4-6.

³¹ Claude Debussy, *Première Rhapsodie* (Paris: Durand S.A. Editions Musicales, 1910).

³² Forbes, “Joseph Holbrooke,” 616.

Rife with secondary V^7 and secondary $vii^{\circ 7}$ chords, Holbrooke employs deceptive local progressions with many enharmonic respellings. One example of this can be seen in ex. 3, m. 10. The augmented 6th chord on the first beat of the measure has the raised 4th scale degree spelled as a D-flat rather than a C-sharp. An additional example of enharmonic respelling and atypical resolutions can be found in ex. 3, m. 16-17.

Example 3. Measures 10-18.³³

Contrasting with Holbrooke’s highly chromatic style is a much simpler, more straightforward one that can be found in his *Mezzotints*. They are in the style of character pieces much like Saint-Saens’ *The Carnival of the Animals*. These compositions showcase Holbrooke’s ability to write memorable melodies, a skill often attributed to his music hall upbringing. An example of this melodic and harmonic style can be seen in “The Butterfly of the

³³ Josef Holbrooke, “Eilean Shona” op. 74 for clarinet and piano/string quartet (Blenheim Press, n.d.).

Ballet," from the *Four Mezzotints op. 55, for clarinet and piano* (ex. 4).

Example 4. Measures 1-17.³⁴

"THE BUTTERFLY OF THE BALLET."

JOSEF HOLBROOKE.
Op. 55. No 6

CLARINET,
VIOLIN &
FLUTE.

PIANO.

Con brio grazioso.

The musical score consists of six systems of staves. The first system shows the piano introduction with a dynamic marking of *f*. The second system includes dynamic markings of *p*, *fff*, *dim.*, and *ppogg.*. The third system continues the piano accompaniment. The fourth system shows the piano accompaniment with a dynamic marking of *pp*. The fifth system continues the piano accompaniment with a dynamic marking of *pp*. The sixth system concludes the piano introduction with a dynamic marking of *cresc.* and a final *f* marking.

³⁴ Josef Holbrooke, "The Butterfly of the Ballet" no. 6 from *Four Mezzotints op. 55* for clarinet and piano (Blenheim Press, n.d.).

The melody is made up of shorter motives and is not nearly so embellished as the melody in *Cyrene* (ex. 1), while the accompaniment is much more diatonic than that of “*Eilean Shona*” (ex. 3).

At the other end of the melodic spectrum from his *Mezzotints* are Holbrooke’s more virtuosic compositions. These include his *Nocturne*, “*Fairyland*” for *viola, clarinet and piano* and the *Double Concerto for clarinet and bassoon*. In *Nocturne*, “*Fairyland*,” the tempo is relatively slow, dotted quarter note = 54-58, but the overlapping flourishes are still challenging to play making ensemble precision difficult.

Example 5. Measures 13-18.³⁵

The image shows a page of musical notation for measures 13-18 of the piece "Fairyland" by Josef Holbrooke. The score is for piano and includes staves for violin, viola, clarinet, and piano. The tempo is marked as "PIANO". The score features various dynamic markings such as *p*, *mf*, *f*, *pp*, and *p*, along with performance instructions like *cresc.*, *dim.*, *rit.*, and *a tempo*. The notation includes complex rhythmic patterns and overlapping flourishes.

These rapid embellishments also occur at quicker tempos. With a tempo marking of quarter note = 92, he combines technically difficult writing with his penchant for the clarinet’s altissimo register in the *Double Concerto for clarinet and bassoon* creating a very difficult passage.

³⁵ Josef Holbrooke, *Nocturne op. 57*, “*Fairyland*” for *viola, clarinet in Bb and piano* (Blenheim Press, n.d.).

