

Panel Discussion Transcript

The following discussion took place as the third session of the Symposium. On the panel were Nicholas Temperley, Bryan White, and Robert Shay; Rod Sharpe mediated.

Rod Sharpe: What we're going to be talking about today is the possible misattribution and possible justification of reassigning the composer of the manuscript through stylistic considerations: Does this sound more like Turner, or more like Aldrich?

I'm going to start out by putting you in the picture as to how we came to acquire this manuscript - what we know, don't know, and surmise about it. I'll begin by showing you "Exhibit A" (holds up a USPS Cushion Mailer). It's a regular mailer addressed to the School of Music at Western Illinois University (WIU), and it has a postmark on the rear: Scarborough, Maine, November 4 2010. You can see it was opened somewhat vigorously by a secretary and out fell this manuscript, no return address, nothing inside! We are at a total loss to understand why it was sent to us and who sent it. Was it "hot"? Was this anonymous donor wishing to offload it quickly to get rid of it? The first thing I did was to call our Alumni Office to ask if they knew of any rich alums living in Scarborough or vicinity. They didn't. Upon realizing what this volume is, it gets passed on to our musicologist, Brian Locke. It's not his field so he passes it on to the Music Library. It's pure serendipity that I have a something of, but not much of, a background in English cathedral music. My high school was a cathedral school and, among other factors, we attended a short service in the cathedral (Southwell Minster) each morning. Please look in your packet and you will find a copy of the title page. [Insert link to title page] So, having only a modest acquaintance with the English cathedral tradition, I was prepared to take the title page at face value - the service music by Aldrich and the anthems by Turner, the manuscript written by Turner. But if you examine the word "Turner" you'll notice, as did Dr. Temperley first, that it's written in slightly bolder ink than the rest. He suggested that the original "Aldrich" was erased and replaced by "Turner", with feint traces of the original discernible. The other thing you can tell is that the handwriting of the title page is definitely different to the rest of the manuscript - it was certainly added later, and possibly quite a bit later. At some point, presumably, someone had this manuscript in hand, questioned who wrote the music, and for some reason, who knows why, attributed it to Aldrich. I began my researches by looking up the entry for Aldrich, with whom I was not previously familiar, in Grove Music Online. The article was written by one Robert Shay who I subsequently traced to the University of Missouri, Columbia - just down the road, one might say! One thing I immediately noticed was that "our" service did not match any of those listed in Grove. Of the four known services, the one in F is in 5 parts whereas ours, in F, is 4 parts. So the first thing I wanted to know from Robert was if he thought this was an unknown service by Aldrich - that started the ball rolling! I learned that Aldrich had been Dean of Christchurch, Oxford, which led me to let them know that we had come by this manuscript. The response from John Milsom there was: "Well, we don't know anything about this service re. Aldrich, but one thing I can tell you is that it's definitely William Turner's handwriting - we have several samples of it here." Robert very kindly drove over from Columbia to take a look about 18 months or so ago. He examined the manuscript thoroughly and discovered some interesting things about it. I'm now going to hand over to Robert now to tell us some technical things about the manuscript.

Robert Shay: Thank you, Rod. Looking at any music manuscript for the first time you're trying to form a general impression as to how it came into being, and get a general sense of its make up (its "codicology" a fancier term referring to study of manuscripts). The first thing we should probably say is that the manuscript began as a bound book of music paper. This is not unusual. If you were an amateur or professional musician in Restoration England you were likely to go and buy music paper rather than rule it up yourself. John Playford sold lots of music paper, both loose and in bound books. So you could go in and buy a bound book of music paper and use it for some purpose, and that's very much what appears to be the case here. There is a bookplate on the inside cover and it looks like at some point it was pasted over with another sheet of plain paper which was cut out to reveal the label. Another thing you do is to get a sense of whether this is the whole thing or not by examining the watermarks. This is an octavo volume – what does this mean? It means that the big folio sheet that this was printed on was folded down into eight parts and the outside edges were cut. You are not going to have a watermark or center mark on every page, only parts of them will appear on each page. You examine them to see if they're this way or inverted and get a sense of how the different pages go together. The other thing you can do is look at the quiring – how the leaves are stitched together. This book is regularly quired – there is a stitch in the middle of each group of pages, but what that revealed to me is that there are some pages missing at the very beginning. What I 'imagine' (underscoring the word) is that when Turner came in possession of this there may have been one or more pages of previously used material which he took out, and not wanting to waste any, he took the first completely empty usable page for his first page – the verso of the surviving first page. The recto was pasted over with a plain sheet (upon which a title and author designation was written in a different hand probably at a later date and which may prove to be a misattribution) and there is discernible what appears to be some original script on the upper staves and bleed-through at the bottom of the verso – of particular interest because of the correction slip we're going to hear about from Nicholas in a few minutes. But that's the general impression of it, of a kind of personal book. It's not a substantially large volume. The size of the book suggests the type of thing someone may have purchased for personal use, but it's hard to infer too much from the size. The copying seems consistent throughout. It's puzzling certainly that Turner carefully signed his name to the last 2 anthems but left the service unsigned. Having studied and edited Aldrich's music I was wondering whether I would generally have an impression about the music being Aldrich's or not. I think that service music is more challenging to analyze stylistically because the composer is required simply to get through a lot of text and a lot of it is polyphonic, whereas with an anthem where the text is more drawn out there's a chance for musical elaborations that more typically show a composer's style – although not a hard and fast rule. I came away with the impression that it might not be by Aldrich and could well be by Turner. The important and most interesting point is that it's music that we don't otherwise know.

