ERASING THE COLOR LINE: THE VIOLIN CONCERTO OF SAMUEL COLERIDGE-TAYLOR

BY

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To my parents

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Preface

Samuel Coleridge-Taylor's mixed-black heritage, which easily could have remained a social handicap in 19th century Victorian England, may arguably have boosted his career during a time when African-heritage music and artists became fashionable amongst the European and American public. That is not to say that Samuel Coleridge-Taylor's world was not imbued with racial prejudice – born a mere 43 years after England's Slavery Abolition Act of 1833, his three visits to America brought him in contact with the segregation experienced daily by African Americans. Nevertheless, when Antonin Dvořák's *New World Symphony* (1893) sought to establish an American school of music upon the melodies of Negro and Native American songs, black American musicians and composers rode on the tidal waves of Dvořák's success. They were able, for the first time, to see the significance of their musical heritage.

It is significant to note that while this black cultural revolution was brewing in America, Samuel Coleridge-Taylor was operating overseas in England. Nor was he, at first, transforming African and African American music into high art. Yet his career and rise to fame were intertwined with the ongoings in America, and without Dvořák and black activists giving a voice to African American musicians and composers, it is plausible that many of Samuel Coleridge-Taylor's works would have never come into fruition. One of these works was his *Violin Concerto* op. 80, the last finished work before his untimely death at the age of 37. This project will argue that the African American musical and political scene between 1893 and 1920 helped the creation of Coleridge-Taylor's *Violin Concerto*.

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Chapter 1: EARLY YEARS

The events of Samuel Coleridge-Taylor's life can be nebulous at times, due to the many romanticized stories and memories recorded by his colleagues, family, and first biographer Berwick-Sayers.[1] Though these tall tales oftentimes obscure the truth, it should be noted that many great composers of the past suffer the same plight. Perhaps it is not too forward to claim that these embellishments are made from a point of reverence, in an attempt to keep their lives mesmerizing and vivid long after they have departed from this earth.

An insightful study of the composer's music always requires one to peer into the composer's life. This is especially true for Samuel Coleridge-Taylor, for his work is deeply tied to his identity as a mulatto[2] Englishman. The time between his birth in 1875 to the completion of his *Violin Concerto* op. 80 in 1912 shows a man grappling with his two racial halves, the society that struggled to assess his identity and music, and the different environments he encountered. An understanding of all of this is necessary to understand Coleridge-Taylor's *Violin Concerto*.

Coleridge-Taylor's story begins with his father Daniel Peter Hughes Taylor, a Krio[3] and a graduate of the King's College Hospital in London. Hughes Taylor spent

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[1] William Berwick Sayers, the Croydon librarian, was asked by Jessie Coleridge-Taylor to write her late husband's biography. He found the task arduous, as Coleridge-Taylor did not keep a diary or wrote regular letters. Sayers is known to have written several misleading facts about the composer. He shared royalties made on the book with Jessie, who was left financially destitute after the death of her husband. Jeffrey Green, *Samuel Coleridge-Taylor, a Musical Life* (London: Pickering & Chatto, 2011), 213.
[2] The term mulatto refers to a person born of one white parent and one black parent, or of two mulatto parents.
[3] Krio refers to an inhabitant of Sierra Leone, and also refers to the language spoken by those inhabitants. The language Krio binds many different ethnic groups of Sierra Leone together.

four years in the British colony of Sierra Leone in Freetown before his family sent him to England. At the age of 25, he qualified as a member of the Royal College of Surgeons; however, though he endeavored to open a medical practice in South London, the public did not trust a black doctor working independently of white supervision. Driven to financial destitution, he left his wife behind in England and returned to Freetown. Little is known of his fate, though it is unlikely that he visited England again after his departure and also unlikely that he financially contributed to young Coleridge-Taylor's rearing. It is surmised that a Dr. Hughes Taylor in Bathurst, now known as Banjul, was the same man. He was deputy coroner of the colony and made his living doing autopsies before passing away in August 1904.

Sierra Leone's relation to England is one of importance, as the land became the base for the Royal Navy. Slave ships were intercepted by patrols and auctioned off in Freetown, and the slaves within the ships were freed. The majority of freed slaves remained in Freetown, gradually creating a new life and culture for themselves, and became the origins of the Krio of Sierra Leone. The Church Missionary Society in particular had a large impact on the Krio; the confluence of African culture, Christianity, and British influence helped the education of the citizens and the cosmopolitan growth of the town as the Krio worked as clerks, lawyers, publishers, journalists, doctors, and other tradespeople. The citizens knew a great deal about the British, and many rules of their trades were borrowed from British practices.

Although the identity of Coleridge-Taylor's father is known as fact, the precise identity of Samuel Coleridge-Taylor's mother remains a subject of debate. According to Geoffrey Self, author of *The Hiawatha Man,* Samuel Coleridge-Taylor's birth certificate

lists an Alice Taylor (formerly Holmans) as his mother,[4] and it is likely that Alice and Daniel Taylor did not marry. A marriage registration has yet to be found, and the complexities of race and class in Victorian England probably made such a relationship difficult. Driven by both financial destitution and familial pressure, it is surmised that Hughes Taylor left for Freetown before Alice revealed that she was pregnant, as his family may have been dismayed by his marriage to a white woman.[5] She later married George Evans in the 1880s and had three children with him.

Alice's father, Benjamin Holmans, took in the boy and his mother after Hughes Taylor's departure. An amateur violinist, he became Coleridge-Taylor's first violin instructor and taught the boy the rudimentary basics of reading and playing music (it is unknown where Holmans received his training and what pieces had made up his repertoire). Alice's other children – Alice, Marjorie, and Victor – also came to possess musical gifts. Victor eventually played viola in the London Symphony Orchestra while Marjorie became a piano teacher, eventually teaching Samuel Coleridge-Taylor's grandson Nigel. Alice was a singer. It is thus surmised that Samuel Coleridge-Taylor inherited his musical gifts from his mother's side of the family.

Africa was far from the boy's early life. Though one may wonder at the impact an absent father must have had on him, such a predicament was not rare during this time

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[4] It is also probable that Alice was the illegitimate child of a Benjamin Holmans, which would account for the confusion surrounding her identity, as Benjamin Holmans may have wanted to bury this fact. Geoffrey Self, *The Hiawatha Man: The Life and Work of Samuel Coleridge-Taylor* (Cambridge: University Press, 1995), 5.

[5] Coleridge-Taylor's first biographer W. Berwick Sayers and daughter Avril Coleridge-Taylor both claim that Hughes Taylor and Alice Taylor had lived together after Samuel's birth, but Geoffrey Self lists that there are problems with this story. The Sierra Leone colonial Blue Book lists that Dr. Taylor took up an appointment there in mid-1875, which left him hardly any time to have lived with Alice Taylor after Samuel's birth (Ibid., 2).

as other children had fathers in the army or at sea. Nevertheless, affection and financial security (though the family was far from wealthy) provided by the Holmans stabilized the boy's life and influenced his character.

The Holmans family moved from Holburn to Croydon, a town currently considered a bastion of culture – the Croydon Symphony Orchestra welcomed the young Colin Davis and Norman Del Mar, as well as Sir Thomas Beecham and Alan Kirby. Coleridge-Taylor's Croydon was much less socially and culturally developed, though the Croydon Railway Company was rapidly developing and the population expanding as a result. Jeffrey Green writes that "it was an unlikely place to raise a child whose artistic talents were to provide generations with delight"[6] while Marjorie, the composer's sister, stated that apart from a few musical people, Croydon remained nonmusical. Yet the town must have felt like home to the composer, for he continued to reside in Croydon even after ascending the pinnacle of fame.

George Evans' job as a railway worker provided financial stability for the family, but the possibility of supporting a child through higher education was an implausible one. Geoffrey Self states that although hardly anything is known of Evans' relationship with Coleridge-Taylor, there has to be something said about the courage in marrying a young woman with a colored child. It is implied that Coleridge-Taylor shared good rapport with his stepfather, for he wrote the majority of his most famous work *Hiawatha's Wedding Feast* in the Evans' home.[7]

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[6] Green, 14.
[7] Self, 9.

Coleridge-Taylor attended the British School on Tamworth Road near his home for about eight years. His ability to maintain a regular education was both impressive and crucial when one takes into account that many did not see education to be beneficial or advantageous. The head teacher, John Drage, and form teacher, Mr. Forman, found Coleridge-Taylor's violin prowess impressive and forced him to perform for school visitors; however, this served to distance him from his classmates, who already found his color to be alienating. On one occasion they tried setting fire to his "crinkly hair" to see if it would burn. Perhaps their pranks instigated a pathological shyness that would inhibit him throughout his professional life; Jessie writes in her memoirs that Coleridge-Taylor was "terribly sensitive and always very shy and modest," especially as a scholar.[8] His daughter Avril surmises that her father's lack of conceit stemmed from his fear of reigniting the insults hurled at him during his student days.[9]

Both Berwick Sayers and Avril Coleridge-Taylor recount the same story of Samuel Coleridge-Taylor's meeting with his first professional violin teacher, yet both Marjorie and Alice – who were living with young Coleridge-Taylor at the time – reject the validity of the tale. Berwick Sayers writes that Joseph Beckwith, a pedagogue who also conducted the orchestra at the Grand Theatre in Croydon, saw the young Samuel Coleridge-Taylor playing marbles in Waddon New Road with a violin case tucked under his arm.[10] He invited the boy to his house where he gave him some simple violin duets to sightread. Samuel Coleridge-Taylor read them perfectly and relayed that his grandfather

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[8] Coleridge-Taylor, Jessie S. Fleetwood Walmisley, *A Memory Sketch, or Persona Reminiscences of My Husband: Genius and Musician S. Coleridge-Taylor* (New York: Bobby & Co. Ltd., 1912), 13.
[9] Coleridge-Taylor, Avril, *The Heritage of Samuel Coleridge-Taylor* (London: Dobson Books, 1979), 41.
[10] W. C. Berwick Sayers, *Samuel Coleridge-Taylor Musician: His Life and Letters* (Chicago: Afro-Am Press, 1969), 6.

had been giving him lessons. Beckwith became Coleridge-Taylor's teacher for about seven years, and either Benjamin Holmans or Herbert A. Walters paid the lesson fees.[11] In turn, Coleridge-Taylor taught Beckwith's son, and later, after being appointed conductor of the Handel Society, hired Beckwith's son to be the orchestral leader.

Coleridge-Taylor's love of music was not unnoticed by his peers and mentors. The story of him running to the shop to buy manuscript paper as a boy whenever he had a penny[12] may be a stretch of the imagination, but the presence of such a story is a testament that his musical passions were great and prominent. Much later, he would confess to his wife that "music was his first love."[13]

Another influential musician in Coleridge-Taylor's life at this time was Herbert A. Walters, a London silk merchant and the choirmaster of St. George's Presbyterian Church. While Green states that John Drage, the head teacher of Coleridge-Taylor's school, relayed to him that the boy had a fine singing voice,[14] Geoffrey Free writes that Walters may have known Dr. Hughes Taylor; whatever the case may have been, Walters soon became a guardian to Coleridge-Taylor. Though this act may seem extraordinary by today's standards, Victorian Britain's wealthy denizens engaged in many acts of patronage.[15] Coleridge-Taylor was not the only boy under the Colonel's care, as Walters

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[11] Another legend concerning Coleridge-Taylor's violin origins was crafted by the black American Henry Francis Downing, who knew the composer. According to Downing, the boy Coleridge-Taylor was gazing at a violin in the shop window of a curiosity shop. The owner told the boy that if he could play a real tune on the violin, it would become his, and Coleridge-Taylor later rushed home to show his prize to his mother. The story, while certainly heartwarming, does not corroborate with the evidence that Holmans had enough money to purchase a violin and already had one in his possession (Green, 12).
[12] Avril Coleridge-Taylor, 14.
[13] Ibid., 23.
[14] Green, 17.
[15] Tate and Carnegie had paid for libraries, George Peabody had funded low-income housing, Boot and Wills financed universities. Green, 23.

showed paternal concern towards all of his choir boys and helped them to secure work. When Walters moved to St Mary Magdalene in Addiscombe, Coleridge-Taylor went with him. *Te Deum* and *Break Forth into Joy*, early compositions by Coleridge-Taylor, were dedicated to Walters; the former unfortunately remains lost.

As Coleridge-Taylor's singing, violin, and compositional talents came into further fruition, Walters decided to support Coleridge-Taylor's higher music education, as the Evans family were too poor to do so. There was also the question of color. Hardly any colored individuals pursued music at college. Walters approached director Sir George Grove[16] and the Royal College of Music to appeal for fifteen-year-old Samuel Coleridge-Taylor's entrance to the school. Grove, who sympathized with the plight of the African people in America and who had attended the African Academy as a child, agreed to let Coleridge-Taylor attend. Perhaps his interest in black music, instigated during his employment as a lighthouse engineer in the West Indies, also swayed his decision, as did the memory of singer Ira Aldridge, one of the college's first students and the daughter of a black American.

Coleridge-Taylor entered at the Royal College of Music in 1890 as a violin major; within two years he abandoned the instrument to study composition. In this he found great rapport with his professor Charles Villiers Stanford, whose roster of students included Gustav Holst and Ralph Vaughn Williams. He may have wanted to change majors earlier but Stanford did not accept students who did not have a working knowledge of the piano; thus, Coleridge-Taylor's first years at the Royal College of Music were filled with violin lessons from Henry Holmes and piano lessons from

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[16] Grove is best known as the creator of the music dictionaries that are extensively used to this day.

Algernon Ashton. Though he excelled in his private instrumental lessons, his music class attendance record was quite poor, perhaps due to his chronic shyness. Geoffrey Free surmises that Coleridge-Taylor may have suffered insecurity due to the very visible difference of the color of his skin and his poverty. His colleagues belonged to the middle and upper classes of society, were better-educated and generally older, so Coleridge-Taylor may have been extremely self-conscious of his lower class status.

One exception remains. Coleridge-Taylor found a friend and ally in William Yeates Hurlstone, who also attended the Royal College of Music as a poor student. Hurlstone and Coleridge-Taylor both worked in their spare time to make financial ends meet, and both took compositional classes from Stanford, who extolled them as his best students. Brahms was Hurlstone's hero and in turn Dvořák was Coleridge-Taylor's, and the two young men spent much time debating and discussing the merits of these composers.[17] Hurlstone's life was to end at the mere age of 30, and Coleridge-Taylor likewise died young, at the age of 37.

The Novello house published a handful of Samuel Coleridge-Taylor's choral anthems while he was a student. Novello specialized in cheap mass production of choral music and offered the public easy access to a composer's music, gaining him recognition and publicity in return. The publication of Coleridge-Taylor's *In Thee O Lord* (at the mere age of 16), *Break Forth Into Joy* (dedicated to Walters), *O Ye that Love the Lord, The Lord is my Strength*, and *Lift Up Your Heads* gave him some encouragement, an important asset when taking into account that he suffered from insecurity.

[17] Dvořák had been invited by Coleridge-Taylor's composition professor Stanford to receive an honorary degree in Cambridge, 1891 (Avril Coleridge-Taylor, 22).

Coleridge-Taylor also suffered from a lack of self-criticism when it came to compositions of his own. He trusted Stanford's judgment infinitely – when Stanford told him to destroy a work because it failed to meet his standards, Coleridge-Taylor obeyed without defending his creation. Stanford also criticized Coleridge-Taylor's inability to sustain the brilliance and flow of his music. Nevertheless, Coleridge-Taylor remained one of Stanford's most esteemed students, winning the Royal College Music compositional scholarship in 1892, which offered him some financial relief.

Perhaps prompted by Walters, Coleridge-Taylor received permission from Sir Grove to put on a small concert at the Public Hall in Croydon, October 1893 to display his compositions. Such an initiative shows that he was steadily gaining confidence in his abilities and working around his shyness. The then-unknown clarinetist Charles Draper, violinist Jessie Grimson, and singer Ethel Winn concertized Coleridge-Taylor's works, including the *Piano Quintet* and *Piano Trio in e minor*; unfortunately, many of these early works have since been lost. The concert was a great success and garnered a favorable review in *The Musical Times*. Audience reception was highly enthusiastic, but Coleridge-Taylor fled before they had the opportunity to congratulate him. Avril Coleridge-Taylor notes that the fact this program had taken place at all was itself a remarkable feat, as her father had come from a background marred by disadvantage:

> His schooling had been, in the strictest sense, elementary. Yet he had managed to make it at the Royal College of Music, among a number of students whose comfortable antecedents and prosperous circumstances stood out in marked contrast to those of Coleridge-Taylor.[18]

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[18] Avril Coleridge-Taylor, 19.

Coleridge-Taylor's student compositions matured quickly under Stanford's tutelage. In 1894, his *Nonet in f minor* was performed at the Alexandra House by college students,[19] and the same year saw the production of his first extant orchestral work, *Zara's Ear-Rings,* which still exists today in manuscript form. Around the same time, Coleridge-Taylor composed his gloomy yet virtuosic *Ballade in d minor for violin and orchestra*, later arranging it for violin and piano. The roster of compositions also includes the *Fantasiestucke* for string quartet, published by Augener and dedicated to Stanford. The work enabled him to win the Lesley Alexander prize, which, at the end of the 19th century, was a milestone for budding composers.

