HERBERT HOWELLS’ \textit{SIR PATRICK SPENS}: \\
A GUIDE TO PERFORMANCE CONSIDERATIONS \\
by \\
ALICIA W. WALKER \\
(Under the Direction of Allen Crowell) \\

ABSTRACT \\

\textit{Sir Patrick Spens}, a large-scale work for chorus, orchestra, and baritone solo, is an important example of the early music of English composer Herbert Howells (1892-1983). Although Howells’ works from the period 1915-1919 were much neglected through most of the twentieth century, the recent revival and subsequent recording of \textit{Sir Patrick Spens} indicate the renewed interest in his earliest significant compositions. Standing in contrast to the body of sacred music and organ works for which the composer is best known, \textit{Sir Patrick Spens} (1917) is a setting of a Scottish ballad. It is characterized by harmonies and orchestrations akin to those of Ralph Vaughan Williams, melodic gestures related to folksong, a text setting with very little repetition, and performing forces on a grander scale than Howells had previously attempted. Only in the closing measures of the work does Howells give indications of the sustained lines and thick choral textures that would become his sonic signature. \textit{Sir Patrick Spens} stands thus as a significant marker on Howells’ compositional journey. It is reflective of the initial influences on his music while yielding indications of the composer he would become. 

The general characteristics of the vocal music of Herbert Howells include, but are not limited to, a tonal/modal harmonic structure, associations with folksong, and an inextricable link to the text.
All of these are present in *Sir Patrick Spens* and will form the basis for analysis of the piece.

This analysis will in turn provide insight into the distinctive features of the work.

The goal of this document is to develop a guide to performance considerations from the point of view of the conductor.

INDEX WORDS: Herbert Howells, Choral-Orchestral Works, *Sir Patrick Spens*, performance considerations, early influences, modality
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May 2009
Dedicated to my husband, Robert

and to my sons, Aaron and Levi

Thank you for climbing Chosen Hill with me.

The journey would not have been complete without you.
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CHAPTER ONE
INTRODUCTION

*Sir Patrick Spens*, a large-scale work for chorus, orchestra, and baritone solo, is an important example of the early music of English composer Herbert Howells (1892-1983). Although Howells’ works written in the period from 1915-1919 were much neglected through most of the twentieth century, the recent revival and subsequent recording of *Sir Patrick Spens* indicate the renewed interest in his earliest significant compositions. Standing in contrast to the body of sacred music and organ works for which the composer is best known, *Sir Patrick Spens* (1917) is a setting of a Scottish ballad. It is characterized by harmonies and orchestrations akin to those of Ralph Vaughan Williams, melodic gestures related to folksong, a text setting with very little repetition, and performing forces on a grander scale than Howells had previously attempted. Only in the closing measures of the work does Howells give indications of the sustained lines and thick choral textures that would become his sonic signature. *Sir Patrick Spens* stands thus as a significant marker on Howells’ compositional journey. It is reflective of the initial influences on his music while yielding indications of the composer he would become.

The general characteristics of the vocal music of Herbert Howells include, but are not limited to, a tonal/modal harmonic structure, associations with folksong, and an inextricable link to the text. All of these are present in *Sir Patrick Spens* and will form

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the basis for analysis of the piece. This analysis will in turn provide insight into the distinctive features of the work. The goal of this document is to develop a guide to performance considerations from the point of view of the conductor.

Need for Study

Most of the in-depth research on the music of Herbert Howells has focused on his sacred choral music and organ repertoire. Interest in his early repertoire has increased in the decades since the composer’s death. *Sir Patrick Spens* is one of the few choral works from the period 1915-1919, when Howells was in his twenties, a point of transition for him and the culture in which he lived. As such, it deserves close examination, especially in light of Howells’ importance to choral music in later years. A study of this work will provide an added dimension to the knowledge of Howells’ development as a composer in general, and as a choral composer in particular.

Prior to the revival of *Sir Patrick Spens* in 2006, the work had been virtually ignored for over seventy years. Although it was written in 1917, it was not published until 1928. The circumstances of this time lapse will be discussed in chapter three. The full score manuscript was held by Stainer & Bell from 1928 until 1982, when the publisher released the copyright.² The lack of access to the manuscript certainly contributed to the absence of research and analysis of this particular work. In 1999 an article was written describing the piece’s origins and the difficulty Howells had in getting it published, and there are references to *Sir Patrick Spens* in both of his biographies. These references lend validity to the work’s significance in Howells’ career, yet they also prompt the need for further research. Musical and textual considerations have not yet been addressed, nor has the work been evaluated in the larger context of the composer’s

While *Sir Patrick Spens* has now been revived and recorded in England, it has yet to achieve recognition as a prominent illustration of Howells’ music from this period. Until more information is readily available, it is unlikely that *Sir Patrick Spens* will be known and performed. It is hoped that the analysis and research of performance considerations provided in this document may facilitate performances of the piece in addition to filling a void in the knowledge of Howells’ body of work.

This study, then, will seek not only to illuminate important performance considerations through insight into Howells’ compositional influences, but also to disseminate knowledge of this composition to potential performers.

**Delimitations**

To provide a contextual framework for this document, a brief biography of Herbert Howells is provided. Due to the focus of this study, particular attention is given to the early years and influences of Howells’ life. Three of these influences are addressed specifically as they relate not only to the composer’s life, but also to the composition *Sir Patrick Spens*. In the majority of writings about Howells, references to the major musical and cultural influences include: 1) Tudor modalism, 2) the West Counties of the Cotswolds, in particular Gloucestershire, and 3) the pathos of personal tragedy which Howells experienced in a number of ways. These influences hold sway in *Sir Patrick Spens* through different means and to varying degrees. It is my intention to examine these relationships in the context of Howells’ early life and to relate them to the study of performance considerations.

The study of performance considerations approaches the work from the point of view of the conductor. Theoretical analysis as to form, harmony, and melodic gesture is
informed by the preceding material related to Howells’ influences, in particular those of modality and folksong. The subsequent discussion deals first with aspects of interpretation which require the attention of the conductor. Like the theoretical analysis, this study is directed by the understanding of the cultural forces which shaped Howells. In this instance, the modal sonorities and associations with folksong are examined especially as they relate to interpretation and performance practice. The final focus of this section addresses the logistical concerns of performing *Sir Patrick Spens*. This discussion includes conducting considerations as well as issues related to performing forces, dialect, and programming.

**Organization**

Chapter One of this document consists of the prospectus, which includes the Need for Study, Delimitations, Organization, and Literature Review. Chapter Two consists of biographical information on Howells, the focus of which is the first part of his life, specifically 1892-1919. Pertinent details from the remainder of his life and career are provided to complete the perspective. Included in this chapter is an examination of three major influences on Howells’ life and music. The biographical context for these influences is described, providing the necessary evidence for their inclusion in the analysis of *Sir Patrick Spens*.

Howells described himself as having “this strange feeling that I belonged somehow to the Tudor period – not only musically but in every way.”³ In addition, he said, “Ralph Vaughan Williams even had a theory that I was the reincarnation of one of the lesser Tudor luminaries.”⁴ These famous references from Howells and Vaughan

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⁴ Ibid.
Williams have served as the springboard for various studies of the former’s use of polyphony and modality, but they have most often focused on the immense repertoire of sacred choral music, which marked the latter half of his life. While *Sir Patrick Spens* is not polyphonic in texture, nor sacred in text, its harmonic and melodic language is decidedly modal. Howells himself described the work as “related to folk song.”⁵ Indeed, the folksong idiom attracted Howells “more for its modal colouring than for its human associations.”⁶ In this study, Howells’ connection with modalism will be considered in light of its use in the beginning stages of his career. The focus will be on his exposure to it as a student at the Royal College of Music, and in his experiences with R. R. Terry at Westminster Cathedral.

The second area of influence under consideration is Howells’ deep rootedness in Gloucestershire. A great number of his compositions were inspired by the beauty of West counties, in particular the countryside between the Severn and the Wye rivers. Christopher Palmer, Howells’ first biographer, relates that “the West of England country scene became a vital shaping force; one feels that the colour and temper of all his finest creations have been quietly determined by it.”⁷ The connection to folksong is found again in this significant influence, this time as an aesthetic expression owing much to the culture of the region, whether topographical or literary. In order to address the literary foundations of this work, the ballad which is the text of *Sir Patrick Spens* will be examined; some of the different versions will be discussed, along with the historical foundations of its legend. *Sir Patrick Spens* is in some ways emblematic of Howells’ most powerful cultural influences; the incorporation of pentatonic melodies, the use of

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⁷ Ibid., 18.
modal harmonies, and even his deep affinity for text setting may be related to the part of England that shaped and guided him, and fired his imagination. These connections are drawn specifically in an effort to thoroughly inform a performance of *Sir Patrick Spens*.

The third area of influence treated in this study is that of personal tragedy. The great trauma most often related in discussions of Howells’ life is that of the death of his nine-year-old-son Michael in 1935, yet Howells was no stranger to the ravages of life. As the young composer was in the midst of his education at the Royal College of Music, he was diagnosed with Graves Disease and given six months to live. Simultaneously, World War I had broken out and the young men of his generation, including his friends and classmates, were leaving to serve their country, putting their careers on hold, and in many cases giving up their freedom or their lives. Howells was treated with radiation over the next few years, yet still managed to complete his studies at the RCM and compose. It was during this period from 1915 when he was diagnosed, to 1917 when he graduated from the RCM, that *Sir Patrick Spens* was written. While it is not precisely known what drew Howells to this particular text, the rather remarkable series of circumstances that led to the composition of *Sir Patrick Spens* is worthy of study. These circumstances are examined in conjunction with Howells’ own struggle with melancholia, his feelings about the war and his absence from it, and his efforts to overcome a sense of insecurity that plagued him especially in the first half of his life. These factors are addressed in order to reveal the context which saw the initial composition, eventual publication, and subsequent languishing of *Sir Patrick Spens*.

Chapter Three begins with a history of Howells’ *Sir Patrick Spens*. The details of composition and publication are related, including the difficulties which led to its
obscurity. This is followed by the events which led to its revival, new engraving, and premiere recording in 2006. First-hand accounts from several of the parties involved in this revival process are provided.

The chapter continues with an analysis of performance considerations from the point of view of the conductor. These considerations will be 1) analytical, 2) interpretive, and 3) logistical. The analytical portion considers the use of modality and pentatonicism in *Sir Patrick Spens*. Specific musical excerpts are examined in order to give insight into the harmonic structure and form of the work, particularly through Howells’ method of shifting pitch center and mode. The interpretive discourse addresses points in the score where the aesthetic of the music is drawn from folksong, and should therefore affect the tone color of the choir and the declamation of text. Further, this section uses specific examples to shape the conductor’s understanding of the work on a large scale.

The logistical analysis includes: an analysis of specific conducting considerations as called for by rhythmic peculiarities in the score, a discussion of the forces required for this work, programming concerns, and the use of dialect.

Chapter Four summarizes the concepts and premises of the document and places *Sir Patrick Spens* in the context of Howells’ long and illustrious career. The larger goal of this paper is to disseminate information, bringing this music to a broader audience of potential conductors and singers as well as providing them with a guide to performance considerations. This final chapter serves as a culmination of these concepts and considerations.
Methodology

The methodology for the development of this paper rests largely on historical and biographical research. The life and music of Herbert Howells as it is documented in books and articles will provide the largest portion of research material. The story of the revival and recording of *Sir Patrick Spens* is recent enough to be recounted in interviews with the parties involved. The author’s correspondence and interviews with these individuals will supply the background necessary to complete the history of the work to date. These individuals include: Paul Andrews, researcher and author of the annotated bibliography of Howells’ work; Andrew Millinger, Secretary of the Howells Society and member of the London Bach Choir; Paul Spicer, professor at the Royal College of Music in London and former student of Howells; and David Hill, conductor of the London Bach Choir.

Further research will involve writings associated with the three influences on Howells that have been chosen as focal points for this study. While none of them has been applied to *Sir Patrick Spens*, there has been research in these areas as applied to Howells in general, or in reference to other selected works. These writings will provide a foundational basis and specific examples are included as they are relevant to this study.

The performance considerations will be addressed through theoretical and stylistic analysis and score study. This information should prove useful to a prospective conductor in that it will supply a structural framework and a guide to stylistic concerns as well as information on logistical and conducting considerations.
Literature Review

A series of circumstances contributed to the obscurity of Sir Patrick Spens, yet references have been made throughout the discourse of Howells’ life and career that prompt a need for further study. The books and articles that provide specific information include Howells’ biographies, *Herbert Howells: A Celebration*, by the late Christopher Palmer, and *Herbert Howells*, by Paul Spicer. Both books contain brief references to *Sir Patrick Spens*, and the latter includes Howells’ own words about the work, which were documented in interviews or writings. Articles related to historical research have been written by Paul Andrews, one of which deals specifically with the story of *Sir Patrick Spens* and its failure to become a published work. Andrews also explores the factors which may have drawn Howells to this particular text. In an earlier article, Andrews documents the relationship between Howells and the Carnegie United Kingdom Trust, which figured quite prominently in the development of Howells’ career and in the particulars of publication of *Sir Patrick Spens*, or the lack thereof.

Beyond these sources which pertain to *Sir Patrick Spens*, the related literature focuses on analytical writings about Howells’ work in general, reviews of his music, and his correspondence, diaries, and interviews where they are relevant. The analytical writings include other dissertations and articles, as well as writings which cite the influence of the Tudor period, the culture and topography of Gloucestershire, and the difficulties confronting Howells from the period of 1915-1919. In addition, research which is pertinent on a more peripheral level has been reviewed. This included literature on the West Counties of England and on the Three Choirs Festival, and books and articles related to “place” as a source of meaning for composers.
Through the consideration of Herbert Howells as a product of his time and culture, as well as a uniquely gifted composer of the period, it is my goal to provide an insightful analysis of this little-known work from his early career. With the analysis and guide to performance considerations, it is hoped that Sir Patrick Spens will gain broader recognition among Howells’ music, and thereby be heard more frequently in the future.
CHAPTER TWO

BIOGRAPHY AND MAJOR INFLUENCES OF HOWELLS’ EARLY LIFE

Springing from the most unlikely of circumstances, Herbert Norman Howells was nonetheless thought by his teachers to be the bright hope of English music. His talent was recognized by the musically influential figures of the day; Charles Villiers Stanford, Hubert Parry, Harold Brewer, and others anticipated a stellar career from the young Howells. His early music showed a great deal of potential. He was both dedicated and gifted, a promising combination. The projection of his greatness, however, was never completely realized, although he did become a beloved national figure in English music. Circumstances and personal tragedy seemed to combine to inhibit Howells’ development and achievement. Howells himself projected a curious blend of self-confidence and insecurity that alternately propelled him forward and stymied his opportunities. It was as though, especially in his early career, he was never quite able to shake off the stigma of his humble beginnings.

