

SYMPOSIUM RECORDS CD 1150

PLAYING UNDER HENRY WOOD

A conversation with Emanuel Hurwitz C.B.E.

When did you first come in contact with Henry Wood?

I went to the Royal Academy of Music in 1933, as a student, and I was straight away in this giant orchestra in the Duke's Hall of the Academy (which had been quite wonderfully refurbished, incidentally, in the last three or four years, with a rather echoey large hall). In 1933 we used to complain about the music stands, which for some reason would not go down past a certain height, which was a little too high, so one always had a sea of rather high music stands. They were talking then of having something rather more modern, and they still have the same stands now, sixty years later.

So there I was, right at the back of the second violins in the Symphony Orchestra, which was probably 120 strong. In those days, all the wind students were also accompanied by their own professors, sitting in the middle. Then they also had the professor of the double-bass playing, and usually a paid ex-student as a good young principal viola, because, as always, in those days there were not many people playing the viola who could play well.

There were two rehearsals a week, on a Tuesday and a Friday, from two to five, and I, with all the others, enjoyed very much being conducted by Sir Henry, because he was a famous figure, an awe-inspiring one. We found him a very friendly man, a very helpful man. I remember one thing he said to us: "It's a nice luxury working with you and rehearsing, because usually when I'm working with the BBC Symphony Orchestra, or any orchestras I work with, we are very limited in the amount of time we have to rehearse." And of course, he was very famous for doing the entire 'Prom' season with one orchestra, by himself, which was a colossal achievement. I would very much like to hear some of those performances now, are there any recordings? That would be really very interesting.

What I first saw about Sir Henry, being right at the back, was that his beat was rather a large beat, he always used a large baton. He had a real, to me, a genuine, marvellous, stick technique which of course I didn't know about in those days, I had never played with anybody except amateur conductors before. You could always see where you were in a bar and all his leads were beautifully clear. And you know, there are some clear conductors who tend to be rather destructive to musical shape by their very clarity. But Wood was the sort of person who managed to have clarity and a beautiful sinuous grace in the beat as well. Another person like him, I found later, was Sir Adrian Boult, another man with a longish baton, but he used his baton, and you were, as it were, working right on the tip of it. It was a flexible end, it wasn't just a two foot long piece of wood. Wood had the patience, I remember, to go over passages slowly with us, which, you know, for a big and important conductor was a very good thing to do because very often you get a very fine conductor who really isn't a very good trainer; and the same way you can have a wonderful violin player who doesn't know how to impart knowledge or any teacher, but he was able to train us as well. He had a very penetrating, rather cockney accent in the

voice, rather high and rather nasal, and he'd get right across. "Trumpets! Watch out! It's your entree in: Four bars. Three bars. Two bars. NOW!"

Did you do the standard repertoire with him or what he was doing in any case for his concerts?

Well, the drill in those days seemed to be that the first hour and a half was preparing things in detail for the concert at the end of term, and there'd be something like ten rehearsals with him over the whole term.

We'd always had an end of term concert and once a year there'd be a big one in the Queen's Hall and it was a great honour to be selected to play for that concert. In the annual concert there was always a piano concerto, though once, I think, it was the Tchaikovsky Violin Concerto.

And in the second half, after fifteen minutes interval, we'd have an hour and a quarter, just belting through a couple of pieces, through a whole Beethoven Seven or a whole Beethoven Five or a Tchaikovsky Symphony.

There would be a donkey work rehearsal done by an assistant conductor on the Friday. His name was O'Donnell and he was the brother of the O'Donnell of the Air Force Band. Being young and innocent, all I knew was that he was really not very exciting compared with Henry Wood, because he was an honourable routine time beater who wasn't able to impart any flair to us. So we looked forward to the once-a-week one, apart from the note-learning one. But he did his job, Mr. O'Donnell, very faithfully preparing these things.

I remember that for the first half a dozen rehearsals all the string players would rotate, so everybody was at the front and at the back, so you'd get these different experiences. And my most distinct experience of being at the front was on the day when we had, I think, it was either *Till Eulenspiegel* or *Don Juan*, I know that I had a short solo which I was very thrilled to play.

I'll always remember seeing Sir Henry come in the afternoon, and take off his jacket, and put it on the back of the chair. And he'd have a large waistcoat on. Incidentally, if you read his autobiography, one of the things he solemnly tells young conductors is to make quite sure that they don't catch cold after sweating at a concert, and have a shower immediately and have a change of underwear before you come out and say hello to people.

Was he a strict conductor?

No, he was not a strict conductor, because there are some conductors who are very great musicians and have a stick technique, they do not have to say: I'm going to start this in 1 or 2 or 3, and also they're able to impart what they're doing, with the orchestra being happy to help them. Svetlanov and Rozhdezhvenski are examples in our own day.

It's always best to have the orchestra thinking, on the qui vive, rather than stoned into the ground. There are many conductors who get their best performances at the last rehearsals, things can be a little stale after that. But Henry, of course, was the antithesis of that because he was a man who lived in the time of chronic under-rehearsal in British orchestras.

