

Sir Donald TOVEY

CHAMBER MUSIC, VOLUME TWO VARIATIONS ON A THEME BY GLUCK, OP. 28 PIANO QUINTET IN C MAJOR, OP. 6

Ormesby Ensemble

SIR DONALD TOVEY: CHAMBER MUSIC, VOLUME TWO

by Peter R. Shore

Sir Donald Francis Tovey, the Reid Professor of Music at Edinburgh University from 1914 until his death in 1940, is best remembered as the author of a series of *Essays in Musical Analysis*.¹ But Tovey regarded himself first and foremost as a musician: making music was the real business of his life; everything else was secondary. Yet he was not content to be a pianist, conductor and composer; as an editor, writer, broadcaster, scholar and teacher, his aim was to bring his knowledge and love of music to a much wider audience.

Born on 17 July 1875 at Eton, Tovey was the younger son of the Reverend Duncan Crookes Tovey and his wife, Mary. At the time of Donald's birth, his father was assistant master of classics at Eton College but he eventually became rector of the parish of Worplesdon in Surrey, just north of Guildford. Neither of his parents was musical, but their elder as well as their younger son had, to different degrees, a gift for music. The extent of Tovey's musicality was recognised not by his family but by a Miss Sophie Weisse, a piano teacher and general musical educator who ran 'Northlands', a fashionable school at Englefield Green, near Windsor, and who took him as a pupil when he was five. She became his 'musical mother', and their association was to last for the rest of his life, with Miss Weisse acting first as tutor and then mentor. This relationship was to prove both a blessing and a curse. Although the Reverend Tovey was a master at Eton College, Miss Weisse succeeded in preventing the young Donald from going to school at all. When his father became the Rector of Worplesdon, Donald received private tuition from Miss Weisse, obtaining from one source or another the substance of a proper school education, as well as firstrate pianoforte training from Miss Weisse herself. His education was completed

¹ Six volumes, Oxford University Press, Oxford and London, 1935–39; a supplementary volume appeared after Tovey's death, in 1944.

with an undergraduate career at Balliol College, Oxford, on a scholarship designed to give promising musicians advanced training in the history, philosophy and literature of ancient Greece, particularly the works of Plato, a course known as the *Literae Humaniores* or 'Greats'. Tovey was awarded a third-class degree after a compromise between the historians among the examiners who wanted to give him a fourth-class ranking and the philosophers who considered him a clear first-class candidate.

When Dr Walter Parratt, organist of St George's Chapel at Windsor, gave Tovey then thirteen years old - his first instruction in counterpoint, it became almost instantly obvious that he was a born contrapuntist. Although Tovey was deeply attached to Dr Parratt, he had a lifelong affection and admiration also for his two later teachers: James Higgs, who taught counterpoint at the Royal College of Music, and Sir Hubert Parry, with whom he began to study composition at the age of fourteen. Tovey was considered for the Royal College of Music but the authorities there were faced with a dilemma, as he would have started at a point far beyond that at which most of their students finished their formal musical education. In 1892, for example, at the age of seventeen, he wrote a counterpoint exercise consisting of thirteen bars combining a six-part canon on a cantus firmus with imitative treatment of three other counterpoints, twenty parts in all. This compositional dexterity was combined with an increasingly phenomenal memory, which laid the foundation of the comprehensive knowledge of classical music for which he became famous. He was also distinguishing himself as a performer: in 1891, at Northlands, he had performed such works as the Schubert B flat Trio, violin sonatas by Beethoven and Brahms (then still very much a living composer) and the 'Waldstein' Sonata, and had accompanied Marie Fillinger (a friend of Robert and Clara Schumann) in Schubert and Brahms songs.

Tovey had met the great violinist Joseph Joachim (a personal friend of Brahms, whose Violin Concerto was written for him) on a visit to Eton College when Tovey was only twelve; they were to remain friends until Joachim's death in 1907. Their first public concert together – which took place in the Albert Institute in Windsor on 15 March 1894, three months before Tovey's nineteenth birthday – opened with Brahms' G major Sonata and closed with Beethoven's 'Kreutzer'.

