

CHANDOS FOR 21

DYSON

THE CANTERBURY PILGRIMS

AT THE TABARD INN • IN HONOUR OF THE CITY

Yvonne Kenny soprano
Robert Tear tenor
Stephen Roberts baritone

London Symphony Chorus
London Symphony Orchestra
Richard Hickox





Greg Barrett

Richard Hickox
(1948 - 2008)

Sir George Dyson (1883–1964)

COMPACT DISC ONE

1	At the Tabard Inn* Overture	11:41
	The Canterbury Pilgrims (beginning)†	45:32
2	I Prologue –	0:52
3	Prologue (Figure 2)	10:04
4	II The Knight	4:48
5	III The Squire	2:53
6	IV The Nun	9:07
7	V The Monk	4:51
8	VI The Clerk of Oxenford	6:03
9	VII The Haberdasher and his Fraternity. The Merchant	6:30
		TT 57:25

COMPACT DISC TWO

	The Canterbury Pilgrims (conclusion)[†]	45:23
1	VIII The Sergeant of the Law. The Franklin	8:21
2	IX The Shipman	4:54
3	X The Doctor of Physic	6:17
4	XI The Wife of Bath	4:35
5	XII The Poor Parson of a Town	10:09
6	XIII L'Envoi	10:56
7	In Honour of the City[‡]	15:08
		TT 60:42

Yvonne Kenny soprano[†]

Robert Tear tenor[†]

Stephen Roberts baritone[†]

London Symphony Chorus^{†‡}

Malcolm Hicks chorus master

London Symphony Orchestra

Richard Hickox

* A note in the score indicates that when the Overture is played before a performance of *The Canterbury Pilgrims* the Prologue should begin at Figure 2. This can be achieved by programming your CD player to omit track 2.

Dyson: The Canterbury Pilgrims / In Honour of the City

From 1945 onwards, the music of Sir George Dyson (1883 – 1964) – traditionalist and optimistic – was increasingly seen as out of tune with the times; and in the 1960s and 1970s it suffered almost total neglect. Yet in many respects Dyson had always been unfashionable: it seems as if career and character almost conspired to consign his music at some stage to that near oblivion from which it has only recently emerged.

Dyson was well into his forties when he successfully re-launched his career as a composer with *In Honour of the City* (1928) and its immediately popular successor, *The Canterbury Pilgrims* (1930). Written in his spare time while at Winchester, this music sprang from deep conviction as to the practical needs of the English choral movement. Dyson was concerned about the increasing domination of the repertoire by music of the past and he recognised that major English works, such as Vaughan Williams's *Sea Symphony* and Delius's *A Mass of Life*, were beyond most societies. In the music which he provided for this purpose, Dyson rejects not only the revolutionary aspects of twentieth-century language,

of which he had written so penetratingly (*The New Music*, 1924), but also the milder modernisms found in the works written in the 1920s by younger compatriots such as Bliss, Walton, and Lambert. The result is unmistakably English, but not self-consciously so. Dyson showed no enthusiasm for Elgar, folksong, or modality, neither did he indulge in pastoral musing or yearning for misty Celtic twilights. His is uncomplicated music – self-confident, vivacious, tuneful – devoid of autobiographical overtones: at that stage of his development, his personal tone was implicit in his choice of texts. A sense of community of spirit was very close to his heart. Dunbar and Chaucer also reflected his own zest for life, broad human sympathies, keen observation, and sense of humour. Dyson clearly relished the challenge of bringing to musical life Chaucer's infinitely varied gathering, with its multitude of universally recognisable traits. Although he was later to write music of greater depth and originality, Dyson never again found such melodic inspiration as in *The Canterbury Pilgrims*: when Chaucer's characters come

to mind, so invariably do Dyson's tunes. It is no wonder that choral societies took this musical portrait gallery to their hearts.

The Canterbury Pilgrims quickly established itself as a classic and it remained popular throughout the 1930s and 1940s. But Dyson (who viewed himself as a kind of twentieth-century *Kapellmeister*) made no special effort to promote his own music; indeed, he was often at pains to be seen not to be using his influential positions to that end. By 1950, there were conspicuously fewer performances of the Three Choirs Festival works which had consolidated his reputation during the 1930s; neither his Symphony (1937) nor his Violin Concerto (1941) had entered the repertoire; and that post-war showcase for the living English composer, the Cheltenham Festival, had already given (in 1949) what was to be its sole Dyson premiere (the *Concerto da camera*). Writing in 1952, Dyson acknowledged, without bitterness, that *The Canterbury Pilgrims* accounted for such reputation as he enjoyed as a composer. Then approaching seventy, Dyson could look back on a happy, fulfilling, and distinguished career. Neither the ensuing rich harvest of eternally youthful works of his 'retirement', nor his continuing conducting activities, earned him a post-war reputation with a public which had come to terms with Britten and Tippett. *The Canterbury Pilgrims*,

however, remained popular with choral societies; and it made an indelible impression on those of us fortunate enough to attend one of the composer's own 1950s performances. But by the time of the death of Dyson in 1964, five years had passed without a London performance by a major choral society, and the general critical verdict was that the well-crafted music of this eminent academic had had its day. Sadly, this view prevailed for two decades – even among those then actively promoting the performance and recording of British music. Only the very occasional performance of *The Canterbury Pilgrims* reminded one of what had been lost.

It was the discovery by the late Christopher Palmer of the music of Dyson in the early 1980s which led to the fine series of recordings through which his music has gradually been restored to circulation. A decade of growing interest has seen more performances, culminating in the splendid revival of *The Canterbury Pilgrims* at London's Barbican Hall on 29 September 1996, which preceded this recording. Dyson himself acknowledged the unique value of recordings in enabling people to get to know music really well. Thus we now have what he would have recognised as the first ever opportunity for a just evaluation of his contribution to British music.

Dyson's style is warm and direct, yet elusive: influences are thoroughly digested and to remark passing affinities with Strauss, Delius, Vaughan Williams, and others, brings us no nearer the heart of the matter. Any definitive assessment of the achievement of Dyson must, of course, await recordings of his other major choral works (*Nebuchadnezzar*, *St Paul's Voyage to Melita*, and, above all, *Quo Vadis*). Meanwhile, we may best characterise Dyson's individuality, perhaps, in terms of a capacity to touch sensibilities which lie at the very root of our national subconsciousness. At his best, his skill in weaving together so many of the expressive threads central to English music is such that Dyson offers us a far-reaching, and therefore deeply satisfying, vision of precious and enduring values.

© Ray Siese

The first mature flowering of his music came while Dyson was Director of Music at Winchester College, an appointment he held from 1924 to 1937. Here not only was he organist, but he had a choir and an orchestra, as well as an adult choral society, and he first achieved his characteristic voice with choral music of a tuneful, vigorous cast for them. Choral societies responded from

the first, and *In Honour of the City* (1928) and *The Canterbury Pilgrims* (1930) quickly established Dyson as a vibrant musical voice of considerable personality.

A few church pieces apart, **In Honour of the City** was his first choral work, and in writing it, while building on a solid traditional foundation, Dyson left a sufficient number of individual fingerprints and wrote with such assurance as to establish himself as a choral composer of distinction.

Dyson sets five of Dunbar's seven stanzas in modern English. Nine years later, in 1937, Walton made his own setting, though preferring the original text and setting six stanzas. The Scottish poet William Dunbar (?1465 – ?1513) is believed to have written his poem around 1500 when journeying with the embassy from the court of James IV to negotiate the King's marriage to Margaret Tudor, though recent scholars have thrown some doubt on Dunbar's authorship. Dyson called his music a 'Fantasia', and it was a fantasia on the theme of London underpinned by the motif of the 'Westminster Chimes' first heard in the second bar of the orchestral introduction as the answering horn figure, though almost unrecognisable because of the changed rhythm. Later the chimes become all-too-evident accompanying figures, and

elsewhere sing out broadly on horns. Each of the five stanzas sets a mood, the opening marked 'festive', giving a roll-call of Londoners of high renown, with special mention of the 'most delectable lusty ladies bright'. Short orchestral links signal changes of mood between stanzas, and the lyrical evocation of the River Thames in the third stanza, Dyson's marking now 'flowing', is the pivotal point, before the bustle and ceremonial of the fourth and fifth stanzas. Dyson now signing with his motto, soon to be familiar in *The Canterbury Pilgrims*.

In Honour of the City was the step that led to **The Canterbury Pilgrims**, first performed at Winchester on 19 March 1931 with leading soloists of the day, Isobel Baillie, Steuart Wilson, and Roy Henderson, and local choirs and orchestra conducted by the composer. It is significant that Dyson announces *The Canterbury Pilgrims* as a work for 'chorus, orchestra, and three soloists', with the emphasis on the chorus, for it is certainly given much of its momentum and swagger by the dramatic and effective choral writing.

The murder, in 1170, of Thomas à Becket, Archbishop of Canterbury, by four knights, as they thought at the behest of King Henry II (the subject of notable verse plays by Tennyson and T.S. Eliot) is a familiar episode from English history. Following the

canonisation of Becket in 1173, Canterbury became one of the most celebrated of shrines, and pilgrims travelled there from across Europe in genuine acts of piety and in search of healing.

Geoffrey Chaucer lived in the second half of the fourteenth century, and, from the perspective of some two hundred years after the murder, paints a vivid canvas of the life and manners of England in the 1380s, and a gallery of all-too-human foibles. Pilgrimage was by then for many a form of tourism, and Dyson presents a colourful period show to be taken at face value.

He confines himself to Chaucer's 'General Prologue' which describes the Pilgrims' meeting at the Tabard Inn in Southwark. (In London, south of the River Thames near old London Bridge, Chaucer's Inn was destroyed by fire in 1676, by which time pilgrimages to Canterbury may well have no longer been the thing to do.) We have portraits of thirteen of the company (plus the Haberdasher's 'fraternity' of Carpenter, Dyer, Weaver, Tapestry Maker, and their cook), each presented as a separate number – eleven movements with 'Prologue' and 'L'Envoi'.

After the opening rising trumpet motif (the pilgrims' emblem enshrining Dyson's own musical motto (GD)) the Prologue is launched with busy music leading to a

slow dance, followed successively by oboe and clarinet giving the emblem a new and ultimately questioning character, before the unaccompanied expressive setting of Chaucer's opening lines. It is April and the arrival of spring turns people's thoughts to pilgrimage. We hear what has been called the 'shrine motif' before the narrator takes up the tale of how a company 'Of sundry folk, by chance together' arrive at the inn. The choir returns to remind us that Canterbury is a place of healing, and the music ends with the orchestra recalling the 'shrine motif'. These two ideas recur, or are alluded to, during the portraits that follow.

Firstly we have 'The Knight that Loved Chivalry', given to the chorus, and opening in Dyson's most outgoing ceremonial manner: wide-spanning melodic line, brass accompaniment. Soon the orchestra changes to a jogging motion evoking the knight's horse, as we are launched on the catalogue of the knight's exploits overseas. At the words 'in the Great Sea, / At many a noble landing' we are surely reminded of a climactic moment in Vaughan Williams's *A Sea Symphony*. But the end is muted: Chaucer is all-too-aware that the age of chivalry is passing and the ambivalent alternation of the notes B flat and B natural leaves us with an unexpectedly valedictory mood.