The important thing for him, if you look at his music (the Academy still has all his library) you'll see, is that written very clearly are directions to be yelled at the orchestra when he hasn't got time to stop.

So the rehearsal in a way was almost a Henry Wood performance of Henry Wood?

That's right, yes. And if you asked for something to be done again, he would say: "No, my boy, you'll think of it more the second time because we haven't done it again."

Did he have a sense of humour?

Oh, a tremendous sense of humour, yes. He was very friendly and very helpful. He was always bringing along some modern piece, I remember doing some, it could have been the Varèse, just to show us what something else was about, and I remember he brought an assortment of things for the percussion and wow-wow mutes for the trumpets; just because he knew that they wouldn't have them there, just for us to experience new things.

Did he use the Academy orchestra for trying out works, I mean apart from instructing you, for trying out a work?

I don't think he did.

But he was really the sort of person one would respect and love at the same time, and that is a Bruno Walter type as an Englishman.

So there were no tantrums or temper.

No tantrums at all, no. The only time he would get angry was if people turned up late, and even then you felt that his anger was a sort of a put on teaching anger, saying, "Behave like that and it doesn't matter how well you play, you aren't going to get a job". It so happens, of course, there's nothing more sort of vague and dithery than lots of talented and untalented young persons.

Was he friendly if you met him around the college?

I don't think any of us dared to say more than, "Hello, Sir". No, you were looking at somebody very big and distant, you know.

When you played with him at the Academy, was he training a student orchestra or did he did treat you like any other orchestra?

Well, I went with my parents to concerts, including his, and he looked the same, exactly. He wasn't doing any bigger beating for us, though I think he probably gave more leads to us.

Did Wood invite other conductors to come to the Academy to give you experience?

Yes. I played under Strauss once. He came to the Academy on the invitation of Wood, and that must have been round about '37 or '38.

Did he conduct as the films show him?

Yes, (demonstrates very small beat) and when it was that big (demonstrates very slightly enlarged beat) then he got a forte, you know.

Apparently in the early days of the century Wood was very, very strong on tuning. Was he still like that?

You had to file past him and he'd have his A on and say 'SHARP' - 'FLAT'. Oh yes, he would still do that and it was considered to be something of a joke that they'd pass through the same fiddle five times, he'd say flat once and sharp the next, you know, but it did make people actually tune up.

So you played with him for 4 or 5 years?

From 1933 until in 1937 my teacher said, 'It's time you got some professional experience, Emanuel.'

SIR HENRY J. WOOD CONDUCTS

by Lewis Foreman ©1994

We remember Henry J. Wood (he always used this form of his name) each summer in the context of the Promenade Concerts in London's Royal Albert Hall. This has assured him of a distinguished place in the history of music in England, but it is easy to forget just how extensive his influence actually was, and his many major roles in developing the musical life of the country, particularly during the first half of his career. As a populariser of music to the widest audience he was unique. As Sir Arnold Bax remarked, he "purified and enriched the musical taste of at least two generations". Of his roles as an orchestral trainer, as a choral trainer, as a teacher of singing, as an organist, of his enormous repertoire, and in particular as a pioneer in recording the repertoire he espoused, even as early as the First World War, we remember too little. Although London-based he travelled widely, conducting numerous choral societies and festivals. He was particularly associated with the Sheffield Festival, and after the 1902 Festival a German critic remarked: "Two personalities now represent a new epoch in English musical life - Edward Elgar as composer and Henry J. Wood as conductor".

Wood's early career was very much in the traditional mould of budding organist and composer. He was deputy organist in his local church at the age of ten. When he played the organ at the Fisheries Exhibition of 1883 and later at the International Inventions Exhibition of 1885, he was greeted as a youthful prodigy, in an age which particularly responded to such Wunderkinder. He became a student at the Royal Academy of Music in 1886, continued giving organ recitals and was notable for championing the work of women composers.

His first professional engagement as a conductor was in December 1887 with a local music society; the programme included a work of his own. Thus were established the two facets of his immediate career: conductor and composer. Between 1888 and 1896 Wood composed vigorously, producing choral works, a dramatic oratorio, two symphonies, operettas and finally a Mass in *Eb*, his Opus 55. But once his conducting career at Queen's Hall had started, this side of his work was forgotten and his early music is unknown today. When, later, he came to orchestrate piano and organ works, and to write his celebrated *Fantasia on British Sea Songs* in 1905, for the centenary of Trafalgar, it is not surprising that his work had the professionalism of the experienced composer, which, in fact, he was.

In 1890, at a time when performing standards in the British Isles appear not to have been high, Wood's father gave him an invaluable gift: he sent him on a tour to hear the greatest orchestras of Europe. In his autobiography, *My Life in Music*, he recalled that he also went to the United States of America to hear the later celebrated Boston Symphony Orchestra. However, as Arthur Jacobs has pointed out, this expedition appears to have been a fantasy, a gilding of the lily. What is true is that he had conceived an ideal which remained in his mind, a standard to which he would direct his whole life, though now it is difficult to compare what Henry Wood actually achieved in setting new standards of orchestral playing with what went before. "I can still hear" he later remarked, "the Crystal Palace Orchestra under August Manns and the Richter Orchestra at St. James's Hall, so hard and blasting, so different from the BBC Symphony Orchestra and our other fine orchestras of today".

