

London Philharmonic Orchestra

SIR ADRIAN BOULT
A MUSICAL LEGACY



SIR ADRIAN BOULT (1889 – 1983)

In October 1919, at very short notice, the young Adrian Boult took over conducting Sergei Diaghilev's Ballets Russes at London's Alhambra Theatre. Over a few days Boult learnt 14 ballets including Satie's *Parade* and Stravinsky's *Petrushka* and *Firebird*. On 5 November 1920 he travelled from London to the HMV studios in Hayes, Middlesex, to make his first recording with the recently re-formed British Symphony Orchestra, of which he had just been appointed Principal Conductor. Crowded around the acoustic recording horn, the musicians recorded excerpts from the ballet *The Good-Humoured Ladies* with music by Scarlatti arranged by Vincenzo Tommasini. Eleven days later Boult returned to Hayes to make his first recording of George Butterworth's *A Shropshire Lad*. He would go on to make recordings for nearly 60 years, living into the digital age. His final sessions (which were with the LPO) were in 1978, when he conducted the music of his friend Gustav Holst and that of Hubert Parry. With the possible exception of another British-born conductor, Leopold Stokowski, few conductors have recorded over as long a period and few have contributed so

much to the music of their contemporaries. As Ralph Vaughan Williams noted in a letter after the premiere of his Piano Concerto: 'You have made impossible the composer's time-honoured excuse that the work would have sounded all right if it had been properly played – I could not have imagined a better performance'.

The relationship that the LPO enjoyed with Sir Adrian was a long and fruitful one. This benefitted both Orchestra and conductor as Boult entered what was a happy 'Indian summer' of recording and music-making. His friendships with many significant 20th-century composers enabled him to bring an authority to performances of works such as those by Elgar, Holst and Vaughan Williams. Although Boult's music-making was grounded on the German classics, it is his devotion to the music of British composers and his willingness, whilst at the BBC, to learn 'new' music such as Berg's opera *Wozzeck*, for which he is particularly remembered. Whilst at Oxford he sang in the second performance of Vaughan Williams's *A Sea Symphony* and heard the young tenor Stuart

Wilson sing *On Wenlock Edge*. He even met John Philip Sousa: 'when one gets used to the noise it is marvellous'.

After a performance of his Symphony No. 2 on 17 March 1920, Sir Edward Elgar wrote to the 30-year-old Boult, who had just conducted the work in London's Queen's Hall.

'My dear Adrian: With the sounds ringing in my ears I send a word of thanks for your splendid conducting of the Sym: – I am most grateful to you for your affectionate care of it & I feel that my reputation in the future is safe in your hands. It was a wonderful series of sounds. Bless you!'

These were prescient remarks and, as it turned out, Elgar's music (as well as the music of many of his contemporaries) was safe in Boult's hands for over half a century, much of it performed with the London Philharmonic Orchestra. Boult's final public appearance was to conduct Elgar's ballet *The Sanguine Fan* at the London Coliseum on 24 June 1978, a work he had recorded with the LPO in 1973. The great ballerina, Dame Beryl Grey, said of Boult's conducting 'that it was almost as if the composer himself was reliving the music. [Boult] knew how to lead; the worst thing to have is a conductor who follows the dancer'.

EARLY YEARS

Adrian Cedric Boult was born on 8 April 1889 to a successful Cheshire businessman and his wife. In 1901 he was sent to Westminster School where he developed into an intelligent and perceptive observer of London's musical life. From school he attended countless concerts hearing music conducted by, among others, Arthur Nikisch, Hans Richter and Richard Strauss. Boult made detailed notes of concerts he attended. At times these reflect the naivety of a teenager and at others the fastidiousness he would bring to his own conducting. Aged 15, he attended what was only the second London performance of Elgar's *The Dream of Gerontius*. It is fascinating to see how an intelligent and perceptive young man had a definite opinion, even if it was to alter later in life. After the performance he wrote: 'I was very disappointed. It is aimless wandering. The closing scene is exquisite, and the demons chorus is good, but Gerontius takes much too long dying ... Will Elgar live? His *Variations* will, I am certain. Will

Gerontius? I am not certain by any means.' Despite becoming one of the supreme interpreters of *The Dream of Gerontius*, Boult expressed a much later opinion in the notes that accompanied his recording of Elgar's *The Kingdom* in 1969: 'I think there is a great deal in *The Kingdom* that is more than a match for *Gerontius*, and I feel it is a much more balanced work and throughout maintains a stream of glorious music whereas *Gerontius* has its ups and downs'.

In 1908, in Oxford for his entrance interview to Christ Church, Boult surprised the Dean, Dr Thomas Strong, when he announced his intention of becoming an orchestral conductor. Perhaps he had been inspired by attending the rehearsals of the London premiere of Elgar's First Symphony. The conductor was Hans Richter and Boult never forgot the occasion. Richter, with the conductors Fritz Steinbach and Arthur Nikisch, became Boult's models, his observation of their particular techniques enabling him to comment on how one or the other might have interpreted a work in a concert he attended. Attending the 1910 Leeds

Festival he noted that Rachmaninoff 'was by far the best conductor who appeared at Leeds' and two years later travelled to Leipzig where he studied for a year. There he attended rehearsals and concerts conducted by Nikisch, whose style was to become the greatest influence on Boult.