Herbert Howells was born in 1892 in Lydney, in Gloucestershire. His father Oliver was what might be termed a handyman, maintaining a shop out of which he took jobs painting or decorating, building, and plumbing. While he was described by Herbert as a wonderful father, concerned with the education and nurture of his children, he was not successful in business. He went bankrupt during Howells’ early youth, and it was devastating for the family both economically and socially.8

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Oliver did cultivate music, art, and literature in his children. He took Herbert to hear the organs and choirs of the region, and Oliver himself played the organ at the Baptist church which the family attended in Lydney. The singing there was reportedly quite dreadful, and Herbert made a move to the Anglican Church as soon as it was permissible. He had begun organ lessons and distinguished himself musically at both church and school. This eventually drew the attention of Lord Bledisloe, the local squire. The generosity of this individual had untold dividends; it led to Howells’ apprenticeship with Herbert Brewer, the organist of Gloucester Cathedral. This was a significant stepping stone in Howells’ path toward a musical career.

Howells’ young life was characterized by contrasting circumstances and events. After his father’s bankruptcy, Herbert, the youngest of seven and small for his age, was regularly sent to the butcher at the end of the day to ask for leftover scraps for the family. In addition to this degrading activity, if Herbert was invited to a social gathering, he was sent to “the kitchen or into the butler’s pantry” when supper was served. Howells also told the story of the kindness of Lord Bledisloe, who, hearing that Herbert had been taken to the kitchen in his home, promptly took all the children to the kitchen to join him. It was Lord Bledisloe’s family who paid for Herbert’s organ lessons with Brewer at Gloucester Cathedral, and later convinced the organist to take him on as an Articled Pupil. Although he benefited from these gestures, the social inferiority which Howells perceived in himself translated into a lack of self-confidence in the face of adversity in later years.

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9 Ibid., 15-16.
10 Ibid., 30.
11 Ibid.
In contrast, he described a pivotal moment in his life at the Three Choirs Festival in Gloucester in 1910, when he was seventeen years old. Howells was seated in the cathedral, an empty seat beside him. He listened with great attentiveness to a new work being performed, and was quite enraptured with the music. Afterward, the conductor, who was also the composer, came and sat next to Herbert. Howells then became aware that he was sitting next to Ralph Vaughan Williams, whose *Fantasia on a Theme of Thomas Tallis* had just swept him away with its beauty. Vaughan Williams signed Herbert’s program at his request. Afterward, the young man was thrilled and unable to sleep; he and his friend Ivor Gurney walked all night through the streets of Gloucester.

Reflected in these two accounts from Howells’ youth are the foundations for both his successes and his disappointments. His passion for music and his ability to create sounds that seemed to grow from the very landscape he walked stood in marked contrast to his diffidence and unwillingness to allow his music to be subjected to harsh criticism. On more than one occasion in his career, Howells withdrew or even destroyed manuscripts which received poor reviews at first performance. It is as though he walked a difficult line between sensibility to act on his creative impulse, and sensitivity which allowed the judgment of others to inhibit that action.

Howells’ apprenticeship with Harold Brewer at Gloucester Cathedral was not a particularly pleasant one, but it did open the door for him to enroll in the Royal College of Music in London. His time at the RCM was successful on every level. He was an outstanding student, distinguishing himself among his peers and with his professors, and winning prizes in competitions both musical and literary. He developed close friendships with his classmates, many of which endured throughout their lives. During his years in

12 Ibid., 37.
London, Howells was able to acquire some of the “town polish” that escaped him as a boy from the country, although this was a more difficult path for him to tread successfully.\textsuperscript{13}

Howells enrolled at the RCM in 1912 and almost immediately was sent by Stanford, his composition professor, to hear the choir of R. R. Terry at Westminster Cathedral. Terry was establishing what would become a revival of Tudor anthem literature with his choir at the cathedral, and Howells quickly absorbed the sound of Tudor polyphony. His \textit{Mass in the Dorian Mode} soon followed and was his first publicly performed work. These experiences would benefit him on multiple levels in the coming years. Howells was indeed a favorite among his professors, who were willing to pass to him the torch of greatness. Their confidence would also serve him in the future as his life took unexpected turns.

By 1915 World War I had broken out, and many of Howells’ friends and colleagues were enlisting and being sent to fight. For Howells, this was not to be the case. In that year, at age 23, he was diagnosed with Graves Disease, a thyroid disorder which was considered terminal. He was told he would live for perhaps six months. His professors and others took an active interest in Howells’ health, recommending him to doctors and in some cases funding his treatment. In fact, Howells received what was then a completely experimental radium treatment which eventually proved successful in eradicating the disease. During the next two years, Herbert was able to continue with his studies, although he did at times succumb to the weakness of his illness, which led to periods of convalescence at his mother’s home in Lydney.\textsuperscript{14}

\textsuperscript{13} Ibid., 33.
\textsuperscript{14} Spicer, 44.
During these years the United Kingdom Carnegie Trust was funding music prizes which would prove to be influential in Howells’ life and career.\textsuperscript{15} The two facets of the funding were aimed toward 1) the transcription, editing, and publication of Tudor anthem literature and 2) composition of new works.\textsuperscript{16} It was typical for known composers to submit works for consideration for the composition prize, and Charles Stanford asked Howells to post his submission, the opera \textit{The Travelling Companion}, for that year’s competition. In a reciprocal action, Stanford asked Howells for his \textit{Piano Quartet in A minor}, Op. 21, which the professor would post on his student’s behalf. On April 7, 1917, Howells received word that he had won a publication prize. As he put it:

“…mine was the only unknown name to appear in the first list of works to be published. There I was rubbing shoulders with names that were household words – Stanford himself, VW, Bridge, Holst, Rutland Boughton and so on – and it was largely due to this happy stroke of fortune that I became known.”\textsuperscript{17}

Winning the prize for publication was a milestone in this period of Howells’ life, and it facilitated a series of events that would shape his role in the landscape of English music. In February of 1917 he had received an appointment as sub-organist for Salisbury Cathedral. This prestigious appointment was to have been the first step in a career sequence which, in those days, would open the appropriate doors for his career as a composer. Within three months, however, he had to step down because of his illness, and return to his mother’s home to recuperate. In the following months Howells was able to do very little; he was ill, incapacitated, and without income, yet a series of events made

\textsuperscript{15} Paul Andrews (author of the annotated bibliography of Howells works), in discussion with the author, July 18, 2008.
\textsuperscript{17} Spicer, \textit{Herbert Howells}, 48.
this one of the most prolific periods of composition in his life. His output was largely chamber music and songs, as well as some symphonic works.

At this critical point for Howells, the relationships with R. R. Terry and the Carnegie Trust proved providential. In an unsolicited letter to the Carnegie Trust, Dr. Henry Hadow, an adjudicator for the Trust’s music committee, cited Howells’ potential as a composer as the central factor in a request for the Trust to give the young composer a stipend while he recovered from his illness.

“…in all my experience I do not think I have ever come across any young English musician of such remarkable promise…Could the Carnegie Trust make a special grant, say, for a short term of years, in order to tide him over the difficult time until he is sufficiently recovered to take up his career?...I would urge that Howells’s life is a matter of national importance. I am not asking for his sake so much as for the sake of future British Art, to which, if I am not wholly mistaken, he is better able to contribute than any man of his age now living.”  

This letter reveals the perception of Howells among the establishment of English music, even as the response of the Trust demonstrates the strength of their confidence in him based on his Piano Quartet. Rather than a grant, as Hadow had actually requested, Howells was assigned the task of working with R. R. Terry at Westminster Cathedral, this time under the auspices of the Trust, for a salary of £150 annually. An income of this level ensured that Howells was able to live and work while he received treatment for his illness, and very likely it facilitated the significant amount of compositions that resulted from this time. Further, it extended his collaboration with Terry and his exposure to a genre of music for which he had a great affinity.

Although Howells was under doctors’ orders to rest, he seemed incapable of doing so. He composed almost feverishly, resulting in the Fantasy String Quartet in

18 Palmer, HH: A Celebration, 23.
19 Ibid.
1917 which won the Cobbett Phantasy Competition that year, as well as his first *Sonata for violin and piano*, a second *Violin Sonata*, *Puck’s Minuet* (an orchestral miniature), and *Elegy* (viola solo, string quartet, and string orchestra). *Sir Patrick Spens*, the focus of this paper, also dates from 1917. The following years, 1918-19, were likewise filled with a variety of chamber and orchestral works, as well as works for organ, and the first choral pieces which would become standards of the repertoire. Appendix B provides a complete list of Howells’ works from this period, indicating the wealth of music resulting from his “convalescence.”

Howells’ correspondence from this time displays a rather puzzling omission of his illness and treatment. His letters to Dorothy Dawe, his fiancée, and other friends and colleagues speak only optimistically of his appointment at Salisbury, and then of the compositions which filled the months following his resignation.\(^{20}\) The engagement period with Dorothy was quite lengthy (they did not marry until 1920); he attributes it to his uncertain financial circumstances, never mentioning his serious illness and the treatment he was receiving. He did not keep a regular diary until 1919, and it reads somewhat self-consciously, as if he expected it to be read by others.\(^ {21}\) It was in April of 1920 that Howells received a teaching appointment at the Royal College of Music. He returned to that place which had been a “cosy family”\(^ {22}\) for him as a student, and to some extent he settled into the comfort of that place for the rest of his career. From that point on he continued his pattern of working very hard; in addition to his teaching schedule, he was a frequent examiner in colleges and an adjudicator for England’s wealth of music festivals and competitions.

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\(^{20}\) Herbert Howells Personal Correspondence, 1915-1919, Archive Materials, Royal College of Music.

\(^{21}\) Spicer, *Herbert Howells*, 69.

\(^{22}\) Ibid., 32.
The most pivotal event in Howells’ adult life occurred when his nine-year-old son, Michael, died suddenly of meningitis in 1935. Howells was overcome with grief and for a period of time could not compose. Even when he eventually emerged from his “frozen” state the music he wrote for the rest of his life bore the impact of the tragedy. It was perhaps this segment of time that ultimately defined Howells as an English composer.

Despite his devastated state, in other areas of his life Howells never ceased working in some capacity. He continued to teach and adjudicate, and also accepted a position as Director of Music for the St. Paul’s Girls’ School. Although he was composing, his identity became more that of a professor than that of a composer, while in the meantime the early interest in his music waned to a degree.

Howells served as a substitute organist at St. John’s College, Cambridge, during World War II. This appointment led to a re-entry into the realm of church music, beginning with his Evening Canticles for King’s College. The association with the music of the church would become the dominant factor in his compositional career from that time forward, leaving the tremendous initial output of chamber and orchestral works to be re-discovered by later generations.

Three Major Influences

Tudor Modalism

The account of Howells’ early days at the RCM documents his exposure to the music of the Tudor period through the influence of R. R. Terry at Westminster Cathedral. The fact that he immediately composed his own Mass in the Dorian Mode reflects his

23 Ibid., 100.
24 Palmer, HH: A Celebration, 400.
fascination with the music of this period. Howells was a technical master of contrapuntal writing; his ear was phenomenal and he could compose a fugue in a crowded lobby full of people and noise.\textsuperscript{25} It was partly this that drew the accolades of his professors at the RCM. In addition, Howells found a connection with the music of the Tudor period that reached beyond technical mastery.

His experience with Vaughan Williams’ \textit{Fantasia on a Theme of Thomas Tallis} was more than the beginning of a friendship with a great English composer. In Howells’ own words:

“How I heard this wonderful work, I was thrilled, I didn’t understand it, but I was moved deeply. I think if I had to isolate from the rest any one impression of a purely musical sort, it would be the hearing of that work not knowing at all what I was going to hear but knowing what I had heard I should never forget.”\textsuperscript{26}

Howells further discussed the affinity both he and Vaughan Williams shared for music from the Tudor period:

“Ralph and I felt and reacted to things musically in a very similar way. And if some of our works are alike in any respect, it’s not, I think, merely a question of influence but also intuitive affinity. We both came from the same part of the world and loved it dearly; we were both attracted by Tudor music, plainsong and the modes – my interest in folk music was perhaps more for its modal colouring than for its human associations. We felt we needed to write in these modes and in the pentatonic scale; there was no question of our using them simply because they were novel.”\textsuperscript{27}

Ralph Vaughan Williams saw in Howells a “reincarnation of one of the lesser Tudor luminaries.”\textsuperscript{28} There is no doubt that Howells perceived Vaughan Williams’ application of Tudor music and modal harmonies as formational. Paul Spicer makes the point that the RCM’s role was equally formational. The College had been founded in

\textsuperscript{25} Spicer, \textit{Herbert Howells}, 61.  
\textsuperscript{26} Ibid., 22.  
\textsuperscript{27} Palmer, \textit{HH: A Study}, 11.  
\textsuperscript{28} Ibid.
1883 in reaction to the “inadequacies of the Royal Academy of Music.” 29 Spicer, citing Frank Howes, states that the English musical renaissance that was to take place in the twentieth century found its roots in the educators Hubert Parry, Charles Stanford, and Alexander Mackenzie. These men created “the environment in which it [English music] could flourish on its own terms and not as a pale imitation of another tradition. This was done through training a new generation of composers in such a way as to lead them into developing a musical language and style which became unmistakably English.”30 Spicer further maintains that it was English folk-song and Tudor polyphony which “broke the hold of nineteenth-century German and Italian music over the entire establishment.”31 Howells’ life and career began at a time when the draw toward modalism as found in Tudor literature was probably irresistible. Because of his formative musical experiences at Gloucester’s Three Choirs Festival and a few years later at the RCM and Westminster Cathedral, his modal harmonic vocabulary may be seen as a natural outgrowth of the influential role played by these institutions and the persons involved. At the same time, an analysis of Howells’ influences must consider his own creative impulse and personal psyche.

