

Sir Arthur Bliss : a preliminary survey and synthesis

of materials for the study of his music

by

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In four volumes

VOLUME ONE

The Man and His Work

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## ABSTRACT

This survey of one of England's most famous composers includes much new information and many fresh details of considerable musicological interest. These were obtained during the writer's research and through his personal approach to many of the individuals involved in Arthur Bliss's career. It is intended that this work form a bridge between the older, general accounts and the definitive work still to be written.

This work is divided into four volumes, of which the first deals with Bliss's life and reaction to his music.

Volumes 2, 3 and 4 form a complete thematic catalogue of Bliss's musical works, published and unpublished, arranged chronologically by date of composition, each being given a serial number, with the letter B prefixed, for use in citation purposes. Full details are given of instrumentation, first performance, the location and bibliographical description of manuscripts, printed first editions, critical comment in a bibliography and major recordings. The incipits of every movement are also quoted, as well as important elements in choral and operatic works.

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## PREFACE

The core of this work is a detailed documentation of Sir Arthur Bliss's life and a comprehensive catalogue of his massive output, numbering over 180 items and including many smaller and forgotten works. It has been my aim to bring together in one place all references to a particular work.

This catalogue is concerned with all Sir Arthur's works, and is not linked specifically with any particular collection of material. Two other catalogues have been created which relate to and complement the present: one is a list and description of all material which has been deposited by Lady Bliss in Cambridge University Library, and the other a card catalogue or index by work to this Cambridge material. The present author, whilst doing research at the home of Lady Bliss, devised a system for producing this card catalogue and prepared many of the entries. A printed catalogue of Bliss's music has been published by his main publisher Novello. This is aimed, however, at the working musician. 1

It is hoped that this work may become the definitive guide for the scholar, musicologist, performer and music lover, and a worthy contribution to the literature about a very important English composer and Master of the Queen's Musick.

---

1 Lewis Foreman, Arthur Bliss : catalogue of the complete works (Borough Green, Novello & Co. Ltd., 1980)

## DEDICATION AND ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

"An exercise bombastically called research,  
but accurately called prying into  
cupboards and pestering friends.....2

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2 Arthur Hutchings, in the preface to his Church Music in the Nineteenth Century (London, H. Jenkins, 1967)

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Sir Arthur Bliss : the Man and his Work

INTRODUCTION

The purpose of this essay is to provide, wherever possible, a synopsis of balanced critical comment which appeared, in various places, after the first hearings of Arthur Bliss's major works. It should be noted, however, that it has been impossible to trace reviews of every work, some of which were performed without attracting any immediate criticism.

In addition there are comments here and there about the composer's activities, so inextricably bound up with the music, and descriptive notes about some of that music included.

\* \* \* \* \*

Sir Arthur Bliss...was an internationally respected musician. He was a distinguished and...prolific composer of music...much of it durably outstanding, in most available genres. In his youth he had been an able pianist, though modest about his talent, and he remained a convincing and accomplished conductor, not only of his own compositions. For a period he served as a musical administrator, reluctant but industrious, to the BBC: he was a conscientious, efficient committee chairman. 1

These words, written by William Mann at the time of Bliss's death in March 1975, aptly sums up his life and career.

Before a visit to America in 1923, Bliss was regarded by the critics as an enfant terrible of English music, with novel, colourful, unconventional works like The Tempest (B27) of 1921. Subsequently, however, he developed an outgoing romantic style linking him with his predecessors yet retaining characteristics of the advanced composers whose music had influenced him in his youth.

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1 William Mann, 'Obituary : Sir Arthur Bliss' in The Times, 29 March 1975, p. 14.

Orchestral works, concertos and ballets feature prominently, as do a series of large-scale choral works. There is also a major opera The Olympians and a television opera Tobias and the Angel. Smaller-scale works include the Clarinet Quintet and a number of song-cycles and piano pieces.

\* \* \* \* \*

## ORCHESTRAL WORKS

Since a number of Bliss's most characteristic, best-known works are for orchestra, we may begin by examining this genre. The earliest are Two Studies (B25), written in 1920 and performed privately at a Royal College of Music Patron's Fund Concert, the only opportunity young composers had of listening to their music. The first was said to have been originally written for Karsarvina to accompany a dance called 'Night'. Its mood is wistfully grave and the two main thematic ideas are treated only to ornamentation rather than development. The second, a vigorous allegro, has many different moods which succeed each other very rapidly. Writing after the first performance, Edwin Evans (a champion of Bliss's music) thought that

Mr Bliss has...experimented in orchestral colour...The two studies were interesting enough, but we doubt whether we shall hear much of them.... 2

On the other hand, 'Gamba' wrote:

...these were an inconsequent mixture of mediocre material and modernism but the effect was not half bad in its way. The composer is inexperienced, but his music does not strike one as being merely clever and promising as suggesting that it will presently be cleverer still, it is more that he has ideas but has not yet discovered how to make the best use of them. 3

The following year, Bliss completed his Mêlée Fantasque (B30), a work of twelve minutes written in memory of his friend Lovat Fraser who was an artist of the theatre and who died suddenly and tragically in June 1921 as a result of injuries, sustained in World War I. The piece passes through a varied range of musical styles: Bliss had in mind the interest of Lovat Fraser in theatre designs, so it is partly a dramatic piece, together with a threnody, a

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2 Edwin Evans, 'Royal College Patrons Fund' in Pall Mall Gazette, 18 February 1921, p. 8.

3 Gamba, 'Violinists at Home and Abroad' in Strand, March 1921, p. 352.

lament for a young man dying before his time. Percy Scholes's main criticism was that the piece was too broken, and it contained passages which appeared to be mere interpolations, included just to show audiences some orchestral possibilities. 4

The music critic of The Times was equally critical after another early performance when he wrote that the composer had travelled the same road in previous works, and that Mêlée Fantasque was a reproduction, on an orchestral scale, of earlier novel chamber works. 'Possibly this was why Mr Goossens's audience, which is almost as special as his orchestra, seemed to take only a rather lukewarm interest in the Mêlée Fantasque' 5

It was Sir Edward Elgar who proposed that for the 1922 Three Choirs Festival, held that year at Gloucester, three "younger" composers should be asked to write and conduct each a new work. Bliss, together with Eugene Goossens and Herbert Howells, was invited to lunch at Elgar's club where the proposal was made. Elgar believed the Three Choirs Festival had become staid and stale and needed some fresh impetus injected into its proceedings. Naturally all three agreed to Elgar's proposals, Bliss thinking that here was a chance to write a large symphony. The Colour Symphony (B33) was the result. His inspiration came from a chance encounter with a book of heraldry. Here he read about the symbolic meanings associated with the primary colours, and saw the possibility of so characterising the four movements of a symphony that each should express a colour as he personally conceived it. The first movement, 'Purple - the colour of Amethysts, Royalty, Pageantry and Death' - is a kind of slow ceremonial march which advances and recedes; an ominous undertone is present throughout the movement, not least at the flourish of trumpets which marks its apogee, and in the final unresolved chord. 'Red' is an explosive scherzo. Red is the colour of Rubies, Wine, Revelry, Furnaces, Courage and Magic, and the music - pronouncedly balletic in character - has an intoxicatedly rhythmic headlong drive and stridency. 'Blue - the colour of Sapphires,

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4 Percy A Scholes. 'Music and Musicians' in The Observer, 16 October 1921, p. 10.

5 Anon, 'Modern Orchestral "Poems" in The Times, 10 November 1921, p.8.



Deep Water, Skys, Loyalty and Melancholy' - is the slow movement: very pastoral and English with much flute arabesque and lazy, lapping rhythms, as of water against a moored boat or stone pier on a drowsy summer afternoon. Finally 'Green - the colour of Emeralds, Hope, Youth, Joy, Spring and Victory' begins as a formal fugal exposition, the first subject stately and long-lined, the second ~~loguacious~~ and rhythmic. This movement was originally published separately under the title Pyanepsion which refers to an ancient Greek festival held during the month of Sowing. Critical reaction was favourable, and the Symphony soon established itself in the repertoire.

Much interest was kindled, and this built up to such a climax that finally the proceedings in Gloucester had an element of sensation about them. A.J.S. called the symphony 'the principal novelty of the day' and continued

Certainly it is the most remarkable work of symphonic proportions produced in recent years. It is the work of a live force, a composer to be reckoned with.... 6

S.L. agreed, adding:

...Bliss is a young composer of amazing vitality, and is far and away the cleverest writer among the English composers of our time. His invention is fertile, rapid, and sure. 7

It was also agreed that the symphony marked a new important stage in Bliss's career and that he was turning his back on previous frivolous undertakings.

The symphony is not a 'symphony' in the strict sense at all; rather it is a sequence of dramatic moods and the same can be said of Bliss's other 'symphony, Morning Heroes. Bliss was inherently not a 'symphonic' composer; his structures tend to be succinct and episodic rather than symphonically cumulative. In this he resembles

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6 A.J.S. 'A Symphony by Mr. Arthur Bliss' in The Birmingham Post, 8 September 1922, p. 6.

7 S.L. 'The Three Choirs Festival in The Manchester Guardian, 8 September 1922, p. 9.

Russian composers, such as Prokofiev, who preferred the smaller, self-entained time-units of ballet or filmscore to the long-breathed continuity and systematic thematic growth demanded by a symphonic argument. Incidentally, after completing Morning Heroes in 1930, Bliss returned to the Colour Symphony and re-fashioned the whole work, leaving only the pastoral movement in its original shape.

Shortly before leaving for America in April 1923, Bliss's contribution to "Captions : five glimpses of an Anonymous Theme" was performed at the Aeolian Hall with the curious title of Twone, the House of Felicity (B37). The other contributors were Herbert Bedford, Eugene Goossens, Felix White and Gerard Williams, but as the manuscript has long disappeared, it is now impossible to ascertain the title of their pieces, or any other facts.

Towards the end of his stay in America, Bliss went to hear a performance of Tchaikovsky's Fourth Symphony, played by the Philadelphia Orchestra under Leopold Stokowski, and was so impressed by the virtuoso playing that he vowed to write a work for him. The result was the Introduction and Allegro (B52) and this was completed before June 1925 when the newly-wedded Bliss returned to England. However Stokowski advised on certain constructive changes. These Bliss later took up in the mid 1930's, virtually re-writing the piece knowing that he had learnt much more. The Introduction and Allegro is cast in one symphonic movement, on a large scale. The Introduction is begun by the lower woodwind and double basses with a serious theme which afterwards, in livelier tempo, becomes the first subject of the Allegro. Towards the end of the piece, the music rises to a large and emphatic climax, to be followed by another quiet section in which earlier themes return, but once more the movement is worked up to a robust and stirring energy which is maintained to the end.

The revised version omits some of the percussion of the original version and makes some other reductions in scoring and content. Bliss was in his mid-30s at the time, and this work is another in which he abandoned his youthful flirtation with the trends of the 1920's in favour of a serious attachment to traditional classical and romantic ideals.

After the first performance, the Times critic wrote:

There is less attempt to dazzle, and a more serious outlook that he has hitherto shown. The Introduction and Allegro is straightforward, vigorous, and, indeed, invigorating music...Mr. Bliss has turned to serious account his considerable gifts, among which his knowledge of the orchestra is conspicuous. 8

Commentators were also agreed that in the next orchestral work, Hymn to Apollo (B54), which appeared at the same time, the Stravinskian influence had almost disappeared from Bliss's work. All that remained was a feeling for unusual and arresting instrumental combinations, and a tendency to use certain kinds of diatonic discard which may ultimately be traced to the influence of Stravinsky and contemporary French composers, but which now had become completely integrated into Bliss's own language. This short orchestral piece, a single-movement Andante moderato, is addressed to Apollo, the god of healing. It shows Bliss's ability to write organic self-regenerating themes which grow by means of rhythmic extension, without repeating exactly, in a continuous unfolding of melody which is relaxed and assured.

The critics were agreed that the piece was interesting and finely thought, but sober and perhaps a little old-fashioned from someone so modern. This was completely revised in 1965 when it was rescored for smaller forces, the original score, for example, including parts for six timpani, bells, percussion, harp and celeste.

It was not until nine years later in 1935 that Bliss returned to the medium of the full orchestra for his next concert piece, and even then it was only the strings which were used in his beautiful Music for Strings (B71). Moving as far away from illustrative ideas as possible (he had just written the score for the H.G. Wells film 'Things to Come'), Bliss chose this title declaring that in spite of

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8 Anon, 'Promenade Concerts' in The Times, 9 September 1926, p. 10.

its neutrality, it was a romantic work. Music for Strings has been called Elgarian, but the comparison is just only in that it is, with Ralph Vaughan Williams' 'Fantasia on a theme of Thomas Tallis', Michael Tippett's 'Concerto for double string orchestra' and Benjamin Britten's 'Variations on a theme of Frank Bridge', one of the very few English works of the twentieth century to earn a place beside the Introduction and Allegro of Elgar as masterpiece of string music. The following can be said to sum up critical feeling about the work:

As Brahms once said of a similar attribution, any fool can see the derivation from Elgar. The true value of this work is the profitable use Bliss makes of his loan. His handling of the material is wholly his own.... In so far as the vocabulary of Music for Strings is derivative it falls short of being a strong work. In so far as it reflects the thought of a vigorous mind, it is a successful work. 9

Towards the end of World War II, Bliss wrote his march The Phoenix (B88), the subtitle of which is 'Homage to France - August 1944'. The title of this march suggests an apt parallel with the legend of the phoenix in that "it was written in honour of the France arisen from the defeat of 1940 to the liberation of 1944".

In his music, J.S. Bach often used passacaglias or chaconnes to produce a stately or solemn effect - and this is also the idea that Bliss employed in his Processional (B101) which was written for the entry of HM Queen Elizabeth, the Queen Mother into Westminster Abbey at the Coronation of her daughter, Queen Elizabeth II on 2 June 1953. An eight-bar phrase, marked 'Andante maestoso,' is announced by trumpets and trombones and repeated some twenty three times with constant changes of key and all the variety of colour, timbre and volume that can be drawn from a full orchestra and organ.

The following November, Bliss was appointed Master of the Queen's Musick in succession to Sir Arnold Bax. As a result one of his first occasional pieces was a short orchestral work, A Birthday Greeting to her Majesty (B108), written to celebrated the 29th birthday of the Queen on 21 April 1955. Its inspiration comes from the refrain 'Happy Birthday to You, Our Queen Elizabeth'.

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9 Anon, 'B.B.C. Concert' in The Times, 28 November 1935, p. 12.

Immediately following in the catalogue of orchestral works is his Meditations on a Theme by John Blow (B109), commissioned by the City of Birmingham Orchestra. In the same week Anthony Lewis, then Peyton-Barber Professor of Music at Birmingham University, presented him with a newly published volume of anthems by John Blow (1649-1708). Opening the pages of this, Bliss came on the noble string melody preceding Psalm 23, and at once felt that a 'signal amen' had been granted him. 10 The theme was ripe for variations: each movement could dwell on the Psalmist's images, and as the House of the Lord is reached only at the end of the Psalm, so Blow's theme could remain veiled until its complete appearance at the climax. For this twofold revelation - of theme and psalm, Bliss appropriately, chose the title 'Meditations'. Bliss spoke little of his emotions, reserving them instead for his music, as in the profound vision revealed by these meditations. It was a firm favourite with the composer, and one of a few works which he thought might represent his life's music. 11

The introduction takes two texts: "The Lord is my Shepherd" is commented on in a pastoral mood, on which sinister music intrudes as the representative of Evil in "I will fear no evil." Meditation One treats "He leadeth me beside the still waters". The music is gently flowing, in 9/8 metre, marked "moderato". The second Meditation (Allegro deciso) expresses the confidence and pride of the shepherd who declares that "thy rod and thy staff they comfort me." The third is simply entitled "Lambs"; it is a small scherzo, pianissimo throughout, involving glockenspiel, harp and muted strings. The composer points out that the beginning of the scherzo moves, like sheep, in close imitation. Meditation four is joyful, "conspirito", with a triplet version of Blow's theme, to suggest "He restoreth my soul". The fifth and last Meditation is to the text "In green pastures" and returns to the pastoral strains of the Introduction, not without a further menace of the "Evil" idea, which leads to an Interlude "Through the valley of the shadow of death" ending with a bass clarinet solo that climbs out of the valley towards the light and the green fields. Now the trombones play the first bass of Blow's tune and the Finale "In the House of the Lord" begins. Blow's tune is heard twice,

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10 Arthur Bliss, As I remember (Faber and Faber, 1970), p. 194.

