

= William Walton =

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

Born in Oldham , Lancashire , the son of a musician , Walton was a chorister and then an undergraduate at Christ Church , Oxford . On leaving the university , he was taken up by the literary Sitwell siblings , who provided him with a home and a cultural education . His earliest work of note was a collaboration with Edith Sitwell , Façade , which at first brought him notoriety as a modernist , but later became a popular ballet score .

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

Walton was a slow worker , painstakingly perfectionist , and his complete body of work across his long career is not large . His most popular compositions continue to be frequently performed in the twenty @-@ first century , and by 2010 almost all his works had been released on CD .

= = Biography = =

= = = Early years = = =

Walton was born into a musical family in Oldham , Lancashire , the second son in a family of three boys and a girl . His father , Charles Alexander Walton , was a musician who had trained at the Royal Manchester College of Music under Charles Hallé , and made a living as a singing teacher and church organist . Charles 's wife , Louisa Maria ( née Turner ) , had been a singer before their marriage . William Walton 's musical talents were spotted when he was still a young boy , and he took piano and violin lessons , though he never mastered either instrument . He was more successful as a singer : he and his elder brother sang in their father 's choir , taking part in performances of large @-@ scale works by Handel , Haydn , Mendelssohn and others . Walton was sent to a local school , but in 1912 his father saw a newspaper advertisement for probationer choristers at Christ Church Cathedral School in Oxford and applied for William to be admitted . The boy and his mother missed their intended train from Manchester to Oxford because Walton 's father had spent the money for the fare in a local public house . Louisa Walton had to borrow the fares from a greengrocer . Although they arrived in Oxford after the entrance trials were over , Mrs Walton successfully pleaded for her son to be heard , and he was accepted . He remained at the choir school for the next six years . The Dean of Christ Church , Dr Thomas Strong , noted the young Walton 's musical potential and was encouraged in this view by Sir Hubert Parry , who saw the manuscripts of some of Walton 's early compositions and said to Strong , " There 's a lot in this chap ; you must keep your eye on him . "

At the age of sixteen Walton became an undergraduate of Christ Church . It is sometimes said that he was Oxford 's youngest undergraduate since Henry VIII , and though this is probably not correct , he was nonetheless among the youngest . He came under the influence of Hugh Allen , the dominant figure in Oxford 's musical life . Allen introduced Walton to modern music , including Stravinsky 's Petrushka , and enthused him with " the mysteries of the orchestra " . Walton spent much time in the university library , studying scores by Stravinsky , Debussy , Sibelius , Roussel and others . He neglected his non @-@ musical studies , and though he passed the musical examinations with ease , he failed the Greek and algebra examinations required for graduation .

Little survives from Walton 's juvenilia , but the choral anthem A Litany , written when he was fifteen , anticipates his mature style .

At Oxford Walton befriended several poets including Roy Campbell , Siegfried Sassoon and , most importantly for his future , Sacheverell Sitwell . Walton was sent down from Oxford in 1920 without a degree or any firm plans . Sitwell invited him to lodge in London with him and his literary brother and sister , Osbert and Edith . Walton took up residence in the attic of their house in Chelsea , later recalling , " I went for a few weeks and stayed about fifteen years " .

= = = First successes = = =

The Sitwells looked after their protégé both materially and culturally , giving him not only a home but a stimulating cultural education . He took music lessons with Ernest Ansermet , Ferruccio Busoni and Edward J. Dent . He attended the Russian ballet , met Stravinsky and Gershwin , heard the Savoy Orpheans at the Savoy Hotel and wrote an experimental string quartet heavily influenced by the Second Viennese School that was performed at a festival of new music at Salzburg in 1923 . Alban Berg heard the performance and was impressed enough to take Walton to meet Arnold Schoenberg , Berg 's teacher and the founder of the Second Viennese School .