The West Counties – Gloucestershire

Scarcely any reference to Herbert Howells’ life and music omits the formative role of his home in Gloucestershire. The rather poignant image of a young college student standing on the platform at London’s Paddington station just to watch the trains

29 Spicer, *Herbert Howells*, 23. Parry and Stanford taught at the RCM, while Mackenzie, principal at the Royal Academy from 1888, eventually “began to emulate the ideals” of the RCM, according to Spicer.
30 Ibid.
31 Ibid.
depart for Gloucester is but one indication of the love he had for this part of England.\textsuperscript{32} 

Over the years of his long life, Howells recounted in interviews and articles the significance of the Gloucester landscape and its environs. Once such reference tells of the importance of the “hill at Chosen:”

I used to sit with Ivor Gurney on a hill half way between Gloucester and Cheltenham and from there, on a clear April day (shall we say), when the visibility was second to none, you could see the whole outline of the Malvern hills thirty miles north of that hill. Gurney said to me one day ‘look at that outline’, he meant the outline of the Malverns, he said, ‘unless that influences you for the whole of your life in tune-making, it is failing in one of its chief essentials’. And of course outlines of hills, and things, are tremendously important especially if you are born in Gloucestershire, God bless it.”\textsuperscript{33}

Ivor Gurney, who was Howells’ compatriot as an organ student at Gloucester Cathedral, was also his friend and companion in things both musical and literary. Gurney was a poet as well as a composer, and he drew Howells more deeply into the literary world, building on the foundation laid by Herbert’s father. Their friendship continued through their years at the RCM; Gurney enrolled a year before Howells, and strongly encouraged his friend to join him. Later correspondence between the two men reveals some strain, especially during the war years, when Gurney was off literally in the trenches and Howells, despite a devastating illness, was experiencing some successes. Regardless of what ensued between them in later years, Gurney’s friendship and guidance in the period before Howells went to London helped to codify the latter’s connection to the land and culture. The two spent hours, and by some accounts even days, walking the countryside and talking of music and literature. The \textit{Piano Quartet}

\textsuperscript{32} Ibid., 33. 
\textsuperscript{33} Ibid., 20.
which won a Carnegie Trust prize is dedicated to “The Hill at Chosen, and Ivor Gurney who knows it.”  

The Cheltenham village, also known as Chosen, eventually had another attraction for Howells in that Dorothy Dawe, the vicar’s daughter, also lived there. Howells’ diary from 1919 alludes to his journeys to see her and the musical associations he drew from what he saw on the way.

31 January, 1919:
Parton Lane is paved with musical thoughts and cows and sheep walk on them and vainly imagine that they walk on stones and mud. This morning I saw string-quartet tunes along the way...In Gloucester I bought lemons, eggs, flowers, and books for a sick girl, and came back along Tune Lane.

As Spicer states, Parton Lane is actually Pirton Lane, which is the road at the bottom of Chosen Hill.

3 February:
I extemporized mad absurdities for D...she repaid me with laughter. And I pottered about the Tune Lane, in the dark and the damp, with trees like ghosts, and cows and horses like dimly-seen terrible monsters. Dear things!

The influence of the Gloucester countryside on a composer’s music is not easily quantified. In the case of Howells, it is more useful to describe the effect it had on his creative impulse, and the way he experienced the world. Interviews with Paul Spicer, Andrew Millinger, and Paul Andrews about this subject all referred to the context of the time and place. Rural Gloucestershire at the beginning of the twentieth century was an isolated place. People walked everywhere, resulting in a slower pace that called for appreciation and understanding of one’s surroundings. The countryside is still one of

36 Ibid., 71.
rolling hills and valleys with fields of green and gold. Even one hundred years later the busy pace of London life is far removed. For Howells personally, the time period in which he lived also encouraged tremendous ownership of his world. Spicer describes this as “a ‘nationalism’ of locality” which fostered an appreciation for the physical contours of the land. Howells’ childhood in Lydney, an ugly, industrial town by numerous accounts, seems to have awoken in the boy a longing for beauty which he found fulfilled in the surroundings of Gloucester. Marion Scott, a devotee and supporter of Howells’ music, described his connection with the land in this way:

...he came naturally into an inheritance of beauty. Hill, sky, cloud, river – all these things are Gloucestershire, and behind them one glimpses the succession of centuries flowing down from the mists of time in an almost unruffled and ever-widening intellectual tide.37

The music critic Edwin Evans, writing in 1920 for the *Musical Times*, focused on the way Howells’ music reflected the countryside from which it came:

The main characteristics are therefore a lyrical realization of the beauties that unfold themselves to the eye of the tone-poet amid rural surroundings, a sense of openairishness combined with a feeling for distance that engenders a strain of mysticism, alternating with a healthy cheeriness which has a different ring from the gaiety of cities.38

Paul Spicer takes Howells’ connection to the land beyond the musical sense to the philosophical. He acknowledges that it “would seem likely that an inborn talent for musical expression found its inspiration and initial outlet...from that very local countryside.”39 He goes on to discuss English pastoralism as it might be applied to

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Howells. Rather than the “chocolate-box prettiness, the portrayal of nymphs and shepherds in an idyllic landscape dancing to the ubiquitous 6/8 metre”40 Spicer maintains:

For the serious English composer, such as Howells, the countryside provided a completely different kind of inspiration. There was much more of the sense of what the psalmist sang when he wrote, “I will lift up mine eyes unto the hills, from whence cometh my help” (Psalm 121), than any mere reflection of beauty in photographic terms. It is a spiritual longing and fulfillment through communion and sympathy with nature coupled with a preoccupation with innocence, and therefore the loss of innocence, which are all part and parcel of the issue of nature as opposed to the corrupting influence of towns.41

Paul Spicer’s description of Howells in this cultural context reveals the basis for the composer’s inclusion with the English Romantics. Howells and other composers of his generation (Vaughan Williams, Elgar, Holst, and others) culminate a period of English history characterized by deep connection to the land as exemplified by William Wordsworth.

Another facet of the West Counties culture which formed Howells is found in the literary realm. Beginning with the guidance of his father, Herbert developed a love for poetry and literature that translated into his own ability to speak and write well; his interviews with the BBC in later years demonstrate his eloquence. As a young man in Gloucester, his friend Ivor Gurney continued to broaden his exposure to fine literature. Gurney, later called the Poet of the Severn, was a mentor to Herbert in this arena. Howells cultivated relationships with poets as he matured. The most famous of these was his friendship with Walter de la Mare. The two men shared an affinity for dramatic complexity and vivid word imagery, and Howells felt that his settings of de la Mare’s

40 Ibid., 42.
41 Ibid.
poetry were among his finest work. While he was more frequently drawn to descriptive rather than narrative poetry, there are examples of the latter in his repertoire. *Sir Patrick Spens* is the first prominent example, and *A Kent Yeoman’s Wooing Song* (1933) is another. Although *Sir Patrick Spens* stands apart from many of Howells’ works in terms of both musical style and treatment of text, it nonetheless exhibits not only the influence of folksong, but also uses the text as its guiding structural force. In a letter to his brother in 1917, Howells was discussing the influence of the view from Chosen Hill on his music. From there he progressed to its connection to folksong and folklore as an art form:

Last Saturday morning I walked to the top of it [Chosen Hill], stood against that fine Old Church, and looked out across the country round the Malverns, and at the Malverns themselves. Five minutes of that view was enough to set the musical part of my brain going…So it is that Chosen affects me…I remember being similarly impressed by a walk with Father to Viney Hill. My poor little brain tried to fashion sounds when I got home that day; but, of course, it lacked the power to do so.

I often wonder what might be the results if children, who are artistically moved by things and events, had the technique which would allow of their expressing their conceptions of things. It could add a new chapter to art, I believe; since what they did would be almost totally lacking in sophistication. And of Art minus sophistication we (who begin saying and doing things only when we have already become sophisticated) know next to nothing. Folk-songs and Folk-Lore come nearest to the absolutely simple art product.43

These words demonstrate that, for Howells, the beauty and simplicity of the countryside he loved were inextricably linked to song and to literature; his emphasis on expressive text setting, then, is quite understandable. To connect this textual emphasis as it is found in *Sir Patrick Spens* with its literary foundation, the final section of this chapter will discuss the history of the ballad which is the basis of the work.

42 Ibid., 68.
Through Howells’ own writings and further analysis over the last ninety years, the influential foundation of Gloucestershire on the composer’s creative impulse as well as his music can be seen. Another significant foundation was the effect on his psyche of trauma and tragedy.

The Pathos of Tragedy

Many of the writings about Herbert Howells’ life focus on the effect of Michael’s death in 1935. It was without a doubt a turning point in Howells’ career and understandably left its mark on everything he wrote from that time forward. An examination of his early life and the circumstances in which he found himself as a young adult reveal that the sensitivity which he exhibited in the aftermath of the loss of his son had its roots in earlier times.

The pain of social ostracism due to financial distress is not always easily understood in modern times. For rural England at the turn of the twentieth century, the social consequences would have been as dire as the economic impact. For an emotionally vulnerable youngster such as Herbert, the humiliation was quite significant. His accounts of the childhood events that occurred in those days are quite vivid, and his diaries in later years are full of references to important persons and his associations with them.44 Perhaps more importantly, his work ethic throughout his life seemed to display a need for financial security. Some have argued that his composition career would have reached the potential he displayed early on had he been willing to resign his position at the RCM and devote more time to composing. While this is only speculation, it does provoke the thought that it could have been Howells’ need for security and acceptance even more than Michael’s death which inhibited the realization of his professors’ dreams.

44 Spicer, Herbert Howells, 69.
for him. Further evidence of this lies in his withdrawal or extensive revision of scores that were criticized unduly. Around 1918, Howells had opportunity to meet with the poet A.E. Housman, for whom the composer had tremendous respect. Howells brought with him settings of Housman’s poetry, but after Housman spent their dinner criticizing composers who set his work, Howells departed without sharing his songs, and then destroyed them.  

During the years from 1916-1919, when Howells was producing such a wealth of music, he was also confronted with the deaths of people who were of great significance to him. The *Elegy* mentioned earlier was written to commemorate the death of Frances Purcell Warren, a close friend and fellow student at the RCM. Warren was one of a close circle of friends for whom Howells wrote a set of pieces informally known as *The B’s*. Each member of the group had a nickname beginning with B; Frances’ was Bunny. Warren was killed at the Battle of Mons in 1917. The following year, Sir Hubert Parry died in October, and then, on September 21, 1919, Herbert’s father Oliver passed away. The years following bankruptcy had been especially difficult for the elder Howells, and he withdrew from his family, feeling he had disgraced them. Howells’ diary marks the day he had a seizure and, without regaining consciousness, died later that afternoon.

Nature was in its loveliest mood today, and it seemed to me a glorious day on which to pass out of this life…It was such a Sunday afternoon as he always loved in his hale and hearty days, for a walk with one or more of us boys of his…Those walks, and his delightful companionship, he [Oliver] charming entertainment for us at flagging moments, and all the greater innumerable kindnesses came back in crowded memories to us today, and we felt more acutely than ever what we had lost in him.  

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46 Ibid., 63-64.
At a time when Herbert Howells’ professional career would, in typical circumstances, have been beginning its ascent into lofty heights, he was confronting issues of life and death as few people in their early twenties ever have to do. Not only were there childhood insecurities that adults must confront and resolve, the death of his father and his father-figure (Parry), and the loss of his friends to death and the threat of injury, but he also was facing his own finitude, at least at some level. While there are few references to Howells’ illness in his own correspondence, one cannot help but wonder at the feverish level of composition during this time. Certainly the need for industry would have been at work, as it always was in Howells’ life, but it is also reasonable to assume that the uncertainty of what was ahead drove him to accomplish as much as possible.

Added into this emotional upheaval was Howells’ reaction to being present in England when his friends and contemporaries were at war. In 1918, a Lydney photographer had a picture of Howells in his shop window. Howells wrote him:

“My dear Mr. Coe, I’m sure you won’t mind my asking you to take my photo and the printed notice out of your window now. They have had an undeservedly good innings there now: and with news as it is, and military thought and exigency so uppermost, there is perhaps reason why so absolutely a useless personage as myself should not be in any way too prominent in the thoughts of an oft-times thoughtless public!” 47

Although Howells had the best of reasons to not be involved in the war, this would not have diminished his feelings of guilt as he lived through the death and tragedy around him.

In addition to the events which marked Howells’ life in his early twenties was the overall sense of sadness and pathos which, by his own admission, was “a quality which

47 Ibid., 62.
has moved me more than any other in music – even since boyhood.”\textsuperscript{48} The tragic element in music was what drew Howells the most. He cited works by Vaughan Williams (\textit{Fantasia on a Theme by Thomas Tallis}), Delius (\textit{Sea Drift}), and Brahms’ \textit{Third Symphony} (the coda of the last movement) as particular examples. Thus, through Howells’ own words and a clear examination of the events of his early life and adulthood, it is clear that Howells’ emotional sensitivity to the pathos of tragedy and its accompanying grief was part of his psyche even before the loss of his son. In light of the dominant character of this pathos in the writing of his later career, it is possible that Michael’s death was the catalyst for a soundscape which found its background in the early events of Howells’ life. These same events were the context in which \textit{Sir Patrick Spens} was composed. While the majority of its musical material does not reflect the “elegiac” quality later associated with Howells, the circumstances of Howells’ life impacted the creation, publication, and even the obscurity of the work.