Example 6. Measures 32-49.³⁶

Holbrooke was not the only British composer making such virtuosic demands on clarinetists at this time. John Ireland and Herbert Howells were both pushing technical boundaries of the instrument. Holbrooke's *Double Concerto* was finished in 1940 while Herbert Howells' *Sonata for clarinet and piano* dates from 1951 and John Ireland's *Fantasy-Sonata for clarinet and piano* from 1943. These sonatas are extremely virtuosic in nature. The Ireland is particularly demanding, with as much if not more rapid passagework in the altissimo register than is seen in Holbrooke's *Double Concerto*. The work of these composers points to the availability of performers capable of meeting these demands. The names of Reginald Kell and Frederick Thurston come to mind. Holbrooke's *Double Concerto* was in fact written for Kell, Holbrooke's son-in-law, and the bassoonist Gwydion (Hol)Brooke, the composer's son. Both the Howells and Ireland sonatas were dedicated to Frederick Thurston.

³⁶ Josef Holbrooke, *Double Concerto for clarinet, bassoon and piano* (Blenheim Press, n.d.).

Holbrooke's melodies could range from the simplest of tunes to acrobatic displays in the clarinet's highest register. Likewise, his harmonies ran the gamut from rudimentary to highly chromatic. Though the influence of Wagner and Impressionism are facets of his compositional style, perhaps the most pervasive and successful feature of his writing lay in his ability to craft attractive and memorable melodies.

CHAPTER 4

ANNOTATED BIBLIOGRAPHY OF SOLO AND CHAMBER WORKS

Solo Works

Andante and Presto op. 6, no. 2 for clarinet and piano (1893/1894)³⁷

Publication status: Hawkes & Son, 1908 (out of print)³⁸

Duration: 10:30 (5:30, 5:00)

Recordings: none commercially available

Dedication: "Dedicated to Charles Draper"³⁹

This piece was originally referred to as *Adagio and Rondo* in Lowe's 1920 biography of Holbrooke.⁴⁰ It is not clear whether just the title was changed or if it is a completely different work.⁴¹ The dedication is to the clarinetist, Charles Draper, who later taught Holbrooke's son Anton. The tempo of the *Andante* is marked eighth note = 100, but no metronome marking is given for the *Presto* which is in the form of a Rondo with several tempo changes indicated to accommodate the different sections. While the transitions from one section to another can be quite challenging, the pieces are of only moderate difficulty for the clarinet and piano with only a few technically difficult passages. There are numerous discrepancies between the clarinet part and the piano score including articulations and tempo and style indications.

Nocturne op. 55, no. 1 for clarinet and piano (1912)

Publication status: Blenheim Press (n.d.), distributed by Emerson Edition

Duration: 5:30

³⁷ Jane Ellsworth and Robert Barnett disagree on the date of composition.

³⁸ obtained copy from Sibley Music Library, Eastman School of Music.

³⁹ Josef Holbrooke, *Andante and Presto op. 6, no. 2 for clarinet and piano*, (London: Hawkes & Son, 1908). (out of print)

⁴⁰ Lowe, 302.

⁴¹ Robert Barnett, e-mail message to author, 1 October, 2008.

Recordings: *100 Years of the Simple-System Clarinet*. Colin Lawson, clarinet, with Francis Pott, piano. Clarinet Classics, CC0044, 2003.

This piece shares the same opus number as “L’Extase” from the *Three Mezzotints*. In Lowe’s listing of compositions, he lists the *Nocturne* as the first *Mezzotint* and “L’Extase” as the second.⁴² The numbers of the others are adjusted accordingly. It seems the *Nocturne* was excised from the set and made to stand on its own. The work is set in a minor key and opens with the clarinet in its lowest register giving the work a dark, brooding quality. Both the clarinet and piano part are technically simple. Marked *larghetto sostenuto*, with the quarter note = 84, the only minor challenge is endurance for the clarinetist.

Three Mezzotints op. 55, nos. 1-3 for clarinet and piano (n.d.)

