

Eltham Choral Society – *Time and Tides: An Exploration of Greenwich*

Update 3 – February 2024

I have written short paragraphs on each of the movements (included in the PDF of the final piece) about each movement's Greenwich-related theme, and about how the whole work follows an overarching trajectory based on the theme of time. This document highlights the main motifs and goes into more detail about each movement, including how the motifs are used throughout the work.

Motif 1: Birdsong (melodic)

This motif is an 8-bar pentatonic melody which represents birdsong (referring to the theme of *nature* relating to Greenwich Park). Originally in 7/8, this melody appears in several movements, sometimes with altered rhythms to fit other time signatures. The whole 8 bar melody is first heard at the start of the piece; in later movements sometimes just the first two bars or other fragments are heard. It begins with a distinctive descending perfect 4th and rising perfect 5th.



Motif 2: Morse Code (rhythmic)

Morse Code for 'TIME' is _ .. _ _ .

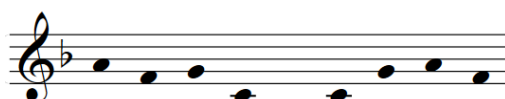
Using this motif combines two themes: *time* and *maritime links*. Translated into a rhythm where a dot is half the length of a dash, and the time in between letters is the same length as a dot, the motif looks like this:



The use of tenuto marks for dashes and staccato marks for dots provides a handy visual reminder to the performers about the presence of this motif as it crops up throughout the piece (though they are not used every single time). This rhythm morphs in various ways, which will be highlighted subsequently.

Motif 3: Chimes (melodic/harmonic)

This motif is used both melodically and harmonically throughout the work, and with its associations of clocks chiming the quarters, is an important ingredient of the music linking back to the theme of *time*.



1. Time (c. 5'40'')

- This movement uses verses from the beginning of Ecclesiastes 3, with the first verse ('There is a time for everything, and a season for every activity under the heavens') used as a refrain which appears at a couple of points during the movement.
- The movement opens with the Birdsong motif, unaccompanied and expressive. The next four bars then build up the rhythm of the Morse Code motif, with each bar adding an extra letter; this is highlighted by the use of tenuto and staccato marks. Each of these bars takes a fragment of melody from the opening Birdsong motif.



- In bars 13 and 14, the full Morse Code motif is heard in a really clear, unambiguous statement: the pitch stays the same, emphasising the importance of the rhythm. Underneath this, the Chimes motif is heard for the first time, unadorned in bars 13-16 and then decorated in bars 17-20.
- The fast triplet quavers in the organ part from bars 21, 73 and 118 represent the relentless (and often repetitive) passage of time.
- In bar 23 the Morse Code motif appears in a slightly altered form: the rests in between the letters have been removed and the note values now doubled, so a dash is a crotchet and a dot a quaver.



- The Chimes motif appears in the pedals from bar 31, with a snatch of the Birdsong motif high up at the top of the texture in bar 33.

Organ (a)

Pedals

- This leads into the Chimes motif being used harmonically when the choir first enters in bar 37. With the hard, percussive sound of the letter 't' at the beginning of the word 'time', and entries accented and then fading, this can be made to sound like chiming bells.

Soprano

Alto

Tenor

Bass

- The Chimes motif is also used melodically in the soprano line, in bars 98-99 and 104-105.



Soprano *mf* *f* *mf* *mp*

A time to embrace and a time to re-frain from embracing, a time to search and a time to give up, a time to keep and a time to throw away.

2. The Lady Oriana (c. 4'50")

- The text used in this movement is a poem by John Wilbye (1574-1638). 'Oriana' is referring to Queen Elizabeth I, providing the link to the theme of royalty.
- The movement is written in a polyphonic style reminiscent of Tallis and other Renaissance composers, but with some harmonic twists which feel more modern.
- The organ mainly doubles the voices: it is there to support the singers and should be audible but not prominent.
- The Morse Code motif appears somewhat more subtly in this movement. It is used in the organ introduction, and on the words 'Fair Queen' in bars 51-52. The tenuto and staccato marks have been left out; they seem too punchy for this style of music. In terms of the rhythm, the last note of each letter has been lengthened to 'fill in' the subsequent rest, so the rhythm now looks like this:

Original:	With rests filled in by preceding note:
T I M E	T I M E
	

- The Chimes motif appears in a couple of places in this movement, transposed:



- The Chimes motif appears most obviously in the tenor line in bars 68-75:



Tenor *mf* *f*

for peace renowned, Her virgin head they crowned. Her virgin

- And later on, slightly more hidden, in bars 114-118:



Soprano *f* *mp* *mf*

a - na: Long live fair O - ri - a - na, Long live fair O - ri - a - na, Long live fair O - ri

Alto *f* *mp* *mf*

a - na: Long live fair O - ri - a - na, Long live fair O - ri - a - na, Long live fair O - ri

Tenor *f* *mp* *mf*

a - na: Long live fair O - ri - a - na, Long live fair O - ri - a - na, Long live fair O - ri

Bass *f* *mp* *mf*

a - na: Long live fair O - ri - a - na, Long live fair O - ri - a - na, Long live fair O - ri

3. *A Drop of Nelson's Blood* (c. 2'50'')

- The organ accompaniment begins very simply, with stylistic open fifths to create a rugged feel. The right hand part then introduces the main melody but with some decoration before the singers enter with the first verse.
- The tambourine provides a strong, steady rhythm throughout.
- This movement is very repetitive, with the melody repeating for each verse and chorus, and the harmony the same for each verse and chorus. This is appropriate for a work song, and variety is provided through other elements such as changing textures.
- The first half of the Chimes motif appears at the end of each verse and chorus, in unison and emphasised with punchy accents:

Soprano 47 48
And we'll all hang on be - hind!

Alto
And we'll all hang on be - hind!

Tenor
And we'll all hang on be - hind!

Bass
And we'll all hang on be - hind!

- The Morse Code motif appears in the organ part in the choruses. This version of it is the same as the altered version in the first movement where the rests in between the letters have been removed and the note values are now doubled, so a dash is a crotchet and a dot a quaver.

Organ (b)

- At the end of each chorus, the first two bars of the Birdsong motif are heard (with the last two notes swapped to fit with the harmony, and some rhythms changed), for example in bar 27:

Organ (a)

4. One Tree Hill (c. 6'40'')

- The two verses of text sung by the choir at the start of this movement were published in the London Chronicle, May 25-27th, 1784. They are inscribed on a bench at a viewpoint in Greenwich Park – on One Tree Hill, mentioned at the end of the text. As such, along with the theme of *royalty* (the text describes 'fair Eliza, Virgin Queen'), the theme of *nature* seemed fitting. The theme of *nature* is explored through the prominent use of the Birdsong motif, and the pastoral-like organ interlude which follows the opening sung passage.
- The movement opens with the full Birdsong motif. The motif itself is pentatonic; the next voice that enters, in the left hand, adds a Bb (and enters on a Bb); and the third voice that enters, in bar 6 in the right hand, adds an E (and enters on an E), completing the normal diatonic harmony.

Organ

Pedals

- The choir enters in bar 8. The sopranos sing a pentatonic melody which is later explored in the organ interlude. The top line of the organ at this point is the Birdsong motif, with some rhythms changed to fit the 4/4 time signature.

Soprano

Alto

Tenor

Bass

Organ (a1)

Here fair E - li - za, Vir - gin Queen From bus'ness free en joy'd the scene. Here oft in pen - sive mood she stood And kind-ly plan'd for Bri-tain's good.

- At the end of both verses, the last three notes of the soprano line are the last three notes of the Chimes motif.

Soprano

kind-ly plan'd for Bri-tain's good.

- The end of bar 32 marks the start of the organ interlude. (At this point, the choir may sit down if chairs are provided in the concert.) The first 8 bars of the interlude are based loosely on the melody sung by the sopranos, with the second voice in the right hand using the rhythm of the Morse Code motif (in its second-movement form: no tenuto or staccato marks, and with the rests 'filled in' by the previous note being lengthened proportionally).
- The upbeat into bar 41 shows where the soprano melody starts, this time in 6/8, to be explored at various points throughout the interlude.
- In bars 71-74, the Chimes motif is heard in the left hand, transitioning the music from 6/8 into 3/4. The first half of the motif is also heard in the right hand in bars 73-74.