Wood was particularly concerned over tuning, and it casts a vivid light on the

standards of string playing when he was young, that throughout his career he held a nightly tuning parade at the Proms, tuning everyone to the A of a strange little machine invented by himself. The viola player Bernard Shore remembered the same process at morning rehearsals: "At 9.45am he is on the platform with tuning fork marked 439. Going to every string player as he arrives at his desk, he says 'Good morning, Mr. So-and-so', nods at his A string, and whacks the fork hard with the hammer. Cocking his ear, in nine cases out of ten he says 'Too sharp!', and goes on whacking until the player is in tune. Having gone the rounds of strings, at 9.56 he proceeds to the wood-wind and whacks the other tuning fork, 435, which is flatter, to allow for the cold instruments." It is difficult today imagining any professional orchestra not being able to start in tune, nor the orchestra accepting being treated like naughty children in this way, but Wood did it for 50 years.

Wood's conducting career first found practical reality in the theatre, training singers for Sullivan's opera *Ivanhoe*. He took every job he could get; what he wanted was experience, thus in 1889 he was engaged as conductor with a motley touring company, the Rousby Touring Opera, and subsequently secured a far more prestigious appointment with the Carl Rosa Opera Company on tour. Other operatic opportunities followed including the British première of Tchaikovsky's *Eugene Onegin*, which effectively established him. He met Tchaikovsky and became associated with Russian music and made much of his reputation as a conductor with it.

The Queen's Hall in Langham Place, at the top of Upper Regent Street, was formally opened on 2 December 1893 with a performance of Mendelssohn's *Hymn of Praise* (his second symphony). Living at 1, Langham Place, Henry Wood found himself almost next door to the newly built hall. It was to be the focus for London's orchestral music until its destruction in an air raid in the night of 10-11 May 1941, and after the closure of the St. James's Hall in Piccadilly in 1905, it was the only regular home for orchestral music. For Henry Wood it became a musical base in London; he certainly conducted very many more concerts there than any other conductor.

Much of Wood's professional life turned on financial issues; including the financing of the Proms and the remuneration of musicians. As early as 1895 he could write in response to a campaign to develop local orchestras: "the musical tendencies of the people are strong, and only some such vocational scheme is wanted to bring them out into practical life in the same degree as is witnessed on the Continent . . . My experience, in the last series of Promenade Concerts...was that the better the music the more appreciative the audience."

Promenade Concerts were not a new idea when Robert Newman, recently appointed manager of Queen's Hall, formed the Queen's Hall Orchestra and offered the conductorship to Henry Wood, then 26. Newman himself had previously been involved in the promotion of promenade concerts at Covent Garden, and an annual series had been a feature of London musical life in the middle of the nineteenth century. Sir Henry vividly put the case in a celebrated interview in 1941: "They said there wasn't a public for great music 47 years ago. The critics wagged their heads. But Robert Newman said we'd make a public and we did. He asked me to be the permanent conductor of a new orchestra he was forming: the Queen's Hall Orchestra, and I jumped at the chance. And after that came the Proms - it was a bold venture in 1895 . . . As for Bach, Haydn and Mozart, and Beethoven and Brahms they are not dry as dust names to be shuddered at these days.

They've become friends now and well-loved friends to all sorts and kinds of people who never had heard of them until the Proms started."

Sir Arnold Bax remembered "the very first time I saw Sir Henry J. Wood was in 1896, when as a small boy I was taken to a Promenade Concert by an aunt". To the composer's juvenile eyes the "imposing black-bearded conductor [was] a physical giant". It is easy to forget that when the young Henry Wood first appeared as a conductor, the Simon Rattle of his day, he was a dynamic and youthful figure. His reputation, largely gathered in the hurly-burly of the theatre, gave the 26-year old a supreme opportunity when Newman launched the Proms and the Queen's Hall Orchestra in 1895.

The architect of the Proms for most people was Robert Newman, who had taken the lease of the new hall, and was trying to find a way of making it a viable proposition. Newman had once been a singer himself, and, indeed, it is said had sung in the first performance of Parry's *Prometheus Unbound* at Gloucester in 1880, so he was a manager with a practical feel for the artistic requirements as well as the finance of the hall. When Newman first approached Henry Wood, he was asked to put up substantial capital. This was beyond his means. The player in the game, who is often forgotten, was the Harley Street laryngologist, Dr. George Cathcart who provided the finance that allowed the first Prom season to take place. Cathcart overheard Wood describing the problem to a singer to whom Wood was giving a lesson. Cathcart's offer was contingent on the Hall adopting what was then regarded as "continental pitch", A tuned to 439 rather than the 452 then in use in the British Isles. (Nowadays the standard A is 440.)

