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Symphony within: rehearing Holst's *A Moorside Suite*

For Edward Gregson

The basis of this material was presented at the Greater New York chapter meeting of the American Musicological Society at Columbia University on 28 January 2017.

In late 1927/early 1928 the BBC and the National Brass Band Festival Committee commissioned Gustav Holst to write the test piece for the 1928 National Brass Band Championships of Great Britain.[1] The work that Holst produced, *A Moorside Suite* (1928), in three movements ('Scherzo', 'Nocturne' and 'March') was to be a novel rethinking of the kind of music that a brass band might play.[2] The Championship held at the Crystal Palace that year was won by the legendary Black Dyke Mills Band conducted by William Halliwell – who conducted a total of six bands out of 15 on the day![3] Holst, delighted, listened to all 15 performances. He wrote to *The British Bandsman*, 'Last Saturday I listened to musicians conducted by musicians'.[4]

Because Holst was himself a professional trombone player who had gigged with a variety of bands and ensembles – particularly in the late 1890s with the White Viennese Band at numerous seaside resorts and later the Carl Rosa Opera Company and Scottish Orchestra – this might not seem on the surface that surprising:

> He liked writing for brass better than for military band: it was mellower and more flexible. His affection for the trombone was lasting, and he knew the texture of the band instinctively and could get the best out of every instrument. Propaganda in any form was always distasteful to him, but the one thing that would rouse him to indulge in it himself

1. Herbert Whiteley, who was editor of the journal *The British Bandsman*, on behalf of John Henry Illes (owner of the *Bandsman* and controller of both the National Championships and the brass band publishing company R. Smith & Co. who published the work), approached Holst for the commission. There is a new Facebook page created by the author which is hoped to provide a growing informal archive of commentary, data and links: 'A Moorside Suite – Gustav Holst' at *www.facebook.com/groups/1919662068302634*.

2. The date at the bottom of Holst's sketches, after the 'March', is '5 min 4-4pm March 15' indicating that all of the essential musical ideas for the work if not its full outline was completed by mid-March of 1928. (See also Jon C. Mitchell: 'Sketches for Holst's "A Moorside Suite"', in *Journal of Band Research* vol.2 no.22 (Spring 1987), p.5. My thanks to Nicholas Clark of the Britten-Pears Library, Aldeburgh, for making available Holst's original sketches for *A Moorside Suite* identified as H173, from the Holst Archive. The page numbers given to the sketches in this article are those of the sequence that the pages arrived in from B-PL not page numbers on the actual H173 sketches themselves. Mitchell was using a second source sketch textbook held at the St Paul's School for Girls, Hammersmith, London library – identified as 'App. IV 4' in his n.2. I am very grateful to Dr Howard Bailes at St Paul's who tracked down this sketchbook (originally donated by Sir Malcolm Arnold) and sent me the scanned pages. These St Paul's sketches are definitely older than H173. My references to these St Paul's sketches in this article will be available to the reader via the Mitchell article, in combination with my own inspection of them here.

3. One of the adjudicators was Sir Granville Bantock.

4. Michael Short: *Gustav Holst: the man and his music* (Oxford, 1990), p.272. In addition to Holst's zeal, JF Russell & JH Elliott (*The brass band movement* (London, 1936), pp.228–29) record that 'An article by the late Peter Warlock (Philip Heseltine [who had committed suicide]) on the brass band in general and Elgar's *Severn Suite* in particular, fell as manna from heaven upon the music page of the *Daily Telegraph* in 1930. "It is high time," wrote Warlock, "that the brass band was recognized, by composers and public alike, as a musical combination of real artistic value".' Warlock had himself arranged Delius's *On hearing the first cuckoo in spring* for brass band.

was the need of better music for brass bands [...] Here were players who combined the enthusiasm of amateurs with the skill of professionals. It was not only their technical proficiency that he admired so much: it was their sense of musical phrasing and their real musicianship.[5]

'The need of better music for brass bands' might be the identifying clause here, for what could be better than providing brass bands with their first symphony?

(Anecdotally, the present writer attended the 1984 Brighton Festival for the UK premiere of Sir Michael Tippett's *Festal brass with blues* by the Fairey Band. After the concert the 80-year old composer came bounding over enthusing mightily over *A Moorside Suite*, which had also been programmed, and Holst's remarkable ear for colour, including his particular use of the triangle in the 'March' – the only movement in the suite to use percussion. Tippett's overall admiration, including what might appear a very minor detail, points to the fact that in Holst's music there is a rarefication of what might otherwise appear generic, a quint-essentialising.[6])

That the suite was conceived specifically for brass band is evidenced in Holst's subsequent completion on 17 April 1932 of his string version of the 'Nocturne' for the junior orchestra of St Paul's Girls School, and his statement that 'The obvious truth being that it is not real string music'.[7] He composed the similarly three-movement *Brook Green Suite* (1932) for strings instead of completing the arrangement of the *Moorside* 'Scherzo' and 'March'.[8] (*A Moorside Suite* was composed in the same year as *Egdon Heath: a homage to Thomas Hardy*, which was commissioned as a symphony by the New York Symphony Orchestra, generally considered his masterpiece barring the popular *The planets*, which is also officially a 'suite' that is

5. Imogen Holst: *Gustav Holst* (Oxford, 1938), p.132. Imogen's own *The unfortunate traveller* (1930, based on a tale by Thomas Nash and dedicated to the Carlisle St Stephen's Band) for brass band, consisting of 'Introduction', 'Scherzo', 'Interlude' and 'March', was clearly inspired by *A Moorside Suite*. Interestingly, given the symphonic case for her father in this article, Imogen's suite is in four movements! Elliott recounts a concert on 12 February 1933, in which Gustav and Imogen Holst's 'very real enthusiasm' was on display, by the Carlisle St Stephen's Band featuring Gustav's Suite in E♭, *A Moorside Suite* and Imogen's *The unfortunate traveller* alongside Gustav's choral *How mighty are the Sabbaths* with a brass band transcription of the orchestral parts. Elliott also recounts that during rehearsals for this concert, he ventured to Holst that the brass band movement had a great future before it, to which Holst replied: 'It has a great present, if only people would realize it'. He noted Holst's 'deep concern in the welfare of the [brass band] movement. It is no secret that his untimely death [in 1934] prevented some ambitious "missionary" schemes from maturing' (Russell & Elliott: *The brass band movement*, pp.185–86).

6. It appears that there is a mysterious op.106, Symphony no.5 in E♭, *Wild Wales* [*Cambria*] for brass band, by Joseph Holbrooke (or Josef – he used both spellings) that may be from the late 1920s or 1930s (more likely the 1930s). It appears not to have been performed. A list of other largely defunct works by Holbrooke for brass band appears at *http://imslp.org/wiki/List_of_works_by_Joseph_Holbrooke*. The addition of percussion to the first two *Moorside* movements and additional percussion in the finale, as heard in transcriptions for concert band and orchestra, add nothing to the overall original effect Holst was seeking.

7. Short: *Gustav Holst*, p.311.

8. Holst went on to arrange the whole suite for strings (in dorian D as it turns out – the manuscript score held at the Britten-Pears Library) but only the 'Scherzo' and first 38 bars of the 'Nocturne' for wind/concert/military band (this manuscript is Add MS 47837 at the British Library). Short states: 'Also arranged for strings and military band' and it would appear that Gordon Jacob made both a full wind band arrangement and full orchestral version in the 1950s. (Why did Jacob make an additional repeat of the opening theme of the 'Scherzo' heard in the London Philharmonic Orchestra recording under Nicholas Braithwaite on the Lyrita label?) Denis Wright also made an additional concert/wind band arrangement. Other arrangements also exist, including one for string orchestra by Philip Lane and ten-piece brass and brass quintet versions by Stephen Roberts. See Michael Short: *Gustav Holst (1874–1934): a centenary documentation* (London, 1974), pp.74–76, and Imogen Holst: *A thematic catalogue of Gustav Holst's music* (London, 1974), pp.171–72.

considered a symphony. Important connections with *Egdon Heath* will be made below.)

Unlike much of the brass band repertoire preceding it, Holst wrote music that sounds every bit as striking and original today as it did almost a century ago: 'In his control of form, Holst is supreme [...] No two of his works are alike, the conception of each determining its length, shape, the forces used. Yet it is the appreciation of these very individual forms which has eluded Holst's critics.'[9] It is the intent of this present essay to correct this deficit in the case of *A Moorside Suite*.

With his deep philosophical and political (socialist) identification with the common man, and his own abilities and insider knowledge as a brass player, it should not be surprising that Holst determined to gift the brass band community with a work of considerable cultural value. He would certainly have grasped that the average brass band lover of the day would have little interest in any particular compositional technique let alone wider historical or aesthetic resonance. But a man of Holst's sensibility, no less than Benjamin Britten, might secretly delight in providing the 'innocent' *naiveté* of the common man – the gifted amateur – with a musical confection concealing considerable sophistication. The robust performance and recording history of *A Moorside Suite* attests to this – a recognition independent of some 'duty' to recognise Holst as the first major composer outside the brass band movement to compose a work for it.

This article seeks to show how Holst in 1928 fashioned in *A Moorside Suite* a work that shares intrinsic motivic connections with the so-called 'fate motif' of the first movement of Beethoven's Fifth Symphony as well as reflecting an overall tonal move from C minor to major (concert pitch for Beethoven, brass band pitch for Holst).[10] It demonstrates how, by using means of thematic transformation, Holst quarries many developments of this motive throughout each of the three movements of the suite. In doing so, it is proposed, Holst shaped a kind of symphonic thought – the whole suite as a singular kind of sonata form enclosing the three movements. This positions Holst's work as standing in specifically English cultural counterpoint not only to the great German composer, but also as a meaningful response to the rise of negative and overbearing forces in the Germany of both the First World War and the subsequent rise of the Nazis in the mid to late 1920s that derived their authority from the very cultural legacy of German music that Holst was increasingly reacting against.[11]

Additionally, for a genius of form such as Holst, such a formal challenge, possibly provoked by Percy Fletcher's *An Epic Symphony* (1926) for brass band – a work much connected with the First World War – might have been positively delicious, especially in the fulfilling of such an otherwise functional commission for a short test piece.

9. Vernon Handley: 'Introduction', in Edmund Rubbra: *Edmund Rubbra's collected essays on Gustav Holst* (London, 1974), p.14.

10. In the spirit of this article I will retain the Teutonic 'motif' for the Beethoven and the English 'motive' (with its neat psychological connotations) for the Holst. We know from the sketches that Holst changed the key of the music on several occasions to bring it into its final form centred on brass band C (Concert B♭). See also Mitchell: 'Sketches'. Because we know Holst scored *A Moorside Suite* himself (see n.17 below), the keys are directly of his own choosing – for both eye and ear (regardless of issues of the pitch of brass band instruments that would have sounded higher in 1928 than they do today).

