

John Foulds' *A World Requiem*: An unjustified obscurity

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The Twentieth Century English composer John Foulds (1880-1939), a contemporary of Holst, Elgar and Vaughan Williams, wrote over sixty works for orchestra, chamber ensembles and solo instruments. He was one of the first English modernists and yet despite his contribution to English music making being recognized and praised by contemporaries such as Elgar, Quilter and Brian, he and his extensive repertoire is little known today.

His oratorio "A World Requiem" is a prime example of an exceptional choral work which has been neglected. It explores a journey of death through the use of quarter tones and great orchestration. Foulds masterly crafts the oratorio into what Simon Heffer believes is "buried treasure"¹. Yet it is a work whose magnificence got tangled up in a political coup against Foulds and was lost to the music world for over eighty years.

The Requiem was a significant element of the nation's commemoration of the fallen of the First World War. Amidst popular acclaim, it was performed for the Armistice Night Festival supported by the British Legion consecutively from 1923 until 1926 at the Royal Albert Hall. However, this success was not to last; it fell out of favour after 1926 and was not performed again until Leon Botstein's performance in 2007.

It is the assertion of this article that "A World Requiem" is an important, if neglected, choral work of the Twentieth Century which should take its place beside the works of more famous English composers such as Elgar and Vaughan Williams. It is hoped that a detailed analysis of the music will demonstrate its value as a significant piece of English composition whose belated revival in 2007 was fully justified.

BORN ON 2 NOVEMBER 1880, John Herbert Foulds was brought up in the industrial suburb of Hulme, Manchester where he had a musical upbringing thanks to his father who was a bassoonist in the Hallé Orchestra. His second wife Maud MacCarthy, a leading expert on Indian music, sparked Foulds' interest in other musical cultures developed and subsequently shaped his compositional style. In 1915, Foulds studied Greek modes and Indian instruments and in the same year wrote *Recollections of Ancient Greek Music* and *Gandharva-Music*. In 1919 he began his Sanskrit opera, *Avatara*, which was never completed but instead later used to create the *Three Mantras*. In the same year, Foulds began work on *A World Requiem* which was completed in 1921. His interest in other cultures led to an emphasis on commemorating the dead of both the allies and enemies of the First World War throughout this work.

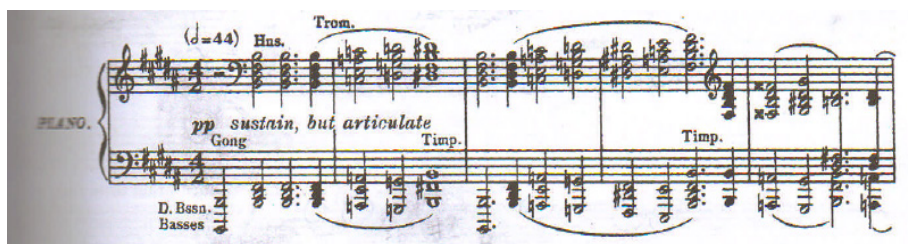
¹ CD liner notes of John Foulds *A World Requiem* 2007 Premiere recording – Simon Heffer

World Requiem – Analysis

The work comprises twenty movements in two parts, written for soprano, contralto, tenor and baritone soli, small chorus of boys and youth, full chorus, orchestra and organ. It was written for large forces as shown in the score where Foulds asks for “at least 100” sopranos and “100” contraltos and “at least 80” tenors and “80” basses. The use of a new percussion instrument to Western music called the *Sistrum* was innovative and shows how open Foulds was to exploring new ideas². This particular instrument created a “golden shimmering” effect providing an ethereal atmosphere³. The use of the instrument indicates Foulds’ interest in the other musical cultures around the world, as the *Sistrum* derived from Ancient Iraq and Egypt.

Several recurring motifs are introduced throughout the work and are explored harmonically or rhythmically in order to develop thematic transformation. The opening of the Requiem begins with a chorale consisting of slow minims played initially by the brass, indicating a sombre mood even though the key is B major:

Ex. 1 *A World Requiem*, ‘I-Requiem’, bb1-5

The image shows a page of a musical score for the beginning of 'A World Requiem'. It features a grand staff with five staves. The top staff is for the Horns (Hns.) and Trombones (Trom.). The middle staff is for the Piano (PIANO). The bottom two staves are for the Double Basses (D. Bssn. Basses). The tempo is marked as quarter note = 44 (♩ = 44). The key signature is B major. The score includes various percussion instruments: Gong, Timp., and Sistrum. The Sistrum part is marked 'pp sustain, but articulate'. The brass parts play a slow, somber melody of minims. The piano part provides harmonic support. The double basses play a rhythmic pattern. The score is annotated with 'Hns.', 'Trom.', 'PIANO.', 'D. Bssn. Basses', 'Gong', 'Timp.', and 'Sistrum'.