11 Arthur Bliss, As I Remember (Faber and Faber 1970), p. 195.

once in eight-bar sections, and then straight through. In the coda, the pastoral mood is re-established, and the forces of evil are finally quelled.

The 'Meditations' were well received, the critic in The Times writing:

...the individual Meditations are richly inventive, the interlude has the dramatic quality of Bliss's ballet scores.... Orchestrally it is a virtuoso piece, for Bliss has in his maturity learned how to combine the romantic grand manner with the astringent subject matter that he produced as a young man. 12

Michael Kennedy in the Musical Times agreed:

...the beauty of the writing for strings and woodwind is noteworthy, and in the Finale, when the great theme is stated twice, splendidly orchestrated in Bliss's most expansive manner. 13

In his portrait of Scotland's capital in the Edinburgh overture (B113), written for the 1956 Edinburgh Festival, Bliss skillfully interweaves images of times past and present, so that not only is today's elegant city evoked, but also the spirit of its turbulent past. At the outset, brass chords and side drum tattoos shape the rhythm of the word "Edinburgh", a motif which permeates the overture, and suggests initially the dramatic skyline of the city. As a link between centuries, Bliss introduces a sixteenth century melody from the Scottish Psalter which was probably sung in St. Giles' Cathedral at that time. It brings into focus the tragic events of Holyrood Palace, and so leads to the central portion of the overture, a "Pavane for Mary Queen of Scots." For the conclusion, a return is made to the present as the overture is capped with a high-spirited jig in which strathspey and reel rhythms abound.

Throughout his life Bliss was an ardent conversationalist. He enjoyed contact with the diverse circle of companions that he met at his clubs, the Garrick and the Saville, as well as the opportunity to meet people at the many committees on which he served for many years. 14

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12 Anon. 'New orchestral work by Bliss' in The Times, 15 December 1955, p. 5.

13 Michael Kennedy 'New Bliss work at Birmingham' in The Musical Times, February 1956, p. 92.

14 Lady Bliss talking to present author, 1980.

Such a background is pertinent to the Discourse for Orchestra (B116), for although it is an abstract musical dissertation Bliss prefaced the score with an allusion to conversation : "As in all speeches there are a few anecdotes, and small digressions, but I hope the subject is sufficiently apparent throughout, in some form, or other, to warrant the title". Discourse was originally composed for the Louisville Orchestra in 1957, but was subsequently revised and scored for a larger orchestra in 1965.

There are five clearly defined sections in the work: an allegro - larghetto where the kernel of the argument is presented; then an allegro vivace when the argument moves forward; this is followed by an andante tranquillo - larghetto when a brief lull gives way to a period of contemplation. Fourthly an allegro con brio where the ideas from the first two sections return, and finally maestoso, the climax, which Bliss describes as a "peroration."

In his rôle of Master of the Queen's Musick, Bliss had the idea of writing a march to be played at Sir Winston Churchill's funeral. This crystallised in late 1961 and early 1962 as a result of a commission from the BBC and his March of Homage in honour of a Great Man (B130) was subsequently recorded and stored in the BBC archives. It was finally broadcast immediately before the State Funeral of Churchill at the end of January 1965. The March's grandeur is obviously related to Handel's "Ode on the death of Queen Caroline" and Purcell's "Funeral Music for Queen Mary's" and with the simplest of means and economy of gesture, Bliss creates an elegy of deep poignancy.

Another occasional work which followed later in 1965 was the Ceremonial Prelude for Westminster Abbey (B143), written for the opening service of the nine-hundredth anniversary year of the Abbey and to accompany the procession of the Queen, who attended this service, from the West door to the Stalls. Bliss's expertise is again apparent as he responds to the sense of occasion and of drama in state pageantry. At the age of 80, Bliss commenced work on his last really large orchestral work, his Metamorphic Variations (B172), written for the Croydon Arts Festival of 1973. The word 'Metamorphic' was included in the title because the three 'elements' of the first section undergo many more transformations in the following thirteen sections than the word 'Variations' normally implies. This first section consists

of a long cantilena for solo oboe, a two-bar chordal phrase heard first on the horns, and then a short coda on the strings consisting of a hushed cluster of notes. The titles of the thirteen sections then indicate their prevailing moods.

Bliss often mentioned how necessary some outward stimulations was to him before commencing a new work - a poem, a colour or a painting. 15 The idea for this Variations apparently came from watching the development of one theme in a series of abstract paintings by his close friend, George Dannatt, to whom, with his wife, the work is dedicated. Part of the work was written in the Dannatt household. It was felt that Bliss had produced something more solid and more considered than the common run of festival commissions. He had also endowed the repertory with that no longer very frequent phenomenon, a good showpiece for large symphony orchestra. Joan Chissell suggested that the underlying theme of the work was friendship

Which explains why the idiom is so retrospectively romantic...always the composer seems to be drawing on a golden krove of personal memory. 16

In 1974, Bliss completed his Lancaster Prelude (B178), written for the tenth anniversary of the foundation of Lancaster University. Bliss was President of the Lancaster University Concerts so it was appropriate that he should contribute something to the orchestral celebrations. According to the programme of the first performance, the work lasts just over four minutes and was planned to precede the ninth symphony of Beethoven. One of the many striking features of the older score is its expansion of traditional symphonic forces. Beethoven adds voices and widens the spectrum of his instrumentation in an attempt to find a new kind of expression in this ninth symphony. Bliss's work uses certain of Beethoven's "extra" instruments in this Prelude, thus creating a clear association between the two works.

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15 Arthur Bliss, As I Remember (Faber and Faber, 1970), p. 71.

16 Joan Chissell, 'Croydon Arts Festival' in The Times, 23 April 1973, p. 5.



## BALLETS

Akin to the orchestral works are those scores he wrote as ballets. Sir Arthur admitted that he always found it easier to write 'dramatic' music rather than 'pure' music. He liked the stimulus of words, or a theatrical setting, a colourful occasion or the collaboration of a great player. In the opinion of many, some of his most tautly argued, strongly characterised and emotionally compelling music has been inspired by the stage, more especially the ballet. There are press reports in the 1920's that he was thinking of composing a ballet after Edgar Allan Poe's story The Mask of the Red Death, but his first real major success was Checkmate (B74), written for the Paris Exhibition of 1937. It was the first time that a composer of Bliss's standing had written a work especially for the Vic-Wells company. Bliss wrote his own scenario in collaboration with the theatre designer and producer W. Bridges Adams. The score is one of Bliss's most powerful - alert and incisive in rhythm, pungent in harmony, harshly, unyieldingly brilliant in orchestral colour. It is disturbing music and probably remains his best achievement in the medium, and the only one to survive in performance.

In essence the work seems to follow the 'classical' scheme of separate numbers, a method of allowing considerable conciseness of expression : the forces involved in the struggle are sharply presented in the bright dance of the pawns, the strong music for the castles and bishops, the Red Knight's virile solo and the menacing entry for the Black Queen, but as battle is engaged and the doddering Red King is deprived of every support, any consciousness of a structural method fades as the musical drama takes hold of the audience.

The ballet was 'an emphatic success', 'highly effective' and very well received. The music, in particular, was singled out as having enormous nervous energy, and hailed as a notable and worthy successor to Vaughn Williams's Job.

Constant Lambert summed the matter up when he wrote at the time:

To me it is the most successful of  
Bliss's scores because it combines in  
one work so many elements of his  
character which have previously  
been presented to us only separately. 17

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17 C. Lambert 'Checkmate' in Radio Times, 8 October 1937, p. 17.

No less apt was his next ballet, Miracle in the Gorbals (B87), which dates from 1944 and which marks his return to composition. It was a heavily mimed melodrama, having a glowering theatrical libretto by its choreographer, Robert Helpmann. It told of a Christ-figure appearing in the Gorbals, his resurrection of a suicide, and his ultimate murder by a gang of toughs, urged on to their killing by a priest, nicely called "The Official", but wearing a dog-collar none the less. Melodramatic though the action was, it was dignified by Bliss' music, which captures all the theatrical vitality of Helpmann's libretto but offers a sustained inspiration of real force and intensity. As with Checkmate, the score divides itself into numbers, and once again Bliss's descriptive gifts are admirably employed, from the ominous opening of the overture in all its Purcellian grandeur, and the beautiful movement entitled 'The Young Lovers' in which he delicately pays tribute to Ravel and Chopin, through the 'brash' writing for the crowd, with a bouncing, jazzy Dance of Deliverance, and the unforced romanticism of the suicide's scenes, to the final anguish of the murder of the Stranger. At the final climax a gong is heard over whose reverberations a ship's hooter sounds with extraordinary lugubrious effect, foreshadowing the imaginative use Britten was to make of the foghorn in Peter Grimes. The score is inscribed to the composer's wife and their two daughters in thanksgiving for their safe return from America, during the darkest days of the war, and for his re-union with them in England on 5 November 1943.

The Times called Bliss's score powerful and

...not lacking in dramatic power.  
Both the dance and the music of the  
suicide girl (Miss Pauline Clayden)  
...have a spring-like freshness....  
The reviewer adds, some what sarcastically,  
...the honours of this discordant ballet  
[however] go to the composer, Arthur  
Bliss who knows how to handle discords. 18

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18 Anon 'Sadler's Wells Ballet' in The Times, 27 October 1944, p. 6.

Not surprisingly, in view of Bliss's powers in realizing a scenario (for Miracle in the Gorbals he had worked not only for the libretto but also with Edward Burra's wonderful designs), Helpmann invited Bliss to compose the score for his next work Adam Zero (B92), staged soon after the Royal Ballet's accession to Covent Garden in 1946.

Until recently the score has hardly been heard which is a great pity for it can be considered to be one of the finest twentieth century English ballet scores. It encountered difficulties from the very first, not only because the scenario (an allegory of the cycle of man's life) was felt to be manifestly inferior to Miracle in the Gorbals, but also because Helpmann, again the inspirational force behind the whole project, sustained injury on stage shortly after the first night and was obliged to retire from the cast - none of which really justifies the almost total neglect of Bliss's music, which is in every way the equal of its two distinguished predecessors. Important sections include the spirited Fanfare Overture, the Dance of Spring, one of Bliss's most exuberant dance pieces, teaming with colour and invention, a Dance of Summer in similar vein and the Night Club Scene, a demonic orgy of saxophone, dance-band percussion, tangos and boogie-woogie rhythms, all anticipating 'West Side Story' two decades later.

W. McNaught said of Adam Zero:

[It] has been enjoying a high success.  
The score of Adam Zero is full of...intelligible,  
vivid...romantic ideas.  
...this new enlargement of the territory of  
ballet is outstanding and attractive....19

The Times praised the ballet and its creator, Robert Helpmann and added

Such success in a difficult medium could  
not have been achieved without music  
as expressive, concise, and in the  
best sense, theatrical as Arthur Bliss's  
score, of which the orchestra gave a  
brilliant performance. 20

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19 W. McNaught, 'Adam Zero' in The Musical Times, May 1946, pp. 155-6.

20 Anon. 'Covent Garden' in The Times, 11 April 1946, p. 6.

Bliss's fourth ballet, The Lady of Shalott (B117) was commissioned for the San Francisco Ballet and staged there in 1958 with choreography by Lew Christensen. Dame Ninette de Valois was reportedly interested in mounting an English version at one time but she did not do so. The idea of using Tennyson's poem as the basis of the work was Christopher Hassalls's; the scenario was also devised by him. 21 A version was however eventually performed here, by children and musicians from Leicestershire, after Bliss's death in 1975.

After the first performance in 1958, the majority of American newspapers praised the ballet, calling it a 'rich and sumptuous theatre-piece', full of medieval colour, and 'highly effective'. However Alexander Fried sounded a discordant note:

Theater music, professional and effective, is all you can call Bliss's piece. It has no creative distinction in itself. His ideas are too superficial and obvious to be artistically valuable. Once his orchestra gets going, you can pretty well guess in advance, from point to point, which way its "effects" and melodic lines will run. 22

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21 Arthur Bliss, As I Remember (Faber and Faber 1970), pp 206-7.

22 A. Fried, 'S.F. Ballet Guest at U.C. Festival' in The San Francisco Examiner, 4 May 1958.

## CONCERTOS

In the same genre are the various concertos which Bliss composed for certain instruments with orchestra. The music of the first was originally conceived in 1920 as a Concerto for piano, tenor, strings and percussion (B28), Bliss had in mind Myra Hess and Stewart Wilson who were planning a special concert in London with him. To mark the occasion, Bliss produced this experimental work for them both, and added a third soloist in the shape of a xylophone player. The English words for the tenor, abstract and philosophic, Bliss wrote himself, thus continuing the experiments started in earlier works such as the Rhapsody (B20) and Rout (B23). In the former, he used a soprano and tenor vocalising on 'Ah' and then in the latter, Bliss used another soprano singing nonsense words that he had, once again, made up himself to represent the sound of a carnival. Realising that performances of a work with such an unlikely scoring were bound to be few, Bliss rescored the work, in 1923, as a 2-piano Concerto. He subsequently made three further versions, each with entirely differing scoring.

The critics seemed to like the piece, and in particular its vigour, although Percy Scholes thought the themes to be nothing like so good as those of Rout and the Rhapsody. 23

It also finally convinced them that Bliss was really serious composer, and that this (and later the Colour Symphony) was evidence that he was not degenerating into a "mere musical stuntist".

Bliss composed his Piano Concerto in B-flat major (B76) at the instance of the British Council for performance by Solomon during the British Week at the New York World's Fair in 1939 and dedicated it "to the People of the United States of America". Bliss had personal associations with the USA : both his father and his wife were American.

What is unusual about this piano concerto is that it is the only English work of this kind drawn on big lines in the full-blooded and lyrical manner of the romantic European conventional concerto, and that its very conventionality is a most unusual feature in Bliss's output. There are however, original touches about the score

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23 Percy A. Scholes, 'Yesterday's Music' in The Observer, 12 June 1921, p. 16.

the timpani in the cadenza of the first movement, the striking final cadenza at the end of the slow movement and the macabre atmosphere of the Finale, which is triumphantly exercised. Throughout, the writing for the piano makes the most exacting demands on the virtuosity of the solo player.

Most critical reaction was centred round the Bliss piano concerto after the first America performance, of which Solomon and Sir Adrian Boult together seem to have given a brilliant impression. "Brilliant" was indeed the epithet used all through the reviews. It was, however, coupled with some complaints of noisy orchestration. Olin Downes said :

The concerto would benefit by some lightening and clarifying of the instrumentation. It is written with marked spirit and gusto. 24

Oscar Thompson wrote to much the same effect in the New York Sun, and another critic, Samuel Chotzinoff, pretended to be shocked at the composer's frank reversion to "virtuoso" music.

Indeed, when the work had been heard in London, the Times critic also remarked about the orchestration as "being too uniformly thick and consequently featureless." 25

The Violin Concerto (B102) followed sixteen years later, it was commissioned by the BBC for Alfredo Campoli. Throughout composition of the first two movements, Bliss and Campoli worked closely together with the result that the final movement was purposefully influenced by his style of playing.

Bliss deliberately took his time over this work, completing it only at the beginning of 1955.

Writers and critics alike were agreed that this Violin Concerto would be welcome by violinists as abounding in brilliant passages and lyrical melody, in generous solo sonority and exhilarating leggiero effects.

They were not however convinced about the work's construction, pointing out that each of the three movements begins with a cogent impulse that later flags.

Indeed the composer was fully aware of its imperfections and authorized cuts before the work was recorded.

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24 Olin Downes, 'Two New Works directed by Boult' in The New York Times, 11 June 1939, p. 47.

25 Anon. 'Promenade Concert' in The Times, 18 August 1939, p. 8.

As late as October 1974, Bliss was still not satisfied as to the length of the work and asked Vernon Handley and George Dannatt for help in suggesting a third cut. 26

Finally there is the Cello Concerto (B161), first performed at Aldeburgh in June 1970. Bliss had wanted to write a work for cello and orchestra as a young man when he used to play through the classical repertoire for the instrument with his brother, Howard, who was a cellist. It was however Mstislav Rostropovich, through insistant and urgent appeals, who secured its composition. It was he who gave the first performance with the English Cahmber Orchestra, conducted by Benjamin Britten. It was Benjamin Britten too who remonstrated with the composer at his having named the work a 'Concertino' and who persuaded him to call it by its proper and deserving title. However, in giving it the diminutive title Bliss probably had in mind the relative shortness of the work and the small orchestra involved, which is of classical proportions with harp and celeste added.