\textbf{Literary Foundations of \textit{Sir Patrick Spens}}

The text source for Herbert Howells’ \textit{Sir Patrick Spens} is a Scottish ballad which exists in a variety of forms.\textsuperscript{49} Rather than the accounting of a specific historical event, it is most likely a compilation of different stories, some of which actually occurred. In the version set by Howells, the king of Scotland seeks from among his lords a man skilled enough to captain his new ship. Sir Patrick is put forth as the best sailor, and is commissioned to sail to Norway and retrieve the king’s daughter. Despite the fact that it

\textsuperscript{48} Ibid., 29.

\textsuperscript{49} William H. Matchett, “The Integrity of ‘Sir Patrick Spence’,” \textit{Modern Philology} 68, no. 1 (August 1970): 25. Matchett surmises that the ballad was written sometime in the sixteenth or seventeenth century, when it was recorded from an oral tradition. The earliest published version appears to date from 1765. There are at least eighteen different versions of the poem which were collected by F.J. Child, but it is an eleven stanza version that is most commonly found in anthologies. The longest version has twenty-six stanzas, and this is the one which is set by Howells.
is a dangerous time of year to sail, Sir Patrick accepts his orders, and arrives safely. Soon
afterwards, the lords of Norway accuse the Scottish men of spending their king’s gold,
and, greatly offended, Sir Patrick departs immediately for Scotland. On the return
journey, a great storm arises, and the ship is lost. There are no survivors, and the women
of Scotland are left to mourn the loss of their true loves.

Howells did not cite the textual source of *Sir Patrick Spens*, but the version he set
is found in F.J. Child’s *The English and Scottish Popular Ballads*, first published in
1885. This anthology by Child (1882-1898) includes eighteen versions of the poem;
the one used by Howells is twenty-six stanzas long. The text as it appears in Howells’
setting is found in Appendix A.

One possible historical foundation for the ballad may be seen in an account from
1281. Margaret, the daughter of King Alexander III of Scotland, was married to the King
of Norway. She was delivered with great consequence by the knights and nobles of
Scotland. On the journey home, the ship sank, and many lives were lost. There is no
record of an historical figure named Sir Patrick Spens (or the other variation of the
surname, Spence) in association with this story, nor in any other event of this kind. It is
therefore generally assumed that this ballad is fictional.

The significant differences in the versions of the ballad are first in the length of
the poem itself. Of the eighteen versions collected by F.J. Child, the shortest has one
stanza and the longest has twenty-six. Other differences are found in the use of language,
particularly the spelling of Sir Patrick’s name (some versions refer to him has Young
Patrick, or Earl Patrick, or use the surname Spence or Spens) the descriptions of the

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26-27.
51 Matchett, 27.
king’s letter (*braid* or *broad*), the lords’ shoes (*cork-heild, coal-black, cork-heeled*), and details about those who mourned the lost crew (*Young P’s lady, ladies...maidens, fans, gude kems*).\(^{52}\) If Child’s anthology was indeed the source from which Howells chose his text, it is of note that he preferred the longest, most detailed version of the story. Perhaps he was searching for a textual canvas on which to place his first large scale choral-orchestral work. If in addition he was seeking a particularly Scottish ballad, this one was a logical choice.

The account of Herbert Howells’ early life reveals a young man with tremendous personal insecurities who, because of his burgeoning talent and tremendous work ethic, was given opportunities to grow far beyond his humble beginnings. Taking with him the finest qualities of music and culture which he found in those early days, but formed still by the challenges and traumas of that time, he became a composer with a distinctive voice. This voice was marked by both great beauty and great pain, making his music a manifestation of the major influences of his formative years.

\(^{52}\) Ibid., 31.
CHAPTER THREE

A GUIDE TO PERFORMANCE CONSIDERATIONS

Introduction

For the conductor, the preparation of a major work includes the following significant areas of consideration: the contextual, the analytical, the interpretive, and the logistical. This chapter, which explores the performance considerations of Sir Patrick Spens, is organized with these factors as the structure. In order to establish context, the first section will recount the history of the work both initial and recent. The next section will explore both the analytical and interpretive elements. The text of the work is the driving force in terms of form, melody, harmony, and rhythm. The interpretive elements of dynamics, tempo, pacing of transitions, balance, declamation, and tone color are likewise guided by the text. The analytical and interpretive elements, then, are closely intertwined, requiring that they be discussed in conjunction with each other. The final portion of the chapter will explore the logistical concerns of this particular work. Conducting considerations, performing forces, programming possibilities, and the use of dialect will form the basis for this discussion.

A History of Howells’ Sir Patrick Spens

Herbert Howells never indicated what drew him to set this Scottish ballad, but several factors were very likely prominent in the process. Earlier musical settings include Robert Lucas Pearsall’s so-called ‘ballad-dialogue’ (ca. 1838) which is for a cappella
double choir, and Herbert Brewer’s setting from 1910. Howells was Brewer’s Articleled Pupil, and since the work was premiered at the Three Choirs Festival in 1913, it is safe to assume that Howells was familiar with it. With this backdrop in mind, it should be recalled that in 1916 Herbert won his first composition prize from the Carnegie Trust for the *Piano Quartet in A minor*. Paul Andrews makes the point that one of the central figures in that process was William Symington McCormick, chair of the adjudication committee. Further, it was McCormick who influenced the military authorities to allow Howells to avoid any type of military service during his illness in 1916-17.\(^{53}\) In light of the great influence on Howells’ life and circumstances that these events generated, it is no surprise that McCormick should be the dedicatee of Howells’ *Sir Patrick Spens*. What is not known is whether Howells’ gratitude led him to choose this ballad to dedicate to McCormick, a Scot, or whether the dedication was an afterthought for a work already conceived. Howells never addressed this in any documented materials, but it is plausible that McCormick was prominent in the composer’s considerations in 1917, and it could well have been a desire to honor him that turned Howells’ creative energies to this Scottish ballad.\(^{54}\)

As Andrews speculates in his article, the factors above likely gave Howells a certain confidence when he submitted *Sir Patrick Spens* to the Trust adjudication committee in 1919. The prize winners in the competition would see their work in full publication; a Class A grade was necessary for this. Three adjudicators examined the work: Donald Tovey, Granville Bantock, and Hugh Allen. All three adjudicators gave

\(^{53}\) Andrews, “*Sir Patrick Spens: A Ballad Revisited,*” 118.

\(^{54}\) An additional point of interest is in the fact that Dunfermline, the ancient capitol of Scotland, and the seat of the king in the ballad, is also the birthplace of Andrew Carnegie, and was the location of the United Kingdom Carnegie Trust at that time.
the work a Class B, which meant it would not receive full publication, but their comments stated that it “merited very serious consideration.”55 The adjudicators agreed that the composer had reached beyond his capabilities at that point. They found the grand scale of the work too extravagant, and expressed a wish that Howells had set it for unaccompanied voices instead.56 Howells was notified of the decision on May 9, 1919, and received an additional letter from the secretary, A. L. Hetherington, which informed him of the adjudicators’ opinion regarding “serious consideration.” Hetherington wrote to Howells again in July 1919, concerning an alternative to full publication which would provide for some assistance in getting the work performed and partially published.

The trustees have been considering what steps might be taken by them to assist composers who have submitted works under the Music Publication Scheme which have merited very serious consideration, but have not been included among those to be published.

In order to facilitate any arrangements you may wish to make for rehearsal or public performance of your work entitled ‘Sir Patrick Spens’, the Trustees are prepared to supply you with one complete set of the band parts together with duplicated copies of the string parts on the scale 7,7,5,4,4, and in addition with 100 copies of the vocal parts with pianoforte accompaniment.

I am to suggest therefore that you should place yourself in communication in due course with Messrs Stainer & Bell and supply them with the work in question that the necessary steps may be taken.57

Howells’ reply to this letter on July 14 expresses his desire that the work be published in full, requesting that the Trustees put their resources toward printing full vocal scores, in hopes that Stainer & Bell would then take up remaining publication costs.

Hetherington’s reply reminds Howells of the distinction between those works awarded full publication privileges and the lesser advantages of the next class of works. The parts

56 Ibid., 118-119. See Appendix C for the complete responses of the adjudicators.
57 Ibid. Dr. Andrews’ article includes the correspondence between the Trust and Howells which is housed in the Archives of the Carnegie Trust in Edinburgh, Scotland. The following account includes quotations from that correspondence as well as summary statements of events.
for the choir were to be hand-copied, which would cost very little, and the end result
would naturally take quite a bit longer. Howells agreed to these terms in a letter on July
18. Stainer & Bell did not receive the full score from Howells in a timely manner,
however. In December 1921, J. M. Mitchell wrote on behalf of the Trust inquiring as to
whether Howells still wished to accept the offer of help with publication. Howells
replied on December 29, apologizing for his “seeming carelessness.” His letter reveals
that he still hoped for full publication from Stainer & Bell:

I must explain that I was under the impression that I had told Mr Howard [of
Stainer & Bell] long since that I would prefer to offer the work to Messrs Stainer
& Bell for publication in the ordinary way. I think that would be the best course
to follow.

In any case, I am grateful to the Trustees for their willingness to have
certain copies made.58

Not surprisingly, this letter resulted in a reply from the Trust which expressed their
confusion over Howells’ ambiguous words. Interestingly, the Trust also wrote to Stainer
& Bell at the same time:

Knowing your personal opinions of the work, I think you will wish to consider
[Howells’] proposal, and I have told Mr. Howells that you will no doubt
communicate with him direct on the subject. If your Board decide[s] to publish
the vocal and piano-forte arrangement…we might then offer Mr. Howells two sets
of band parts.59

By February 1923 Stainer & Bell had agreed to publish the vocal scores, and Howells
was to send both the full score and the vocal score to the publisher. However, by October
1925, the full score still had not been sent, and Howells wrote that the work was under
revision. He wrote on January 5, 1926, that they should have the full score by the “end of
this month.” In fact, the letter acknowledging receipt of the scores is dated July 28, 1926.

In this letter Stainer & Bell’s agent, Howard, states that due to heavy alterations in the

58 Ibid., 120.
59 Ibid.
score, publication would be delayed. This proved to be true; it was August 14, 1928, before the score was published.\textsuperscript{60}

A review of the events of the ten years following the initial submission of \emph{Sir Patrick Spens} leads to several possible conclusions: 1) Howells’ impetus for submitting the score to Stainer & Bell for publication was inhibited by the response of the adjudicators to his work, 2) his response to their criticism prompted him to do extensive revisions before he was willing to submit it, or 3) Howells became preoccupied with other work in the years following the submission for the Trust, and simply procrastinated before returning to it. Given the characteristics of Howells’ personality, and his unwillingness to subject his work to harsh criticism, the first two possibilities are quite likely. It is also true that, given the change in his circumstances – recovery from his illness, marriage, a new career at the RCM, and becoming known as a composer – he was too busy to focus on preparing this work for publication.

There are two manuscripts of \emph{Sir Patrick Spens} currently in existence. One is the Stainer & Bell score which was released by the publisher in 1982. It is now at Royal College of Music (RCM MS 4935), and it is indeed heavily revised. In some cases entire pages are simply pasted over with new pages of music, while other revisions involve small changes in orchestration. The other manuscript is in the Bodleian Library at Oxford (Bodleian MS. MUS. Sch. Ex. b. 75). Howells was asked in 1933 to submit a work of “any size, any number of pages”\textsuperscript{61} to Oxford in fulfillment of the Bachelor of Music degree (this was required for Howells to proceed to the D. Mus). The implication of the request is that the process was a formality for a composer of the stature which

\textsuperscript{60} Ibid., 121.
\textsuperscript{61} Ibid., 122. From a letter dated December 22, 1933, from Michael E. Sadler, Master of University College, Oxford, on behalf of The Friends of the Bodleian Library.
Howells had reached by this time. The work Howells chose was *Sir Patrick Spens*. The manuscript is a clean copy, dated 1917, and according to Paul Andrews, is in Howells’ early hand. It was therefore assumed to be the original, unrevised version of the score.\(^{62}\) A comparison of the two manuscripts with the published scores, however, reveals that the Bodleian MS reflects all the major revisions of the RCM score which would have been owned by Stainer & Bell in 1933. The differences between the Bodleian MS and Novello’s published score consist of small scoring inconsistencies and what appear to be inadvertent omissions of text (basses at m. 33, baritone solo at mm.167-168). Appendix D indicates the revisions that appear in the RCM score. All of the major scoring changes appear in the Bodleian MS as well; the existing inconsistencies are listed in Appendix E. Some of the differences in the scores may be the result of copying errors while others involve the omission of directions which might have been relevant to a publisher, but not necessarily to an archive. It appears possible, then, that the RCM MS is the original score, with revisions included, while the Bodleian MS appears to have been copied from the revised score, or perhaps from Howells’ notes about the revisions. The full answer may never be known; a great many of Howells’ scores were destroyed when his home was bombed during World War II. This along with his habit of giving his scores away makes it nearly impossible to know what he might have used for the Bodleian MS, or whether a separate original score was in existence. Regardless, it is clear that neither one of the extant MSS is the unrevised full score originally submitted to the Trust.

After *Sir Patrick Spens* was published, it received only one public performance; a student choir and orchestra conducted by W. Gillies Whitaker performed the work at the

\(^{62}\) Ibid., 122.
King’s Hall, Armstrong College, Newcastle-upon-Tyne on February 1, 1930. Howells wrote to Charles Kennedy Scott, conductor of the Philharmonic Choir, regarding the work, but it never resulted in a performance. Howells discussed the piece briefly in interviews in 1919 and 1922. He described it as a work designed to express “an absolute union of feeling and expression between the Border Ballad and the music,” and highlighted the economy of the text setting particularly. Howells also refers to a second version of the work for solo vocal quartet, string quartet, and piano. This score has never been found, and is assumed lost. Beyond these citations of the work, *Sir Patrick Spens* remained in obscurity for the next seventy years.