11. Compare this with the 'anti-symphonic' music of Holst's early so-called 'Indian' period, from the 1890s through to *The cloud messenger* (1909–10), which privileged 'juxtaposing ideas or sound in a mosaic form rather than through symphonic development': Raymond Head: *Gustav Holst and India*, 2nd edition (Chipping Norton, 2012), p.29. Michael Tippett later adapted this mosaic technique as sonata/symphonic method in the period of his opera *King Priam* in the 1960s and 70s and occasionally beyond.

Dancing at an English dawn: the *Moorside* 'Scherzo'

Thus the rhythmic motive – indicated as *x* in all the musical examples that follow – that informs all of the music of the opening 'Scherzo' is one closely allied, though reinterpreted, with the famous Fate Motif underpinning the first movement of Beethoven's Fifth Symphony, to wit: short-short-short-long or · · · — (ex.1). In a sense Holst conceals this connection in plain sight and sound.

This has traditionally been identified as the Beethovenian sound of 'Fate knocking on the door', and Holst might well have intuited the value of making this ultra-famous soundbite the *Ur*-motive in a serious work in the 'popular style' of music for brass band and its audiences: a subconsciously recognisable musical hook for the broader listening public.

Indeed, if we read the ABA form of Holst's 'Scherzo' in the brass band key of dorian C (concert B♭), which contains a strong C minor bias with sharpened sixth, one might claim that Holst is putting his version of the Beethoven Fate Motif in its original C minor-ish context – in exclusively brass band terms (there's the inside joke), and for the eye rather than the ear – but reinterpreting it through an English modality.[12] Indeed by using brass band C dorian rather than concert C minor Holst might already be sonically recontextualising Beethoven.[13] ('How [Holst] enjoyed uttering his unorthodox opinions about the scoring of Beethoven!'[14]) Of course Concert B♭ is the foundational pitch of the harmonic series in brass band terms: the maximum number of open or 'natural' tones (i.e. no valves included), adding to the music's sonic magnetism.

It is worth noting that another great nationalist folksong collector/composer, the Hungarian Bela Bartók, composed his First Piano Concerto in 1926 two years before *A Moorside Suite*, a work that is similarly obsessed, in its second and third movements particularly, with the same Beethoven Fifth-derived rhythmic Fate Motif · · · —. So although *A Moorside Suite* may not have been viewed in any trendy *accepted* sense a contemporary modernist work, it nonetheless shows itself as involved in contemporary musical interests and cultural meaning (cf. the observation: 'If they can praise the strength lent by folk-music to the works of Stravinsky and Bartók, it is stupidity of monumental proportions to deny that strength in Holst'.[15])

The fact that Holst disguises this motive, henceforth referred to as the rhythmic motive, in his 'Scherzo' as one of his fingerprint dancing 6/8

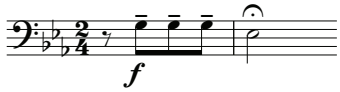
12. Short (*Gustav Holst*, p.412) identifies the scherzo as the only consistent genre form Holst retained throughout his composing career.

13. In Holst's original sketch, the 'Scherzo' melody appears in Concert D. Thus it was lowered a major third in its final form. The sketch also reveals melodic and rhythmic changes. See also Mitchell: 'Sketches', p.2, ex.3.

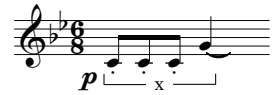
14. Rubbra: *Collected essays*, p.42.

15. Handley: 'Introduction'.

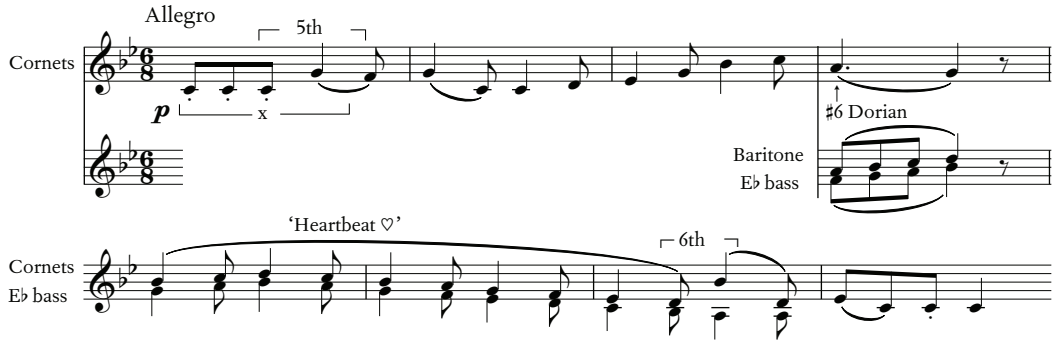
Ex.1a: Beethoven 'fate motif'



Ex.1b: Holst's rhythmic motive



Ex.2: Holst: *A Moorside Suite*, 'Scherzo', opening melody with accompaniment showing rhythmic motive, heart rhythms, baritone triplets and scale with concluding sixth



tunes – not a folksong but one of his own original melodies – is precisely the kind of move an Englishman might make when engaging with one of the Great German Masterworks (ex.2).

Even the portentous falling thirds of Beethoven's Fate Motif are offset by Holst's rising perfect fifths (later fourths) – a generative interval for the whole suite. Thus the stentorian weight and psychological foreboding of the Teutonic master is translated into a lilting but thoughtful English folk dance.[16] Indeed the outer panels of the 'Scherzo' share a good deal in common with the 'Dance of the three girls' from Holst's choral ballet of 1926 *The golden goose*. It is precisely this lightness of touch as opposed to

16. Holst's 'Scherzo' sounds, to this listener, like music describing a sun-brushed early morning mist in the English countryside, with light human activity around about – impressionistic brush-strokes rather than filled-in detail. The following 'Nocturne' is therefore, obviously, the night and the final 'March' a full break of day. Thus *A Moorside Suite* can also be *A day in a life*.

17. Short: *Gustav Holst*, p.429. Holst's *A Moorside Suite*, Elgar's *Severn Suite* (1930) and John Ireland's *A Downland Suite* (1932) and *Comedy Overture* (1934) have been identified as a 'First Harvest' of works from the period 1928–36 of an effort to engage significant composers outside the brass band movement itself (Hindmarsh:'Building', p.253). We should also properly include the *Oriental Rhapsody: Lalla Rookh* (1930); *Symphonic Prelude: Prometheus unbound* (1933, after Shelley) and *Overture: King Lear* (1936), by Sir Granville Bantock; the *Concert Overture: Henry V* (1934) by Ralph Vaughan Williams; the suite *Pageantry* (1934) by Herbert Howells; and the suite *Kenilworth* (1936) by Sir Arthur Bliss in this context. (Howells and Bliss would both go on to compose the triptych *Three figures* (1960) and *The Belmont Variations* (1963) respectively.) Holst undertook the complete scoring of *A Moorside Suite* himself, although he did (apparently) consult with composer Henry Geehl (1881–1961) on issues of brass band scoring – as would Elgar and Ireland. (The precise degree of Geehl's involvement in scoring the Elgar, raising doubts about the veracity of Geehl's claim to have scored the entire work when the subsequent discovery of Elgar's manuscripts suggests otherwise, is addressed in Hindmarsh: 'Building', p.255, although Hindmarsh: ibid., p.256 mistakenly claims that both Ireland works were scored by Frank Wright. It is more likely that Ireland consulted with either Geehl or Kenneth Wright or both and that either could have scored both of Ireland's pieces.) Geehl wrote: 'Holst [in addition to Elgar but unlike Ireland] was another composer who proved very difficult. I visited him several times in connection with the "Moorside Suite", and, when he asked my opinion about a bit of the scoring he was working on, I ventured to remark that I thought the passage in question needed more filling in – the middle especially – and mentioned a similar part in Tschaikowsky's "Romeo and Juliet". At this innocent remark he flew into a temper, telling me that Tschaikowsky's music was banal, his scoring "circussy" and his craftsmanship beneath contempt! Such presumption rather nettled me, and I suppose I was somewhat rude when I told him "that it did not interest me one little bit what he thought of Tschaikowsky, but it would interest me greatly to know what Tschaikowsky thought of him!" I am sorry to say that we did not part the best of friends – and I never met him again.' (Henry Geehl: 'The unrecognised arranger', in *The Conductor* vol.5 no.8 (1960), pp.3 & 8). This much would certainly seem to indicate that, at best, Geehl was only an advisor to Holst, and did not undertake any scoring of *A Moorside Suite* himself (*pace* Hindmarsh ('Building', p.254), who

threatening obsession that is the gist of Holst's musical thought here: 'Even in *A Moorside Suite*, specially commissioned as a brass band test-piece, he resisted the temptation to indulge in dazzling technique for its own sake, and eschewed such tricks as double-tonguing, opting instead for solid musicality, for which control of sustained *legato* is necessary.'[17]

This opening melody is spun with a chain of heartbeat rhythms: — · — · — · — etc.[18] (These might remind us of Holst's own weak heart, whose failure would claim his life prematurely only six years later, in 1934, at the age of 59.) It should also be noted that the dancing nature of these rhythms are related by genre to the little dance shanty that recurs in the concluding 'March'.

The tune itself consists of two phrases: the first four bars, using all the notes of the C dorian octave, dance around the pitch of G using thirds and fifths, thus utilising the triadic; the second four bars are a scalic arc, anticipating Holst's use of scales thematically and developmentally throughout the suite. Notably the melody and its cadence encode the falling sixth-plus-tone that will become such a distinctive expressive feature of the following 'Nocturne'.

At letter A the first phrase of the melodic idea is immediately developed by the solo horn as are the scales of the second phrase in the ensuing sequences of falling scales – their descending sweep resisted by the rising layers of the rhythmic motive in the cornets. This leads to a full *ff* canonic statement between high and low band of the tune at letter B – thus the tune itself is already being developed in the symphonic manner.

As this music unfolds we also gradually become aware that the rhythmic motive and the heartbeat rhythm make up the texture of all the music right up to the concluding little chains of triplets in the solo voices at letter C derived from the rhythm first heard in bar 4 in baritones and E♭ bass (see ex.2) and the cadence in the basses at the end of the opening tune (ex.3, three bars before letter A).[19] Thus the economy of means in the musical statement is exemplary, virtually minimalist, setting up all of the music to follow in the ensuing two movements.