After hearing the concerto at Aldeburgh, Stanley Sadie thought it emerged as 'a pretty substantial piece', and artfully scored. He added:

It would be foolish to look for anything like new departutes from Bliss: a composer close to 80 is entitled to continue his established manner. The Cello Concertino does not depart; but Rostropovich's inspiration has stretched the frame to accomodate a different and rich, expressive colour. 27

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26 Letter from Bliss to George Dannatt, 16 October 1974 (Mr G. Dannatt).

27 Stanley Sadie, 'A substantial piece' in The Times, 25 June 1970, p. 7.

## FILM MUSIC

Bliss's collaboration with H.G. Wells on the Korda film version of The Shape of Things to Come (B69) was important in British film-music history. The composer was called in before the film was actually shot; normally the question of 'background' music arises only after the cutting stage. In March 1934, Bliss gave three lectures to the Royal Institution, and at one of them H.G. Wells was present. The outcome was an invitation to lunch, over which Wells invited him to collaborate on the projected film due to be made by Korda at Denham. 28 Collaboration was precisely what Wells had in mind, though he himself was not particularly musical; from the outset he was determined that the music should play an organic part in the film as existing correspondence to Bliss makes clear. A good deal of the music was written and even recorded before the film really got under way; and one section, 'Machines' was actually shot to the music though this was not finally to Wells's taste. Ultimately, as Wells himself admitted, it proved impossible to blend scenario as music as perfectly as he and Bliss had hoped, and the picture itself, being obliged to make a number of concessions to popular taste, fell rather short of what the author had envisaged. Nevertheless the music achieved no small success as a concert suite arranged by the composer from the complete score, of which it provides a useful cross-section.

When the film was released, The Times, in its review, said:

The film is well able to suggest in terms of architecture the world of the future, and this remarkable effort to describe pictorially Mr. Wells fantasy is amplified by details so elaborate and imposing that the imagination is continually stimulated. ...it is the incomparable scenery and size of spectacle which are the real triumph of the film. 29

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28 Arthur Bliss As I Remember (Faber and Faber 1970), p. 104.

29 Anon, 'New films in London in The Times, 11 July 1938, p. 12.



Conquest of the Air (B73) was a documentary film setting forth the history of man's struggle to win the power of flight, from the earliest times to the present age; it begins with the old myth of Icarus and ends with the contemporary experiments in the stratosphere. Bliss composed an extensive score of accompanying music which plays an important part all through, as it did in "Things to Come". A suite, dedicated to Muir Mathieson, was subsequently made and this has become a particular favourite with youth orchestras.

Much of Bliss's music for the film of Shaw's Caesar and Cleopatra (B85) directed by Gabriel Pascal, was written before the composer withdrew from the project in 1944. 30 To this day, this music remains unknown in manuscript having had no performance or recording.

The following year, Bliss wrote the score for Theroald Dickinson's film Man of Two Worlds (B89) which is particularly interesting in that it includes a miniature concert-piece for piano, man's voices and orchestra entitled Baraza (three short movements and piano cadenza) which has been performed and recorded separately by Eileen Joyce who recorded it originally for the film sound-track. The title is a Swahili word which means a discussion in council between an African Chief and his headman, the hero of the film being Kisenga, a Negro pianist and composer who plays this piece in the National Gallery as his last concert performance before returning to Tanganyika. African folk-music proved a fructifying influence on the score (Bliss was sent recordings of native drumming and folk-singing made by the crew while on location in Africa) and Baraza as an unpretentious piano concertino (with the voice parts omitted)

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30 When Bliss's contract was cancelled, both Benjamin Britten and William Walton were approached, but they were too busy to take on the job; Prokofiev was unable to come from the Soviet Union to write the music, as Pascal had at one time hoped. Finally, it was decided to call in a French composer, and Georges Auric was the choice.

would be well worth reviving : it is a beautifully-constructed, fastidiously-worked little piece.

Thorold Dickinson writes:

All of our good composers were busy, but Sir Arthur Bliss, under contract to Gabriel Pascal, disagreed with his proposals on the subject of Shaw's Caesar and Cleopatra, and on the rebound undertook the chore of adapting Tanganyikan music to European orchestration in Man of Two Worlds.

The opening reel of the film is dominated by the first performance of Baraza, a miniature piano concerto with a choral climax, given at a lunch-time concert at the National Gallery. This had to be staged in the studio, as the director of the Gallery and the director of the concerts refused to believe that an African would be capable of composing a work worthy of their series.

This like much of the rest of the score had to be composed before shooting could begin in the studio, yet much music had to be kept as sketches until the film had been finally cut. Bliss supplied music to strengthen passages of the film where the inexperience of the African performances revealed visual weaknesses.

Bliss's score for the film is a positive contribution to the work. It is spare and strong. 31

This film had one disappointment from the point of view of publicity because it was refused in many countries including initially in America, on the grounds of its idea that a coloured man could come to the West and compete with the best.

In the same year of 1945, the Ministry of Information asked Bliss for a score to accompany Présence au Combat (B90), a semi-documentary, with a French commentary, about the German occupation of France between 1940 and 1944. Nothing now remains of this large score except a passage, some ten pages in length, written for a supply' sequence'.

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31 Letter from Thorold Dickinson to the present author, [dated September 1978].

Bliss's score for Christopher Columbus (B93), written in 1949, is very large indeed, it was an attempt to revive the epic style of "Things to Come". The picture was not successful but the music is full of magnificent ideas, including a fine description of Columbus setting out for the new world and a triumphant march as he returns to the Court, reminiscent of the war theme from "Things to Come".

The Times, in its review of the film, called it, perhaps unfairly, 'a piece of hack biography'. 32 No mention is made of the music. Harold Brown, however, called the score a routine affair, distinguished enough in its execution, but paralleling the episodic nature of the film, and making no attempt to achieve a truly organic integration.

He does, however, cite one notable exception: the triumphant and jubilant music when Columbus's party lands on the American shore. 33 As for The Beggar's Opera (B99), written four years later, Bliss simply took the original Gay and Pepusch tunes and either extended them or made variations on them. It was quite unlike the version by Benjamin Britten (1948) who took the tunes and then imposed his own personality on it. Bliss made the tunes as lovely as possible in sound, as an orchestra could, using different kinds of combinations of instruments. However, there was a certain amount of original music written which was used in linking passages; this was founded on the songs, for example, the procession to the scaffold at the end of the film.

Bliss's settings received a particular, sympathetic mention in The Times review of the film:

Sir Arthur Bliss who arranged the tunes and made a film score of them, rejoices in their sweeping, vigorous contours, and, taking his cue from the producers, snaps his fingers at the historical approach... and sets the tunes in joyful neo-romantic idiom. 34

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32 Anon. 'New films in London' in The Times, 20 June 1949, p. 7.

33 H. Brown 'Christopher Columbus' in Film Music Notes, November/December 1949, p. 16.

34 Anon. 'Rialto Cinema' in The Times, 5 June 1953, p. 9.

Lord Olivier, who took the part of Macheath in the film, writes:

I found him most remarkable for his generous attitude towards his fellow composers. I believe he did not care very much for my singing - for which nobody in their right mind could blame him.

At any rate, he forbade recordings to be made of our soundtrack. I was sad about this as it seemed to indicate his displeasure with my voice....35

The following year, Bliss collaborated with Malcolm Arnold on music for the film Welcome the Queen (B103), released to celebrate the homecoming of the Queen from her Commonwealth Tour. Bliss's expertise is again apparent, as he responds to the occasion and drama inherent in state pageantry. Dotted rhythms are again present, but now the music has a jubilant dignity as befits a royal celebration.

The March, used over the opening credits and the end titles, demonstrates Bliss's facility to compose such occasional music at great speed. Having seen only the newsreels of the Tour, he knew exactly what he wanted, the theme taking shape immediately in his mind. Barely forty-eight hours later, the fully orchestrated work was complete.

Bliss's last film score was written for Seven Waves Away (B115) in 1957. Important passages were a passage for solo mouth organ (played by Larry Adler) and a characteristic doom-ridden march to accompany the sinking of the ship.

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35 Letter from Baron Olivier to the present author, 5 July 1979.

## INCIDENTAL MUSIC

In similar vein to film music is Bliss's music written as incidental music and signature tunes to plays and television productions.

The earliest of these was in 1919 when Bliss arranged the music for As you like it (B19) from Tudor and later sources, as Stravinsky was later to do with Pergolesi and 'Pulcinella'. The music was played by a quartet of girls on the stage, in the Forest of Arden, in full costume. This feature received particular attention in The Times review of the play:

And the Elizabethan music performed upon stringed instruments by players in appropriate costumes rather as a part of the play than as a mere interlude or decoration is a very delightful feature. 36

This was followed by music for a production of The Tempest (B27), a work which went towards gaining Bliss the reputation of an enfant terrible.

It was not so much a production as a selection from a series of productions in various styles. Decorative scenes designed by Hugo Rumbald alternated with pseudo-realistic vistas of our own Channel coast. There were almost as many composers as it takes to present a revue. The contributors were Arne, Sullivan, Raymond Roze, Frederic Norton and Bliss whose share consisted of an Overture, the storm-music of the opening scene, and a musical incantation announcing the 'strange shapes' that provide the banquet. The score is for tenor and bass voices (singing 'help'), trumpet, trombone, a large array of timpani (placed around the auditorium, but hidden) side-drum, tenor-drum, bass-drum, gong and piano - a continuation of his experimentation with sound and unusual combinations of instruments.

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36 Anon. 'Shakespeare Day' in The Times, 23 April 1919, p. 16.

E.K said of Bliss:

Our young composers of today are nothing if not unconventional, and Mr Bliss (for whom lately we have had some very clever music) was clearly determined, for his part, to shun the outworn conventions of storm music. Mr Bliss, one imagines, is still in the happy stage of experimenting, and a tonal combination which deprives him of strings and woodwind may here serve his immediate purpose of securing a freakish atmosphere. 37

The critic of The Times thought that:

In this performance, Sullivan and Bliss were both at a disadvantage by being placed next to one another... The two contradict each other...flatly...[and] one wonders whether Arthur Bliss will come through it as Sullivan so conspicuously did into the expression of a clear mind of his own. 38

It was left, however, to Ernest Newman to sound an apocalyptic note when he wrote:

Mr Bliss is a young musician of a curiously lively, questing mind. He has experimented a good deal in unusual instrumental combinations, and always we feel that there is a reason, rooted in the thought itself, for the music being laid out just as it is. Altogether Mr Bliss strikes one as a composer from whom something may be expected. 39

Nothing remains whatsoever of the score for a production of Ira Remsen's play, King Solomon (B45), written whilst Bliss was in America. He had continued his interest in matters theatrical, having been appointed musical director of the local theatre in Santa Barbara during his stay, as well as taking a more direct part by acting in certain productions. There may have been much more incidental music written for some of these productions, but it has also disappeared into oblivion.

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37 E.H., 'The Tempest music' in The Daily Telegraph, 5 February 1921, p.8.

38 Anon. 'The "Tempest" music in The Times, 5 February 1921, p. 6.

39 E.Newman, 'The Week in Music' in The Manchester Guardian, 10 February 1921, p. 4.

Some twenty years later, in 1945, Bliss returned to the medium by writing some music for his wife's radio play Memorial Concert (B91). The story dealt with a young composer, who, at college or academy, met and fell in love with a very promising young violinist. They married and became quite eminent in their various spheres, when he left her for a rich American girl whom he married. However, a fatal accident befell him after finishing a violin concerto. At a concert, given in his memory, his first wife, now a famous violinist, plays the concerto for the first time, and in the audience is his second wife, and her thoughts are expressed while she listens to the music. From this score, Bliss was able to extract a concert piece entitled 'Theme and Cadenza'.

A typical English pastoral piece of music for oboe and violin was written for use as an integral part in J.B. Priestley's play, Summer Day's Dream (B95), first given in August 1949. This was Priestley's first play following his collaboration with Bliss on the libretto for the opera "The Olympians".

As for signature tunes for radio and television, Bliss wrote a perfect miniature for the programme Your Questions Answered (B83) or Answering You in February 1944, just before resigning his post of Director of Music at the BBC. Typically, much thought went into these few bars, with bold and soft sections to imitate a person calling and the resultant echo. Similarly for War in the Air (B106), one of the BBC Televisions' first major documentaries, about the RAF in the 2nd World War, Bliss produced music for the opening and closing titles in the form of a memorable and suitable march. When the RAF later asked for a concert march, this provided the basis and was extended into "Salute to the RAF".

In 1960, he produced some music for the service run by ABC Television (B111). It is not clear whether this was used although a recording was made. The signature tune consisted of a moderato maestoso in typical fashion, and the interval music a soft, lilting, gentle waltz. Also in 1960, the BBC commissioned some special introductory music for their major television production, entitled Age of Kings (B121), a compressed presentation of the plays of Shakespeare dealing with the Plantagenet Kings. The prelude is a royal fanfare which might have greeted any of the Kings and which sets the scene, the choral

evokes the solemnity of court life and the postlude begins and ends with a flourish for brass in true Bliss fashion. The main theme is majestic and memorable.

For a major BBC-ITN television documentary film, The Royal Palaces of Britain (B145), shown on Christmas Day, 1966, Bliss contributed a score consisting of some five sections. The programme, directed by Anthony de Lotbinière and narrated by Kenneth Clark, showed the palaces, their history and their art treasures for the first time on television.

The music helped to describe the historical events which took place in these various palaces - e.g. when the cameras went into Holyrood House, the murder of Rizzio was described by visuals of chairs overturned, doors flung open and a body being dragged along, accompanied by horrific music.



## MUSIC FOR BRASS BAND

Arthur Bliss spent the last three months of 1935 in making an extensive tour of investigation into some of the lesser known aspects of English music-making for a series of articles destined for the BBC journal, 'The Listener'. It was while on this tour that Bliss encountered for the first time the evocative sounds produced by a Northern amateur brass band. To write for such a body of players would reflect his delight and interest in scoring for brass and his enthusiasm in producing music for virtuoso soloists even if, in this medium, they remained nameless. Thus the Kenilworth Suite (B72) came to be written within twelve months as the test piece for the annual Crystal Palace Festival. There is no doubt that the composer was pleased with the performances he heard:

As to the playing itself, Mr Bliss afterwards expressed his great delight with the very high standard of technique and musicianship displayed by many of the bands - a fluency and ease of execution which, he said, never failed to amaze him. He felt, however, that some bands were inclined to concentrate on technical brilliance and neglect the more artistic side of their playing.

The reviewer continued :

The whole work is melodious and not involved harmonically and should make a welcome addition to the small but steadily growing list of original works for brass. 40

Kenilworth has since become a band 'classic' along with works like Elgar's 'Severn Suite', Ireland's 'Dawnland Suite' and Howell's 'Pageantry'. The music itself is martial in style, as befits the subject, concerning the visit of Queen Elizabeth to Kenilworth Castle in 1575. There are fanfare-like figures in the texture, something at which Bliss particularly excels. The second movement has a refreshing lyricism about it. It is indicative of the composers' feeling that the chief characteristic of English music is its poetical and lyrical character, contemplative rather than passionate. It uses the soloists to define the

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40 D.W., 'The National Brass Band Festival' in The Musical Times, October 1936, p. 936.

tone colours inside the brass band. The third movement of Kenilworth is a march and has become popular in its own right; from its Elgarian introduction through to its exciting coda, it is well conceived writing.

Other marches for military band which followed, The First Guards (B112) and Call to Adventure (B129) were cast in a similar vein but equally effective.

The Belmont Variations (B133) of 1963, named Belmont after the birthplace in Massachusetts, USA of the composer's wife, was conceived as a test piece for the National Brass Band Finals at the Royal Albert Hall in 1963.

Two interesting comments about the test-piece appeared in The British Bandsman from the competitors themselves:

...The Belmont Variations, Easington Colliery (Co. Durham) say: "We believe it will be a brass band original for the connoisseur".

Crookhall Colliery, who say it is a good test-piece, add: "Bandsmen are finding it very interesting." 41

No member of the band escapes the testing process in this work of considerable charm and character. Following a short statement the theme is introduced, calling for smooth presentation, and leading to six variations and a Finale. Solo instruments play their part, and an interesting cadenza for cornet, euphonium and trombone is a feature of the work.

Two other works remain in this part of the catalogue, another march The Linburn Air (B140) for military band and Salute to Lehigh (B155), an extended fanfare-type piece written for an American college band in 1968.

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41 D. Neilson, "Brass Band Original -for the Connoisseur" in The British Bandsman, 28 September 1963, p. 3.

