

# To Catch the World: Percy Scholes and the English Musical Appreciation Movement 1918–1939

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In 1910, E.M. Forster published his novel *Howards End*. The character of Leonard Bast, a clerk in an insurance company, exists on the 'extreme verge of gentility.'<sup>1</sup> Democracy ostensibly ensures his equality with the rest of society, yet 'he was not as courteous as the average rich man, nor as intelligent, nor as healthy, nor as lovable. His mind and his body had been alike underfed, because he was poor, and because he was modern they were always craving better food.'<sup>2</sup>

Leonard is determined to improve himself, by attending art galleries, concerts and the opera, and by reading great literature. Early in the novel, Forster depicts him as he sits in his basement flat reading:

Leonard listened to [Ruskin's voice] with reverence. He felt that he was being done good to, and that if he kept on with Ruskin, and the Queen's Hall concerts, and some pictures by Watts, he would one day push his head out of the gray waters and see the universe.<sup>3</sup>

Yet Bast often despairs of attaining his goal, constantly beset by practical worries such as the cost of tickets and programmes. He feels he will never catch up with those who have known culture from childhood, thinking that, 'he could never follow them, not if he read for ten hours a day. Oh, it was no good, this continual aspiration. Some are born cultured; the rest had better go in for whatever comes easy.'<sup>4</sup>

Bast, initially bent on self-improvement, exemplifies the early twentieth-century figure variously known as 'the man-in-the-street,' 'the plain man,'<sup>5</sup> 'the ordinary listener,'<sup>6</sup> or, more picturesquely, the 'man on the Clapham omnibus.'<sup>7</sup> These terms were often used by music critics, educators and administrators—particularly following World War I—with reference to the nature of the musical public. The key characteristic attributed to this figure, which proved to be of particular interest to the English musical community, was an urge for self-improvement, a longing to acquire taste and, by doing so, to climb the social ladder. In the first quarter of the twentieth century, substantial numbers of new lower-middle class citizens sought to demonstrate or improve their social status by cultural attainments such as the ability to discuss the meaning and merits of symphony or opera. Forster records Leonard Bast's thoughts following a concert at the Queen's Hall:

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<sup>1</sup>E.M. Forster, *Howards End*, ed. Oliver Stallybrass (1910; London: Edward Arnold, 1973) 43.

<sup>2</sup>Forster, *Howards End* 43.

<sup>3</sup>Forster, *Howards End* 47–48.

<sup>4</sup>Forster, *Howards End* 52.

<sup>5</sup>E.D. Mackerness, *A Social History of English Music* (London: Routledge & Kegan Paul, 1964) 264; Stewart Macpherson, *The Appreciation Class* (London: Joseph Williams Ltd., 1923) 4.

<sup>6</sup>Mackerness, *Social History* 265.

<sup>7</sup>Paul Theroux, *The London Embassy* (1982; London: Penguin, 1983) 116.

Oh, to acquire culture! Oh, to pronounce foreign names correctly! Oh, to be well-informed, discoursing at ease on every subject that a lady started!...If only he could talk like this, he would have caught the world.<sup>8</sup>

The man-in-the-street's desire for culture, as portrayed by Bast, is typically associated with the practice of listening to music and acquiring the ability to discuss it, thereby demonstrating musical taste. Active engagement in musical culture through, for instance, learning to play an instrument or to sing, was in decline. In England, musical participation—whether it was in choir, band or at home on the parlour piano—had been a beacon of self-improvement for much of the nineteenth century.<sup>9</sup> Around the turn of the century, scientific and technological advances increasingly changed the musical landscape. The advent of sound reproduction by gramophone and player-piano enabled music of a standard, if initially inadequate, sound quality to be brought into the home, regardless of the musical training of the people involved. These developments made it, in one critic's view, 'a waste of time any longer to become musicians,'<sup>10</sup> and participation in organised amateur music making decreased.<sup>11</sup> Instead, listening to music was increasingly held up as a valuable activity. Leon Botstein notes that as singing as a musical accomplishment was superseded in the early nineteenth century by 'pianizing,' the necessity for a high standard of aural training was removed; players merely had to translate notation into fingerings.<sup>12</sup> With the gramophone and player-piano, even this lesser degree of musical education was unnecessary: little or no performance skill was required.<sup>13</sup> As a result, the activity of listening accrued a higher status. Botstein writes: 'to be able to listen and then talk intelligently about music became sufficient for the use of music as a cultural good, either as an instrument of self-cultivation and education or as a vehicle for the public display of social status.'<sup>14</sup>

The vast increase in the dissemination of music by mechanical means around the turn of the century also stimulated a desire to educate the listener in 'good' music. The player piano and the gramophone, which took a hold on English musical life around the turn of the century, and radio, in the 1920s, brought with them a greater amount and variety of music. The impact of these new technologies—most notably the dissemination of dance music and jazz—was anathema to many serious musicians. They viewed with horror the spread of such tainted, debased styles, seeing them as not only musically but also morally dubious. Sir Hugh Allen, addressing the Incorporated Society of Musicians, lamented that the gramophone had 'filled many homes with the repellent, devastating and sordid noises of some of the worst forms of jazz and some of the cheapest forms of comic songs, purpose devised to administer to a poor...taste, its influence is pernicious.'<sup>15</sup> E.D. Mackerness, in *A Social History of English Music*, writes:

<sup>8</sup> Forster, *Howards End* 37.

