The Creel

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The Creel

Journal of The Rawsthorne Trust and The Friends of Alan Rawsthorne

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Editorial

Rawsthorne enthusiasts are getting younger. Last year Abdullah Khalaf shared with us his insights about the 1967 Ballade, and now it is with particular pleasure that I quote some remarks from a 19-year-old (she might be 20 by the time you read this) cellist and soprano, who structured her recital with **Andrew Leach** (9 May 2017 at St Mary-le-Tower, Ipswich) around Rawsthorne's Cello Sonata and *Tzu Yeh Songs*:

> I'm very excited to have lighted upon Rawsthorne's work – such a versatile and interesting composer … I wish his songs and his Cello Sonata were more widely performed! I think they are brilliant. I can see the work and life of Alan Rawsthorne becoming a life-long interest of mine.

Music to our ears from **Rhiannon Humphreys**, who will be going to Cardiff University this autumn to read English Literature. **Tony Pickard** will be glad that his attempt to place Rawsthorne in context for the benefit of new admirers (see p. 31ff) will have at least some readers from the rising generation.

Hats off, too, to the **Bloomsbury Chamber Orchestra** under **Michael Turner**, who performed Rawsthorne's Divertimento at St James' church, Sussex Gardens W2, on 1 July; and in advance to **Southgate Symphony Orchestra**, who will be performing the Second Symphony on 25 November at Southgate (The Bourne) Methodist Church N14, in an ambitious programme which also includes Berlioz's *Harold in Italy*. Some of the Rawsthorne Friends are already making plans to attend.

Feedback

Many thanks to all those who responded to the call in the last issue to let us know if you wished to continue to receive communications from the Trust and the Friends. An encouraging degree of feedback resulted from this: **John France** offered his reception history of the Concerto for String Orchestra and **Keith Warsop** an article that, like Tony Pickard's, sets Rawsthorne in the context of his time. **Tonie Pollard** searched the 1911 Census and 1939 Register to provide biographical information on Jessie Hinchliffe's family. **Peter Dickinson** unearthed a copy of Rawsthorne's programme note for the Violin Sonata, and **Meurig Bowen** contributed the composer's note for the Concerto for Ten Instruments, as well as two photographs of Rawsthorne at Cheltenham; these appear on pages 30 and 36 respectively. All this to follow the excellent opener by **Andrew Mayes**, who begins this year's issue with a window on the scholarship that went into the recent new recording of the Clarinet Concerto.

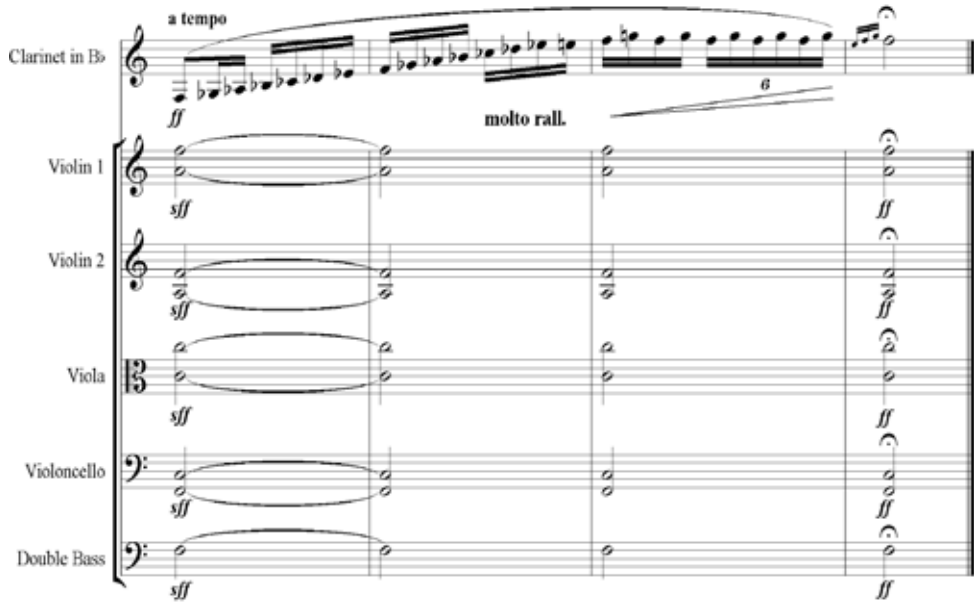
As well as specific respondents, there are many with whom we are in contact in other ways. But for those from whom we have not heard anything for years, there is still time: I should be delighted to have a line or email from as many as possible – just to let us know you are still there. *Martin Thacker*

Alan Rawsthorne's Concerto for Clarinet and String Orchestra – The Original and Revised Endings

Andrew Mayes

Anyone seeking information on Alan Rawsthorne's Concerto for Clarinet and String Orchestra will soon discover that there is more than one version of the ending. This was the experience of the present writer when he began research on the work ahead of writing the CD notes for a new recording. The ending in the composer's manuscript score, dated January 1937, held in the Rawsthorne archive at the Royal Northern College of Music in Manchester (RNCM AR/1/078a) is the one eventually published in 1963 (Example 1).

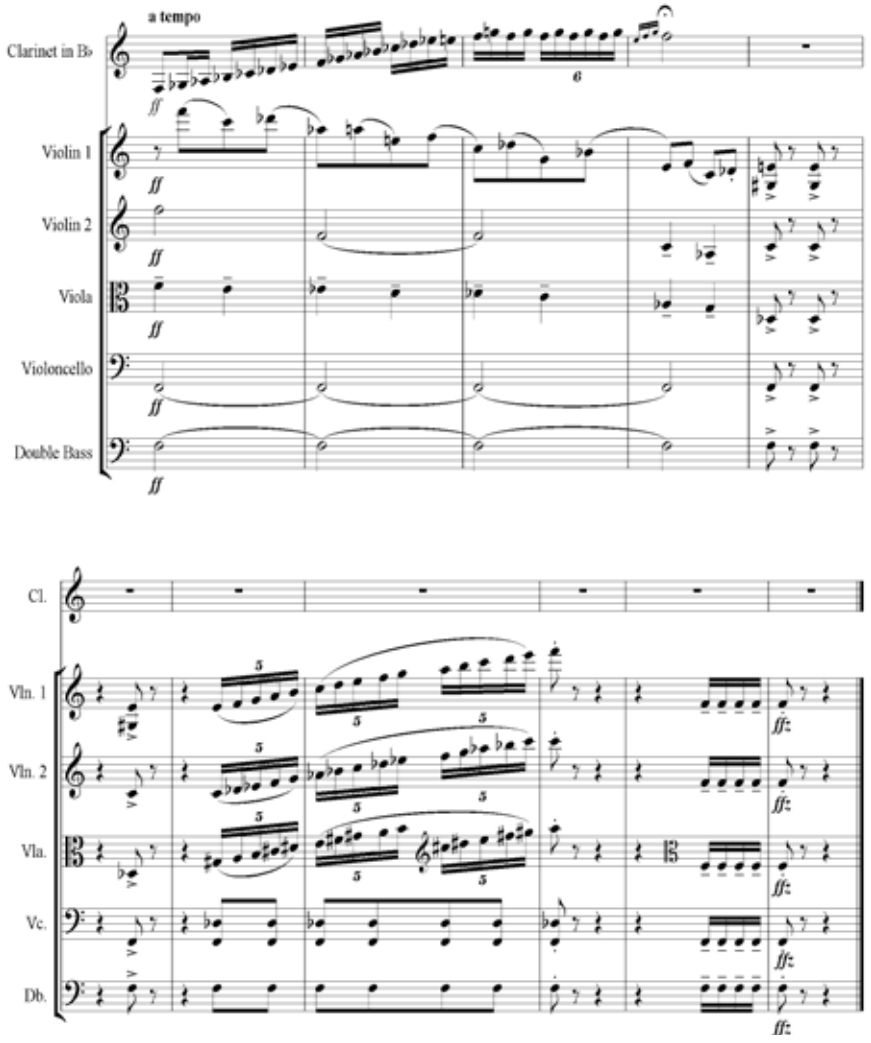
From other sources, however, it is clear that the conclusion of the work occupied Rawsthorne over a number of years. A set of string parts in Oxford University Press folders is additionally held at the Royal Northern College of Music. Some of these present the original ending, others a revised ending, and some even include both, with various crossings out and directions which is to



Example 1 Rawsthorne Clarinet Concerto, Last movement: original ending from bar 158 as in the MS score (RNCM AR/1/078a)

be played. Unfortunately, and perhaps significantly, there is not a clarinet part. An Oxford University Press sticker attached to the Violin 1 first desk part reads:

> These parts belong to the first set as were received in the library. They had better not be used because there is some debate, even by the composer, whether the last eleven bars were cut or not. Use new ones.



Example 2 Rawsthorne Clarinet Concerto, last movement: revised ending from bar 158 as it appears in a single page of MS score; not in Rawsthorne's hand (RNCM AR/1/092)

They have, however, clearly been used to play both endings, as bowing marks have been pencilled into both versions.

Also retained in the archive, and of particular interest, is a single page of manuscript score (RNCM AR/1/092). It is not in Rawsthorne's hand, but in that of a copyist whose writing is found elsewhere in the parts (Example 2). This contains the score of the final bars from 158 to the end, and brings together the parts of the alternative ending as they appear in the set of parts referred to above. At the top of this page is written: 'Rawsthorne Clarinet Concerto. Revised ending now rejected by the composer 1963.'

Whilst the notes on the string staves are written in ink, those on the clarinet stave are in pencil. They present the original ending and occupy the first four bars only; the remainder remain blank. Written at the bottom of the page is: 'Position of clarinet part doubtful.' As if to emphasise the questionable status of this revised ending, another note on an Oxford University Press sticker has also been paper-clipped to the page. It reads:

> For reference purposes, page of score showing the extended ending by eleven bars as were added when the composer revised it, but which he has since rejected in favour of the shorter one now in the score and parts.

It should be noted that the original ending of just four bars is extended in the revised version by a further seven. There is a particular element in the revised ending that reveals the composer using material from elsewhere in the final movement. The descending figure for the first violins at bar 158 (the first bar of the revised ending) appears earlier at bar 64 and again at bar 108.

John C Dressler notes, 'However, this appears to be the ending used in the recording by Thea King.'[1] That particular recording was made in 1981, when Thea King was joined by the Northwest Chamber Orchestra of Seattle, conducted by Alun Francis (Hyperion A-66031, 1982, LP stereo. CDA-66031, 1989, CD, Helios CDH55069, 2002, CD). The accompanying notes to the recording explain that the ending used was reconstructed by King and Francis from a private recording made by the dedicatee, Thea King's late husband, Frederick Thurston, with an orchestra conducted by Rawsthorne himself.

If Dressler is correct, then it should be possible to transcribe the missing clarinet part from Thea King's recording and reunite it with the string parts found in the single page of manuscript score noted above. Unfortunately it is not that simple. On listening to the King / Francis recording one is immediately aware that the string parts in the reconstruction differ significantly from those in the single page of manuscript score (RNCM AR/1/092).

Rawsthorne's original ending has at times been considered somewhat weak. John McCabe noted:

> It is rather a pity that the decidedly weaker ending was the one to be published, or that performers are not provided with a choice between

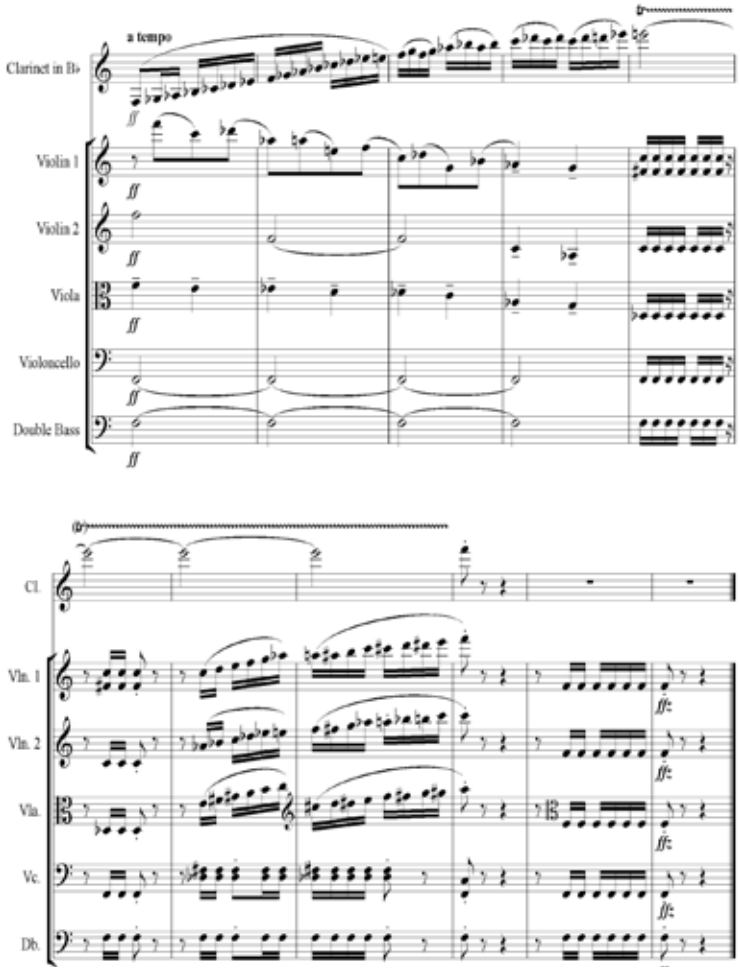
the two; this must reflect the composer's approval of the simpler one, since he did himself correct the proof of the printed version.[2]

For this reason, it was very much the desire that the new Prima Facie recording of the concerto (PFCD053, with Linda Merrick, clarinet and The Manchester Sinfonia conducted by Richard Howarth) should present the listener with not only the original ending (which it is thought had not previously been recorded) but also a version of the revised alternative. As to which, it was ultimately decided to transcribe the ending from the King / Francis recording in its entirety – clarinet and string parts, considering that its integrity should be respected, and also recognising that whilst the other manuscript sources are the work of a copyist (from an unknown source) the Thurston recording has the authority of a version directly associated with the composer himself. Though the clarinet part as transcribed does fit above the string parts as given in the single page of manuscript score, it is not certain that this was the intention. Moreover the recording of the King / Francis reconstruction remains the only known source of the clarinet part for the revised ending. The whereabouts and date of the private recording by Thurston and Rawsthorne do not appear to be known; it is not included among the archival recordings listed by Dressler. Additionally, it was considered wise and of benefit to seek further consultation on the transcription; and Philip Lane, who has transcribed a number of Rawsthorne's film scores, was requested to examine what had been prepared. Encouragingly he concurred with the present writer's reading, which is presented opposite (Example 3).