His first professional engagement, on 27 February 1914, was back home in the Wirral town of West Kirby (where his family had moved). He conducted a programme that included George Butterworth's *The Banks of Green Willow*. Boult had met Butterworth in Oxford and, when President of the University Musical Club, invited Butterworth to give what turned out to be a significant event in English music: the first performance of some of the songs from *A Shropshire Lad*. Whilst at Oxford, Boult also began his lifelong friendship with Ralph Vaughan Williams, later becoming one of the finest interpreters of the composer's music. It is almost certain that Boult conducted more premieres of major works by Vaughan Williams than anyone else.

In 1920 Boult attended the Mahler Festival in Amsterdam. There he heard Mahler's Sixth, Seventh and Ninth Symphonies, *Das Lied von der Erde* and *Kindertotenlieder*. Boult's comments on Mahler's music are perceptive: '... it is impossible to question the orchestration of a man who was one of the greatest conductors of his age, although one must confess to an impression of over-scoring in much of the purely orchestral work'. Boult's only studio recordings of Mahler's music were the First Symphony, *Lieder eines fahrenden Gesellen* and *Kindertotenlieder*. Nevertheless, Boult was one of the pioneering post-war interpreters of Mahler's music, conducting broadcast performances of many of the symphonies before he took up his position with the LPO.

In 1924, Boult's appointment as Director of the Birmingham Festival Choral Society led to his move to the City of Birmingham Orchestra (CBO). The local audience, although welded to traditional programming were, nevertheless, introduced to the music of Mahler and Stravinsky, Boult and his family subsidising concerts on occasions. It

was during these six years directing the CBO that Boult's reputation was made. Whilst there, he was able to conduct performances of *Die Walküre* and *Otello* with the touring British National Opera Company, and elsewhere *Parsifal* and *Pelléas and Mélisande*. He had also been noticed by the BBC and in 1928 was invited to join the Corporation's Music Advisory Committee.

WITH THE BBC

In January 1930 Percy Pitt, the BBC's Director of Music, stood down on reaching his 60th birthday. The BBC, following discussions between Sir John (later Lord) Reith, the Director General, Sir Hugh Allen and Sir Henry Walford Davies, asked Boult to take over as Director with the responsibility of directing the music of the Corporation, adding 'If conducting now and then could be added to direction ... well and good'. Boult assumed the position on 15 May and became involved in the planning for the establishment of the BBC Symphony Orchestra, which would employ up to 110 musicians. Reith's wish that Boult

should primarily be an administrator was soon compromised when it became clear that Boult insisted on conducting the Orchestra's first concert on 22 May 1930 in Queen's Hall. This was one of those concerts that few who attended would forget. Largely unknown in London, Boult conducted a programme that began with Wagner's Overture from *Der fliegende Holländer* and ended with the second Suite from Ravel's *Daphnis and Chloë*. In the words of the *Times* critic, 'London now possessed the material of a first-class orchestra'. The excellence of the new orchestra meant that many conductors from overseas were attracted to perform in London, notably Willem Mengelberg, Richard Strauss and Arturo Toscanini. Boult continued as Director of Music until 1942 when he was at last freed from administrative duties. He now grabbed the additional freedom to work more substantially with the Orchestra, conducting many wartime broadcasts, which included Beethoven's *Fidelio* and *Missa Solemnis* and rarities such as Wagner's *Das Liebesmahl der Apostel*.

During his time at the BBC, Boult conducted an exceptional number of UK premieres such as Berg's

Three Orchestral Pieces, Busoni's *Dr Faust*, Khachaturian's *Ode to Stalin*, Křenek's Piano Concerto, and Malipiero's First and William Schuman's Third Symphonies. Many a composer from Berg (whom Boult had got to know at a meeting in Cambridge in 1931) to Béla Bartók and Elisabeth Lutyens had reason to be grateful to him for his faithfulness to their music and his determination to get to what he thought were the intentions of the composer.

THE LPO YEARS

The LPO, formed by a financial consortium led by the conductor Sir Thomas Beecham, gave its first 'electrifying' concert on 7 October 1932. However, following the departure of Sir Thomas overseas in 1940 and the withdrawal of financial support which, with wartime restrictions, threw the future of the LPO into doubt, many musicians did what they could to support the Orchestra. As Boult put it 'someone hit on the idea of lending them [LPO] my services as conductor'. He was, therefore, already known to the players of the LPO by the spring of 1950, when he was approached by Thomas Russell,

the Orchestra's General Manager, asking Boult to take over the Principal Conductor's position from Eduard van Beinum, who had retired through ill-health.

Although Boult had made his first recording with the LPO in the Autumn of 1949, this was hardly a propitious time for the Orchestra, as it attempted to recover after World War II and compete with the ability of newly-formed rival orchestras in Britain to attract some of the finest instrumentalists. Boult quickly threw himself into supporting the Orchestra by accepting a substantial workload and by contributing to it financially. He set to work recording with the Orchestra, undertaking an exhausting tour of Germany in early 1951, and conducting more concerts than any other conductor in Britain at the time.

