

# Sir Donald TOVEY

## CHAMBER MUSIC, VOLUME THREE: THE COMPLETE CELLO SONATAS

SONATA FOR CELLO AND PIANO, OP. 4

SONATA FOR SOLO CELLO, OP. 30

SONATA FOR TWO CELLOS

**BACH ARR. TOVEY**

PRELUDE IN C MINOR

Alice Neary, cello  
Kate Gould, cello  
Gretel Dowdeswell, piano

# SIR DONALD TOVEY: CHAMBER MUSIC, VOLUME THREE: THE COMPLETE CELLO SONATAS

by William Melton

Donald Francis Tovey was born on 17 July 1875 at Eton, where his father, the Reverend Duncan Crookes Tovey, an essayist of note, served as a genial assistant master of classics. Mary, *née* Fison, Donald's mother, was both perceptive and erudite (she could quote long tracts of Dante from memory). Yet neither of Donald's parents was of a musical bent, and the uncanny talent for music that their younger son demonstrated cried out for a mentor. A suitable guide was found in Sophie Weisse, who ran a school for masters' children attended by Donald's older brother, Duncan. Donald insisted on attending singing lessons, as well. 'I remember the first day', Miss Weisse wrote,

he was not yet five years old, and I took him on my knee as I sat at the piano during a singing class. To my astonishment, I found presently that he was singing the *second* part from the music that was on the desk, [...] thenceforth my life was devoted to the care of what was a very delicate child, in whom I recognized an unusual mental endowment and an almost incredible musical talent.<sup>1</sup>

Weisse, well-schooled in the German music literature though not a pianist herself, consulted the pianist-conductor-composer Ludwig Deppe and groomed Tovey into a remarkable pianist. She would remain a supportive, though sometimes stifling, influence throughout his life. Weisse, who went on to open the Northlands School for girls at Englefield Green, augmented her pupil's experience by sending him for further study to the specialists Walter Parratt and James Higgs (counterpoint) and Hubert Parry (composition). Donald also began a lifelong habit of spending his extra

<sup>1</sup> Mary Grierson, *Donald Francis Tovey: A Biography Based on Letters*, Oxford University Press, London, 1952, p. 4.

money on miniature scores, which he would take on train journeys and devour like novels. In the mid-1880s he began giving local concerts and his reputation grew; in 1890 he played at Windsor at the request of Princess Beatrice. Weisse also introduced him to one of the eminent musicians of the era, Joseph Joachim. The dedicatee of Brahms' Violin Concerto in D major, the great violinist forged a strong bond with young Donald through demanding but respectful treatment. The two first performed together in 1894, the same year that Tovey went up to Oxford, and the splendid Joachim Quartet (with Karel Halíř, second violin, Emanuel Wirth, viola, and Robert Hausmann, cello) frequently appeared with the young Tovey on piano. Joachim wrote to Frankfurt's Hoch Conservatoire director Bernhard Scholz:



*Joseph Joachim by Heinrich Varges*

My young friend Francis Tovey has just told me that he is going back to London via Frankfurt. I must introduce you to him, for he is perhaps the most remarkable, most versatile musician I have met in decades. Let him play you the Goldberg Variations, or Beethoven's 33 [Diabelli Variations], or Brahms' Paganini Variations, or ask him about something from the history of music, etc., etc. You will see that knowing him is a great asset! Do not be distracted by an impression that may be off-putting at first.<sup>2</sup>

In 1898 'The Tove' (the nickname given him by classmates at Oxford) completed his formal training, graduating from Balliol College in classical honours. The collection of performers, writers and noteworthy friends who were attracted to the young Tovey was impressive, despite his often uninspiring outward countenance.

Tovey's appearance was remarkable. Of unusual height, with aristocratic features, he would have been a handsome man had it not been that his stooping figure, his clumsy movements and the savage neglect of his clothes, always of the best English material, made him into a grotesque figure. [...] It was his habit, without heeding the money and other things that fell out of his pockets, to strip off his clothes and let them lie on the floor so that in the morning he had only to slip back into them.<sup>3</sup>

Tovey's learned and original mind ('a young man who knew more than his elders and was tactless enough not to conceal the fact'<sup>4</sup>) alienated more than a few of his contemporaries. For E. J. Dent,

Tovey was never conceited at any period of his life, not even in old age; he displayed his learning because it was all so new and exciting to him, and because he wanted his friends to share the joy of it. In this he was like a generous child with a new picture-book or a box of chocolates.<sup>5</sup>

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<sup>2</sup> Letter from Joseph Joachim to Bernhard Scholz, c. end March 1901, in Johannes Joachim and Andreas Moser, *Briefe von und an Joseph Joachim*, Vol. 3 (1869–1907), Julius Bard, Berlin, 1913, p. 499.

<sup>3</sup> Fritz Busch, *Pages from a Musician's Life*, transl. Marjorie Strachey, Hogarth Press, London, 1953, p. 97.

<sup>4</sup> Edward Joseph Dent, 'Donald Tovey', *The Music Review*, Vol. 3, 1942, p. 3.

<sup>5</sup> *Ibid.*

In 1900 Tovey gained an influential backer in Edward Speyer, an important financier but also a promoter of concerts and a former friend of Brahms and Clara Schumann. In the same year Tovey made his true professional debut as pianist and composer (and writer of programme notes) at a series of four chamber-music concerts at St James' Hall in London. These four evenings were signal successes with audiences and critics, and opened up further concerts as far afield as Berlin and Vienna ('Herr Tovey [...] offered an awe-inspiring performance of Bach's so-called Goldberg Variations, though I do not believe that this grandiose work, which lasts more than 50 minutes, belongs in the concert hall'<sup>6</sup>). Chamber music was a speciality, but Tovey also performed his own Piano Concerto in A major, Op. 15, with Henry Wood, and later Hans Richter, on the podium. His distinctly original programme notes led to an invitation to write the main musical articles for the eleventh edition of the *Encyclopædia Britannica*.