## FANFARES

In addition to the above, for full brass or military band, are the brass pieces for small combinations of instruments, including his fanfares, most of which were written as Master of the Queen's Musick and by which he is generally now remembered. Prior to 1953, when he was appointed Master, he had written only a handful of such pieces. Of these, Fanfare for Heroes (B64) and A Fanfare for a Dignified Occasion (B75), often mistaken as one of the fanfares written specially for the wedding of Princess Elizabeth in 1947, are regularly performed today. Suffice to say, that, as with all his compositions, large or small, Bliss took great pains over them and put much thought into them. The Peace Fanfare for Children (B86) of 1944 for the BBC is a good example - its theme is based on the popular Viennese air "O, du lieber Augustin". The end of World War II was only nine months away.

When appointed Master of the Queen's Musick in the autumn of Coronation Year, Bliss was, from the outset, determined to make something new and memorable of that office.<sup>42</sup> He was conscious of his place in a tradition of ceremonial music that stretched back to Handel, Purcell, Blow and beyond. He was also aware that great national events - a Coronation, Royal weddings and births, an Investiture of a Prince of Wales, become part of a nation's history, and that the music he might compose for such occasions would become part of that heritage. So it was that he suggested that several fanfares might be written for the wedding service of Princess Margaret (B122) in May 1960.

The precedent was set and Bliss wrote similar pieces for the weddings of Princess Alexandra in 1963 (B135) and Princess Anne (B176) ten years later.

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<sup>42</sup> George Dannatt, Arthur Bliss: 1891-1975 in Lewis Foreman, Catalogue of the Complete Works (Novello 1980), p.19.

That Bliss was interested by genuine music makers, however removed from the norm they might be, was evident in a piece he wrote, in 1961, for the America Wind Symphony which specialised in giving concerts on rivers in a specially-designed barge, some 120 feet in length. Greetings to a City (B126) was the result, a piece that exploited the antiphonal effects of separately placed brass choirs.

By composing a Gala Fanfare (B131) for the opening of the Commonwealth Games in Australia (November 1962), Bliss was the first holder of his office to write special music for an important royal occasion outside Britain. The fanfare was initially written at the invitation of Professor Frank Callaway who was Director of Music for the Games. Private individuals also asked Bliss for fanfares - e.g. Colonel Langfield when High Sherrif of Dorset in 1963 (B1236) and Sir Gilbert Inglefield as Lord Mayor of London in 1967 (B142). Sir Gilbert always thought it a pity that no contemporary ceremonial music or fanfare had been composed for functions in the City. The only traditional music for a Lord Mayor was, and still is, the March of Handel's 'Scipio'. This fanfare was subsequently used on several occasions throughout Sir Gilbert's year of office. William Mann thought

the fanfare...substantial in harmony  
and in brass antiphony. If I were  
Lord Mayor, I would want it to be  
played at every occasion on which  
I was officiating. 43

Great thought was exercised by Bliss, as can be seen from the various extant sketches, on the ceremonial music for the Investiture of Prince Charles as Prince of Wales (B156) at Caernavon Castle in July 1969. Again antiphonal effects were achieved by placing a brass choir on each of the three towers - a stroke of genius on the composer's part. Commentators (including Buckingham Palace) were

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43 W.S. Mann, 'Richness of new violin concerto' in The Times, 20 November 1967, p. 11.

agreed that they added to the dignity of the scene and were played brilliantly by the trumpeters of the Royal Military School of Music under Colonel Jaeger.

It is perhaps characteristic that Bliss's last piece of music should be written in this vein : his music for a BBC documentary about British architecture, Spirit of the Age (B181). Bliss also conducted the players at the recording, the last time he was active professionally in the musical world.

## CHAMBER MUSIC

Some of Bliss's earliest works were chamber works. Later in his 20's, he wrote an early String Quartet (B10), dedicating it to Edward J. Dent who had helped the composer so much in his Cambridge days. It had its first London performance whilst Bliss was on active service in France in 1915. Lady Elgar attended this performance and afterwards wrote to Bliss saying that she liked it very much indeed. 44

The Daily Telegraph thought that the quartet had

...much that is good and the  
promise of still better things  
to come. 45

After a later performance, The Standard agreed:

His music has a simple, fresh  
and straightforward expression,  
typically British, but none the  
less aesthetically valuable on  
that score. 46

A feature of Bliss's works in the decade following the first World War is the unconventional use of voices, combined with unusual combinations of instruments : this may be seen in Madame Noy (B17), the Rhapsody (B20) and Rout (B23). This use of novel techniques (such as vocalising) was inspired by the approach of Les Six and Stravinsky. Bliss paid a musical visit to Paris in 1919 for which, being uncertain of Ravel's whereabouts at the time, the music critic Edwin Evans provided him with an introduction to another French composer, Maurice Delage, who placed him in touch with the various currents of French musical life.

Madame Noy (B17) the first of three very characteristic works, came before the public for the first time in June 1920. The setting is for soprano with flute, clarinet, bassoon, harp, viola and bass. It makes a piquant background to the gruesome story, with its wealth of opportunities for musical illustration. Compared

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44 Letter from Lady Elgar quoted in  
Arthur Bliss, As I Remember (Faber and Faber 1970), pp. 23-4.

45 Anon. 'Aeolian Hall' in The Daily Telegraph, 26 June 1915, p.6.

46 Anon. 'The Philharmonic Quartet' in The Standard, 13 November  
1915, p. 8.

with what had gone before, it established the direction which Bliss was to take. Madame Noy is also part of an English movement which culminated in Walton's Facade of 1923. A rather sour note was sounded in the Westminster Gazette after the concert:

Less effective was an elaborate would-be humorous song, Madame Noy, by Arthur Bliss, which had not been heard before. This was a setting of some verses of the nonsense order for voice, flute, clarinet, bassoon, viola, double-bass and harp, though what there was in such childish lines to induce anyone to expend so much energy in the setting of them it was hard to discover. 47

The second Chamber Rhapsody (B20) was the next work to reach the public, which it did in October 1920, in two performances within a few days. It is a work for soprano, tenor, flute, cor anglais and bass, the two voices vocalising on 'Ah' throughout and being placed as instruments in the ensemble. In many ways, this Rhapsody is more personal than Madame Noy. It is one of Bliss's most poetical works, and, since the poetry is in gentler vein, the improved sense of definition attracted less notice than the more salient characteristics of his other works, in which the colouring was in brighter hues. The work was accepted for publication by the Carnegie Trust, and when the score in due course made its appearance there were many who were surprised to find how straightforward was a work which, like Madame Noy, had aroused sharply divided comment.

The Carnegie Trust report described the work as

...a delicate and sensitive piece of work with great melodic charm, and a pure and classical sense of beauty. A distinctive point in the texture is that the voices are used as instruments and take their place not as soloists but as strands in the general design. 48

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47 Anon. 'Miss Thursfield's Recital in Westminster Gazette, 25 June 1920, p. 5.

48 C.U.K.T. Annual Report for year ending 31 December 1921, p. 50.

Edwin Evans, writing after the second performance,  
because the first performances was inadequate, thought  
    ...it was heard under better conditions,  
    and made a deeper impression.  
    Mr Bliss is much more definite than we  
    thought him. 49

Then, as if with malice aforethought, Bliss produced Rout (B23), the first performance of which was given at the Baroness d'Erlanger's house in December 1920. The original version is for soprano, flute, clarinet, harp, string quartet, bass, glockenspiel and side drum, but it was subsequently been arranged for full orchestra and given as an interlude during the 1921 season of the Russian Ballet.

The title is used in its significance of revelry, and the music conveys an impression such as one might gather at an open window at carnival time. The singer is given a series of meaningless syllables chosen for their phonetic effect. Its infectious gaiety made Rout very popular, and it was probably the composition which contributed most to the portrait of Bliss which the musical world was making for itself.

After the first performance, The Times, found it "exceedingly clever". However, like most of the critics at that time, the writer did not take Bliss seriously:

Having heard several of these whimsical excursions one begins to wonder where they are leading. Are they forming an individual style with which Mr Bliss will be able to say something when he has really got something to say, or is he becoming a fashionable joker? 50

The Conversations (B24) which followed immediately were written in 1920 and performed for the first time in January 1921. They consist of five pieces for violin, viola, violoncello, flute (alternating with bass-flute) and oboe (alternating cor anglais). The subtitles are: 'The Committee Meeting', 'In the Wood', 'In the Ball-room', 'Soliloquy' and 'In the Tube at Oxford Circus'. Although this

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49 Edwin Evans, 'Wigmore Hall' in Pall Mall Gazette, 14 October 1921, p. 50.

50 Anon. 'A musical "Rout" in The Times, 17 December 1920, p. 10.



instrumental ingenuity is conspicuous, much of this interest is polyphonic, especially in the first and last numbers. 'The Committee' seems to have had a chairman of more than usual obstinacy, who continued to have his own way by persevering in spite of interruptions. Bliss was preoccupied solely with musical effects, and finds music even in the rumble that drowns conversation in the Tube, and the soliloquy, for cor anglais, is an absorbing piece of unaccompanied cantilena.

The critic in The Daily Telegraph thought

Some of this music is witty, some of it is long-winded, some of it would easily bear repetition.

The "Soliloquy"...is hardly likely to interest anyone but the player, and he must be a master of woodwind. 51

On the other hand, The Times continued to treat Bliss not too seriously, saying that

..."A committee meeting" is laughable, and its second "In the Wood", is musical, but it tails off, and somehow we missed the joke of the finale about "the Tube at Oxford-circus"; our mistake, no doubt. 52

However, it was Ernest Newman, in the Sunday Times who again came to Bliss's defence by saying it is the best of the new works, its superiority coming from the fact that he is really a subtle and original harmonic thinker. 53

A second String Quartet (B41) was written in America in 1924 but subsequently disappeared. The score only came to light after the death of the composer in 1975.

Three years later, at the request of the America patroness Mrs Elizabeth Sprague Coolidge, Bliss wrote a quintet for oboe and strings (B59) with Len Goossens in mind as soloist. The work explores many of the oboe's potentialities as a solo instrument—different

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51 Anon. 'Modern Chamber Music in The Daily Telegraph, 21 April 1921, p. 13.

52 Anon. 'The "French Six" in The Times, 21 April 1921, p. 13.

53 E. Newman, 'The Week's Music' in The Sunday Times, 24 April 1921, p. 6.

tone colours of the three registers, rapid light staccato notes and sostenuto phrasing. The first two movements are predominantly pastoral, but the finale is wacious and rhythmical, making use of a tune called 'Connelly's Jig'. This was suggested to Bliss by the music critic Edwin Evans; normally the composer was not of the folk-song school. Following the quintet's first performance in Italy, the Italian critics were agreed that its most successful feature was

...the blend of the tone of the oboe with that of the strings [which was] possible because of the competence and the specific taste with which Bliss has treated this most indole instrument, and also because of the greatest ability and technical perfection of the performer. 54

This was followed three years later by a similar work, a quintet for clarinet and strings (B65); again the personality of a great player, in this case Frederick Thurston, provided the incentive. The quintet is constructed in four movements of which the middle two carry the most weight. The opening movement is a flow of 'conversation' between the five instruments - the clarinet starts the discussion, after which the viola joins in, then the cello, and last of all the two violins add their comments. The second movement is an extended Scherzo, strenuous and dramatic, calling for vital rhythmic playing from all the five instruments. The third is a rhapsodic romance, well suited to the melodic powers of the clarinet, while the Finale is all sprightly brilliance, with cross rhythms to add to the zest.

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54 Anon. 'Concerto Coolidge' in Gazzetta di Venezia, 12 September 1927, p. 5 (translation).

The Times critic said of the composer, this work, and the previous one, that he seemed definitely to have passed into a different phase of musical thought from that which dominated him when his work came conspicuously before the public some ten years previously. He continued :

He is no longer captivated by effects  
or tempted to follow the examples  
of contemporaries.

Apart from a word of criticism about the texture, he thought the work and its intepretation admirable. 55

Bliss dedicated his Sonata for Viola and Piano (B68) to Lionel Tertis who gave its first performance with Solomon at the piano. The writing abounds in broadly sweeping and expressive phrases for the viola, whose tone is scrupulously considered in the balance with the piano. The first movement, restless and perturbed in character, is an admirable piece of writing. The Andante is viola music par excellence in its sombre, elegiac expressiveness. The Finale is a spirited furiant, in effect a very quick gigue. In an Epilogue the sombre mood of the earlier part of the work returns, with impressive use of material from the first movement. Critical reaction was favourable, many saying that it was a work of high interest and considerable beauty. However, one or two thought that the third movement, the 'Furiant', was not perhaps quite so well suited to its medium.

This work must count, along with the Clarinet Quintet, as Bliss's richest and most mature production, and is a most distinguished contribution to twentieth-century English chamber music.

The invitation to write a string quartet for the Pro Arte Quartet again came from Mrs Coolidge whilst Bliss was visiting Professor of Music at the University of California in 1940. The resultant String Quartet No 3 (B80) had its first London performance given by the Griller String Quartet in the composer's presence at a National Gallery Concert. The first movement (Allegro cor brio) is framed by an Andante maestoso - a prologue that turns into an epilogue. The ensuing Allegretto grazioso, a subtle schezo with

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55 Anon. 'The Kutcher Quartet' in The Times, 20 February 1933, p. 8.

quite a few double-stoppings for the leader, shows the lighthearted side of Bliss's creative personality at its most characteristic. A contrasted Sostenuato follows which forms the work's centre of gravity, and it ends with a Vivace Finale. The work was favourably received, it being described as intellectually well founded and vigorous.

It was as a result of the performance of the third Quartet that the Griller Quartet asked Bliss to compose a new work to celebrate the 20th anniversary of this coming together as a quartet. They subsequently played the String Quartet No 4 (B96) for the first time at the Edinburgh Festival in September 1950.

The Quartet is written for virtuoso players and is difficult music to play. Indeed the third movement, a Scherzo, was sometimes played separately by the Grillers in their master classes to show what difficulties a string quartet could be faced with, and how they could be overcome.

There are the usual four movements. The first is forceful in character and has a contrasting section marked by a long flowing tune. The second movement, starting and finishing with a soft dissonance, is contemplative, with the strings at times muted. The Scherzo, beginning with a uprush for the four instruments, is to be played at top speed. The last movement is laid out in alternate sections of slow and quick, with a quiet coda to bring the work to an end. Critics thought the work showed ample invention and contained many happy ideas, the two middle movements sounding a new note in Bliss's music, the slow movement being particularly striking for a shadowy and fugitive quality which transformed itself into something more robust but still half veiled in the scherzo.

## INSTRUMENTAL MUSIC

Scattered through the Bliss catalogue are only one or two works which involve piano and a solo instrument or other forces. Two feature the clarinet - the early Two pieces for Clarinet and piano (B9) and an Andante Tranquillo (B55), written for Frederick Thurston, now unfortunately lost. In 1970, Bliss contributed a piece towards Music for a Prince (B163), taking as his theme the melody (a Welsh hymn tune) of the interlude music from his Investiture Music of the previous year. A year later he wrote a Praeludium for Organ (B169), for an American friend and organist Dr. Fred Tulan who has since played the piece around the world. It was obvious that it is a work which Bliss 'heard' for full orchestra but finally noted for organ.

## PIANO MUSIC

It was inevitable that Arthur Bliss would compose many works for the piano, his own instrument. As a child he wanted to be a concert pianist, and although his career took a different path, he remained a fine executant throughout his life. At Cambridge, he studied with Ursula Creighton, a pupil of Busoni, and in 1910 had the experience of hearing Busoni himself play. Some very early pieces dating from about 1910 onwards and written whilst he was at Cambridge - May-Zeeh (B4), a Suite (B6), an Intermezzo (B7) and Valses Fantasques (B8) - were privately published. Bliss only returned to the medium after the First World War for a brief time and produced another handful of highly individual works. Bliss (B35), a one-step, is for example a cross between Scott Joplin and Percy Grainger's 'Country Gardens' and captures the flavour of the 1920's perfectly. Whilst in America, he wrote four works which show a complete masterly understanding of the piano resources - Masks (B46), a set of four pieces, a Toccata (B48), the Suite for Piano (B49) and Two Interludes (B50). Each of the pieces bears the Bliss imprint : short notes on strong beats, use of three staves to encompass the harmonic and percussive thought which was developed to its final limit in the Piano Sonata (B98) of 1952, trills, syncopation and a 'ragtime' idiom as in the 'piumosso' section of the Toccata. The 'Elegy' in the Suite for Piano of 1925 is dedicated to the memory of Bliss's brother Kennard who had been killed in action at Thiepval on the Somme in 1916 at the age of 24. Kennard had been a poet, painter and musician (playing the clarinet) and would have been a powerful stimulating critic of the music which his brother Arthur was to write. It is also in this Suite that a favourite rhythm with the composer, that of the polonaise, first manifested itself. He was to use it time and time again through his career, for example in the music for Christopher Columbus (B93), the Belmont Variations (B133) and the Metamorphic Variations (B172) of 1972. Of the Two Interludes (B50), the first has real emotional power and beauty, and is without a moment's uncertainty or hesitation. The second,

dedicated to Ethel Eichheim, who with her husband, the leader of the second violins in the Boston Symphony Orchestra, were friends of the composer in Santa Barbara, California, is much lighter in style.