To complicate matters still further, taped into one each of the Violin 2 and Viola parts issued with the present hire material from Oxford University Press, there remain strips of manuscript paper which contain yet another reading of the alternative ending for these two parts (Example 4). They do not fit with the other string parts contained in the single page of manuscript score, which would need to be amended to make harmonic sense if an attempt was made to integrate them with these further different parts. It would thus appear that there were three versions of the alternative ending – there may have been more – of which the chronology seems far from certain.

It should also be noted that in the last two bars, as they appear in the single page of manuscript score (RNCM AR/1/092), the concluding, repeated string chords are on four semiquavers and a quaver. In the Violin 2 and Viola parts taped into the present hire material the semiquavers are increased to six, and match the King / Francis reconstruction; evidence of further revision having taken place.

There seems to have been doubt about the ending even beyond publication of the full score. There is reference to it in a short letter retained in the files at Oxford University Press. It is dated 2 July 1965 and was sent by OUP to Rawsthorne during preparations for publication of the clarinet and piano reduction.

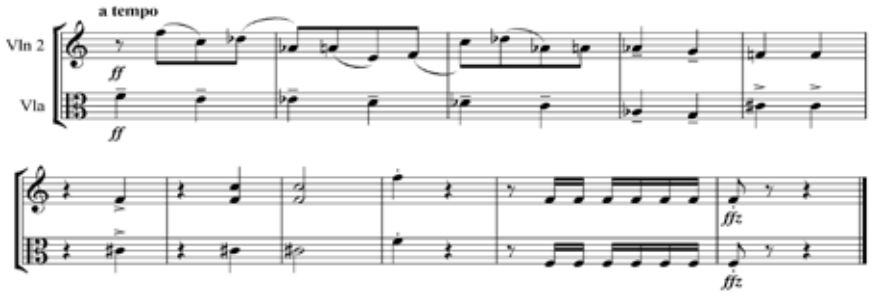


Example 3 Rawsthorne Clarinet Concerto, last movement from bar 158 transcribed from the Thea King / Alun Francis Hyperion recording first released in 1982 (articulation of clarinet part advised by Linda Merrick)

The letter reads:

Dear Alan,

We think it is time the clarinet and piano version was published. I hope you will agree. I enclose a copy because I think you ought to go through it, if you would be so kind, getting it ready for the engraver. I expect that you will agree that 3 staves, like those on page 5, should be avoided, and the piano part made so that all the notes are playable. I believe you altered the ending. Is the one in the enclosed score correct?



Example 4 Rawsthorne Clarinet Concerto, last movement from bar 158: Violin 2 and Viola parts of revised ending as contained on strips of paper taped into the present hire material from Oxford University Press

A transcription of this letter provided by Oxford University Press does not indicate who was the signatory (though it was almost certainly Alan Frank), and there is no documented reply from Rawsthorne in their files. In the event, the piano reduction, which retains the original ending, was prepared by Gerard Schurmann and published in 1972. The manuscript of this is also held at the Royal Northern College of Music.

What prompted Rawsthorne to abandon the revised ending was discussed with Linda Merrick. She considered that the most plausible hypothesis for the composer adopting the apparently weaker original ending was because of the technical demands presented in the revision, on which Frederick Thurston may have advised. Rawsthorne perhaps feared that the clarinet's ascent into a register hitherto unexplored in the concerto, and its final trill on concert E^3, were too ambitious, potentially limiting future performances of the work. Linda expressed this view in 'A Performers' Perspective', included in the notes for the Prima Facie recording, and also in a talk given at the Rawsthorne and McCabe celebratory event at the Royal Northern College of Music on 29 October 2016. In both, Linda further noted that, with advances in instrument design and increased technical facility of performers since the work was written, the composer's fears would appear to have been somewhat misplaced.

Listeners to the Prima Facie recording can programme either ending, and form their own view of the effectiveness of each, and indeed of the wisdom or otherwise of Rawsthorne's decision to retain the original.

I am most grateful to Linda Merrick for her support; for kindly reading my draft of this article; and for advising me on the articulation used for the solo clarinet part in the transcription from the Thea King / Alun Francis recording.

Notes

[1] John C. Dressler, *Alan Rawsthorne: A Bio-Bibliography* (Westport, CT: Praeger, 2004).

[2] John McCabe, *Alan Rawsthorne: Portrait of a Composer* (Oxford University Press, 1999).

Andrew Mayes became a trustee of the Rawsthorne Trust in 2007 and its treasurer in 2009. He edited *The Recorder Magazine* for twelve years (1993–2005), and is a vice chairman of the North West Early Music Forum and a governor of the Dolmetsch Foundation. Although remaining a keen recorder player (but now describing himself as a 'lapsed baroque oboe player'), much of Andrew's time in recent years has been devoted to research and writing on the recorder's twentieth-century repertoire. His book, *Carl Dolmetsch and the Recorder Repertoire of the 20th Century* was published by Ashgate in 2003 (a revised edition was published in paperback by Peacock Press in 2011 to coincide with Dolmetsch's centenary). He undertook further research through Birmingham Conservatoire, preparing a thesis examining Dolmetsch's performance practice in the repertoire composed for him, and was awarded a PhD by Birmingham City University in 2009.

More about the Hinchliffes of Huddersfield

Martin Thacker (based on research kindly made available by **Tonie Pollard** and **Dudley Diaper**)

After the publication of the Rawsthorne / Hinchliffe wedding photographs in last year's *Creel*, certain lacunae remained in our knowledge of who was who. My appeal for reader participation brought an excellent response when Tonie Pollard shared with us the results of a search of the 1911 census and the 1939 register, as well as of records of marriages and deaths. My old friend Dudley Diaper (like Tonie, a resident of north east Essex) did some follow-up checking on my behalf, and provided various further insights.

The result of all this is that we now know a good deal about Jessie's family. I hope this will not appear to be too far off-topic for this journal: it is surely relevant to Rawsthorne's biography to see what sort of family (containing at least two musicians) he married into, especially since the wedding, holiday, and other snaps all exude the qualities of liveliness and happiness. Although cameras can lie, they don't usually do so as consistently as this.

Readers will probably know that the 1911 Census is still the latest to which we have access. It is not yet time for the 1921 Census to be made public, and most of the 1931 results were destroyed by enemy action during the war. What we luckily do have, however, is the 1939 Register, that is, the survey taken by the government very quickly after the commencement of hostilities, for the purposes of issuing identification, ration books, call-up papers, and so on. And from the Census and the Register we gather the following ...

... in 1911 the family were living at 60 Ashbrow Road, Fartown, Huddersfield, and the members were:

Jessie's father: **Herbert Hinchliffe**. A headteacher (probably of what used to be called an elementary school – up to age 14). Born Holmebridge, Huddersfield, 16 December 1875.

Her mother: **Myra Weare Hinchliffe**, born Aston Manor, Warwickshire, 15 December 1880.

Her elder brother: **Ernest Darby Hinchliffe**, born 29 November 1903.

Her elder sister: **Ethel Myra** (always known as **Myra) Hinchliffe**, born 2 July 1905.

Jessie herself: **Jessie May Hinchliffe**, born 29 May 1908.

Ernest became a structural engineer and company director. He was the first to marry, in the fourth quarter of 1933, and his bride was Alice Hastilow, sometimes known as Gwynne (e.g. in the 1939 register, death register, and probate calendar; but she was registered at birth and marriage only as Alice). She was definitely Gwynne when sailing back from New York with Ernest on the *Queen Mary* in May 1954. Also on the first-class passenger list was one Laura L'Estrange, better known (then, anyway) as Constance Collier, an early film megastar. We don't know which name the family used for Gwynne / Alice, because Barbara Rawsthorne's annotations to the photographs know her only as 'Ernest's wife'. They married in Birmingham, and continued to live there. Ernest died in 1962; Alice in 1987.

Jessie, as of course we know, was a violinist and founder member of the BBC Symphony Orchestra, who married Alan Rawsthorne on 15 July 1934.

Myra, thus at least twice a bridesmaid, eventually married Geoffrey N. Sanderson, a worsted cloth manufacturer, in the fourth quarter of 1936. Their daughters were Gillian and Jennifer. Myra died in 1970; Geoffrey not until 1998, at the age of 94.

Mr Hinchliffe, Ernest, Alice (in front), Mrs Hinchliffe, Geoffrey Sanderson

Mr Hinchliffe, Ernest, Mrs Hinchliffe with one of Myra's daughters, Myra (in front), Alice.

By September 1939 Mr and Mrs Hinchliffe had retired to 96 Far Banks, Holmfirth (later of *Last of the Summer Wine* fame), near Huddersfield. Myra and Geoffrey were living with them. She is listed as a 'corsetière', the usual

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BARNSLEY.

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SECOND RESERVED - 2/4
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Tickets may be obtained from Messrs. Riley & Co., Queen Street; Day & Co., Shambles Street; B.B. Co-operative Society, Music Department, Market Street; and Hibbert, Murray & Co., Market Street (where plan may be seen). Tel. 348.

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CONCERTO IN G MINOR ... ... *Max Bruch*

CHACONNE ... ... *Bach*

ITEMS BY ... ... *Dvorak*
... ... *Paganini*
... ... *Bazzini*

definition of which is 'maker or fitter of corsets'. In those days there were many women who were the underwear equivalent of Avon ladies, representing makers' catalogues in clients' own homes (see, for example, www.corsetiere.net/Spirella/Corsetiere/zhhhFitter.htm#reallife). Presumably Myra found this more congenial or convenient than being a piano teacher, which she could certainly have managed, judging from her billing, aged 19, as accompanist to the15-year-old Jessie, in the programme reproduced here. This concert was no half-and-half affair, and Jessie must have required a very competent musician as her partner.

Press Cuttings.

Yorkshire Post, 1922.

"A talented violinist."

Birmingham Post, 1923—

"It seemed incredible . . . capable of such advanced technique."

Birmingham Gazette, 1923—

"A charming girl of extraordinary gifts."

Huddersfield Examiner, 1921—

"Admirable style and unusual grip of the work."

The Strad, 1923—

"A Master of the Violin."

The Musical Opinion, 1923—

"Did remarkably with the Paganini Wilhelmj Concerto, No. 1, playing with good pure tone, intonation and execution."

Barnsley Independent, 1922—

"She revealed a beautiful touch and clever artistic expression."

Barnsley Chronicle, 1923:—

"Her performance was nothing short of wonderful."

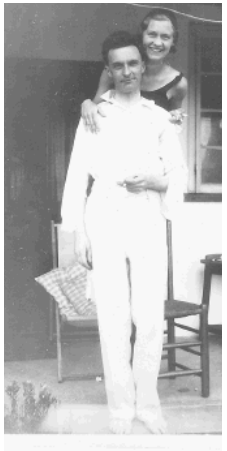
Myra Ernest Jessie

A visitor from Dartington …

… who seems likely to stay for a while

Lyme Regis, 1932

Myra just reaches Geoffrey's shoulder …



… but Jessie is cheating

Some years later … Myra and Gillian or Jennifer

Later still: Geoffrey and Myra *en fête*

A new generation. Scapegoat Hill, W. Yorks, September 1969. Geoffrey, Myra, daughters, and a spouse or boyfriend. Myra, sadly, died during the following year

A regular poser

The line of enquiry pursued here began with the photograph that appeared on page 47 of *The Creel* 8/2 (2016). It is reproduced below, very small, as a reminder. We wanted to know about the occasion, the building, and the people appearing alongside Jessie and Alan. The first two of these questions remain unanswered. The third stemmed from the great similarity of the profiles of Jessie and the lady on her right. At the time, we knew not so much as whether Jessie had a sister. Now we know much more.

The profile similarity remains, and yet … the man slightly behind and to her left doesn't really seem to resemble Geoffrey Sanderson, as shown in either the early or the late shots in this article. Apart from anything else, Geoffrey was much taller.

I called this a mystery photograph at the time, and it seems likely to remain just that!

The Reception History of Alan Rawsthorne's Concerto for String Orchestra (1949)

John France

Introduction

Alan Frank suggested that 'one of ... [Alan Rawsthorne's] most successful recent works is the Concerto for Strings only'.[1] He continued: 'Here, in this somewhat severe work, it is purely the force and logic of the musical reasoning that carries the listener along.' He feels that the slow movement 'shows strongly that serious reflective mood which ... [is] very typical of him'. Perhaps a little mischievously, he submits that this middle movement is effectively a set of 'melancholy variations' on 'God Save the Queen, which it resembles thematically!' This is a good, brief overview of one of Alan Rawsthorne's most successful works.

Sixty-four years after Frank's comments, this work is still highly regarded by enthusiasts of Rawsthorne's music. Unfortunately, this is not mirrored in contemporary concert halls: it has been heard on only three occasions at the Proms (1949, 1950 and 1953). BBC Radio broadcasts have been relatively rare; not counting the Proms themselves, there are about half a dozen broadcasts to be found listed by the Genome project, which indexes *Radio Times*, including performances conducted by Neville Marriner, Bryden Thomson, Harry Blech, and Sir Adrian Boult, as well as broadcasts of the Leslie Jones recording. There is currently only one recording of this work available (Naxos). Three other versions have disappeared into collectors' archives.

In this essay, I will explore the genesis of the Concerto for String Orchestra; the world premiere and the Proms premiere; the immediate reaction to the music; and selective responses to the work during the past sixty-eight years. This is a 'reception' history rather than a technical investigation of the music. However, for completeness, I have included Alan Rawsthorne's programme note for the work, as well as references to the analyses by Paul Hamburger, John McCabe and Sebastian Forbes. I conclude with a discography and select bibliography.

