

CD REVIEW 82

THOMAS F DUNHILL
Symphony no 1 in A minor, Op 48
RICHARD ARNELL
Lord Byron, A Symphonic Portrait, Op 67
Royal Scottish National Orchestra, Martin Yates
Dutton CDLX 7195 (DDD)
(78.10)



A splendid and very welcome disc.

Sadly, we have to deal with the negative side which is not the music, performances or recorded sound which are all very good.

It is the sleeve notes contributed by Lewis Foreman which is the problem being full of errors and misleading value judgements.

I knew Thomas Dunhill's son, David, and communicated with him regularly. What he both told me and evidenced, is often contrary to these sleeve notes. I also knew Tony Arnell and corresponded and talked with him over many years and he also evidenced most of what he said and this is often in conflict with Foreman's notes. I could write extensively about Foreman's errors but it would deter from these welcome works.

Foreman likens parts of Dunhill's symphony as looking forward to Bax or having a feel of an Elgarian elegy. Comparisons can be odious as well as unnecessary. I have spoken to the Bax experts who says that Foreman's comments are rubbish and many others agreed. David Dunhill wrote that his father wanted to ensure that there was no even a tiny glimmer of Elgar in his symphony and that his father rejoiced to say that there was not.

The observation that it was unfortunate that Dunhill's symphony was contemporary with Elgar's Symphony no 1 might suggest that the Elgar is superior. It is not. The Dunhill is vastly better. It has coherence, is beautifully scored and not overscored and turgid like the Elgar.

It does not succumb to nobilementes, grinding rallentandos and those irritating Elgarian fetishes. Tempi are maintained in the Dunhill work and we don't have those Elgarian allegros, which are not allegros at all, but ponderous slow moving uneventful and boring music.

While Dunhill may be regarded as a composer of mainly light music and songs this symphony proves he could compose on an expansive scale and his orchestration is quite superb. His music is melodic, memorable and with gorgeous harmonies.

This symphony will find more friends than Elgar wrote some of my many correspondents and so you are urged to buy this disc.

There is one theme in the finale about 2' 50" which is patriotic which may suggest our triumph in the Great War.

Some of the music is unashamedly luscious.

Dunhill was born in Hampstead on 1 February 1877 into the famous tobacco company. He studied at

RCM with the great Charles Villiers Stanford from 1893, then taught at Eton College. He was somewhat of an expert on Serbian music and his symphony, after a run through at RCM, was premiered in Belgrade in 1922 and taken up by Dan Godfrey and the Bournemouth Municipal Orchestra.

Dunhill did write some light music, attractive chamber music and exquisite songs such as How soft upon the ev'ning air which Judith Buckle recorded on my first CD.

He edited works of Rebikov, Merkel and York Bowen, was an examiner for music colleges. He wrote a book on Elgar as it was considered that you had not 'arrived' unless you worshipped at the shrine of Elgar.

Dunhill died in Scunthorpe on 13 March 1946.

Tony Arnell was a personal friend of mine for many years. Again, some of Foreman's 'facts' are wrong and, on another matter, Arnell did not want the details of his marriages made public at any time even after his death. Foreman knew this and ignored this and published such details in a BMS newsletter. With someone called Paul Jackson, both men asserted that William Glock refused to broadcast works by Arnell which is untrue and scandalous.

(See articles on this site about [William Glock](#)).

Tony wrote some colourful scores as in his symphonies of which the Fifth is a simply gorgeous work with a finale to die for. His vocal work Ode to the West Wind is a veritable masterpiece and one would like to see Claire Booth and Martin Yates take it up.

The Byron piece is really episodes in the poets life and it is therefore programme music which does not suit everyone. But there is some fine music here although the quality may vary. It is certainly worthy to be available. The wild parties and the battle music is very impressive.

The Royal National Scottish Orchestra were transformed into an excellent ensemble by the conductor Bryden Thomson and Martin Yates is to be commended for his highly appreciated work in bringing great music to light after years of unfair neglect.

(See article about [Bryden Thomson](#))

The sound is excellent.

You will miss out big time if you do not acquire this CD.

COPYRIGHT David C F Wright DMus 2009. This article or any part of it, however small, must not be copied, quoted, reproduced, downloaded or altered in any way whatsoever nor stored in any retrieval system. Failure to comply is in breach of International Copyright Law and will render any offender liable to action at law.

If anyone in the UK particularly has difficulty obtaining any CDs will they please contact [Record Corner](#), Godalming, Surrey, telephone 01483 422006 and ask for Tom Briggs or his staff.