

= Arnold Bax =

Sir Arnold Edward Trevor Bax , KCVO (8 November 1883 ? 3 October 1953) was an English composer , poet , and author . His prolific output includes songs , choral music , chamber pieces , and solo piano works , but he is best known for his orchestral music . In addition to a series of symphonic poems he wrote seven symphonies and was for a time widely regarded as the leading British symphonist .

Bax was born in the London suburb of Streatham to a prosperous family . He was encouraged by his parents to pursue a career in music , and his private income enabled him to follow his own path as a composer without regard for fashion or orthodoxy . Consequently , he came to be regarded in musical circles as an important but isolated figure . While still a student at the Royal Academy of Music Bax became fascinated with Ireland and Celtic culture , which became a strong influence on his early development . In the years before the First World War he lived in Ireland and became a member of Dublin literary circles , writing fiction and verse under the pseudonym Dermot O 'Byrne . Later , he developed an affinity with Nordic culture , which for a time superseded his Celtic influences in the years after the First World War .

Between 1910 and 1920 Bax wrote a large amount of music , including the symphonic poem Tintagel , his best @-@ known work . During this period he formed a lifelong association with the pianist Harriet Cohen ? at first an affair , then a friendship , and always a close professional relationship . In the 1920s he began the series of seven symphonies which form the heart of his orchestral output . In 1942 Bax was appointed Master of the King 's Music , but composed little in that capacity . In his last years he found his music regarded as old @-@ fashioned , and after his death it was generally neglected . From the 1960s onwards , mainly through a growing number of commercial recordings , his music was gradually rediscovered , although little of it is regularly heard in the concert hall .

= = Life and career = =

= = = Early years = = =

Bax was born in the London suburb of Streatham , Surrey , to a prosperous Victorian family . He was the eldest son of Alfred Ridley Bax (1844 ? 1918) and his wife , Charlotte Ellen , née Lea (1860 ? 1940) . The couple 's youngest son , Clifford Lea Bax , became a playwright and essayist . Alfred Bax was a barrister of the Middle Temple , but having a private income he did not practise . In 1896 the family moved to a mansion in Hampstead . Bax later wrote that although it would have been good to be raised in the country , the large gardens of the family house were the next best thing . He was a musical child : " I cannot remember the long @-@ lost day when I was unable to play the piano ? inaccurately " .

After a preparatory school in Balham , Bax attended the Hampstead Conservatoire during the 1890s . The establishment was run ? " with considerable personal pomp " , according to Bax ? by Cecil Sharp , whose passion for English folk @-@ song and folk @-@ dance excited no response in his pupil . An enthusiasm for folk music was widespread among British composers of the late 19th and early 20th centuries , including Parry , Stanford , Vaughan Williams and Holst ; Sullivan and Elgar stood aloof , as did Bax , who later put into general circulation the saying , " You should make a point of trying every experience once , excepting incest and folk @-@ dancing . "

In 1900 Bax moved on to the Royal Academy of Music , where he remained until 1905 , studying composition with Frederick Corder and piano with Tobias Matthay . Corder was a devotee of the works of Wagner , whose music was Bax 's principal inspiration in his early years . He later observed , " For a dozen years of my youth I wallowed in Wagner 's music to the almost total exclusion ? until I became aware of Richard Strauss ? of any other " . Bax also discovered and privately studied the works of Debussy , whose music , like that of Strauss , was frowned on by the largely conservative faculty of the Academy .

Although Bax won a Macfarren Scholarship for composition and other important prizes , and was known for his exceptional ability to read complex modern scores on sight , he attracted less recognition than his contemporaries Benjamin Dale and York Bowen . His keyboard technique was formidable , but he had no desire for a career as a soloist . Unlike most of his contemporaries , he had private means that made him free to pursue his musical career as he chose , without the necessity of earning an income . The Times considered that Bax 's independence and disinclination to heed his teachers ultimately damaged his art , because he did not develop the discipline to express his imagination to the greatest effect .