In February and August 1933, the Orchestra had recorded music by Elgar under the direction of the composer, the magnificent string section showing its quality in the *Serenade for Strings*, and the playing of the great Léon Goossens in the *Froissart* Overture drawing praise from Elgar: 'Léon G's oboe passages ... are divine – what an artist!'. By 1950 the

rebuilding of the Orchestra was underway and Boult's choice of Elgar's Symphony No. 1 for his first LPO recording suggested both a link to his old friend and a determination to ensure Elgar's music established itself at the heart of the Orchestra's music-making. Boult was always supportive of the music of his own country, recording Butterworth's *A Shropshire Lad*, Elgar's *Enigma Variations*, Holst's *The Planets* and Vaughan Williams's ballet *Job* four times each and his complete symphonies twice. Vaughan Williams attended the first series of sessions, which were recorded by Decca in London's Kingsway Hall. Initially these were for seven symphonies, the Eighth not being completed until 1956 and the Ninth in 1958. The composer's widow, Ursula Vaughan Williams, remembered the challenge of recording in winter: 'It was both tedious and exhilarating: the tedious in the gaps and waits, the murky, greenish blue tipped-up seats, the rumble of trains passing under the hall and disorganizing (sic) the music, the cold weather and the sandwich meals'.

During his time as Musical Director of the Orchestra Boult accompanied the players on a number of gruelling overseas tours, culminating in a visit to the Soviet Union in the autumn of 1956.

Earlier, Boult advised the LPO management that he would not be going to Russia as flying caused him ear pain and his back trouble was exacerbated on long journeys. With the tour imminent, the Russian authorities suddenly told the Orchestra that unless Boult conducted, the tour would be cancelled. So Boult agreed to go and conducted a successful series of concerts including in Moscow the Fourth and Fifth Symphonies of Vaughan Williams, the great *Meditations on a Theme of John Blow* by Bliss, the Violin Concerto of Walton (with Alfredo Campoli), Holst's *The Planets* and what was, clearly, a special performance of Schubert's 'Great' C major Symphony. On his return Boult felt the time had come to hand over to Sir John Pritchard, making it clear that he 'was ready to work with [the LPO] as much as possible'. During 1957 Boult became closely involved in the Elgar centenary celebrations as well as continuing to make recordings for EMI and Decca.

It was at this time that Boult and the LPO began making recordings for a number of American labels, including Everest, Nixa, Reader's Digest, RCA, Vanguard and Westminster. On occasions, for contractual reasons, the Orchestra had to be called

by another name such as the 'Philharmonic Promenade Orchestra'. Boult's overseas reputation is largely based on the extraordinary number of recordings he made; many of which were with the LPO. In particular, the recordings he made between 1965 and 1978 for EMI and Lyrita are an exceptional legacy and remain a testament to his range and wide musical sympathies. These remain touchstones for today's listeners.

Boult's recordings of Wagner operatic excerpts, notably 'Siegfried's Funeral March' from *Götterdämmerung*, show off his sense of pacing and balance, as well as his unerring ability to point the climax of a dramatic piece. In contrast, a recording from 1967, 'The LPO on Parade', allowed Boult to enjoy his favourite *Dam Busters March* by Eric Coates as well as four Marches by John Philip Sousa. The latter's *The Stars and Stripes Forever* has rarely sounded more thrilling nor as much fun!

Boult outlived the other four great British conductors of his time: Barbirolli, Beecham, Sargent and Wood. He was devoted to the great Austro-German tradition but, like Barbirolli and Sargent, he was also committed to the music of his country. He had the privilege of befriending great

composers like Vaughan Williams, and his espousal of Butterworth's music helped to ensure this was not forgotten after Butterworth's premature death. For some, Boult was already old-fashioned by the time he took over the LPO. This is clear in his 'unfashionable' but sensitive recording of Bach's 'Brandenburg' Concertos (works he had conducted in his earliest concerts) which he recorded with the full Orchestra in 1972. Recordings he made of the music of Bach and Handel in the 1950s were also 'of their time' yet still have great charm.

Those of us who have the privilege of recalling Sir Adrian remember the tall figure, the straight back, the immaculate tails and the unfashionably long stick. Born a Victorian, he lived into the digital age, made the BBC Symphony Orchestra one of the great ensembles of its day, and worked to turn the LPO into a similar body over the six years he was at the helm. His recorded legacy is substantial, but does not fully reflect his wide musical sympathies which extended beyond Brahms, Elgar and Dvořák to Busoni, Mahler and Strauss. Nevertheless, those last years, notably the recordings he made for EMI with Christopher Bishop, produced a legacy which is perhaps unequalled by other conductors of his

age. Boult was a musician who knew what he wanted and could, on occasions, lose his temper if musicians were neither taking him seriously nor playing or singing to the standard he expected. He was a man of simple tastes, eschewing alcohol and enjoying uncomplicated ‘school’ food. His love of what he did never deserted him. Sometime after those last recording sessions, Christopher Bishop mentioned to Boult (now very infirm) the possibility of recording the symphonies of Schumann one more time. Boult’s eyes lit up at the thought, but his body was no longer up to the demands of long recording sessions.