Publication status: G. Ricordi & Co., 1920 (out of print)⁴³

Recordings: none commercially available

1. “L’Extase” *op. 55, no. 1*

Duration: 3:30

2. “Albanian Serenade” *op. 55, no. 2*

Duration: 4:00

3. “Celtic Elegie” *op. 55, no. 3*

Duration: 4:00

There were originally four pieces in this set of *Mezzotints*. See the above listing for *Nocturne op. 55, no. 1* for an explanation. “L’Extase,” shares its theme with the first movement of the *Clarinet Quintet*. The tempo indication is *andantino semplice* with no metronome marking given. The parallel movement of the chords in the piano accompanies an elegant melody in the clarinet. Neither part is challenging.

“Albanian Serenade” contrasts with “L’Extase.” It is more folk-like in character. It

⁴² Lowe, 312.

⁴³ Obtained copy from International Clarinet Association Research Library.

begins with a lyrical section marked *andantino*, leading to a dance-like *poco vivace*, and returning to the *andantino*. The *poco vivace* is of easy to medium difficulty for the clarinet and the piano.

In the third piece of the set, “Celtic Elegie,” the tempo indication given is *adagio ed espressivo molto*. There is no metronome marking, and the meter signature is 6/4. Neither part is technically challenging.

Four Mezzotints op. 55, nos. 5-8, for clarinet and piano (n.d.)
Publication status: Blenheim Press (n.d.), distributed by Emerson Edition
Recordings: none commercially available.
1. “Canzonetta: Spring Song” *op. 55, no. 8*
Duration: 3:30
2. “The Butterfly of the Ballet” *op. 55, no. 6*
Duration: 2:30
3. “Girgenti (Cavatina)” *op. 55, no. 7*
Duration: 4:00
4. “From Syracuse” *op. 55, no. 5*
Duration: 2:00

No date of composition was found for this second set of *Mezzotints*. They were originally published in 1918, but no publication information is present on the older copies obtained or the version currently available from Emerson Edition. Holbrooke’s name is at the bottom of each page, indicating that he may have published them himself.

The “Canzonetta: Spring Song,” is a truncated and simplified version of what is now published as the second movement of the *Clarinet Quintet*. This version has none of the sixteenth-note filigree present in the *Quintet* version.

“The Butterfly of the Ballet” is marked *con brio grazioso*, with a lilting melody that is shared between the instruments. The pervasive use of the rhythmic figure of an eighth and

two sixteenth-notes adds a dance-like quality to the piece. It is of moderate difficulty for both instruments.

“Girgenti (Cavatina),” begins *adagio non troppo*. The middle section is marked *animato*, but is not difficult for either instrument. This is another example of Holbrooke’s more simplistic harmony with a lyrical melody.

“From Syracuse,” is similar to the “The Butterfly,” if not so successful. A two-bar sixteenth-note motive alternates between the clarinet and piano. It is of moderate difficulty.

Eilean Shona op. 74 for clarinet and piano/string quartet (1920)

Publication status: Blenheim Press (n.d.), distributed by Emerson Edition

Duration: 4:00

Recordings: *English Clarinet Quintets*. Thea King, clarinet with the Britten String Quartet. Hyperion Records, CDH55105, 2003.

Holbrooke: String Quartets. Richard Hosford, clarinet with The Rasumovsky Quartet. Dutton Laboratories, CDLX 7124, 2002.

Eilean Shona has been something of a musical nomad. Its chronology is not quite clear, but at different times it has been a song, one of the *Mezzotints* (“Melodie”), and briefly, the second movement of the *Clarinet Quintet*. In his notes to Thea King’s recording, Christopher Palmer writes, “Eilean Shona is an island off the west coast of Scotland, and this piece is a re-working of what was originally a song to words by Gerald Cumberland. What the text was about need hardly concern us, so immediately atmospheric is the music – a few bars and we are in thrall. That is real Celtic magic.”⁴⁴

The clarinetist needs excellent control in the high register. The highest note is an altissimo “B” with the lower octave provided as an alternative. The piano part is somewhat

⁴⁴ Christopher Palmer, Compact Disc Liner Notes for *English Clarinet Quintets*, Thea King, clarinet with Britten String Quartet, (Hyperion Records, CDH55105, 2003), 5.

awkward in its voice-leading because it is a reduction of a string quartet. The version available from Emerson Edition contains both the string quartet parts and a piano reduction by R.

