

classic **CHANDOS**

WALTON

THE BEAR



Della Jones mezzo-soprano

Alan Opie baritone

John Shirley-Quirk bass

Northern Sinfonia
Richard Hickox





Greg Barrett

Richard Hickox
(1948 - 2008)

Sir William Walton (1902 – 1983)

The Bear (1965 – 67)

An Extravaganza in One Act

Popova **Della Jones** mezzo-soprano
Smirnov **Alan Opie** baritone
Luka **John Shirley-Quirk** bass

Northern Sinfonia
Richard Hickox

[1]	Luka: 'It is not just, Madam...' – with Popova	9:34
[2]	Popova: 'Who is that?' – with Luka	3:26
[3]	Smirnov: 'Fool! Oaf! Blockhead!' – with Popova	3:42
[4]	Smirnov: 'There! She's vanished' – with Luka	8:37
[5]	Popova: 'Sir, in my solitude...' – with Smirnov	4:18
[6]	Smirnov: 'Madame, je vous prie' – with Popova	3:51
[7]	Popova: 'I was a constant, faithful wife' –	4:01
[8]	Smirnov: 'I'm sick of this mourning, mourning, mourning!' – with Popova and Luka	8:39
[9]	Smirnov: 'Listen... Are you still angry?...' – with Popova, Luka, and Groom	7:12
		TT 53:26

Walton: The Bear

Sir William Walton (1902 – 1983) wrote two operas, the second – *The Bear* – far more readily acclaimed than the first, and more often performed. He laboured for seven years (1947 – 54) on the latter, *Troilus and Cressida*, a full-blown, no holds-barred romantic opera in which the great time-honoured tradition of Verdi and Puccini was given a marvellous new lease of life. Unfortunately, it was *too* traditional for the taste of those austere post-war times: despite the popular success of its early performances (and it was staged at San Francisco and Teatro alla Scala as well as Covent Garden), critics demurred, and word got round that the work was an anachronism and something of a white elephant. It never entered the repertoire on a secure footing, and a substantially revised version (1972 – 76) failed to make the impression that the composer hoped it might. It remains to be seen what the future has in store.

So second time round Walton was taking no chances. Everything, now, is on a modest scale. *The Bear* is a chamber opera in one act only, for three singers only, no chorus, and the orchestra is chamber-size with a small number of strings (originally solo players,

but Walton preferred a slight boosting of their numbers). These dimensions were largely dictated by the circumstances of the first performance, which took place in Aldeburgh in June 1967 as part of the twentieth Aldeburgh Festival. In fact, the initial impetus for the work had come from Peter Pears (though, ironically, there was no part in it for him, as there had been in *Troilus and Cressida*!) who some time in 1964 had suggested Chekhov's *The Bear* or *The Proposal* as a one-act possibility for Aldeburgh. The Koussevitzky Music Foundation provided funds, and Walton set to work on the libretto. He soon decided that he needed help, and approached the writer Paul Dehn (1912 – 1976). Work progressed swiftly and harmoniously and was impeded only by Walton's operation for lung cancer and subsequent recuperation. The score was finally completed on 30 April 1967, just about in time for the Aldeburgh (Jubilee Hall) premiere in June. It shared a double bill with Lennox Berkeley's *Castaway*, for which Dehn had also provided the libretto. Colin Graham produced, and Monica Sinclair and John Shaw sang the leading roles. The work was well

received from the start and quickly became popular; sometimes it is paired with a staged version of the original *Façade*, a combination which Walton approved (though he was annoyed by critics who invariably invoked *Façade* in connection with *The Bear*, claiming, quite rightly, that apart from a purpose to entertain and the fact that both are the work of one-and-the-same composer, they have hardly anything in common).

Paul Dehn wrote of Chekhov and *The Bear* as follows:

Stretching immature wings between 1887 and 1890, Chekhov wrote two serious four-act plays (*Ivanov* and *The Wood Demon*) and five one-act 'vaudevilles', as he called them, of which *The Bear* brought him most acclaim and money. 'I live', he wrote to a friend in 1889, 'on the charity of my *Bear*.'

The plot is deceptively simple. Popova, a pretty widow, affectedly faithful to the memory of her late, and alas! promiscuous husband, is confused by Smirnov, one of her husband's more boorish creditors. They quarrel to a point where each aims a loaded pistol at the other. Neither can fire. They have both fallen helplessly in love. But to condense the plot of any Chekhov play is as silly as to try and dehydrate a sauce by Escoffier. Here, in the small compass of a one-acter, Chekhov's dialogue subtly

breathes as much (if not more) about the war between the sexes as was ever exhaled in the entire works of Thurber or in Shakespeare's *The Taming of the Shrew*, and Thurber would have been the first to approve the fact that Chekhov's shrew (with how lethal mixture of false fidelity, dainty fastidiousness and assumed disdain!) does most of the taming.

It is impossible to turn a one-act play into a one-act opera without abbreviating the original text. So for the *recit.* passages we have jointly evolved what we hope is no more than a reverently *pruned* version of Chekhov's own dialogue; and in the arias, I have tried to paraphrase the mood and the actual content of Chekhov's prose into verse which could accommodate my composer's predilection for occasional pastiche and his genius for musical wit.

That 'occasional pastiche' and 'musical wit' call for brief comment. Walton and Dehn did not, in the event, call their work a vaudeville (a term which, originally in France, had stood for a farcical entertainment mounted at a street fair and garnished with some popular songs to which new and topical words could be fitted), but an 'extravaganza': the three *dramatis personae* are caricatures and act farcically, but their situation is *possible* in real life and their

emotions are real, however exaggerated and absurd. This touch of ambiguity is typical Walton: yet again, curiously, is invoked that strange collection of etchings by Jacques Callot – seventeenth-century forerunner of Rembrandt and Goya – known as the *Balli di Sfessania*. These already form a significant part of the background to the *Façade* Entertainment and also to the overture *Scapino*. Most of these etchings are riddled with obscenities and the burlesque element is very strong; but, complementarily and even paradoxically, taste, elegance, and emotion also play their part. So they do in *The Bear*.