This is then sung by the tenors and altos who have the same rhythmic motif, yet it is still a variant of the melody. It is not until the sopranos and basses join them that an exact melodic shape is sung, reiterating the meaning of the words “*Requiem Aeternam! Lord Grant them rest eternal*”. The chromatic movement signifies a sorrowful yet respectful mood which appears throughout the work. This along with the work as a whole allowed the contemporary audience, affected by the reality of war, to commemorate the lives of those lost in the war. Many consequently praised Foulds for his achievement in capturing the right mood for a war-stricken population⁴. This important motif played by the orchestra and later the full chorus in the first movement, recaptures the same solemn mood in order to end the tenth movement *Requiem* and consequently the end of Part 1. By creating a circular effect, Foulds underlines the importance and seriousness of the subject he is writing about.

In the third movement a three-chord progression is used to signify *God the Lord*, which after being played by the woodwind, brass and strings at the beginning, is then used in a similar way later on in the movement, although the last interval differs and it has been rhythmically diminished. It is played by the violins as a counter-melody accompanying the baritone’s solo:

² ‘[An] ancient type of rattle consisting of a U-shaped piece metal on a handle with two metal cross bars that rattled when the instrument was shaken’ from *The Larousse Encyclopaedia of Music* ed. by Geoffrey Hindley et al, 3rd edn 1974 (London: The Hamlyn Publishing Group Limited)

³ Score of *A World Requiem*, Novello Edition – ‘Notes for Producer’

⁴ Cited in James G. Mansell, *Musical Modernity and Contested Commemoration at the Festival of Remembrance, 1923-1927*, *The Historical Journal* 52, no. 2 (June 2009): 445. A pamphlet containing positive views expressed by audiences in the form of letters is referred to.

Ex.2 Ibid. 'III-Confessio', bb 1-6 (Original motif)

Ex.3 Ibid bb 55-58 (developed motif as counter-melody in violin part)

This three chord motif appears again in XV, *Vox Dei* to signify the presence of the Lord. The orchestra accompany the tenor solo and then have an interlude of the motif before the soprano solo enters with "This is the appearance of the likeness of the glory of the Lord" only to "behold out of the fiery cloud a voice, saying This is my beloved son". It is indeed God who "hath spoken" and in turn both "heavens...[and] earth [shall] give ear".

In the twelfth movement *Elysium* there is an ascending and descending motif formed of quavers, introduced by the clarinet at the beginning, then played by other woodwind instruments and later sung by the upper voices of the main chorus, where it is harmonized. Meanwhile, the Celeste and later the choir accompany this motif with pairs of short quaver rhythms which when sung are "Holy[s]". As well as this there is an ascending chromatic scale consisting of crotchets, quavers and dotted crotchets played generally in the strings. These three individual motifs fit together throughout the movement with a tenor and soprano solo floating over the top:

Ex. 4 Ibid, 'XII- Elysium' bb 47-52

This movement contains passages which were heard “clairaudiently” in a “physically objective way”. Maud MacCarthy’s account recalls her “at the top of the house; and John was in his study two floors below. [She] went down to tell him, and found him writing the same passages in the same keys [as she had been writing]!”⁵ This confirms their rather unconventional beliefs, particularly with regards to Theosophy, a spiritual philosophy with esoteric teachings.

In the eleventh movement, *Laudamus* the opening theme, a scurrying motif using crotchets and paired quavers, has accents on weaker beats of the bar. This is played by the violins, accompanied by a rhythmically augmented variation of the motif in the ‘cellos and basses. Eight bars into the melody, the violins signal a slight change in motif, instead inverting it and using quavers over the bar line but keeping the same key intervals of a tone and a 5th. At the change of key to A \flat major there are now three individual parts which play the motif all slightly augmented, with the original motif in the violin part:

Ex.5 Ibid, 'XI- Laudamus' bb 14-19

This theme is played as an accompaniment to the soprano soloist and when the chorus join, singing the *Synthetic* melody. The *Synthetic* melody, as Foulds calls it in the score, is played by the orchestra with the instruction “singing”, “with utmost intensity” and *fff*. This motif is seen by Foulds as a song, as we can determine from his instructions “the tempo free like a song”.

