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Sir William Walton

Faade, Overtures, Wise Virgins

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Sir William Turner Walton OM (29 March 1902 – 8 March 1983) was an English composer. During a sixty-year career, he wrote music in several classical genres and styles, from film scores to opera. His best-known works include Faade – An Entertainment, the cantata Belshazzar's Feast and his First Symphony.

Born in Lancashire, the son of a musician, Walton was a chorister and then an undergraduate at Christ Church, Oxford. On leaving the university, he was taken up by the literary Sitwell siblings, who provided him with a home and a cultural education. His earliest work of note was a collaboration with Edith Sitwell, Faade, which at first brought him notoriety as a modernist, but later became a popular ballet score. Other early works that made his name were a Viola Concerto and Belshazzar's Feast.

In middle age, Walton left Britain and set up home with his young wife on the Italian island of Ischia. By this time, he had ceased to be regarded as a modernist, and some of his compositions of the 1950s were criticised as old-fashioned. His only full-length opera, Troilus and Cressida, was among the works to be so labelled and has made little impact in opera houses. In his last years, his works came back into critical fashion; his later compositions, dismissed by critics at the time of their premieres, were revalued and regarded alongside his earlier works.

Walton, who was largely self-taught as a composer, was a slow worker, painstakingly perfectionist, and his complete body of work across his long career is not large. His most popular compositions continue to be frequently performed in the 21st century, and by 2010 all his works were recorded for CD.

Notes from Wikipedia

Recording and restoration notes

The 1954 Decca recording of Walton's Faade is perhaps the closest thing we have to an authentic performance, not least thanks to the recitals from the author of the poems, Dame Edith Sitwell. Although Walton, an eternal fiddler and reviser of his works, was later to add further to his Faade numbers, the version here is the definitive version published with Sitwell in 1951, and unaltered until after her death.

If Decca's recording sounds just a little dim and dusty some 57 years later, this was easily lifted by an XR remastering which brings a new clarity and directness to these performances - they really burst into life!

The Boult recordings here are among the finest I've heard from the mono era - full-bodied, rich and deep (and I'm in danger here of describing a bottle of fine wine!), they're also bursting with vivacity and possess a fabulously clear top end. Pristine's 32-bit XR remastering has worked here on further definition of the fine inner detail, while leaving the overall impact of the original largely intact and unchanged.

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FULL PROGRAMME NOTES CAN BE FOUND ONLINE AT WWW.PRISTINECLASSICAL.COM

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WALTON

FAADE

EDITH SITWELL

PETER PEARS

ENGLISH OPERA GROUP ENSEMBLE

ANTHONY COLLINS

PORTSMOUTH POINT

SIESTA

SCAPINO

THE WISE VIRGINS

LONDON PHILHARMONIC ORCHESTRA

SIR ADRIAN BOULT

STUDIO RECORDINGS, 1954

Sir William WALTON

Facade

- 1 Fanfare (0:31)
- 2 1. Hornpipe (1:12)
- 3 2. En famille (3:04)
- 4 3. Mariner man (0:43)
- 5 4. Long steel grass (2:01)
- 6 5. Through gilded trellises (2:21)
- 7 6. Tango-Pasodoble (1:51)
- 8 7. Lullaby for Jumbo (1:31)
- 9 8. Black Mrs. Behemoth (0:58)
- 10 9. Tarantella (1:16)
- 11 10. A man from a far countree (1:25)
- 12 11. By the lake (1:43)
- 13 12. Country dance (1:48)
- 14 13. Polka (1:26)
- 15 14. Four in the morning (2:38)
- 16 15. Something lies beyond the scene (1:00)
- 17 16. Valse (3:04)
- 18 17. Jodelling song (2:30)
- 19 18. Scotch Rhapsody (1:15)
- 20 19. Popular song (1:57)
- 21 20. Fox-trot 'Old Sir Faulk' (2:00)
- 22 21. Sir Beelzebub (1:13)