Denwood.

Cyrene op. 88 for clarinet and piano (1930)

Publication status: Blenheim Press (n.d.), distributed by Emerson Edition

Duration: 5:00

Recordings: none commercially available.

This is the slow movement of his *Saxophone Concerto* transposed for Bb clarinet. The title refers to the Greek mythological figure. The Cyrene of myth was a nymph and one of the many conquests of the sun-god, Apollo. As the story goes, Apollo fell madly in love with the nymph upon their first encounter, spirited her away, and founded a city in North Africa in her honor. Marked *larghetto e espressivo*, it is a very effective piece, with a definite Impressionistic sound. The clarinet part is of medium difficulty with fairly simple accompaniment in the piano.

Nocturne op. 98b, "Phryne" for clarinet and piano (1939)

Publication status: Blenheim Press (n.d.), distributed by Emerson Edition

Duration: 6:00

Recordings: none commercially available

Dedication: "for Reginald Kell"⁴⁵

Phryne was a famous Greek courtesan said to have inspired various paintings and sculptures. There is a similar Impressionistic sound with parallel chord movement as found in *Cyrene*. Marked *poco lento sostenuto*, the melody is elaborately embellished posing some technical difficulty for the clarinetist.

⁴⁵ Josef Holbrooke, *Nocturne op. 98b, "Phryne" for clarinet and piano* (Blenheim Press, n.d.).

Chamber Works

Clarinet Quintet op. 27 for clarinet and string quartet (1911)

Publication status: Blenheim Press (n.d.), distributed by Emerson Edition

Duration: 25:00

Recordings: *Weber, Concertino op. 26; Brahms, Clarinet Trio op. 114; Holbrooke, Clarinet Quintet op. 27.* Reginald Kell, clarinet with Louis Kentner, piano; Anthony Pini, cello; Willoughby String Quartet; and Orchestra conducted by Walter Goehr. Testament, SBT 1002, 1991 (rec. 1939).

Holbrooke: String Quartets. Richard Hosford, clarinet with The Rasumovsky Quartet. Dutton Laboratories, CDLX 7124, 2002.

I. *Maestoso moderato – Poco allegro cantabile* (11:00)

II. *Canzonet: Andante affetuoso* (5:00)

III. *Poco vivace* (9:00)

The *Clarinet Quintet* has perhaps the most convoluted history of Holbrooke's works for clarinet. There are several explanations available, but they all differ slightly. Holbrooke's son, Gwydion, had this to say about it in a letter to Jane Ellsworth:

The evolution of Holbrooke's *Clarinet Quintet* is quite a story. In between 1900 and 1923 the composer gave 135 concerts featuring British composers and works of his own, and in 1904 a quintet was played at the Steinway hall on May 7th. It was called 'Fate,' and featured two violins, viola, cello, and horn (which was played by York Bowen). It consisted of two related outer movements and a centre movement of unrelated variations. The work was played a few times with this combination up to about 1914, when it evolved into two clarinet quintets, both of two movements.

No. 1 consisted of a development of a simple clarinet piece he had written earlier, and then the variations. Two unrelated movements. No. 2 embraced the two related movements mentioned above, which undoubtedly made a better work.

However, when the possibility of a Kell recording arose in 1939, Holbrooke decided to replace the last movement of No. 2 with something a little less youthful – an arrangement of the last movement of a little used wind quartet – the resulting record being the first movement of No. 2, the first movement of No. 1 and a new last movement. Three unrelated movements.

But that is not the end of the saga. When Jack Brymer decided to broadcast the quintet in 1956 (?), the composer saw another opportunity, and wrote him a new slow movement! This was an adaptation of a song called '*Homeland*' by Gerald Cumberland. So the Brymer broadcast was No. 2 with a new middle movement.