The 1952 Sonata for Piano (B98) was written as a 'thank-you' present for the brilliant but ill-starred young pianist Noel Mewton Wood who had given many splendid performances of the Bliss Piano Concerto. It is a pungent, masculine, dynamic piece in three movements whose skilful blending of pungency and lyricism recall Prokofiev, of whose piano sonatas Bliss was in fact a great admirer. Scott Goddard said of the piece that it was remarkably interesting :

The writing is energetic and muscular, the thought eloquent. It is altogether an important addition to contemporary piano forte music. 56

With the Triptych for Piano (B162) of 1970, Bliss returned to his first love. The first of the three movements is naturally reflective (it was originally called 'Romance'), the drama in the second rests on the contrast between rhetorical statements and bravura passages, and the last movement is carried on a vivacious rhythmic pulse and ends with brilliance.

Joan Chissell wrote of Triptych's success:

Each of the three pieces suggested undiminished appreciation of the instrument's potential. The finale perhaps needed crisper texture, but Mr Kentner's energy never flagged. 57

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56 S. Goddard, 'Muscular music' in News Chronicle, 25 April 1925, p. 3.

57 J. Chissell, 'Louis Kentner' in The Times, 22 March 1971, p. 8.

## OPERAS

Bliss worked at his romantic opera The Olympians (B94) unremittingly between 1945 and 1949, mostly in the isolation of his wood-encircled music room at Pen Pits in Somerset. His librettist, J.B. Priestley, who had suggested the subject at the first Cheltenham Festival in 1945, was then living on the Isle of Wight and the collaboration, apart from occasional meetings at the publishers in London, was largely by post. This apparently worked well for both parties.

The story is based on the old legend that when the gods of Olympus were no longer worshipped, they became a troupe of strolling players, wandering about Europe century after century. Now and then their divine power returns to them for a few hours. This is what happens in the opera, the action taking place in the South of France in the 1830's.

Bliss's fine music is rich and warming and the work earned the approval of two of the country's severest critics of opera, E.J. Dent and Ernest Newman.

The opera contains some of Bliss's most powerful music, beautifully orchestrated. Melodic and particularly rhythmic definitions is however rather at a premium in Act I (long stretches of 6/8) but the voltage increases perceptibly after the 'gods' have become aware of their impending good fortune and Acts 2 and 3 contain the most sustainedly memorable invention. The occasional lapse into facile melodism is offset by the studied savagery of Mars' music and of Jupiter's throwing of the thunderbolt at Lavatte. Lyrically, too, there are fine moments - Hector and Madeleine's nocturnal love-duets in Acts 1 and 2 and the beauty of the 'Ode to Venus' also in Act 2.

However, the opera was produced in the uncertain post-war artistic climate of Covent Garden in the autumn of 1949, with quite inadequate rehearsal. Peter Brook was the talented producer,



Karl Rankl, the uninspired, prejudiced conductor and it immediately became clear that any real working together would be minimal, and so it was, with disastrous results, that the third act was virtually unrehearsed.

The first act was well prepared and was completely successful. The second did not go th plan because the ballet dancers required could not be taken from the senior company, which was on tour, with the result that they had to make do with comparatively inexperienced junior dancers, including the composer's younger daughter, Karen. They could not be given the prominence which both Bliss and Priestley had asked for in the text, and the whole movements of the chorus and ballet had to be changed, not always for the better. As for act three, adequate rehearsal was impossible, with the result that the composer did not attend the opening night but spent it in the Saville Club.

Many in the audiences, both at the original performances and at the brief revival the following year, were greatly impressed, and a concert performance in 1972 seemed to confirm the intrinsic merit of the operas' whole conception as a full blooded creation. Original critical reaction was inevitably mixed. In 1949, many felt that the third act was too long, the Times noting that the production suffered from too much movement in the second act and not enough in the third. It thought that the performance was fully adequate under Rankl, however, some of Bliss's more complex rhythms needing more polish.

All agreed that Bliss, having proved in his ballets that dramatic music was well within his metier, had expanded his scale, had grown more and more lyrical, had become prodigal with frank tunes and handled a big form with easy mastery.

William McNaught called it a 'singing opera', adding that every character who had a voice was allowed to show it off. The chorus

was also allowed to sing chorally. He added:

Bliss has wisely cleared his idiom  
of modern harmonic astringency.  
He uses quite a lot of common chords  
and progressions.... 58

At the other end of the spectrum, Ernest Newman, though  
admiring the opera for its constant vitality and musical  
imagination, thought the production left a great deal to be  
desired. He continued :

I found it difficult to imagine a  
worse handling of the second act.  
The performance in general...was  
mediocre. The ballet was poor,  
the Venus (a non-vocal part)  
ineffectual. 59

Bliss's second opera Tobias and the Angel (B118) was commissioned  
by the BBC and was composed between 1958 and 1959. It was not a  
completely new discipline to Bliss for his considerable knowledge  
in composing music for films stood him in good stead when it came  
to writing music in a very concentrated form. Bliss again had  
a good producer, Rudolf Cartier, but he was not entirely pleased  
with the final production because instead of being rather austere,  
it was, according to Bliss, 'supercolossal' and all the men wore  
beards which caused difficulties when trying to sing. 60

The opera (to a libretto by Christopher Hassall after the  
Apocryphal Book of Tobit) starts uncertainly but after the duel  
with the fish is consistently riveting. The conflict between the  
powers of darkness and light is graphically portrayed in the  
scene where Asmoday, the demon, is overcome by Azarias who reveals  
himself as the Archangel Raphael. Here Bliss is at the height of  
his powers as a dramaturgist. The scene when Tobit's sight is  
restored is also very moving and sensitively handled by the composer.

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58 W. McNaught, 'The Olympians' in The Musical Times, October 1949,  
p. 367.

59 E. Newman, 'The Olympians - II' in The Sunday Times, 9 October 1949,  
p. 2.

60 GRANADA TV Archive Interview between Michael Chanan and Sir  
Arthur Bliss, 14 April 1974.

Hassall's libretto was thought to have been extremely successful, and Bliss's music lyrical and colourful, in similar vein to that which had served him, with increasing maturity, for the last quarter of a century. The writer in The Times pointed out, however, that Bliss remains idiomatically what he was in The Olympians and even in Checkmate and Things to Come. 61

Cedric Wallis remarked that Bliss does however write with consideration for the voice, and that the production was amongst the best operatic occasions seen on the television screen. 62

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61 Anon. 'Bliss's new opera for television' in The Times, 18 May 1960, p. 18.

62 C. Wallis, 'Tobias and the Angel on television' in The Musical Times, July 1960, p. 432.

## CHORAL WORKS

Bliss's choral works for various forces, but excluding solo songs with piano accompaniment, represent a sizeable part of his full catalogue.

In the spring of 1928, the Bliss's visited Sicily with friends, and it was at Syracuse, on the site of the classical fountain of Arethusa, that the ideas of a choral work, a celebration of a Sicilian day from dawn to dark, came to the composer. The poems he chose to set in the Pastoral (B61) ranged over the centuries from Theocritus through Poliziano, Ben Jonson and John Fletcher to Robert Nichols and form an exquisitely selected miniature anthology. Bliss reverted to a similar scheme in later works - eg in Morning Heroes, and Benjamin Britten was to adopt a similar idea in many of his works, from the 'Serenade' onwards.

The Pastoral was dedicated to Sir Edward Elgar who wrote to Bliss that the Pan sections suited him best. It represents the composer at his most lyrical and seductive, in a mood far removed from some of the rugged vehemence which frequently characterises his music. One cannot fail to be enchanted and moved by the 'Naiads' Music,' with the flute flickering across the female voices, the tender 'Pigeon Song', the brilliant 'Song of the Reapers', and the lovely closing pages for unaccompanied chorus.

Immediately following is the Serenade (B62) which is an attempt to revive the tradition of the vocal serenata in which the lover himself sings his songs of courtship. It was one of the first works to be written after the Bliss's had settled in Hampstead. There are four movements : (1) an overture depicting "a somewhat swashbuckling and cocksure fellow", (2) his serenade - a setting of Spenser's sonnet 'Fair is my love', (3) an orchestral portrait of his lady and (4) a song in her praise - Sir John Wotten's 'Tune on my pipe the praises of my love.' This delightful and melodious work is by turns sparkling, humorous, moving, tender in the idyll, ardent in the two poems, and most colourfully scored.

However the writer in The Times unfairly thought these songs [to be] of rather tame vocal line, [with] rather elaborate orchestral decoration, leav[ing] one wondering what the composer has really intended to do with this Serenade of many ideas, none fully realized. 63

In the following year, 1930, came one of Bliss's major achievements, the choral symphony Morning Heroes (B63), a requiem for those who died during World War I. It was said to have been an attempt by the composer to exercise a recurrent nightmare of the trenches - Arthur had spent some five years on active service, mainly in France - but not entirely successful. This spirit of conflict was to recur in many works for example Things to Come (B69), Checkmate (B74), Miracle in the Gorbals (B87), Meditations on a theme by John Blow (B109) Tobias and the Angel (B118) and The Beatitudes (B127) to name all but a few works.

Bliss again resorted to the anthology scheme, choosing poems as different in age and style as Homer, Li-Tai-Po, Walt Whitman, Robert Nichols (an old family friend) and Wilfred Owen. This catholicity of texts is undoubtedly a signal factor in the determining of the music's character which is for the most part bracingly unparochial and untainted by the complacency which English composers of the period (with perhaps the exception of Walton and 'Belshazzar's Feast' of the following year) were wholly unable to steer clear of in their choral writing.

The opening melodrama, 'Hector's farewell to Andromache' is particularly fine; an orator who has a very impressive part, speaks against the background of the orchestra. This was not the first time that an orator had been used in this way: Vaughan Williams wrote for one in 'Aethiopia saluting the colours' of 1908, and Elgar in 'A Voice in the Desert' (Opus 77), written during World War I. Later, Owen's 'Spring Offensive' is accompanied only by distant cannon-fire in the form of two sets of timpani, but the entry of the

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63 Anon. 'London Symphony Orchestra' in The Times, 19 March 1930, p. 12.

music is exquisitely timed and the return of the F-major cannon-fire at the orchestral climax of the finale is a dramatic and compelling stroke.

Bliss was often found at his best when perpetrating violence in music, and the seething tumult of Whitman's 'The City Arming' is matched in music of a rugged and dynamic brilliance. In the slow movement, 'Vigil' Bliss effectively juxtaposes Li-Tai-Po on a young wife whose husband is away at the wars with Whitman on a young soldier far from home. It is music of great tenderness and feeling. Morning Heroes was first performed at the Norfolk and Norwich Triennial Musical Festival in October 1930.

It is worth quoting part of what Sir Arthur wrote about Morning Heroes for the recording, issued in 1975 after his death.

It is an immense satisfaction to me in my 84th year to have this work, written forty five years ago, now permanently on fine records.

So many memories are thereby laid to rest.

I spent most of the years 1915 and 1916 near or in the front line in France, and for long afterwards I was haunted by the atrocious sights and sounds of those times.

There came a moment in after years when I felt I must exorcise these nightmare, and try by music to sublimate them.

Hence this choral symphony, dealing with war, which I wrote in 1929.

There was another compelling reason why I should write such a work, I wanted to pay tribute to the memory of my brother, Kennard, who served in the Royal Field Artillery, and was killed on the Somme just after his twenty fourth birthday.

This symphony has then the character of a pagan requiem, and every movement of the five, except one, ends sorrowfully - The emphasis throughout is not so much on war - as on Courage, the Courage of both men and women. The score bears the dedication:- 'To the memory of my brother, Francis Kennard Bliss, and all other comrades killed in battle'.

The work was well received by the critics, The Times pointing out that

...at last the composer has set himself in his music to reveal thoughts out of many hearts. He has a great deal to say. 64

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64 Anon. 'Norwich Musical Festival' in The Times, 24 October 1930, p. 12.

Twenty years later, Bliss was to return to writing for the voice with The Enchantress (B97). In June 1951, he heard Kathleen Ferrier sing Handel and felt that he must write a work for her. Towards the end of that year therefore he occupied himself with writing an extended scena for her, having consulted a friend, the poet Henry Reed, who suggested that Bliss should set the second Idyll of Theocritus. This Idyll tells of a proud lady of Syracuse, Simaetha, who invokes the aid of sorcery to recapture her faithless lover Delphis. Reed kindly made a free adaptation of the Idyll to be used as a libretto which Bliss found to be a perfect vehicle for dramatic music. He scored the work for an orchestra without clarinets or bassoons, relying on the nasal tone of the oboe and cor anglais, and the sardonic sound of muted brass. Unfortunately it was hardly suitable for Kathleen Ferrier's personality. Everyone who ever met her was struck by her joyous vitality and goodness. Bliss pointed this out one day, but Ferrier only laughed and carried on singing.

After an early performance in London, Arthur Jacobs thought that Miss Ferrier<sup>65</sup> was in her element<sup>66</sup>.

She brought out the dramatic nature of the work, and her singing had passion and beauty. 65

Winifred, Kathleen's sister, recalled an interesting incident:

The only thing I remember Kathleen saying about their rehearsals together was that, in his excitement, Sir Arthur broke one of the keys of her piano! It was an old one, a Cramer that she had won in a piano playing competition when she was 16. She was very much amused by this incident and enjoyed working with Sir Arthur. 66

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65 A.J. 'An All-British Orchestral Concert' in The Musical Times, May 1952, p. 224.

66 Letter from Winifred Ferrier to the present author, 31 May 1979.

Henry Reed also provided Bliss with a poem to set to music, Aubade (B100), as his contribution to 'A Garland for the Queen' in 1953, commissioned by the Arts Council to mark the coronation of Queen Elizabeth II. Reed's light, stimulating but not too associative verse moved Bliss to lithe, full-blooded, completely unmannered music that gathers force gradually from its start with female voices above, culminating in a broad C major conclusion. The critics were agreed that this opening song was the masterpiece of the collection, one or two adding that Bliss had written nothing more sustainedly and spontaneously lyrical. In 1954, as a recently appointed Master of the Queen's Music, Bliss wrote an occasional work, A Song of Welcome (B104) to celebrate the return of the Queen and Duke of Edinburgh from their Royal Tour. Bliss has indicated that the shape of C. Day Lewis's poem was to some extent influenced by the formal design which the composer wished to give to the music, a design largely modelled on that of Henry Purcell's songs of royal welcome. 67 Thus the work has choral and solo numbers and linking orchestral interludes (but no introductory 'symphony'), and its central portions framed by two, almost identical, choruses of jubilation set to the single word 'Welcome' whose varied metrical treatment is noteworthy.

The critic in The Times wrote of the piece :

The opening was ceremonial and brought back echoes of the Coronation, but the soprano solo...provided another indication that as Bliss has outgrown his youthful iconoclasm he has uncovered a vein of fresh and spontaneous English lyricism - his madrigal in A Garland for the Queen was conspicuous for it. 68

After the first public performance, the same writer noted that this

...joyous occasional piece...smacks neither of routine nor of insipidity.  
...both authors can be congratulated on the shift of art that shines from their work. 69

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67 Programme note for the first-concert performance, Royal Albert Hall, 29 July 1954.

