

= Kathleen Ferrier =

Kathleen Mary Ferrier , CBE (22 April 1912 ? 8 October 1953) was an English contralto singer who achieved an international reputation as a stage , concert and recording artist , with a repertoire extending from folksong and popular ballads to the classical works of Bach , Brahms , Mahler and Elgar . Her death from cancer , at the height of her fame , was a shock to the musical world and particularly to the general public , which was kept in ignorance of the nature of her illness until after her death .

The daughter of a Lancashire village schoolmaster , Ferrier showed early talent as a pianist , and won numerous amateur piano competitions while working as a telephonist with the General Post Office . She did not take up singing seriously until 1937 , when after winning a prestigious singing competition at the Carlisle Festival she began to receive offers of professional engagements as a vocalist . Thereafter she took singing lessons , first with J.E. Hutchinson and later with Roy Henderson . After the outbreak of the Second World War Ferrier was recruited by the Council for the Encouragement of Music and the Arts (CEMA) , and in the following years sang at concerts and recitals throughout England . In 1942 her career was boosted when she met the conductor Malcolm Sargent , who recommended her to the influential Ibbs and Tillett concert management agency . She became a regular performer at leading London and provincial venues , and made numerous BBC radio broadcasts .

In 1946 , Ferrier made her stage debut , in the Glyndebourne Festival premiere of Benjamin Britten 's opera *The Rape of Lucretia* . A year later she made her first appearance as Orfeo in Gluck 's *Orfeo ed Euridice* , a work with which she became particularly associated . By her own choice , these were her only two operatic roles . As her reputation grew , Ferrier formed close working relationships with major musical figures , including Britten , Sir John Barbirolli , Bruno Walter and the accompanist Gerald Moore . She became known internationally through her three tours to the United States between 1948 and 1950 and her many visits to continental Europe .

Ferrier was diagnosed with breast cancer in March 1951 . In between periods of hospitalisation and convalescence she continued to perform and record ; her final public appearance was as Orfeo , at the Royal Opera House in February 1953 , eight months before her death . Among her many memorials , the Kathleen Ferrier Cancer Research Fund was launched in May 1954 . The Kathleen Ferrier Scholarship Fund , administered by the Royal Philharmonic Society , has since 1956 made annual awards to aspiring young professional singers .

= = Early life = =

= = = Childhood = = =

The Ferrier family originally came from Pembrokeshire in South West Wales . The Lancashire branch originated in the 19th century , when Thomas Ferrier (youngest son of Private Thomas Ferrier of the Pembrokeshire Regiment) settled in the area after being stationed near Blackburn during a period of industrial unrest . Kathleen Ferrier was born on 22 April 1912 , in the Lancashire village of Higher Walton where her father William Ferrier (the fourth child of Thomas and Elizabeth , née Gorton) was the head of the village school . Although untrained musically , William was an enthusiastic member of the local operatic society and of several choirs , and his wife Alice (née Murray) , whom he married in 1900 , was a competent singer with a strong contralto voice . Kathleen was the third and youngest of the couple 's children , following a sister and a brother ; when she was two the family moved to Blackburn , after William was appointed headmaster of St Paul 's School in the town . From an early age Kathleen showed promise as a pianist , and had lessons with Frances Walker , a noted North of England piano teacher who had been a pupil of Tobias Matthay . Kathleen 's talent developed quickly ; in 1924 she came fourth out of 43 entrants at the Lytham St Annes Festival piano competition , and in the following year at Lytham she achieved second place .

== Telephonist and pianist ==

Because of William 's impending retirement and the consequent fall in the family 's income , Ferrier 's hopes of attending a music college could not be realised . In August 1926 she left school to start work as a trainee at the GPO telephone exchange in Blackburn . She continued her piano studies under Frances Walker , and in November 1928 was the regional winner in a national contest for young pianists , organised by the Daily Express . Although unsuccessful in the London finals which followed , Ferrier won a Cramer upright piano as a prize . On 10 March 1929 she made a well @-@ received appearance as an accompanist in a concert at Blackburn 's King George 's Hall . After further piano competition successes she was invited to perform a short radio recital at the Manchester studios of the BBC , and on 3 July 1930 made her first broadcast , playing works by Brahms and Percy Grainger . Around this time she completed her training and she became a fully fledged telephonist .