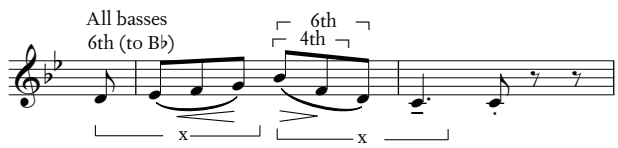
The self-identified Trio is in brass band C major (B♭ Concert) – thus the previous minor/dorian now opens out into the parallel major, as does the entire arc of Beethoven's Fifth Symphony – whose melody we might in other symphonic contexts conceive of as a sonata form second subject (ex.4). Holst composes a new *cantabile* tune in the cornets (three-parts,

claims he did). It is interesting that Elgar's *Severn Suite* (the River Severn being in the Midlands) and Ireland's *A Downland Suite* (the Downs being in the South of England) are both possibly a creative response to Holst's Northern *A Moorside Suite*. It was Elliott (*Brass band movement*, p.224) who first observed that the Ireland is 'founded on symphonic practice'. It was also Elliott (p.217) who first perspicaciously observed that: 'The repertory of the new original works includes pieces which were evidently conceived in general terms of a medium with a definite scope and pronounced individual characteristics, but which do not specifically aim at subtleties of instrumentation; there are others which have obviously taken shape from an intimate knowledge of the ensemble, and which in part strive to develop its inner resources. The contributions of Elgar and Ireland fall into the first category; those of Holst and Bantock into the second.'

18. Another excellent example of this heartbeat rhythm in contemporary Holst is the 'Mummer's play' from *The golden goose* of 1926.

19. In brass band terminology 'basses' means the tuba section – two E♭ and two B♭ basses.

Ex.3: Holst: *A Moorside Suite*, 'Scherzo', bass cadence also showing 6th

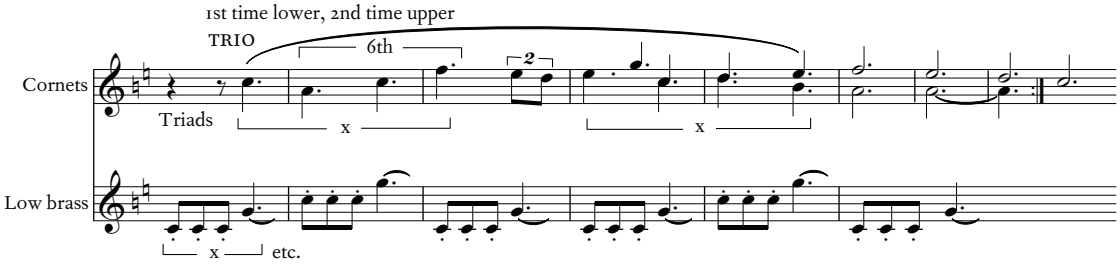


hence 'Trio') in a regular dotted crotchet rhythm (broken by an occasional duplet) that behaves like the regular rhythm second subject of Beethoven's Fifth – all the while underpinned by the same short-short-short-long · · · — first subject rhythm in the lower band with which Beethoven similarly underpins his (ex.5). Holst essentially juxtaposes 6/8 with 2/4 switching between the higher and lower strata of the band.

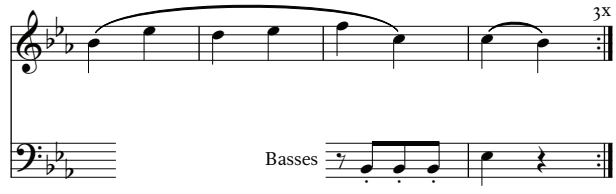
This *cantabile* tune reveals itself to be a further development of the ideas from the opening melody: it consists of thirds that return on themselves to fill in a seventh (A-G, almost an octave) and concludes with a descending scale phrase prepared by a slight scalic ascent. Again Holst is intrinsically developing his melodic and motivic material in a symphonic manner. The triadic harmony represents a further development in this context.

The Trio *cantabile* tune is itself immediately developed , now as a unison line (i.e. without the previous triads in the cornet line), at fig.D as tenor horns, baritones, euphoniums and basses sequentially echo and vary the first three bars of the tune in a gradually rising, sleep-like yawn and repose (ex.6).

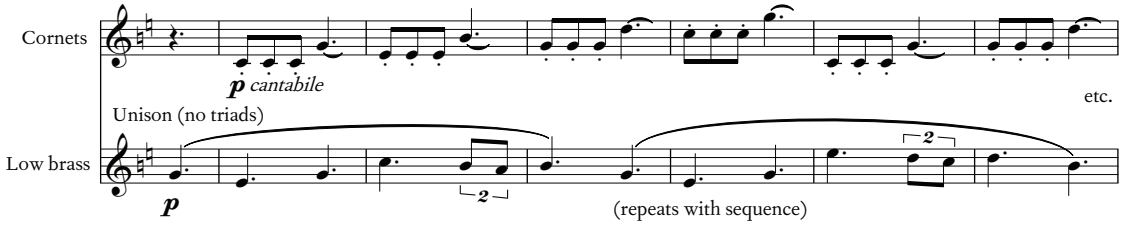
Ex.4: Holst: *A Moorside Suite*, 'Scherzo', Trio cantabile showing construction



Ex.5: Beethoven: Fifth Symphony, first movement, second subject showing construction



Ex.6: Holst: *A Moorside Suite*, showing sequential development



The cornets then resume the original triadic *cantabile* tune, bringing it to a sudden apotheosis on high B♭, a semitone beyond the octave (i.e. A-B♭) that then descends, notably, in a series of falling fourths sounding against a sweeping descending scale. This apotheosis reveals a release of passion that is quickly withdrawn into the more reflective character of the movement – a singularly 'English', if not actually repressive, *Affeckt*. The latter cycle then repeats (from fig.D to the *Da Capo*).

This *cantabile* Trio is also formally important as it prepares us for a pattern common to all three movements: the 'Scherzo', 'Nocturne' and 'March' all commence with relatively active music that is followed by a more static, chorale-like idea, much like the sonata-form normative model of an active (traditionally male-gendered) first subject and a more passive (traditionally female-gendered) second subject. (That Holst's second subject is no more masculine or feminine than his first subject is the notable feature here.) This formal approach suggests a kind of mirroring within the suite itself, in particular an expositional and recapitulatory mirror between the 'Scherzo' and 'March' movements respectively, corresponding to traditional sonata form expectation.

At a more local level, this same 'mirroring' process can be felt in Holst's use of echo technique: Holst's Trio *cantabile* tune in the cornets is underpinned by the rhythmic motive stated in the lower brass. As the development of this *cantabile* then moves to the basses and the cornets take over the rhythmic motive, one experiences them as a series of reimagined distant bugle tattoos – as though one might be encountering a ripple of memory or thoughts, possibly (although not exclusively) regarding the victims of war, or possibly a bucolic view of the past filtered through the melancholy of war. This shimmering aura is not executed explicitly by Holst, there is nothing in-your-face about it, but rather by means of an exquisite euphony employing echo and a sense of vast open space. In this sense Holst turns the generic expectations of a group of brass instruments sounding strident and bellicose on its head: the brass-band-as-community transforms before our ears into a delicate instrument of mind and recall, of contemplation, memory and peace, via Holst's expert aural imagination.[20] Such echo technique in the Trio is far from absent in the outer panels of the 'Scherzo'. It is simply that it is distilled: echo is the 'Scherzo's core of being, its *fons et origo*.

Holst's echo technique also extends to the subsequent movements: falling sixths and other features of the 'Nocturne' and the canons of falling scales and rising fourth motives in the 'March'. To these we will return. There is always the sense of Holst's transition toward a more heterophonic (i.e. echoing) texture in the recurring pattern of these moments in *A Moorside Suite*, and these may well be associated with landscape – the work is said

20. Indeed, it is clear, as previously mentioned, that Holst did not feel that the suite worked well in other orchestrations. Although on the surface not generically 'like' brass band music, Holst was clearly able to hear unique possibilities within specifically brass band orchestration that would *not* transcribe well elsewhere. In *A Moorside Suite*, brass band colour reigns supreme.

to have been inspired by Holst's walks in 'rugged, bracing landscapes like the North York Moors':[21] one might assume that any significant sound made on the Moors themselves would resonate and echo around, and these echoes would create a sense of location and distance to a degree. (Of course Holst also employs such techniques in other works that have nothing to do with the Moors or even landscapes *per se*!) In utilising this echo technique in each of the movements Holst is potentially locating the listener at an imagined space within the musical landscape itself, providing a frame for aural reference and contemplation: thus the music serves as both memory and place, inner and outer, mind and body.

Also, as the roles reverse in Holst's Trio melody at fig.D, the unison lower band now sequentially developing the originally triadic tune, one becomes aware of the same kind of riff-like construction both Beethoven (Fifth) and Holst give to their second subject themes (exx.5 & 6). The sudden emergence of a beautiful regular rhythmic downward scale, derived from the previous lilting ones in the opening cornet melody and cumulative trombone and bass scales before the *tutti* statement of the tune at letter B, now heard against the climax of the triadic Trio tune after letter E, is a particular musical feature that will be developed further in the 'Nocturne' and 'March'.[22]

However, unlike Beethoven's Fifth, Holst's two 'Scherzo' tunes (i.e. opening and Trio) do not transition into a typical symphonic sonata form development section. As shown below, both this development and sonata form expectation is deferred to the remaining two movements as a kind of 'continual development' such as that practised by the late-Romantic German tradition including the Second Viennese School (Schoenberg, Berg and Webern). Rather, the Trio loops back around to a reprise of the opening, and the 'Scherzo' suddenly evaporates into the late evening air.

What has been most remarkable about this opening music is how it is only one step from monody: influenced by folksong principle we are primarily either listening to single-line melody or two-part canon. Even the triadic Trio wears its harmonies lightly, quickly shifting to the unison low brass melody. The 'Nocturne' will exploit actual unaccompanied monody. The striking aspect of both movements is how the music clearly trends toward – if not actually achieving – heterophonic texture: simply put, the melodies give the impression of harmonising themselves via the web-like, echoing extensions around them. Such techniques are closer to those found in what we now call World Music – especially the music of the East – and is a demonstration of Holst's deeper engagement with such in a manner anticipating much in Britten's music – especially after *Curlew River* in the 1960s. Of course the technique can also be found by singing monody, such as plainchant, in the vast echoey environs of a Western cathedral or church, as Britten also exploited.

21. Hindmarsh: 'Building', p.254.

22. Short: (*Gustav Holst*, pp.374–76) discusses the importance of such scales to Holst: 'Rising and falling scales are mixed in the *Toccata*, *Egdon Heath*, and *A Moorside Suite*'.