- In bars 81-88, the Birdsong motif is heard transposed into D major. This is accompanied by a held tonic pedal in the pedals, and a dominant inner pedal in the left hand using the rhythm of the Morse Code motif. This time the Morse Code motif is in 7/8, with a quaver as a dash and a semiquaver as a dot, but with notes elongated to fill in the rests. There is still a rest between each iteration of the motif.

- The Chimes motif (with the Cs displaced by an octave) is heard in the second voice of the right hand in bars 101-102, pre-empted by the first half of the motif in the left hand in bars 97-98.

- The Morse Code motif next appears in the pedals from bar 105, with the same version as in bars 83-88 but with no rest between iterations, and no articulation markings.

- The Chimes motif appears for the final time in this movement at the top of the texture in bars 111-113, followed shortly after by the first bar of the Birdsong motif in bar 114, leading back to the Birdsong motif in full at the end.

- The last three bars of the right hand contain the first three bars of the Birdsong motif backwards.

5. When I heard the learn'd Astronomer (c. 4'50")

- This movement is split into two distinct sections. The first half of this poem by Walt Whitman is all about the scientific side of astronomy – the ‘proofs... figures... charts and diagrams, to add, divide, and measure’. To capture this scientific, mathematical aspect, I wanted to write music which had an intensely rhythmic, driving quality – to evoke machinery moving or cogs turning in a repetitive, systematic way. To achieve this, the left hand and pedals of the organ part repeat the same pattern throughout this whole section.
 - The left hand and pedals follow a 1 – 2 – 3 – 4 – 5 – 6 – 7 pattern (see brackets on the screenshot below). These numbers add up to 28, which divides into 4 bars of 7/8 (with the last quaver of each 4-bar phrase acting as the upbeat into the next phrase).
 - The pedal plays on the first quaver in each of these groupings (and with the higher numbers, elsewhere too to demarcate where the beats lie within the irregular time signature: in the group of 5, on the first and third quavers; in the group of 6, on the first and fourth quavers; and in the group of 7, on the first, fourth and sixth quavers).
 - The left hand then fills in the rest of each group with a repeated pattern which adds a note each time until it has reached 6 quavers within the ‘7’ grouping (the first quaver of each grouping is always just played by the pedals).

- The bars in this 4-bar phrase are all divided into 3 beats, but where the beat of 3 quavers comes depends on which bar within the phrase:

Bar 1: 2+3+2 Bar 2: 2+3+2 Bar 3: 3+2+2 Bar 4: 2+2+3

The image shows a musical score for three parts: Organ (a), Organ (b), and Pedals. The Organ (a) part is in the treble clef with a key signature of one flat (Bb) and a 3/8 time signature. It consists of four bars of music, each containing a sequence of eighth notes. Organ (b) is in the bass clef and also consists of four bars of music. The Pedals part is in the bass clef and consists of four bars of music. Above the Organ (a) part, there are four bar groupings: Bar 1: 2+3+2, Bar 2: 2+3+2, Bar 3: 3+2+2, and Bar 4: 2+2+3. These groupings indicate the division of each bar into three beats of eighth notes.

- The Chimes motif first appears in the second voice of the right hand in bars 74-78. It acts as a bell striking the hour, forcing the narrator of the poem to notice that time is moving on. It heralds the start of the second half of the piece, where we're faced with the inflexibility of the scientific approach and the need to go outside and physically look at the stars – marvelling in awe and silence.

The image shows a musical score for Organ (a) in the treble clef with a key signature of one flat (Bb) and a 3/8 time signature. It consists of eight bars of music. The Chimes motif is highlighted in pink and consists of a sequence of eighth notes. The motif starts in bar 74 and continues through bar 78.

- While the Chimes motif is still sounding, the music cascades forward in a way that feels out of control given the order and regularity of the organ part so far in this movement. This is achieved by way of an accelerando, and the reversal of the pattern in the left hand and pedals: after the usual pattern ending on the 7 grouping in bars 74-77, the system goes back on itself (6-5-4-3-2-1), adding to the sense of rushing which crashed down chaotically into bar 82.