In 1931 , aged 19 , Ferrier passed her Licentiate examinations at the Royal Academy of Music . In that year she started occasional singing lessons , and in December sang a small mezzo @-@ soprano role in a church performance of Mendelssohn 's oratorio Elijah . However , her voice was not thought to be exceptional ; her musical life centred on the piano and on local concerts , at King George 's Hall and elsewhere . Early in 1934 she transferred to the Blackpool telephone exchange and took lodgings nearby , to be close to her new boyfriend , a bank clerk named Albert Wilson . While at Blackpool she auditioned for the new " speaking clock " service which the GPO was preparing to introduce . In her excitement , Ferrier inserted an extra aspirate into her audition , and was not chosen for the final selection in London . Her decision in 1935 to marry Wilson meant the end of her employment with the telephone exchange , since at that time the GPO did not employ married women . Of Ferrier 's career to this point , the music biographer Humphrey Burton wrote : " For more than a decade , when she should have been studying music with the best teachers , learning English literature and foreign languages , acquiring stage craft and movement skills , and travelling to London regularly to see opera , Miss Ferrier was actually answering the telephone , getting married to a bank manager and winning tinpot competitions for her piano @-@ playing . "

== Marriage ==

Ferrier met Albert Wilson in 1933 , probably through dancing , which they both loved . When she announced that they were to marry , her family and friends had strong reservations , on the grounds that she was young and inexperienced , and that she and Wilson shared few serious interests . Nevertheless , the marriage took place on 19 November 1935 . Shortly afterwards the couple moved to Silloth , a small port town in Cumberland , where Wilson had been appointed as manager of his bank 's branch . The marriage was not successful ; the honeymoon had revealed problems of physical incompatibility , and the union remained unconsummated . In a tribute article written for the 50th anniversary of Ferrier 's death , the journalist Rupert Christiansen wrote of Ferrier 's sexuality that " there is absolutely no justification for the idea that she was a lesbian , but she may have been sexually frigid " . Outward appearances were maintained for a few years , until Wilson 's departure for military service in 1940 effectively ended the marriage . The couple divorced in 1947 , though they remained on good terms . Wilson subsequently married a friend of Ferrier 's , Wyn Hetherington ; he died in 1969 .

== Early singing career ==

In 1937 Ferrier entered the Carlisle Festival open piano competition and , as a result of a small bet with her husband , also signed up for the singing contest . She easily won the piano trophy ; in the singing finals she sang Roger Quilter 's To Daisies , a performance which earned her the festival 's top vocal award . To mark her double triumph in piano and voice , Ferrier was awarded a special rose bowl as champion of the festival .

After her Carlisle victories , Ferrier began to receive offers of singing engagements . Her first appearance as a professional vocalist , in autumn 1937 , was at a harvest festival celebration in the village church at Aspatria . She was paid one guinea . After winning the gold cup at the 1938 Workington Festival , Ferrier sang Ma Curly @-@ Headed Babby in a concert at Workington Opera House . Cecil McGivern , producer of a BBC Northern radio variety show , was in the audience and was sufficiently impressed to book her for the next edition of his programme , which was broadcast from Newcastle on 23 February 1939 . This broadcast ? her first as a vocalist ? attracted wide attention , and led to more radio work , though for Ferrier the event was overshadowed by the death of her mother at the beginning of February . At the 1939 Carlisle Festival , Ferrier sang Richard Strauss 's song All Soul 's Day , a performance which particularly impressed one of the adjudicators , J. E. Hutchinson , a music teacher with a considerable reputation . Ferrier became his pupil and , under his guidance , began to extend her repertoire to include works by Bach , Handel , Brahms and Elgar .