It was no hardship at all for Walton to write an opera somewhat in the *buffo* style of the Italian composers whom he so admired – Rossini, Donizetti, the Puccini of *Gianni Schicchi*. His temperament was always basically Latin or Mediterranean (he confessed to sleeping through Wagner) and it was surely predestined that he would one day settle in Italy, on the island of Ischia, where *The Bear* was written; fittingly enough it was *The Bear* that formed the subject of the first summer Master Class held at La Mortella (the Walton home), in 1989. Much of its sparkle and spirit lies in its ongoing series of musical jokes and references. Some of these are more obvious than others, and on quite a few occasions it is hard to

tell whether Walton *is* in fact engaging in parody or pastiche or direct allusion – or merely *pretending* to be. I do not here intend to spoil listeners' enjoyment by identifying those references I myself happen to have recognised; but I should be prepared to bet that if all those who heard *The Bear* were asked to draw up a complete list of 'jokes', hardly any two lists would be identical. But that, of course, is all part of the fun.

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At the time of his premature death at the age of sixty in November 2008, **Richard Hickox** CBE, one of the most gifted and versatile British conductors of his generation, was Music Director of Opera Australia, having served as Principal Conductor of the BBC National Orchestra of Wales from 2000 until 2006 when he became Conductor Emeritus. He founded the City of London Sinfonia, of which he was Music Director, in 1971. He was also Associate Guest Conductor of the London Symphony Orchestra, Conductor Emeritus of the Northern Sinfonia, and co-founder of Collegium Musicum 90.

He regularly conducted the major orchestras in the UK and appeared many times at the BBC Proms and at the Aldeburgh, Bath, and Cheltenham festivals, among

others. With the London Symphony Orchestra at the Barbican Centre he conducted a number of semi-staged operas, including *Billy Budd*, *Hänsel und Gretel*, and *Salome*. With the Bournemouth Symphony Orchestra he gave the first ever complete cycle of Vaughan Williams's symphonies in London. In the course of an ongoing relationship with the Philharmonia Orchestra he conducted Elgar, Walton, and Britten festivals at the South Bank and a semi-staged performance of *Gloriana* at the Aldeburgh Festival.

Apart from his activities at the Sydney Opera House, he enjoyed recent engagements with The Royal Opera, Covent Garden, English National Opera, Vienna State Opera, and Washington Opera, among others. He guest conducted such world-renowned orchestras as the Pittsburgh Symphony Orchestra,

Orchestre de Paris, Bavarian Radio Symphony Orchestra, and New York Philharmonic.

His phenomenal success in the recording studio resulted in more than 280 recordings, including most recently cycles of orchestral works by Sir Lennox and Michael Berkeley and Frank Bridge with the BBC National Orchestra of Wales, the symphonies by Vaughan Williams with the London Symphony Orchestra, and a series of operas by Britten with the City of London Sinfonia. He received a Grammy (for *Peter Grimes*) and five *Gramophone Awards*. Richard Hickox was awarded a CBE in the Queen's Jubilee Honours List in 2002, and was the recipient of many other awards, including two Music Awards of the Royal Philharmonic Society, the first ever Sir Charles Groves Award, the *Evening Standard* Opera Award, and the Award of the Association of British Orchestras.

Walton: The Bear

Sir William Walton (1902 – 1983) schrieb zwei Opern, von denen die zweite, *The Bear*, sehr viel erfolgreicher war als die erste, *Troilus and Cressida*, und weitaus häufiger aufgeführt wird.

The Bear (Der Bär) ist eine Kammeroper in einem Akt für nur drei Stimmen und ohne Chor. Die Besetzung des Kammerorchesters sieht nur wenige Streicher vor (ursprünglich Solisten, doch Walton entschied sich dann für einige mehr). Diese bescheidene Besetzung entsprang hauptsächlich den Umständen der Uraufführung, die im Juni 1967 in Aldeburgh im Rahmen des zwanzigsten Aldeburgh Festivals stattfand. Die Anregung zu der Oper kam von Peter Pears, der bereits 1964 Tschechows *Der Bär* oder *Der Antrag* als mögliche Einakter für Aldeburgh vorgeschlagen hatte. Die Koussevitzky Music Foundation stellte die Mittel zur Verfügung, und Walton machte sich an das Libretto, wobei er bald den Schriftsteller Paul Dehn (1912 – 1976) zur Hilfe zog. Die Arbeit machte gute Fortschritte, wurde jedoch durch Waltons Lungenkrebs-Operation und anschließende Genesungszeit unterbrochen. Schließlich war *The Bear* am 30. April fertig, gerade noch zeitig genug,

um in Aldeburgh im Juni uraufgeführt zu werden. Das Werk wurde von Publikum und Kritikern gut aufgenommen und blieb seither im Repertoire.

Paul Dehn schrieb wie folgt über Tschechow und *Der Bär*:

In den Jahren 1887 bis 1890, als Tschechow als Schriftsteller flügge wurde, schrieb er zwei ernste vieraktige Schauspiele (*Iwanow* und *Der hölzerne Teufel*) und fünf einaktige "Vaudevilles", wie er sie nannte, von denen *Der Bär* am erfolgreichsten und auch am einträglichsten war. Tschechow schrieb 1889 an einen Freund, er lebe auf Kosten seines *Bären*.

Die Handlung ist täuschend einfach. Popowa, eine hübsche Witwe, die ostentativ dem Andenken ihres (untreuen!) verstorbenen Mannes treu ist, gerät mit dem ungeschliffenen Smirnow, einem Gläubiger ihres Mannes, in Streit. Sie richten schließlich Pistolen aufeinander, doch keiner der beiden vermag auf den anderen zu schießen, denn sie haben sich hoffnungslos ineinander verliebt. Doch den Inhalt eines Schauspiels von Tschechow zusammenfassen zu wollen ist

so dumm wie der Versuch, eine Soße von Escoffier einkochen zu wollen. Im kleinen Rahmen eines Einakters sagt Tschechows subtiler Dialog hier so viel (oder mehr) über den Krieg der Geschlechter aus wie die gesammelten Werke von Thurber, oder wie Shakespeares *The Taming of the Shrew* (Der Widerspenstigen Zähmung). Thurber hätte wohl als erster zugegeben, daß Tschechows "Widerspenstige" (mit einer tödlichen Mischung von falscher Treue, gezielter Pingelichkeit und geheuchelter Geringschätzung!) den größten Teil der Zähmung besorgt.