After leaving the Academy Bax visited Dresden , where he saw the original production of Strauss 's *Salome* , and first heard the music of Mahler , which he found " eccentric , long @-@ winded , muddle @-@ headed , and yet always interesting " . Among the influences on the young Bax was the Irish poet W. B. Yeats ; Bax 's brother Clifford introduced him to Yeats 's poetry and to Ireland . Influenced by Yeats 's *The Wanderings of Oisín* , Bax visited the west coast of Ireland in 1902 , and found that " in a moment the Celt within me stood revealed " . His first composition to be performed ? at an Academy concert in 1902 ? was an Irish dialect song called " *The Grand Match* " .

= = = Early career = = =

Musically , Bax veered away from the influence of Wagner and Strauss , and deliberately adopted what he conceived of as a Celtic idiom . In 1908 he began a cycle of tone poems called *Eire* , described by his biographer Lewis Foreman as the beginning of the composer 's truly mature style . The first of these pieces , *Into the Twilight* , was premiered by Thomas Beecham and the New Symphony Orchestra in April 1909 , and the following year , at Elgar 's instigation , Henry Wood , commissioned the second in the cycle , *In the Faëry Hills* . The work received mixed notices . The Manchester Guardian 's reviewer wrote , " Mr Bax has happily suggested the appropriate atmosphere of mystery " ; The Observer found the piece " very undeterminate and unsatisfying , but not difficult to follow " . The Times commented on the " rather second @-@ hand language " at some points , derivative of Wagner and Debussy , although " there is still a great deal which is wholly individual " . The Musical Times praised " a mystic glamour that could not fail to be felt by the listener " although the coherence of the piece " was not instantly discernible " . A third work in the cycle , *Roscartha* , was not performed in the composer 's lifetime .

Bax 's private means enabled him to travel to the Russian Empire in 1910 . He was in pursuit of Natalia Skarginska , a young Ukrainian whom he had met in London ? one of several women with whom he fell in love over the years . The visit eventually proved a failure from the romantic point of view but musically enriched him . In Saint Petersburg he discovered and immediately loved ballet ; he absorbed Russian musical influences that inspired material for the First Piano Sonata , the piano pieces , " *May Night in the Ukraine* " and " *Gopak* " , and the First Violin Sonata , dedicated to Skarginska . Foreman describes him in this period as " a musical magpie , celebrating his latest discoveries in new compositions " ; Foreman adds that Bax 's own musical personality was strong enough for him to assimilate his influences and make them into his own . Russian music continued to influence him until the First World War . An unfinished ballet *Tamara* , " a little @-@ Russian fairy tale in action and dance " , provided material the composer reused in post @-@ war works .

Having given up his pursuit of Skarginska , Bax returned to England ; in January 1911 he married the pianist Elsie Luisa Sobrino (b . 1885 or 1886) , daughter of the teacher and pianist , Carlos Sobrino , and his wife , Luise , née Schmitz , a singer . Bax and his wife lived first in Chester Terrace , Regent 's Park , London , and then moved to Ireland , taking a house in Rathgar , a well @-@ to @-@ do suburb of Dublin . They had two children , Dermot (1912 ? 1976) and Maeve Astrid (1913 ? 1987) . Bax became known in Dublin literary circles under the pseudonym " Dermot O 'Byrne " ; he mixed with the writer George William Russell and his associates , and published stories , verses and a play . Reviewing a selection of the prose and poetry reissued in 1980 , Stephen Banfield found most of Bax 's earlier poems " like his early music , over @-@ written , cluttered with the secondhand lumber of early Yeats , though the weakness is one of loosely chosen language rather than complexity . " Banfield had better things to say of the later poems , where Bax " focuses

matters , whether laconically and colloquially upon the grim futility of the 1916 Easter Uprising ... or pungently upon his recurrent disillusionment about love . " Some of Bax 's writings as O 'Byrne were regarded as subversively sympathetic to the Irish republican cause , and the government censor prohibited their publication .