When Albert Wilson joined the army in 1940 , Ferrier reverted to her maiden name , having until then sung as ' Kathleen Wilson ' . In December 1940 she appeared for the first time professionally as ' Kathleen Ferrier ' in a performance of Handel 's Messiah , under Hutchinson 's direction . In early 1941 she successfully auditioned as a singer with the Council for the Encouragement of the Arts (CEMA) , which provided concerts and other entertainments to military camps , factories and other workplaces . Within this organisation Ferrier began working with artists with international reputations ; in December 1941 she sang with the Hallé Orchestra in a performance of Messiah together with Isobel Baillie , the distinguished soprano . However , her application to the BBC 's head of music in Manchester for an audition was turned down . Ferrier had better fortune when she was introduced to Malcolm Sargent after a Hallé concert in Blackpool . Sargent agreed to hear her sing , and afterwards recommended her to Ibbs and Tillett , the London @-@ based concert management agency . John Tillett accepted her as a client without hesitation after which , on Sargent 's advice , Ferrier decided to base herself in London . On 24 December 1942 she moved with her sister Winifred into an apartment in Frognal Mansions , Hampstead .

= = Stardom = =

= = = Growing reputation = = =

Ferrier gave her first London recital on 28 December 1942 at the National Gallery , in a lunch @-@ time concert organised by Dame Myra Hess . Although she wrote " went off very well " in her diary , Ferrier was disappointed with her performance , and concluded that she needed further voice training . She approached the distinguished baritone Roy Henderson with whom , a week previously , she had sung in Mendelssohn 's Elijah . Henderson agreed to teach her , and was her regular voice coach for the remainder of her life . He later explained that her " warm and spacious tone " was in part due to the size of the cavity at the back of her throat : " one could have shot a fair @-@ sized apple right to the back of the throat without obstruction " . However , this natural physical advantage was not in itself enough to ensure the quality of her voice ; this was due , Henderson says , to " her hard work , artistry , sincerity , personality and above all her character " .

On 17 May 1943 Ferrier sang in Handel 's Messiah at Westminster Abbey , alongside Isobel Baillie and Peter Pears , with Reginald Jacques conducting . According to the critic Neville Cardus , it was through the quality of her singing here that Ferrier " made her first serious appeal to musicians " . Her assured performance led to other important engagements , and to broadcasting work ; her increasingly frequent appearances on popular programmes such as Forces Favourites and Housewives ' Choice soon gave her national recognition . In May 1944 , at EMI 's Abbey Road Studios with Gerald Moore as her accompanist , she made test recordings of music by Brahms , Gluck and Elgar . Her first published record , made in September 1944 , was issued under the Columbia label ; it consisted of two songs by Maurice Greene , again with Moore accompanying . Her time as a Columbia recording artist was brief and unhappy ; she had poor relations with her

producer , Walter Legge , and after a few months she transferred to Decca .

In the remaining wartime months Ferrier continued to travel throughout the country , to fulfil the growing demands for her services from concert promoters . At Leeds in November 1944 she sang the part of the Angel in Elgar 's choral work *The Dream of Gerontius* , her first performance in what became one of her best @-@ known roles . In December she met John Barbirolli while working on another Elgar piece , *Sea Pictures* ; the conductor later became one of her closest friends and strongest advocates . On 15 September 1945 Ferrier made her debut at the London Proms , when she sang *L 'Air des Adieux* from Tchaikovsky 's opera *The Maid of Orleans* . Although she often sang individual arias , opera was not Ferrier 's natural forte ; she had not enjoyed singing the title role in a concert version of Bizet 's *Carmen* at Stourbridge in March 1944 , and generally avoided similar engagements . Nevertheless , Benjamin Britten , who had heard her Westminster Abbey *Messiah* performance , persuaded her to create the role of Lucretia in his new opera *The Rape of Lucretia* , which was to open the first postwar Glyndebourne Festival in 1946 . She would share the part with Nancy Evans . Despite her initial misgivings , by early July Ferrier was writing to her agent that she was " enjoying [the rehearsals] tremendously and I should think it 's the best part one could possibly have " .