Thus one is made aware in this music of Holst's late-period evolution from a focus on chords toward the primacy of melody and its extractions.[23] The 'Scherzo' is propelled by *lines* of music – melodic counterpoints, rather than harmonic movement.[24] When actual harmony occurs it tends to form distant background textures, impressions rather than achievements. (This is also encountered in the later music of Britten.) It is this more vaporous texture that tends toward remoteness rather than a fuller harmonic embrace: one tends to sense emotion being strained through the intellectual rigour of musical lines dancing and consorting together.

Holst's anti-Wagnerian intent, repudiating 19th-century Romantic luxuriance and his own earlier compositional language – also the immediate heritage of much early brass band music that Holst is similarly resisting – leaves its telling fingerprint in *A Moorside Suite*, marking it out as uniquely 'other' in the early brass band repertoire – and much that comes subsequently. The composer Wilfred Heaton (1918–2000) will emerge from within the brass band movement as Holst's closest successor in this regard (e.g. the radical economy of the second movement of his *Contest music* of 1973). Indeed it was Holst's pupil, Edmund Rubbra (frequently quoted in the present article) who would chronologically next show such a poetic quasi-minimalist approach to brass band writing in his evocative and much under-rated *Variations on 'The Shining River'* for brass band in 1958, regrettably – like Holst – his only single contribution to the brass band repertoire.[25]

Thus Holst's opening movement is as understated and unassuming as Beethoven's Fifth first movement is overstated and over-determined – an observation that has relevance to the political *milieu* of the day with the general rise of fascism. (Let it here be noted that in Holst's two-line draft of the complete suite he 'originally intended the "Scherzo" to be the third movement of the work, for it was originally labeled "Allegretto 3rd Movement (Scherzo)." The "Allegretto" was later shortened to "Allegro" and the "3rd Movement" part of the title was crossed out. The draft of this movement is essentially the same as what appears in the finished product.'[26] To this important formal evolution we will return below.)

The extreme delicacy of style and almost chamber music-like transparency of Holst's texture are a miracle of musical imagination for the brass band medium. But for the brief few bars of *ff* as the band sings out the opening melody in *tutti* all of the other dynamics are below *mf* including a unison *pp* 'puff' at the end. How different it is from Holst's subsequent stand-alone orchestral *Scherzo* of 1933, a stentorian movement in the Vaughan Williams symphonic manner – much more like the kind of brass band scherzo one might have expected Holst to write for his *A Moorside Suite* if he was a less imaginative composer. But that *Scherzo* was for an orchestral symphony that

23. See Rubbra: *Collected essays*, p.38.

24. Holst was also arranging two versions of Bach's Fugue 'à la gigue' for concert/wind/military band and for orchestra for the BBC during this period – additional evidence of contrapuntal influence.

25. Rubbra's variations, the theme originally being a piano study, are especially curious in that many of them – except the fourth variation – appear to have very little, if any, direct connection with the theme. See also Ralph Scott Grover: *The music of Edmund Rubbra* (Aldershot, 1993), p.575.

26. Mitchell: 'Sketches', p.4.

Holst ultimately did not compose – whereas the 'Scherzo' of his brass band symphony now shifts gear for a second movement 'Nocturne'.[27]

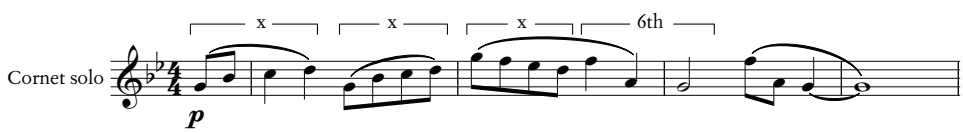
Staring at the stars: the *Moorside* 'Nocturne'

If Holst's 'Scherzo' was a model of economy and transparency, the 'Nocturne' is its quintessence: monody.[28] For it opens with an unaccompanied cornet solo playing an original melody in G minor by Holst that sounds like one of the folk songs he would have recorded in an English pub during one of his folksong collecting forays with Vaughan Williams some 20 years earlier. (The 'Nocturne' does indeed share a familial relationship with 'Saturn' in *The planets* from 16 years earlier).

But what is particularly interesting about this tune is that it begins with a four-note rising figure that can be heard to represent a development – a melodic transformation – of the Beethoven Fifth-derived rhythmic motive of the opening 'Scherzo'.[29] This is confirmed as the initial pausing rhythm of short-short-long-long (· · · — —) is ironed out in the second bar into four regular quavers short-short-short-short (· · · ·) that is itself balanced by a descending figure of the same rhythmic grouping at the start of bar 3 (ex.7). Also the pivotal use of the perfect fourth and fifth in the melodic phrases is essential as motivic content for the suite in a manner beyond incidental usage (i.e. as a fundamental interval of the harmonic series).

Holst encourages the ear to hear it in this way, as the only element of the phrase that is not connected to the rhythmic motive is the cadential figure: the falling sixth and whole-tone, formerly concealed at the end of the opening cornet melody and final bass cadence of the 'Scherzo', now becomes a distinctive motivic icon of the whole movement – as such it is immediately taken up by solo flugel horn and solo tenor horn as accompanying echoes.[30] The effect of this evolution is that this particular falling motive now becomes a melancholic reflection of its fleeting former presence in the 'Scherzo'. It is as if Holst locates a specific brief moment in time and expands it in the 'Nocturne' revealing deeply affecting moods impossible to obtain at the previous swift tempo. Thus motive becomes mood and provokes philosophic reflection – a quality that the tone of the 'Nocturne' as a whole deeply implies.

Ex.7: Holst: *A Moorside Suite*, 'Nocturne', opening cornet melody



27. Holst had composed an orchestral Symphony in C minor (1892) and a *Cotswold Symphony* (1900), but these were his only purely orchestral symphonies as opposed to his two choral symphonies.

28. Holst's sketches (pp.3–4) for the 'Nocturne' show that the second theme Chorale was originally in Concert A♭ rather than the Concert C of the final form.

29. Mitchell also observes that the opening four notes in the solo cornet closely resemble those of 'A br band fugue' (Holst's designation) subject in a sketch Holst rejected ('Sketches', p.1, ex.1 – the actual pitches being G-A-B-D as two semiquavers plus two quavers.) It is possible that this sketch was briefly considered as part of an original first movement idea (see also 'Sketches', p.5), but there is no actual evidence to support this in the sketch.

30. Imogen Holst identifies these falling sixths as 'recalling the poignancy of *I love my love* and are instinctively turning toward the *Lyric Movement* of five years later': *The music of Gustav Holst and Holst's music reconsidered*, third revised edition (Oxford, 1986), p.79. *I love my love* is no.5 of the *Six choral folk songs* of 1906, also used in the second movement of his *Second Suite in F* op.28 no.2 of 1911 for military/wind band.

The groups of four quavers (short-short-short-short or ….) are then spun into sequences of scales in the ensuing accompaniment – scales that recall and develop those beautifully expressive 'Scherzo' scales ('Nocturne', letter A, flugel and tenor horn). Once again Holst takes earlier 'fleeting' material and broadens its scope in a kind of slo-mo, greatly enhancing expressive meaning and detail. In this way the 'Nocturne' reveals itself to be a kind of 'dream' version of the 'Scherzo' content. On the technical level this plays into the idea of the 'Nocturne' as a novel kind of development section in relation to the exposition status of the 'Scherzo'. What should be carefully noted is how Holst's subtle and highly imaginative treatment of conventional sonata form practice completely serves the expressive movement of the musical shapes.

The call-response type texture Holst evokes is again suggestive of echo, and gradually solo (cornet) becomes trio (add flugel and solo horn) becomes quartet (add baritone) becomes quintet (add bass): once again a series of contrapuntal melodic lines. All the time the groupings of four quavers are thematic developments of the first movement rhythmic motive. This little section is concluded by a return of the solo cornet laying out three versions of the motive as at the beginning. The euphonium develops this in a halting melody accompanied only by two tenor horns.[31]

As we have observed, Holst seems to set up these echo distances in each movement in differing proportions: they are more or less regular in the 'Scherzo', creating a sense of stable space – a central location. In the 'Nocturne' they radiate both regular and irregular space, suggestive of a more varied position. If we are, in some manner, standing in the moors, we are now occupying a different location.

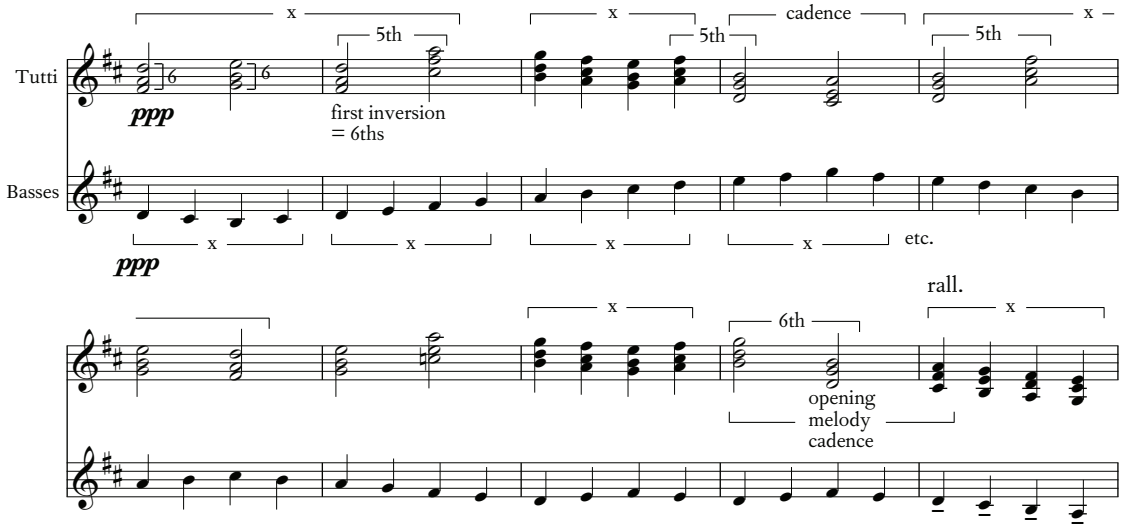
Canonic imitation also plays into this, as it did in the 'Scherzo' at letter B, especially during the chamber moments described above. These contrapuntal textures are played off against the subsequent massively quiet homophony of the 'Nocturne' *tutti* chorale.

This is the small miracle that happens at letter C: as if the moon benevolently bathes the scene in D major as Holst employs the full band marked *ppp* in a chorale-like section, mirroring the form of active to static material in the 'Scherzo' opening and Trio. (Once again one discerns Holst's subversion of typical *tutti* expectations in this luminous *ppp* respect.) The interval of the perfect fifth is again melodically pivotal here alerting us to the fact that the cosmic chorale is itself a magnificent reconception of the 'Nocturne' opening cornet folk-song monody, a point well-made by the now massive falling sixth at the end of the first long phrase two bars before letter D (ex.8 – yet another expansion of the falling sixth motive!).