Were all the Canterbury Pilgrims mounted? The text indicates that most if not all the company was, and Dyson's music delineates the character of several of these steeds. The 'Wife of Bath' rides astride an 'ambler', a self-explanatory word for the pace of a docile horse going long distances. In contrast, the rascally Shipman rode a 'rouncey', meaning a hired horse, but with overtones of size, and Dyson's 'Bold and rhythmic' 9/8 leaves us in no doubt as to the solidity of the Shipman's transport, the music eventually reminding us that the Shipman would far prefer to be aboard his barque the 'Magdalen'.

The tenor soloist presents a portrait of the knight's son, 'The Squire', 'A lover and a lusty bachelor, / With locks acurl...'. Chaucer's Squire is a personable young fellow, finely turned out, a stylish horseman, recently returned from military adventures on the continent. Yet he could not only sing and play the flute but compose both words ('indite') and music of his songs. The parallel between the Squire and the songbird, singing all night during the mating season, is reflected by Dyson in the ardent high-lying melisma on the word 'nightingale'. In a thoughtful pendant to this vivid portrait Dyson reminds us that it was a regular duty of a squire to carve for his Lord, underlining that chivalry and courtesy yet lived.

Dyson calls the next pilgrim 'The Nun'; this is Chaucer's Prioress, Madame Eglantine. With her jewellery and fine cloak, personal good looks – her forehead uncovered – and her attention to court fashion, we may deduce that she aspired to the world's vanities. The chorus frames the soprano solo with the Latin tag 'Amor vincit omnia' ('Love conquers all', or possibly 'Love binds all'). The tag is from Virgil; does it refer to religious or romantic love? The clue is perhaps found in the commentary on her table manners, taken from Ovid's guidance to women on attracting men.

The baritone depicts the worldly Monk in an even more satirical tone. Did Chaucer secretly admire his Monk or was it a pure lampoon of a familiar figure of his day? The fat and over-fed music contrasts with the next portrait, the shabby Clerk of Oxenford. Here Dyson wanted the music to be as threadbare as his Clerk. This quiet, slow fugal texture underlines the bookworm's scholarly ways. But as the strings dominate the orchestral line we find that the Clerk too has red blood in his veins, and the 'very broad and sustained' climax carries a triumphal tone, surely underlining Dyson's views on 'moral virtue'.

Chaucer's five 'gildsmen' Dyson dubbed 'The Haberdasher and his Fraternity'. All in

livery, these senior members of mediaeval guilds were self-made men of some substance. And yet they were, perhaps, not very bright, Dyson giving them 'very deliberate' pizzicato string chords evoking the overloaded party's stolid progress. These were respected members of highly specific closed shops, in the case of the haberdasher a dealer in the minutiae of tailoring; reels of cotton, needles and pins, but specifically a supplier of caps and hats. With them rode the Merchant, a tycoon of his day. Chaucer's own father had been a merchant, and Chaucer himself is seen in surviving portraits wearing the fashionable forked beard which his Merchant displays. Yet in the reference to selling Crowns (a royal monopoly) and the sarcastic final line we may deduce that Chaucer had little time for his Merchant, for all his riches.

'The Sergeant of the Law' and 'The Franklin' were powerful figures in late mediaeval society. Sergeants were the premier lawyers of their day, and would become judges. Dyson probably took this portrait at face value, but it is worth remembering that Chaucer scholars are divided as to how far his intention was satirical. Travelling with the Sergeant is the Franklin, whom Chaucer sketches as a person of substance, indeed of self-indulgence – a landowner but not one of noble birth. As with

several other pilgrims he would have had aspirations to court status. Yet Chaucer's Franklin was a man of achievement and had been a Sheriff and an Auditor. His description, as of several others, perhaps suggests that Chaucer suspected them of corruption.

Bearing in mind the standing of some of the company, one wonders if they welcomed the Shipman. This rogue is vividly described in a sweeping setting which evokes both his steed and his inexpert manner of riding. Yet one can imagine the travellers, along with Chaucer himself, having a certain respect for a captain whose skulduggery was largely directed at foreigners.

Chaucer held the Doctor of Physic in far less regard. His love of gold and lack of any spiritual dimension gave him a powerful ambivalence in Chaucer's mind in an age when illness was an ever-present spectre. Chaucer may have resented the Doctor's status, but he took 'The Wife of Bath' utterly at face value; the contrast is particularly notable. The least pretentious member of the company, she is splendidly vivacious. Dyson makes her portrait a vivid character piece, the precursor of Vaughan Williams's Elinor Rimming in *Five Tudor Portraits*. The wife is another well-off member of the company, having accumulated the estates of five husbands, and, even if somewhat coarse, she has the ability to be

at ease in any company. Being gap-toothed suggests an amorous nature, and, as we hear at the end, so sexually experienced a lady still has a roving eye.

The glorious setting of 'The Poor Parson of a Town', like his similar treatment of the Clerk of Oxenford, defines the sympathies of Dyson. This triumphal depiction of Chaucer's model priest perhaps reflects Dyson's public-school views on duty. Yet it surely has greater significance. At the climax the radiant music seems to separate itself from the text and appears to be celebrating something almost transcendental. So visionary a flight may be heard in the music of other English composers of the time, including Gerald Finzi, Patrick Hadley, and Howard Ferguson.

Finally 'L'Envoi', in which the host at the Tabard Inn suggests that on the journey to Canterbury each traveller should tell a story, and the lot falls to the Knight to begin. The opening of the Prologue is heard again, and the melody to which the company sets out grows gradually out of the emblematic theme, the Knight launching into his tale. At the first performance, Steuart Wilson, in a moment of inspired improvisation, walked from the platform as he sang. As the company disappears towards the horizon, the work ends with the theme now echoing from afar, as the romantic horn, offstage,

heralds their great adventure and a fund of stories.

In 1943 Dyson produced his orchestral overture **At the Tabard Inn**, intending it as a prelude to *The Canterbury Pilgrims*, but also as a concert piece to stand in its own right. Here Dyson takes episodes from the larger work and produces a tuneful and evocative concert overture. This was conducted by Leopold Stokowski in 1949 and he remarked (in a letter to Dyson) that he found it 'a masterpiece of characterisation', adding that 'the kind of lusty energy and humour that Chaucer portrayed you have expressed in the medium of music to perfection'.

© Lewis Foreman

Yvonne Kenny is one of the most distinguished sopranos of her generation. After winning the Kathleen Ferrier Competition she joined The Royal Opera, Covent Garden where her roles have included Pamina (*Die Zauberflöte*), Ilia (*Idomeneo*), Marzelline (*Fidelio*), Adina (*L'elisir d'amore*), Liù (*Turandot*), Aspasia (*Mitridate*), Semele, Alcina, and Donna Anna (*Don Giovanni*). International appearances have included the Vienna State Opera, Berlin Staatsoper, Bayerische Staatsoper, Zurich, Australian Opera, and Glyndebourne in roles such as

Countess (*Le nozze di Figaro* and *Capriccio*), Cleopatra (*Giulio Cesare*), and the Marschallin (*Der Rosenkavalier*). She appears regularly on the concert platform throughout Europe, the USA, and Australia, as well as at the Edinburgh, Salzburg, and Aix-en-Provence Festivals. She has made more than forty-five recordings.

Robert Tear was born, in 1939, and educated in Wales, and became a choral scholar at King's College, Cambridge. Throughout his career he showed his versatility and talent as one of the world's leading tenors, working with such conductors as Bernstein, Giulini, and Karajan. His repertoire was extremely varied, ranging from Monteverdi and Dowland to Stravinsky and Tippett. He appeared at the opera houses in Geneva, Berlin, Munich, and Cologne as well as The Metropolitan Opera, The Royal Opera, Covent Garden, and English National Opera. He was a regular guest of all the great US orchestras and greatly in demand as a concert singer. He made numerous recordings and in 1984 was awarded the CBE. Robert Tear died in 2011.

Stephen Roberts is one of Britain's finest concert and oratorio performers with an extensive repertoire which includes the major baritone roles by Bach, Handel, Elgar, and Britten, as well as the choral symphonies of

such composers as Beethoven, Mahler, and Vaughan Williams. He is a champion of the English choral tradition, having performed and recorded with all the principal British orchestras, including many that specialise in authentic period disciplines and groups playing music of the twentieth century. He has given concerts in venues all over Europe, including recently Paris, Vienna, Rome, Berlin, and Madrid, as well as performances in Japan, Hong Kong, the USA, and Canada.

The **London Symphony Chorus** was formed in 1966 to complement the work of the London Symphony Orchestra. The chorus consists of more than two hundred amateur singers, selected by audition, and is self-managed by a Council of nine elected representatives. Whilst maintaining a close relationship with the London Symphony Orchestra, with which most of its performances are given, the London Symphony Chorus has developed an independent life which allows it to partner other leading orchestras at home and abroad. Since its first performances in 1966, the Chorus has achieved international distinction for its consistently high standards over a wide-ranging repertoire.

The **London Symphony Orchestra** is the capital's longest established orchestra

and was the first in Britain to become self-governing. Founded in 1904, it has attracted Principal Conductors of the highest international stature. Since taking up residency at the Barbican Centre in the City of London in 1982, the London Symphony Orchestra has pioneered the multi-disciplinary festivals which have become a central feature of London's cultural life. Concert-giving is just one part of the orchestra's life – as well as making recordings it has a strong commitment to education work and this includes work in schools and prisons as well as workshops, special events, and performances.

At the time of his untimely 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 of 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.

Dyson:

Die Pilgerfahrt nach Canterbury/ Zu Ehren der Stadt London

Ab 1945 wurde Sir George Dysons (1883–1964) traditionsgebundenes, optimistisches Oeuvre zunehmend als gegenwartsfremd empfunden; in den 60er und 70er Jahren war er fast verschollen. Freilich war er in gewisser Beziehung schon seit jeher altbacken: Seine Laufbahn und Wesensart schienen fast danach angetan, seine Musik der Vergessenheit zu überlassen, aus der sie erst kürzlich wieder ausgegraben worden ist.