68 Anon. 'Master of the Queen's Music' in The Times, 17 May 1954, p. 4.

69 Anon 'Promenade Concert' in The Times, 30 July 1954, p. 11.



Spiritually akin to the orchestral work, Meditations on a Theme by John Blow (B109), is Bliss's cantata The Beatitudes (B127), composed (as was Britten's 'War Requiem') for the 1962 Coventry Festival (which included the consecration of the new cathedral). It is perhaps the most distinguished of a number of choral works dating from the 1960's and 70's. Menace and aggression are again well to the forefront here : the orchestral prelude 'A Troubled World' is inspired by the sentiments of John Donne and suggests some high-scale cataclysm. Perhaps Bliss was again trying to exorcise memories of war, this time the Second World War and in particular the bombings of Coventry when the old cathedral was destroyed by enemy action. Bliss once again reverted to the anthology form, now with the assistance of Christopher Hassall, who suggested the subject. It was felt that the work would prove too cumbersome if each of the nine Beatitudes were treated separately and that, if they were to be grouped, the groups should be interspersed with appropriate poetry. Together composer and librettist realised a memorable work for orchestra with a large percussion department, organ, mixed chorus and soloists, all of which combine to evoke the content of the Beatitudes as set off by poems largely drawn from the metaphysical poets. Bliss was as unfortunate in the first performance of this work as he had been forty years earlier with the Colour Symphony at Gloucester. For Coventry, he had written a religious cantata with a particular ambience in mind, that of the newly-built Cathedral, where his work was to inaugurate the Festival. In the event he found he had to conduct his large forces in the entirely unsuitable local theatre. The critics were unanimous in feeling that this cantata could not be given the careful consideration it deserved, nor be rightly appraised, in surroundings so dissimilar from those for which it had been designed.

Andrew Porter called the work:

imaginative in conception, and capably carried out. The idiom, **roughly**, is that of Bliss's ballet and film scores, crossed with the solid merit of the English oratorio tradition. 70

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70 A. Porter, 'The Coventry Festival' in The Musical Times, June 1962, p. 459.

The work was dedicated to the composer's first grand-daughter, Susan.

It was not a big step from The Beautitudes to the next work, also written with a Cathedral setting in mind. The much shorter cantata Mary of Magdala (B132), first performed at the Three Choirs Festival at Worcester Cathedral in 1963, owed its existence to another commission arising through the City of Birmingham Symphony Orchestra via the Feeney Trust. Contralto and bass soloists replace the soprano and tenor soloists of The Beautitudes and the text is more of a piece, being adapted by Christopher Hassall from a seventeenth-century poem, one of his last tasks before his untimely death.

The story relates how Mary Magdalene, returning to the sepulchre in the garden to anoint the body of Christ, found the tomb empty.

There are many deft touches in this score and the accompaniments are thinner and more astringent than is general with Bliss, with some arresting, rather moving, chordal sequences. Mary's part is the most substantial and has led to comparisons between this work and the Brahms's 'Alto Rhapsody'.

Ernest Bradbury called it a

...slight, unpretentious, somewhat earnest work [which] was received politely rather than with enthusiasm. 71

The writer in The Times thought the new work

seems to gain from the fluency of quick composition in a style now grown assured....

While structure of the whole is firm, the incidental beauties are many. Thus the final chorus ...achieves a fragrance that is perhaps new in his music. 72

In December 1962, Bliss was asked by the BBC to compose a chamber work for the 1963 Cheltenham Festival. He decided to write a work for voice with instrumental ensemble rather than a work for instruments alone, and immediately set about finding suitable words. By coincidence, while browsing through a copy of 'The Listener' he alighted on some

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71 E. Bradbury 'Three Choirs Festival' in The Musical Times, October 1963, p. 722.

72 Anon. 'Choral Music from Carissimi to Stravinsky in The Times, 4 September 1963, p. 13.

translations, by Kevin Crossley-Holland, of Old English riddles from the Exeter Book. The search for a text, hardly begun, was ended.

The result was the engaging A Knot of Riddles (B134) for baritone, with orchestra restricted to string and wind quintets, and harp. The Riddles are posed by the singer with realistic accompanying music from the orchestra; the answers are given by the same soloist generally followed by a pertinent orchestral comment or, in two cases, by silence - almost more telling and more laughter-producing.

The Times noted that the work was not profound, but it succeeded in what it set out to do namely to charm and entertain. 73

From the same period comes The Golden Cantata (B137) for tenor soloist, chorus and orchestra, a work based on eight poems especially written by Kathleen Raine. She wrote in the programme that

'the sequence of the poems was an attempt to suggest the evolution of music and how this follows the evolution in the world itself, first of articulate life, then of consciousness and finally of Orphic utterance'.

Poet and composer together achieve a paean of praise for music, 'Music is the Golden Form' as Raine wrote in her last poem, an ode to music. The work was composed for the Quincentenary celebration of the first degree in music given by Cambridge University in 1464.

One critic observed:

Bliss's music treats the words throughout in illustrative terms. It is interesting to see that his response to some of the earlier poems is more original and more striking than to the later ones; the last is set to relatively conventional C major celebratory music, while the first drew from him some haunting and telling harmonic sequences. 74

Stanley Sadie called the Golden Cantata a 'traditionally conceived ceremonial piece' but felt that the texts had a certain relevance but little to inspire. 75

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73 Anon. 'Riddles more charming than profound' in The Times, 12 July 1963, p. 5.

74 Anon. 'A new work by Sir A Bliss' in The Times, 19 February 1964, p. 13.

75 S. Sadie 'Cambridge' in The Musical Times, April 1964, p. 283.

The cantata, The World is Charged with the Grandeur of God (B158), is a setting of three poems by Gerard Manley Hopkins selected for the composer by Peter Pears, and is dedicated to him. For the 1969 Aldeburgh Festival there was to be a concert of music written by those under seventeen and those over seventy-seven. The composer delighted in working with the discipline of the restricted resources available at Aldeburgh that year - three trumpets and four trombones, two flutes, mixed chorus and no soloists. The first and third sections are set for the chorus and brass choir, while the beautiful middle section is for women's voices only accompanied by two flutes. It was felt that it was finely worked and rewardingly written.

Shield of Faith (B180) specially written for the Quincentary of St. Georges' Chapel, Windsor, in 1975 was his last major work. In it, Bliss returned to his favourite anthology format, the poems, one from each of the five countries, being selected and assembled by Canon Stephen Verney, now Bishop of Repton. This selection, though inspiring, was onerous in that every poem - from the first by William Dunbar, to the last, from T.S. Eliot's 'Little Gidding', and including an extract from Opoe's 'Essay on Man' - required different treatment, treatment which should not upset the balance of the whole, a problem which the composer solved in a range of most apt and perceptive musical moods. The setting is for soprano and baritone soloists with full chorus and organ. The whole cantata radiates what might be termed an inner certainty, from the decisive organ introduction to the concluding bar when the organ holds its final chord, after the singers have ceased, in a last 'niete'

The composer did not live to hear Shield of Faith at St George's Chapel, Windsor, on 26 April 1975, for he died on 27 March of that year at his home in St. John's Wood, London, aged eighty-three years and eight months.

## SOLO SONGS

Bliss's solo songs with piano accompaniment form an early part of his output, although a final song cycle was written as late as 1968 and he revised, in 1972, the Three Songs (B34) to poems of W.H. Davies of 1922.

Some most pleasing songs were written in the twenties, amongst which The Fallow Deer at the Lonely House (B43), 1924, a strong and sympathetic setting of Thomas Hardy's poem, along with two songs of 1925-6, Rich or Poor (W.H. Davies) (B51), and A Child's Prayer (B53) (Siegfried Sassoon), all show a marked development upon the Three Romantic Songs (B32) of 1921 and the earlier three W.H. Davies songs. Although A Child's Prayer - written for Barbara, his elder daughter - has a delightfully plaintive and straightforward melody, this is set above an expressive chromatic accompaniment which takes the Prayer out of the nursery into more sophisticated surroundings.

Another song was Bliss's contribution to a collection of settings by thirteen composers of poems by James Joyce published by the Sylvan Press in 1933. Bliss set the poem Simples (B66) from 'Pomes Penyeach' and used, at Joyce's request, a particular Italian refrain. It is said that of all the settings this was Joyce's favourite.

The song, together with a reproduction of Wyndham Lewis's 1922 drawing of the composer, was reprinted in a limited edition by the Oxford Press to mark the occasion of his eightieth birthday in 1971. Two early song cycles deserve a mention. In 1923, Bliss wrote two works which set sequences of poems by the Chinese poet Li-Po : The Ballads of the Four Seasons (B39) was the first, The Women of Yueh (B40), the second. The 'Autumn' and 'Winter' movements of The Ballads treat of war, particularly in the 'alla marcia' rhythm of 'Winter'; the rhythm he was to use again, to such telling effect in 'The City Arming' section of Morning Heroes (B63).

The miniature song-cycle The Women of Yueh was written when Bliss was in America. At the time, the League of Composers, devoted to the promotion of modern music, had just been established in New York,

and it was during the winter of that year that two very active members of the League, Varese and Salzer<sup>o</sup>, invited Bliss to write a short work for one of their concerts. He complied with the request by producing these five songs to poems by one of the greatest Chinese poets, Li-Po. It was originally scored for string quartet and double bass, with flute, oboe, clarinet, bassoon and percussion, but later Bliss made an arrangement for voice and piano. Seventeen years later in 1940, and again in the United States, Bliss wrote music for a very different sequence of five poems by Edna St. Vincent Millay and two by Elinor Wylie. The Seven American Poems (B78) were written in the house at Santa Barbara of Bernard and Irene Hoffmann and dedicated to them. They reflect the composer's sense of disturbance and apprehension, the conflict between his desire to leave America to serve in England, and the anguish of parting from his wife and children. Each of the settings carries the burden of some vanished joy or beauty.

Bliss's last cycle Angels of the Mind (B150), consists of settings of seven poems by Kathleen Raine, to whom the work is dedicated. They are selected for 'The Pythess, and other poems' and 'Stone and Flower'. All seven are mystical poems which consider the nature of reality and the quality of life and death. The angels of the mind are symbols for these seemingly tangible thoughts that bring God closer to Man. Bliss selected the poems mainly for their musical qualities, but they have in common a pre-occupation with angels present not only in the mind, but in nature. Although the workmanship is adroit, this cycle bears no comparison with the impassioned Seven American Poems of almost thirty years earlier in which an equal number of simpler poems, also by women poets, were set with that complete conviction which carries the emotion over into the audience.

## CONCLUSION

Bliss, like any other composer, was influenced both by music written before his time and by some of the music of his contemporaries. A basic influence was the music of the sixteenth and seventeenth centuries that was manifested to him through the teachings of Charles Wood and Edward Dent at Cambridge. If from the sixteenth-century Madrigalists he learned how to handle dissonances, semitonal clashes, 'false relations' and to adopt their tendency towards ambiguity of key, Bliss also learned further from Prucell how to handle dissonances, in the employment of accented short notes on strong beats. It can be seen also from his arrangement of the Set of Act Tunes and Dances (B21), for string orchestra, how Prucell affected the colour and verve of his own writing for the medium, and indeed for the full orchestra or other combination of instruments.

Bliss has always been a composer associated with Sir Edward Elgar. Influences can be detected in the 'Pigeon Song' and the closing pages of the Pastoral of 1928; in the finale of the film music for Things to Come where a flowing Elgarian 'nobilmente' melody movingly complements Cabal's apostrophe to the spirit of adventure and to man's unquenchable thirst for knowledge, and in the March from Welcome the Queen of 1954. Musically he was in many ways Sir Edward's heir - his work has the same Romantic sweep and the orchestration has much of the same virtuosity. Both became Master of the King's (Queen's) Musick and both were skilled at writing occasional pieces. Both wrote a superb work for orchestral strings and both solved the problem of writing for speaker and orchestra. Furthermore they knew each other well.

However Bliss was very much also inclined towards the Gallic influence of Ravel and LesSix, and of the Parisian-based Stravinsky. He signified, many years later, his delight in the music of Ravel by the few words he placed at the head of No 5 of A Knot of Riddles (B134) (A Bookworm), 'Hommage modeste à Maurice Ravel'. Of LesSix, Darius

Milhaud interested him the most and they established a close friendship, especially when in America. As with many modern composers, Stravinsky made a deep impression on Bliss, more especially through the Diaghilev Russian ballets - such influence was by way of helping him to clarify his orchestration and producing a particular orchestral sound rather than in actual musical content. Bliss received a good deal of practical help from Ralph Vaughan Williams and Gustav Holst - they were able to go through and discuss together any work in progress. He was able to repay his debt to both composers by conducting the first performance of a work by each, 'Savitri' by Holst and 'The Shepherds of the Delectable Mountains' by Vaughan Williams. Regular meetings for exchanges of views also took place with John Ireland when they worked near each other, in Chelsea, although correspondence did continue between them up to the 1950s.

Bliss continued to take a great interest in musical developments up to his death. He also used his position to help and back up colleagues, ranging from Britten, Ruth Gipps, Denis Appley and even Oliver Knussen to whom he sent a telegram of good wishes before the performance of his first every work - he was 15 years old at the time.

His was a life that had brought him personal happiness and professional esteem, and a 'professional' he certainly was in every sense of the word. He regarded himself as a 'professional' composer and brought the highest degree of professionalism to bear on all his undertakings. And, in the last analysis, happy any man who can conclude his autobiography with the words with which Bliss concludes his :

The odds against happiness can be so menacingly and terribly weighted that I doubt whether I should wish to be born again. But in this life of mine... I have had much to be grateful for. I had the father that I could have wished, and I have the wife and two daughters that I could have wished. Grandchildren live to carry forward the link from me to the future, and fortune has permitted me to work at what I best love, music. 76



## Appendix A

### CHRONOLOGY

This chronology gives details of some of the lesser-known facts about Arthur Bliss. The information is derived from a wide variety of sources, the more important and interesting being indicated under each entry in brackets, with locations for letters and other source materials.

This documentation is intended to be complimentary to As I Remember (Faber and Faber, 1970), in that it provides fuller and more exact information, and it is offered as a guide to a future biographer.

CHRONOLOGY

1847

March 14 Frank E Bliss (Arthur's father) born

1876

May 10 Miss Agnes Kennard Davis (Arthur's mother)  
(Wednesday) presented at Court (Buckingham Palace) by the  
Countess of Aberdeen.  
(Court Circular, Saturday 13 May 1876 (Lady Bliss))

1888 June

F.E. Bliss appointed a Managing Director of  
the Anglo-American Oil Company (now Esso  
Petroleum Co.)

November

F.E. Bliss appointed Chairman of the company.  
Remained so until 1900, and a Managing Director  
until 1903.

1891

August 2  
(Sunday)

Arthur Edward Drummond Bliss born at 1.50pm,  
at 'Hawthornden', Queen's Ride, Barnes, London  
("Baby's Biography" (Lady Bliss))

August 29

Christened into the Church of England.  
God parents : James Davis  
                  Agnes Davis  
                  Elijah Bliss (grandfather)  
                  Howard Davis (god father)  
                  Archer Vance Pancoast.

1892

September 20 Francis Kennard Bliss born.

1894

June 21 Howard James Bliss born.

1895

March 18

Agnes Kennard Bliss (née Davis), Arthur's mother,  
dies in Nice. Buried in Mortlake Cemetary, 27  
March 1895.

1898

September 21 Arthur sent to The Norland Place School,  
164 Holland Park Avenue.

1902

January 20 Arthur sent to Bilton Grange School.

1903

December 27 Arthur's first visit to France.

1904

January 1 Arthur's first visit to Switzerland.

June 20 Arthur plays in Bilton Grange School concert.

1905

March 11 Arthur plays a duet in the Town Hall, Rugby.

September 28 Arthur enters Rugby School.

1907

March 25 Arthur confirmed in Rugby School Chapel by  
(Monday) the Bishop of Worcester.

March 31 Arthur takes his first communion in Rugby School  
(Sunday) Chapel.

1909

December 16 Arthur gains Exhibition for Pembroke College,  
Cambridge.

1910

October 10 Arthur enters Pembroke and is placed in  
Mr Wilson's house, and in class "upper middle one."

October 21 Matriculated (pensioner) at Pembroke.

Michaelmas Exempted from Parts I and II (Class II): Previous  
(Oxford and Cambridge Board) Examinations.  
(Cambridge University Reporter, 18 October 1910,  
p. 135 and 29 December 1910, p. 451.)

1911

- Easter Term                   Examined and approved for the examination in Music for the degree of Mus.B. (Part 1, Class 1)  
Examiners were C.V. Stanford, Charles Wood and Alexander Wood.  
(Cambridge University Reporter, 6 June 1911, p. 1122.)
- February 10                   Takes part in Bach's Mass in B minor  
(Cambridge University Musical Society)
- June 6                         Takes part in Vaughan Williams' Sea Symphony  
(without the Scherzo)  
(Cambridge University Musical Society)
- Michaelmas                   Examined and approved for the second special examination in History, for the ordinary B.A. degree (Part 1, Class II)  
(Cambridge University Reporter, 16 December 1911 pp. 380-1.)