In 1923 , in collaboration with Edith Sitwell , Walton had his first great success , though at first it was a succès de scandale . *Façade* was first performed in public at the Aeolian Hall , London , on 12 June . The work consisted of Edith 's verses , which she recited through a megaphone from behind a screen , while Walton conducted an ensemble of six players in his accompanying music . The press was generally condemnatory . Walton 's biographer Michael Kennedy cites as typical a contemporary headline : " Drivel That They Paid to Hear " . The Daily Express loathed the work , but admitted that it was naggingly memorable . The Manchester Guardian wrote of " relentless cacophony " . The Observer condemned the verses and dismissed Walton 's music as " harmless " . In The Illustrated London News , Dent was much more appreciative : " The audience was at first inclined to treat the whole thing as an absurd joke , but there is always a surprisingly serious element in Miss Sitwell 's poetry and Mr Walton 's music ? which soon induced the audience to listen with breathless attention . " In The Sunday Times , Ernest Newman said of Walton , " as a musical joker he is a jewel of the first water " . Among the audience were Evelyn Waugh , Virginia Woolf and Noël Coward . The last was so outraged by the avant @-@ garde nature of Sitwell 's verses and the staging , that he marched out ostentatiously during the performance . The players did not like the music : the clarinettist , Charles Draper asked the composer , " Mr Walton , has a clarinet player ever done you an injury ? " Nevertheless , the work soon became accepted , and within a decade Walton 's music was used for the popular *Façade* ballet , choreographed by Frederick Ashton .

Walton 's works of the 1920s , while he was living in the Sitwells ' attic , include the overture *Portsmouth Point* , dedicated to Sassoon and inspired by the well @-@ known painting of the same name by Thomas Rowlandson . It was first heard as an entr 'acte at a performance in Diaghilev 's 1926 ballet season , where The Times complained , " It is a little difficult to make much of new music when it is heard through the hum of conversation . " Sir Henry Wood programmed the work at the Proms the following year , where it made more of an impression . The composer conducted this performance ; he did not enjoy conducting , but he had firm views on how his works should be interpreted , and orchestral players appreciated his " easy nonchalance " and " complete absence of fuss . " Walton 's other works of the 1920s included a short orchestral piece , *Siesta* ( 1926 ) and a *Sinfonia Concertante* for piano and orchestra ( 1928 ) , which was well received at its premiere at a Royal Philharmonic Society concert , but has not entered the regular repertory .

The *Viola Concerto* ( 1929 ) brought Walton to the forefront of British classical music . It was written at the suggestion of Sir Thomas Beecham for the viola virtuoso Lionel Tertis . When Tertis received the manuscript , he rejected it immediately . The composer and violist Paul Hindemith stepped into the breach and gave the first performance . The work was greeted with enthusiasm . In The Manchester Guardian , Eric Blom wrote , " This young composer is a born genius " and said that it was tempting to call the concerto the best thing in recent music of any nationality . Tertis soon changed his mind and took the work up . A performance by him at a Three Choirs Festival concert in

Worcester in 1932 was the only occasion on which Walton met Elgar , whom he greatly admired . Elgar did not share the general enthusiasm for Walton 's concerto .

Walton 's next major composition was the massive choral cantata *Belshazzar 's Feast* ( 1931 ) . It began as a work on a modest scale ; the BBC commissioned a piece for small chorus , orchestra of no more than fifteen players , and soloist . Osbert Sitwell constructed a text , selecting verses from several books of the Old Testament and the Book of Revelation . As Walton worked on it , he found that his music required far larger forces than the BBC proposed to allow , and Beecham rescued him by programming the work for the 1931 Leeds Festival , to be conducted by Malcolm Sargent . Walton later recalled Beecham as saying , " As you 'll never hear the work again , my boy , why not throw in a couple of brass bands ? " During early rehearsals , the Leeds chorus members found Walton 's music difficult to master , and it was falsely rumoured in London musical circles that Beecham had been obliged to send Sargent to Leeds to quell a revolt . The first performance was a triumph for the composer , conductor and performers . A contemporary critic wrote , " Those who experienced the tremendous impact of its first performance had full justification for feeling that a great composer had arisen in our land , a composer to whose potentialities it was impossible to set any limits . " The work has remained a staple of the choral repertoire .

