

COMPACT
disc
DIGITAL AUDIO
PACO 138

Walton

Troilus and Cressida

Pristine
XR

Walton's *Troilus and Cressida*, which reflects the composer's great love of romantic Italian opera, was the closest to his heart of all his works. It had the longest period of gestation - over seven years - but it was to be beset with problems. The première of Britten's *Peter Grimes* at Sadler's Wells in June 1945 had revitalised hopes for British opera. Walton felt keenly the rivalry of fellow composers and John Ireland wrote to a friend: 'Walton was there, with Lady Wimborne. He must have felt rather a draught, I fancy!' The spur had come from the BBC, its Director of Music writing informally to Walton on 8 February 1947: 'The BBC has decided to commission an opera and would like you to compose it. I do not at all know how you are placed as regards time, but I very much hope that you will be interested in the idea.' The fee was fixed at £500 - with £175 for the libretto.

The first performance of *Troilus and Cressida*, which was broadcast, took place at the Royal Opera House on 3 December 1954. Even once the composition had been completed, the opera seemed plagued with problems. There were initial doubts as to who would be designer and director - ultimately Hugh Casson and George Divine, after such names as Henry Moore, Isobel Lambert and Laurence Olivier had been considered. Then there were casting difficulties, and the greatest disappointment was with the role of Cressida which Walton had written with Walter Legge's wife Elisabeth Schwarzkopf in mind. After problems in fixing dates she eventually declined with varying excuses that her English was not good enough and 'the text was Ivor Novello-ish and in English'. How magnificently she would have taken on that role can be surmised from the extracts she recorded in 1955 with Walton conducting [*Pristine PASC280*]. Her replacement, the Hungarian soprano Magda Laszlo, could speak little English and had to be coached. Contrary to what one might have expected, the rather camp role of Pandarus, with its occasional Brittenesque phrasing and suggestions of falsetto, was not written with Peter Pears in mind though he proved admirable in the part. Parry Jones was the first suggestion (just as Nicolai Gedda had been for *Troilus*). Perhaps for Pears's sake the lines: 'Come, Troilus, confide in me. I have much experience in these things . . . What do you know of love?' were removed soon after the first performance.

The first orchestral rehearsal nearly had to be abandoned because the parts were littered with so many inaccuracies that had not been properly checked by the publishers. Sargent, who had little experience in the opera pit, clearly did not know the score well enough and for reasons of vanity would not wear glasses, making reading the manuscript score even more difficult. He also refused to beat when the orchestra was not playing, leaving whole ensembles to fend for themselves without setting a tempo. However, whatever problems there were in rehearsal, the first night was counted a success and while the work had a mixed reception in the musical journals the Daily Express critic called it 'the proudest hour of British music since the première of Benjamin Britten's *Peter Grimes* nine years ago'.

Stephen Lloyd, author of *William Walton: Muse of Fire* (Boydell 2001). *Full and extensive notes can be found online*

Producer's Note

Drawn from unbroadcast 33rpm acetate disc recordings, this release offers quite reasonable sound quality for a live performance, though some surface noise and a less than totally "hi-fi" frequency range puts it at lower than state-of-the-art for the mid-fifties. That said it's significantly better than the AM radio broadcast that has surfaced elsewhere from the same series of performances. Our dating of 21 December 1954 is based on detective work centred around the use of stand-in Barbara Howitt for Monica Sinclair in the role of Evadne. **Andrew Rose**

walton

troilus and cressida

the original covent garden production, 1954

richard lewis, troilus
magda laszlo, cressida
frederick dalberg, calcas
geraint evans, antenor
peter pears, pandarus
forbes robinson, horaste
barbara howitt, evadne
otakar krauss, diomede

covent garden opera chorus & orchestra
sir malcolm sargent, conductor



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- CD 1
- 1 BBC Introduction (1:51)
 - 2 **TROILUS & CRESSIDA Act 1 - Virgin of Troas** (8:29)
 - 3 Back to your hovels (2:16)
 - 4 Is Cressida a slave? (4:17)
 - 5 Morning and evening (5:23)
 - 6 Forgive me Pandarus (3:54)
 - 7 Ask me no more (1:59)
 - 8 My father! My father! (3:11)
 - 9 Slowly it all comes back (3:25)
 - 10 Why niece in tears (1:58)
 - 11 Sweet sir, there's something on your mind (6:39)
 - 12 BBC Introduction to Act 2 (1:14)
 - 13 **Act 2, Scene 1 - Does talking put you off** (7:13)
 - 14 How can I sleep (1:28)
 - 15 At the haunted end of the day (2:17)
 - 16 Not so loud! don't be alarmed (5:42)
- CD 2
- 1 If one last doubt, one lurking (4:23)
 - 2 New life, new love! (4:04)
 - 3 Now close your eyes (1:08)
 - 4 **Scene 2 - The Storm** (2:45)
 - 5 From isle to isle (2:39)
 - 6 Who would go drumming (2:27)
 - 7 My name is Diomedes (4:59)
 - 8 This thing shall be revoked (6:36)
 - 9 BBC Introduction to Act 3 (1:08)
 - 10 **Act 3 - All's well!** (7:02)
 - 11 No answering sign (3:50)
 - 12 Cressid, daughter, why so heavy-hearted? (3:37)
 - 13 You gods, you deathless gods (2:11)
 - 14 Proud, wondrous Cressida (4:51)
 - 15 Take it, take it (3:45)
 - 16 Evadne! Evande! (2:18)
 - 17 Troilus! Dear Cressid, I rejoice (3:44)
 - 18 What is this sudden alarm? (4:46)
 - 19 Sextet (2:35)
 - 20 She has brought shame on Argus (5:35)
 - 21 Diomedes! Diomedes! (1:54)
 - 22 BBC Conclusion and credits (0:55)



XR remastering by Andrew Rose

Cover artwork based on a photograph of the death of Troilus (Act 3) from the Covent Garden production

CAST

Richard Lewis, Troilus
Magda Laszlo, Cressida
Frederick Dalberg, Calkas
Geraint Evans, Antenor
Peter Pears, Pandarus
Forbes Robinson, Horaste
Barbara Howitt, Evadne
Otakar Krauss, Diomedes

Covent Garden Opera Chorus & Orchestra
Sir Malcolm Sargent, conductor

Recorded 21 December 1954,
Covent Garden, London

Total duration: 2hr 18:27

Full cast and notes can be found online

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