Today the work is published as No. 2, with the option of including the first movement of No. 1 as a centre movement. The other slow movement is available as a separate piece, called 'Eileen Shona.'⁴⁶

The work is for clarinet in "A" and is very challenging for all the performers. The first and last movements are made even more difficult due to the fact that they are manuscript reproductions. The optional middle movement, *Canzonet*, is printed. Metronome markings are provided for the outer two movements, but no metronome marking is indicated for the second movement. As mentioned earlier, the first movement of the quintet shares its main theme with the "L'Extase" *Mezzotint*, and the second movement is an enlarged and embellished version of the "Canzonetta" *Mezzotint*. It contains improvisatory-like passagework for the clarinet. The third movement is by far the most challenging technically for the clarinet.

Wind Sextet op. 33(a) in F minor for wind quintet and piano (1902)

Publication status: Blenheim Press (n.d.), distributed by Emerson Edition

Duration: 22:00

Recordings: none commercially available

I. *Allegro appassionato non troppo* (10:00)

II. *Andante con moto (molto espressivo, sostenuto)* (7:00)

III. *Rondo: Vivace marcato* (5:00)

The work is scored for flute, oboe, clarinet, bassoon, and horn with piano. The current edition of this piece is problematic in that no score is included and all the parts are manuscript reproductions. The piano score is more neatly presented than the others, but it is in such large print that at times no more than five measures fit on one page. The wind parts are very difficult to read especially for the flutist with the uneven spacing of the ledger lines. The lack of legibility is even more of a problem because of the technical difficulty of the music, which

⁴⁶ Ellsworth, 171-172.

demands virtuosity of all players. There are many changes of tempo with no metronome markings given.

Miniature Suite op. 33b for wind quintet (1897)

Publication status: Blenheim Press (n.d.), distributed by Emerson Edition

Duration: 9:30

Recordings: none commercially available

Dedication: "Mrs. Alice Stuart-Worthley"⁴⁷

I. *In the Fields: Intermezzo* (1:30)

II. *A Joyous Moment: Scherzo* (1:30)

III. *Minuet: Fugue* (2:00)

IV. *A Lament: Larghetto* (3:00)

V. *Une Fête: Finale* (1:30)

This quintet is scored for flute, oboe, clarinet in "A," horn, and bassoon. Movements one, two, four, and five have programmatic titles. *In the Fields* is in 3/8 meter in a pastoral style. *A Joyous Moment* is marked *vivace* and is in 2/4 meter with rapid passagework. As the title indicates, *Minuet: Fugue* employs contrapuntal writing throughout. *A Lament* is marked *larghetto, molto sostenuto*, and is in B minor in 6/8 meter. *Une Fête* is marked *molto con brio* and is the most challenging of the movements because of the rapid triplet articulation required in all parts. No metronome markings are provided. The dedication is not found in the score currently available from Emerson Edition.

Nocturne op. 57, "Fairyland" for viola, clarinet in Bb and piano (1911)

Publication status: Blenheim Press (n.d.), distributed by Emerson Edition

Duration: 10:00

Recordings: *Twelve by the Moon-dial*. Riverdale Ensemble. Chestnut Hall Music, CHM080930, 2008.

⁴⁷ Kenneth L. Thompson, "Holbrooke: Some Catalogue Data," *Music & Letters* 26, no. 4 (October 1965): 303, <http://www.jstor.org/stable/732661> (accessed October 4, 2008).

This one-movement work contains several sections in which the tempo ranges from dotted quarter note = 54-69. Despite the slow tempo there are some difficult technical passages in each part, making ensemble difficult. Holbrooke included Edgar Allen Poe's poem "Fairyland," and placed brief excerpts throughout the score. Jane Ellsworth had this to say about the piece, ". . . the unusual style of the work (no other work for this instrumentation exists in this 'impressionistic' style) and its outstanding musical qualities make it an interesting and worthwhile piece."⁴⁸

Talliesin's Song op. 73, no. 1 song with clarinet obligato (publ. 1919)

Publication status: out of print, unavailable

Recordings: none commercially available

Eilean Shona op. 74 for clarinet and piano/string quartet (1920)

Publication status: Blenheim Press (n.d.), distributed by Emerson Edition

Duration: 4:00

Recordings: *English Clarinet Quintets*. Thea King, clarinet with the Britten String Quartet. Hyperion Records, CDH55105, 2003.