Genesis

By the end of the 1940s, Rawsthorne had established a significant niche in British music, especially for chamber and orchestral works and film scores. During this period, major works including the Concerto for Oboe and Strings (first performed 1947) the Clarinet Quartet (first performed 1948) and the Cello Sonata (first performed 1949) were given their premieres. The year 1948 saw the film scores and incidental music for *Saraband for Dead Lovers*, *X-100*, *Trimalchio's Feast* and *No Other Road*.

The same year as the Concerto for String Orchestra was premiered, the Sonatina for Piano was first heard at the Wigmore Hall on 8 April 1949. The pianist was James Gibb. The only other production from that year was a cadenza for Mozart's Concerto in E flat Major for Two Pianos, K 365. On a personal level, the composer had amicably separated from his first wife in 1947.

The Concerto for String Orchestra was written for, and dedicated to, the Dutch String Orchestra of Amsterdam and their conductor Gerard Schurmann. This orchestra was specially formed to include the most important soloists and chamber ensembles in the country. Dimitri Kennaway explained how Rawsthorne, whilst visiting Amsterdam in 1948 to hear a performance of his Symphonic Studies, was impressed by the orchestra's playing and immediately proposed writing a work for them.[2]

Gerard Schurmann was born in the former Dutch East Indies in 1924, leaving for England at an early age. He studied composition with Rawsthorne. At the age of 21, alongside a career as a concert pianist, he held the post of Cultural Attaché at the Dutch Embassy in London. Through the good offices of Eduard van Beinum, then conductor of the Amsterdam Concertgebouw Orchestra, Schurmann was appointed (1948) as resident conductor of the Radio Philharmonic Orchestra in Hilversum for a two-year period.

John McCabe has explained that Schurmann was more a protégé, colleague and close friend of Rawsthorne than a pupil.[3] Gerard Schurmann is still active, aged 93 years. For a detailed study of the relationship between the two men, see the article by Dimitri Kennaway referred to above.[4]

Programme note

For reference, I include a transcript of the handwritten programme note by Alan Rawsthorne, held in the archive at the Royal Northern College of Music:

Concerto for String Orchestra ... Alan Rawsthorne

Largo Maestoso - Molto Allegro
Lento e Mesto
Allegro Piacevole

> The first movement is vigorous and aggressive. Its two principal subjects are contrasted in various ways, but they are similar in mood, and subsidiary figures carry this feeling through most of the movement. The main subject is stated in the first two bars, Largo, after which the real tempo, Molto Allegro, is immediately established with a subsidiary theme. The second subject is easily distinguished by its new rhythm, and is decorated by scales on a solo violin. This is an important moment to be aware of. The music becomes quieter, though still restless and protesting, and a solo viola enters with a cantilena derived from the opening of the Allegro. The development proceeds, with inversions of the main subject

and a dotted figure derived from a diminution of the second. Some relief from the turbulent character of the movement is provided by a solo violin which plays a short section of quieter music in a slower tempo; the mood is gentler, though rather sad, and the accompaniment keeps up a certain agitation with its tremolandos. Soon the original characteristics reappear. The reprise of the second subject is accompanied by a vigorous counterpoint running above it; the movement ends abruptly.

The second movement is in three main sections. The violas start by playing the principal theme, a melody that is slow and very sad but with a hint of a march-like tread emphasised by pizzicato cellos and basses. It is developed by the entry of the upper strings, which take the music to a climax and down again to a cadence-theme or codetta. A restatement of the melody in the cellos and basses follows, working up to a still greater climax. The tension relaxes, and the first section ends quietly. The theme of the second section is very solemn and is characterised by irregular bar-lengths. It passes almost imperceptibly into the third section, which consists of a short restatement of the opening melody, and a few bars of coda.

The last movement follows without a break. Now the mood changes, and a much sunnier and more carefree atmosphere prevails. The form is rather looser and more expansive; a number of ideas are involved. At the opening, a flowing tune is played in octaves by first violins and violas, unaccompanied at first, followed by a secondary subject of a more playful kind. This leads, after a little development, to a new section in a faster tempo; a violin plays solo passages over chords on the rest of the orchestra, and figures from this are developed in wayward rhythms. A new melody arises out of all this, treated in imitation as a duet between violas and cellos, after which some of the opening music is referred to. This perhaps gives the movement something of a rondo-like feeling. Another new section presently appears, a fugato on a subject derived from the principal theme of the first movement. Eventually this subject is combined with the main melody of the present movement, which wins the day and leads to a recapitulation. The piece ends with a resolute coda.

World premiere

The world premiere of Alan Rawsthorne's Concerto for String Orchestra was given during a Hilversum radio broadcast on 13 June 1949. I located a single newspaper review of this work presented in the local Dutch-language Hilversum newspaper, *De Gooi* dated Tuesday, 14 June 1949.

The critic (J.d.v.H) wrote (my translation) that 'yesterday, the Dutch String Orchestra led by Gerbrand Schürmann had the honour of broadcasting ... the world premiere of the Concerto for String Orchestra by the English composer Alan Rawsthorne'. He thought that 'the conductor well interpreted this fascinating score, assisted by players of great talent and enthusiasm ... [with] a flawless technique and clear concentration'. The chamber-music quality of the Concerto was prominent: the scoring was 'delicately nuanced with precisely balanced parts and accuracy of attack'.

The stylistic parameters of the work impressed the reviewer:

> This ingenious structure of beautifully themed material reflects a strong constructive spirit which expresses itself with warm sentiment and clear ... thematic development. [This is] vital music utterly devoid of that nervous, sometimes overwrought, mood that so-called present-day composers try to take advantage of, and which are a reflection of the prevailing chaos and frenzy of the 'modern' setting.

The reviewer concluded by maintaining that 'this first performance was a remarkable success: hopefully this work will find its way into the hearts of many music-lovers, whilst also being an incentive to Dutch composers'.

One short review was provided by W. R. Anderson in his 'Round about Radio' (*Musical Times* (December 1949)) feature: 'Rawsthorne's string concerto (1949) is among his most accomplished essays in what seems to me nervy, dark, acrid, uncomfortable music. I wished for more rests, and was glad of the long one when it ended. Alas, some of us will never be fit for this order of art, which may be destined to rule the future.'

Unfortunately, it is not possible to know if this was based on the Hilversum production or (more likely) the Norman del Mar / BBC Symphony Orchestra concert, broadcast on 12 November 1949.[5]

At the Proms

Two months after the premiere (Thursday, 11 August 1949) the Concerto was heard at an Albert Hall BBC Promenade Concert with the London Symphony Orchestra conducted by Basil Cameron. Other works performed that evening included Arnold Bax's Symphony No.4, Tchaikovsky's *Francesca da Rimini*, Schumann's Piano Concerto in A minor (soloist Cyril Preedy) and Rimsky-Korsakov's overture *The Maid of Pskov*.

The Times (12 August 1949) reviewer (possibly Frank Howes) felt that Rawsthorne's work was 'a concerto in the sense that it exploits its players to the full and, as in the eighteenth-century concerto grosso, there are some solo passages for the principals'. The music was 'contrapuntal and harmonically individual, [and] tonal without being oppressively diatonic ... ' which is both 'thoughtful' and 'effective'. He considered that the 'admirably varied' string

writing 'is often reminiscent of Bliss or Walton'. The work was played with 'commendable drive' by the strings of the London Symphony Orchestra under Basil Cameron.

The *Western Morning News* (13 August 1949), in the syndicated 'Our London Letter', reported the premiere and suggested that 'There is no doubt that the mature Rawsthorne is now emerging, for in this intelligent piece of string composition the blend of ideas is skilfully woven and the composer is less abstract than usual.' Specific elements that caught the author's attention included 'a striking passage for solo violin to pianissimo accompaniment, a fugal section, and occasional broad chordal writing reminiscent of Elgar in [his] Introduction and Allegro'. He concludes by noting that the 'opening grim dissonance does not foretell the beauty, ascetic though it may be, which follows'.

Damning with faint praise, the *Observer* (14 August 1949) pointed out that Bax and Rawsthorne 'do not pack them in as a solid programme of Tchaikovsky does'. The Concerto for String Orchestra, which was presented as 'absolute music', was never 'abstruse or trying'. In fact, the solo violin and viola passages are given an 'almost human eloquence'. C. F. D. thought that the work's 'main achievement' was 'its use of great smooth masses of string tone, like cumulus clouds in motion. The effect is hypnotic.' The performance by Cameron and the London Symphony Orchestra had 'every sign of personal enthusiasm'.

Martin Cooper, reviewing the work with the Proms performance at the back of his mind (*Musical Quarterly* April 1950) recorded that 'the [Concerto] made little mark when it was first performed ... in the Albert Hall last August'. He believed that the venue was 'too big and the orchestra too little rehearsed, so that the intensity of the first two movements was never communicated to the audience (or else unrealized by the orchestra) and the effect of Rawsthorne's close thinking and compressed writing was simply one of crabbedness'. Referring to a later concert at the smaller Chelsea Town Hall (12 December 1949, Boyd Neel Orchestra conducted by the composer), he wrote that 'these judgments were entirely reversed and the work stood out as a remarkably strong and typical example of Rawsthorne's music'.

Rawsthorne's Concerto heard at this concert was described by Donald Mitchell (*Music Survey* 2/3 (Winter 1950) 'as one of our civilisation's few civilised pieces'.

Finally, William Somervell Mann (W. S. M.) reviewing the Prom concert for the *Musical Times* (September 1949) gave a lengthy commentary on the work. He held that it was the most important novelty at that year's Proms. Mann gives a detailed analysis echoing the programme notes. He concluded by stating that: 'Rawsthorne's technique is not a goal in itself, for the material evokes vital and stimulating emotions in its hearers, while the occasional use of soloists, either singly or as a group, adds brilliance to a work that blends logic and sympathy most happily.'

The score

The score of the Concerto for String Orchestra was published in 1949 by Oxford University Press, It was reviewed (unsigned) in *Music and Letters* (April 1950):

> Rawsthorne's concerto is no serenade. Indeed, its most obvious feature is the tension brought about not only by dissonances no less real for being mainly diatonic but also by the unremitting skill with which a minimum of material is developed into a large-scale fabric ...The whole work is one of Rawsthorne's finest constructions.

It was also examined by Richard Bales in *Notes* (June 1950):

> Rather than apply the classic meaning of Concerto to this work, it had better been titled a Suite, since there is but one short section for solo violins, viola, and cello in the entire composition. [The only critic to emphasise this point.] Nevertheless, this is a welcome addition to string orchestra repertoire and it has been written with a sure hand. If conservative in idiom, it has the virtues of rhythmic vitality and fine formal proportions. One feels that it is just the right length, that it is really for the strings and not just piano transcribed. A good group of players will be required to elicit the maximum effect.

Academic study

One of the most important studies of the Concerto was given in the short-lived *Music Survey* journal (2/2 (Autumn 1949)) by Paul Hamburger. It is worthy of lengthy quotation:

> One cannot say of [Rawsthorne's] latest full-scale work, as one could of the [Piano] Sonatina, that its material is not worked out in all its possibilities ... This is most apparent in the first movement, in strictest sonata form, with three well-defined subjects, the first contrapuntal, the second a lyrical passage for solo viola ... a short development in double counterpoint being followed by an emotional climax of the movement, a quiet solo-violin passage over a string tremolo; followed in turn by a shortened recapitulation. The second movement, a kind of chaconne, has the same four-note motto as 'La Folia,' used by Corelli and others, and has some of the grave charm of those early Italian chaconnes. Whether the quotation is conscious or not, one thing is certain: Rawsthorne's musical roots strike very deep. Lastly comes a serious rondo, thematically related to the first movement, with a quiet, almost stagnant first episode, and a fugue as second episode. The main section is progressively shortened until at last the few firm chords of the second subject that are left put their foot down and call a halt.

'La Folia' was originally an Iberian dance adapted to several melodies. One of these tunes developed a considerable vogue and has been used by many composers. It is based on the four-note theme D–E–C♯–D. The best-known twentieth-century work utilising this theme was Sergei Rachmaninov's *Variations on a Theme of Corelli*. It is also the thematic paradigm for 'God Save the Queen', hence Alan Frank's comment quoted in the first paragraph of this article.

A. E. F. Dickinson in his 'The Progress of Alan Rawsthorne' (*Music Review*, May 1951) pointed out that the first movement is 'somewhat unexpectedly, a kind of sonata-form, in which the second subject is distinguished by solo-descants the first time and general counterpoint the second'. He thinks that the second movement '... has a grave principal mood, not unlike the finale of Vaughan Williams' *A London Symphony*, and a declamatory, mysterious interlude'. The finale is unbalanced, and the 'main refrain thins in repetition'.

Interestingly, Dickinson feels that the concerto 'suffers audibly from being confined to strings'. He is surprised to see that the work has been placed beside Elgar's Introduction and Allegro by at least one responsible critic (see the *Western Morning News* (13 August 1949) review, p. 22 above).

Sebastian Forbes, in his examination of Rawsthorne's orchestral music,[6] defines the Concerto and the Symphony No.1 (1950) as two important works from Rawsthorne's middle period. He states that both have been acclaimed 'for their fastidious technique and avoidance of anything excessively flamboyant'. On the other hand, they are 'equally notable for their nervous energy and busy counterpoint, particularly in their first movements'. Each work has made great use of 'slender material'. The stylistic mood of both works exemplifies a 'touch of sadness' which is 'more telling than merely the fact of a minor key (D minor for the Concerto)'.

Forbes thinks that the Concerto's opening movement balances a sense of assertiveness with one of introspection. The slow movement is formally a 'rondo' with the development of the first episode emerging directly from the main theme. This contrasts with the second episode which is 'more unsettling'. There are two 'passionate climaxes'. Forbes points out that the finale opens with a theme that resembles the 'basis of [Rawsthorne's] Theme and Four Studies for Piano Solo ...' (c. 1940). This 'easy going' opening proceeds with 'fluency and confidence' and 'energetic bravura'. He feels that 'the spirit of Vivaldi is not far away'. The analysis concludes: 'This [Concerto] and the Symphony No.1 represent a genuine flowering of neoclassicism: they are instrumentally conceived, with purely musical terms of reference, functional tonality and evident manipulative skill.'

