TO MY TWO FRIENDS (E DUOBUS UNUM):

HUGH M'DIARMID

AND

C.M.GRIEVE

LIKEWISE

TO THE EVERLASTING GLORY OF THOSE FEW

MEN

BLESSED AND SANCTIFIED IN THE

CURSES AND EXECRATIONS OF THOSE

MANY

WHOSE PRAISE IS ETERNAL DAMNATION

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On the 4th of May, 1985, I received a hastily typewritten letter:

"Dear Mr. Rice,

Go straight ahead with the proposed recording of my Opus Clavicembalisticum. No objections at all.

Yours sincerely,

K.S. Sorabji."

Sorabji's so-called 'ban' on the performance of his music stemmed from his belief that the music is "for serious performers and serious listeners *only.*" The fact that he consented to performances and recordings since 1976 indicates that towards the end of his life he came to believe that the time might be right for the music to be made public, and, indeed, that he wanted it to be heard. I do not believe that any composer writes music intending it not to be heard, least of all the creator of such vital, compelling music as Sorabji's. For all its overpublicised complexity, it is the opposite of obscure. It has the power to grip an audience, arouse extraordinary tensions, and precipitate their release in tumultuous ovation. Mere cerebral note-complex weaving cannot achieve this. If there is still resistance to Sorabji's music in the minds of the public and their guiding critics and commentators, it must be due to misconceptions. Firstly, there is danger in being too different, and not admitting of ready comparisons with well-understood musical trends. Most of the argument in human thought is by comparison and analogy, and comprehension is almost always achieved by argument, in the broadest sense of the word. To encounter a musical vocabulary which does not fit snugly into a discussion of the evolving musical styles of the Twentieth century must be very galling to certain orderly-minded individuals who do not like to have to evaluate things on their own terms without the benefit of the prompting of received opinion. "Why do I write as I do? Why did (and do) the artist-craftsmen of Irán, India, China, Byzantine-Arabic Sicily … produce the sort of elaborate highly wrought work they did? That was their way. It is also mine. If you don't like it … that is just too bad, but not for *me,* who couldn't care less." Such ferocious independence of spirit has earned Sorabji not a few enemies in a world of fashionable conformity. Secondly, there is the problem of Sorabji's absolute refusal to disclose in verbal detail what his music is 'about'. It has become fashionable for modern composers to tell us — in words — exactly what they want us to hear in their music. If, as Carl Nielsen said, "music is the sound of life", then this is a fundamentally unhelpful

distortion, since no aspect of life can be expected glibly to yield up its secrets in the reading of the printed paragraph of a programme note. Ronald Stevenson has written of one of his own major compositions that it may appear like the map of a life, expressed in music. (Note the absence of detail in this description; every listener's life has its own chronography, so the supply of ideas to be 'found' in such a piece, viewed in such a way, is inexhaustible). Sorabji's compositions, like vast tracts of life, are to be lived through, and the listener must extract what understanding he or she can from the experience. Of course there will be ambiguity, complexity, and an absence of comfortable solutions. This will always be so, except for those who observe the world from a viewpoint of infantile simplicity, and see life in black and white. There will also be the indescribable richness of sensation that is available to us all, and which the greatest composers take the trouble to try to describe to the rest of us.

An important task remains; to acknowledge the unique powers of the performer on this recording. John Ogdon is the ideal interpreter for this music. He has transcended the bounds, not only of conventional pianism, but of conventional musicianship in his interpretation, both intellectual and emotional, of the work, and in his technical execution of the formidable task whose end result is before you.

I am very greatly indebted to Alistair Hinton for his assistance during the preparation of this recording.

C.H.R.
31st October. 1988

John Ogdon with Ronald Stevenson, 1985.
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A Zoroastrian Musician in Dorset

Ronald Stevenson

A creative musician in Britain is a rarity, an outsider. So a Zoroastrian musician in Britain is a positive miracle.

Or at least a curiosity.

A curiosity invites curiosity. So I shall assume that the invitation to the reader's curiosity has been accepted and that he will read these pages in the spirit of Haroun al Raschid, looking for adventure.

It was not only old Khayyam who bade us "leave the Lot / Of Kaikobad and Kaikhosru forgot". Kaikhosru Shapurji Sorabji is not so much forgot as unknown. That he should have remained so, is a serious indictment of the contemporary world of music.

Sorabji is emphatically unlike the Englishman, whose face, once seen, is never remembered.

Already, before we discuss his music, his name makes a music for us, all its own. It is a name as strange to Western ears as an English name must be unspeakably dull to Eastern ears. Kaikhosru Shapurji Sorabji — they are eponymic names from the Iranian pantheon. Let us take them separately.

KAIKHOSRU = Persian for King Cyrus the Great of Persia; founder of the Persian Empire; a true upholder of the Zoroastrian religion.

This name is symbolic of Sorabji the innovator and Sorabji the conservator. It is the cypher of his lofty aloofness from Milton's "miscellaneous rabble who extol / Things vulgar". It is also an earnest of his *credo,* that of the ancient Zarathustra, which precedes Christ by a whole millennium.

SHAPURJI = 'Son of the King'.

The regality of the first name is underlined by the second, to make assurance doubly sure. Here we have to do with no milk-and-water democrat. Here is a musician for the Temple, not for the concert hall. And, as Ezra Pound reminds us,

The temple 卌 is holy, because it is not for sale.

SORABJI = an equation which a few words cannot contain, but which the following thoughts may go some way towards clarifying. Sorabji is a Parsi, a Zoroastrian from India, but not of it. On a postcard to the author, he has elucidated this point with characteristic *brio:*

"The English (the stupidest race in Europe, Kayserling called them) call anyone who comes FROM India but not OF it … INDIAN … as who should call a kitten emerging from a dog kennel a puppy? ... They would if they were goddamfools like the English."

(One learns to expect no eirenicon from Sorabji. His libations are vials of vitriol.)

His ancestral roots were in Irán, Spain and Sicily. From ancient Irán he derives his richly ornate craftsmanship and spiritual dedication to the highest; to Spain he owes his sombre and scintillating exoticism, which glows and flickers in the sable and sanguine colours of his music; and from Sicily he inherits his fierce independence of spirit.

Race — not 'racism' — matters to him. The waters that have flowed between the countries of his amphibious birthright have not diluted his blood. To him, borders are FRONTIERS.

He has set himself to guard the frontiers of art. His watchtower is Corfe Castle, Dorset, where he has lived long in superb solitude. That watchtower is not a 'tower of ivory': it is a granite tower. In a world that is a stage, as Shakespeare saw it, or a village, as Leopardi saw it, and which is now in danger of becoming a monstrous 'Subtopia' of functional tubular girders — scaffolding and scaffold for millions of hollow men — Sorabji is secure and sane in his metaphysical granitic tower. His uniqueness is not madness: the madness is what surrounds us. It behoves us not to accuse such a man of madness in this twentieth century, which resembles Lilliput more and more every day. Sorabji, physically small, is spiritually large. In a day of quasi-universal pygmean scale, when men's spiritual stature seems in inverse proportion to their scientific discoveries, perhaps Sorabji is bound to appear eccentric. He is certainly 'outside the circle' if the circle is taken to mean the dull diurnal round of brilliant mediocrity. And, though his *largesse* of genius made him a superlative critic in the pages of 'The New Age' and in many learned (and not-so-learned) journals of music, you must not expect to find him in the Grand Circle of Critics. Nor will you come upon him in the Grand Circle at the Festival Hall, nor in the Albert Hall, for he hates concerts that 'promote' (like a boxing-match) music which he does not wish to hear, and that are 'patronised' by people whom he does not want to meet. But if by 'circle' you mean something like what Goethe meant when he spoke of 'world citizenship'

and 'world language', than you must take account of Sorabji; and he will be inside that circle, not outside it, because that circle will be big enough to include him. His distinguished ancestry and his unique creative gift are twin points of a compass that describes a circle which embraces both Orient and Occident. A navigator determines his position by reference to the east; then, accordingly, to all points of the compass. It is not for nothing that this is called 'orientation'. Sorabji, like C. M. Doughty, indicates the emergent significance of the East for the West. Western art needs a new orientation; it has been waiting ready for whole millennia in the East.

The difficulty of writing about Sorabji is that one's prose threatens to become cornucopean in the attempt to say something about so abundant a creative energy. To attempt to write about him in one language is like trying to contain the seven seas in one pail, or a djinn in a bottle. One finds oneself becoming multilingual out of necessity, not out of a jejune emulation of the literary style of Ezra Pound. No ordinary book can be written about such an extraordinary man and musician as Sorabji: it must at least be a heptaglot! This clamant question of words is a hard one — as hard as the couch of words itself. For couched words must be. And the role of *accoucheur* is never without at least the possibility of hazard. We glimpse the difficulty as soon as we tackle the question of Sorabji's racial background and are obliged to invoke the names of Irán, Spain and Sicily.

There is a sense in which artists, throughout the world, form a race of their own, a race apart, like a lost tribe. Certainly, the history of music is bedevilled by a peculiar type of schizophrenia unknown to the psychiatrist. One finds it cropping up in all the 'histories' when the historian braves the quicksands of original genius: such men as Berlioz, Liszt, Chopin, Mahler, Delius, Busoni … and Sorabji, among others. To take a few: Berlioz is totally unlike any other French composer; both Poland and France claim Chopin; Busoni — a pure Italian — was known as a German in Italy and as an Italian in Germany. But the umbilical cord cannot connect to more than one placenta; fundamentally, every great artist is nourished by one country. It has nothing to do with leagues of distance (or of nations). As in the Hans Andersen story, every great artist is connected to his spiritual source by an invisible umbilical cord, and the further he travels away from that source, the more it hurts him and the more his art suffers.

So Sorabji is a Parsi composer, domiciled in Dorset. He loathes lexicographers, so expect to find no data here. (You will find little elsewhere, and what you find will baffle extremely). He has composed the longest symphonic works in the literature of music. If they were merely great in length,

they would hardly warrant comment; but as some people believe they are great in content, the reader must be prepared not to overlook what can only appear as a very strange case indeed — a Zoroastrian musician in Dorset! — but positively to accept it, to give it credence, fabulous and legendary as it all sounds, and to conserve patience in the hope of discovering what some artists (among them John Ireland, York Bowen, Roger Quilter, Edmund Rubbra, Delius, Sir Osbert and Sir Sacheverell Sitwell, Sir William Walton, Francis George Scott, Hugh M'Diarmid, Alban Berg, Sir Donald Francis Tovey, Ernest Newman and Busoni) believed to be a considerable contribution to the history of music.

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Kaikhosru Sorabji, 1988.
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Around Kaikhosru Sorabji

Alistair Hinton

Sorabji's life-story is hardly the stuff of which best-sellers are made, short as it is on such essentials as scandals, public image-making, opportunism and the like. For all his phenomenal creative and performing gifts, the ways of the international jet-set virtuoso and of the cult-composer were never his. The horror of appearing at large gatherings of people, the desire to protect his music from the unwelcome attentions of ill-equipped performers and listeners, and the deep distaste for the indulgence in hype, especially self-hype, of creative musicians are just a few of the things that made Sorabji the intensely private man he always was. The Scottish poet, friend and contemporary (almost to the day) of Sorabji, Hugh M'Diarmid, ends his chapter on the composer in his book **The Company I've Kept** (1966) with this paragraph:—

> "A great composer, a great critic and a prince among men, I know nothing about Sorabji (none of the particulars men usually know of each other, family affairs, education, hobbies, etc.) — nothing, but I think everything that matters, everything, as Jeeves would say, that is 'of the essence'."

Sorabji's life could hardly be described as uneventful, though almost all the major events in it are his very few public appearances as a performer and his very many musical compositions and essays. The quiet dignity essential to the truly great creative/recreative artist is given expression in Sorabji's essays 'Performance versus Celebration' and 'Attitudes of Mind towards Music.'[1] The well-ordered and harmonious private life without the benefit of which, he believed, such an artist cannot be fully prepared to meet the supreme spiritual, intellectual and physical demands made upon him by his work, is touched upon in his chapter on Bernard van Dieren.[2] Malcolm Boyd's article on Medtner

(a composer much admired by Sorabji) in the 1980 edition of Grove ends with this sentence that could equally well be applied to Sorabji himself: "[Medtner's] dedication to what he considered the immutable laws of his art was such that for him composition amounted almost to a profession of faith and, despite its strong appeals to the emotions, his music has a priestly quality to which not everyone can respond." The rationale behind Sorabji's strongly self-imposed way of life is perhaps best and most succinctly summed up in his essay 'Il Gran Rifiuto'.[2]

Needless to say, Sorabji almost always refused interviews with journalists and often made a point of providing misleading information about himself to lexicographers. He did take part in recorded interviews for the BBC for the centenaries in 1980 of Medtner and the Scots composer Francis George Scott, but the only noteworthy exception to his rule concerning interviews about himself occurred in 1977, when London Weekend Television made a programme about him. However, on that occasion, he insisted on a number of conditions being met before consenting to this interview — firstly, that it should take place in his own home in Dorset; secondly, that no live filming be done (and he permitted still photographs only after some persuasion); thirdly, that under no circumstances would he play the piano during its course; and lastly, that he reserved the right to terminate it as soon as he saw fit. The exception proved the rule with a vengeance in this instance. The interview nevertheless did take place, although a good many of the questions, reasonable as they were, turned out to be both longer and less prickly than his answers. The programme, presented by the interviewer, Russell Harty, and which also included contributions from Sir Sacheverell Sitwell, Yonty Solomon, Felix Aprahamian and myself, was shown, though Sorabji, who never possessed or wished to possess a television set, neither saw it nor wanted to see it.

The majority of journalists no doubt view the prospect of interviewing the purposeful (and, in this case, purposefully) inaccessible figure of importance as a challenge, even when no such 'challenge' is actually being set by the potential subject of such an interview. Much has been made of Sorabji's alleged 'eccentricity' in his hard-line attitudes over such matters. I have even heard him described on one occasion as a 'typical crusty English eccentric', although it seems hard to imagine how a Parsi born of an Indian father could manage to qualify as anything 'English'. Admittedly, it is perhaps equally hard to imagine any composer besides Sorabji issuing such a printed notice as the following:—

"TO THOSE WHOM IT MAY CONCERN, IF ANY, AND OTHERS WHO MIND ANYBODY'S BUSINESS BUT THEIR OWN

"Dates and places of birth relating to myself given in various works of reference are invariably false.

"It is also stated that my name, my real name, that is the one I am known by, is not my real name. Now one is given one's name — one's authentic ones — at some such ceremony as baptism, Christening, or the like, on the occasion of one's formal reception into a certain religious Faith. In the ancient Zarathustrian Parsi community to which, on my father's side, I have the honour to belong, this ceremony is normally performed, as in other Faiths, in childhood, or owing to special circumstances as in my case, later in life, when I assumed my name as it now is or, in the words of the legal document in which this is mentioned "... received into the Parsi community and in accordance with the custom and tradition thereof, is now and will be henceforth known as ..." and here follows my name as now.

"Certain lexicographical *canaille,* one egregious and notorious specimen particularly, enraged at my complete success in defeating and frustrating their impudent impertinent and presumptuous nosings and pryings into what does not concern them, and actuated no doubt by the mean malice of the base born for their betters, have thought, as they would say, to take out it of me by suggesting that my name *isn't* really my name.

"Insects that are merely noisome like to think that they can also sting."

with its underlining handwritten postscript (from Pope):—

"But let me flap this bug with gilded wings,
This painted child of dirt that stinks and stings."

Sorabji, however, was no poseur, no image-maker or headline-creator. He simply took a view diametrically opposed, it would appear, from that of Grainger and, more particularly, perhaps,

from some of our present-day musicologists, in regard to this aspect of 'composer exposure'. He never sought to diarise his life and the prospect of autobiography would have appalled and disgusted him. He once put to me the rhetorical question of whether, and if so, to what extent, a foreknowledge of the syphilis and grave mental depression suffered respectively by Wolf and Duparc is essential to a thorough understanding of the work of two of Europe's greatest song-composers, adding that an awareness of what Gesualdo and Mozart got up to in their private lives or the manner in which Wagner treated many of those around him would likewise be useless towards an appreciation of the music of those composers. "All that matters", as he often pointed out, "is the music itself and one's intellectual and emotional response to it. The rest is mere muck-raking, is of interest only as such and is the concern only of the muck-rakers and their mindless readership." M'Diarmid clearly shares Sorabji's attitudes here, in the suggestion that he not only 'knows nothing' but also feels no need to know anything of the details of Sorabji's lifestyle.

There are some precedents here, of course. Sorabji's decision to put an end to his public appearances as a pianist is, in a way, reminiscent of the similar attitudes of two of the 19th century's greatest pianists, Liszt (in later life) and Alkan (during most of his life). Indeed, Alkan's general reclusiveness has something in common with that of Sorabji. In more recent times, two giants of the keyboard, Horowitz and Michelangeli, for one reason or another, spent considerably more time off the concert platform than on it, so to speak. The chief difference here is that Sorabji's last public recital in December 1936 remained his last. Schumann's famous *cri de coeur* to the critics "... pick out the fifths and leave us in peace" appears to share something with Sorabji's attitudes towards what he calls the "muck-rakers". The French composer Magnard shunned all publicity where his music was concerned, though he did not go as far as Sorabji and place an all-out embargo on public performances of his work without his prior consent. The copious creativity of Ives and Brian was thwarted respectively only by the onset of illness and the onset of old age, rather than by the lack of performances. Skalkottas spent the last one-third or so of his short life composing at considerable speed a vast body of works not only without specific performance prospects but, it would seem, without even telling those closest to him that he was doing so. In this respect, Skalkottas perhaps went even further than Sorabji who, at least in letters to close friends, at times mentioned a little about what he had recently completed and what he was currently working on (though rarely in much detail).