The image shows a musical score for three parts: Organ (a), Organ (b), and Pedals. The Organ (a) part is in the treble clef with a key signature of one flat (Bb) and a 3/8 time signature. It consists of eight bars of music. The Organ (b) part is in the bass clef and also consists of eight bars of music. The Pedals part is in the bass clef and consists of eight bars of music. Above the Organ (a) part, there are markings: 'accel.' with a dotted line, 'frenetic, uncontrolled', and 'Slow, wistful J=42'. The Organ (a) part starts with a forte (f) dynamic and ends with a piano (pp) dynamic. The Organ (b) part starts with a forte (f) dynamic and ends with a piano (pp) dynamic. The Pedals part starts with a forte (f) dynamic and ends with a piano (pp) dynamic. The Organ (a) part has a 7 grouping in bars 74-77 and a 6-5-4-3-2-1 grouping in bars 78-81. The Organ (b) part has a 7 grouping in bars 74-77 and a 6-5-4-3-2-1 grouping in bars 78-81. The Pedals part has a 7 grouping in bars 74-77 and a 6-5-4-3-2-1 grouping in bars 78-81. The Organ (a) part has a 3 grouping in bars 82-84. The Organ (b) part has a 3 grouping in bars 82-84. The Pedals part has a 3 grouping in bars 82-84. The Organ (a) part has a 3 grouping in bars 85-87. The Organ (b) part has a 3 grouping in bars 85-87. The Pedals part has a 3 grouping in bars 85-87. The Organ (a) part has a 3 grouping in bars 88-90. The Organ (b) part has a 3 grouping in bars 88-90. The Pedals part has a 3 grouping in bars 88-90. The Organ (a) part has a 3 grouping in bars 91-93. The Organ (b) part has a 3 grouping in bars 91-93. The Pedals part has a 3 grouping in bars 91-93.

- Looking at the tonality of this movement as a whole, the repeated Bb which has been continuously heard in the pedals for the first half of the piece actually acts as extended dominant preparation for the key of Eb major. However, at bar 82 we arrive at C minor instead of the expected Eb major, forming an interrupted cadence. This reflects the tone of the text at this point ('how soon unaccountable I became tired and sick'), which is then emphasised and driven home by the chord of Db minor in bar 90. This, however, soon turns into a hopeful and intensely-felt F major chord at the start of bar 91 – a chord full of relief and light, underpinning the words 'till rising and gliding

out'. The cadence from bar 95-96 is the long-awaited perfect cadence into Eb major, and the rest of the movement remains in Eb major, with an atmospheric chord including the flattened 6th (Cb) at the end. The final chord of the piece is a second inversion chord, which feels slightly unresolved, suiting the ethereal activity of looking 'up in perfect silence at the stars'.

- The Morse Code motif is heard at the start of the second section, in the pedals, from bar 82-91. In bar 91 the motif moves into the right hand; the rhythms here have the same proportional length, but are halved, which adds movement under the words 'rising and gliding out'.

The image shows two staves of organ music. The top staff is labeled 'Organ (a)' and the bottom staff is 'Organ (b)'. Both are in 3/4 time and Eb major. The music features a rhythmic motif of eighth notes, first in the bass clef (Organ a) and then in the treble clef (Organ b). Dynamics range from piano (p) to forte (f).

- In bars 92-94, the choir sings the same melody and harmony as heard in bars 28-32, providing a link to the first section – but the speed, rhythms and accompaniment are very different to suit the words.

The image shows four staves of vocal music for Soprano, Alto, Tenor, and Bass. The lyrics are: 'were ranged in co - lumns be - fore me, I wan - der'd off by my - self,'. The music is in 3/4 time and Eb major. Dynamics are marked as mezzo-forte (mf).

- The Chimes motif is heard again in the organ part in bars 98-99 and 102-103, to mark the words 'from time to time'.

The image shows five staves of musical score. The top four staves are for Soprano, Alto, Tenor, and Bass, with lyrics: 'and from time to time, In the mys-ti-cal, mys-ti-calmoist night - air, and from time to time,'. The bottom staff is for Organ (a). The music is in 3/4 time and Eb major. Dynamics range from piano (p) to mezzo-forte (mp).