Ferrier 's performances in the Glyndebourne run , which began on 12 July 1946 , earned her favourable reviews , although the opera itself was less well received . On the provincial tour which followed the festival it failed to attract the public and incurred heavy financial losses . By contrast , when the opera reached Amsterdam it was greeted warmly by the Dutch audiences who showed particular enthusiasm for Ferrier 's performance . This was Ferrier 's first trip abroad , and she wrote an excited letter to her family : " The cleanest houses and windows you ever did see , and flowers in the fields all the way ! " Following her success as Lucretia she agreed to return to Glyndebourne in 1947 , to sing Orfeo in Gluck 's opera *Orfeo ed Euridice* . She had often sung Orfeo 's aria *Che farò* (" What is life ") as a concert piece , and had recently recorded it with Decca . At Glyndebourne , Ferrier 's limited acting abilities caused some difficulties in her relationship with the conductor , Fritz Stiedry ; nevertheless her performance on the first night , 19 June 1947 , attracted warm critical praise .

Ferrier 's association with Glyndebourne bore further fruit when Rudolf Bing , the festival 's general manager , recommended her to Bruno Walter as the contralto soloist in a performance of Mahler 's symphonic song cycle *Das Lied von der Erde* . This was planned for the 1947 Edinburgh International Festival . Walter was initially wary of working with a relatively new singer , but after her audition his fears were allayed ; " I recognised with delight that here potentially was one of the greatest singers of our time " , he later wrote . *Das Lied von der Erde* was at that time largely unknown in Britain , and some critics found it unappealing ; nevertheless , the Edinburgh Evening News thought it " simply superb " . In a later biographical sketch of Ferrier , Lord Harewood described the partnership between Walter and her , which endured until the singer 's final illness , as " a rare match of music , voice , and temperament . "

= = = Career apex , 1948 ? 51 = = =

On 1 January 1948 Ferrier left for a four @-@ week tour of North America , the first of three transatlantic trips she would make during the next three years . In New York she sang two performances of *Das Lied von der Erde* , with Bruno Walter and the New York Philharmonic . Alma Mahler , the composer 's widow , was present at the first of these , on 15 January . In a letter written the following day , Ferrier told her sister : " Some of the critics are enthusiastic , others unimpressed " . After the second performance , which was broadcast from coast to coast , Ferrier gave recitals in Ottawa and Chicago before returning to New York and embarking for home on 4 February .

During 1948 , amid many engagements , Ferrier performed Brahms 's *Alto Rhapsody* at the Proms in August , and sang in Bach 's *Mass in B minor* at that year 's Edinburgh Festival . On 13 October she joined Barbirolli and the Hallé Orchestra in a broadcast performance of Mahler 's song cycle *Kindertotenlieder* . She returned to the Netherlands in January 1949 for a series of recitals , then left Southampton on 18 February to begin her second American tour . This opened in New York with a

concert performance of Orfeo ed Euridice that won uniform critical praise from the New York critics . On the tour which followed , her accompanist was Arpád Sándor (1896 ? 1972) , who was suffering from a depressive illness that badly affected his playing . Unaware of his problem , in letters home Ferrier berated " this abominable accompanist " who deserved " a kick in the pants " . When she found out that he had been ill for months , she turned her fury on the tour 's promoters : " What a blinking nerve to palm him on to me " . Eventually , when Sándor was too ill to appear , Ferrier was able to recruit a Canadian pianist , John Newmark , with whom she formed a warm and lasting working relationship .

Shortly after her return to England early in June 1949 , Ferrier left for Amsterdam where , on 14 July , she sang in the world premiere of Britten 's Spring Symphony , with Eduard van Beinum and the Concertgebouw Orchestra . Britten had written this work specifically for her . At the Edinburgh Festival in September she gave two recitals in which Bruno Walter acted as her piano accompanist . Ferrier felt that these recitals represented " a peak to which I had been groping for the last three years " . A broadcast of one of the recitals was issued on record many years later ; of this , the critic Alan Blyth wrote : " Walter 's very personal and positive support obviously pushes Ferrier to give of her very best " .