Wood was determined that his orchestra should aim at the highest standard and this meant establishing an adequate rehearsal regime. Many have described the infamous deputy system that dominated London musical life for over a century. Artists engaged to play in a concert might attend rehearsals but not play in the concert, sending a deputy if a more lucrative engagement were offered elsewhere. Thus hardly a concert took place without someone sight-reading. Wood grappled with this. After an episode on 30 September 1904, when most of the players at rehearsal were unfamiliar faces, he announced the abolition of the practice. Many of his orchestra left and formed the London Symphony Orchestra whose first concert on 9 June 1904 Wood attended. Wood had contained the custom but never succeeded completely in eliminating it. Only when the BBC appointed a fully salaried orchestra in 1930, was the financial security of at least some British orchestral musicians before the Second World War assured.

Wood's first performances and United Kingdom premieres included, early in his career, works by Tchaikovsky (it was he who made the 'Pathétique' Symphony popular in England), Sibelius (including the First, Sixth and Seventh Symphonies and *Tapiola*) and many works by Strauss and Debussy. Not only Beecham, but also Wood gave many Delius first performances, Wood's included *Sea Drift*, the Dance Rhapsody No 2, the Double Concerto and the revision of the Piano Concerto. Wood had, in fact, been considered for the celebrated 1899 London concert of Delius's music but had been unavailable. In 1904 he wrote asking for score and parts of Delius's *Lebenstanz*, but owing to the lack of adequate rehearsal time he did not give a Delius work until the Piano Concerto, in a 1907 Promenade Concert - the first performance of a major Delius score in a regular London concert.

Wood's activity was amazing; as he once remarked, "in my time I have done as many as 140 concerts in a year". He was particularly associated with the performance of

new music, and even as early as Rosa Newmarch's book on Wood, published in 1904, she could list 273 "novelties" introduced in just eight years up to 1903. Arthur Jacob's biography, *Henry J. Wood, Maker of the Proms*, lists over 700 first performances (or first performances in Great Britain).

Sir Henry Wood was long associated with Arnold Bax, he gave the first performances of nine of his works, but, more importantly, giving the second and subsequent performances of a host more. Bax dedicated his Third Symphony to Wood, who had conducted its first performance in March 1930. Between 1928 and 1942 he conducted 11 performances of three of Bax's symphonies (Nos. 1, 3 and 4) at the Proms, and from 1919 onwards Bax featured every year during Wood's lifetime except 1921, 1926 and 1939.

Bax's first Prom appearance had been in 1910 when Wood had invited him to submit a work for the 1910 season, and Bax had responded with his tone poem *In the Faery Hills*. When Bax first met Sir Henry, the year before he was knighted, he remembered "a day or two before the date of the concert he summoned me to his house for a preliminary run-through on the piano. In youthful trepidation I knocked at his door in Hampstead wondering what kind of reception I should get from that - even so long ago - almost legendary figure. Almost immediately he hurried into the room and I discovered to my relief that in stature he was actually no more than life-size. Like Elgar, Sir Henry at the rostrum always appeared by sheer force of personality to be very much taller than he actually was...His handshake was firm and genial . . . getting to work at once (for as ever there was no spare time to waste), he proved kindness itself, showing the keenest interest in and paying the closest attention to my score. At the concert he gave a beautifully balanced rendering of the piece which was, at the time, considered dangerously modern and uncomfortably difficult to play."

Wood enumerated his "points for the would-be conductor" and it is useful to remember them as they frame his approach to his art:

- (i) A conductor must have a complete general knowledge of music;
- (ii) The conductor must have more than a slight acquaintance with every instrument of the orchestra, and if possible, some intensive study of a stringed instrument - preferably the violin;
- (iii) The conductor must play the piano really well;
- (iv) The conductor must have an impeccably sensitive ear, as well as rhythmic and interpretative sense;
- (v) The conductor must be unafraid of the art of gesture;
- (vi) the conductor must be a perfect sight-reader and sound musician;
- (vii) The conductor must study the art of singing;
- (viii) The conductor must have a good physique, a good temper and a strong sense of discipline.

Bernard Shore remarked on the "iron constitution, great personal magnetism . . . extraordinary command of the stick . . . his stick moved with the economy and beauty of a violinist's bow. Above all, that confidence which only he could give. I shall never forget one particular performance of the Mozart Sinfonia Concertante which I played with Jean Pougnet" [the performance here recorded].

Wood's book *About Conducting* is an admirable guide to his art not only on conducting. Take his baton, again Bernard Shore: "his stick is not just a time-beater, but

with its big sweep or tiny movement it controls the dynamic as well. It is extremely flexible and, at the sudden division into subdivided beats, a model of clarity." Wood's weighty baton is legendary, but it is somewhat startling to read his statement that "I paint my batons a dull-finish white . . . and I avoid a bright finish paint as this catches the light in movement and is disconcerting to the players . . . a 6d. pot of Chinese white, with a good small paint-brush always handy, is a good wrinkle".