Es ist unmöglich, aus einem einaktigen Schauspiel eine einaktige Oper zu machen, ohne den Originaltext zu kürzen. Für die Rezitative haben der Komponist und ich zusammen eine hoffentlich respektvoll *beschnittene* Version von Tschechows Dialog ausgearbeitet, und für die Arien habe ich versucht, die Stimmung und den Inhalt von Tschechows Prosa in Versform so zu paraphrasieren, daß der Vorliebe des Komponisten für gelegentliches Pasticcio und seinem Talent für musikalischen Humor Rechnung getragen wird.

Zu diesem "gelegentlichen Pasticcio" und dem "musikalischen Humor" muß noch kurz etwas gesagt werden. Walton und Dehn nannten ihr Werk schließlich nicht

"Vaudeville", sondern "Extravaganza": Die drei *dramatis personae* sind Karikaturen und handeln grotesk, doch ihre Lage könnte *eventuell* lebensnah sein und ihre Gefühle sind wahr, wenn auch übertrieben und absurd. Diese Zwiespältigkeit ist typisch für Walton, hatte aber auch schon im siebzehnten Jahrhundert bei Jacques Callots ungewöhnlicher Reihe von Radierungen, den *Balli di Sfessania*, Pate gestanden, die im Wesentlichen den Hintergrund zu Waltons *Façade* und auch zu seiner Ouvertüre *Scapino* bilden. Diese Radierungen sind reichhaltig mit Obszönitäten und burlesken Darstellungen versehen, doch paradoxerweise sind auch Eleganz, Geschmack und Gefühl vertreten, wie das auch in *The Bear* der Fall ist.

Walton hatte keinerlei Schwierigkeiten, eine Oper im Buffo-Stil der italienischen Komponisten zu schreiben, die er so bewunderte, so z.B. Rossini, Donizetti und Puccini (in *Gianni Schicchi*). Temperamentsmäßig war er immer vorwiegend Südländer (er gab zu, bei Wagner eingeschlafen zu sein), und es schien ihm vorbestimmt zu sein, eines Tages in Italien zu leben. Er ließ sich auf Ischia nieder, und dort entstand *The Bear*. Dort, und zwar in Waltons Villa La Mortella, bildete *The Bear* im Sommer 1989 bei der ersten dort abgehaltenen Meisterklasse das Hauptthema. Die

geistsprühende Lebhaftigkeit der Oper beruht hauptsächlich auf den vielen musikalischen Späßen und Anspielungen, die mehr oder weniger leicht identifizierbar sind. An vielen Stellen ist schwer erkennbar, ob es sich hier um eine Parodie, ein Pasticcio oder eine direkte Anspielung handelt, oder ob Walton nur so tut als ob. Ich will den Hörern nicht den Spaß verderben, indem ich alle Stellen anführe, die ich persönlich gefunden habe. Wenn alle Hörer eine Liste der von ihnen identifizierten "musikalischen Späße" machten, dann wäre jede dieser Listen wieder anders. Doch das ist ja gerade der Witz der Sache.

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Übersetzung: Inge Moore

Bei seinem frühzeitigen Tod im November 2008 wirkte der sechzigjährige **Richard Hickox** CBE, einer der begabtesten und vielseitigsten britischen Dirigenten seiner Generation, als Musikdirektor an der Opera Australia. Sein Name verbindet sich vor allem auch mit der 1971 von ihm gegründeten und künstlerisch geleiteten City of London Sinfonia sowie dem BBC National Orchestra of Wales, dem er von 2000 bis 2006 als Chefdirigent vorstand und danach als Conductor Emeritus treu blieb. Außerdem war er Gastdirigent beim London Symphony

Orchestra, Conductor Emeritus der Northern Sinfonia und Mitbegründer des Collegium Musicum 90.

Er dirigierte regelmäßig die namhaften Orchester Großbritanniens und gastierte vielfach bei den BBC-Proms und anderen Festivals, wie Aldeburgh, Bath und Cheltenham. Mit dem London Symphony Orchestra gab er im Barbican Centre konzertant inszenierte Opernaufführungen, darunter *Billy Budd*, *Hänsel und Gretel* und *Salome*. Mit dem Bournemouth Symphony Orchestra brachte er zum erstenmal in London den gesamten Zyklus von Vaughan-Williams-Sinfonien zu Gehör, und im Rahmen seiner langjährigen Zusammenarbeit mit dem Philharmonia Orchestra dirigierte er Elgar, Walton und Britten gewidmete Konzertreihen im Londoner South Bank Centre sowie beim Aldeburgh Festival eine konzertante Inszenierung von *Gloriana*.

Trotz seiner Tätigkeit in Australien konnte er weiterhin Einladungen an die Royal Opera Covent Garden, English National Opera, Wiener Staatsoper und Washington Opera folgen. Weltberühmte Orchester wie das Pittsburgh Symphony Orchestra, das Orchestre de Paris, das Symphonieorchester des Bayerischen Rundfunks und die New Yorker Philharmoniker verpflichteten ihn als Gastdirigenten.