<sup>9</sup> See W. Stanley Jevons, 'Amusements of the People,' *Methods of Social Reform and Other Papers* (London: Macmillan & Co., 1883) 1–27; Samuel Smiles, *Self-Help: With Illustrations of Conduct and Perseverance* (1859; London: John Murray, 1905).

<sup>10</sup> E. V. Lucas, 'Mixed Thoughts on Broadcasting,' *Radio Times* 5 Sep. 1924: 441.

<sup>11</sup> Dave Russell, 'Amateur Musicians and their Repertoire,' *Music in Britain: The Twentieth Century*, ed. S. Banfield, *The Blackwell History of Music in Britain* 6 (Oxford: Blackwell, 1995) 145.

<sup>12</sup> Leon Botstein, 'Listening Through Reading: Musical Literacy and the Concert Audience,' *Nineteenth-Century Music* 16 (1992): 129–45.

<sup>13</sup> Tempo and volume could be adjusted on the player-piano by means of levers and/or foot pedals, and it was recommended that the 'performer' practice in order to obtain the best results. See Percy A. Scholes, *The Appreciation of Music by Means of the 'Pianola' and 'Duo-Art'* (London: Humphrey Milford-OUP, 1925); 'Two New Musical Instruments,' *Natal Witness* 23 Jun. 1926; G.N.A., 'Player-Piano Notes,' *The School Music Review* 15 Jul. 1925: 64.

<sup>14</sup> Botstein, 'Listening Through Reading,' 139.

<sup>15</sup> 'Music and Mechanism: Sir Hugh Allen's Address,' *Times* 11 Jan. 1930: 8.

Enthusiasts for musical appreciation were guided by a variety of aspirations, but at the back of their minds was the conviction that if the layman were induced to understand and appreciate music of first-rate quality he would *ipso facto* be inclined to eschew whatever was inferior...the ordinary listener needed some elementary guidance as to what really was worth while.<sup>16</sup>

Thus, in response to the increased dissemination of music through new technologies, musical appreciation aimed to create an audience for 'worth while' music, simultaneously wresting public attention away from 'inferior' music with its degenerate effects.

As musical taste became something one acquired by reading about and listening to music, efforts were made by leading figures of the musical world to support and advance this trend. Sir Henry Wood's development of the Queen's Hall Proms from 1895 is a significant example. This discussion will focus upon the appreciation movement's most vocal advocate, Percy A. Scholes (1877–1958). Scholes' views on the democratisation of serious music, the diversity of his efforts to achieve this, and his notable popularity with the public, make him an invaluable point of reference for the English musical appreciation movement as a whole.

Born in Leeds, Scholes was largely self-taught,<sup>17</sup> working first as a church organist, then as a music teacher in Canterbury, England (1901–02) and Grahamstown, South Africa (1904), and as an extension lecturer of the universities of Manchester, Oxford and London. Through these experiences he developed the skills of holding an audience's attention and communicating his ideas effectively to both children and adults. His desire to improve the wider public's musical understanding was exemplified by his foundation of the Home Music Study Union in 1907,<sup>18</sup> and its journal *The Music Student* (later *The Music Teacher*) in 1908, which he also edited until 1921. He took an Associateship at the Royal College of Music in 1907 and a B. Mus. at Oxford the following year. In 1913 he became music critic for the *Evening Standard*, moving to the *Observer* in March 1920 on the departure of Ernest Newman.<sup>19</sup> During this time he made several tours of the United States and Canada, lecturing to school-children and the general public on musical appreciation.<sup>20</sup> In 1916 he went to France to direct the 'Music for the Troops' section of the Young Men's Christian Association (YMCA), giving lectures, conducting ensembles and organising musical performances at the 5th Army Rest Camp.<sup>21</sup> His first overtly appreciationist text—a reworking of his wartime YMCA lectures entitled *The Listener's Guide*

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<sup>16</sup> Mackerness, *Social History* 264.

<sup>17</sup> Scholes was a lifelong sufferer of severe bronchitis which limited his attendance at school; it was severe enough that at the age of sixteen doctors told him that he would not live until twenty; John Owen Ward, Personal interview, New York, Mar. 1999.

<sup>18</sup> Scholes explained that this 'operated by means of "circles" in different parts of the country, whose members followed out a prescribed course of appreciative study of the music of different historical periods, and met monthly to discuss their studies and to perform to and with one another suitable illustrative music.' Scholes, 'Summary of the Career of Dr. Percy Scholes,' t.s., 14 Oct. 1938, in possession of John Owen Ward, New York. H.C. Colles, 'Scholes, Percy A. (Alfred),' *Grove's Dictionary of Music and Musicians*, ed. Eric Blom, 5th ed. (London: Macmillan, 1954) 524.

<sup>19</sup> Scholes left the *Observer* in 1925, asserting that he was 'wearying of the daily attendance in concert rooms and opera houses' ('Summary of the Career'). However, his departure may also have been motivated by disagreements with its editor, J.L. Garvin. In particular, Scholes was highly critical of Paderewski ('Music of the Week: Paderewski at the Albert Hall,' *Observer* 22 Feb. 1925), whom Garvin staunchly admired. (Ward, Personal interview).