⁵ Cited from James Schmidt, *Cenotaphs in Sound: Catastrophe, Memory, and Musical Memorial, Proceedings of the European Society for Aesthetics*, vol. 2, 201

Foulds' pacifist message is most prevalent throughout the second movement *Pronuntiatio* as the text from both Psalm 46 and Isaiah 2:4 are used to convey a need for peace. The baritone sings "*Nation shall not lift sword against nation. Neither shall they learn war anymore*" showing that Foulds' pacifist nature prevails. During the second movement, Foulds creates tension in order to make his message clear by using a technique similar to that of Elgar, in "*But Hark... low born clods of brute earth*" from *Dream of Gerontius*. Although the reasons for emphasizing the words differ slightly, the technique of unison writing for the chorus can be compared and the result shows Foulds' effective skills as an orchestrator. During *Pronuntiatio* the chorus is in unison before a chord is sung at crucial moments to make use of word-painting. For example, a chord is used in the chorus at the moment when the earth has "*melted*" because God had "*uttered his voice*". At the moment "*melted*" occurs, a poignant *diminuendo* is placed in both choral and orchestral parts to signify the importance of the omnipotent voice of God in relation to earth as Ex. 9 shows:

Ex.9 Ibid, 'II- Pronuntiatio' bb 6-14

The image displays two systems of a musical score. The first system (measures 6-14) features four vocal staves (Soprano, Alto, Tenor, Bass) and a piano accompaniment. The lyrics for the vocal parts are: "moved: He ut-tered his voice: the earth". The piano part includes a section labeled "Wind" with a dynamic marking of *f*. The second system (measures 15-14) features the same four vocal staves and piano accompaniment. The lyrics for the vocal parts are: "melt-ed. He mak-eth war to cease un-to the". The piano part includes a section labeled "Str." (Strings) with a dynamic marking of *f* and a section labeled "Brass". A large number "5" is positioned above the first measure of the second system.

Similarly, Elgar uses moments of unison writing in the movement depicting purgatory, as Gerontius makes his journey through Judgement. In order to have a greater emphasis to the words “*of the high thought*”, he writes the parts in unison for “*in place*” preceding the chord which is sung on “*of the high thought*”. Elgar limits the amount of unison writing used and it is possible that Foulds’ liberal use of this technique could make Foulds’ word-painting with chords seem more effective:

Ex.11 A World Requiem 'III- Confessio' bb 62-71

la - - tion, and have en -
 dured griev - - ous dis - tress;
 (Free, not too slowly) Ma - ny have been led a - way cap - tive, (Tempo) Ma - ny have fal - len;
 pp Str.
 Duxton 1918/9

The use of this technique can also be found in Elgar's *Dream of Gerontius* as his sketches prove that he was determined only to be influenced by Newman's text.¹⁴ The *Pui Lento* section in the *Prelude* begins with the Tenor solo singing "Jesu Maria I am near to death and thou, thou art calling me. I know it now". This has a combination of both *arioso* and *recitativo* approaches to the melody, particularly relevant at the second "thou", to emphasize the being who is calling him to leave earth and to go on his journey to Judgement:

¹⁴ Programme notes of Aylesbury Choral Society's performance of Elgar's *Dream of Gerontius*, Burton, James. May 2003

Ex.11 Elgar's Dream of Gerontius 'Prelude' bb 170-190

Gerontius. (Tenor.)

Quasi Recit. *progress.*

Sola. *arco* *div.* *unis.* *ppp* *cresc.* *f* *arco* *pp* *ppp*

Vcl. *ppp* *cresc.* *f* *pp* *ppp*

C.B. *ppp* *cresc.* *f* *pp* *ppp*

Allegro moderato. largamente rit. Più lento.

Sola. *f* *pp* *cresc.*

Vcl. *pp* *div.* *ten.* *ppp* *ten.* *ten.* *cresc.*

C.B. *pp* *div.* *ten.* *ppp* *ten.* *ten.* *cresc.*

death, And Thou, Thou art calling me; I know it now. Not by the to-ken of this fal'ring breath, This chill at heart, this
kam, und du Herrst du bist, der mich ruft; kein Zweifel kommt. Lässt mich er-ken-nen mei-nes A-thens Noth, des Herzens Krampf, des

largamente *pp* *div.* *ten.* *ppp* *ten.* *ten.* *cresc.* molto string.