Sein phänomenaler Erfolg im Schallplattenstudio schlug sich in mehr als 280 Aufnahmen nieder; jüngste Projekte waren Gesamteinspielungen der Orchesterwerke von Frank Bridge sowie Sir Lennox und Michael Berkeley mit dem BBC National Orchestra of Wales, die Sinfonien von Vaughan Williams mit dem London Symphony Orchestra und eine Reihe von Britten-Opern mit der City of London Sinfonia. Richard Hickox wurde

mit einem Grammy (für *Peter Grimes*) und fünf *Gramophone* Awards ausgezeichnet. Neben dem britischen Verdienstorden CBE (Commander of the Order of the British Empire), der ihm 2002 verliehen wurde, erhielt er zahlreiche weitere Auszeichnungen, so etwa zwei Royal Philharmonic Society Music Awards, den ersten Sir Charles Groves Award, den *Evening Standard* Opera Award und den Association of British Orchestras Award.

Walton: The Bear

Sir William Walton (1902 – 1983) écrivit deux opéras. *The Bear* (L'Ours), le second, reçut un meilleur accueil que le premier, *Troilus and Cressida*; il est aussi repris sur scène plus souvent que le précédent.

The Bear est un opéra de chambre en un acte, pour trois chanteurs seulement. Il est dépourvu de chœur et l'ensemble orchestral compte qu'un petit nombre de cordes (à l'origine, il ne se composait que des musiciens solistes, mais par la suite, Walton décida d'augmenter les effectifs). Cette dimension réduite fut dictée par les circonstances de la création, en 1967, au vingtième Festival d'Aldeburgh. L'idée initiale de cet opéra est attribuée à Peter Pears; le célèbre ténor pensait qu'une courte saynète de Tchekhov, *L'Ours* ou *La Demande en mariage*, transformée en opéra, conviendrait particulièrement à Aldeburgh. L'idée fut retenue, la Koussevitzky Music Foundation procura le fonds et Walton se mit au travail sur le livret. Mais le compositeur découvrit rapidement qu'il avait besoin des conseils d'un spécialiste et demanda à l'écrivain Paul Dehn (1912 – 1976) de l'aider. Le travail progressa alors rapidement et harmonieusement, interrompu, hélas, par un

cas de force majeure: la maladie de Walton (un cancer des poumons), son opération et sa convalescence. La partition fut néanmoins achevée le 30 avril 1967, juste à temps pour le Festival d'Aldeburgh, et la première mondiale qui eut lieu au mois de juin. L'ouvrage connut de suite un grand succès populaire qui ne l'a pas abandonné depuis.

Paul Dehn écrivait au sujet de Tchekhov et de *L'Ours*:

Entre 1887 et 1890, Tchekhov, dans un esprit de recherche et de transition, produisit deux grandes pièces de théâtre en quatre actes: *Ivanov* et *L'Esprit des forêts*, plus cinq "vaudevilles" – comme il les appelait – en un acte, parmi lesquels *L'Ours* qui lui apporta à la fois éloges et argent. "Je vis – écrivait-il à un ami – de la charité de mon ours."

L'intrigue est d'une simplicité trompeuse. Popova, une jolie veuve, semble vouloir rester fidèle à la mémoire de son époux, qui lui, par contre, l'avait trompée sans vergogne. Elle est néanmoins troublée par Smirnov, un des ex-créanciers de son mari, et un homme rustre. Ils se disputent, et la dispute

s'envenime au point où chacun pointe un pistolet en direction de l'autre. Mais aucun ne tire – ils sont tombés désespérément amoureux l'un de l'autre! Essayer de condenser l'intrigue d'une pièce de Tchekhov est une entreprise aussi vaine que de tenter la deshydratation d'une sauce d'Escoffier. Les dialogues, bien que dans le cadre restreint de cet acte unique, laissent subtilement filtrer autant (sinon plus) de réflexions sur la guerre des sexes que tous les ouvrages de James Thurber [1894 – 1961, conteur, dessinateur et satiriste américain, auteur, notamment, de "A-t-on besoin des femmes?"]; autant et même plus que *La Mégère apprivoisée* (Shakespeare). Et Thurber aurait été le premier à apprécier le fait que la mégère de Tchekhov, par un mélange fatal de fausse fidélité, de coquetterie délicatement exagérée et d'arrogance feinte, est des deux protagonistes celui qui réellement apprivoise l'autre.

Il est impossible, sans abrégé le texte original, de transformer une pièce en un acte en un opéra, également en un acte. Nous avons, par conséquent, élaboré ensemble une version des dialogues, respectueusement (du moins l'espérons-nous) raccourcis pour les récitatifs. Nous avons essayé de paraphraser la prose de

Tchekhov dans nos vers et de reproduire ses traits d'esprit dans les arias – ce qui d'ailleurs convenait très bien au penchant de mon compositeur pour le pastiche fortuit et à son don génial pour l'humour musical.

Ce "pastiche fortuit" et cet "humour musical" demandent une légère explication. Dehn et Walton n'ont pas qualifié leur opéra de "vaudeville", mais d'*extravaganza*. Les trois *dramatis personae* sont des caricatures et agissent d'une manière cocasse. La situation dans laquelle elles se trouvent est cependant tout à fait plausible et leurs émotions sont bien réelles, aussi exagérées et absurdes qu'elles puissent paraître. Cet aspect assez ambigu est typiquement waltonien, bien que, d'une façon curieuse, il évoque davantage, ici, la série de gravures *Belli di Sfessania* de Jacques Callot (graveur et dessinateur français du dix-septième siècle, précurseur de Rembrandt et de Goya, qui entra quelques années au service des Medicis). Ces gravures servaient déjà de toile de fond à *Façade* et à l'ouverture *Scapino*. La plupart d'entre elles sont criblées d'éléments obscènes et fort burlesques; mais parallèlement et même de façon paradoxale le goût, l'élégance et l'émotion juste jouent un grand rôle. Il en est de même dans *The Bear*.