= = = 1930s = = =

In the 1930s , Walton 's relationship with the Sitwells became less close . He had love affairs and new friendships that drew him out of their orbit . His first long affair was with Imma von Doernberg , the young widow of a German baron . She and Walton met in the late 1920s and they were together until 1934 , when she left him . His later affair with Alice , Viscountess Wimborne ( born 1880 ) , which lasted from 1934 until her death in April 1948 , caused a wider breach between Walton and the Sitwells , as she disliked them as much as they disliked her . By the 1930s , Walton was earning enough from composing to allow him financial independence for the first time . A legacy from a musical benefactress in 1931 further enhanced his finances , and in 1934 he left the Sitwells ' house and bought a house in Belgravia .

Walton 's first major composition after *Belshazzar 's Feast* was his *First Symphony* . It was not written to a commission , and Walton worked slowly on the score from late 1931 until he completed it in 1935 . He had composed the first three of the four movements by the end of 1933 and promised the premiere to the conductor Hamilton Harty . Walton then found himself unable to complete the work . The end of his affair with Imma von Doernberg coincided with , and may have contributed to , a sudden and persistent writer 's block . Harty persuaded Walton to let him perform the three existing movements , which he premiered in December 1934 with the London Symphony Orchestra . During 1934 Walton interrupted work on the symphony to compose his first film music , for Paul Czinner 's *Escape Me Never* ( 1934 ) , for which he was paid £ 300 . After a break of eight months , Walton resumed work on the symphony and completed it in 1935 . Harty and the BBC Symphony Orchestra gave the premiere of the completed piece in November of that year . The symphony aroused international interest . The leading continental conductors Wilhelm Furtwängler and Willem Mengelberg sent for copies of the score , the Chicago Symphony Orchestra premiered the work in the US under Harty , Eugene Ormandy and the Philadelphia Orchestra gave the New York premiere , and the young George Szell conducted the symphony in Australia .

Elgar having died in 1934 , the authorities turned to Walton to compose a march in the Elgarian tradition for the coronation of George VI in 1937 . His *Crown Imperial* was an immediate success with the public , but disappointed those of Walton 's admirers who thought of him as an avant garde composer . Among Walton 's other works from this decade are more film scores , including the first of his incidental music for Shakespeare adaptations , *As You Like It* ( 1936 ) ; a short ballet for a West End revue ( 1936 ) ; and a choral piece , *In Honour of the City of London* ( 1937 ) . His most important work of the 1930s , alongside the symphony , was the *Violin Concerto* ( 1939 ) , commissioned by Jascha Heifetz . The concerto , Walton later revealed , expressed his love for Alice Wimborne . Its strong romantic style caused some critics to label it retrogressive , and Walton said in a newspaper interview , " Today 's white hope is tomorrow 's black sheep . These days it is

very sad for a composer to grow old ... I seriously advise all sensitive composers to die at the age of 37 . I know : I 've gone through the first halcyon period and am just about ripe for my critical damnation . "

In the late 1930s Walton became aware of a younger English composer whose fame was shortly to overtake his , Benjamin Britten . After their first meeting , Britten wrote in his diary , " [ ... ] to lunch with William Walton at Sloane Square . He is charming , but I feel always the school relationship with him ? he is so obviously the head prefect of English music , whereas I 'm the promising new boy . " They remained on friendly terms for the rest of Britten 's life ; Walton admired many of Britten 's works , and considered him a genius ; Britten did not admire all of Walton 's works but was grateful for his support at difficult times in his life .