= = = First World War = = =

At the beginning of the war Bax returned to England . A heart complaint , from which he suffered intermittently throughout his life , made him unfit for military service ; he acted as a special constable for a period . At a time when fellow composers including Vaughan Williams , Arthur Bliss , George Butterworth and Ivor Gurney were serving overseas , Bax was able to produce a large body of music , finding , in Foreman 's phrase , " his technical and artistic maturity " in his early thirties . Among his better @-@ known works from the period are the orchestral tone poems November Woods (1916) and Tintagel (1917 ? 19) .

During his time in Dublin Bax had made many republican friends . The Easter rising in April 1916 and the subsequent execution of the ringleaders shocked him deeply . He expressed his feelings in some of his music such as the orchestral In Memoriam and the " Elegiac Trio " for flute , viola , and harp (1916) , as well as in his poetry .

In addition to his Irish influences , Bax also drew on a Nordic tradition , being inspired by the Norwegian poet Bjørnstjerne Bjørnson and Icelandic sagas . Bax 's Symphonic Variations for Piano and Orchestra (1917) is seen by the musicologist Julian Herbage as the turning @-@ point from the Celtic to the Nordic in Bax 's oeuvre ; Herbage views it as a further indication of the shift that Winter Legends , composed thirteen years later , has a Nordic rather than a Celtic setting .

During the war Bax began an affair with the pianist Harriet Cohen , for whom he left his wife and children . Musically , she was his muse for the rest of his life ; he wrote numerous pieces for her , and she was the dedicatee of eighteen of his works . He took a flat in Swiss Cottage , London , where he lived until the start of the Second World War . He sketched many of his mature works there , often taking them in short score to his favoured rural retreats , Glencolmcille in Ireland and then from 1928 onwards Morar in Scotland , to work on the full score at leisure .

= = = Inter @-@ war years = = =

In a study of Bax in 1919 his friend and confidante , the critic Edwin Evans , commented on the waning of the Celtic influence in the composer 's music and the emergence of " a more austere , abstract art " . From the 1920s onwards Bax seldom turned to poetic legend for inspiration . In Foreman 's view , in the post @-@ war years Bax was recognised for the first time as an important , though isolated , figure in British music . The many substantial works he wrote during the war years were heard in public , and he started writing symphonies . Few English composers had so far written symphonies that occupied a secure place in the repertoire , the best known being Elgar (A ? and E ? symphonies) and Vaughan Williams (Sea , London and Pastoral symphonies) . During the 1920s and into the 1930s Bax was seen by many as the leading British symphonist .

Bax 's First Symphony was written in 1921 ? 22 , and when first given it was a great success , despite its ferocity of tone . The critics found the work dark and severe . The Daily News commented , " It is full of arrogant , almost blatant , virility . Its prevailing tone colour is dark , very dark ? thick clouds with only here and there a ray of sunlight . " The Daily Telegraph suggested that if there was any humour in the piece , it was sardonic . The Manchester Guardian noted the severity of the work , but declared it " a truly great English symphony " . The work was a box @-@ office attraction at the Proms for several years after the premiere . In Foreman 's view , Bax was at his musical peak for a fairly short time , and his reputation was overtaken by those of Vaughan Williams and William Walton . The Third Symphony was completed in 1929 and , championed by Wood , remained for some time among the composer 's most popular works .

In the mid @-@ 1920s , while his affair with Cohen continued , Bax met the twenty @-@ three @-@ year @-@ old Mary Gleaves , and for more than two decades he maintained relationships

with both women . His affair with Cohen ripened into warm friendship and continuing musical partnership . Gleaves became his companion from the later 1920s until his death .