The brief article on Sorabji in the 1949 edition of the **Oscar Thompson International Cyclopedia of Music and Musicians** speaks of "... the composer's conviction being that music should be accessible only to those of the highest skill." Whilst this is not in itself untrue, as a casual glance at almost any of Sorabji's bigger scores will demonstrate, two things must first be properly understood. With regard to the skills required by performer and listener alike, Sorabji has never gone out of his way to create difficulties in order to render his work more remote and recondite, having not the slightest interest in either difficulty or simplicity for their own sakes, and the fact that learning his major works no more fits into a performer's usual schedules than the works themselves fit into normal concert programmes is a difficulty Sorabji saw as imposed not by himself but by the conventions of the concert career as it is generally understood. Also, on the matter of accessibility, Sorabji saw his compositions as intended for a small circle of his close friends rather than for general consumption by the concertgoing public. These friends included, in the main, the dedicatees of his works, although in most cases, unless fortunate enough to hear Sorabji playing them, even they have, for the most part (at least until recently) had to be content only with the knowledge of their existence and the honour of the dedication. James Payn wrote of "... the well-nigh universal habit of literary lying and pretence of admiration for certain works of which in reality we know very little, and for which, if we knew more, we should perhaps care even less."[3] It is but a short distance between this idea and that of Sorabji illustrating his lack of interest in public approbation by saying that he cannot possibly concern himself with responses to his work from listeners "of whom he knows nothing, and of whom, if he knew more, he would care even less."

However, to return to the matter of events in Sorabji's life: one occasion of great importance, which Sorabji certainly regarded as such, was his one meeting in London in 1919 with Busoni. At this stage, the 27-year-old Sorabji had to his credit four piano concertos (and was contemplating another), a number of songs and a few piano works including the **Fantaisie espagnole** and the **First Piano Sonata**. Sorabji asked Busoni if he could help him get the sonata published but only after Busoni had insisted on hearing the younger composer, despite his protests of modesty, play it to him, with the words "Never mind, do what you can; music is, after all, to be heard, and I cannot play it."

So we have on the one hand Sorabji's belief in his music being intended and suitable only for a small circle of like-minded friends and, on the other, Busoni's statement to him "music is, after all, to be heard." Since the mid-1970s when Sorabji began consenting to certain public performances, broadcasts and recordings of his music, the opportunity has been afforded to us to discover which of the two men was right. Sorabji's music is never likely to suffer the fate of the sort of mass public appeal that has befallen such works as Vivaldi's **Four Seasons**, Beethoven's **Fifth Symphony** and the first and second piano concertos respectively by Tchaikovsky and Rakhmaninov through no fault attributable to those composers. It has, nevertheless, become abundantly clear that those of Sorabji's works which have now been heard have touched the emotions and intellects of a far greater number of those "of whom he knew nothing" than he would have believed possible.

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1. From "Around Music" (Unicorn Press, 1932)
2. From "Mi Contra Fa" (Porcupine Press, 1947)
3. From "Some Private Views" (London, 1881)

In December 1959, John Ogdon gave a private performance of Opus Clavicembalisticum at Ronald Stevenson's house in West Linton, Scotland. This was the only occasion on which the work was played to the dedicatee, Christopher Grieve (Hugh M'Diarmid). This remarkable series of photographs, taken during this unique event, are by the Edinburgh photographer, Helmut Petzsch. Copyright ©1959, Helmut Petzsch.

Ogdon, Grieve, Stevenson

Stevenson, Grieve

Ogdon, Grieve

Ogdon, Grieve

Opus Clavicembalisticum — a Brief History

Alistair Hinton

Sorabji regarded his **First Organ Symphony** (1923-24) as his earliest truly personal and mature work, much as Busoni thought of his own **Second Sonata** for violin and piano. He said that, in retrospect, he regarded his earlier music as "efforts, not particularly successful, to find my direction as a composer", and it is perhaps fair to suggest that the nearest he ever came to a change of approach was between the quasi-expressionist near-atonal (at times) **Second** and **Third Piano Sonatas** and the first of his three monumental works for organ solo. Another mammoth work, the **Variations and Fugue on 'Dies Irae'** for piano (1923-26) (not to be confused with his even larger and much later **Sequentia Cyclica** on the same theme), was dedicated to the memory of Busoni, to whom Sorabji had already dedicated his **First** and **Second Piano Sonatas**. Whilst it might be misleading to over-estimate the growing influence of Busoni on Sorabji at this time (and it must be said that Busoni, though he admired Sorabji, did not find that what he heard of his music appealed to him personally, much as it fascinated him), the stylistic transition in Sorabji between his works before and after 1923 could be said to reflect a transition between the influence of Busoni of the **Sonatina Seconda** and Busoni of the **Fantasia Contrappuntistica**.

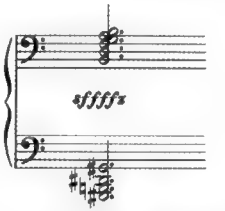
The establishment in the mid-1920s of Sorabji's preoccupation with fugal composition and with theme-and-variation form in general (and passacaglia-with-variations in particular) went hand in hand with an increasing awareness of the importance to him of the works of the Netherlands school, of Palestrina and most especially of Bach, and this at a time when he was gradually growing away from many of the trends in post-First-World-War European music. As a result, the foundation-stones for **Opus Clavicembalisticum** could then be laid.

Destined to be the crowning achievement of his piano works thus far, the **Opus** was begun in 1929. Its title was originally intended to be **Opus Sequentiale**, and its structural layout bears resemblances to that of Busoni's **Fantasia Contrappuntistica**, with the principal difference that the Sorabji work also takes in four short largely *moto-perpetuo*-like virtuosic movements and two massive sets of variations; furthermore, it is more than seven times the size of Busoni's **Fantasia**.

During the course of its composition, Sorabji's very dear Scots friend Erik Chisholm (who almost single-handedly was the Glasgow-based **Active Society for the Propagation of Contemporary Music**), began trying to persuade the composer to perform **Opus Clavicembalisticum**, once completed, in Glasgow. Chisholm, a composer himself and an astonishingly enterprising and courageous figure in Scottish musical life at that time, founded his Society for the purposes of attracting major international European composers to Scotland to talk about and perform their work. Amongst those who took part during the late 1920s and the 1930s were van Dieren, Bartók, Hindemith and Szymanowski, and Sorabji himself gave four performances for Chisholm in the Society's series of concerts.

As work on the **Opus** continued apace, frequent correspondence between Sorabji and Chisholm recounted its progress, though not in much detail, and Sorabji gave the first of his performances for Chisholm's Society in the spring of 1930. On this occasion he gave the première (and the only performance until 2002) of his **Fourth Piano Sonata**. Despite their close friendship and mutual admiration, Chisholm had to do a good deal of sensitive and persuasive tactical manoeuvring and Sorabji a good deal of heart-searching before the performance of **Opus Clavicembalisticum** could be agreed upon and scheduled.

Sorabji's letter to Chisholm of 25.06.1930 includes the following paragraph:—

> "With a racking head and literally my whole body shaking as with ague I write this and tell you I have just this afternoon early finished Clavicembalisticum (252 pages — longer than Dies IRAE and immeasurably better ... the final Coda Stretta is an achievement with the 4 forms of each subject running through the fabric linked with quotations of earlier fugue subjects declaimed with massive vehemence[.] the closing 4 pages are as cataclysmic and catastrophic as anything I've ever done — the harmony bites like nitric acid the counterpoint grinds like the mills of God to close finally on this implacable monosyllable:

"I am the Spirit that denies!"

But how it's drained me ... I feel like Christ when he said "Virtue has gone out of me!" And I too: all my courage, all my strength!!"

Needless to say, the première of **Opus Clavicembalisticum** was received with suitable astonishment. This took place in Stevenson Hall, Glasgow, on December 1st, 1930, and the composer apparently decided on the spur of the moment not to take the expected breaks between each of the work's three parts, for fear of the possible consequences of interrupting his flow.

Opus Clavicembalisticum was published in 1931 by Curwen of London. Waldheim-Eberle of Vienna were engaged to undertake the printing, and the edition, in spite of the composer's proof-reading, contains quite a number of errors throughout the course of its 252 large pages. Reviewers of this publication included Havergal Brian, Alec Rowley (in **The Musical Times**), Ralph Hill (in **The Chesterian**), Edmund Rubbra (in **The Monthly Musical Record**) and M. C. van de Rovaart (in the Dutch **De Muziekbode**). The appearance of this monolith in print, priced at 2 guineas, aroused much enthusiastic admiration and respect.

The manuscript of the **Opus** was given by the composer to Erik Chisholm, who later gave it to the music library of the University of Cape Town, where he (Chisholm) had by that time become Dean

of the Music Faculty. Curiously, a short analytical note on the work, together with a thematic index, appears in Sorabji's hand as an appendix to the manuscript. No clue is given as to why or for whose benefit he wrote this, and it seems to be a well-nigh unique instance of Sorabji relaxing somewhat his customary attitude of "never apologise, never explain". In any event, it was not included in the publication of the **Opus**. Sorabji gave the proofs for publication to his dear friend Norman Peterkin, whose heirs now own them.

The next public performance appears to have been of its first part only. This took place in March 1936 in London when a well-meaning but sadly ill-equipped pianist distended it to at least twice its proper length. Edward Clarke Ashworth's review in **The New English Weekly** of this most unfortunate event bemoans the fact that the composer was not secured to give the performance, in place of the inadequate John Tobin. Humphrey Searle recalled that Tobin's account seemed to show no concept of the composer's intentions (Searle had previously studied the score with considerable interest), and that it was disappointingly unrecognisable as Sorabji. This mishap may have been a contributory factor to Sorabji's decision soon afterwards to place the embargo on public performances without his express permission, "no performance at all" as he put it, being "vastly preferable to an obscene travesty."

An essay by Erik Chisholm with a descriptive catalogue of some of Sorabji's works, including a couple of pages on the **Opus**, was published by the Music Department of Oxford University Press in 1939, shortly after they assumed the sole selling agency for Sorabji's published musical works.

The first truly masterly and detailed analysis of **Opus Clavicembalisticum**, including 35 music examples, was written by Scottish composer/pianist Ronald Stevenson in 1961 as part of a proposed symposium on Sorabji whose other contributors were John Ogdon and Hugh M'Diarmid, dedicatee of the **Opus**. The analysis is published for the first time in the present volume. Ogdon gave a private performance of the **Opus** in Stevenson's home in 1959 (29 years to the day after Sorabji's première) in the presence of Stevenson and M'Diarmid. Stevenson himself, whose astounding pianism is well known, must also have spent considerable time in those days practising the **Opus** (though he has never actually performed it). This analysis, made in the absence of any public performances,

broadcasts or recordings and relying entirely on Stevenson's composer/pianist insights and on one private hearing of John Ogdon, is therefore all the more remarkable. Regrettably, the symposium was never published complete, although part of a discussion of Sorabji between its three contributors which was intended as one of its chapters was later included in M'Diarmid's book **The Company I've Kept**[1], in a chapter on the composer. The essays **A Zoroastrian Musician in Dorset** and **Kaikhosru Sorabji and Herman Melville**, reproduced in the present publication, were also intended for inclusion in the symposium.

Paul Rapoport's book **Opus Est**[2] includes Sorabji as one of the 'six composers from Northern Europe' which are its subject-matter. Rapoport selects one work, **Opus Clavicembalisticum**, for a detailed study in his chapter on Sorabji.

Opus Clavicembalisticum went out of print late in 1977, and was in fact the first of Sorabji's 14 published musical works under the control of Oxford University Press to achieve this status. In common with each of the others, when stocks became exhausted, the composer declined reprints. All of the original publications were out of print before Sorabji's death in 1988.

Australian pianist Geoffrey Douglas Madge was given permission by the composer to perform **Opus Clavicembalisticum** in public in 1980. During the Holland Festival in June that year Madge gave four performances of its first two movements, one of which was broadcast live. He also gave a further broadcast for ABC Television in Australia the following month. In the same year, an LP record of American pianist Michael Habermann, devoted entirely to Sorabji, was issued and this also included the first two movements of the **Opus**.

Geoffrey Douglas Madge went on to give his first complete performance of **Opus Clavicembalisticum** in Utrecht, Netherlands, in May 1982, and played the entire third part of it in London later that month. A commercial recording of the Utrecht performance was released the following year. Since then he has performed all or part of the work in Chicago, Bonn and Aarhus (Denmark) in 1983, Montréal and Toronto in 1984, Viitasaari (Finland) in 1986, Oslo and Paris in 1988, and Berlin in 2002.

In the early 1960s, shortly before his death, Erik Chisholm, in an essay on Sorabji, devotes a page or so to **Opus Clavicembalisticum**. Recalling its 1930 Glasgow première he says this:

> "At that time Sorabji was a fabulous pianist and his performance of this amazing work was equally astonishing judged purely as a display of pianistic virtuosity. At that time, too, he played all his extant piano works to me, not once but several times. I can well believe that under different circumstances, if, for example, Sorabji had had to earn his living as a professional musician, he might easily have had sensational success as a concert pianist, for his performances 35 years ago were quite staggering."

Earlier in the same part of the essay, Chisholm, with what now turns out to have been great foresight, declares:

> "The distinguished and highly popular English pianist, John Ogdon, has indeed played the entire work privately and by all accounts is well up to all its enormous technical and interpretative demands.
>
> "If Sorabji would give permission for a pianist of Ogdon's gifts publicly to play his music, it could easily be the beginning of a public appreciation of his music."

Now that the public has had opportunities over the past quarter-century or so to hear at least some part of Sorabji's vast output, it seems reasonable to suggest that we are by now beyond "the beginning of a public appreciation of his music." Sorabji indeed consented to this historic recording of **Opus Clavicembalisticum**, and its first complete performance in England was given by John Ogdon, likewise with the full knowledge and gladly given permission of the composer, though not, it must be said, in his physical presence.

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Revised 2002

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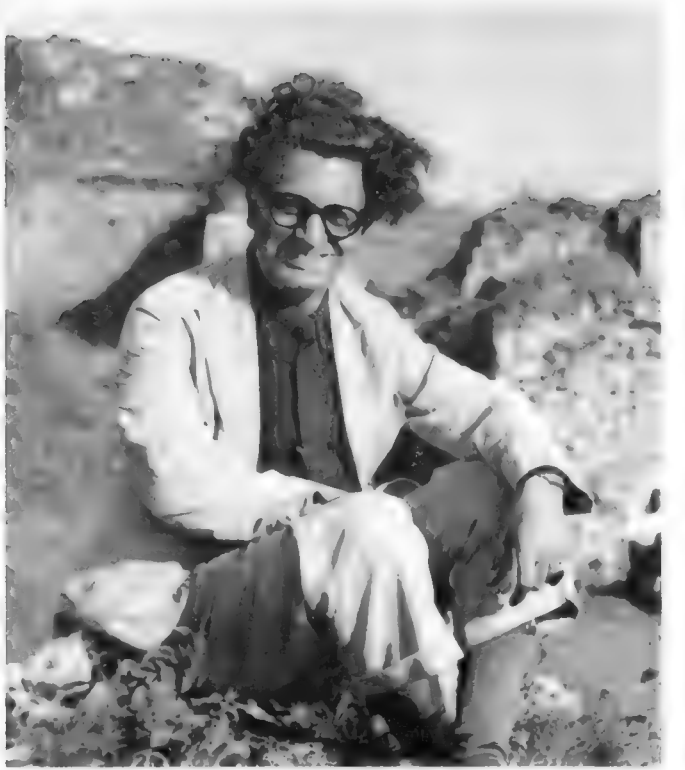
1. Hutchinson, London, 1966.
2. Taplinger, New York, 1979.



Sorabji on the slopes above Corfe Castle in the mid-1930s.
Photograph by Norman Peterkin (also attributed - less probably - to J. Muspratt).

Shortform-Analysis of Opus Clavicembalisticum

Kaikhosru Sorabji

This analysis was written by the composer on three pages of manuscript immediately following the end of the piece, followed by four pages of music examples. It was not included in the published score, and it seems reasonable to assume that it was never intended for publication. Those familiar with Sorabji's literary style may be disappointed by the prosaic, factual and brief nature of this piece of writing. It should be remembered that Sorabji was always opposed to wordy descriptions of his own music — no lengthy discourses on any of his works appear in his enormous correspondence, and this is one of only two formal analyses of any of his works that he attempted. The analysis gives the impression of having been written in a hurry and with little attention to detail, and the increasing brevity of description of the later sections, together with increasing discrepancies in titling and punctuation, point to mounting impatience with the whole exercise. The 'Theme Table' that follows is comprehensive, however, so Sorabji obviously thought the analysis worth completing, or had some reason to do so. It could be that he thought that this brief outline of the work would be of interest to a friend (it is not clear to whom, although Erik Chisholm, who presented the concert in which Sorabji gave the first performance, is an obvious possibility), or would aid the work's accessibility to a prospective publisher, who might otherwise find its size and unfamiliar style daunting (in the event the piece was published at the composer's father's expense). The other analysis that Sorabji wrote was of the **Fourth Piano Sonata**, the work that almost immediately preceded **Opus Clavicembalisticum** in the composer's output. The **Fourth Sonata** was also presented in a concert under Erik Chisholm's auspices, which suggests that the analyses were connected in some way with the concerts, either being read out in an introductory talk, or printed in the programme (although surely this could not account for the copious music examples). The underestimated length of the work (see footnote 2) definitely implies that the analysis preceded the first performance. However, no documentary evidence has so far come to light to clarify this matter.