<sup>20</sup> 'Percy A. Scholes: Concert Lectures,' leaflet, (London: The Lecture Agency, [1914–15]).

<sup>21</sup> Under the auspices of this scheme Scholes sent Gustav Holst to spread the musical message in Salonica and Constantinople, and collected donated musical instruments including Elgar's trombone. Scholes, 'Summary of the Career,' Percy A. Scholes, 'The Music Soldiers Like,' *The Red Triangle* 1918: 51–53; Ward, Personal interview.

to *Music*—appeared in 1919, and he subsequently published more than thirty books directed at the ordinary listener, both child and adult.

Scholes gave regular (weekly, and later fortnightly) broadcast talks as Music Critic at the recently formed British Broadcasting Company (BBC) from June 1923 until his resignation in September 1928. He was also Music Editor of its weekly journal *The Radio Times* from 1926 to 1928. The formation of the British Broadcasting Company in late 1922 had been a key stimulus to the musical appreciation trend. BBC policy, particularly during the 1920s, focused on the elevation of taste, driven by Director-General John Reith's view that 'the supply of good things creates the demand for more.'<sup>22</sup> The BBC's cultural paternalism had an overwhelming impact upon the way in which music was presented to its listening audience. During a speech in 1927 Reith reflected:

We have endeavoured to exclude anything that might be harmful, directly or indirectly... We venture to believe that a new national asset has been created... [which] is of the moral and not the material order—that which, down the years, brings the compound interest of happier homes, broader culture and truer citizenship.<sup>23</sup>

These statements express the main elements of the BBC's self-appointed mission; eschewing mere entertainment, to reach the largest possible audience with the very best programmes. In musical terms, the organisation's policy makers, and most of the Music Department, favoured serious rather than popular styles. In 'The BBC and the Ultra-Modern Problem,' Jennifer Doctor notes:

For music, the implementation of the fundamental policy of expanding listeners' tastes and cultural horizons involved two basic goals: building a basic knowledge of standard repertory for those who had little experience with serious music, and expanding the repertory base for those who were familiar with standard works.<sup>24</sup>

With these goals in mind, in the 1920s a number of BBC radio programmes were developed which provided the listener with a basic knowledge of the standard repertoire, and an appropriate vocabulary to display this knowledge.<sup>25</sup> Sir Walford Davies' weekly broadcasts, *Music and the Ordinary Listener*, ran, with some interruptions, from January 1926 to late 1939, and were immensely popular,<sup>26</sup> the *Radio Times* claiming that 'Sir Walford has been the most important single factor in the great development in musical appreciation brought about by

<sup>22</sup> J.C.W. Reith, *Into the Wind* (London: Hodder & Stoughton, 1949) 116.

<sup>23</sup> 'Four Wonderful Years: The Prime Minister's Tribute to Broadcasting,' *Radio Times* 31 Dec. 1926: 6; and Reith, qtd. in Andrew Boyle, *Only the Wind Will Listen: Reith of the BBC* (London: Hutchinson, 1972) 213–14.

<sup>24</sup> Jennifer Doctor, 'The BBC and the Ultra-modern Problem: A Documentary Study of the British Broadcasting Corporation's Dissemination of Second Viennese School Repertory, 1922–36,' PhD diss. Northwestern University (Illinois), 1993, 128.

<sup>25</sup> Robert Stradling & Meirion Hughes, *The English Musical Renaissance 1860–1940: Construction and Deconstruction* (London: Routledge, 1993) 90; Paddy Scannell & David Cardiff, *A Social History of British Broadcasting* (Oxford: Basil Blackwell, 1991) 195. See also D.L. LeMahieu, *A Culture for Democracy: Mass Communication and the Cultivated Mind in Britain between the Wars* (Oxford: Clarendon-OUP, 1988) and Doctor, 'The BBC and the Ultra-modern Problem.'

<sup>26</sup> For responses to Davies' broadcasts see 'Listeners' Letters,' *Radio Times* 19 Feb. 1926: 390; 'The Announcer,' 'Both Sides of the Microphone: The Intimate Touch,' *Radio Times* 16 Nov. 1928: 445; 'What the Other Listener Thinks,' *Radio Times* 7 Dec. 1928: 655; 'From their Favourite Letters,' *Radio Times* 12 July 1929: 62. Also Asa Briggs, *The Birth of Broadcasting, The History of Broadcasting in the United Kingdom 1* (1961; Oxford: OUP, 1995) 259.

broadcasting.<sup>27</sup> *The Foundations of Music*, formally established in 1927 and running for ten years, similarly aimed at improving mass musical taste.<sup>28</sup> It consisted of a ten or fifteen-minute programme of solo and chamber music broadcast five to six times per week, in the popular early evening time slot.<sup>29</sup> The works selected were believed to constitute 'the foundation from which the whole of modern music is derived and on which it rests...[having their] counterpart in such English literature as the Bible, Shakespeare, Milton, Chaucer, and the Elizabethan poets.'<sup>30</sup>