In the 1930s , Bax composed the last four of his seven symphonies . Other works from the decade include the popular Overture to a Picaresque Comedy (1930) , several works for chamber groups , including a nonet (1930) , a string quintet (1933) , an octet for horn , piano , and strings (1934) and his third and last string quartet (1936) . The Cello Concerto (1932) was commissioned by and dedicated to Gaspar Cassadó , who quickly dropped the work from his repertoire . Although Beatrice Harrison championed the concerto in the 1930s and 1940s , Bax said , " The fact that nobody has ever taken up this work has been one of the major disappointments of my musical life " .

Bax was knighted in 1937 ; he had neither expected nor sought the honour , and was more surprised than delighted to receive it . As the decade progressed , he became less prolific ; he commented that he wanted to " retire , like a grocer " . Among his compositions from the period was the Violin Concerto (1938) . Although not written to commission , he had composed it with the violin virtuoso Jascha Heifetz in mind . Heifetz never played it , and it was premiered in 1942 by Eda Kersey with the BBC Symphony Orchestra and Wood .

= = = 1940s and 50s = = =

After the death of the Master of the King 's Music , Sir Walford Davies , in 1941 , Bax was appointed to succeed him . The choice surprised many . Bax , despite his knighthood , was not an Establishment figure ; he himself had expressed a disinclination to " shuffle around in knee @-@ breeches " . In the opinion of The Times the appointment was not a good one : " Bax was not cut out for official duties and found their performance irksome " . Nonetheless , Bax wrote a handful of occasional pieces for royal events , including a march for the Coronation in 1953 .

After the Second World War began , Bax moved to Sussex , taking up residence at the White Horse Hotel , Storrington , where he lived for the rest of his life . He abandoned composition and completed a book of memoirs about his early years , Farewell , My Youth . The Times found it at times waspish , at times reticent , surprising in parts , and regrettably short . Later in the war Bax was persuaded to contribute incidental music for a short film , Malta G. C. ; he subsequently wrote music for David Lean 's Oliver Twist (1948) and a second short film , Journey into History (1952) . His other works from the period include the short Morning Song for piano and orchestra , and the Left @-@ Hand Concertante (1949) , both written for Cohen . Bax and the Poet Laureate , John Masefield , worked on a pageant , The Play of Saint George in 1947 , but the project was not completed .

In his last years , Bax maintained a contented retirement for much of the time . Walton commented , " an important cricket match at Lord 's would bring him hurrying up to town from his pub at Storrington with much greater excitement than a performance of one of his works " . In 1950 , after hearing his Third Symphony played at Bournemouth , he said , " I ought perhaps to be thinking of an eighth " , but by this time he had begun to drink quite heavily , which aged him rapidly and impaired his ability to concentrate on a large @-@ scale composition . He wrote in 1952 , " I doubt whether I shall write anything else ? I have said all I have to say and it is of no use to repeat myself . " Celebrations were planned by the Hallé Orchestra and others to celebrate Bax 's seventieth birthday in November 1953 . The celebrations became memorials : while visiting Cork in October 1953 Bax died suddenly of heart failure . He was interred in St. Finbarr 's Cemetery , Cork .

= = Music = =

Bax 's fellow composer Arthur Benjamin wrote that Bax was " a fount of music " , whose " spontaneous and inexhaustible outpourings " , unique among his contemporaries , were comparable to those of Schubert and Dvořák . Evans has suggested that Bax 's music paradoxically combines robustness and wistfulness , a view that later commentators including Herbage have endorsed . The early music is often instrumentally difficult or orchestrally and harmonically complex ; from about 1913 onwards he moved towards a simpler , sparer style . The composer and musicologist Anthony

Payne considers that Bax 's best works date from the period between 1910 and 1925 : he instances The Garden of Fand , Tintagel , November Woods , the Second Piano Sonata , Viola Sonata , and first two symphonies . By the 1930s Bax 's music ceased to be regarded as new and difficult , and towards the end of that decade it was attracting less attention than before .