The following 18 months saw almost uninterrupted activity , encompassing a number of visits to continental Europe and a third American tour between December 1949 and April 1950 . This American trip broke new ground for Ferrier ? the West Coast ? and included three performances in San Francisco of Orfeo ed Euridice , with Pierre Monteux conducting . At the rehearsals Ferrier met the renowned American contralto Marian Anderson , who reportedly said of her English counterpart : " My God , what a voice ? and what a face ! " On Ferrier 's return home the hectic pace continued , with a rapid succession of concerts in Amsterdam , London and Edinburgh followed by a tour of Austria , Switzerland and Italy . In Vienna , the soprano Elisabeth Schwarzkopf was Ferrier 's co @-@ soloist in a recorded performance of Bach 's Mass in B minor , with the Vienna Symphony Orchestra under Herbert von Karajan . Schwarzkopf later recalled Ferrier 's singing of the Agnus Dei from the Mass as her highlight of the year .

Early in 1951 , while on tour in Rome , Ferrier learned of her father 's death at the age of 83 . Although she was upset by this news , she decided to continue with the tour ; her diary entry for 30 January reads : " My Pappy died peacefully after flu and a slight stroke " . She returned to London on 19 February , and was immediately busy rehearsing with Barbirolli and the Hallé a work that was new to her : Ernest Chausson 's Poème de l 'amour et de la mer . This was performed at Manchester on 28 February , to critical acclaim . Two weeks later Ferrier discovered a lump on her breast . She nevertheless fulfilled several engagements in Germany , the Netherlands and at Glyndebourne before seeing her doctor on 24 March . After tests at University College Hospital , cancer of the breast was diagnosed , and a mastectomy was performed on 10 April . All immediate engagements were cancelled ; among these was a planned series of performances of The Rape of Lucretia by the English Opera Group , scheduled as part of the 1951 Festival of Britain .

= = Later career = =

= = = Failing health = = =

Ferrier resumed her career on 19 June 1951 , in the Mass in B minor at the Royal Albert Hall . She then made her usual visit to the Holland Festival , where she gave four performances of Orfeo , and sang in Mahler 's Second Symphony with Otto Klemperer and the Concertgebouw Orchestra . Through the summer her concert schedule was interspersed with hospital visits ; however , she was well enough to sing at the Edinburgh Festival in September , where she performed two recitals with Walter and sang Chausson 's Poème with Barbirolli and the Hallé . In November she sang Land of Hope and Glory at the reopening of Manchester 's Free Trade Hall , a climax to the evening which , wrote Barbirolli , " moved everyone , not least the conductor , to tears " . After this , Ferrier rested for two months while she underwent radiation therapy ; her only work engagement during December

was a three @-@ day recording session of folk songs at the Decca studios .

In January 1952 Ferrier joined Britten and Pears in a short series of concerts to raise funds for Britten 's English Opera Group . Writing later , Britten recalled this tour as " perhaps the loveliest of all " of his artistic associations with Ferrier . Despite continuing health problems , she sang in the St Matthew Passion at the Royal Albert Hall on 30 March , Messiah at the Free Trade Hall on 13 April , and Das Lied von der Erde with Barbirolli and the Hallé on 23 and 24 April . On 30 April Ferrier attended a private party at which the new Queen , Elizabeth II , and her sister , Princess Margaret , were present . In her diary , Ferrier notes : " Princess M sang ? very good ! " . Her health continued to deteriorate ; she refused to consider a course of androgen injections , believing that this treatment would destroy the quality of her voice . In May she travelled to Vienna to record Das Lied and Mahler 's Rückert @-@ Lieder with Walter and the Vienna Philharmonic ; singer and conductor had long sought to preserve their partnership on disc . Despite considerable suffering , Ferrier completed the recording sessions between 15 and 20 May .

During the remainder of 1952 Ferrier attended her seventh successive Edinburgh Festival , singing in performances of Das Lied , The Dream of Gerontius , Messiah and some Brahms songs . She undertook several studio recording sessions , including a series of Bach and Handel arias with Sir Adrian Boult and the London Philharmonic Orchestra in October . In November , after a Royal Festival Hall recital , she was distressed by a review in which Neville Cardus criticised her performance for introducing " distracting extra vocal appeals " designed to please the audience at the expense of the songs . However , she accepted his comments with good grace , remarking that " ... it 's hard to please everybody ? for years I 've been criticised for being a colourless , monotonous singer " . In December she sang in the BBC 's Christmas Messiah , the last time she would perform this work . On New Year 's Day 1953 she was appointed a Commander of the Order of the British Empire (CBE) in the Queen 's New Year Honours List .