Dyson war schon Mitte der Vierzig, als seine Komponistenlaufbahn mit *In Honour of the City* (Zu Ehren der Stadt London) (1928) und seinem sofort sehr beliebten Nachfolger, den *Canterbury Pilgrims* (Die Pilgerfahrt nach Canterbury) (1930), wieder in Schwung kam. Diese Werke, die er in seiner Freizeit während des Dienstes am Winchester College schrieb, hatten ihren Ursprung in seinen eingefleischten Ansichten über die praktischen Bedürfnisse der englischen Chortradition. Daß Musik aus alter Zeit im Repertoire überhandnahm, erschien ihm bedenklich, doch er wußte, daß großformatige englische Werke wie die *Sea Symphony* von Ralph Vaughan Williams oder *A Mass of Life* (Eine Messe des Lebens) von Delius für die

meisten Laienchöre nicht in Frage kamen. In seinen für diesen Zweck geschriebenen Kompositionen verwehrte sich Dyson nicht nur gegen die revolutionären Aspekte der Musik des zwanzigsten Jahrhunderts, über die er sich in *The New Music*, 1924, so kompromißlos ausgedrückt hatte, sondern auch gegen weniger modernistische Werke jüngerer Landsleute wie Bliss, Walton und Lambert. Das Ergebnis ist eindeutig, aber nicht geflissentlich englisch. Dyson begeisterte sich nicht für Elgar, Volkslieder oder Modi; er erging sich nicht in idyllischen Betrachtungen und sehnte sich nicht nach mystischen keltischen Urzeiten. Seine Musik ist unkompliziert: selbstbewußt, lebhaft, melodiös und ohne allen autobiographischen Beigeschmack; damals drückte sich seine persönliche Note im Wahl seiner Texte aus. Der Gemeinschaftsgeist war ihm sehr ans Herz gewachsen. Dunbar und Chaucer entsprachen auch seinem eigenen Lebensgusto, seiner Sympathie für alles Menschliche, seiner scharfen Beobachtungsgabe und seinem Humor. Offensichtlich stellte er sich mit viel Vergnügen der Aufgabe, Chaucers

bunter Gesellschaft mit ihren vielen, allgemein verständlichen Eigenheiten auf musikalischem Wege Leben einzuhauchen. Obwohl Dyson später viel profundere, originellere Werke schrieb, erfand er nie wieder so begnadete Melodien wie in den *Canterbury Pilgrims*: Wenn man an Chaucers Charaktere denkt, fallen einem unweigerlich Dysons Themen ein. Kein Wunder, daß sich Singvereine so für diese musikalische Gemäldegalerie begeisterten.

The Canterbury Pilgrims wurden alsbald zum Klassiker und waren während der 1930er und 1940er Jahre sehr beliebt. Indes unternahm Dyson nichts besonderes, um seine Werke zu fördern; vielmehr lag ihm daran, zu beweisen, daß er von seiner einflußreichen Position keinen Gebrauch machte. Von 1950 an wurden die Werke, die bei den Three Choirs Festivals (Festspiele in den Domstädten Gloucester, Hereford und Worcester) während der 1930er Jahre sein Ansehen befestigt hatten, viel seltener aufgeführt; weder seine Sinfonie (1937) noch das Violinkonzert (1941) war ins Repertoire aufgenommen worden, und das nach dem Krieg gegründete Cheltenham Festival, bei dem zeitgenössische englische Komponisten ihre Werke vorführten, hatte bereits 1949 die einzige Premiere einer Komposition von Dyson, sein *Concerto da camera*, gebracht.

1952 stellte er ohne alle Ranküne fest, daß sein Ansehen als Komponist, soweit er darauf Anspruch erheben konnte, lediglich auf den *Canterbury Pilgrims* beruhte. Im neunundsechzigsten Lebensjahr konnte er auf eine gute, befriedigende, beachtliche Karriere zurückblicken. Trotz der reichen Ernte ewig junger Werke aus den Jahren des Ruhestandes und seiner fortlaufenden Tätigkeit als Dirigent hatte er bei dem Nachkriegspublikum, das mit Britten und Tippett zurecht kommen konnte, keinen Erfolg. Indes waren *The Canterbury Pilgrims* bei Laienchören weiterhin sehr beliebt und machten auf uns, denen vergönnt war, in den 1950ern eine der vom Komponisten selbst geleiteten Aufführungen mitzuerleben, einen unvergeßlichen Eindruck. Als Dyson 1964 starb, hatte seit fünf Jahren keine Aufführung mit einem namhaften Singverein in London stattgefunden und die Kritik war einstimmig der Ansicht, daß die tadellos gearbeitete Musik dieses bedeutenden Akademikers überholt sei. Leider war an diesem Urteil zwanzig Jahre lang nicht zu rütteln – sogar bei denen, die sich energisch für die Interpretation und Einspielung britischer Werke einsetzten. Allein ganz vereinzelte Aufführungen der *Canterbury Pilgrims* riefen uns ins Gedächtnis, was uns entging.

Anfang der 1980er wurden Dysons Werke von Christopher Palmer wieder entdeckt;

es folgte eine gut gelungene Reihe von Einspielungen, die sein Oeuvre wieder in Umlauf brachten. Mit zunehmendem Interesse war er auch öfter im Konzertsaal zu hören; den Gipfelpunkt bildete eine großartige Aufführung der *Canterbury Pilgrims* am 29. September 1996 in Londons Barbican Hall, der die vorliegende Aufnahme folgte. Dyson war sich bewußt, daß Einspielungen den Hörern eine hervorragende Gelegenheit bieten, sich mit bisher unbekanntem Werken anzufreunden. Er hätte begriffen, daß wir jetzt zum allerersten Mal die Möglichkeit haben, seinen Beitrag zur britischen Musik zu würdigen.

Dysons Stil war warm, unmittelbar und dabei nicht leicht zu fassen: Musikalische Einflüsse wurden gründlich verarbeitet und mit Betonungen der Anklänge an Strauss, Delius, Vaughan Williams und andere kommen wir nicht weiter. Erst wenn seine anderen größeren Chorwerke (*Nebuchadnezzar*, *St Paul's Voyage to Melita* und vor allem *Quo Vadis*) eingespielt sind, kann sein Opus endgültig beurteilt werden. Mittlerweile kann seine individuelle Tonsprache vielleicht am besten unter dem Aspekt der Gefühle, die den Lebensnerv des britischen Unterbewußtseins berühren, definiert werden. Wenn Dyson ins Schwarze trifft, verwebt er so viele in der englischen Musik ausdrucksstarke

Fäden, daß er uns eine weitgespannte und daher unendlich erfüllende Vision kostbarer, unvergänglicher Werte bietet.

© Ray Siese

Übersetzung: Gery Bramall

Dysons Musik erreichte ihre Reife während seiner Zeit als Musikdirektor am Winchester College (1924 bis 1937). Er war Organist, leitete den Knabenchor und ein Orchester sowie einen gemischten Laienchor; die lebhaften, melodiosen Werke, die er für dieses Ensemble komponierte, brachten seine persönliche Note erstmals zum Ausdruck. Mehrere Singvereine zeigten sofort großes Interesse; mit den Kantaten *In Honour of the City* (1928) und *The Canterbury Pilgrims* (1930) konnte sich Dyson einen Namen als Komponist mit markantem musikalischem Idiom schaffen.

Abgesehen von einigen Sakralwerken war **In Honour of the City** Dysons erstes Chorwerk; dank zahlreicher individueller Merkmale, die ein solides traditionelles Fundament durchdringen, und der Selbstsicherheit, die seinen Satz kennzeichnete, wurde er alsbald als namhafter Komponist von Chorwerken bekannt.

Dyson vertonte fünf der sieben Strophen des schottischen Dichters William Dunbar (?1465 – ?1513) in moderner englischer Sprache; die neun Jahre später entstandene

Fassung (1937) von Sir William Walton (der sechs Strophen vertonte) greift auf den Originaltext zurück. Die Dichtung entstand angeblich um 1500, als Dunbar an einer Mission vom Hof König Jakobs IV. teilnahm, die über die Heirat des Königs mit Margaret Tudor verhandelte; mittlerweile bezweifeln gewisse Experten, daß er der Autor ist. Dyson bezeichnete seine Komposition als eine "Fantasia": eine Fantasie über das Thema London, fundiert auf dem Motiv der sogenannten "Westminster Chimes", des Glockenspiels am Uhrturm des Palace of Westminster, das zunächst in Takt zwei der Orchesterintroduktion im Hornmotiv ertönt, aber infolge der rhythmischen Veränderung fast unkenntlich ist. Später gestaltet sich das Glockenmotiv zu ausgesprochen evidenten Begleitfiguren; an einigen Stellen ertönt es in den Hörnern. Jeder der fünf Strophen ist ihr eigenes Ambiente verliehen: Die mit *festive* bezeichnete Einleitung zählt berühmte, reiche Londoner auf, unter besonderer Erwähnung der "lieblich frohen, anmutigen Damen". Kurze instrumentale Überleitungen zwischen den Strophen melden jeweils eine neue Stimmung. Der Drehpunkt stellt sich in der dritten Strophe mit einer lyrischen Evokation der Themse ein (Vortragsbezeichnung *flowing* – fließend), gefolgt vom regen Betrieb und Zeremoniell der vierten und fünften

Strophe; Dysons Motto, das bald von den *Canterbury Pilgrims* her bekannt werden sollte, tritt bereits in Erscheinung.

In Honour of the City war der Schritt, der zu den **Canterbury Pilgrims** führte. Die Kantate wurde am 19. März 1931 in Winchester mit den damaligen führenden Solisten Isobel Baillie, Steuart Wilson und Roy Henderson, lokalen Chören und Orchester unter der Leitung des Komponisten uraufgeführt. Bezeichnenderweise betitelte Dyson *The Canterbury Pilgrims* als ein Werk für Chor, Orchester und drei Solisten, also räumte er dem Chor den Vorrang ein; tatsächlich ist der Elan weitgehend dem kräftigen, dramatischen Chorsatz zuzuschreiben.

Im Jahr 1170 wurde der Erzbischof von Canterbury, Thomas à Becket, von vier Rittern ermordet, die König Heinrichs II. Verzweiflungsschrei als Auftrag aufgaben (das Sujet ist in bekannten Versdramen von Tennyson und T.S. Eliot behandelt). Nachdem Becket 1173 heiliggesprochen wurde, entwickelte sich Canterbury zu einem berühmten Wallfahrtsort, den Pilger aus ganz Europa aufsuchten, um Gott zu dienen oder Genesung zu suchen.

Etwa zwei Jahrhunderte nach dem Mord schuf der Dichter Geoffrey Chaucer (ca. 1343 – 1400) mit lebhaften Farben ein umfassendes Bild des Lebens in England in

den 1380er Jahren, in dem er alle möglichen menschlichen Schwächen beschrieb. Damals wurden Wallfahrten bereits weitgehend eine Art Tourismus; Dyson bietet eine breitgefächerte Palette des Lebens, die als bare Münze genommen werden darf.

Dyson vertonte nur Chaucers "General Prologue", der das Zusammentreffen der Pilger in der Tabard-Schenke in Southwark beschreibt. (Als die Schenke am Südufer der Themse unweit der alten London Bridge 1676 abbrannte, waren Wallfahrten vielleicht nicht mehr an der Tagesordnung.) Dreizehn Teilnehmer sind geschildert (abgesehen von den Gildenbrüdern des Kurzwarenhändlers, nämlich Zimmermann, Färber, Weber, Teppichweber und Koch), die sich jeweils in einer eigenen Nummer vorstellen, also insgesamt elf Sätze, Prolog und "Envoi" – Abschluß.

Der Eröffnung in den Trompeten (das Pilgermotiv mit George Dysons eigenem Motto, der Aufwärtsquinte GD) folgt der Prolog mit regem Treiben, das in einen langsamen Tanz mündet, in dem erst die Oboe, dann die Klarinette dem Motto ein neues, fragendes Gepräge verleihen. Nun singt der unbegleitete Chor Chaucers erste Strophe. Es ist April, und mit dem Einzug des Frühlings denken die Leute an Pilgerfahrten. Wir hören das sogenannte Wallfahrtsmotiv,

dann beginnt der Erzähler seinen Bericht über einen Kreis von Leuten, "durch Zufall nur zusammengetroffen", die sich in der Schenke eingefunden haben. Der Chor erinnert uns noch einmal daran, daß Canterbury eine berühmte heilkräftige Stätte war, und der Satz endet mit dem Wallfahrtsmotiv. Diese beiden Gedanken werden im Verlauf der folgenden Porträts wiederholt oder angedeutet.