The conductor Vernon Handley , long associated with Bax 's music , commented that the composer 's influences include Rachmaninoff and Sibelius as well as Richard Strauss and Wagner : " He was aware of jazz and many more composers on the European scene than we are now . That finds its way into a person 's psyche and personality and into his technique as a musician . "

The critic Neville Cardus wrote of Bax 's music :

The paradox is that Bax 's methods , his idiom and tonal atmosphere are impersonal : that is to say , there is no direct unfolding of an individual state of mind or soul as we find in Elgar or Gustav Mahler . Yet there is no mistaking the Bax physiognomy or psychology : always through the gloom and thickets of the symphonies the warm rays of an approachable , lovable man and nature may be felt .

York Bowen thought it regrettable that Bax 's orchestral works frequently call for exceptionally large forces : " When the score demands such luxuries as triple or quadruple woodwind , six horns , three or four trumpets , extra percussion and perhaps organ , it is undoubtedly throwing extra difficulties in the way of performance . " The composer Eric Coates commented that Bax 's music appealed greatly to orchestral players : " whichever instrument he wrote for , it was as if he played that instrument himself , so well did he seem to write for it " .

= = = Symphonies = = =

While in Dresden in 1907 Bax began work on what he later called " a colossal symphony which would have occupied quite an hour in performance , were such a cloud @-@ cuckoo dream to become an actuality " . He added " Happily , it never has ! " , but he left a complete piano sketch , which was orchestrated in 2012 ? 13 by Martin Yates , and recorded for the Dutton Vocalion label ; it lasts for 77 minutes . The four @-@ movement work , more conventional in structure than his completed symphonies , shows a strong Russian influence in its material .

Bax wrote his seven completed symphonies between 1921 and 1939 . In a study of the seven , David Cox wrote in 1967 that they were " often dismissed as amorphous by those who imagine that Bax consists only of Celtic mistiness and ' atmosphere ' . In fact they have considerable strength and frequent astringence ; and formally the thematic material is presented with consistency and purpose . " In Herbage 's view , the cycle can be seen to fall into two groups ? the first three and the last three ? with the Fourth Symphony as " an extrovert interlude between these largely introspective works " . Handley agreed that the first three could be grouped together ; Foreman sees a Celtic influence in all three , with Bax 's emotions about the Easter rising and its aftermath discernible . The Fourth is generally regarded as a more optimistic work than its predecessors and successors . Handley calls it " festive " , but comments that its ideas developed into darker mood in the Fifth and Sixth . The Fifth is , for Herbage , " the greatest tour @-@ de @-@ force " ; the Sixth stands out for its " magnificent final movement " , which the critic Peter Pirie said " tears the earth up by its roots " ; and the Seventh , in the view of the Grove Dictionary of Music and Musicians , has an elegiac tone , its simplicity far removed from the discursive and complex music of Bax 's earlier years .

= = = Concertante works = = =

Bax 's first work for solo instrument and orchestra was the 50 @-@ minute Symphonic Variations in E ? (1919) , written for Harriet Cohen . The Times considered it " like one of those deeds of recklessness which in the Army may be followed either by a Court @-@ martial or a V.C. We incline to favour the Court @-@ martial , and to award the V.C. to Miss Harriet Cohen for her part in the enterprise . "

The Cello Concerto (1932) was Bax 's first attempt at a full @-@ scale conventional concerto . It calls for a smaller orchestra than he customarily employed , with no trombones or tuba , and no

percussion apart from timpani . Foreman points to many subtleties of scoring , but notes that it has never ranked high among the composer 's mature works . The Violin Concerto (1937 ? 38) is , like the last symphony , in a more relaxed vein than most of Bax 's earlier music . Cardus singled it out as " unusually fine " , although Heifetz may have felt it not virtuosic enough . The composer described it as in the romantic tradition of Joachim Raff .