John McCabe considers the Concerto to be an 'outstanding contribution to that extraordinarily rich repertoire of string orchestra music by British composers'.[7] He writes that it is 'coloured by a strong neo-classical impulse, a true concerto grosso influence'. McCabe explains that this 'baroque' effect is only explicit in the finale, where the composer contrasts the solo group with the main 'tutti'. Elsewhere in the work the scoring typically calls for a 'single unit'. The 'most arresting' thing about the Concerto is 'its emotional directness'. Rawsthorne has used his trademark augmented chords, but has also made use of major and minor triads in various inversions. As for the slow movement, McCabe feels that this is not so much 'melancholic' as 'full of compassion and imbued with a sense of sorrow that is both personal and universal'. No explicit mention is made of the 'La Folia' theme, but he points out that this music has 'the air of a funeral procession'. McCabe notes the 'sunny freedom' of the finale achieved by the 'wider-ranging intervals' in the melody. This contrasts with much that has passed, which is 'marked by passion and even tragedy'.

Discographic overview

In 1963 Alan Rawsthorne journeyed to the Soviet Union in the company of Alan Bush, as representatives of the Composers' Guild. Whilst there, they performed several of their works. Subsequently, (1983) the Russian record company Melodiya issued a few of these on a double LP. This included Rawsthorne's Second Symphony ('Pastoral') and the Concerto for String Orchestra, coupled with Alan Bush's 'Nottingham' Symphony and *Birthday Overture*. To my knowledge this has never been reissued: I was unable to find a significant review.

In 1965 the Little Orchestra of London released an LP of the Concerto for String Orchestra coupled with Peter Racine Fricker's *Prelude, Elegy and Finale* (1949) and Lennox Berkeley's Serenade for Strings (1939). It was reviewed in *The Gramophone* (August 1965) by Edward Greenfield, who claimed that Rawsthorne had been 'thinly, almost shabbily, treated over [his] sixtieth birthday celebrations', so that this present disc made 'some amends'. Rawsthorne is 'one of those composers who benefit specially from the sort of repetition made possible with a record'. The composer's style, Greenfield felt, is not 'usually easy to grasp in the memory at a first hearing, yet the argument is the very opposite of unmemorable once the essentials have been grasped'. This is especially true with the Concerto with 'its strong, aggressive first movement ...' followed by a 'thoughtful slow movement that seems at first to add coda upon coda, but which in fact is very surely constructed'. And finally, 'the rondo-like finale with a fugato doing far more than spin out argument ... it reconciles the main subjects of the first and last movements'. Edward Greenfield was equally enthusiastic about the Fricker and the Berkeley, despite having one or two minor complaints about the quality of the recording. In all cases the playing was 'passionate and convincing'.

Anthony Payne (*Tempo* (Spring 1966)) welcomes the LP of string music by Rawsthorne, Berkeley and Fricker and reminds the listener that these composers 'have of late been ousted from the public eye by the younger generation and who, in the present works at least, have made a break with parochial Englishry

without being influenced by the Schoenbergian revolution'. He writes that, in Rawsthorne's Concerto for String Orchestra, 'we are faced with sadly undervalued music ... for it is a rich and complex work, and one which needs several hearings of the sort a gramophone easily affords, before its subtleties fall into place and prove their memorability'.

The Concerto for String Orchestra was re-released by PYE in 1969, coupled with Rawsthorne's Piano Quintet (1968) and Cello Sonata (1948). John Dressler notes that the Concerto was further reissued in 1997 on CD: I cannot find any other reference to this re-release.[8]

BBC Radio Classics issued a CD of a broadcast of the Concerto made in September 1966 by Sir Adrian Boult and the BBC Symphony Orchestra. It included music by Moeran and Bliss. This CD has been subsequently deleted.

In 1999 Naxos released an important CD of orchestral works by Alan Rawsthorne including the Concerto for String Orchestra, Light Music for Strings, Divertimento for Chamber Orchestra, Concertante Pastorale for Flute, Horn and Strings, the Suite for Recorder and String Orchestra and the Elegiac Rhapsody for String Orchestra. The last three works were 'world premiere recordings'. *The Gramophone* (July 1999) regarded this CD as 'yet another Naxos / British music bull's eye, comprising an imaginative programme realised with great sympathy by all involved'. Andrew Achenbach thought that the 'most substantial offering here [was] the resourceful and magnificently crafted Concerto'. The orchestra gave a performance which 'in its emotional scope and keen vigour, outshines Sir Adrian Boult's (now deleted) 1966 radio recording with the BBCSO ...' David Lloyd-Jones and the Northern Chamber Orchestra bring 'a more thrusting urgency in the outer movements'. He also locates an 'extra sense of slumbering tragedy' in the Lento e Mesto.

Conclusion

In my opinion, two considerations lead to the Concerto for String Orchestra's ultimate success. Firstly, Rawsthorne has written a piece of music that stylistically takes a 'middle road': it neither emulates the then-current hegemony of Ralph Vaughan Williams, nor experiments with the nascent modernism being explored by Humphrey Searle and Elizabeth Lutyens and soon to explode into avant-garde music driven by Darmstadt. Secondly, the argument of the Concerto is sustained from the first bar to the last: stylistically the entire piece is thoroughly integrated. This is a hugely satisfying work that engages successfully with tragedy, passion and humour. Alan Rawsthorne's Concerto for String Orchestra is a masterwork; it is one by which the composer will be remembered in perpetuity.

Discography

1. Alan Rawsthorne / USSR State Symphony Orchestra: Alan Rawsthorne, Concerto for String Orchestra, Symphony No.2 ('Pastoral'); Alan Bush / USSR State Symphony Orchestra: Alan Bush, Symphony No. 2 ('Nottingham'); Bush, *Birthday Overture*. Melodiya D012687-90 (2 LPs) (c. 1983).
2. Leslie Jones / Little Orchestra of London: Alan Rawsthorne, Concerto for String Orchestra; Lennox Berkeley, Serenade for Strings, Peter Racine Fricker, Prelude, Elegy and Finale. Pye Golden Guinea Collectors Series GSGC 4042 (Mono) and GSCG 14042 (Stereo) (1965). Reissued on Collectors Series GSGC 7060 (LP) (1969) coupled with University Ensemble of Cardiff: Rawsthorne, Piano Quintet and George Isaac / Eric Harrison: Rawsthorne, Cello Sonata.
3. Sir Adrian Boult / BBC Symphony Orchestra: Alan Rawsthorne, Concerto for String Orchestra (rec. 1966); Arthur Bliss, Music for Strings; E. J. Moeran, Sinfonietta. BBC Radio Classics 15656 91632 (1996).
4. David Lloyd-Jones / Northern Chamber Orchestra, Rebecca Goldberg (horn), Conrad Marshall (flute), John Turner (recorder): Alan Rawsthorne, Concerto for String Orchestra; *Concertante Pastorale* for Flute, Horn and Strings; Light Music for String Orchestra; Suite for Recorder and String Orchestra; Elegiac Rhapsody for String Orchestra; Divertimento for Chamber Orchestra. Naxos 8.553567 (1999).

Notes

[1] Alan Frank, *Modern British Composers* (London: Dennis Dobson, 1953).

[2] Dimitri Kennaway, 'Alan Rawsthorne and Gerard Schurmann: A Great Friendship', *The Creel* 7/4 (2014), pp. 22–39.

[3] John McCabe, *Alan Rawsthorne: Portrait of a Composer* (Oxford University Press, 1999).

[4] Kennaway, 'Alan Rawsthorne and Gerard Schurmann'.

[5] John C. Dressler, *Alan Rawsthorne: A Bio-Bibliography* (Westport, CT: Praeger, 2004).

[6] Sebastian Forbes, 'The Orchestral Music', in Alan Poulton, ed., *Alan Rawsthorne*, 3 vols. (Kidderminster; Hindhead: Bravura Press, 1984–6), vol. III, pp. 86–145.

[7] McCabe, *Alan Rawsthorne*.

[8] Dressler, *Alan Rawsthorne*.

John France became interested in classical music after performing as a 'pirate' in a Grammar School production of *The Pirates of Penzance* in 1971. After hearing 'Down Ampney' at church he discovered the world of Ralph Vaughan Williams and the then largely undiscovered country of British Music. Usually, he has been most sympathetic towards the lesser-known composers. He regularly contributes reviews and articles to *MusicWeb International* and a variety of musical journals and magazines, and has written programme notes for many concerts. He has lectured on Gustav Holst, John Ireland and William Lloyd Webber. Recently, he has had articles published in the British Music Society Journal, The Delius Society Journal, The RVW Society Journal and the Finzi Society Journal.
Currently he maintains a British Music Blog – The Land of Lost Content [http://landofllostcontent.blogspot.com/]

Two More Programme Notes by Rawsthorne

Over its twenty-eight years *The Creel* has discovered and published the following notes (all by Rawsthorne himself):

1/2 (Spring 1990) 'The Creel'; Symphony No. 2
1/3 (Autumn 1990) Concerto for String Orchestra (also on pp. 19–20 of this issue); String Quartet No. 3; Concertante for Violin and Piano
2/2 (Autumn 1992) Piano Concerto No. 2; Concerto for Two Pianos
2/3 (Spring 1993) *Practical Cats*
4/2 (2000) Violin Concerto No. 1
4/3 (2001) Symphony No. 2 (see also 1/2, which was a facsimile of the MS)

The following, from Cheltenham Festival programmes, have been sent in by Peter Dickinson and Meurig Bowen respectively.

ALAN RAWSTHORNE
Sonata for Violin and Piano
FIRST PUBLIC PERFORMANCE

1. *Adagio–Allegro non troppo*
2. *Allegretto*
3. *Toccata (Allegro di Bravura)*
4. *Epilogue (Adagio Rapsodico)*

The first movement of this Sonata starts with a violent statement by the piano based on two contrasting triads one semitone apart. A lyrical phrase of four notes is introduced after a few bars; these elements recur in various disguises throughout the rest of the work with a view to giving a sense of cohesion to the whole. The short introduction is followed by an Allegro; the two triads play an important part here, in providing the thematic material, as they also play in Movement II, where they supply a melody for a remote kind of dance. This movement, painted in very subdued colours, is punctuated by the pianist with unobtrusive variants of the phrase with which he started the whole sonata.

The third movement is a brilliant affair, characterised by alternating triple and duple rhythms between the two instruments. The opening lyrical phrase provides the basis of a middle section. There is a short, non-virtuoso cadenza before the coda.

The fourth movement is a reminiscence of the first. The opening triads are spread in arpeggios over the keyboard, sustained by the pedal, with phrases by the violin intervening. There follows for the violin a melody containing the germ of its opening music, and the piece ends with another reference to the basic triads, very quietly.

It is extremely difficult for a composer to write his own programme notes. The object of programme notes should be to seduce the audience into the belief that they will enjoy the music, and that is hardly the province of the composer. I can only hope that you will.

ALAN RAWSTHORNE
Concerto for Ten Instruments
FIRST PERFORMANCE
Commissioned for the Occasion

1. *Preludio–Allegro Deciso*
2. *Andante poco Doloroso*
3. *Allegro*
4. *Poco Lento*

In the present work, the aim has been not so much to contrast the timbres of the string ensemble with that of the wind, but to evolve passages in which the two will mingle into a colourful whole. The antithesis of the wind group and the strings follows so naturally from the nature of this combination of instruments that the composer has little need consciously to exploit it; such passages, so to speak, arise of their own accord. The general ensemble creates problems of balance which require, of course, considerable attention in composition.

The first movement leads off by the First Violin playing a passage, marcato, in which he is presently joined by other instruments in turn. Although alternating with other sections of a less bravura character, the movement is on the whole of a forceful nature.

The movement which follows is in a more melancholy mood, with a principal subject played by the Cor Anglais. The music works up to a more agitated state; the counterpoint is rather complicated, much of it deriving from the principal subject. It closes with a return to the mood of the opening.

The third movement is of a lighter character and texture, and the fourth, Poco Lento, is a kind of meditation on the preceding music, containing occasional snatches of ideas heard before.

Rawsthorne (third from left) with six of the players from the premiere of the Concerto for Ten Instruments. Of the players, only Alan Civil (second from left) and Gwydion Brooke (fifth from left) have been confidently identified. Max Salpeter, possibly, is on far right (just visible). The full list is given below

The Prometheus Ensemble

Max Salpeter (Violin)	Roger Lord (Oboe)
Jurgen Hess (Violin)	William Bennett (Flute)
Kenneth Essex (Viola)	Michael Meyerowitz (Clarinet)
Douglas Cameron (Cello)	Gwydion Brooke (Bassoon)
Stuart Knussen (Double bass)	Alan Civil (Horn)

Cheltenham Festival, Wednesday, 5 July 1961

Who Is Alan Rawsthorne and Where Does He Fit In?

Tony Pickard

When Alan Rawsthorne's name came up in conversation during a break in orchestral rehearsals, several older players immediately recognised it and went on to recall some of his music which they had heard during the 1950s and 1960s. Listening to our conversation was a younger player, who asked, 'Who is Alan Rawsthorne, and where does he fit in?' Questions that almost anyone could have posed today, given the prolonged neglect of his music. Yet, whenever I have had the opportunity to chat with young professional players after they have performed one of his works, they are full of enthusiasm and cannot understand why they were not introduced to his music at college. Rawsthorne was never a 'niche' composer; during his lifetime his music was frequently performed in concert halls and frequently broadcast, and many works were commercially recorded, the *Street Corner* overture and Second Piano Concerto being especially popular with the concert-going public. No wonder that in 2005, his centenary year, the *Penguin Guide*, reviewing a new recording of his three symphonies (Naxos 8.557480), asked why his music was so neglected, and continued: 'His language is individual and immediately recognisable as his. Anyone who responds to Walton will feel at home in his world.'[1]

Rawsthorne's life has been comprehensively covered by Tim Mottershead in his concise biography 'Alan Rawsthorne: The Fish with an Ear for Music.'[2] That gives us the answer to the first question: who is he? The purpose of this article is to try to show where he fits in. I have tried where possible to avoid quoting sources that have already appeared in *The Creel* or *The Sprat*.

Rawsthorne's 'late start'

The one well-known fact about Rawsthorne is that he studied dentistry, and then architecture, for two years before going to music college; this can lead to the false impression that he had no experience of music beforehand, or that he had to 'struggle' in order to study it, or both. Biographers rarely have the luxury of space to quote extensively from primary sources, and I feel that it is important to place the essentials on record for the interest of the reader and the benefit of future writers.