Zunächst "Der Ritter, der sich der Ritterart befleißigte". Der Chor besingt ihn in Dysons überschwinglichsten, feierlichsten Tönen mit weitgespannten Melodielinien, begleitet von Blechbläsern. Als bald erweckt der Orchesterrhythmus Gedanken an des Ritters Pferd, und wir erfahren über seine vielen Heldentaten in fernen Landen. Die Stelle "in the Great Sea / At many a noble landing" (im Mittelmeer / nahm er an vielen Feldzügen teil) läßt gewiß Höhepunkte in der *Sea Symphony* von Vaughan Williams erstehen. Indes ist der Abschluß verhalten: Chaucer weiß genau, daß die Zeit des Rittertums zu Ende geht und das doppelsinnige Nebeneinander der Noten H und B erzeugt eine unvermutet melancholische Stimmung.

Waren sämtliche Pilger beritten? Aus dem Text geht hervor, daß die meisten, wenn nicht alle, zu Roß saßen, und Dysons Satz gibt das Wesen einiger Pferde zu erkennen. Die Frau von Bath sitzt rittlings auf einem

Ambler, einem sanften Pferd, das weite Strecken gewohnt ist. Hingegen reitet der unredliche Seemann auf einem *Rouncey*, einem Mietpferd, das wahrscheinlich recht groß war, und Dysons 9/8-Takt (Vorzeichen *Bold and rhythmic*, also energisch und rhythmisch) drückt deutlich aus, wie stark sein Verkehrsmittel war; schließlich gibt die Musik zu erkennen, daß er viel lieber an Bord seiner Barke, der "Magdalen", wäre.

Der Tenorsolist präsentiert den Sohn des Ritters, den Knappen, "Ein Liebhaber und ein froher Junggeselle, / gelockt ...". Chaucers Knappe ist ein schmucker Bursche, elegant, ein tüchtiger Reitersmann, erst kürzlich aus Feldzügen auf dem Kontinent heimgekehrt. Dazu war er nicht nur ein guter Sänger und Flötist, sondern konnte auch die Melodien und Texte seiner Lieder erdenken. Die Analogie zwischen dem Knappen und dem Vogel, der während der Paarungszeit die ganze Nacht hindurch singt, betont Dyson mit dem leidenschaftlichen Melisma im hohen Register bei dem Wort "Nightingale". Die beschauliche Coda dieses lebhaften Porträts erinnert uns daran, daß Knappen bei Tisch dem Ritter das Fleisch zerlegten; also waren Rittertugend und Courtoisie noch nicht vorbei.

Dysons nächste Person, "Die Nonne", ist Chaucers Priorin Madame Eglantine. Ihr Schmuck und eleganter Umhang, ihre

Wohlgestalt – die Stirn war nicht verhüllt – und ihre Beachtung höfischer Moden lassen darauf schließen, daß sie weltlichem Tand nicht abhold war. Das Sopransolo ist von Virgils Wendung "Amor vincit omnia" ("Die Liebe besiegt alles" oder vielleicht "Die Liebe bindet alles zusammen?") umrahmt, die der Chor singt; ist damit die Liebe im sakralen oder romantischen Sinn gemeint? Vielleicht gibt Chaucers Kommentar über die Tischmanieren der Priorin Aufschluß; er stammt aus Ovids Anweisungen an Frauen über die Mittel, Männer zu ködern.

Noch sarkastischer sind die Töne, mit denen der Bariton den lebensfrohen Mönch schildert. Bewunderte ihn Chaucer insgeheim oder ist diese Strophe einfach ein Pasquill auf eine damals bekannte Persönlichkeit? Der dicke, überladene Orchestersatz unterscheidet sich deutlich vom nächsten Charakter, dem armseligen Kleriker von Oxenford, dessen Musik deutlich sein fadenscheiniges Äußeres malt. Der ruhige, langsame, fugierte Satz betont die Gelehrsamkeit des Bücherwurms. Indes übernehmen die Streicher allmählich die Führung und es stellt sich heraus, daß auch in seinen Adern rotes Blut fließt; der breite, getragene Höhepunkt schließt triumphierende Klänge an, die gewiß Dysons Einstellung zu "moralischen Tönen" betonen.

Bei Dyson heißen Chaucers fünf Gildenbrüder "Der Kurzwarenhändler und seine Gilde". Alle tragen Montur; diese wohlhabenden Selfmademen sind die Prominenz der mittelalterlichen Gilden. Trotzdem waren sie vielleicht nicht die allerklügsten, denn Dysons pizzicato Streicherakkorde (*very deliberate*, also sehr bedachtsam) malen ein gutes Bild vom behäbigen Vorwärtskommen dieser gewichtigen Gesellschaft. Sie waren angesehene Mitglieder genau definierter *Closed Shops*: Der Kurzwarenhändler verkaufte Schneiderzubehör, also Garne, Näh- und Stecknadeln, vor allem aber Kappen und Hüte. Mit ihm ritt der Kaufmann, ein mächtiger Geschäftsmann. Chaucer war selbst ein Kaufmannssohn und ist auf erhaltenen Porträts mit dem modischen Drosselbart abgebildet, den auch sein Kaufmann trägt. Freilich lassen die Anspielung auf die Kronen, die er wechselte (ein Monopol der Krone), und seine sarkastische Schlußzeile darauf schließen, daß Chaucer vom Kaufmann trotz seines Vermögens herzlich wenig hielt.

Im Spätmittelalter waren Rechtspfleger und Gutsherren sehr einflußreiche Personen. Die Rechtspfleger waren die bedeutendsten Juristen, die später manchmal in den Richterstand erhoben wurden. Wahrscheinlich nahm Dyson dieses Porträt

für bare Münze, aber man darf nicht außer Acht lassen, daß sich die Chaucer-Experten über die Frage, inwiefern er Satire anstrebte, uneinig sind. Mit dem Rechtspfleger reitet der Gutsherr, den Chaucer als einen wohlhabenden, sogar genießerischen Menschen schildert – er besitzt Land, aber kein blaues Blut. Wie einige andere Pilger hatte er Aussichten, hoffähig zu werden. Jedenfalls hatte dieser Gutsherr im Leben viel erreicht und als Sheriff und Rechnungsprüfer gedient. Seine Beschreibung und die einiger anderer Personen geben zur Vermutung Anlaß, daß Chaucer sie der Bestechlichkeit verdächtigte.

Angesichts des sozialen Standes der Reisegesellschaft fragt man sich, ob der Seemann mit offenen Armen begrüßt wurde. Der weit ausholende Satz entwirft ein lebhaftes Bild dieses des Reitens unerfahrenen Spitzbuben und seines Mietpferds. Dennoch kann man sich vorstellen, daß seine Reisegefährten und auch Chaucer dem Kapitän, dessen Gaunerei vor allem Ausländern galt, einigen Respekt entgegenbrachten.

Vom Arzt hielt Chaucer viel weniger, denn zu einer Zeit, da jedermann von Seuchen und Gebrechen bedroht war, konnte er sich wohl mit dessen Geldgier und Selbstsucht nur schwer abfinden. Besonders ausgeprägt

ist der Kontrast zwischen seiner Einstellung zum Arzt und der "Frau aus Bath", die er überhaupt nicht persiflierte; sie ist das unanmaßendste Mitglied der Gesellschaft, eine überaus lebhaft Persönlichkeit, die sich in Dysons Faktur zur Vorläuferin der Elinor Rummig in den *Five Tudor Portraits* von Ralph Vaughan Williams entwickelt. Sie ist eine begüterte Pilgerin, denn sie hat fünf reiche Gatten beerbt und fühlt sich trotz ihrer etwas ungeschliffenen Art nie falsch am Platz. Ungeachtet ihrer Zahnlücken ist sie anscheinend der Liebe nicht abhold; schließlich erfahren wir, daß sie den Männern noch immer schöne Augen macht.

Dysons wunderbare Vertonung des "armen Dorfpfarrers" gibt, wie bei dem Kleriker von Oxenford, seine Sympathien zu erkennen. Die prächtige Beschreibung des vorbildlichen Priesters spiegelt vielleicht seine eigene, auf den Prinzipien der englischen *public schools* basierende Einstellung zu Fragen der Verantwortung wider. Auf dem Höhepunkt scheint sich die Musik vom Text loszulösen und transzendente Regionen zu zelebrieren – ein Höhenflug, dem man auch bei Zeitgenossen, darunter Gerald Finzi, Patrick Hadley und Howard Ferguson, begegnet.

Der letzte Satz ist "L'Envoi" (Zum Abschluß): Der Wirt der Tabard-Schenke schlägt vor, jeder Pilger möge auf dem Weg

nach Canterbury eine Geschichte erzählen. Sie ziehen Lose und der Ritter muß beginnen. Die Eröffnung des Prologs erklingt wieder, die Melodie, zu der die Gesellschaft aufbricht, entfaltet sich allmählich aus dem Pilgermotiv und der Ritter beginnt seine Erzählung. Bei der Uraufführung kam dem Tenor Stuart Wilson der brillante Einfall, singend von der Bühne abzugehen. Die Gesellschaft verschwindet allmählich und das Werk schließt mit dem aus der Ferne ertönenden Thema, während hinter der Bühne ein romantisches Hornsolo das große Abenteuer und Geschichten in Hülle und Fülle verkündet.

1943 schrieb Dyson seine Orchesterouvertüre *At the Tabard Inn* als Vorspiel für die *Canterbury Pilgrims*, aber auch als eigenständiges Konzertstück, indem er Abschnitte aus dem Hauptwerk zu einer melodiosen, evokatorischen Konzertouvertüre verarbeitete. Sie wurde 1949 unter Leopold Stokowski gespielt, der dem Komponisten brieflich mitteilte, er betrachte sie als ein Meisterstück der Charakterisierung und hinzufügte: "Die Art von herzhafter Energie und Humor, die Chaucer darstellte, haben Sie durch das Medium der Musik perfekt ausgedrückt."

© Lewis Foreman
Übersetzung: Gery Bramall

Dyson: Les Pèlerins de Cantorbéry / En honneur de la Cité

À partir de 1945, la musique de Sir George Dyson (1883 – 1964) – traditionnelle et optimiste – fut de plus en plus considérée comme passée de mode, et pendant les années soixante et soixante-dix, elle fut presque complètement négligée. Cependant, par bien des aspects, Dyson a toujours été démodé: c'est comme si, à un certain moment, carrière et caractère avaient conspiré contre sa musique jusqu'au point de la plonger dans le néant duquel elle a été tirée seulement récemment.