Il était facile à Walton d'écrire un opéra dans le style bouffe des compositeurs italiens

qu'il admirait tant: Rossini, Donizetti, et le Puccini de *Gianni Schicchi*. De tempérament, on aurait pu le croire essentiellement latin ou méditerranéen (il avouait s'endormir en écoutant Wagner). Il était sûrement destiné à s'installer en Italie; en fait, dans l'île d'Ischia, et c'est là qu'il composa la musique de *The Bear*. Ce fut *The Bear* qui servit de sujet aux premières classes de maîtrise (1989) qui maintenant se tiennent chaque été à La Mortella (la propriété que possédaient les Walton à Ischia). L'humour étincelant de l'opéra provient en grande partie des plaisanteries et citations musicales en séries ininterrompues. Certaines sont plus faciles que d'autres à reconnaître au passage. Il est parfois malaisé de décider s'il s'agit de parodies et de pastiches, ou d'allusions directes, ou encore si Walton a seulement prétendu les faire. Je ne veux pas amoindrir le plaisir de l'auditeur en lui donnant la liste des citations que j'ai pu moi-même identifier, mais je suis prêt à parier que si tous ceux qui connaissent *The Bear* faisaient une liste, aussi complète que possible, des "plaisanteries" qu'ils ont discernées, il n'y aurait probablement pas deux listes semblables! Mais cela, évidemment, fait partie de notre plaisir.

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Traduction: Paulette Hutchinson

Au moment de sa disparition prématurée à l'âge de soixante ans en novembre 2008, **Richard Hickox** CBE, l'un des chefs d'orchestre britanniques les plus doués et les plus complets de sa génération, était le directeur musical d'Opera Australia. Auparavant, il avait été chef principal du BBC National Orchestra of Wales de 2000 à 2006, date à laquelle il devint chef honoraire. Il était le directeur musical du City of London Sinfonia qu'il fonda en 1971. Il était également chef invité associé du London Symphony Orchestra, chef honoraire du Northern Sinfonia et co-fondateur de Collegium Musicum 90.

Il dirigea régulièrement les plus grands orchestres du Royaume-Uni et participa souvent aux Proms de la BBC ainsi qu'aux festivals d'Aldeburgh, de Bath et de Cheltenham entre autres. Avec le London Symphony Orchestra, il dirigea au Barbican Centre à Londres plusieurs mises en scène partielles d'opéras dont *Billy Budd*, *Hänsel und Gretel* et *Salome*. À la tête du Bournemouth Symphony Orchestra, il donna la première intégrale des symphonies de Vaughan Williams à Londres. Dans le cadre de son association avec le Philharmonia Orchestra, il dirigea des festivals Elgar, Walton et Britten au South Bank de Londres et une mise en scène partielle de *Gloriana* au Festival d'Aldeburgh.

Outre ses activités avec l'Opéra de Sydney, il avait récemment travaillé entre autres avec le Royal Opera de Covent Garden, l'English National Opera, l'Opéra d'état de Vienne et le Washington Opera. Il fut invité à diriger des orchestres de renom mondial tels le Pittsburgh Symphony Orchestra, l'Orchestre de Paris, l'Orchestre symphonique de la Radio bavaroise et le New York Philharmonic.

Connaissant un succès phénoménal en studio, il réalisa plus de 280 enregistrements, dont dernièrement des cycles d'œuvres orchestrales de Sir Lennox

Berkeley, Michael Berkeley et Frank Bridge avec le BBC National Orchestra of Wales, les symphonies de Vaughan Williams avec le London Symphony Orchestra ainsi qu'une série d'opéras de Britten avec le City of London Sinfonia. Il obtint un Grammy (pour *Peter Grimes*) et cinq *Gramophone Awards*. Créé Commandeur de l'Ordre de l'empire britannique (CBE) en 2002, Richard Hickox remporta de nombreux autres prix, dont deux Music Awards de la Royal Philharmonic Society, le tout premier Sir Charles Groves Award, l'*Evening Standard* Opera Award et l'Association of British Orchestras Award.

The Bear

Popova sits weeping.

Luka

- [1] It is not just, Madam... you're simply killing yourself. The cook and the housemaid have gone out in the woods picking strawberries... ev'ry living soul is happy... even the cat knows how to enjoy herself walking in the courtyard and chasing birds. But you sit indoors all day, as tho' in a nunnery, taking no pleasure in anything. Why, it's nearly a year since you even went out of the house!

Popova

And I never will go out. Why should I? My life is over. He lies in his grave – I have buried myself within these four walls... We are both dead.

Luka

There you are, at it again! I wish I hadn't to listen to you! I lost my missus too... Well what about it? I cried and grieved for a month or two, and that was enough for her. Suppose I kept on weeping and wailing and mourning all my life – it would be more than the old woman was worth. *(sighs)*

You've forgotten all your neighbours... You won't visit or receive them... And it's not as though there weren't any nice people about – the whole place is full of them... There's a regiment at Ryblovo, and the officers are perfect gentlemen – you hardly can take your eyes off them! In the camp there's scarcely a Friday goes by without a ball, and the military band plays music every day, they say. Ah! dear lady! You're young, pretty, blooming with health – all you need is to live your life to the full... You know, beauty won't last forever! There may come a time when you'll want to show off to the officers too – flaunting your tail like a peacock – but it will be too late then!

Popova *(resolutely)*

I must ask you never to speak to me again like this! You know quite well that since my poor husband died life has no meaning for me. I may seem to you to be still alive, but that is only what you think! I made a vow to wear this mourning always, never to look at the light of day until I go to my grave... Do you hear? May his dear, departed spirit see how I love him... Yes, I know it was no secret to you that he was often unjust, mean, brutal... and even unfaithful to me. But I'll be faithful

unto death, and let him see how well I can love. Watching from beyond the grave, he will see me just as I was before he died...

Luka

Instead of talking like that, you'd do better to walk in the garden or have your horse Toby put into harness and call upon your neighbours.

Popova

Oh!

(weeps)

Luka

Madam, dear lady!... What is it! What is it! What is the matter? What is the matter? God be with you!

Popova

He was so fond of Toby! Toby, Toby! He always used to drive him when he went to call on the neighbours. How well he used to drive! How forceful he looked when he tugged at the reins with all his strength! Don't you remember? Toby, Toby! Tell the groom to give him an extra bag of oats today.

Luka

Yes, Madam.