Michael Kennedy, in his biography of Sir Adrian, wrote that when he was considered for the BBC position ‘Boult at this time was not what today we should call charismatic. Whatever may have constituted the general public’s idea of a conductor, it was not Boult. He could not rival the characterful avuncular popularity of Wood; he had none of Beecham’s raffish charm and daredevilry; he lacked the brilliance and panache of Sargent; he had not the magnetic intensity of Barbirolli’. Nevertheless, he was the BBC’s choice in 1930 and that of the LPO in 1950. The first appointment placed him in the unique position of both

educating and entertaining the British public as they bought into the idea of listening to music ‘on the radio’ and in creating one of the great orchestras of the time. In the second, again he was closely involved once more in creating a great orchestra and, as the musical life of Britain developed and advanced in those post-war years, playing a continued major role in the musical life of these islands.

In considering Boult’s legacy it is obvious that he contributed greatly to the opportunities for audiences to hear and understand the orchestral music of his native country. Supported by the British Council, tours of European countries – as well as those under Soviet domination – would include a number of British works. With Boult the LPO was able to celebrate a side of British culture which showed a world beyond Shakespeare and Turner. On one of his appearances on BBC Radio’s *Desert Island Discs* most of his eight recordings were of British music (although not conducted by him) but, tellingly, his ‘one record’ was of Mozart’s Symphony No. 40, K.550, conducted by Richard Strauss, a conductor (and composer) he heard and admired.

At his best Boult, as with any great conductor, could get to the heart of the music. For example, in Rachmaninoff’s Third Symphony, Boult understood the originality of this work, which many of its first listeners failed to grasp. He allowed the long melodic lines to breathe whilst skilfully balancing the lively music with the darker reminders of Rachmaninoff’s obsession with the *Dies irae*. In one of the lesser-known symphonies of Vaughan Williams, the Eighth in D minor, Boult points up the surprising scoring with its thrilling use of percussion but, at the same time, bringing out the shadows in the Symphony. Once, in the company of the conductor Vernon Handley, I can recall watching a film of Boult conducting ‘Mars’ from Holst’s *The Planets*. Handley was reduced to tears of laughter as he pointed out how Boult was ‘fudging’ the beat. As Handley explained, ‘Only a great conductor could do that’. Boult was an ideal accompanist, Dame Janet Baker saying that one of the happiest recordings she made was with the LPO under Boult of Brahms’s *Alto Rhapsody* and Wagner’s *Wesendonck Lieder*.

It is now over 40 years since Boult last conducted the LPO, but some of those who played under him remember the time vividly. Michael Boyle, who

joined the Orchestra in 1962 as second bassoon, ‘first encountered Sir Adrian when a young player just out of music college. I soon got used to his beat which, compared to some of his contemporaries as diverse as Georg Solti and Rudolf Schwarz, was relatively clear. To conserve energy in a four-in-a-bar passage he would leave out the third beat, but otherwise we did not find it a problem. A budding student conductor watching him at a rehearsal might find his approach puzzling. He would not say anything for a while, only stopping to make a point about balance, affecting mock surprise that the Orchestra had not noticed it themselves “Are you sure you can hear the solo oboe at letter H?”’. ‘Only if the ensemble faltered momentarily, his beat would become exaggeratedly clear, his eyes would flash, and his moustache seemed to bristle. With a familiar work such as a Brahms or Elgar symphony he would leave out long passages: “This plays itself”, saving energy for the concert itself, often finishing a rehearsal early. He always showed great loyalty to the LPO, where he felt comfortable. He would trust the players’ professional experience’. Keith Millar, who was Principal Percussionist with the Orchestra, confirms this: ‘His conducting technique was wonderful, but he hardly did anything: he

never moved his hands above his waist, he just did everything really with his wrist, but it was all there. He would just do as little as necessary, but he made everything work for you’.

There are many conductors who remain grateful for Boult’s generosity in teaching them for no charge, as were the members of the BBC Symphony Orchestra he founded, not only for his outstanding leadership but for his work in maintaining the BBC’s music in wartime, at times under very difficult conditions. Later with the LPO, the Orchestra he helped rescue, he improved its standards and therefore its reputation. During his time ‘at the helm’ and afterwards, the LPO became one of the leading European ensembles.

Finally, there are the recordings Boult made, primarily with the LPO. As long as recordings exist, these will be played, such as the symphonies of Beethoven, Brahms and Elgar, Schubert’s ‘Great’ C major, the music of Sibelius and Tchaikovsky and British music – especially Elgar’s *The Apostles* and *The Kingdom*, music by Holst, Vaughan Williams’s *The Pilgrim’s Progress*, *Job* and nine symphonies. Boult ‘never forgot from [his] Oxford days “the

impact of Vaughan Williams, this magnificent-looking man, and his fresh and vital music”’.

Invited to conduct at the Coronation of King George VI in 1937, Boult was knighted that year. He also conducted at the 1953 Coronation and was made a Companion of Honour in 1968.

In a January 1961 concert programme, the LPO offered its own tribute to Boult in celebration of his ten years’ service. There could be no finer tribute to this most self-effacing of men who contributed so much to British musical life for over 60 years:

‘The London Philharmonic Orchestra and the London Philharmonic Society take this opportunity of honouring a great man; for those of us who have had the privilege of working with Sir Adrian Boult know that he is one of the outstanding musicians of his day, selflessly devoted to the realisation of the scores he undertakes to conduct. With him duty and inclination are one. No task is too difficult, none too menial for him. In Sir Adrian we salute an ambassador, a public servant and a great artist, as well as a human being of warm sympathy and deep understanding’.