Among the minor concertante works is Variations on the Name Gabriel Fauré (1949) for harp and strings , in a style more neoclassical than most of Bax 's music . Bax 's last concertante piece was a short work for piano and orchestra (1947) written in his capacity as Master of the King 's Music , marking Princess Elizabeth 's twenty @-@ first birthday .

= = = Other orchestral works = = =

Bax 's tone poems are in a variety of styles and have varied sharply in their popularity . His impressionistic tone poems In the Faëry Hills and the Debussy ' La Mer ' like Nympholept are described by Grove as " a succinct and attractive pieces " . The former was modestly successful , but Spring Fire and Nympholept (1913) instanced by Foreman as difficult works ; were not performed in Bax 's lifetime . During the First World War Bax wrote three tone poems , two of which ? The Garden of Fand (1913 ? 16) and November Woods (1917) ? have remained on the fringes of the modern repertoire , and a third ? Tintagel (1917 ? 19) ? which in the decade after his death was the only work by which Bax was known to the public . Grove characterises all three as musical evocations of nature , with little expression of subjective personal response . The orchestral piece that was neglected longest was In memoriam (1917) , a lament for Patrick Pearse , who was shot for his part in the Easter rising ; the work was not played until 1998 . Bax reused the main melody for his incidental music to Oliver Twist (1948) .

Oliver Twist was the second of Bax 's film scores . The first was for a short wartime propaganda film , Malta , G. C .. A four @-@ movement suite was published after the release of the latter , containing what The Penguin Guide to Recorded Classical Music calls " a notable March with a genuine nobilmente theme in the best Elgarian tradition " . Bax 's third and last cinema score was for a ten @-@ minute short film Journey into History in 1952 .

Other orchestral works include Overture , Elegy and Rondo (1927) ? a lightweight piece , according to Grove . The Overture to a Picaresque Comedy (1930) , was for a time one of his most popular works . It was described by the composer as " Straussian pastiche " and by The Times as " gay and impudent , and with that tendency to vulgarity which so easily besets the instinctively refined composer determined to let himself go " , Cardus thought the work so appealing that to live up to the overture the putative comedy would have to be " written by Hofmannsthal and Shaw in collaboration . Not often is English music so free and audacious as this , so gay and winning . "

= = = Vocal music = = =

The critic Peter Latham remarked that he was surprised that Bax had never set any of Yeats 's poems to music . Bax replied , " What , I ? I should never dare ! " . Latham added that Bax 's sensitiveness to poetic values made him " painfully aware of the violence that even the best musical setting must do to a poem " . Eventually this feeling caused him to give up song @-@ writing completely .

At the start of his composing career , songs , together with piano music , formed the core of Bax 's work . Some of the songs , mainly the early ones , are conspicuous for the virtuosity of their piano parts , which tend to overwhelm the voice . Grove contrasts the virtuoso accompaniment of " The Fairies " (1905) with the simpler " The White Peace " (1907) , one of his most popular songs . The musical analyst Trevor Hold writes that the piano " goes berserk " in " Glamour " (1920) . Among the poets whose verses Bax set were his brother Clifford , Burns , Chaucer , Hardy , Housman , Joyce , Synge and Tennyson . The composer himself singled out for mention in his Who 's Who article " A Celtic Song @-@ Cycle " (1904) to words by " Fiona Macleod " (a pen name of the poet William Sharp) . Among the post @-@ war songs , Hold considers Bax 's " In the Morning " (1926)

to be one of the best of all settings of Housman 's works , " and it makes you wish that Bax had made further explorations into the Shropshire landscape . " Hold classes that song , together with " Across the Door " (1921) , " Rann of Exile " (1922) and " Watching the Needleboats " (1932) , as " truly modern , 20th @-@ century masterpieces of song " .

