

TAGORE, CARPENTER, AND THE GITANJALI SONG CYCLE

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HELEN JANICE BRIGGS

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Approved by:

Thomas B. Stamerberg
Major Professor

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INTRODUCTION

The purpose of this report was to present pertinent information concerning the lives of two great men, Rabindranath Tagore and John Alden Carpenter, who have enriched poetry and music. Out of this union was produced the Gitanjali Song Cycle. This paper presents an analysis in which certain fundamental musical characteristics of Carpenter are made known.

It is interesting to note the similarities between Carpenter and Tagore. Both men were born in aristocratic families, not lacking in wealth or social position. Both were religious, sensitive, and humane. Tagore sought international understanding among people, and in this same respect Carpenter has brought American thought into closer rapport with the poems of Tagore and William Sharp, with Negro folklore and Classic and Romantic ideals of older civilizations.

Both men have been described as conservative. In the case of Carpenter, he belonged with those who were conservatives at heart, but who nevertheless were progressive. Tagore was said to have been far less conservative in his old age than during his earlier manhood.

Similarly, Carpenter has shown his gift for writing words as well as music as is seen in his suite, Adventures in a Perambulator. That Tagore has composed over a thousand songs is proof of his ability to write music.

Walt Whitman was a favorite of both. Olin Downes wrote that Carpenter had surely been stirred and profoundly touched by the coarse, cosmic and racial Whitman. Tagore considered Whitman America's greatest poet.

Both men were exceedingly independent in their works. Tagore sought neither to follow any known models nor to cater to any standardized public taste. Although Carpenter has been compared to Debussy, nevertheless he is himself, and has evolved a style of his own.

Unique is the fact that the Gitanjali brought fame overnight to the poet and composer alike.

CHAPTER I

RABINDRANATH TAGORE

Rabindranath Tagore was born at a time when his native land of India lay powerless at the feet of the British. In the hundred years that have passed since his birth, the face of India has undergone such radical changes as no optimist living in 1861 could have envisaged. Most remarkable are the changes that have taken place in the mind and spirit of modern India of which the transformation in outward appearance is but a partial reflection.

A number of forces and factors were responsible for this transformation, not the least of which was what happened in the rest of the world and its impact on India. Among individuals who made these forces creative in shaping the destiny of India, Rabindranath Tagore stands out as pre-eminent. The contribution of Tagore was subtle and deep, for it released and fed the hidden fountains of creative activity in fields which the politician is powerless to exploit.

Though Tagore was essentially a poet, he was much more than a mere poet in the Western sense of the term, as Gandhi was more than a mere politician or patriot. He was a poet in the traditional Indian sense of the word, kavi, a seer, an intermediary between the human and the divine. His genius enriched whatever it touched. He gave to his people in one lifetime what normally takes centuries to evolve--a language capable of expressing the finest modulations of thought and feeling, a literature worthy to be taught in any university in the world. There is hardly a field of literary activity which was not explored and made fruitful by his daring adventures, and many of these were virgin fields in Bengali which his hands were the first to stir into life....He is one of the world's few writers whose works--in his own language--

withstand the severest tests of great literature, eastern or western, ancient or modern.¹

Unfortunately, Tagore's own language, Bengali, is only one of the many in India, so that even in his own country the majority of the people have access to his writings in translation only.² To his people then, Tagore's main significance lies in the impulse and direction he gave to the course of India's cultural and moral development, and in the example he presented of a genius devoted to his art and no less dedicated to the service of his people and of humanity in general.³ Consequently, he set out to make India proud of her heritage. His poems became laden with traditional thought and imagery. His plays highlighted the buffooneries of the imitators of the ruling class. In his lectures he expounded the wisdom of Hindu scriptures. On all sides, he endeavored to reinstate India's glory.⁴ Because of his many sided genius, the contemporary renaissance in Indian culture was not confined to the languages and their literatures. His almost missionary zeal for the development of the Indian arts, whether it be dancing or music or painting or the handicrafts, his appreciation of the indigenous folk arts and his fostering of both the classical and the folk traditions in his School at Santiniketan provided a stimulus and a prestige to these arts which has enabled them to survive and flower.⁵

¹Krishina Kripalani, Tagore, pp. 1-3.

²Ibid., p. 4.

³Ibid.

⁴Krishnalal Shridharani, "Rabindranath Tagore," The Saturday Review of Literature, August 16, 1941, 24:3.

⁵Kripalani, op. cit., p. 4.

Rabindranath Tagore was the fourteenth child born to a wealthy family which numbered fifteen children. Fortunately, he was robust and survived the neglect of his parents and the tyranny of the servants. In fact, he was none the worse for it. Listening to the conversation in the servant's quarters and the stories he was told to keep him quiet, he must have early acquired an ear for folklore and the racy idiom of the colloquial Bengali of which he became a great master and protagonist in later life.

Hemendranath, Rabindranath's third eldest brother, was in charge of directing the early studies of his younger brother and his companions. He insisted that the children should be taught in their mother-tongue and not in English.

Though the child had less than enough of his parents' company and care, his education was by no means neglected. Much more than the lessons at school it was the private tutoring at home that laid the foundation in Rabindranath's mind of his wide range of interests as well as his life-long aversion to 'the mills of learning'.⁶

Rabindranath was still in his teens when he went to London to study law, but he returned home without finishing the course. Thus, like Bernard Shaw, he was no school-product, but, also like Bernard Shaw, he was a lusty student of libraries and life. Instead of going to the Inner Temple while in England, Tagore spent most of his time in the British Museum, and consumed Shakespeare, Milton, Byron, Goethe, Dante, Petrarch, and Tasso. He also translated into Bengali parts of

⁶Ibid., p. 43.

Victor Hugo, Shelley, Elizabeth Barrett Browning, and Tennyson. But his favorite English poet was Robert Browning; he thought Walt Whitman America's greatest poet. In his own poetry, he abandoned the traditional Indian metre, and in his songs he occasionally showed the influence of Western music. Early in his youth he became famous in India as the "Bengali Byron."⁷

RELIGION

Tagore had all the advantages of ancestry and wealth and position. His family was of the Brahman caste, with a long record in scholarship and public service, and without the handicap of extreme Hindu Orthodoxy.⁸ The Tagore family represented in their new destiny a fine fusion of the three great strands of culture--Hindu, Muslim, and Christian--which have made modern India what it is.⁹ They comprise a family sub-caste of their own. The poet's father was the second founder of the Brahmo Somaj, the reformed Hindu church of Bengal, which in its first stage of growth reached numerical strength enough to make a distinct community in Bengal, socially liberal and providing a nursery for the professions. Tagore was to the end a devoted servant of the Somaj.¹⁰

The best key to the poet-philosopher's vision of man and reality is to found in his book entitled "The Religion of Man." In the preface

⁷Shridharani, *op. cit.*, p. 4.

⁸S. K. Ratcliffe, "Tagore," *Nation*, September 6, 1941, 53:205.

⁹Kripalani, *op. cit.*, p. 17.