Reception of *A World Requiem*

Foulds' dream of creating a large scale work which would commemorate the lives of those who had fought during the First World War may have seemed realised after the first performance of *A World Requiem* in 1923 for the Armistice Commemorations in the Royal Albert Hall. Yet it was only to be performed for a further three consecutive years at this national event before its disappearance after 1926. It was not until eight decades later that the work was to be performed again.¹⁵ But why, when the contemporary audiences during 1923-26 had enthusiastically appreciated the performances, was the *World Requiem* not performed again until 2007? It is now considered as one of the major choral works of the 20th century, as Ivan Hewitt believes "a work of amazing talent, even a kind of genius".¹⁶ Why was one of Foulds' greatest works so underappreciated and neglected?

Amongst his musical contemporaries, Foulds' talents were recognised and his *Requiem* warmly received. After three years composing the *World Requiem* Foulds called on the help of the *British Music Society* with arranging the first performance. The Committee had "adopted unanimously" a proposal to allow it to be performed under the patronage of the *British Music Society*. They believed it should be performed in a Cathedral such as "St. Paul's Cathedral or Westminster Abbey" and promised to "do all they can to make the event a national one".¹⁷ This support was a coup for Foulds and individuals such as Sir Hugh Allen, the chairman of the society were keen to get the score seen by others including Charles Kennedy Scott, the conductor of the London Philharmonic Choir, who was "fired with enthusiasm".¹⁸

Foulds' famous contemporary Elgar respected the composer's work. After reading the score of *The Vision of Dante* Op 7, Elgar praised the work saying it was "one of the finest

¹⁵ James Schmidt, *Cenotaphs in Sound: Catastrophe, Memory, and Musical Memorial*, *Proceedings of the European Society for Aesthetics*, vol. 2, 201

¹⁶ Ivan Hewitt *World Requiem Comes Alive after 81 year wait*, *The Telegraph*, 12 November 2007 <http://www.telegraph.co.uk/news/uknews/1569074/World-Requiem-comes-alive-after-81-year-wait.html>, Accessed 27/10/11

¹⁷ Letter written by Founder of British Music Society, Eaglefield Hull to Foulds on 29 April 1921. Malcolm MacDonald op. cit. 31

¹⁸ Malcolm MacDonald, *John Foulds and his music. An Introduction*, Kahn and Averill Ltd, London, 1975, 31

modern works" to have come to his notice and that it deserved an "immediate and prestigious performance".¹⁹ Surely an appraisal of this kind demonstrates Foulds' capability as a composer. Another composer who appreciated Foulds' work was Havergal Brian, who, after asking the publishers Novello if any rising stars thought to rival Elgar, was given a copy of Foulds' *Variazioni ed Improvisati*, which he then "enthusiastically" reviewed.²⁰

After the first performance of the *Requiem*, composers who had been present praised Foulds, such as Roger Quilter, Eugene Goossens and Josef Holbrooke. Musicians also praised the work – in particular the baritone Norman Allin who claimed it was "one of the finest things produced in English music for a long time".²¹ The actress, Dame Sybil Thorndike, who had originally trained as a classical pianist, wrote it was "such an exquisite wondrous thing" and even the Nobel Prize winner George Bernard Shaw had called Foulds "a great composer".²² The British Labour Politician and Secretary of State for India and Burma, F.W. Pethwick-Lawrence relayed his enthusiasm, saying "it went deeper down and higher up, it was bigger, broader, nobler, and reached out more into the eternal than music as it is ordinarily understood and interpreted, or as any music other than that heard by the great masters-has ever done. It is indeed a world heritage..."²³

Audiences were enthusiastic about the *Requiem*. Even before having heard the *World Requiem*, the demand for tickets had broken all previous records at the Royal Albert Hall. In fact the premiere had a packed auditorium and the 10 minute ovation indicates its success.^{24,25} Flooded with glowing feedback following the concert, Foulds was no doubt proud of his achievement. Extracts from the hundreds of letters of congratulations were later published in a booklet. One such letter details that the attendee found his "music floated through [his] being...and to [him] there was healing in every note. The very state of mind produced was one of quiet ecstasy which [he] shall never forget".²⁶