= = = Second World War = = =

During the Second World War Walton was exempted from military service on the understanding that he would compose music for wartime propaganda films . In addition to driving ambulances ( extremely badly , he said ) , he was attached to the Army Film Unit as music adviser . He wrote scores for six films during the war ? some that he thought " rather boring " and some that have become classics such as *The First of the Few* ( 1942 ) and Laurence Olivier 's adaptation of Shakespeare 's *Henry V* ( 1944 ) . Walton was at first dismissive of his film scores , regarding them as professional but of no intrinsic worth ; he resisted attempts to arrange them into concert suites , saying , " Film music is not good film music if it can be used for any other purpose . " He later relented to the extent of allowing concert suites to be arranged from *The First of the Few* and the Olivier Shakespeare films . For the BBC , Walton composed the music for a large @-@ scale radio drama about Christopher Columbus , written by Louis MacNeice and starring Olivier . As with his film music , the composer was inclined to dismiss the musical importance of his work on the programme . Apart from these commissions , Walton 's wartime works of any magnitude comprised incidental music for John Gielgud 's 1942 production of *Macbeth* ; two scores for the Sadler 's Wells Ballet , *The Wise Virgins* , based on the music of J. S. Bach transcribed by Walton , and *The Quest* , with a plot loosely based on Spenser 's *The Faerie Queene* ; and , for the concert hall , a suite of orchestral miniatures , *Music for Children* , and a comedy overture , *Scapino* , composed for the fiftieth anniversary of the Chicago Symphony Orchestra .

Walton 's house in London was destroyed by German bombing in May 1941 , after which he spent much of his time at Alice Wimborne 's family house at Ashby St Ledgers in the countryside of Northamptonshire in the middle of England . While there , Walton worked on projects that had been in his mind for some time . In 1939 he had been planning a substantial chamber work , a string quartet , but he set it aside while composing his wartime film scores . In early 1945 he turned again to the quartet . Walton was conscious that Britten , with *Les Illuminations* ( 1940 ) , the *Sinfonia da Requiem* ( 1942 ) , and Peter Grimes in 1945 , had produced a series of substantial works , while Walton had produced no major composition since the *Violin Concerto* in 1939 . Among English critics and audiences , the *Violin Concerto* was not at first rated one of Walton 's finest works . Because Heifetz had bought the exclusive rights to play the concerto for two years , it was not heard in Britain until 1941 . The London premiere , with a less famous soloist , and in the unflattering acoustics of the Royal Albert Hall , did not immediately reveal the work as a masterpiece . The *String Quartet in A minor* , premiered in May 1947 , was Walton 's most substantial work of the 1940s . His biographer , Michael Kennedy , calls it one of his finest achievements and " a sure sign that he had thrown off the trammels of his cinema style and rediscovered his true voice . "

= = = Post @-@ war = = =

In 1947 , Walton was presented with the Royal Philharmonic Society 's Gold Medal . In the same year he accepted an invitation from the BBC to compose his first opera . He decided to base it on Chaucer 's *Troilus and Criseyde* , but his preliminary work came to a halt in April 1948 when Alice Wimborne died . To take Walton 's mind off his grief , the music publisher Leslie Boosey persuaded

him to be a British delegate to a conference on copyright in Buenos Aires later that year . While there , Walton met Susana Gil Passo ( 1926 ? 2010 ) , daughter of an Argentine lawyer . At 22 she was 24 years younger than Walton ( Alice Wimborne had been 22 years his senior ) , and at first she ridiculed his romantic interest in her . He persisted , and she eventually accepted his proposal of marriage . The wedding was held in Buenos Aires in December 1948 . From the start of their marriage , the couple spent half the year on the Italian island of Ischia , and by the mid @-@ 1950s they lived there permanently .

Walton 's last work of the 1940s was his music for Olivier 's film of Hamlet ( 1948 ) . After that , he focused his attentions on his opera Troilus and Cressida . On the advice of the BBC , he invited Christopher Hassall to write the libretto . This did not help Walton 's relations with the Sitwells , each of whom thought he or she should have been asked to be his librettist . Work continued slowly over the next few years , with many breaks while Walton turned to other things . In 1950 he and Heifetz recorded the Violin Concerto for EMI . In 1951 Walton was knighted . In the same year , he prepared an authorised version of Façade , which had undergone many revisions since its premiere . In 1953 , following the accession of Elizabeth II he was again called on to write a coronation march , Orb and Sceptre ; he was also commissioned to write a choral setting of the Te Deum for the occasion .