¹⁰Ratcliffe, *op. cit.*, p. 205.

he tells us that from his "immature youth" onward, "the Religion of Man has been growing within my mind as a religious experience and not merely as a philosophical subject."¹¹

Tagore talks as a humanist in many passages. "Goodness lies in realizing in oneself the humanity which is universal and of all times; degradation is the failure to realize the 'Universal Man' that is over and above the 'natural self'."¹² Again: "Beauty and excellence, heroism and sacrifice reveal the soul of man; they transcend the isolated man and realize the Universal Man who dwells in the inmost heart of all individuals."¹³

Tagore admits that it may be no more than "an idiosyncrasy of my temperament" to be unable to accept religion "because everybody whom I might trust believed in its value."¹⁴

It is Tagore's belief that the nature of both God and man must be illuminated by the notion of creative partnership.¹⁵ "We ignore Tagore's inner conviction if we think that the realization of the best either in God or in man is possible without mutuality."¹⁶

The religion of man, then, is a cry of gladness--often found even in the heartbreak of suffering faced heroically--where God and man seek for a creative partnership needed by both in fulfilling their beings. There is no good in any man any where that

¹¹Peter A. Bertocci, "Tagore - Great Sentinel of Humanity," Religion in Life, Fall 1961, 30:551.

¹²Ibid.

¹³Loc. cit.

¹⁴Loc. cit.

¹⁵Ibid., pp. 555-559.

¹⁶Ibid., p. 559.

any man can afford to neglect and this is the universal man. In dedicating our lives to the realization of Man, we share in the creativity of God--be it in the home, field, factory, university or community. In dedicating ourselves to the creativity of Man we are worshipping the God whose crucible is there. The religion of man is not idolizing of self or of naturalized human nature; nor is it the worship of an External Other who might in his majesty possibly be indifferent to man. Thus "He who is infinite in man must be expressed in the finitude of human life, of human society."

Clearly, then, when man identifies with "the immensity" of his own world, he does not "lose himself" in God but he does shatter the bonds of egotism. And he discovers fundamental creativities of the spiritual life in so doing.¹⁷

EDUCATION

Tagore was a pioneer in the field of education. For the last forty years of his life he was content to be a schoolmaster in humble rural surroundings, even when he had achieved fame such as no Indian had known before. He was the first in India to think out for himself and put in practice principles of education which are now commonplaces of educational theory, if not yet of practice.¹⁸

Keeping in the convention of the great teachers of the past, the man of letters became a man of action as a further step toward his goal of first reviving the ancient culture of India and, secondly, of seeking a higher unity between India's tradition and Western science. In 1901, he started an educational project on his father's estate at Bolpur, about a hundred miles from Calcutta. Apart from his writings, this is the most precious gift he has left behind.¹⁹ Into the international university,

¹⁷Ibid., p. 561.

¹⁸Kripalani, op. cit., p. 7.

¹⁹Shridharani, op. cit., p. 15.

Visva Bharati, he poured his earnings from writing and lecturing, the income from his inherited lands, and the sum which he received in 1913 as the first non-white recipient of the Nobel prize for literature.²⁰

...For forty years filled with artistic, intellectual and civic activity, Rabindranath Tagore sought to embody at Santiniketan a radically human ideal of education. Only when students and scholars from all over the world can come together for plain living and high thinking, in the common search for the conditions of human peace, freedom, and "true spiritual realization," will the dream of Tagore be realized at Visva-Eharati (center of international culture). Visva-Eharati, like its founder, stands for an ideal of life which has already become part of the cultural conscience of India.²¹

The earliest experiments in what is today known as Community Development were conducted by Tagore, first among the peasants of his own estates, and later in the institute named Sriniketan, which he founded for this purpose. His writings on rural education and on the problems of community development are still the finest manual for all workers in the field. If Tagore had done nothing else, what he did at Santiniketan and Sriniketan would be sufficient to rank him as one of India's greatest nation-builders.²²

AMBASSADORSHIP

"Rabindranath Tagore was the only man of letters, the single public figure, who could be regarded as a personal bridge between the West and the modern Orient."²³ Shridharani comments on Tagore as being more

²⁰"Legacy of Tagore," The Christian Century, August 20, 1941, 58:1022.

²¹Bertocci, op. cit., p. 555.

²²Kripalani, op. cit., p. 8.

²³Ratcliffe, op. cit., p. 205.

successful than anyone else in the twentieth century in bringing the East and the West closer together. This fact was aptly and even superbly recognized by the civilized world in 1913, when the Nobel Prize in Literature went for the first and only time out of the orbit of Western culture to be awarded to the Indian poet. Kipling, who was also born in India, had achieved the same distinction long before Tagore. But while Kipling's life work resulted in deepening the canyon between "the lesser breeds and God's chosen caste,"²⁴ it was Tagore who, for the first time in recent centuries, showed that the East can contribute to the West something more than a burden to be borne by the white man.

Ever since 1913, Tagore had been India's greatest and most effective ambassador of good-will to the world at large. But the United States in particular was the scene of his most spectacular feats as well as failures. On the credit side, no other Indian visiting this country was so successful in revealing India to the United States, not even Uday Shanker, the famous dancer. On the debit side, he became a victim of propaganda and whispering campaigns.²⁵

Tagore's main object to the West, however, did not consist in revealing the "Oriental grace." It was his ambition in the early nineteen-twenties to bring back to the Occident "the human touch" which was being obliterated by the rampant nationalism of the West.²⁶

To Tagore the faith that there is one God of love required him to give his life in working for one community of mankind. Thus he founded his international university. He wrote: "The most important of all facts in the present age is that the East and West have met. So long as

²⁴loc. cit.

²⁵Shridharani, op. cit., p. 3.

²⁶loc. cit.

it remains a mere fact, it will give rise to interminable conflicts; it will even hurt man's soul. It is the mission of all men of faith to raise this fact into truth.²⁷

NATIONALISM

Although friendly with Gandhi, Tagore made it plain that in thought and purpose, as in method, he stood at the opposite pole. He had drunk deeply of the Western springs and could not tolerate a program of isolation and non-cooperation. He was a modern, with an impassioned faith in cultural exchange and in the amplitude of the mind. Nor could he for a moment harbor the idea of non-violence as a principle of public action.²⁸ "A passionate lover of India and her finest ideals, he was too much of a Tagore to allow himself to be monopolized by any exclusive creed."²⁹

In the first decade of the present century the partition of Bengal infuriated the whole province and roused the people to a higher realization of their helplessness under foreign rule. Rabindranath turned his resentment into creative channels and made plans for national education and social reconstruction in addition to inspiring the people with poems that stirred them to the heart and with essays that awakened self-reliance and a sense of self-respect. As the movement degenerated into bomb-throwing and secret murders the poet returned to Santiniketan and

²⁷ The Christian Century, op. cit., p. 1022.

²⁸ Ratcliffe, op. cit., p. 205.

²⁹ Loc. cit.

proceeded quietly with his educational experiments.³⁰

A letter written in New York in 1921 concerning a statement made by a member of his Santiniketan Ashram shows how little difference Tagore saw between Indian and American nationalism:

It has deeply hurt me. This is the ugliest side of patriotism. For small minds, patriotism dissociates itself from the higher ideal of humanity. It becomes a magnification of self on a stupendous scale--magnifying our vulgarity, cruelty, greed; dethroning God to put this bloated self in his place. The whole world is suffering from this cult of devil worship in the present age. I cannot tell you how deeply I am suffering, being surrounded in this country by the endless ceremonials of this hideously profane cult. Everywhere there is an antipathy against Asia vented by a widespread campaign of calumny.³¹

Of all Tagore's controversial writings, the one which will probably live longest is a little book of three essays entitled Nationalism. Nationalism was first a protest against the impersonality of the modern state, which Tagore saw as a highly organized, closely articulated machine, insensitive to moral values, dedicated only to power and profit, growing by what it feeds on until it crushes all pity and betrays those who trust it most implicitly.³²

The knighthood which Tagore accepted in 1915 was returned to the Viceroy in the bitter grief evoked by the tragedy of Amritsar. His renunciation of the title was announced in a letter of protest which may be said to have introduced a new style in Indian political literature. "Tagore, especially when moved to anger by a public event, was a master of statement in his second language. The newspapers of the English-

³⁰Annadasankar and Lila Ray, Bengali Literature, pp. 62-66.