So what was it which caused the *Requiem* to fall from favour? The contemporary media reviews of the *World Requiem's* performance seemed incongruent with the reactions of the audience. Newspapers and music journals, such as the *Musical Quarterly* were unanimous in their decision to cast off any of the *Requiem's* claim to being serious music. The *Musical Times* wrote:²⁷

"The most favoured progression is [C major, D major and E major] and he has no compunction in filling a page with it. No doubt it had taken on some mystical significance in the composer's mind which hallowed it. But to us it was as if a preacher had taken some simple text such as 'Worship God' and was unable to enlarge upon it. After a number of repetitions our humility would give place to criticism of the preacher's art. And so we criticised the composer's art as this

¹⁹ Malcolm MacDonald, *John Foulds and his music. An Introduction*, Kahn and Averill Ltd, London, 1975, 14

²⁰ *Ibid*, 8

²¹ *Ibid*, 34

²² *Ibid*, 33, 34

²³ *Ibid*, 33-35

²⁴ The *Musical Times*, Vol. 64, No. 970 (Dec. 1, 1923), 864

²⁵ Malcolm MacDonald, *John Foulds and his music. An Introduction*, Kahn and Averill Ltd, London, 1975, 33

²⁶ James G. Mansell, *Musical Modernity and Contested Commemoration at the Festival of Remembrance, 1923-1927*, *The Historical Journal* 52, no. 2 (June 2009) 445

²⁷ *London Concerts*, *The Musical Times*, Vol. 64, No. 970 (Dec. 1, 1923), 864

progression multiplied itself in all shapes and keys. It was one of several that outstayed their welcome."

MacDonald argues that the BBC's decision to dismiss the work as "serious" music may have been part of the "depressing tendency in British music, after the Great War, to distrust anything which seemed too large-scale, too serious, or too visionary in conception—a tendency which aided the eclipse of several fine composers".²⁸ Indeed it seems that the Jazz age of 1920s did not find it fitting to be reminded of the traumatic experience of the First World War and instead wanted to celebrate its end and forget about the death that had occurred. Foulds' *Requiem* did not fit because it sought to help the bereaved by commemorating the dead, not making them forget about the war.

But the question remains, why was his *World Requiem* not appreciated by the media and why was it consequently erased from the British musical scene? Musicologists today claim that there were several factors which explained the media's harsh attack on the *World Requiem*. Mansell believes that it was John Foulds' ideas themselves which were off-putting for many critics as his minimalist approaches were deemed too different from the "formally pleasing harmonies, melodies and rhythms" they wanted to hear.²⁹ The absence of prominent glorious melodies as the piece continues left the majority of them yearning for something that wasn't going to be there. For this reason, the chromatic harmonic sequences which dominate throughout the work were dismissed as "dull".³⁰ Even the text which had been carefully selected by Foulds and his wife, taking into consideration the *Requiem's* purpose, was seen as an "exhortation and ejaculation" of the words of Scripture by the *Musical Times* in 1923, who did not review later performances.³¹ Yet Foulds had selected text which would comfort those who had lost friends and family to the war and which extended to all countries who had been involved, highlighting the importance of universal music to Foulds.

Indeed Foulds' beliefs would have been a fuel for critics, as Foulds had found consolidation in the ideas of Theosophy. This movement was centred on joining the West to the East via mediums such as music. The musical elites looked down upon this and they were unable to identify with Foulds' pacifist motive for his *Requiem*. As the fifth movement *Audite* states, the pacifist motivations are clear with the element of "universal appeal".³² The baritone soloist sings "Give ear all ye nations of the world! ...Have peace one with another, follow peace with all men".

The idea to create a work which would spiritually move his audience was dismissed by many critics who represented the thoughts of the "British musical elite",³³ including the BBC, whose own director of music Adrian Boult (later Sir Adrian Boult) took particular efforts to prevent Foulds from ever being broadcast as a "serious" composer. For example, a BBC memo written by Boult in 1932 states that "...all his music is very dull

²⁸ Malcolm MacDonald, *John Foulds and his music. An Introduction*, Kahn and Averill Ltd, London, 1975, 36

²⁹ James G. Mansell, *Musical Modernity and Contested Commemoration at the Festival of Remembrance, 1923-1927*, *The Historical Journal* 52, no. 2 (June 2009) 444