Troilus and Cressida was presented at Covent Garden on 3 December 1954 . Its preparation was dogged by misfortunes . Olivier , originally scheduled to direct it , backed out , as did Henry Moore who had agreed to design the production ; Elisabeth Schwarzkopf , for whom the role of Cressida had been written , refused to perform it ; her replacement , Magda László , had difficulty mastering the English words ; and Sargent , the conductor , " did not seem well acquainted with the score " . The premiere had a friendly reception , but there was a general feeling that Hassall and Walton had written an old @-@ fashioned opera in an outmoded tradition . The piece was subsequently staged in San Francisco , New York and Milan during the next year , but failed to make a positive impression , and did not enter the regular operatic repertory .

In 1956 Walton sold his London house and took up full @-@ time residence on Ischia . He built a hilltop house at Forio and called it La Mortella . Susana Walton created a magnificent garden there . Walton 's other works of the 1950s include the music for a fourth Shakespeare film , Olivier 's Richard III , and the Cello Concerto ( 1956 ) , written for Gregor Piatigorsky , who gave the premiere in January 1957 with the Boston Symphony Orchestra and the conductor Charles Munch . Some critics felt that the concerto was old @-@ fashioned ; Peter Heyworth wrote that there was little in the work that would have startled an audience in the year the Titanic met its iceberg ( 1912 ) . It has nevertheless entered the regular repertoire , performed by Paul Tortelier , Yo @-@ Yo Ma , Lynn Harrell and Pierre Fournier among others .

In 1966 Walton successfully underwent surgery for lung cancer . Until then he had been an inveterate pipe @-@ smoker , but after the operation he never smoked again . While he was convalescing , he worked on a one @-@ act comic opera , The Bear , which was premiered at Britten 's Aldeburgh Festival , in June 1966 , and enthusiastically received . Walton had become so used to being written off by music critics that he felt " there must be something wrong when the worms turned on some praise . " Walton received the Order of Merit in 1967 , the fourth composer to be so honoured , after Elgar , Vaughan Williams and Britten .

Walton 's orchestral works of the 1960s include his Second Symphony ( 1960 ) , Variations on a Theme by Hindemith ( 1963 ) , Capriccio burlesco ( 1968 ) , and Improvisations on an Impromptu of Benjamin Britten ( 1969 ) . His song cycles from this period were composed for Peter Pears ( Anon. in Love , 1960 ) and Schwarzkopf ( A Song for the Lord Mayor 's Table , 1962 ) . He was commissioned to compose a score for the 1969 film Battle of Britain , but the film company rejected most of his score , replacing it with music by Ron Goodwin . A concert suite of Walton 's score was published and recorded after Walton 's death . After his experience over Battle of Britain , Walton declared that he would write no more film music , but he was persuaded by Olivier to compose the score for a film of Chekhov 's Three Sisters in 1969 .

= = = Last years = = =

Walton was never a facile or quick composer , and in his final decade , he found composition increasingly difficult . He repeatedly tried to compose a third symphony for André Previn , but eventually abandoned it . Many of his final works are re @-@ orchestrations or revisions of earlier music . He orchestrated his song cycle *Anon. in Love* ( originally for tenor and guitar ) , and at the request of Neville Marriner adapted his *A minor String Quartet* as a *Sonata for Strings* . One original work from this period was his *Jubilate Deo* , premiered as one of several events to celebrate his seventieth birthday . The British prime minister , Edward Heath , gave a birthday dinner for Walton at 10 Downing Street , attended by royalty and Walton 's most eminent colleagues ; Britten presented a Walton evening at Aldeburgh and Previn conducted an all @-@ Walton concert at the Royal Festival Hall .