The analysis as printed here conforms to the punctuation, titling and layout of the composer's manuscript.
C.H.R.

Shortform-Analysis of Opus Clavicembalisticum

This work is admittedly an essay in the form adumbrated by the immortal BUSONI in his great FANTASIA CONTRAPPUNTISTICA which, with the Hammerklavier Sonata and the REGER Variations on a theme of BACH are three of the supreme works for the piano. Like the FANTASIA CONTRAPPUNTISTICA, the Opus Clavicembalisticum is primarily a Fugue-Sequence, but whereas in the BUSONI work the first three fugues run on consecutively and are connected [thematically][1] the fugues of the Opus Clavicembalisticum are all thematically self contained and separated by extended interludes and cadenze and it is not till the CODA STRETTA of the whole work that themes of preceding fugues are woven into the texture. My "Opus" continues the task of my contribution to the theory (my own) of "one programme one work" which it still further extends occupying the length of a full ordinary programme (2 ½ hours approximately) for its performance.[2] The "Opus" falls into three broad divisions indicated as PARS PRIMA, PARS ALTERA and PARS TERTIA respectively.

I. PARS PRIMA

This section consists of (I) Introito: a short section exposing the five themes of the Choral Prelude. The initial descending passage marked "declamato con enfasi e forza" is in the nature of a motiv and frequently reappears in various guises in the course of the work. (II) This subsection is the Choral Prelude proper; a short linking passage marked NEXUS serves as a connecting link. The five themes are fully and elaborately treated in the Chorale Prelude which after a climax subsides on to a short pedal figure over which is quietly intoned a forecast of the subject of the first Fugue.

III The first Fugue is a deliberate-paced 4 voiced specimen with two counter-subjects which are themselves fugally treated in an extended episode. The subject is treated in all four ways of straight, reversed, inverted, inverted and reversed.

IV The Fantasia is a Toccata-like movement based on preceding themes. In the final Bars is added a motto based on the initials C. G. H (B♮). D of the Gentleman to whom the work is dedicated.

V The Second Fugue is double: occasional allusions to motti from the first Fugue will be found in it. The treatment becomes more extended and free — although always rigidly contrapuntal and fugal. This concludes the first part of the work.

II. Pars Altera

VI. The Interludium Primum is a theme of slow grave character with 49 short variations of every kind increasing in elaboration and complexity as the section progresses.

VII. A rapid running CADENZA (I) filled with many disguised allusions to earlier themes leads to —

VIII. The Third Fugue which is triple and very fully worked. Each section uses as countersubject the forms of the subject in the preceding section.

III. PARS TERTIA

This is the longest section of the work. IX Interludium Alterum is an extended section in three divisions a Toccata an Adagio and Passacaglia with 81 Variations. Continually fresh themes are introduced as each movement of the work arrives. Very many and diversified kinds of treatment from simple two part Counterpoint to the most elaborate and intricate of decorative arabesque are applied to the Passacaglia theme.

X. Is a short Cadenza in chord formations leading to the

XI. Fourth Fugue which is quadruple, All four subjects being fully treated: the

XII. CODA STRETTA is then reached—a most intricate and complex weft of themes from the entire work culminating with a powerful declamation of the 1st Subject of the first Fugue with supreme power and massiveness.

Note: Separation and performance of any section or subsection apart from the whole work is absolutely prohibited. The work is only intended for pianist-musicians of the highest order. Indeed its intellectual and technical difficulties place it beyond the reach of any others — it is a weighty and serious contribution to the literature of the piano, for serious musicians and serious listeners, only.

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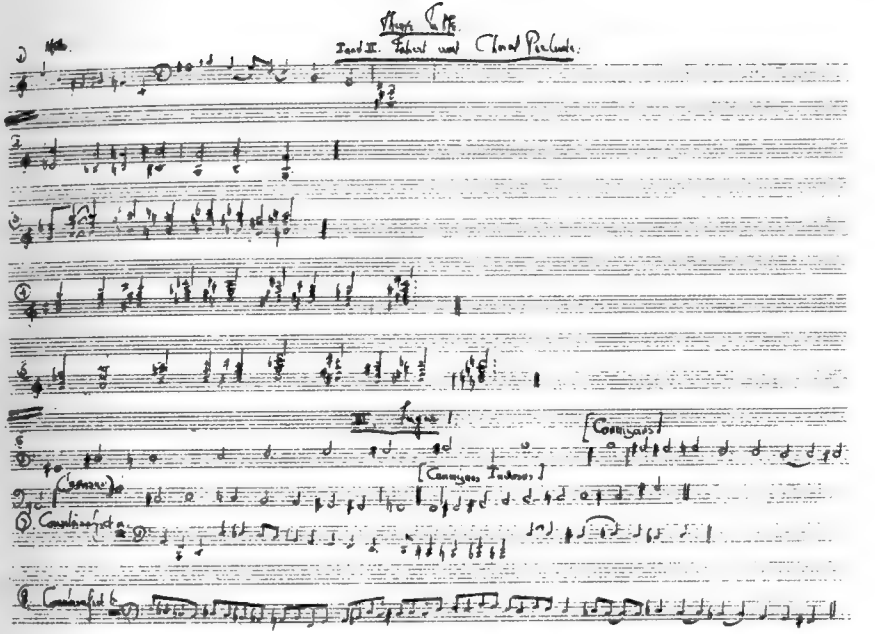
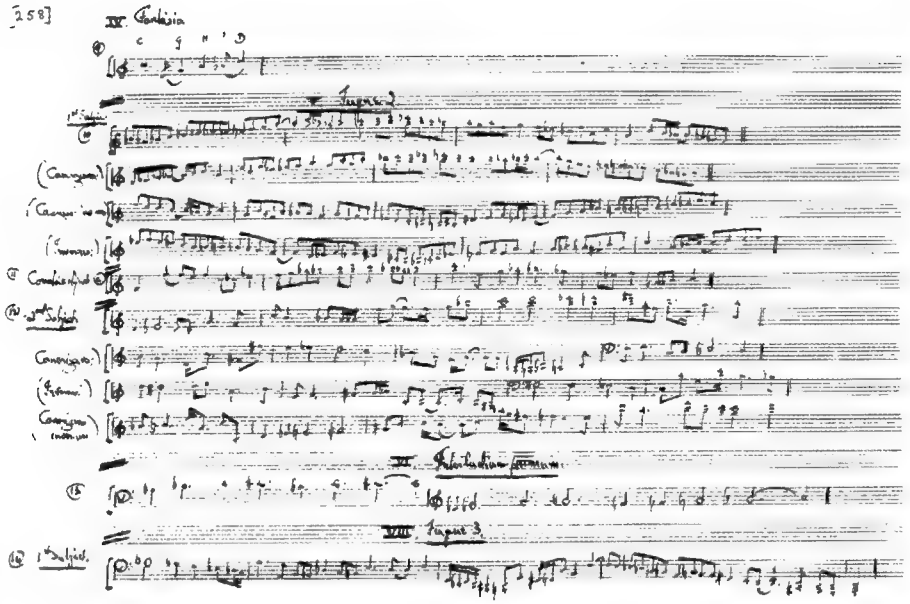
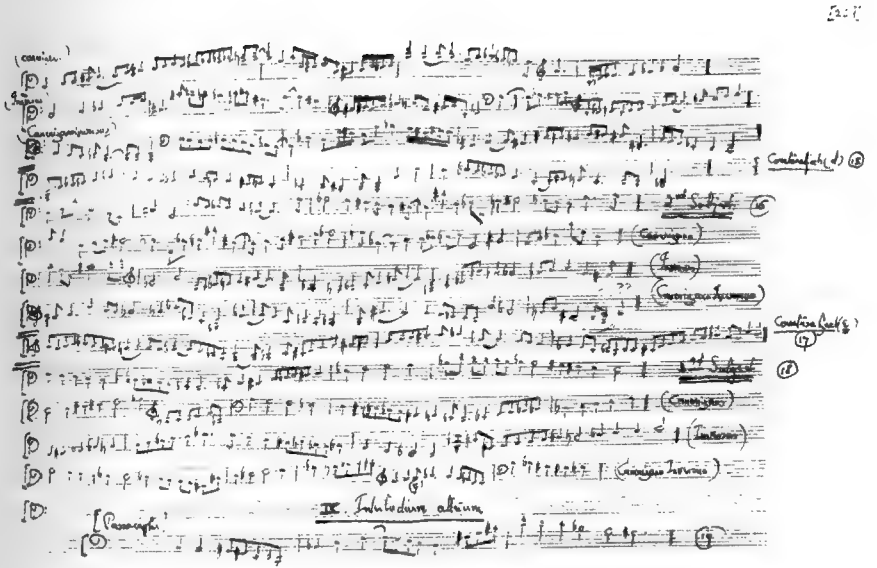
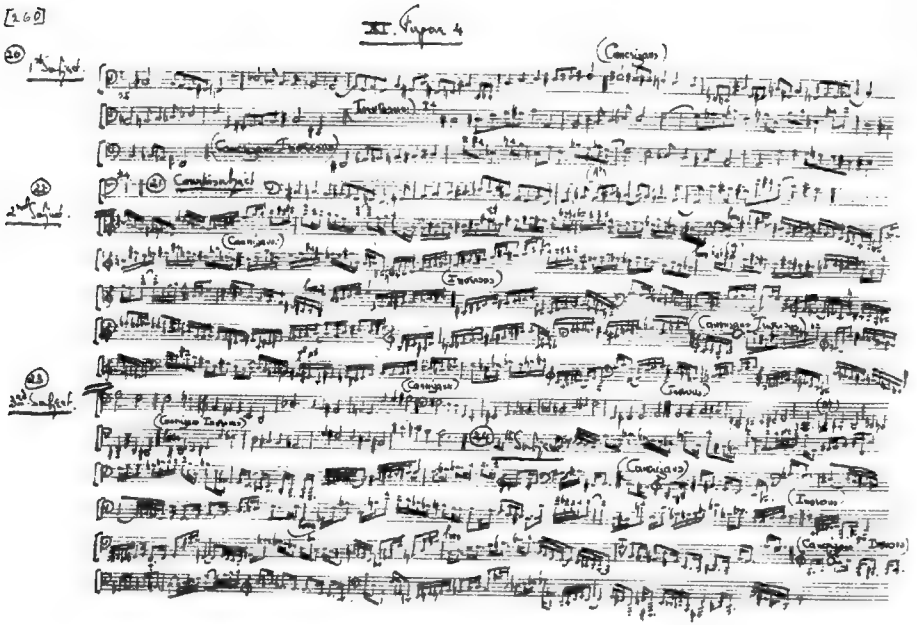
1. Sorabji deleted this word in the manuscript. There are thematic references to the first two fugues in the third, but they are not extensive.

2. The composer presumably means that the work, at 2½ hours, is intended to substitute for a full ordinary programme, without intending to imply that an ordinary programme would be of this length. On the subject of timings for Opus Clavicembalisticum, it is worth noting that these can be misleading, even when they might reasonably be assumed to be accurate. The timing that the composer envisaged (and that which he took in his 1930 performance) can be called into question for a start. In his programme notes for the concert, Erik Chisholm stated that the work would last "2 ¼ to 3 hours", including intervals "of 5 to 10 minutes". The following day, the Glasgow Herald mentioned two intervals "of 10 minutes or more" in a performance that lasted "in total a little over two hours". In an article in the same newspaper five years later, Chisholm (who is said to have turned pages at the performance) said that the performance lasted "more than 2 ½ hours with intervals". However, Chisholm's sister (who was at the performance) and the composer (who gave it) both stated unequivocally that no intervals took place. Then we have the question of the infamous 1936 John Tobin performance of the first part of Opus Clavicembalisticum. A critic has suggested that if Sorabji really intended that the work last about 2 hours, since the present recording lasts about twice that length of time, Tobin was "as good" as Ogdon. No. Contemporary accounts (Edward Clarke Ashworth, writing in The New English Weekly; J.A.W. (Jack Westrup?); the composers Humphrey Searle and Mervyn Vicars (both of whom were at the performance) and Sorabji himself (who later denied that he was there, although Vicars said they were there together) put the timing of Tobin's performance at 80 minutes (Ashworth) and 90 minutes or thereabouts (everybody else). Ashworth wrote that Sorabji told him that the first part ought to last 40 minutes. For the record, Ogdon took 51 minutes in the present recording and 46 in his 1988 Queen Elizabeth Hall performance; Geoffrey Douglas Madge (live performance, 1982) took 47.

It is possible to be deceived about timings, even under favourable conditions, and in this connexion it is worth considering Yonty Solomon's first performance of Sorabji's Third Piano Sonata at the Wigmore Hall. Three critics reviewed the performance, giving timings. The Daily Telegraph gave the duration as 65 minutes; The Guardian, 75 minutes, while The Times' timing was 90 minutes. It would seem that these statistics tell us less about the duration of the piece than about the reactions of different listeners, a principle which may be assumed to be generally applicable.







Opus Clavicembalisticum — a Critical Analysis

Ronald Stevenson

Opus Clavicembalisticum is Sorabji's masterpiece, in the sense that it marks his emergence from the period of apprenticeship through which every composer must pass; and stamps his originality upon every page with the inerasability of a watermark.

Besides its ordinary edition, the work appeared in a special limited edition of twenty-three copies printed on Whatman hand-made paper, each numbered and signed by the composer. The long folio format (bound in golden mottled 'pewter' paper, lettered in 'Othello' bold face), the superb heavy paper (252 pages with generous margins) and the fine Viennese printing (inevitably, with such a long work, containing a number of misprints) all constitute a collector's item of great value.

The work carries the imprimatur of Curwen, London, who first managed the publication. Later it was placed into the hands of Oxford University Press.

Opus Clavicembalisticum bears the following unique dedication:

TO MY TWO FRIENDS (E DUOBUS UNUM[1]):
HUGH M'DIARMID
and
C.M. GRIEVE
LIKEWISE
TO THE EVERLASTING GLORY OF THOSE FEW
MEN

BLESSED AND SANCTIFIED IN THE
CURSES AND EXECRATIONS OF THOSE
MANY
WHOSE PRAISE IS ETERNAL DAMNATION

Facing the dedication, the composer prints what he calls the 'constitution of the work', an impressive ichnograph:

PARS PRIMA	I.	INTROITO
	II.	PRELUDIO CORALE
	III.	FUGA I
	IV.	FANTASIA
	V.	FUGA A DUE SOGGETTI
PARS ALTERA	VI.	INTERLUDIUM PRIMUM (THEMA CUM XLIX VARIATIONIBUS)
	VII.	CADENZA I
	VIII.	FUGA A TRE SOGGETTI
PARS TERTIA	IX.	INTERLUDIUM ALTERUM (TOCCATA: ADAGIO: PASSACAGLIA CUM LXXXI VARIATIONIBUS)
	X.	CADENZA II
	XI.	FUGA A QUATTRO SOGGETTI
	XII.	CODA STRETTA

Comparison of this plan with the *distribuzione dell'opera* appended by Busoni to his **Fantasia Contrappuntistica** (*edizione definitiva,* 1910) reveals the *fons et origo* of Sorabji's formal conception.

Here is Busoni's plan:

PARS PRIMA	I.	PRELUDIO CORALE
	II.	FUGA
	III.	FUGA II (a due soggetti)
	IV.	FUGA III (a tre soggetti)
PARS ALTERA	V.	INTERMEZZO
	VI.	VARIAZIONE 1
	VII.	VARIAZIONE 2
	VIII.	VARIAZIONE 3
PARS TERTIA	IX.	CADENZA
	X.	FUGA IV (a quattro soggetti)
	XI.	CORALE
	XII.	STRETTA

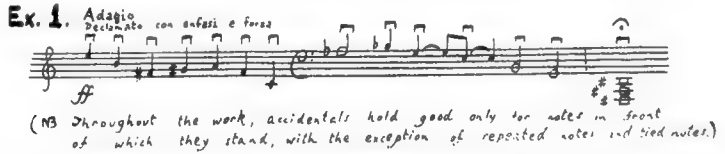
Busoni told Hugo Leichtentritt that the **Fantasia Contrappuntistica** was, in its architectonic aspect, based on the proportions of the Palace of the Popes at Avignon. If the image is taken suggestively rather than literally, it may illumine to liken Sorabji's *magnum opus* to such grand architecture as the Temple of Ranpur. Standing on a lofty foundation 200 feet square, this glory of Indian architecture is surrounded by a range of 86 cells, each bearing a pyramidal roof or *sikra.* It contains five shrines, the central one having a quadruple image of Adinath. There are 20 domes, 21 feet in diameter, supported by over 400 columns enclosing the shrines — a multi-columnar vista, like an intimation of infinity. The colouristic cadenzas in Sorabji's music, which set off the architectonic counterpoint of the fugues, may be likened to the rose-quartz Aravuli mountains which rise behind the Temple of Ranpur.

To analyse adequately Sorabji's 252 pages bar by bar would take a far greater number of pages, and the number of readers prepared to comb through such an analysis would be in reverse ratio to its inordinate length. Here a general outline of the work, with occasional detail, must suffice.