= = = Final performances , illness and death = = =

As 1953 began , Ferrier was busy rehearsing for Orpheus , an English @-@ language version of Orfeo ed Euridice to be staged in four performances at the Royal Opera House in February . Barbirolli had instigated this project , with Ferrier 's enthusiastic approval , some months previously . Her only other engagement in January was a BBC recital recording , in which she sang works by three living English composers : Howard Ferguson , William Wordsworth and Edmund Rubbra . During her regular hospital treatment she discussed with doctors the advisability of an oophorectomy (removal of the ovaries) , but on learning that the impact on her cancer would probably be insignificant and that her voice might be badly affected , she chose not to have the operation .

The first Orpheus performance , on 3 February , was greeted with unanimous critical approval . According to Barbirolli , Ferrier was particularly pleased with one critic 's comment that her movements were as graceful as any of those of the dancers on stage . However , she was physically weakened from her prolonged radiation treatment ; during the second performance , three days later , her left femur partially disintegrated . Quick action by other cast members , who moved to support her , kept the audience in ignorance . Although virtually immobilised , Ferrier sang her remaining arias and took her curtain calls before being transferred to hospital . This proved to be her final public appearance ; the two remaining performances , at first rescheduled for April , were eventually cancelled . Still the general public remained unaware of the nature of Ferrier 's incapacity ; an announcement in The Guardian stated : " Miss Ferrier is suffering from a strain resulting from arthritis which requires immediate further treatment . It has been caused by the physical stress involved in rehearsal and performance of her role in Orpheus " .

Ferrier spent two months in University College Hospital . As a result , she missed her CBE investiture ; the ribbon was brought to her at the hospital by a friend . Meanwhile , her sister found her a ground @-@ floor apartment in St John 's Wood , since she would no longer be able to negotiate the many stairs at Frognal Mansions . She moved to her new home in early April , but after only seven weeks was forced to return to hospital where , despite two further operations , her

condition continued to deteriorate . Early in June she heard that she had been awarded the Gold Medal of the Royal Philharmonic Society , the first female vocalist to receive this honour since Muriel Foster in 1914 . In a letter to the secretary of the Society she wrote that this " unbelievable , wondrous news has done more than anything to make me feel so much better " . This letter , dated 9 June , is probably the last that Ferrier signed herself . As she weakened she saw only her sister and a few very close friends , and , although there were short periods of respite , her decline was unrelenting . She died at University College Hospital on 8 October 1953 , aged 41 ; the date for which , while still hopeful of recovery , she had undertaken to sing Frederick Delius 's A Mass of Life at the 1953 Leeds Festival . Ferrier was cremated a few days later , at Golders Green Crematorium , after a short private service . She left an estate worth £ 15 @, @ 134 , which her biographer Maurice Leonard observes was " not a fortune for a world @-@ famous singer , even by the standards of the day " .

= = Assessment and legacy = =

The news of Ferrier 's death came as a considerable shock to the public . Although some in musical circles knew or suspected the truth , the myth had been preserved that her absence from the concert scene was temporary . The opera critic Rupert Christiansen , writing as the 50th anniversary of Ferrier 's death approached , maintained that " no singer in this country has ever been more deeply loved , as much for the person she was as for the voice she uttered " . Her death , he continued , " quite literally shattered the euphoria of the Coronation " (which had taken place on 2 June 1953) . Ian Jack , editor of Granta , believed that she " may well have been the most celebrated woman in Britain after the Queen . " Among the many tributes from her colleagues , that of Bruno Walter has been highlighted by biographers : " The greatest thing in music in my life has been to have known Kathleen Ferrier and Gustav Mahler ? in that order . " Very few singers , Lord Harewood writes , " have earned so powerful a valedictory from so senior a colleague . " At a memorial service at Southwark Cathedral on 14 November 1953 the Bishop of Croydon , in his eulogy , said of Ferrier 's voice : " She seemed to bring into this world a radiance from another world . "