THE RECORDINGS

These recordings show many sides of Boult's musical personality. In a BBC television broadcast in April 1989 the composer Malcolm Williamson observed that Boult 'lived for the service of music', whilst Christopher Bishop reminded viewers that 'he had a terrific fire. People found it very difficult to equate the fiery music he produced with his very calm personality'. Vernon Handley, aged 15 in 1945, saw Boult conduct for the first time: 'He didn't move his feet at all: just the stick was moving, an occasional nod of the head, an occasional lift and flick of the left hand; yet everything he did came out in the sound of the orchestra'. This issue contains a few well-known recordings, as well as lesser-known performances and some rarities. These demonstrate Boult at his best: allowing the music to play itself whilst subtly guiding the Orchestra through his interpretations. The set also shows something of the wide range of his musical sympathies.

VOLUME 1

Made for HMV in Abbey Road Studios in October 1949, this recording of Elgar's Symphony No. 1 was issued in May 1950 and coincided with Boult's appointment as the LPO's Principal Conductor. This was his first recording with the Orchestra and the first of the Symphony since the composer's own, made in 1930. Boult recorded the Symphony twice more with the LPO and this early recording shows his affinity with

the music and Elgar's idiom, Boult's relatively swift tempi reflecting those of the composer. The recording of Vaughan Williams's Symphony No. 6 is from the Decca sessions made in the Kingsway Hall, during which the last four of the then-completed Symphonies were recorded in December 1953, when the composer and his wife, Ursula, attended the sessions.

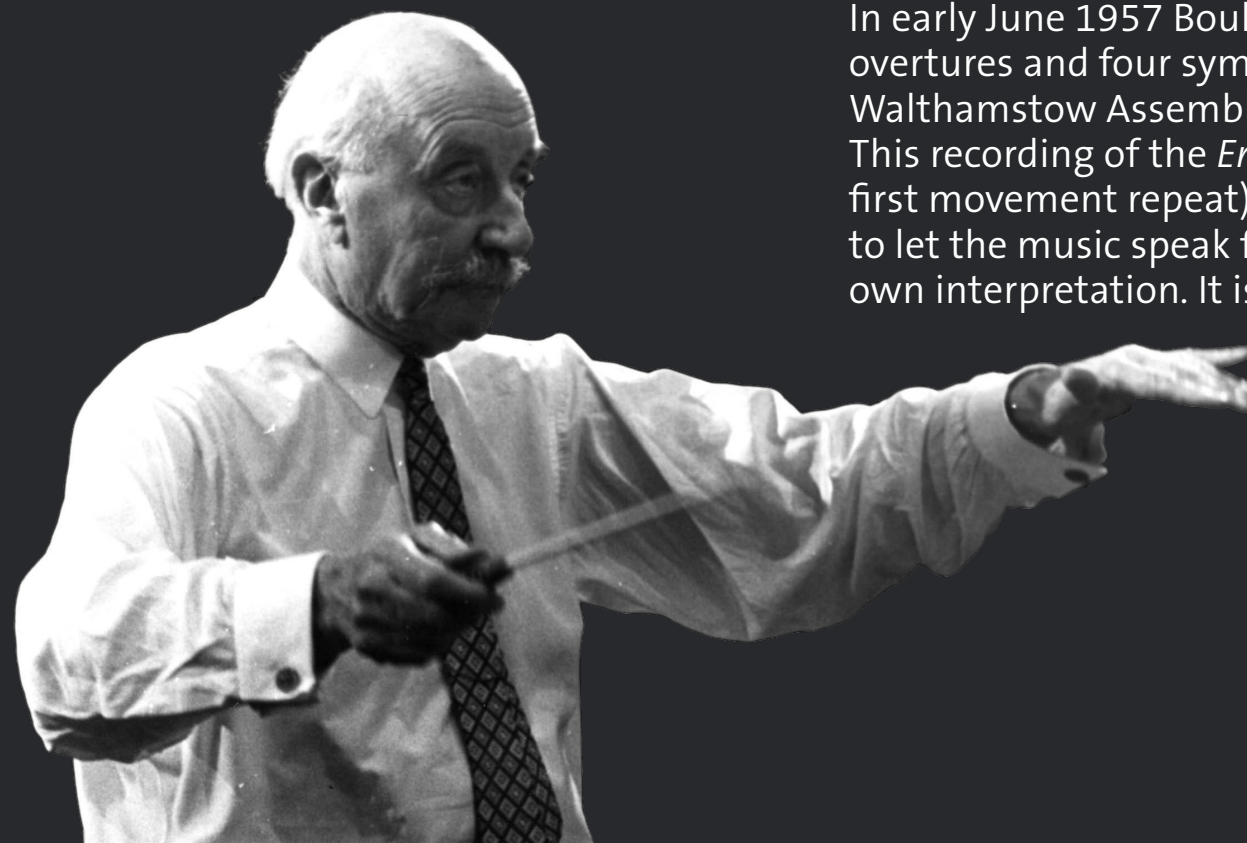
VOLUME 2

In early June 1957 Boult recorded four overtures and four symphonies by Beethoven in Walthamstow Assembly and Hornsey Town Halls. This recording of the *Eroica* Symphony (without its first movement repeat) demonstrates Boult's ability to let the music speak for itself whilst creating his own interpretation. It is neither rushed, nor is it in

any way slow, but has a projection and momentum which is instantly attractive. The recording also demonstrates what fine woodwind and horn sections were then at the heart of the LPO. In 1967 the cellist Christopher Bunting joined the Orchestra for sessions that included Boult's only recording of the Bruch. This issue also includes a recording of live music-making. On 21 November 1955 the pianist Patricia Bishop participated in a concert recorded in the Royal Festival Hall (see Volume 5) in which she performed Ernst von Dohnányi's *Variations on a Nursery Song* ('Ah, vous dirai-je, Maman') a work Boult had performed with Dohnányi as soloist many years before.