Dyson avait largement dépassé la quarantaine quand il entreprit avec succès une nouvelle carrière de compositeur avec *In Honour of the City* (En honneur de la Cité – 1928) puis *The Canterbury Pilgrims* (Les Pèlerins de Cantorbéry – 1930) qui fut immédiatement populaire. Composée à Winchester pendant ses moments de loisirs, cette musique naquit de la profonde conviction qu'il avait des besoins du mouvement choral anglais. Dyson était préoccupé par la domination croissante d'un répertoire constitué d'œuvres du passé, et il comprit que des partitions anglaises importantes telles que la *Sea Symphony*

de Vaughan Williams ou la *Mass of Life* de Delius étaient inaccessibles à la plus grande partie du public. Dans la musique qu'il composa à cet effet, Dyson rejeta non seulement les aspects révolutionnaires du langage du vingtième siècle, à propos duquel il écrivit si pertinemment (*The New Music*, 1924), mais également le modernisme plus modéré que l'on peut trouver dans les œuvres datant des années vingt de certains de ses compatriotes plus jeunes tels que Bliss, Walton ou Lambert. Le résultat est très clairement anglais, mais d'une manière qui n'est pas complètement consciente. En effet, Dyson n'eut aucun goût pour la musique d'Elgar, le folkore ou la musique modale, ni davantage pour les brumes des crépuscules celtiques. Sa musique est simple – assurée, vivante, mélodieuse –, et dénuée de toute connotation autobiographique. À ce moment de son développement, le ton personnel de Dyson était implicite par le choix des textes. Un sentiment de communauté d'esprit était très cher au cœur du compositeur. Dunbar et Chaucer reflétaient également sa propre joie de vivre, sa solidarité avec le genre humain, son goût de l'observation et son sens de

l'humour. Il est clair que Dyson prit plaisir à relever le défi de donner vie en musique à l'infinie variété des personnages de Chaucer, avec leurs innombrables traits universellement reconnaissables. Bien que Dyson ait composé par la suite des œuvres beaucoup plus profondes et originales, il ne retrouva jamais une inspiration mélodique de la qualité de celle de *The Canterbury Pilgrims*. Si l'on songe aux caractères de Chaucer, les mélodies de Dyson s'imposent immédiatement à l'esprit. Il n'est pas étonnant que les sociétés chorales eurent tant d'affection pour cette œuvre.

The Canterbury Pilgrims s'éleva rapidement au rang de classique, et demeura populaire tout au long des années trente et quarante. Mais Dyson (qui se considérait lui-même comme un genre de *Kapellmeister* du vingtième siècle) ne fit aucun effort particulier pour promouvoir sa propre musique: bien au contraire, il prit souvent le plus grand soin à ne pas utiliser dans ce but les pouvoirs que lui donnait sa position importante. Parvenu en 1950, on joua de moins en moins souvent les œuvres écrites pour le Three Choirs Festival qui avaient consolidé sa réputation au cours des années trente. Sa Symphonie (1937) et son Concerto pour violon (1941) ne s'étaient pas non plus imposés au répertoire. Le Cheltenham Festival, qui fut le tremplin des compositeurs anglais après la Seconde Guerre mondiale,

avait déjà donné (en 1949) ce qui devait être son unique création d'une œuvre de Dyson (le *Concerto da camera*). Écrivant en 1952, Dyson reconnaissait sans la moindre amertume que *The Canterbury Pilgrims* avait été son plus grand succès de compositeur. À l'approche de ses soixante-dix ans, Dyson put faire le bilan d'une carrière heureuse, riche et distinguée. Ni la riche moisson d'œuvres éternellement jeunes de sa "retraite", ni la poursuite de ses activités de chef ne lui gagnèrent une réputation auprès d'un public qui avait accepté Britten et Tippett. Cependant, *The Canterbury Pilgrims* demeura populaire parmi les sociétés chorales, et ceux qui eurent la chance d'entendre le compositeur diriger cette œuvre dans les années cinquante en gardèrent une impression indélébile. Mais à la mort de Dyson en 1964, cinq années s'étaient écoulées depuis la dernière exécution notable à Londres de *The Canterbury Pilgrims*, et le verdict de la critique fut que la musique bien construite de cet éminent professeur avait eu son heure de gloire. Cette opinion persista malheureusement pendant les deux décennies suivantes – même parmi les plus actifs défenseurs de la musique anglaise. Seules les très rares exécutions de *The Canterbury Pilgrims* nous rappelaient ce qui avait été perdu.

C'est Christopher Palmer, aujourd'hui disparu, qui redécouvrit la musique de

Dyson au début des années quatre-vingt. Cette découverte lança la remarquable série d'enregistrements grâce auxquels ses œuvres ont été peu à peu remise en circulation. Dix années d'intérêt grandissant ont donné lieu à davantage de concerts, avec pour point culminant la reprise de *The Canterbury Pilgrims* au Barbican Hall de Londres le 29 septembre 1996, et qui précéda le présent enregistrement. Dyson lui-même reconnut que les enregistrements pouvaient tenir un rôle unique en donnant au public la possibilité de connaître réellement très bien la musique. Ainsi, nous disposons maintenant de ce qu'il aurait considéré comme la première possibilité d'une évaluation juste de sa contribution au patrimoine musical anglais.

Le style de Dyson est à la fois chaleureux, direct et insaisissable. Il assimila parfaitement diverses influences, et souligner ici et là certaines affinités avec Strauss, Delius, Vaughan Williams ou d'autres compositeurs ne nous avance en rien. Pour former un jugement définitif sur sa production, il faut à l'évidence attendre les enregistrements de ses autres œuvres chorales importantes: *Nebuchadnezzar*, *St Paul's Voyage to Melita*, et par-dessus tout *Quo Vadis*. En attendant, on peut dire que l'originalité de Dyson réside dans sa

capacité à toucher la sensibilité qui git aux racines même de notre inconscient national. Dans ce qu'il a de meilleur, l'art de Dyson à réunir ensemble tant de traits expressifs fondamentaux de la musique anglaise est tel qu'il nous offre une vision ample et profondément satisfaisante de valeurs précieuses et immuables.

© Ray Siese

Traduction: Francis Marchal

Les premières œuvres de la maturité de Dyson datent de l'époque où il était le directeur de la musique du collège de Winchester, fonction qu'il occupa de 1924 à 1937. Outre le fait qu'il y était organiste, Dyson avait également à sa disposition un chœur, un orchestre, et une chorale d'adultes. Il trouva son propre style au travers des partitions chorales vigoureuses et mélodieuses qu'il écrivit pour eux. Les sociétés chorales répondirent dès le début, et *In Honour of the City* (1928) avec *The Canterbury Pilgrims* (1930) établirent rapidement sa réputation de musicien à la personnalité vibrante et profondément originale.

Si l'on excepte quelques pièces de musique d'église, *In Honour of the City* fut sa première partition chorale. Tout en écrivant

sur une solide fondation traditionnelle, il présenta suffisamment de caractéristiques personnelles, et fit preuve d'une telle assurance d'écriture qu'il s'imposa d'emblée comme un remarquable compositeur de musique chorale.

Dyson mis en musique cinq des sept vers de Dunbar en anglais moderne. Neuf ans plus tard, en 1937, Walton en réalisa également un arrangement (de six des sept vers), mais préféra conserver le texte original. Le poète écossais William Dunbar (?1465 - ?1513) aurait écrit son poème vers 1500 au cours du voyage qu'il fit avec l'ambassade envoyée à la cour de Henri VII pour négocier le mariage de Jacques IV d'Écosse avec Margaret Tudor. Cependant, des chercheurs ont récemment mis en doute la paternité du texte. Dyson qualifia sa musique de "Fantasia", et il s'agit en effet d'une fantaisie sur le thème de Londres, prenant pour base le motif du "carillon de Westminster" que l'on entend à la deuxième mesure de l'introduction orchestrale sous la forme d'un motif confié au cor, mais presque méconnaissable en raison de l'altération du rythme. Par la suite, le carillon devient une figure d'accompagnement bien trop évidente, tandis qu'ailleurs, il résonne aux cors avec ampleur. Chacun des cinq vers met en place une atmosphère différente. La première porte l'indication *festif*, et nous

donne à entendre l'appel de londoniens de grand renom, avec une mention spéciale pour "les dames brillantes et robustes les plus délectables". De brèves liaisons orchestrales signalent les changements d'atmosphère entre les vers. Pour l'évocation lyrique de la Tamise du troisième vers, Dyson indique "coulant". Cette section constitue le pivot central avant l'effervescence puis le caractère solennel des quatrième et cinquième vers, où Dyson utilise son propre motif musical qui sera bientôt familier dans *The Canterbury Pilgrims*.

In Honour of the City fut l'étape qui mena à la composition de **The Canterbury Pilgrims**, dont la création eut lieu le 19 mars 1931 à Winchester par les meilleurs solistes du moment – Isobel Baillie, Steuart Wilson, Roy Henderson – avec des chœurs et l'orchestre de la ville, l'ensemble dirigé par le compositeur. Il est significatif que Dyson ait qualifié *The Canterbury Pilgrims* d'œuvre pour "chœur, orchestre et trois solistes", en mettant l'accent sur la place du chœur. En effet, du fait de son écriture chorale efficace, celui-ci se voit confier la plupart des moments forts et éclatants.

Le meurtre en 1170 de Thomas à Becket, archevêque de Cantorbéry, par quatre chevaliers aux ordres du roi Henri II (un sujet qui inspira des pièces en vers importantes

de Tennyson et T.S. Eliot) est un épisode bien connu de l'histoire de l'Angleterre. Après la canonisation de Becket en 1173, Cantorbéry devint l'un des lieux de pèlerinage les plus célèbres, et les pèlerins vinrent de l'Europe tout entière en signe de piété et pour y chercher la guérison.

Geoffrey Chaucer vécut pendant la seconde moitié du quatorzième siècle. Avec un recul de quelque deux cents ans après cet assassinat, il peignit une fresque haute en couleurs montrant la vie et les usages de l'Angleterre des environs de 1380, ainsi qu'une galerie des faiblesses de l'homme. Les pèlerinages étaient devenus à son époque une forme de tourisme, et Dyson nous présente une période colorée à prendre au pied de la lettre.

Le compositeur se limite au "General Prologue" de Chaucer où il décrit la réunion des pèlerins à l'auberge du Tabard dans le quartier de Southwark à Londres. (L'auberge de Chaucer, située sur la rive droite de la Tamise au sud de Londres près de l'ancien "London Bridge", fut détruite par le feu en 1676, époque où les pèlerinages à Cantorbéry n'étaient peut-être plus le genre de choses à faire.) Nous avons le portrait de treize membres de cette compagnie (plus le "mercier et sa confrérie" représentée par un charpentier, un teinturier, un tisserand,

un tapissier et leur maître-queue), chacun dépeint par un numéro séparé – le tout formant un ensemble de onze mouvements encadrés par le "Prologue" et "L'Envoi".

Après le motif ascendant joué par la trompette (l'emblème des pèlerins renfermant le motif musical de Dyson (GD, c'est-à-dire sol, ré)), la musique du Prologue commence de manière animée, et mène à une danse lente suivie successivement par le hautbois et la clarinette qui confèrent à l'emblème un caractère nouveau et interrogateur avant la présentation expressive par le chœur *a cappella* des premiers vers de Chaucer. C'est le mois d'avril, et l'arrivée du printemps donne aux gens l'idée de partir en pèlerinage. On entend ce que l'on a appelé le "motif du pèlerinage" avant que le narrateur ne commence le récit du conte, et nous dise comment une compagnie de "Différentes gens, par chance réunis" arrive à l'auberge. Le chœur intervient de nouveau pour nous rappeler que Cantorbéry est un lieu de guérison, puis la musique se termine par le "motif du pèlerinage" repris par l'orchestre. Ces deux idées réappaissent ou sont évoquées au cours des portaits qui vont suivre.

