

## SIR WILLIAM GLOCK, NOT AVANT GARDE

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I am one of many people who are very troubled by the continual attacks on the late Sir William Glock with the false argument that, because he was allegedly in favour of avant garde music, he deliberately ignored music by British composers who wrote in tonal, traditional and conservative idiom.

In the British Music Society Newsletter (122), Paul Jackson in his article about Richard Arnell refers to Arnell and many other composers who suffered at the hands of Glock who was in favour of avant garde and experimental music.

This is completely untrue and has resulted in the perpetrating of a myth.

Glock certainly did not like avant garde or experimental music. The historical accounts of his reactions, when present at performances of avant garde works by Nono and others, in which he thought he was going to be caught up in the resultant riots, are well known.

Glock was conservative and catholic in his taste. He was criticised for playing Mozart on the BBC every day and, like me, was a committed Beethovenian having studied with Arthur Schnabel.

As Controller of Radio Three, he appointed conductors who were not avant garde such as Dorati and Colin Davis. It was in Glock's last year that Boulez was appointed to be the conductor of the BBC Symphony Orchestra and so the comment of the Glock and Boulez years (plural) might suggest a long period of collaboration when Boulez was the conductor of the BBC Symphony Orchestra which is both untrue and misleading.

My friend, the composer, John Veale, was unflinched to believe that Glock was against him and therefore he and the BBC did nothing to broadcast any of his work. Lewis Foreman's obituary of Veale states that as well. It is completely untrue.

Bryden (Jack) Thomson was approached by Glock to perform John Veale's Symphony no. 2 around 1968. It was agreed and scheduled and then the higher ups in the BBC over ruled Glock. Thomson also had a series of 24 concerts of tonal modern British music scheduled and this went into production but, again, Glock's bosses pulled the plug.

John Veale stopped composing twice and many thought that this was because he was dead and that is why his music was not played, but the real reason for his neglect by the BBC, and this was after the Glock years, was because of his correspondence in The Guardian newspaper about Britten's War Requiem ending with a homosexual love duet which Britten had eventually admitted was true. Britten was the blue eyed boy at the BBC, and any criticism of him was objected to by the BBC.

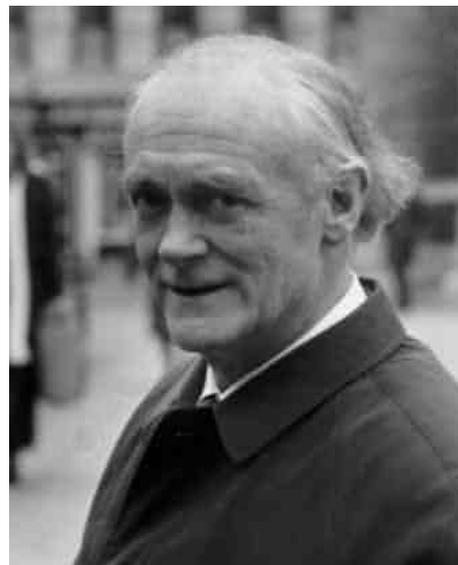
It is also claimed that Ruth Gipps was ignored by Glock. That is also untrue. He scheduled seven works of hers in his time at the BBC and I have a letter from 'Wid' Gipps giving all the details and dates of such broadcasts.

It has always been a policy of the BBC and London Proms to include new British works and that would include some atonal works and Glock kept this existing tradition alive. But most of the new British works were tonal such as Iain Hamilton's Fourth Symphony.

It was Glock who literally saved the London Promenade Concerts. [Consult my other article on Glock.](#)

The late Richard Noble, kept every Radio Times from 1951 onwards and he went to the trouble of listing all the works broadcast in Glock's time of which very few were avant garde. Of living British composers many were very well represented in Glock's eleven years, such as

Richard Arnell (three ballets, two quartets and two symphonies), Kenneth Leighton, John Joubert, Francis Chagrin, Ruth Gipps, Ivor Walsworth, Edmund Rubbra, Ernest Tomlinson, John Dyer, Denis ApIvor, William Wordsworth, George Oldroyd, Arthur Wills, Ivor Keyes, David Morgan, Alan Rawsthorne, David Barlow (2 symphonies, three chamber works and an opera), Rebecca Clarke, Guy Woolfenden, Arnold Cooke (3



symphonies, two concertos and six chamber works) and I could go on. The list is endless.

None of these composers were avant garde, although Denis ApIvor's works after the Glock era, became atonal and some were serial.

I have recordings of many of these broadcasts made in the Glock era. I have the concert in which he personally introduced three works by Francis Chagrin, a very tonal composer. I have recordings of Glock introducing many new British works that were tonal and it is absolutely clear that he supported music of this kind although, as I have said, some of his worthy projects were over ruled by higher management.

I also have a list compiled by 'Wid' Gipp's of new British works premiered on the BBC in the Glock years where most of these works were given their initial reading by one of Ruth's orchestras.

Since Glock's departure from the BBC in 1971-2 season, successive Controllers have had more power. Who was it that moved heaven and earth to prevent Malcolm Arnold's Symphony no. 9 being broadcast? There is a list of composers who suffered at the hands of Drummond and this is proved by the vitriolic letters he wrote to them and I have copies of some of them but no one publicises these injustices.

Robert Simpson, in the days of Robert Ponsonby, became disillusioned with the BBC. In a letter to me dated 17 August 1978 he writes:

"It is a very recent thing that the BBC have now developed policies as to which composers they wish to broadcast and those that they do not want to broadcast".

In conversation, Robert Simpson said that Glock did his level best to support music of all kinds on the BBC, but he was constantly prevailed upon by Hans Keller to promote modern music from his part of the world namely Austria-Germany, and, after Glock left, Keller had his way, to some extent.

I have written over 300 articles on composers including about 120 who are still alive. Not one of them has been critical about Glock. In fact, many have said that he was a great support to them. I have their letters here.

Of course, there are composers who feel that Glock did nothing for them but, if that is the case, that is not his fault. He was often over ruled and, at other times, it was because the in-house BBC orchestras and the in-house conductors did not want to perform the music. And, of course, there was the BBC's reading panel for new scores, and one remembers some of their stupidities. They rejected a symphony of Wordsworth in the early 1950s because it was written in two different colour inks! There is also the truth that some concerts of new British tonal works were cancelled to accommodate a new work by Britten who held court at the BBC. I found Britten to be the most offensive person I have ever met.

Another issue is that some composers 'shot themselves in the foot' by indiscreet and ill advised communications with the BBC and bullying techniques.

People will use the Harry S Truman quote to describe Glock that the buck stops with him. This is grossly unfair and the time has come to remember all the good things Glock did and to withdraw the scurrilous and untrue attacks made upon him.

As for Boulez, he was an exemplary conductor and unlike some other BBC conductors, the BBC orchestra liked him. I have several letters from players in the orchestra to this effect. In the late 1960s everybody wanted to see and hear Boulez and he did guest conduct at some of the Proms before his appointment to the BBC SO in 1971.

It is always worrying when people condemn others just because they do not fit into their mould. What I write in this letter is evidenced and therefore not an opinion or a personal point of view. It is fact.

Why have people told these lies about Glock and keep repeating them? To dislike someone perhaps for not over-promoting the music that they personally like, is one thing but to tell lies and maintain a hate campaign or campaign of lies trying to convince us of their falsehoods is utterly despicable.

Sir William Glock was born on 3 May 1908 and died in Oxfordshire on 28 June 2000.

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