Walton revised the score of *Troilus and Cressida* , and the opera was staged at Covent Garden in 1976 . Once again it was plagued by misfortune while in preparation . Walton was in poor health ; Previn , who was to conduct , also fell ill ; and the tenor chosen for *Troilus* pulled out . As in 1954 , the critics were generally tepid . Some of Walton 's final artistic endeavours were in collaboration with the film @-@ maker Tony Palmer . Walton took part in Palmer 's profile of him , *At the Haunted End of the Day* , in 1981 , and in 1982 Walton and his wife played the cameo roles of King Frederick Augustus and Queen Maria of Saxony in Palmer 's nine @-@ hour film *Wagner* .

Walton died at La Mortella on 8 March 1983 , at the age of 80 . His ashes were buried on Ischia , and a memorial service was held at Westminster Abbey , where a commemorative stone to Walton was unveiled near those to Elgar and Britten .

= = = Legacy = = =

In 1944 , it was said of Walton that he summed up the recent past of English music and augured its future . Later writers have concluded that Walton had little influence on the next generation of composers . In his later years , Walton formed friendships with younger composers including Hans Werner Henze and Malcolm Arnold , but although he admired their work , he did not influence their compositional styles . Throughout his life , Walton held no posts at music conservatoires ; he had no pupils , gave no lectures and wrote no essays . After his death , the Walton Trust , inspired by Susana Walton , has run arts education projects , promoted British music and held annual summer masterclasses on Ischia for gifted young musicians .

= = Music = =

Walton was a slow worker . Both during composition and afterwards he would continually revise his music ; he said , " Without an india @-@ rubber I was absolutely sunk . " Consequently , his total body of work from his sixty @-@ year career as a composer is not large . Between the first performance of *Faade* in 1923 , for example , and that of the *Sinfonia Concertante* in 1928 , he averaged only one small piece a year . Of his work as a whole , Byron Adams in *Grove 's Dictionary of Music and Musicians* writes :

Walton 's music has often been too neatly dismissed by a few descriptive tags : " bittersweet " , " nostalgic " and , after World War II , " same as before " . Such convenient categorizations ignore the expressive variety of his music and slight his determination to deepen his technical and expressive resources as he grew older . His early discovery of the basic elements of his style allowed him to assimilate successfully an astonishing number of disparate and apparently contradictory influences , such as Anglican anthems , jazz , and the music of Stravinsky , Sibelius , Ravel and Elgar .

The writer adds that Walton 's allegiance to his basic style never wavered and that this loyalty to his own vision , together with his rhythmic vitality , sensuous melancholy , sly charm and orchestral flair , gives Walton 's finest music " an imperishable glamour " . Another biographer of Walton , Neil Tierney , writes that although contemporary critics felt that the post @-@ war music did not match Walton 's pre @-@ war compositions , it has become clear that the later works are " if emotionally less direct , more profound . "

= = = Orchestral music = = =

= = = = Overtures and short orchestral pieces = = = =

Walton 's first work for full orchestra , Portsmouth Point ( 1925 ) , inspired by a Rowlandson print of the same name , depicts a rumbustious dockside scene ( in Kennedy 's phrase , " the sailors of H.M.S. Pinafore have had a night on the tiles " ) in a fast moving score full of syncopation and cross @-@ rhythm that for years proved hazardous for conductors and orchestras alike . Throughout his career , Walton wrote works in this pattern , such as the lively Comedy Overture Scapino , a virtuoso piece commissioned by the Chicago Symphony Orchestra , described by The Musical Times as " an ingenious blending of fragments in exhilarating profusion . " Walton 's post @-@ war works in this genre are the Johannesburg Festival Overture ( 1956 ) , the " diverting but hard @-@ edged Capriccio burlesco " ( 1968 ) , and the longer Partita ( 1957 ) , written for the Cleveland Orchestra , described by Grove as " an impressively concentrated score with a high @-@ spirited finale [ with ] steely counterpoint and orchestral virtuosity " . Walton 's shorter pieces also include two tributes to musical colleagues , Variations on a Theme by Hindemith ( 1963 ) and the Improvisations on an Impromptu of Benjamin Britten ( 1969 ) , in both of which the source material is gradually transformed as Walton 's own voice becomes more prominent . The critic Hugh Ottaway commented that in both pieces " the interaction of two musical personalities is ? fascinating " .