Holbrooke: String Quartets. Richard Hosford, clarinet with The Rasumovsky Quartet. Dutton Laboratories, CDLX 7124, 2002.

Twelve by the Moon-dial. Riverdale Ensemble. Chestnut Hall Music, CHM080930, 2008.

Commentary can be found above, in first reviewed work in Chamber Works: *Clarinet*

Quintet op. 27 for clarinet and string quartet (1911).

The Tea-Shop Girl op. 77, no. 4 song with clarinet obligato (1919)

Publication status: 1923 (out of print)⁴⁹

Duration: 1:00

⁴⁸ Ellsworth, 174-175.

⁴⁹ Obtained copy from International Clarinet Association Research Library but does not list a publisher.

Recordings: none commercially available

This is a humorous song with text by Ezra Pound dealing with the approach of middle age. Ominous sounding chords in the piano represent the encroachment of time. The work is of moderate difficulty with the clarinet part presenting no technical challenges.

Tame Cat op. 77, no. 5 song with clarinet obligato (1919)

Publication status: out of print, unavailable

Recordings: *Tame Cat and Other Songs by British Composers*. Sylvia Eaves, soprano; Thea King, clarinet; Courtney Kenny, piano. Cameo Classics, CC9020CD, 2006.

Serenade in D-flat op. 94 for flute, oboe, clarinet and bassoon (1939)

Publication status: Emerson Edition, Ampleforth, England, 2003

Duration: (15:00)

Recordings: none commercially available

Dedication: "To Gwydion with much pleasure"⁵⁰

I. *Moonlight on the Water* (5:00)

II. *Sad Memories* (4:00)

III. *Scherzo Caprice* (6:00)

This quartet is technically challenging for each performer. Instruments are often paired with one another in virtuosic passages making precision a must. The third movement is the most demanding in this respect.

Double Concerto op. 119 for clarinet, bassoon and piano (1940)

Publication status: Blenheim Press (n.d.), distributed by Emerson Edition
(piano reduction)

Duration: 15:00

Recordings: none commercially available

I. *Allegro maestoso* (3:30)

II. *Andante sostenuto* (6:30)

III. *Allegro con brio* (5:00)

⁵⁰ Josef Holbrooke, *Serenade in D-flat op. 94 for flute, oboe, clarinet and bassoon*, (Windmill Farm, Ampleforth, North Yorkshire, England: Emerson Edition, 2003).

This is a virtuosic composition with formidable parts for both solo instruments, and the fact that the parts are manuscript reproductions only adds to the difficulty. The first movement is in four sections. Two performance versions are provided by the composer. In the first version, the movement ends with a solo cadenza begun by the clarinet and completed by the bassoon and then segues directly into the second movement. The second version provides a shorter, simplified cadenza. The second movement is more lyrical than the first and typifies Holbrooke's elaborate ornamentation style. The third movement is given a march-like character by a recurring *marcato* motive consisting of a dotted eighth and sixteenth-note figure followed by two eighth-notes and a triplet. The work is characterized by much rapid sixteenth-note scale and arpeggio passagework in varied articulations.

Apollo Quintet op. 120 for four winds or four clarinets and piano (1907)
Publication status: Blenheim Press (n.d.), distributed by Emerson Edition
Duration: 5:00
Recordings: none commercially available

This quintet is available in two versions by the composer – clarinet or wind quartet, both with piano. The instrumentation for the clarinet quartet is the unusual combination of E-flat, B-flat, basset horn, and bass clarinet. The instrumentation for the wind quartet version is flute, oboe, B-flat clarinet, and bassoon. The parts are manuscript reproductions. The wind parts are not so virtuosic as some of his works but are still difficult. The piano looks to be extremely difficult and is also the hardest to read. The piece is in one movement with several sections