VOLUME 3

This volume, devoted to music of the dance, reminds us of Boult's sympathy with ballet music. In Walthamstow's Assembly Hall in 1955 he recorded music from three of Delibes's ballets: *Coppélia*, *Sylvia* and *La Source* (also known as *Naila*, the ballet's heroine). Boult did as much as anyone to promote the music of his friend Gustav Holst



including conducting the first performance of *The Planets* in 1919, a work he recorded four times.

The ballet music from the opera *The Perfect Fool* is taken from Decca's Kingsway Hall sessions in March 1961. This was music close to Boult's heart and, although the absurd story has predicated against performances of the opera, the ballet music in which a wizard summons the spirits of the earth, water and fire as the opera begins has retained its place in the concert hall. In 1936 Boult conducted a memorable performance of Stravinsky's *The Rite of Spring* in Paris. This makes it regrettable that his only recording of Stravinsky's music is the short *Circus Polka*, in which Boult seems completely at home as he is in the music of Saint-Saëns and in Falla's exotic dance.

VOLUME 4

This volume opens with Boult's brilliantly managed recording of Bartók's *Music for Strings, Percussion and Celesta* made for the Pye label in 1955. Sibelius's *Lemminkäinen's Return*, recorded in 1956, is a work to which Boult's undemonstrative conducting style is suited as the latent excitement

in the piece gathers momentum towards its thrilling resolution. In the Saint-Saëns piece, where he was joined by the Australian pianist Gwenneth Pryor, and in the Walton, Boult relaxes. He had known Walton a long time and was instrumental in finding him work with the music publishers Goodwin and Tabb in 1920.

The volume ends with two contrasting works, beginning with Vaughan Williams's *The Lark Ascending*, the first performance of the orchestral version of which Boult conducted in 1921. Jean Pougnet, then Leader of the Orchestra, was the soloist in this recording. George Gershwin may not be a composer usually associated with Boult, but this recording of the *Cuban Overture* from 1968 is another testimony to Boult's ability to allow the music to speak for itself, the gaiety in the piece remaining undiminished.

VOLUME 5

Boult made four commercial recordings of the Butterworth *Rhapsody*, a work he performed in a special 80th birthday programme recorded in

the BBC's Maida Vale studios on 2 March 1969. Boult manages the tension of the opening bars with subtle control before Butterworth's melody is released. Based on the setting of the song 'Loveliest of trees' from his song cycle *A Shropshire Lad*, Butterworth's brilliant orchestration leaves the listener wondering what 'might have been'.

From another concert in the Royal Festival Hall (January 1962) Boult conducted Arnold Bax's tone-poem *The Garden of Fand*. Boult had conducted Bax's music since his first professional concerts and, in this piece as in all these works, was in his element. He knew much of this music inside out, but always managed to bring a freshness to performances.

The concert in November 1955 (see Volume 2) was otherwise of British music. The baritone Frederick Harvey performed four of the five songs in Stanford's evocative second cycle from 1910 of settings of sea poems by Sir Henry Newbolt. Britain's naval might is celebrated across two centuries in the vigorous 'The Song of the Sou' Wester' and in 'The Little Admiral', Newbolt's tribute to Lord Nelson. However, the magically scored 'Sailing at Dawn' picturing the modern fleet

putting to sea evokes a sombre thoughtfulness that underlines the responsibilities of the fighting sailor.

In 1954 Malcolm Arnold composed concertos for harmonica, flute and organ. The Organ Concerto, which was given its premiere broadcast that evening with the Canadian organist Hugh McLean, is scored for three trumpets, timpani and strings. The concert ended with another work which Boult had recorded with the Orchestra the previous June, Elgar's 'Concert Overture' (in effect a brilliant tone-poem) *In the South (Alassio)*.

Of all the composers with which Boult is associated, perhaps the music of Elgar, Holst and Vaughan Williams were the closest. This set of recordings concludes with the music of the composer he did as much as anyone to promote and for whom he would become one of his most devoted and greatest interpreters.

Programme notes © Andrew Neill 2020

VINYL SOURCES

Beethoven Symphony No. 3 – SRV127, 1957

Elgar Symphony No. 1 – ALP 1052, 1953

Delibes Ballet Suites – GL0188, 1957

Sibelius Lemmääinkinen’s Return – VRS489B, 1958

Vaughan Williams Symphony No. 6 –

LL-976, 1955

Engineer: Mike Clements.

Disc transfers using Technics SL110 with Ortofon

M20fl Super cartridge tracking at 1.75g mounted

on SME Series III Low Mass transcription arm. Signal

path is Ortofon M20 – Shure phono pre-amp (1970)

– LC2 level converter (unbalanced to balanced

line level 0VU = 1.228 Volts)- Mackie 24/8 mixing

console – Apogee PSX100 24bit A/D.