Miss Weisse had many contacts with wealthy and fashionable members of society in the last years of Queen Victoria's reign, which helped to enhance Tovey's career as a concert pianist and composer. She also financed the publication of Tovey's Piano Concerto (which is dedicated to her) in 1903 and much of his chamber music between 1906 and 1913. Tovey made his London debut in 1900 and the next year made London and the Home Counties his base until the First World War. He appeared regularly as a concert pianist and chamber musician, and wrote articles and reviews for *The Times Literary Supplement* – and he composed. Ten years after the Piano Concerto of 1903, Tovey wrote his Symphony in D;² four trios were composed between 1900 and 1910, a piano quartet in 1900, two string quartets in 1909 and a piano quintet in 1900. In 1907 he began work on *The Bride of Dionysus*, an ambitious music drama in three acts based on the Theseus–Ariadne–Phaedra triangle; it was completed in 1918.

Tovey's private life, though, was unhappy. He married in April 1916, but it was apparent very early on in the marriage that his wife suffered from severe psychiatric problems, and the marriage ended in divorce in 1922. The effects of this deteriorating relationship – combined with the drain on his energies of being such a visible and charismatic professor – brought the flow of his compositions to a virtual standstill. The position was not helped by the realisation that, as a composer, he had little in common even with the contemporaries he admired, like Sibelius and Holst, let alone the ones he didn't (the atonal Schoenberg, Stravinsky after *Petrushka*). When in 1925 Tovey married Clara Wallace, who had been a pupil at Miss Weisse's school, Weisse at first made a semblance of approval but remained to the end unreconciled to the marriage – and there were many other instances when Tovey felt that Miss Weisse was interfering in his personal and professional life.

On the strength of his writing, he was invited to contribute to the Eleventh Edition of the *Encyclopaedia Britannica*, obliging with around fifty major entries on musical forms and the achievements of the great composers. His relations with Miss Weisse had become tense and in 1912 his friendship with the cellist Pablo Casals and his wife

² Recorded, with the Prelude to *The Bride of Dionysus*, by George Vass and the Malmö Opera Orchestra on Toccata Classics Tocc 0033.

Guilhermina Suggia went sadly wrong. Suggia was a very attractive young woman as well as a musician, and her husband may have, unjustly, become jealous of the innocent attention shown towards her by Tovey. Tovey could be as hot-tempered as his Spanish friend and the ensuing quarrel, however unfounded, caused a rift between them which lasted until 1925.

In 1914 the Chair of Music in Edinburgh University fell vacant. Tovey successfully applied for the position and was to hold the Reid Professorship from then until his death in 1940. For six months of the year he taught the history of music, analysis, orchestration and interpretation, and organised concerts for the university as well as for the people of Edinburgh in general. For the rest of the year he wrote, edited the musical classics and continued his concert tours. Perhaps his finest achievement in Edinburgh was the formation and maintenance of the Reid Symphony Orchestra. Initially there were 60 players of varying degrees of proficiency (45 of them were professionals). The Reid Orchestra gave its first concert in 1917 in the Usher Hall in Edinburgh, conducted by Tovey, and continued to perform eight concerts a year for the rest of his life - with his characteristic analytical essays in the programme notes. In spite of setbacks in his personal life (the break-up of his first marriage among them),



Tovey with Miss Weisse around 1890

and though he was recurrently troubled with bouts of ill heath because of arthritis and high blood pressure (from which only practical music-making was guaranteed to lift his

spirits), Tovey found himself elevated to the status of Grand Old Man. In 1925 he began his first series of broadcast keyboard talks – but as a broadcaster he was unpredictable: at best, he was natural and fluent; at worst, when he was troubled by time-limits, or by the fact that he could not walk up and down as he discoursed, it was hesitant and discursive; however interesting, it was technically bad broadcasting. In 1929 he was appointed European Music Editor of the next major edition (the fourteenth) of the *Encyclopaedia Britannica*.