Bax wrote a substantial number of choral works , mostly secular but some religious . He was a nominal member of the Church of England , but in the view of the critic Paul Spicer , " None of Bax 's choral music can be described as devotional or even suitable for church use ? Here is a secular composer writing voluptuous music . " The choral works with religious texts include his largest @-@ scale unaccompanied vocal piece , Mater ora Filium (1921) , inspired by William Byrd 's Five Part Mass ; it is a setting of a medieval carol from a manuscript held by Balliol College , Oxford . The composer Patrick Hadley considered it " an unsurpassed example of modern unaccompanied vocal writing " . Bax 's other choral works include settings of words by Shelley (Enchanted Summer , 1910) , Henry Vaughan (The Morning Watch , 1935) , Masfield (To Russia , 1944) , and Spenser (Epithalamium , 1947) .

= = = Chamber and solo piano music = = =

In his overview of Bax 's earlier chamber works , Evans identifies as among the most successful the Phantasy for viola , the Trio for piano , violin , and viola and " a String Quintet of such difficulty that an adequate performance has seldom if ever been possible " . He rates the Second Violin Sonata (1915) as the composer 's most individual work to that date . For Evans , the culminating point of Bax 's early chamber music was the Piano Quintet , a work " of such richness of invention that it would be an ornament to the musical literature of any country or period " . Foreman makes particular mention of the First String Quartet (1918 ? " a classical clarity of texture and form to its Celtic inspiration " , and the " grittier " Second Quartet (1925) , the Viola Sonata (1922) , the Phantasy Sonata for viola and harp (1927) and the Sonata for Flute and Harp (1928) .

The composer and musical scholar Christopher Palmer writes that Bax was unusual among British composers in composing a substantial oeuvre for solo piano . Bax published four piano sonatas (1910 ? 32) , which are , in Palmer 's view , as central to the composer 's piano music as the symphonies are to the orchestral output . The first two sonatas are each in a single movement , of about twenty minutes ; the third and fourth are in conventional three @-@ movement form . The First Symphony was originally planned as a large @-@ scale piano sonata in E ? (1921) ; the manuscript score of the latter came to light in the early 1980s and was performed for the first time in 1983 . Bax 's own virtuosity as a pianist is reflected in the demands of many of his piano pieces . Palmer cites Chopin and Liszt as major influences on Bax 's piano style as well as Balakirev and the other Russians whose influence is seen throughout the composer 's work . For piano duo Bax composed two tone poems , Moy Mell (1917) and Red Autumn (1931) . His shorter piano pieces include picturesque miniatures such as In a Vodka Shop (1915) , A Hill Tune (1920) and Water Music (1929) .

= = Neglect and revival = =

In his later years Bax 's music fell into neglect . Sir John Barbirolli wrote , " I think he felt keenly that his richly wrought and masterly scores were no longer ' fashionable ' to @-@ day , but nothing could deter him from the path of complete honesty and sincerity in his musical thought . " The neglect became more complete after the composer 's death . He had always sustained a Romantic outlook , distancing himself from musical modernism and especially Arnold Schoenberg 's serialism , of which Bax wrote in 1951 :

I believe that there is little probability that the twelve @-@ note scale will ever produce anything more than morbid or entirely cerebral growths . It might deal successfully with neuroses of various kinds , but I cannot imagine it associated with any healthy and happy concept such as young love or the coming of spring .

Neither Bax 's views nor his works were fashionable in the two decades after his death . The critic

Michael Kennedy writes that the mid @-@ 1950s were a time of " immense change and transition in influential musical circles . " The music favoured by the cultural establishment until then was regarded as having made Britain musically parochial and indifferent to the developments of the past half @-@ century . In Kennedy 's words , " Rubbra , Bax and Ireland found themselves out in the cold " .