From time to time commentators have speculated on the directions Ferrier 's career might have taken had she lived . In 1951 , while recovering from her mastectomy , she received an offer to sing the part of Brangäne in Wagner 's opera Tristan und Isolde at the 1952 Bayreuth Festival . According to Christiansen she would have been " glorious " in the role , and was being equally sought by the Bayreuth management to sing Erda in the Ring cycle . Christiansen further suggests that , given the changes of style over the past 50 years , Ferrier might have been less successful in the 21st century world : " We dislike low @-@ lying voices , for one thing ? contraltos now sound freakish and headmistressy , and even the majority of mezzo @-@ sopranos should more accurately be categorised as almost @-@ sopranos " . However , she was " a singer of , and for , her time ? a time of grief and weariness , national self @-@ respect and a belief in human nobility " . In this context " her artistry stands upright , austere , unfussy , fundamental and sincere " .

Shortly after Ferrier 's death an appeal was launched by Barbirolli , Walter , Myra Hess and others , to establish a cancer research fund in Ferrier 's name . Donations were received from all over the world . To publicise the fund a special concert was given at the Royal Festival Hall on 7 May 1954 , at which Barbirolli and Walter shared the conducting duties without payment . Among the items was a rendition of Purcell 's When I am laid in earth , which Ferrier had often sung ; on this occasion the vocal part was played by a solo cor anglais . The Kathleen Ferrier Cancer Research Fund helped establish the Kathleen Ferrier Chair of Clinical Oncology at University College Hospital , in 1984 . As of 2012 , it was continuing to fund oncology research .

As the result of a separate appeal , augmented by the sales proceeds of a memoir edited by Neville Cardus , the Kathleen Ferrier Memorial Scholarship Fund was created to encourage young British and Commonwealth singers of either sex . The Fund , which has operated from 1956 under the auspices of the Royal Philharmonic Society , initially provided an annual award covering the cost of a year 's study to a single prizewinner . With the advent of additional sponsors , the number and

scope of awards has expanded considerably since that time ; the list of winners of Ferrier Awards includes many singers of international repute , among them Felicity Palmer , Yvonne Kenny , Lesley Garrett and Bryn Terfel . The Kathleen Ferrier Society , founded in 1993 to promote interest in all aspects of the singer 's life and work , has since 1996 awarded annual bursaries to students at Britain 's major music colleges . The Society organised a series of events to commemorate the centenary of Ferrier 's birth in 2012 . In February 2012 Ferrier was one of ten prominent Britons honoured by the Royal Mail in the " Britons of Distinction " stamps set . Another was Frederick Delius .

A biographic documentary film , Kathleen Ferrier , also known as *La vie et l'art de Kathleen Ferrier ? Le chant de la terre* was directed by Diane Perelsztejn and produced by ARTE France in 2012 . It featured interviews with her near relatives , friends and colleagues to produce a fresh view of her life and contributions to the arts . Kathleen Ferrier Crescent , in Basildon , Essex , is named in her honour .

= = Recordings = =

Ferrier 's discography consists of studio recordings originally made on the Columbia and Decca labels , and recordings taken from live performances which were later issued as discs . In the years since her death , many of her recordings have received multiple reissues on modern media ; between 1992 and 1996 Decca issued the Kathleen Ferrier Edition , incorporating much of Ferrier 's recorded repertoire , on 10 compact discs . The discographer Paul Campion has drawn attention to numerous works which she performed but did not record , or for which no complete recording has yet surfaced . For example , only one aria from Elgar 's *Dream of Gerontius* , and none of her renderings of 20th @-@ century songs by Holst , Bax , Delius and others were recorded . Only a small part of her *St John Passion* was captured on disc .

The recording of the unaccompanied Northumbrian folk song " *Blow the Wind Southerly* " , initially made by Decca in 1949 , has been reissued many times and frequently played on radio in shows such as *Desert Island Discs* , *Housewives ' Choice* and *Your Hundred Best Tunes* . Another signature aria , first recorded in 1944 and on numerous subsequent occasions , is " *What is life ?* " (*Che farò*) from *Orfeo ed Euridice* . These records sold in large numbers rivalling those of other stars of the time , such as Frank Sinatra and Vera Lynn . In the 21st century Ferrier 's recordings still sell hundreds of thousands of copies each year .