The *Clarinet Quintet*, written in response to Stanford challenging his students to write a clarinet quintet devoid of Brahmsian influence, garnered Coleridge-Taylor a small taste of the fame that was to come. Stanford, excited that Coleridge-Taylor had succeeded his challenge, showed the music to the violinist Joachim, who supposedly played it around continental Europe. Publication of the quintet, however, was delayed for quite some time.

1895 to 1896 was primarily occupied with the writing of the *Symphony in a minor, op. 8*, which exists in manuscript form only. Though a few small works (such as the *Dance and Lament* for violin and piano) were composed on the side, Coleridge-Taylor labored with the symphony, particularly the last movement. Stanford found the last movement to be wanting, and Coleridge-Taylor, after tearing up and burning the

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[19] Stanford was not satisfied with the Andante, saying to his neighbor, "He will never write a slow movement until he has been in love! No one can who has not been in love" (Avril Coleridge-Taylor, 21).

symphony finale in front of his violinist friend W. J. Read,[20] embarked on the arduous task of creating a worthy final movement. The first movements were performed by the College orchestra with Stanford as conductor in the spring of 1896, with Holst on trombone and Vaughn Williams on the triangle.

His last year, 1896, was a prolific one. Coleridge-Taylor, perhaps buoyed by the success of Elgar's *Salut D'Amour*, observed that the market for short salon works was profitable. He drew inspiration from the poetry of Henry Wadsworth Longfellow in composing the *Hiawathan Sketches op. 16* for violin and piano (his later *Hiawatha* cantata did not recycle any ideas from the Sketches) and the *Five Southern Love Songs op. 12* for voice and piano, his earliest published song cycle. There was also the *Legende* for violin and orchestra, op. 14, dedicated to his college colleague Marie Motto who gave its first performance with the College orchestra with Stanford conducting the ensemble.

It is important to note that all of Coleridge-Taylor's early works were written from the vantage point of a young composer trained in the classical European style. Inspiration for these early works was drawn from the likes of Tchaikovsky, Schumann, Schubert, and Dvořák – he would not encounter African and African American music until later in 1899. Though Dvořák used Bohemian folk melodies in his music, Coleridge-Taylor's early works drew from the beautiful lyricism of Dvořák rather than

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[20] W. J. Read asked Coleridge-Taylor if he could keep the manuscript, as it seemed a pity to have it destroyed. With Coleridge-Taylor's approval, he rescued it from the fire. Read later lent the manuscript to an interested musician, whereupon it became lost until some time later, when the violinist discovered that it had been sold. The British Library managed to purchase the score, where it can now be found in the Royal College of Music library. Jessie writes that Coleridge-Taylor's trust in Stanford was total, which caused him to burn many manuscripts that Stanford did not consider to be the best of standards. The composer idolized his teacher and kept a photograph of Sanford on one of the piano candle sconces (Jessie Coleridge-Taylor, 15).

how the composer gathered and manipulated his source material. It is likely that he did not foresee that his music would embrace elements from his father's heritage.

By the time Coleridge-Taylor graduated the Royal College of Music at the age of 20, he had produced a more prolific output than the composers Elgar, Vaughn Williams,[21] Delius, and Holst[22] at his age. By the end of his college study, he was "no longer a student who composed but a composer who still studied."[23] With more than several works published, the young man was slowly making a name for himself, especially with the success of his *Clarinet Quintet*. Sadly, success did not equal wealth, and throughout his school years and afterwards, he had to teach on the side to make ends meet. Though Geoffrey Free alleges that the composer found teaching a draining ordeal and one that he would have liked to have given up had he the opportunity, Avril Coleridge-Taylor states that the principal of the Crystal Palace School of Art and Music[24] remarked that Coleridge-Taylor spent extra time and care when he taught his students. In addition to teaching violin during evenings at the Croydon Conservatory, the composer also conducted the string orchestra of the same conservatory, later adding a ladies' choir. The work he undertook not only contributed to his finances, but also helped him receive patronage from the wealthy, prominent musical families in Croydon. Wealthy female patrons in particular were quick to support his activities.

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[21] Avril Coleridge-Taylor writes that traces of her father's music are found in Vaughn Williams' *Sea Symphony* and *Hugh the Drover,* specifically in the nature of string writing and chords. The late Hubert Foss agreed with this claim (Avril Coleridge-Taylor, 20).
[22] Holst was a full year older than Coleridge-Taylor; "had he lived Coleridge-Taylor's life span his compositions would be a footnote in history" (Green, 48).
[23] Ibid., 39.
[24] Coleridge-Taylor taught at the Crystal Palace School of Art and Music from 1905. He also taught at the Trinity College of Music from 1903, the Croydon School, and had private pupils (Avril Coleridge-Taylor, 61).

One particular female Croydon resident and fellow student at the Royal College of Music became a large influence in the composer's life. Though they had often seen each other in school, Jessie Fleetwood Walmisley and Coleridge-Taylor rarely exchanged words (she was six years his senior) until she spotted him at an annual Christmas pantomime at the Croydon Theatre.[25] During the summer holidays, Jessie, who was given the task of learning the accompaniment to several Schubert violin and piano duets, sought Coleridge-Taylor's violin talents. The duo eventually performed at a musical soiree held by her parents, with Coleridge-Taylor playing his *Legende* on violin and Jessie accompanying him on the piano.[26] Their desire to wed shocked Jessie's parents, who expressed concern over Coleridge-Taylor's heritage and were afraid that both he and Jessie would be ostracized in their careers and personal lives. Jessie's parents considered Coleridge-Taylor to be "only a generation removed from status of an African savage," and feared that he would "perhaps take her to the 'Dark Continent,' compel her to live amongst his naked relations and wear no clothes."[27] Likewise, her siblings expressed their disapproval, stating that they disliked the idea of a black brother-in-law. Disturbed by their attitude, Jessie sought a second opinion from her priest before marrying Coleridge-Taylor later in his career, in 1899.[28]

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[25] Jessie Coleridge-Taylor, 11.

[26] In her memoirs, Jessie stated the difference between herself and Coleridge-Taylor by stating that he was a scholar, while she was a student – "a distinction with a difference" (Ibid., 11).

[27] Green, 53.

[28] On the morning of their marriage, Jessie received a telegram from Coleridge-Taylor which consisted of a quote from his cantata *Hiawatha*. He had written "You shall enter in my wigwam for the heart's right hand I gave you." Coleridge-Taylor's reference to *Hiawatha* on this important day, and the Samuel Coleridge-Taylor Society's quote from *Hiawatha* on the cup presented to him indicate that the cantata was both personally meaningful to the composer and to the public, which will be discussed later. Jessie received many love letters from Coleridge-Taylor throughout the course of their relationship, and by her wish, these letters were scattered in his coffin at his funeral (Jessie Coleridge-Taylor, 27-34).

The black poet Paul Laurence Dunbar was another contact who became a formidable force in the composer's life. The African American community, particularly the arts community, was making headway in the States (a phenomenon that will be discussed in the next chapter). Dunbar, the son of a former slave and the protégée of black rights activist Frederick Douglass, visited England in the spring of 1897. The success of his poems, which depicted plantation life, love, and philosophy, allowed him the opportunity to travel and give lectures. Samuel Coleridge-Taylor's daughter, Gwendoline (later known as Avril), surmises that it was Dunbar who made Coleridge-Taylor conscious of his racial origins and instilled in him pride for his heritage. In 1897-1898, his compositions certainly took a new direction from his student works. New compositions more often than not used exotic titles derived from overseas stories and scenes. Coleridge-Taylor also set Dunbar's lyrics for his 1897 *Seven African Romances* and *A Corn Song*, and the two performed collaborative poetry and music recitals together throughout Croydon and London.

Dunbar wrote the words to Coleridge-Taylor's dramatic work *Dream Lovers*, in which Lady Katherine falls in love with Torado, a mulatto prince. Around the same time, Coleridge-Taylor's four-movement *African Suite* was written for solo piano. The last movement, *Danse Negre*, was originally for strings, with the original manuscript bearing a quotation from Dunbar. While it is unknown whether actual African songs are used, the second and third movements, *A Negro Love Song* and *Valse*, respectively, suggest some rudimentary knowledge of African music. Either Dunbar or the Fisk Jubilee Singers from Tennessee, who become well-known in England from the 1870s, may have educated him. In the 1890s, manager Frederick Loudin established a similar choir in

England, and it is not too farfetched to assume that Coleridge-Taylor had heard their performances or at least became familiar with their songs, particularly since Loudin became a close family friend to himself and Jessie. *The Times* noted the importance of the *African Suite*, as they classified it a genuine racial composition, "not the imperfectly remembered mannerisms of the English comic song as seen through the medium of the American coloured race."[29]

Though these pieces marked "the first flush of his enthusiasm for his racial roots"[30] it is important to reassert that Coleridge-Taylor never succumbed to totally abandoning the European style that permeated his student works. Coleridge-Taylor's self-identity was staunchly rooted as an Englishman, and much of the African inspiration he received was used in an exploratory manner, rather than to be used for a revolutionary cause. Even after composing several more works inspired by Africa or the songs of African Americans, the composer himself considered his music as "African" in a more "general expressive sense."[31] He did not resort to writing such music without traditional European harmonies and forms, and he chose to lean upon Classical procedures to reinterpret Negro music. This fuels the debate as to how Coleridge-Taylor perceived himself and what function he wanted his music to fulfill; yet understanding of his oeuvre is lacking, for he stands as one of the English composers of the late 19th century whose musical style "has not been fully analyzed by modern scholars."[32] Yet another point of

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[29] Avril Coleridge-Taylor, 71.
[30] Self, 59.
[31] Richards, Paul, "A Pan-African Composer? Coleridge-Taylor and Africa," *Black Music Research Journal* Vol. 21 No. 2 (Autumn 2001): 568.
[32] Thompson, Jewel Taylor, *Samuel Coleridge-Taylor: The Development of His Compositional Style* (New Jersey: The Scarecrow Press, Inc.), xi.

interest concerns the fact that the composer never travelled to Africa, nor did he – at least in written form – express the desire to do so; however, he did express the desire to travel to Germany and attempted to make the journey, although this attempt was not successful. Jessie wrote that Coleridge-Taylor set out for Berlin three times but never made it further than Eastbourne.[33]

The publisher's editor August Jaeger (known today as "Nimrod" in the Elgar *Enigma Variations*), impacted the composer's life around the same time Coleridge-Taylor formed relationships with Dunbar and Jessie Walmisley. Jaeger, who worked extensively with the composer Elgar, was a part of the Novello publishing house and worked arduously to promote the composer. In the autumn of 1895, Coleridge-Taylor performed the *Ballade in d minor* with violinist Isabella Donkersley at the Kensington Town Hall. It is highly likely that August Johannes Jaeger, one of the driving forces behind Novello & Company, was in attendance at this performance and was captivated by Coleridge-Taylor's compositional skill, which buoyed his decision to work with the composer. Novello published the work, an unusual move for them, as they were the leading publisher of choral music.[34]

1898 was a busy year for Coleridge-Taylor. His *Four Characteristic Waltzes* was performed in the Proms, marking his first London performance, and the same piece was later performed for the Queen at Osborne.[35] Elgar, who had been invited to write a commission for the Three Choirs Festival, found himself tied up with work and referred

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[33] Green, 202.
[34] Ibid., 35.
[35] Jessie writes that her husband's vision for the piece was to have the subjects treated in Brahmsian waltz rhythm rather than emulating a ballroom waltz style (Jessie Coleridge-Taylor, 34).

Coleridge-Taylor in his place. For the occasion Coleridge-Taylor wrote the *Ballade in a minor* for orchestra and, having to travel to Gloucester to conduct the piece, met Elgar in person at one of the rehearsals. The work reaped great critical reception, as did Coleridge-Taylor's brilliant conducting, and the near-instantaneous public recognition for the composer enabled him to return to Croydon the next day as a recognized artist. But these successes, momentous as they were, would soon be overshadowed by the success of his cantata *Hiawatha's Wedding Feast*.

Chapter 2: HIAWATHA AND AMERICA

Coleridge-Taylor's cantata and arguably most well-known work *Hiawatha's Wedding Feast* took its ideas and text from Henry Wadsworth Longfellow's poem of the same name. Longfellow's *Hiawatha's Wedding Feast* (1855) depicted a romanticized portrait of the "Red Indian" in which Hiawatha, a legend from Native American folklore, falls in love with the squaw Minnehaha, slays an evil magician, discovers corn, and invents the written language. Longfellow, perhaps the most influential poet of the late 19th century, was a source of inspiration to many artists and composers; Elgar and Arthur Sullivan were among the list of composers who set his poems.

In 1865, news of the plight of Native Americans reached England. Shortly after the Civil War, the rush to secure gold, agriculture, and land ensued in the massacre of Native Americans through warfare and/or disease. Treatises were shattered. The murder of Chief Sitting Bull of the Sioux tribe in the winter of 1890 culminated in the Massacre of Wounded Knee, dissolving the American Indian Nation. England sympathized with the Native Americans, and thus the circumstances were ripe for setting *Hiawatha's Wedding Feast* to music. Other composers, including Delius, Charles Converse, and Frederick Cowen tried their hand at setting Longfellow's poem. The second and third movements of Antonin Dvořák's *New World Symphony* also had connections to the poem.[36]

While he felt disinterest towards teaching, Coleridge-Taylor found a fascination with theatrical music which would haunt him for the rest of his life. Unlike in England,

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[36] Self, 69-70.

opera was a prevalent force in continental Europe. English composers who lacked the resources to tackle the European opera houses had to settle for the "tamer" cantata which was in demand amongst choirs, festivals, and publishers.[37] The numerous choral societies scattered about England wanted cantatas, and this need supplemented the income of English composers.[38]

Coleridge-Taylor wrote the cantata *Hiawatha's Wedding Feast* throughout 1897 and 1898. It was no coincidence that he composed a work themed on marriage while agonizing over Jessie Walmisley. Novello purchased the composition for a mere 15 pounds, never dreaming that the piece would make a tremendous profit. Coleridge-Taylor sold it for such a paltry sum because he, as always, was in immediate need of money. When *Hiawatha's Wedding Feast* reached the heights of popularity, Coleridge-Taylor was unable to reap any monetary profit from it and had to keep teaching arduously to make a living. The overwork he endured was a large factor in his early death, and eventually led to the creation of the Performing Rights Society in 1914, where fees were collected for the live performance of sheet music.

The first performance of *Hiawatha's Wedding Feast* took place at the Royal College of Music in 1898. Stanford conducted and the sick Arthur Sullivan, the first director of the College when it was known as the Training School, insisted that he would

[37] Self, 55.
[38] Coleridge-Taylor's attempts to compose theatrical works beyond cantatas would culminate in only meagre success, much to his chagrin. In October 1910, Coleridge-Taylor's *Hiawatha* trilogy received a semi-operatic treatment at the hands of York's Missionary Exhibition. The staging, modified for action and scenery, included a painted background and a wigwam, with the chorus placed offstage (Self, 270-271). The soloists acted the parts of Hiawatha, Minnehaha, Nokomis, Famine, and Fever onstage. The dramatization of the work was an encouragement to a composer who longed to create successful works for the operatic stage (Self, 134). This motivated the composer to work on a ballet version of the *Hiawatha* trilogy, which was sadly very unsuccessful.

go even if he had to be carried into the room. Reviews of the production in the *Times* and *Manchester Review* lauded the music as fresh and original, brilliant and colorful, rich and sensual. In his diary, Sullivan praised Coleridge-Taylor's genius, saying that "he is a composer – not a music-maker."[39] Coleridge-Taylor, nervous and apprehensive, listened to the performance from behind a screen and scurried away from the audience's applause. The question remains open as to whether or not Coleridge-Taylor was familiar with Iroquois music, but he was surely familiar with Dvořák's *New World Symphony*, which incorporated legitimate Iroquois melodies. Some of Dvořák's influence was channeled into his work – the score was lush and symphonic, while using only a few basic ideas which were continuously transformed and reworked throughout the cantata.

The popularity of *Hiawatha's Wedding Feast* rose almost instantaneously, due to both the social content of the work and the originality of the choral writing. Performances of *Hiawatha* sprung up in England, the United States, South Africa, and Canada; only one other choral work -- Handel's *Messiah* – rivaled its popularity. The success of the cantata made a profound change in Coleridge-Taylor's life; he was to be busier than ever with travels, adjudicating at competitions, conducting ensembles, and dealing with the jealousy of his colleagues. At the time of Coleridge-Taylor's death, the *Cheltenham Examiner* wrote that in English-speaking countries, it "would be difficult to find a choral society which at one time or another during the past ten years has not given the whole or at least a part of the "Hiawatha" trilogy."[40] There was a greater demand for his music, and he in due time expanded the cantata into a trilogy.

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[39] Avril Coleridge-Taylor, 32.
[40] Green, 207.