Tout d'abord "The Knight that Loved Chivalry" (Le Chevalier qui chérit la chevalerie). Ce morceau est confié au chœur,

et s'ouvre par le style le plus solennel de Dyson: une longue ligne mélodique se déploie au-dessus d'un accompagnement confié aux cuivres. Bientôt la musique de l'orchestre se transforme en un mouvement cahotant qui évoque le cheval du chevalier, et nous voilà lance dans le récit de ses exploits au-delà des mers. On peut trouver une analogie avec la *Sea Symphony* de Vaughan Williams au moment crucial souligné par les mots "in the Great Sea / At many a noble landing" (sur la Grande Mer / avait participé à maints nobles débarquements). Cependant, la fin est comme voilée. En effet, Chaucer est trop conscient du fait que l'ère de la chevalerie est sur le point de disparaître, et l'alternance ambiguë entre le si bémol et le si naturel nous plonge dans un climat d'adieu tout à fait inattendu.

Les pèlerins de Cantorbéry étaient-ils tous montés à cheval? Le texte nous indique que la plupart, sinon tous, voyageaient à cheval, et la musique de Dyson décrit le caractère de plusieurs de ces montures. La "bourgeoise de Bath" monte à califourchon sur un "ambler", terme qui qualifie un cheval docile marchant au pas pendant de longues distances. Faisant contraste, le marin monte un "rouncey" (un cheval de trait), c'est-à-dire un cheval de louage. Le "Hardi et rythmique" 9/8 de Dyson ne nous laisse aucun doute

quant à la solidité du moyen de transport du marin, et la musique nous rappelle finalement qu'il préférerait de loin être sur son bateau, le "Magdalen".

Le ténor solo nous présente le portrait du fils du chevalier, "The Squire". L'écuyer de Chaucer est un jeune gaillard solide, bien de sa personne et cavalier expert, revenu récemment de quelque aventure militaire sur le continent ("A lover and a lusty bachelor, / With locks acurl..." (Un amant et gaillard bachelier, / aux boucles frisées)). Non seulement il peut chanter et jouer de la flûte, mais il compose également les paroles et la musique de ses chansons. Le parallèle entre l'écuyer et l'oiseau qui chante pendant toute la nuit au moment de la saison de l'accouplement est dépeint par Dyson dans l'ardent mélisme qui met en valeur le mot "rossignol". Dans un épisode pensif faisant pendant à ce portrait plein de vie, Dyson nous rappelle que l'un des devoirs ordinaires de l'écuyer était de découper la viande à table pour son seigneur, soulignant ainsi que chevalerie et courtoisie étaient encore vivantes.

Dyson intitule le récit suivant "The Nun" (La Nonne). Il s'agit de la mère prieure de Chaucer, madame Eglantine. Avec ses bijoux, son habit élégant, sa jolie mine – son front étant découvert – et son attention pour les

manières courtoises, on pourrait conclure qu'elle aspire aux vanités de ce monde. Le chœur encadre la soprano solo avec la citation latine empruntée à Virgile, "Amor vincit omnia" ("L'Amour vient à bout de tout", ou peut-être encore "L'Amour unit tout"). Mais s'agit-il d'un amour religieux ou romantique? Une indication nous est peut-être donnée dans le commentaire des manières de table de la religieuse, emprunté à Ovide et à ses conseils aux femmes pour séduire les hommes.

Le bariton décrit le caractère terre-à-terre du moine d'une manière encore plus ironique. Chaucer admirait-il secrètement son moine ou s'agit-il de la satire d'une figure familière de son temps? La musique grasse et trop nourrie contraste avec le portrait suivant, celui du pauvre clerc d'Oxford. Ici, Dyson voulut une musique très maigre. La texture lente et calme de cette fugue souligne les manières de rat de bibliothèque de l'étudiant. Mais à mesure que les cordes dominent les lignes de l'orchestre, nous découvrons que lui aussi a le sang chaud, et le point culminant "très ample et soutenu" confère au mouvement un ton triomphal, mettant très certainement en relief l'opinion de Dyson sur la "vertu morale".

Les cinq "guildmen" de Chaucer deviennent "Le Mercier et sa confrérie" ("The Haberdasher and his Fraternity") chez Dyson. Habillés en livrée, les membres dirigeant de ces guildes

médiévales étaient tous des hommes faits à la force du poignet, et parvenus à une certaine aisance. Il n'étaient peut-être pas non plus très intelligents. Dyson les dépeint par des accords *pizzicato* "très délibérés" joués aux cordes qui évoquent la progression monotone de la compagnie. Ces personnages étaient des membres respectés de magasins très spécialisés. Le mercier, par exemple, vendait tout ce qui concerne la confection: bobines de coton, aiguilles et épingles, et plus spécifiquement capuchons et chapeaux. Le marchand, un magnat en ce temps-là, voyageait à leurs côtés. Le père de Chaucer fut lui-même marchand, et les portraits du poète qui nous sont parvenus nous le représentent portant la barbe fourchue à la mode à cette époque, et arborant ses insignes de marchand. Cependant, dans ses allusions aux ventes de la couronne (un monopole royal), et dans son dernier vers sarcastique, on peut déduire que Chaucer avait peu de temps à perdre avec son marchand et toutes ses richesses.

"L'Homme de loi" et "Le Franc-tenancier" ("The Sergeant of the Law and the Franklin") étaient des personnages puissants dans la société de la fin du Moyen Age. Les officiers de justice étaient les hommes de loi les plus importants de leur temps, et devinrent juges par la suite. Dyson réalisa probablement

ce portrait au pied de la lettre, mais il est intéressant de rappeler que les spécialistes de Chaucer ne s'accordent pas quant à savoir jusqu'à quel point le poète se voulait satirique. Avec l'homme de loi voyage le franc-tenancier ("Franklin") que Chaucer décrit brièvement comme étant un homme aisé – un propriétaire certes, mais roturier. Comme plusieurs des autres pèlerins, il nourrissait sans doute le désir d'obtenir une position à la cour. Quoiqu'il en soit, le propriétaire de Chaucer est un homme parvenu, qui fut juge puis commissaire aux comptes. La description de Chaucer, comme celles d'autres personnages, semble laisser sous-entendre qu'il le soupçonnait de corruption.

Si l'on songe à la position sociale de plusieurs des membres de la compagnie, on peut se demander s'ils accueillirent favorablement le marin. Ce coquin est décrit avec panache par une musique qui évoque sa monture et son inexpérience de l'équitation. On peut néanmoins imaginer que les voyageurs, tout comme Chaucer, avaient un certain respect pour ce navigateur dont les malversations étaient largement au détriment des étrangers.

Chaucer a beaucoup moins de considération pour Le Médecin ("Doctor of Physic"). Son goût pour l'or et son absence de toute dimension spirituelle lui donnent une

puissante ambiguïté dans l'esprit de Chaucer en un temps où la maladie était un spectre omniprésent. Si Chaucer méprisait peut-être le statut du médecin, il prit "La Bourgeoise de Bath" ("The Wife of Bath") entièrement au pied de la lettre – le contraste entre les deux personnages est particulièrement frappant. C'est la personne la moins prétentieuse de toute la compagnie, et elle fait preuve d'une superbe vivacité. Dyson réalise d'elle un portrait musical plein de vie qui préfigure celui de Elinor Rummig dans les *Five Tudor Portraits* de Vaughan Williams. La Bourgeoise de Bath est aussi une femme riche: elle a accumulé la fortune de cinq maris, et bien qu'un peu vulgaire, elle est parfaitement avec tout le monde. Le fait qu'elle est une personne aux dents écartées suggère une nature amoureuse, et l'on apprend à la fin qu'une femme ayant une telle expérience est toujours à l'affût d'une aventure.

La magnifique mise en musique que réalise Dyson pour "The Poor Parson of a Town" (Le Pauvre Recteur d'une ville), tout comme celle du clerc d'Oxford, définit ses sympathies. Cette description triomphale du prêtre de Chaucer reflète sans doute les idées très "public-school" du compositeur en ce qui concerne le devoir. Cependant, elle possède très certainement une signification plus importante. Au moment le plus fort,

la musique radieuse semble se séparer du texte et donne le sentiment de célébrer quelque chose qui est presque de l'ordre de la transcendance. On peut retrouver un envol visionnaire de cette ampleur dans la musique d'autres compositeurs anglais de la même époque, notamment chez Gerald Finzi, Patrick Hadley et Howard Ferguson.

Enfin, dans "L'Envoi", le patron de l'auberge Tabard suggère que chaque pèlerin raconte une histoire pendant le voyage à Cantorbéry, et le sort incombe au Chevalier de commencer. On entend de nouveau le début du Prologue. La mélodie sur laquelle la compagnie se met en route se dégage peu à peu du thème emblématique, et le chevalier commence son récit. Lors de la création, Steuart Wilson, pris d'une inspiration soudaine, traversa la scène en chantant. Tandis que la compagnie s'éloigne à l'horizon, l'œuvre s'achève par le thème que l'on entend

maintenant de loin en écho, tandis que le cor romantique situé derrière la scène annonce leur épopée et un trésor d'histoires.

En 1943, Dyson écrivit son ouverture pour orchestre **At the Tabard Inn** avec l'idée de s'en servir comme prélude à *The Canterbury Pilgrims*, mais également comme pouvant être une pièce de concert à part entière. Pour ce faire, il reprit divers épisodes de l'œuvre principale, et composa une ouverture mélodieuse et évocatrice. Elle fut dirigée par Leopold Stokowski en 1949. Celui-ci nota (dans une lettre à Dyson) qu'il voyait en elle un "chef-d'œuvre de représentation", ajoutant que "l'énergie vigoureuse et pleine d'humour dépeinte par Chaucer était exprimée en termes musicaux de manière absolument parfaite".

© Lewis Foreman

Traduction: Francis Marchal

COMPACT DISC ONE

The Canterbury Pilgrims

2 I. Prologue

When that April with his showers sweet
The drought of March hath piercéd to the
root,
And bathéd every vein in such moisture
Of which virtue engendered is the flower;
When Zephir eke with his sweet breath
Inspiréd hath in every holt and heath
The tender branches, and the young sun
Hath in Ram's sign his half course run,
And small birds make melody
That sleep all night with open eye –
So worketh nature in their hearts –
Then folk do long to go on pilgrimage,
And palmers for to seek strange strands,
To far saints known in sundry lands;
And specially, from every shire's end
Of England, to Canterbury they wend,
The holy blissful martyr for to seek,
That them hath holpen when they were sick.

Befell that in that season on a day,
In Southwark at the Tabard as I lay,
Ready to wenden on my pilgrimage
To Canterbury with full devout courage,
At night there came into that hostelry
Well nine-and-twenty in a company,
Of sundry folk, by chance together come
In fellowship, and pilgrims were they all,
That toward Canterbury would ride.
The chambers and the stables were wide,

And well we were lodged at the best.
And shortly, when the sun was come to rest,
So had I spoken with them everyone,
That I was of their fellowship anon,
And made agreement early for to rise,
To take our way, there as I you devise.
But none the less, while I have time and
space,
Ere that I further in this story pace,
Methinketh it according to reason
To tell you all the condition
Of each of them, so as it seeméd me,
And which they were and of what degree,
And eke of what array that they were in;
And at a knight then will I first begin.