It should be noted that this music bears a strong sibling relationship to the stately brass panel in *Egdon Heath*, both at the *Andante maestoso* 5/4

31. It is clear from p.3 of Holst's sketches that he cut several bars (3) before C in order to simply extend the euphonium's rising major third (G-A-B), with rhythmic shifts, to transition into the chorale at C. This reworking is given on p.11 of the sketches, where a further deletion shows Holst working to get the rhythm and harmony right (Holst writes '? not in score' above this). Additionally the sketches of the 'Nocturne' do not include any of the *rallentando* and *a tempo* indications we find in the finished score.

Ex.8: Holst: *A Moorside Suite*, 'Nocturne', chorale showing familial likeness to cornet monody, and rhythmic motive



between figs.5 & 6 in that orchestral score and at the end in the similar music after fig.10: the chorale-like feel, importance of the interval of a fourth and long bass scales possibly enable us to interpret this orchestral music as a 'nocturnal' landscape of *Egdon Heath*, at least on one level.

But what is even more remarkable than this piece of counter-intuitive brass band orchestration is the fact that the chorale is itself a further development of the rhythmic motive (ex.8). The stalking scales in the lower band are similarly arranged into four-note groupings and are themselves an expansion of the descending scales passages already observed throughout the 'Scherzo' and the tenor horn counterpoint at fig.A – pointedly felt at the *ff* climax of the section five bars after letter D.

Additionally Holst scores the chorale chords as first-inversion triads, emphasizing the interval of the sixth with all those English *fauxbourdon* resonances stretching back to the Burgundian period of musical history – yet another creative resonance of the 6th-interval (ex.8). Indeed, the total effect of the chorale is of slippage back to a late Medieval or Renaissance slow, elegant dance – a curious conjoining of the rural field of the 'folksong' to the harmonised urbanity of the Royal (Elizabethan?) Court. The total effect of the 'Nocturne' in these respects is of a translation backwards through time and space. (The progression from melody to harmony also mirrors that in the 'Scherzo'.)

The remainder of the 'Nocturne' is a lightly varied reprise of these two ideas:[32] folk-song-like chamber texture followed by cosmic chorale, with a coda that further varies the folk-like material and introduces a neat exchange of descending perfect fourths and fifths via soprano cornet, solo cornet,

32. On p.4 of Holst's sketches it is clear from a deletion that he rethought, and created, the canon between horn and E♭ bass seven bars after E.

solo horn and a final sixth on solo trombone that is a ghost of the previous cosmic chorale climax.[33] Three final chords on trombones, basses (tubas) and cornets respectively, recall the chorale in paraphrase. The final chord of G major is the parallel major to the opening G minor – a parallel key relationship mirroring that of the 'Scherzo' (C dorian/minor to C major). The move from a tonic of C major/minor for the 'Scherzo', dominant G minor/major of the 'Nocturne' returning to the tonic C minor/major for the 'March' similarly reflects Classical-period sonata form symphonic practice.

Once again in the 'Nocturne', out of the slenderest materials, Holst conceives of a brass band texture that is enthralling in its beauty, economy and novelty of form. But for present purposes it is also remarkable for the protean way in which the rhythmic motive has been thematically developed: almost all of the music of the 'Nocturne' is derived from its various profiles. Holst achieves all of this with absolutely no detriment to the apparent spontaneity of musical invention and atmospheric effect.

Mid-day Hike: the *Moorside* 'March'

The ensuing magical silence is suddenly shattered by a stentorian cornet statement of the rhythmic motive (ex.9a).[34] The 'March'-that-is-not-a-march has commenced – unlike the first two movements this one could have been what one might expect a brass band to 'do', only it isn't (for the most part).[35] Indeed on p.6 of Holst's sketches H173 this movement is identified as a 'Finale Rondo' – Holst does not use the term 'March' at all.[36]

Holst's layering of the opening summons through the various sections of the band mirrors the similar summons opening his 'Dance of the Spirit of Fire' – coming out of the very last bars of 'Dance of the Spirits of Water' – from the ballet music to *The perfect fool* (1918–22). It also bears a tolerable family resemblance to the dynamic theme that opens the finale of Beethoven's Fifth Symphony in that it is constructed from the basic elements of the harmonic series – in Beethoven's case a rising C major triad subsequently filled-in and in Holst's case a tonally and modally undetermined rising set of fourths G-C (brass band pitch) with ♭7th F. Holst's subsequent filling-in reveals C minor (related to the dorian C that opened the 'Scherzo') (ex.10). The long-range goal of Beethoven's Fifth from C minor to C major is mirrored by Holst, but the opening tune of the march is more burdened and stress-infused, perhaps by the Spirit of the Age (the connection with the Spirit of Fire in *The perfect fool*) and the general rise of European dictatorship.

But, regarding Beethoven, Holst has his cake and eats it too, for his opening gesture is also as direct a gestural reference to the opening of

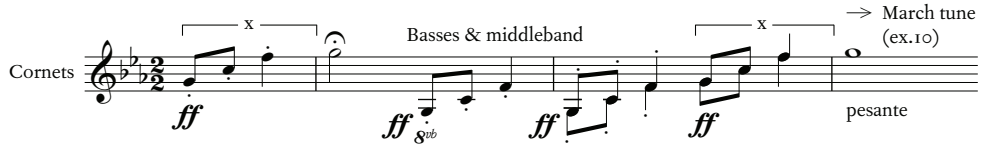
33. Page 5 of Holst's sketches reveal a deletion and insert (of bars 6–7 after H) that shows he was still working the harmonic element of the coda out at a late stage.

34. This opening summons of two-and-a-half bars is not present at the beginning of the 'Finale Rondo' (i.e. the 'March') on p.6 of Holst's sketches. Rather it starts with the march theme direct. However, it does appear at the bottom of the page with the identification 'Intro' followed by the form in the letter scheme appearing in the main text of this article. Clearly this was a later thought.

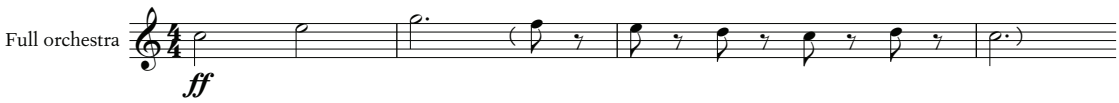
35. Imogen observes that the *Moorside* 'March' 'is like a mature comment on the early *Marching Song* [op.22 no.2 for wind band] of 1906: it is a fitting acknowledgement of a twenty years' debt of gratitude for the solid and companionable help that folk-songs had brought him' (Imogen Holst: *The music of Gustav Holst*, p.79).

36. In the sketches a great deal of the harmony is also missing from the later part of the 'March' when melodic material is repeated, especially after letter H, where some of it is pencilled in, clearly added after the ink melodic line: for example there is absolutely nothing indicated other than the euphonium melody at J.

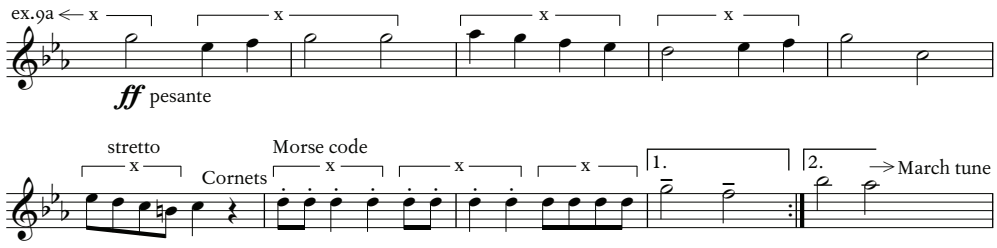
Ex.9a: Holst: *A Moorside Suite*, 'March', the opening fanfare (related to Beethoven in ex.1a)



Ex.9b: Beethoven: Fifth Symphony, finale, opening theme



Ex.10: Holst: *A Moorside Suite*, 'March' rondo tune showing stretto, and rhythmic motif Morse code showing dislocation



Beethoven's Fifth as can be, complete with fermata. Thus at a stroke Holst invokes both the opening and finale of the Fifth while recapitulating the opening of the *Moorside* 'Scherzo' at the same incisive instant.

However, Holst simultaneously sidesteps the triumphalism of the Beethoven finale with an ensuing anxious English march-shanty complete with frantic Morse code effects (see below).[37] The point here is that the entire 'March' hums with a tone of un-march-like foreboding (at least not typically) that is relieved to some extent by the later major mode shanty elements but which may, from a certain listening perspective, also suggest that the final return of the 'big tune' functions to some degree as a Hollywood Ending. Again Holst eats his cake: the ending is both genuinely aspirational (at the *naïve* – in the best sense – level) and provisional (in the historic context).

The foregoing analysis of the earlier movements has shown how the rhythmic motive (*x*) has been present in various transformed manifestations throughout the 'Nocturne': a unique type of development section in the terminology of symphonic sonata form. But its emphatic return here is distinctive – a kind of varied motivic declaration that is both initiatory (for the 'March') and recapitulatory (from the 'Scherzo') for the whole suite.

Regarding these opening fourths, and in relation to Holst's anti-Teutonic orientation, Edmund Rubbra has observed that:

37. I am taking the liberty of referring to the major themes in Holst's 'March' as 'shanties' because each of them strikes me as having that particular quality, even though they are original tunes. Mitchell ('Sketches', p.4) states that Holst's original sketch for this march-shanty tune is dated '"3pm March 9 St. Barth" ("St. Barth" being either a church or a hospital)' and is in the same key as the final form with an altered cadence. This date, time and location might well be in the St Paul's School sketchbook Mitchell is using but is not in the H173 sketches at the Britten-Pears Library that I am consulting.