**The Revival of *Sir Patrick Spens***

Early in 2006 David Hill, conductor of the London Bach Choir, was making preparations for a recording of Howells’ *Hymnus Paradisi* on the Naxos label. The seventy-nine minute recording required an additional work since *Hymnus* is approximately fifty minutes. Andrew Milllinger, a member of the Bach Choir and the Hon. Secretary of the Howells Society, discussed several of Howells’ works with Hill as possible candidates for the recording. Paul Spicer, professor at the RCM and former pupil of Howells, joined the conversation between Hill and Millinger. He had recently come across the manuscript of *Sir Patrick Spens* in the RCM library, and suggested it to Hill for the recording. The conductor asked for and received a score for perusal, and within two weeks the process to revive the work began. At St. John’s College, Cambridge, where David Hill was Organist of the College, a meeting took place between

63 Ibid., 117.
64 Ibid., 121-122.
65 Andrew Millinger, email message to the author, May, 2008. The following account of the revival of *Sir Patrick Spens* is from correspondence with Andrew Millinger, who was kind enough to provide the story of events in thorough detail.
Hill, Millinger, and Martin Neary, chairman of the Howells Society. Neary and Millinger, after examining the score, felt that the work was unlike any other work by Howells, except perhaps *A Kent Yeoman’s Wooing Song*, written in the 1930’s. The consensus was that not only would Naxos be interested in the revival of the work and a world premier recording, but that critics would also be interested, generating more publicity and thereby raising Howells’ profile, along with that of the Howells Society and the Bach Choir.

Herbert Howells’ daughter, Ursula, had instructed in her will for the Herbert Howells Trust to be established within St. John’s College. The Literary Executors of the Trust are the Senior Bursar and the Organist of the College. Millinger writes, “Under the terms of the will, the Trust had to seek the advice of the Society before embarking on publishing and financially supporting HH’s works.” Neary and Millinger agreed that the Society would support a publication by Novello, and consented to use some of the royalty income coming into the Trust to finance the recording (Naxos was unable to provide for the entire cost).

The next steps involved obtaining scores for the rehearsals. Millinger first contacted Stainer & Bell, explaining the situation and the plans. Stainer & Bell’s copyright had expired in 1982, and with the support of the Trust and the Society, transferring the expired rights to Novello was left to the officials at the publishing companies. Millinger found that the two full score manuscripts were at the RCM and at the Bodleian Library. It had been reported that the Bodleian MS was not consistent with

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66 Ibid.
the vocal score which had been at Stainer & Bell, but was now in Novello’s possession,\(^\text{67}\) and the RCM score was tapped to be the source for the performance scores. Novello produced the parts in a timely manner, allowing for the recording to take place in mid-September 2006, played by the Bournemouth Symphony Orchestra.

As anticipated, the recording, released in June 2007, was “well received, and gained many column inches,” according to Millinger. He further writes that “articles appeared in BBC Music Magazine, Classic FM Music Magazine,…[and] Choir & Organ.” In addition, Classic FM and BBC Radio 3 both broadcast the recording. In November 2008, the Bach Choir performed the work as part of their concert series.

The revival of *Sir Patrick Spens* is somewhat ironic when one considers how quickly it moved from the archives of the RCM to the recording studio and the stage. After remaining unnoticed at Stainer & Bell for over seventy years, it was reviewed, engraved, rehearsed, and recorded within six months.

Performance Considerations: Analytical and Interpretative

In his monograph *Herbert Howells: A Study*, Christopher Palmer describes *Sir Patrick Spens* as the work in which Howells’ mastery of choral-orchestral polyphony was “first made manifest,” also noting that the work had remained “one of his most obscure.”\(^\text{68}\) Palmer believed that the reason for this was that Howells was not at his best with “dramatic descriptive music” in which he “merely illustrates, he does not illuminate.”\(^\text{69}\) An analysis of the harmonic, melodic, and rhythmic features of *Sir Patrick Spens*

\(^{67}\) The nature of these “inconsistencies” was never specified, and it is unclear exactly how this was ascertained. The author has speculated as to whether the vocal score that resided at Stainer & Bell was actually an unrevised score from the composer which was inconsistent with the revised full score now at the RCM (and the Bodleian MS), but there is no avenue of discovery available by which to explore this.

\(^{68}\) Palmer, *Herbert Howells: A Study*, 45.

\(^{69}\) Ibid.

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Spens from the long view of Howells’ music and career reveals a young composer not yet at full power, but nonetheless stretching his wings.

In this work, the text is as much a driving force as in any of Howells’ compositions. In fact, it might be said that the demands of setting this text overshadowed Howells’ emerging sonic vocabulary. The composer’s own words about the work were relayed by Christopher Palmer in his biography of Howells, first published in 1992:

This also is absolutely British in idiom; definitely planned to make, as far as possible, an absolute union of feeling and expression between the Border Ballad and the Music. It is as brief as it well can be; no phrase in the verse is ever repeated; all the tunes in it might almost ‘belong to the soil’ – and the Sea! – it is an example (I hope) of a fit compromise and union between the spirit of Folk Music and modern organized musical expression.70

In an interview in The Music Teacher, Howells had these words to say about the work:

The setting…was done with a main intention of getting through the narrative with as great a saving of time as can ever be effected where music makes an attempt at saddling itself on words. It is doubtful if any ‘organised’ musical setting can ever hope to deal rapidly enough with any folk ballad, where the swiftness of narrative is the chief need. I wanted to set Sir Patrick with the best possible attempt at this essential swiftness of action; obviously ‘folk-y’ music was the best possibility. All my tunes therefore have the directness of simple folk tunes; the choral technique is founded on the need for swift action; there is no word-repetition, and very little suggestion of anything approaching contrapuntal treatment. The voices are concerned with directness and speed in conveying the narrative; the vividness and suggestions of more purely musical sorts are left to the orchestra.71

With this understanding of the text as the composer’s impetus, the parameters of the musical analysis may be established accordingly. Sir Patrick Spens as set by Howells is a twenty-six stanza narrative poem. For the purposes of this study, the story will be divided into five scenes. The first opens with the king in Dunfermline, seeking a captain for his new ship, and concludes with Sir Patrick’s acceptance of the commission. The

71 Ibid., 439.
second scene is brief and transitional, describing the voyage to Scotland. The third scene involves the confrontation between the lords of Norway and the Scots men, ending with Sir Patrick’s intention to depart the next morning. Scene four is a lengthy one, and is best approached in smaller segments. It is the doomed voyage home, with both the orchestral and choral forces featured in the storytelling. Within the larger scene is the trepidation of the crew before departing, the orchestral “storm,” the choral re-telling of the storm’s force, the brave response of Sir Patrick and his crew, and the denouement of the ship and its sailors. The fifth scene holds the words of epilogue, describing the mourning of those whose loved ones would never return, and including a final tribute to the brave Sir Patrick Spens.

This division of scenes is established not only by the narrative of the poem, but also by the musical rendering of it. Howells uses the choral and orchestral textures, as well as shifts in the mode and pitch center, to achieve the montage of scenes and the action within them. For example, scene one is controlled primarily by the Dorian mode, with movement to the Aeolian mode serving as the shift away from the center, although other collections are included. The pitch centers vary with the narrative: beginning with G Dorian, the controlling collection then moves to E Aeolian (m. 28), and then to F Lydian (m. 35), only to return to Dorian, but with D as the pitch center, at m. 47. Howells’ method of shifting modes relies primarily on common tone “modulation” and chromatic voice leading. For instance, when E Aeolian sounds at m. 28, the previous sonority is G minor 7.\textsuperscript{72} G and D are held in common, B-flat moves to B-natural, and parsimonious motion leads F to E in the bass. The following measures reflect both E Aeolian and D Major sonorities, with a brief sounding of E Dorian before settling in F

\textsuperscript{72} In referring to minor 7 sonorities in this document, the author is describing a minor triad with a minor 7th.
Lydian at m. 35. These vertical soundings of modes are quite characteristic of Howells’ style. Christopher Palmer described the quality and its basis this way:

Much of Howells’s harmony derives, of course, from a ‘verticalization’ of the intervallic characteristics of the modes and the pentatonic scale heard ‘horizontally’…That there is nevertheless perfect concord between horizontal and vertical motion – between the melodic continuity and its accompanying harmony – is the result of Howells’s thinking naturally, always, in terms of line. This essentially melodic impetus is generally diatonic, modal or pentatonic and thus braces the chromatic fluidity of the harmonic textures,\(^\text{73}\)

The significant changes in mode correspond to a change in focus of the text: in the opening measures, the king seeks a “skeely skipper,” and an elderly knight tells him of Sir Patrick. At m. 28, the choir then tells of the “braid letter” being delivered to the unsuspecting captain. The change from quotation to narrative is accompanied by the first significant shift of mode, and Howells also changes the orchestral texture at this point. When F Lydian sounds at m. 35, it too is marked by a change in the choral texture. In this case it is not an indication of the change in speaker but rather denotes a new dramatic focus: as Sir Patrick Spens is about to receive the letter that will seal his fate, the choir abruptly returns to homophony. As the letter is “read” by the choir, with the voices paired soprano/tenor and alto/bass, the orchestra maintains agitated rhythms: the woodwinds have triplets against the duple eighth notes of the harp and sixteenth notes in the strings. At m. 47, the Dorian mode returns as the choir sings emphatically, “Tis thou maun bring her hame,” with block chords by both the choir and orchestra. Howells’ affinity for text setting is readily apparent in the harmony and textures of this first major section of the piece. The melodic and rhythmic characteristics bear examination in the same light.

In an earlier quotation, Howells described the melodic features of this work as having the simple directness of folk-tunes (see note 19). Indeed, the first scene in particular makes use of melodies in the range of a sixth, with one note, usually the third or fourth degree, suppressed or seldom incorporated. This lends a pentatonic quality to the melodies without strict adherence to the scale. The simplicity of the tunes allows the text to be performed with an emphasis on the story, rather than on lyricism which might permit the melody to supersede the text. In keeping with this, the phrases are fairly brief; the need for the “swiftness of narrative,” as Howells put it, obviously takes precedence.

The melodies of *Sir Patrick Spens* are not generally a source of unity in the work. It is through-composed in that there is no textual refrain, nor a melodic one. There is, however, a primary theme that recurs. This motif is heard first in the orchestral introduction, played by the brass. It is essentially pentatonic (C, D, E, G, A) and in Howell’s hand, has a triumphant, fanfare-like quality. This motif is altered chromatically and rhythmically and alluded to as the story progresses; the orchestra plays more ominous versions of it in the midst of Sir Patrick’s response to the king’s letter (mm. 84-88), and again as the storm commences at m. 206. It is then sung by both Sir Patrick and the sailor as they seek to save the ship (mm. 328-341), and echoed by the choir in the measures which follow. This moment is structurally significant in that the ascending motif, often set sequentially to this point, finally resolves as the sea overwhelms the ship in mm. 348-350. Howells’ treatment of a fairly simple folk-like tune produces a unifying theme which, through chromatic alteration, reflects the drama of the ballad.

The rhythmic features of *Sir Patrick Spens* hold insight into the composer’s sensitivity to the text and drama as well as his struggle with these elements. The use of
meter changes and duple rhythms set against triple characterize the entire work; the first scene is exemplary of what is to come. The opening meter is 3/4, and the orchestra immediately offers the two against three figures: the woodwinds have eighth and sixteenth notes, as do the upper strings, the brass instruments play the quarter note fanfare, while the lower strings play triplets. As the voices enter with primarily duple rhythms, the instruments continue the mixed rhythmic textures. The choir soon has opportunity to shift to triplets as Howells clusters brief syllables together in order to emphasize the weightier or more picturesque text (see fig. 3.1 below).

Another application of the duple against triple rhythm is found in the use of hemiola, which Howells used throughout his career, especially at cadences. The first example of this in *Sir Patrick Spens* is found at mm. 37-38, as the choir sings *a cappella* of where Sir Patrick was to be found when he received the king’s letter (see fig. 3.2).

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74 Howells, *Sir Patrick Spens*, full score, mm. 1-15, 1-3.
75 Jeffrey Carter, DMA Dissertation, *Herbert Howells’ Psalm Settings as Exemplars of Stylistic Change in his Sacred Music*. University of Kansas, 2000. 34.
Fig. 3.1 *Sir Patrick Spens* mm. 14 and 23\(^7\)\(^6\)

The elongated note values in duple rhythms over the 3/4 measures bring to a close the part of the narrative which sets the stage. In addition, the next two major cadences also use displaced accents to set off the drama of each moment: one is mm. 47-48 (“thou maun bring her hame”), and the next is Sir Patrick’s first reaction to the letter in mm. 56-58 (“So loud, loud laughed he”). These measures are included in figure 3.3.

A rather subtle rhythmic treatment of the dramatic nature of the narrative is also found in m. 58. The second beat of the measure is a half note followed by a quarter note, with both under a triplet bracket. The uneven, abrupt nature of this triplet conveys the sense of disbelief and angry laughter that a character such as Sir Patrick would have exhibited in response to a foolhardy mission. It is also a likely example of what the Carnegie adjudicators referred to as “fidgetty[sic] rhythmic difficulties” in their responses to the work. If it was such an example, Howells apparently did not see fit to

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77 Herbert Howells, *Sir Patrick Spens*, vocal score, 5.
revise it. Like other similar places in the work, the rhythmic difficulties are included with great intentionality in order to communicate the meaning and mood of the text.
Figure 3.3 *Sir Patrick Spens* mm. 47-48, 56-58

The conductor of *Sir Patrick Spens* will find that the text is the primary guide to matters of interpretation. While dynamics and tempo are indicated in the score, the matters of balance, pacing, declamation, and tone color are dictated by the form and the character of the narrative. Continuing to use the first scene as the point of study, one can see the careful attention to “voice” in the setting of the poem. The narrative begins in unison octaves for SATB choir, followed immediately by the tenors and basses singing the quotation of the king’s words. This pattern continues throughout the first scene with texture changes as noted previously. A thorough interpretation of the score will require the conductor to go beyond awareness of the texture changes. The next step is to elicit from the choir a tone color that reinforces the ballad’s characterizations. This is achieved through the color and placement of the vowel, and through the articulation of consonants. As the choir varies these elements of interpretation, the swiftly moving narrative can be

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79 Herbert Howells, *Sir Patrick Spens*, vocal score, 6-7.
conveyed as if a fine storyteller is relating it. Through the use of clipped or elongated consonants which may alternately convey the urgency of the mission, or the heaviness of the mourning, or through vowels darkened ominously or sung with bright optimism, the mood of the story is reinforced by the choral interpretation.