Scholes' talks were similarly fundamental to the BBC's musical mission. He often turned aside from pure criticism to promote greater tolerance of 'the classics,' sometimes devoting his whole talk to listener education ('How to Get the Most out of Wagner,' 19 July 1923) or to proving the attraction of highbrow music ('The Coming High-Low Concert,' 31 January 1924).<sup>31</sup> He strove to reach a musically uneducated audience, refusing to cater only to the highbrow, and encouraging his listeners to develop their own critical abilities. In his final broadcast talk in September 1928 he reflected:

I think that the last five years have seen the greatest growth of tolerance that has ever been seen in any five-year period since the suppression of the Spanish Inquisition. A great many of the lowbrows have done something else, perhaps even better than merely becoming tolerant—they have removed the restrictive hat with which I suppose they were born, and have allowed their brow to grow. From much correspondence received I have learnt how large a proportion of the population of the British Isles there is which, unable before broadcasting to trace tune in a symphony, can now hear it even in a fugue... I have constantly tried to teach... the lesson that the fine things of music... are not for the heedless and lazy, but for them who are prepared to focus their attention and, day by day and week by week, to increase their powers of musical observation.<sup>32</sup>

The BBC broadcasts were supported by numerous publications, including two books by Scholes, *Everybody's Guide to Broadcast Music* (1925)<sup>33</sup> and *The Radio Times Music Handbook* (1935).<sup>34</sup> These endeavoured to provide the ordinary listener with a sense of the broadcast works' historical background as well as the correct pronunciation and meaning of musical terms and titles. Forster's Leonard Bast, to whom the pronunciation of *Tannhäuser* caused such distress, would have been an ideal audience for such texts.<sup>35</sup> *Everybody's Guide to Broadcast Music* was partly composed of material from Scholes' broadcast talks, including numerous

<sup>27</sup> 'The Broadcasters,' 'Both Sides of the Microphone: Au Revoir to Sir Walford,' *Radio Times* 29 Nov. 1929: 620.

<sup>28</sup> Paddy Scannell, 'Music for the Multitude? The Dilemmas of the BBC's Music Policy, 1923–1946,' *Music, Culture and Society* 3 (1981): 245.

<sup>29</sup> The composers featured most often in *Foundations of Music* were, in order of frequency, Bach, Beethoven, Mozart, Schubert, Brahms, Handel, Schumann, and Haydn. See *Radio Times* Jan. 1927–Jun. 1936.

<sup>30</sup> Filson Young, 'The Foundations of Music: The Scheme of a New Series of Broadcast Recitals,' *Radio Times* 31 Dec. 1926: 6.

<sup>31</sup> Percy A. Scholes, 'How to Get the Most out of Wagner,' 19 July 1923; 'The Coming-High Low Concert,' 31 January 1924; Scripts, Reels 458–59, BBC Written Archives Centre (WAC). Extracts from BBC scripts and minutes are published with the kind permission of the BBC Written Archives Centre, Caversham Park, Reading.

<sup>32</sup> Percy A. Scholes, 'Appreciative Listening,' *Radio Times* 26 Oct. 1928: 226.

<sup>33</sup> Percy A. Scholes, *Everybody's Guide to Broadcast Music* (London: OUP & Hodder and Stoughton, 1925).

<sup>34</sup> Percy A. Scholes, *The Radio Times Music Handbook: Being a Complete Book of Reference Giving both Meaning and Pronunciation of the Technical Words Found in Programmes*, 4th ed. (London: Geoffrey Cumberlege-OUP, 1950).

<sup>35</sup> Forster, *Howards End* 35. Bast says, "'This year I have been three times—to 'Faust,' 'Tosca,' and—' Was it 'Tannhouser' or 'Tannhoyser'? Better not to risk the word.'"

extracts from listener's letters. Its contents include 'How to Listen to an Orchestra,' 'Helpful Publications for Opera Lovers,' 'What is Good Singing?' and 'Is Modern Music any Good?'<sup>36</sup> Other BBC publications also provided musical guidance, such as the pamphlets produced to support various series including Davies' *Music and the Ordinary Listener*. The BBC published two weekly journals: *The Radio Times* which commenced in September 1923, and *The Listener* in January 1929. Both contained rudimentary guides to listening, and transcripts and summaries of talks.<sup>37</sup> In April–May 1928 the *Radio Times* serialised Percy Scholes' *Miniature History of Music*,<sup>38</sup> Scholes noting:

It covers the ground yet is readable,...it omits, as far as possible, all unnecessary names, dates and facts; and, in addition, the series of eight chapters...while enabling the listener to 'place' the various composers and styles of Music included in the B.B.C.'s Programmes, constitutes an easy introduction to the subject.<sup>39</sup>

The BBC clearly constituted a powerful force in English musical appreciation from its inception, focusing its efforts in both publication and broadcasting towards realising Scholes' assertion that 'in five years time...the general *musical public* of these islands will be treble or quadruple its present size. And the next generation...will accept the great symphonies of the world as a part of its regular, natural daily and weekly pleasures.'<sup>40</sup>