PARS PRIMA

I. INTROITO (pp 5-7).

The work begins with an arresting series of thirteen notes, which inscribe a drooping arc, like a rainbow dipping down into an abyss:



It is also like an awesome text prefacing a Savonarolian sermon. Or it is like a superb tragedian's soliloquy at the beginning of a momentous drama. Or it is like the music of great bells being cast into the ocean from a high tower. It is all that and more besides. It is not a tone-picture of an abyss-plumbing rainbow or of bells cast into the sea. But it is music which inspires emotions akin to the emotions suggested by those images. This music's sonority on the piano suggests a mythical instrument which would combine the ring of a trumpet with the peal of a bell. It would be erroneous to think of the series of thirteen notes as a Schönbergian tone-row, for its 'freedom of speech' embraces what twelve-tone theorists proscribe: the recurrence of a note or notes within the basic series. Rather might we compare Sorabji's opening bar to an Indian *raga*: both present a basic pattern out of which the music is woven. It is the practice of the classical singers of India to prelude their song with its *raga*. Sorabji's first bar stands in that kind of relationship to his composition. The methods of many twelve-tone composers are very different from that, for these composers are generally at pains to conceal the random row which is the elementary arithmetical basis of their composition; or if they expose it, they often also expose the tenuity of its aural relevance to the whole composition; aural relevance as distinct from visual relevance, for the human ear is as slow as the eye is sharp to perceive niceties.

Sorabji's thirteen notes comprise: a chord of the 4th (root E), a passing note, an F major-minor chord, a diminished triad (root E, with B flat) and a common chord of E minor followed by one of

D sharp minor. Thus the expansive, widely ranging melodic line contains a contracted inner harmonic progression which moves semitonally round a pivotal E. This procedure is intimately related to the opening harmonic idea of Busoni's **2nd Violin Sonata.** The tonality is the same, but Busoni's chromaticism is explicit where Sorabji's is implicit. Here is the Busoni:

The interior chromaticism in Sorabji's theme is expressed by harmonic implication. Apart from the passing note (note 4), which is later proved inessential when it is omitted from the theme, there is a semitone between only the first of the thirteen notes and the last. Paradoxically, it takes Sorabji thirteen notes to achieve the descent of the smallest interval used in his work, the semitone. This indicates the largeness of his time-scale and how the most prosaic interval in Western music (the much-suffering semitone) is in his hands shot through with a pregnancy of meaning rivalled by few composers.

Incidentally, Sorabji's 'down-bow' signs over his opening notes (indicating powerful emphases) are derived from their employment in the slow movement of Busoni's Piano Concerto.

His musical 'text' stated, Sorabji selects from it the major-minor coalescence and develops it in a figured chorale *(Vivo e pesante molto)*, with a rapid arpeggio *ostinato* high on the keyboard; a chorale-like melody which relates to the 4th-chord of the 'motto', emblazoned in bronze haut-relief octaves in the middle of the keyboard; and an irregularly reiterated pedal-chord of D sharp minor, underpinning the whole grand structure — grand, not grandiose. The arpeggio figure spreads to the left hand and the chorale melody rises above it, when the arpeggii contract to an accompaniment of scalic quintuplets. This returns to the pedal chord of D sharp minor, over which a brilliant octave run, sweeping up and down the keyboard, interrupts the chorale in the improvisatory style of a chorale-prelude. Then follows a new passage, again based on a reiterated pedal-note (a low C sharp this time). Here is a sonal premonition of sidereal space. The rhythm moves in changeless change. The harmony consists almost entirely of common chords, but curious juxtapositions negate the familiarity into sounds so unfamiliar as to begin to approach psychic regions of experience. The

whole section of five vast bars has its direct model in the third page of Busoni's **Fantasia Contrappuntistica**, as is immediately clear from a comparison of the texts:

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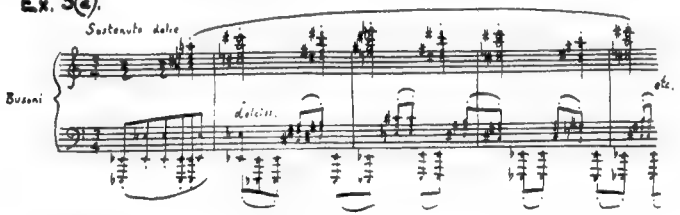
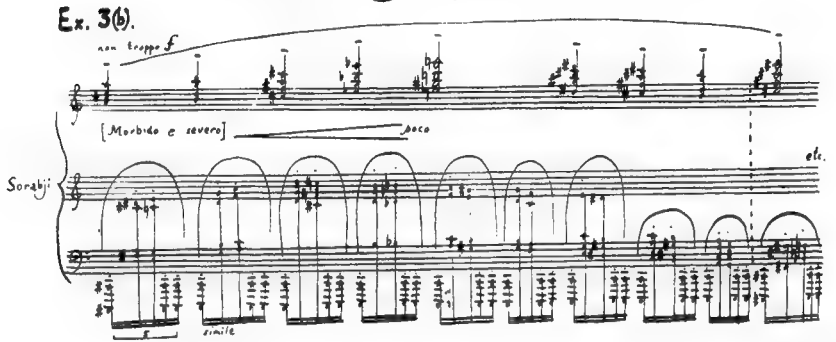

Ex. 3(b).



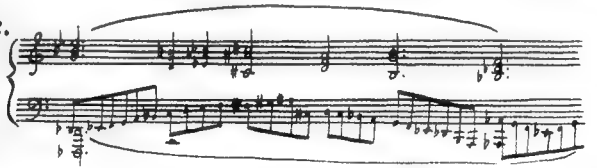
Busoni's melody is taken from the Bach chorale, **Glory to God in the Highest**, to which Sorabji's melody makes an oblique and occult reference. The oracular utterance breathes out *rallentando.* For a few seconds there is the frozen fixity of a low-held chord. The Bach chorale reference then inspires an organ-like toccata passage of upward and downward rushing scales treated with chordal accretions

which the composer expressly marks *quasi mixtures d'organo.* This plunges to the rock-bed of the keyboard and another held chord. The opening arpeggio *ostinato* returns and the chorale in octaves and thirds rings out above an imperiously reiterated pedal-note on the piano's lowest octave. Arpeggii lap in a foamed iridescence of sound and a scale cascades down to the anchored D sharp minor pedal. Above this, mystical chorale-chords rise like vapour.

II. PRELUDIO-CORALE (pp 8-19).

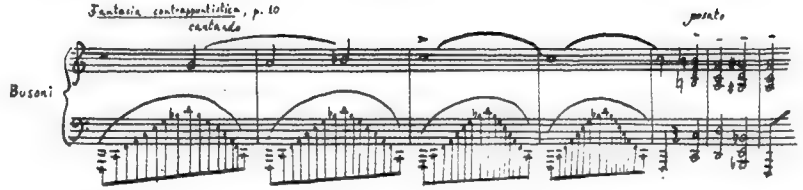
The opening motto and the chorale themes of the *Introito* are here developed against ornate and richly varied scalic backgrounds. The style is improvisatory; the form, variations. In addition to the themes presented in the *Introito,* two new ideas emerge. The first of these (foot of page 8)

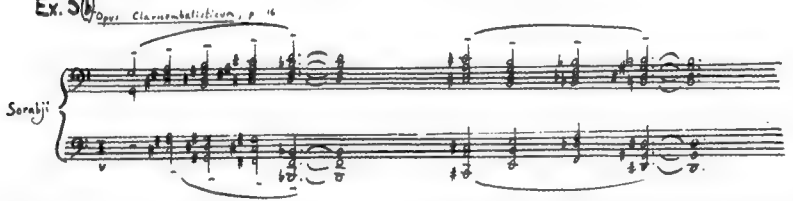
Ex. 4.



is derived from notes 2-6 of the opening motto, though, through its rhythmic and harmonic treatment, it sounds like a new theme. The second of the new ideas is introduced towards the end of the chorale-prelude, and, consisting of an upward perfect 5th followed by a drop of a semitone, appears as a premonition of the first fugue's subject, like a shadow cast before, and is tinged with an ominous undertone of shuddering Faustus-feeling. It may owe its inspiration to the theme which accompanies the first entry of the three mysterious students from Cracow in Busoni's opera **Doktor Faust**. Sorabji's chorale-prelude furnishes other evidence of having its roots in Busoni's **Fantasia Contrappuntistica**, as is clear from the following juxtaposition:

Ex. 5(a).

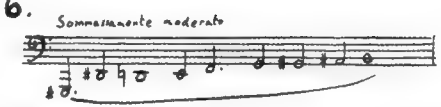


Ex. 5(b).

Like the Busoni **Fantasia**, Sorabji's work is a Kantian *Musik an sich* and, though written for piano, and though containing pages beautifully adapted to the piano, might well be transcribed for many possible instrumental combinations, or, perhaps best of all, may be 'performed' in the mind of any reader expert enough to read it as he would read a book; no doubt occasionally using the piano as a dictionary, to 'look up' the sometimes unfamiliar harmonic vocabulary. If the Busoni and Sorabji works are biased towards one kind of instrument, it is to an ideal type of organ — which may appear paradoxical, considering the designation 'for pianoforte'; but will appear as the truth it is, when the piano's power of suggesting an ideal organ is realised; for an organ — solely by virtue of being an organ — cannot suggest an ideal aural projection of itself, but is, indeed, more liable, given unfavourable acoustics (which are common!) to suggest a caricature of itself, when the 32 foot vibrations threaten to shiver the foundations of Victorian architecture! Sorabji's 'ideal organ' sounds at the end of his chorale-prelude, when he expressly marks an extended figured pedal-passage *quasi pedali soli.*

III. FUGA I *(quatuor vocibus)* (pp 19-30).

The subject *(dux)* is:

Ex. 6.

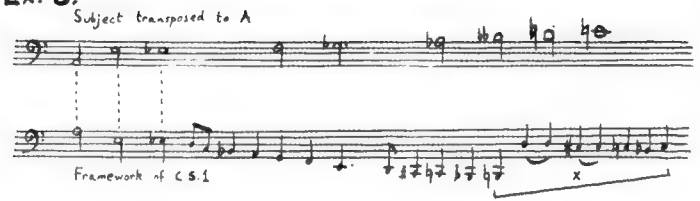


The first three notes of this subject were foreshadowed at the end of the chorale-prelude. The second constituent, the rising scale, is related to the chorale-theme (see examples 3(b) and 5(b) above). The *dux* is in G sharp minor. The *comes* is at the interval of a minor 7th above, but this does not establish a formalistic procedure: later answers are at variable intervals. This formalistic freedom is earnest of Sorabji's *sui generis* treatment of the fugal form. The other two major twentieth century composers who have written extensively in the fugue form — Hindemith and Shostakovich — are more traditional than Sorabji in their treatment of tonality between subject and answer: Hindemith may depart from the tonic-dominant hegemony, but, once his ratio of tonality has been established between subject and answer, he maintains it; and of Shostakovich's 24 fugues, only one of them (no. 21 in B flat) diverges from his scrupulously observed classical principle of answering the subject in the dominant.

Sorabji's counter-subject 1 (C.S.1)

Ex. 7.

plays an *obbligato* role throughout the fugue, that is, it is associated with every statement of the subject. C.S.1 is really a subtly concealed mirror-form of the subject, plus an appended figure of six notes (x), as is demonstrated here:

Ex. 8.

A general view of the fugue would read as follows:

	Inclusive no. of bars	Ratio of bars
Exposition: p 19, bars 1-4	4	1
Development: pp 19-24, bars 5-38	34	8
Final section: pp 24-30, bars 38-75	37	7
	75	

The barlines are used as phrase-punctuation. Dotted barlines serve the purpose of the conventional measure. (The bars enumerated above are counted as including both the ruled and dotted barline indications.)

This general view is in relation to the form as it was established in the Bach tradition. Thus the development is said to commence at bar 5 because, after the first 4 bars, each of the four voices has stated either subject or answer. The final section is taken as commencing at bar 38 (p 24, line 2) because at that point the original tone-centre of G sharp is re-established; and because it is immediately preceded by an extended pedal-point, according to the principle expounded by Busoni in his edition of Bach's **Well-tempered Clavier**: "The entrance of the organ-point ... announces, in contrapuntal pieces, the beginning of the Third Part" *(vide* Busoni: note 2 to Fugue XV). The relative length of the sections — 1:8:7 — indicates that the yardstick of ternary form (the ratio 1:2:1) cannot be applied in this case. On paper the form is cast in the ternary mould: indeed it is virtually impossible for a fugue to be cast in any other form and to remain a fugue: but the aural impression

of this fugue is binary rather than ternary: an impression conveyed by three factors: (i) the exposition is so concentrated that it passes into the development very soon after the inception of the piece; (ii) the absence of a repeated tonal scheme in the exposition makes it sound already like the development; and (iii) there are two main *fermate* (pauses), both in the tonic, G sharp minor (p 24, line 2, first chord, and p 30, line 2, first chord) and these serve to make clear a fundamentally bipartite formal conception.

After the second *fermata* a second countersubject is introduced:

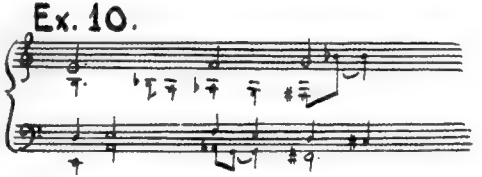
Ex. 9.

This is treated as *obbligato,* with C.S.1.

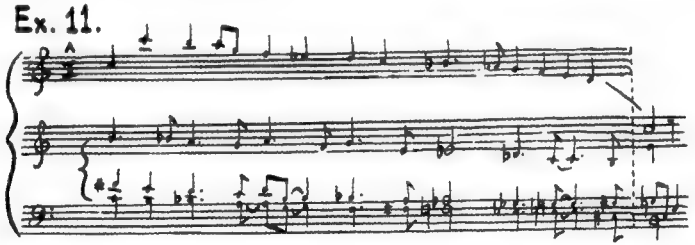
Just how concentrated this fugue is may be seen from the fact that, during its 75 bars, there are no less than 73 complete statements of the subject or answer. There are also some partial statements. Episodes are very few indeed.

The opening motto of the *Introito* (ex. 1) also makes three reappearances, gleaming sombrely through the dark warp and woof of the fugal texture.

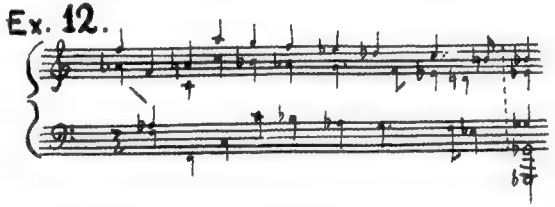
The general impression of the fugue is stark and forbidding. The opening 5th of the subject is indicative of other passages of bold harmonic nudity. Sorabji evidently believes that the contrapuntal principle of individual part-writing may be extended (or perhaps we should say sacrificed) to the occasional writing of consecutive octaves, the constituents of which are distinguished from each other only by slight rhythmic modifications, as between alto and bass, and tenor and soprano in the 4th bar of the fugue:

Ex. 10.

This kind of thing occurs very rarely in the fugue. If it were to recur often, it would create a dismal impression indeed and would reduce a four-part fugue to one in two parts.

In contradistinction to such starkness, there are other — again infrequent — passages of Tristanesque lusciousness, as in bar 2, p 22:

Ex. 11.

On the second line of the same page, there is a canon based on C.S.1., which again presents a completely different harmonic texture, this time of a *naïveté* which has much in common with certain moments in the works of van Dieren, particularly the slow movement of the 5th string quartet. Here is the Sorabji:

Ex. 12.



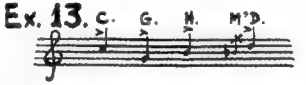
Such widely divergent elements as those presented above in examples 10-12 are somehow welded into a whole in pages replete with every contrapuntal device, including cancrizans canons — and even

inverted cancrizans canons! At the end of the fugue, after the *attacco* of the first three notes has been subjected to canonic entries embodied in a texture of orchestral density[2], there is a convincing impression of esemplastic coherence and unity of purpose.

IV. FANTASIA (pp 30-39).

This movement is a complete contrast to the preceding fugue. It is an extended *perpetuum mobile* in rapid semiquavers, a mammoth two-part invention which, though fundamentally biphonic, gathers in its course accretions of fragmentary references to the opening motifs of the first fugue and of the *Introito;* and, near the end of the movement, a new idea appears, based on the initials of the dedicatee:

Ex. 13. C. G. M. M'D.



No doubt Sorabji's admiration for the energumen of Scottish genius inspired him to supreme effort of creative will in this movement.

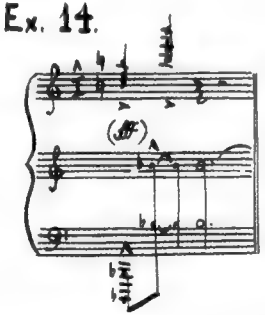
It is piano-writing of a very high order, perhaps the finest of the whole work. It hints at transcendence of piano technique, not only in Liszt's sense of a transcendental study, but in the sense of surpassing the idea of a purely pianistic style by drawing into its net a diabolical suggestion of violinistic technique, in the employment of *glissandi* chords (sliding from a black-note chord to a white-note chord in demisemiquavers) and also in the marking "*quasi pizzicato*", which is even repeated more audaciously as "*pizzicato*" (sic! — *tout court!).*

This *Fantasia* is aquatic. Its sonorities shimmer in currents and eddies of sound. Rock-like octave or chordal fragments are tossed in its tidal flood of semiquavers. It is laced with scalic sprays and lashed with arpeggio breakers. It is a note-swarm. It is not a *Jeu d'eau* in the Ravellian or Lisztian sense. It is never an impressionistic fountain of chromatic water-music. Its line is never sprinkled with grace-notes of Beardsleyesque fringe-dots. Rather should we compare it to the firm, wiry line of Leonardo's late studies in hydrology; or to the fanged serpent-waves of Hokusai's 'Mangwa'.

Towards the movement's close, agitation whips it up into a clotted yeasty texture, like concretions of foam-masses after a prolonged storm.