Robert Hausmann's death in 1909 occasioned Tovey's *Elegiac Variations* for cello and piano.<sup>7</sup> The same year also saw a first meeting and two concerts with Pablo (Pau) Casals, which aroused mutual admiration and more performances in 1910. A shared evening spent reading through sonatas introduced Tovey to the violinist Adolf Busch, who notified his brother on his return to Germany: 'Wake up, Fritz; I have found a genius in England.'<sup>8</sup> As *Generalmusikdirektor* in Aachen, Fritz Busch went on to conduct the premiere of Tovey's Symphony in D major, Op. 32.<sup>9</sup> A slew of Tovey's chamber music was published by Schott just before the war (thanks to the intercessions of Sophie Weisse). Tovey also forged relationships with the German-Dutch composer Julius Röntgen, as well as Granville Bantock, Emánuel Moór, Adrian Boult, Dame Ethel Smyth, Albert Schweizer, Robert Trevelyan (who would furnish the libretto for Tovey's only opera, *The Bride of Dionysus*<sup>10</sup>), Albert Einstein and Dorothy L. Sayers.

<sup>6</sup> Wilhelm Altmann, 'Kritik: Konzert, Berlin', *Die Musik*, Vol. 1, No. 9, 1 February 1902, p. 832.

<sup>7</sup> Recorded by Alice Neary and Gretel Dowdeswell on Toccata Classics TOCC 0038.

<sup>8</sup> Grierson, *op. cit.*, p. 159.

<sup>9</sup> Recorded by the Malmö Opera Orchestra conducted by George Vass on Toccata Classics TOCC 0033.

<sup>10</sup> The Prelude was likewise recorded by the Malmö Opera Orchestra conducted by George Vass on Toccata Classics TOCC 0033. Other excerpts from the opera were recorded by Sally Silver (soprano), Yvonne Fontane (mezzo-soprano), Robert Johnston (tenor) and Michael Bundy (baritone), with the Belfast Philharmonic Choir and Ulster Orchestra conducted by George Vass, on Dutton Epoch CDLX 7241.

The delicate balance that had existed between pianist and composer ended in July 1914 when Tovey accepted the Reid Chair of Music at Edinburgh University. Assuming teaching duties, at which he excelled, he guided students in interpretation, thorough-bass, score-reading, orchestration, advanced counterpoint, composition, history and analysis. At the same time, he promoted historical concerts, edited musical scores and founded the Reid Orchestra. As a conductor he was insightful, although technically flawed, but he was progressive as an administrator (80 per cent of the first- and second-violin sections during the season 1927–28 were women).<sup>11</sup> For the Reid Concerts he wrote many programme notes that would be later incorporated in six volumes of the excellent *Essays in Musical Analysis*, published by Oxford University Press in 1935–39.

Though Tovey's private existence was plagued by an unhappy first marriage to Margaret, *née* Cameron (their union lasted from 1916 to 1922), his pianistic career continued sporadically in Edinburgh and elsewhere, and included tours to New York ('Listeners felt that an intellectual and masterful mind was holding sway over the key board'<sup>12</sup>), Boston and two summers of giving lectures and performances at The School of the Arts in Santa Barbara, California. With such competition from other quarters, his composing output inevitably slowed, with the notable exceptions of *The Bride of Dionysus*, premiered by The Edinburgh Opera Company in 1929, and the Cello Concerto in C major, Op. 40. The latter was given its successful debut by Casals with the Reid Orchestra conducted by Tovey in 1934.<sup>13</sup> 'Today', said Tovey, who was obviously moved, 'I had what was never granted me before – to be thought of as a composer.'<sup>14</sup>

In 1917 Tovey had been elected a Fellow of the Royal Society of Edinburgh, and he was awarded two honorary degrees in 1920, Master of Music from Birmingham and Doctor of Music from Oxford. He was appointed an honorary member of the venerable

<sup>11</sup> Anon., *The Sixty-Fourth Session of Reid Orchestral Concerts, Reid Symphony Orchestra, Eleventh Season*, Paterson, Edinburgh, 1926, p. 31.

<sup>12</sup> Anon., 'Concerts in New York, January 3: Donald Francis Tovey', *Musical Courier*, Vol. 96, No. 2, 12 January 1928, p. 12.

<sup>13</sup> A 1937 recording of Casals playing the Concerto with the BBC Symphony Orchestra conducted by Sir Adrian Boult was released on Symposium 1114 in 1914. The only modern recording, by Alice Neary and the Ulster Orchestra conducted by George Vass, can be found on Toccata Classics TOCC 0038.

<sup>14</sup> Aylesa Forsee, *Pablo Casals, Cellist for Freedom*, Crowell, New York, 1965, p. 105.

Worshipful Company of Musicians in 1934 and, with the strong recommendation of Edward Elgar, he was knighted by King George V in 1935. As he aged, Tovey suffered from physical complaints aggravated by his ceaseless labours, including arthritis in both hands that would make piano performance impossible. He gave his crowning British Academy Lecture, 'The Main Stream of Music', in 1938, and on 19 May 1939 he stood for the last time at the podium of the Reid Concerts. Two months later Tovey was severely ill (his chronic high blood pressure would indicate heart disease). After a hospital stay, he returned home, but his second wife, Lady Tovey (formerly Clara Wallace), was ailing as well. The declaration of war against Germany came on 3 September 1939. As the government acted to deter inessential travel, Tovey's widely scattered friends were constrained to remain distant during his last months. On 10 July 1940, one week before his 65th birthday, Sir Donald Francis Tovey died in Edinburgh.

A. H. Fox Strangeways expressed the loss felt by the British musical world:

The death of Donald Tovey on July 10th was a severe blow to the higher interests of music in this country. That may seem a strong word for an effect which will be practically felt by few; but estimate of work done may have depth as well as breadth (of its possible length it is not, of course, for contemporaries to speak), and it is difficult to think of anyone in our generation who has based his judgments, particular and general, on such profound knowledge as Tovey did. There are at most two. One was Hubert Parry, for whom writing was a side-issue among other larger matters, and one which gave him much trouble: 'those whose ideas are great and deep-seated', he wrote in his diary, 'cannot hope to say easily what they think'. The other was Henry Hadow, for whom to think a thing and to find the expression for it were one act. To both of these, unlike as they were, Tovey pays a sincere tribute whenever opportunity offers; for their ideal was also his - to get their fellow countrymen to understand that music has as central a place as any art in the life of a man of education, and is worthy of heart-whole devotion.