= = = = Concertos and symphonies = = = =

Walton 's first successful large @-@ scale concert work , the Viola Concerto ( 1929 ) is in marked contrast to the raucous Portsmouth Point ; despite the common influence of jazz and of the music of Hindemith and Ravel , in its structure and romantic longing it owes much to the Elgar Cello Concerto . In this work , wrote Edward Sackville @-@ West and Desmond Shawe @-@ Taylor in The Record Guide , " the lyric poet in Walton , who had so far been hidden under a mask of irony , fully emerged . " Walton followed this pattern in his two subsequent concertos , for Violin ( 1937 ) and for Cello ( 1956 ) . Each opens reflectively , is in three movements , and contrasts agitated and jagged passages with warmer romantic sections . The Cello Concerto is more introspective than the two earlier concertos , with a ticking rhythm throughout the work suggesting the inexorable passage of time .

The two symphonies are strongly contrasted with one another . The First is on a large scale , reminiscent at times of Sibelius . Grove says of the work that its " orgiastic power , coruscating malice , sensuous desolation and extroverted swagger " make the symphony a tribute to Walton 's tenacity and inventive facility . Critics have always differed on whether the finale lives up to the rest of the work . In comparison with the First , the Second Symphony struck many reviewers as lightweight , and , as with many of Walton 's works of the 1950s , it was regarded as old fashioned . It is a very different kind of work from the First Symphony . David Cox describes it as " more a divertimento than a symphony ... highly personal , unmistakably Walton throughout " , and Kennedy calls it " somewhat enigmatic in mood , and a superb example of Walton 's more mature , concise , and mellow post @-@ 1945 style . "

= = = = Music for ballets , plays and films = = = =

Although generally a slow and perfectionist composer , Walton was capable of working quickly when necessary . Some of his stage and screen music was written to tight deadlines . He regarded his ballet and incidental music as of less importance than his concert works and was generally dismissive of what he produced . Of his ballets for Sadler 's Wells , The Wise Virgins ( 1940 ) is an arrangement of eight extracts from choral and instrumental music by Bach . The Quest ( 1943 ) , written in great haste , is , according to Grove , oddly reminiscent of Vaughan Williams . Neither of these works established itself in the regular repertoire , unlike the ballet score Walton arranged from

the music of *Faade* , the music for which was expanded for full orchestra , still retaining the jazz influences and the iconoclastic wit of the original . Music from *The Quest* and the whole of the *Viola Concerto* were used for another Sadler 's Wells ballet , *O.W.* , in 1972 .

Walton wrote little incidental music for the theatre , his music for *Macbeth* ( 1942 ) being one of his most notable contributions to the genre . For the cinema he wrote the music for 13 films between 1934 and 1969 . He arranged the *Spitfire Prelude and Fugue* from his own score for *The First of the Few* ( 1942 ) , and he allowed suites to be arranged from his Shakespeare film scores of the 1940s and 1950s . In these films , Walton mixed Elizabethan pastiche with wholly characteristic Waltonian music . Kennedy singles out for praise the Agincourt battle sequence in *Henry V* , where Walton 's music makes the charge of the French knights " fearsomely real . " Despite Walton 's view that film music is ineffective when performed out of context , suites from several more of his film scores have been put together since his death .

= = = Opera = = =

Walton worked for many years on his only full @-@ length opera , *Troilus and Cressida* , both before its premiere and afterwards . It has never been regarded as a success . The libretto is generally considered weak , and Walton 's music , despite many passages that have won critical praise , is not dramatic enough to sustain interest . Grove calls the work a partially successful attempt to revivify the traditions of nineteenth @-@ century Italian opera in a post @-@ war era wary of heroic Romanticism .

Walton 's only other opera , *The Bear* , based on a comic vaudeville by Chekhov , is judged by critics as much more successful . It is , however , a one @-@ act piece , a genre not regularly staged at most opera houses , and so is infrequently seen . Operabase records four productions of the piece worldwide between 2013 and 2015 .