4 II. The Knight

A Knight there was, and that a worthy man,
That from the time that he first began
To ride abroad, he lovéd chivalry,
Truth and honour, freedom and courtesy.
Full worthy was he in his lord's war,
And thereto had he ridden, no man further
As well in Christendom as in heathen lands,
And ever honoured for his worthyness.
At Alexandria was he when it was won;
In Granada at the siege eke had he been
Of Algecir, and ridden in Benmarin.
At Layas was he, and at Attalia,
When they were won; and in the Great Sea
At many a noble landing had he been.
At mortal battles had he been fifteen,
And fought for our faith at Tramezene
In lists thrice, and ever slain his foe.
This same worthy knight had been also

Some time with the lord of Palathia
Against another heathen in Turkey;
And evermore he had a sovereign prize,
And though that he were worthy, he was
wise,
And bore himself as meek as is a maid.
He never yet a villainy had said, unto no
manner wight.
He was a very perfect, gentle knight.

5 III. The Squire

With him there was his son, a young Squire,
A lover and a lusty bachelor,
With locks acurl as they were laid in press.
Of twenty years of age he was, I guess.
Of his stature he was of even length,
And wonderly active and great of strength;
And he had been sometime in cavalry,
In Flanders, in Artois, and in Picardy,
And borne him well, and in so short a space,
In hope of favour by his lady's grace.
Embroidered was he, as it were a mead
All full of fresh flowers white and red;
Singing he was or fluting, all the day;
He was as fresh as is the month of May.
Short was his gown with sleeves long and
wide;
Well could he sit on horse and finely ride;
He could make songs and well indite,
Joust and eke dance and well portray and
write.
So hot he loved, he slept by night
No more than doth a nightingale.
Courteous he was, lowly and serviceable,
And carved before his father at the table.

6 IV. The Nun

AMOR VINCIT OMNIA.
There was also a Nun, a Prioress,
That of her smiling was full simple and coy;
And she was called Madame Eglantine.
Full well she sang the services divine,
Entuned in her nose full seemily
And Norman-French she spake, full fair and
skilfully.
At meat well taught was she withal,
She let no morsel from her lips fall,
Nor wet her fingers in her sauces deep,
Well could she carry a morsel and well keep,
That no drop fell upon her breast;
In courtesy was set full much her pleasure.
Full daintily after her meat she reached,
And certainly she was of gay desport,
And full pleasant and amiable of port
And took pains to follow the ways
Of Court, and stately was of manner,
And to be held worthy of reverence.
But for to speak of her conscience,
She was so charitable and pitiful
She would weep if that she saw a mouse
Caught in a trap, if it were dead or bled.
Of small hounds had she that she fed
With roasted flesh, or milk and wheaten
bread;
But sore wept she if one of them were dead,
Or if men smote it with a stick smartly,
And all was conscience and tender heart.
Full seemily her wimple crinkled was;
Her nose well formed, her eyes grey as glass,
Her mouth full small and thereto soft and red,
But certainly she had a fair forehead;

It was almost a span broad I trow,
For, surely, she was not undergrown.
Full handsome was her cloak as I was ware;
Of small corals about her arm she bare
A string of beads with gaudies all of green,
And thereon hung a brooch of gold full
sheen,
On which there was first writ a crownéd A,
And after AMOR VINCIT OMNIA.

7 V. The Monk

A Monk there was, and likely to be master,
A bold rider that lovéd hunting,
A manly man, to be an Abbot able.
Full many a dainty horse had he in stable,
And when he rode men might his bridle hear
Jingling in the whistling wind as clear,
And eke as loud, as doth the chapel bell,
Where that this lord was Prior of his cell.
The rule of Saint Maurice or Saint Benedict,
Because that it was old and some deal strict,
This monk let old things pass, and chose
the new.

He gave not for that text a plucked hen
That saith that hunters be not, holy men,
Nor that a monk when he is reckless,
Is likened to a fish that is waterless;
That is to say, a monk out of his cloister.
But that same text he held not worth an
oyster;
And I said his opinion was good.
Why should he study and make himself mad
Upon a book in cloister always poring,
Or toil with his hands and labour

As Austin bade? How shall the world be
served?

Let Austin have his toil to him reserved.
Therefore he was a horseman bold aright;
Greyhounds he had as swift as fowl in flight;
Of spurring and hunting for the hare
Was all his lust, for no cost would he spare.
I saw his sleeves a-ruffled at the hand
With fur, and that the finest in the land;
And for to fasten his hood under his chin.
He had of gold wrought a curious pin,
A love-knot in the greater end there was.
His head was bald and shone as any glass,
And eke his face as it had been anoint.
He was a lord full fat and in great point;
His eyes were bright and rolling in his head,
That gleamed like a fire beneath a pot;
His palfrey was as brown as is a berry.
He was not pale as a tormented ghost;
A fat swan loved he best of any roast;
His boots were supple, his horse in great
estate.

Now certainly he was a fair prelate.

8 VI. The Clerk of Oxenford

There was a Clerk of Oxenford
That unto logic long had gone,
As lean was his horse as is a rake,
And he was not right fat, I undertake,
But looked hollow, and thereto soberly;
Full threadbare was his overcape;
For he had got him yet no benefice,
Nor was so worldly for to have office;
For he would rather have at his bed's head
Twenty books clad in black or red
Of Aristotle and his philosophy,
Than robes rich, or fiddle, or gay psaltery;

But all be that he was a philosopher,
Yet had he but little gold in coffer;
But all that he might of his friends borrow,
On books and his learning he it spent,
And busily began for the souls to pray
Of them that gave him wherewith to study.
Of study took he most care and most heed,
Not a word spake he more than was need,
And that was said in form and reverence
And short and quick, and full of high sense.
Tending to moral virtue was his speech
And gladly would he learn and gladly teach.

**9 VII. The Haberdasher and his Fraternity.
The Merchant**

An Haberdasher, and a Carpenter,
A Weaver, a Dyer, and a Tapestry-maker, –
And they were clothed all in one livery
Of a solemn and great fraternity;
Full fresh and new their gear appointed was;
Their knives were capped, not with brass,
But all with silver, wrought full clean and
well,
Their girdles and their pouches every whit.
Well seeméd each of them a fair burgess
To sit in a guildhall, on a dais.
Each one for the wisdom that he knew
Was shapely for to be an alderman.
For chattels they had enough and rent,
And eke their wives would it well assent;
It is full fair to be called Madame
And go to vespers walking all before,
And have a mantle royally borne.

A Cook they had with them for the nonce,
To boil the chickens with the marrowbones,

And sauces sweet and savoury;
Well could he know a draught of London ale;
He could roast and seethe and boil and fry,
Make a stew and well bake a pie.

A Merchant was there with a forkéd beard,
In motley and high on horse he sat;
Upon his head a Flandrish beaver hat;
His opinions he spake full solemnly,
Tending always to the increase of his
winning;
He would the sea were kept free at any cost
Betwixt Middleburg and his river Orwell.
Well on exchange could he sell crowns
This worthy man full well had used his wit,
There could no man call him a debtor,
So stately was he of his governance,
With his bargains and with his borrowings.
Forsooth he was a worthy man withal.

COMPACT DISC TWO

**1 VIII. The Sergeant of the Law.
The Franklin**

A Sergeant of the Law, wary and wise,
There was also, full rich of excellence.
Discreet he was, and of great reverence;
He seeméd such, his words were so wise.
Justice he was full often in Assize,
By patent and by full commission;
For his science and for his high renown;
Of fees and robes had he many a one;
So great a purchaser was nowhere none.
All was fee-simple to him in effect,
His purchasing might not be undone.

Nowhere so busy a man as he there was,
And yet he seeméd busier than he was.
In set terms had he cases and dooms all
That from the time of King William had fallen;
Thereto could he indite and make a deed,
There could no wight cavil at his writing;
And every statute knew he all by rote.
He rode but homely in a medley coat.

A Franklin was in his company.
White was his beard as is a daisy,
Of his complexion he was sanguine.
Well loved he in the morning a sop in wine.
To live in delight was ever his wont,
For he was Epicurus's own son,
That held opinion that full delight
Was verily felicity perfect.
An householder, and that a great, was he;
Open to all that came in his country;
His bread, his ale, was always of the best;
A better cellared man was nowhere none.
Without baked meat was never his house,
Of fish and flesh and that so plenteous
It snowed in his house of meat and drink.
Of every dainty that man could think,
After the sundry seasons of the year,
So changed he his meat and his supper.
Full many a fat partridge had he in coop,
And many a bream and many a luce in stew.
Woe was his cook if his sauces were not
Poignant and sharp, and ready all his gear.
His table fixed in the hall alway,
Stood ready covered all the livelong day.
At sessions there he was lord and sire;
Full oft-times he was knight of the shire.

A cutlass, and a pouch all of silk,
Hung at his girdle white as morning milk;
A Sheriff had he been and an Auditor.
Was nowhere such a worthy proprietor.

2 IX. The Shipman

A Shipman was there, dwelling far by west.
For aught I wot he was of Dartémouth.
He rode upon a rouncey as he could,
In a gown of coarse cloth to the knee.
A dagger hanging upon a cord had he
About his neck under his arm adown.
The hot summer had made his hue all brown,
And certainly he was a good fellow.
Full many a draught of wine had he drawn
From Bordeauxward while that the merchant
slept.
Of tender conscience took he no heed.
If that he fought, and had the upper hand,
By water he sent them home to ev'ry land.
But of his craft to reckon well his tides,
His currents and his dangers him besides,
His harbour and his moon, his pilotage,
There was none such from Hull to Carthage.
Hardy he was and wise to undertake;
With many a tempest had his beard been
shake;
He knew well all the havens, as they were,
From Gothland to the Cape of Finisterre.
And every creek in Britain and Spain.
His barque was calléd the Magdalen.

3 X. The Doctor of Physic

With us there was a Doctor of Physic;
In all this world there was none to him like,

To speak of physic and surgery;
 For he was groundet in astrology.
 He watched his patient a full great deal,
 Following the stars by magic natural.
 Well could he foretell the ascendant,
 And figure the constellations for his patient.
 He knew the cause of every malady,
 Were it of hot, or cold, or moist, or dry,
 And where they engendered and of what
 humour;
 He was a very perfect practiser.
 The cause known and of its harm the root,
 Anon he gave the sick man remedy.
 Full ready had he his apothecaries
 To send him drugs and his electuaries,
 For each of them made other for to win,
 Their friendship was no new thing to begin.
 Well knew he the old Aesculapius,
 Old Hippocrates, Hali, and Galen,
 Averrhoes, John of Damascus, and
 Constantine.
 His study was but little on the Bible.
 Of his diet moderate was he,
 For it was of no superfluity,
 But of great nourishing and digestible.
 In scarlet and in blue he clad was all,
 Lined with taffeta and sendal silk.
 And yet he was but careful of dispense,
 He kept all that he won in pestilence.
 For gold in physic is a cordial,
 Therefore he loved gold in special.

4 XI. The Wife of Bath

A good wife was there of beside Bath,
 But she was some deal deaf, and that was
 scaith.