In the bitonal close the employment of a mere semitone raises the music's brilliance to an even higher dimension and suggests a graphic image of a leaping crested wave:

Ex. 14.



This *Fantasia* suggests the purity, the power, the movement and the mystery of many waters.

V. FUGA II *(duplex)* (pp 39-58).

Whereas the first fugue was stark like a rock-framed Northern sea-scape, the second fugue has the lightness and the limpidity of a Mediterranean pastoral scene. Whereas the rhythms of the first fugue had the gaunt irregularity of a rock range, the rhythms of the second fugue have the harmonious groupings of a dance *en plein air.* The first fugue's subject contained such rhythmic complexity that, especially with the later *stretti,* it presented ever new aspects in different contexts; the time-signature (if marked) would have been

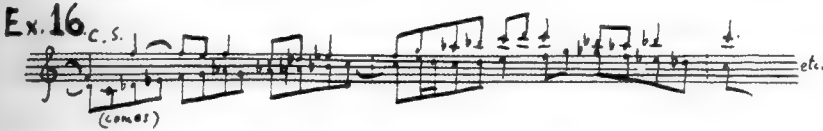
$$\frac{24}{4} \quad (3+2+4+2+3+2+2+2+4).$$

The subject of the second fugue, however, is almost entirely divided into bars of 3/2 which casts it into a type of *courante:*

Ex.15 Animato assai

The subtly shifting modal inflections of the theme lend it a charm tinctured with an elusive archaic quality. The answer is given at the interval of a 6th. Sixths and thirds sweeten the harmony and play a greater part in this music than they did in the first fugue, which was characterised by a harmonic language employing a more liberal use of angular sevenths, fourths and fifths. What fifths there are in this second fugue add a bucolic touch to the harmonious flutings of the dance-like counterpoints. The countersubject

Ex.16 C.S.



is not an inseparable adjunct to the theme in this fugue. It is sometimes replaced and varied by the reappearance of the first fugue's countersubject and by low octave reminiscences of the first fugue's subject, whose menacing rising 5th, followed by the semitone drop, momentarily clouds the pellucid atmosphere of the second fugue. From ex. 16, the mediæval, *provençal, livre d'heures* mood of this movement will be evident. The sound of flutes and *tambour de Basque, "arpes et luthes",* is evoked by this music. But the delectable mood is evanescent. As the fugue develops, it becomes progressively sterner and gradually assumes a formidable aspect not unlike that of the first fugue.

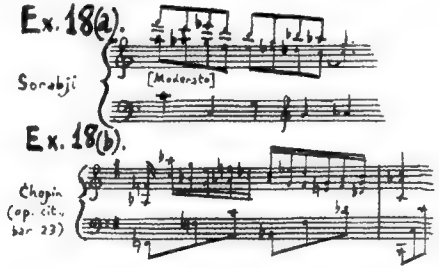
The form of the first half of this double fugue stands forth most clearly when considered as a brief exposition followed by an extended development. Any paramount conception of coda or climax is precluded by the non-existence of the emphatic cadential 'landmarks' of the first fugue. Here everything drives onward. Some justification could be argued for the two closing pages of the first half, with their augmentations ringing out in minims across the *courante*-like quaver texture, constituting a coda. But these two pages are not preceded by a pedal, as a coda often is in classical

fugue form; and neither does any well defined tonality lend substance to this interpretation of the formal argument. The tonality is in a constant state of flux. It was so even in the fugal subject itself (ex. 15), with its recurrent chromatic contradictions, which may best be explained as polymodality. The first half of this double fugue had its tonal centre in B flat, and, after charting many modulations, ends on a resolute chord of G major. The second subject begins on that chord, embedded within it.

If the first half of the fugue was dance-like, the second half is song-like. The second subject

suggests a 'cello, but, if it were played on a 'cello, the high *tessitura* would make it imperatively concerto-like in its technical difficulty. This wide pitch-range is extremely rare for a fugal subject and creates a complex texture replete with overlappings of parts. But such is the beautiful clarity of its lyricism that it shines through the amassing of sound which accompanies the fugue's progress. The tonality here is more clearly defined than it was in the dance-like first half of the fugue; and this, too, creates clarity. There is a distinct suggestion of C minor at the beginning of this song-like theme, a suggestion which is confirmed by the answer.

A short episode (p 49, line 3) — and episodes are very few in the closely reasoned Sorabjian fugue — is curiously reminiscent of the thirds and sixths of Chopin's **G major Nocturne, op. 37, no. 2**:



This is given as an almost unique example of the detection of any derivative elements in Sorabji's music, which, apart from the manifestly intentional references to Busoni's **Fantasia Contrappuntistica**, are almost non-existent. The example is also offered as a case of the rule-proving exception.

The *tempo moderato* tempers the dance-like first subject, which was originally marked *animato assai*. When the two are combined, it is the song-like element that prevails. This *cantabile* is developed in more frequent episodes. The form of this second half of the double fugue, as well as the tonality, also bears a more direct relationship with the traditional form than the first fugue did. The ternary ratio of 1:2:1 is clearly followed in the brief exposition and coda, flanking the extended development, and an organ-point of a thick 5-note chord, with a manual-like *stretto* in quavers above it, clearly presages the coda, which presents close *stretto* and a restatement of the opening C minor tonality.

Fanfare chords (marked *quasi "mixtures" martellato*) herald the splendour of the double fugue's close, the refining splendour of a sunset. The long drawn-out *diminuendo* cadence is enigmatic tonally, for, instead of ending on C, it ends on a strange chord

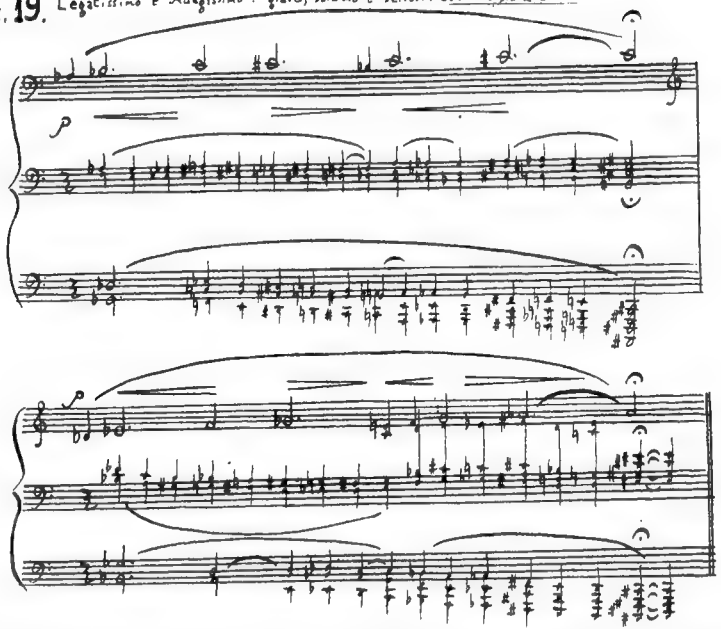
above an A flat pedal, which recalls the first fugue and thus at this stage of the work (the end of the first of the three main parts), provides a connecting link with the G sharp pedal-notes of the first fugue.

PARS ALTERA

VI. INTERLUDIUM PRIMUM *(Thema cum variationibus)* (pp 59-98).

This interlude is cast in the form of a chorale-like theme with variations. The theme deserves to be quoted *in extenso:*

Ex. 19. Legatissimo e Adagissimo : grave, solenne e serioso. Serenità piena e dolce



Here is enshrined the heart of the work, like an unguent in an alabastrine casket. For assuredly this chorale epitomises the anointed spirit which consecrates the whole work. The theme's *legatissimo* has the smoothness of alabaster; its *adagissimo* has the massiveness of alabaster; and the chromaticism has the fine granularity of alabaster. Or again, this chorale stands like a dedication tablet in a great building. There are forty-nine variations, which, through viny entanglements of figuration, or

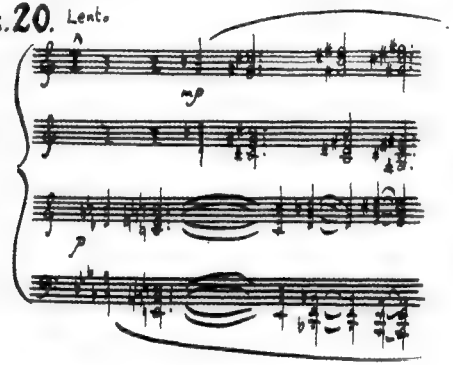
through dense polyphonic webs of sound, preserve the outlines of the theme. In this sense, the variations, despite their kaleidoscopic range of expression, are related more to the classical 17th and 18th century variation form than to the modern variation form, which, as practised by such masters as Elgar and Richard Strauss, often uses the theme merely as a *point d'appui* and frequently digresses from it. (Indeed that type of variation-form would more fittingly be described as 'digressions from a theme', rather than 'variations on a theme'.)

A sentence might be written about each of Sorabji's variations, but that procedure would hardly add to the general impression attempted above, and may even detract from it. Instead of that plan, a few of the variations which present points of salient interest have been selected for more detailed comment.

It would be incorrect to assume that the piano writing is consistently virtuosic. Variation 9 is a two-part invention of irreducible simplicity, treating the chorale-theme as *cantus fermus* with a slow-flowing quaver counterpoint above it, both in the bass register.

Severe simplicity is also manifest in variation 17, but it is a simplicity which belongs only to the idea of the variation; its problems of execution are of well-nigh insuperable difficulty, even with the employment of the Steinway middle pedal. The antiphonal character of the passage

Ex. 20. Lento



could be better realised on two pianos than on one, though the coalescence of tonalities, caught in a cloud of subtly pedal-held sound, may perhaps be better realised on one piano.

'Paganinesco' is the subtitle of variation 20, which is also marked *quasi saltando.* The virtuosity of this music is the nth. degree of Liszt. It can be matched in the *corpus* of post-Lisztian piano music perhaps only by Gino Tagliapietra's **Tre Esercizii e Venti Variazioni per le Grandi Estensioni del Pianoforte** (Ricordi, 1925)[3].

The Italian expressions accompanying variation 35 are reminiscent of the eloquent descriptions used by Busoni on the score of his **Piano Concerto**. Sorabji here uses, in a *Presto vivace,* the expression *guizzando come fiamme* (flashing like flames) to describe the sequences of rapid double sixths which fuse major and minor harmony. Toward the end of the variation, the composer employs the same simile in the phrase *vanno morendo le fiamme* (the flames die down).

Variation 38 presents an outstanding example of the fertility of Sorabji's rhythmic invention:

Ex.21. *Adagio senza variazioni di tempo nel basso*

Above this invocation of the 287 drums of India, a free quasi-improvised passage, marked *oscuro* moves in low chords, like a threnody.

After the complex rhythms of variation 38, the following variation is of a lyrical simplicity unique in the whole of the **Opus Clavicembalisticum**. This music refutes the error of assuming that Sorabji, because he thinks in a highly complex manner, is incapable of ever thinking simply. (But note the wholly characteristic proviso following the tempo indication!). This entire variation is given here, reduced from three staves to two (without altering any note), so that the reader may be able to savour a self-contained passage of a more easily accessible aspect of Sorabji's work:

Ex.22. *Andando. Il tutto soavemente melodioso ma non con simplicità infantilistica*

After the mature simplicity of variation 39, the last ten variations gather a fantastic wealth of pianistic figuration. Variation 46 contains a 'reflection' of the chorale-prelude in the bass, below scalic demisemiquavers which recall the *Fantasia* and, in unsolicited confirmation of my description of the *Fantasia* as 'aquatic', bears the words *scorrendo, liscamente e liquido.*

Variation 47 is marked *Andante, con severità didattica.* This last word has perhaps never been employed in a musical context outside the *corpus* of Sorabji: the austere polyphony is a pause before the onslaught of the penultimate variation.

The final variation begins *Moderato, insinuante e carezzando* and is kept *pianissimo* (in the manner of Sorabji's 'hothouse' music) until the sudden resolve near the close, which is a conflagration of sound.

The first interlude contains such sumptuous piano writing, contrasted with such severe polyphony as to render it comparable perhaps only to Liszt's **Todtentanz** on the **Dies Irae** (a theme which Sorabji has also treated in his **Sequentia Cyclica**).

VII. CADENZA I (pp 99-104).

This cadenza consists of seven episodes linked in improvisatory manner.

After the massed sonal effects in which the preceding interlude culminated, relief is given by reducing the four-stave high-banked texture to a single darting line of semiquavers on a single bass stave. This line comprises roulades, scales and expanding broken-chord sequences. The rhythm is rich in interest, for, while the semiquaver norm is constant, the groups are arranged in unequal numbers of notes, comprising four, five, six, seven and sometimes two semiquavers.

After this brief introductory monodic passage, single bass notes echo the chorale-theme of the interlude. Then below the ever inventive semiquaver line, which now shoots off into major-minor broken chords and long bands of superimposed thirds, bass octaves recall the countersubject of the second fugue (ex. 16) and also the motif of the dedicatee's initials (ex. 13).

The single line of semiquavers sprouts ramifications of double-thirds and sixths over rich chordal pedal-points.

Then suddenly the proliferating sound is drawn up to a compact texture of six-part chords in dotted rhythm, marked *con sentenziosità didattica, pesante e pomposo.* A pause for thought.

But soon the thing "shoots up like a dragon" again, with a sweeping rapid scale, and the principal tempo of the opening semiquavers is restored, though not in its single line but in a rich tapestry of densely woven sound. Chordal pedal-points punctuate the multiple sentences of music.

Towards the close of the cadenza, the introductory monody returns in bass register. A chain of trills, also in the bass, provides a *cantus fermus* above the running counterpoint, which soon cannot be constricted to its low register but rises above the trills as they descend.

A brief final section is constructed above an E flat pedal-point, with each hand playing semiquavers and crotchet chords. The figuration rises to the top of the keyboard and is eclipsed in a final chord in which no less than eighteen notes sound together (marked *acutissimo gridando forsennatamente: lasciare vibrare:* very keenly and unconstrainedly crying out: leave [the sounds] to vibrate [in the pedal]).

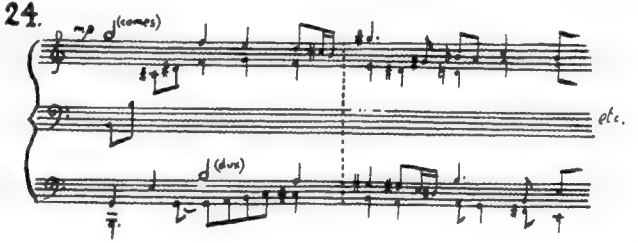
VIII. FUGA TERTIA TRIPLEX (pp 105-137).

The *dux primus* is the most beautiful melody in the whole work. It is blent of song and fantasy:

Ex.23. Moderato

The second 'answer' adds harmonic and contrapuntal beauty to the melody of the subject. It is a moment of *afflatus:*

Ex. 24.



Such harmonic appeal is very rare in Sorabji's fugues. Their general asperity indicates that it were better not to consider the fugues as harmony at all, but as counterpoint without harmony, which for the greater part they are, notwithstanding ex. 24; there are combinations of sounds without a feeling of harmonic progression. Any harmonic movement in the fugues is transient and subsidiary to the contrapuntal idea. The principal employment of harmony here is as cadential punctuation.

The development of the first section of this fugue is like a series of expositions, commencing in two parts and gathering counterpoint in close *stretti,* until a cadential chord clinches the argument.

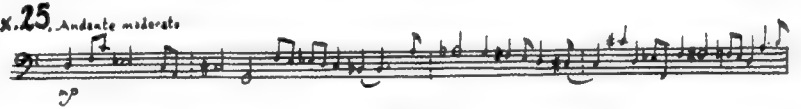
There are two passing references to the subject of the first fugue. These are absorbed in the

music's flow and their function is formal rather than dramatic.

Octave doublings of the two outer parts of the five voices announce the *stretto,* which builds up the voice-leading from the previous four-part writing to no less than seven parts.

The *dux alter* is quasi-atonal or nontonal — perhaps the nearest approach to the Schönberg of Opus 11 anywhere in the work:

Ex.25. Andante moderato



Two countersubjects are employed, the one quoted in ex. 24 and another in flowing quavers. These countersubjects are treated in an extended episode.

Development by a series of exposition-like passages, remarked upon in the first section of this fugue, is also found in the second section and adds to the fugal dialectics the impression of the musical argument being assailed from various angles; an impression which is further reinforced by the complete apparatus of fugal technique being deployed.

Again, octave doublings initiate the climax and the argument is arrested on a strong *fermata* chord.

The *dux tertius* is prosaic:

Ex.26. Moderato e sostenuto

— which the composer may intend as a correlative to the richly *cantabile* first subject and the quasi-atonal second subject.

In the development, the countersubjects from the first and second fugues engage in episodic dialogue — a parallel passage to the episode on two counter-subjects in the second section of this fugue.

The kind of development presented by the first two sections — accumulation of exposition-like passages — is also found in the third and last section and, this time, accelerations add to the effect

of argument assailed from different angles. The tempo reaches a fiery *allegro* before retarding to the principal tempo of the fugue.

Octave doublings — by now the familiar signal for the inception of the climax — make the conclusion of the musical discourse blaze with conviction.

A final bar of massive chords *(molto adagio)* — still bearing the imprint of the counterpoint, as rhyolite shows the lava-flow in its structure — seals the end of the fugue.

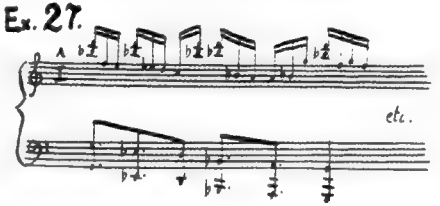
PARS TERTIA

IX. INTERLUDIUM B (Toccata: Adagio : Passacaglia) (pp 137-193)

(a) Toccata.