Particularly in his younger days, Wood was notable for the number of women composers, especially British, whose works he performed. For a then male-dominated profession (except, of course, soloists) this was pioneering. He also instituted the employment of women in his orchestra, even more revolutionary in his day. In *About Conducting* he allots a short section to this subject, remembering that he "was the first to employ women in the professional orchestra, the old Queen's Hall Orchestra, and I have never had reason to regret it". His further remarks may not find favour today however, for he goes on to say that "when the proportion of women players rises I find they do not put their backs into it as when less represented; and if women are in too great a proportion, I find their presence is apt to slacken the standard of the male element. A few good women players on the other hand create and encourage competition . . . I am all for women wood-wind players; they have a sensitiveness and sympathy." Wood was absolutely insistent on equal pay for women players, in his day also revolutionary.

But what was a concert at Queen's Hall actually like? J B Priestley's Mr. Smeeth in *Angel Pavement* "liked the look of the place, with its bluey-green walls and gilded organ pipes and lights shining through holes in the roof like fierce sunlight". But perhaps the most vivid account of Henry Wood was written by W N P Barbellion, that brilliant young naturalist and writer, dead at 27, whose diary gave him posthumous fame when promoted by H G Wells in 1919. Barbellion's description of Wood conducting at a Queen's Hall concert on 12 December 1914 is particularly graphic: "He would be worth watching if you were stone deaf . . . The face of Sir Henry Wood strikes me as very much like the traditional picture of Jesus Christ, tho' Sir Henry is dark, the melanic Messiah I call him (very much to my own delight). Rodin ought to do him in stone - Chesterfield's ideal of a man - a Corinthian edifice on Tuscan foundations. In Sir Henry's case there can be no disputing the Tuscan foundations. However swift and elegant the movement of his arms, his splendid lower extremities remain as firm as stone columns. While the music is calm and serene his right hand and bâton execute in concert with the left, perfect geometric curves around his head . . . Sir Henry snatches a second to throw back a lock of hair that has fallen limply across his forehead. His sword zigzags up and down the scale - suddenly the closed fist of his left hand shoots up straight and points to the zenith . . . it looks as tho' it were all up for poor Sir Henry...he opens out both arms wide and baring his breast, dares them all to do their worst . . . "

He was the undisputed leading British conductor up to, say, 1930; only Beecham came near to him. But after Boult's appointment to found the BBC Symphony Orchestra, Wood increasingly felt himself left out, and prestigious first performances that once would have gone to him began to fall to Boult. It was Wood, though, who conducted the first public British performance of Berg's Violin Concerto (Webern had previously conducted a broadcast performance) and the premiere of Prokofiev's Second Violin Concerto on 12 December 1936.

Before the First World War, Wood was one of only three "big name" British

conductors, all young. The others were Beecham and Landon Ronald. Wood was not involved in the operatic scene, which the others were, and his breadth of repertoire meant that in many ways he was unchallenged. It was Wood who was playing Debussy in Edwardian days, and Scriabin, Mahler (the First and Seventh Symphonies, the latter not heard again until the 1950s, and *Das Lied von der Erde*) and Schoenberg before the First World War.

Although a new generation of conductors arose in the 1920s, Wood's position was secure, though later he did not have quite the pull he had once enjoyed. Yet he was, quite simply, a living legend. In 1927, after the death of Newman, there was a financial crisis which was resolved by the BBC taking over the series. Wood continued, but with the formation of the BBC Symphony Orchestra under the direction of Adrian Boult, his controlling position had greatly changed. There was now an extensive and highly-trained musical bureaucracy; his absolute monopoly of how things were done was no more.

In the 1920s and until 1935 (when his second marriage broke up) he divided his year between his London house at Primrose Hill and Chorleywood in Hertfordshire, where he had bought an old farm house, Appletree Farm, complete with barns, outhouses and a large garden, and set on the common. An upper gallery in the big barn he turned into a very fine music room (he was an energetic amateur carpenter). "This was the scene" remembered his daughter "of the large parties which my parents gave throughout the summer, and to which came, I suppose, in the course of the years, almost every famous musician of the day. I certainly remember such illustrious people as Janáček, Kodaly, Bloch and Hindemith, and there were certainly many others."

Promenade Concert: Tuesday 8 September 1936

BBC Symphony Orchestra (90 players)

Schubert: Entr'acte in *Bb*; Ballet Music in G (Rosamunde)

Mozart: Sinfonia Concertante in *Eb* for Violin, Viola & Orchestra, K.364

I Allegro maestoso II Andante III Presto

"L'Amoro" (Il Re Pastore) & "Alleluja" (from Exultate Jubilate)

The 1936 Promenade Concert season saw Wood at the height of a tradition that had been evolved over many years. The concert on 8 September, was not unusual in its length. The extract which is recorded here was all that was broadcast. Today this would make an adequate, even generous, first half, but before the interval that night came also the "heavenly lengths" of Schubert's "Great C Major" Symphony. In the second half, Saint-Saëns' tone poem *Le Rouet d'Omphale* and Honegger's "Symphonic Movement" *Pacific 231* framed two Mahler songs ('Ich atmet' einen Linden duft' and 'Wer hat das Liedlein erdacht') performed with piano accompaniment.