In moments of emphasis, the composer placed clear articulation marks for the choir: mm. 35-39 includes *tenuto* markings, as well as multiple indications for accent that require the conductor to make choices about the attack, volume, and release of the pitch (see fig. 3.2). In this case, as in others throughout the work, the text is a reliable guide, and generally leads the performer to the prominent words, usually on the strong beat. In the case of mm. 35-39, the most significant accent marks (>) fall on the name “Patrick Spens,” and on the word “walking,” indicated with ('). There is a good deal of subjectivity in the interpretation of these markings, and the conductor’s decision about the weight, duration, and articulation of each one is best guided by the drama of the text. Howells apparently found this to be a pivotal moment; it is the first place to be treated with such a plethora of articulation marks. It is also important, however, to place these measures in the larger context of the ballad. This is the point at which Sir Patrick is found and will be told of his commission, thereby sealing his fate. While the tension of the story begins to climb here, it is by no means the apex; there is much more drama ahead. The conductor, then, must find the appropriate level of articulation and accent in order to move the story forward without overstating the moment.

The pacing of transitions is one of the most significant decisions of interpretation for the conductor. The conductor’s concept of the piece is conveyed through such elements as the approach into and away from silence, the guiding of a tempo change or
the return to a previous tempo, as well as the negotiation of varying textures and moods. These events may call for an abrupt shift, or for a smooth, more gradual change. Following the guidance of dynamic indications in the score, the intensity of sound and the balance of voices and instruments fall under the purview of the conductor. These elements are a particular challenge in *Sir Patrick Spens* because of the wealth of transitional passages. Within the first scene, the entrance of the baritone soloist (Sir Patrick) is set off with silence at mm. 71-72; a *ritardando* is indicated within the rests. This is followed with a *crescendo* that immediately returns to *pianissimo* for the orchestra even as the tempo changes to *poco piu agitato*. This eventful transition takes place over four measures (fig. 3.4 mm. 71-74).

![Figure 3.4 Sir Patrick Spens mm. 71-74](image)

It is especially significant in that it precedes the first entrance of the main character. The conductor’s task, then, is to negotiate the change from narrative choir to solo voice with the accompanying changes in orchestral texture, dynamics, and tempo.

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80 Herbert Howells, *Sir Patrick Spens*, vocal score, 9.
The highest dramatic point in the ballad is found in the storm and the loss of Sir Patrick and his men. In this fourth scene, mm. 260-324 consist of the choral depiction of the storm and the first damage to the ship. Throughout this section, the tempo gradually accelerates to m. 303, when it subsides a bit (*un poco meno mosso*), only to move ahead again at m. 315 (*più mosso*). The tempo change might indicate a lull in the storm, as it were, except that the text in mm. 303-315 speaks of the breaking anchors and top masts. The impending doom of the vessel is clear.

Throughout this portion of the ballad, Howells maintains a triplet figure in the orchestra which is set sequentially, always rising in pitch and intensity. The choir’s duple rhythms against the orchestral “waves” depict the battle of the sailors against the sea, and the juxtaposition of rhythms increases with the drama of the text. In m. 314 the choir sings four eighth notes within a measure of 3/4 followed by hemiola figures in the next measures. Mm. 317-321 are characterized by duple rhythms distributed among the different voices; these serve to anticipate a brief resolution of duple against triple at m. 324. The meter changes to 2/2, with the composer indicating that the half note is to equal the preceding dotted half note (fig. 3.5).
Piu mosso

And the waves came over the storm.

It was a deadly storm.

And the waves came over the storm.

Piu mosso

Broken ship, till all her sides were

It was a deadly storm.

Broken ship, till all her sides were
The measures which follow (mm. 328-341) feature solo passages by the baritone (Sir Patrick) and a tenor soloist (a sailor). As the choir re-enters and the narrative resumes, the efforts of the sailors are in vain, and the sea rushes in once more, indicated by a return of 3/4 at m. 350-360. The overall dynamic level of this material is *forte* or *fortissimo*, but within that the orchestra has to balance the soloists (mm. 328-341) without losing the intensity of the moment. Howells facilitates this by reducing the orchestration under the solo passages; the bassoon doubles the baritone while the lower strings maintain a *tremolo*, then the tenor is doubled by the violins. Care must be taken here as the orchestration rapidly re-builds as the tenor sings.\(^\text{82}\) The tenor must not be overpowered, but the dynamic level quickly moves to *fff*, the loudest indication in the score, at m. 348.

The interpretive challenges for the conductor in these measures (mm. 260-360) lie in the building of intensity through the long *accelerando*, the subsequent changes in

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\(^{81}\) Ibid., 29.

\(^{82}\) Howells, *Sir Patrick Spens*, full score, mm. 328-341, 46-48.
tempo, the shaping of the dynamics, and the articulation of the duple rhythms which are scattered throughout the section. Like the material from scene one, the frequent transitions in the music require the conductor to have a broad perspective on the work which facilitates the contextual pacing of the music.

The closing scene (mm. 462-529) of Sir Patrick Spens holds musical material which more closely reflects the “Howells sound.” It is especially significant to this study in that it sheds light on how the work fits in Howells’ oeuvre. The distinctive features of this scene are the voicing, the length of the lines, the harmonies used to set the text, and the orchestration; all depart from the previous material of the piece.

The voicing of this section of Sir Patrick Spens calls for divisi soprano and alto parts. This six-part voicing (SSSAAA) begins in m. 467 and continues through m. 503. The tenors and basses enter at m. 485 with a TTBB scoring, although the first tenors do not actually sing until m. 490. Like the women’s parts, their divisi concludes at m. 503-504. The text set in this thick voicing is:

“The ladies wrang their fingers white,
The maidens tore their hair,
All for the sake of their true loves,
For them they’ll see nae mair.

O lang may the ladies sit,
Wi’ the fans into their hand,
Before they see Sir Patrick Spens
Come sailing to the strand.

O lang may the maidens sit
Wi’ the gude kaims in their hair,
A’waiting for their own true loves,
For them they’ll see nae mair.”

83 Howells, Sir Patrick Spens, vocal score, 36-46.
The full treble voicing and the staggered entrances which Howells uses in these measures depict the mourning women of Scotland. There is a sense of the host of people affected by this tragedy as well as the cries of grief they utter. The addition of the men’s voices adds richness to the sonority, especially since they are accompanied by the entrance of the timpani, organ, and double bass, none of which were included with the initial entrance of the women’s voices. The orchestration is characteristic of this portion of the piece in that the orchestra’s role has become less independent of the choir, and instead doubles the voices more frequently.84

The harmonies Howells uses to set this portion of the ballad are modally conceived, but move with greater chromaticism than other parts of the work. The Mixolydian mode that is used at m. 467 soon moves by half step motion to an essentially pentatonic melody in m. 471 (primary pitches are D, E, F#, A, B). The next several measures are characterized by the “vertical” use of extended tertian harmonies with scale passages in the vocal lines that gradually return to E-flat Mixolydian. Then, at m. 484, an extended G minor sonority leads to octave A’s sounding in the orchestra in m. 485. The tenors and basses sing a first-inversion F-sharp minor triad under the B minor 7 chord of the women’s voices. Thus Howells is shifting the pitch centers through chromatic voice leading.

The interpretive challenge for the conductor in this case is to understand Howells’ treatment of the points of arrival. The text provides some guidance in this, but in contrast to the cadence points of the rest of the work, the composer extends the vocal lines and elongates some of the harmonies to convey the mood of the ballad rather than the meter. The first stanza as printed above is set in mm. 467-479. In this case, the harmonic point

84 Howells, Sir Patrick Spens, full score, mm. 467-504, 65-70.
of arrival clearly corresponds to the end of the stanza; the A-flat extended triad is approached through parsimonious voice leading and sustained by both the choir and the orchestra. The endings of the next two stanzas are not so aligned with cadential progressions. The phrase “Before they see Sir Patrick Spens sailing to the strand” (m. 485-489) is sung over an A pedal tone which continues to sound through the third line of the next stanza (“A’waiting for their own true loves”). There is no harmonic sense of arrival at m. 489, only a shift in the harmony that moves the line forward once again. At m. 494 the soprano line peaks at the high B-flat, and the bass pedal moves finally to G. The sonority is C minor 7, but with the G in the bass voice and low instruments, the sense of arrival is not here, either. The next textual arrival point is at the end of the third stanza in this group: “For them they’ll see nae mair.” Here the composer reveals his hand, in a manner of speaking, for the sonority (E-flat minor 7 followed by B-flat and G-flat in the orchestra) brings the phrase to a close, but does not settle the harmony. The harmonic goal of this passage, it seems, is to convey the sense of waiting that the mourners will always feel, for the ship will never return. There is no sense of harmonic resolution. Indeed, the low voices overlap into m. 504 as the meter and tempo change. The brief interlude which follows returns the pitch center to F-sharp (established at the beginning of the “storm” in m. 206) via a descending minor third.85 While the treatment of text to this point in the piece has seen the meter and rhyme aligned with the cadences, this section (figure 3.6 mm. 490-504) calls the conductor to leave behind the illustration of text for what Palmer might have called its “illumination.”

85 The isolated minor third serves as a transitional device in several places in Sir Patrick Spens. These include m. 206, mm. 356-359, and mm. 461-462 in addition to mm. 509-510.
Maidens sit, wi' the gude kaims in their hair, A' wait

strans, come sailing to the strand, O

strans, come sailing, sailing to the strand, O

O lang may the maidens sit, A' wait

strans, come sailing, sailing to the strand, O

strans, come sailing, sailing to the strand, O

strans, come sailing, sailing to the strand, O

strans, come sailing, sailing to the strand, O
Figure 3.6 *Sir Patrick Spens* mm. 490-504\(^{86}\)

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\(^{86}\) Howells, *Sir Patrick Spens*, vocal score, 44-46.
As a twenty-five year old composer, Howells found in this work an opportunity to set a form of folk-lore with which he had some familiarity. The choral-orchestral medium was still a new one for him, and his desire to treat the text appropriately resulted in sensitivity to story and scene that took precedence over his greater gifts of sonority and mood. Thus, the work is characterized by transitions of texture, mode, meter, and tempo that demand extensive study and vigilance on the part of the conductor.

Performance Considerations: Logistical

The logistical concerns of *Sir Patrick Spens* which follow are addressed in terms of conducting considerations, programming, performing forces, and the use of dialect. The conducting considerations will deal primarily with gesture as an interpretive device, and will focus on transitions and rhythmic difficulties in the vocal score.

The wealth of transitions that occur in *Sir Patrick Spens* not only require the conductor to have a strong sense of the pacing of the work, they also require that the gesture consistently reflect that pacing. Thus, the conductor’s task is first to develop a scheme of tempi which holds the various sections of the work together, and then to determine the approach to each of these tempi. Some will be marked by abrupt change, while others will evolve more gradually. The material from the first and fourth scenes as discussed above provides examples of each of these. The transition in mm. 71-74 (see fig. 3.4), when Sir Patrick is first heard as a soloist, is marked by silence, *ritardando*, and a new *poco piu agitato* tempo indication. In this case, the conductor must conduct the rests of mm. 71-72 in order to hold both the *ritardando* and the subsequent faster tempo in context. The triplet figures at m. 74 will require the second violins and violas to
immediately articulate the new tempo, and so the conductor’s clear preparatory gesture should be directed primarily to those sections.

Another important transition occurs at mm. 106-107. In this instance, the orchestral material conveys a sense of the ship setting sail through the sweeping melody, harp glissandi, and arpeggiated figures of the lower strings. The ritardando in m. 106, followed by the piu moderato tempo of m. 107, signals a scene change in the music. Once again, the conductor’s attention should be given to the instruments which facilitate the tempo change; in this case, the low strings have the triplet figures. The upper strings also require attention, in that the distinctive melody is found there. Transitions such as these occur throughout the work with great frequency, as already mentioned. Most of these fall to the orchestra to articulate successfully, although the choral forces are called upon to accelerate the tempo in several passages. The choral challenges as they relate to the conductor’s gesture are more frequently found in the rhythmic peculiarities that occur in Sir Patrick Spens.

As in any choral work, the conductor is charged with determining the timing of releases for the choir. The articulation of final consonants has the ability to propel the line forward through the release of energy, and the timing of this articulation needs to be unified. Likewise, the articulation of text with complex rhythms is often difficult for singers, and the conductor’s task is to make sure they are rendered accurately. When the complex rhythmic figures are combined with difficult releases, the challenge is multiplied. This is often the case in Sir Patrick Spens. As stated earlier, the duple against triple rhythms are characteristic of the work, and appear early in the first scene. The difficult rhythms in mm. 53-59 (see fig. 3.3) reinforce the drama of the text, but also

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87 Howells, Sir Patrick Spens, full score, mm. 106-107, 14.
present significant conducting considerations. The meter is 3/4, with hemiolas and an unusual triplet followed by rests for both the choir and orchestra. The conductor must decide whether to maintain a pattern of three, to conduct the hemiola and triplet/release, or some other combination of gestures. At the tempo indicated by the composer (quarter note =126), there is not time to conduct the triplet in m. 58, so the conductor must teach the articulation of the rhythm and release then indicate it with the body and breath as much as with the baton. The orchestra will require a clear downbeat at m. 59, and that must take precedence over the choral release, regardless of the decision about the hemiola.

Another instance of triplet rhythms combined with an important release is found in mm. 348-350 (see fig. 3.7).

