

A Musical Journey Back To 1103 A.D.  
(Themes and Variations)

*for pianoforte*  
*(or organ)*

Anthony Skilbeck

### ***Programme note***

Though not exact contemporaries, the work's dedicatee and I are alumni of the Royal College of Music, London. Also, we have both lived in the same town for many years and have a connection with Worksop Priory; Haydn sings in the choir, and I was Organist and Choirmaster there from 1977 to the end of 1983. It was only recently that I discovered that my paternal Great, Great Grandfather, George Taylor, was baptised in the Priory on Christmas Eve, 1822. I did not know this when I moved to Worksop, over 30 years ago. When Haydn, a pianist, hinted that he would appreciate having a composition written for him, it therefore seemed appropriate to involve some aspect of the Priory's history in the work.

It was in 1103 that a monastic establishment after the order of St Augustine was founded in Worksop. From this fact was born the concept of the composition - a theme and variations travelling musically back in time to that year. First, the theme is announced, after which comes a romantic "Album-leaf", a classical style movement, a baroque "Gigue" and a renaissance "Ricercare". Bar 153, beat 1, marks the point at which the journey reaches 1103 A.D. and here, the theme is used in a plainsong-like way, plainsong being the church music of the time. Four trope-like passages are interpolated leading to a section in the motet style of the Notre Dame School (circa 13th century), for this is how tropes developed. The work concludes with a 21st century passage in which the main theme is combined with that of the second trope, both rhythmically altered. As this final passage has a bell-like quality and the varied Theme 1 is repeated, I have called this section "Carillon." Throughout the work I have used my own harmonic language.

Whilst working on the composition, it occurred to me that arrival at the 1103 point could mark the Golden Section (in duration) of the work - bar 153. beat 1. Up to this point, the length of the piece should be 5'40" (340 seconds). Calculation showed that the remainder should be 3'50" long, making a total duration of 9'30". I remain unconvinced that listeners comprehend such a structure, but it is a useful compositional tool.

The work was finished in July, 2012.

### ***Performance notes***

Some pianoforte pedalling signs are given; they are not indications concerning the use of organ pedals.

The term "ease" is an indication not to hurry or play in strict time; *pochissimo rit.* / *pochissimo rubato*.

If an electric piano is used, vary the sounds. For example, a harpsichord sound could be used for bars 90 to 112; a "choir" sound for bars 187 to 191 and a vibraphone sound from bar 192 to the end. A skilful organist could adapt the work for performance on that instrument, despite the occasional straying out of compass. Registration could be varied and the "motet" (bars 187 to 191) even played as an organ trio. The "motet" and "carillon" could be played together as a separate piece, during Communion, perhaps.

### ***Bibliography***

A History of Western Music (5th Edition) by Donald Jay Grout, published by W.W.Norton & Co.  
Masterpieces of Music before 1750 by Carl Parrish & John F.Ohl, first published by Faber & Faber Ltd. in 1952.  
An outline history of European Music by Michael Hurd published by Novello & Co. Ltd. in 1968.

For Haydn Robert Lee

# A Musical Journey Back To 1103 A.D.

Anthony Skilbeck

♩ = 60

"ease"

*mf* *espress.* *mf* *sim.*

*senza ped.*

5

"ease"

*mf* *sim.* *mf* *mf*

*poco rit.*

11

*a tempo*

"ease"

*mf* *sim.*

15

"ease"

*mf* *sim.* *p* *p*

*poco rit.*

♩ = 80

Link of 7 notes, later used as commencement of Trope I (bar 157).

Romantic "Album-leaf"

♩ = 108

21

accel.

Musical score for measures 21-27. The piece is in 3/4 time with a tempo of 108. It begins with an acceleration. The right hand features a melodic line with slurs and fingerings (2, 3, 5-4, -2). The left hand has a bass line with slurs and fingerings (4, 3). The dynamic is marked *mf*.

*con ped.*

28

Musical score for measures 28-34. The right hand has a melodic line with slurs and dynamics *mf*, *f*, and *mf*. The left hand has a bass line with slurs and dynamics *mf (>)*.

Variation

♩ = 80

35

rit.

Musical score for measures 35-40, the start of a variation. The tempo is 80 and the piece is in *rit.*. The right hand has a melodic line with slurs and dynamics *mf* and *mp*. The left hand has a bass line with slurs and dynamics *p* and *mp*. The piece concludes with *con ped.*

41

Musical score for measures 41-45. The right hand has a melodic line with slurs, dynamics *mf*, and *mp*, and fingerings (3, 1, b, #). The left hand has a bass line with slurs and dynamics *mp* and *mf*.

46

Musical score for measures 46-50. The right hand has a melodic line with slurs and dynamics *mp* and *mf*. The left hand has a bass line with slurs and dynamics *mf* and *sonore*. The piece ends with a dynamic of *mf*.