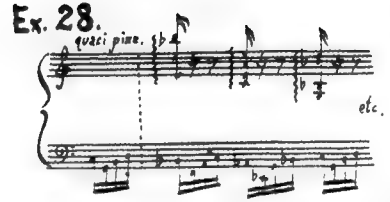
The Toccata *(Rapido)* recalls the *Introito,* with its deep-anchored D sharp minor pedal-chord and the motto theme set against a scintillating semiquaver background reminiscent of the first cadenza. The piano writing is prodigiously inventive. So is the harmony and the rhythm. The rhythm in the following quotation would be difficult to match before Messiaen:

Ex. 27.



The following diabolical suggestion of violin technique would be difficult to match anywhere in piano literature:

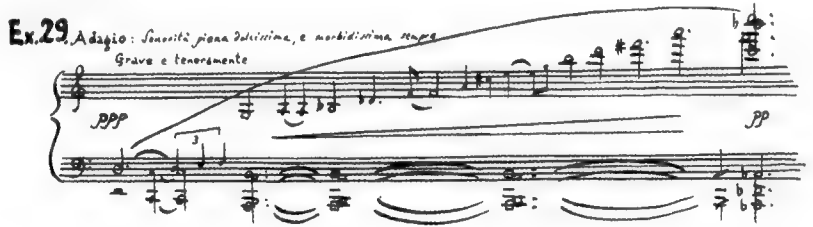
Ex. 28.



The style of this toccata is improvisatory. Brilliancy is heightened by the frequent employment of the piano's highest register.

(b) Adagio.

With the Adagio, we reach what might be regarded as the inverse of the *Introito's* opening motto (ex. 1). It will be remembered that the motto inscribed a descending arc of sound which plumbed the tenebrous depths of the D sharp minor chord. The notes rang out like an apocalyptic trumpet. Here we have the ascent from the depths. The notes rise slowly in a diaphonous rainbow of sound which tips the glacial heights of the keyboard:

Ex. 29.

From this moment we begin to glimpse the last mountain ranges of the work's end.

Comparison with the 'basic set' of Alban Berg's **Violin Concerto**

Ex. 30.

is fraught with significance. The whole-note group of the last four notes in ex. 30 was associated by Berg with his quotation of the Bach chorale **Es ist genug** which is very like Sorabji's chorale in the first interlude (cf. ex. 19). The subtitle of the Bach church cantata no. 20, **O Ewigkeit, du Donnerwort**, in which the chorale appears, is 'Dialogue between Fear and Hope'. This interior dialogue is also found in the **Opus Clavicembalisticum**. If the *Introito* is 'Fear', the Adagio is 'Hope' — the two magnetic poles of the work. When we recall Joseph Szigeti's conjecture that Busoni's **2nd Violin Sonata** with its variations on the Bach chorale **Wie wohl ist mir, o Freund der Seele, wenn ich in deiner Liebe ruh** may have influenced Alban Berg, whose **Violin Concerto**, composed in 1935, also climaxes in variations on the Bach chorale: **Es ist genug! si nimm, Herr, meiner Geist**; and when we recall the intimate connexion between Sorabji's *Introito* motto theme and the opening of Busoni's **2nd Violin Sonata** (cf. the examples above, relating them) Busoni, Berg and Sorabji are glimpsed in communion with Bach.

The form of the Adagio is a large-scale binary conception, with each section juxtaposing a nocturne-like passage floating on a billowy arpeggio accompaniment followed by an organ-like series of 8-part block chords, marked *con sollenità pontificale: grave e severo ma dolce.* This formal idea is a development of the plan which Chopin adopted in the **Nocturne in G minor, op. 37, no. 1**. Stylistically, Sorabji's Adagio is a study in impressionism and, as such, has much in common with Debussy's **La cathédrale engloutie**. Just before the close of the Adagio, there are references to the *Introito's* motto-theme, marked *poetico.* For almost the whole of this movement, the tone-range is strictly limited to *ppp-mp.* Only in the last slowly descending series of chords does the volume increase to *ff.* Finally, the moonbright sonorities blaze in the deep pool of a C sharp major chord. This chord also completed the *adagissimo* chorale-theme of the first interlude. So here is a further link between the Adagio and the *adagissimo,* and further justification of the correspondence demonstrated above, when the two passages were related to Berg's **Violin Concerto**.

(c) Passacaglia.

The ground-bass

Ex.31. Tranquillo e moderato

pays scant tribute to the traditional triple time-signature, though the syncope of the minim, the second note in the theme, and subsequent groupings of three crotchets may be oblique references to the classical hall-marks of the form.

Like the Bach **Chaconne**, this Passacaglia is constructed in variation-clusters, in this case totalling eighty-one variations.

The first five variations constitute the first grouping. They are cumulative, that is, they progress from the monody of the ground-bass to five parts in variation 5, employing only the note-values of the theme.

With variation 6 the five parts are reduced again to two, but variety is achieved by the new flowing semiquaver counterpoint. Variations 6-8 again pile up the counterpoint from two to four parts.

Variations 9-10 are respectively in three- and five-part writing, with a broken rhythm in triplet semiquavers, a rest on the first of each triplet. The rhythm is further varied by the introduction of demisemiquavers and syncopations.

Variations 12-13 are grouped in contrast: the steady semiquaver counterpoint in double notes of no. 12 is followed by all manner of rhythmic quirks and caprices in no. 13 (marked *fantastico*).

The *tranquillo* of variation 14 is similarly contrasted to the *vivace* of variation 15.

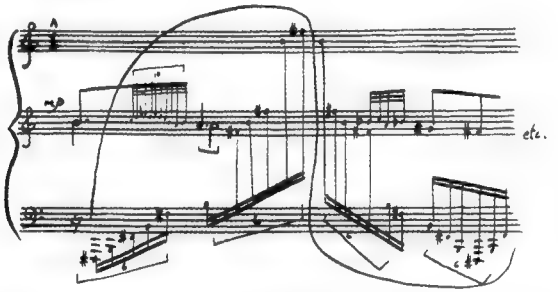
Variations 16-18 are *moderato sempre* with a constant background of uninterrupted semiquavers. To this group of three variations in moderate tempo is added the contrast of another three in quick tempo.

From variation 21 to variation 52 the theme moves to the middle part, embedded in ever-changing textures.

From variation 53 onward the theme becomes the melody and is subjected to a wide range of treatment, from severe canonic imitation to **Jardin parfumé**-like sensuousness.

Variation 53 is of especial interest. Sorabji never indulged in the 'oriental atmosphere' against which he inveighed in his essays "Around Music". This variation, characterised as *quasi tambura,* furnishes the sole example in **Opus Clavicembalisticum** of the blending of Oriental and Occidental idioms (unless we include the 'drum'-variation of the First Interlude, ex. 21). The tambura is a musical instrument common to Arabia, India and Persia. It is a large stringed instrument with a big head and a long, graceful neck. Its four strings are gently plucked, one after the other. No Eastern singer of repute will perform without two tamburas. They provide the fixed, regular drone-background to the free improvisation of the song.

Ex. 32.



The position of the theme, relative to the variation-groups, presents the broadest formal division of the movement. Variations 1-20 state the theme as ground-bass; variations 21-52 transfer it to the middle part; and variations 53-81 transfer it to the melody. Thus there is a roughly equal tripartite division underlying the formal conception. Within that general plan, there are the further groupings of tempo and texture.

After the theme has been subjected to the consummately grandiose treatment of the final variations, in which the white page grows black with notes, the ground-bass theme is restated in quiet, noble octaves in a brief Epilogue *(largissimo e dolcissimo).*

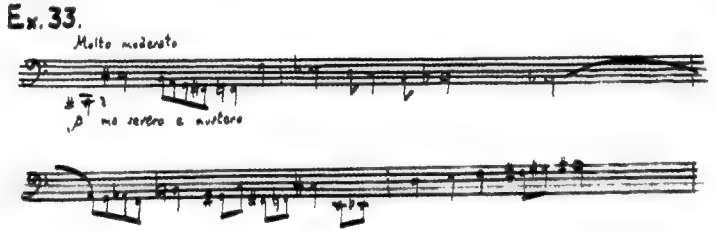
X. CADENZA II (pp 194-197)

This is built entirely of chord sequences in *vivo* quavers over a reiterated pedal octave A. It is unrelated to any previous or subsequent material and its purpose is to provide relief from the overwhelmingly accumulative effect of the preceding Passacaglia.

XI. FUGA IV *(Quadruplex)* (pp 198-240)

The first subject

Ex. 33.

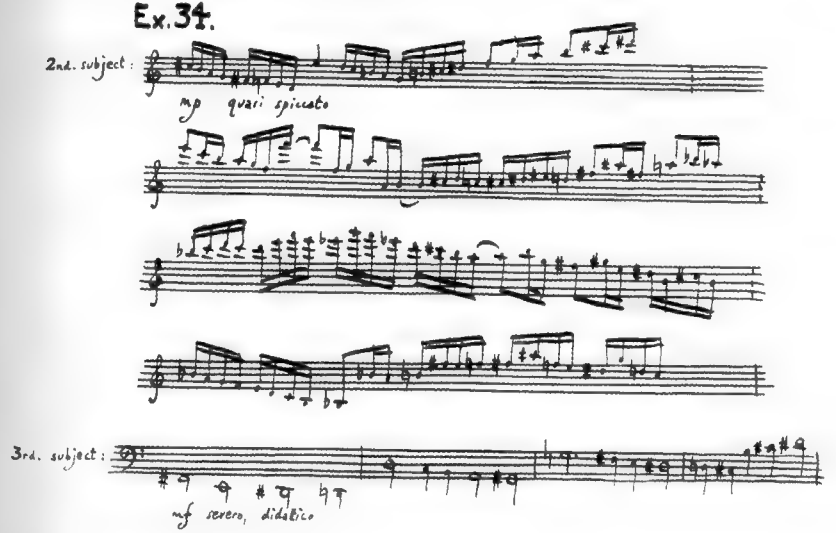
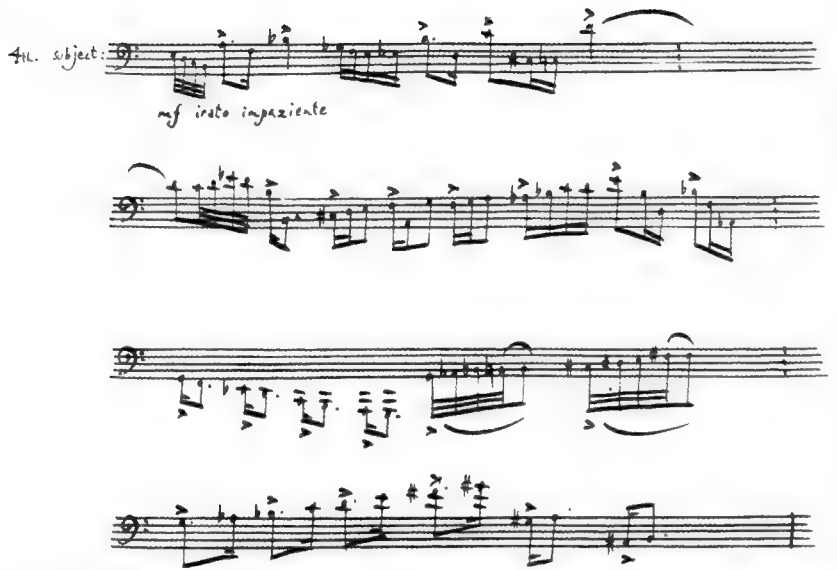


has affinities with the Passacaglia's ground-bass: both begin with the rhythmic sequence of crotchet-minim-quavers and both are tinged with whole-tone-scale colouring. The suggestion of sensuousness inseparable from the whole-tone scale is curiously denied in Sorabji's marking of the theme: *severo e austero.* This denial may be symptomatic of Sorabji's unease in accommodating a residual early French-impressionist influence, which, by the time he was composing the **Opus**, he had largely outgrown.

This quadruple fugue also adheres to and enlarges upon the Passacaglia's piled-up construction. The fugue does this in two ways:

1: by developing through a series of accumulating exposition-like sections which begin with two-part close imitation and gradually add to the counterpoint until a four-part cadence is reached, whence the scheme is repeated;

2: the note-value norm of the first subject — the crotchet — is accelerated, then retarded, then accelerated by the three subsequent subjects:

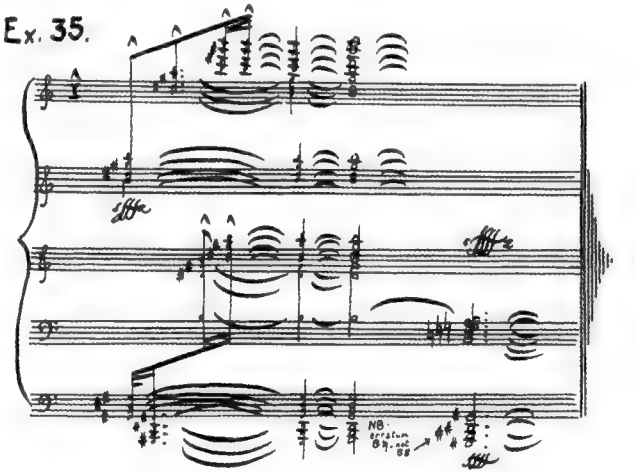
Ex. 34.

Then, too, the excitement is increased by the required quasi-imperceptible increase in the tempo, extending from the fugue's initiation to the *stretta.*

The extraordinary number of notes in the *andamenti* of the 2nd and 4th subjects constitute an almost insuperable difficulty to comprehension — especially when one reflects that these subjects are not only presented but combined with the other subjects — and in all manner of contrapuntal combinations too! — near the end of some four hours of music, comprising concentrated counterpoint, relieved only by transcendental piano writing, with an all but total banishment of simplicity!

XII. CODA-STRETTA (pp 240-252)

The summation of the work begins with full organ-like counterpoint combining the four subjects of the quadruple fugue in *strettissimo.* This is developed through various contrapuntal combinations, the work driving on through with inexorable will. Towards the close, the first subjects of the 2nd and 3rd fugues are recalled *martellatissimo,* in high chords. A *più largo* is only a gathering of forces for the final avalanche.

After a slight break the final cadence reiterates a chord of G sharp minor — the tonality of the first fugue — but adding a grinding dissonance which certainly allows of no complaisance in conventional peroration. It is like Sorabji himself, protesting to the last.



1. Sorabji altered this to "UNUS" in his 'working copy', but "UNUM" is what appeared in all copies of the publication. [Editorial footnote]

2. The music on pp 28-30 resembles an orchestral score more than a piano score! The appearance of this music can be matched in twentieth century piano music perhaps only by page 12 of Wladimir Vogel's *Epitaffio per Alban Berg* (Ricordi, 1936).

3. Tagliapietra (1887-1954) was a favourite pupil of Busoni.

John Ogdon, 1985
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Kaikhosru Sorabji and Herman Melville

John Ogdon

"Woe to him who seeks to please rather than to appall." (Melville)

Kaikhosru Sorabji, in "Mi Contra Fa", speaks of Toscanini, Busoni and Heifetz as beings "set apart". Had his context admitted extension beyond the realm of music, he could well have included the name of Herman Melville.

Why is this? E. M. Forster, in "Aspects of the Novel", pays tribute to the unique depth and power of Melville's finest work, "Moby-Dick"; prophetic of Joyce's use of myth and fabulous resurrection in the dream-plumbed world of Finnegan's Wake, it is also subject to a more directly sexual analysis, as D. H. Lawrence showed in one of his finest essays (Studies in Classic American Literature), and is thus accessible to both Jungian and Freudian analysis. It is no accident that Jung found it the most interesting American novel, and a treasure-house of symbolism.

In what lies its lasting appeal? Lawrence suggests that its meaning is puzzling not only to us, but that it also was to its creator:

"Of course he is a symbol.

Of what?

I doubt if even Melville knew exactly. That's the best of it."

Somerset Maugham, however, in "Ten Novels and their Authors", avers that we do well to approach Moby-Dick as a straightforward whaling story without metaphysical overtones, cites Melville as authority for this, and maintains that the finest parts of the novel are those chapters, such as "The Grand Armada", which conform to this exciting exterior interpretation of the novel.

There is much critical support for a more symbolic interpretation: Lawrence notes that, "as a revelation of destiny the book is too deep even for sorrow". And for E. M. Forster this sadness, so deep

that it becomes "undistinguishable from glory", seems to lead us to the heart of Melville's message.

The style of the novel is elevated: a phantasmal whiteness, remote and majestic, owing immediate allegiance to Coleridge's "Rime of the Ancient Mariner" and Edgar Allan Poe's "The Narrative of Arthur Gordon Pym", enshrouds the more straightforward elements of the novel, which is also in the stylistic lineage of Milton and Sir Thomas Browne and, here and there, of Shakespeare.

Renouvier has said, "the world is suffering from lack of faith in a transcendental truth". It still is; Melville perceived a great truth and only lost faith in the possibility of bringing it to the often unsympathetic and materialistic peoples of his time after the failure of "Pierre", which was to have been his "Book of the Sacred Truth".

Melville is not earthbound: his passion, like Berlioz's, burns with a fierce pure white flame; the preoccupation with *"l'homme moyen sensuel"* which is so typical of the nineteenth century novel is so far removed from his art as is the sumptuous richness of Wagner's sound from the Himalayan rarity of Berlioz's orchestral texture. D. H. Lawrence's acumen is at its highest when he says, "In his 'human' self, Melville is almost dead. That is, he hardly reacts to human contacts any more; or only ideally … he is more spell-bound by the strange slidings and collidings of Matter than by the things men do."