Figure 3.7 Sir Patrick Spens mm. 348-350

88 Howells, Sir Patrick Spens, vocal score, 32.
At this dynamic climax of the storm, the choir and orchestra release on beat two, then resume with a clean articulation of an uneven triplet rhythm before moving (in the case of the orchestra) to a new tempo. Howells indicates *senza rallentando*, requiring the tempo to remain steady up to the meter change. The composer’s notation of the rhythm calls for the last two quarter notes of the 2/2 measure to be divided into six equal pulses, with the last three sounding the text. Presumably Howells used this notation to achieve an emphasis on the drama; the subtle distinction afforded by the triplet rhythm elongates the text slightly more than a duple rhythm might have done. The conductor’s gesture should reflect that subtlety inasmuch as possible; this is an instance where dictating the rhythm could serve the music well, but perhaps the best option is to give a clear preparatory gesture into the triplet. The release immediately preceding provides a springboard for counting the triplet, if given clearly on beat two (fig. 3.7 mm. 348-350).

A final type of conducting consideration involves the interpretive aspect of the gesture. In the previous section, mm. 490-504 (fig. 3.6) exhibit a lack of resolution that is reflective of the text. The conducting gesture throughout this section should convey the unsettled quality of the sonorities. This is accomplished through use of the horizontal plane and the degree of “lift” in the gestures. As the conductor emphasizes the horizontal and reduces the vertical direction of the pattern, the singer senses less of the preparatory/arrival of upbeat and downbeat. Likewise, a degree of buoyancy in the gesture combined with lifted posture will communicate the continuous nature of the line.

These examples indicate some of the particular challenges of conducting *Sir Patrick Spens*. Like any work of substance, it requires careful consideration on the part
of the conductor to communicate clearly both the larger issues of pacing and subtle requirements of articulation.

A major consideration in preparing *Sir Patrick Spens* is the size of the forces required; they are not modest. The orchestration is as follows:

2 Flutes (2. doubling Piccolo)
2 Oboes (2 doubling Cor Anglais)
2 Clarinets in B-flat (1. doubling Clarinet in A)
   (2. doubling Clarinet in A and Bass Clarinet)
2 Bassoons

4 Horns in F
2 Trumpets in C
3 Trombones
Tuba
Timpani
Percussion (3 players)
   Side drum
   Bass drum
   Triangle
   Cymbals

Harp
Organ

Baritone Solo
Chorus

Strings

The size of the orchestra and the divisi scoring for the chorus make it apparent that the choral forces must be extensive. Certainly the extensive vocal ranges and the forceful dynamics reinforce the need for a choir of significant size. The London Bach Choir, which is currently about 200 singers, was the first group to record this work, and this number is an appropriate choice. Like other works on this grand scale, the soloists must be chosen with the need for balance in mind. While only the baritone is listed in the scoring, the tenor soloist also makes a prominent appearance, and must balance an
orchestral crescendo. Presumably, the tenor could come from within the choir, if desired, but would be most effective when staged with the baritone.

The size of the orchestra and chorus suggests that the potential performers of *Sir Patrick Spens* are limited to professional orchestras and symphony choruses, university orchestras and combined choruses, or particularly strong choral societies with resources or partnerships with orchestras of the same vein. The difficulty level of the music itself further limits the kinds of organizations capable of a successful performance. On the other hand, it is also true that, at this writing, there has been no American premiere of this work, and the opportunity to unveil music from this period of Herbert Howells’ life is still largely untapped.

A further consideration for performing this work is the determination of the music to complete the program. The impetus for the revival of *Sir Patrick Spens* rose from a need to pair a work with *Hymnus Paradisi*. Certainly, this is an excellent program featuring two large scale works for chorus, orchestra, and soloists from two contrasting periods in the composer’s life. The November, 2008 performance of *Sir Patrick Spens* (the first public performance since 1930) by the London Bach Choir featured Vaughan Williams’ *Fantasia on a Theme by Tallis*, as well as his *Sancta Civitas* and *A Lark Ascending*. In addition, the program included Peter Maxwell Davies’ *A Birthday Card for Prince Charles*, and Howells’ orchestrated version of his *Te Deum* and *Jubilate* written for King’s College.89

If the primary performing ensemble was an orchestra, the possibilities are much broader; a symphonic chorus appearing for a twenty-minute work is not unusual. A university performance featuring an orchestra and combined choirs is unlikely to offer an

89 http://www.thebachchoir.org.uk/
exclusively Howells program, so the considerations turn toward the use of resources. Given the scale of the forces required, the difficulty of Sir Patrick Spens, and the length of the work, the remaining works on the program might feature opening a capella works by the choir, with an orchestral work to follow. Other creative options could involve related works from the period, such as Vaughan Williams’ Sea Symphony. Certainly the creative possibilities for programming are extensive, especially in light of the epic nature of the ballad, its associations with folk-song, the sea, and ancient Scotland. The particular demands of Sir Patrick Spens, although not insignificant, should be weighed against these romantic qualities as well as the musicological interest inherent in the work. The latter features should make this work a very satisfying addition to a concert program.

The final topic for performance considerations is the use of dialect in Sir Patrick Spens. Because the work is Scottish, the use of dialect communicates the character of the work very effectively. Some of the pronunciations are spelled phonetically in the poem itself; the score is an effective resource for words such as faem (foam), maun (must), hame (home) e’e (eye). Within the solo material, the brogue can be even more pronounced, lending a colloquial quality to the narrative. In addition to what is indicated in the score, Andrew Millinger of the Bach Choir provided further insight into the pronunciation of the text which increased the choir’s ability to characterize the narrative. Appendix A, which contains the full text as set by Howells, indicates these pronunciations. Definitions of less familiar words are also included in the appendix. In guiding the choir’s pronunciation of the Scottish text, the conductor should be aware that although Howells set the version found in Child’s anthology, many of the word spellings are altered to reflect a more English pronunciation. In fact, the score’s text closely
matches the rendering in *Oxford Book of English Verse*, first published in 1900. The Oxford collection omits several stanzas; the accusation of the lords of Norway and Sir Patrick’s angry response are not included. The implication of this is that, while Howells drew on the Child anthology for the length of the story, he preferred a more modified approach to the brogue. The preparation of this work for performance, then, calls for the conductor to guide accordingly the inflection of the choir’s pronunciation. To facilitate informed decisions, Appendix A also includes a list of the words which differ from the rendition in Child’s anthology. Ultimately, the conductor may choose to provide the choir with a consultant whose pronunciations are authentically Scottish. Any modifications for tone color, articulation, and vowel unity would be left to the conductor’s interpretation.

The performance considerations of *Sir Patrick Spens* are best approached through a contextual understanding of the work’s history with the analytical and interpretive aspects closely intertwined. The foundations of Howell’s early life definitively shaped how he chose to set the text as well as how the piece was disseminated to the world. Approaching a performance of the work through the lens of Howells’ early influences broadens the conductor’s understanding, facilitating a concept of the piece which is well-paced and effectively interpreted. Further, a careful approach to the logistical concerns will produce a well-conceived performance that is not only conducted clearly, but also placed in a program which will complement the strengths of the work as well as those of the performing ensembles.

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CHAPTER 4
SUMMARY AND CONCLUSION

The major influences on Howells as discussed in this document include Tudor modalism, the West Counties of Gloucestershire, and the pathos of personal tragedy. These factors were brought to bear in differing ways in *Sir Patrick Spens*. While Howells’ later music is frequently described as elegiac, this is not the mood of *Sir Patrick Spens*. Although the story is a tragic one, the character of the music does not focus there; it only alludes to it in the closing scene. In this instance, the influence of tragedy in Howells’ life was brought to bear more in the circumstances surrounding its creation and obscurity. The illness which nearly claimed Howells’ life was ironically one of the factors which strengthened his relationship with the Carnegie Trust. Yet the criticism of the Trust’s adjudicators may have been a defining factor in the composer’s extreme delay in preparing the work for publication. It is quite possible that Howells’ insecurities came to the fore in this instance, resulting in a decade of profound reluctance to deal with the work’s weaknesses or the extensive revisions they required. That it was eventually accomplished speaks to Howells’ work ethic, which characterized his life even in crisis.

The musical characteristics of the piece exemplify Howells’ affinity for modal harmonies. While Howells’ later work is perhaps less transitory in the use of modes, *Sir Patrick Spens* is nonetheless a fine early example of modality in his work. The analysis included in Chapter 3 revealed the incorporation of modes as central not only to the harmony of the music, but also to the drama of the ballad. In addition, the extended
tertian harmonies, pentatonic melodies, and use of common tone and chromatic voice leading characterize both this work as well as Howells’ more mature compositions, providing further perspective on its place in the composer’s repertoire. The elaborate use of these techniques in the final scene give an early voice to the composer Howells would become.

The third area of influence was the cultural foundation of Gloucestershire, particularly as it relates to folksong and poetry. The idioms of folksong and folklore were of great importance to Howells and he equated them with the beloved countryside which surrounded him. That these things should find their way into his music is the most natural of occurrences. In the case of folksong, Howells did not use existing melodies, but rather crafted his own; the modal/pentatonic quality of the melodies of Sir Patrick Spens demonstrates his understanding of the genre. Sir Patrick Spens, which Howells calls a Border Ballad, differs from most of his other poetic settings in that it is narrative, and the composer appears less concerned with interpretation than with illustrating the story. This manifests itself in the method of text setting which Howells uses. In Sir Patrick Spens, virtually every cadence point falls on a strong beat; they are in keeping with the meter of the poetry. As noted in Chapter 3, Howells was much more concerned with moving the narrative swiftly than with purely musical effects. The exception to these symmetrical cadences falls at the end of the work, when the music is transformed via thick harmonies and the avoidance of cadences into sonorities which foreshadow what would become the “Howells sound.”91

91 Robert Lehman, “The Choral Idiom of Herbert Howells” Choral Journal 33 (October 1992) 13. In this article, Lehman notes that in a selected anthem, only one cadence falls on a strong beat. He uses this example to illustrate Howells’ preference for displaced metrical accents.
In these three avenues of influence (tragedy, modalism, and the cultural influences of Gloucester), it is apparent that *Sir Patrick Spens* is shaped by them, but it is also true that their full manifestations were yet to be seen. This is evidenced by the wealth of literature concerning Howells’ later church music and large choral works which cites these influences as being of great importance. In addition, Howells’ own words about his music often refer to these influences as significant. Thus, these areas of analysis are an effective lens for viewing *Sir Patrick Spens*’ place in the composer’s oeuvre.

As a large scale choral-orchestral work, it is especially important as a first attempt. While the original, unrevised version is not extant, the examination of the revised score at the RCM reveals that most of the composer’s changes had to do with orchestration rather than with the choral setting. It can thus be assumed that Howells’ modal, melodic, and rhythmic choices were ones that he elected to keep intact. These aspects are most characteristic of his formative influences, and that decision reveals his connection to them even as he matured as a composer.

The performance considerations as discussed in this document seek to provide a holistic approach to the work. The contextual information found in the story of the ballad and in the events surrounding Howells’ setting give the conductor a foundational understanding of the piece before the first note is sounded. The analytical and interpretive aspects are shaped by the biographical information on the composer; insight into his life and persona provides an added dimension to the theoretical analysis. For example, the interpretation of the peculiar rhythms and frequent transitions is enlightened by the appreciation of Howells’ affinity for the text. In the realm of melodic range and

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92 RCM MS 4935.
contour, it is helpful to know that the composer believed folk-like tunes to be essential and appropriate. That Howells was drawn to folksong because of the inherent modalism further illuminates the conductor’s view of the score.

Finally, the logistical considerations call for a broad perspective on the work which incorporates the historical and musicological significance, an appreciation for its place in Howell’s life, and the distinctive features which make its performance a worthwhile, if challenging, endeavor. The conductor’s gesture is a factor in this endeavor, facilitating a well-executed performance that highlights the text even as the composer sought to do.

In 1917 Herbert Howells was a twenty-five year old composer who had already experienced significant professional success as well as debilitating personal trauma. In a time when the world he knew was changing so drastically, he appears to have drawn on the formative influences of his early life to shape his creative impulse. The tremendous output of music from 1915-1919 (the latter part of which was supposedly spent convalescing), suggests that the act of composing might have been more therapeutic than it was rigorous, and it is possible that the influences which guided the composer also brought solace to the man. In the case of Sir Patrick Spens, the student of Howells’ music finds a piece that is not introspective or elegiac, but which nonetheless reflects the most important aspects of the composer’s persona, albeit in rather unique ways.

Herbert Howell’s role in the world of choral music is widely acknowledged and appreciated. The strongest associations are with sacred choral music, and his contributions to the genre are well established. His early repertoire, however, remains largely unfamiliar, especially outside the United Kingdom. As an example of his early
work, and as a milestone on a remarkable journey of composition, *Sir Patrick Spens* is due a place of prominence in the body of knowledge surrounding Howells’ work. Further, it deserves a niche in the performance repertoire of large choral/orchestral organizations. It is hoped that this document will disseminate knowledge about the work, and provide the impetus to see *Sir Patrick Spens* set sail once more.
BIBLIOGRAPHY


______. *Walter De La Mare: A Selection from His Writings.* Edited by Kenneth Hopkins. London: Faber and Faber, 1956.


Discography


Howells, Herbert. *In Gloucestershire (String Quartet No. 3).* Divertimenti. The Hyperion Helios Series, CDH55045. 2001 by Hyperion Records Limited.


Manuscripts


Musical Scores


APPENDICES

Appendix A

*Sir Patrick Spens*
Text as set by Herbert Howells\(^93\)
Pronunciation guide\(^94\) in ( )
Dialect translations\(^95\) in [ ]
Text as it appears the Child anthology\(^96\) {}

The King sits in Dunfermline town (town = toon)
Drinking the blood-red wine; {blude-red}
“O where shall I get a skeely skipper [skeely=skillful] {whare}
To sail this new ship o’mine?” (to = teh)

O up and spake an eldern Knight,
Sat at the King’s right knee;
“Sir Patrick Spens s the best sailor
That ever sail’d the sea.” {sailed}

Our king has written a braid letter [braid = broad, open, long]
And sealed it with his hand {seald}
And sent it to Sir Patrick Spens
Was walking on the strand.