He gave several prestigious university lectures, among them eight on Beethoven in Edinburgh in 1922. The ten Cramb Lectures, 'Music in Being', were delivered at Glasgow University in 1925, the year in which he added Boston and New York to his list of recital venues. In 1929 he was at last able to conduct the premiere of The Bride of Dionysus (the décor by Charles Ricketts). In 1931 he published important editions, alone or in collaboration, of Beethoven's Piano Sonatas and Bach's '48' and The Art of Fugue. This last, for which Tovey wrote a conjectural ending to Bach's unfinished concluding Contrapunctus XIV, was a significant factor in persuading the then Master of the King's Musick, Edward Elgar, to recommend him for a knighthood, and he was duly dubbed Sir Donald in 1935. Hubert Foss of Oxford University Press persuaded (and then actively helped) him to collect, edit and revise a large number of his 'essays in musical analysis' so as to make up the famous six-volume set published between 1935 and 1939; 'looking it up in Tovey' became an entertaining and instructive activity all over the music-loving English-speaking world. It was an odd kind of fame for a musician who considered himself first and foremost an active musician and, privately, even more a composer. There was to be one more tour de force with the writing in 1934 of the Cello Concerto,³ conceived for Casals, who was proud to give it its first performance on 22 November 1934.

Tovey died in Edinburgh on 10 July 1940. His death passed largely unnoticed by press and population, whose thoughts were pre-occupied by the turmoil of the Second World War. Fortunately, the memory of Tovey was kept alive not least by the publication in

³ Recorded by Alice Neary, cello, with George Vass conducting the Ulster Orchestra, on Toccata Classics TOCC 0038.

1952 of Mary Grierson's biography, 4 which has been an important source of information for this essay. Tovey's writings then in print were editions (for the Associated Board of the Royal Schools of Music) of Bach's *Wohltemperiertes Klavier* (1924, with Harold Samuel) and of Beethoven's piano sonatas (1918, with Harold Samuel), which had been joined in 1931 by his *A Companion to Beethoven's Pianoforte Sonatas* as well as the *Essays in Musical Analysis* and *A Companion to 'The Art of Fugue'* (1931). His articles from the *Encyclopaedia Britannica* and a book about Beethoven, both edited by Hubert Foss, were published posthumously in 1944 by Oxford University Press. It was to be half a century before the next publication associated with Tovey was to appear: in 2002 Oxford University Press brought out *Donald Francis Tovey: The Classics of Music – Talks, Essays, and Other Writings Previously Uncollected.*

Variations on a Theme by Gluck, Op. 28, for flute and string quartet

Tovey's *Variations on a Theme by Gluck* were premiered in 1913 with Louis Fleury as flautist. The theme, the *sicilienne* for flute and strings from Act 5, scene 2, of *Armide*, had been in Fleury's recital repertoire, and on at least one occasion (in London, on 12 July 1911) he played it at a concert in which Tovey, too, performed. For the premiere in 1913 Tovey, as was his custom, wrote an analysis of the work for inclusion in the programme. Here it is, unchanged apart from the insertion of track numbers.

The most important thing in a set of variations is the theme; and, according to the classical theory of the variation form, if the variations are not to be mere embroidery (which, however, may have high aesthetic value in its place), the tune is rather less important than the bass, and the general shape of its phrases and periods far more important than the mere sum total of tune, bass, and harmonic details. In other words, the theme is conceived as a whole object, of definite size and shape; not as a tune that may be broken up into melodic figures which the variations may develop in any order and at any length they choose. On the contrary, where the deeper structure of the theme is preserved, there is no inherent necessity for a variation to resemble the original melody at all. In the present instance

⁴ Mary Grierson, Donald Francis Tovey: A Biography based on Letters, Oxford University Press, Oxford and London, 1952.

I quote the whole melody, with only an indication of the bass; since even in variations which depend on the bass, it does not follow that the bass should be emphasized, any more than it follows from a painter's knowledge of anatomy that the bones of his figures should be laid bare. At the same time it would be of no use to attempt to follow Gluck's melody as such throughout these variations. I give it here (Ex. 1) because thereby I give it its shape, both in phrasing and in harmony 1. To this shape all the six variations are faithful.

Ex. 1



The first (Ex. 2) 2 retains some semblance to the melody.