He had hoped for the opportunity to write more chamber and symphonic works, but the success of *Hiawatha's Wedding Feast* was such that he was immediately pigeonholed as a cantata composer. *Hiawatha's Wedding Feast* easily overshadowed the few instrumental works he completed around the same time. The violin and piano works *Gypsy Suite op. 20* and the *Sonata in d minor*, op. 28 still shared a modicum of success, however. The *Gypsy Suite* in particular, with its light but brilliant writing, was championed by the American violinist Maud Powell, who included it in her concert repertoire. Coleridge-Taylor would later dedicate his violin concerto to her.[41]

Coleridge-Taylor's confidence grew as his conducting matured and improved. In 1897, the Croydon Orchestral Society was formed.[42] He conducted the amateur orchestra from 1898 onwards, but although the programs included works such as the Weber overtures and Schubert's *Unfinished Symphony*, Coleridge-Taylor rarely used any of his own works. Amidst these new responsibilities, the North Staffordshire Festival, the Three Choirs Festival, and Norwich Festival all commissioned new works from him for 1899.

For the North Staffordshire Festival, Coleridge-Taylor began the sequel to *Hiawatha's Wedding Feast*, titled *The Death of Minnehaha*. The first performance took place at a festival in Hanley, October 1899, barely a year after the first performance of *Hiawatha's Wedding Feast*. Avril Coleridge-Taylor regards *The Death of Minnehaha* as the stronger work and though this is a matter of opinion, the subject matter was a great

[41] Self, 81.
[42] Ibid., 84.

deal more intense than its predecessor, as tragedy, suffering, famine, and fever strike the protagonists.[43]

For the Norwich Festival, Coleridge-Taylor wrote the Overture to *Hiawatha's Wedding Feast*. Musical connections to *The Wedding Feast* and *Minnehaha* were practically non-existent, and inspiration came more from the melodies of the Fisk Jubilee Singers. One song in particular, *Nobody Knows the Trouble I See*, was quoted in the Overture. Perhaps Coleridge-Taylor saw some similarity between the plight of African Americans and Native Americans and used the spiritual to create a bridge between the two groups.

The Overture was first performed at the Norwich Festival in 1899, and later at the Proms in 1900. Despite its good run, Elgar's letter to Jaeger depicts his waning support of Coleridge-Taylor, where he deems the Overture to be "rot" and "uninteresting."[44] He also suggests that support and backing for Coleridge-Taylor came from the public's sympathy to his color.

The final part of the trilogy, titled *Hiawatha's Departure*, was commissioned by the Royal Choral Society, who performed the entire trilogy at the Royal Albert Hall in March 1900 with the composer at the podium. Coleridge-Taylor was a mere 24 years old when he completed all three parts of the renowned and acclaimed *The Song of Hiawatha*. The *Birmingham Post* labeled Coleridge-Taylor a "second Tchaikovsky; in economy of

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[43] Avril Coleridge-Taylor, 38.
[44] Edward Elgar, ed. Percy M. Young, *Letters to Nimrod: Edward Elgar to August Jaeger, 1897- 1908*, (London: Dennis Dobson, 1965), 74.

material, another Dvořák."[45] The performance was a momentous one; Thompson states that

> …to have an entire evening devoted to a single work, by a choir and orchestra of a thousand people, before an enormous audience, and in the largest concert room in the United Kingdom were elements great enough to upset the equilibrium of any young man

and remarked on the rarity of such an opportunity.[46]

Novello bought both *Minnehaha* and *Departure* for 250 pounds, which gave Coleridge-Taylor enough momentary financial security to marry Jessie in December 1895. After their honeymoon, they returned to Croydon. The Boer War in South Africa was just six weeks old at that time.

Hiawatha's Departure was slated for performance in the Royal College of Music in March 1900. Jaeger, however, was unimpressed with the music and enlisted Elgar to retouch some spots. He claimed that the chorus was mediocre and commonplace.[47] Rather than having Elgar retouch the music, Coleridge-Taylor eventually rewrote the work to appease his publisher. However, the original unaltered music was performed at the Birmingham Festival. The black American activist W.E.B. Du Bois was present in the audience, and despite the poor choir, was impressed. This was his first encounter with Coleridge-Taylor's work, and he would later befriend and support the composer during his journey to the United States. That his black brethren were making headway

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[45] Avril Coleridge-Taylor, 40.
[46] Thompson, 10.
[47] Elgar's growing disdain stems more from jealousy than a just critical appraisal of Coleridge-Taylor's work. In 1900, Coleridge-Taylor's *Hiawatha Wedding Feast* was performed at the Birmingham Festival along with the first performance of Elgar's *The Dream of Gerontius.* The audience, puzzled by Elgar's work, received *Gerontius* coldly, but showed enthusiasm and appreciation for *Hiawatha* (Richards, 237).

into the world of serious classical music – a staunchly white-operated world – made a profound impression on the activist.

As the anti-slavery movement had grown during the 1830s, attitudes towards blacks slowly changed for the better. Harriet Beecher Stowe's *Uncle Tom's Cabin*, published in 1832, created a sensation in both America and England. The novel depicted the true brutality of slave life in the Southern American plantations, but its popularity in England had less to do with England's sympathy on the plight of African slaves and more to do with England's antipathy towards America. The American conceit of being the most enlightened and free country was shattered by Stowe's novel, much to the delight of the English.[48] In any case, life for the black professional in England during the first half of the nineteenth century saw less harassment and more equality with his white brethren. Of note was the life of the colored violinist and composer Joseph Emidy, who worked in Cornwell until his death in 1835. Throughout his career, he suffered very little prejudice.[49]

However, these views dissipated during the second half of the nineteenth century, as blacks became regarded as members of lower society. Dr. James Hunt and the Anthropological Society of London (formed in 1863) introduced the idea of "scientific" racism, where the level of black intelligence was vastly inferior to that of whites. Across the country, black troops suffered racism and abuse at the hands of their leaders and white colleagues.[50] It was this world that Coleridge-Taylor was born into in 1875.

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[48] Ephraim Doughlass Adams, *Great Britain and the American Civil War* (New York: Russell & Russell, 1958), 33.
[49] Self, 143.
[50] Ibid., 143.

Though England never succumbed to the level of segregation enacted by the Jim Crow laws in America,[51] Coleridge-Taylor still encountered instances of racism in his country. Jessie recounts an event where a visitor from the Church of England joined the couple at tea time and, gazing at Coleridge-Taylor, remarked, "It really is surprising; you eat like we do, dress like we do and talk as we do."[52] Another instance included a clergyman who visited Jessie, ignorant that she was the wife of Samuel Coleridge-Taylor, to discuss mixed marriages and the status of colored folk. Upon remarking that he considered colored people to make excellent servants, Jessie retorted that "colour prejudice is the greatest injustice, and a dishonor to the Creator who made both black and white"[53] before revealing her identity as the wife of the composer.

Even at the Royal College of Music, Coleridge-Taylor encountered an instance where a fellow student uttered a racial insult just as Stanford was passing by. Stanford took Coleridge-Taylor to his room to console him, assuring him that Coleridge-Taylor "had more music in his little finger than in the whole of that student's body."[54]

It can be argued that black empowerment and black consciousness came into fruition with the help of the arts during the late nineteenth century. While Coleridge-Taylor was still a student, Antonin Dvořák's *New World Symphony* made its world debut in Carnegie Hall in the winter of 1893. The work, conceived and written during the composer's tenure at the National Conservatory in New York City, embodied his desire

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[51] There were instances of segregation, however, such as the ban on restaurants and pubs serving black customers in London in 1903 (Green, 171).
[52] The composer was too flabbergasted to reply, but Jessie understood that many of these sorts of remarks stemmed from ignorance, though she too was incensed at these words (Jessie Coleridge-Taylor, 37).
[53] Ibid., 37.
[54] Avril Coleridge-Taylor, 24.

to establish an American school of music based on Native American and African American melodies. He deemed these melodies to be the foundation of American music, and with the assistance of one of the conservatory students, the black singer Harry T. Burleigh, Dvořák grew familiar with the plantation melodies that Burleigh's grandfather had passed on to his children and children's children. The black leaders of Harlem attended the premiere of the New World Symphony with anticipation, for it was the first time that the melodies of African Americans were elevated as high art. Burleigh found Dvořák's dedication to African American spirituals to be unusual and touching, as racism and prejudice continued to be prevalent during the time. It is unusual that Dvořák, who used Czech melodies with much less a nationalistic and revolutionary mindset than Smetana, championed the melodies of Native Americans and African Americans with bravado and upon learning the history of Burleigh's grandfather, a former slave, empathized with their cause.[55]

Dvořák's American visit in 1892 marked a period where America was ready "to excel in the development of its own musical culture."[56] Jeanette Thurber, the idealistic patron and founder of the now defunct National Conservatory of Music in New York, nursed an ambition to create an American school of composition and invited the Czech composer to the States to carry out this aim. Dvořák accepted the challenge, stating, "I came to discover what young Americans had in them, and to help them to express it."[57] Musical nationalism was a growing trend with composers Dvořák, Tchaikovsky, Sibelius,

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[55] Craig von Buseck, *Nobody Knows: The Forgotten Story of One of the Most Influential Figures in American Music* (Grand Rapids: Baker Books, 2014), 147-153.
[56] Karen A. Shaffer and Neva Garner Greenwood, *Maud Powell: Pioneer American Violinist* (Ames: Iowa State University Press, 1988), 120.
[57] Ibid., 120.

Grieg, and Smetana, and these composers reworked and elevated national idioms and folk songs into European art music for revolutionary or experimental purposes. Dvořák's assertion that the American school of music should be founded on Negro and Native American melodies not only elevated the music of these people, but the people themselves during an era of segregation and violence.

Harry T. Burleigh continued to carry out Dvořák's mission after the composer returned to his homeland, and was the first black composer to turn the spiritual into art song. Buoyed by his endeavors, the American black community created a musical scene from 1895 to 1920 that was more diverse than the Harlem Renaissance that would soon overtake and overshadow their doings.[58] Black minstrel shows, African American symphonies, performers, and songs thrived at this time. The Fisk Jubilee Singers, an all-black choir that sang compositions by African Americans, toured Europe to raise funds for their struggling college in Tennessee. It is not too forward to surmise that the interest Dvořák's symphony generated towards African American melodies helped the success of the Fisk Jubilee Singers.

Coleridge-Taylor, meanwhile, operated in England – a continent apart from Burleigh's endeavors in the United States. He considered himself as squarely an Englishman, despite his self-consciousness due to his skin color. His view towards himself grew more intricate, however, as black American artists and writers ventured into England. The Fisk Jubilee Singers toured England in 1874, 1876, and 1884, bringing with them African American spirituals which Coleridge-Taylor heard for the first time.

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[58] Samuel A. Floyd Jr., "The Invisibility and Fame of Harry T. Burleigh: Retrospect and Prospect," *Black Music Research Journal* Vol. 24 No. 2 (Autumn 2004): 191.

Their performances gradually ceased but Coleridge-Taylor maintained a life-long friendship with their director, Frederick Loudin.

In 1900, the first Pan-African Conference was held at the Westminster Town Hall from the 23rd of July to the 27th. The event, organized by the African Association and Trinidad lawyer Henry Sylvester Williams, aimed to send a petition to Queen Victoria regarding the grievances in South Africa, and appeal to the Nations of the World for equal rights, opportunities, and privileges regardless of the color of one's skin. Representatives arrived from Africa, America, Canada, the West Indies, and various parts of England. Coleridge-Taylor, at the age of twenty-five, attended. Other prominent figures included Frederick Loudin, the manager of the Fisk Jubilee Singers, and Professor W.E.B. Du Bois. As Coleridge-Taylor's involvement with black society strengthened, so too did his stature amongst that community. He gradually became a beacon of hope for colored people – local black beggars and visitors from Africa traveled to his house to seek his advice on various matters.

His marriage to Jessie also heightened his status amongst the white folk of Edwardian England. Although her family had voiced concerns about Coleridge-Taylor bringing down her status, in truth her presence served to mediate between Coleridge-Taylor and the white public. Perhaps she also stabilized Coleridge-Taylor's self-identity as an Englishman, for she readily created a "normal" life and family with him. Despite some events of racism encountered in England, this normalcy may have prevailed throughout his life had he not voyaged to America.

In America, Coleridge-Taylor was respected with a fervor "little short of deification,"[59] especially in Washington DC, where many former slaves had gravitated after their emancipation. The first American performance of *Hiawatha's Wedding Feast*, given by the Caecilia Musical Society of Boston, was so popular that it was repeated a mere two days later. Coleridge-Taylor received the support of the most influential artists active in American during that time, including Harry T. Burleigh[60] and the Hilyer family, a colored couple based in Washington DC, who were both amateur singers. Mrs. M. E. Hilyer dreamt of creating an American choral society dedicated to performing the works of Coleridge-Taylor. This vision led to the formation of the Washington Coleridge-Taylor Society in 1901. The group was without precedent in that it was composed entirely of colored singers (white singers were denied) and trained by a black conductor. Although the Fisk Jubilee Singers had also been composed of black singers, the Society was composed on a larger scale with over 200 voices, brought about by black initiative and sustained by black resources.[61] Almost from the outset they appealed time and again to Coleridge-Taylor to journey to America and conduct their group.

Coleridge-Taylor wrote to Hilyer regarding his requirements for the ensemble. The composer wished to have around 300 good singers, as well as a professional (not amateur) orchestra. He expressed that the orchestra could be mixed-race, as he did not expect to find many colored players yet. The colored players had to play as well as or

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[59] Self, 161.
[60] Burleigh and Coleridge-Taylor's friendship was further cemented by their common interest in the music and ideals of Antonin Dvořák (Avril Coleridge-Taylor, 53).
[61] Jewel Taylor Thompson, *Samuel Coleridge-Taylor: The Development of His Compositional Style* (Metuchen, NJ: The Scarecrow Press, Inc., 1994), 12.

better than their white colleagues. There was also the question of whether the white players would be willing to accompany a black choir.[62]

Coleridge-Taylor's visit to the Coleridge-Taylor Society was continuously postponed, as new professional and familial responsibilities emerged for the busy composer. There was also the letter that the composer sent to Mr. Hilyer in 1901, where he expressed doubt as to whether the aims of the Coleridge-Taylor Society would aid African Americans in any way:

> I cannot but believe that all this real striving and earnest work will do something to leaven the prejudice between black and white; or am I wrong, and is it a fact that it rather tends to increase it, as I was last week informed by a coloured American?[63]

In the Spring of 1903, the Coleridge-Taylor Society went ahead and performed without the conductor. *Hiawatha* was performed in the Metropolitan African Methodist Church with Harry Burleigh as one of the soloists. *The Boston Herald* drew connections between the black ensemble and the Native Americans of Longfellow's poem, stating that "no white society could interpret it as sympathetically as this colored choral society."[64] There was no orchestra, a fact that disconcerted Coleridge-Taylor, who was informed of the performance by Hilyer. The Society made a new impassioned appeal to the composer to visit, telling him that the Society "was born of love of your work, and christened in your honor, and for two years has studied your masterpieces inspired by the hope that you would sooner or later come to America…"[65] Despite their words, Coleridge-Taylor was unyielding and demanded the assurance of a first-class orchestra

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[62] Self writes that Coleridge-Taylor did not think to ask whether the white players of the orchestra would be willing to play under himself, a black conductor (Self, 150).
[63] Berwick Sayers , 118.
[64] Self, 151.
[65] Ibid., 151.

before he would visit. The Society, who had their hopes set on an all-black presentation of *Hiawatha*, eventually hired the Marines Band.

It is important to note that while Coleridge-Taylor grew interested in his origins and the plight of colored folk, he never grew radicalized, nor did he actively use his art to champion their cause. Mr. Hilyer sent Coleridge-Taylor his research regarding the racial origins and achievements of the African American population, no doubt hoping to rope the composer into the "racial responsibility" of championing black rights.

Coleridge-Taylor responded carefully, making it clear that he was not going to join their cause. He did not possess a militant personality, and he was not interested in using his art for revolutionary purposes. His sole aim in using African melodies and African-inspired melodies in some of his pieces, as written in the preface of his *24 Negro Melodies*, was to do for African music what Dvořák did for Bohemian music. That is to say, he merely wished to present melodies to an interested audience rather than impart a deeper message. Coleridge-Taylor also always used African melodies in a European musical context, unlike Bartok who present folk melodies in their unadulterated style.

During the time Coleridge-Taylor made an impact on England's musical scene, the trend of drawing influence from nationalism and folk elements gave rise to a new way of music writing. Although this new way of writing was often used for patriotic purposes (Smetana, the Russian Mighty "Five," Grieg in Norway), some composers (such as Dvořák with Bohemian melodies) used such folk elements solely for musical exploration and to fulfill self-generated interest. Nationalism in English music came at a relatively later time, as the music of Vaughan Williams and Holst gained public recognition during the first half of the 20th century. Coleridge-Taylor's musical path was more multi-

dimensional, which makes his oeuvre as hard to pin as his identity. His work challenged and inspired both his English colleagues and the colored artists in America, but one has the sense that the composer's musical success relied less on an ambition to promote a revolutionary cause, and more from survival and self-interest.[66]

Yet there were times when one suspects that Coleridge-Taylor may have had a deeper message to present. In 1901, he was working on *Toussaint L'Ouverture*, the subject of which concerned the colored revolutionary. Coleridge-Taylor conducted the work at the Proms in October of that year. The subject matter is one of significance, as it points to Coleridge-Taylor's further immersion into black politics and black history.[67] There are no words from Coleridge-Taylor as to why he felt drawn to this subject matter, but one can speculate that the plight of the African people was on his mind during its conception.