It was not merely a greater knowledge of music 'than anyone now living', as Joachim said, that Tovey possessed, but a knowledge ready for instant use, stored in a memory that never failed. (That he was known once to forget, in a circle of friends, what came next in

an Intermezzo of Brahms is still treasured as a memorable event.) Minds usually become palimpsests with age, but his retained impressions unconfused by new experience. With each experience he had an art to look at the whole fact, absorb it entire and digest it without hurry or delay. He read prose, he tells us, too fast to make it worth while to skip, and anything rhythmical, therefore, in words or tones he had to read aloud or to play. This shows what he understood by 'knowledge' of music: there is no such knowledge except as based on actually experiencing it, in Clutton Brock's phrase, 'letting it happen to us'.<sup>15</sup>

Perhaps the ultimate tribute was given by Pau Casals when he visited Tovey's flat in Buccleuch Place after the latter's death:

There, sitting at the beautiful old Bösendorfer piano which had come from Northlands, [Casals] played, with that wonderfully expressive touch which he has on the keyboard, the opening of the 'cello concerto – Tovey's last work, dedicated to him. 'He was the greatest musician we had,' he said, with tears standing in his eyes.<sup>16</sup>

Of Tovey the teacher, the composer William Wordsworth recalled his own study days in Edinburgh:

It has never been my good fortune to meet any one whose mind and soul seemed so to dwarf all other views of music and life as did his. [...] to have one's compositions criticized by him was a humiliating process, for his power of concentration, of seeing that every note should be in its right and inevitable place, was simply amazing. He judged everything one brought to him by the highest standard, and not much survived the test. But it was the finest training in self-criticism that it was possible to have.<sup>17</sup>

Another composer and former student, Erik Chisholm, regretted the

great loss to English musical literature that none of the students (including myself) who came week after week to sit at the feet of the Oracle had the common sense to bring

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<sup>15</sup> Arthur Henry Fox Strangeways, 'Donald Francis Tovey', *Music & Letters*, Vol. 21, No. 4, October 1940, p. 305.

<sup>16</sup> Grierson, *ibid.*, p. 162.

<sup>17</sup> William Brocklesby Wordsworth, 'Tovey's Teaching with Three Letters from the Late Sir Donald Tovey', *Music and Letters*, Vol. 22, No. 1, January 1941, p. 60.

a tape recorder into the class, which would have preserved these indescribably brilliant outpourings of our learned and well-beloved Professor. With eyes roving up to the ceiling, pacing up and down like some restless caged animal, heaving and pecking, Tovey would hold forth explaining, demonstrating, digressing, digressing from his digressions, ramming home his arguments with endless musical examples (ne'er a book opened); no let-up until the full cycle of a brilliant rhetorical discourse had finalised and completed itself.<sup>18</sup>

Musicians of successive generations remember Tovey largely for his rigorous essays, the finest of which are keenly perceptive, though 'he never came to regard himself as a scholar, disliked the company of mere musicologists, and looked upon most of his writings as the work of a popularizer'.<sup>19</sup> 'It was his practice', noted George Whatley,

to examine music and to discuss what he found, rather than to deal with abstract theories of what one may be expected to find. This point of view is evident in all of his published writings, and the artistic integrity and contemporary relevance of his work have not diminished in the intervening years since [...].<sup>20</sup>

The American composer Roger Sessions contributed:

The great and almost unique distinction of the late Sir Donald Tovey lay in the fact that he was both a practical musician and a highly articulate writer. He had, in other words – as pianist, conductor, and composer – the experience of music which only those who make it can have, and at the same time the ability to formulate clearly the results of this experience. In consequence his influence was incalculable not only on a whole generation of British musicians but on a large section of the English-speaking musical public, which, through Tovey's *Essays in Musical Analysis* and other writings, has come into contact with the thoughts on music of one who contributed in an outstanding manner to its making.

<sup>18</sup> Erik Chisholm, 'Men and Music' ([www.erikchisholm.com/menandmusic/tovey.php](http://www.erikchisholm.com/menandmusic/tovey.php)).

<sup>19</sup> Michael Tilmouth, 'Tovey, Sir Donald (Francis)', *The New Grove Dictionary of Music and Musicians*, ed. Stanley Sadie, Vol. 19, Macmillan, London, 1980, p. 103.

<sup>20</sup> George Larry Whatley, *Donald Francis Tovey and his Contributions to the Study of Harmony and Counterpoint*, dissertation, Indiana University, 1974, p. 440.

And the thoughts themselves are of no superficial kind. Tovey was a man of genuinely deep culture who possessed to a high degree the gift of relating ideas gained from widely different sources; and his writing on music is constantly enriched and often verified by allusions, generally apposite, to literary and other matters.<sup>21</sup>

In addition to the six-volume *Essays in Musical Analysis* and his articles for the *Encyclopædia Britannica*, Tovey's publications include companions to Beethoven's piano sonatas and Bach's *Art of the Fugue* (both 1931), and the books *Beethoven* (1944), *A Musician Talks* (1941) and *The Classics of Music* (2002). Tovey also collaborated on musical editions of Beethoven's cello sonatas (1918) and piano sonatas (1931) and the 48 Preludes and Fugues from Bach's *Das wohltemperierte Klavier* (1924).

Even more than Stanford and Parry, whose success as teachers sometimes overshadowed their compositional gifts, it has been observed that as a composer, 'he never developed any real individuality. [...] Tovey was defeated by his own too varied talents'.<sup>22</sup> When Casals was asked how Tovey the composer could be so underrated, he replied that the public saw Tovey primarily as a writer on music; 'one must be aware that in England most artists acquire a label which it is extremely difficult to get rid of'.<sup>23</sup> In addition, the German commentator Hans Redlich noted that Tovey had

developed in an enclave of the German conception of music into a witty, form-perfect Brahms epigone, at a time when England was beginning to find a native tone of its musical language with Elgar, Vaughan Williams and Holst. The apparent lack of success of the initially highly regarded composer Tovey [...] is the natural consequence of his creative isolation from the contemporary music of his native soil.<sup>24</sup>

<sup>21</sup> Roger Sessions, 'Sir Donald Tovey: Musical Articles from the Encyclopedia Britannica, Essays in Musical Analysis, Oxford', *The Kenyon Review*, Vol. 7. No. 3, Summer 1945, p. 504.