The second (Ex. 3) 3 introduces quite new ideas, and (like all subsequent variations) is double – that is to say, it adds or substitutes fresh features in place of the repeats.

Ex. 3



The third variation (*Largetto pesante e maestoso*) (Ex. 4) $\boxed{4}$, is in another time, $\frac{9}{8}$, one bar being equivalent to two of the theme.

Ex. 4



The fourth variation (*Allegro agitato*, $_4^4$ time) (Ex. 5) $\boxed{5}$ is stormy, and its repeats are in a more compressed rhythm (1½ bars = 2 of the theme) than its first statements.

Ex. 5



The fifth variation (*Adagio sostenuto*, $_{4}^{6}$) (Ex. 6) $\boxed{6}$, is in the major. During its course the strings put on sordines, and remain muted till the end of the work.

Ex. 6



In the sixth and last variation (*Andante come Tema, ma un poco meno mosso*) (Ex. 7) [7], the strings take up some ornamentation recently given out by the flute. They work it into a kind of fugue covering the first part of the theme; and, when they begin to repeat it, the flute enters its lowest octave with the entire original tune. A short coda arises from its last phrases, the ornamental figures keeping up a perpetual motion till the whole dies away on a single note.

Andante come Tema, ma poco meno mosso (Flute) p semplice e legato (VI.1)

Piano Quintet in C, Op. 6

Tovey composed his only piano quintet in 1900. He was then at the height of his career as a concert pianist, and the Piano Quintet shows not only his prowess as a performer but also his increasing development as a composer, not least his mastery of counterpoint. The Quintet was first performed at the second of a series of chamber concerts in St James Hall in London on 8 November 1900. The critic from *The Times* was impressed:

A work full of fine ideas carried out with astonishing ability, and yet one in which mere erudition is never allowed to predominate. One or two of the themes strike the hearer as not particularly original, but their working-out is masterly, and so interesting that the circumstance is easily overlooked. [...] It was excellently played by the composer and the Kruse quartet.

Tovey had met Johan Secundus Kruse (1859–1927), the second violinist of the famous Joachim Quartet from 1892 until 1897, and had performed on a number of occasions. Kruse then formed his own string quartet.

Tovey's own programme note on his Piano Quintet ran to twelve pages of cut-anddried analysis with no fewer than 54 musical examples and may have been too much of a stretch for those listeners, critics and public alike, who were not really knowledgeable enough to follow his argument.

The first movement, *Allegro maestoso* [8], is written in sonata form. The exposition opens directly with the first subject (Ex. 8).

Ex. 8



There are two second-subject groups of thematic ideas. The first begins at bar 52 in the key of E minor with the viola (Ex. 9).

Ex. 9



The second group begins at bar 79 in E major with the first violin (Ex. 10).

Ex. 10



The development returns to the original key of C major at bar 125 with the first subject (Ex. 8); then at bar 186 the second-subject group 2 returns but now in the key of E flat major (Ex. 10). The recapitulation begins at bar 218, where the first and second subjects are treated in different keys. The coda begins at bar 382 and is 26 bars in length and reiterates the first subject.

The second movement, a Rondo marked *Allegretto moderato*, *un poco giocoso e teneramente* ('a little gaily and tenderly') opens with the principal theme played on the piano in the key of A flat major (Ex. 11).

Ex. 11



The second theme is introduced by the second violin in the same key of A flat major (Ex. 12) and these themes are developed and embellished.



A third theme, introduced by the first violin at bar 157 in the key of B major (Ex. 13), is then developed and embellished in the same key.

Ex. 13



These themes are reworked and further embelished in different keys until the end of the movement.

The third movement, *Largo appassionato* [10], opens in the key of F minor with a theme played by the viola (Ex. 14). Although the tempo is slow, the movement is full of passion, with the piano playing demisemiquavers and the dynamic range extending from *ppp* to *ff*.

Largo appassionato



The second theme beginning, at bar 33, is in the major key of A flat and is introduced by the piano, followed by the first violin (Ex. 15).

Ex. 15



These themes go through considerable development, from bar 56 until the end of the movement, where the music fades away to *ppp*.

