

NAXOS

Sir George
DYSON

Symphony in G major
Concerto da Chiesa

Bournemouth Symphony Orchestra • David Lloyd-Jones



Sir George Dyson (1883-1964)

George Dyson was born in Halifax, West Yorkshire, the son of a blacksmith. Although from a working-class background in the industrial north, he became a Fellow of the Royal College of Organists at the age of sixteen. Winning an open scholarship to London's Royal College of Music in 1900 he went on to be the voice of public school music and, in 1937, Director of the Royal College of Music, the first alumnus of the College to do so, a fact of which he was inordinately proud. At the College Dyson was a pupil of Sir Charles Villiers Stanford, then at the height of his influence as a composition teacher. In 1904 Dyson won the Mendelssohn Scholarship, and went to Italy, later journeying on to Vienna and Berlin, where he met many of the leading musicians of the day. In London Nikisch conducted his early tone-poem *Siena*, later withdrawn.

On Dyson's return to England, Sir Hubert Parry recommended him as Director of Music at the Royal Naval College, Osborne. Dyson soon moved to Marlborough College, but on the outbreak of war in 1914 he enlisted. During the war he became celebrated for his training pamphlet on grenade warfare, which he produced as brigade grenadier officer of the 99th Infantry Brigade, and which was widely disseminated. Dyson saw action in the trenches and in due course was invalided out. In his diary Parry writes in shocked terms when he saw Dyson back in College, a shadow of his former self.

Dyson worked in the Air Ministry where he helped establish RAF bands, and he also realised the march *RAF March Past* that Walford Davies had sketched in short score. In 1920 he became known as a composer when his *Three Rhapsodies* for string quartet, composed soon after his return from the continent before the war, were chosen for publication under the Carnegie United Kingdom Trust's publication scheme. He was appointed to Wellington College, and he also became a professor

at the Royal College Music.

In 1924 Dyson moved to Winchester College, where he enjoyed possibly the most productive part of his life as a composer. In addition to teaching and school music, here he also conducted an adult choral society. If one said that at this time he composed as a hobby one would give the wrong impression, yet this was a spare time activity for him in a busy professional musical life. Such practical musicianship gave him the foundation for his later successes. This started in 1928 with *In Honour of the City*, which was so successful he soon produced a more ambitious piece, *The Canterbury Pilgrims*, a succession of evocative and colourful Chaucerian portraits written for Winchester in 1931 and probably his most famous score. Soon he was commissioned by the Three Choirs Festivals to write further works, and for Hereford in 1933 he produced *St Paul's Voyage to Melita* (repeated in 1934, 1937 and 1952). Other Festivals soon followed, and *The Blacksmiths* was written for Leeds in 1934, and then *Nebuchadnezzar* for Worcester in 1935. There were also orchestral works including the *Symphony in G* of 1937 and in 1942 a *Violin Concerto*.

Knighted in 1941, Dyson retired in 1952, to enjoy a remarkable Indian summer of composition, though by this time his music was beginning to sound old-fashioned to some, and although it all achieved publication and performance it did not have quite the immediate following of his earlier scores. These later works included *Sweet Thames Run Softly*, a mellifluous setting for baritone, chorus and orchestra of words from Edmund Spenser's *Prothalamion*. Finally came a twenty-minute nativity sequence *A Christmas Garland*, and *Agincourt* a brilliant return to the scale and style of that first choral work, *In Honour of the City*, now setting well-known Shakespearean words.

Lewis Foreman

At the Tabard Inn - Overture

It was absolutely typical of the highly organised Dyson that he found time in the dark days of 1943, while keeping the Royal College of Music open, to write a long-intended overture to his choral work *The Canterbury Pilgrims* (1930). That colourful portrait gallery of characters from Chaucer's *Prologue* had become widely popular and Dyson happily decided to weave from its store of memorable tunes an orchestral tapestry of a kind which could also stand on its own as a concert piece. This Overture soon found favour on both sides of the Atlantic, with Leopold Stokowski giving the American première with the New York Philharmonic in February 1949.

After the pilgrims' trumpet motif, Dyson develops the jaunty music of the Franklin to evoke the increasingly animated scene as the pilgrims foregather. As this reaches its climax, we glimpse, through the throng, the Monk; and then, as they disperse, the Nun. There follows the theme of the Poor Parson of a Town, eloquently conveying an integrity lacking in his fellow travellers. Ranking among Dyson's finest melodies, its quiet dignity contrasts tellingly with the extrovert music surrounding it. The lively central section embraces music associated with the Doctor of Physic, the Merchant and the Shipman, all eventually brought to heel by the Sergeant of the Law. We hear next the flowing lyrical theme associated with the pilgrims setting out on their journey, followed by the Wife of Bath's picturesque dance measures. With the return of the Franklin's music, a sense of keen anticipation grows and the overture closes with surging *Meistersinger-ish* swagger, capped by the return of the opening trumpet call.