1913

- Easter Term                   Examined and approved for the examination in Music for the degree of Mus.B. (Part II).  
Examiners were C.V. Stanford, Arthur Somervell and Cyril Rootham.  
(Cambridge University Reporter, 3 June 1913, p. 1160.)  
Examined and approved for the special examination in History (Part II, Class II)  
(Cambridge University Reporter, 14 June 1913, p. 1281.)
- June 14                       Awarded B.A. and Mus.B. at a Congregation.  
(Cambridge University Reporter, 17 June 1913, pp. 1329 and 1331.)
- November                     Entered Royal College of Music as a student of Composition and Theory.

1914

- July                          Leaves the Royal College of Music
- August 31                   Enlists into the Inns of Court Officer's Training Corps. Kennard Bliss enlists in the 2/28th Battalion County of London Regiment (Artists' Rifles) as Private 1770.
- October 4                    Discharged on appointment into a commission.
- October 5                    Appointed to a temporary Commission as 2nd Lieutenant, 13th Battalion Royal Fusiliers (Army records (Ministry of Defence))

1915

March 30 Promoted Lieutenant

July 7 Kennard Bliss is discharged on appointment to a Commission.

July 8 Kennard is appointed to a temporary commission as 2nd Lieutenant, 154th Brigade RFA.

July 25 Farewell lunch,regimental mess.

July 30 (Friday) Sails from Folkstone for France.

July 31 Arrives at Boulogne at 2am.

August 17 Arrival of rest of the battalion.

August 18 Instruction period begins.

September 4 Arthur sniped at whilst out walking.

September 11-15 In firing line- "...out on our stomachs for 3½ hours.  
Could not sleep for slugs and mice."  
(Letters from Arthur to Francis and Howard Bliss (Lady Bliss))

September 30 Writes to Elgar and Sir Hubert Parry.  
"...I am completely demoralized."

October 15 Thinking out an overture to a War Suite,  
"with scraps of the Marselleise, ending with a drum roll".

October 16 Receives a signed score of Cockaigne from Elgar.

November 23 Took 30 men out on patrol. 2 men shot at,"[and] Private Ashcroft being carried in, Mr Bliss stayed behind with Sergt. Mackenzie and Corporal Price as a rear-guard covering party. A little later Corporal Price got hit in the chest, and Mr. Bliss and Sergt. MacKenzie carried Corporal Price back to our wire. ...Mr Bliss and Sergt. MacKenzie deserve every credit for their conduct under such conditions."  
[Arthur asked his father to keep this information strictly private.]  
(Letter from Capt. C.C. Anthony, No 3 Coy., 134 Royal Fusiliers to Commanding Officer, 13th Battalion, Royal Fusiliers, dated 24 November 1915 from Trenches 74/76  
(Whereabouts unknown, copy with Lady Bliss)  
Bliss' report to his Commanding Officer, dated 24 November 1915  
(Cambridge University Library)

1915

December 16

Promoted to Captain.  
(The London Gazette, no. 29454, Friday  
28 January 1916, p. 1134.)

1916

January 9

During heavy mortar-bombardment (Hannescamps), ran across open country-in the face of rifle and machine-gun fire at 250 yards range-into the area affected; and by quickly clearing the particular trench of all but the necessary sentries he undoubtedly saved the Company many casualties. He himself was thrown down by the explosion of one of the bombs, but escaped with a severe shaking. He did not report sick.

January 15

Writes to Howard Bliss that he wants to write a Homage to Handel for violin, clarinet and cello.

March 29

Battalion inspected by Haig. Recommended Bliss for decoration in despatch of 30.4.16  
(The London Gazette, no 29623, Thursday 15 Jun  
1916, p. 5937.)

April 7-17

On leave. Sees Elgar and hears his Starlight Express on gramophone records.

May 1

In the trenches again.  
On machine-gun course in France at Auxi le-Chateau.

July 7

Wounded at La Boisselle  
(H.C. O'Neill, The Royal Fusiliers in the Great War London, Heinemann, 1922, p. 116.)

August 30

Kennard is posted to D Battery 59th Brigade RFA

September 28

Kennard is killed at Thiepval

September 30

Kennard buried in the military cemetery at Aveluy.

1918

- April 16 Arthur appointed to a Commission as Lieutenant, Grenadier Guards Special Reserve of Officers.
- September 8 Sailed from Southampton to Le Havre with 1500 Americans.
- November 11 End of World War I.
- December 4 Arthur goes to Loudres.
- December 6 Visits the Grotto.
- December 8 Attends mass in the Church of the Rosary at Loudes.

1919

- February Resumes studies at the Royal College of Music (until July 1920)
- February 15 Demobilised from the Army.
- April 27 Conducts Stravinsky's Ragtime at the Aeolian Hall.  
Visits Paris.
- October Hammersmith Musical Society founded by Bliss, at the Lyric Theatre.

1920

- January 28 Resigns Commission in the Grenadier Guards.
- August Takes a cycle tour of the battle lines in Belgium and France with Ulrich Nisbet.  
(The Times, 30 June 1921, p 8)
- December 9 Conducts the Portsmouth Philharmonic Society, singing Berlioz's Faust.  
(The Evening News, 10 December 1920, p. 4)

- 1921 (-1922)
- Joins teaching staff at the Royal College of Music. In charge of the Score Reading Class.
- February 3 Conducts the Portsmouth Philharmonic Society. Rout included in the programme. (Portsmouth Times, 11 February 1921, p. 4.)
- March 17 Conducts Bach's B-minor Mass in Portsmouth. (The Musical Times, 1 May 1921, p. 368.)
- May 4 Grace Crawford gives a performance at Steinway Hall (Guild of Singers and Players) of some Italian songs, with string accompaniment, arranged by Bliss. (The Times, 5 May 1921, p. 13.)
- June 23 Conducts Holst's Savitri at the Lyric Theatre, Hammersmith. (The Times, 24 June 1921, p. 13.)
- July 2 Lectures to the Society of Women Musicians. (The Observer, 3 July 1921, p. 7.)
- July Mention that Bliss is writing a ballet for Karsavina, based on Edgar Allan Poe's Masque of the Red Death. (The Weekly Dispatch, 10 July 1921, p. 6.)  
Also believed to have been working on an oboe concerto.
- 1922
- March 8 Visits Liverpool for a British Music Society concert devoted to his music. (The Liverpool Echo, 10 March 1922, p. 9.)
- June 22 Lectures on 'The Musical Renaissance' to the U.G.M. at Cambridge. (The Musical Times, 1 August 1922, pp 581-2.)
- July 11 (Tuesday) Conducts the first performance of Ralph Vaughan Williams' The Shepherds of the Delectable Mountains at the Royal College of Music.
- July Reported to have finished a symphony in B minor. Also contemplating a "Kinema-opera" on a subject by O. Henry. (The Evening News 29 July 1922.)



1923

- January Decides to go to America with his father, his stepmother and stepsister Enid.
- March 25 Farewell dinner given at Paganini's Restaurant to Bliss by the Faculty of Arts.
- April 21 Sails for New York in SS Aquitania.
- April 27 Reaches New York.
- June Moves to Lake Mohonk.
- July Arrives in San Francisco by way of North Carolina, the Rockies and Vancouver.
- August Arrives in Santa Barbara, California.
- October Returns to New York.
- December 23 Howard arrives in New York to join the family.

1924

- January Returns to Santa Barbara.
- February 26 Accompanies Eva Gauthier, a French-Canadian mezzo soprano, in a concert at the Montecito (Santa Barbara) Country Club.
- August 4-16 Appears in Beggar on Horseback at the Lobero Theatre, Santa Barbara. Meets Gertrude Hoffmann, his future wife.
- October 6 Leaves for San Francisco to lecture on "Modern English Composers".
- October 21 Writes to Ulrich Nisbet that "I have a quaint appointment here as Director of Music [for the Community Arts Association] which may keep me here for several years...."
- November Appointed music critic of the Santa Barbara Morning Press.  
(Santa Barbara Morning Press, 2 November 1924, p 8)

1925

March 3 Engaged to Gertrude Hoffmann.  
June 1 Married in the garden of the Santa Barbara  
(Monday) Old Mission.  
Honeymoon spent in San Francisco.  
June 13 Sails with Mrs Bliss for England in S.S. Orbita.  
(Saturday)  
December Visits Winterthur as a member of selection  
jury for the ISCM Festival.

1926

July 18 Barbara, their first daughter, born.

1927

July/August Visits Santa Barbara. Meets Mrs Elizabeth  
Coolidge.  
September Visits Venice.

1928

Teaching at the Royal Academy of Music.  
Visits Sicily.

1929

Moves to Hampstead.  
July/August Arthur sails to the U.S.A. on S.S. Adriatic  
to see his father.

1930

March 13 Present the R.P.S. gold medal to Ralph  
Vaughan Williams.  
April 30 Francis Bliss dies in his 83rd year.

1931

Visits Santa Barbara.

1932

February 17 Karen, their second daughter, born.  
September Arthur is invited to conduct a concert in  
Berlin.  
(The Times, 19 September 1932, p. 10)

1934

March 8 ) Lectures to the Royal Institution.  
March 15 ) Meets H.G. Wells.  
March 22 ) Pen Pits [the Bliss house in Somerset] started.

1935

July 24 Appointed to the British Council's Music Advisory Committee and attends its first meeting.

August 2 Approached by the BBC for a musical survey of England, to be published in The Listener. (Letter, dated 2 August 1935 (BBC Written Archives Centre). Also Arthur's reply dated 5 September, together with his suggestions)

September The BBC invites Arthur to become Music Director in succession to Adrian Boult. (News Chronicle, 25 September 1935, p. 3)

1937

March Travels to Baden Baden.

April Asked to write a piece for the B.B.C. but refuses as 'I am greatly pressed for time to finish my new Chess Ballet, for Paris...' (Letter, dated 30 April [1937] (B.B.C. Written Archives Centre))

Proposal to appoint Arthur as a judge at the 3rd International Composer Competition in Warsaw.

1938

February Visits Paris.

May 27 Appointed as a Commandeur de l'Ordre de Léopold II.

August Asked by the B.B.C. for incidental music for a programme entitled "Sark!" Refuses. (Letters dated 31 August 1938  
5 September [1938]  
6 September 1938 (B.B.C. Written Archives Centre))

October Visits Brussels as a jurist for the Eugene Saye International Competition for Pianists.  
Head modelled in clay by A. Mahler.

1939

- June 4 Arrives in U.S.A. on SS Georgic with family to attend the New York World Fair.
- August 3 Addresses the Rotary Club of Pittsfield on his impressions of the Berkshires Festival of Music.
- September 4 Sends a telegram to Sir Adrian Boult (from Stockbridge) offering his services to the B.B.C.  
(B.B.C. Written Archives Centre)
- September 8 Follows offer up by sending a letter to R.S. Thatcher at the B.B.C.  
(B.B.C. Written Archives Centre)
- September 15 Reply from R.S. Thatcher saying "...there really isn't a job while the services of so many bright members of the staff are still unused. Your offer is immensely appreciated, none the less".  
(B.B.C. Written Archives Centre)
- September 19 Writes to Eugene Goossens (from Belmont, Mass.) saying "...I've been invited to teach at Berkeley in California early next year, which I may accept".  
(Miss Pamela Main)
- October 7 Another letter to Eugene Goossens saying "I feel a veritable exile. I have to start my career again. I am very nostalgic for England".  
(Miss Pamela Main)
- October 11 Writes to Bridge Adams (from New York), saying "I spend most of my time working the Library in Harvard preparing lectures on Tudor composers to be given next year at the University of California in San Francisco..."  
(Bridges-Adams Collection. University of Calgary Library, Canada)
- December Bliss in Kansas City and then on to Chicago for Christmas with his family.

1940

January

Travels to Berkeley to take up his appointment at the University of California.

July-August

Spends the vacation in Santa Barbara. Receives letters from Howard about London and the bombings.

1941

April

Receives a letter from Kenneth Wright, Director of Overseas Music, B.B.C., asking for help in his department.

May 1

Appointed as Assistant Director of Music, B.B.C.

May

Leaves New York for Montreal to join convoy.

June 2

Writes to Trudy Bliss that there are "...still several days to go and I am getting bored with the enforced waiting..."  
(Lady Bliss)

June 5

Joins convey and sails

June 30

Arrives at Avonmouth.

July 3

K.A. Wright writes to Trudy Bliss thanking her for her "generous attitude in sparing Arthur to us for the work [at the BBC]"  
(Lady Bliss)

July 7

Writes to Trudy Bliss from the BBC, "I am going to enjoy my work. It brings me into touch with all sides of music and I shall make my presence felt".  
(Lady Bliss)

July 22

Writes to Trudy Bliss from the British Council, "I dined last night with Stephen Spender...he wants to write me an opera libretto. Rather exciting!"  
(Lady Bliss)  
Broadcasts to North America and Canada

August 5

Compares an Anglo-American programme at the Promenade Concerts in the Royal Albert Hall.

September 28

Writes to Trudy Bliss that "...I may be making a change in my job shortly - it is still rather vague, but I may take Thatcher's place in the Home Service BBC with a view to becoming ultimately DoM... I have been approached, and it is a compliment.  
(Lady Bliss)

1941

October 2/3/4

Broadcasts a message (in a programme 'As You Request') to students at Berkeley on the Pacific Transmission.

November 9

Writes to Trudy Bliss, that "...yesterday in the Wigmore Hall I played...the song cycle, which I now call Music to 7 American Poems.

1941/2

Enlists Bridges Adams to help with his opera Ulyses.

(Bridges Adams Collection. University of Calgary, Canada [n.d.])

1942

March 17

Writes to Albert Elkus (at Berkeley) enquiring whether the University would care to have his services again.

April 1

Appointed Director of Music at the BBC. BBC Music Policy finally evolved.  
(B.B.C. Written Archives Centre: Music Policy dated 8 November 1939, (first draft) 16 December 1941, (second draft) 6 March 1942)

April 6

Writes to Barbara Bliss that "I have started a broadcast, series called Music in Our Time...." (Lady Bliss)

May

Invites some British Composers to write works for Section C of the B.B.C. Symphony Orchestra.  
(B.B.C. Written Archives Centre. B.B.C. memos dated 12 May 1942  
20 May 1942)

June 20

Greets Russian musicians at the Empress Rooms, Earls Court.

July 27

Writes to Trudy Bliss from the Saville Club that "...I've got the D.G. (Sir Cecil Graves) to agree to my visiting U.S.A. if possible sometimes this autumn for a very short visit with the ulterior object of bringing my family back with me."

July 30

Announces new policy about dance bands. Committee of seven appointed to vet radio dance music.  
(News Review, 30 July 1942  
The Daily Mail, 1 August 1942)

1943

- January Spends 3 days in Liverpool recording his Piano Concerto with the Liverpool Philharmonic Orchestra.
- March 3 Writes to Trudy Bliss that there is "... no more definitive news of my visiting U.S.A...."
- March 29 Asked to supply music for a schools Empire Day feature. Refuses.  
(B.B.C. Written Archives Centre)
- May 6 Albert Elkus sends invitation to Bliss to conduct a series of lectures and conferences on music in war time at the University of California.  
(B.B.C. Written Archives Centre)
- August 4 Introduces a series of talks designed to acquaint Indian listeners with the nature of European music.  
(The Times, 4 August 1943, p. 6)
- August 10 Achieves final agreement that Ralph Vaughan Williams should be commissioned by the B.B.C. for an anthem for a victory service.  
(B.B.C. Written Archives Centre. Memos dated  
10 August 1943  
17 August 1943)
- November 5 Trudy Bliss with her daughters arrive from the U.S.A., via Portugal.
- November 23 Invited to compose some church music by the Religious Broadcasting Department of the B.B.C.  
(B.B.C. Written Archives Centre. Memos dated  
23 November 1943  
3 March 1944  
11 March 1944  
13 March 1944  
28 March 1944  
4 May 1944)

1944

- January Announces his resignation as D.o.M. to take effect from 31 March 1944. (The Times, 15 January 1944, p. 2)
- February Invited by Sir Henry Wood to compose a new work for the Jubilee Promenade Concerts. (B.B.C. Written Archives Centre, Memo dated 19 February 1944)
- March 31 Leaves his post as D.o.M. at the BBC. Succeeded by Victor Hely-Hutchinson.
- April 5 Receives a letter of thanks from Adrian Boult. (Lady Bliss)  
Becomes a Fellow of the Royal College of Music.
- September 26 Introduces the New Zealand Day programme in the name of British musicians.