³¹The Christian Century, op. cit., p. 1022-1023.

³²Ibid., p. 1023.

speaking world continued to call him Sir Rabindranath. That did not trouble him. He had taken his stand."³³

WORKS

William Butler Yeats wrote of his conversation with a distinguished Bengali doctor of medicine who described Tagore in the following manner:

I read Rabindranath every day, to read one line of his is to forget all the troubles of the world...No poet seems to me as famous in Europe as he is among us. He is as great in music as in poetry, and his songs are sung from the west of India into Burmah wherever Bengali is spoken. He was already famous at nineteen when he wrote his first novel; and plays, written when he was but little older, are still played in Calcutta. I so much admire the completeness of his life; when he was very young he wrote much of natural objects, he would sit all day in his garden; from his twenty-fifth year or so to his thirty-fifth perhaps, when he had a great sorrow, he wrote the most beautiful love poetry in our language. After that his art grew deeper, it became religious and philosophical; all the aspirations of mankind are in his hymns. He is the first among our saints who has not refused to live, but has spoken out of Life itself, and that is why we give him our love.³⁴

Literary

To Indians, Tagore was above all the symbol of unity between the ancient Aryavarta (the land of the Aryans) and Hindustan of today. His poetry ran the gamut of India's heritage. The philosophers who wrote the "Upanishads" in 500 B.C. came to life again under his magic fingers. Buddha's teachings of "Maitri," bond of love, took on importance in Tagore's "Religion of Man." Sages like Kabira and Nanak who glorified mysticism in the Middle Ages; Emperor Akbar, who Indianized Islam in

³³Ratcliffe, op. cit., p. 205.

³⁴William Yeats, Gitanjali Song Offerings, pp. 5-6.

the 16th century; and the "Bauls," devotee-poets who until recently sang on the banks of the Ganges in Bengal--all these voices of the past formed a part of Tagore's lyric chorus.

The extraordinary beauty of Rabindranath's prose and verse, and the profound philosophy underlying his writings, caught the imagination of the people. This resulted in what may be described as the Tagore Age in India's literature. For the last forty years, Tagore's has been the most decisive influence, not only in the literature of his own province of Bengal but throughout central and northern India. While his philosophical treatises and essays on art and literature lie on the library tables of the so-called intelligentsia, his fictional writings have swayed the masses of his countrymen. And when the moon is high overhead, the people of the small towns often perform his historical plays in the streets for the free enjoyment of the entire community.³⁵

Paintings

The year of 1928 was indeed a fruitful year for Tagore, thanks partly to the fact that his health obliged him to stick to his own soil. It was in this year too that he began his experiments in an entirely new and unforeseen medium of creative expression, that of painting. He had always been drawn to this art and had occasionally cast furtive and longing glances at it; since as a young boy he had seen his elder and versatile brother Jyotirindranath draw.

³⁵Shridarani, op. cit., pp. 3-15.

Fortunately, Tagore had had no training and no reputation at stake as a painter, and so he painted without inhibition or affectation. The only unfortunate part was that, not taking his art seriously, he drew on whatever paper was at hand and with any instruments and colours, with the result that the preservation of these paintings, many of which are of exquisite quality, is presenting a serious problem. He painted fast and with a sure hand, in between the intervals of his literary activity, finishing each picture at one sitting, and has left behind nearly 2,500 paintings and drawings, all done during the last thirteen years of his life--a no mean achievement, considering that during the same period he also published more than sixty volumes of new literary writing, poetry and prose.

Tagore's poetry reveals nothing of his personality, although it establishes his status. But his painting is an intimacy comparable to the publication of private correspondence. It is probably much nearer to his music than to his poetry. The manner is as varied and colorful as the theme.³⁶

Music

Fortunately, unlike other lessons, music lessons were not drilled into Rabindranath at set hours. Music floated in the very air he breathed at home. Almost every member of the family was a musician of some sort and either sang or played on some instrument or another. The boy was gifted with a fine voice and an uncommon aptitude for picking

³⁶Kripalani, op. cit., pp. 338-341.

up whatever he heard--and he picked up all types of music, in utter disregard of the very rigid caste barriers that separate one class from another, no less in music than in society.

Recalling the days spent with Jadu Bhatta, a celebrated musician of the time whose name is a legend in Bengal, he wrote later:

'He made one big mistake in being determined to teach me music, and consequently no teaching took place. Nevertheless, I did casually pick up from him a certain amount of stolen knowledge.' Half in humility, half in irony he confessed: 'it was no one's fault but my own that nothing could keep me for long in the beaten track of learning. I strayed at will, filling my wallet with whatever gleanings of knowledge I chanced upon.'³⁷

In a sense Tagore's songs are his greatest gift to his people, not only because their joy is equally shared by the literate and the illiterate, by the young and the old, but because through them he has expressed all the finest nuances of mood and feeling in the simplest and sweetest of words. They are his "offerings" in the true sense of the word, and because they are the innermost whispers of his soul, their appeal is so universal. "He often said in his old age that while all his other achievements might be forgotten, his songs would continue to be sung."³⁸

According to Shridharani, Tagore's songs number from one thousand to one thousand four hundred. He comments further on how the pupils at Shantiniketan commit the melodious songs to memory without any conscious effort on their part. They learn the tunes from the morning rounds of the Ashram choir which awakens the community with the poet's music. The tempo is picked up from evening dances. The great store of Tagore's

³⁷ Ibid., p. 45.

³⁸ Ibid., p. 163.

songs, often deep in philosophy and always in charming style, furnish the students with an unique background on things and personalities around them. They also develop a proper perspective for life. "It was this privilege of living in the consciousness of the great poet and looking at the world through the philosopher's eyes that distinguished Santiniketan from modern schools in India."³⁹

On writing of Tagore and Western Music, Arnold Bake presents the question; "How did Tagore react when he came into contact with the music of the West?" It seems clear that, by and large, it had not much attraction for him. The overpowering vertical structure of the Western harmonic compositions remained remote and, even to a certain degree, repellent to him as a musician. His way was the delicate moulding of one single, unaccompanied melodic line in which the emotional overtones of his poem found expression. Any confinement on that free development by a rigid rule of chords, any suggestion of being tied to a certain key and of modulating from one key to another along accepted harmonic lines, was quite foreign to his mode of thinking. His musical imagination was forever wedded to the pure modal principle which regards the notes of the different octaves--solely in their different relationships to one fixed point--the drone.

Consequently, the whole harmonic system with all its modern developments which composers asked Rabindranath to love and appreciate when they came and played their compositions on his texts, really meant nothing at all to a man who could not conceive the spirit of his poems being expressed except in one single melodic line. He clearly saw, however, that in principle there was nothing in Indian music which precluded an eventual harmonic--or at least polyphonic--development. He tried, off and on, to experiment with some new ideas taken from Western music which

³⁹Shridharani, op. cit., p. 15.

seemed not to spell complete destruction to an original Indian melody in the same way as the application of undiluted Western harmony, but this remained more an intellectual pastime than an inspiration from the heart and never came to any real fruition.⁴⁰

GITANJALI

All the pain and suffering, the bereavements and rebuffs, both in the world and in his mind, which Tagore, who had begun his career as a dashing and gay cavalier, went through in the first decade of this century were finally resolved and sublimated in the songs that poured forth from his full and chastened heart in 1909 and 1910 and published as Gitanjali (Handful or Offering of Songs) in the latter year. Fifty-one of these 157 songs were later translated by him into English and included in the English book of that name which made him world-famous.