= = = Chamber works = = =

Apart from an early experiment in atonalism in his *String Quartet* ( 1919 ? 22 ) , which he later described as " full of undigested Bartók and Schoenberg " , Walton 's major essays in chamber music are his *String Quartet in A Minor* ( 1945 ? 46 ) and the *Sonata for Violin and Piano* ( 1947 ? 49 ) . In the opinion of Adams in Grove 's Dictionary , the quartet is one of Walton 's supreme achievements . Earlier critics did not always share this view . In 1956 *The Record Guide* said , " [ T ] he material is not first class and the composition as a whole seems laboured . " The work exists also in its later expanded form as the *Sonata for Strings* ( 1971 ) , which , the critic Trevor Harvey wrote , combines Walton in his most energetically rhythmic mood with a " vein of lyrical tenderness which is equally characteristic and is so rewarding to listen to " . The *Violin Sonata* is in two closely related movements , with strong thematic material in common . The first movement is nostalgically lyrical , the second a set of variations , each one a semitone higher than its predecessor . Walton briefly refers back to Schoenberg with a dodecaphonic passage in the second movement , but otherwise the sonata is firmly tonal .

= = = Choral and other vocal music = = =

Walton 's liturgical compositions include the *Coronation Te Deum* ( 1952 ) , *Missa brevis* ( 1966 ) , *Jubilate Deo* ( 1972 ) , and *Magnificat and Nunc dimittis* ( 1974 ) , and the anthems *A Litany* ( 1916 ) and *Set me as a seal upon thy heart* ( 1938 ) .

One of the best @-@ known and most frequently performed of Walton 's works is the cantata *Belshazzar 's Feast* . Written for large orchestra , chorus and baritone soloist , it intersperses a choral and orchestral depiction of Babylonian excess and depravity , barbaric jazzy outbursts , and the lamentations and finally the rejoicing of the Jewish captives . The " couple of brass bands " added at Beecham 's suggestion to an already large orchestra each consist of three trumpets , three trombones and a tuba . Many critics judged it the most important English choral work since Elgar 's



The Dream of Gerontius in 1900 . None of Walton 's later choral works have matched its popularity . They include In Honour of the City of London ( 1937 ) and a Gloria ( 1960 ? 61 ) composed for the 125th anniversary of the Huddersfield Choral Society .

= = = Recordings = = =

From the days of 78 rpm discs , when relatively little modern music was being put on record , Walton was favoured by the record companies . In 1929 the small , new Decca company recorded eleven movements from Façade , with the composer conducting a chamber ensemble , with the speakers Edith Sitwell and Walton 's friend and colleague Constant Lambert . In the 1930s , Walton also had two of his major orchestral works on disc , both on Decca , the First Symphony recorded by Harty and the London Symphony Orchestra , and the Viola Concerto with Frederick Riddle and the LSO conducted by the composer . In the 1940s Walton moved from Decca to its older , larger rival , EMI . The EMI producer Walter Legge arranged a series of recordings of Walton 's major works and many minor ones over the next twenty years ; a rival composer expressed the view that if Walton had an attack of flatulence ( he used an earthier expression ) , Walter Legge would record it .

Walton himself , although a reluctant conductor , conducted many of the EMI recordings , and some for other labels . He made studio recordings of the First Symphony , the Viola Concerto , the Violin Concerto , the Sinfonia Concertante , the Façade Suites , the Partita , Belshazzar 's Feast , and suites from his film scores for Shakespeare plays and The First of the Few . Some live performances conducted by Walton were recorded and have been released on compact disc , including the Cello Concerto and the Coronation Te Deum .

Almost all Walton 's works have been recorded for commercial release . EMI published a " Walton Edition " of his major works on CD in the 1990s , and the recording of the Chandos Records " Walton Edition " of his works was completed in 2010 . His best @-@ known works have been recorded by performers from many countries . Among the frequently recorded are Belshazzar 's Feast , the Viola and Violin Concertos and the First Symphony , which has had more than twenty recordings since Harty 's 1936 set .