<sup>22</sup> Michael Tilmouth, 'Tovey, Sir Donald (Francis)', *The New Grove Dictionary of Music and Musicians*, ed. Stanley Sadie and John Tyrrell, Vol. 25, Macmillan, London, 2001, p. 665.

<sup>23</sup> J. Ma. Corredor, *Conversations with Casals*, transl. André Mangeot, Dutton, New York, 1957, p. 103.

<sup>24</sup> Hans Ferdinand Redlich, 'Tovey, (Sir) Donald Francis', *Die Musik in Geschichte und Gegenwart*, ed. Friedrich Blume, Vol. 13, Bärenreiter, Kassel, 1989, p. 600.

Jürgen Schaarwächter concurred, but with a difference: 'he remains strongly connected to the musical language of Brahms and Bruch, but not without developing impressive emotional depth and intensity of his own.'<sup>25</sup> Yet even such a 'nativist' as Sir Granville Bantock argued in favour of Tovey's compositions:

Tovey's music is distinguished by high and serious aims. Though he shows marked regard for classic form and style, he is also an earnest and successful explorer of new forms, abundant evidence of which fact is to be found in his chamber music. He is most happy in his treatment of the variation form. His pianoforte and string quartets have not yet received the attention they deserve. Personal acquaintance with the music is desirable; and actual performance leads to a deeper appreciation of the composer's style and method, revealing a sympathetic and highly organized imagination that disdains any sensational appeal. Those who seek for truth and beauty in musical expression will find much reward in a close study of his work.<sup>26</sup>

Edward Dent testified that Tovey never 'thrust his own compositions on unwilling listeners; and I never heard him complain that they were neglected and all too seldom performed.'<sup>27</sup> Henry Coles felt that Tovey 'produced works which musicians respect but the public is apt to ignore to its own loss.'<sup>28</sup> Ernest Walker hoped that British listeners would eventually rate Tovey's music 'as highly as I do. Conservative in idiom, no doubt; but why not? It is his own idiom, and of no composer can we ask more.'<sup>29</sup> Pau Casals stated simply, 'Tovey was a wonderful composer.'<sup>30</sup>

In September 1912 Tovey had taken a holiday at Pau Casals' summer house at Playa de San Salvador, roughly 40 miles southwest of Barcelona. He spent his days working on

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<sup>25</sup> Jürgen Schaarwächter, 'Tovey, Sir Donald (Francis)', *Die Musik in Geschichte und Gegenwart*, ed. Ludwig Finscher, Personenteil, Vol. 16, Bärenreiter, Kassel, 2006, p. 980.

<sup>26</sup> Granville Bantock, quoted in William Saunders, 'The Late Sir Donald F. Tovey', *The Music Review*, Vol. 1, 1940, p. 307.

<sup>27</sup> *Loc. cit.*, pp. 3-4.

<sup>28</sup> Henry C. Coles, 'Tovey, (Sir) Donald (Francis)', *Grove's Dictionary of Music and Musicians*, ed. Eric Blom, Vol. 8, St. Martin's Press, New York, 1966, p. 524.

<sup>29</sup> Ernest Walker, 'Sir Donald F. Tovey', *Radio Times*, Vol. 699, 19 February 1937, p. 12.

<sup>30</sup> Pablo Casals and Albert Kahn (eds.), *Joys and Sorrows*, Simon and Schuster, New York, 1970, p. 215.

the opera *The Bride of Dionysus* and swimming in the Mediterranean. Casals' biographer Robert Baldock described the scene:

'In spite of the heat,' Tovey reported, 'I never felt better in my life.' In fact Tovey threw himself into leisure much as he threw himself into everything – with excessive fervour: 'I am getting quite my top speed,' he wrote to Weisse, 'without the slightest fatigue.' For several intensive hours each day he worked on his opera [...] and in breaks from composition he imposed vigorous routines and activities on the other members of the party.<sup>31</sup>

The housemates who were subject to Tovey's management of their leisure time included Enrique Granados and his wife, the pianist Mieczysław Horszowski and the Portuguese cellist Guilhermina Suggia. Suggia, aged 24 (and thus eleven years Casals' junior), had studied with him since 1906 and began to appear in concerts as Mme. P. Casals-Suggia, although the two were not legally married. Tovey had a shock after news arrived that his father had been taken ill (the Rev. Tovey died on 29 September), and a serious dispute arose between Tovey and Casals, the exact cause of which is disputed by biographers. As Tovey's biographer Mary Grierson speculated,

Guilhermina Suggia was then a young woman at the height of her beauty [...]. Maybe she played with fire – maybe the hot Mediterranean summer had a disturbing effect on the finely balanced emotional poise of three ultra-sensitive people – and certainly Tovey showed that unhappy lack of *Menschenkenntnis* which Miss Weisse had long deplored. He idealized his friends – the more so when they were musicians of such calibre, and was deeply disturbed when he found that human nature has a distressing way of conflicting with the ideal. Moreover, he lost his sense of proportion more disastrously than a more worldly person might have done [...]. That there was no *real* cause for a quarrel did not make it any the less bitter, and the Englishman had quite as hot a temper as the Spaniard.<sup>32</sup>

Casals' rift with Suggia soon became permanent, but in the mid-1920s he and Tovey reconciled. Their warm relationship resumed and the two performed multiple times together in Edinburgh, including the first performance of Tovey's Cello Concerto in

<sup>31</sup> Robert Baldock, *Pablo Casals*, Gollancz, London, 1992/Northeastern University Press, Boston, 1993, p. 97.

<sup>32</sup> Grierson, *op. cit.*, p. 161.

1934, when Tovey engineered the honorary doctorate awarded to Casals by Edinburgh University.

At one point during that fateful holiday Tovey produced a **Sonata for Two Cellos in G major** (1912) as a gift for Casals and Suggia. Robert Baldock, perhaps allowing the atmosphere of contention to overshadow the work, wrote that Tovey ‘presented his hosts with an embarrassingly contrived Sonata for Two Cellos – based on a Catalan folk melody – which they were constrained to try out.’<sup>33</sup> The Casals biographer Herbert Kirk kept the background drama from tarnishing the new composition.

