

London; 21 August 2018

Our guest presenter was Malcolm Walker, former editor of *The Gramophone* magazine with which he was associated for over 30 years. His subject was **Lawrance Collingwood**. I was going to say 'the conductor' Lawrance Collingwood but he was much more than that: organist, organ scholar, choir master, composer, recording expert. He was born in 1887 and in 1911 went to Russia to study music, met his future wife and began conducting and composing. On returning to Britain he was appointed to Lilian Baylis' company which would go on to stage a staggering 50 operas all without Government subsidy. He became a record producer, forming a close working relationship with Elgar and was involved in all Elgar's recording sessions from 1926 until the composer's death. He continued to work with many of the leading musicians of his day retiring in 1957 though he would return to the recording studio in 1964.

We heard examples of Collingwood's work beginning with the *Marriage of Figaro*: Peter Dawson's splendid 1927 record of 'Now Your Days of Philandering are Over'. As Malcolm observed, you could hear every word. Other recordings included part of Act 1 of *Lohengrin*; Brahms' *Academic Festival Overture*; *Acis and Galatea*: 'O Ruddier than the Cherry' sung by Malcolm's father, Norman Walker; and Collingwood's last recording, in 1964: the whimsical organ grinder's tune from Elgar's *Starlight Express*.

What sort of person was Collingwood? Malcolm described him as reserved and private; a conducting style free from excessive movement; a sensitive and complete musician and a true professional – a remarkable man who gets less recognition than he deserves and to whom we owe a great deal. He died in 1982 aged 95. Malcolm ended this absolutely riveting programme with what might be Collingwood's finest recording: Elgar's *Nursery Suite* recorded by the London Symphony Orchestra in 1953.

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