³⁰ *The Observer*, 16 November 1924, cited in James G. Mansell, *Musical Modernity and Contested Commemoration at the Festival of Remembrance, 1923-1927*, *The Historical Journal* 52, no. 2 (June 2009) 446

³¹ *The Musical Times*, Vol. 64, No. 970 (Dec. 1, 1923), 864

³² James G. Mansell, *Musical Modernity and Contested Commemoration at the Festival of Remembrance, 1923-1927*, *The Historical Journal* 52, no. 2 (June 2009) 446

³³ *Ibid*, 447

stuff, and the more serious it is the duller it becomes".³⁴ Together with the authoritative voice of the BBC and the influence of successful contemporary British composers, such as Vaughan Williams, the criteria for the music suitable for a war-stricken population had been forged. It was to be exclusively English with a reliance on simple folk music. Unfortunately the music of John Foulds did not meet these criteria. Even though he wrote music based on Celtic folk songs, Foulds' own doctrine of Modernity did not include reminiscing about the past but instead sought to look forward and beyond England's shores. He wrote "*for present-day composers...to concentrate upon such, or any other narrow nationalistic phenomena, goes clean against the main evolutionary trend of the art*".³⁵ His appreciation of music's adaptability and how events such as the war could change it for the better was perhaps what marked him as an outsider to those who did not want to move on and why he is now regarded as a great composer.

Foulds' intention of making his *Requiem* accessible to all nations involved in the First World War highlights a universalist theme in his music and as he described it himself "*it is just because so many of our composers have responded to the English national vibration that they have done so little work which may be described as universal*". James Mansell claims "*The BBC, in particular, mistook Foulds' humanism for a thinly veiled popularism of which it remained deeply suspicious*".³⁶ In fact, it is also possible that the establishment feared Foulds' other intention of making his *Requiem* "*comprehensible to ordinary Britons*".³⁷ As he came from a working class background, there was an attraction of his music not only for middle class music lovers but the working classes too. This potent mix in the minds of the musical elites meant a harsh and hostile review of his work would help prevent a potential alliance between Foulds and the working class. The work highlighted the deadly consequences of the authorities' sending ordinary men to war.

Maud MacCarthy believed that a conspiracy against Foulds' *Requiem* had occurred between the British Legion, the BBC and the *Daily Express* and wrote to the BBC Music Department on the matter.³⁸ However, Mansell claims that the decline in popularity of *A World Requiem* was not caused by the criticism from the newspapers or by the snobbery of the BBC. Instead it was part of a wider debate which consequently led to the disappearance of the work. Before 1923, armistice nights were called "Victory Ball" or "Armistice Jazz" and the change from celebratory to commemorative music after 1923 caused concern for several newspapers who argued that armistice night should not be a "Festival of Remembrance" but instead a festival of celebration of the war's end and victory. The conflicting opinions were drawn out in a national battle between the newspapers. The *Daily Mail* was supportive of Foulds' *Requiem*, which had given a solemn atmosphere giving consolation to those who had lost someone in the war. It wrote in 1925 that the *Requiem* had "*established itself for the musical celebration of Armistice Day*".³⁹ In contrast, the *Daily Express* argued for its replacement with a celebration of the war's end. A political debate ensued causing Foulds and his wife MacCarthy to move their proposed performance of *A World Requiem* to the Queen's Hall, enabling a revival of the "Victory Ball" to take place at the Royal Albert Hall. This coup

³⁴ BBC, *John Foulds Files*. Cited in Mansell 447

³⁵ John Foulds, *Music Today*. Cited in Mansell 446

³⁶ Ibid. Cited in Mansell 446

³⁷ Ibid. Cited in Mansell 446

³⁸ Ibid. Cited in Mansell 436

³⁹ Originally taken from among quotes found in the pamphlet produced by Foulds and MacCarthy to build up support for the *Requiem*, BBC *John Foulds Files*. Cited in Mansell 446

had been supported by Lord Northampton and the Duchess of Sunderland in aid of the Royal Northern Hospital but, although it had been a tradition prior to the *Requiem*, the proposed ball was not now appreciated in the same way. A protestor wrote to *The Times*, saying:⁴⁰

"...it is of course possible to make a plausible cause for anything – even for dancing on Armistice Day. Whether 'that victory feeling' is the real motive or only the excuse is for each to settle with his own conscience. The fact remains that most of us regard an Armistice Day ball as an outrage on decency. It does not prove callousness; it betokens a painful lack of imagination."