Holst The Perfect Fool – LW5175, 1955

Bartók Music For Strings, Percussion and Celesta –

NCL 16011, 1955

Transfer: Andrew Walton, K&A Productions

Dohnányi *Variations*, **Arnold** Organ Concerto, **Elgar**

In the South, **Stanford** *Songs of the Fleet* – 1955 St.

Cecilia’s Day Concert, courtesy of the British Library.

Engineer: Karl Jenkins.

Transcription discs were cleaned using a Keith

Monks’ Gemini and transferred using a Garrard 401

turntable with an SME Model 312 tonearm. The

cartridge was a Shure M44-7 with an Esoteric Sound

2.8mil elliptical truncated stylus tracking at 3.0g.

Signal pre-amplified through a Vadlyd Elberg MD12

mk2 and converted with a PrismSound ADA-8XR at

192kHz.

The London Philharmonic Orchestra gratefully

acknowledges Jonathan Summers, of The British

Library, for facilitating the release of these

transcription discs.

STANFORD

SONGS OF THE FLEET, OP. 117

Sailing at Dawn

One by one the pale stars die before the day now,

One by one the great ships are stirring from their sleep,

Cables all are rumbling, anchors all a-weigh now,

Now the fleet’s a fleet again, gliding towards the deep.

Now the fleet’s a fleet again, bound upon the old ways,

Splendour of the past comes shining in the spray;

Admirals of old time bring us on the bold ways!

Souls of all the sea-dogs, lead the line to-day!

Far away behind us town and tower are dwindling,

Home becomes a fair dream faded long ago;

Infinitely glorious the height of heav’n is kindling,

Infinitely desolate the shoreless sea below.

Once again with proud hearts we make the old surrender,

Once again with high hearts serve the age to be,

Not for us the warm life of Earth, secure and tender,

Ours th’ eternal wandering and warfare of the sea.

The Song of the Sou' Wester

The sun was lost in a leaden sky,
And the shore lay under our lee;
When a great Sou' Wester hurricane high
Came rollicking up the sea.
He played with the fleet as a boy with boats
Till out for the Downs we ran,
And he laugh'd with the roar of a thousand throats
At the militant ways of man.

Oh! I am the enemy most of might,
The other be who you please!
Gunner and guns may all be right,
Flags a-flying and armour tight,
But I am the fellow you've first to fight
The giant that swings the seas.

A dozen of middies were down below
Chasing the X they love,
While the table curtseyed long and slow,
And the lamps were giddy above.
The lesson was all of a ship and a shot,
And some of it may have been true,
But the word they heard and never forgot
Was the word of the wind that blew.

The Middy with luck is a Captain soon,
With luck he may hear one day
His own big guns a-humming the tune:
'Twas in Trafalgar's Bay'.
But wherever he goes, with friends or foes,
And whatever may there befall,
He'll hear for ever a voice he knows
For ever defying them all:

The Middle Watch

In a blue dusk the ship astern
Uplifts her slender spars,
With golden lights that seem to burn
Among the silver stars.
Like fleets along a cloudy shore
The constellations creep,
Like planets on the ocean floor
Our silent course we keep.

And over the endless plain,
Out of the night forlorn
Rises a faint refrain,
A song of the day to be born.
Watch, O watch till ye find again
Life and the land of morn.

From a dim West to a dark East
Our lines unwavering head,
As if their motion long had ceased
And Time itself were dead.
Vainly we watch the deep below,
Vainly the void above;
They died a thousand years ago,
Life and the land we love.

The Little Admiral

Stand by to reckon up your battleships
Ten, twenty, thirty, there they go.
Brag about your cruisers like Leviathans
A thousand men a-piece down below.

But here's just one little Admiral,
We're all of us his brothers and his sons,
And he's worth, O he's worth at the very least,
Double all your tons and all your guns.

Stand by *etc.*

See them on the fore-bridge signalling
A score of men a hauling hand to hand,
And the whole fleet flying like the wild geese
Moved by some mysterious command.

Where's the mighty will that shows the way to them,
The mind that sees ahead so quick and clear?
He's there, Sir, walking all alone there
The little man whose voice you never hear

Stand by *etc.*

There are queer things that only come to sailormen,
They're true, but they're never understood;
And I know one thing about the Admiral,
That I can't tell rightly as I should.

I've been with him when hope sank under us
He hardly seemed a mortal like the rest,
I could swear that he had stars upon his uniform,
And one sleeve pinned across his breast.

Stand by *etc.*

Some day we're bound to sight the enemy,
He's coming, tho' he hasn't yet a name
Keel to keel and gun to gun he'll challenge us
To meet him at the Great Armada game.

None knows what may be the end of it,
But we'll all give our bodies and our souls
To see the little Admiral a-playing him
A rubber of the old Long Bowls!

Stand by *etc.*

Sir Henry Newbolt (1862-1938)

CHRISTOPHER BUNTING *cello*

Christopher Bunting MBE was born in 1924 into a musical family. His father, a civil engineer, was a keen amateur pianist, and his mother played the piano and cello. He took up the cello aged six, and later went on to complete a degree in music at Cambridge University, although his studies were interrupted by army service during the Second World War.