Mozart's Sinfonia Concertante in *Eb* became known as a concert piece - and for many years an infrequently heard one - because of the activities of Lionel Tertis and the support of Henry Wood. In 1901 Hans Wessely and Lionel Tertis "discovered" the work and it was performed at Queen's Hall in 1903, with Wood conducting, according to Tertis, its first London hearing. It had in fact been heard in Hallé concerts in Manchester in 1868 and 1873, but in 1903 it must have appeared to be a find. Wood remembered this episode in his autobiography as a "really beautiful rendering of Mozart". He remained the work's champion and eventually Tertis's pupils took over the role of the viola partner, Bernard

Shore being the first. Tertis's edition was, in fact, published (by the Oxford University Press) in the Spring of 1936. It was unfortunate that when Tertis came to record it, in April 1933, Harty was chosen as conductor rather than Wood who had championed the revival.

In Wood's performance, cuts are made in all three movements, perhaps the most curious being 40 bars of the exposition of the first movement (from bars 18 to 58, pages 3 to 7 of the Eulenburg miniature score). Mozart wrote cadenzas for the first two movements, but, like Tertis before them, Pougnet and Shore played a cadenza only in the first movement. Tertis wrote an extended cadenza, quite un-Mozartian in style, and Wood's soloists follow Tertis in playing the opening 12 bars of Mozart's cadenza, followed by the Elgarian string tremolandi of Tertis's cadenza which they then cut short. (The programme in fact ascribed the cadenza to Hellmesberger.) Wood then cuts the 12 bars following the cadenza and goes straight into the closing 7 bars of the movement. In the slow movement Mozart's cadenza is cut, together with the 6 preceding bars. In the third movement 24 bars (bars 456-480, pages 95 and 96 of the miniature score) are omitted near the end.

In these performances Wood brings forward BBC Symphony Orchestra section leaders as soloists. Marie Wilson, who accompanies Elisabeth Schumann, and Bernard Shore, are very much exemplars of the orchestras strengths.

(In order to accommodate everything on this disc, it was necessary to omit applause and a brief pause after the first movement.)

Bax: Cello Concerto Beatrice Harrison and the BBC Symphony Orchestra.

Beatrice Harrison made her début with Henry Wood in May 1907, she was only fifteen, playing the Saint-Saëns A minor concerto, a then new Suite for Cello and Orchestra by Victor Herbert, and the *Variations Symphoniques* for cello and orchestra by the Alsatian composer Léon Boëllmann. Her wide-spread fame dated from her later broadcasts, dueting with nightingales in the garden of her home, Foyle Riding, Limpsfield, Surrey in the 1920s. She was strongly associated her with the Delius Concerto and Double Concerto (with her sister May), the Elgar Concerto and the Brahms Double Concerto (also with May).

Bax was certainly associated with the Harrisons by the time of the First World War, in 1915, for example, we find him invited to Oxted for "Nightingales at 10", and in 1923 he composed his Cello Sonata in Eb for Beatrice. It is dated 7 November 1923 and was first performed by her and Harriet Cohen on 26 February 1924. Bax remarked "I know she must be kept in order about rubatos, but I do believe she puts the stuff over better than any English cellist". Later, Bax was clearly dissatisfied with the Spanish cellist Cassado, who gave the first performance of his Cello Concerto in March 1934, and the work remained one of his least appreciated until it was taken up by Beatrice. As early as 1935 she wrote to Adrian Boult from New York (she had just given a recital in Boston), announcing she had been asked to play "either the Elgar, or to bring out the Bax Cello work...old K[oussevitsky] is very interested in Bax, and Arnold is most anxious for me to bring out his work over here". (Koussevitsky, at Boston and New York, gave several Bax works in the 1920s and early '30s, including the first two symphonies; the second a total of eight times, out of the fifteen performances it has ever enjoyed.) In fact she appears not to have played the concerto until the broadcast performance on this compact disc,

given on 2 Jan 1938; she would later give it at least twice during the war.

Bax's relationship with the Harrison sisters was complicated. He appeared in public as a pianist with the violinist May Harrison, the two of them giving the first performance of Delius's Third Sonata (available on Symposium CD 1140). May became very attached to Arnold who did not reciprocate her *schwärm*, at one point having to write a somewhat sharp letter to her after she had followed him to Scotland. It is said her jealousy caused her sister Beatrice never to play the *Rhapsodic Ballad* for unaccompanied cello that Bax wrote for her in the summer of 1939.

Comparatively few examples of live performances of cello concerti survive from the 1930s. We only have Casals performing the Tovey Concerto in November 1937 (on Symposium CD 1115), and extended fragments of Beatrice's young rival Florence Hooton which exist from 16 January 1936 giving the first performance of Frank Bridge's *Oration*. The present recording of Beatrice Harrison playing the Bax Concerto was broadcast from the BBC Maida Vale Studio; unfortunately, it has not survived complete.