*scherzando*

52

*p* *mf* *mf*

*rit.*

*In Classical style*

56

*mf* *mp* *mf*

$\text{♩} = 84$   $(\text{♩} = 84)$

2 1 1 2 3

3

Link, as before.

*mp* *mf* *mp* *sim.*

61

*mf* *mp*

66

*mf* *mp*

71

*mf* *mp* *mf* *mf*

3 3 3 5

1

poco rit.

76

a tempo

mf

80

♩. = 63

Baroque (Gigue)

85

Link, as before. senza ped.

93

98

103

2nd time,  
poco rit.

108

1. 2.

*mf*

Link, as before.

Renaissance (Ricercare)

113  $\text{♩} = 80$  **rall.**  $\text{♩} = 58$

*sereno e spianato*  
*mp*

*senza ped.*

Reminiscent of the Ricercare in my "Variations on Three Original Themes" for organ.

121

*mp*

128

*mp*

135

*mp*

141

*mp*

A discreet use of the sustaining pedal may be used in bars 147-152.

*Circa 1103 / Golden Section (see notes).*

Vox Organalis (V.O. - bass clef lowest notes and treble clef notes).

Each phrase begins in unison (though does not end so here), which was the custom since 9th C..

Vox Principalis (V.P.) in the tenor: first three phrases of the theme of the work with changed phrasing and no anacrusis. The V.P. is harmonised by means of organum (parallel intervals).

**Trope I** New material. The first 7 treble notes have been used as a link between previous sections.

The trope tenors (bass notes) comprise those of the last-heard phrases of the V.P.. In most cases, at the point where each tenor note begins, the two voices form intervals of a unison, 4th, 5th, or octave, as was the custom of the time. I permit the interval of an augmented 4th (bar 158) as it is a prominent interval in my harmonic language.



159

leg. leg.

Continuation of the Vox Principalis  
(Theme of the work).

161 **poco rit.** ♩ = 84

*mp* tranquillo

P

164 **Trope II**

*mp* quasi plainsong  
(espress. e flessibile ♩ = 72)

senza ped. leg. leg.

P

167

crescendo

leg. leg.

Continuation of the Vox Principalis  
(Theme of the work).

169 **poco rit.** ♩ = 84

*f* *mp* tranquillo

2 P P

**Trope III** "Notre Dame School" (ca. 1180)  
using the six Rhythmic Modes. 3 parts. Dance-like.

♩ = 80

173

*f energico*

*con ped.* *leg.* *leg.*

176

*leg.* *leg.*

178

*poco rit.*

Final phrase of the Vox Principalis  
(Theme of the work).

"Notre Dame School" (ca. 1180)  
**Trope IV** using the six Rhythmic Modes.  
3 parts. Dance-like.

♩ = 80

179

*mp tranquillo* *f energico*

*con ped.* *leg.*

184

*leg.* *leg.*

rall.

186

attacca

"Motet" "Notre Dame School" (ca. 13th C.)

♩ = 104

187

Triplum  
Motetus

*mf religioso, legato, come coro* *mf*

Tenor

*con ped.*  
The plainsong of Trope I, transposed and organised into rhythmic modes.

"ease"

189

*mf*

190

*mf*

"ease"

191

*mf*

rall.

Coda: "Carillon"

♩ = 80

A variation of Theme I  
(omitting the 4th & 5th phrases).

"ease"

Musical score for measures 192-193. The score is in G major and 3/4 time. It features a piano accompaniment with a steady eighth-note bass line and a treble line with eighth-note patterns. The dynamic is marked *mp*. A bracket labeled "ease" spans the first two measures. The bass line includes fingering numbers 3 and 1.

The plainsong (rhythmically varied) of Trope II.

"ease"

Musical score for measures 194-195. The score continues the piano accompaniment. The dynamic is marked *mp*. A bracket labeled "ease" spans the first two measures. The bass line includes fingering numbers 4, 2, 1, 2, 5, and 5.

"ease"

Musical score for measures 196-197. The score continues the piano accompaniment. The dynamic is marked *p delicato* in the first measure and *p* in the second. A bracket labeled "ease" spans the first two measures. The bass line includes fingering numbers 4, 2, 1, 2, 5, and 5.

\* *rall al' fine*

Musical score for measures 198-199. The score continues the piano accompaniment. The dynamic is marked *p*. A bracket labeled "ease" spans the first two measures. The bass line includes fingering numbers 4, 2, 1, 2, 5, and 5.

\* As if a clockwork musical box "winding down" - similar to the carillon movement in my "Seven Jewels" for flute and cello (1976).

This section has the same character as the "Pastorale Variations" (Comunio) in my "Barzago Pieces" for organ (2006) and "The Budding Tree" movement in my chamber work "Harthill Moor" (2007).