As other American ensembles began to perform *Hiawatha*, Coleridge-Taylor eventually acquiesced to the Society's invitation. Mr. Hilyer, elated with the decision, took the opportunity to send the composer some reading material. Included was the biography of Frederick Douglas, which gave Coleridge-Taylor background information on the lives of Africans in the United States, as well as a copy of W.E.B. DuBois' *The Souls of Black Folk.* In addition to black American art, black American politics was to

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[66] There are also those who argue that the brevity of the composer's life (he died at the age of 37) did not allow him enough time to full develop a mature compositional style (Thompson, 27).
[67] Pierre Dominique Toussaint (1743-1803) was a Haitian slave and the grandson of an African chieftain. After the outlawing of slavery in France in 1789, Toussaint headed the freedom movement in Haiti (which had been colonized and controlled by the French) as France, Britain, and Spain strove to suppress this rebellion of slaves. His military and political prowess earned him the nickname of "The Black Napoleon," and he drew inspiration from the French Revolution to fight for the rights of the colored people while carefully and cleverly negotiating with the countries that sought to suppress him. Though he appointed himself the governor-general of Haiti in 1801, he was captured by Napoleon's men and brought to France where he died in prison. Haiti received its independence in 1804 (Avril Coleridge-Taylor, 49).

influence Coleridge-Taylor's life, and perhaps in turn influence the way others perceived the composer as well.

DuBois and Booker T. Washington were the two leading black activists in America at the time; however, their views represented the "twin poles" of the Black American dilemma. Washington took the stance of non-violence while DuBois believed in militancy towards the white majority. Washington, the older of the two activists, was the son of a female slave and an unknown father. From a young age he yearned for a higher education and slowly moved up the ranks to meet this goal, from being a trade teacher to attending college and ultimately embarking on a teaching career. His most influential speech, known today as the Atlanta Compromise, was delivered in the 1895 Atlanta Exposition where he advocated the trading of black civil, social, and political rights for low-level economic opportunities and non-violence with whites. Advising his audience to "Cast down your bucket where you are," Washington's level of tolerance prompted him to advocate the protected ballot, where blacks were given tests to pass before they had the potential chance of casting a vote. Though his moderation won him popularity with both whites and blacks, many were dissatisfied with Washington's leniency, especially as more than 3,500 lynchings took place between 1885 and 1910.

Du Bois, on the other hand, was a lifelong academic, having received an education from Harvard, Atlanta University, and Berlin. Eventually finding the world of academia too stoic against the reality of racism and violence directed at blacks, Du Bois' *The Souls of Black Folk* challenged Washington's acceptance towards several white policies exerted against blacks. Calling for "organized determination and aggressive action," Du Bois' advocacy against submission impacted Coleridge-Taylor. Perhaps for

the first time he understood why America begged him to visit, and why the Hilyers regarded him as an exceptional role model for their race. When Mr. Hilyer stated that "the Negro race is going to be saved by its exceptional men," surely he included Coleridge-Taylor in that roster of such men. In a letter to the composer written around 1907, Hilyer expressed the importance of Coleridge-Taylor's work and its impact on America:

> In composing *Hiawatha* you have done the colored people of the U.S. a service which, I am sure, you never dreamed of when composing it. It acts as a source of inspiration for us, not only musically but in other lines of endeavor. When we are going to have a *Hiawatha* concert here, for at least one month we seem, as it were, to be lifted above the clouds of American color prejudice, and to live there wholly oblivious of its disadvantages, and indeed of most of our other troubles.[68]

Coleridge-Taylor's affinity for Du Bois' work led to a mutual friendship between the two men. In 1905, the composer thanked Du Bois for his *Credo*, a work that has been compared to Martin Luther King's *I Have a Dream* with its assertions of "freedom uncursed by color." Coleridge-Taylor hung the present in his dining room for all to see.

1904 marked the fortieth year after America's Civil War. Despite the victory that went to the anti-slavery North, the living conditions for blacks in America remained miserable and decrepit. Segregation reigned, especially in the South, with supporters in the North. Lynchings were rampant, books such as Helen Bannermann's book *The Story of Little Black Sambo* were published without qualm,[69] and scientific racism – where the brains of white men were naturally superior to those of black men – was a popular theory.

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[68] Avril Coleridge-Taylor, 67.

[69] *The Story of Little Black Sambo* drew criticism, as "sambo" was considered to be a racial slur. Dissenters claimed that it illustrated a stereotypical depiction of a black man as a happy, laughing, lazy character, despite the fact that the protagonist Sambo was a South Indian boy in Bannermann's story. Published in 1898, Langston Hughes criticized the book in 1932 as being hurtful to black children. Even so, some illustrators and authors saw no racist overtones with the story, which remains popular in Japan to this day.

William Sanders Scarborough, the first classical African-American scholar, remarked that "the negro was worse off in the United States then he was 40 years ago. Avenues which were then open to him were now closed, and he had not the same means of culture as formerly."[70]

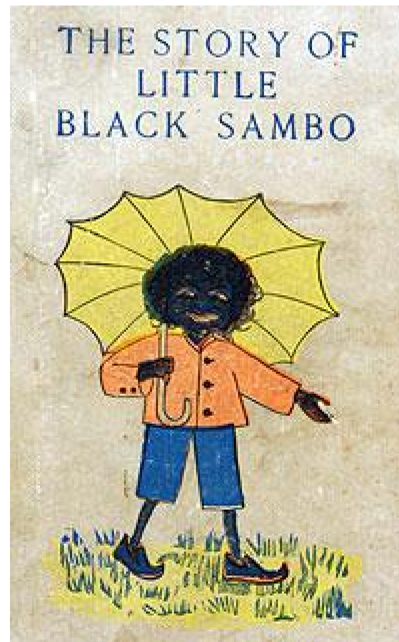

Figure 2.1. First US Edition Cover (1900) of *The Story of Little Black Sambo*

For Coleridge-Taylor, altercations began at his first train stop in America. The composer, after his colored status was commented upon by the train conductor, replied, "I am an Englishman." Geoffrey Free notes the significance in Coleridge-Taylor taking his stance as an Englishman rather than as a colored man, but perhaps Coleridge-Taylor was also concerned for his own safety. Precautions were also taken for the composer's visit, as he was advised to go no further south than Baltimore. His wife Jessie in particular feared for his safety as she remained behind in England.

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[70] Green, 192-3.

Racism extended to the concert halls as well, as the American black concert-going audience faced stringent rules regarding their presence. Blacks were only admitted to segregated seats in the theaters, particularly in the South; when *Hiawatha* was performed at a Southern theater, blacks were not even allowed on the pavement outside, despite the fact that the work was written by a colored composer.

While attending Sunday worship at a church in Washington DC, the composer was granted a great reception by the congregation and those who had travelled across the States just to see him and shake his hand.[71] The first concert with the Choral Society took place in November 1904 at the Convention Hall. The *Hiawatha* trilogy was performed to a sold-out audience, a third of which was white – evidence that interest in the composer was not limited to just those of his race. It was hoped that Theodore Roosevelt would attend, but as he was re-elected a week before the performance and busy with work, he sent his secretary in his place. The soloists, which included Harry T. Burleigh, were all colored, as was the chorus. The 52 members of the Marines Band comprised the orchestra, and the sight of them playing respectfully under a black conductor was considered to be a "moral victory." *The Georgia Baptist* took note of this, writing that the event "marked an epoch in the history of the negro race of the world. It was the first time that a man with African blood in his veins ever held a baton over the heads of the members of the great Marine Band."[72]

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[71] Jessie reveals a humorous anecdote where Coleridge-Taylor had been booked by a certain church to talk to the congregation instead of the pastor. He had no knowledge of this until last minute, and his shock was so great that he locked himself inside all day, much to the disappointment of the congregation, who had taken special pains to advertise the event (Jessie Coleridge-Taylor, 29).

[72] Self, 161.

The audience and critical response nearly reached enthusiastic delirium. For them, Coleridge-Taylor was a living realization of their highest ideal, "proof that the more exalted ways of creative art were open to and attainable by the negro."[73] The second concert took place the very next night. *Songs of Slavery* (the title of which was changed to *Choral Ballads*) was performed, a work that was also set to the poems of Longfellow and dedicated to the Society.

In November, the performers and their conductor traveled to Baltimore, Maryland where they repeated *Hiawatha* along with *Songs of Slavery*. The festival ended four days later with a public reception. Mrs. Hilyer and the Choral Society presented the composer with a silver cup engraved with Longfellow's words: "It is well for us, O brother/That you come so far to see us." Other valuable gifts included a Red Indian Peace Pipe Bag, which had belonged to White Cloud, Chief of the Chippewas, from Colonel Anderson of New York; and a baton made from the wood grown on Frederick Douglass' estate[74] from the M. Street High School for girls.

During a dinner given in his honor in Boston, Coleridge-Taylor met Booker T. Washington, who encouraged the composer to visit Tuskegee, Alabama, where he had opened a teachers' college[75] by the name of Tuskegee University some twenty years earlier. Though Coleridge-Taylor's views aligned more with those of Du Bois rather than Washington's "accomodationist philosophies," they shared a mutual respect, which is

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[73] Self, 161.
[74] Frederick Douglass (1818-1895) was a former slave and one of the great leaders of the abolitionist movement and a champion of equal rights for all people, including Native Americans, immigrants, and women. His revolutionary writing and speeches refuted the prejudice that slaves lacked the intellect to operate as independent citizens.
[75] Such institutions trained high school graduates to become teachers.

evidently felt in Washington's short "Biographical Notice of Samuel-Coleridge Taylor" in the composer's *Twenty-four Negro Melodies* op. 59 no. 1, Boston 1905. As the composer had asked for help in publicizing his tour, Washington suggested contacting Harry Burleigh for further guidance. He also stated that while Coleridge-Taylor's name was well known amongst the African American community, the composer was still relatively unknown in white America, save for in the exclusive musical circles. Despite such an observation, Coleridge-Taylor's first visit to the States ended up being a financial, social, and musical triumph.

Coleridge-Taylor's remaining days in America were spent touring universities, schools, and traveling to the White House to meet President Roosevelt. Further concerts were given, such as in Chicago's Music Hall where German violinist Theodore Spiering performed the *Gypsy* Suite and other works with the composer; for the same occasion, Coleridge-Taylor performed his own works at the piano. He visited Howard University and the Armstrong Training School in Washington DC, as both institutions provided higher education for blacks, but it is uncertain if these visits were made for pleasure or for purpose. After concerts in New York City and Philadelphia,[76] Coleridge-Taylor returned to Croydon in December.

In the face of all he had seen and experienced, was it possible that his American journey caused an identity crisis? Avril Coleridge-Taylor surmises that her father felt himself to be in a somewhat privileged position, since he was a British citizen and

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[76] This concerto took place at the Witherspoon Hall, with all proceeds donated to the building fund of the Douglass Memorial Hospital (Avril Coleridge-Taylor, 54).

therefore did not suffer the constraints of the African American.[77] Still, the sights of segregation – found even in Washington, D.C. – amazed the composer and perhaps heightened his concern on behalf of colored American citizens. But despite witnessing the African American's living conditions, the artistic side of Coleridge-Taylor was envious, for America provided more opportunities and showed a wider appreciation of music through public support. For this reason, he briefly considered emigrating.

Upon his immediate return, Coleridge-Taylor had an increased number of commitments, as he was appointed a staff member of the Crystal Palace School of Art and Music. His teaching roster, which included the colored composer and violinist Clarence Cameron White,[78] grew along with his conducting duties. In the Spring of 1905, his *24 Negro Melodies* was published and given to the Boston publisher Oliver Ditson in the hopes of capitalizing on the fame garnered from his American trip.[79]

Rather than being a mere marketing ploy however, the *24 Negro Melodies* was arguably inspired from his trip to America, as his encounters with African Americans and their stories must have stayed fresh in his mind. *24 Negro Melodies* used both African and African American melodies,[80] as well as one from the West Indies. The African melodies were taken from the collection of Swiss missionary Henri Alexander Junod, while the African American melodies were influenced from his friendship with Fisk

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[77] The composer writes: "As soon as people found out that I was English they were quite different" (Ibid., 55).

[78] Clarence Cameron White (1880-1960) was a black composer and violinist from Tennessee and a graduate of Oberlin College, which is noted for being the first college and conservatory to regularly admit black students. His interest was in using Negro songs as the basis and inspiration for his compositions, which included a ballet, violin compositions, and orchestral works amongst others.

[79] This fact is asserted by Geoffrey Self, but Avril Coleridge-Taylor writes that Oliver Ditson had commissioned the work from her father.

[80] Self notes that African melodies tend to use more repetitive phrases, while African American melodies comprise more of popular songs and hymns/gospels.

Jubilee Singers director Frederick Loudin. One of these melodies, *I'm Troubled in Mind*, had been made famous by the Fisk Jubilee Singers, and it is possible that the composer held a special affinity for it, as it was also the foundation of the *Symphonic Variations on an African Air,* first performed in 1906. In the preface, the composer lamented Loudin's death, stating that the man had enabled Coleridge-Taylor to appreciate the music of his race.

The aim of the collection was also relayed in the preface. Coleridge-Taylor stated that he hoped to achieve for black music what Brahms had achieved for Hungarian music, Grieg for Norwegian music, and Dvořák for Bohemian music; in short, to elevate and honor common folk music by transforming it into high art.

For *24 Negro Melodies* Coleridge-Taylor presented each original unadorned melody first before presenting his interpretation of it. The collection was sent to his former teacher Stanford, who in turn showed the work to composer and British folk music connoisseur Percy Grainger. Grainger noted that two of the tunes were of Irish origin and commented that it was "a curious instance of the transmigration of folk singers"[81] where Irish American melodies reached and merged with African American culture.

Ditson produced and brought out five arrangements for violin, cello, and piano in 1906, and published the piece with a preface by Booker T. Washington. The activist acknowledged the value of Coleridge-Taylor's art:

> It is especially gratifying that at this time, when interest in the plantation songs seems to be dying out with the generation that gave them birth, when the Negro song is in too many minds associated with "rag" music and the more reprehensible "coon" song, that the most cultivated musician of his race, a man

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[81] Avril Coleridge-Taylor, 72.

> of the highest aesthetic ideals, should seek to give permanence to the folk-songs of his people by giving them a new interpretation and an added dignity.[82]

Washington's mention of the coon song and rag music referred to two musical genres popular in America from the late 19th century to the early 20th century.[83] Though these promoted racist images of blacks, both blacks and whites engaged in their composition and performance. Meant to be humorous, coon songs caricatured African Americans as gamblers, lazy/violent drunks, ardent fans of watermelon and chicken, and promiscuous citizens.[84] Rag music sought to emulate the marches and jigs of African American bands and, in the process, mixed the syncopation style of African music with European classical tradition. Some rags, such as Ernest Hogan's *All Coons Look Alike to Me* perpetuated racial stereotypes of black people while others, such as Scott Joplin's *Maple Leaf Rag*, showed musical sophistication and heralded the beginning of jazz.

This trend of using new American musical genres to lampoon colored people also extended to the immensely popular minstrel shows, which often used blackface to caricaturize African Americans. Minstrel shows also gained popularity in England, spreading a misinformed and libelous image of black America.[85] To have music that promoted a positive image of black people was a rare and crucial novelty.

The *Five Choral Ballads* for SATB choir, written around the same time and performed in Norwich 1905, and based on Longfellow's *Poems on Slavery,* worked towards that end. Written in 1842 when the anti-slavery and pro-slavery forces in the

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[82] Avril Coleridge-Taylor, 139-140
[83] Coleridge-Taylor thought coon songs were rot, lacking in melody, and incorrectly portrayed Negro character. He stated that they had nothing to do with Negro melodies (Green, 133).
[84] James M. Dormon, "Shaping the Popular Image of Post-Reconstruction American Blacks: The 'Coon Song' Phenomenon of the Gilded Age," *American Quarterly* 40 (1998): 450-471.
[85] Green, 43.

States were at loggerheads, Self states that "for the first time in his work, a note of real anger appears" as Coleridge-Taylor shows empathy for "the slave dying in the rice fields, hunted in the swamp, singing psalms of praise in his dungeon."[86]

Coleridge-Taylor's second American visit took place in the Fall of 1906. Before the composer's departure from Croydon to Boston, Du Bois traveled home to Atlanta, where a race riot was taking place. Over 10,000 whites had beaten black people in the city and killed twenty five in the process. President Roosevelt remained silent on the matter.

The main event of Coleridge-Taylor's second visit was a three-day festival in Washington DC, which was preceded by a tour of major cities in America and Canada with Burleigh, soprano Lola Johnson, and violinist Felix Fowler Weir,[87] all of whom were colored artists. The three-day festival featured performances of the cantata *The Atonement, The Quadroon Girl*, and the thirteenth performance of *Hiawatha* in the capital by the Coleridge-Taylor Society. Meanwhile, *Hiawatha* was being presented across the country and sales of *Twenty-Four Negro Melodies* were well under way.

