

WALTON FACADE

&
Lecocq: *Manzelle Angot*

A conductor of wide-ranging authority in a varied repertory, Anatole Fistoulari is nonetheless remembered most vividly for the several ballet recordings he made for Mercury Records. The son of a noted conductor, Fistoulari maintained that he had made his debut before an orchestra at the age of seven. Beyond dispute is his broad exposure to Russian musical culture, thoroughly absorbed before he concentrated his activities in Europe and, eventually England, where he became a British subject. Fistoulari learned most of his technique and repertory from his father, Gregor Fistoulari, a student of Nikolay Rimsky-Korsakov and Anton Rubinstein. The work allegedly conducted by the seven-year-old Anatole in Kiev was Tchaikovsky's "Pathétique" Symphony, a score of enormous depth and complexity. In 1933, he leapt into the fire with an appointment to conduct for the Grand Opéra Russe in Paris, a company assembled around the famously temperamental Russian bass baritone Feodor Chaliapin. His ability to maintain a cool head there led to a 1938 engagement with Leonid Masim's Ballets Russes; with that company, Fistoulari toured the Continent and America, where his work was much admired. During WWII, Fistoulari became a popular figure in England. After conducting a 1942 production of Mussorgsky's unfinished *Sorochintsi Fair*, he was made principal conductor of the London Philharmonic Orchestra in 1943. In 1954, he returned to ballet as guest conductor of the Royal Ballet and, in 1956, led the London Philharmonic in a tour of Russia that brought enthusiastic audiences to the halls of Moscow and Leningrad. Other guest engagements took Fistoulari to several other parts of the world, notably New Zealand and the Mideast, but he continued to base his activities in England. Active in the recording studio, Fistoulari built a substantial discography. In addition to his much-praised Mercury recordings of Delibes' *Sylvia* and Adam's *Giselle*, he recorded excerpts from Tchaikovsky's *Sleeping Beauty*; Alexandre Luigini's short, but effective *Ballet Egyptien*; and several works by Khachaturian. Fistoulari's direction of Liszt's Hungarian Rhapsodies was praised, as were recorded collaborations with pianists Vladimir Ashkenazy, Earl Wild, and Shura Cherkassky, as well as violinists Nathan Milstein (Brahms) and Ruggiero Ricci (Khachaturian).



Antole Fistoulari The Royal Opera House Orchestra, Covent Garden

Early life and rise to fame Walton was born into a musical family,[1] in Oldham, Lancashire, England.[2] At the age of ten, Walton was accepted as a chorister at Christ Church Cathedral in Oxford, and he subsequently entered Christ Church of the University of Oxford as an undergraduate at the unusually early age of sixteen[3]. He was largely self-taught as a composer (poring over new scores in the Ellis Library, notably those by Stravinsky, Debussy, Sibelius and Roussel), but received some tutelage from Hugh Allen, the cathedral organist.[4] At Oxford Walton befriended two poets — Sacheverell Sitwell and Siegfried Sassoon — who would prove influential in publicizing his music.[5] Little of Walton's juvenilia survives, but the choral anthem *A Litany*, written when he was just fifteen, exhibits striking harmonies and voice-leading which was more advanced than that of many older contemporary composers in Britain. Perhaps the most daring harmonic features of the work are the pungent augmented-chord inflections, notably in the striking final cadence.

Walton left Oxford without a degree in 1920 for failing *Responsions*[6], to lodge in London with the literary Sitwell siblings — Sacheverell, Osbert and Edith — as an 'adopted, or elected, brother'[7]. Through the Sitwells, Walton became familiar with many of the most important figures in British music between the World Wars, particularly his fellow composer, Constant Lambert, and also in the arts, notably Noel Coward, Lytton Strachey, Rex Whistler, Peter Quennell, Cecil Beaton and others. Walton's first reputation was one of notoriety, built on his ground-breaking musical adaptation of Edith Sitwell's *Façade* poems. The 1923 first public performance of the jazz-influenced *Façade* resulted in Walton being branded an *avant-garde* modernist (the critic Ernest Newman described him thus: 'as a musical joker he is a jewel of the first water'), though the first performances stimulated a considerable amount of controversy. An early string quartet gained only slight international recognition, including a performance at the 1923 festival of the International Society for Contemporary Music in Salzburg, with a much appreciative Alban Berg in attendance.

During the 1920s, Walton made a modest income playing piano at jazz clubs, but spent most of his time composing in the Sitwells' attic. The orchestral overture *Portsmouth Point* (which he dedicated to Sassoon) was the first work to point toward his eventual accomplishments, including a strong rhythmic drive, extensive syncopation and a dissonant but predominantly tonal harmonic language. It was the *Viola Concerto* of 1929, however, which catapulted him to the forefront of British classical music, its bittersweet melancholy proving quite popular; it remains a cornerstone of the solo viola repertoire. This success was followed by equally acclaimed works: the massive choral cantata *Belshazzar's Feast* (1931), the *Symphony No. 1* (1935), the coronation march *Crown Imperial* (1937), and the *Violin Concerto* (1939). Each of these works remains firmly entrenched in the repertoire today. Though *Belshazzar's Feast* is a cornerstone of the repertoire of any up-and-coming choral society, the *First Symphony* remains a challenge even to professional orchestras without generous rehearsal time to devote to it.