Other supporters for the return of an Armistice Night of commemoration included the Archbishops of Canterbury and York, who both denounced the planned ball and which was consequently cancelled. *The Times* published a letter received from Lord Northampton, who believed that even though there was "*a strong feeling against public rejoicing on Armistice Day*" the debate was truly about whether the celebration should take place at the Royal Albert Hall – a "*symbol of national culture*".⁴¹

The proposed "Victory Ball" was replaced by a Remembrance Service led by the Reverend H.R.L. Sheppard, which was the first religious broadcast on the BBC in 1924. This was followed by the return of the *Requiem* the following year at the Royal Albert Hall and, as Mansell claims, the debate over the intended events on Armistice Night in 1924 caused a "*significant split between secular and religious culture in inter-war Britain*". The *Requiem* was now being associated with the "*church's objection to Armistice celebration*" because of its religious content and was marked by the *Daily Express* as a form of "Pacifist Christianity".⁴²

The *Daily Express* had persuaded the British Legion that they would sponsor the next Armistice Night in 1927, controlling what would be performed and that unfortunately did not include Foulds' *A World Requiem*. MacCarthy wrote to the founder of the British Legion, Field Marshall Earl Haig claiming the Legion had "*stooped*" to a "*conspiracy of silence*" and reminded Haig that in 1923, he had written to tell them of his hopes that "*on each Armistice Day many thousands [would] sing the work throughout the land*".⁴³ The *Daily Express* turned the "Festival of Remembrance" into an occasion "*to promote British cultural traditions and a worldview based on the continued power of the British Empire*" unlike Foulds and MacCarthy, who had called for "*international unity and peace*".⁴⁴

A later *Radio Times* article in 1931 on the history of the Festival of Remembrance (a phrase coined by Maud MacCarthy) falsely claimed that 1927 was the first year it had run and that the *Daily Express* was its founder. This effectively wrote Foulds and MacCarthy's "*contribution out of history*"⁴⁵ although as MacCarthy writes in her complaint to the BBC, she and Foulds "*created the festival, and by much hard work*".

⁴⁰ The Times, 24 October 1925. Cited in Mansell 449

⁴¹ James G. Mansell, *Musical Modernity and Contested Commemoration at the Festival of Remembrance, 1923-1927*, *The Historical Journal* 52, no. 2 (June 2009) 449

⁴² *Ibid* 450

⁴³ *Ibid* 450

⁴⁴ *Ibid* 452

⁴⁵ *Ibid* 453

2007 performance

The conductor Leon Botstein – known for championing “*the tragically neglected*”, conducted the 2007 performance and the premiere recording of *A World Requiem*. Roger Wright, Controller of BBC Radio 3, decided to revive the work with the support of Foulds family, the Royal British Legion and the *Daily Telegraph*. This revival, 81 years since it had been last performed in the Royal Albert Hall, caused a stir among music critics and newspapers who believed it would be something magnificent. Indeed their response to the concert did contain such remarks but there is a sense that the sheer vastness of the work and its length left many critics unable to appreciate it. Perhaps it suffered in comparison to Foulds’ other more adventurous works – such as the *Three Mantras* Op. 61B. A more experimental approach to the *Requiem* would have made it easier for earlier critics to attack the work for being too unconventional. In addition, Foulds wanted to make it accessible to all and the consequent work enabled them to enjoy what they considered as a successful commemoration. According to Rob Barnett, “*so many in the audience will have known what wartime bereavement meant and lived it through Foulds’ music touching off the deepest of emotional wellsprings*”.⁴⁶

A World Requiem is considered to be a “*lost masterpiece*” by the music critic Richard Whitehouse⁴⁷ and the critic Patrick C Waller⁴⁸ believes it, as Foulds intended, “*achieve[s] its consolatory aim, to radiate pacifism and tolerance, and to cross religious denominational boundaries. And it [doesn’t] outstay[] its welcome for a single minute*”. This is a very different kind of criticism from that faced by Foulds during the 1920s.

The newspaper critics at the 2007 performance were very different again, although the only newspaper that reviewed any of the original performances as well as the 2007 performance was *The Times* – which had originally damned the work. On this occasion, the *The Times* review believed it was “*a justified revival*” although it had mixed views on the music itself claiming it to be “*jumble; of its time and out of time; conventional and modernist; often thrilling, occasionally blank*”.⁴⁹ Ivan Hewett in the *Telegraph* wrote:⁵⁰

“The musical style seemed to call on every idiom available in the early 20th century... Yet the piece had a very definite atmosphere of its own. It was as if Foulds had gathered all his sources, and by adding little glimpses of modernism and a touch of Indian mystery, projected them up on to a mystical plain.”