As a child he had cello and piano lessons and composed music from an early age. He was brought up in an Edwardian middle-class home. His father, Hubert Rawsthorne, had qualified as a doctor but did not practise, having a private income derived from a fortuitous succession of family inheritances. Following the First World War the value of this income was much reduced, and he was too old to return to medicine; hence the need to see his son settled in a profession.

Rawsthorne's sister Barbara, in a 1972 memoir, recalled how her brother came to study dentistry:

> Our father was not at all unsympathetic to Alan's desire for a musical career. He himself was interested in music and had much pleasure in listening to it, but at that period a career in music, as in painting, was a very chancy affair unless backed by private means. There was no particular tradition of musical talent in the family and our father had no means of knowing that Alan had it in him to make a real life in music, and he thought that he would be very unhappy if he had to prostitute his art to make a living. Dentistry, he thought, would give him more time than medicine to 'enjoy music as a hobby', but when he found that (to Alan) the alternative to devoting his life to music was to shut it out altogether, he realised that music must be his life and it was with his full consent that Alan finally entered the Royal Manchester College of Music in 1925. However Alan always felt that the late start to his training was a great drawback to him.[3]

Rawsthorne was being somewhat disingenuous about a 'drawback'. His father's caution was surely justified given the family's circumstances. Rawsthorne could quite easily have been another of those, from a privileged background, who thought that some talent was the sole requirement for a career in the arts. His two years at Liverpool University served to stiffen his resolve to study music, which his father recognised and amicably accepted. He did not make a particularly late start, but he may have been a slightly late developer, arriving in the early 1930s in roughly the same position as Britten, who was the best part of a decade younger. One likely factor in this was the profound and lasting effect that the death of his mother in 1927 had on her 22-year-old son.

The 1930s: establishing a reputation

Rawsthorne left the RMCM in July 1929 with diplomas in performance and teaching, together with prizes for both piano and composition. He had achieved success at college concerts, particularly with his *Tzu-Yeh Songs*, with words translated from the Chinese by Arthur Waley, and his first BBC broadcast came in 1928, when his fellow student Gordon Green played his piano Waltz in C minor. Of his contemporaries, only William Walton (b. 1902) and Constant Lambert (b. 1905) had made any significant impact on the musical world during the 1920s. For Rawsthorne, Britten, Tippett[4] and the rest it would be well into the 1930s before they had a similar impact; in the meantime they continued to refine their music in search of an individual voice.

Rawsthorne described this process during a 1962 interview with Malcolm Rayment:

> MR: Would you say that you made a late start because you were highly critical of your efforts?
>
> AR: I certainly think that is true. I have, of course, thrown a great deal of stuff away. I suppose many people do that and it certainly took a long time for me to decide exactly which road I wanted to travel in the way of composing. I tried a great many things – imitations of various composers – out of which I have tried to produce something which is individual. But until I felt at ease in this way I didn't really want to emerge as a composer.[5]

One of the experimental works which he did not destroy is the ten-minute *Esquisses* for high voice and chamber orchestra (c. 1932). The texts, like those of the much better-known *Tzu-Yeh Songs*, are taken from Arthur Waley's translations from the Chinese. There is no record of a performance, but the piece is of interest because it is his earliest surviving work involving the orchestra. Trevor Hold has described it as 'Less a song cycle than a suite of instrumental dances with a vocal part … the voice is treated like a solo orchestral instrument. The real musical interest lies in the orchestral writing, which is elaborate, colourful and skilful.'[6] John McCabe found that 'The discretion with which the scoring is accomplished shows clearly his natural understanding of the medium and the intriguingly *Façade*-like touches scattered throughout the score add to its charm. There are occasional hints of Rawsthorne's mature style … '[7] The composer made a version for two violins and piano and incomplete versions for piano accompaniment, and this hybrid work might have a life as a piano or purely orchestral work. All the manuscripts are held in the Rawsthorne Archive at the Royal Northern College of Music.

Working as a pianist and composer for the School of Dance-Mime at Dartington Hall, Devon, between 1932 and 1934, gave him valuable practical experience with another art form: dance. While there he composed a string quartet (1932) which was performed at Dartington in June 1933 by the Griller Quartet.

1934 was a turning point both professionally and personally. In January the Macnaghten Quartet gave the London premiere of his 1932 string quartet, which Anne Macnaghten recalled in a letter dated October 1993:

> Alan later scrapped this work as being immature, but it has something characteristic of him – sensitive and attractive, and different. It received good press notices on that first appearance, in particular from Marion Scott in the *Musical Times* and Frank Howes in *The Times*. During the late 1930s we played it many times in Music Club concerts and at least once for the BBC (in the 'Light Classics' series!).[8]

Rawsthorne married Jessie Hinchliffe in July 1934. They had known each other since their RMCM days and she had joined the BBC Symphony Orchestra on its foundation in 1930. Moving in Macnaghten-Lemare circles and meeting Jessie's BBC colleagues must have widened his musical horizons. In November he and Jessie gave the first performance of his Concertante for Violin and Piano, and the year ended with another performance of the 1932 quartet by the Griller Quartet, in a programme which included Britten's Phantasy Quartet for Oboe and Strings. *The Times* noted that 'Both works declare their composers to be men of promise.'[9]

BBCSO oboist Helen Gaskell premiered the Oboe Quartet in 1935, and principal clarinettist Frederick Thurston the Clarinet Concerto in February 1937. Thurston also gave the first broadcast performance of the Concerto in December of the same year; this was the first of Rawsthorne's works to be broadcast by the orchestra. His Viola Sonata was premiered in a broadcast BBC concert, also in 1937. With fellow BBCSO violinist Kathleen Washbourne, Jessie gave the first performance of the Theme and Variations for Two Violins in January 1938. This was the work that was to propel him to international recognition.

Although Rawsthorne was eight years older than Britten, their careers span roughly the same period of about forty years from 1932, the year of Rawsthorne's String Quartet and Britten's Phantasy String Quintet, until Rawsthorne's death aged 66 in 1971. Britten died, aged 63, in 1976. Both works were withdrawn by their composers. The Britten Quintet was not performed again until June 1983 at the Aldeburgh Festival. The Rawsthorne work was recorded by the Flesch Quartet along with the 1935 Quartet and the three published Quartets (ASV CDCCA 938), but not released because 'space has not permitted this to be included on the CD'.[10]

Britten, despite having well-established contacts with the BBC and music publishing, could not make a living from music in the economically depressed 1930s, and in 1935 applied for a staff job at the BBC. Fortunately for him, they put him in touch with the GPO Film Unit, where he wrote music for documentary films. This would have been at the same time as Rawsthorne was freelancing as a copyist and arranger for the BBC. It seems likely that the two composers first met at the Macnaghten-Lemare concerts and, despite Britten dividing his time between Lowestoft and London, must have got to know each other reasonably well, as Britten's diary for Friday, 21 February 1936 records that after rehearsing Frank Bridge's Piano Trio No. 2 on a bitterly cold morning, he had 'Lunch at nearby Express – and then walk to Alan Rawsthorne's (Belsize Park) to borrow a copy of "L'Isle Joyeuse" which I hope to play on Sunday … '[11] Britten played the trio two days later at Cambridge, with Irene and Bernard Richards, along with, presumably, the Debussy piece borrowed from Rawsthorne. His diary records his difficulties in bringing his performance up to standard at short notice.

At a Lemare concert in February 1936 Gerald Finzi and Rawsthorne had works premiered. Rawsthorne's Overture for Chamber Orchestra (since lost) was his first orchestral work to be played in public. While the critics were lukewarm, Finzi 'was generous about his now-forgotten Overture for Chamber Orchestra, calling it "the most important thing in the concert" in preference to his own Milton Sonnets; after the war he (Rawsthorne) became a regular and respected colleague'.[12]

A number of his other 1930s scores have been lost and a few rediscovered – for instance the Viola Sonata, and more recently the *Chamber Cantata* for voice, string quartet and harpsichord, first performed in February 1937. At its first performance in modern times, at the Royal Northern College of Music in October 2016, it sounded like a valuable addition to the composer's catalogue. A lost work rarely mentioned is his setting of lines from Robert Browning's poem 'Fra Lippo Lippi' for tenor voice and chamber orchestra which was scheduled to be performed by Steuart Wilson and the Lemare Orchestra in February 1935, but replaced by another work at the last minute. A clue to Rawsthorne's interest in this text may be found in a footnote to the poem (about Fra Lippo Lippi, a fifteenth-century Florentine painter-monk): ' … Browning's forceful statement upon the relationship of Art to Life … '[13] Perhaps the poet's views chimed with Rawthorne's at that time. There was an intention to perform the work at some future date, as the following letter from the composer to Iris Lemare, written while on holiday near Vienna in July 1936, shows:

> I saw Maurice Johnstone on Friday at Broadcasting House and had a talk about our scheme and now I have a dreadful feeling that I have let you down [perhaps by agreeing that the work might be performed by someone other than Lemare]. He said that the combination of my work and you and Steuart was such as might not happen in years though each might make an appearance independently at any time … So Johnstone said that I had better send my work to him for a 'once over' anyway, and then we will see what is to be done.[14]

Could this score, like the Viola Sonata, be another manuscript that was not returned and forgotten about? Might the score be filed in the BBC archives?

If the Viola Sonata marked Rawsthorne's emergence as a composer to be reckoned with, the Theme and Variations for Two Violins (1937) and the orchestral Symphonic Studies (1938) are his earliest works to be mentioned by many writers. Their success at International Society for Contemporary Music Festivals, in London and Warsaw respectively, brought Rawsthorne to international attention, enhanced by Gordon Green's 1938 broadcast from Oslo of the piano Bagatelles. These three works, together with the Concerto for Piano, Strings and Percussion, first performed in 1939 (later fully orchestrated) became the foundation of his reputation.

Wartime

Rawsthorne's burgeoning career, like that of so many others, was disrupted by the outbreak of war; but at the age of 34 it was unlikely that he would soon be required for military service, and, as the BBC had evacuated its Music Department

Alan Rawsthorne, 1941. The Terrells' house by the cottage in Chew Magna [Somerset]. Photograph and caption by Mollie Barger

and Symphony Orchestra to Bristol, he joined them there. As well as composing 'He also did volunteer wartime work and lectured at Bristol University, teaching English to foreign students and giving lectures on music appreciation.'[15]

The BBC commissioned a work for an exchange concert with Swiss broadcasting. Rawsthorne set Coleridge's 'Kubla Khan' for soli, chorus, strings and percussion, and it was duly broadcast in June 1940. The full score was lost in a bombing raid on Bristol, and despite the entreaties of the BBC and fellow composers to reconstruct the work, he declined to do so. Nearly sixty years later Edward Harper was commissioned to make an orchestration from the vocal score. Rawsthorne had expanded the orchestration of the First Piano Concerto from strings and percussion to full orchestra, and Harper followed this lead with *Kubla Khan*. This version was first performed at the Bridgewater Hall, Manchester, on 30 March 2008.[16] A recording of the concert was issued, showing that this 15-minute work was deserving of a studio recording. Oxford University Press published a well-produced vocal score in 2007.

In 1941 Rawsthorne was conscripted into the Royal Artillery as a gunner in 'E' Battery, Watson Unit, Shrivenham, Wiltshire – Edmund Rubbra was in 'F' Battery; did they get the chance to try out Rawsthorne's suite 'The Creel' for piano duet, composed in 1940, from which this journal takes its name? Military life with its red tape and rules was never going to be congenial to him, and a posting as a sergeant to the Army Education Corps was probably the best that could be arranged. Even with special leave being granted for composition, life was very restricted, especially when compared to that in the RAF Symphony Orchestra, which recruited many fine players and gave many concerts. 'By far the greatest service, however, was to the musicians themselves, since they were able to pursue their own careers and interests provided that they could arrange their engagements so as not to interfere with their service duties.'[17]

No wonder he felt resentful about this period in his life; most of his composing was incidental music for BBC plays or for film. Apart from the fully orchestrated Piano Concerto first performed by Louis Kentner and the LPO with Rawsthorne conducting in July 1942, the *Street Corner* overture commissioned in 1944 by ENSA (Entertainments National Service Association) but not performed until September 1945, and his last BBC wartime commission, *Cortèges*, performed in July 1945, he had little to show for his wartime efforts.

Fitzrovia

Much has been made of Rawsthorne and Fitzrovia; partly because it is the only group, however informal, with which his name has been linked. 'The name "Fitzrovia" was derived from the Fitzroy Tavern halfway down Charlotte St. (London W1) and denotes a diffuse, subdivided community of Bohemians and would-be Bohemians, whose composition and character changed all the time as members elected themselves or were extruded [*sic* – excluded?].'[18]

Wartime attracted a new generation of Fitzrovians whose world was centred on the BBC. A cross-section would include Dylan Thomas, Louis MacNeice and Stevie Smith as well as Rawsthorne, Constant Lambert, Elizabeth Lutyens, Humphrey Searle, William Alwyn and William Walton.

> The new Fitzrovians drank in small groups, and they were drawn to the same pubs mostly by their employment, actual or potential, in or by the Features and Drama departments of the BBC. The geographical boundaries of 'Fitzrovia' had been extended to take in both Broadcasting House in Portland Place and the Ministry of Information in Bloomsbury, the other great wartime employer of artists and writers ...[19]

Many moved away in 1945 as this temporary wartime employment came to an end. Rawsthorne and MacNeice were among the last of those remaining into the 1950s.