Concerto da Chiesa for string orchestra

Completed in 1949 and first performed that summer by Reginald Jacques with his orchestra, the *Concerto da Chiesa*, like the previous year's *Concerto da Camera*, is a work in the great tradition of English string compositions from Purcell to Tippett. Writing to his son, Freeman, at Christmas 1948, Dyson told him that 'the new churchy one is much more sober' and to his publisher, Novello, the following February, he characterized it as 'founded on old hymn-melodies so woven in, I hope, that it is not easy to be sure which are old and which are new'. The strings are divided between *concertino* (solo quartet) and *ripieno* (all others).

In the anguished first movement, based on 'O come, O come Emmanuel', more and more voices respond to the opening supplication, their pleas increasingly urgent and intense, reaching a climax against a reiterated stabbing rhythm. Earlier material is recapitulated, but in a mood of utter exhaustion, all energy spent. This intense lament, or prayer, is probably the darkest music Dyson ever wrote - his response, perhaps, to still-recent events. In complete contrast, the variations on 'Corde natus' ('Of the Father's Heart begotten') are all light, an ineffable grace pervading their swift progress, in ever more animated textures and glowing colours, from joyful dancing to radiant rejoicing. The final movement, based on the old psalm-tune 'Laetatus sum', opens in full-throated syncopated exhilaration. Its confident, purposeful, development, takes 'Corde natus' in its stride, but its real goal, after an abbreviated recapitulation, proves to be the refrain of 'Veni Emmanuel' ('Rejoice! Rejoice! Emmanuel/Shall come to thee O Israel!'), grief here sublimely transfigured into a vision of eternal rest. Thereafter, the briefest of codas.

Ray Siese

Symphony in G major

Dyson's *Symphony* dates from 1937, the year of the Coronation, Dyson conducting the London Symphony Orchestra at its première at Queen's Hall on 16th December. It faced strong competition, for the 1930s saw the first performance of some of the most dynamic and charismatic symphonies by British composers, including Vaughan Williams's *Fourth Symphony*, Walton's *First*, five of those by Bax, Moeran's *Symphony in G minor*, and the first two by Rubbra. Although in 1938 Dyson's symphony was chosen for the Three Choirs Festival at Worcester, and it was published in 1940, it was soon forgotten, and it barely survived the war, remaining unheard after the 1940s until revived by Peter Craddock at Fareham on 11th November 1989 when he conducted local Havant orchestras. All present on that occasion were gripped by the character and impact of the work.

Dyson adopts more or less conventional sonata form for his first movement though its use is not rigid and he gives rather more importance to his second subject group than the opening theme. The symphony opens and closes with pageantry but viewed retrospectively one finds this to be very much a movement of troubled times and the distant rumble of war. Dyson is notable in this sound world for looking to the then fashionable model of Sibelius in his build-ups of running semi-quavers and quaver figurations in the strings over which burgeoning plangent wind, and welling brass, generate icy landscapes and threatening moods.

The large-scale slow movement almost continues the mood of the coda of the first, a poised and still world evoked largely in the strings, slowly building in its dark immensity to a succession of passionate episodes but eventually fading on the return of the opening theme with an epilogue of spectral reminiscence.

The scherzo is a theme and variations and opens in a mood of pageantry from the world of *The Canterbury Pilgrims* with mock-courtly dance music, subsequently explored through a succession of variations alternately fast and slow, some of them a long way from the theme. The climax is probably the fourth, which brings a grandly reflective mood. The end comes in wistful vein: we might imagine Cinderella sadly dancing to this music her regret at not going to the ball. It runs straight into the finale, the feeling almost unchanged, the join difficult to note without a score, save that it is heralded by a welling brass chord and the basses starting an insistent regular tread.

The finale is the grandest of the four and revisits the treatment and material of the earlier movements, notably building on the theme of the third in the main *Allegro*. After the brooding opening, the *Andante* is launched with a pastoral woodwind melody over dancing quavers which initiates an imposing build up, soon with a second motif, and running semi-quavers underpinning smiling woodwind, growing over a huge span. Successive climaxes lead to further statements of the pastoral music driven by the dancing string patterning. Yet Dyson's brass constantly reminds us his heart is in pageantry rather than Sibelian northern forests. A Russian colouring is apparent in a passing reference to Borodin's *Second Symphony* and a reflective lyrical passage for strings which momentarily has overtones of Rimsky-Korsakov; the writing for strings becomes more and more passionate. Finally a glorious reflective episode (*Andante molto moderato*) heralds the final build up, the music almost turning into a ceremonial march, but at the last minute Dyson suddenly fights shy of a triumphant ending and we close on a questioning note.