⁴⁶ Rob Barnett

http://www.musicweb-international.com/classrev/2008/May08/Foulds_World_chsa5058.htm#ixzz1bv4JaLNk

Accessed 27/10/11

⁴⁷ Richard Whitehouse

http://www.classicalsource.com/db_control/db_concert_review.php?id=5182

Accessed 27/10/11

⁴⁸ Patrick C Waller :[http://www.musicweb-](http://www.musicweb-international.com/classrev/2008/feb08/Foulds_World_chsa5058.htm#ixzz1bv7oICGq)

[international.com/classrev/2008/feb08/Foulds_World_chsa5058.htm#ixzz1bv7oICGq](http://www.musicweb-international.com/classrev/2008/feb08/Foulds_World_chsa5058.htm#ixzz1bv7oICGq)

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⁴⁹ Geoff Brown, *The Times*, 13 November 2007

<http://new.geraldfinley.info/index.php/performances/performances-concert-and-recital/concert-performances-2007/2007-11-11-john-foulds-a-world-requiem-royal-albert-hall-london/> Accessed 27/10/11

⁵⁰ Ivan Hewett *A World Requiem comes alive after 81-year wait*, *The Telegraph*, 12 November 2007

<http://www.telegraph.co.uk/news/uknews/1569074/World-Requiem-comes-alive-after-81-year-wait.html>

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He went on to say “*what we heard was a work of amazing talent, even a kind of genius*”. The *Guardian* also believed the music to be successful in its aim calling “*the score... emotive and eclectic*”.⁵¹ The *Evening Standard* believed “*if ever a work was destined for the Royal Albert Hall it is surely John Foulds’ World Requiem*”.⁵²

Conclusion

The unfortunate reception of John Foulds’ *A World Requiem* led to Foulds’ decline in popularity as a composer. Indeed the animosity he faced was a contributing factor in his choosing to leave the country and pursue a career which would not involve fighting a constant battle against the musical corporations who had eyes only for English Pastoral music. His fall into obscurity could be compared with those of Havergal Brian or Lord Berners. By not recognising his ability as a serious composer he was effectively pigeon-holed as light music which would not enable *The Requiem* to be heralded as a great work of the 20th century.⁵³

With the revival of some of Foulds works including *A World Requiem* in the early 21st century, Foulds has managed to gain a better reputation than he had whilst he was alive. He is now considered to have been a pioneer whose originality marks him out as a significant composer of the 20th century. This rise in recognition is evident from Foulds’ inclusion on the *Masters of the English Musical Renaissance* CD alongside the likes of Parry.⁵⁴ Another CD places one of his orchestral works alongside that of Vaughan Williams.⁵⁵

One hopes that Foulds will continue to be recognized as more artists of international repute record and perform his works. As Simon Heffer wrote in the *New Statesman* “*the brilliance of his writing is plain to hear for all who buy his music and listen to it. The 20th century may have consigned John Foulds to oblivion, but the 21st will see him return in glory*”.⁵⁶

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⁵¹ Tim Ashley, *A World Requiem*, *The Guardian* November 13, 2007

<http://www.guardian.co.uk/music/2007/nov/13/classicalmusicandopera1> Accessed 27/10/11

⁵² Barry Millington, *Longing for something Memorable*, *Evening Standard* 12 November 2007

<http://www.thisislondon.co.uk/music/review-23420608-longing-for-something-memorable.do> Accessed 27/10/11

⁵³ James G. Mansell, *Musical Modernity and Contested Commemoration at the Festival of Remembrance, 1923-1927*, *The Historical Journal* 52, no. 2 (June 2009) 447

⁵⁴ *Masters of the English Musical Renaissance*, Parry, Brian, Foulds, Luxemburg Radio Symphony Orchestra, cond. By Leopold Hager (Forlane, B0000038E4, March 2001)

⁵⁵ Foulds *Dynamic Triptych*, Vaughan Williams *Piano Concerto*, Royal Philharmonic Orchestra, cond. by Vernon Handley (Lyrita, B000027QW, July 2006)

⁵⁶ Simon Heffer, *A genius ignored for his politics*, *New Statesman*, 25 December 2000

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