Promenade Concert 21 June 1942 Rehearsal Sequences

Symphony No.3 (Bax) A two minute extract from the exposition of the first movement, in the miniature score, from 5 bars before 3 (page 2) to the second bar before 7 (page 7). Bax's score calls for consecutive bars in the most unlikely time signatures (3/8 1/8 3/8 6/8 2/4 3/8 6/8 3/8 2/4 6/8) and we hear Wood calling them out to the orchestra.

Brandenburg Concerto No.3 (Bach) A two minute extract commencing towards the end of the first movement. The two cadential chords that Bach intended as an end to an improvised slow movement or one from elsewhere, are simply played as a link in their own right, and then comes the opening of the last movement. Of particular interest is Wood's call for the work to be played lightly, in spite of the large number of strings in his orchestra.

June 1942 was a busy time for Wood. Particularly remembered by his admirers is his British premiere of Shostakovich's 'Leningrad' Symphony which immediately followed these performances, from the studio on 22nd and at the Proms on 29th. It was doubtless already in rehearsal when these fragments were recorded.

The 'Cello Concerto

Correspondence between Beatrice Harrison and Arnold Bax

by David Candlin, Chairman, Harrison Sisters Trust

Bax wrote to Beatrice on 14th September, 1937, "I am really delighted that you are playing my concerto soon. As you know I always proclaim you to be the finest English cellist, and the other day old Sir Henry (Wood) enthusiastically agreed with me! We will go through it some time later, shall we? I am quite idle and have written nothing all this year. I must be getting senile! (PS) I am afraid you will be doing the concerto at a studio concert, for the BBC Symphony Concert programmes do not mention it."

On 29th November he wrote, "...I am so glad the BBC has fixed the date for the concerto and that you seem happy about it. We must go through it together a little later on. Be careful not to let the beginning hang about rhapsodically. It must go along with urge and fire. Cassado (who gave the first performance with Hamilton Harty at the Queen's Hall in March 1934) made this mistake at first, but the other day at Bournemouth

it was just right."

The Studio Concert took place on January 2nd, 1938, at 7.50 pm at the Maida Vale Studios, Delaware Road, and there were rehearsals at 10 am and 2.30 pm the day before, and again at 10 am on the morning of the concert. It was broadcast as a regional Sunday Orchestral Concert (Eighth Season). The BBC Orchestra (Section B) was conducted by Sir Henry J. Wood and the Leader was Paul Beard. The programme was as follows:

- | | | | |
|------|--|--------------|-------|
| 6.30 | Overture, The Ruler of the Spirits | – Weber | (6') |
| 6.39 | Concerto for Violincello and Orchestra | – Arnold Bax | (33') |
| 7.13 | Symphony No. 4 in B flat (Op. 60) | – Beethoven | (35') |

The fee that Beatrice Harrison obtained through her agent Harold Holt was Twenty Guineas.

The day after the concert Arnold Bax wrote to Beatrice, "I must just send you a line to thank you again for the intense pleasure your beautiful playing gave me last night. It is astonishing that your first performance of this concerto should be so triumphant. I believe you think and feel in music, don't you?"

On 25th January he wrote again, "Yes I will gladly come to Tea one day soon and shall love to hear you play the concerto again. I will write to Koussevitsky any time you tell me to..."

A letter on 1st February suggests a meeting where he will play for her ("you need not get Charlie (Lynch)"), and he writes again on 23rd February to say, "Gladys tells me that you have an agent friend who is just off to America to try to arrange among other things for you to play the concerto there. Well, I do hope this comes off for your playing of the work is quite unforgettable. I cannot conceive a more poetic presentation of my music, and I will say that to anyone. I wrote to Koussevitsky about you immediately after I last saw you.

But on 20th April he wrote, "How very disappointing about our concerto! No, I have had no answer from Koussevitsky but then I never expect any conductor - except old Sir Henry - to answer a letter. They are the rudest people in the world and all alike. Meanwhile I have told the 'R.P.S.' more than once that I would like you to play the concerto with them next season, and this is quite a possibility, but I hope with some conductor who will trouble to know the score.

(PS) Yes, thank you, I would like to come to tea again, someday."

On 29th May he writes, "I hear from Henry J. (Wood) that you are to play my concerto at a Prom. Is this true? I do hope so, but I never believe any such rumour until I see the printed BBC prospectus." In June: "I am very disappointed that you are not to play my concerto at a Prom, but Barbirolli will soon be here and I shall suggest 'the first performance in America' to him. Basil Cameron I saw the other day, but he has lost his job, unfortunately. I told Herbage of the BBC that I was very keen on your playing the concerto again soon so I am doing my best."

There are no further existing letters to Beatrice until May 1939, when Bax discusses the new *Rhapsodic Ballad*. No mention of the concerto is made in this or any of the subsequent letters to Beatrice which survive, but she did perform the work several times again, although never in America.