It has been suggested that Scholes' relatively brief involvement with the BBC, and in particular his resignation from the Corporation and departure to Switzerland in 1928 were due to increasing divergence between Scholes' attitude to musical appreciation and that of the BBC hierarchy.<sup>41</sup> His continual insistence on improving the musical tastes of the 'lowbrow' may have become less acceptable to the BBC when it sought to raise the tone of its music-educational endeavours in the later 1920s. Minutes of a BBC Control Board meeting of November 1926 note that

Mr. Scholes was now doing musical critic talks fortnightly at five guineas a time, but it was proposed to suspend these and obtain another voice at the microphone. It was further decided that he should not write any further programme notes for individual concert programmes as it was desired to address these to a more musically-cultured public.<sup>42</sup>

However, it is unlikely that this shift in the BBC's attitude was the key to Scholes' subsequent departure. Notwithstanding the Control Board's decision of November 1926, Scholes continued

<sup>36</sup> Scholes, *Everybody's Guide to Broadcast Music* 13–14.

<sup>37</sup> Examples of listener's guides to broadcasts include: Percy A. Scholes, 'Rutland Boughton's "Alkestis,"' *Radio Times* 4 Jan. 1924: 45; Percy A. Scholes, 'Some of the Week's Music,' *Radio Times* 7 Mar. 1924: 405. Transcripts of talks include: C. Sanford Terry, 'The Way to Like Good Music,' *Radio Times* 25 Apr. 1924: 193; Percy A. Scholes, 'Appreciative Listening,' *Radio Times* 26 Oct. 1928: 226. The article 'A "New Venture,"' in the first issue of *The Listener* stated that 'It was obviously desirable to preserve the text of certain broadcast talks in a regular and more or less permanent form...It is the primary function of THE LISTENER to satisfy the constant demands made for the text of broadcast talks after delivery.' *The Listener* 16 Jan. 1929: 14. Notes for Sir Walford Davies' *Music and the Ordinary Listener* series, as well as guides to the *Foundations of Music* recitals, appeared weekly in this journal.

<sup>38</sup> Percy A. Scholes, *A Miniature History of Music for the General Reader and the Student* (London: Humphrey Milford-OUP, 1928).

<sup>39</sup> Percy A. Scholes, 'A Miniature History of Music,' *Radio Times*, 6 Apr. 1928: 11.

<sup>40</sup> Percy A. Scholes, 'Broadcasting Symphonies,' 4 Oct. 1923, Scripts, Reel 458, BBC WAC; Scholes' emphasis.

<sup>41</sup> Doctor, 'The BBC and the Ultra-modern Problem.'

<sup>42</sup> Minutes of Control Board Meeting, 16-17 Nov. 1926, R 3/3/2, 'Control Board Minutes, 1926,' BBC WAC.

to give regular broadcasts as BBC Music Critic for almost two more years. Furthermore, the Board was not seeking to wholly terminate Scholes' association with the Corporation, as further minutes of the meeting demonstrate:

It was considered that we could obtain nobody better in the country for the popular notes in the 'Radio Times,' to which Mr. Scholes was now contributing about twenty columns per week. He would therefore continue with his 'Radio Times' articles and the programme annotations, and it was decided to offer him the post of 'Music Editor' of the 'Radio Times' at a salary of £1,000 per annum.

After Scholes' resignation from the organisation he returned to give broadcasts on several occasions and contributed a substantial number of significant articles to the *Radio Times*.<sup>43</sup>

It was Scholes' improved financial position in the later 1920s, rather than any dispute with the BBC, which liberated him to pursue other, less frenetic, occupations. As early as February 1925, Scholes secured a valuable contract with the Aeolian Company to edit 'The World's Music' series of Audiographic Duo-Art and Pianola rolls, in which substantial analytical and/or biographical comments were printed on the rolls themselves, to be read as they unwound.<sup>44</sup> This position demanded more and more of his time, until, at his own instigation, Scholes 'cut out all London labour and distraction by retiring to his old haunts in Switzerland, settling there, and sending material over to his staff in London.'<sup>45</sup> In addition, Scholes had long suffered from respiratory problems, which it was hoped the move to Switzerland would benefit.<sup>46</sup> In October 1929 the stock market crash effected the demise of Aeolian's fortunes and hence the end of the 'World's Music' series. Fortunately for Scholes, the company honoured his contract in full, thus providing him with the financial means to remain in Switzerland and devote his attention to musical authorship, in particular the landmark work, *The Oxford Companion to Music*.<sup>47</sup>

The publication of a wide range of books and articles on musical appreciation was a key element of the movement between the wars. Scholes was the most prolific author in this field, his books published primarily by Oxford University Press (OUP). In 1923 OUP's Music Department was established in London. Under the leadership of the young Hubert Foss, the publication of books grew and diversified, and popular titles on music appreciation flourished.<sup>48</sup> A series of small, inexpensive books on leading composers, entitled *The Musical Pilgrim*, was issued by OUP from 1924 onwards. As mentioned earlier, Scholes alone had more than thirty books published by OUP, outlining basic musical history and technique for the ordinary

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<sup>43</sup> Between 1928 and 1931 Scholes gave at least five broadcast talks under the series title *New Friends in Music*. He broadcast four lectures on 'Modern Music-How Does it Strike You?' in the *Music and the Ordinary Listener* series 10-31 Oct. 1938. His *Radio Times Music Handbook* was published in 1935, and articles appearing in the *Radio Times* after his resignation include his 'Portrait of Coates,' 8 Feb. 1929: 350, series 'The Critic from his Hearth,' from 15 Feb. to 12 Jul. 1929, series 'A Miniature History of Opera,' from 10 Apr. 1931, series 'A Miniature History of British Music,' from 6 Jan. 1933, and 'Swing Music Again: A Correspondence between Percy A. Scholes and Leonard Hibbs,' 14 Aug. 1936: 6-7.