Of clothmaking she had such a skill
 Excelling them of Ypres and Ghent.
 In all the parish, wife there was none
 That to the offering before her should go,
 And if there did, certain so wrath was she,
 That she was out of all charity.
 Her coverchiefs full fine were of ground, –
 I durst swear they weighed ten pound, –
 That on a Sunday were upon her head.
 Her hosen were of a fine scarlet red
 Full straightly tied, and shoes full soft and
 new;
 Bold was her face and fair and red of hue.
 She was a worthy woman all her life,
 Husbands at church door she had five,
 Beside other company in youth;
 Thrice had she been at Jerusalem;
 She had passed many a strange stream;
 At Rome had she been and at Boulogne,
 To St James in Galicia and at Cologne,
 She knew much of wand'ring by the way.
 Gap-toothed was she, soothly for to say.
 Upon an ambler easily she sat,
 Wimpled full well and on her head an hat
 As broad as is a buckler or a target;
 An over-skirt hung from her hips large,
 And on her feet a pair of spurs sharp.
 In company well could she laugh and chat;
 Of remedies of love she knew perchance,
 For she knew of that art the ancient dance.

5 XII. The Poor Parson of a Town

A good man was there of religion
 And was a poor Parson of a Town;
 But rich he was in holy thought and work;
 He was a learned man, a clerk,

That Christ's gospel truly would preach;
 His parish-folk devoutly would he teach.
 Benign he was, and wondrous diligent,
 And in adversity full patient;
 Full loth was he to cursen for his tithes,
 But rather would he give, without a doubt,
 Unto his poor parish-folk about,
 Of his offering and eke of his substance:
 He could with little stock have sufficiency.
 Wide was his parish, and houses far asunder,
 But he stayed not for rain or thunder,
 In sickness nor in mischief to visit
 The farthest in his parish, great or little,
 Upon his feet, and in his hand a staff.
 This noble ensample to his sheep he gave
 That first he wrought and afterward he
 taught,
 Out of the gospel he those words caught.
 He did not set his benefice to hire
 And leave his sheep encumbered in the mire,
 And run to London unto St Paul's
 To seek for himself a chantry for souls;
 Or with a brotherhood to be withdrawn,
 But dwelt at home and kept well his fold,
 So that the wolf not made it to miscarry, –
 He was a shepherd and not a mercenary:
 And though he holy was and virtuous,
 He was to sinful man not despitous,
 Nor of his speech difficult nor lofty,
 But in his teaching discreet and benign,
 To draw folk to Heaven by fairness,
 By good ensample, this was his business:
 But were it any person obstinate,
 What so he were, of high or low estate,

Him would he chasten sharply for the nonce.
 A better priest I trow that nowhere none is;
 He waited after no pomp or reverence,
 Nor made him a light conscience,
 But Christ's lore, and his Apostles twelve,
 He taught, but first he followed it himself.

XIII. L'Envoi

But now is time to you for to tell
 How that we bare us that very night,
 When we were in that hostelry alight;
 Great cheer made our Host us everyone,
 And to the supper set he us anon,
 And served us with victual of the best;
 Strong was the wine and well to drink us
 pleased.
 A seemly man our Host was withal
 For to have been a marshal in a hall.
 A large man he was with eyes bright,
 A fairer burgess was there none in Cheap.
 Bold of his speech, and wise and well taught
 And of manhood him lacked right naught.
 Eke thereto he was right a merry man,
 And after supper to speak of mirth began,
 And said thus: 'Now, lordings, truly,
 Ye be to me right welcome heartily;
 For by my troth, if that I shall not lie,
 I have not seen this year so merry a
 company;
 Fain would I make you mirth, wist I how,
 And of a plan I am now right bethought.
 Ye go to Canterbury – God you speed –
 The blissful martyr quit you your meed!
 And well I wot, as ye go by the way
 Ye set yourselves to tell tales and to jest;

For truly comfort and mirth there is none
 To ride by the way dumb as a stone;
 And therefore will I make to you disport
 And if you like it all, by one assent,
 Now for to stand at my judgement,
 Tomorrow, when ye ride by the way,
 Be ye not merry, smite off my head.'
 Our counsel was not long for to seek,
 And granted him without more ado,
 And bade him say his verdict as he pleased.
 'Lordings, now hearken for the best,
 This is the point, to speak it short and plain,
 That each of you to shorten you the way,
 In this voyage shall tell tales twain,
 Of adventures that once had befallen.
 And which of you beareth him best of all
 Shall have a supper at the cost of all,
 When we come again from Canterbury.
 And, for to make you the more merry,
 I will myself gladly with you ride.'
 This thing was granted, and our oaths sworn.
 And thereupon the wine was fetched anon;
 We drank, and to rest went each one.
 The morrow, when that day began for to
 spring,
 Up rose our Host and waked us all,
 And gathered us together all in a flock,
 And forth we rode, at a foot-pace,
 Unto the fountain of St Thomas;
 And there our Host began his horse to arrest,
 And said: 'Lordings, hearken if you will.
 Let see now who shall tell the first tale.
 As ever I may drink wine or ale,
 Whoso is rebel to my judgement
 Shall pay for all that by the way is spent!

Now draw lots, ere that we farther wend;
 He that hath the shortest shall begin.
 Sir Knight, my master and my lord,
 Now draw a lot, for that is my award
 Come near, my lady Prioress,
 And ye, Sir Clerk, let be your shamefastness,
 Nay, study not; lay hand to it, every man.'
 Anon to draw every wight began,
 And, shortly for to tell as it was,
 Were it by fortune, hazard, or chance,
 The lot fell to the knight.
 Of which full blithe and glad was every wight.
 And when this good man saw that it was so,
 He said: 'Since I shall begin the game,
 Welcome be the lot, in God's name!
 Now let us ride, and hearken what I say.'
 And with that word we riden forth our way,
 And he began with right a merry cheer,
 His tale anon, and said in this mannér.

(The Knight's Tale)

'Long since, as old stories tell us,
 There was a duke that hight Theseus;
 Of Athens was he lord and governor;
 And in his time such a conqueror...'

Geoffrey Chaucer (c.1343 – 1400)
 © Oxford University Press

7 In Honour of the City

London thou art of townès a per se.
 Sovereign of cities, seemliest in sight,
 Of high renown, riches and royalty;
 Of lords and barons and many a goodly
 knight;

Of most delectable lusty ladies bright;
Of famous prelates in habits clerical;
Of merchants full of substance and might;
London, thou art the flower of cities all.

Gem of all joy, jasper of jocundity,
Most mighty carbuncle of virtue and valour;
Of royal cities rose and gilliflower,
Strong Troy in vigour and strenuity;
Empress of towns, exalt in honour;
In beauty bearing the crown imperial;
Sweet paradise precelling in pleasure;
London, thou art the flower of cities all.

Above all rivers thy river hath renown
Whose beryl streams, pleasant and preclare,
Under thy lusty wallès runneth down,
Where many a swan doth swim with wingès
fair;
Where many a barge doth sail and row with
are;
Where many a ship doth rest with top royal;
O town of towns, patron and not compare,
London, thou art the flower of cities all.

Upon thy lusty bridge of pillars white
Be merchantès full royal to behold,
Upon thy streets goeth many a seemly
knight

In velvet gownès and in chains of gold.
By Julius Caesar thy tower founded of old,
May be the house of Mars victorial,
Whose artillery with tongue may not be told;
London, thou art the flower of cities all.

Strong be thy wallès that about thee stands;
Wise be the people that within thee dwells;
Fresh is thy river with his lusty strands;
Blithe be thy churches, well sounding be
thy bells;
Rich be thy merchants in substance that
excels;
Fair be their wives, right lovesome, white and
small;
Clear be thy virgins, lusty under kells;
London, thou art the flower of cities all.

William Dunbar (?1465 - ?1513)

You can now purchase Chandos CDs or download MP3s online at our website: www.chandos.net

For requests to license tracks from this CD or any other Chandos discs please find application forms on the Chandos website or contact the Finance Director, Chandos Records Ltd, direct at the address below or via e-mail at srevill@chandos.net.

Chandos Records Ltd, Chandos House, 1 Commerce Park, Commerce Way, Colchester, Essex CO2 8HX, UK.
E-mail: enquiries@chandos.net Telephone: + 44 (0)1206 225 200 Fax: + 44 (0)1206 225 201



www.facebook.com/chandosrecords



www.twitter.com/chandosrecords

Recording producer Brian Couzens

Sound engineer Ralph Couzens

Assistant engineers Jonathan Cooper (1 October 1996) and Richard Smoker (30 September & 4 and 5 October 1996)

Editor Peter Newble

Mastering Jonathan Cooper

Recording venue Blackheath Concert Halls; 30 September, 1, 4 and 5 October 1996

Front cover Lydgate and the Canterbury Pilgrims leaving Canterbury, from *Troy Book and the Siege of Thebes* (1412–22), John Lydgate Poetry (fifteenth century), British Library / Bridgeman Art Library, London

Back cover Photograph of Richard Hickox by Greg Barrett

Design and typesetting Cassidy Rayne Creative (www.cassidyrayne.co.uk)

Booklet editor Finn S. Gundersen

Publishers Oxford University Press

© 1997 Chandos Records Ltd

Digital remastering © 2012 Chandos Records Ltd

© 2012 Chandos Records Ltd

Chandos Records Ltd, Colchester, Essex CO2 8HX, England

Country of origin UK



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.

CHANDOS DIGITAL2-disc set **CHAN 241-43****SIR GEORGE DYSON** (1883–1964)

COMPACT DISC ONE

1	At the Tabard Inn *	11:41
	The Canterbury Pilgrims (beginning)†	45:32
2	I Prologue –	0:52
3	Prologue (Figure 2)	10:04
4	II The Knight	4:48
5	III The Squire	2:53
6	IV The Nun	9:07
7	V The Monk	4:51
8	VI The Clerk of Oxenford	6:03
9	VII The Haberdasher and his Fraternity, The Merchant	6:30
	TT	57:25

COMPACT DISC TWO

	The Canterbury Pilgrims (conclusion)†	45:23
1	VIII The Sergeant of the Law, The Franklin	8:21
2	IX The Shipman	4:54
3	X The Doctor of Physic	6:17
4	XI The Wife of Bath	4:35
5	XII The Poor Parson of a Town	10:09
6	XIII L'envoi	10:56
7	In Honour of the City ‡	15:08
	TT	60:42

* A note in the score indicates that when the Overture is played before a performance of The Canterbury Pilgrims the Prologue should begin at Figure 2. This can be achieved by programming your CD player to omit track 2.

Yvonne Kenny soprano†
Robert Tear tenor†
Stephen Roberts baritone†
London Symphony Chorus†‡
Malcolm Hicks chorus master
London Symphony Orchestra
Richard Hickox

© 1997 Chandos Records Ltd Digital remastering © 2012 Chandos Records Ltd © 2012 Chandos Records Ltd
 Chandos Records Ltd • Colchester • Essex • England

DYSON: THE CANTERBURY PILGRIMS ETC. – Soloists/LSC/LSO/Hickox

CHANDOS
CHAN 241-43

DYSON: THE CANTERBURY PILGRIMS ETC. – Soloists/LSC/LSO/Hickox

CHANDOS
CHAN 241-43