6. Even Such is Time (c. 5'15'')

- This movement opens with the Chimes motif stated clearly and unambiguously in the organ part. This is followed by a melody quoted from the first movement ('there is a time for everything, and a season for every activity under the heavens') in the left hand, with a transposed and rhythmically-altered version of the Birdsong motif in the right hand.

Musical score for the beginning of 'Even Such is Time'. The score is in 4/4 time and features three staves: Organ (a) in the treble clef, Organ (b) in the bass clef, and Gt. (Guitar) in the bass clef. The Organ (a) part is marked 'Sw.' and plays a melodic line. The Organ (b) part plays a bass line with a '2' indicating a second. The Gt. part is marked 'Gt. mp' and plays a rhythmic pattern with a '2' indicating a second. The key signature has two flats (B-flat and E-flat).

- This is followed by the Morse Code motif, first in the pedals and then in the right hand, in an irregular 9/8 grouping: 2+2+2+3. The dashes are crotchets, the dots are quavers, and there are no rests between letters or iterations this time.

Musical score showing the Morse Code motif. The score is in 4/4 time and features three staves: Organ (a) in the treble clef, Organ (b) in the bass clef, and Pedals in the bass clef. The Organ (a) part is marked 'f' and plays a complex rhythmic pattern. The Organ (b) part is marked 'Sw.' and plays a melodic line. The Pedals part plays a rhythmic pattern. The key signature has two flats (B-flat and E-flat).

- With this Morse Code figuration in the organ, the choir sings the Chimes motif – as in the first movement, but transposed.
- At bar 30, the sopranos sing the first line of the poem. The first two bars of melody cover the notes of the Chimes motif but in a different order. At the same time, the melody from bars 17-20 of the first movement (the decorated version of the Chimes motif) is heard, transposed and more decorated, in the organ.

Musical score for the vocal entry and organ accompaniment. The score is in 4/4 time and features two staves: Full Score in the treble clef and Gt. (Guitar) in the bass clef. The Full Score part is marked 'p' and 'mp' and plays a melodic line. The Gt. part is marked 'Gt.' and plays a rhythmic pattern with a '3' indicating a triplet. The key signature has two flats (B-flat and E-flat).

Reflectively ♩=48

30 *p* E - ven such is time, that takes in trust Our youth, our joys, our all we have; *mp*

Gt.

- In bars 42-44, the Morse Code motif is heard very high and very quietly in the organ.
- The start of the Birdsong motif is heard in the organ in bar 46.

- The melody sung by the sopranos in bars 46-48 on the words 'wandered all our ways' is very similar to the melody in the previous movement in bars 92-94 on the words 'wander'd off by myself'. This also occurs in bars 66-68 on the words 'God shall raise me up'.

Soprano *mf*
I wan - der'd off by my - self,

Soprano *mp* *mf*
When we have wan - dered all our ways,

Soprano *p* *mp*
My God shall raise me up,

- At bar 52, the Morse Code motif returns in the pedals, but this time in a regular 9/8 grouping (3+3+3). A minor version of the start of the Birdsong motif is heard in the right hand in bars 53-54 and in the left hand in bars 57-58. Over this, the choir again sings the Chimes motif, as in the first movement, but this time altered to fit the key of Eb minor.

Soprano *p* *mf* *mf* *p*
Time, Time, Time, Time

Alto *p* *mf* *mf* *p*
Time, Time, Time, Time

Tenor *p* *mf* *mp* *p*
Time, Time, Time

Bass *mp* *mf* *mf* *p*
Time, Time, Time

Organ (a) *mf*
Time, Time, Time, Time

Organ (b) *mf*
Time, Time, Time, Time

Pedals
Time, Time, Time, Time

- After a huge climax building up from repetitions of the words 'My God shall raise me up', the choir and crashing organ chord cut out. After a few beats of silence, the choir enters again, very softly, with the words 'I trust'. The organ part then includes a transposed version of the music from bars 9-12 of the first movement, and ends with the same 6-note melody found at the end of the fifth movement – but this time, to finish the entire piece, the music feels far more final by ending on a root position tonic chord instead of a second inversion chord.

Organ (a) *molto rit.* *Gt. p*
Sw. *p* *pp*

Organ (b)

Pedals