> His almost fanatical reaction against the chromaticism of Wagnerian methods led Holst to see what possibilities were locked up in the pure diatonicism of these perfect fourths and fifths, and his mind was essentially a questing and experimental one his researches led to astonishing results.[38]

The *Moorside* 'March' is one such astonishing result for those with ears that hear, and this particular figure of two rising fourths has resonated strongly within the brass band repertoire itself:[39] Holst's characteristic use of two fourths separated by a whole-tone were also adopted as leading motives that open and close Gilbert Vinter's late *James Cook: circumnavigator* and *Spectrum* of 1969 for brass band. Vinter was a seminal – virtually a solitary – figure in the brass band repertoire of the 1960s and *Spectrum* in particular is considered a canonic text.[40]

Holst's example also directly inspired Edward Gregson's *Connotations for brass band* (1977) originally subtitled 'Variations on a fourth', partly as a homage to Holst some 50 years after *A Moorside Suite*. Gregson is also a successor of the innovation of Vinter's brass band writing to a degree. *Connotations* was not only an early benchmark of Gregson's compositional career, it also represented a new kind of continental openness toward the Classical musical language of the USA (a clue also in the title: Aaron Copland wrote a work entitled *Connotations* in the 1960s, although the 12-tone language in that particular work being different from Gregson's at this point, who is closer in spirit to neo-Classical Copland). This 'American openness' is a stylistic hallmark that would also strongly influence Gregson's successors Philip Sparke and Peter Graham – also with strong jazz influences – whose protean writing for both brass and wind/concert band enjoys great international success.[41]

(Indeed Gregson's earliest title for *Connotations* was 'Symphonic Variations', a nomenclature he deemed too abstract for brass band audiences, thus *Connotations* was adopted as a literary term implying 'more than one way of incorporating ideas about the same thing, or multiple ways of hearing a basic musical idea.' In discussing this article with Gregson I pointed out that in this way *Connotations* becomes an extension, or a mirror, of *A Moorside Suite* – also working the same rhythmic motive related to Beethoven 5 – which, from the perspective of the symphonic developments outlined in the present article, could also have been titled 'Connotations'.[42] Gregson was surprised and pleased at this revelation. There is a genuine, deep dialectic between both works.)

Thus Holst's rhythmic motive, derived from Beethoven, has also resonated unconsciously or otherwise in these later brass band works. It is Holst's specifically melodic (linear) use of the fourth as opposed to its employment in (quartal) chords – e.g. Gregson in *Connotations*, although he also uses them melodically– that is distinctive and radically different in

38. Rubbra: *Collected essays*, p.48. Short: (*Gustav Holst*, pp.368–69) identifies early examples of Holst's use of the (diatonic) fourth in the operetta *Lansdown Castle* (1892), the opera *The magic mirror* (1896), *Cotswold Symphony* (1900). 'Jupiter' from *The planets* (1914–16), *First choral symphony* (1923–24), *Terzetto* for flute, oboe and viola (1925), and *The wandering scholar* (1929–30). Late examples include *Hammersmith* (1930), *Capriccio* (1932), and the final orchestral *Scherzo* (1933–34).

39. Such fourth combinations are also found in Holst's ballet *The golden goose* (1926), *Egdon Heath* (1927) and Double Concerto (1929), all dating from the late *A Moorside Suite* period.

40. I am not including consideration of the Salvation Army brass band literature in this particular 'secular band repertoire' context.

41. A brief example of Philip Sparke's link to Holst would be three bars before fig.40 of his *Cambridge variations*, where cornet, horn and baritone solo figures of falling 6th-plus-tone employ the same technique as Holst's 'Nocturne' – using falling/overlapping figures to intensify the harmonic texture. 'I distinctly remember thinking of *Moorside* as I was writing this passage – even though that was 25 years ago!' (Philip Sparke, e-mail of 2 August 2017).

42. Skype discussion with Edward Gregson, 15 August 2017.

Holst's work during the modernist period: line pre-eminent over harmony, a vital dimension of his debt to monodic folksong. It should also be noted that the two rising fourths that inform the coda of Holst's orchestral *Egdon Heath* (Molto Adagio at fig.11) share a familial connection with the *Moorside* 'March.'

Beethoven's fateful C minor (brass band pitch) is again asserted at the beginning of Holst's 'March', pointing up another recapitulatory element from the 'Scherzo'. The tune itself, a type of shanty, insistently emphasises G to D back to G and down to C. If the tonic C is taken as a distinct element it is possible to hear the entire march phrase as evolved from sequences of the four-note rhythmic motif (ex.10).[43] The responding cornet section phrase in G major spells out the rhythmic motive in a kind of Morse code working in cross-rhythm against the march's pulse and underpinned by percussion used for the first time in the suite.[44] There are several examples of this kind of rhythmic dislocation in the 'March'.

It is clear, from his final arrangement of the movements, that Holst has planned to enable us to hear the opening of the 'March' as a varied recapitulation of the opening 'Scherzo' – complete with key, brass band C dorian/minor transitioning to C major – and the emphatic return of the rhythmic motive. (Indeed this may well be why he added the opening fanfare as a later thought in the final sketch in H173.) Echoes and descending scales also abound in a veritable plethora of recapitulatory gestures that again expand the emotional range of those very gestures. Thus the 'March' is both a sonata form recapitulation and further development section simultaneously, in the manner of the progressive sonata form techniques of late romanticism and the Second Viennese School, particularly Alban Berg.

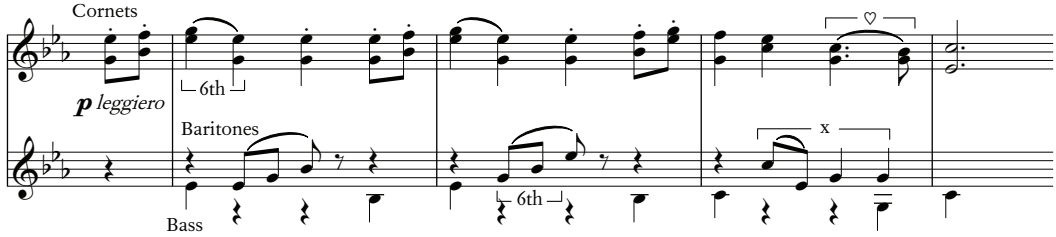
The form of the opening section of the 'March' as a whole may be shown as A, B, A, A1, C, C1, A, where A = march theme; B = Morse code (bar 9); A (bar 14); A1 (echo, letter A); C = dance; C1 = dance echo (letter B); A. Holst gives us a delightful little dance episode, a second shanty, C, recalling the 'Scherzo' in both dance genre and the heartbeat rhythm (ex.11).[45] (Holst originally identified this form, on pp.6 and 7 of his sketches, as: 'A B A aa

43. Short (*Gustav Holst*, p.365) identifies rhythmic diminution in the march phrase as the descending scale fragment in the middle of the tune is halved in rhythm, bringing the tune to an abrupt end.

44. These 'Morse code' passages in the 'March', used to break up the opening statements of the march-shanty theme, were apparently added by Holst at a late stage in the H173 sketches, possibly taken from another rejected St Paul's sketch (see n.35 above). See Mitchell: 'Sketches', p.5. They appear as two additional patches on pp.12 & 13 of the sketches.

45. Holst's original sketch for this dance-shanty, dated '7am March 8', is notated twice as fast and is transposed down a minor 6th but is otherwise almost completely unmodified in its final form. See Mitchell: 'Sketches', p.3, ex.5.

Ex.11: Holst: *A Moorside Suite*, 'March', second shanty showing heartbeat rhythm



C bass C C 8 inra A D', where A = march theme; B = a (late) patch stuck to the sketch indicating the Morse code figure; aa = march theme; C = dance; D = chorale-shanty.)[46]

At letter C we hear a smooth tune – a kind of second subject if you will – of which Elgar might have been proud (ex.12). It constitutes the third and final original shanty tune by Holst in the 'March'.

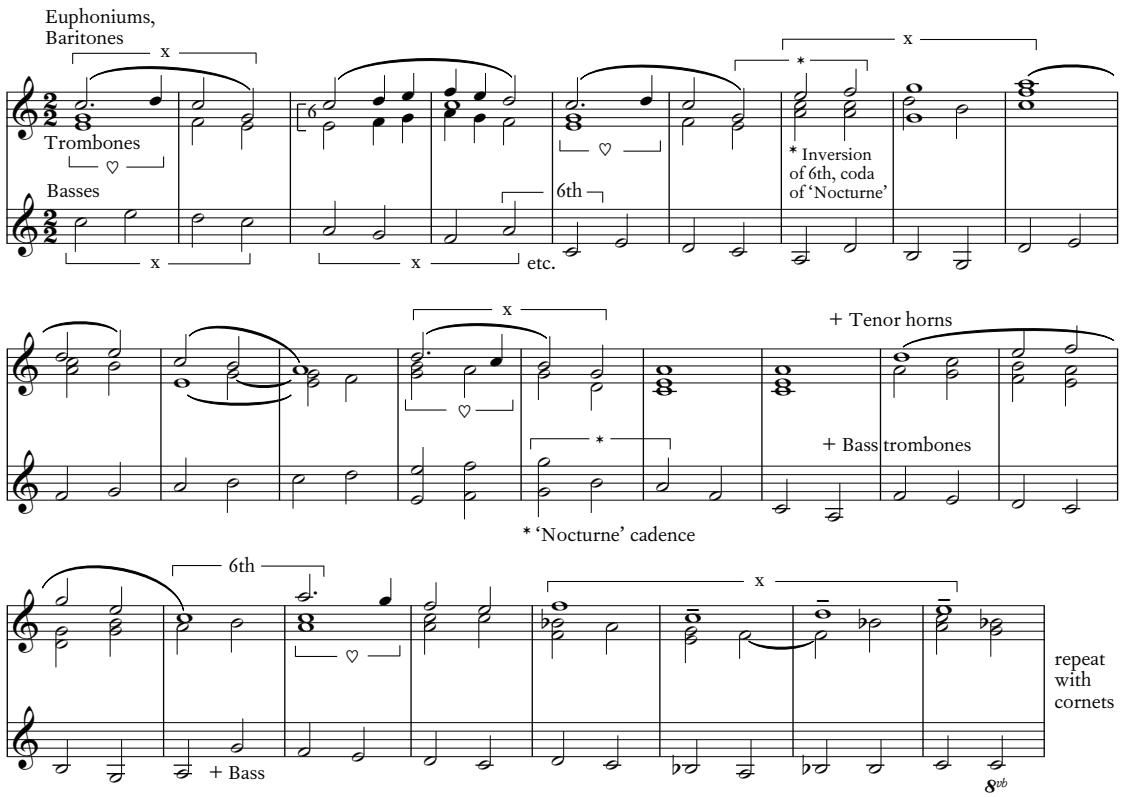
As with the 'Scherzo' Trio, the key now slides into the parallel C major, pointing to both key and chorale-shanty melody as a further recapitulatory gesture.[47] The head motive of this elegant shanty tune is yet another variant of the rhythmic motive embodying the heartbeat. At letter D the rhythmic motive also informs the counterpoint in the inner pars – groupings of phrases into four notes. Even the four bars leading into the climax at letter E are four great semibreves accompanying each bar of the tune (ex.13).