<sup>44</sup> 'The Pianola in Musical Instruction: Lectures for Children,' *Times* 2 Mar. 1925: 20; *AudioGraphic Music* (New York: The Aeolian Company, 1927).

<sup>45</sup> Scholes, 'Summary of the Career.' See also 'Both Sides of the Microphone,' *Radio Times* 28 Sep. 1928: 609; John Owen Ward, Draft of 'Scholes' article for *Dictionary of National Biography*, t.s., 7 (in possession of John Owen Ward, New York).

<sup>46</sup> Ward, Personal interview.

<sup>47</sup> Ward, Personal interview.

<sup>48</sup> Duncan Hinnells, *An Extraordinary Performance: Hubert Foss, Music Publishing, and the Oxford University Press* (Oxford: OUP, 1998) 6, 10.

listener.<sup>49</sup> These included a history and defence of the musical appreciation movement, entitled *Music: The Child and the Masterpiece*, published in 1935, as well as the outstanding encyclopædic work *The Oxford Companion to Music* of 1938 (see Table 1).

**Table 1: Scholes' Oxford University Press Publications**

Year	Title
1919	<i>The Listener's Guide to Music</i>
1920	<i>The First Book of the Great Musicians</i> <i>'Musical Appreciation' in Schools: Why-And How?</i>
1922	<i>The Second Book of the Great Musicians</i> <i>The Beginner's Guide to Harmony</i>
1923	<i>The Listener's History of Music, volume 1</i> <i>The Third Book of the Great Musicians</i> <i>The Complete Book of the Great Musicians</i>
1924	<i>First Book of the Gramophone Record</i>
1925	<i>The Appreciation of Music by Means of the 'Pianola' and 'Duo-Art'</i> <i>Second Book of the Gramophone Record</i> <i>Everybody's Guide to Broadcast Music</i> (published with Hodder & Stoughton)
1928	<i>A Miniature History of Music</i>
1929	<i>The Listener's History of Music, volumes 2 &amp; 3</i>
1930	<i>The Listener's History of Music</i> (complete) <i>The Columbia History of Music through Ear and Eye-Period I</i>
1931	<i>The Columbia History of Music through Ear and Eye-Period II</i> <i>A Miniature History of Opera</i>
1932	<i>The Columbia History of Music through Ear and Eye-Period III</i>
1933	<i>Practical Lesson Plans in Musical Appreciation by Means of the Gramophone</i> <i>Miniature History of Music and Opera</i> <i>The Columbia History of Music through Ear and Eye-Period IV</i>
1934	<i>The Puritans and Music in England and New England</i>
1935	<i>Music: The Child and the Masterpiece</i> <i>The Radio Times Music Handbook</i>
1938	<i>The Oxford Companion to Music</i>
1938	<i>The Columbia History of Music through Ear and Eye-Period V</i>
1939	<i>A List of Books about Music in the English Language</i>
1942	<i>God Save the King: Its History and its Romance</i>
1947	(ed.) <i>The Mirror of Music 1844-1944</i> (2 vols, published with Novello & Co.)
1948	<i>The Great Dr. Burney</i> (2 vols)
1952	<i>The Concise Oxford Dictionary of Music</i>
1953	<i>The Life and Activities of Sir John Hawkins</i>
1954	<i>The Oxford Junior Companion to Music</i> <i>God Save the Queen: The History &amp; Romance of the World's First National Anthem</i>
1959	<i>Dr. Burney's Musical Tours in Europe</i>

<sup>49</sup> Several of Scholes' publications preceded his OUP books; these included *Everyman and His Music: A Collection of Essays* (Kegan Paul, 1917) and *An Introduction to British Music* (Cecil Palmer & Hayward, 1918). He also translated *An Introduction to French Music* (Cecil Palmer & Hayward, 1917), and it is worth noting that his thesis *The Puritans and Music* which he had submitted to the University of Lausanne for the degree of Dr. ès Lettres, was defended in French. The breadth of his interests is further exemplified by his booklets *Some Aesthetic and Everyday Reflection on the Vegetarian System of Diet* (London: London Vegetarian Society, [1931]) and *Why I am a Vegetarian* (London: London Vegetarian Society, [1948]).

In his books Scholes provides listeners with an adequate vocabulary to describe their musical experience in a conventional, acceptable manner. His *Radio Times Music Handbook* exemplifies the genre, and opens with 'The Plea of a Radio Listener' by which Scholes justifies producing the text. This 'plea' is an extract from a listener's letter to the *Radio Times* of 1933:

Out of all the listeners, I do not suppose there are more than one-third who really understand anything about 'good music', and there must be many, like myself, middle-brows or low-brows, who would like to. My complaint is that daily we read in THE RADIO TIMES, in the programmes, the musical terms used, and it would be a boon if we knew what they meant. Articles have lately appeared on melody, rhythm, counterpoint...—most interesting and instructive—but cannot some one help us by giving the meaning of all musical terms?<sup>50</sup>

In this text and others, Scholes teaches listeners how to talk about music by enhancing their vocabulary of musical terms. The would-be music lover is provided with increased skills, but it is important to note that these skills are chiefly in the realm of ordinary literacy rather than musical proficiency. The books tend to support the activities of listening and discussion of music, rather than that of performance.

