

泰戈爾詩與廿世紀早期英國歌曲： 以羅納德、法爾茲與布瑞基之創作 為主要考察對象

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摘要

孟加拉詩人泰戈爾不僅在 1910 至 1930 年代的英國文壇引發熱議，也吸引當代英國作曲家將其文字譜寫成歌曲。雖然已有少數研究討論此現象，卻多聚焦在相關作曲家及作品的資訊蒐集，少見深入的作品分析。本論文探討其中三位最具代表性的作曲家及他們的泰戈爾歌曲，特別著重個別樂類傳統對作曲家詩文處理的影響。本文發現，最早創作泰戈爾歌曲的羅納德，在 1913 年所創作的第一系列《歌曲奉獻》中還顯示出深刻的「客廳敘事歌」傳統，1920 年完成的第二系列《歌曲奉獻》則更富宗教性，並可見到十九世紀德語藝術歌曲的痕跡。法爾茲在 1919 年為戲劇《犧牲》創作的兩首歌曲中，將印度傳統樂器融入西方的弦樂室內樂，預告了他日後結合東、西方音樂的努力。布瑞基自 1922 年起陸續創作的三首泰戈爾歌曲使用擴張調性的和聲語言。他以宣敘調保留了詩文的語言韻律，再利用鋼琴部分清楚的素材邏輯補強成完整架構。布瑞基的泰戈爾歌曲象徵他對藝術歌曲創作的告別，也揭示了他日後更國際化的前衛路線。

關鍵詞：泰戈爾、羅納德、法爾茲、布瑞基、英國歌曲

Rabindranath Tagore's Poetry and English Songs in the Early Twentieth Century: On Musical Settings by Landon Ronald, John Foulds and Frank Bridge

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Abstract

The Bengali poet Rabindranath Tagore not only stirred a fierce debate in the English literary world from the 1910s to 1930s but also evoked contemporary English composers to set his words to music. Most of the researches on the musical renditions of Tagore's poems focus on compilation of materials on the composers and their works; yet very few studies actually analyze the relationship between music and the poetic texts closely. The present study focuses on Landon Ronald, John Foulds and Frank Bridge and their musical renditions of Tagore's poems with special attention to the characteristics of musical genres selected and their implication to the composition of these songs. Ronald's *Song-Offerings* is the first musical adaptation of Tagore's poetry in the Western world. Whereas the first series of *Song-Offerings* composed in 1913 was branded with characteristics of the "drawing-room ballad," the second done in 1920 was more religious and bore imprints of the romantic German Lieder. In the two songs he composed for Tagore's play in 1919, *Sacrifice*, Foulds incorporated Indian musical instruments on top of a conventional Western string ensemble. This attempt predicts his lifelong interest in hybridizing the musical traditions of the East with the West. Bridge moved a step further to set Tagore's three works to music in extended tonality, which are basically recitatives with slight variations achieved through the linguistic prosody of the poems. The loose vocal part is to be cemented by the clear logic constructed in the piano part. With these three songs dated from 1922 to 1925, Bridge bid farewell to his career as a song-composer and manifested his metamorphosis into an avant-garde composer.

Keywords: Rabindranath Tagore, Landon Ronald, John Foulds, Frank Bridge, English Songs

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Summary

Shortly before the outbreak of World War I, Rabindranath Tagore (1861-1941), a poet from the British Raj, published three volumes of poetry, *Gitanjali*, *The Gardener*, *The Crescent Moon* between 1912 and 1913, which instantly caught the attention of the literary circle in London. Tagore was awarded the Nobel Prize in Literature in 1913 and was the first non-Caucasian laureate for the category. As a musician himself, the poet selected lyrics of his own Bangali songs and recast them into prose translations and published them in the above three volumes. With his international acclaim, these English poems were translated into different languages and published in many countries around the world. From 1913 to 1930, the poetry of Tagore inspired many composers in the West who tried to adapt the poetic texts for their songs. From the currently available materials, the author finds that the great fervor to set Tagore verse into songs originated from England, where the popularity of his poetic works first began. Landon Ronald (1873-1938) composed two sets of *Song-Offerings* in 1913 and 1920 which were based upon the poems from *Gitanjali*, John Foulds (1880-1939) wrote incidental music for *Sacrifice* and two of the songs were based upon Tagore's poems, and Frank Bridge (1879-1941) set three poems from *The Gardener* into music. These musical renderings reflect the challenges posed against the writing of English songs, and the development of English music in general due to the complex political and social environment. Taking into consideration the political tension between UK and India, the author investigates the

above-mentioned works within a broader context. The first part of the essay reviews the reception of Tagore's poetry in England and how they were interpreted by the musical world. The second part examines these works through their generic characteristics and the musical languages of each composer to show how the poems were represented in these songs.

The Irish poet William Butler Yeats (1865-1939) played a pivotal role in the early reception of Tagore in England. At first, he and the American poet Ezra Pound (1885-1972) helped fine-tune the English translation of Tagore's poems, then he wrote an introduction to the English edition of *Gitanjali* when it was first published. Yeats's misreading of Tagore has been widely discussed but this did not repudiate the fact that his interpretation has dominated the understanding of Tagore's poetic works. Although Yeats did not understand Bangali, he constantly praised the musicality of Tagore's poetry and regretted that it was not translatable into English. His comments further instigated disagreements among the literati: whereas some adored the rhythm in the prose translation of Tagore's poems, others criticized the poor quality of English. Behind these debates, there was an over-riding ideology of Orientalism, which treated Tagore's poems as "the other" and attempted to confine his works within the stereotype of the colonized constructed by the colonizer. The antagonism reflected the resentment of the English people against the Indian Independence Movement.