The composer also received an invitation to attend a recital in Norfolk, Connecticut along with Burleigh and Weir, as he was elected an honorary member of the Litchfield County Choral Union, founded by the Stoeckel family. Little did the composer know that this encounter would shape the creation of his violin concerto when he returned in 1910.

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[86] Self, 169.
[87] Weir later formed an all-black string quartet (Self, 150).

Carl Stoeckel (1858-1925) was the son of Gustav Jacob Stoeckel, a former Bavarian refugee and professor of music at Yale University and the first head of the Yale School of Music. Due to his father's influence, Carl Stoeckel became a patron of music, building the Music Shed (1906) on his estate at Norfolk as a performance venue for choral and orchestral music. In 1899, he established the Norfolk Festival in remembrance of his father. Every year a distinguished composer was commissioned to write a special work and invited to conduct it. Besides Coleridge-Taylor, composers Rachmaninoff, Kreisler, Sibelius, Stanford, and Vaughn Williams were all invited at various times to the Norfolk Festival, where they were received with the utmost level of hospitality by the Stoeckel family.[88] Avril states that both Carl Stoeckel and his wife, Ellen Battell Terry, held an interest in all things English, and this passion might have partially buoyed their interest towards Coleridge-Taylor.

Coleridge-Taylor's return to England resembled the one he made from his first journey to America. Upon setting foot back in Croydon, he was immediately busy with teaching, travelling, conducting, and composing duties. One of his newest compositions was the *Ballade for violin and piano in c minor*, op. 73 (1907), written for the German violinist Theodore Spiering.[89] Spiering accepted the piece into his repertoire and performed it extensively around Germany.

Elsewhere in the world, equality for blacks still seemed far in the horizon. British businessman Cecil Rhodes, a firm believer in British colonialism and the "founder" of

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[88] Coleridge-Taylor expressed gratitude and astonishment that a multi-millionaire preferred to support the arts rather than using the money for yachts and horses (Jessie Coleridge-Taylor, 56).
[89] The work, though written for Spiering to play, was dedicated to the Russian violinist Maurice Zacharewitsch. The first performance was given by the dedicatee and the composer in Leeds, 1907.

Rhodesia in Africa, was exploiting the diamond fields of South Africa. The profit created the Rhodes Scholarships at Oxford, reserved primarily for those of European descent. The world was still run by "a white-dominated global economy" with those like the "venerable colleges of Oxford taking money generated by semi-slave labour mining, all dressed for show and vanity."[90] A court case in the Gold Coast in 1909 drew many to voice distrust on an all-black jury, particularly when the accused was white. In spite of such social setbacks, art seemed to be making fast social progress, as Harry Burleigh was invited to England in 1908 to sing for the Broughton Castle, King Edward the Seventh, and the Duchess of Marlborough. His trip was funded entirely by American millionaire John Pierpont Morgan.

Carl Stoeckel made a visit to London in the Autumn of 1909. Coleridge-Taylor met with him in a hotel where Stoeckel presented him with gifts for his children, and the two men made an agreement for Coleridge-Taylor to visit Norfolk in the Spring of 1910 for the 20th anniversary of the Litchfield Choral Union. The works for performance were chosen by ballots by the members of the Choral Union, with Coleridge-Taylor's *Hiawatha* and Verdi's *Requiem* receiving the most votes; since "circumstances effectually prevented the appearance of Verdi" (the composer had passed away in 1901), Coleridge-Taylor won the ballot by default. In the meantime, Coleridge-Taylor was engaged with conducting *The Wedding Feast, Minnehaha*, and a new orchestral work titled *The Bamboula*, an extract from the *24 Negro Melodies*. The title referred to a type of African tambourine which was taken by slaves to the West Indies and to Southern

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[90] Green, 158.

States Louisiana and New Orleans, eventually becoming a dance in the 19th century.[91] Using a Creole tune (one that had been previously set by Gottschalk), Coleridge-Taylor created an orchestral rhapsody with a lush texture reminiscent of Tchaikovsky and an atmosphere reminiscent of Dvořák's *New World Symphony*. The composition was dedicated to the Stoeckel family.

May 1910 marked Coleridge-Taylor's third visit to America and his second visit to Norfolk, Connecticut where he was received by the Stoeckels. For the Litchfield Festival, Carl Stoeckel employed musicians from the New York Philharmonic, which was under the direction of Gustav Mahler. Upon asking the Litchfield Choral Union if anybody objected to playing under an Anglo-African conductor, only two members left in protest.[92] Coleridge-Taylor conducted the rehearsal of *The Bamboula* in Carnegie Hall, and his prowess earned him the affectionate title "the African Mahler" from the orchestra. He himself was well-pleased with them, and the next night conducted the first two parts of *Hiawatha*, Tchaikovsky's *Nutcracker* suite, Lalo's *Symphonie Espagnole* (with Fritz Kreisler as the soloist), and *The Bamboula*. The composer was also exposed to modern American music, such as the works of Horatio Parker, and expressed interest in performing these works in England.

The composer's rides through the Litchfield countryside and the laurel blossoms inspired him to sketch a new choral work, which was eventually titled *A Tale of Old*

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[91] Self, 213.
[92] Carl Stoeckel wrote: "…but there were many volunteers more than willing to take his place and to have the prestige of performing the part under so great a composer as Mr. Coleridge-Taylor" (Avril Coleridge-Taylor, 68). Stoeckel, like Hilyer, acknowledged the importance of Coleridge-Taylor's visits to the America: "I suppose that it is difficult for you in England and Europe generally to understand the unfortunate and unreasonable prejudice which still exists against Africans in the United States; but the fact is here, we must face it and do our best to overcome it, and I know of no incident, in my life at least, that has done so much to dissipate this feeling as the visit of Mr. Coleridge-Taylor to this country in 1910."

Japan and completed by April 1911. During its creation, he also busied himself with two commissions from Tree (*The Forest of Wild Thyme* and *Othello*) as well as the *Petite Suite de Concert* for orchestra, which was performed at Leighton House with violinist Zacharewitsch, Coleridge-Taylor on the piano, and the esteemed conductor John Barbirolli on cello. His favorite, however, was *A Tale of Old Japan*, which he deemed to be his finest work to date, superior to *Hiawatha*. The work was dedicated to the Stoeckels and based on Alfred Noyes' poem *The Two Painters*.[93] At this time in England, the coronation of King George the Fifth stirred excitement in the air, the death of Mahler brought a time of anticipation for the musical circles, the Society of Women Musicians began its inaugural meeting, and Du Bois rallied the Universal Races Congress at London University.

In America, riots took place in Springfield, Illinois in 1908; the town had been the birthplace of President Abraham Lincoln, and the public lynchings and the shooting of blacks on his centenary disturbed the peace of black Americans. The NAACP (National Association for the Advancement of Colored People) was born in reaction to this violence. Bishop Walters, Du Bois, and William Scarborough, three men Coleridge-Taylor had met throughout the course of his life, were closely affiliated with the group. It is unknown how these events affected Coleridge-Taylor, but surely he was aware of such happenings and empathized with his black colleagues in the United States.

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[93] While one might suspect that the composer drew inspiration from Puccini's *Madame Butterfly,* an opera that had garnered massive popularity in 1905, Coleridge-Taylor's work showed no hint of Japanese color. Rather, the influence of Rachmaninoff and Tchaikovsky was prevalent. The composer also took the liberty to alter the original ending of the poem where the painter Sawara paints his dead lover lying before him. The first performance at the Queen's Hall by the London Choral Society and the London Symphony Orchestra was met with critical acclaim.

Coleridge-Taylor's efforts in America increased his connections to other artists and supporters during a time of political and musical change. Though he remained a momentous figure with the black American community, he also won the support and interest of white audiences, supporters, and artists. In particular, his new friendship with the Stoeckel family brought about the creation of new works composed for the festival in Litchfield, and also expanded his network to include the famed violinist Maud Powell, for whom he would write and dedicate his *Violin Concerto* at the request of Carl Stoeckel.

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Chapter 3: VIOLIN CONCERTO

The Stoeckels commissioned Coleridge-Taylor to write a violin concerto for Maud Powell to play at Norfolk.[94] Powell, who had met Coleridge-Taylor in London, had long been concertizing his *Gypsy Suite* as well as her own arrangement of his *Deep River* for violin and piano. The composer steadily worked on the commission amidst his return to England and his new appointment as professor of composition at the Guildhall School of Music in 1910.

Carl Stoeckel had a specific vision for the work, requesting the use of old Negro songs and Deep South hymns, as well as *Yankee Doodle.* Mrs. Stoeckel further roped the composer in by playing *Keep me from Sinking Down, Good Lord* on the piano within earshot, a melody she had learned from her father, who in turn learned it from a slave. Though Coleridge-Taylor's interest was piqued by the melody, he eventually decided to use the Negro hymn *Many Thousand Gone* for the slow movement. After devising a way to use *Yankee Doodle* in the finale, he sent the completed score to America. Upon receiving the music, the Stoeckels and Powell surveyed it with great embarrassment, as the composition did not appeal to their tastes. The composer, sensing their hesitation, wrote a letter denouncing his own work as a banality and asked them to destroy it. He had struggled in the writing process, as Carl Stoeckel's well-intentioned requests turned out to be difficult to accommodate. The short tunes Stoeckel had had in mind could not

[94] The timing for this commission was interesting, since Elgar, Delius, and Coleridge-Taylor were the three leading English composers in the early twentieth century; each had played the violin at some point, and each wrote a violin concerto.

sustain a large-scale structure, and in the end, Coleridge-Taylor devised a new and better concerto.

Rather than destroying the original version as Coleridge-Taylor had requested, Carl Stoeckel returned the manuscript to the composer. Stoeckel expressed admiration for the second movement, deeming it one of the composer's finest works; however, Coleridge-Taylor insisted upon rewriting the entire concerto.[95] Stoeckel and Powell asked the composer for an arrangement of *Keep Me from Sinking Down, Good Lord*, and Coleridge-Taylor obliged. The short work was used as an encore piece after the first performance of the violin concerto held in Norfolk, 1912 by the dedicatee Maud Powell. The program also included the first American performance of *A Tale of Japan*.

Upon finishing the new violin concerto, Coleridge-Taylor showed the work to his violinist friend William J. Read, declaring that this concerto was "ten thousand times better than the other – those native melodies rather tied me down."[96] Powell liked the work and a full score and parts were promptly sent over.[97] The solo violin part was in her possession by March 1912.

Maud Powell's ascendance to fame was an incredible accomplishment during an era when constraints were made on women's societal roles. Though women singers were able to find success, women instrumentalists were still frowned upon, as their body usage

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[95] Geoffrey Self surmises that this rewriting was due to Coleridge-Taylor's ambition to solidify his fame on the European continent, and perhaps he felt that an African-American themed concerto would restrict appeal. Self also surmises that perhaps the composer wanted to make a violin concerto worthy of the Elgar violin concerto, which had its first performance in November 1910 (Self, 241).
[96] Ibid., 242.
[97] Geoffrey Self claims that these were sent on Titanic and thus became lost at the bottom of the sea. Jeffrey Green, on the other hand, claims that the Titanic story is an urban legend and that the music was sent on another ship but was lost *en route* to America. In any case, a new score and parts needed to be made, and Coleridge-Taylor's second set safely reached the Stoeckels.

was considered provocative. Coleridge-Taylor's partnership with Powell was interesting in that various aspects of their lives show some overlap. For example, women's suffrage and the seeds of the African American civil rights movement were brewing in America, the leaders of whom looked towards Powell and Coleridge-Taylor as icons. Powell was interested in the development of an American school of violin playing, just as Coleridge-Taylor was – whether intentionally or not – furthering Dvořák's vision of creating an American style of music based on Negro melodies. As Coleridge-Taylor was ascending his pinnacle of fame, her string quartet was touring America and Germany and receiving acclaim and exposure. Both artists had to deal with critics who could not see past gender and color, though this ignorance stemmed from the fact that both artists were minorities in their fields. And most unfortunately, both artists, although prolific in their day, have faded from current public memory.

Born in Illinois in the year 1867, Powell eventually came to be known as America's first great master of the violin.[98] Though the violin's awkward playing position was considered unladylike, Powell's mother nursed the ambition that her child should be a violinist. As America at the time lacked music conservatories that ranked with those in Europe, Powell's training took her overseas. In Leipzig, Powell studied with the esteemed Henry Schradieck; in Paris, at the Paris Conservatoire[99] with Charles Dancla. In England, a country that had no long tradition of producing great violinists, she concertized with the best singers of the time; in Berlin, she studied with Joseph Joachim at the Berlin Hochschule fur Musik, a school that rarely accepted young foreigners and

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[98] Shaffer, xii.
[99] The Paris Conservatoire was founded in 1795, but did not admit its first female student until 1850. The first female student, Camilla Urso, was also a violinist and a source of inspiration to Powell (Shaffer, 43).

had only started accepted female students a decade earlier. Her time in Berlin fortified a strong friendship with the composer Max Bruch, and she chose to perform his first violin concerto with the Berlin Philharmonic in 1885. During her return to the United States, she forged a professional relationship with the acclaimed conductor Theodore Thomas, who had dramatically raised the quality of classical music in America and eventually created the New York Philharmonic.

Powell's rise to fame was momentous, considering that the best violinists of her day were European males and the only prominent women violinists were Camilla Urso and Lady Halle. The odds were against her, as were the odds against Coleridge-Taylor, a composer of African descent who made a living by writing European music. Both Powell and Coleridge-Taylor could not escape the critics who did not know how to look past their gender and race. In Powell's case, critics more than often raved over her "masculine" way of playing; W. J. Henderson wrote "she played yesterday not like a woman, but like a man"[100] as though giving the ultimate compliment. Particularly in her early years, prejudices were built against women violin virtuosos,[101] but she won over her audience by being "just myself, and (playing) as the spirit moved me, with no further thought of sex or sex distinctions which, in art, after all, are secondary."[102] In the same manner, Coleridge-Taylor was besieged by critics who always heard an "African barbarism" in his works, whether he was channeling African inspiration or not.

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[100] Shaffer, 271.
[101] Having introduced the violin concertos of Tchaikovsky, Sibelius, and Bruch to the United States, Powell also introduced Dvořák's Violin Concerto in A minor in the States. Even here she could not escape the prejudice cast against her due to her gender; when she met with the Czech composer, he stated that Joachim thought the concerto was too difficult for a woman to play. Upon hearing her play, he admitted that Joachim was wrong, and that Powell had the capability to play the concerto perfectly.
[102] Shaffer, 101.

Coleridge-Taylor seemed to bear the title “mulatto composer” or “Creole composer” or “African composer” throughout his life just as Powell bore the title “famous woman violinist” as though it implied “that there is something unusual in a woman achieving distinction of any kind.”[103]

Britain’s late Victorian era was dominated by anti-female views with regards to music, despite the fact that music performance attracted a substantial number of women. Thousands of women sang or played, and were able to perform under the guise of contributing to “philanthropic causes.” The Royal Academy of Music had accepted female applicants from 1822, but enrolled its first female violinist some 50 years later – most of its prior female students had studied voice, harp, or piano. Music performance quietly broke the social conventions that restricted women from working on equal footing with men.[104]

There is no clear evidence that indicates whether or not Coleridge-Taylor supported women’s rights, but many black male activists had championed equality for women, perhaps seeing the parallels between the oppression women suffered and their own struggles. Frederick Douglass in the nineteenth century, W. E. B. Du Bois in the late nineteenth and early twentieth centuries, and Martin Luther King Jr. during the Civil Rights Era of the mid-twentieth century are included in this roster. Coleridge-Taylor’s views on the matter remain debatable; however he supported the all-female Brahms Choir and conducted a small string orchestra that had only one male member. The Croydon Conservatory concert in 1898, which he must have conducted, was composed of all

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[103]Shaffer, 278.
[104] Green, 50.

women with the exception of the double bassists. Several of the violinists that collaborated with him, including Mary Dickinson, Isabella Donkersley, Isabella Jaeger, Kitty Woolley, and Maud Powell, were women. Whether his work with women happened out of necessity or supported personal political views remains unknown.

Powell sympathized with the plight of black Africans, especially after her concerts in South Africa, where the exclusion of blacks from the concert halls saddened her.[105] Since black South Africans were prohibited from attending her concerts, they listened outside her hotel window while she practiced. The experience may have broadened her world view, and she made the effort to study the culture and music of black Africans. Before her journey to South Africa in 1905, she had been performing her rendition of Coleridge-Taylor's arrangement of the spiritual *Deep River*, originally for solo piano, recording it in 1911 with Victor Records. In an interview in 1915, she expressed her opinion that *Deep River* was among her personal favorites on the record, stating that "it's a real American tune."[106] Henry Krehbiel hailed Powell's *Deep River* as the "most effective bit of music based on American folksong which has yet been offered to the public."[107]

Another similarity between Powell and Coleridge-Taylor was that conducting was considered an unusual affair for both artists. In Powell's case, women were barred from conducting altogether, as it was assumed that the men of the orchestra would not stand to have a woman leading them.[108] A similar complaint was made towards black conductors,

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[105] Shaffer, 227.
[106] Green, 218.
[107] Shaffer, 234.
[108] Ibid., 144.

where white orchestral musicians refused to subjugate themselves to a leader of color. Both artists conquered this barrier in their own manner; Coleridge-Taylor was able to have a rather prolific and successful conducting career, and Powell's quartet gave her opportunities to lead her three male colleagues as the first violinist and founder.