Scholes' popular *Listener's History of Music*, which was first published in 1923, offers a prime example. The study begins at the sixteenth century, because, as Scholes states, 'the man for whom [it is] written never has, in the ordinary way of his musical life, any chance of hearing anything earlier...the whole idea of the book is to enable this untrained music-lover to understand the music that he is accustomed to hear.'<sup>51</sup> In the *Listener's History*, the leading composers of each period—who, with the exception of Ethel Smyth and Amy Beach, are exclusively male—are described by means of a potted biography, and often accompanied by a photograph or painting. Scholes is careful to compare musical elements with examples from the reader's ordinary experience, where possible; for instance, when discussing rhythm he quotes from the texts of well-known hymn tunes,<sup>52</sup> and the formal principle of unity in variety, he suggests, parallels the pattern of birdsong.<sup>53</sup> It was important that the musical initiate be able to demonstrate familiarity with the accepted notions of music history, and with the canon of great composers and master works. As Botstein noted, 'familiarity with the canon and the recognition of icons could define cultivated taste.'<sup>54</sup>

Scholes' attitude to musical appreciation is elucidated by examining his intended audience. He soundly rejected the notion that 'good' music was the exclusive domain of the educated or the 'highbrow,' imagining his readership as the "'ordinary listener," engaged day after day in weaving or building, in buying or selling, in preaching or teaching, banking or law.'<sup>55</sup> He believed strongly in the democratisation of music and of his own role in this endeavour, writing in *The Listener's Guide to Music*:

It is the need of the ordinary listener—the quite ordinary, humble-minded, so-called 'unmusical' person—that has prompted the writing of the book, and it is his approval which will decide on its success. This book is, frankly, for the man, woman, or (elder)

<sup>50</sup> Letter, *The Radio Times*, 10 Nov. 1933; qtd. in Scholes, *The Radio Times Music Handbook* v.

<sup>51</sup> Percy A. Scholes, *The Listener's History of Music*, vol. 1 (London: Humphrey Milford-OUP, 1923) vi.

<sup>52</sup> Scholes, *Listener's History* 7.

<sup>53</sup> Scholes, *Listener's History* 3.

<sup>54</sup> Botstein, 'Listening Through Reading' 137.

<sup>55</sup> Percy A. Scholes, *The Listener's Guide to Music* (Oxford: Humphrey Milford-OUP, 1919) 10.

child to whom music is to be one of life's 'hobbies,' put it right down on that level and the author is satisfied.<sup>56</sup>

Scholes attempts to address the audience at its own level, in a quite conversational style. It has been argued that his efforts to appear as one with the common man resulted in a sense of condescension rather than equality. Stradling and Hughes in their recent study of the English Musical Renaissance note that 'the tone of these textbooks now seems patronising to an embarrassing degree,' and observe that Scholes remained 'secure in the belief that his clients were difficult to insult.'<sup>57</sup> Interestingly, similar comments were also made by Scholes' contemporaries. In 1924, an anonymous columnist wrote in the *London Times* of the growing number of the public seeking musical understanding, yet noted that 'we are still in the stage of "Appreciation," an endeavour, when all is said, to make pap for grown men as if they were children.'<sup>58</sup> However, the popularity of Scholes' books indicates that this view was not widespread, and that his reading audience largely appreciated the books' contents and style.

Scholes' success as an author can be determined by sales figures for some texts which survive in the form of condensed accounts at Oxford University Press, and also by the number and regularity of reprints and new editions of these books. The *Oxford Companion to Music* led the way, selling 106,000 copies in fifteen years. Duncan Hinnells, in his recent study of music publishing and the Oxford University Press, declares that 'Percy Scholes's *Oxford Companion to Music*...became, arguably, the most successful book on music ever produced.'<sup>59</sup> In fact OUP was unable to keep up with the demand for this text, particularly during the early 1940s.<sup>60</sup> The *Radio Times Music Handbook* is also notable for its enormous first print run and phenomenal sales; for the first edition in October 1935, 10,721 copies were printed, of which almost nine thousand were sold in the UK within the first six months, assisted no doubt by advertisements in the *Radio Times*.<sup>61</sup> Scholes' *Listener's Guide to Music* ran through six large editions totalling 16,000 copies in its first four years,<sup>62</sup> surprising even its author and suggesting that the audience for musical appreciation was either more substantial or more enthusiastic than he had envisaged in the movement's early years. Similarly, Scholes' *Miniature History of Music: For the General Reader and the Student*, which was first published in 1928, appeared in a total of eight editions or reprints in only fifteen years. The consistent and overwhelming popularity of Scholes' books on music represents a remarkable and perhaps unsurpassed achievement.