The last movement, *Allegro largamente* 11, opens in the original key of C major and the first theme is introduced on the piano (Ex. 16). It is followed immediately by a second theme in A flat major played by the first violin and cello in octaves and answered by the piano in octaves (Ex. 17).

Ex. 16





These themes are much developed and embellished until the movement and the work as a whole are brought to a grand finish, with running scales in the piano and a crescendo from *mp* to *ff*, finishing on the tonic, C.

Peter R. Shore, born in Eastbourne in 1945, worked for several years as a professional theatre and dance-band musician, bandleader, arranger and orchestrator before joining Decca Records in the export sales department. He emigrated from England to Sweden in 1972, working for Decca's Scandinavian distributor in Stockholm, in the Swedish film and video industry as a sound engineer and editor, and for Ericsson Telecom in technical training. From 2001 he worked as a teacher of music and English but has now retired to concentrate on promoting British music. His paternal grandmother was Donald Francis Tovey's first cousin.

The Ormesby Ensemble – here Sarah Brooke, flute; Olga Dudnik, piano; Robert Atchison, Jacqueline Hartley, violins; Bill Hawkes, viola; David Jones, cello – was founded by Robert Atchison in 2008 as an extension of the work of the London Piano Trio, itself founded by Robert Atchison in 1997. The group specialises in works for all sizes of chamber ensemble, including strings, wind and other instruments, with a preference for highlighting works by less well-known composers. Its reputation for excellence has encouraged composers such as Jed Balsamo and Christopher Weeks to write music exploring these resources. The group has performed at a number of festivals, making frequent appearances at the London International Festival founded by Jyotsna Srikanth. An earlier recording of chamber music by Donald Tovey was released on the Guild label in 2010.

Sarah Brooke has held the Principal Flute positions of the Royal Opera House and Opera North, and the Co-Principal Flute positions at the London Symphony Orchestra and at English National Opera. Her chamber-music activities have included regular appearances with the Soloists of the Orchestra of the Royal Opera House and more recently in the Turner Ensemble during its residency at King's Place. As a soloist she collaborated with pianist Elizabeth Burley to give a Wigmore Hall recital and produce an album celebrating the flute music of twentieth-century British composers.



Olga Dudnik was born in Ukraine into a family of professional musicians and was soon giving concerts in prestigious venues across the Soviet Union. She studied at the Special Music School for Gifted Children in Kiev, where she received the Gold Medal for Excellence and at sixteen she won the Ukraine Piano Competition. In 1990 she continued her studies with Alexander Volkov at the Rubin Academy of Music at Tel Aviv University. In 1993 she moved to London, where she undertook Advanced Solo Studies at the Guildhall School of Music and Drama with James Gibb and was awarded the 'Premier Prix' on completion of the course. Later she continued her studies at the Royal College of Music with Irina Zaritskaya, where she gained an M. Mus. in Advanced Performance. Of her competitions Olga is especially proud of the first prize in the Arianne Katz Competition (1992) and prizes in



the Young Soloist of the Year (1996) and Hong Kong International Piano Competition (1997). She has made both Purcell Room and Wigmore Hall debuts, the latter broadcast live by the BBC, and has appeared with numerous orchestras, including the London Philharmonic at the Queen Elizabeth Hall. Since 1999 she has been on the staff of the Guildhall School and combines a teaching career with a busy schedule of recitals and concerto and ensemble appearances across Europe. Her most recent recordings include William Wallace's Second Piano Concerto (2002) and the Piano Concerto by Christopher Gunning (2003), both released by Albany.