In the writing of the Violin Concerto, perhaps it is worth noting that Coleridge-Taylor did not attempt to "feminize" the writing according to gender stereotypes of the day. Though lyricism pervades the work, the piece – particularly in the first and last movements – also displays virtuosity, heroism, and power. These traits, once reserved as male traits for the solo violinist during the Romantic period, served to create the violinist as a symbol of military power.[109] Keeping in mind that Maud Powell was the dedicatee and performer of his Violin Concerto, Coleridge-Taylor perhaps was treating her as an equal in the face of longtime traditional views that the violin was an unsuitable instrument for a woman. Perhaps the prejudice he experienced throughout his life and observed in America towards the black arts community instilled within him the confidence that anybody, regardless of color and gender, was capable of performing a certain way. The Violin Concerto remains one of his more powerful and virtuosic pieces for the instrument.

The restraints of Coleridge-Taylor's schedule prevented the composer from attending the premiere of his own violin concerto. To accommodate his absence, a life-size portrait of Coleridge-Taylor was hung onstage with which Powell shared the final applause. Coleridge-Taylor was able to hear the work the next day at the Croydon Public

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[109] Kawabata, Maiko, "Virtuoso Codes of Violin Performance: Power, Military Heroism, and Gender," *19th-Century Music*, Vol. 28 No. 2 (Fall 2004): 91.

Hall with William J. Read as the soloist. Performance opportunities for the concerto quickly lined up; most notably, Sir Henry Wood conducted the first London performance with solo violinist Arthur Catterall on September 20, 1912; and Powell performed it with the New York Philharmonic and the Chicago Symphony. The Coleridge-Taylor Violin Concerto would be the last full-scale concerto that Powell introduced to the world. As the Violin Concerto appeared shortly before World War I, it was no small feat to obtain, learn, and perform the music. Time was scarce as Europe rushed towards war in 1914. Perhaps this aided the quick obscurity of the piece; the last full performance during the composer's lifetime was given in 1913 in Bournemouth.

The Proms performance had caused the composer some anguish, as the new copyright laws decreed that a public copyright performance had to take place to protect the composer's performing rights. Catterall lived too far away for such a performance to take place conveniently. Coleridge-Taylor wrote to W. J. Read to complain that the copyright performance was a "farce," stating that only a half-dozen people needed to be present, and that just a few bars from each movement were needed. The audience members could be composed of close acquaintances and friends, and though the work could be sight-read on the spot, the event had to be advertised. Read rushed to help his friend, and the copyright performance took place in Croydon, June 1912 with the composer accompanying Read at the piano. The Proms performance itself was a success, with the *Musical News* of July 1912 claiming that Coleridge-Taylor's concerto "may turn out to be a work of permanent importance to violinists."[110]

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[110] Green, 203.

Coleridge-Taylor opted to publish the work with Metzler rather than Novellos, as Novellos would charge a performing fee for English performances. The composer surmised that this would hinder performance opportunities, and may have recalled Elgar's troubles with the violinist Eugene Ysaÿe, who had cancelled his performance of Elgar's violin concerto in England due to a performing fee. While opposed to an English performing fee, Coleridge-Taylor was not opposed to an American performing fee. The composer was promised around thirty dollars for each of the American performances, and Powell had already booked the work for five performances. Coleridge-Taylor promised to pass some of this profit to Metzler if they published the work, a term they accepted.

Stoeckel too had considered concertizing Elgar's violin concerto in 1911, but the burdensome negotiations prevented the performance from taking place. He and Powell offered 500 dollars to Novellos, who immediately demanded 1000. Incensed, Powell stated that she found the concerto to be lacking anyway and had no further interest in playing it. Stoeckel too claimed that he would be willing to pay that sum if the music had been worth it, but he found it to be empty and pompous. The 1000 dollars saved from the cancellation of a performance of the Elgar violin concerto went instead to Coleridge-Taylor's concerto. Powell, though acknowledging that the work had its limitations particularly in its short structure, declared that it was a "pretty, melodious one – like a bouquet of flowers."[111] As she presented the work across the States, she also kept her arrangement of the composer's piano work *Deep River* in her programs. Powell recorded the concerto with Victor records in June 1911, and performed it in Carnegie Hall in 1917.

[111] Green, 200. It is also interesting to note that Maud Powell was an avid lover of wild flowers, and stated that the beauty of them was enough to make one weep or sing (Shaffer, 219).

The creation of such a work was important, as the composer was almost always pressured to write choral pieces, incidental music, and salon pieces for the many commissions that came his way. Avril Coleridge-Taylor notes that this was a pity, for these "later in his life deprived Coleridge-Taylor of sufficient leisure to indulge in what was, especially in Edwardian England, the uneconomic pursuit of serious ensemble music."[112]

The American critics responded well to the work but criticized its limitations; in particular, disappointment was expressed at Coleridge-Taylor adhering to sonata forms rather than taking creative liberties with form in the concerto.[113] Powell also commented on the form, stating that to her, the piece seemed neither a full-grown concerto or a suite, but something in-between. She performed the work everywhere, with orchestras and piano.

Perhaps it is worth discussing the African American connection to the violin and to instruments in general. Though today the majority of prominent and professional violinist are white, slave fiddlers existed from the 1690s, gaining peak popularity during the 18th century. The more talented slaves were sent to places like New Orleans to learn standard dance tunes and may have competed in fiddle contests. Not much is known of these slave fiddlers or their relationship with their masters; however, it is interesting to note that many black composers, including Samuel Coleridge-Taylor, Dean Dixon, Ulysses Kay, and William Grant Still, also started out on the violin. A roster of professional black violinists included George Bridgetower, Chevalier J.J.O. de Meude-

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[112] Avril Coleridge-Taylor, 24.
[113] Shaffer, 249.

Monpas, and Joseph White. Nineteenth-century New Orleans also witnessed a wealthy, free black population that produced exceptional black musicians and prodigies that continued their education in Paris, including violinist Edmund Dede.[114] Despite this output of black violinists, William Grant Still lamented that black instrumentalists had yet to be accepted as equals by white musicians: "No matter how hard they studied or what success they won, they did not manage to gain top game, nor to acquire the glamour that surrounded the important singers."[115] The fact that a black composer and former violinist wrote a violin concerto of serious technical caliber serves to be important in this regard: he broke the constraints of a racially prejudiced field, wrote an instrumental piece for the serious performer, and allowed a woman to premiere it.

It is interesting to note that while the composer had written several works influenced by African American and African music, he had trouble doing so on command. His comment to William Read where he asserted that the native melodies that the Stoeckels wished for him to insert burdened him shows that he could only use such melodies if they came from his own organic interests. While enthused about theatrical commissions, Coleridge-Taylor showed less enthusiasm for the Stoeckel's commission of a violin concerto built on African American and American melodies. It is worth noting that Coleridge-Taylor differed from composers such as Burleigh, who took on every opportunity to promote and use the melodies of black folk. Had the Stoeckels asked someone like Burleigh to compose a work built on African American melodies, Burleigh

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[114] Other instrumentalists included the half-brothers Lucien and Sidney Lambert, who were both virtuosic pianists and continued their education in Paris.
[115] William Grant Still, "The Negro Musician in America," *Music Educators Journal* Vol. 56 No. 5 (Jan. 1970): 158.

would have worked to that end. Coleridge-Taylor, however, could not compromise his own artistic integrity to successfully write such a work. While he did attempt to honor the Stoeckels' requests for the work, his own artistic priorities won over these requests. The rewritten concerto used no American tunes, either white or black. The only recycled part was the opening theme of the piece.

Yet the irony is that the *Violin Concerto* would not have come into fruition if Coleridge-Taylor himself was not a black composer. The Stoeckels needed a black composer to realize their compositional vision and perhaps thought such a commission would come naturally to Coleridge-Taylor, who had written more than a handful of African American and African based compositions. This series of circumstances and misunderstandings led to the creation of a violin concerto that was neither African nor American, and came from the composer's own organic writing. It can also be argued that the violin concerto would not have come into being had it not been for public interest in African American arts and politics. In this manner, Coleridge-Taylor's violin concerto had a strange origin in which he could not fulfill the original request of the Stoeckels and invoke the music of his heritage, yet he made a work that showed he was a composer first and an activist second.

It is difficult to ignore the similarities between Coleridge-Taylor's *Violin Concerto* and that of his idol Dvořák. Similarities begin from the outset, particularly in the solo violin's entrance in the first movement. In both compositions, the solo violin's entrance resembles a quasi-cadenza accompanied by the orchestra. Triplets are an important motif, providing rhythmic vitality, as are running arpeggiated sixteenths and sextuplets.

Example 3.1. The violin entrance in Antonin Dvořák's *Violin Concerto* op. 53

Example 3.2. The violin entrance in Coleridge-Taylor's *Violin Concerto* op. 80

There is also the similarity of form in this opening movement; both composers opted for a short sonata form with a truncated recapitulation, a decision that, while not wholly unusual, was just radical enough to incense the staunch classicist.[116]

The similarities continue with the second movement. Dvořák sets his slow movement to a 3/8 meter while Coleridge-Taylor chooses 6/8, with the phrases of both pausing briefly after the second measure before continuing the melody. While not an exact intervallic replication of each other, there is no denying that the melodies are eerily similar. There is also the matter with the third movement, where both composers set the meter at 3/8 and a playful romp-like atmosphere emerges from the opening theme.

Example 3.3. Second movement opening, Dvořák's *Violin Concerto* op. 53

[116] Josef Joachim, the dedicatee of Dvořák's *Violin Concerto*, expressed much dissatisfaction over this decision for the first movement. Perhaps that is why he never performed it.

Example 3.4. Second movement opening, Coleridge-Taylor's *Violin Concerto* op. 80

There were accusations during Coleridge-Taylor's life that he was a second-rate composer who used compositions of his own and by other composers, such as Dvořák and Elgar, as models. One such example was his *Scenes from an Everyday Romance: A Suite for Orchestra in Four Movements*, which was similar in concept to Elgar's *Enigma Variations.*[117] Coleridge-Taylor's *The Soul's Expression* was also similar in atmosphere to Elgar's *Sea Pictures*, both of which were written for the Norwich Festival.[118] When

[117] Self, 112.
[118] Ibid., 114.

pressed for time, Coleridge-Taylor was known to recycle parts of his own compositions to fashion new pieces. It is unknown for sure whether Coleridge-Taylor had heard Dvořák's *Violin Concerto*, but it is not too farfetched to assume that he knew the piece. Dvořák's *Violin Concerto* was composed in 1883, when Coleridge-Taylor was just eight years old. Since he extolled the Czech composer's works and since he himself started as a violinist, perhaps Coleridge-Taylor had, at some point in his life, attempted to study and learn the violin concerto of Dvořák.

But it would be incorrect to assert that the Coleridge-Taylor *Violin Concerto* is a copy of the Dvořák *Violin Concerto*. While similarities indeed exist, Coleridge-Taylor adds his own signature to the work. For one thing, he was extremely conscious of the overall structure of the work. The three-note motif in the opening theme of the first movement unites all three movements together; it re-appears in the second movement as an integral part of the B section, and is stated in the third movement in dotted rhythms.

Example 3.5. First movement, *Violin Concerto* op. 80, Samuel Coleridge-Taylor

Example 3.6. Second movement, *Violin Concerto* op. 80, Samuel Coleridge-Taylor

Example 3.7. Third movement, *Violin Concerto* op. 80, Samuel Coleridge-Taylor

To further tie all three movements together, Coleridge-Taylor constructed a coda at the end of the third movement where the first movement's theme is stated in grand octaves. The three-note motive is stated throughout this section, and closes the entire work.

Example 3.8. Third movement ending, *Violin Concerto*, Samuel Coleridge-Taylor

Most impressive, however, is the development in the third movement, where the major theme from each of the movements is stated by the orchestra before the violin heralds the recapitulation. This conscientiousness shows a composer concerned with the large scheme of the work and how to make it as cohesive as possible. Such a maneuver also invokes the last movement of Beethoven's *Symphony No. 9 in d minor*, op. 125 (1822) where portions of the previous three movements are recalled, like a distant memory, before the movement commences. But perhaps Coleridge-Taylor again took inspiration from Dvořák, particularly the *Cello Concerto in b minor*, op. 104 (1894-1895) where a segment near the end of the last movement recalls the themes and atmosphere of the preceding two movements before the piece's exuberant end.

O Maestoso. ♩= 84.
Movement 1: Opening theme
ff a tempo.

Allegro ♩= 126.
allargando.
Movement 2: leading to B Theme
furioso.
allargando.

52 *Moderato.* ♩ = 112.

P *a tempo.*

a tempo. **Movement 2: Theme B**

ff *mf* *mf* *cresc.* *poco.* -

accel. *accel.* *a tempo.*

Movement 1: Opening Theme

a poco. *f a tempo.*

sff *sempre ff*

Q

sff

Example 3.9. Third movement development ending, *Violin Concerto* (piano reduction), Samuel Coleridge-Taylor

Some other traits stand out. Coleridge-Taylor's impressive sequential passages, particularly the one in the first movement before the development, show a penchant for repetition over truly developing themes. As for the violin cadenza accompanied by a timpani roll, he may have borrowed that idea from the cadenza of Beethoven's violin

concerto, or from the cadenza of Elgar's violin concerto, where the solo violin is accompanied by thrummed strings.[119]

In terms of lyricism, the composer was often compared to Schubert, whose melodious lieder-like lines were apparent in his instrumental compositions. Coleridge-Taylor too was considered a master lyricist; Avril Coleridge-Taylor and the critic R. Nettel for *Music in the Five Towns* observed the many "grey-bearded critics moved to tears, and there were many in the audience who made no attempt to hide their emotion"[120] during the *Hiawatha* performances. Coleridge-Taylor had the propensity to create beautiful, naturally singable melodies,[121] a trait that ultimately worked against his favor, as his music was criticized for sounding too saccharine.[122] But during his life, it served him well as his compositions offered the public respite from the "brooding, introspective melodic style of the post-romantic school of Brahms, Mahler, and Wagner" and "the outmoded formal and rhythmic clichés of the Handel-Mendelssohn school"[123] which was so popular in England's late 19th century. One sees his lyricism particularly in the second movement of the *Violin Concerto* as the muted strings play the opening melody that, for all its lushness and romanticism, stays very simple. This writing, too, was probably influenced from the works of Dvořák, though Coleridge-Taylor also manages to have a more rhapsodic air in his concerto than his idol. In a letter to Mr. Hilyer, dated May 12,

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[119] Self, 244.
[120] Avril Coleridge-Taylor, 39.
[121] The composer was also conscientious in accomodating the ranges of the singers in a way that did not strain or force their voices. This helped the popularity of his pieces, since both amateur and professional choirs could perform his works with little rehearsal time. This was also why Elgar's *Gerontius* was unpopular at first, since Elgar's work was more of an aural and technical challenge to both the performers and audience.
[122] Ellsworth Janifer, "Samuel Coleridge-Taylor in Washington," *Phylon (1960-)* vol. 28 no. 2 (2nd Qtr., 1967): 188.
[123] Ibid., 188.

1901, the composer wrote that Dvořák was his "first musical love" and that he loved "the 'open-air' sound his music always has and the genuine simplicity which our modern music so often lacks."[124]

The composer also had a solid understanding of the violin, having been a violinist himself. It is unknown what edits Maud Powell made to the work, but she professed satisfaction with the final draft (a fate that was not given to Dvořák's *Violin Concerto*; even after editing the violin part, Joachim expressed dissatisfaction with the work). The combination of virtuosity, musicality, and fullness of range negates the assumption that black instrumentalists cannot compare to the skill of their white colleagues. Surely Coleridge-Taylor's violin training was of a high level and aided the compositional writing of his violin works (a large output that included *Two Romantic Pieces*, *Ballade in d minor*, *Two Gipsy Movements*, *Gipsy Suite*, *Valse Caprice*, *Ballade in c minor*, *Legende* op. 14, *Two Romances*, *Hemo Dance*, *Three Hiawatha Sketches* op. 16*, Violin Sonata in d minor* op. 28, *Four African Dances* op. 58, and arrangements of spirituals and transcriptions of symphonies). It was not just empathy that led Grove to accept the young Coleridge-Taylor as a violin student of the Royal College of Music; Green argues that Grove's decision to accept the boy meant that Coleridge-Taylor's violin playing and musicianship were of a high standard.[125] It is interesting to note that his English colleagues Edward Elgar and Frederick Delius, both of whom had written violin concertos, were also primarily violinists.

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[124] Avril Coleridge-Taylor, 51.
[125] Green, 25.

