



The English composer Kaikhosru Shapurji Sorabji (born Leon Dudley Sorabji; 14 August 1892 – 15 October 1988) was born in Chingford, North East London to an Indian Zoroastrian father and a Spanish-Sicilian mother.

As good an introduction as any to his character is probably best given in this note from a Guardian Newspaper article in 2003 entitled “Mr Miseryguts” .

*He was notorious as the Howard Hughes of music. Cut off from the world and supported by a private income, he composed dauntingly huge pieces which were regarded as all but unplayable. He forbade the performance of his music lest inferior musicians ruin it. He remained alone, despising the trivial productions of others, in his artistic castle of ideal, Platonic complexity, a lone voice in the wilderness until his death.*

The Wikipedia article on Sorabji provides an interesting biography of his compositions and his personal life and interests.



In addition to numerous piano, voice and orchestral compositions, Sorabji composed three organ symphonies, all on a mammoth scale, as is evidenced that a performance of the second organ symphony lasts over eight and a half hours – the final movement alone lasting over three hours! A score example is shown below.

The total recorded performances and recordings of the first and second symphonies are very few, and the third organ symphony is yet to be performed – one wonders if because at one stage the manuscript features 11 staves.

A search on You Tube will find numerous exerts from performances by Kevin Bowyer, and many of these

feature the score on the screen so you can very much appreciate the difficulty of the music. They are neither easily listening nor playing and therefore not for the faint hearted. They are however worth a listen, as they demonstrate a Herculean effort by one of the world's foremost organists to ensure that this music, although not commonly known, will not be lost to future generations.

*Andrew Gardner*

296

A page of musical notation for an organ piece. It consists of four staves. The top two staves are in treble clef, and the bottom two are in bass clef. The music is highly complex, featuring many sixteenth and thirty-second notes, often beamed together. There are numerous accidentals, including naturals and flats. The notation includes many slurs, ties, and dynamic markings such as *mf* and *f*. The piece appears to be in a major key with a 2/4 time signature. The notation is dense and fills most of the page.

A continuation of the musical notation from the previous page. It also consists of four staves (two treble, two bass). The notation is equally complex, with many beamed notes and accidentals. There are several *mf* and *f* markings. The piece concludes with a final cadence on the bottom two staves, marked with a double bar line and a fermata. The overall style is that of a highly technical and expressive organ work.