(off-stage loud knocking at the door)

Popova *(fearfully)*

² Who is that? Say that I'm not at home!

Luka

Yes, Madam.

(He goes.)

Popova *(sits alone gazing at the photograph)*

You shall see, Nicolas, how well I can love and forgive... My love will only fade away when I do, when my poor heart stops beating.

(laughing through her tears)

Aren't you ashamed of yourself? I'm such a good little woman, such a true and loyal wife. I've locked myself up and I'll be faithful to you all my life, while you... aren't you ashamed of yourself, you silly old fatty? How you deceived me and made scenes and left me alone for weeks on end!...

Luka (*appears, flustered, in the doorway*)
Madam, there's someone asking to see you.

Popova
Didn't you say that I'm not at home?

Luka
I did, but he said it's very urgent.

Popova
I'll see no one!

Luka
I told him so, but he swore and push'd past me... he's in the dining room now.

Popova (*irritably*)
Very well, show him in...
(*Luka goes, closing the door.*)
How rude people are! How extremely impertinent they are! Why should they go on disturbing my peace of mind? It would seem as if I really must enter a convent... Yes, a convent...

(*Enter Luka and Smirnov fighting.*)

Smirnov
[3] Fool! Oaf! Blockhead! – You're far too fond of talking... Donkey!

(*He sees Popova and makes a dignified bow... clicking his heels.*)
Madam, I have the honour of presenting myself: Grigory Stepanovitch Smirnov, landowner, and retired lieutenant of artillery. I must trouble you on a most important matter...

Popova
And what do you want?

Smirnov
At the time of your husband's lamented demise,
He owed me a debt of inordinate size.

Popova (*in alarm*)
How much?

Smirnov
Thirteen hundred roubles.

Popova
What for?

Smirnov
Oats, Madam.

Popova
That reminds me, Luka. Don't forget to give Toby his extra bag of oats.

(Exit Luka.)

Smirnov

I lent him the sum out of friendship and
pity.

By raising a loan from my Bank in the City,
On which (to my mingled vexation and
sorrow)

My Bank is demanding the interest...
tomorrow.

I am loth to intrude in this grief-stricken
house,

But I must have the money I lent to your
spouse.

Popova

How soon?

Smirnov

This very instant.

(She winces.)

Smirnov

If not, my estate will be put up for sale:
And myself, a poor bankrupt, must
languish in jail.

Popova

The debt shall be paid. I'll certainly speak
To my bailiff, who comes at the end of
the week.

Smirnov

I need it today!

Popova

Your prospects are bleak.

My bailiff will pay at the end of the week.

Smirnov

I need it today.

My finances will crash!

Popova

My bailiff will pay.

I haven't the cash.

Smirnov

My finances will crash!

Popova

I haven't the cash.

Smirnov

I need it today!

Popova

My bailiff will pay.

Smirnov

I have come to see you, not your bailiff!
What the hell... excuse the expression...
What the hell do I want with your bailiff?

Popova

Sir, I'm not used to hearing such vulgar
language. I will listen to you no longer.

(She goes out quickly, slamming the door.)

Smirnov

[4] There! She's vanished. Everyone
vanishes... except my creditors. But when
I try to get money from my debtors...

Grozdiov is not at home,
Koritsin is out riding,
Yaroshevitch is still in Rome,
And Mishkin still in hiding.

O I could shed a bitter tear,
But that would not be mannish!
Why, O why must creditors appear
And debtors always vanish?

Chubakov is always drunk,
Mazutov is moronic,
Nemorov has become a monk,
Volnitsky has bubonic.

And I am prey to grief and fear
Which nothing, now, can banish.
Why, O why must creditors appear
And debtors always vanish?

Not one of the wretches has paid me,
not one! Not one! And all because I'm
soft-hearted, a milk-sop, an old woman!
Brr! How angry I feel, how furious! I'm
positively shaking with rage, I can hardly
breathe... Ugh! My God! I feel sick! I'm
almost fainting.

(shouting)

Hi there!

(Luka appears in the doorway.)

Luka

Well, what is it?

Smirnov

Bring me some kvass, or a glass of water!
(Luka goes out, closing the door.)

When a man's in such deadly need of
money it's like a mill-stone round his
neck, but she won't pay because, if you
please, her bailiff's away! Typical feminine
logic! That's why I never like dealing
with women. I'd rather sit on a barrel of
gunpowder than try to reason with a

woman. Brr! They make me get cramp in my legs! I want to shout 'Help!'

Luka (*enters and puts a glass of water on a table*)

Madam is indisposed and will see no one.

Smirnov

Get out! Get out!

(*Luka gets out!*)

Indisposed and will see no one? Very well, then, you needn't... If you're ill for a week, I'll stay for a week... If ill for a year, I'll stay for a year... I'll get my own back! I'm not taken in by those widow's weeds or those dimples... We all know about dimples! Brr! (*goes to the window and shouts*)

Semion, unharness the horses! We'll be staying here quite a time! Tell that fool of a groom to feed them some oats. It's insufferably hot, no one will pay, I've had a thick night, and to top it all there's this yowling howling female. My head aches. (*sits holding his head*)

Perhaps I should have some vodka? I will, I will. Hi there! Hi there!

Luka (*appears in the doorway*)

Well, what is it now?

Smirnov

Bring me a bottle of vodka!

(*Luka goes, closing the door.*)

Smirnov (*suddenly catching sight of himself in a mirror*)

Ugh! I look a fine sight, I must say!

Mud – in my hair!

Muck – on my boots!

Ugh! and the stink of me!

(*shouting*)

VODKA! VODKA!

Why should I care?

I don't care two hoots.

What must she think of me?

(*shouting*)

VODKA! VODKA!

Where is that fool?

Has he dropped dead?

I'll try being civiler.

(*calling softly*)

Vodka!

(*to himself*)

Only keep cool!

Don't lose your head!

(*roaring*)

Dunderhead! Driveller.

VODKA! VODKA!

Luka (*enters with the vodka which Smirnov snatches from the tray*)
Sir, you take too much of a liberty...