It has been a subject of debate as to whether or not African or African American elements exist in Coleridge-Taylor's violin concerto. One must acknowledge that the work can stand on its own merit, and that it does not rely upon the interest and exoticism generated from "black music" or "black composers." The *Philadelphia Inquirer*, when writing about his oeuvre as a whole, stated:

> …He [does not] need any special consideration by reason of his race. He illustrated, as it had not been illustrated before, the love for musical utterance which is an oft-noted Negro trait, but his music has stood, and will stand exclusively upon his own merits.[126]

In this manner, the *Violin Concerto*, much like its composer, has a puzzling identity. Had America not taken an interest in black music, and had Dvořák not turned Negro melodies into high art, it is likely that a composer such as Coleridge-Taylor might not have received any funding from America to fuel his three journeys. But the *Violin Concerto* shows Coleridge-Taylor going back into his early roots, rather than delving into a racial commentary. When Powell commented on the small structure of the work, one also remembers Coleridge-Taylor's *Legende* for violin and piano, written during his student days, where the gentle lyricism and brevity gave the composition the feel of a violin tone-poem. It should be noted, however, that other traits point to Coleridge-Taylor's growth from his early years. The harmonic richness, for one, is far more experimental than anything he had composed under Stanford's wing.

Is the work, then, an English piece? Here one finds a problem too, with this categorization. The *Musical News* questioned the idea that a British school of music

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[126] Theodore D. Phillips, *The Life and Musical Compositions of S. Coleridge-Taylor* (Oberlin: Oberlin Conservatory, 1935), 142. Qtd. in "Higher Music of Negroes," *The Literary Digest* Vol. 45 (Oct. 5, 1912): 565.

existed and stated that British composers did not make works that were distinctly British in the same manner that French, German, and Italian schools existed.[127] Perhaps Coleridge-Taylor was aware of this, just as he seemed aware of the "problem" generated by a black composer creating non-black works. There is little to explain how he categorized his own music, and perhaps the constant need to write and teach left him little time for reflection on this matter anyway; however, during his final four days of life, he reportedly told Jessie: "When I die, everything will go wrong…when I die, the critics will call me a Creole."[128] She maintained that the words were spoken with anxiety; perhaps they revealed that he was bothered by the idea of potentially being classified as a composer without deep national roots, unlike his fellow and past composers.[129] Classification of Coleridge-Taylor's work cannot be undertaken without the acknowledgement that he had a broad cosmopolitan and cultural palette to draw inspiration from, not only limited to English and African music, but also influences from Spain, Germany, Bohemia, France, and others.

But to say that Coleridge-Taylor rejected African influences entirely limits one from seeing the full scope of his works. Although Coleridge-Taylor rejected Stoeckel's request to use specific melodic references in the Violin Concerto, there lies the question of whether or not Coleridge-Taylor channeled African American influences at all in the writing of this piece. The opening of the concerto, for example, channels certain aspects of the African American musical language, mainly with the suggestive use of the blue note, where prominence is given to the lowered third, seventh, and fifth (Example 3.11).

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[127] Green, 139.
[128] Ibid., 206.
[129] Richards, 256.

The concerto, whose tonic is G, places repetitive stress on notes B-flat and F, evoking an African American atmosphere in the writing. The blue note can be traced to slave songs[130] (Example 3.10) and perhaps originated from African singers adjusting their pitch to blend harmonically with their peers,[131] suggesting a pitch in-between the expected notes. In the slave song *Follow the Drinking Gourd* (composition date and composer unknown), prominence is likewise given to the lowered third and lowered seventh, like Coleridge-Taylor's Violin Concerto. Its influence can be found in the compositions of William Grant Still, Coleridge-Taylor's successor (Example 3.12). In his *Afro-American Symphony* (1930), the opening English horn solo touches on the lowered third, fifth, and seventh (C-flat, D-natural, and G-flat, respectively), and these notes permeate the entire first movement.

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[130] Eileen Southern, *The Music of Black Americans*, 3rd ed. (New York: W.W. Norton & Company), 334.
[131] Mellonee V. Burnim and Portia K. Maultsby, editors, *African-American Music: An Introduction*, 2nd ed. (New York: Routledge, 2015), 79.

CHORUS

Fol - low ______ the drink - ing gourd! Fol - low ______ the

drink - ing gourd. __ For the old man is a - wait - ing for to

VERSE

car - ry you to free-dom If you fol-low the drink - ing gourd. When the

sun comes back, and the first quail calls, __ Fol - low ______ the

drink - ing gourd. __ For the old man is a - wait - ing for to

car - ry you to free-dom If you fol - low the drink - ing gourd.

Example 3.10. African-American song *Follow the Drinking Gourd*, first published in 1928, composer unknown

Example 3.11. Solo violin's first entrance, *Violin Concerto* op. 80, Samuel Coleridge-Taylor (piano reduction)

Example 3.12. Opening English horn solo, Symphony No. 1 in A-flat *Afro-American*, William Grant Still, ed. Charles Latshaw (untransposed)

However, discussing any piece of Coleridge-Taylor's ultimately fuels debate about the composer's identity and how this shaped his music. This is a difficult question to answer, as Coleridge-Taylor's identity was (and still is) a subject of debate, perhaps even to the composer himself. Assessing his identity through his colleagues also does not yield a clear answer; some discerned him as an African living in a foreign country, while others considered him a colored Englishman.

Looking at the English Violin Concerto, one finds that Delius, Stanford, and Elgar all wrote their violin concertos between 1900 and 1920 (Vaughn Williams, Somervall, Bax, Walton, and Britten would follow, between 1920 and 1940). It is interesting to note that out of Coleridge-Taylor's contemporaries, only Stanford seemed bent on reinventing English music with his violin concerto (and in this, he was not entirely successful, as his fascination with the Romantic sound kept him from creating new expressive possibilities for the violin and orchestra).[132] Delius and Elgar wrote more personalized violin concertos. The former, often considered a master of lyricism, invoked the English countryside and fused it with the sounds of Grieg, Debussy, and Wagner, perhaps influenced by his own cosmopolitan upbringing.[133] The latter created an intensely emotional violin concerto with an enigmatic dedication, perhaps to his lover.[134] Perhaps

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[132] Paolo Petrocelli, *The Resonance of a Small Voice: William Walton and the Violin Concerto in England between 1900 and 1940* (United Kingdom: Cambridge Scholars Publishing, 2010), 5-8.
[133] Ibid., 31-34.
[134] Ibid., 24.

the advantage of English composers, being composers in a “land without music,” was that they could create personal works that reflected their personal feelings and personal connections to certain places. Though Stanford tried to reinvent the sound of English music, perhaps Elgar and Delius did just that by writing their concertos in a manner that pleased them. It is also interesting to note that out of these composers, Stanford was the only composer who began and finished his concerto in England.[135]

It is unknown just how personal Coleridge-Taylor’s Violin Concerto was to him, but it does raise some rather interesting points. One sees his fervent admiration for Dvořák throughout the writing, and perhaps a grudging respect for Elgar. One sees him embracing certain aspects of his heritage, but rejecting the use of specific black American and African tunes, as per Stoeckel’s request. Only he himself was in control of how he used black tunes in his works; he could not relinquish that decision to anyone else. And while the concerto held elements suggestive to that of African American music, he did not stray from using traditional European forms.

It is also probably worth noting that the composer was the only colored man at the Norfolk Festival. Though some of his black fans considered his invitation to Norfolk a sign of honor, others criticized his decision to go to a “primarily white” festival instead of promoting his “black” music. Perhaps he had wind of this and lapsed into the old feelings of self-consciousness, therefore crippling his ability and willingness to compose a concerto based on black tunes. But this assertion, like so many of those that surround this particular composer, remains hypothetical.

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[135] Petrocelli, 40.

Coleridge-Taylor himself rarely paraded the race issue of his heritage. However, there was one particular instance where he had cause to defend himself. South of Croydon, in a small town named Purley, the vicar and barrister gathered a debate team to discuss “the Negro problem in North America.” The *Croydon Guardian* reported the views the group expressed: that black men were of a lower order in the Darwinian hierarchy; that the skulls of black men resembled those of primates and therefore black men were ape-like; that black men exuded a different smell; that black men never sought to improve themselves. Coleridge-Taylor was engaged in conducting duties in Birmingham at the time, but later wrote to the *Croydon Guardian* expressing his rage towards the lecturer and the clergymen present during the debate. He states (qtd. in the *Croydon Guardian*, 15 February 1912):

> It is amazing that grown-up, and presumably educated, people can listen to such primitive and ignorant nonsense-mongers, who are men without vision, utterly incapable of penetrating beneath the surface of things.
>
> No one realises more than I that coloured people have not yet taken their place in the scheme of things, but to say that they never will is arrogant rubbish, and an insult to the God in Whom they profess to believe… [136]

The composer also mentions the colored people who have already achieved success and recognition for their efforts, including Alexandre Dumas,[137] Alexander Pushkin,[138] and W. E. B. Du Bois, expressing the hope that one day the colored man will take his rightful place alongside white man. He continues:

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[136] Self, 252. Qtd. in the *Croydon Guardian*, 15 February 1912.
[137] French author Alexandre Dumas (1802-1870) is most known for *The Three Musketeers, The Count of Monte Cristo*, and *The Man in the Iron Mask*. His father was born in what is now Haiti as the son of a French nobleman and a female slave. His novel *Georges*, inspired by his encounters of racism, includes the famous retort to a man who insulted his mixed-race heritage: “My father was a mulatto, my grandfather was a Negro, and my great-grandfather a monkey. You see, Sir, my family starts where yours ends.”
[138] Alexander Sergeyevich Pushkin (1799-1837) was the prolific Russian poet and writer of *Eugene Onegin* and *Boris Godunov*. His great-grandfather, Abram Petrovich Gannibal, was kidnapped from Africa as a

> Personally, I consider myself the equal of any white man who ever lived, and no-one could ever change me in that respect; on the other hand, no man reverences worth more than I, irrespective of colour and creed. May I further remind the lecturer that really great people always see the best in others? It is the little man who looks for the worst – and finds it. It is a peculiar thing that almost without exception all distinguished white men have been favourably disposed towards their black brethren. No woman has ever been more courteous to me than a certain member of our own English Royal Family, and no man more so than President Roosevelt.[139]

Geoffrey Self observes that in his letter, Coleridge-Taylor maintained the dignity of Booker T. Washington while channeling the fury of Du Bois. Responses to the composer's letter ranged from support[140] to ire, with dissenters writing to the *Croydon Guardian* that the only means of protection for white men and women was to lynch coloreds. Impressed with Coleridge-Taylor's outburst, the editor of the *Africa Times and Orient Review* asked the composer if he would be willing to submit articles for their periodical. Coleridge-Taylor's submission to the first issue shows a very pessimistic yet realistic outlook on the relationship between whites and coloreds:

> There is, of course, a larger section of the British people interested in coloured races; but it is, generally speaking, a commercial interest only… It seems that the different section of the whites are not interested in the aims of each other (excepting, perhaps, financially), and I doubt if more than a few will be inclined to study the aspirations of those of another race.[141]

In short, Coleridge-Taylor's *Violin Concerto* provides an interesting study that encompasses discussion on race, the composer's failure to use African American musical quotations unless invoked by his own will, women instrumentalists, and the connection

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child and brought to Peter the Great as a gift. Peter the Great took a liking to the boy, and raised him as though a member of his family.

[139] Self, 252. Qtd. in the *Croydon Guardian*, 15 February 1912.

[140] The vicar-chairman wrote to Coleridge-Taylor and dissociated himself from the views of the group in Purley.

[141] Self, 252.

between the British bi-racial composer and Dvořák's initial mission in America. Had Dvořák never opened public interest in the melodies of Native Americans and African Americans, it is likely that Coleridge-Taylor and his works might have never found a foothold in America. It is also interesting to consider that Coleridge-Taylor's *Violin Concerto* stands as an homage to Dvořák, arguably more than as an homage to his heritage, as Carl Stoeckel had initially envisioned. In this, one can see that Coleridge-Taylor's musical influences encompass much more than just the issue of race, and that these influences are just as varied and complex as the composer's heritage.

Chapter 4: DEATH AND LEGACY

In 1911, the London visit of the Diaghilev Russian Ballet inspired the composer to think about the theater again, and he took it upon himself to write a ballet version of *Hiawatha* -- a work whose efforts unfortunately came to nothing. Despite having written a large quantity of music for the ballet, the final product was orchestrated by Percy Fletcher and published posthumously in 1919.[142] Although Coleridge-Taylor had once again dreamt of entering the world of theater and had relentlessly pursued his talents to that end, this vision was not meant to be, for soon he grew burdened with chronic overwork, missing rehearsals due to "a tired feeling."

Geoffrey Self states that the temptation to take more jobs and to compose more large-scale pieces was "justified financially by the fees concert promoters paid to a composer to conduct his own work."[143] Even as the composer tried to re-work and shorten his schedule, he kept travelling and conducting during his illness. Most of these engagements were done with amateurs, who needed more rehearsals than professionals. As these groups often operated without helpers or assistance, all of their problems – orchestral and otherwise – fell upon Coleridge-Taylor to solve.[144] Due to continuous stress, the composer's illness – diagnosed as acute pneumonia—deepened, and he passed away on September 1, 1912.

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[142] Avril alleges that Fletcher's work does not convey the characteristics that are evident in her father's work, and that the alterations Fletcher made (time values, tempo marks) are misleading to Coleridge-Taylor's reputation and oeuvre (Avril Coleridge-Taylor, 78).
[143] Self, 257.
[144] Jessie writes that Coleridge-Taylor's rehearsals with amateur orchestras often distressed the composer and provided many amusing anecdotes for conversation. There was the flautist whose teeth blew out before the note, the oboist whose oboe was tied together with string, the horn player with horrible intonation, the near-sighted cymbal player who never played in time, and the double bassist who fell asleep during the performance and dropped his instrument (Jessie Coleridge-Taylor, 53).

Coleridge-Taylor's funeral service was a testament to how the composer inspired the black community and artists of all color. Held in early September at St. Michael and All Angels Church in Croydon, Avril Coleridge-Taylor recalls that the building was packed with members of the black British community as well as the famous artists who had worked with the composer. His mother Alice – who had been presumed dead by many – was present, as was H. L. Balfour, the organist of Royal Albert Hall. Flowers were sent from the numerous orchestras that Coleridge-Taylor had conducted, the schools he had worked in, his publishers, etc.[145] One particular wreath, in the shape of the African continent with Sierra Leone in red, was from "the sons and daughters of West Africa resident in London," with a card that read "Sent on behalf of unknown relatives in distant Sierra Leone, who wished him well in life – and Peace in death." Geoffrey Self writes of the pity that "a man of distinction and achievement and an unofficial ambassador of his country was not accorded with royal honor or distinction."[146] Music was provided at the funeral service, consisting of Coleridge-Taylor's song *When I am dead, my dearest* and the slow movement from the *Violin Concerto*, played by William J. Read.

The English composer Sir Hubert Parry's tribute in the *Musical Times* illustrates how he perceived Coleridge-Taylor's mixed-race shone through in his compositions: "He wanted to put down what welled up in him quite simply and straightforwardly… It was

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[145] Self writes a partial list: the Royal Choral Society, the Royal Academy of Music, the Guildhall School of Music, Trinity College of Music, the London Symphony orchestra, the New Symphony Orchestra, the Stock Exchange Musical Society, the Alexander Palace Choral Society, the String Players' Club, the Bournemouth Orchestra, Novello and Co., and many others besides (Self, 260).
[146] Self, 272.

the very simplicity and unconsciousness of his character which caused racial motives and impulses to be revealed so clearly."[147]

Geoffrey Self, however, writes from a more balanced perspective, stating that Coleridge-Taylor's "mixed race origin led eventually to a division of aim in his work, as he tried to reconcile the two worlds into which he had been born. And, because he was coloured, that aspect of his work which related to the expression of his paternal side has been accorded in the past more than its due weight in critical appraisal."[148]

Similarly, Theodore Phillips states that critics and audiences tended to give more weight to Coleridge-Taylor's racial influence on his compositions than was fair:

> The disparity in the value of his compositions presents one of the chief handicaps toward intelligent appraisal. Doubtless this disparity was brought about by a conflict between his Negro origin and his English environment. Thus we are forced at the outset to draw a line of demarcation between the two.[149]

He asserts that the composer's lifelong conflict between his origin and his environment gave rise to many opinions regarding the extent of racial influences in his works.

The composer's family was left poor after his death. A charity concert at the Royal Albert Hall was organized by the composer's former guardian Colonel A. Walters on November 22, 1912. The choir and orchestra consisted of representatives from the various choral societies and orchestras that Coleridge-Taylor had worked with, including the London Symphony Orchestra, the Handel Society, and the Stock Exchange Orchestra. Donations poured in from various supporters, the list of which included Novellos, the

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[147] Self, 261.
[148] Ibid., 274.
[149] Phillips, 140.

Stoeckel family, Nellie Melba, and Beerbohm Tree, and the massive audience included the Duke of Argyll and Princess Louise. Other memorial concerts were held both in England and overseas. The Samuel Coleridge-Taylor Society of Washington, which had previously disbanded, gathered again for one last concert in May 1913 and gave the proceeds to Jessie.