Landon Ronald composed four songs with poetic texts from *Gitanjali* the same year of its first publication by Macmillan. As a renowned conductor, consultant of the newly established Gramophone Company and chairman of Guildhall School of Music, Ronald was famous for his songs, most notably, "Down in the Forest." Ronald's songs were usually categorized as the "drawing-room ballad," also known as "sentimental ballad" or "royalty ballad." Take the first song "Pluck This Little Flower" from the first series of *Song-Offerings* for example, Ronald made several changes, such as: deleting texts with explicit religious implication in order to emphasize the affection of "the lyrical I" to the addressee. Nonetheless, his alteration also unraveled the parallel structure between the 1st and 2nd stanzas. At the end of the song, the composer set the vocal line in high register with a fermata to create an

emotional climax, a practice that conforms to the trope commonly used in drawing-room ballads, but inevitably the change breaks down the prosody in the poetic text. Such musical features were rarely used in the second series of *Song-Offerings*. Compared to the first series, the four poems chosen in 1920 are more introspective and contemplative with internal dialogues. In composition techniques, we can observe the influence of Claude Debussy (1862-1918) and Robert Schumann (1810-1856) on these later works, which broke through the limitations of drawing-room ballad and the artistry moved a step closer to romantic art songs.

John Foulds is famous for his *World Requiem*, composed between 1919 to 1921. His lover Maud MacCarthy (1882-1967) inspired his interest in Indian music, so when the Union of the East and West commissioned him to compose the incidental music for *Sacrifice*, Tagore's play produced by Prince of Wales Theatre, he happily accepted. The whole piece includes two songs, namely "I Am Going Alone in This World" and "Ye Dweller in the House," unfortunately they were never published. The only source available for research into these works is the account written by Malcolm MacDonald, which indicated that the work contains solo voice, a string quartet with violins and a tampura. This unique instrumentation anticipates his works after 1936 when he started working for All-India Radio, during which he collected Indian folk music and wrote hybrids featuring elements from both western and Indian musical traditions. However, considering the abundant musical elements from Ancient Greek and Celtic cultures embedded in his earlier works, Foulds was considered more an "internationalist" when he composed incidental music for *Sacrifice* because he believed in the intercommunication of musical principles in different civilizations. By incorporating materials from far and wide, he could reinvent the modern musical language and appropriate them for his own works.

Frank Bridge's earlier songs are also branded with characteristics of drawing-room ballads. In the choice of texts, he was often criticized to be "haphazard" or "opportunistic." Nevertheless, he started working on verse written by highly accomplished poets, including Walt Whitman (1819-1892), Tagore and James Joyce (1882-1941) after 1917. His *Day after Day*, composed in 1922 for mezzo-soprano, showcases Tagore's prose-like prosody written in recitatives and conveys

authentically the cadence in Tagore's poems with constantly changing rhythms. The music constitutes of five musical themes, which not only correlate with the texts but also provide a structural support for the vocal phrases which are loosely connected and tonally ambiguous. The lyrics of *Speak to Me, My Love*, composed in 1924, are also set in recitative. The varied repetitions of the main melody in piano part see an intelligent transformation of the strophic convention in art songs. *Dweller in My Deathless Dreams*, commissioned by the Irish tenor John McCormack (1884-1945), observes the convention of the romantic *Lied*. As Michael Pilkington points out, these three songs can be read as a poetic entity in itself: it begins with the female speaking voice in *Day After Day* who could hardly contain herself in the long wait. The longing was fulfilled with a face-to-face encounter in *Speak to Me, My Love*, and finally the male speaking voice responded passionately in *Dweller in My Deathless Dreams*. This interpretation can be accepted when the closely linked waltz rhythm in the 2nd and 3rd songs can be interpreted to suggest the man's response to the woman. Bridge stopped writing art songs in 1926 after he finished the composition of *Journey's End*, and turned his focus to instrumental music that are radical with avant-garde style. Even though he never returned to song compositions, his Tagore songs can be seen as the summit of his song writing and they are now regarded as the milestone of the Tagore phenomenon in the history of English art song during the early twentieth century.

In conclusion, written in 1913, Ronald's *Song-Offerings* signals a pursuit after the literary and musical fashions of the time. It was not until his second series of *Song-Offerings* and Bridge's Tagore songs that the fad created by Tagore's poetry started to fade out. At this point, composers had more critical distance which allowed them to understand Tagore's poems with more depth and arrange the music with more sophistication and subtlety. For example, Bridge chose to set Tagore's unique language style to recitatives which gave his works a modernistic twist. With the new harmonic language of extended tonality, the composer underlined the communication barrier in Tagore's portrayal of the human mind in his verse. These analyses indicate that the literary and musical reception of Tagore's poetry deserve to be re-read and re-examined with close readings. The artistic value of Tagore's

poetry is still tensely debated, but through the mediation of music, his poetry has undoubtedly mirrored the musical intentions of these composers.

Keywords: Rabindranath Tagore, Landon Ronald, John Foulds, Frank Bridge, English Songs

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