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TIPPETT *Symphony No. 2 (world première)* BLISS *conducts Bliss*

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"At the premiere, broadcast live on BBC radio, the performance broke down a few minutes into the first movement and had to be restarted. Boulton apologised to the audience for the error: "*Entirely my mistake, ladies and gentlemen.*" It later transpired that the orchestra's leader, Paul Beard, had altered the bowing of the string parts to make them more readable, and so public criticism for the collapse was transferred to him and his modifications (critics included the conductor John Barbirolli, himself a string player, who approved the original notation of the parts and blamed Beard's rewrites for obliterating the natural off-beat phrasing that Tippett had carefully notated). Recent scholarship, however, indicates that the cause of the collapse lay rather with the flute getting lost and beginning a solo passage bar too early; the woodwind section en masse proceeded to get a bar ahead of the strings. When the horns (who were taking their cues from the woodwind parts) joined in the melee by coming in a bar too early also, Boulton took the decision to halt the performance. Up to the point of halting, the string section had been serenely playing on, ignoring the confusion in the rest of the orchestra; they were still together, and had arrived at the correct point. Ironically, therefore (in view of the opprobrium attached to Beard), the blame for the collapse may indeed have lain with Boulton—it is unclear if the flute player took an independent decision to enter early or was mistakenly cued in by Boulton. In a further irony (in view of the insistence of Barbirolli and Tippett that the original notation was preferable, and that rescoring would cause more problems than it would solve), the flute part (which had NOT been altered) was at the point of error written in the complex manner deemed by Beard as unnecessarily complicated for the violins.

Relations between Tippett and the BBC were already strained, due to Tippett's missing the requested 1957 deadline, and his subsequent tardiness in meeting the new February 1958 deadline (he only informed them of having completed the work in November 1957, and the parts required printing and proofing before the piece could be rehearsed by the orchestra). The misfortunes of the premiere soured them further: the BBC Controller of Music insisted that the orchestra could not be blamed for the performance, since it was "*equal to all reasonable demands*" made by composers, implying that Tippett's demands were not reasonable; stung by this, Tippett made no attempt to defend the BBCSO from criticism, later using his autobiography to blame all involved except himself and his own writing (he had, he said, urged to Boulton and Beard that the editorial changes would do more harm than good—"and so it turned out"). He broke a scheduled commitment to conduct the piece himself at the BBC Proms later that year, with Boulton instead taking the engagement. In response, the BBC invited him to the rehearsals of that performance, on condition that he did not approach within 40 feet of the platform, a condition which required him to shout out for Boulton's attention and summon him over whenever he wanted to make a point to the conductor.

Despite the blame which still generally attaches to Beard for the mistake (e.g., in a 2005 British Library exhibition), orchestras since have routinely played the piece using his editorial changes."

Wikipedia, notes on Tippett's *Symphony No. 2*

Producer's Note

These two recordings, both in excellent sound quality, are presented here in their entirety as broadcast in 1956 and 1958 on BBC radio. As far as I can ascertain, they have never been issued before. I have included the unfortunate "false start" referred to in the notes above, with Boulton abandoning the first movement after about two minutes and twenty seconds, for historical interest. Likewise the somewhat stilted discussions between presenter Ronald Fletcher and Sir Arthur Bliss (and Lady Bliss) will I'm sure be of interest to many. In both cases good live sound has, with XR remastering, produced superb orchestral tone throughout. I've been able to compensate for a handful of very short tape dropouts in the Tippett and eliminate a number of coughs from a generally quiet Royal Festival Hall audience. The Bliss was clearly recorded in front of a studio audience, who refrain from applause and remain exceptionally quiet. The venue is not known at this stage but would most likely have been one of a handful of larger BBC radio studios equipped to accommodate a full orchestra and small audience. Capstan pitch correction software was able to correct a major drop in pitch over the duration of the Tippett of around eight percent, something that would have been impossible as recently as five years ago.

Andrew Rose

TIPPETT

SYMPHONY NO. 2 WORLD PREMIÈRE

BBC Symphony Orchestra

conductor Sir Adrian Boult

BLISS

 conducts Bliss

Welcome The Queen

March from 'Things to Come'

Checkmate (excerpts)

Theme and Cadenza for violin and orchestra

Overture: Edinburgh

BBC Concert Orchestra

Alfredo Campoli, violin

Previously unreleased live recordings, 1956 & 1958

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