Jessie approached several accountants to produce a statement summarizing Coleridge-Taylor's royalties from 1905 to his death. The composer had had an average annual royalty of 119 pounds, most of which had been spent on concert funds. The public grew conscious of the composer's exhaustive work and poverty, and the topic fueled controversy, with many claiming that Coleridge-Taylor's death was the "direct result of his insisting on working when he was really very ill."[150] Sir Thomas Armstrong asserted that the composer had endured "twelve years of unrelenting labour, with a major composition almost every year, a great deal of travel, conducting and teaching, and little money"[151] while Avril revealed that her father had copied orchestral parts by hand to save the expense of a professional copyist.[152] Talks between the Society of Authors and *The Times* ensued, as composers were urged to receive royalties as opposed to settling for a lump sum, as Coleridge-Taylor had done with *Hiawatha*. Novellos, in the face of criticism, declared that they had always given Coleridge-Taylor the choice of either selling his composition outright – the path that many composers chose -- or earning royalties.[153] Coleridge-Taylor's former teacher, Charles Stanford, declared that an appeal

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[150] Self, 265.
[151] Avril Coleridge-Taylor, 12.
[152] The only duplicating system available was the jellograph, which was messy and unreliable (Ibid., 93).
[153] Since they considered the business arrangements of *Hiawatha* to be private, however, details were spared (Self, 265).

on behalf of the composer's family was needed, and others joined him in this outcry. Walford Davies tried to appeal to Novellos to put *Hiawatha* on a royalty basis, but that request was denied.

The ongoing controversy fueled the rise of the Performing Rights Society in 1914. After the death of Coleridge-Taylor, his music still thrived, and everybody made money off his works except for his family. The Performing Rights Society ensured that payments went to the creators of the music. Likewise, the Copyright Act of 1911 ensured this as well. Perhaps this was Coleridge-Taylor's lasting contribution to the music world, for shortly after his death, he was no longer seen as a major force in English music.

This begs the question: what did Coleridge-Taylor contribute to the music world? Throughout his life and after his death, he was often pigeonholed as a "black composer," despite the fact that most of his compositions drew influence from European art music. His oratorio *The Atonement* drew attention from his being the first colored composer to venture into the genre, igniting the ire of Elgar who claimed that nobody would pay attention to Coleridge-Taylor's work if he were not black.[154] Was his oeuvre valuable because the composer was black, or was his music valuable by its own merit – that is to say, was it not enough to think of Coleridge-Taylor as a "composer" and not necessarily a "black composer?"

Critics mirrored Elgar's statement. In 1898, *The Gloucester Chronicle* proclaimed, "I cannot help thinking that part of Mr. Coleridge-Taylor's enormous

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[154] Coleridge-Taylor and Elgar's relationship steadily soured as the latter's work, particularly *The Dream of Gerontius,* was ill-received by the public while Coleridge-Taylor's *The Song of Hiawatha* reached the dizzying heights of fame. Elgar had the unfortunate capacity of holding lifelong grudges and was thought to have been jealous of Coleridge-Taylor (Richards, 237-8).

popularity is due to the African blood, although mingled with English, which so unmistakeably flows in his veins."[155] The African descent of the composer was especially problematic for those who strove to fit musicians into national schools. *The Referee* went as far as to touch on the composer's physical attributes, claiming that Coleridge-Taylor's European descent was made obvious by the angle of his forehead and prominent front part, while the Negro side came from the composer's childlike contentment with the present moment and energetic spirit.[156]

The irony of these comments is that such racist attitudes of the time may have contributed to the growing public interest in Coleridge-Taylor and his works, and to other black artists. Even more ironic is that at the present moment, perhaps the need to readdress past racist attitudes contributes to a revived interest in Coleridge-Taylor and the black artists who thrived around the same time. As with all composers, Coleridge-Taylor's works are linked to the social issues that transpired around his time; with the present-day struggle to combat and understand racism, Coleridge-Taylor stands to mind as a colored minority who viewed himself simply the way we view ourselves: as a general citizen of the world. In this manner, one may find him relatable as a human being living his life as all of us do, though the issue of color lurks in the background. Perhaps this is not too far-fetched a view to place on most present-day minorities.

Money was always needed due to Coleridge-Taylor's financial generosity, especially towards colored people. Since songs were quickly written and could be sold outright for an immediate sum, Coleridge-Taylor penned many of these during his

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[155] Green, 58.
[156] Ibid., 209.

travels. But the hard truth remained that in 1901, a composer without an independent income had to accept any and every part-time job to make ends meet. Coleridge-Taylor toiled for the many choral festivals by writing music and conducting, and continued his conducting efforts in Croydon. The programs, according to Self, "showed little evidence of a quest and thirst for new music exploration"[157] but Coleridge-Taylor was dealing with amateurs, not professionals. While the works of Beethoven, Mozart, Schubert, and Dvořák were performed, Coleridge-Taylor rarely included any of his own works. Despite his great patience with the players, he resigned in 1902-3 after six years. The Croydon Orchestral Society dissolved and Coleridge-Taylor immediately organized his own orchestral concert series. This lasted for three years without subsidies or financial backing, and in the end it had to fold as they were quickly losing money.

Since many of Coleridge-Taylor's compositions were created for the sake of profit, and since his increasingly demanding schedule left little room for respite, his works often suffered as a result. Self maintains that his compositions tended to be "hit or miss" with the majority written in an artificial, commonplace style. Perhaps due to his acknowledgment of this, along with his schedule and exhaustion, Coleridge-Taylor took a compositional hiatus from 1902 to 1903.

In spite of this, Coleridge-Taylor remained dedicated to his work and made a point of bringing classical music to audiences who had little means of hearing it. He pushed for the Handel Society to perform before two distinct audiences – those in high society, and those in poor neighborhoods in east London. He was also dedicated to

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[157] Self, 120.

pushing his musicians to their full potential and was informed that the first violins in his Croydon orchestra were on equal par with the best in England.[158]

Though one can argue that the surge and exposure from Dvořák's *New World Symphony* complicated the way Coleridge-Taylor's music was received, the composer's mixed race and its supposed influence on his writing was discussed and debated even before he was introduced to African and African American music. The *London Sunday Referee*'s review of the composer's *Ballade in a minor* from his student days states: "His appearance proclaims his African extraction…his music is dominated by Western form of expression, but underneath this surges and pulsates a barbaric spirit and a wild passion which imparts to his compositions palpitating life and remarkable individuality."[159] During his life and after his death, a handful of critics strove to lump Coleridge-Taylor's works under one general description, such as *The Hampshire Advertiser*'s statement that

> his mixed descent cannot be forgotten in any study of his music, since it makes his work an interesting example of racial characteristics in music…it is obvious at once that it has certain features in its melody, style of treatment, and use of orchestral colour which distinguish it at once from the music of English composers.[160]

The Times, at the 1898 performance of *Hiawatha's Wedding Feast*, claimed that "the young composer's father was an African, but his mother was an Englishwoman, and his music reflects in a remarkable manner the spirit of both races…"[161]

There were also those who took the opposite approach in assessing Coleridge-Taylor's oeuvre, claiming him as a purely black composer, or a purely English composer.

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[158] Green, 164.
[159] Ibid., 61.
[160] Ibid., 207.
[161] Ibid., 70.

The Henley and South Oxfordshire Standard's article "Negro Composer's Death" gave a fictionalized story of the composer Massenet who, upon leafing through Coleridge-Taylor's music without knowing the composer's name, "declared that he was certain the musician was of negro extraction, basing his belief on the character of the music."[162] Meanwhile, Sylvester Russell, writing for the black press, said that Coleridge-Taylor's music was purely in the European tradition and lacked African influences.[163]

The argument that Coleridge-Taylor left little to the legacy of music brings up the question of what determines whether something is of lasting value or not. He was the first undoubtedly successful composer the Royal College of Music produced, and there is something to be said about the importance of overcoming the boundaries placed on those of his race. The American painter William Sydney Mount captures the complexities of race in his *The Power of Music* (1847) where an African American worker eavesdrops on a white fiddle player's performance. Though the love and enjoyment of music is shared by the black worker and the white fiddler, they are in divided spaces. Not only is this division physical, but political and social as well.[164]

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[162] Green, 208.
[163] Ibid., 134.
[164] "The Power of Music," *Cleveland Museum of Art*, accessed 3 October 2016. https://www.clevelandart.org/art/1991.110.

Figure 4.2. William Sydney Mount, *The Power of Music* (1847)

The black composer William Banfield's article "Black Artistic Invisibility" addresses the public dismissal of important creative, cultural, social, and spiritual aspects of Black artistic culture and how these works are left off the roster of what is valued, preserved, and disseminated.[165] He states that the only modern music genre that defines Black culture is hip-hop while the few past music genres that defined Black culture tended to be jazz and vocal works. This marginalization ignores the prolific output that

[165] The article opens with the haunting line that encapsulates Banfield's feelings on his profession: "I am a Black American composer and I am invisible." William Banfield, "Black Artistic Invisibility: A Black Composer Talking 'Bout Taking Care of the Souls of Black Folk While Losing Much Ground Fast," *Journal of Black Studies* Vol. 35 No. 2 Special Issue (Nov. 2004), 196.

Black musicians and composers have offered, and, according to Banfield, also suggests that "white artists were the only ones creating worthwhile important works"[166] although white composers such as Stravinsky and Debussy have found inspiration from the music of black people.[167] Ignoring composers of color leaves one to ignore the global, social, cross-cultural processes of what shapes western music, and gives credit solely to a select few. In doing so, we encourage the invisibility and lower the standard of the black musician, and take few steps in dissolving the "color line" in art.

Banfield asserted that "art is politics in that anyone who does a work of art defends a certain set of values"[168] In Coleridge-Taylor's case, his values as a black artist, though very important and personal, may have been overridden by his values as a citizen and artist of the larger world. In spite of this, one tends to focus on the race aspect, as during a time of segregation and apartheid, the emergence of a colored composer was something quite extraordinary. Did his heritage work in his favor in accumulating public interest? Would he have been as well-known as a composer during his lifetime had he been white? Would he have been better remembered today if he was a white composer? Would his works not be dissected or scrutinized as much if he were white? These are questions with unknown answers. One can only imagine.

This brings up larger questions for today, questions that surpass Coleridge-Taylor's life and encompass the racial problem as a whole. Norman Rockwell's famous painting, "The Problem We All Live With," depicts real-life events that would transpire

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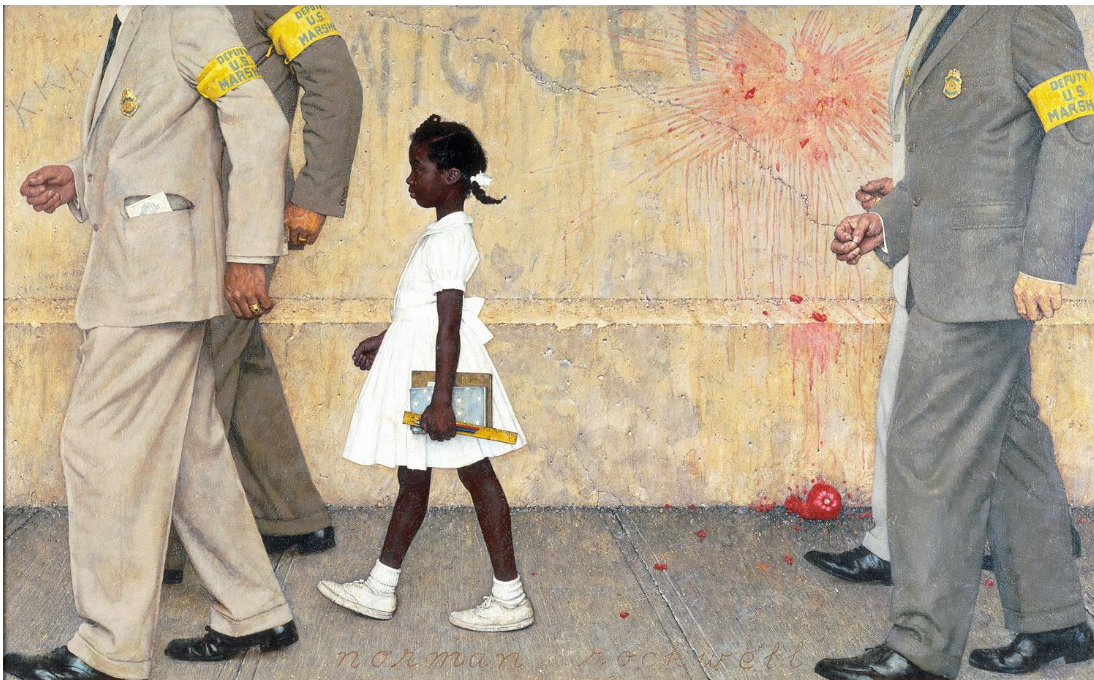
[166]Banfield, 201.
[167] The American composer and pianist Louis Moreau Gottschalk also found inspiration from African melodies but was left off this list as his mother was Creole, and his heritage may not be considered white.
[168] Banfield, 203.

about 50 years after Coleridge-Taylor's death. The young Ruby Bridges, a black child whose exam scores were proficient enough to earn her a spot at a white elementary school, is seen walking to school while being escorted by four U.S. Marshals for the sake of her safety. When Bridges started attending her new school, she was met with threats from her schoolmates and their parents, whose threats ranged from poisoning her food to hanging her.[169] The racial slur in the painting, the angry red of the splattered tomato, and the four Marshals evoke an atmosphere where, if a black citizen "trespasses" into white domain, their very lives could be at stake. It is especially poignant that Bridges is a mere girl, showing that basic resources all children should ideally have access to – such as a good education and safety – can be withheld from the black community.



[169]Karen Savage and Daryl Kahn, "After 5 Decades, Ruby Bridges Gets Applause Instead of Death Threats in School," *Youth today* (27 January 2016), accessed 4 October 2016.   http://youthtoday.org/2016/01/after-5-decades-ruby-bridges-gets-applause-instead-of-death-threats/.

Figure 4.3. Norman Rockwell, *The Problem We All Live With* (1964)

Kerry James Marshall's mural "Our Town" (1995) likewise depicts a disparity between the lives of white and black Americans. His artwork portrays a low-income black neighborhood as a safe, serene neighborhood resembling white suburbia. Hidden throughout the tidy houses and lawns are graffiti scribbles that undermine the idyllic scene. Such depictions address the white gaze and the assumption that life for blacks has progressed to that of equal status while ignoring the lack of equality that still exists today.[170]

Figure 4.3. Kerry James Marshall, *Our Town* (1995)

[170] "Our Town," *Crystal Bridges Museum of American Art,* accessed 3 October 2016. http://collection.crystalbridges.org/objects/1188/our-town?ctx=1518c8f6-9f49-474e-b4dc-b7e01c86853a&idx=8.

Grant Still expressed concern for the future of the black musician, stating that the progress of the black musician is tied to the improvement of his or her economic status. Cultural events in the past were closed off for Negroes not only because of segregation, but also because they did not have the money to attend. Winifred Sheeler, a violin teacher based in Houston, reveals an anecdote where she tried to teach a group of young black children how to play the instrument, only to have them laugh at her and say, "What will I do with it? I can't eat my violin."[171]

Perhaps looking at Coleridge-Taylor's life points us in the right direction in terms of racial equality in the arts. The black heritage and its desire for solidarity should be taken seriously and honored, yet in no way should their works be pigeonholed as works belonging to "black artists" and "black performers." To do so would be creating a "separate but equal" category, which goes against consolidating the history of western music where all contributions from all composers are considered worthwhile and important. Though heritage is undoubtedly important, a double standard should not exist; one should be able to acknowledge the difficulty of being a black musician and the setbacks that occur due to their unequal status in society, without making distinct categories of "black musicians" and "white musicians" as though the two cannot mutually exist in the same general category of "musician." Both white and black musicians, after all, have contributed to the arts and have inspired each other.

In this manner, the *Violin Concerto* of Coleridge-Taylor is important in that it defies categorization as a "black piece" or "white piece" and comes from the composer's own vision. Had it not been for Dvořák and Burleigh igniting the interest of America in

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[171] Grant Still, 101.

black culture and art, it is plausible that Coleridge-Taylor may not have had an audience or sponsors in America, and the *Violin Concerto* may never have been; yet it is implausible to think that the piece was commissioned for reasons other than he had won fame as a great artist as opposed to a black man who did something well. The history of Coleridge-Taylor's life and his *Violin Concerto* shows that there is something worth commemorating in a composition by a black composer that does not derive from black music, and proves that the western world could allow a black composer to make an impression in music, equal to and not separate from that of his white colleagues.

Coleridge-Taylor's music, though not a part of the standard repertoire, is not wholly forgotten. The Violin Concerto remained unperformed for about 70 years until it was revived in 1980 at the London Guildhall School of Music with Sergiu Schwartz on the solo violin[172] and was recorded for the first time by the Johannesburg Philharmonic Orchestra with soloist Philippe Graffin in 2004, and later by soloist Bredon Hill with the London Philharmonic, as well as soloist Anthony Marwood with the BBC Scottish Symphony Orchestra. The violinist Rachel Barton-Pine continues to champion some of Coleridge-Taylor's violin music, including the Powell rendition of *Deep River* and his *Romance in G Major*. His works are also performed today by the Detroit-based Sphinx Organization, a society founded by black violinist Aaron Dworkin, which strives to promote the music and music careers of colored minorities. Though performances of Coleridge-Taylor's music remain sparse, a handful of artists maintain the importance of keeping his name and work alive, and continue to keep his pieces available for public consumption.

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[172] Petrocelli, 28.

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