Casals, who like other of Tovey’s close friends felt a tremendous sincerity in the man, also reveled in the musical give and take when Tovey was among the company – from fresh insights into Bach to Tovey’s identification in the music of the Catalan sardana the full embryo of the symphonic form. (Early in his visit to San Salvador Tovey wrote one of his most ingratiating string works, a sonata for two cellos, the second movement of which is a variation on a Catalan folk song.)<sup>34</sup>

Schott & Co. of London published a limited edition of the Sonata in 1914.<sup>35</sup> Casals avoided the piece, understandably identifying it with his split from Suggia and long separation from Tovey (for the same reason, the Sonata makes no appearance in Casals’ memoirs). At roughly 25 minutes in length, Tovey’s Sonata is a more substantial work than most of its eighteenth- and nineteenth-century predecessors, and invites investigation by cellists. The *Allegro* first movement begins 1 with a long-breathed *legato* theme in the first cello, *piano* in G major, underpinned by the second cello with widely spaced arpeggios delineating the harmony. A further episode introduces running quavers under the melody, and the closing of the opening section adds sequences in dotted figures. In a contrasting theme in D minor/major, its *forte* start quieting to *pp dolce*, the cellists trade the relaxed melody with each bar, and the episode is

<sup>33</sup> Baldock, *op. cit.*, p. 97.

<sup>34</sup> Herbert L. Kirk, *Pablo Casals: A Biography*, Holt, Rinehart and Winston, New York, 1974, p. 289.

<sup>35</sup> The current WorldCat catalogue lists just one exemplar of the 1914 Schott print edition still available, a copy in the Edinburgh University Library that was presumably Tovey’s own ([www.worldcat.org/title/sonata/oclc/1113849336&referer=brief\\_results](http://www.worldcat.org/title/sonata/oclc/1113849336&referer=brief_results)). A newer edition was issued by Schott after Tovey’s death, but it also had limited circulation.

extended with the increased motion of semiquavers. The end of the exposition features fragments of the first theme through a modulatory lens, before a repeat sign directs the cellists back to the beginning of the exposition. After this repeat, an F major seventh chord begins the development with the first theme, which is further fragmented when the frequency of modulation is increased. There are passing visits to E flat major and B flat major, the latter incorporating the dotted figures at the end of the first theme, and a second-cello recapitulation of the G major opening theme is supported by semiquaver accompaniment in the first cello. The contrasting theme is delivered *espressivo* before continuous semiquavers, *staccato e leggieramente*, precede another return of the opening in C/G major. A coda begins *forte* with accents, adding semiquavers and a *crescendo* to *ff* before a D major dominant to fermata-held G major tonic chord brings the close. Though the *Allegro* often conjures Brahms in richness and detail, Tovey also offers original, agile and unfettered moments in a nod to its instrumentation.

There is no pause before the beginning of the *Andante maestoso e sostenuto* that follows [2]. In tribute to Casals, the second movement is a setting of variations on the Catalan folksong, ‘El Mariner’/‘Lo Mariner’ (‘The Sailor’). Dating from the sixteenth or seventeenth century, this ballad of unrequited love sprawls to 33 verses (in the form of a dialogue between a young woman and a sailor), with seven syllables to each line.

A la bora de al mar  
n’hi ha una donzella  
que en brodava un mo-  
cador, quès per la reyna.

By the sea  
there is a maiden  
who was embroidering a handkerchief,  
which is for the queen.

**ANDANTINO** *molto espressivo*

À la bo-ra de la

*cresc.*

mar s'hi ha u -- na don --

*dim.* *poco cresc.*

se -- lla s'hi ha u -- na don --

se -- lla Que bro -- da van me -- ca --

*cresc.*

-- der qu'es per la

*dim.* *poco cresc.* *dim.*

rey -- na qu'es per la rey -- na

'Lo Mariner', from *Cansons de la Terra*. Cants populars Catalans  
by Francesch Pelay Briz y Candi, Ferrando Roca, Barcelona, 1866, p. 115

Two bars of D major act as an introduction to the initial twelve-bar *largamente* statement in the first cello of the ‘Lo Mariner’ melody. The sub-phrases of four bars each are answered by two bars of *con sordino* imitation in the second cello. After the next two-bar prelude, the tune is taken up by the second cello. The short variations that follow employ syncopated double stops in the first cello and semiquavers in the second, a minimalist version in F and C major in crochets and bandying bars of quavers, and a fertile harmonic tour through E major, A major, F major, A flat major and C minor. At *Assai tranquillo* the tonic D major is reached for a last truncated statement as coda, ending with *morendo* in G major and a fermata-held D unison. There is again no lull before the beginning of the finale, *Fuga. Allegretto giocoso* [3], an extended fugue which begins with the entry of the second cello *mf-p* in G major ( $\frac{2}{4}$ ) and largely in quaver motion. The first cello enters after eleven bars, duplicating the subject a fifth above. With the exposition of the fugue subject then complete, the parts proceed in alternate entries set in disparate but related keys. Tovey, unafraid of the weight of contrapuntal tradition, yet possessed of his own natural buoyancy, enlivens the texture with dynamics from *pp* to *fff* and four changes between duple and triple metre. A slow turn towards the tonic occurs on the penultimate page, a memorable sequence with otherworldly flageolets (harmonics) in the first cello above furiously animated (yet *pp*) semiquavers in the second cello. A coda in  $\frac{2}{4}$  and the final appearance of the subject in the last eighteen bars, *sempre ff*, precede four dominant-tonic cadences with double and triple stops and a concluding fermata on unison G.

Composed in 1887, when Tovey was twelve or thirteen, his arrangement of Bach’s **Prelude in C minor, BWV999** [4] was discovered among Tovey’s papers by Peter Shore, a former Decca executive and Tovey family relation – and the initiator of the series of Tovey recordings on Toccata Classics. What Bach had composed as an improvisatory, chordal piece for lute (though it has often been transcribed for keyboard) is lent an extra dimension with the addition of the cello, creating a rich, melismatic arioso.