Robert Atchison was born in London and studied music from a young age. His teachers included Sheila Nelson, Bronisław Gimpel at the Royal Northern College of Music, Emanuel Hurwitz at the Royal Academy of Music and Maurice Hasson. In 1982 he was a finalist in the Abbado International Competition in Milan. He has given concerto performances and recitals in the USA, South America, the Far East, France, Germany, Ireland, Italy and Spain. In 1983 he made his concerto debut at the Queen Elizabeth Hall playing the Beethoven Concerto and in 1984 at the Barbican with the Vivaldi Four Seasons. He joined the Philharmonia Orchestra in 1984 and remained there until 1990. From 1991 to 1997 he was a member of all three orchestras of the Academy of St Martin in the Fields, and was co-principal to Iona Brown. In 1993 he was appointed Director of the Spanish Chamber Orchestra, appearing frequently as soloist. Since then he has



had a busy chamber and solo career. As the violinist of the London Piano Trio he tours regularly throughout Europe and the Far East, and current plans include a tour of Canada, China and the United States. He is also in demand as a freelance leader in the United Kingdom and Europe. He is Leader of the Disney production The Lion King at the Lyceum Theatre in London. His recordings include the Telemann Twelve Fantasias and the complete Bach Sonatas and Partitas for the Altamira label. Also on Altamira he has made many recordings with the London Piano Trio, including the complete piano trios of Cecil Armstrong Gibbs, recently released. Recordings now planned include two violin-and-piano recital albums, the two Mendelssohn concertos and the first recordings of works by Henry Cotter Nixon and Imogen Holst. He was Artistic Director (with Renato Bossa) of the International Music Series at the Certosa di Capri, Italy, from 2006 to 2009, and Artistic Director of the Gibbs Music Festival in Danbury, Essex, from 2008 to 2014. In 2013 Guild released the complete works for violin and piano by Armstrong Gibbs, where he was partnered by Olga Dudnik. In 2014, with his own Altamira Chamber Orchestra, he released The Four Seasons by Antonio Vivaldi with Sir Michael Gambon narrating Vivaldi's sonnets, a recording which has received enthusiastic reviews from magazines such as Gramophone. In the summer of 2016 he was made Artistic Director, with Christopher Benham, of the Festival Jalesnes in France.

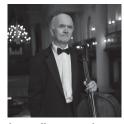
Jacqueline Hartley studied the violin with Howard Davis, Frederick Grinke and Carmel Kaine. After being awarded a scholarship to study at The Royal Academy of Music, Jacqueline formed The Hartley Trio, which made many recordings and performed at the Wigmore Hall and South Bank and toured extensively. Jacqueline was also a member of the London Philharmonic Orchestra, The Academy of St Martin in the Fields and the BBC and City of Birmingham Symphony Orchestras, occasionally appearing as soloist with these orchestras as well as recording with them. She has also played on many soundtracks, including a number of Bond films, Mission Impossible and Into The Woods.

Bill Hawkes was born in Cambridge in 1967 and studied violin and viola at the Royal Academy of Music. His career has been diverse: he has been violist in the Balanescu and Nigel Kennedy Quartets, principal viola of Scottish Opera and the Scottish Ensemble, first violinist in the Michael Nyman Band, leader/soloist in the Gavin Bryars Ensemble and guest principal viola of the London Philharmonic and Philharmonia Orchestras. He has been prolific in the commercial sector over the past 25 years, playing on hundreds of pop, television and film recordings. Bill is also a successful amateur racing cyclist with Thanet Road Club in Kent. where he lives.





David Jones, born in Shrewsbury, began playing the cello as a young boy but was initially drawn to the sciences and read chemistry at Salford University before deciding to pursue a career as a cellist and joining the Royal Northern College of Music, Manchester, under the tutelage of Moray Welsh. During this time he attended master-classes in Perugia under David Geringas and also reached the finals of the LSO Shell strings competition. After completing his degree he held the position of co-principal cello, first in the Hallé and then in the Philharmonia Orchestra, where he played the solos on many recordings, including Tchaikovsky's



Second Piano Concerto with Barry Douglas and the complete Vaughan Williams symphonies conducted by Leonard Slatkin. David was the cellist of the London Ensemble from 1994 to 2005, making frequent trips to Japan. As well as recitals and other chamber-music concerts, his concerto performances include works by Dvořák, Boccherini, Brahms (the Double Concerto) and Tchaikovsky (*Variations on a Rococo Theme*). In 2002 he was appointed associate principal cello of the Royal Opera House Orchestra, Covent Garden, and in spring 2009 he joined the London Piano Trio.

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