"Love of God and love of man, strength in sorrow and humility in joy, an innocent wonder that hides centuries of thought, invest these songs with an appeal that is both universal and perennial."⁴¹

It was at the request of Sir William Rothenstein that Tagore came to London. Rothenstein had become interested in learning about the poet after reading an English translation of one of his short stories which impressed him very much. And so when Tagore came to London he showed Rothenstein his poems who in turn sent them to W. B. Yeats.⁴²

Yeats has recorded what he felt about these poems in the introduction he wrote for them. "The work of a supreme culture," he wrote, "they yet

⁴⁰Arnold Adridan Bake, "Tagore and Western Music," A Centenary Volume, p. 88.

⁴¹Vrinalani, op. cit., p. 210.

⁴²Ibid., p. 218.

appear as much the growth of the common soil as the grass and the rushes."⁴³

It was, of course, the Nobel prize for literature that insured his [Tagore's] triumph. The award in 1913 was a complete surprise to the world, for the committee had nothing to go upon save a single volume of translated lyrics, "Gitanjali" (Song Offerings), and the poet's legendary renown in his own land. His literary fortune was made overnight, although his peculiar glory was not attained until after 1919....⁴⁴

The distinguished novelist, Halldor Laxness, also a Nobel Prize winner writes of Tagore and his Gitanjali.

...In my country as elsewhere among western readers the form and flavour of the "Gitanjali" had the effect of a wonderful flower we had not seen or heard of before; its great attraction was a direct stimulus for many poets to undertake new experiments in lyrical prose. Even as far as the Scandinavian countries there was a vogue in lyrical prose directly originating from the newly-acquired knowledge of Tagore. I among others, tried my hand at this form in my youthful days, but without success, perhaps because I did not realize that "Gitanjali's" form is entirely secondary to its substance. I guess this was the common reason why most of Tagore's disciples in the West were bound to fail. The physical foundation of Tagore's poetry, the tropical warmth and growth, was lacking in our environment to make this kind of poetry imitable here....

...What an enviable god, this god of Tagore: the Great Friend, the Beloved, the Lotus flower, the unknown man playing a lute [flute] in the boat yonder on the river!...Nowadays our god in the West is either the director of the Big All World Firm Inc., or the primitive imaginary playmate of the childish mind. He is the one we cry to in the hours of precipitate danger and in the hour of our death. This is why a spiritual reality like Tagore's probably shall remain only one more eastern wonder to the western mind yet for a long long time to come.⁴⁵

⁴³Yeats, op. cit., p. 8.

⁴⁴Ratcliffe, op. cit., p. 205.

⁴⁵Kripalani, op. cit., pp. 233-234.

CHAPTER II

JOHN ALDEN CARPENTER

Several authors agree that the career of John Alden Carpenter presents one of the curious contradictions so characteristic of Americans. As stated by John Tasker Howard;

Carpenter should have been a talented amateur, one who dabbles in the arts in gentlemanly fashion, but to whom real achievement as a creative artist is impossible. Then too, a man with his aristocratic background seems logically to belong among the conservatives, if not with the reactionaries, politely experimenting, perhaps, but rarely venturing into the realm of new and strange tonal combinations.¹

Olin Downes wrote that if Carpenter had followed an intellectual and emotional path all too clearly marked out for him by ancestry, traditions and environment, he might have become an Emersonian.²

At any rate Howard Hanson would speak for the majority in an article published in The Saturday Review of Literature two months before the death of Carpenter. "He [Carpenter] is a true creative artist whose music voices his thoughts, his emotions, his philosophy of life, and voices them eloquently."³

It is difficult to describe the music of any composer and particularly so in the case of a composer like Carpenter, whose creative

¹John Tasker Howard, "John Alden Carpenter," Modern Music, November-December 1931, 9:8.

²Olin Downes, "J. A. Carpenter, American Craftsman," The Music Quarterly, October, 1930, 16:443.

³Howard Hanson, "John Alden Carpenter," The Saturday Review of Literature, February 24, 1951, 9:50.

personality is so many-sided, complex, and subtle. Hanson speaks of several important contributions that Carpenter will be remembered for. He was one of the first American composers, as were the earlier George Chadwick and Henry F. Gilbert, to break successfully with the German tradition which was so powerful at the time of his birth, a tradition which simultaneously nourished and smothered its disciples. He was one of the very first Americans to bring to American music a subtlety and delicacy of expression which had been up to that time generally lacking. Hanson points out that this has been referred to at times as the "French influence," but that this is too facile an explanation. He continued the excursion into the expression of humor in music, already begun by Chadwick in a work such as "Tam-O-Shanter," but in a way which was entirely individual. Finally, though primarily a melodist and colorist, he has remained an interested experimenter in rhythmic techniques.⁴

John Alden inherited his name in direct line from Priscilla's John Alden of Pilgrim fame. He was born in Park Ridge, Illinois, on February 28, 1876, and lived most of his life in Chicago.⁵ His gifts for music were undoubtedly an inheritance from the maternal side of the family. The composer's mother, Mrs. Elizabeth Curtis Greene Carpenter, was a vocalist who had studied in Europe with Marchesi and William Shakespeare and whose special activity was church singing. She took particular interest in the musical development of her children and much of John Carpenter's success in the field of art was undoubtedly due to her early

⁴Loc. cit.

⁵Madeleine Goss, Modern Music Makers, p. 34.

influence. Mrs. Carpenter's elder brother was a well-known music teacher in the East.⁶

Carpenter began his musical studies under his mother's instruction and at the age of twelve took up more serious work under the supervision of Amy Fay, a pupil of Liszt and Tausig. He pursued his theoretical studies unaided until the age of sixteen, when he took some lessons with W. L. Seeboeck, and in 1893 he entered Harvard University, where for four years he took musical courses under John Knowles Paine.⁷

Early in his career, Carpenter felt that he needed further instruction. He wrote to Sir Edward Elgar, whose music had always appealed to him, and asked if he might study with him. Elgar replied that he was not interested in teaching. When in 1906 the two met in Rome, the English composer finally agreed to give some lessons. Carpenter did not gain as much from these lessons as he had hoped. He worked only a short time with Elgar. Three years later in Chicago he found a teacher better suited to his needs. Bernard Ziehn did more for him, he said, than anyone he had ever worked with.⁸

Carpenter received an honorary M. A. degree from Harvard in 1922, and was made a Doctor of Music of Wisconsin University; he was decorated by the French Legion of Honour in 1921 and was a member of the National Institute of Arts and Letters, receiving an award in 1947 for

⁶Felix Borowski, "John Alden Carpenter," The Music Quarterly, October, 1930, 16:449.

⁷Peggy Hicks-Glanville, Groves Dictionary of Music and Musicians, 1954, 2:90.

⁸Goss, op. cit., p. 35.

distinguished services to music.⁹

Successful in business as well as in music, Carpenter's life until the latter years was divided between the two.¹⁰ He served as vice-president of George B. Carpenter & Company, Chicago merchants in mill, railway and vessel supplies--a family business inherited from his father.¹¹ George B. Carpenter & Sons was founded as a ship's chandlery in 1840 by one Robb, who later turned it over to Gilbert Hubbard. This owner of the business was served by the father of John Carpenter and later--about 1860--the employe became a member of the firm. When Hubbard died, his partner succeeded him as sole owner, and the name of the firm was changed to George B. Carpenter.¹²

Madeleine Goss wrote that Carpenter found nothing particularly remarkable in such a combination. "Even composers have to eat," he explained with quiet humor. "The majority of serious composers are forced to seek a living outside of composition. They teach, they write, they lecture--each according to his individual skill and opportunity--and compose when they can. The composer in business is fundamentally in much the same case."¹³

In somewhat of a contrast to the above statements made by Carpenter early in his career, the following statements were recorded of him on

⁹Hicks-Glanville, op. cit., p. 90.