“To Noroway, to Noroway, {Noroway}
To Noroway o’er the faem;
The King’s daughter of Noroway, (daughter = dochter)
‘tis thou maun bring her hame.” [maun = must]

The first word that Sir Patrick read
So loud, loud laughed he {Sae}
The next word that Sir Patrick read {neist}
A tear blinded his e’e. {ee}

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\(^93\) Herbert Howells, *Sir Patrick Spens*, vocal score.
\(^94\) Millinger, in discussion with the author, July 2008.
\(^95\) Quiller-Couch, 403-405.
“O who is it has done this deed,
And told the King of me?
To send us out at this time o’ year
To sail upon the sea?”

“Be it wind, be it weet, be it hail or sleet,
Our ship must sail the faem;
The King’s daughter of Norroway
‘tis we must bring her hame.”

They hoysed their sails on a Monenday morn
Wi’ a’ the speed they may
They have landed on Norroway
Upon a Wodendsday.

They hadna been a week, a week
In Norroway but twae
When that the lords of Norroway
Began aloud to say

“Ye Scottish-men spend a’ our King’s goud
And a’ our queen-is fee”
“Ye lie!” “Ye liars loud
Fu’ loud I hear ye lie!”

“For I ha’e brought as much white money
As gane my men and me
And I brought a half-fou o’ gude red goud
Out o’er the sea with me”

“Mak’ ready, mak’ ready my merry men all,
Our gude ship sails the morn!”
“Now ever alack, my master dear
I fear a deadly storm”

“I saw the new moon late yestreen,
Wi’ the auld moon in her arm,
And if we gang to sea, master
I fear we’ll come to harm.”

They hadna sail’d a league, a league,
A league but barely three,
When the lift grew dark, and the wind blew loud,
And gurgly grew the sea.
The ankers brake, and the top mast lap,
It was sic a deadly storm
And the waves came o’er the broken ship,
Till all her sides were torn.

“O where will I get a gude sailor
To take the helm in hand
Till I get up to the tall top-mast
To see if I can spy land?”

O here am I, a sailor bold,
To take the helm in hand,
Till you get up to the tall top-mast
But I fear you’ll not spy land”

They hadn’t gane a step, a step,
A step but barely ane
When a bolt flew out of the gudely ship
And the salt sea it came in!

“Gae fetch a web o’ the silken claith
Another o’ the twine
And wapped them into the ship’s side,
And let na the sea come in!”

They fetched a web o’ the silken claith
Another o’ the twine
And they wapped them round the gude ship’s side,
But still the sea came in.

O laith, O laith were our gude Scots lords
To weet their cork-heel’d shoon!
But lang ere a’ the play was play’d
They wat their hats aboon

And many was the featherbed
That fluttered on the faem;
And many was the gude lord’s son
That never mair came hame.

The ladies wrang their fingers white
The maidens tore their hair
All for the sake of their true loves,
For them they’ll see nae mair.
O lang, lang may the ladies sit
Wi’ the fans into their hand
Before they see Sir Patrick Spens
Come sailing to the strand.

O lang, lang may the maidens sit
Wi’ the gude kaims in their hair
A’ waiting for their own true loves,
For them they’ll see nae mair.

Half owre, half owre to Aberdour,
‘Tis fifty fathoms deep,
And there lies gude Sir Patrick Spens,
Wi’ the Scots lords at his feet.
Appendix B

Howells’ Works List 1915-1919
from the Complete List of Works compiled by Paul Andrews

Orchestral

Three Dances for violin and orchestra, Op. 13 1915
_Puck’s Minuet_ for small orchestra, Op. 7 1917
Suite for string orchestra, Op. 20, no. 1 1917**
_Elegy_ for viola, string quartet and string orchestra, Op. 15 1917
_Thé Dansant_ 1919*

Chamber

_Lady Audrey’s Suite_, for string quartet, Op. 19 1915
Quartet in A minor for piano, viola, and cello, Op. 21 1916
_Phantasy String Quartet_, Op. 25 1916/17
Three pieces for violin and piano, Op. 28 1917
Sonata No. 2 in E flat major for violin and piano, Op. 26 1917**
Sonata No. 1 in E major for violin and piano, Op. 18 1917/18
_Cradle Song_ for violin and piano 1918**
_Damsons_ for violin and piano 1918**
_Poem_ for violin and piano, Op. 32 1919*
_Rhapsodic Quintet_ for clarinet, two violins, viola, and cello, Op. 31 1919

Organ

_Phantasy Ground Bass_ 1915*
Three Psalm Preludes Set 1, Op. 32 1915/16
Rhapsody, Op. 17, no. 1 1915
Two Short Pieces 1916*
Rhapsody, Op. 17, no. 2 1918
Rhapsody, Op. 17, no. 3 1918

Piano/Clavichord

_Minuet in A minor_ 1915*
_Snapshots_, Op. 30 1916/18
_Phantasie_ for piano 1917**
_Sarum Sketches_ op. 6 (suite for piano) 1917
_Jackanapes_ Op. 14, no. 2 1919
_Rhapsody_ for piano, Op. 14, no. 1 1919
Solo Instrumental

Prelude No. 1 for harp 1915**
Phantasy Minuet for pianola, Op. 27 1919*

Chorus and Orchestra

_Sir Patrick Spens_ op. 23 1917

Sacred Choral

Four Anthems to the Blessed Virgin Mary, Op. 9 1915*
*Haec Dies* 1918*
*Here is the Little Door* 1918
*A Spotless Rose* 1919

Secular Choral

_The Tinker’s Song_ 1914 or 1916
_In Youth is Pleasure_ 1915
Five Part-Songs for Female Voices, Op. 11 1915-17
_The Skylark_ 1916**
_An Old Man’s Lullaby_ 1917
Three Songs, Op. 24 1917

Solo Songs

Four Songs for Voice and Piano 1915
(nos. 2 and 4 no longer extant)
Three Rondeaux, Op. 12 1915-17(?)
Five Songs for high voice and orchestra, Op. 19 1915
_There Was a Maiden_, Op. 22, no. 1 1915
_The Widow Bird_, Op. 22, no. 3 1915
_Girl’s Song_, Op. 22, no. 4 1916
_A Madrigal_, Op. 22, no. 2 1916
_By the Waters of Babylon_, Op. 17 1917
_Here She Lies, a Pretty Bird_ 1917
Two Songs by Ivor Gurney (orchestrated by Howells) 1917
_Upon a Summer’s Day_ 1917
Four French Chansons, Op. 29 (arranged by Howells) 1918
_Mally O!_ 1918
_Old Skinflint_ 1918
_The Restful Branches_ 1918 (1919?)
_Whin – song set_ 1918
Five Songs for low voice and piano 1919
_King David_ 1919
The Mugger’s Song 1919
Peacock Pie, Set 1, Op. 33 1919
Peacock Pie, Set 2 1919
A Garland for De la Mare 1919/73

* denotes missing MS
** unpublished
Appendix C

Responses of the adjudicators to Sir Patrick Spens

Professor Tovey.
A very remarkable work: but, in my opinion, a mistake. The question is, what is our duty toward mistakes on such a plane? I don’t happen to believe in this method of setting a ballad: it’s very interesting to young composers to devote their powers of illustration to the opportunities offered by the way in which a primitive ballad describes regularly one incident in each stanza; but the larger the scale & the more elaborately the illustration is done the weaker the total impression becomes; & the whole resulting art form is a debilitating experience for the composer. This man would, I am sure from what we have seen of his nobility of style both here and elsewhere, have produced a much greater because timely setting of this ballad if he had made up his mind to supersede De Pearsall with it as an unaccompanied chorus. At present it is little more than a 20th-century Stanford’s Revenge (a work for which I have considerable respect bien entendu) handicapped by many fidgetty rhythmic difficulties for the chorus. (Also the Revenge is not a primitive ballad and it isn’t a misfit).

Professor Bantock.
I thoroughly endorse Tovey’s criticism of this work & confess to a disappointment since my acquaintance with this composer’s Piano Quartet which is refined & high in achievement. Here on the other hand is a somewhat bombastic extravagance & lavish display of technique that repels the well wisher. There is apparently too much of Stanford here and too little of Howells. ‘The Voyage of Maeldune’ & ‘The Revenge’ in their own way should satisfy any needs in this particular direction, & I see no necessity for a perpetual series of such works. I am disappointed, but in spite of my admiration for Howells’ genius, I cannot place this work higher than a class B.

Dr. Allen.
He has plunged too readily into this setting without reflecting that his style is as yet unsuited for work on a big canvas. He has incredible facility & runs into considerable danger from that source. The ballad would have been more happily treated at his hands in [an] unaccompanied setting. Class B.

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Appendix D

Revisions within the RCM Manuscript

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Measure/Rehearsal number(s)</th>
<th>Revisions to RCM score; All are reflected in Novello’s published score</th>
<th>Additional comments</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>m. 20</td>
<td>‘cello: D natural to C natural</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>mm. 25-28</td>
<td>Bass part crossed out</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>m. 33</td>
<td>Bass: original “sent” marked out’ Published score has “sealed”</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>mm. 40-41; 45-46</td>
<td>Erasure of notes doubling flute to reflect rests</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>mm. 53-56</td>
<td>Alternate voicing crossed out</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>mm. 64-73</td>
<td>Entire page is replaced with a pasted-in page</td>
<td>First solo entrance</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Following mm.97</td>
<td>A page was removed</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>m. 98</td>
<td>Orchestration crossed out; making it a cappella for the soloist</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>m. 100</td>
<td>Original indication was <em>a tempo</em>; Replaced with <em>tempo, come prima</em> Vln.1 part written, then omitted (mm.100-102); Bsn. also written, then omitted for mm. 100-106.</td>
<td>Ob., cl. double the Original vln.1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>mm. 107-109</td>
<td>String parts revised and pasted into the score</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>mm. 127-128</td>
<td>HH indicates “2/4 not in chorus” and a time signature does not appear; Voice parts have dotted half note, while orchestra has 2/4 bars and appropriate rhythms.</td>
<td>Score indicates Half note = previous dotted half note; published score puts 2/4 in full score, but not in the vocal score</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>m. 134</td>
<td>Originally scored for piano; Crossed out and moved to harp</td>
<td>Piano part doubled the woodwinds</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>m. 136</td>
<td>Revisions for strings pasted into score</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>mm. 143-144</td>
<td>String parts written, then omitted</td>
<td>Erasure marks only</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>mm. 145-146</td>
<td>Side drum written, then omitted</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>RN10</td>
<td><em>Deciso</em> written in score;</td>
<td>Included in vocal score, not full score</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>mm. 161-162</td>
<td>Original piano scoring omitted and moved to harp</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>pp. 25-26</td>
<td>Looks to have been pasted in</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>mm. 163-164</td>
<td>Trumpet part altered</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>m. 190</td>
<td>Original timpani roll started in m. 190 and continued; <em>Descresc.</em> indicated; both crossed out by HH</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>m. 191</td>
<td>Strings and woodwinds crossed out on downbeat</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>RN 13-RN14</td>
<td>Extensive changes; simplified to be primarily <em>a cappella</em> for the soloist</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>mm. 230-237 – m. 252</td>
<td>Pasted over with revisions</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>RN 16: mm. 26-267; 276-278.1</td>
<td>Original piano scoring omitted</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>m. 288</td>
<td>Organ entrance (not revised)</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>mm. 324-327</td>
<td>New material pasted in</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>m. 360</td>
<td>RCM score indicates “2 desks only” For strings</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>mm. 376-380</td>
<td>Sop. &amp; bass voices textual rhythm altered;</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>m. 485</td>
<td>Empty staves left for 3rd tenor &amp; bass parts, but they remained empty</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>m. 506</td>
<td>Cl. 1 C-sharp changed to D-flat</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
### Appendix E

**Comparison of Bodleian MS with Novello Score**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Measure Numbers</th>
<th>Comparison of Scores: Differences and points of revision that are held in common</th>
<th>Additional Comments &amp; Conclusions</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>mm. 4-5</td>
<td>Timpani only on downbeat of m. 5</td>
<td>Differs from RCM; Possible copy error</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>m. 33</td>
<td>Bass text omitted</td>
<td>Differs from RCM; Possible copy error</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>mm. 45-46</td>
<td>Piccolo part omitted</td>
<td>Same as RCM</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>mm. 53ff</td>
<td>No alternate scoring</td>
<td>Same as RCM</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>mm. 100-102</td>
<td>Bassoons omitted/vln 1 tacet</td>
<td>Same as RCM</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>m. 127</td>
<td>HH puts 2/4 in choral parts</td>
<td>Difference w/published vocal score; however, the time signature does appear in the vocal parts of the RCM full score, and of the published full score</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>m. 155</td>
<td>Tenor part: “spend” is written on beat one, then crossed out and written on beat 3</td>
<td>“spend” on beat 3 is consistent with RCM score</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>mm. 167-168</td>
<td>Text omitted from Baritone solo</td>
<td>Probable copy error</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>RN 13</td>
<td>Timpani/percussion</td>
<td>Same as RCM</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>m. 203</td>
<td>Tenor part omitted for “harm”</td>
<td>Probable copy error</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>mm. 311-312</td>
<td>Difference in rhythmic notation for choral parts, horns, tpt.</td>
<td>Notes for both scores are eighth notes; Brackets for RCM indicate “2”, while brackets for Bodleian MS indicate “4”; Possible copy error</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>m. 313</td>
<td>Vln. 1 written in upper octave; Novello score uses “8va”</td>
<td>Possible editorial decision;</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>RN 20</td>
<td>Notes about the organ parts that appear in RCM and Novello scores do not appear in Bodleian score</td>
<td>Difference between RCM and Bodleian MSS</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>m. 467ff</td>
<td>“Col. //” appears in Sop. I &amp; II when they double</td>
<td>Does not appear in RCM score</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>m. 485</td>
<td>Indication from HH about soloist for SI line is present</td>
<td>Consistent with RCM score</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>m. 494</td>
<td>Half notes in SII line are correct</td>
<td>Novello score has 2 quarter notes; a mistake</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Final measure</td>
<td>“N.B. one or two players to tune down to low B here” note by HH</td>
<td>Present in RCM and Novello scores</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>