The **Sonata for Solo Cello in D major, Op. 30**, was published in 1913 by Schott & Co. of London and dedicated to the English cellist Percy Frederick Such, a student of

Robert Hausmann. The piece was set in historical context by the cellist-scholar Thomas Loewenheim:

Tovey may have heard some of the concert-etudes and other works for solo cello<sup>36</sup> in performance, in England or on his many tours of the Continent. He may also have been familiar with the large-scale and enormously difficult solo works that began to be published in the early years of the twentieth century, incorporating or based on Baroque forms; for example, Louis Abbiate, *Préludes et fugues* (1901); Julius Klengel, *Kaprixe in Form einer Chacone unter freier Benutzung eines Themas von Robert Schumann*, Op. 43 (1905); and Emánuel Moór, *Suite*, Op. 122 (1912). An equally likely influence on him writing a solo cello work himself was his deep affection for the compositions of Johann Sebastian Bach.<sup>37</sup>

Bach's Cello Suites were, of course, a major inspiration. Tovey had written in October 1897, 'I investigate the Bach Suites every day after lunch. [...] The suites are among the most astounding art products in the world.'<sup>38</sup> Sometime in 1911–13 Tovey's unique solo sonata – nearly 35 minutes in length – was composed. The first movement, marked *Allegro con brio ma largamente*<sup>39</sup> [5], begins with an imposing, widely spread motif in D major and common time in which Loewenheim discerns 'clear Brahmsian echoes'.<sup>40</sup> A *piano dolce* secondary theme in the dominant A major is assembled of quavers that are 'highly reminiscent of the opening motif from Bach's Cello Suite No. 1 in G major, BWV 1007'.<sup>41</sup> A bridge passage with an oft-refreshed pedal A leads, *espressivo decrescendo*,

<sup>36</sup> Relevant nineteenth-century cellist-composers included Karl Davidoff, Friedrich Dotzauer, Auguste Franchomme, Georg Goltermann, Friedrich Grützmacher, David Popper and Adrien-François Servais.

<sup>37</sup> Thomas Loewenheim, 'Elephant or Relevant?' *Reviving Sir Donald Francis Tovey's Sonata for Violoncello Solo, Op. 30: A Critical Performance Edition Made in Light of an In-Depth Study of the Historical Background and a Musical Analysis*, DMA Dissertation, Indiana University, 2007, pp. 28 and 30.

<sup>38</sup> Grierson, *op. cit.*, p. 67.

<sup>39</sup> Tovey would later pencil parentheses around the 'ma largamente' of the tempo indication, underlining that 'The brio is the point. The largamente takes care of itself. I had better not have marked it. But I won't contradict it as it's there' (Loewenheim, *op. cit.*, p. 55). *Ibid.*, p. 33.

<sup>40</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 55.

to the end of the exposition.<sup>42</sup> The development deals swiftly with the opening material in the first ten bars and passes to the secondary theme in E flat minor, before progressing through C minor/major. Recapitulation occurs *ff* and in the tonic D major, and the secondary material arrives in D major *pp* before a D pedal prepares the way for a lengthy coda. Here D major is not firmly established until quite late, but after two dominant-seventh cadences the quavers of the secondary theme reiterate the tonic through the last four bars.

In the central *Allegretto, un poco agitato, ma sempre piano* [6], *con sordino* semiquavers outline the opening *piano* in A minor and  $\frac{6}{8}$  metre that Loewenheim describes as ‘a beautiful misty atmosphere, straight from [Tovey’s] English pastoral heritage and perhaps his training under Parry.’<sup>43</sup> This segment, which like each that follows is tripartite, visits additional regions in F major and A minor. A contrasting trio section, *arco* in D minor (*sempre tranquillo ma espressivo e cantabile*) and with a developmental central episode, leads to a return of the opening theme in A major, now alternating between *arco* and *pizzicato*. A *codetta* further cements A minor, and dotted minims precede the two final *pizzicato ppp* cadences.

The finale is a stately Passacaglia [7], its theme beginning with minims in descending thirds, *Andante*. As Loewenheim explains:

Finishing the sonata with a passacaglia brings us back to both the famous Chaconne from Bach’s second Violin Partita in D minor, BWV 1004, which Tovey often heard Joachim perform in their joint recitals, and the last movement of Brahms’ Fourth Symphony, in which the great Romantic composer obviously pays homage to Bach as well.<sup>44</sup>

In this roughly first third of the movement, in D major, Variations 1–11 follow.

From one variation to the next, Tovey builds up tension by decreasing the macrorhythm steadily, from half notes, to quarter notes, quarter-note triplets, eighth notes, and so forth,

<sup>42</sup> Loewenheim notes that the transitions from the exposition to the development and the recapitulation to the coda both overlap one another by three bars (*ibid.*, p. 36).

<sup>43</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 39.

<sup>44</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 30.

as well as increasing the cello compass for each variation, arriving at a climax in variation eight ([bars] 65–72). From there he gradually slows down and decreases the dynamic, while introducing several new melodic variations [...].<sup>45</sup>

After the last variation, based on the second movement of Haydn's String Quartet, Op. 76, No. 3, a variant on the opening theme re-establishes the ascendancy of D major. An intricate middle section in D minor follows, housing Variations 12–20 (variously polyphonic, in triplets, in continuous trills and, with Nos. 18–20, cadenza-like). The final section, again in D major, unveils a new theme (which also contains the opening theme) in Variation 21. Nos. 22–27 follow, slowly increasing in dynamics, tempo and complexity (eventually using triple and quadruple stops) before the coda and Variations 28–31 are reached. No. 28 (*Allegro* in  $\frac{3}{4}$  metre) begins with the original passacaglia theme in diminution, minims now shortened to crochets. The final section is a free working of the passacaglia theme, increasing the tempo (exchanging quavers for semiquavers) while reaffirming D major. The directions *con brio* and *ff* are added in the drive to the last cadences and a final, fermata-held bar.