Bunting made his recital debut at the Wigmore Hall in 1952, and throughout his 40-year performing career he premiered numerous works, including giving the world premiere of Finzi's Cello Concerto, and British broadcast premiere of Shostakovich's Cello Concerto No. 1.

Aside from performing, Bunting was also a renowned teacher, including at the Yehudi Menuhin School and Royal College of Music. He also composed a number of works for the cello.

Christopher Bunting died in 2005, aged 80.

PATRICIA BISHOP *piano*

Patricia Bishop studied at the Royal College of Music, where in 1954 she was awarded the Musicians' Company's prestigious Silver Medal. Bishop also received the Queen's Music Prize, a prize awarded to exceptional musicians of the British Isles, aged under 30.

She went on to have a successful performing career, playing regularly with orchestras including the BBC Symphony and London Philharmonic Orchestra. She was particularly known for her interpretation of Ernst von Dohnányi's music. Bishop made multiple recordings of Dohnányi's *Variations on a Nursery Song*, and performed the work at the Proms in 1959 under the baton of Sir Malcolm Sargent.

The recording in this set was made when Bishop was just 22 years old, and marked her debut at the Royal Festival Hall.

GWENNETH PRYOR *piano*

Australian-born pianist Gwenneth Pryor has become well known to British audiences through her regular recitals, concerto performances and broadcasts.

She made her recital debut at the Wigmore Hall in 1965 and since that time she has continued to base her career in the UK. Pryor has performed and recorded with all the major orchestras, including the English Chamber Orchestra, London Philharmonic and London Symphony Orchestras, and has also won a considerable reputation as a chamber music player.

Pryor has performed under many eminent conductors, among them Sir Adrian Boult, Sir Charles Groves, David Zinman and Charles Dutoit. She has been invited to perform and tour in many parts of the world and in such halls as the Lincoln Centre in New York, the Tonhalle in Zurich, the Musikvereinsaal in Vienna and the Sydney Opera House.

FREDERICK HARVEY *baritone*

Frederick Harvey, born in Devon in 1908, was an English baritone. He had a long association with the military, having served in the Second World War as a member of the Royal Naval Volunteer Reserve.

Harvey maintained his military connection in his musical career, going on to produce recordings with the Royal Marines Orchestra. He was perhaps best known for performing English works of the early Twentieth Century, and particularly Stanford's *Songs of the Fleet*, a cycle of songs on a subject with which he had such an intimate connection.

Frederick Harvey died in 1967, aged 59.

HUGH MCLEAN *organ*

Hugh McLean was born in Winnipeg, Canada in 1930. He began his musical life as a chorister at All Saints Anglican Church in Winnipeg, before going on to study piano and organ, taking up his first position as an organist at 15 years old.

In 1949 McLean took up an organ scholarship at the Royal College of Music in London. McLean made his London concert debut in 1955 with the premiere performance of Malcolm Arnold's Organ Concerto at the Royal Festival Hall with the London Philharmonic Orchestra and Sir Adrian Boult, in a Royal Command Concert with Queen Elizabeth II in attendance – the performance included on this release.

Upon his return to Canada, McLean built his career as not only an organist, but also a pianist, harpsichordist, choirmaster, composer, teacher, editor and musicologist until his retirement in 1995. He died in 2017.

CROYDON PHILHARMONIC SOCIETY

The Croydon Philharmonic Society (now Croydon Philharmonic Choir) was founded in 1914 by Alan Kirby and its first performance, of Handel's *Messiah*, was held for the benefit of Belgian refugees at the start of the First World War. It soon became recognised as one of the best choirs in the country, particularly for its performances of Elgar. Kirby conducted the Choir until his death in 1959 and under his baton it became strongly associated with some of the leading figures in British music, performing with many eminent conductors, orchestras and soloists.

Kirby was succeeded by Myers Foggin and then in 1973 by James Gaddarn, who considerably developed the Choir's repertoire and versatility. His tenure included the commission and first performance of two major works - *Heloise and Abelard* by Dame Elizabeth Maconchy and Antonín Tučapský's *Stabat Mater*. David Gibson became music director in 1999 - the fourth in the Choir's history.

LONDON PHILHARMONIC ORCHESTRA

One of the finest orchestras on the international stage, the London Philharmonic Orchestra was founded in 1932 by Sir Thomas Beecham. Since then, its Principal Conductors have included Sir Adrian Boult, Bernard Haitink, Sir Georg Solti, Klaus Tennstedt and Kurt Masur.

Vladimir Jurowski was appointed the Orchestra's Principal Guest Conductor in March 2003, and became Principal Conductor in September 2007. From September 2021 he will become the Orchestra's Conductor Emeritus. Edward Gardner is Principal Conductor Designate, and will take up the position from 2021.

The London Philharmonic Orchestra has performed at Southbank Centre's Royal Festival Hall since it opened in 1951, becoming Resident Orchestra in 1992. It is Resident Symphony Orchestra at Glyndebourne Festival Opera and also has residencies in Brighton, Eastbourne and Saffron Walden. The Orchestra performs to sell-out audiences throughout the UK and on worldwide tours.

The London Philharmonic Orchestra made its first recordings in 1932, just three days after its first public performance. It has recorded and broadcast regularly ever since, and in 2005 established its own record label. **lpo.org.uk**