As well as Scholes' success in his conventional role as an author on music, he also demonstrated great innovation in utilising the new technologies of the gramophone and player piano to promote serious music. As editor of Aeolian's AudioGraphic series of player piano rolls throughout the late 1920s, Scholes engaged leading contemporary composers to annotate their own works, later recalling, 'Elgar willingly supplied me with the material for printed comments on the *Enigma* Variations, Stravinsky those for the *Firebird* and *The Rite of Spring*;

<sup>56</sup> Scholes, *Listener's Guide* 1-2, Scholes' emphasis.

<sup>57</sup> Stradling and Hughes, *The English Musical Renaissance* 235.

<sup>58</sup> 'Musical Thinking: The Criticism of the Living,' *Times* 16 Feb. 1924: 10.

<sup>59</sup> Hinnells, *An Extraordinary Performance* 21.

<sup>60</sup> Norman Peterkin, memo to F. Norton, 12 Feb 1943, File 'To 1944/5,' Box 409, 'Scholes: Oxford Companion. Misc. Correspondence,' Oxford University Press (OUP) Archive, Oxford. Extracts from Oxford University Press archival sources are published with the kind permission of the Secretary and Delegates of Oxford University.

<sup>61</sup> 'The *Radio Times* Music Handbook,' Condensed Account, 'LOCA 003162 / CA 51,' Condensed Accounts, OUP Archive.

<sup>62</sup> Scholes, *Listener's History* v; Percy A. Scholes, letter to George Bernard Shaw, 25 Jun. 1923, 'File No 6222, Scholes, *Listener's History of Music*, Ref PB/ED/ 014706, Box 1941,' OUP Archive.

younger composers, like Goossens, were just as ready to help.<sup>63</sup> Scholes gave numerous public lectures outlining the 'great' composers, drawing on the player piano for his musical examples.<sup>64</sup> His early recognition of the educational potential of the gramophone is also noteworthy. Despite certain limitations of sound quality and fidelity until the mid-1920s, the gramophone grew in popularity. Scholes quickly identified this trend; his book *Learning to Listen by Means of the Gramophone* appeared in 1921,<sup>65</sup> soon followed by *The First and Second Books of the Gramophone Record* (1924 and 1925 respectively), *The Columbia History of Music by Eye and Ear* (volumes 1 to 5, 1930 to 1938) and *Practical Lesson Plans in Musical Appreciation by Means of the Gramophone* (1933).<sup>66</sup> He was among the first to recognise the gramophone's value for musical appreciation, particularly as it allowed musical works to be heard 'frequently and at leisure.'<sup>67</sup> *The Columbia History* was perhaps the most useful of his gramophone studies; sold in conjunction with specially prepared recordings, it enabled reading to be immediately followed by carefully guided listening. This work certainly reached a substantial audience, the five volumes collectively selling well over 100,000 copies and remaining in print until 1962.<sup>68</sup>

In *Music: The Child and the Masterpiece*, Scholes expounds his own 'personal expression of faith:'

Music is the widest of all the arts. It has something for everybody. And upon those who, by natural endowment, social privilege, or educational advantage, find in it the greatest enjoyment there is imposed the duty of helping others to such enjoyment.<sup>69</sup>

In the harsh light of modern scholarship it is easy to dismiss the idea of musical appreciation as sentimental and idealistic. Its faded textbooks and doctrines seem quaint, their missionary fervour dated, if not embarrassing. In its day, however, musical appreciation was stimulated by a strong sense of social responsibility. Scholes' broadcasts and books were well-received by a public aspiring to a little culture and refinement after the ugliness and deprivation of war.<sup>70</sup> The cultivation of musical taste was also a way of enhancing one's social standing within the class-ridden English society. Moreover, the appreciation movement represents the culmination of a notable shift in the nature of musical culture which had taken place over the preceding decades. To individuals such as Leonard Bast, who believed that by acquiring culture one could '[catch] the world,' it promised nothing less than salvation.

<sup>63</sup>Percy A. Scholes, 'In Defence of "Musical Explanations,"' *Radio Times* 17 Mar. 1933: 663. Aeolian Rolls D-905-911, Goossens' 'Kaleidoscope'; Rolls D-759-769, Stravinsky, 'My Life and Music up to "The Firebird"'; Rolls D-885-893, Elgar, 'Enigma' Variations.

<sup>64</sup>'The Pianola in Musical Instruction: Lectures for Children,' *Times* 2 Mar. 1925: 20; Scholes, *The Appreciation of Music*.

<sup>65</sup>This text was published by HMV Gramophone Company as a guide to their records.

<sup>66</sup>These texts were all published by OUP; the *Columbia History* in association with the Columbia Graphophone Company who produced the accompanying records.

<sup>67</sup>'Mr Percy Scholes: Guide, Philosopher and Friend,' *Radio Times* 24 Jul. 1931: 207.

<sup>68</sup>Condensed accounts No LOCA 003157-003161 / CA51, OUP Archive.

<sup>69</sup>Percy A. Scholes, *Music: The Child and the Masterpiece* (London: Humphrey Milford-OUP, 1935) 74.

<sup>70</sup>H.A.L. Fisher, *An Unfinished Autobiography* (1940) 94; qtd. in Mackerness, *Social History* 259.