The **Sonata for Cello and Piano in F major, Op. 4**, was completed in the summer of 1900 while Tovey was on extended holiday across Britain. His widely separated destinations included

Oxford in general, Durness, the Firth of Forth, the delightfully quiet and gay and intellectual Cornishes and their absurd live seagulls and cormorants, and the pompous Chester and the sea fog with the glassy water, and the clear ring of cold gray sky with a perspective of cold gray clouds seven layers deep, have suddenly turned into an extremely gay and jovial 'cello sonata in F major [...]. The Mus.Bac. exercise will just go to the devil.<sup>46</sup>

The cello sonata that resulted from the holiday, which would not be published by Schott until 1910, was dedicated to his friends Hubert and Gerald Warre Cornish (whose father Dr Warre Cornish was the Vice-Provost of Eton and whose house had functioned as a second home to the young Tovey). Though Tovey and Robert Hausmann gave concerts

<sup>45</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 45.

<sup>46</sup> Grierson, *op. cit.*, p. 45.

together at the time of composition, it was Percy Such who was particularly associated with the work:

Mr. Donald Tovey, at his chamber concert at the Æolian Hall, June 22nd, produced a sonata of his own in F for cello and piano [...] which appealed to the listener by reason of emotional and imaginative qualities not always appreciable in Mr. Tovey's compositions, scholarly and intellectual though they be. The cello part, played by Mr. Percy Such, was at times slightly overweighted by the piano.<sup>47</sup>

Ernest Walker laconically described the sonata as 'an expressive slow movement with two livelyish neighbours'.<sup>48</sup>

The great model for the first movement, *Allegrissimo* [8], is undeniable, and Brahms is conjured with a rigour that might have satisfied the older composer himself (who was known to tease his disciple Heinrich von Herzogenberg for his lack of the same). The opening offers noble F major chords in the piano, *forte* in common time, dotted and with *sforzando* accent on the second beat, that soon dissolve into *legato* chromatics. In bar 8 the cello launches into its own singing theme, which also stresses the second beat of the bar. A genial, ineffably Brahmsian contrasting theme appears in the cello, *giojoso* in the dominant key of C major, to be followed by a rollicking cadential *staccato assai* that leads to a reprise of the second theme, the texture now thickened with triplet motion in the piano left hand. After an *ff* lunge to A flat major, the sinuous quavers that mark the close of the exposition move, through deft modulations, into the development. A dotted fragment of the opening appears in F major in fugal imitation and quickly veers into faraway tonal regions, including B sharp minor and a return of the secondary material in F minor. A four-bar sustained trill on C in the piano left hand and a *crescendo* in triplet semiquavers lead to the recapitulation. Here the return of the dotted opening theme in F major is brief, and tonal wandering takes the material to C minor and D major. The secondary theme is also given in fragmented fashion in D flat major before it appears sweetly in the cello, *lusingando* ('cajoling') above quaver triplets, *piano* and

<sup>47</sup> Anon., 'Musical Notes: London', *Monthly Musical Record*, Vol. 34, No. 404, 1 August 1904, p. 157.

<sup>48</sup> In Walter Willson Cobbett (ed.), *Cobbett's Cyclopedic Survey of Chamber Music*, Vol. 2, Oxford University Press, London, 1963, p. 516.

*cantabile*. A climax in D flat major segues to the meandering quavers of the conclusion of the exposition before an extended period in F major is reached at *sempre più dolce e tranquillo*, the note values slowing to semibreves in the piano. A codetta at *a tempo* on the main theme is furnished with a triplet-quaver accompaniment. There is a surprising sidestep to D major before the movement closes on five dominant-tonic cadences that reaffirm the predominance of F major, in *fortissimo*. Throughout the movement Tovey's secure grasp of sonata form is on display – a striking mastery at the age of 25 – as is his elegantly idiomatic writing for both instruments.

The middle movement, *Andante cantabile* [9], begins with a solemn theme in D flat major and  $\frac{6}{8}$  metre. A lamenting second theme is cast in an unsettled parallel minor (notated in the enharmonic C sharp) and is repeated in E major. C sharp minor at *pesante* leads to the return of the opening theme in D flat major, accentuated by syncopations in the piano. This return reveals the presence of song-form construction, and after brief asides in F sharp minor, the last eight bars benefit from the stability of D flat major, *ppp*. The thematic and harmonic resemblances to Brahms are not matters of pure imitation; indeed, Tovey is on occasion more modern in his tonal choices. His commitment to the relevance of the formal structure, however, remains constant.

The finale, *Vivace giocoso ma non presto* [10], is fashioned in another Brahmsian construct, the hybrid sonata-rondo form employed by Brahms in the finale of his Sonata for Violin and Piano in D minor, Op. 108.<sup>49</sup> The opening presents a resolute, *pesante* cello line supported by offbeat *staccato* quavers from the piano in a fluid A minor-major mix. A contrasting lyrical theme arrives with a notated key-change to a chromatically active D major, the mixed modes joined by jubilant calls in the cello and rustic open fifths in the piano. The opening reappears in A minor before a fugal episode and advanced modulation reveal a second contrasting sphere with a lengthy development that makes use of both previous themes. Featured are a fifteen-bar C sharp pedal trill in the piano left hand, a new *piano, cantabile* theme, and excursions to varied major keys (among

<sup>49</sup> Sonata-rondo form reprises the initial theme in the tonic key at the close of both exposition and recapitulation, and a third, often developmental section forms the central element of the structure. Still, the opening theme alternates with the other episodes in typical rondo manner.

them B flat, G, C and F). A return of the opening in diminution and A minor, still more development and a shift to F major all precede a more settled region in A minor/C major. A *Vivace* codetta quickens the *forte pesante* quavers to *ff* semiquavers and the movement closes on two F major chords. As a London critic noted in 1910, 'Mr. Tovey's own Sonata in F is a bright, fast and vigorous piece of work, showing moments of strong construction throughout.'<sup>50</sup>

*William Melton is the author of Humperdinck: A Life of the Composer of Hänsel und Gretel (Tocatta Press, London, 2020) and The Wagner Tuba: A History (edition ebenos, Aachen, 2008), and was a contributor to The Cambridge Wagner Encyclopedia (2013). He did postgraduate studies in music history at the University of California at Los Angeles before a four-decade career as a horn-player with the Sinfonie Orchester Aachen (Aix-la-Chapelle). Further writings include articles about lesser-known Romantics like Felix Draeseke, Friedrich Gernsheim, Henri Kling and Friedrich Klose, and he has researched and edited the scores of the 'Forgotten Romantics' series for the publisher edition ebenos.*

**Alice Neary** enjoys a varied performing career as a chamber musician, soloist and as principal cellist of the BBC National Orchestra of Wales. She is familiar to listeners of BBC Radio 3, and her festival performances include the BBC Proms chamber series, Marlboro (USA), Bath International, Santa Fe (USA) and Lofoten. Recent concerto performances include the Honegger and Cheryl Frances-Hoad concertos with BBC NOW.