1945

- June 22 Receives an honours degree of Doctor of Music at Edinburgh University.
- September 17 Appointed to B.B.C. Music Advisory Panel.
- October 4 Agrees to compose six short piano pieces for the B.B.C. Withdraws 20 January 1947. (B.B.C. Written Archives Centre. Memo dated  
4 October 1945  
Letter dated 11 October 1945  
Letter dated 14 October [1945]  
Memo dated 15 October 1945  
Letter dated 22 October 1945  
Letter dated 20 January 1947)

1946

- May Visits Vienna and conducts the VPO.  
Appointed Chairman of the music committee of the British Council, in succession to Ernest Makower.



1947

- July Appointed a member of the executive committee of the British Council.
- July 21 Asked by the B.B.C. to take part in B.B.C. programme on the difficulties and opportunities in writing opera. Refuses.  
(B.B.C. Written Archives Centre. Letters dated 21 July 1947  
25 July [1947])
- July 30 Asked for a brilliant festival overture to celebrate the first 25 years of the B.B.C. Refuses because "I have to write music for a "Young Person's Guide to Ballet" film which is being short this autumn...!"  
(B.B.C. Written Archives Centre. Letters dated 30 July 1947  
3 August [1947])
- August 12 Asked to compose a piece for the Third programme. Refuses.  
(B.B.C. Written Archives Centre, Letters dated 12 August 1947  
17 August 1947)
- November 27 Receives a honorary degree of Doctor of Music at London University.  
(The Times, 28 November 1947, p.7.)
- December Visits Hungary.

1948

- April Visits Ankara in Turkey, at the invitation of the British Council, to attend the Anglo-Turkish musics festival.  
(The Times, 1 April 1948, p. 3  
14 April 1948, p. 3.)

1949

- July 4 Receives a request from the Arts Council for a large scale choral and orchestral work for the 1951 Festival of Britain. Refuses in November 1950, his decision having been announced publicly in The Times of 25 April 1950, p. 8.  
(The Arts Council. Letters dated 4 July 1949  
7 July (1949)  
3 April (1950)  
17 April 1950  
18 November 1950  
28 November 1950  
19 December 1950)

1949

November 11

Writes to Bridges Adams that he and J.B. Priestley "...are thinking of trying again with a new subject [for a second opera]." (Bridges Adams Collection. University of Calgary, Canada).

1950

June

Receives the honour of a Knighthood in the Birthday Honours and celebrates his Silver Wedding.  
(The Times, 8 June 1950, p. 3)

July 4

Knighthood at Buckingham Palace.

September 3

Writes to Eva Gauthier that "I am on to another opera with Priestley (a comic one of the Edwardian period, 1900 or thereabouts)". (Eva Gauthier Collection. New York Public Library)

September

Elected vice-chairman of the Performing Right Society.  
(The Times, 15 September 1950, p. 3)

Attends an International Conference on Musical Copyright in Madrid.

1951

May

Protests at a L.C.C. decision to stop its grant to the L.P.O.  
(The Times, 1 May 1951, p. 3)

August 2

Celebrates his 60th birthday.

Receives an honorary degree of Doctor of Law at Glasgow University.

December

Appointed to the Council of the Royal College of Music.

1952

Addresses the Society for the Promotion of New Music.  
(The Times, 2 January 1952, p. 6)

1953

- June Attends Coronation Service in Westminster Abbey. Receives the Coronation Medal.  
Elected Honorary Fellow of Pembroke College, Cambridge.
- September Decides to offer Pen Pits for sale.  
(The Times, 25 September 1953, p. 8)
- October Invited to compose an anthem for the Religious Broadcasting Department of the B.B.C.  
(B.B.C. Written Archives Centre. Memo dated 29 October 1953)
- November 17 Appointed Master of the Queen's Musick in succession to Arnold Bax.
- November 27 Promises to write a short song for Eva Gauthier.  
(Eva Gauthier Collection, New York Public Library)

1954

- May The B.B.C. invites Bliss to compose a suitable fanfare for Music for a Royal Birthday, a programme to be broadcast on the Queen's official birthday. Refuses.  
(B.B.C. Written Archives Centre. Letters dated  
3 May 1954  
4 May 1954  
12 May 1954  
13 May 1954)
- Presents the RPS gold medal to Stravinsky.  
(The Times, 28 May 1954, p 2.)
- June Visits Norway
- July Appointed President of the Performing Right Society in succession to Leslie Boosey.  
(The Times, 2 July 1954, p. 5.)
- July 7 Move to St. John's Wood, London N.W. 8.
- July 13 Receives the Freedom of the W. Co. of Musicians.
- July 15 Has an audience with the Queen.  
(The Times, 16 July 1954, p. 10.)
- September Appointed president of the Western Orchestral Society.  
(The Times, 13 September 1954, p. 3.)

1955

January 26

A RPS concert of Bliss' music is held in the Royal Festival Hall.

July

Correspondence with C. Day-Lewis re a proposed opera about two sisters who used to walk to the fountain in the middle of the Piazza dell'Esedra every day because it reminded them of their youth.  
(Letter, dated 19 July 1955 (Mrs C Day-Lewis))

October

An announcement that Bliss would lead a delegation to Russia in April 1956  
(The Times, 5 October 1955, p 8  
27 January 1956, p. 7.)

Addresses the Crime Writers Guild of Great Britain.

1956

July

The B.B.C. asks for a brass band piece. Refuses.  
(B.B.C. Written Archives Centre, Letter dated  
24 January 1956  
15 May 1956  
21 May 1956)

April

Arrives in Russia.  
(The Times, 16 April 1956, p. 7.)

April 19

Conducts a concert in Moscow  
(The Times, 20 April 1956, p. 8.)

May 8

Returns from Russia via Denmark.  
(The Times, 7 May 1956, p. 3)  
(The Times, 9 May 1956, p. 6.)

September

Visits Germany.

October

Visits Eire and gives an illustrated lecture on "Musical Audiences".  
(The Cork Examiner, 6 October 1956, p. 7.)  
Signs a petition opposing certain provisions in the Copyright Bill.  
(The Times, 24 October 1956, p 7  
25 October 1956, p. 4.)

November

Mention of a choral work by Bliss and Cecil Day Lewis for 1958, commissioned by the BBC.  
(B.B.C. Written Archives Centre. Letter dated  
28 November 1956)

1957

July 15

Elected a Fellow of Trinity College of Music.

September

Mention of a Christmas celebration work, commissioned by the B.B.C. Refuses.  
(B.B.C. Written Archives Centre. Letter dated 26 September 1957)

Visits Helsinki and conducts a concert.

1958

February

Announced that Bliss will go to Moscow as one of the judges at an international contest for young violinists and pianists.  
(The Times, 11 February 1958, p. 6)

April

Visits Russia and Prague.

May

Accepts honorary post of president of the L.S.O.  
(The Times, 10 May 1958, p. 8.)

Visits Belgium with the LSO, including Ypres.  
(The Times, 12 May 1958, p. 14  
13 May 1958, p. 5.)

July

Addresses a PRS anniversary luncheon.  
(The Times, 4 July 1958, p. 13.)

September

Attends memorial service for Ralph Vaughan Williams as representative of the Queen.  
(The Times 20 September 1958, p. 8.)

October

Conducts at the Brass Band Championships in the Royal Albert Hall.  
(The Times, 27 October 1958, p. 12.)

1959

February

Opens the St. Pancras Festival.  
(The Times, 23 February 1959, p. 12.)

April

Dinner held in Bliss' honour at the Garrick Club.  
(The Times, 13 April 1959, p. 12.)

Lays a wreath on Handel's grave.  
(The Times, 15 April 1959, p. 14.)

June

Conducts the Bournemouth SO in the restored Guildhall at Portsmouth.  
(The Times, 9 June 1959, p. 13.)

October

Presents Sir Malcolm Sargent with the R.P.S. gold medal.  
(The Times, 15 October 1959, p. 5.)

1960

- January Proposal for a Churchill piece - to include a passage for a speaker.  
(Letter from C. Hassall to Bliss, dated 18 February (Lady Bliss))
- June Presents Zoltan Kodaly with a Laurel wreath at concert in the Royal Festival Hall.  
(The Times, 4 June 1960, p. 9)
- September Conducts a concert at the 3-choirs Festival in Worcester. Visits Switzerland and Italy.  
(The Times, 9 September 1960, p. 4)
- October 5 The National Music Council asks for a fanfare. Refuses.  
(Letter dated 5 October 1960 (Lady Bliss))

1961

- January Asked to compose for a short part song for the Cork International Choral Festival. Refuses.  
(Aloys Fleischmann, Letters dated 2 January 1961  
5 January 1961  
24 June 1961  
30 June 1961  
12 July 1961  
23 August 1961  
1 September 1961  
13 September 1961  
24 March 1962  
2 April 1962  
4 April 1962  
15 April 1962  
24 April 1962  
20 June 1962  
26 June 1962  
3 July 1962  
12 July 1962)
- March Leads deputation, to the Chancellor of the Exchequer, seeking the abolition of purchase tax on musical instruments.  
(The Times, 2 March 1961, p. 6.)
- April 17 Elected to the Atheneum Club.  
(The Times, 18 April 1961, p. 14.)
- August 2 Celebrates his 70th birthday.
- August 3 Conducts a birthday concert.  
(The Times, 3 August 1961, p. 5.)
- October Pronounces a eulogy at a concert celebrating John Ireland's birthday.  
(The Times, 9 October 1961, p. 16.)
- December Present, Pierre Monteux with a silver-banded baton.  
(The Times, 11 December 1961, p. 5.)

1962

- January Opens an exhibition of original manuscripts by British composers at the Royal Festival Hall.  
(The Times, 18 January 1962, p. 5)
- June Visits France and Portugal.
- December Open an international class congress.  
(The Times, 28 December 1962, p. 8.)

1963

- March 24  
(Thursday) Receives the RPS gold medal.
- July 24 Lays foundation stone of Arthur Bliss' House at Lindfield (The Samaritan Housing Association)
- September On the jury of the Leeds International Pianoforte competition.  
(The Times, 23 September 1963, p. 6.)
- December Awarded an honorary degree of Doctor of Music at Bristol University.  
(The Times 7 December 1963, p. 10.)

1964

- February 20 Awarded an honorary degree of Doctor of Music at Cambridge University.  
(The Times, 21 February 1964, p. 16.)
- June Elected president of the International Confederation of Authors' and Composers' Societies for two years.  
(The Times, 23 June 1964, p. 14.)
- September/October Visits Australia.
- November Visits Japan and Ceylon.  
Returns to London 25 November.
- December Reads a message of congratulations to Malcolm Sargent when the L.S.O. returned after a round-the-World tour.  
(The Times, 12 December 1964, p. 10.)

1965

- March Asked for a short work by the B.B.C. for the 1966 Promenade Concerts. (B.B.C. Written Archives Centre. Letter dated 4 March 1965)
- April Visits the Dame of Sark.
- May Visits Scotland and stays at Holyroodhouse House.
- July Becomes President of the Cheltenham Festival.
- August 16 B.B.C. - 2 televise a Workshop self-portrait by Bliss, produced by John Drummond.

1966

- January Accepts the presidency of the Bristol Sinfonia. (The Times, 11 January 1966, p 5.)
- May Starts to write As I Remember.
- June Visits Prague.
- August 2 Conducts a 75th birthday concert. (The Times, 3 August 1966, p. 15.)
- October 5 Presents Shostakovitch in absentia with the R.P.O. gold medal. (The Times, 7 October 1966, p. 7.)
- November 10 Voted Man of the Year by the British Committee for the Rehabilitation of the Disabled.

1967

- June/July Visits Canada, the U.S.A. and Malta.
- July Composer-in-residence at the Florida International Music Festival (The Times, 18 July 1967, p. 6.)  
Appointed a Friend of the Chapel Royal in The Tower of London.



1968

- July Announced that Bliss is to write a piece for the Nottinghamshire County Youth Orchestra.  
(The Times, 27 July 1968, p. 18.)
- November Visits the U.S.A. with Lady Bliss.

1969

- January 1 Receives the K.C.V.O. in the New Year's Honours List.  
(The Times, 1 January 1969, p. 7.)
- February Visits Belfast.
- May 8 Elected a honorary life member of the American Bible Society, on visit to U.S.A.
- May 13 Awarded the degree of Doctor of Fine Arts, Princeton University.
- June Leads protests against B.B.C. orchestral cuts.  
Visits the U.S.A.  
(The Times, 30 June 1969, p. 3.)

1970

- July 4 Receives the honorary degree of Doctor of Letters at Lancaster University.
- May As I Remember published by Faber.
- October Presents the R.P.S gold medal to Gostropovich.

1971

- May Bilton Grange School requests a piece of music.  
(Letter, dated 24 May 1971 (Lady Bliss))
- June Receives the C.H. in the Queen's Birthday Honours.  
(The Times, 12 June 1971, p. 1.)
- August 2 Celebrates his 80th birthday.  
80th birthday concert.  
(The Times, 3 August 1971, p. 7.)

1972

The Imperial War Museum requests some special music for an exhibition of war tapestries.

October 12

Unveils a plaque on the house in Hanover Terrace where Vaughan Williams lived.  
(The Times, 13 October 1972, p. 18.)

1974

June

Enters St. Mary's Hospital, Paddington for an operation.

December 6

Launches a Gustav Holst Museum appeal in Cheltenham.  
(The Times, 7 December 1974, p. 18.)

1975

January 11

Conducts for the last time.  
(The Sunday Times, 12 January 1975, p. 6.)

March

Seriously ill.  
(The Times, 25 March 1975, p. 1.)

March 27

Dies at the age of 83.  
(Obituaries and Tributes:  
The New York Times, 28 March 1975, p. 30 (Anon)  
The Scotsman, 28 March 1975, p. 11  
The Scottish Daily Express, 28 March 1975, p. 2 (N. Garden)  
The Daily Telegraph, 29 March 1975, p. 10 (Anon) (Martin Cooper)  
The Financial Times, 29 March 1975, p. 6 (R. Crichton)  
The Guardian, 29 March 1975 (Anon)  
The Guardian, 29 March 1975 p. 6 (Hugo Cole)  
The Irish Times, 28 & 29 March 1975, p. 18 (C. Acton)  
The Times, 29 March 1975, p. 14 (Anon)  
The Washington Post, 29 March 1975 p. B4 (Anon)  
Yorkshire Post, 29 March 1975, p.3 (Anon)  
The Observer, 30 March 1975, p. 4 (S. Walsh)  
The Sunday Telegraph, 30 March 1975, p. 15 (J. Noble)  
The Musical Times, Vol 116, no 1587, May 1975, pp. 436-7 (R. Crichton)

May 20

Service of Thanksgiving held in Westminster Abbey.  
(The Times, 21 May 1975, p. 17.)

1982

February

The Performing Right Society Bliss Memorial Scholarship is inaugurated. Commencing with the academic year 1982/83, it is to be a one-year post-graduate course in composition, to be competed for annually at the Royal College of Music.

## Appendix B

### BIBLIOGRAPHY

This bibliography is devoted to material about Bliss's career and general criticism of his music. It is divided into two sections - section A includes writings by Bliss himself, section B books, major newspaper and journal articles, records of interviews with Bliss and any publications containing lists of compositions which may be used to discover the different dates assigned to works, or which mention any discarded by the composer. The arrangement of both sections is chronological by date of publication.

SECTION A

1916

'A German Festival : Symphony Orchestra's Lost Chance' (Letter to the Editor), Fall Mall Gazette, 11 October 1916, p. 8d.

Letter re the Elgar Fugue Competition: Awards of the Adjudication, The Music Student, Vol IX, no. 3, November 1916, p. 108.

1920

'Stray Musings in Amsterdam', Royal College of Music Magazine, Vol. 16, no. (3), 1920, pp. 17-20.

(Note - the vol.no. is misprinted on the cover as 19)

1921

A new work on orchestration [book review], Musical News and Herald, 19 March 1921, p. 363.

Orchestral wind instruments, ancient and modern [book review], Musical News and Herald, 9 April 1921, p. 465.

'Unexplained Superstitions : I The Cult of the Dead', Musical News and Herald, 23 April 1921, p. 523.

'Recent Works of Igor Stravinsky', Musical News and Herald, 14 May 1921, p. 625.

'Recent Works of Arnold Bax', Musical News and Herald, 21 May 1921, p. 652.

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