Resuming his career at the age of 40, Rawsthorne had a lot of catching up to do. A string of orchestral and chamber works consolidated his reputation. His music became familiar, perhaps unknowingly, to cinema goers. Among his best-known films are *The Captive Heart*, *Where No Vultures Fly*, and, of course the 1952 film *The Cruel Sea*. His most popular work from this period was the Second Piano Concerto, an Arts Council Commission for the Festival of Britain, which celebrated the centenary of the 1851 Great Exhibition and was a showcase for post-war Britain. In that time of austerity it was spoken of as 'a tonic for the nation'. As well as showing industrial and scientific achievements, young designers were given their heads, resulting in many innovative products, and room was found for whimsy and eccentricity. Rawsthorne reflected that spirit in the Concerto with a cheeky tune in the finale which made it an instant success, and it was soon recorded by Clifford Curzon with the LSO and Sargent; a recording which has rarely been out of the catalogue. When the Concerto was included in a 1984 concert, Ronald Crichton's programme note concluded:

> The finale opens with a rowdy gesture introducing the main rondo theme, whose frank tunefulness distressed some good souls when it was new. Now it sounds like a carnival hit half-remembered by a reveller not quite steady on his feet – the side-slips here are not harmonic but rhythmic – Rawsthorne's tribute, no doubt, to the 1951 festival spirit. But the popular associations do not disguise the finale's adroit completion of a carefully balanced four-movement structure. This is the only one of the four to end loud, with a bang – or is it, rather, a shrug?[20]

In concert programmes Rawsthorne was now being described as one of the 'Big Four' of British music, alongside Britten, Walton and Vaughan Williams. This was not as extravagant a claim then as it would be today. Vaughan Williams was thirty years older than Walton and from an earlier generation; the others had, within fairly recent memory, announced their maturity with a major orchestral work: Walton – 1929 Viola Concerto, Britten – 1937 *Variations on a Theme of Frank Bridge*, and Rawsthorne – 1938 Symphonic Studies. The Rawsthorne has been described as 'one of the most stylish and exuberantly inventive products of British music from the first half of the last century'.[21] Another important composer, ten years older than Walton, was Arthur Bliss, who had been much in vogue in the years after the First World War, but who by the late 1940s was beginning to be eclipsed by Walton, Britten and Rawsthorne. At the time of writing, however, he is obtaining some revenge at the latter's expense: just as Bliss was not mentioned among the 'big four' of whom we have just spoken, so Rawsthorne is nowadays not mentioned among the 'eclipsers' in the Wikipedia article on Bliss.

The piano concertos greatly contributed to Rawsthorne's prominence among British composers; in them Michael Kennedy detected a link to Britten and Walton:

> Like Walton, Rawsthorne imparts a sub-stratum of tension to his music by ambivalent use of keys, evidenced by the flute melody which begins the second concerto. There is a tranquil adagio and a finale in which the Latin-American rondo theme is used as a text for a most witty display. It is an invigorating work, but its predecessor is better. This was composed in 1939 for strings and percussion and revised in 1942 for full orchestra. It is the piano concerto Walton did not write, having the same electric rhythms and alternations of irony and romance. The three movements are called Capriccio, Chaconne and Tarantella, sufficient pointers to the character of the music. The Chaconne is extraordinarily imaginative, one of the most haunting slow movements of the era, with each variation in a different key. In the finale, a song associated with the republicans in the Spanish Civil War is quoted, giving the work, as will be seen, an affinity with Britten's Violin Concerto.[22]

Rawsthorne's 'low point'

The mid 1950s proved to be a watershed in all three composers' careers. In 1954 Walton completed his opera *Troilus and Cressida* upon which he had laboured for six years; Britten completed *The Turn of the Screw* and the third Canticle, a setting of Edith Sitwell's 'Still Falls the Rain', and Rawsthorne his Second String Quartet (as well as *Practical Cats*, a work of rather less weight than the others mentioned here). If all three had stopped composing at the end of that year we would still have most of the works for which they are best remembered. In April 1955 Britten told Edith Sitwell that *The Turn of the Screw* and Canticle III made him feel 'on the threshold of a new musical world' and that he was taking the following winter off to do some deep thinking.[23] William Alwyn, an exact contemporary of Rawsthorne, who had known him at least since the wartime Fitzrovian days, recorded in his diary for 3 December 1955:

> A delightful evening at the IMA (International Musicians' Association) with Richard Farrell. (Alan) Rawsthorne joined us. A pity he has let himself run to seed; he is still an amusing and charming companion, with the bohemian aura of the Café Royal still clinging to him, evoking the shades of Constant Lambert and E. J. (Jack) Moeran; but now he always gives the impression of being slightly fuddled. Alan is a fastidious composer. His output is small compared with Benjamin Britten and minute compared with the prodigal output of Malcom Arnold.[24]

This is a valuable snapshot of Rawsthorne at the low point in his career. He had written little since 1951 (although we might mention the full-length ballet *Madame Chrysanthème*, premiered in 1955; the Second Violin Concerto would follow in 1956 – neither of these, however, was an unqualified success) and Alwyn's frustration that such a gifted composer did not write more is all too apparent in the hyperbolic comparison with Britten and Arnold. In 1956 *The Times* commented 'Rawsthorne in fact is a composer who has shown no developments of style in his twenty-five years of creative work. He found the style he needed and has continued to write in it';[25] a charge which could equally have been levelled at Walton. Rawsthorne was in a stylistic cul-de-sac and he knew it. His second wife Isabel, who as an artist herself would have understood the problems involved, asked him 'why do you keep writing the same piece?'[26] Hugh Wood pinpointed Rawsthorne's difficulty:

> The danger inherent in a style so completely formed and a manner so self-sufficient is obvious: the character of the music may fail to develop and gesture may degenerate into mannerism. Rawsthorne's later music is not free from these dangers, as a comparison of the Bagatelles with the Four Romantic Pieces (1955) will show. But they are offset by a new spareness of texture and seriousness of thought in the Second String Quartet (1954) and renewed vigour in the recent Violin Sonata (1958).[27]

Renewal

The Violin Sonata marked the beginning of his most creative period; also in 1958 he composed his last feature-film score, *Floods of Fear*, followed by music for three documentary films, the last of which was *Messenger of the Mountains* in 1964. He was now free to concentrate on his concert music.

Rawsthorne's 'renewal' as a composer coincided with the beginning of William Glock's time as BBC music controller (1959–72).Glock favoured the avant garde, particularly the second Viennese school and its descendants, over other contemporary music. During this period Rawsthorne fared better than many contemporaries, who felt that they were being cold-shouldered by the BBC. His earlier works were still being performed and featured regularly in Promenade Concerts. In 1962 the BBC commissioned his *Medieval Diptych*, and in 1963 his Quintet for Piano and Wind Instruments, as well as giving the first performance of his large-scale choral work *Carmen Vitale*. His last BBC commissions, in 1968, were the Concerto for Two Pianos and Orchestra and the *Triptych* for Orchestra. I have heard a tape of the 1962 Proms premiere of the *Medieval Diptych* (Peter Glossop, BBCSO / Del Mar) and was impressed by the enthusiastic applause (even taking into account the famed Proms generosity) for both the work and the composer when he took his bow. The work was repeated at the Proms within the next few seasons, conducted by Rawsthorne – his final appearance as a conductor. A Rawsthorne premiere continued to be an eagerly awaited event in the musical calendar, and he had loyal supporters: the Welsh composer Alun Hoddinott (1929–2008), for example, was a friend and advocate, instrumental in commissioning the 1967 piano Ballade and the 1968 Quintet for Piano and Strings for Cardiff.

Britten's Cello Symphony of 1963 was his first purely orchestral work since the *Young Person's Guide to the Orchestra* of 1946. Rawsthorne's Third Symphony and Elegiac Rhapsody, both from 1964, were his most impressive orchestral works since his 'renewal' of 1958. How much each composer had developed can be judged by a comparison of the Britten and Rawsthorne works with Walton's 1963 *Variations on a Theme of Hindemith*, widely regarded as the best of his late orchestral music. The Walton is immediately recognisable as his, whereas Britten and Rawsthorne are exploring new ground, their 'fingerprints' less discernible than before.

Rawsthorne's output is larger than he is often given credit for; more than 150 works written between 1927 and 1971, including lost and unpublished

Rawsthorne at Cheltenham with some of the other composers mentioned in the article. While he and Alun Hoddinott (far left) seem jokily aware of the camera's presence, Arthur Bliss and Elizabeth Lutyens maintain an almost waxwork propriety

works, film scores and incidental music. Of his more than seventy published works, about twenty deserve a place in the repertoire. Many more are well worth hearing – which we can do, since Dutton and Naxos have recorded most of his orchestral and chamber music. As Francis Routh concluded: 'In considering his work as a whole, Rawsthorne does not immediately impress the listener with striking thematic ideas; nor does he indulge in outrageous experiments. The listener is invited to seek for himself, to pay the closest attention. Rawsthorne's art is an intimate one, but his idiom is richly varied, and suitable for all occasions of instrumental music, whether a full-length symphonic work or a small chamber piece. Though forged from traditional materials, it is anything but derivative.'[28]

Notes

[1] Ivan March, Edward Greenfield and Robert Layton, *The Penguin Guide to Compact Discs and DVDs 2005/2006* (London: Penguin, 2005), p. 1069.

[2] *The Creel* 5/3, issue no. 19 (Winter 2005/6), pp. 30–91.

[3] Alan Poulton, ed., *Alan Rawsthorne*, 3 vols. (Kidderminster; Hindhead: Bravura Press, 1984–6), vol. II, pp. 1–2.

[4] For parallels between Rawsthorne and Tippett, see my article in *The Creel* 7/2, issue no.23 (Summer 2012), pp. 10–17 and 39–44.

[5] *The Creel* 4/4, issue no. 16 (2002), p. 40.

[6] Poulton, ed., *Alan Rawsthorne*, vol. III, pp. 68–9.

[7] John McCabe, *Alan Rawsthorne: Portrait of a Composer* (Oxford University Press, 1999), p. 16.

[8] *The Sprat*, February 2001.

[9] 'Recitals of the Week', *The Times*, 8 December 1934; quoted in Poulton, ed., *Alan Rawsthorne*, vol. II, p. 42.

[10] *The Sprat*, December 1996.

[11] *Journeying Boy: The Diaries of the Young Benjamin Britten 1928–1938* (London: Faber and Faber, 2009).

[12] Stephen Banfield, *Gerald Finzi: An English Composer* (London: Faber and Faber, 1997).

[13] *Robert Browning's Poetry*, ed. James F. Loucks and Andrew M. Stauffer. 2nd edn (New York: W. W. Norton, 2007), p. 105, note 1.

[14] Poulton, ed., *Alan Rawsthorne*, vol. II, pp. 25–6.

[15] McCabe, *Alan Rawsthorne*, p. 74.

[16] Edward Harper, 'Some Thoughts on Reconstructing Kubla Khan', *The Creel* 4/3, issue no.15 (Summer 2001), pp. 7–14.

[17] Stephen J. Pettit, *Dennis Brain: A Biography* (London: Robert Hale, 1976), p. 65.

[18] Meirion Harries and Susie Harries, *A Pilgrim Soul: The Life and Works of Elizabeth Lutyens* (London: Michael Joseph, 1989), p. 115.

[19] Ibid., p. 116.

[20] The Great British Music Festival, British Music 1925–1975, Programme Book; 23 October 1983 – 1 April 1984, Royal Festival Hall.

[21] *The Gramophone Classical Good CD, DVD and Download Guide 2007*, ed. James Jolly (London: Gramophone Publications, 2006), p. 811.

[22] Michael Kennedy, 'The Concerto in Britain', in *A Guide to the Concerto*, ed. Robert Layton (Oxford University Press, 1996), p. 345.

[23] Humphrey Carpenter, *Benjamin Britten: A Biography* (London: Faber and Faber, 1992), p. 366.

[24] *Composing in Words: William Alwyn on His Art*, ed. A. Palmer (London: Toccata Press, 2009), p. 133.

[25] *The Times*, 9 September 1956, quoted in *The Creel* 5/3, issue no. 19 (Winter 2005–6), p. 75.

[26] Isabel Rawsthorne interviewed by Tim Mottershead, ibid.

[27] *European Music in the Twentieth Century*, ed. Howard Hartog (London: Penguin Books, 1961), p. 150.

[28] *Contemporary British Music*, ed. Francis Routh (London: Macdonald, 1972), p. 63.

TONY PICKARD is a frequent contributor to *The Creel* who is well versed in matters concerning Rawsthorne's life and works. He first encountered the composer's music on the BBC Third Programme in the early 1960s and joined the (then) Alan Rawsthorne Society in 1996. He is an amateur viola player, enthusiastic about the repertoire and discography of the instrument. He was a career civil servant with the Central Office of Information.

Alan Rawsthorne and the Others: British Symphonists of the 1960s

Keith Warsop

Following the death of Ralph Vaughan Williams in 1958 the musical establishment lighted on a number of composers who were designated as 'greatest living British symphonist', depending on the point of view of the particular 'expert'. At this time Alan Rawsthorne had only his First Symphony of 1950 on the table, so he hardly came into the frame. The veteran Havergal Brian was in the middle of his amazing late creative outburst of symphonic composition, but the BBC had only just started to broadcast some of them, so he was another who did not come into consideration.

At this period, Benjamin Frankel (1906–73) was one of those who were mentioned. His eight symphonies (1958–71) had a special quality which would have endeared him to BBC music boss William Glock, for Frankel used Schoenberg's twelve-tone method – and the BBC did indeed broadcast all of his symphonies around 1970. Unlike Schoenberg, who tended to avoid any chords or themes which might suggest traditional tonality, Frankel embraced them, so that his symphonies hardly sound serial at all, and pose no problems for those who can appreciate Bartók or Hindemith.

Havergal Brian's own champion, Robert Simpson, was himself espoused by those of a pro-tonality mind, while Malcolm Arnold's more populist style gradually became more and more unacceptable to the mainstream critical press, and Edmund Rubbra's supporters could not point to any further symphonies to follow his Seventh of 1957, until the Eighth surfaced in 1968.

I could mention other composers, but this preamble leads up to my main point, which is that we can now look back to what was a golden period for British symphonism, from about 1958 to about 1970 – whatever the stylistic fingerprints of the various composers. Furthermore, present-day listeners can investigate the music themselves, as over the past twenty-five years nearly all of the significant British symphonists of the time have appeared in (usually) good-quality recordings and performances, thanks in the main to Chandos, CPO, Dutton, Hyperion, Lyrita and Naxos.

The following (in alphabetical order) are all well worth hearing: William Alwyn (Lyrita and Naxos); Richard Arnell (Dutton); Malcolm Arnold (Chandos, Naxos and Conifer reissued on Sony); Lennox Berkeley (Lyrita and Chandos); Havergal Brian (mainly Dutton and Naxos); Alan Bush (Classico and Dutton); Francis Chagrin (Naxos); Arnold Cooke (Lyrita); Benjamin Frankel (CPO); Daniel Jones (Lyrita); Andrzej Panufnik (CPO); Rawsthorne (Lyrita and Naxos); Edmund Rubbra (Chandos); Humphrey Searle (CPO); Robert Simpson (Hyperion); and Michael Tippett (Chandos) to which group we must add William Walton, whose Symphony No. 2 appeared in 1960 and is available from a number of labels.