¹⁰Goss, op. cit., p. 34.

¹¹John Tasker Howard, op. cit., p. 8.

¹²Borowski, op. cit., p. 450.

¹³Goss, op. cit., p. 34.

his last birthday.

When he [Carpenter] was asked what counsel he would give to young composers, he answered; My advice would be, 1) Never give up; 2) Do not expect to make any money of it. During the early part of my life I engaged in both business and musical composition. My friends used to congratulate me on having two interests, but if I had it to do over again, I would only try one. A life time is not enough to devote to composing.¹⁴

CRITICAL COMMENTS

In forecasting Carpenter's future as an artist, Olin Downes said; "It is his deeper vision of life, his humane sympathy and pity, without which no artist can possibly be great, and his poetical search that give his music more than ephemeral promise." Downes was willing to guarantee that Carpenter had perused and listened to the sweet truths of Emerson and that he had read and rambled with Mark Twain. But even more he believed that Carpenter had surely been stirred and profoundly touched by the coarse, cosmic, and racial Whitman.

A man of too exquisite sensibility, as I am certain, for his comfort or a wide success, or perhaps for the emotional and creative explosion that achieves an undying masterpiece, Carpenter has walked, culturally speaking, with poets and kings "nor lost the common touch." In a word, his heart is bigger than his head, which is essential for a composer. Will Carpenter's integrity and quest for the reality and fullness of life conquer his watchful conscience and good breeding sufficiently to make him more than the remarkable and significant composer that he is to-day? That is the question; the answer to it will be the measure of the durability and significance of his work after he and we have joined our fathers.¹⁵

John Tasker Howard also pondered the future of Carpenter;

It is of course a question whether the very regularity of his existence may not prove a limitation. A man who is abnormal in no

¹⁴John Alden Carpenter: A Musical Humanist," Music American, May 12, 1951, 71:12.

¹⁵Downes, op. cit., pp. 443-444.

direction, who is at all times seemingly poised, bred and reared in an aristocratic, polished environment, may be capable of producing art works which are thoroughly charming, but he is rarely capable of those ecstatic outbursts that result from a more volatile temperament.

The ultimate decision as to the "greatness" of any musical work rests with future generations alone, and it is hazardous to predict the verdict of our successors. It is impossible to state whether Carpenter has really overcome the limitations that his temperament and environment have imposed upon him, whether his fine sensitiveness will allow him those emotional heights which make music compelling. It is enough that he gives us music that is genuine, unartificial, and generally his own.¹⁶

Authors agree that Carpenter is no reactionary; compared with Chadwick, Foote, and his older contemporaries, he is a radical, yet viewed from the standpoint of the advance guard; he is always a few paces behind the extremist. He belonged with those who were conservatives at heart, but who nevertheless progressed. He was not afraid of the new or of the startling, but he could not bring himself to sensationalism for the mere purpose of being original. He had to digest new ideas thoroughly before they issued from his mind as a valid expression.

Carpenter's Violin Sonata of 1911 stamps it's composer as one who is not afraid of showing influences, yet who is not content to be an imitator. It shows him also as something of a romanticist, a label that is anathema to many a modernist. Yet every modernist shows romantic tendencies, in spite of his leanings toward realism. The reaction of the modernists is not so much against pure romanticism as it is against a sentimentalism which often sinks to mawkishness.¹⁷

¹⁶John Tasker Howard, op. cit., p. 10.

¹⁷Ibid., pp. 12-13.

When the Chicago composer first began to attract the attention of music-lovers in America, it was often said that his style, so far from being American, was really French. This dogmatic assertion was pronounced in the earlier part of this century, when Debussy and Ravel were regarded as apostles of modernity. "It is one of the peculiarities of public opinion--in the case of music at least--that nothing pleases it quite so much as to drape the mentle of the hero of the day round the shoulders of the lesser men."¹⁸ Carpenter was not likely to escape the painstaking investigators who found Debussy in every composition that might contain augmented triads or successive chords of the ninth or whole-tone scales. But although there is some truth in the fact that the composer of the ballet, Skyscrapers has absorbed something of the Gallic spirit of the twentieth century, it is none the less true that he has evolved a style of his own. Along with this individual note, there is to be found in Carpenter's music a curious distillation of rhythms and turns of melody that have their origin in Spain.¹⁹ The composer held that this Spanish influence was entirely subconscious, but it was nevertheless appropriate.²⁰

Carpenter is among the most American of our composers. Because he has the American viewpoint, he is of an authentic American type; and when he is genuinely creative, as he usually is, his music is truly a native expression, in spite of its obvious derivations. Though he

¹⁸Borowski, op. cit., p. 454.

¹⁹Loc. cit.

²⁰John Tasker Howard, op. cit., p. 14.

occasionally uses jazz patterns, and Negro songs, that alone can never make him a composer. It is the manner of their use that stamps them as genuine or false.

It would be too much to expect a man of Carpenter's heritage to reek of the dance hall, to write the jazz of Broadway that George Gerwshin can produce, yet is it any the less American to present the effect that jazz can exert on one who has exposed himself to Broadway, even though he is not himself one of its native sons?

Obviously the answer to such a question depends on the subjectivity of the influence. If Carpenter had self-consciously commanded himself to adopt the shifting accents and other formulae of jazz, the result would have been wholly objective, and little more than an interesting exercise in composition....²¹

In speaking of merely practical things, Carpenter brought the American composer's technic up to date. Acquainted with the works not only of the Straussian era, the stylistic qualities of which he gladly left behind him, but also of the modern Frenchmen, the contemporary Russians, and others, he incorporated in his compositions the indispensable technical facilities that the musical art of Europe holds for us. He developed admirably clear forms which enclose American popular musical idioms and imply poetical impressions and interpretations of American environments. This he has done with an immense passion, a regular New Englander's concealed passion (although he wasn't born in New England) for truth and beauty. In a word he created, and he contributed indispensably to the great future edifice of a national music.²²

A great deal of John Alden Carpenter's music is "programmatic"--inspired by some outside source. As he put it, "With only a few

²¹Ibid., pp. 10-11.

²²Downes, op. cit., pp. 447-448.

exceptions (notably the two symphonies and his chamber music) everything that I have written has started from a non-musical basis."²³

When he composed, he felt the need for a special mood which created the desire for the expression. This may have been produced by a poem--an emotion--an idea. "All music that lives is based on a mood, whether directly or indirectly." He once said to Lawrence Gilman, "I have found that the germ of an idea may become implanted and then lie dormant for a long period, only to be called into active life, after perhaps a considerable interval, by influences outside myself and not always recognizable."²⁴

WORKS

Carpenter's first notable orchestral performance was in 1915 at Orchestra Hall in Chicago, when The Adventures in a Perambulator met with huge success.²⁵ In this work Carpenter described, with extraordinary insight and a rare gift for the whimsical, the world as seen through a child's eyes. The suite tells of a baby's outing in the park, and perfectly interprets the child's varying moods and adventures. The suite is in seven parts, each with an explanatory preface written by the composer.²⁶ This work together with a Concertino for Pianoforte and Orchestra and a concert version of his ballet Skyscrapers had performances throughout America and also in Paris.

²³Goss, op. cit., p. 44.

²⁴Loc. cit.

²⁵Hicks-Glanville, op. cit., p. 90.

²⁶Goss, op. cit., p. 36.