The emotional and moral ambiguity of Melville's writing, which renders his message ineffably tantalising, suggests, if one wishes to make a musical analogy, comparison not with Sorabji but rather with Busoni, Bruckner, Debussy or van Dieren.

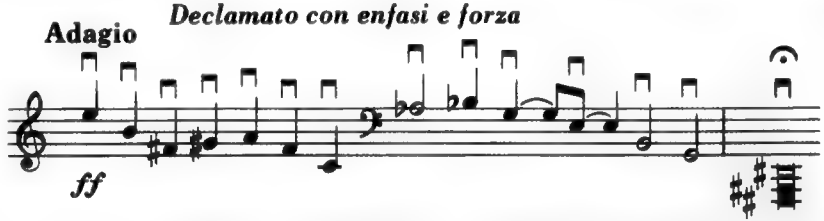
Consider the beautiful opening of "Pierre":

"There are some strange summer mornings in the country, when he who is but a sojourner from the city shall early walk forth into the fields, and be wonder-smitten with the trance-like aspect of the green and golden world. Not a flower stirs: the trees forget to wave; the grass itself seems to have ceased to grow; and all Nature, as if suddenly become conscious of her own profound mystery, and feeling no refuge from it but silence, sinks into this wonderful and indescribable repose."

This might call to mind, by musical association, the opening of the Busoni Piano Concerto, of Debussy's "Prélude à l'après-midi d'un faune" or "Gigues", or the Tema con Variazione for piano by Bernard van Dieren, or the opening of Bruckner's Ninth Symphony, beginnings (loomings) which may prelude catastrophe or triumph, but which in themselves are uncommitted. Busoni, who shows us triumph and exultation in the key of C minor, defeat and resignation in the major key, is peculiarly fitted to serve as guide through the mazes of Moby-Dick, whose hero fights an evil that

only he can see, becoming evil himself in the struggle.

So, too, is Wagner: anyone who has heard the opening of the Second Act of Siegfried immediately possesses a key to the darkest pages of Moby-Dick. The mythological framework and elemental imagery of the Ring furnish innumerable parallels with Melville's master-work.

But at the first great invocation in Moby-Dick, "Call me Ishmael", I suggest that comparison with Sorabji is immediately compelling, for in the opening of Opus Clavicembalisticum, his greatest published piano work, we again find a clarion call, proclaiming faith in a transcendental artistic truth:—

Like the opening of Moby-Dick, it is Lucifer-like in its pride; "facilis descensus Averni" is the message of its swift descent.

The spiritual Ishmaelism of Melville and Sorabji is strikingly similar. Melville, with little formal education ("a whale-boat was my Harvard and Yale") went to sea when he was 18; in his early writing he showed charming and eloquent narrative gifts which deepened at so amazing a speed, commensurate with his deepening experience, that he was emboldened to declare, in his thirty-second year, "I feel that I am now come to the inmost leaf of the bulb, and that shortly the flower must fall to the mould"; later he chose to change the course of his life by forsaking the voluble and conversational worldliness and success of his early years for ever-increasing moral and mental speculation ("wandering the barren deserts of metaphysics") and a mundane post in the New York Customs Office.

Sorabji too had little or no academic musical education: he was largely self-taught as a composer, and manifests in his early music a voluble richness and superabundance of fantasy and imagery

similar to the cascade from the pen of the young Melville. A hot sensual haze shimmers and hovers lazily in the beautiful tone-poems "In the Hothouse" and "Le Jardin parfumé" which hold a place in Sorabji's output comparable with that of "Typee" and "Omoo" in Melville's.

Sorabji also elected to change the course of his artistic life, by placing a fierce prohibition on public performances of his music: this retirement from the public eye is applicable to Sorabji only as composer and pianist — his letters and essays have continued to fire a broadside upon complacency to this very day.

The changing attitude of these two men towards the outside world stems from the same cause: both had messages of extraordinary difficulty and intensity to offer, and both felt that the machinery of communication was inadequate; "all my novels are botches", wrote Herman Melville, asking Hawthorne to forgive structural imperfections in his writing, for the sake of the all-pervading "archangelic soul" behind it. The problem in Sorabji's music is not one of spiritual ambiguity, his message being emblazoned in his music with exemplary clarity and fire, but rather of technical complexity, in his immensely difficult writing for the piano. Well-intentioned and sincere performances in the 'thirties, other than the composer's, did not satisfy him that the drive and flow of the music were being communicated to the audience, so he decided that if public performance could not satisfactorily convey his meaning, then public performance his music would not have.

Melville found that in the material prosperity and expanding commercialism of his time there was little enough place for his mature work — with its emphasis on spiritual values and sympathy for the under-dog and the castaway. A novel that was "the superbest prophecy of fascism that any literature produced", as Henry A. Murray so truly says, had to wait many years before the world could understand its import.

Sorabji, too, has found the musical world at large unready to receive his artistic experience. An emphasis on compositional techniques and post-Webernian brevity for their own sakes is most uncongenial to him. The length of a mature work of his occupies an entire recital, which presents great practical difficulties in performance, both for performer and audience, a problem which has also been faced by Messiaen, whose finest piano work, "Vingt Regards sur l'Enfant-Jésus", lasts 110 minutes.

Messiaen, rather than Sorabji, might implore forgiveness for formal shortcomings for the sake of the all-pervading "archangelic soul", bearing in mind the sometimes naïf, often beautiful and totally

direct religious tenor of his writing.

Sorabji, unlike Messiaen, shows in his mature work, and especially in Opus Clavicembalisticum, a granitic command of form that is highly enviable; it stems, he has told us, from study of Busoni's Fantasia Contrappuntistica — he has extended the formal structure of his model to an impressive architectonic design. This permits a plasticity of detail within the broad confines of the scheme, and this conforms impressively to the need for variety within a basic unity which most of us desire in approaching a work of art.

Opus Clavicembalisticum does suggest and invite comparisons with Moby-Dick. Here also a great and austere formal scheme is set forth, while within its limits Melville is free to rhapsodise and soliloquise (as his plot allows) with a lyrical beauty that leads us, as Viola Meynell has truly said, "to the comprehensible limits of marvellous imagination".

Within the formal scheme of Opus Clavicembalisticum is much opportunity for the rhapsody dear to Sorabji, and in the Adagio — so prophetic, in its opening, of Berg's Violin Concerto — he calls forth hallowed deeps, providing the most profound experience of the whole composition, reminding one person, at least, of the sheer beauty of the opening of "The Symphony" in Moby-Dick:—

"It was a clear steel-blue day. The firmaments of air and sea were hardly separable in that all-pervading azure; only, the pensive air was transparently pure and soft, with a woman's look, and the robust and man-like sea heaved with long, strong, lingering swells, as Samson's chest in his sleep.

"Hither, and thither, on high, glided the snow-white wings of small, unspeckled birds; these were the gentle thoughts of the feminine air; but to and fro in the deeps, far down in the bottomless blue, rushed mighty leviathans … sword-fish, and sharks; and these were the strong, troubled, murderous thinkings of the masculine sea.

"But though thus contrasting within, the contrast was only in shades and shadows without: those two seemed one; it was only the sex, as it were, that distinguished them."

Both men draw heavily on the contents of the unconscious; this is shown by a process of writing "on and on" which would seem to shape, during the actual creation of their work, the quality of the artistic experience communicated by it, rather than an experience implicit in the very undertaking. Especially, in the opening pages of Moby-Dick, stigmatised as "journalism" by D. H. Lawrence, one cannot feel that Melville knew to what levels of feeling his Muse would later lead him.

What of Melville's later work? Has this any point of contact with the later (unpublished) work of

Sorabji? There is a strong connection in their attitude towards publication: Melville, in the last twenty-five years of his life, showed great unwillingness to publish, regretting the publication (financed by his uncle) of "Clarel", and thereafter publishing only two slender volumes of poetry in limited editions. Sorabji, likewise, has published nothing since the appearance of Opus Clavicembalisticum in the 'thirties.

Melville's refusal to publish, and his constantly increasing verbal economy (which may be observed from 1854 onwards) stem from his tired, resigned state of mind which, in the short story "Bartleby", approaches clinical "negativism". Sorabji, however, takes pride in ever-increasing proliferation and exuberance of detail in his vast "Jami" Symphony and the Opus Archimagicum for piano. Nonetheless, a glance which the composer most kindly gave me at the Sequentia Cyclica, dedicated to Egon Petri, seemed to show, compared with Opus Clavicembalisticum, a greater austerity in keyboard writing coupled with harmonically thoughtful penetration of the rarest beauty.

Melville's comment on a statement by an editor of Chatterton's Poetical Works, who wrote, "though Shakespeare must ever remain unapproachable", was "Cant. No man 'must ever remain unapproachable.'"A similarly honest and incisive directness has always informed Sorabji's criticism. He has never been one of those many who are so hypnotised by a famous name that they forswear their critical faculties. Nor has he ever been afraid to sing the praises of the lesser-known, in heroic partisanship loud and clear. In this way he has done an enormous amount to create and foster interest in the work of Szymanowski, Medtner, van Dieren, Chausson and Godowski, to name only five from many possible examples.

He does not share Melville's passionate faith in theoretical democracy, since he is intensely aristocratic in his beliefs. It is interesting to note that Melville, in a letter to Hawthorne written in 1851, says: "There have been those who, while earnest on behalf of political equality, still accept the intellectual estates."

This would seem to imply that Melville, in practice, held a less democratic viewpoint than that which he propounded in "White Jacket".

Sorabji does share with the great novelist a belief in intense individuality and in the necessity of remaining absolutely true to one's artistic credo without compromise and without fear. It is significant that as an expression of his sense of vocation and immense conviction he should open "Mi Contra Fa" with a quotation from Norman Douglas' "Alone", which ends:—

"While others nurse their griefs he nurses his joy. He endeavours to find himself at no matter what cost, and to be true to that self when found, a worthy occupation for a lifetime."

And the title of the book is perhaps more significant than the quotation from it, for Sorabji is a man "very much alone, and on his own" in the world of contemporary music, even as Melville was "a creature set apart" in the literary world of the nineteenth century. Full account will have to be taken of Sorabji's extraordinary contribution to 20th century music, just as historical perspective demanded that the bitter criticisms and misunderstandings of Melville's work should be fully redressed.

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Paul Rapoport, Alistair Hinton, John Ogdon, Ronald Stevenson and Alastair Chisholm, on the occasion of Ogdon's first public performance of Opus Clavicembalisticum (Queen Elizabeth Hall, London, 14th July, 1988). Photograph by Clive Spencer-Bentley. Copyright ©1988 C.J. Spencer-Bentley.

Notes on the Life and Career of Sorabji

Alistair Hinton

These are a few facts concerning Kaikhosru Shapurji Sorabji. Born on 14 August 1892 in Chingford, Essex, England, his Parsi father was a civil engineer and his mother apparently a soprano. He lived almost all his life in England. Both parents spoke several European languages and Sorabji's familiarity with those languages began at home long before he received formal training in them. His education, both general and musical, was largely private. He began piano lessons with his mother at about the age of six and later received tuition in harmony, counterpoint, piano and organ from numerous teachers up to his mid-teens. He never received full-time training at university or music conservatoire and was largely self-taught from this point onwards.

No 'child prodigy', he pursued with particular diligence the study of his first love, the piano, developing a prodigious technique through a self-imposed thorough grounding in the keyboard works of Bach and the studies of Czerny and Cramer, Chopin, Liszt, Alkan, Busoni (the **Klavierübung**) and Godowsky (the **Studies on the Etudes of Chopin**). Some of this practice was done using a Virgil Clavier (silent keyboard). At the same time, his unusually enquiring musical mind led him to absorb much of the important new music of the early years of this century. This put him, as a young musician in pre-First-World-War England, to a great deal of trouble as recordings of such music were virtually non-existent, performances rare and scores not easy to come by. As a result, however, he gained a wide-ranging and up-to-date knowledge of developments in music throughout all of Europe, from Albéniz and Granados at one end to Rakhmaninov, Skryabin and Medtner at the other. As well as firing off many enthusiasms within him, this irrepressible pursuit must have done wonders for his sight-playing abilities. Furthermore, he must have been a rarity amongst young musicians in England at that time, being aware as he was of Mahler and Schönberg.

His earliest extant musical works date from 1914 and his first critical essays and articles from about the same time. He met and played to Busoni in 1919 in London, as a result of which Busoni helped him get his **First Piano Sonata** published. Between about 1920 and 1936 he gave occasional public performances and broadcasts of some of his own work in London, Glasgow, Paris, Vienna and Bombay, although during these years there seem to have been only four occasions on which anyone else performed any of his music in public. Between 1918 and 1931, fourteen of his works were published privately at his own and his father's expense and, in 1938, these publications all came under the selling agency of Oxford University Press Music Department, where those not yet sold out remained until 1988.

In Glasgow in 1936, Sorabji made his last public appearance as pianist, giving on that occasion the première — and only performance so far — of his nine-movement **Toccata Seconda**. This seems to have been the year in which he finally decided to let it be known that he wished henceforward no further public hearings of any of his music without his consent, and he withheld that consent, almost without exception, for nearly forty years.

Since he began his work as composer and author, a continuous stream (perhaps an Amazonian flow would be a fairer description) of musical works (until 1968) and of literary articles, concert and record reviews (until the 1940s) poured forth from him. Two books of his essays, **Around Music** and **Mi Contra Fa**, were published in London in 1932 and 1947 respectively. He concentrated less on his literary work after the 1940s, although a handful of articles and a plentiful supply of frequently vituperative 'letters-to-the-editor' have appeared since then.

Between 1962 and 1968, Sorabji's friend Frank Holliday persuaded him to make private recordings (in the composer's home) of more than ten hours in total of his piano works, including the **Second** and **Fourth Piano Symphonies**, though these recordings were not intended for general circulation. In 1970, two pieces from this set of recordings, **Gulistan** and **Concerto per Suonare da me Solo**, were included in a three-hour broadcast in New York on Sorabji. This programme has since been repeated on other American FM stations.

In 1954, Sorabji gave permission for some of his music manuscripts to be microfilmed and, on numerous further occasions from 1978, many more such microfilmings have taken place with a view to compiling as complete as possible a set of films of his musical works.

In the mid-1970s, Sorabji began consenting to numerous performances, broadcasts and recordings of his compositions and, since that time, more than fifty of them have been heard in public, including the **First Organ Symphony** and **Opus Clavicembalisticum**.

1973 saw the resumption, after a short gap, of his activities as composer. The years between his 80th and 90th birthdays were very busily productive ones for him and saw the composition of the **Fifth** and **Sixth Piano Symphonies**, several other solo piano works and a large two-movement piece for piano and small chamber orchestra. Furthermore, at the age of 88, he received — and completed — his first official commission, a fact all the more remarkable as the piece contains no keyboard part and is scored for chamber ensemble, both rare occurrences in Sorabji's output. He did not compose after 1984.

His compositions range in dimensions from **Frammenti aforistici** for piano lasting five or six seconds, to the original version of his **Symphonic Variations**, also for piano, which probably plays for at least seven hours. They include songs, a few chamber works, three organ symphonies, eleven works for piano and orchestra, two vast choral-and-orchestral symphonies and an even larger **Messa Alta Sinfonica** for the same forces. The bulk of his work, however, is for solo piano and includes at least sixteen pieces each having a duration well in excess of two hours.

The 1970s saw the inclusion of Sorabji's **Pastiche on the Waltz, Op. 64, No. 1 ("Minute Waltz") by Chopin** (the first of his **Trois Pastiches** of 1922) in an American anthology of 13 piano transcriptions of this waltz — this was the first publication of any music by Sorabji for over 40 years. Much more recently, in 1987, his **Fantasiettina**, composed in 1961 in honour of Hugh M'Diarmid's 70th birthday the following year, was published in England by Bardic Edition of Aylesbury — this was the first time any music Sorabji composed since **Opus Clavicembalisticum** (1929-30) has appeared in print. Many new editions of Sorabji's works have been prepared in the years since 1988,

the largest to date being the **Second Organ Symphony** by Kevin Bowyer; this activity continues apace and is of crucial importance in enabling and encouraging more performances, recordings and broadcasts.