Naturally, some of these wrote symphonies either side of the period 1958–70.

With the passing of time it is now possible to look back at these composers as a group and discern that, whatever the individual differences between them, it is also evident that they share a period style, so that the distance between say, Robert Simpson, Benjamin Frankel and Edmund Rubbra, is not, after all, very great.

There may be a number of reasons for this. One is that they were all writing for performances by the same top British orchestras of the day, the London big five (BBC Symphony, London Philharmonic, London Symphony, Philharmonia and Royal Philharmonic) plus those in Birmingham, Bournemouth, Liverpool and Manchester, so they had in their mind's ear the sound produced by these outstanding orchestral musicians.

A second reason is that they all used the traditional four-movement symphony as a background form, so any changes from this, such as single-movement symphonies, symphonies closing with a slow movement, or linking sections together, are all felt as variations on the underlying shape. Finally, none of these symphonists adopted a radicalist modern style such as that promoted by the BBC in the Glock era, when such composers as Berio, Boulez, Messiaen, Nono and Stockhausen were given the limelight.

How do Rawsthorne's Second and Third symphonies of 1959 and 1964, added to his First, fit into this scenario? He belongs to those composers whose pieces are based on the traditional four-movement symphony including one movement in scherzo style, though his more concise treatment of such things as recapitulations, often greatly transformed or merged with developments and codas, shows that he was not a mere 'filler-in of forms'. In addition the inclusion of a soprano soloist in the finale of the Second Symphony, the 'Pastoral', is an original touch (Mahler was a pioneer, here, of course), avoiding the more standard use of a chorus made by such as Alan Bush ('Byron' Symphony) or Rubbra ('Sinfonia Sacra'). Tippett later picked up this idea in his Third Symphony of 1972.

It might seem that with just three symphonies, Rawsthorne's output rather pales against that of Brian (32), Daniel Jones (13), Rubbra and Simpson (both 11) or Arnold (9), but this is a slightly false reading. Earlier in Rawsthorne's career both the Symphonic Studies (1939) and the Concerto for String Orchestra (1949) provide much symphonic treatment of the material and later both the Theme, Variations and Finale (1967) and *Triptych* (1969) continue this process, so we can actually credit the composer with seven symphonically based works.

It has sometimes been suggested that the concision of these two late works (both at around 15 minutes' playing time) reflects Rawsthorne's health worries which made him unable to buckle down to the task of writing more substantial pieces. But there is another possibility. Havergal Brian's huge pre-war symphonies had contracted dramatically in his old age so that the 100-minute plus 'Gothic' Symphony (1919–27) is strongly contrasted with his 9-minute No. 22 of 1964–5 which he called 'Symphonia Brevis' and, appropriately enough, No. 12 (1957) lasts for 12 minutes, with many of his other late symphonies clocking in at below 20 minutes.

Similarly, the Welsh composer Daniel Jones wrote in 1984 about his concise Twelfth Symphony:

> I don't know whether it's age or ripeness or whatever, but to me most music seems too long these days – my model is Haydn. It's taken me a long time to whittle my length down – my first symphony lasted about an hour – but what I am after is sufficient brevity. The ideal is that the listener will feel that a point has been made and the argument concluded. It can't go on any longer. One should say what one has to say, then shut up.

Even the king of light music, Eric Coates, who certainly did not compose lengthy works, stated in 1951, six years before his death, in writing to conductor Gilbert Vinter about his *Four Centuries* suite (whose four movements total just over 20 minutes):

> I am afraid I find the first and last movements a little too long anyhow and if I had written it now would have cut them both down considerably to bring them into the five-minute limit. Well, as one gets older one becomes less long-winded – in the words of the Immortal Bard: 'Brevity is the soul of wit' – and how right he is.

Edmund Rubbra was another who slimmed down his later symphonies, opting in both his Tenth (1974) and Eleventh (1979) for single-movement structures whose playing time falls just short of 15 minutes each, and so even slightly shorter than Rawsthorne's Theme, Variations and Finale, and the *Triptych*. It can clearly be seen that Rawsthorne fits into this pattern – the search for brevity – and instead of brushing aside his later compositions we should get to know them more closely and discover all the positive features he brought to them.

Finally, Rawsthorne's Third must rank as one of the finest symphonies by this group of composers from the 1960s; so that it is a scandal and a pathetic reflection on London concert promoters and orchestras that, at the time of writing, it still awaits its premiere in the capital.

KEITH WARSOP, a retired journalist who contributed LP reviews to a variety of newspapers in the East and West Midlands, first developed an enthusiasm for Rawsthorne's music in the mid-1960s. He remembers particularly the LP reissue of the performances of the piano concertos by Lympany ad Matthews and the issue by Argo of the Third Symphony coupled with Gerhard's Concerto for Orchestra. An authority on the music of Spohr, he was for some years chairman of the Spohr Society of Great Britain, and wrote liner notes for Spohr recordings issued by Hyperion, ASV and Naxos.

When the Honeymoon Was Over: Jessie's and Alan's First (and Subsequent) Homes

Martin Thacker (with grateful thanks to **Dudley Diaper** and **Michael Burgess**)

> If any of you know cause, or just impediment, why [information in *The Creel* should not be treated as Gospel] ye are to declare it.

The hallowed formula for the calling of banns of marriage in the Church of England is here adapted as a kind of health warning: I reproduced some pictures of the Rawsthorne / Hinchliffe wedding in last year's *Creel*, and – on the authority of an article in an earlier issue – I claimed that the site of the photographs might well be Ormonde Terrace, Primrose Hill. My thinking was that since neither of the couple's families had a base in London, being from Lancashire and Yorkshire respectively, and since Rawsthorne and Jessie were stated in the earlier article to have returned to Ormonde Terrace after the honeymoon, then they would be likely to have had the flat ready beforehand, and used it for the photographs and celebration. In fact, this scenario eventually turned out to be roughly correct – but the address was not! A reader (Penny Berkut) phoned me to say that I was wrong – the environment shown was nothing like Ormonde Terrace. When I came out of my initial denial I found out how to access the London telephone directories for the period, and I asked Dudley Diaper if he would check up on marriages, in case our assertion that Alan and Jessie were married at St Martin in the Fields proved likewise to be innacurate. It did not; we breathe again, and the marriage certificate is reproduced nearby.

Telephone directories and marriage certificate tally: the location of the photographs was actually 26 Upper Gloucester Place NW1; the section of Gloucester Place north of Euston Road, up near Regent's Park. Nowadays it is part of the northbound A41, carrying just a little more traffic than is apparent in the wedding photographs. And if we enormously blow up one of these pictures we can see that, while the upper bellpush still says 'Kerr, 2 rings' (as quoted in last year's *Creel*) the lower one, previously indecipherable, actually says 'Hinchliffe'. (Hereby hangs a parallel but separate tale, in which a 22-year-old woman violinist from Huddersfield moves to London, becomes a founder member of the BBCSO, rents her own flat, with telephone; and, as we shall see, never goes back, except for visits. All this with Queen Victoria a fairly recent memory. It's difficult to decide whether the female emancipation or the tip-top standing orchestra is the bigger change from the nineteenth century.)

Nowadays there is no 'Upper' Gloucester Place; the whole thoroughfare is treated as one, so the present-day address of the former No. 26 is hard to determine. It's clear, however, that the open ground I wrongly took for Primrose Hill is actually Dorset Square. It looks as if we need to be one or two houses north of the corner of the square, on the other side of the road. The generous pavements of 1934 have evidently been narrowed to accommodate the traffic.

The study of Rawsthorne addresses (and, to be clear, I mean official ones listed in reference sources, not any temporary arrangements he may have entered into from time to time)[1] is still somewhat in its infancy. Alongside the slip-up in *The Creel* referred to above, another key text reproduces an image of the Rawsthornes 'outside their London home' (in this case Upper Gloucester Place), while elsewhere referring to 'his garden flat in Belsize Park', and in another place speaking of 'the flat in Osmonde [*recte* Ormonde] Terrace', without providing any sense of sequence or relative duration. This is paralleled by a determined captioning of every photograph of Sudbury Cottage, Little Sampford, as 'Saffron Walden'. The latter is indeed part of the address of the cottage, but it's nine miles away. 'Thaxted' would have been closer, though still wrong.

The search mechanism (not to mention the optical character recognition) on the telephone directories is somewhat difficult to use, especially considering that Jessie and Alan were not the only bearers of their respective names. But from what I have seen I can be fairly confident in stating the following:

1934: Jessie is listed for the first time in the London phone book at 26 Upper Gloucester Place NW1. This is also her address on the marriage certificate; on that certificate Rawsthorne is placed at 42 Craven St WC2, near the Strand and Trafalgar Square. This latter address gave him the residence in the parish that qualified them to be married at St Martin's. Jessie's flat was too far away, in the parish of St Cyprian, Clarence Gate; not such a universally known landmark, though it was one of the premier 'high' anglican churches in London. Rawsthorne was newly in London after finishing his employment at Dartington. Did he choose Craven St so that a prestigious location for the marriage would be available? It seems somewhat out of character ... but, behold, the very next wedding at St Martin's, on the same day, involved the 18-year-old Patricia Kitching, *also* of 42 Craven St, who married Charles Weston (aged 22). How can we account for this double coincidence? In fact, 42 Craven St was a hotel.[2] Rawsthorne might actually have lived there for a time, we don't know; but there was a convention that you only had to leave a suitcase in the room for the requisite number of days, and St Martin's would then recognise you as resident in the parish.

1935: Jessie is still listed in the phone book at 26 Upper Gloucester Place. In other words, Rawsthorne has moved in with her and this is their first married home.

1936–1938 (probably until the end of summer 1939): She and he (separate entries in the same directory) are listed at 31a Belsize Park (the latter is the name of the particular street as well as of the whole district). She continues to use her maiden name, evidently – at least for professional purposes. Their number: PRImrose 0557. Much later, PRI would become 01–722, and later

1934. Marriage solemnized at The Parish Church in the Parish of St Martin in the Fields in the County of London

Columns:— 1 No.	1 When Married.	2 Name and Surname.	3 Age.	4 Condition.	5 Rank or Profession.	6 Residence at the time of Marriage.	7 Father's Name and Surname.	8 Rank or Profession of Father.
215	July 14th 1934	Alan Rawsthorne	29	Bachelor	Musician	42. Craven St. W.C. 2	Hubert Rawsthorne	Doctor
		Jessie May Hinchliffe	26	Spinster		26 Upper Gloucester Place	Herbert Hinchliffe	Headmaster

Married in the Parish Church according to the Rites and Ceremonies of the Established Church by ____ or after Banns by me,

This Marriage was solemnized between us, Alan Rawsthorne. Jessie May Hinchliffe. in the Presence of us, John Gibson. Hubert Rawsthorne. Myra Hinchliffe.

Rawsthorne / Hinchliffe marriage certificate from the Westminster Collection, City of Westminster Archives Centre

still 0207-722. This flat has the distinction of being their main pre-war address, and of being the site of the creation of works which propelled Rawsthorne to national and international notice. The autograph full score of the Clarinet Concerto (1937), for example, bears this address in Rawsthorne's hand. Here he was visited by Britten (see p. 34), and Denis ApIvor, who lived nearby.

1939–1945: no phone books appear to have been produced. This is the period of evacuation, and the 1939 Register (see p. 12 in this issue) lists them at 41 Down Lease, Bristol – probably a temporary lodging (Jessie's description of 'a very large house on the edge of the Downs – glorious country and very fresh and bracing'[3] sounds right for this address) before moving to the oft-mentioned shared accomodation with Sidonie Goossens and Hyam Greenbaum, bombed in 1941. There would be later addresses at Chew Magna, Somerset, and then Bedford, as well as Rawsthorne's temporary army addresses from 1941 to 1945.

1946–1952: the London phone book gives 28 Ormonde Terrace, Primrose Hill, NW8. They must have taken this flat during the war (or perhaps in 1939, keeping it on for the duration) if the Poulton biography is correct that it was damaged by a doodlebug while Jessie was inside it. Rawsthorne is listed at this address as late as 1952, around the time he acquired Sudbury Cottage, Little Sampford, Essex. A date of 1947 is often given for the breakup of the marriage, so that this would appear to have been a very amicable separation indeed.

1957: by this year, Jessie has moved to 66 Ormonde Terrace.

1975: and by this time she has arrived at 62 Regents Park Rd NW1, where she remained.

Notes

[1] One of these is given by Gerard Schurmann in his 'Recollections of a Long Friendship', in Alan Poulton, ed., *Alan Rawsthorne*, 3 vols. (Kidderminster; Hindhead: Bravura, 1984–6), vol. I, p. 4: ' ... a flat on the top floor of the French Club at 4 St. James's Place ...' See also Tim Mottershead, 'Alan Rawsthorne: The Fish with an Ear for Music', *The Creel* 5/3, issue no. 19 (Winter 2005–6), pp. 30–91 at p. 65.

[2] Nowadays, 41 and 42 Craven St are the headquarters of the British Optical Association.

[3] Poulton, ed., *Alan Rawsthorne*, vol. II, p. 29.

Gloucester Place NW1 at Dorset Square - recognisable as the site of the photograph with wedding car in *Creel* 2016. The former 26 Upper Gloucester Place must be slightly this side of the just-visible tree on the far left ...