Following the success of the ballet Krazy Kat, Carpenter wrote a ballet expressing the bustle and racket of American life. Skyscrapers was the result, and with Robert Edmond Jones, the ballet was produced at the Metropolitan Opera House, New York, in 1926. There were many later performances of it in Germany.²⁷ Skyscrapers is highly descriptive music, but in consonance with its subject it is rugged, frequently noisy, highly rhythmic, and impelling. This is music of the city, racous, jazzy, witty, dramatic, but always underlined with that sense of humanity which is never absent from the composer's works.²⁸

Carpenter's Pianoforte Quintet was commissioned for the Library of Congress Festival in 1935 by the Elizabeth Sprague Coolidge Foundation. The choral work, Song of Faith, was performed at the Washington Bicentennial in 1932. His last work was a symphonic suite, The Seven Ages, which was first performed by the New York Philharmonic Symphony in 1945.²⁹

SONGS

Outside of his works for orchestra, and his ballets, Carpenter is best known as a songwriter. In that field he has attained rare distinction. It is in his songs that he shows his leanings toward the French impressionists. "Nor is such a comparison necessarily a denial of individuality, for Carpenter's refinement and aristocratic elegance are often his own."³⁰ That his first compositions were mainly songs is

²⁷Hicks-Glanville, op. cit., p. 90.

²⁸Hanson, op. cit., p. 50.

²⁹Hicks-Glanville, op. cit., pp. 90-91.

³⁰T. J. Howard, Our American Music, p. 167.

possibly because his introduction to music came through his mother's singing.³¹

The following comments by Felix Borowski point out the characteristics of Carpenter's more familiar songs:

The large majority of Carpenter's vocal offerings are of the most admirable purity of style, steeped in an atmosphere of poetry and of musical refinement such as is seldom met with in American song literature. The vocal pieces, too, are often filled with the poignancy and emotion that have eluded him in some of his instrumental works. Looking upon this literature as a whole, it would seem that Carpenter has done more than any other native composer to bring honor and respect to American song. Not all of Carpenter's lyrical productions however, stand upon the loftiest plane of art. There are songs, like the early Treat Me Nice (written in 1905), which he would like to see suppressed. Even Her Voice, a setting of a text by Oscar Wilde, composed seven years later than the previously mentioned work, is scarcely worthy of the gifts which called it into being. But it would be easy, for that matter, to pick out songs that are commonplace or dull, from the works of the greatest masters.

The poetic quality was apparent early in Carpenter's vocal work. The Green River, written in 1909 to a text by Lord Alfred Douglas, is filled with poetic suggestion and this, too, may be said about Le Ciel (Verlaine), written the following year. Some of the songs written before and about the period of The Green River are less interesting, but no critical listener in that period could have been aware of the two works

³¹Goss, op. cit., p. 34.

that have just been mentioned without having come to the conviction that their creator would be heard from in the future. Il pleure dans mon coeur (Verlaine) was composed in the same year as Le Ciel, and contains much of the same beauty and imaginativeness. Carpenter was able, too, to put more than mere charm into the song; the conception of the music, as he felt it, involved the constant re-iteration of one note, and the technical skill with which this was accomplished is worthy of praise.

The Cock Shall Crow (1908) is rather ordinary. There should be mentioned the delicate setting of Waller's Go, Lovely Rose (1908), and Little Fly (1909), are interesting without being much more; Looking-glass River, an expressive setting of Stevenson's verses, dating from 1909; and a somber one of Verlaine's Chanson d' Automne, a product of the following year. These last two disclose Carpenter's fondness, in the earlier songs, of making use of the lowest range of the piano in writing the accompaniments.

In Watercolors, a song cycle composed in 1915, Carpenter went to four Chinese poems translated by Herbert A. Giles, Professor of Chinese, at the University of Cambridge. In these songs there is an irresistible combination of whimsicality and expressiveness. It is perhaps in music such as this that Carpenter is most typically represented. Later he made a version for orchestra of the piano accompaniments to the songs which were given at a performance of the Allied Arts in Chicago.

The dialect songs include two whose texts have been drawn from the Dorsetshire poems of William Barnes and six which, as to their poems, have a Negro origin. The Dorsetshire songs are Don't Ceare and Wull ye come in early spring. The first of these is admirable in its humor and

in the spiritedness of the vocal and piano parts. The second is not as inspired. Carpenter began experimenting with Negro music as early as 1915, when he wrote Treat Me Nice--one of his failures. The Lawd is smilin' through the do' followed in 1918 and is a highly effective example of Negro characteristics in the voice-part with Carpenterian treatment of the accompaniment. Still later came the cycle of Four Negro Songs--Shake your brown feet, Honey, The Cryin' Blues, Jazz-Boys, and That Soothin' Song--which, composed in March, 1926, was published the following year. There is distinct fascination in these lyrics. The harmonic effects are more astringent than in the earlier works and the composer has been successful in keeping intact the spirit of Negro art, at the same time giving musical value to its setting. To the music of the people The Home-Road surely belongs. Carpenter wrote it in July, 1917, when the war fever was at its height and the song is one of the very few products of the period which survived a calamitous struggle. Edward Elgar, who desired to write a popular piece, pointed his case by writing the marches in Pomp and Circumstance, and Carpenter seconded him by the production of The Home-Road.³²

John Tasker Howard wrote that Carpenter's songs are a poignant expression, and while the best of them may be for the few rather than for the many, they are none the less American for being finely wrought and persuasive rather than compelling.³³

³²Borowski, op. cit., pp. 455-457.

³³John Tasker Howard, op. cit., p. 11.

BELIEFS

"Carpenter's intelligence and his sense of spiritual obligation were revealed in some of the statements he made on his 75th birthday on February, 28th only two months before his death. Asked what he considered the role of music to be in these anxious times, he answered:"

To nourish and sustain our people. American leadership has become recognized in the military and economic spheres. Music, and all the arts, are the medium through which we can express this spiritual leadership.³⁴

"Carpenter was neither blind to the challenges of the historical crisis in which we live nor afraid of its particular disasters."

On the contrary he said: For the creative artist this is a trying and difficult time. We live in fear--fear of today and tomorrow. What we need is greater courage and vision to grasp the position of leadership now taken by the scientist and political statesmen.

Carpenter was not only a composer; he was an aesthetic thinker who saw in art, as well as in religion, values and principles which should influence the practical thinking of our age. I recommend prayer and a return to religion and art as a solution to today's problems, he declared. They speak to us best that is in us.³⁵

THE GITANJALI SONG CYCLE

The following comments from Borowski, Olin Downes, T. J. Howard, and Music American, reveal the significance of Carpenter's Gitanjali:

The settings of the Gitanjali text by Rabindranath Tagore, published in 1914, brought Carpenter before a larger public than any which had hearkened to his strains before. The success of these six songs was

³⁴Music American, op. cit., p. 12.

³⁵Loc. cit.

founded upon the solid rock of merit. This is vocal art that contains fine music wedded to really poetic and imaginative texts. When I bring to you colour'd toys and The sleep that flits on baby's eyes made a searching appeal; for this was not music that had been written for the market-place; it had beauty undisfigured by cheap tunefulness and the harmonic subtlety struck a new note in native composition. In 1914, too, the composer made an orchestral arrangement of the Gitanjali songs and this arrangement was heard in a concert given at Orchestra Hall, Chicago, with Miss Lucille Stevenson as the interpreter of the vocal part. In this form the lyrics were somewhat less convincing than they had been in the form in which originally they had been conceived--a circumstance due, it is probable, to the fact that the composer at that time was less familiar with the orchestra than he became later.³⁶

He was especially happy with the texts of Rabindranath Tagore, whose spirit he seems to catch more faithfully than any other composer. He has been penetrating in drawing from the poems the oriental warmth of color, the sensitiveness to mood.³⁷

Through his music Carpenter has brought American thought into closer rapport with the poems of a Tagore and a William Sharp, with Negro folklore, and classic and romantic ideals of older civilizations.³⁸

In the music Carpenter has left us is a clear and undistorted image of his personality. The song cycle Gitanjali, inspired by the poems of

³⁶ Borowski, op. cit., pp. 451-452.