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Chronological List of Works

Composition	Date	Dedicatee
Transcription of "In a Summer Garden" (Delius) (pf)	1914	—[a]
"The Poplars" (Dučić, trans. Selver) (v.pf) (two versions)	1915	—
"Chrysilla" (de Régnier) (v.pf)	1915	—
"Roses du soir" (Louÿs) (v.pf)	1915	—
"L'heure exquise" (Verlaine) (v.pf)	1916	—
Vocalise (v.pf) (two versions)	1916	—
Piano Concerto No. 1 (pf.orch)	1915-1916	P. Heseltine [1]
"Apparition" (Mallarmé) (v.pf)	1916	—
"Hymne à Aphrodite" (Tailhade) (v.pf) (two versions)	1916	—
Sonata (unnumbered) (pf)	1917	—
"L'étang" (Rollinat) (v.pf)	1917	—
"I was not sorrowful" (Dowson) (v.pf)	1917	—
"Le mauvais jardinier" (Gilkin) (v.pf) (incomplete)	1917	—
Quasi habanera (pf)	1917	N. Peterkin [2]
Désir éperdu (pf)	1917	—
Piano Concerto No. 2 (pf.orch) (only known to exist as 2-piano MS)	1917	—
Poem "Chaleur" (orch)	1917	—
Piano Concerto No. 3 (pf.orch)	1918	C. Trew [3]
In the Hothouse (pf)	1918	T. Jenkins [4]

Piano Concerto No. 4 (pf.orch)	1918	—
Fantaisie espagnole (pf)	1919	N. Peterkin
Sonata No. 1 (pf)	1919	F. Busoni [5]
Trois poèmes (v.pf)	1918-1919	M. Martine [6]
(i) "Correspondances" (Baudelaire)		
(ii) "Crépuscule du soir mystique" (Verlaine)		
(iii) "Pantomime" (Verlaine)		
Music to "The Rider by Night" (text, Robert Nichols) (vv.ens) (part lost)	1919	—
Toccata (pf)	1920	T. Jenkins
"Arabesque" (Shemseddin) (v.pf)	1920	R. Brittain [7]
Piano Quintet No. 1 (pf.str qt)	1920	P. Heseltine
Piano Concerto No. 5 (pf.orch) (published as No. 2)	1920	A. Cortot [8]
Sonata No. 2 (pf)	1920	F. Busoni
Prelude Interlude and Fugue (pf)	1920/1922	R. Brittain
Sonata No. 3 (pf)	1922	A. Hinton [9]
Symphony No. 1 (orch.pf.org.ch)	1921-1922	M.M. Sorabji [10]
Trois pastiches (pf)	1922	
(i) Valse in D flat, Op. 64 No. 1 (Chopin)		—
(ii) "Habanera" from "Carmen" (Bizet)		—
(iii) "Song of the Hindu Merchant" from "Sadko" (Rimsky-Korsakov)		C. à-Becket Williams [11]
Piano Concerto No. 6 (pf.orch) (numbered "iii" in MS)	1922	"To Bernard" [12]
Opusculum (orch)	1923	J. Ireland [13]
Rapsodie espagnole (Ravel — transcription de concert (first version)) (pf)	1923	—
Le Jardin parfumé (pf)	1923	C. à-Becket Williams

Cinque sonnetti di Michelangelo Buonarroti (v.chamber orch)	1923	—
Trois Fêtes Galantes (Verlaine) (v.pf)	1924?	M.M. Sorabji
(i) "L'allée"		
(ii) "À la promenade"		
(iii) "Dans la grotte"		
Piano Concerto No. 7 "Simorg-Anka" (pf.chamber orch)	1924	H. Ellis [14]
Organ Symphony No. 1 (org)	1923-1924	E. Edroff-Smith [15]
Valse-fantaisie (Hommage à Johann Strauss) (pf)	1925	H.V. Marrot [16]
Variations and Fugue on "Dies Irae" (pf)	1923-1926	F. Busoni
Trois poèmes du Gulistan de Sa'di (v.pf)	1926	E. Chisholm [17]
(i) "La lampe"		
(ii) "La jalousie"		
(iii) "La fidelité"		
Fragment (pf) (three versions)	1926/1928/1937	H. Rutland [18]
"L'irrémédiable" (Baudelaire) (v.pf)	1927	B. Marchesi [19]
Piano Concerto No. 8 (pf.orch) (numbered "v" in MS)	1927-1928	A. Solito di Solis [20]
Toccata No. 1 (pf)	1928	B. Bromage [21]
Djâmî (pf)	1928	R.N. Best [22]
Sonata No. 4 (pf)	1928-1929	F.G. Scott [23]
Passacaglia (pf) (unfinished)	1929	—
Toccatinetta (pf)	1929	C. Gray-Fisk [24]
Opus Clavicembalisticum (pf)	1929-1930	H. M'Diarmid [25]
Symphony (complete piano part of abandoned work for piano, orchestra, soli and chorus)	1930-1931	E. Chisholm

Vocalise (Movement) (v.pf)	1927-1931	M.M. Sorabji
Organ Symphony No. 2 (org)	1929-1932	E. Emlyn Davies [26]
Piano Quintet No. 2 (pf.str qt)	1932-1933	D. Saurat [27]
Fantasia ispanica (pf)	1933	A. Rowley [28]
Pasticcio capriccioso (Valse in D flat Op. 64 No. 1 (Chopin)) (pf)	1933	M.M Sorabji
Toccata No. 2 (pf)	1933-1934	N. Peterkin
Sonata No. 5 "Opus Archimagicum" (pf)	1934-1935	C. Gray-Fisk
Symphonic Variations (pf)	1935-1937	E. Clarke Ashworth [29]
Symphony No. 1 "Tantrik" (pf)	1938-1939	E. Chisholm
Chromatic Fantasia (J. S. Bach — piano transcription with a different Bach fugue) (pf)	1940	E. Edroff-Smith
Quaere reliqua hujus materiei inter secretiora (based on a short story by M.R. James) (pf)	1940	"To E. With Love" [30]
Gulistan (the Rose Garden (Sa'di)) (pf)	1940	H. Morland [31]
St Bertrand de Comminges "He was laughing in the Tower" (based on a short story by M.R. James) (pf)	1941	E. Nason [32]
Trois chants (v.pf)	1941	J. McArden / H.J. Cooper [33]
(i) "Le faune" (Verlaine)		
(ii) "Les chats" (Baudelaire)		
(iii) "La dernière fête galante" (Verlaine)		
One Hundred Transcendental Studies (pf)	1940-1944	H. Welsh [34]
Rapsodie espagnole (Ravel — transcription de concert (second version)) (pf)	1945	—
Prelude in E flat (J.S. Bach — piano transcription) (pf)	1945	R.N. Best

Concerto per suonare da me solo (pf)	1946	N. Peterkin
Closing scene from "Salome" (R. Strauss — concert paraphrase) (pf)	1947	—
Sequentia Cyclica super dies irae ex missa pro defunctis in clavicembali usum (pf)	1948-1949	E. Petri [35]
Symphony No. 2 "Jami" (orch.pf.org.ch.v)	1942-1951	M. Vicars [36]
Organ Symphony No. 3 (org)	1949-1953	N. Gentieu [37]
Un nido di scatole (pf)	1954	H. Rutland
Symphony No. 2 (pf)	1952-1954	H. Morland
Toccata No. 3 (pf) (lost)	1955?	C. Gray-Fisk
Passeggiata veneziana (based on the Barcarolle from "The Tales of Hoffman" (Offenbach)) (pf)	1955-1956	Y. Bowen [38]
Symphonic Variations (pf.orch) (adapted from piano work of the same title)	1938-1956	—
Rosario d'arabeschi (pf)	1956	S. Sitwell [39]
Opus Clavisymphonicum (pf.orch)	1957-1959	J. Ireland
Symphony No. 3 (pf)	1959-1960	G. Richards [40]
Suggested bell-chorale for St. Luke's Carillon (Campanile of St Luke's Church, Germantown, Philadelphia) (bells)	1961	N. Gentieu
Fantasiettina sul nome illustre dell'egregio poeta Christopher Grieve ossia Hugh M'Diarmid (pf)	1961	H. M'Diarmid
Messa alta sinfonica (orch.org.soli.ch)	1955-1961	R.N. Best
Symphony No. 4 (pf)	1962-1964	H. Rutland
20 Frammenti aforistici (pf)	1964	H. Morland
Toccata No. 4 (pf)	1964-1967	P. Rapoport [41]
Frammento cantato (v.pf)	1967	H. Morland

Concertino non grosso (4vn.va.vc.pf)	1968	M. Vicars
103 Frammenti aforistici (Sutras) (pf)	1962-1972?	D. Garvelmann [42]
Benedizione di San Francesco d'Assisi (v.org)	1973	A. Hinton
Symphony No. 5 (Symphonia brevis) (pf)	1973	A. Hinton
Variazione maliziosa e perversa sopra "La morte d'Åse" da Grieg (pf)	1974	A. Hinton
Opusculum Clavisymphonicum (pf.chamber orch)	1973-1975	A. Hinton
Symphony No. 6 (Symphonia claviensis, Symphonia magna) (pf)	1975-1976	A. Hinton
4 Frammenti aforistici (pf)	1977	A. Hinton
Symphonic Nocturne (pf)	1977-1978	A. Hinton
Il Grido del gallino d'oro (variations and fugue on a theme from "Le Coq d'Or" (Rimsky-Korsakov)) (pf)	1978-1979	M. Habermann [43]
Il Tessuto d'arabeschi (fl.str qt)	1979-1980	To the memory of F. Delius [44]
Villa Tasca (pf)	1979-1980	R. Stevenson [45]
Opus Secretum (pf)	1980-1981	K. Derus [46]
Passeggiata variata (pf)	1981	C. Spencer-Bentley [47]
Sutra sul nome dell'amico "Alexis" (pf)	1981	R.W. Procter [48]
Fantasiettina atematica (fl.ob.cl)	1981	A. Burton-Page [49]
Passeggiata arlecchinesca (pf)	1981-1982	G.D. Madge [50]
Sutra "per il caro amico quasi Nipote - 'Alexis'" (pf)	1984	R.W. Procter

a. This transcription was known from Sorabji's correspondence with Philip Heseltine to have been a work in progress in September, 1914. It was not clear whether Sorabji had completed it. The manuscript of the complete transcription is now thought to be in a private collection in the U.S.A.

1. The composer Peter Warlock. There was a long correspondence between Heseltine and Sorabji.
2. Scottish composer and life-long friend of Sorabji. Peterkin arranged for Sorabji's early publications to come under the selling agency of O.U.P.
3. Charles Trew. Sorabji's harmony and counterpoint teacher, from the years before any of the extant works were written.
4. Friend of the composer.
5. See "Around Kaikhosru Sorabji" and "Notes on the Life and Career of Sorabji".
6. Marthe Martine, soprano. She premièred the "Trois poèmes" with the composer, in Paris, 1921.
7. One of the composer's many friends who were not directly connected with the world of music — Rex Brittain was a barrister.
8. The famous pianist. He expressed interest in Sorabji's works, but never performed any in public. They met in 1920.
9. Alistair Hinton. Composer. Sorabji's closest friend from the 1970s. It was mainly due to his efforts that Sorabji was persuaded to give permission for the performance of his music in recent years. He founded and is curator of The Sorabji Archive, and is now acting on Sorabji's behalf in all matters pertaining to his work. The 1973 dedication of the 1922 3rd Sonata was, of course, retrospective; an inscription in Sorabji's hand on the copy of its publication which he gave to Hinton in 1973 suggests that there was another dedicatee at the time of its composition, but no name is mentioned and the identity of that dedicatee remains unknown. Hinton met Sorabji for the first time in 1972.
10. Madelaine Mathilde Sorabji, the composer's mother.

11. Christopher à-Becket Williams. Composer. Sorabji presented him with the manuscript of the 6th piano concerto, which was kindly given to The Sorabji Archive by the dedicatee's daughter in 1988.
12. Probably Bernard Bromage (see note 21 below), as it seems improbable that Sorabji knew Bernard van Dieren (later a close friend) personally at this time.
13. The composer John Ireland. He and Sorabji corresponded for about 30 years.
14. Havelock Ellis, psychologist and pioneering writer on the psychology of sexuality.
15. Emily Edroff-Smith was a piano teacher, and a close friend of the composer's mother. She was known as "Aunty Edroff" in the family.
16. Friend of the composer.
17. Erik Chisholm (1904-1965) founded the "Active Society for the Propagation of Contemporary Music" which existed in Glasgow in the 1920s and 1930s. Among the leading figures who gave concerts and talks for the Society were Berg (perhaps; this has never been conclusively substantiated), van Dieren, Hindemith, Szymanowski, and Bartók, as well as Sorabji. Chisholm was a composer, pianist, organist and conductor. He was subsequently Dean of the Faculty of Music at the University of Cape Town.
18. Harold Rutland was a pianist, and Professor of Piano at Trinity College of Music. He performed the "Fragment", and was a lifelong champion of the composer's music.
19. Blanche Marchesi. Soprano. Sorabji devoted a chapter of his book "Mi Contra Fa" to her. His "Villa Tasca" from 1979-1980 contains a passage which refers to her rendition of a Sicilian folksong.
20. Count Aldo Solito di Solis. Italian pianist. Sorabji wrote several favourable reviews of his concerts.
21. Bernard Bromage. He proof-read (albeit inadequately) Sorabji's first book "Around Music". The dedication appears on the microfilm of the manuscript, which was made in the 1950s, but was later removed from the manuscript itself.

22. Reginald Best, the composer's companion in his later years.
23. Francis George Scott was a Scots composer, especially of songs, some of which are among the finest written in the 20th century. Championed by Hugh M'Diarmid, who wrote about him in his poetry and the autobiographical "The Company I've Kept", Scott has now fallen into undeserved neglect. Sorabji's "Mi Contra Fa" contains a highly enthusiastic essay on Scott's songs.
24. Critic, and close friend of the composer. He wrote at least one highly complimentary article about Sorabji.
25. Hugh M'Diarmid (Christopher Murray Grieve), the Scots poet. One of the most influential figures in the Scottish arts. A polymathic intellect with an inclination toward epic forms in his own work, it is scarcely surprising that he and Sorabji found each other to be kindred spirits. The first essay in M'Diarmid's autobiographical "The Company I've Kept" (Hutchinson, 1966) concerns Sorabji, and contains a passage of poetry adapted from the author's "On a Raised Beach" in tribute to Sorabji, which ends: "Great work cannot be combined with surrender to the crowd". In a pleasing example of the wheel turning full circle, this text has been set to music by Alistair Hinton (q.v.) in response to a commission which arose indirectly from Hinton's association with the present recording. See also "Fantasiettina ..." (1961).
26. Organist. He performed the middle movement of the composer's Organ Symphony No. 1 in 1928, this being the work's first and only performance until 1987, and, incidentally, one of the very few occasions on which Sorabji heard his music performed by anyone else.
27. Denis Saurat. French philosopher; a political and philosophical thinker highly regarded by Sorabji. One-time head of the Institut Français.
28. Pianist and professor at the Royal Academy of Music.
29. Edward Clarke Ashworth wrote an excellent review of the publication of Opus Clavicembalisticum.
30. This was probably Edward Nason, to whom the other piece inspired by an M.R. James ghost story was dedicated. Based on correspondence between Sorabji and Frank Holliday, it has also been suggested that it could have been Edward Clarke Ashworth. The composer denied this in conversation with Alistair Hinton, and insisted that the dedicatee was, indeed, Nason.

31. Harold Morland, poet (he refers to Sorabji in several of his poems). Friend of the composer since the 1930s.
32. Friend of the composer. See note 30 above.
33. Joy McArden and James Cooper. Soprano/pianist and wife/husband. They performed the "Trois chants" in the composer's presence, privately, and were given permission to broadcast them. There is no record of such a broadcast having taken place.
34. Henry Welsh. Friend of the composer.
35. Egon Petri. A Busoni pupil, he became a close friend of Sorabji. He contemplated playing Opus Clavicembalisticum but never actually did so. Interestingly, à propos the present recording, he was John Ogdon's teacher.
36. Mervyn Vicars. Composer and cellist. A friend of the composer for many years, he wrote a work for piano and orchestra on themes from Opus Clavicembalisticum.
37. Norman Gentieu first suggested to Sorabji that all his manuscripts should be microfilmed, and created a (largely fictitious) "Society of Connoisseurs" to facilitate this project.
38. York Bowen, the English composer-pianist. He dedicated his 24 Preludes for piano to Sorabji.
39. Sir Sacheverell Sitwell, who wrote, in 1976, "It is a privilege to have been asked to write these few words in praise and welcome to my old friend Kaikhosru Sorabji whom I have known, I think, since 1918! ... a most vital, amusing and energising influence in all he said or wrote ... Personally I have every sympathy with him over the aristocratic seclusion into which he has withdrawn and which I find both enviable and dignified." (Programme note for Yonty Solomon's Wigmore Hall concert, 7th December 1976).
40. At the disastrous 1936 London performance of the first part of Opus Clavicembalisticum there were, apparently, protests from the audience on Sorabji's behalf, concerning the quality of the

performance. According to the composer, George Richards was the loudest protestor.

41. Paul Rapoport is a musicologist, critic, writer and composer in Canada. He edited the symposium "Sorabji - A Critical Celebration" (Scolar Press, 1992).
42. Donald Garvelmann scripted and presented the three-hour broadcast about Sorabji on Radio WNCN New York, in 1970.
43. Michael Habermann, American pianist. He has performed and recorded a number of Sorabji's works.
44. Sorabji was a lifelong admirer of Delius, who in turn praised "Le Jardin Parfumé" when he heard it broadcast in 1930. In a letter to the composer, he wrote that the piece "... interested me very much. There is real sensuous beauty in it."
45. Ronald Stevenson. Scots composer-pianist. One of the most extraordinary musicians of our time. A pianist of unique insight and prolific composer in many forms, especially song and piano music, he is also one of the world's leading authorities on Busoni and Grainger, among others. He has recorded Sorabji's "Fantasiettina ..." for Altarus Records.
46. Kenneth Derus has published a collection, with commentary, of the Sorabji-Heseltine correspondence (in "Sorabji - A Critical Celebration", ed. Rapoport [Scolar Press, 1992]).
47. Clive Spencer-Bentley. Composer, currently working as a schoolteacher. Friend of the composer in his later years. The "Passeggiata Variata" was a 21st birthday present for Spencer-Bentley.
48. Robert W. Procter. Friend of the composer. "Alexis" was a nickname. The composer incorrectly dated the first of these pieces "1971" (using Roman numerals, as was his custom, this is an easy mistake to make). He did not know the dedicatee in 1971, and the manuscript paper on which they were written was of the type he adopted after 1973, which suggests the later date. It now appears that the second "Alexis" Sutra is the composer's last work.
49. Anthony Burton-Page. Musician and teacher. Friend of the composer in his later years.
50. Geoffrey Douglas Madge. Australian pianist. He has performed works of Sorabji internationally.