Smirnov
What's that? Who the hell do you think you are talking to? Keep your mouth shut!

Luka (*aside, going to the door*)
There's a brute for you! The devil himself must have sent him here.

(*Luka goes out.*)

Smirnov
Oh! What a rage I'm in! So furious! So angry, I could grind this whole house to powder. I feel positively sick! Almost faint!...
(*shouts*)
Hi there! Hi there!

Popova (*enters with downcast eyes*)
5 Sir, in my solitude I have long been unused to the sound of the human voice – and I can't bear shouting. I beg you most earnestly not to disturb my peace.

Smirnov
Repay me my money and I'll go.

Popova
I've already told you quite plainly, I've no money in hand at the moment. Wait till the end of the week.

Smirnov
I have also told you quite plainly that I must have the money today, not at the end of the week. If you won't pay me today, I'll have to hang myself tomorrow.

Popova
But what can I do, if I haven't the money?

Smirnov
So you won't pay me now? You won't?

Popova
I can't...

Smirnov
In that case I shall stay here till you pay me...
(*sits down*)
I shall keep on sitting here, just like this.
(*He shows his irritation by drumming on the table with his fingers, and tapping the floor with his foot. Jumps up, shouting*)
Do you think I'm joking?

Popova

Please don't shout! This isn't a stable!

Smirnov

I don't need to shout in a stable!

Popova

You don't seem to know how to behave in the presence of a lady.

Smirnov

Yes, I do know how to behave in the presence of a lady.

Popova

No, you don't!

Smirnov

Yes, I do.

Popova

No, you don't! You're just a coarse ill-mannered peasant. Well brought-up people don't talk as you do, to a lady.

Smirnov

Well, this is a surprise! How would you like me to converse with you, then? In French, or what?

(parodying a French singer)

6

Madame, je vous prie,
Sortez d'ici with me,
And let us walk together
In this delightful weather,
Pour oublier nos troubles.

Madame, je vous prie,
Sortez d'ici with me.
I feel so very gay
That you will not repay
My thirteen hundred roubles.

Madame, je vous prie,
Flânez un peu with me.
Your humble servant pleads:
Put off those widow's weeds.
Unveil, as did Salome!

Madame, je vous prie,
Sortez with me d'ici,
I feel bien amusé
That you will not repay
The money that you owe me.

Popova

That's rude and not at all clever or funny!

Smirnov (*mimicking her, quasi falsetto*)

Rude and not at all clever or funny!
So I don't know how to behave in the company of ladies! Believe me, in my time,

I've seen more women than you have sparrows. I've fought duels over three of them. Jilted more than twenty, and ten have jilted me. Yes, indeed! I know them inside out! I've loved, suffer'd, and sigh'd for them! And wouldn't give *that* (*snapping his fingers*) for the lot of them.

Popova

In that case you can tell me, who is more faithful and constant in love? The man?

Smirnov

Yes, of course, the man.

Popova

The man! The man is more faithful and constant in love! What right have you to defend my husband and accuse *me*? Let me tell you the truth!

7 I was a constant, faithful wife,
Every temptation scorning,
And shall be constant all my life...
In mourning, mourning, mourning.

Defend my husband if you can!
What words could you praise *him* in?

A woman loves one man. *My* man
Loved women, women, my man loved
women!

The dark, the fair, the slim, the stout,
Tall, middle-sized, and small,
With brains and (frequently) without,
He loved them all, all, all.

How should a loyal wife react,
Who, in his desk, discovers
One hundred letters (neatly stacked)
From lovers, lovers, lovers.

What could a poor, weak woman do
But humour his caprices,
When acts more suited to a zoo
Took place with neighbours' nieces?

I smiled, I turned the other cheek.
I never once a grouse made...
Except the day he tried to wreak
His will upon my house-maid.

I was a constant, faithful wife,
Every temptation scorning,
And shall be faithful all my life...
And shall remain so all my life...
In mourning, mourning, mourning.

8

Popova

Popova

Luka, this man is going. Kindly show him the back door.

Luka

Dare I show him the back door?

Smirnov

I've seen doors. I need no showing.

Popova

You're a boor!

Smirnov

And you are... a... bore.

(threatening Luka)

Luka

God protect me!

Smirnov

He had better!

Popova

Kill my servant, if you dare!

Smirnov

Madam, you are still my debtor.

Popova

You, sir, are a bear.

Smirnov

A bear?

Popova

A brute! A monster! A bear!

Smirnov

It's about time we gave up the idea that only men have to answer for insults! If there's going to be equality between the sexes, then let us have it. I challenge you!

Popova

You want a duel? Splendid!

Smirnov

Now, this instant.

Popova

This very instant! My husband had some pistols... I'll get them at once.
(goes towards the door, opens it, but turns before shutting it)

What a pleasure it will be to pop a bullet straight thro' your stupid fat head! The devil take you!

(She goes.)

Smirnov

I'll pick her off like a partridge! I'm not a sentimental puppy. But what a woman! Her eyes flashed, her cheeks shone, she accepted my challenge! I've never seen anyone like her! All the same, I must kill her, just as a matter of principle.

Luka

Sir, sir, go away!

Smirnov

What courage! What daring!

Luka

O leave us, I pray.

Smirnov

She'd kill without caring!

Luka

Kind sir, go away,
O leave us, I pray.

Smirnov

O, she is all I could
Worship in womanhood...
A kitten at play,
But a tigress at bay...

Luka

Sir, sir, sir! Go away!
Sir, leave this house!
It's time you departed.

Smirnov

Frail as a mouse,
But so lion-hearted!
Under her beauty lurks
Gunpowder, fireworks...
A kitten at play,
But a tigress at bay...

Luka

Sir, sir, sir! Go away!

Smirnov (*ignoring Luka*)

I like her! I definitely like her, my anger's
vanished! I'm even ready to cancel her
debt. O what a wonderful woman! O what
a pity it is that I have to kill her.