³⁷ T. J. Howard, op. cit., p. 467.

³⁸ Downes, op. cit., p. 448.

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³⁶Borowski, op. cit., pp. 451-452.

³⁷T. J. Howard, op. cit., p. 467.

³⁸Downes, op. cit., p. 448.

Rabindranath Tagore reveals his sensitive imagination, keen color sense, and romantic aspirations. The songs with their shifting, expressive harmonies and supple vocal lines reflect the lessons he learned through observation and emotional reaction. They established Carpenter, early in his career, as an authentic lyricist.³⁹

³⁹Music American, op. cit., p. 12.

CHAPTER III

AN ANALYSIS OF A SONG FROM THE GITANJALI SONG CYCLE

The Gitanjali song cycle was composed in 1913. The following frames the background of the same period in which it was produced: Debussy was alive; his music was current and he had just finished a significant period; Stravinsky had just written Sacre du printemps (1913); which was preceded by Firebird (1909) and Pruruská (1911); Ravel had written Daphnis et Chloé (1910); and Schoenberg's Pierrot Lunaire (1912) had been composed, as had Scriabin's Poem of Ecstasy (1907).

The aesthetic attitude was one of departure from the Romantic. It was a period of transition from late Romanticism to the Modernism which developed immediately after World War I. The attitudes of Victorianism and Romanticism were disintegrating, but the cynicism which followed World War I had not developed. There is, in this music, a graciousness which is soon to disappear.

This music is through-composed. It is adjusted to poems written in free verse and the metrical structure is highly irregular. The form and length of the music is determined by the words.

1. In each, the vocal line is free; it is moulded by the text: The melody so evolved is not "tuneful" but, instead is semi-declamatory. It does not fall into regular periodic construction, nor is there always systematic development of particular figures.

2. The accompaniment supplies the main source of formal organization. It develops the sectional organization of each piece; it controls unity

by the reiteration and development of important figures. These songs are for voice and piano, not for voice supplemented by the piano.

As a specimen of Carpenter's style, a general analysis was made of When I bring to you colour'd toys, the first song in the cycle.

The formal problem is not as formidable in this number as in some of the others, because the text itself falls into three parts.

When I bring to you coloured toys, my child, I understand why there is such a play of colours on clouds, on water, and why flowers are painted in tints--when I give coloured toys to you, my child.

When I sing to make you dance, I truly know why there is music in leaves, and why waves send their chorus of voices to the heart of the listening earth--when I sing to make you dance.

When I bring sweet things to your greedy hands, I know why there is honey in the cup of the flower and why fruits are secretly filled with sweet juice--when I bring sweet things to your greedy hands.¹

The reiteration of the leading idea, When I bring----, When I sing-- --, When I bring---- suggests statement, departure, and restatement, which outlines a ternary form.

The song is 80 measures long. Part I ends on the first beat of measure 32; Part II ends in measure 68; Part III completes the composition.

This ternary structure is merely suggested in the voice part by a return in Part III to the opening figure of Part I. The general organization of the song is shown in Figure 1.

¹John Alden Carpenter and Rabindranath Tagore, Gitanjali Song Offerings, pp. 3-7.

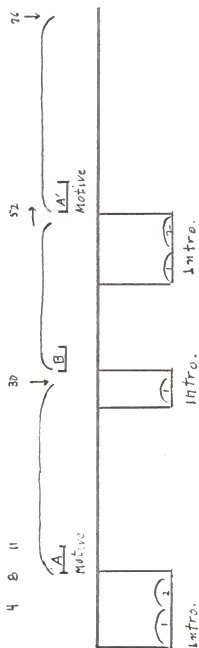


Figure 1

In Part I, mm. 8-11, the vocal line opens with a three measure motive, marked A from which material develops in accordance with the order and the meaning of the words. This material is sufficient unto itself. In Part II, mm. 32-33, a contrasting motive is used, in spite of the similarity of the word forms. Part III, mm. 51-55, opens with a modified reiteration of A from which quite a different parcel of material dependent upon the new text material is evolved.

The continuity of the form, as projected in the piano part, is based upon the reiteration of material based on the introduction. Figure 1 illustrates how the first phase of introductory material, mm. 1-8, is used later to stand as an accompaniment to the last note of the vocal line, mm. 28-32, which closes Part I, and how both phrases of this material, in mm. 43-52, are interpolated in Part II so the last of these supports the last complete phrase of the vocal line which closes the part. This material, as well as being introductory, is also used to form pivots between the two adjacent parts in a way to give more unity to the form than is inherent in the vocal line. For additional unity, the accompaniment in mm. 52-59, Part III, is the same as that in mm. 9-17, Part I.

Example 1 illustrates how the piano part further develops continuity. The figures around which the introduction is written permeate the piano part in one form or another throughout Parts I and III.

All of the three tone figures have one common rhythmic plan; differences in interval structure give the impression of variations on a single design.

Carpenter's harmonic idiom is that of early twentieth century triadic harmony. It abounds in chord extensions through the 7th and 9th.

Ex. 1

"When I bring to you colour'd toys"

Rabindranath Tagore

John Alden Carpenter

June-September, 1913

Animato (♩ = 145)

Voice

Piano

The musical score is written for voice and piano. It begins with a tempo marking of *Animato* and a quarter note equal to 145 beats per minute. The piano accompaniment starts with a forte (*f*) dynamic. The score is divided into several sections labeled A, A', B, C, D, C, B', D, and A. The voice line enters with the lyrics: "When I bring to you colour'd toys, my child, I understand why there is such a play of". The piano part features a complex rhythmic pattern with many sixteenth notes. Dynamic markings include *mf*, *a tempo*, *rall.*, and *p*. The score concludes with a double bar line and a small asterisk-like symbol.

In Example 2, a case might be made for regarding the opening two chords as actually being extensions of dominant harmony, the first being a chord of the thirteenth over an implied C sharp. If these chords are played over an actual C sharp, as in Example 2b, their amalgamation into the dominant harmony is apparent. The rate of the harmonic rhythm, and the inconclusive resolutions of the first chord, makes this assumption tenable.

Ex. 2

Example 2 is a piano accompaniment in G major (one sharp). The music consists of two measures. The first measure features a 13th chord (F#13) in the right hand and a 9th chord (C#9) in the left hand. The second measure shows a resolution to a 9th chord (C#9) in the right hand and a 13th chord (F#13) in the left hand. The notation includes stems, beams, and fingerings.

Ex. 2b

Example 2b is a piano accompaniment in G major (one sharp). The first measure shows a 13th chord (F#13) in the right hand and a 9th chord (C#9) in the left hand. The second measure shows a resolution to a 9th chord (C#9) in the right hand and a 13th chord (F#13) in the left hand. Fingering numbers are indicated: 13, 9, 7, 1, 5, 3 in the right hand, and 4, 7 in the left hand. A circled 'B' is written below the second measure.

Non-harmonic tones frequently appear as appoggiaturas in arpeggiated designs.

Ex. 3



In Example 4 a chromatic passing chord develops.