She was a member of the Gould Piano Trio from 2001 until 2018, with career highlights in that role including performances of the complete piano trios of Beethoven, Schubert and Dvořák at the Wigmore Hall, the commissioning of new works from Sir James MacMillan and Mark Simpson, frequent tours of the USA and over 25 album releases.

She has appeared as guest cellist with numerous groups, among them the Nash Ensemble, Ensemble 360 and the Endellion, Elias, Bingham and Heath Quartets. She collaborates with



<sup>50</sup> Anon., 'Tovey-Casals Concert', *The Cremona*, Vol. 4, No. 43, 17 June 1910, p. 71.

the pianists Benjamin Frith, Robin Green, Viv McLean and Daniel Tong. Frequent visits to the International Musicians Seminar at Prussia Cove provide ongoing inspiration. In January 2022 she took part in a USA tour with Marlboro Music Festival musicians, which included performances at Carnegie Hall and the Philadelphia Chamber Music Society. Future plans include Strauss' *Don Quixote* with the BBC National Orchestra of Wales and a concert at the Wigmore Hall to mark the 50th anniversary of the International Musicians Seminar.

Alice Neary studied with Ralph Kirshbaum at the Royal Northern College of Music and, as a Fulbright scholar, with Timothy Eddy at Stonybrook, USA. As a teacher, she has been a tutor in cello at the RNCM and Royal College of Music. She is now based in her home town of Cardiff at the Royal Welsh College of Music and Drama, where she was awarded a Fellowship in 2015. She is also a mentor for ChamberStudio. She and her husband, David Adams, founded the Penarth Chamber Music Festival in 2014. She plays a 1710 cello by Alessandro Gagliano.

**Kate Gould** gained an entrance scholarship to the Royal Academy of Music in 1990. She went on to study in Berlin at the Hochschule der Künste with Wolfgang Boettcher, having won many prizes during her studies and becoming a member of the European Union Youth Orchestra.

In 1991 she formed the Leopold String Trio, which went on to sustain a distinguished international career until their final concert in 2012 at the Barbican Centre, London, performing Tippett's Triple Concerto with the BBC Symphony Orchestra, broadcast live on BBC Radio 3. They recorded for Hyperion Records and soon became BBC New Generation Artists and toured international concert-halls on the ECHO Rising Stars scheme. She used their Borletti-Buitoni Trust Award to curate a prestigious three-year series of twelve concerts at the Wigmore Hall and the Trio went on to win the Royal Philharmonic Society Award for Chamber Music.

In addition to the Winchester Chamber Music Festival, where her piano trio, the London Bridge Trio, is resident, Kate Gould is also co-artistic director of the Ironstone Chamber Music Festival in north Oxfordshire. In recent years, she has performed at the Aldeburgh Festival,



Roman River Festival and Festival de los Siete Lagos (Argentina), and the North York Moors, Peasmarsh, Penarth, Corbridge, Wye Valley and Sacconi Folkestone chamber-music festivals.

In 2019 she performed at Jack Liebeck's series at the Laeiszhalle, Hamburg, and took part in an Offenbach theatre project on gut strings in Cologne. In February 2020, she performed a recital of Beethoven cello sonatas with Martin Roscoe at The Castle Hotel, Taunton, for Martin Randell, and repeated the programme in 2022 with Daniel Tong at Queen's University, Belfast.

She became a member of the Chamber Orchestra of Europe in 2000, and in 2022 she will perform a solo-cello piece as part of the CEO concert at the Würzburg Mozartfest: Isabel Mundry's *Le Corps des cordes*. She has an increasingly busy schedule, playing as guest principal cellist of most British orchestras, as well as the period-style ensembles Orchestre Révolutionnaire et Romantique, Orchestra of the Age of Enlightenment and Les Siècles in France.

She has taught at the Royal College of Music and Royal Welsh College of Music and Drama and coached on the 'Cadenza' (London), Bergamo (Italy) and Lake District summer-music courses. She currently coaches the cello section of the National Youth Orchestra of Wales.

**Gretel Dowdeswell** has appeared at the major chamber-music venues in the UK and has broadcast frequently for BBC Radio 3. Duo appearances include recitals with Ralph Kirshbaum, Pekka Kuusisto, Alice Neary, Miklós Perényi, Thomas Riebl and Jian Wang. As Associate Artist at Brunel University, London, she completed a Beethoven piano-sonata cycle and collaborated with the University in a three-year project featuring the keyboard works of J. S. Bach. In 2016 she founded the Rural Music Initiative, bringing workshops, tuition and performing opportunities to children in Suffolk. She works regularly at Snape Maltings, Suffolk, with Aldeburgh Voices and Aldeburgh Young Musicians.

She studied with Hamish Milne at the Royal Academy of Music and with András Schiff and György Kurtág at the International Musicians' Seminar, where she is now resident pianist and a regular guest at the annual Open Chamber Music seminar.





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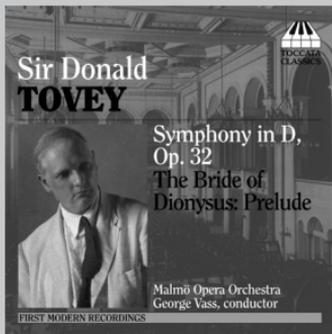
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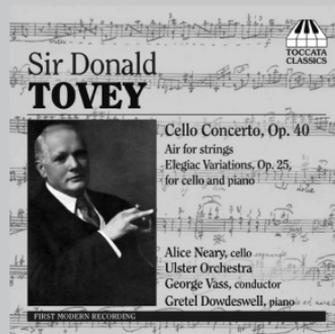
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## SIR DONALD TOVEY Chamber Music, Volume Three

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<b>Sonata for Two Cellos in G major (1912)</b>	<b>24:23</b>
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<b>J. S. Bach arr. Tovey (1887)*</b>	
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