Rod Sharpe: The other hand out that you have is the end of the anthem "Behold Now Praise the Lord" where you can see Turner's signature. So then the issue comes up: why did he sign both anthems but not the service? That might be why whoever it was wrote out the title page attributed this music to Aldrich. One explanation for that is what I suggested at the recital: the service and first anthem belong together, the anthem the 'companion' to the service, the signature suggesting that all the music to that point was his and that "Try Me O God" added as a filler, received a separate signature. Both service and anthem are in the same key (F) so it seems a reasonable possibility. Though why someone at some point thought it was by Aldrich sending

us all down a blind alley we can only speculate. Nicholas, when you first saw the ms. And played it through you were inclined to think . . .

Nicholas Temperley: I didn't think it was as bold or original as some of Turner's music, but I now think perhaps it was an early work. When I was considering style I didn't feel I had enough to go on, or know enough of Aldrich's music to say it was one or the other. But I did feel it was a little less interesting but that may be partly as Robert was saying that when you're writing a service you don't get as much of a chance to show originality as you do when you're writing an anthem. And, of course, trying to date this anthem is a whole other issue. What's the date for "Try Me O God?"

Bryan White: Circa 1697.

Rod Sharpe: There were basically two styles, the progressive and conservative side by side, and the service tended to be conservative. You should have a reproduction of the opening measures of the Te Deum showing the pasted tab, which is the really intriguing thing (and you can view this later on the actual manuscript), and Nicholas has an interesting theory about that.

Nicholas Temperley: We start with the idea that we know this is in Turner's writing, so he was either writing out his own composition or writing out someone else's. And I thought that it might help to tell which that was. You'll notice for one thing the staves on the patch are a different size from the main staves - slightly narrower - and could have been from later when he had time to recheck the manuscript. But when you look at what is on the back of that first page (recto) at the bottom (opposite the patch) you can see that it is print-through from the original notes underneath the patch through onto the sheet of plain paper that was pasted on the back (now the title page). The pasting or gluing caused the ink to dissolve so that some of it passed through to the pasted on recto sheet. The notes seem to be slightly off the staves of the original (pasted over) recto page because we're seeing them coming through from the verso side (under the patch). (The original printed staves on each side of a sheet are not level with each other, back to back. - Ed.) It's quite easy once you've made this assumption to see what was written underneath. And so I've made the presumption to have written this page (NT's hand out) as a conjecture of what was underneath originally.

[Insert link to "Turner Manuscript Conjecture"]

What we have got here are two versions: in the original clefs and also in modern clefs because I thought we might like to sing it. What you see in the top version are the original (bleed-through) notes in larger font - one note in the treble part, four in the alto, three in the tenor, and one in the bass. The rest of it is taken more or less from the final (paste over) version. What I think happened was somebody wrote this out originally and then decided to change it, and the change involved the additional six half-notes - the length of one and one half measures. This is followed by a short measure of only two half-notes (m. 10), and it's the only measure of this duration anywhere in the manuscript. I think the person thought, "Well, this is rather dull" and changed it to a more elaborate setting of the words "All the earth doth *worship* thee." Well if my conjecture is correct, the only person likely to do this is the composer, and if Turner was copying out somebody else's music it's unlikely he'd put in an extra measure and a half for no reason. If

it was his own he might have thought, “Well, I think I could have done better.” And as we know that the copyist was Turner, then this proves that the composer was Turner!

[Participants perform NT’s reconstruction twice.]

Robert Shay: If I could just jump in at this point, it’s important to mention that this sort of compositional tampering is very common. Certainly composers in this period, and many others, seem never satisfied, and even when they’re writing out a fair copy they get new ideas and want to get them down on paper. And maybe one other point that should have been said earlier is there’s no doubt that the writing on the other side (title page) is much later; eighteenth century, maybe nineteenth-century style writing.