Ex. 4

Having no harmonic significance, it is merely a form of chromatic descent simultaneously in the three upper voices in the movement from a V chord to a II_7 chord.

Carpenter builds up sonorities through the fusion of rapidly produced non-harmonic tones with harmonic tones.

An example of Carpenter's more complicated harmonic progressions are found between mm. 33-43.

Ex. 6

The image shows two systems of handwritten musical notation for piano accompaniment. Each system consists of two staves, one with a treble clef and one with a bass clef. The notation is highly complex, featuring numerous accidentals (sharps, flats, naturals) and stems, indicating intricate chordal structures and voice leading. The first system shows a progression of chords, with some notes beamed together. The second system continues this progression, with some notes marked with a fermata. The overall impression is one of dense, complex harmonic texture.

In this example, the chords are reduced to their basic sonorities.

This is a progression moving from the tonality of D major to F sharp major through an atonal passage in which chord roots move by the intervals of the third or fourth. This kind of tonal ambiguity is typical of the triadic style in the last stages of its development. Continuity between chords is established by a common tone between each adjacent chord.

CONCLUSION

Carpenter's bass lines are static. they are written more to enhance the sonority and to develop lineal design.

Though extension of chords into the ninth at times suggest Debussy-like sonorities there is very little parallelism. Nor are the harmonies arranged to imply a melodic sort of tonality which is basic to the Debussy School. The sonority is derived from the key board. It is non-orchestral in concept.

The correlation of the vocal line with the text is excellent. This may be demonstrated by comparing the accents of the music with the accents of the verse. An example of this is found in the second song of the Gitanjali, entitled On the day when death will knock at thy door. Here the accents in the vocal line often coincide with those in the verse.

On the dáy when| death will| kñock at thy dóor,| what wilt thou
offer to| him?

Oh, I will| sét before my guest the| full vessel of my| lífe; I
will| néver let him go with empty| hánds.

All the sweet vintage of| all my áutumn| dáy and summer nígths,|
all the éarnings and| gleanings of my busy life, will I place before
him| at the clóse of my| days when déath will| knock at my| dóor.²

Characteristic of this song is the grouping of many syllables within a bar against very few syllables within a bar according to the importance of the words of the text.

²Carpenter and Tagore, op. cit., pp. 9-11.

The rest of the songs are all handled with this same technique and skill, and they are all laid out against a strictly measured plan in the piano part.

Only rarely in the course of a number, does the piano part alternate between a triple and quadruple metrical plan. And in each instance the plan includes a large group of bars; metrical changes do not occur on a bar to bar basis.

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APPENDIX

A Complete List of Songs by John Alden Carpenter

Songs	Composed	Published
Improving Songs for Anxious Children	1901-1902	1903
Treat Me Nice	1905	1906
The Cock Shall Crow	1908	1912
May the Maiden	1908	1912
Go, Lovely Rose	1908	1912
The Heart's Country	1909	1912
The Green River	1909	1912
Little Fly	1909	1912
Looking-Glass River	1909	1912
When the misty shadows glide	1910	1912
Chanson d' Automne	1910	1912
Dansons la gigue	1910	1912
Il pleure dans mon cœur	1910	1912
Le Ciel	1910	1912
Bid me to live	1911	1912
A Cradle-Song	1911	1912
Don't Ceare	1911	1912
Fog-Wraiths	1912	1913
Her Voice	1912	1913
The Player Queen	1914	1915
Les Silhouettes	1912	1913
To One Unknown	1912	1913
Wull ye come in the early spring	1914	1918
Gitanjali:	1913	1914
When I bring to you colour'd toys		
On the day when death will knock at thy door		
The sleep that flits on baby's eyes		
I am like a remnant of a cloud of autumn		
On the seashore of endless worlds		
Light, my light		
The day is no more	1915	1915
Watercolors:	1915	1916
On a Screen		
The Olalisque		
The Highwaymen		
To a Young Gentleman		
The Home-Road	1917	1917
Khaki Sammy	1917	1917
The Lawd is smilin' through the do'	1917	1918
Berceuse de la guerre	1918	1918
Serenade	1920	1921
Slumber-Song	1920	1921
Four Negro Songs:	1926	1927
Shake your brown feet, Honey		
The Cryin' Blues		
Jazz-Boys		
That Soothin' Song		

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TAGORE, CARPENTER, AND THE GITANJALI SONG CYCLE

by

HELEN JANICE BRIGGS

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INTRODUCTION

The purpose of this report was to present pertinent information concerning the lives of two great men who have enriched poetry and music. Out of this union was produced the Gitanjali Song Cycle. This paper has presented an analyzation in which certain fundamental musical characteristics of Carpenter are made known.

It is interesting to note the similarities between Carpenter and Tagore. Both men were born in aristocratic families, not lacking in wealth or social position. Both were religious, sensitive, and humane. Tagore sought international understanding among people, and in this same respect Carpenter has brought American thought into closer rapport with the poems of Tagore and William Sharp, with Negro folklore and Classic and Romantic ideals of older civilizations.

Both men have been described as conservative. In the case of Carpenter, he belonged with those who were conservatives at heart, but who nevertheless were progressive. Tagore was said to have been far less conservative in his old age than during his manhood.

In direct contrast to each other, Carpenter has shown his gift for writing words as well as music as expressed in his suite, Adventures in a Perambulator. That Tagore has composed over a thousand songs is proof of his ability to write music.

Walt Whitman was a favorite of the two. Olin Downes wrote that Carpenter had surely been stirred and profoundly touched by the coarse, cosmic and racial Whitman. Tagore thought that Whitman was America's greatest poet.

Both men were exceedingly independent in their works. Tagore sought neither to follow any known models nor to cater to any standardized public taste. Although Carpenter has been compared to Debussy, nevertheless he is himself, and has evolved a style of his own.

Unique is the fact that the Gitanjali brought fame overnight to the poet and composer alike.

CONCLUSION

Carpenter's bass lines are static. They are written more to enhance the sonority and to develop lineal design.

Though extension of chords into the ninth at times suggest Debussy-like sonorities there is very little parallelism. Nor are the harmonies arranged to imply a melodic sort of tonality which is basic to the Debussy School. The sonority is derived from the key board. It is non-orchestral in concept.

The correlation of the vocal line with the text is excellent. This may be demonstrated by comparing the accents of the music with the accents of the verse. An example of this is found in the second song of the Gitanjali, entitled On the day when death will knock at thy door. Here the accents in the vocal line often coincide with those in the verse.

On the day when|death will| knock at thy door| what wilt thou
offer to|him?

Oh, I will| set before my guest the| full vessel of my| life; I
will| never let him go with empty| hands.

All the sweet vintage of| all my autumn| days and summer nights|
{ all the earnings and| gleanings of my busy life, will I place before
him| at the close of my| days when death will| knock at my| door.²

²Carpenter and Tagore, op. cit., pp. 9-11.

Characteristic of this song is the grouping of many syllables within a bar against very few syllables within a bar according to the importance of the words of the text.

The rest of the songs are all handled with this same technique and skill, and they are all laid out against a strictly measured plan in the piano part.

Only rarely in the course of a number, does the piano part alternate between a triple and quadruple metrical plan. And in each instance the plan includes a large group of bars; metrical changes do not occur on a bar to bar basis.

The most striking technical feature in this cycle has to do with the adjustment of oriental poetry to the rather inflexible rhythmic and metrical conceptions of occidental music prevalent before World War I.

It would be interesting to know Tagore's reactions to this type of treatment. Nevertheless, through their efforts in the Gitanjali, Tagore and Carpenter have contributed indispensably to the universal appeal of mankind.