Foreman comments that in the years after Bax 's death his reputation was kept alive by a single work ? Tintagel . Kennedy estimates that it took " twenty painful years " before the music of the British romantics including Bax made headway against the dominance of modernism . Foreman dates the revival of Bax 's music to Handley 's performances of the Fourth Symphony and other works with the Guildford Philharmonic Orchestra in the 1960s , and the pioneering recordings by Lyrita Recorded Edition of five of the symphonies . Scholarly consideration of Bax 's life and music came with studies by Colin Scott @-@ Sutherland (1973) and Foreman (1983) . Bax 's centenary in 1983 was marked by twenty programmes on BBC Radio 3 , covering a wide range of the composer 's music . In 1985 the Sir Arnold Bax Trust was established to promote the composer 's work including the sponsoring of live performances and recording and publication of his music and writings . Since then a large number of Bax 's works , major and minor , have been recorded (see below) . The proliferation of Bax recordings has not been matched by a revival in his fortunes in the concert hall ; the critic Stephen Moss observed in The Guardian in 2007 , " Bax is considered the promotional kiss of death . " In 1999 the Oxford University Press published a complete catalogue of Bax 's works compiled and annotated by Graham Parlett ; Music & Letters called it " a benchmark for any future researchers seeking to compile a catalogue of a composer 's works " .

= = Recordings = =

Two recordings of Bax as a pianist were made in 1929 . With Lionel Tertis he recorded his own Viola Sonata for Columbia , and with May Harrison he recorded Delius 's Violin Sonata No 1 for the rival HMV label . Of the symphonies , only the Third was recorded in the composer 's lifetime ; it was played by the Hallé under Barbirolli and released in 1944 . The Viola Sonata , Nonet and Mater ora Filium were recorded under the auspices of the English Music Society in 1937 and 1938 . The Phantasy Sonata for Viola and Harp , the Sonata for Two Pianos and a handful of the songs were recorded on 78 rpm discs . Of the tone poems , Eugene Goossens conducted the first recording of Tintagel , in 1928 ; twenty years later a set of The Garden of Fand with Beecham and the Royal Philharmonic Orchestra was released by HMV . By 1955 Bax on record was so scarce that The Record Guide listed only Tintagel , the Coronation March , the unaccompanied choral work What is it Like to be Young and Fair ? and the solo piano piece Paeon .

Parlett included an extensive discography in his 1999 A Catalogue of the Works of Sir Arnold Bax , later expanded and updated in a website . At 2015 the latter lists more than 250 works by Bax that have been recorded and published . The discography includes three complete cycles of Bax 's symphonies released on CD , two by Chandos Records , the first conducted by Bryden Thomson (recorded 1983 ? 88) and the second by Handley (2003) ; between them was a cycle issued by Naxos Records conducted by David Lloyd @-@ Jones (recorded 1997 ? 2001) . The major tone poems and other orchestral works have been recorded , many of them in several different versions . , however Nympholept arguably Bax greatest tone poem , was never performed during Bax life and was first recorded by Bryden Thomson in 1984 . Bax 's chamber music is well represented on disc , with recordings of most of the works , and multiple versions of many , including the Elegiac Trio , the Clarinet Sonata and the Fantasy Sonata . Much of the piano music has been recorded by pianists including Iris Loveridge , John McCabe , Ashley Wass and Michael Endres , though by 2015 no integral survey had yet been recorded . Of the vocal works , by far the most often recorded is Mater ora Filium , but other choral works , and a representative selection of the songs are on disc .

= = Honours and legacy = =

Bax received the gold medals of the Royal Philharmonic Society (1931) and the Worshipful

Company of Musicians (1931) , and the Cobbett medal for chamber music (1931) . He was awarded honorary doctorates by the universities of Oxford (1934) and Durham (1935) and the National University of Ireland (1947) . A Bax Memorial Room at University College , Cork , was opened by Vaughan Williams in 1955 . After Bax 's knighthood in the 1937 Coronation Honours he was advanced to KCVO in 1953 . An English Heritage blue plaque , unveiled in 1993 , commemorates Bax at his birthplace , 13 Pendennis Road in Streatham .

In 1992 Ken Russell made a television film dramatising Bax 's later years , The Secret Life of Arnold Bax . Russell himself portrayed Bax and Glenda Jackson , in her final acting role , appeared as Harriet Cohen .