Behaving like the repeated material in the 'Scherzo' where the bass of the band carried the *cantabile* melody, the 'March' chorale-shanty itself proceeds with repetition and stretching upward before repose (ex.6 above). The

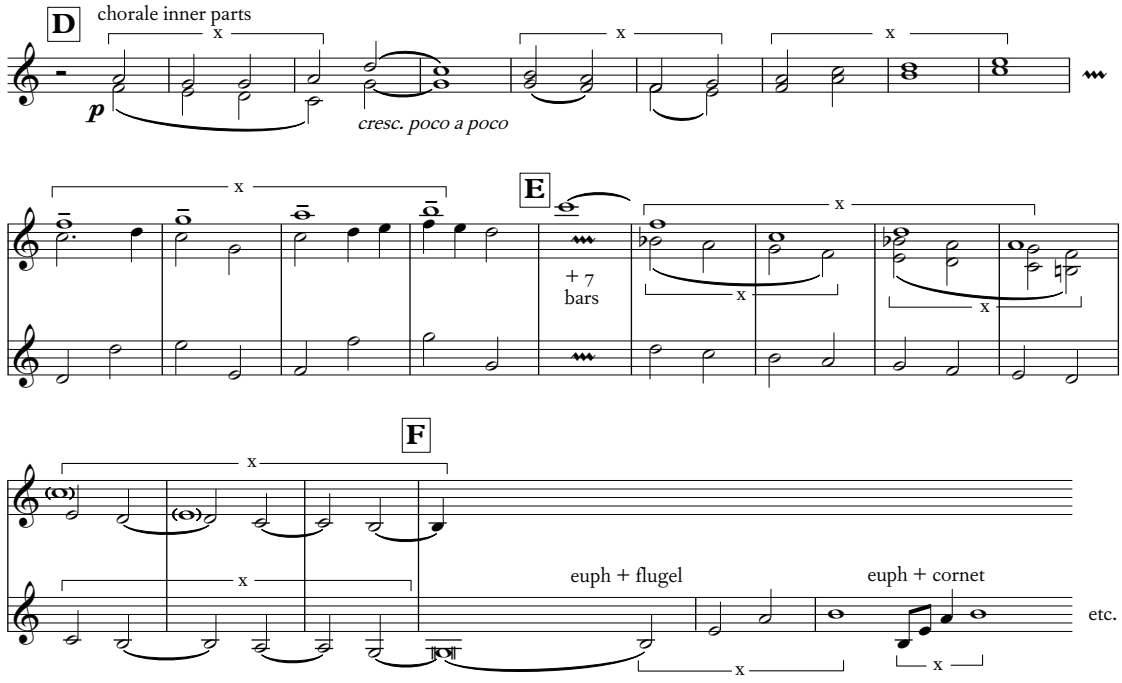
46. Page 6 of H173 sketches and Mitchell: 'Sketches', p.5.

47. Holst's original sketch for this chorale-shanty melody is in the same key but notated twice as fast. See Mitchell: 'Sketches', p.3, ex.4, top line.

Ex.12: Holst: *A Moorside Suite*, 'March', chorale-shanty showing rhythmic motif and heartbeat, and phrase repetition and scales in bass line



Ex.13: Holst: *A Moorside Suite*, 'March', showing 'x' motive in inner parts at letter D and four great notes at letter E



accompanying bass-line further develops scalic patterns. The great chorale-shanty climax on high C in the cornets at letter E cements the importance of this pitch as key for the entire suite.

Holst's intensive focus on the rhythmic motive continues into the transitional music at letter F. This is strange music to encounter in a march of any kind, one's antennae detecting Holst's relishing of generic subversion and display of imaginative skill once again. The call and responses (echoes) between instruments are varied in their placing and the dreamy scales seem contemplative rather than functional and disciplined as one would expect of a march. We first hear the rhythmic motive as an even four-note pattern sequentially on solo euphonium and flugel horn with a return of its opening fanfare profile in the euphonium and second cornets. These kind of exposed rhythmic variants are played out against a gentle stream of descending scales, redolently recalling the 'Scherzo', but also the great scales at the heart of the 'Nocturne'. As the rhythmic motive begins to kick up, moving into the return to C minor, so do the scales, in rapid staccato descent. It is as if the music is 'waking up' and reorienting back to the march idea after the sensuous contemplative sweetness of the chorale-shanty section. It is a truly magical moment, transporting the movement entirely away, suggesting a world-within-a-world. Holst is doing nothing

less than completely rethinking what a march can be, delivering it from its otherwise militaristic provenance: he is pacifying the inherently implied bellicosity of the genre.

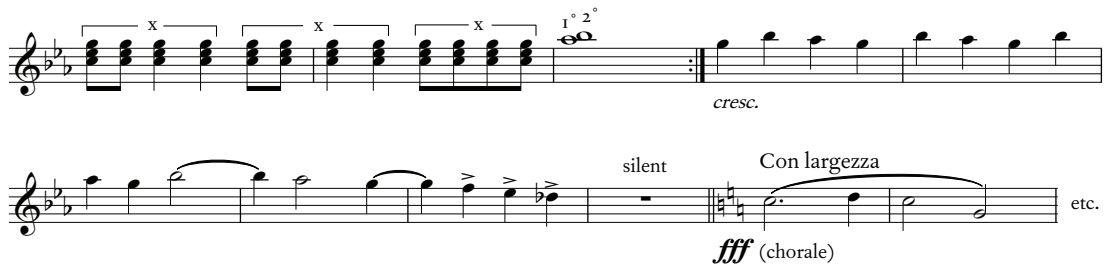
The dislocated Morse code rhythms return at letter G against stentorian soundings of yet another rhythmic four-note variant in the trombones. (Is this a stylisation of machine-gun fire we are hearing?) A highly syncopated *tutti* sequence of fourths that one would be sorely pressed to keep step with – and which is indeed a highly concentrated extension of echo technique, like a consecutive series of quasi physical blows – initiates a boisterous return of the march tune, which is itself now developed, tumbling headlong into the little dance-shanty after letter F (ex.14).

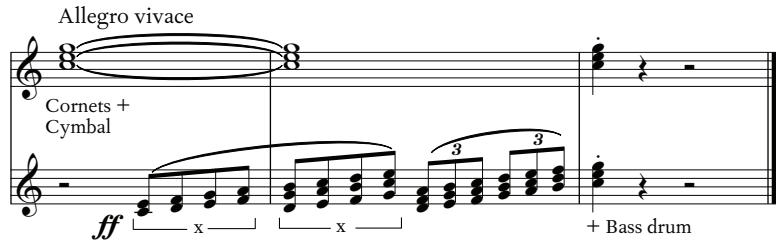
This Morse code episode also returns unexpectedly to form an extended, indeed slightly sinister commentary centred on Holst's own instrument, the trombone (again is it recalling the distant – or anticipating the future – sound of machine gun fire?). The disruptive *tutti* sequence of fourths also returns unexpectedly to cap off the music into a dramatic silent bar before letter L.

This has been a varied internal recapitulation and formal development of the opening march sequence shown above. It leads to a final *tutti* peroration of the second chorale subject at letter L *Con largezza* (not quite Elgar's *Nobilmente*!) complete with a huge rising scale, a hair-raising statement of aspiration and summation of all the scalic forms heard previously throughout the entire suite, in the low brass. The short Allegro vivace coda features new rushing four-note groupings before a dramatic final flourish (ex.15 – the final triplets being related to those at the end of the 'Scherzo' – a winsome final recapitulatory touch).).

Holst's use of echo technique in the 'March' has been, if anything, more complex than the other movements. The rising fourths are layered in sections at the very beginning and even the rhythmic *stretto* within the march tune itself can be accommodated within a broader definition of echo. The falling scales beneath the tune suggest a spreading of space. Repetition of motives themselves become a kind of concentrated echo and the disjointed rhythms

Ex.14: Holst: *A Moorside Suite*, 'March', showing Morse code rhythm and stentorian rhythmic motif leading to major tutti dislocation





Ex.15: Holst: *A Moorside Suite*, 'March', Coda, showing rhythmic motif

of fourth at the climax before the return of the march theme and just before the silent bar preceding the *Con largezza* denote a kind of 'echo-jam'.

Sweet symphonic summary

At a late stage in my research and musical analysis for the present article I discovered an article written about Holst's sketches for *A Moorside Suite* in 1987 by Jon C. Mitchell, with the subsequent delivery of Holst's original sketches (H173) from the Britten-Pears library and a set of earlier sketches held at the St Paul's School for Girls, Hammersmith (see n.2). In addition to the quotation at the end of the above section on the 'Scherzo' I was astonished to read the following, subsequently confirmed by my own inspection of the sketches:

> Holst's title for the third movement ('March') was 'Finale: Rondo.' This would indicate that Holst originally planned *A Moorside Suite* to have four movements. The second movement would be the 'Nocturne', the third 'Scherzo,' the fourth 'Finale: Rondo' ('March'). But what of the first? Holst may have planned to use a sonata-allegro movement, since the other movements could be interpreted as belonging to the sonata cycle. Or, at this point in the compositional process, he still could have had a fugal beginning in mind. Whatever the case, he abandoned plans for a four-movement work by the time he had completed this stage of the composition.[48]

It is important to note that there are no identified sketch materials of any kind by Holst for a first movement – not a single bar in either the St Paul's sketchbook or the H173 score sketch at the Britten-Pears Library. Thus, based on Holst's own notations in his sketches, Mitchell surmises (confirmed by my own inspection of the H173 sketches) that Holst had originally planned to write a four-movement work that would have approximated a symphonic sequence (i.e. missing sonata allegro first movement; 'Nocturne' slow movement; 'Scherzo' dance movement and 'March' rondo finale).

Holst even has a concluding symphonic sonata-rondo movement (in which a single thematic idea regularly returns between contrasting episodes in the Germanic model) masquerading as a 'March'-which-is-not-a-march, but rather a dramatic kind of march-rondo in which the march theme is repeated, rondo like, within a kind of extended development section of the whole work.

48. ibid., p.5.

The reader can only imagine one's sense of vindication as though Holst himself was verifying one's conclusions from beyond the grave almost 90 years later, in ways that even Mr Mitchell could not have imagined 30 years earlier. For Holst had not abandoned his plans for a four-movement symphonic work. Rather he had completely altered its construct and re-distribution. Indeed, the fact that not only did Holst reposition the 'Scherzo' as the new opening movement, without any original first movement having been composed, but also actually changed its designation from 'Allegretto' to 'Allegro' does indeed indicate that he recognised its new status as a kind of 'sonata allegro' as qualified in the scheme I have outlined in the present article: Holst's symphonic intentions were in no way compromised by the reshaping of the formal scheme. Indeed, they were fully consummated in a completely novel redesign.