(*Popova enters with a pistol in each hand.*)

Popova

Here they are...

(*She brandishes them.*)

...but before we start you must show me
what to do with them. I've never handled
a pistol before.

Luka

The Lord save us and have mercy upon us!

(He kneels and silently repeats this phrase to himself. Only his lips are seen to be moving.)

Smirnov *(taking one of the pistols)*

A beautiful pistol!... You must hold it like this.

(aside)

Beautiful eyes!

Popova

Like this?

Smirnov

Yes, that's good... Now load like this...

Take aim... Head back a little! Arm full length. Right!... that's it...

(taking one of her fingers)

Then with this exquisite finger press on this little thing – it's called a trigger. And that's that. Above all, keep cool, and try to stop your hand from shaking.

Popova

Very well! But isn't it rather awkward to shoot in here? Perhaps we had better go into the garden.

Luka *(aside)*

I'll go and fetch the cook and the groom.

(He goes.)

Smirnov

All right. But I warn you. I shall fire into the air.

Popova

Why? Whatever for?

Smirnov *(hesitates)*

Because... because... well, that's my business.

Popova

You're afraid, aren't you? Well, I'm not. I can't wait till I've made a hole in your head, that cowardly head I dislike so much. Why won't you be a man?

Smirnov

Because I like you.

Popova *(laughs angrily)*

He likes me! He's not a man – and he likes me!

(points to the door)

You can go. Get out!

(shouting)

Out!

Smirnov *(puts down the pistol in silence, takes his cap, and goes to the door. He stops by the door and for seventy-five seconds they look at each other without speaking. Then he approaches her hesitantly.)*

9 Listen... Are you still angry?... Well, I'm angry too, but, don't you see... How can I explain?... The fact is... the fact is... *(clutches the back of a chair which breaks with a loud crack)*
Hell take it! What delicate furniture you've got! I like you! I'm almost in love with you.

Popova

Stay away from me – I hate you!

Smirnov

Good God, what a woman! I'm lost! I'm caught like a rat in a trap.

(He ponders.)

No – like a mouse.

(He advances on her.)

Popova

Keep away, or I'll fire! I'll fire!

Smirnov

Fire! I would gladly die,

Slain by a hand so sweet.

Fire! I would gladly lie

Dead at such dainty feet.

Fire! but before we part,

Before you take my life,

Know that you set my heart

On fire!

(He kneels and bellows:)

Be my wife.

Popova

Let us fight!

Smirnov

But I'm off'ring my hand in marriage!

Popova

Let us fight!

Smirnov

What! You don't want it? Then you won't get it.

(rises and walks quickly towards the door)

Popova

Wait a moment...

Smirnov (*stopping*)

Yes?

Popova

No. Nothing... You can go... Wait though...

No, go away! Go, go! I hate you! However...

No, don't go. Oh, if you only knew how angry I feel!

(*flings the pistol on the table*)

My fingers are numb from holding the wretched thing!

(*tears her handkerchief in fury*)

Why are you standing there? Get out!

Smirnov

Good-bye!

Popova

Good-bye! Where are you going?

(*He turns in the door.*)

No! Don't come near me!

Smirnov (*going up to her*)

If only you knew how angry I am with myself – I've fallen in love like a fool. I've been down on my knees,

(*gruffly*)

I love you! It's the last thing I wanted to do! I must pay the interest tomorrow and now there's you! I can never forgive myself! Never!

Popova (*takes the bell from the table and rings it*)

Keep away! Stand back! Hands off! I hate you! I challenge you! Let us fight.

(*They embrace, her arm round his neck, ringing the bell until it drops from her hand. Luka and the groom enter and see the embracing couple.*)

Luka and the Groom

The Lord save us. The Lord have mercy upon us.

Popova (*demurely, with downcast eyes*)

Luka, tell the groom not to give Toby any oats at all today. He's not to give any oats at all today to Toby!

Curtain

Paul Dehn (1912–1976) and the composer
after the one-act play *The Bear* (1888)
by Anton Chekhov (1860–1904)



The premature death of Richard Hickox on 23 November 2008, at the age of just sixty, deprived the musical world of one of its greatest conductors. The depth and breadth of his musical achievements were astonishing, not least in his remarkable work on behalf of British composers. An inspiring figure, and a guiding light to his friends and colleagues, he had a generosity of spirit and a wonderful quality of empathy for others.

For someone of his musical achievements, he was never arrogant, never pompous. Indeed there was a degree of humility about Richard that was as endearing as it was unexpected. He was light-hearted and, above all, incredibly enthusiastic about those causes which he held dear. His determination to make things happen for these passions was astonishing – without this energy and focus his achievements could not have been as great as they were. He was able to take others with him on his crusades, and all in the pursuit of great music.

Richard was a completely rounded musician with a patience, kindness, and charisma that endeared him to players and singers alike. His enthusiasm bred its own energy and this, in turn, inspired performers. He was superb at marshalling

large forces. He cared about the development of the artists with whom he worked and they repaid this loyalty by giving of their best for him.

An unassuming man who was always a delight to meet, Richard was a tireless musical explorer who was able to create a wonderful sense of spirituality, which lifted performances to become special, memorable events. For these reasons, Richard was loved as well as respected.

The Richard Hickox Legacy is a celebration of the enormously fruitful, long-standing collaboration between Richard Hickox and Chandos, which reached more than 280 recordings. This large discography will remain a testament to his musical energy and exceptional gifts for years to come. The series of re-issues now underway captures all aspects of his art. It demonstrates his commitment to an extraordinarily wide range of music, both vocal and orchestral, from the past three centuries. Through these recordings we can continue to marvel at the consistently high level of his interpretations whilst wondering what more he might have achieved had he lived longer.

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CHAN 10947 X

Sir William Walton (1902–1983)

The Bear (1965–67)

An Extravaganza in One Act

Popova Della Jones mezzo-soprano

Smirnov Alan Opie baritone

Luka John Shirley-Quirk bass

TT 53:26

Northern Sinfonia
Richard Hickox

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