Bryan White: What I have to say about this is really judged on the style of the work. Stylistic analysis is absolutely a problematic thing to do and you can’t be certain about it but I do this type of service music with my choir from time to time and I’ve done both of the other extant settings of the Magnificat and Nunc Dimittis by Turner. Both of these are thought to be late; from the later 1690s, certainly. Based on that, the Mag. and Nunc from this manuscript, I would say is dissimilar in a certain number of ways. I’ll just read out the things that I found different. The approach to contrapuntal writing in the WIU service is less flexible than what we find in other of Turner’s works, the most noticeable being in how this composer approaches contrapuntal writing in a very schematic way. He brings in one part and then another in a contrapuntal entry and then he brings in the other two parts that he hasn’t used at the same intervals in exactly the same way. That’s quite a thorough-going process throughout the Mag & Nunc – most pronounced in the Nunc Dimittis where he hardly does anything else. The Mag has a little bit more flexibility. That sort of contrapuntal writing is not characteristic of the other Turner services where his contrapuntal style is more flexible. His approach to contrapuntal entries and imitative passages is not schematic in the same way. This reliance on paired entries at the same pitches is one thing that gives me pause to think that this could be anything representative of Turner’s later works. Another thing that I’ve noted about it is that the service we heard today lacks what we call the English Cadence (Sings: La-da-da-da-da-di-dum), with the flat 7th, which occurs with some regularity in both of the other Turner services. There are some awkward progressions that aren’t characteristic of later Turner. He is not the most exciting composer on the planet although as a service composer he is a really fine writer, but he’s always, I would say, regular. He’s very polished in his part writing and his harmonic progressions. This service that we heard today, you may agree, has a few awkward places. At the beginning of the Magnificat, the progression in the second bar is rather awkward. Also at bar 10 is just not quite formally regular in the way Turner tends to be. And then in the Nunc – this is a place which is easy to hear – the 4th bar, has the treble line’s B flat going to a B natural, which is not a very polished line, and that gave me some pause to doubt that it could be mature Turner. In general, I think it is less sensitive to word setting than later Turner. Also, it lacks ascending chromatic figures. If someone wishes to come later, I’ve brought both these services – E major and A major - with me. At points in the work he brings in an ascending chromatic figure that he treats contrapuntally. And again, there’s nothing as inventive as that happens in this (WIU’s) service, I would say. I think there’s less regularity in the tonal progressions. Then in the Gloria Patri, both have a canon 2 in 1, displaying a sort of uniformity of treatment. In the two late services only one of the Gloria Patris have a canon (4 in 2: i.e. 2 voices in canon in 4 parts). So, again, that doesn’t mean that he

couldn't have written a work that does have canons in Gloria Patri, but it isn't consistent, certainly, with the other known works of his. And the last thing I would say is that there is a lack of variety in the scoring. In both the other works there are sections where we move down to 3 voices, or possibly even 2, even though one of them does have up to 6 voices available, so there's much more by way of verse sections as opposed to full sections in 4 parts all the way through. The only distinction we have in today's work in the Dec-Can distribution. So all of these things would lead me to believe either it's not by Turner or it could be an early work. One thing we can't determine [is the date?] He worked first at Lincoln at age 16, 17, 18, after he left the Chapel Royal when he was a boy, and I think that as far as we know, none of his service music can be ascribed to his Lincoln period. Possibly this could be an early work from then. (BW raises an additional stylistic point, but this was attributable to a copying error in the transcription and so is omitted here. – Ed.)

Rod Sharpe: Robert, would you care to say something about copying, because we know Turner copied other things as well as his own music. In general, copying was a way musicians could supplement their incomes?

Robert Shay: The broader question as to why certain things were copied is interesting but not necessarily always easy to answer. We know, for example Turner may have been employed by a family in Kent – the Filmers – patrons of music - who maintained residences in London and Kent employing music teachers for their large family. We think Turner might have been one of these teachers for a time, and as soon as you find yourself in some kind of pedagogical situation the reasons for copying out music could be significantly broader than just thinking about “my music.” Bryan has been surveying Turner in a much broader, more careful way than has been done before and [] a span of activity. The earliest we know about Turner – 1667 – but seems to have stopped writing music around 1705, although he lived until 1740. This still gives us rather a substantial block of time when he was writing music. No one has cared enough about Turner yet to try to put what we have in chronological order.

Bryan White: I think it's fair to say there's not a lot of music he's copied of other people's. The only example we know about for certain is his Filmer 17 ms. Here he copied out an anthem by Purcell together with one of his own and song by Handel (this must have been copied c. 1712 or later []). One Handel song was not written before that time. We have a print of it that was almost certainly used for the copy. This is very likely to have been a teaching book related to his teaching one or both of the Filmer daughters who were musical. In the manuscript he does two things: he adapts a Purcell anthem that was in four parts into a solo anthem, and he does the same for one of his own. But otherwise we don't have any evidence of his copying out any other anthems that weren't his own

Robert Shay: And just to stay with the Filmer's for a moment . . . [Recording ends]