NOTES ON THE STRING SOLOISTS

by Tully Potter

One of the most elegant British violinists was Jean Pougnet. He was born on 20th July 1907 in Mauritius where his father, who came of French stock, was a civil servant. The family returned to England when Jean was two and he was brought up in an intensely musical atmosphere: his father played the piano, as did his brother René, and his sister Marcelle gave him his first violin lessons when he was seven. A close neighbour was the famous violin teacher Rowsby Woof, who started teaching Jean privately, their collaboration continuing from 1918 to 1925, at the Royal Academy of Music. There Pougnet won all the prizes for violin playing and led an outstanding quartet, coached by Lionel Tertis and including the future conductor Hugo Rignold. But the Depression years made it difficult to establish a career so Pougnet worked mainly in light music and the film studios until World War II, when he led the BBC Salon Orchestra. However he did not neglect the classics and frequently appeared as a soloist. He also led the outstanding London String Trio with William Primrose (later Frederick Riddle) and Anthony Pini, and had a piano trio with Angus Morrison and Pini. In 1942 Pougnet became leader of the London Philharmonic Orchestra and when peace came, he embarked on a full career as a classical violinist, still finding time to lead the BBC Palm Court Orchestra in broadcasts. He died at Ferring, Sussex, on 14 July 1968. Pougnet's recordings included Bach's Double Concerto (with Grumiaux and Susskind); Delius's concerto (with Beecham); Vaughan Williams's *The Lark Ascending* (with Boult); and a memorable series of string trios with Riddle and Pini. He was especially admired in Mozart's music, which suited his smallish but beautifully focused tone; so it is valuable to have a document of his playing in the composer's finest concerted work for the violin.

A great gentleman of the viola was Bernard Shore, who was born on 17 March 1896 and began his career as an organist. However, during war service in the trenches, he was severely wounded in the right hand. As he was carried, still conscious, into the field dressing station, he begged the doctor to save as much of his hand as possible. He was left with enough of it to grip the bow and so concentrated on his second instrument, the viola. In 1919 he resumed his studies at the Royal College of Music (viola with Arthur Bent, horn with Adolf Borsdorf and composition with Thomas Dunhill), he then studied with Lionel Tertis, the real inspiration for his career. He made his solo début in 1925 and soon gave the première of Gordon Jacob's First Viola Concerto at a Promenade Concert. Other premières followed and he gave the second performance of the Walton Concerto, after Hindemith. He played in the Spencer Dyke Quartet and was the founder viola principal of the BBC Symphony Orchestra in 1929 (his book *The Orchestra Speaks* contains invaluable pen pictures of the great conductors he played under). When Tertis retired in 1937, Shore acquired the master's pupil Roger Chase. In 1940 he joined the RAF,

becoming a squadron leader on special duties. After the war he briefly resumed his BBC post, but his work as a special adviser to the Ministry of Education took up more and more time. His only commercial solo recordings were made in the late 1940s. Almost to the end of his life, Shore played his Tertis Model Viola (by Arthur Richardson of Crediton) for pleasure; and even in 1980 he was still producing a sonorous tone. He died on 2 April 1984. Shore's noble playing can be heard on a number of orchestral recordings; but it is of great historical (and musical) interest to hear him in perhaps the best concerted work for his instrument.

In quite recent memory, Marie Wilson was still playing occasionally as a distinguished extra in the first violins of the Philharmonia Orchestra. She now lives in retirement in Sussex. Born in London in 1903, daughter of the leader of the Gaiety Theatre orchestra, she studied with Maurice Sons, himself a pupil of Wieniawski, at the Royal College of Music and, while still a student, played in Sir Henry Wood's Queen's Hall Orchestra. She led her own quartet and gave up orchestral playing in 1925, but in 1930 was lured into the new BBC Symphony Orchestra, staying until 1944. Adrian Boult described her as 'without doubt the greatest woman orchestral player in the world'. She then had a fine career as a soloist, with all the major concertos in her repertoire as well as many British works. Off the concert platform, she is a superb cook, an avid reader and a much-loved teacher.

Elisabeth Schumann (1888 Merseburg, Saxony - 1952 New York) studied in Germany and made her début in 1909 in Hamburg where she remained until moving to Vienna in 1919. In 1938 she left Austria for New York which was thereafter her home. She sang at the Metropolitan Opera in the 1914-1915 season and first appeared at Covent Garden in 1924. She sang in the first Edinburgh Festival in 1947. In her were combined a fine, silvery voice, an excellent singing technique, musical intelligence, a warm personality and the ability to communicate. Thus, not surprisingly, she was immensely successful in both opera and recital. As a rising star in the German opera houses she gained experience in a very wide repertoire but later she sang mainly from the Austro-German tradition extending from Bach to Richard Strauss. She was particularly celebrated in the works of Mozart, most notably as Susanna in *Le Nozze di Figaro* though perhaps her most famous part of all was Sophie in *Der Rosenkavalier* of Richard Strauss.

Acknowledgements:

Symposium Records is most grateful to David Candlin, Lewis Foreman, Emanuel Hurwitz, Arthur Jacobs, Erik Johnson, Paul Lewis, Stephen Lloyd and Tully Potter for their many contributions to this production and to Scholar Press for permission to use quotations from *Bax the Composer and his Times* by Lewis Foreman

Copyright Notice: This digitally transferred compilation with its notes is copyright, it may not be broadcast, copied, hired out, publicly performed or stored in a retrieval system without written permission.