Nonet op. 129, "Irene" for winds and strings (n.d.)
Publication status: out of print, unavailable
Recordings: none commercially available

CHAPTER 5

CONCLUSION

Joseph Holbrooke was well known in the first quarter of the 20th century in England, and he was considered by many to be one of the most promising young British composers. He received many commissions, and his works were given numerous performances both at home and abroad. Tirelessly promoting his works and those of other young British composers, he seemed destined for greatness, but, sadly, it was not to be. His fall from favor was disconcertingly abrupt and thorough. The number of performances of his works began to dwindle, and his compositions fell out of print as he faded into obscurity.

Many reasons have been given for Holbrooke's decline. These range from compositional shortcomings to overly long works with unrealistically large instrumentation. Regardless of the reasons, the extent of the neglect is unjustified. In the last decade of the 20th century, his work began to be re-evaluated. Several of his works with clarinet are in print again and new recordings have been issued.

While most of the disagreement on Holbrooke's compositional ability centers around his large-scale works, the quality of his chamber works for clarinet have been praised even by detractors such as Peter J. Pirie. Plaintive melodies and striking harmonies combine with often evocative subjects to provide many worthwhile additions to the clarinet's repertoire. Ranging from simple character pieces to virtuosic exhibitions, Joseph Holbrooke's solo and chamber works for clarinet are truly deserving of further exposure.

CHAPTER 6

FURTHER RESEARCH

In order to bring more attention to Joseph Holbrooke's music for clarinet, several avenues should be pursued. At present, only three of the works have commercially available recordings: *Nocturne op. 55, no. 1 for clarinet and piano*; *Clarinet Quintet op. 27*; and "*Eilean Shona*" *op. 74 for clarinet and piano/string quartet* (recorded w/string quartet). Making recordings available of Holbrooke's clarinet works would be the single most effective way of promoting them. This writer intends to pursue funding for a recording project of these pieces.

Submitting articles for consideration for publication in journals such as *The Clarinet* and *The Clarinet & Saxophone* along with applying to present at conferences such as those held by the International Clarinet Association and the University of Oklahoma would also be very effective methods of advocating these works. Both of these actions would familiarize clarinetists at the college and professional level with these works and thereby encourage them to add the pieces to their own performing and teaching repertoire. The addition of these compositions to the standard repertoire of clarinetists is what must ultimately take place to ensure their future. Further exposure could be gained by seeking to add some of the technically more accessible pieces to pre-college repertoire lists such as the Texas-based University Interscholastic League's Prescribed Music List.

While these actions would do much to promote Holbrooke's music for clarinet, there is still a need for further investigation and editing/publication. This writer will continue to search for the missing pieces mentioned in Chapter 4 with the help of the composer's daughter-in-law, Jean Holbrooke. Through her correspondence, she has been a valuable source of information

and has graciously offered further assistance. Those missing pieces, if found, along with the *Andante and Presto* and *The Tea-Shop Girl*, could then be edited and published. Even some of the pieces that are commercially available now would benefit from revision. One of the biggest obstacles to performing some of Holbrooke's works is legibility. The pieces that are manuscript reproductions would discourage many from attempting them because they are so difficult to read. The piano score to the *Apollo Quintet op. 120 for four winds or four clarinets and piano* is one of the most forbidding examples.

Example 7. Measures 24-38.⁵¹

2.

mf sostenuto

pp

f Animato

⁵¹ Josef Holbrooke, *Apollo Quintet op. 120 for four winds or four clarinets and piano* (Blenheim Press, n.d.).

With the permission of Jean Holbrooke and Emerson Edition, I would assist in preparing a much more accessible version of the scores that are in manuscript.

I feel these actions: recording the works; publishing articles; presenting at conferences; encouraging performances at the pre-college, college, and professional level; and the publication/revision of missing or illegible pieces would significantly improve the visibility and acceptance of Joseph Holbrooke's solo and chamber works involving the clarinet.

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