For, what I hope to have shown in the foregoing analysis is that Holst has created a kind of expanded symphonic sonata form across the entire three-movement span of *A Moorside Suite* representative of a 'missing' first movement that has been secretly dissolved into the extant three. It has been shown how the 'March' is itself a highly varied recapitulation of the 'Scherzo', not least in Holst's use of parallel C minor and major (brass band pitch) and intensive rhythmic design and development, but also how the 'Nocturne' is, in fact, a continuing development of ideas both musical and emotional also found in the 'Scherzo'. The opening out of C minor into C major over the entire span of Holst's suite mirrors the same process across the whole of Beethoven's Fifth Symphony, thus keeping *A Moorside Suite* in an unlikely but nonetheless relevant dialogue with Ludwig van's masterpiece. Essentially Holst's move from C minor to major refuses to be overtly triumphalist (depending on how one hears the 'Hollywood ending') while fully utilising the underlying sense of optimism, even qualified salvation, that is implied by such a fundamental harmonic move.

On the basis of this evidence, one might wonder why Holst didn't designate *A Moorside Suite* a 'symphonic suite', as he had with *The planets*? If Percy Fletcher had titled his three-movement-suite-in-all-but-name *An Epic Symphony* for brass band, why wouldn't Holst at least call his *A Simple Symphony*? When one is completely familiar with the music, such designations seem somehow inappropriate. Why is this?

Firstly the nature of the landscape indicated by the title may be of import: Holst would not write a 'Germanic' symphony to describe the English moors – their essential bleakness and melancholy. Rather he would write, if you will, an island symphony – a symphony that reflects an English scale of life, 'Little Britain' – a distillation of 'Englishness' into a verisimilitude of symphonic form. Benjamin Britten, a lifelong fan of Holst and deeply influenced by him, and who also had Holst's daughter Imogen as his personal amanuensis

for many years, would do the same with his *Simple Symphony*, which is really a suite based on tunes from his own childhood. Britten's *Sinfonia da requiem* (1940, like *A Moorside Suite* a work in three movements), *Spring Symphony* (1948, an extended 12-movement work for choir, vocal soloists, boys' choir and orchestra modelled after Mahler, taking a cue from Holst's own *Choral Symphony*) and *Cello Symphony* (1964, really a type of concerto in four symphonic movements) are similarly English translations or subversions of the stereotyped German idea of what a symphony is 'properly' meant to be. The same could be said of Michael Tippett's four symphonies, but not, perhaps, to the same degree of formal transgression – which is not to say they don't have great formal innovation within themselves (they most certainly do).[49]

In our post-'Brexit' world it is, perhaps, easier to recognise that in the same way that a 'normal' English person (and here one is deliberately invoking a cultural Old World stereotype, tongue in cheek, to make a point) would hardly ever (if ever!) directly submit to a German cultural norm or manner – certainly not after the First World War (and Holst's suite was written in the very middle of the period now thought of as the Second Thirty-Years' War, the period from 1914 to 1945 encompassing both world wars), Holst's suite would similarly play affectionate havoc with the normative Germanic symphonic model. For a man of Holst's prodigious gifts of bespoke form, such a relationship must surely have been irresistible, especially as he was emphatically desirous to create a work that would avowedly improve the quality of brass band music.

Along with his personal friend and colleague Ralph Vaughan Williams, Holst essentially came out of that 19th-century musical nationalist movement that, via folksong, attempted to remake a specifically national music as opposed to the previously dominant German tradition of Schütz, Bach, Handel, Buxtehude, Haydn, Mozart, Beethoven, Schubert, Schumann, Brahms, Mendelssohn, Wagner, Bruckner, Mahler, Wolf, Schoenberg, Berg, Webern, Hindemith et al. – right up to and including Holst's own era around the Second Thirty-Years' War. (Vaughan Williams's own response to the Teutonic model in his nine orchestral symphonies stands in a similarly parallel world, and the consistently thicker textures – whether or not actually scored by RVW – and musical thinking in his brass band contributions, *Overture: Henry V* (1933–34), *Prelude on three Welsh hymn tunes* (1955) and *Variations for brass band* (1957), serve here to illustrate the economy of Holst's, with the exception of the radical thematic economy of the 1957 *Variations* that rivals any work of the Second Viennese School in tonal terms.)

It is important to attend to the fact that although Holst returns to the use of original music based on folk-like ideas in *A Moorside Suite* (possibly a welcome departure for him after the intensity and apparent introversion

49. I am not of the school that denigrates Tippett's achievements, which I value most highly. If anything Tippett's symphonic statements engage the Teutonic tradition much more on its own mainly Beethovenian terms, especially Tippett's Third – largely in the tradition of Elgar and Vaughan Williams. But in none of these cases should Tippett's dynamic reimagining of symphonic technique and meaning be underestimated, for it is an epic achievement.

of *Egdon Heath*), he has nonetheless completely integrated his thematic material into music that does not draw undue attention to the 'folk element': thus *A Moorside Suite* is not merely a piece of propaganda for English folksong-derived music, but is rather a complete dissolving of the 'folk element' into a truly subtle and remarkable symphonic technique – indeed a 'folk-symphony', thus Holst's thumbing his nose at those claiming such a creature could not exist. In this sense of dissolving folk in the concert art he is the equivalent of Bartók and Kodály. This is Holst's astounding achievement in *A Moorside Suite* and his genuinely unique contribution to the quality of brass band music. One only wishes he could have lived long enough to have done more.

As alluded to above, it is also noteworthy that Percy Fletcher's highly successful *An Epic Symphony*, which was the commissioned test piece for the National Brass Band Championships in 1926 – two years before Holst's – is also essentially a three-movement suite with a big march finale. It is certainly possible that Fletcher's work – if Holst had heard it and/or been provided with a perusal score – provided some kind of stimulus, or anti-model, for the 'secret symphony' that is *A Moorside Suite*. (Certainly Fletcher's work provided a direct model for Arthur Bliss's *Suite: Kenilworth*, composed for the National Championships in 1936, and Bliss would almost certainly not have been unaware of Holst's masterpiece for the medium either.)

The formal *legerdemain* that Holst plays is that the missing symphonic sonata form first movement of *A Moorside Suite* is collapsed into the three existing movements – a potential that was always there simply waiting to be discovered. For a formal genius like Holst this trick must have been exquisite, rescuing him from the boredom of conventional formal procedure and also providing opportunity for novel formal integrity in fulfilling the commission for a test-piece-length work for a specific occasion.

It is here that the idiosyncratic requirements of the brass band test piece come into play: a commission for the National Championships of Great Britain during that period (if no other) had to require considerations of length and time simply to be able to get through the 15 band competition performances on the special day.[50] Thus Holst's particular genius was able to condense the symphonic requirements outlined above into a streamlined three-movement suite related to the English landscape that was presumably of significance to him.

As importantly, I hope that this article has probed more deeply into how Holst's music is informed of an intense musical intellect and economy: hardly a single note is wasted. The 'Scherzo' itself, in keeping with the word's designation as 'play', is a tightly reasoned musical game that vaporises into the atmosphere. Genuine warmth can be experienced in the 'Nocturne', yet one can still sense that a deep musical logic – indeed a symphonic logic – is

50. It should be noted that modern brass band test piece commissions are often closer to 20 minutes in length, or longer, for a larger number of competing bands on the day!

unfurled through its original folksongs and cosmic chorale. The 'March' ultimately doesn't so much invoke a trump across the moors as it does a series of musical shanty episodes, stentorian, dance-like, majestic, ruminative and sometimes, like the other movements, very thinly scored with a minimum of *tuttis* that are judiciously deployed in a symphonic rondo design. Evocative music perhaps, but infused with a fierce, lean musical intelligence. One might even argue that, in Holst, the musical heart and mind are thoroughly integrated at one of the rarest levels in all musical history – even though in some works the mind does occasionally win out.

The motivic design outlined in this article is worthy of the Second Viennese School and any number of the other modernist composers working around Holst in more outwardly 'contemporary' musical languages at the time, often with more posing bombast and of-the-moment posturing.[51] It was precisely the Holstian model that inspired Britten to do likewise, and to find a way out of the worst excesses of the modernist straight jacket.

In the broader field of Holst scholarship and thinking, this investigation of *A Moorside Suite* respectfully refutes the received wisdom that Holst 'does not use the conventions of development' and that his contemporary orchestral work *Egdon Heath* (with its similar focus on a particular landscape and claims made about it being a symphony in one movement) is an isolated example of Holst's extraordinary formal achievement. It also respectfully refutes the claim that 'We find little in the way of sonata form in Holst's music'.[52] *A Moorside Suite* may indeed look back 20 years to Holst's early use of folksong, yet the formidable technique outlined above make clear that this brass band suite has significant claims on Holst's understated genius. His intense phobia of fame and recognition find reflection in the hiddenness of the formal appropriations of his art in addition to his music's very resistance to the kind of 'heavy' analysis undertaken in the present article. (When you listen to *A Moorside Suite* after reading this, I can virtually guarantee that the word 'symphony' would be the very last word to come to mind and, in retrospect, my detailed analysis will appear far too grand in its claims and largesse – all a part of Holst's humble plan no doubt!)

As mentioned above, subsequent to *A Moorside Suite*, Holst composed an orchestral *Scherzo* (1933–34) that was only one movement of a planned but uncompleted symphony. That Holst wrote this symphonic *Scherzo* after his brass band suite is particularly curious in relation to the *Moorside* 'Scherzo' and Beethoven's Fifth Symphony – were these scherzos a kind of gateway into a type of orchestral symphonic thinking for Holst? This question is piqued by the additional recognition that Holst's *Hammersmith* (1930) for wind band is described as a 'Prelude and Scherzo'.

Thus it is that Gustav Holst's *A Moorside Suite* for brass band might be considered a reactive kind of English symphony, and with these qualifications,

51. For additional insights into Holst's use of deeply-embedded motifs that unify apparently (and superficially) diverse musical movements and sections, including 'Jupiter' from *The planets*, *Edgon Heath* and *Hammersmith*, see Short: *Gustav Holst*, pp.415–16. If this technique is not considered genuinely symphonic, it is hard to think what is.

52. Short: *Gustav Holst*, pp.411 & 413 respectively.

the first brass band symphony. As such Holst reimagines Beethoven and the entire Teutonic tradition that Beethoven, in a certain sense, founded (*pace* Haydn), or at least brought to a creative head. In the middle of the Second Thirty Years' War, antagonised and initiated by Germany, Gustav Holst re-imagines and recontextualises 'German-ness' into a idiomatic English Moorside soundscape and an idiosyncratic response to German symphonic sonata form carried across the entire work in music that culminates, at the end of the 'March', in an idealised vision of what 'Englishness' might not only mean, but what it might contribute: not constricting paranoid agitation and fear, but a spontaneous, closely reasoned and ultimately open-hearted spiritual freedom.