During World War II, Walton was granted leave from military service in order to compose music for propagandistic films, such as *The First of the Few* (1942), and Laurence Olivier's adaptation of Shakespeare's *Henry V* (1944), which Winston Churchill encouraged Olivier to adapt as if it were a piece of morale-boosting propaganda. By the mid-1940s, the rise to fame of younger composers such as Benjamin Britten substantially curtailed Walton's reception among music critics, though the public always received his music enthusiastically. After composing a second string quartet (1946), his strongest achievement in the world of chamber music, Walton dedicated the considerable period of seven years to his

three-act tragic opera, *Troilus and Cressida* (1947–1954). The opera was not widely acclaimed, and it was from this point that Walton's reputation as an old-fashioned composer became confirmed.

Walton also composed the music for two more Shakespeare-Olivier films — the Academy Award-winning *Hamlet*, and *Richard III*. Walton, however, did not win Oscars for any of his Shakespeare-based scores. After *Troilus and Cressida*, Walton returned to orchestral music, composing in rapid succession the *Cello Concerto* (1956), the *Symphony No. 2* (1960), and his masterpiece of the post-war period, the *Variations on a Theme by Hindemith* (1963). His music from the 1960s shows a great reluctance to accept the post-war *avant-garde* trends espoused by Pierre Boulez and others, as Walton preferred to compose in the post-Romantic style which he had found most rewarding. Indeed, he was far from forgotten, having been knighted in 1951 and received the Order of Merit in 1967. His one-act comic opera, *The Bear*, was well received at the Aldeburgh Festival in 1967, and commissions came from as far afield as the New York Philharmonic (*Capriccio burlesco*, 1968), and the San Francisco Symphony (*Improvisations on an Impromptu of Benjamin Britten*, 1969). His song-cycles from this period were premiered by artists as illustrious as Peter Pears (*Anon. in love*, 1960) and Elisabeth Schwarzkopf (*A Song for the Lord Mayor's Table*, 1962).

Walton was commissioned to write the score for the 1969 film *Battle of Britain*. The music was conducted by Malcolm Arnold. However, the music department at United Artists objected that the score was too short. As a result, a further score was commissioned from Ron Goodwin. Producer S. Benjamin Fisz and actor Sir Laurence Olivier protested this decision, and Olivier threatened to take his name from the credits. In the end, one segment of the Walton score, titled *The Battle in the Air*, which framed the climactic air battles of 15 September 1940, was retained in the final cut. The Walton score was played with no sound effects of aircraft motors or gunfire, giving this sequence a transcendent, lyrical quality. Tapes of the Walton score were believed lost forever until being rediscovered in 1990. Since then the score has been restored and released on compact disc.

In his final decade, Walton found composition increasingly difficult. He repeatedly tried to compose a third symphony for André Previn, but later abandoned the work. His final works are mostly re-orchestrations or revisions of earlier music, and liturgical choral music. He had settled on the island of Ischia in Italy in 1949 with his Argentinian wife Susana Gil, and it was at his home there where he died in 1983. Since his death, Walton's music has gained a resurgence of attention, both in live performance and recordings. Indeed, as the history of post-war classical music continues to be re-evaluated, Walton is seen less as old-fashioned representative of a lost era, and more as a strong individualist who wrote in an attractive, personal idiom.

Walton was knighted in 1951 and appointed to the Order of Merit in 1967.

Walton Facade & Lecocq Mamzelle Angot

Antole Fistoulari the Royal Opera House Orchestra, Covent Garden

Walton Facade

1-Fanfare 0:33

2-Scotch Rhapsody 1:06

3-Valse 3:16

4-Tango - Pasodoble 1:50

5-Swiss Yodelling Song 2:25

6-Country Dance 2:03

7-Polka 1:16

8-Noche Espagnole 2:31

9-Popular Song 2:08

10-Old Sir Faulk 1:47

11-Tarantella Sevillana 2:20

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12-Overture 2:38

13- Act I: No. 3 - Mazurka 1:07

14-No. 5 - Tempo di Marcelaia 1:52

15-Act II: No. 8 - Tempo di Gavotte 4:09

16-Act II: No. 11 1:36

17-Act III: No. 13 5:09

18-Finale 7:26

Recording Info: Producer: Michael Williamson Engineer: Ken Cress
Recorded by Decca for RCA September 10-11 1957 at Watford Town Hall



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