... perhaps present-day 132? Images © 2017 Google United Kingdom

31 Belsize Park NW3. Entrance on left, next after bicycle and parked car. 31a was the garden (i.e. basement) flat, which currently seems not to exist as a separate address. 32a survives, however - down steps (not visible) to the right of those on the extreme left of the picture. On the other side of the road: St Peter's churchyard. Image © 2017 Google United Kingdom

Ormonde Terrace NW8. The entrance to No. 28 (and to many other flats) is to the right of the fourth parked vehicle from the camera. Note the tendency for all these Rawsthorne dwellings to have open ground opposite: first Dorset Square, then St Peter's churchyard, then Primrose Hill. Image © 2017 Google United Kingdom

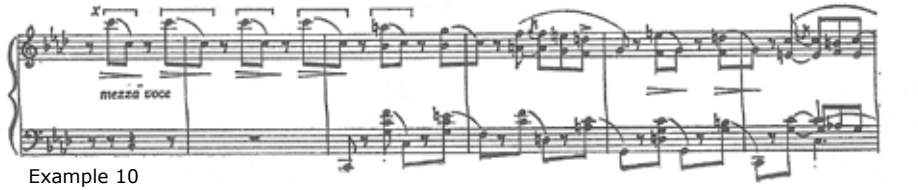
Chopin's Third and Fourth Ballades

Alan Rawsthorne (completing his thoughts on the Ballades, begun in the last issue)

The Third Ballade, in A flat, is perhaps the most light-hearted of the four. More sombre colours are used to introduce the development section, where the material is worked out at some length, but on the whole the mood is cheerful. It was written during 1840–1, when Chopin was living with George Sand in Paris and her country house at Nohant. In the summer of 1840, however, they did not go to the country, as Madame Sand was apparently too hard up; the endless flow of guests at Nohant was expensive to maintain, and the general way of life must have been a drain on her resources. This was a period of Chopin's life when he was reasonably happy and contented. His circumstances were pleasantly organised; he moved in a circle of sympathetic and interesting friends, from whom he could disappear whenever he wanted to without causing affront; in fact, he was living the civilised but not oversophisticated life to which he was most suited. It must have contrasted agreeably with Valldemosa. We might think of this bland composition as a reflection of such felicities, but the Fourth Ballade, written more or less within the same period, proves this to be too naive an assumption. In April 1841, and again in February 1842, Chopin made two of his rare appearances in public. At the second, given with the singer Pauline Viardot, he played the A flat major Ballade. Presumably this was its 'first performance'. In a contemporary account of the occasion, given in Pleyel's Rooms, we read of 'gilded ribbons, soft blue gauzes, strings of trembling pearls, the freshest roses and mignonettes, in a word, a thousand of the prettiest and gayest hues', and though these observations refer to the audience (which must indeed have looked very pretty) the opening strains of the piece might deceive one into taking a similar view of the music. The first theme has elegance, grace and charm. It is suave and altogether delightful. There is no introduction, for an introduction would only detract from the open-eyed frankness with which the melody introduces itself. The last two notes of this theme's first phrase ('x'), a sort of sub-phrase (and thus marked by Chopin), are of great importance in the structure.

Example 9

After the theme has been stated, a bold octave starts the next sentence, but this little phrase of two notes, with its gentle fall of a second, continues to sound. Its persistence gives an unconscious sense of logic to the whole paragraph. Presently we arrive, apparently by accident, at the key of C major and this tonality is insisted upon with curious emphasis in a series of repeated cadences and a quite elaborately ornamented version of the triad. But in half a bar we are back in the home key with the opening melody once again, sounding all the fresher for this capricious switch of tonality. It is a characteristic trick – or perhaps feat of leger-demain is a more respectful phrase. The section comes to a definite conclusion, after some sequential treatment of the scale-passage contained in the melody, and rests for two bars in the home key. But once again, when the tonality has been firmly and decisively established, we are suddenly whisked into F major for the second section, by an ambiguous C.



Example 10

The theme of this section must surely refer, once again, to the two-note figure 'x' of the first theme. I do not think it out of proportion to insist on the importance of this, insignificant though the figure may be in itself. It gives life and unity to the whole composition. To some this sort of thing is merely accidental. They are probably right after their fashion, but we must take careful note of accidents. They only show that Chopin accidentally composed in a coherent and logical way. The theme is given a charmingly lurching effect by having the chords on the off-beats and single notes on the strong ones. It is a device which not every composer can bring off successfully. Brahms has tried it in an intermezzo in E minor,[1] and the result resembles imperfectly cooked porridge. He has marked it 'Grazioso'.

The second strain of this theme, in F minor, builds up the biggest climax we have yet had, and after a fairly systematic passage of relaxation, the first strain returns in the orthodox key, and the section closes in its dominant. So far we have had two units, each complete in itself, and each of the familiar ABA type. They have been stated and to some extent enlarged upon during the statements; there can be no going back at this moment because of their completeness, and so we go forward to what seems like an episode introduced for the sake of contrast. Possibly it could be extensive and lead to a recapitulation. And certainly it can be called an episode, but it is more, for its graceful arabesques serve to introduce the semiquaver movement so necessary to the development which presently starts. This development is one of the most powerful Chopin ever composed. It is mainly to do with the second subject, which rises through the turmoil to heights so imposing that one is quite staggered to look back at its winsome origins. But the first subject also makes an appearance after a time, and the two are worked together in a quite wonderful way. This is true creative craftsmanship. The climax is a restatement of the opening theme as a tremen-

dous tutti, with harmonies laid out over the keyboard that fairly make it glow. This serves Chopin (and us) as quite sufficient recapitulation for the purposes of this piece, because Chopin, as I have said before, recognises form as sensation, not to be calculated in numbers of bars. And surely these triumphant few bars make the point! The composition ends with a reference to the episode, by way of coda, in a blaze of light.

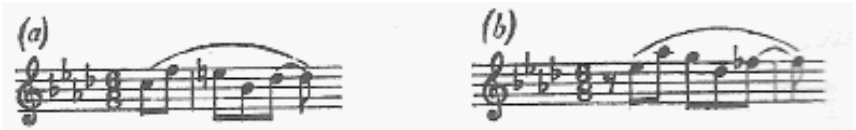
I have found that the beauties of Chopin's Fourth Ballade are sometimes admitted even by those unsympathetic to his work as a whole. To most of his admirers the work is one of the great peaks of his achievement. It was composed in 1842, and published the following year as Op. 52.

The introduction is very striking – just as arresting, with its quiet, persuasive tones, as is that of the First Ballade with its rhetoric. The phrasing of its melody is intriguing.

Example 11

We may think of the phrase beginning at 'x' as the answer to the first phrase in the tenor register. But the third phrase, beginning at 'y', shows us that the second must have already begun before the first has finished. Perhaps it stretches from the start of the piece. This sort of finesse pervades the whole work. What exactly are those hesitant three notes doing, for instance, at the beginning of the main melody when it arrives? The naive listener will accept them as the start of the tune, and Chopin includes them in his phrase-mark. But we learn afterwards that the tune really begins with the last two quavers of this bar, which form an anacrusis. The three-note figure only occurs once again during the piece, after the cadenza in bar 134. And though we are reasonably expecting a four-bar phrase, we find that owing to dallying about in the fourth bar the phrase has rhythmically occupied four and a half bars; the position of the melody, in terms of bar-lines, has become dislocated. Compare Examples 12(a) and (b).

Far from sounding ungainly the effect is completely convincing and an added interest is unconsciously felt by the listener, whose business is not to supply bar-lines, but to respond to the wonderful shape of this most haunting of melodies. Perhaps a hint of it may be found in the first of the 'Trois Nouvelles

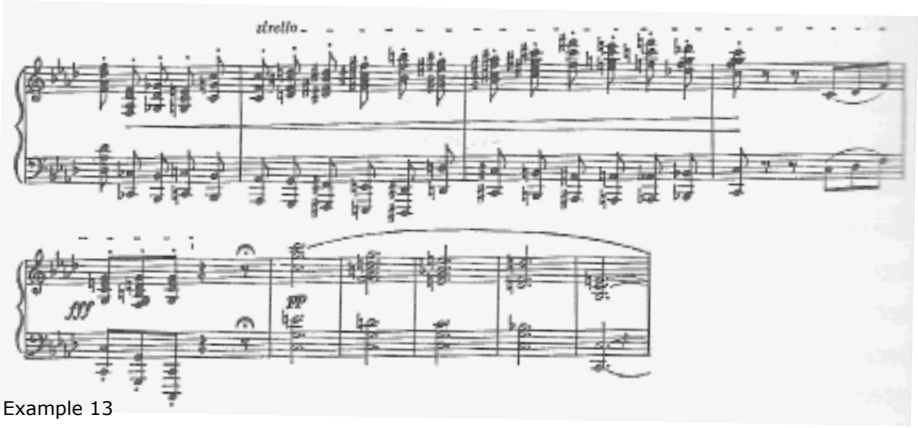


Example 12

Études' of 1839, in the same key, and Liszt has something of the kind in his second Concert Study, also in F minor. Similarity of music in the same key is always a fascinating subject. But nothing quite like this has ever been written. Chopin was a master of such metrical finesse, which seems capricious and ought to sound so, but doesn't. The point of it is that it gives him great freedom in the manipulation of the moments of relaxation or tension in the cadences and modulations with which his phrases open or close. Thus in bar 12 the melody can complete its first sentence on the chord of A flat with leisure to relax. But farther on, at bar 22, there is plenty of time for the modulation which carries it back to the key of F minor. The whole scheme has admirable plasticity, and at the same time is firm and shapely. It was for this purpose, probably, that Beethoven retained the ¾ time signature for his scherzos, though there is only one beat in the bar.

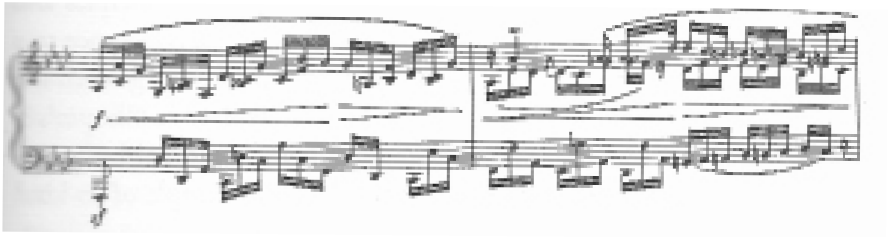
So in this metrical freedom the unhurried melody unwinds itself through a richly varied harmonic terrain, until it arrives at a curiously amorphous passage starting in G flat major (bar 38), which rather suggests the introduction of new material. But figures from the tune intervene, and soon we find ourselves, after a characteristic rhythmic build-up, involved in a counterstatement of the first theme. Fanciful semiquaver decorations accompany this; they build the theme to its first climax, and flow on into a bridge-passage introducing the second idea. Here, having reached his new key of B flat major, Chopin spends four bars in throwing out hints of his next theme in quick modulations – a characteristically wayward proceeding which happily does not take the shine out of the theme proper when it arrives. The beauty of this theme is of a kind no other composer has realised, and although this exquisite tenderness is to be found elsewhere in Chopin's works – in the second theme of the G major Nocturne, Op. 37, No. 2, for example – it seems here to have reached its apotheosis. A modulating passage of great eloquence leads to a development which reintroduces the introduction. This is a very fine stroke. Not only is this reappearance very telling in itself, but Chopin shows us at the same time the relation of the introduction to the main melody, namely the four repeated notes in the figure which features so largely in the latter vis-à-vis the repeated quavers of the introduction. (Another accident!) The music, as it settles into the key of A major, has a new significance. The little cadenza which follows hints that its arpeggios will turn out to be the dominant of D minor, which indeed they do. A very curious passage now begins in this key, in which the first phrase of the melody is treated in canonic imitation – not an aspect of music which one usually associates with Chopin. These devices are helped, and at the same time made more fascinating, by the metrical fluidity we have already referred to. In these circumstances the tune seems to have some difficulty in getting under way, but eventually it succeeds, and we sail off into a richer version of the melody than we have had hitherto. It is a statement embellished with fanciful and luxuriant figuration, but the embroideries are never extravagant and the shapely melodic contours persist until the figures

dissolve into scale-passages accompanying another version of the second theme, this time in D flat. Though its characteristic tender quality never quite deserts it, the theme manages to achieve a strength and grandeur that one would not have suspected, as it builds a great climax finishing with a decisive cadence in the dominant, C, and a fermata. Then follow eight bars of the most breathless suspense in all music – five chords which prepare the way for the coda. Both time and emotion seem to cease.



Example 13

The coda is a perfectly coherent piece of music if it is not reduced to the amorphous mess favoured by some pianists, apparently anxious to reach the conclusion without a major disaster. Perhaps there has been too much loose talk of whirlwinds and the like. Its driving triplets possess irresistible power, and this extraordinary composition finishes with a sense of inevitability as conclusive as the crack of doom.



Example 14

It may seem odd that the most profound of these ballades, the first and fourth, are the ones to have waltz-accompaniments to their main themes. The melody of the fourth certainly demands the most delicate sense of rubato for its execution. In an oration delivered at Lwów in October 1910, Paderewski speaks of 'an inborn national arrhythmia' which he considers a Polish national characteristic, and which, he says, would serve to explain the instability and lack of perseverance with which the Poles are generally credited. 'Not one of those great beings', he goes on, 'to whom providence entrusted the revelation of the Polish soul was able to give such strong expression as Chopin to this arrhythmia. Being poets, they were hampered by limiting precision of thought ... But Chopin was a musician; and music alone, perhaps alone his music, could reveal the fluidity of our feelings, their frequent overflowings towards infinity, their heroic concentrations, their frenzied ecstasies which lightly face the shattering of rocks, their impotent despairs, in which thought darkens, and the very desire of action perishes. This music, tender and tempestuous, tranquil and passionate, heart-reaching, potent, overwhelming: this music which eludes metrical discipline, rejects the fetters of rhythmic rule, and refuses submission to the metronome as if it were the yoke of some hated government: this music bids us hear, know and realise that our nation, our land, the whole of Poland lives, feels and moves in tempo rubato.'[2]

Rather dangerous stuff, this, and such pianists as are still hampered by limiting precision of thought, like the poets, should tread warily when entering the realms of Polish arrhythmia. Playing out of time in a cosmopolitan fashion is no substitute.

It is interesting and even sometimes illuminating to make analogies between Chopin's ballades and sonata form; sometimes the classical rondo might be invoked. But it is quite unnecessary for their understanding. As I have tried to point out, it is always the principles and sensations that constitute the ultimate form, and not the adherence to a preordained pattern of events. For the events must always govern the pattern in which they occur, or the form will be as dead as Chopin's is vibrating with life. And I would suggest that the student should examine every sonata movement as though it were the first example of its kind he has ever seen.

Notes

[1] Op. 116, No. 5.

[2] London 1911, translated by L. Alma Tadema.