Lewis Foreman

Bournemouth Symphony Orchestra

Founded in 1893 by Sir Dan Godfrey, the Bournemouth Symphony Orchestra has had among its Principal Conductors some of the finest musicians in the world, including Rudolf Schwarz, Constantin Silvestri, Sir Charles Groves and Paavo Berglund. More recently Andrew Litton raised the orchestra's standards to new levels, crowning its centenary season with a triumphant début tour of the United States in April 1994, followed by Yakov Kreizberg and débuts at the Musikverein, Vienna, the Concertgebouw, Amsterdam, and Carnegie Hall, New York. In October 2002, Marin Alsop became Principal Conductor, the first woman to hold this title for any British symphony orchestra. The name of the orchestra is internationally known through over three hundred recordings, including the award-winning release of Anthony Payne's sketches for Elgar's *Symphony No.3* (Naxos 8.554719) with Paul Daniel, the symphonies of Vaughan Williams with the former Chief Guest Conductor Kees Bakels and Paul Daniel, and recordings of works by Philip Glass, Leonard Bernstein, and John Adams under Marin Alsop for Naxos (8.559031), this last chosen as Editor's Choice in the November 2004 issue of *The Gramophone*. The orchestra is also now well known through increasing international exposure in overseas tours. In addition to its recording and international touring commitments, the Bournemouth Symphony Orchestra is dedicated to providing orchestral music across the South and West of Britain, with a varied programme of educational and outreach commitments, and makes regular appearances in major festivals and concert-halls throughout the country.

David Lloyd-Jones

David Lloyd-Jones began his professional career in 1959 on the music staff of the Royal Opera House, Covent Garden, and soon became much in demand as a freelance conductor for orchestral and choral concerts, opera, BBC broadcasts and TV studio opera productions. He has appeared at the Royal Opera House (*Boris Godunov* with both Christoff and Ghaiurov), Welsh National Opera, Scottish Opera and the Wexford, Cheltenham, Edinburgh and Leeds Festivals, and with the major British orchestras. In 1972 he was appointed Assistant Music Director at English National Opera, and during his time there conducted an extensive repertory which included, in addition to all the standard operas, *Die Meistersinger*, *Katya Kabanova*, and the British stage première of Prokofiev's *War and Peace*. In 1978, at the invitation of the Arts Council of Great Britain, he founded a new full-time opera company, Opera North, with its own orchestra, the English Northern Philharmonia, of which he became Artistic Director and Principal Conductor. During his twelve seasons with the company he conducted fifty different new productions, including *The Trojans*, *Prince Igor*, *The Midsummer Marriage* (Tippett), and the British stage première of Strauss's *Daphne*. He also conducted numerous orchestral concerts, including festival appearances in France and Germany. He has made many successful recordings of British and Russian music, and has an extensive career in the concert-hall and opera-house that takes him to leading musical centres throughout Central Europe, Scandinavia, Russia, Israel, Australia, Japan, Canada and the Americas. His highly acclaimed cycle of Bax's symphonies and tone poems for Naxos (Gramophone Award) was completed in the autumn of 2003.

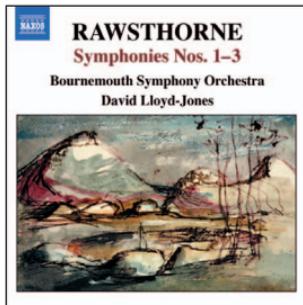
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Playing Time
72:33

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First performed in 1938, Dyson's *Symphony* had to wait until the 1990s to achieve the recognition it deserves as one of the finest twentieth-century British symphonies. Although the symphony opens and closes in a mood of pageantry from the world of his choral masterpiece, *The Canterbury Pilgrims*, it is also a work of troubled times and the distant rumble of war. Passages of enigmatic beauty and icy landscapes alternate with mock-courtly dance music and brilliant orchestral effects reminiscent of Sibelius, Borodin and Rimsky-Korsakov. The *Concerto da Chiesa* is a work in the great tradition of English string compositions from Purcell to Tippett. The composer himself characterized it as 'founded on old hymn-melodies so woven in, I hope, that it is not easy to be sure which are old and which are new'.

George DYSON

(1883-1964)

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| ① | At the Tabard Inn - Overture | 11:13 |
| | Concerto da Chiesa for String Orchestra * | 19:06 |
| ② | Veni, Emmanuel | 7:10 |
| ③ | Corde natus | 5:36 |
| ④ | Laetatus sum | 6:20 |
| | Symphony in G major | 42:14 |
| ⑤ | Energico | 10:30 |
| ⑥ | Andante | 10:57 |
| ⑦ | Allegro risoluto - L'istesso tempo - Molto moderato - Vivace -
Molto sostenuto - Poco andante - Poco allegretto - Presto - Grazioso - | 8:56 |
| ⑧ | Poco adagio - Andante - Allegro assai - Andante molto moderato | 11:51 |

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* Solo String Quartet: Duncan Riddell, Helen Cox, Violin
Stuart Green, Viola • Timothy Walden, Cello

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